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"Unswerving Devotion to Truth and Duty": Southern Women and the Print Culture of the Lost Cause, 1850-1920

Ashley Robles
University of Redlands

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“Unswerving Devotion to Truth and Duty”: Southern Women and the Print Culture of the Lost
Cause, 1850-1920

By Ashley Robles

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Introduction

Within a few decades after the end of the conflict, the Civil War had taken on literal and ideological meanings far beyond the battlefield. Once the task of reconciliation and Reconstruction had begun, many people, North and South, fought to determine the future of the war's memory. Within the former Confederate states, white men and women resisted Reconstruction and rejected the new racial order that had been created due to the abolition of slavery. At Reconstruction's end, these former Confederates worked to re-create the Old South, enforcing prewar racial and gender hierarchies while romanticizing the Confederacy and its war. This rewriting of Civil War memory in the service of contemporary upheavals would become the Lost Cause. Historian Gaines M. Foster explains the Lost Cause's hold on southern memories of the war as "they [white southerners] remembered the battle but had forgotten its pain, its cost, and its issues."¹ More importantly, the Lost Cause also became a tool of white supremacy—a justification for slavery, for black inferiority, and for contemporary Jim Crow laws and racial segregation. The Lost Cause owes its prolific and influential lifespan to the work of thousands of white southerners, particularly white southern women. The women—many of whom had supported Confederate nationalism during the war and had resisted attempts at Reconstruction—formed women's clubs and political organizations, or wrote memoirs or novels about the Confederacy, in order to develop a new white nationalism and to indoctrinate future generations of southerners in the Lost Cause. These women also played a crucial role in keeping Confederate memory alive throughout the South, particularly through their contributions to an emerging postwar print culture of reconciliation and the Lost Cause. By appealing to gendered ideas of women's proper role as a helper and healer, white southern women could achieve politicized,

¹ 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), 4.

public roles, which was denied to them otherwise. However, the work of individual women as writers, educators, and activists on behalf of the Lost Cause has often been obscured by similar efforts by white southern men, often veterans. The work of white southern women promoting the Lost Cause reveals complex interplays of race, gender, and class, and of the role of history, politics, and education within the New South.

As writers, white southern women practiced one of the most potent ways of influencing Civil War memory. Prior to the war, a literary marketplace of “sentimental” or domestic fiction commanded thousands of female readers and featured popular authors such as the northerner Harriet Beecher Stowe and the southerner Augusta Jane Evans.² Southern women who wrote domestic fiction explicitly separated their novels from politics, and yet implicitly wove political themes into their characters and plots. While women such as Evans and Caroline Lee Hentz regarded their writings as a defense of southern life and particularly southern slaveholding, they also regarded themselves as professional authors who worked for wages, and they depended on their novels for income for significant parts of their lives. Writing for elite white women who eagerly consumed domestic novels about southern heroines and the innate goodness of southern life, these women became crucial parts of the South’s popular literary culture, as working women who dictated to other women about gender, marriage, work, and race.³ Even during the stresses of wartime, Confederate women continued to write letters and diaries as well as read novels, considering it one of the few luxuries left to them. With a strong heritage of reading and writing in a female-centered literary culture, in the postwar period more and more women took up the pen and produced memoirs, fictional novels, and autobiographical novels. Novels such as *Flower*

² Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 154.

³ Elizabeth Moss, *Domestic Novelists in the Old South: Defenders of Southern Culture* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992), 1-29.

de Hundred by Constance Cary Harrison and the historical writings of former Confederate First Lady Varina Davis, who memorialized her husband through her work, were not only successful but influential. The nobility of Confederate men and the Confederate army, the idyllic lives of plantation families, and the comfort of unshakeable gender and racial hierarchies percolated throughout these works and similar ones, and helped place the Lost Cause central to many white southerners'—and eventually, to a national—conception of the Civil War and the reunified nation. White women who could not vote or have an active political voice quickly found that through their writing, they could influence the course of post-Reconstruction politics and popular culture to a larger degree than thought possible.

Black southern women, in contrast, presented serious resistance to and rejection of the Lost Cause and the themes of reconciliation and Confederate nationalism that prevailed after the Civil War. Freed from slavery but watching many of the gains made during Reconstruction undone by white southerners committed to white supremacy and a pre-emancipation racial and gender order, black southerners worked to gain civil rights and expose the difficult realities of black life in the South, before, during, and after the war. Black women wrote their own novels and memoirs, and educators promoted books that honored African-American history and focused on slavery as central to the cause of the Civil War. Notable black southern women such as writer Octavia V. Rogers Albert, activist and writer Ida B. Wells, and educator Anna J. Cooper brought awareness to racial tensions within the South, directly in opposition to efforts of white women to create fictional novels about stalwart white plantation beauties and faithful slaves. Seeking to undermine the white supremacist ideologies of white women's writing and the Lost Cause, black women bore witness to their own experiences as either slave or a free woman denied the rights given to white Americans. Black female writers found themselves denied the large, white

audience enjoyed by women like Augusta Jane Evans or Constance Cary Harrison, with few exceptions. Largely due to this disparity in audience size and regional and national influence, many black women found themselves as unwilling participants in the Lost Cause, as racial stereotypes such as the faithful slave and the mammy were employed by white writers to endorse a rose-tinted view of the Old South. The invention of these stereotypes and their widespread popularity, in the South as well as the North, demonstrates not only the success of white women in promoting the Lost Cause, but also how racial stereotypes and clichés began to obscure the work of black women in writing and popularizing their own emancipationist, racially egalitarian views on the Civil War. Nonetheless, the work of black southern women in testifying to black experience during Reconstruction and the post-Reconstruction South and extending a growing literary culture of black female writers provides a narrative of resistance to the Lost Cause's hegemony.

Literature on women and the Lost Cause continues to be an understudied field. Most scholarly work on the Lost Cause concern its development through white male southerners, particularly Confederate veterans, or how terrorist groups such as the Ku Klux Klan worked to uphold racial and gender hierarchies in the Reconstruction period, which provided a fertile breeding ground for Lost Cause thought to flourish. However, a growing body of work focusing on the lives of women in the antebellum south, the Civil War, and the Reconstruction period has provided a framework for discussions of gender, race, and class in the postwar South. Some works on white southern women as writers and memoirists, as political activists, and as educators in relation to the Lost Cause and the promotion of Confederate history and culture have also been produced. Many of these historians agree on the reasons behind white southern women's commitment to the Lost Cause, but diverge in their explorations of the methods these

women chose to transmit Confederate history, culture, and racial and gender ideologies.⁴ However, the roles of black women in opposition to the Lost Cause has an even more muddled scholarship. While the lives of black southern women in slavery and as freedwomen during Reconstruction is a growing field, their roles as politically motivated educators or writers has been little mentioned. Though women such as Ida B. Wells have a body of scholarship surrounding their work, many of the women who joined political or literary clubs or worked in opposition to the racial politics of the post-Reconstruction South have been largely marginalized in historical scholarship. The purpose of this project is to merge these two often separate bodies of scholarship and discuss the political and literary efforts of white and black southern women in opposition and occasionally in agreement. By using primary sources that have been the subject of little scholarly attention as well as several that have been seriously studied, this thesis aims to construct a history of the Lost Cause that focuses on women's print culture and combines white and black women writers into the same, if often divergent and competing, narrative. White southern women as political actors through their writings, and black women as engaging with Lost Cause rhetoric at all in their writings and in their politics, provides a new perspective on American women's history and the development of the Lost Cause as a racial ideology rather than merely flawed historical memory.

This thesis will focus on a selection of primary sources written by southern women between 1850 and 1920. Caroline Lee Hentz, a northern white woman who primarily lived in the South, wrote *The Planter's Northern Bride* in 1854 as a response to antislavery fiction such as

⁴ For more on white southern women and the Lost Cause, 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); Karen L. Cox, *Dixie's Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2003); Caroline E. Janney, *Burying the Dead but Not the Past: Ladies' Memorial Associations and the Lost Cause* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008.)

Uncle Tom's Cabin, and its success would lay the groundwork for later, postwar Lost Cause fiction. During the Civil War, Augusta Jane Evans's *Macaria* from 1864 captured Confederate nationalism and the nobility of white southerners which resonated with white women and their struggles, and inspired a reverence of the Confederacy which became a hallmark of the Lost Cause. In the postwar period, writers like Constance Cary Harrison and Grace King, among others, also wrote fictional novels that glorified the Old South and the Confederacy while portraying unequal relationships between white and black southerners and a rose-tinted view of slavery. Harrison also produced her own rose-tinted memoirs of a Civil War that was equal parts hardship and glory, while women like Varina Davis, the former First Lady of the Confederacy, wrote memoirs of her husband that equated him to a Biblical figure leading a struggling country. Black southern women, conscious of inequalities of gender and race, wrote their own versions of southern history and the southern present. Octavia V. Rogers Albert published the recollections of former slaves which laid bare the realities of slavery that white women had ignored in their own works. Anna J. Cooper and Ida B. Wells, less concerned with the Civil War than the contemporary South, nonetheless fought back in pen against white supremacy, racial inequality, and the Lost Cause's monopolization of national thought by arguing for education, feminism, and an end to lynching and segregation. Every source, whether created with the Lost Cause in mind or not, can offer a perspective on gender, race, and the creation of historical myths that interacted with the Lost Cause in public, literary spheres.

Chapter 1: White Southern Women and Lost Cause Fiction, 1850-1900

From the moment of secession, white southern women were among the most strident defenders of the Confederacy. Gender roles in the prewar South had been less public and political than the roles of northern women of the same period, particularly as reform movements such as the abolitionist and early feminist movements grew amongst educated, elite northern women. Antebellum white southern women instead relied on apolitical connections with other women outside the domestic sphere and remained aloof from political involvements; nonetheless, once secession reached their states and war had begun, white women became increasingly active supporters of the war and of Confederate nationalism. As one southern woman wrote to another in 1861, “But like the women of old gird on a heart of steel and be ready and willing to do our part to aid our Struggling Country to sever the galling and oppressing yoke, of tyranny.”⁵ White women took it upon themselves to encourage men to enlist in the war as well. In many parts of the Confederacy, women implicitly compared un-enlisted men with femininity and a woman’s role on the home front, presenting bonnets or petticoats to un-enlisted local men who were seen as shunning a masculine duty to enlist and fight for the Confederacy.⁶ In other ways, women revealed the fears and anxieties that plagued them at the beginning of the war and would continue to haunt them far beyond the end of the war in 1865. As it became clear that the short, easily won war promised by Confederate leaders would instead be a long, difficult campaign, white women became beset by worries over family members off fighting, the possible occupation of their homes or towns by Union forces, and desertion of slaves or even slave uprisings. Elite white women often witnessed the breakdown of their lifestyles as husbands, fathers, brothers, and sons left for war and often did not return and the paternalistic bonds that

⁵ Letter from ‘Jennie’ to ‘May Darling Bell’, November 13, 1861, Smiley Library.

⁶ Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 15.

supposedly held together masters and slaves began to dissipate.⁷ The Lost Cause clichés of faithful retainers and loyal mammies had few counterparts within the real southern war, as black men and women took advantage of the absence of white men and abandoned their bondage for freedom. Despite these troubles, many white women continued their unwavering support of the Confederacy up until its day of surrender and beyond.

Despite the lack of visible political engagement by white southern women compared to their northern counterparts, women found outlets through reading and writing. Southern white women reached beyond the domestic sphere into the public sphere through writing, which became a major form of support for the Lost Cause after the war and was patterned after the prewar and wartime influence of female writers such as Caroline Lee Hentz and Augusta Jane Evans. During the 1850s, following the publication and consequent enormous success of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), one woman's book became the center of antislavery and proslavery politics. White southerners were outraged at what was perceived as an unjust attack on the South and slavery, and in response some southern writers published "anti-Uncle Tom novels," written in direct response to Stowe's novel.⁸ White southern women had been supporters of slavery for many of the same reasons as white men, but in particular many women equated slavery with ideologies of gender and domesticity. Many women who wrote proslavery works believed that slavery and a rigid racial hierarchy protected women from the dangers of a free society that abolitionists supported, and while some believed in widening spheres for elite, educated white women, they also supported women's place within the domestic sphere.⁹ Of the many writers who produced proslavery fiction in the decade after *Uncle Tom's*

⁷ Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 54-62.

⁸ Amy Cummins, "Loyal and Devoted Attachment": Anti-Abolition Rhetoric by Southern Women of Letters, 1852-1860," *Southern Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal of the South* 14, no. 2 (September 2007): 20.

⁹ Cummins, "Loyal and Devoted Attachment," 13-14.

Cabin, one of the most successful was Caroline Lee Hentz, a native northerner whose sympathies were nonetheless with southern slaveholders.¹⁰

Hentz, a native of Massachusetts who moved to the South during the 1820s in search of teaching work for her husband and herself, was not a member of the white slaveholding elite but was an active supporter of their politics. Working as a teacher with writing as a side occupation, in 1849 her husband's failing health caused her to abandon education to write full-time, as her education endeavors had been less successful than her literary works. Hentz's work as both a teacher and a writer was compelled by a need to support a family without a male breadwinner due to her husband's unemployment due to illness, and her openly leaving the domestic sphere out of economic need was, by the 1850s, driven by not only her husband's illness but also her desire to keep her son in Harvard Medical School.¹¹ Her economic issues, therefore, likely informed her desire to write proslavery works to a robust literary marketplace rather than ideological concerns. Her willingness to embrace proslavery issues so openly may have resulted from a need to sell her work during a decade when slavery was at the forefront of national and sectional politics and would allow her novels to easily sell in a southern literary market.¹² Nonetheless, Hentz's support of slavery was vocal and prominent, and was most directly seen in her 1854 novel *The Planter's Northern Bride*. One of her most successful works, it continued to be ranked among the most popular southern novels through the end of the nineteenth century,

¹⁰ For more on domestic fiction in the antebellum period, both North and South, see Mary Kelley, *Private Woman, Public Stage: Literary Domesticity in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984); Elizabeth Moss, *Domestic Novelists in the Old South: Defenders of Southern Culture* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992); G.M. Goshgarian, *To Kiss the Chastening Rod: Domestic Fiction and Sexual Ideology in the American Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992); Shirley Samuels, ed. *The Culture of Sentiment: Race, Gender, and Sentimentality in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.) For further examination of how female novelists responded to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the 'anti-Uncle Tom' literary movement, see Joy Jordan-Lake, *Whitewashing Uncle Tom's Cabin: Nineteenth-Century Women Novelists Respond to Stowe* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2005.)

¹¹ Cummins, "Loyal and Devoted Attachment," 19.

¹² *Ibid.*

and Hentz herself continued to be widely-read for decades after her death in 1856. Within the preface, Hentz addresses the simmering antislavery movements within the nation by offering a direct rebuttal to the brutal descriptions of slavery in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and other abolitionist works: "One thing is certain...we have never *witnessed* one scene of cruelty or oppression, never beheld a chain or a manacle, or the infliction of a punishment more severe than parental authority."¹³ Hentz had never owned slaves herself and the extent of her interactions with slaveholders and slaves is unknown, but she insisted she had been a guest in slaveholders' homes on several occasions to support the accuracy of the depictions of slavery in her novels. Hentz continues to describe the "exhibition of affectionate kindness and care [by the slaveholders], and loyal and devoted attachment [by the slaves]," further describing slaves as "the happiest *labouring class* on the face of the globe."¹⁴ The myth of the faithful slave and the paternal slaveholders (particularly the slaveholding men), which would dominate fiction including Hentz's into the twentieth century had already been given a voice before the Civil War. Hentz then quotes "a negro woman" whose former owners have died as saying, "I wouldn't have left my master and mistress for all the freedom in the world."¹⁵ The rhetoric deployed by Hentz to defend and justify her position on slavery within her novel was echoed in later depictions of former slaves who reject freedom in favor of the supposed comfort of slavery, representing the whites who themselves longed for the comforts of slavery and white supremacy.

The Planter's Northern Bride follows a young northern white woman named Eulalia Hastings, the daughter of an ardent abolitionist, who falls in love with a charming, wealthy, and benevolent slaveholder. A minor character, a crony of Eulalia's father, fulfills the southern

¹³ Caroline Lee Hentz, *The Planter's Northern Bride* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia: A. Hart, Late Carey & Hart, 1854), iv-v.

¹⁴ Hentz, v-vi.

¹⁵ Hentz, vii.

stereotype of the rabid, villainous abolitionist, and Eulalia's own abolitionist family members are eventually converted to the pro-slavery cause. The novel also illustrates that, as Amy Cummins explains, "social institutions such as education should serve to reinforce southern culture, including the preservation of slavery and of class distinctions, and that Northerners can be swayed to the correctness of Southern culture, including slavery," an idea which would reverberate with the women of the United Daughters of the Confederacy and their textbook crusades in the 1890s.¹⁶ The character of Moreland, a slaveholder and the eventual husband of Eulalia, early in the novel responds to a rebuke by an antislavery man who questions how humans could be chattel: "Nevertheless, I assure you, that next to our own kindred, we look upon our slaves as our best friends."¹⁷ Comparisons are drawn throughout the novel between slaves and northern "wage slaves," echoing a common proslavery argument of the period that countered that slaves were better cared for and less prone to disease and poverty-stricken lives than northern workers, and Moreland frequently expounds on the inferiority of African-Americans. Many of the northern characters, except for Eulalia, are portrayed negatively, as belligerent, obstinate, ignorant, or as hypocrites, they are only positively portrayed if they, like Eulalia and eventually the rest of her family, embraces slavery and denounces abolitionism. Once Eulalia becomes a plantation mistress, the overwhelming adoration of Moreland's slaves and her own stated apathy on abolitionism allows her to fall easily into the role of an elite slaveholding woman. Within the portrayal of Eulalia as a passive, feminine white woman who eventually supports slavery, as well as the novel's pointed defenses of slavery and the inferiority of African-Americans, the groundwork for postwar novels of the Lost Cause had been laid.

¹⁶ Cummins, "Loyal and Devoted Attachment," 21.

¹⁷ Hentz, 23.

Despite the challenges of the war years, Confederate women continued to write and consume fiction, partly as an escape from the harsh realities of home front life but also as a way to reaffirm their commitment to the war and the Confederacy. Of the novels published by women during the Civil War, *Macaria; or, the Altars of Sacrifice* (1864) by Augusta Jane Evans was the most successful novel of the period, becoming the bestselling novel of the Confederacy.¹⁸ Evans had been a successful author prior to the war, with her 1859 novel *Beulah* gaining her literary fame both North and South. Her involvement in Confederate relief groups and as a nurse in military hospitals led Evans to curse her inability to serve the Confederacy more directly, as a soldier, and instead she turned to writing to produce a patriotic novel, which could “serve” in her place.¹⁹ *Macaria* itself is drawn from a Greek mythological figure who rescues Athens from invasion by offering herself as a sacrifice for the gods, and themes of martyrdom and sacrifices pervade the novel. Irene, the novel’s primary heroine, explicitly draws parallels between her life during the Civil War and the mythological figure, claiming to her love interest Russell, “I cannot, like Macaria, by self-immolation redeem my country...but I yield up more than she ever possessed. I give my all on Earth—my father and yourself—to our beloved and suffering country. My God! accept the sacrifice, and crown the South a sovereign, independent nation!”²⁰ Indeed, Irene loses her father and Russell (who became emblematic of the idealized white Confederate men who perished in battle) to war, and both she and another major female character, Electra, finish their days in contented spinsterhood. While Evans offers female characters like Irene and Electra the option of an unmarried life filled with nursing the wounded and supporting the Confederacy, she nonetheless reaffirms the traditional place of women within

¹⁸ Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 168.

¹⁹ Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 168-169.

²⁰ Augusta Jane Evans, *Macaria* (1864; Carlisle, Massachusetts: Applewood Books, 2010), 375.

the antebellum gender hierarchy: “Women have a knack of intertwining stems and grouping colors; our fingers were ordained for all such embroidery...of stern, practical, every-day life. You men are more at home with state papers, machine shops, navies, armies, political economy, and agricultural chemistry.”²¹ The role of women as independent and resourceful, and possibly unmarried, was thus delineated according to their services to the Confederacy, both during and after the war. Sacrifices, grief, and patriotism as portrayed in *Macaria* were all themes that many white Confederate women confronted in their own lives, and the book’s resounding success demonstrates not only the importance of novels to Confederate women, but also how resonant these themes had become to them.

As with women such as Caroline Lee Hentz and Augusta Jane Evans before and during the Civil War, the literary market for fiction penned by women writers was large and growing after the war. However, the aims of postwar southern novels had changed, as southern white women became invested in memorializing the Confederacy and promoting the Lost Cause rather than attacking abolitionist works like *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* or stirring up Confederate patriotism during wartime. From the 1870s through the early twentieth century, women produced novels that sentimentalized the Old South and the Confederacy, which mourned the end of prewar gender and racial hierarchies, and most insidiously, supported a reconstruction of those hierarchies by continuing to adhere to prewar ideas of women’s roles within the domestic sphere and by including depictions of African Americans as faithful slaves and doting mammies. The popularity of writers such as Hentz and Evans is a testament to how pervasive the Lost Cause was in the New South—and how women continued to gain a place in the public sphere through their writings.

²¹ Evans, 208.

Grace King was one of the most popular and widely read of white southern women writers, even outside the South. King, however, has often been left out of studies of the Lost Cause, particularly her fiction work, and her national reach was narrower than other writers like Constance Cary Harrison.²² While Harrison's work was published in popular national magazines such as *Century*, King's work was mainly popular in the South and was not nationally promoted like Harrison. King's absence from scholarship on the Lost Cause may be due to the focus of the majority of her writings—on the lives of Creoles in Louisiana and local color (a genre which focused on a setting and its dialect, customs, history, and particular features) stories rather than plantation romances or war memoirs. King, a southern native of Louisiana, wrote fiction as well as nonfiction, beginning her career as a writer of stories about Creole culture.²³ She often clashed with fellow writer George Washington Cable, another white Louisiana writer who covered Creole culture in his writings. Cable, however, wrote extensively about issues such as the physical abuse of slaves and interracial relationships, and he was sympathetic to calls for the full social and political equality of African Americans.²⁴ King found Cable's work abhorrent and wrote rebuttals to his works, echoing the response of Caroline Lee Hentz in the 1850s to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

One such novel was *Monsieur Motte*, published in 1888. Unlike Harrison, whose work explicitly identified itself with the slaveholding elite and the growing literature of plantation fiction, King's work was mainly local color and lacked the overt connections to the Lost Cause of Harrison's work. King's novel was born less out of a desire to compete with other writers of plantation fiction such as Harrison than to promote her own views on race in Louisiana,

²² Glenn Robins, 2003, "Lost Cause Motherhood: Southern Women Writers," *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 44 (3), Louisiana Historical Association: 285.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

responding to the work of Cable. Within *Monsieur Motte*, King sought to portray the Old South as idyllic, with benevolent and paternalistic slaveholders who presided over plantations filled with loyal, submissive, and loving slaves.²⁵ *Monsieur Motte* follows the life of Marie Modeste, a young Creole orphan who has been sheltered and cared for by a mysterious uncle and benefactor, Monsieur Motte. Marie has never met him, and it is eventually revealed that he is deceased, his care for Marie a fiction created by her loyal (formerly enslaved but now freed) black female servant Marcelite, who has cared for Marie since her birth and who supports Marie through money earned through her work as a hairdresser. Though freed, as are the other black characters in the novel, Marcelite fulfills the ultimate fiction of former slaveholders: that slaves were so loyal they would continue their care of their white owners even after freedom. In one scene Marcelite cries, after giving Marie a gift, “I belonged to you; you have a right to it. Who made me your slave? God. Who made me free?”²⁶ Marcelite, described as a “quadroon” woman and therefore partially white, is nonetheless regarded as completely different racially than the fully white Marie. Even when racially mixed, Marcelite retains her inferiority to Marie by virtue of not being completely white; and King, despite her interest in Creole stories, rejects and ignores miscegenation in her depiction of Marcelite.

The novel’s setting during Reconstruction, rather than in the antebellum period, reinforces more strongly the ideas about black inequality and continued subservience under freedom, perhaps more explicitly than *Flower de Hundred*. The black characters throughout the novel are largely depicted as slaves rather than as freed people. In one section of the novel, entitled “On the Plantation,” the free black workers of the plantation are described exactly as slaves might be: “The day’s work had come to an end. The plantation bell rang out its dismissal

²⁵ Robins, “Lost Cause Motherhood,” 286.

²⁶ Grace Elizabeth King, *Monsieur Motte* (Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1969), 297.

and benediction...From the two long rows of whitewashed cabins in the quarters the smoke began to rise.”²⁷ The workers include not only able-bodied, adult men and women, but also “drowsy young women, sitting with their babies on the cabin steps,” “exempt old women...hobbl[ing] around in a fictitious bustle,” as well as young children who follow the adults into the fields of the sugar plantation.²⁸ King gives no suggestion that these characters are sharecroppers or otherwise independent of the plantation, but instead frames them as former slaves who chose to remain on the plantation and continue their work because of their continuing loyalty to kind former slaveholders. Marcelite, the former slave who so loyally cares for Marie Modeste, is similarly characterized as a freed black woman who chooses to live much like a slave because of her love and devotion to Marie, Marie’s family, and the plantation; she has no life independent of her former white owners. Such characters were common in works of the 1880s and 1890s, as historian David Blight notes: “Southern blacks had to have their place in the splendid disaster of the war, emancipation, and Reconstruction. So in the works of several widely popular writers they were rendered faithful to an old regime, as chief spokesman for it, and often confused in—or witty critics of—the new.”²⁹ King as well as Harrison had incorporated these depictions of African Americans into their novels, to resounding success. White southern women had taken steps into the public, political sphere through their novels and not only strengthened the hold of the Lost Cause on popular memory of the Civil War, but had provided explicit condemnations of providing full racial equality and ending white supremacy throughout the South.

²⁷ King, 112.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001), 221.

Constance Cary Harrison, a descendant of Thomas Jefferson and the wife of Jefferson Davis's private secretary, was a Virginia native and an elite woman and professional author whose memoirs were among the most popular published by women in the post-Reconstruction period. Harrison, in addition to penning popular memoirs, also wrote fiction. Her 1890 novel *Flower de Hundred*, subtitled *The Story of a Virginia Plantation*, is characterized by historian Sarah E. Gardner as "as much a response to the reconciliation literature of northerners as a defense of southern antebellum society and the Confederacy."³⁰ Originally published in serialized form in *Century* like her war memoirs, *Flower de Hundred* received enthusiastic responses and reached a large national audience, unlike many other southern women who only attained regional popularity. The story of a Virginia plantation before and during the Civil War, Harrison intended the novel as a "social history" of the antebellum South and a defense of secession and slavery, without advocating either a return to slavery nor positing it as the reason for southern secession.³¹ The protagonist, slaveholder Colonel Richard Throckmorton, is described as an "indulgent master" and Harrison writes that, "It was not certain whether he was most beloved by his little mother, by the younger women in her train, by the boys [his grandsons], or by his black people."³² Much like Hentz in the 1850s and like many other southern writers, Harrison characterizes the slaves on Throckmorton's plantation as faithful and adoring, but also as indolent, lazy, and liable to descend into barbarism if slavery did not exist—a sharp condemnation of the social and political equality sought by African Americans in the 1890s. Describing the slave quarters on the Throckmorton's plantation, Harrison writes, "The

³⁰ Sarah E. Gardner, *Blood & Irony: Southern White Women's Narratives of the Civil War, 1861-1937* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 78.

³¹ Gardner, 92-93.

³² Constance Cary Harrison, *Flower de Hundred: The Story of a Virginia Plantation* (New York: Cassell Publishing Company, 1890), 13.

blacks...were ready at a hint to relapse into the barbarous habits and beliefs of their African ancestors” and describes them as “characterized by sensuality” and “shut off from the sense of accountability and duty.”³³ However, to avoid criticisms of advocating a return to slavery, Harrison neatly adds that slavery “hampered the development of the South” and that “the highest civilization is reached only where there is absolute equality before the law of rights of every kind, and possibility of equal actual attainment.”³⁴ Like many other postwar southerners, Harrison trod a line between defending the antebellum South and glorifying it, including defenses of slavery and black inferiority, while ultimately stressing that slavery’s end had been positive for the growth of the South if not necessarily for African Americans, and thus rejecting a return to a slave economy. Nonetheless, Harrison’s characterizations of prewar slaves clearly adhered to notions of what contemporary African Americans were—and were not—capable, offering a strong defense of white supremacy and political, cultural, and economic subordination of African Americans, if not an explicit return to slavery. Its depictions of slaves as unwilling to abandon the plantation even in the face of emancipation, and as still claiming kinship to former slaveholders after freedom, characterized African Americans as unworthy of freedom and citizenship, as an inferior even if not a slave. Furthermore, even if black southerners are not tied by slavery to white slaveholders, Harrison posits, bonds of affection and familial love can replace the bonds of slavery, a fantasy of former elite whites across the South. *Flower de Hundred*’s positive reception across the country, and Harrison’s continued success as an author of both fiction and nonfiction works, demonstrates how widespread the Lost Cause had become, and how it was used to not only glorify the Confederacy and Old South but how it could wielded as a political tool against the increasing political and social gains of African Americans. Both

³³ Harrison, *Flower de Hundred*, 42-43.

³⁴ Harrison, *Flower de Hundred*, 44.

Harrison and Grace King had discovered political, social, and economic power as well as security through their writing and through their own promotion of the Lost Cause and white supremacy.

Constance Cary Harrison and Grace King were two of the most popular southern female writers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Many other southern women submitted their stories of the war to publishers, and as with nonfiction war memoirs, publishing houses worried over the quantity of fictional war narratives being submitted; however, recognizing the public demand for such novels led to most publishing houses accepting most of these stories as they sold in the marketplace.³⁵ These women all had the same goals in mind when writing their novels: the ‘true’ story of the Old South and the Civil War, the defense of the Confederacy, the glorification of the Lost Cause, and the condemnation of Reconstruction and African American equality. Many of these women also became professional writers and received profits that were normally reserved for men, in a period where gender roles in the New South were becoming more rigid and less accessible for women to pursue such autonomy through other means. In the preface to her 1906 novel *A Daughter of the Confederacy*, Phoebe Hamilton Seabrook writes, “The writer has endeavored to portray some of the features of Southern life during the war time as it really was...no doubt there were horrors, but they were remote, and not in the experiences of the writer,” who Seabrook assures the reader, “has endeavored to sketch the Southern home life with its many simple pleasures, the bravery with which the war time trials were met.”³⁶ White women could not access the public sphere through voting or holding office, as many white men could, in order to promote the Lost Cause and enforce white supremacy and

³⁵ Gardner, 208.

³⁶ Phoebe Hamilton Seabrook, *A Daughter of the Confederacy: a Story of the Old South and the New* (New York: Neale Publishing Company, 1906), 7.

black disenfranchisement through the law. Constance Cary Harrison, Grace King, Phoebe Hamilton Seabrook, and countless other writers represent one of the most prominent and popular ways white women were able to influence the public sphere, and support the Lost Cause. However, organizations dedicated to Confederate memory and 'righting the wrongs of history' were emerging and gaining political and cultural power during the 1890s and early 1900s.

Chapter 2: The Lost Cause in Memoirs and Nonfiction and the United Daughters of the Confederacy, 1880-1920

After the end of the Civil War in 1865, white women across the Confederacy found themselves now loyal to a country that had ceased to exist. Many elite women of slaveholding families also found their former economic status had plummeted as freed African-Americans deserted plantations and the certainty of class and wealth as slaveholders was destroyed. In the uncertain period of Reconstruction, into the early twentieth century, white women worked to shape the way the Confederacy would be remembered in personal ways that nonetheless carried political implications. These women helped shape the political, cultural, and social life of the New South and further embedded the Lost Cause in regional and national discourse. Across the nation, calls for memoirs from veterans due to widespread interest in the war led to many women submitting their war experiences as civilians in hopes of publication. The growing cult of the Lost Cause, which lionized generals like Robert E. Lee and Thomas ‘Stonewall’ Jackson of the Confederate Army while castigating others like former president Jefferson Davis, also prompted women to publish memoirs of their husbands that would enshrine their spouses within the Lost Cause as heroes rather than villains. Prominent women such as the former First Lady of the Confederacy, Varina Davis, and the wives of generals such as Thomas ‘Stonewall’ Jackson, George Pickett, and James Longstreet all published histories of their husbands that shielded them from postwar criticism. In the decades after the war, the fight over the history of the Civil War had begun, and southern women became avid participants in the battles over how the Confederacy would be remembered and who would become its heroes.

War memoirs became a profitable sector of the national literary marketplace after the Civil War, and southern white women were eager to share their memories with a wide audience.

By the end of Reconstruction and through the 1890s, war memoirs had become enormously popular, with figures such as Ulysses S. Grant and Jefferson Davis publishing their memoirs. Popular literary magazines and newspapers prominently featured war memoirs, usually from white male veterans, to feed the national desire for more wartime writings; one magazine, *Century*, ran a hugely successful monthly series on war memory throughout the 1880s.³⁷ Within the South, white women scrambled to publish their war diaries and postwar memoirs, so much so that by the early 1900s the literary marketplace had become swamped by them.³⁸ Since elite women such as Mary Boykin Chesnut, who was married to a Confederate politician, were the memoirists more strongly sought after by publishing houses, many women turned back to the domestic sphere for their audiences. Many women intended their memoirs for family members, often to be passed down through generations of women, which historian Victoria E. Ott describes as “a form of indoctrination of the next generation into the Lost Cause mythology as well as the championing of racial hierarchy and conventional gender ideals.”³⁹ Nonetheless, reaching the public sphere through their memories and other nonfiction works was the hope of many if not most white southern women who wrote memoirs. Constance Cary Harrison, in addition to being a successful fiction author, was one of the most popular female memoirists of the 1880s and 1890s.

Harrison was one of the few women whose memoirs were published in the popular *Century* magazine series of war memoirs, largely due to her elite status as well as the “domestic” tone she adopted in her memoirs, reminiscent of the writings of sentimental novels. Her

³⁷ *Century*'s readership increased from 127,000 to 225,000 during the first six months of memoir publication, and the memoirs were later published in collected volumes because of demand, see Blight, 174-181.

³⁸ Gardner, 173.

³⁹ Victoria E. Ott, *Confederate Daughters: Coming of Age during the Civil War* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008), 136.

sentimental and “social” memories of the war were juxtaposed with the military accounts of male writers.⁴⁰ Women like Harrison found more success with such writings rather than the military or historical accounts written by men because of the widespread belief that women were incapable of writing genuine history or military scenes; Augusta Jane Evans, who after the war abandoned a history of the Confederacy, cited her womanly inability to write critically about the military aspects of the Civil War as the reason.⁴¹ One of Harrison’s short memoirs published in *Century* was “A Virginia Girl in the First Year of the War,” from August 1885. She describes how she came to fear the slaves on her plantation after John Brown’s raid at Harpers Ferry, writing that, “Peace, in short, had flown from the borders of Virginia.”⁴² Harrison fills her memoir with recollections of family events and emphasizes her role as a young, unmarried white southern woman. Though she discusses deaths and grief, and hardships resulting from the war, she also describes the early years as “the gala days of war” where she visited soldiers and brought tea to their tents during her visits.⁴³ Juxtaposed between lavish descriptions of flowers and greenery, Harrison discusses her work visiting soldiers, sewing battle-flags, and fulfilling her duty as a young Confederate woman. Harrison mainly chronicles her experiences moving from war-torn homes and cities and receiving news of defeats and the deaths of young soldiers. Her memoir is less focused on military experiences and the political and military history of the Civil War than her personal life as an elite white woman, which was what many magazines, particularly *Century*, believed held mass appeal for readers, particularly northern and southern women.

⁴⁰ Gardner, 84-85.

⁴¹ Gardner, 43.

⁴² Constance Cary Harrison, “A Virginia Girl in the First Year of the War,” *The Century; a popular quarterly*, August 1885, 606, <http://ebooks.library.cornell.edu/cgi/t/text/pageviewer-idx?c=cent;cc=cent;rgn=full%20text;idno=cent0030-4;didno=cent0030-4;view=image;seq=0616;node=cent0030-4%3A20>.

⁴³ Harrison, “A Virginia Girl in the First Year of the War,” 608.

Harrison would continue to publish memoirs into the twentieth century, and her fiction novels would serve the Lost Cause just as much as her personal recollections.

One of the most elite white women of the Confederacy, Varina Davis, also became a memoirist, though of a different sort than Constance Cary Harrison. Davis's husband, former Confederate president Jefferson Davis, had published his own memoir of the war, *The Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government*, published in 1881, which was largely ignored or received scathing reactions, particularly in the North. One notable negative review was by James Longstreet, a former Confederate general who had since joined the Republican Party and repudiated the Confederacy.⁴⁴ The criticism of Jefferson Davis's wartime leadership and the lukewarm reaction towards his memoirs had abated by his death in 1889, but prominent political and military enemies continued to castigate him. This debate undoubtedly contributed to Varina Davis's decision to publish her own biography of her husband in 1890, titled *Jefferson Davis, Ex-President of the Confederate States of America; A Memoir by His Wife*. In the first chapter, Varina Davis explains her reasons for honoring her husband through a biography: "In fulfillment of this sacred task [writing the biography] I shall endeavor to be guided by the spirit that inspired him during his whole life—a spirit of unswerving devotion to truth and duty."⁴⁵ She also invokes the Lost Cause by name, further stating that, "If I fail, it will be because my love for the Southern people, and their lost cause and leader, may unconsciously influence my judgment of the men and beliefs that were arrayed in deadly conflict during the war between the States."⁴⁶ Varina Davis's comparison of Jefferson Davis to Moses further underscored her attempt to paint him as

⁴⁴ Carol Berkin, *Civil War Wives: The Lives and Times of Angelina Grimke Weld, Varina Howell Davis, and Julia Dent Grant* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009), 209.

⁴⁵ Varina Davis, *Jefferson Davis: Ex-President of the Confederate States of America: A Memoir by His Wife* (New York: Belford Co., 1890), 2.

⁴⁶ Davis, 2.

a heroic, even Biblical, figure, as Gardner explains, “It posited him as the leader of a weary, downtrodden people...and like Moses, who died on Mount Nebo before reaching the promised land with the Israelites, Jefferson Davis died before white southerners could redeem their downfall at Appomattox.”⁴⁷ Varina Davis’s memoir was not the commercial success she desired, indeed she unsuccessfully sued her publishers’ under-promotion of her work. She nonetheless regarded her biography as a success in rehabilitating her husband’s political and military image.⁴⁸ More importantly, Varina Davis’s biography led to more wives of former Confederate men to publish memoirs of their husbands, hoping to place them into the growing pantheon of Lost Cause heroes.

Among the women who followed Varina Davis into the literary marketplace were Mary Anna Jackson, La Salle Corbett Pickett (known as Sallie Pickett), and Helen Dortch Longstreet. All four women faced what Gardner describes as “the curious position of lionizing losers,” or of naming one single man as the source of righteousness or near-victory within the Confederacy.⁴⁹ Mary Anna Jackson published a memoir of her husband, Thomas ‘Stonewall’ Jackson, in the 1880s, largely plagiarized from an earlier essay on Stonewall Jackson by Margaret Junkin Preston, his sister-in-law and confidante. Sallie Pickett, who also published Civil War fiction, published *The Heart of a Soldier: As Revealed in the Intimate Letters of General George E. Pickett, C.S.A.* (1913), a collection of letters between her husband George Pickett and herself during the war. Much of the book was fictionalized and sentimentalized, often drawn from prior accounts of battles such as the Battle of Gettysburg.⁵⁰ In 1904, Helen Dortch Longstreet, the widow of James Longstreet, published her own biography of him, titled *Lee and Longstreet at*

⁴⁷ Gardner, 100.

⁴⁸ Berkin, 211.

⁴⁹ Gardner, 100.

⁵⁰ Gardner, 184.

High Tide. Helen Longstreet's biography was controversial because of her relationship to the deceased general—she had married him in 1897, and was much younger than him, without the personal ties to the Confederacy of women like Varina Davis. Longstreet's reputation as a traitor to the Confederacy because of his membership in the Republican Party and charges of disloyalty to Robert E. Lee during the war also contributed to the controversy surrounding her biography.⁵¹ All of these women except Mary Anna Jackson had, aside from the task of “lionizing losers,” to handle how to glorify their husbands as heroes and Lost Cause icons while also contending with contemporary criticism of them. Jackson, due to her husband's death during the war and the unimpeachable regard many white southerners held him in, still wanted to preserve and shape his legacy and enshrine him even deeper into Lost Cause mythology.

Ideas of femininity and gender also influenced their decisions about what to write as much as how they wrote these works. As the wives and widows of Confederate generals, these women regarded it as their duty to defend their husbands and saw themselves as best equipped to memorialize these men after death. However, the accusations of plagiarism and the admitted reliance on previous biographies, memoirs, and war correspondences by women like Varina Davis and Mary Anna Jackson demonstrates how women entering the public sphere through writing could be fraught if that writing concerned “unfeminine” topics such as battles, political discourses, and military strategies.⁵² Gender, rather than literary amateurism or plagiarism, could determine the success and acclaim a memoir received. While these memoirs were not sufficient commercial successes, they demonstrate how women could actively shape and influence the Lost Cause through their writings, and how women writing nonfiction memoirs of political or military

⁵¹ Gardner, 134.

⁵² Gardner, 101.

matters were subject to greater scrutiny than women who wrote fanciful fictional novels or sentimentalized personal memoirs.

The Lost Cause and the United Daughters of the Confederacy

White southern women in political activism and political organizations had a limited history prior to the Civil War. Greater industrial development in the North had already brought many women into a workforce, and small but vibrant reform movement and growing feminist movement had also provided opportunities for northern women to become politically active. During the war, however, voluntary organizations, relief associations, and opportunities for women as nurses grew in number, with many white women, particularly elite women or women in cities, eagerly joining to support the Confederate war effort.⁵³ After the war, many women continued their activities, organizing ladies' memorial associations (LMAs) to bury and memorialize the Confederate dead. The LMAs would later diminish in importance as more explicitly political organizations such as the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) began to dominate women's political activities in the 1890s. For many white women, belonging to these organizations served as marker of elite status. As historian Caroline E. Janney explains, "In the antebellum South, a 'lady' had been defined as a white woman of the slaveholding class...but slavery as a marker of elite status had vanished with the surrender, and former white slaveholders were forced to find alternative markers of class status," such as joining a memorial association or the UDC.⁵⁴ Regardless of whether women joined to retain elite status or to support the Lost Cause, or both, the UDC became one of the most prominent women's organizations of the early twentieth century, indoctrinating thousands of white southern children into the Lost Cause by

⁵³ Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 23-25.

⁵⁴ Caroline E. Janney, *Burying the Dead but Not the Past: Ladies' Memorial Associations and the Lost Cause* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 55.

promoting favorable histories of the Confederacy, suppressing the unfavorable, and campaigning for a return to prewar racial and gender hierarchies.

Mildred Lewis Rutherford was one of the most successful and well-known leaders within the UDC, and became famous as its Historian-General. Rutherford was born in 1851 to a University of Georgia professor of mathematics and member of the slaveholding elite.⁵⁵ After the war, Rutherford became one of many former slaveholding southern whites who perpetuated the Lost Cause. Rutherford joined the UDC and served as its Historian-General from 1911 to 1916, producing speeches, pamphlets, and novels into the 1920s in pursuit of her stated goal to cleanse the nation of the “historical sin” of blaming the South for secession and the Civil War.⁵⁶ Often appearing in antebellum dresses as a stereotypical “southern belle,” Rutherford became one of the most articulate and forceful women to promote the Lost Cause from within the UDC. Rutherford’s own credentials as an educator were not rigorous, and she was not a trained historian; however her own reach with white southerners, especially women, outstripped professional historians who articulated more complex understandings of the Civil War. One of her most famous addresses (later printed as a pamphlet) was titled “Wrongs of History Righted,” delivered in Savannah, Georgia, in 1914. After praising the South for producing major historical leaders such Thomas Jefferson and then-president of the United States Woodrow Wilson, Rutherford chronicles the history of the United States through her interpretation, by painting the North and South as inherently incompatible. She dismisses slavery as a pretext for war by saying, “Was the war fought to hold our slaves? Ah! how often have we of the South had this cast into our teeth and often by some of our own southern people. Yes, it is full time this wrong

⁵⁵ Fred Arthur Bailey, "Mildred Lewis Rutherford and the Patrician Cult of the Old South," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 78, no. 3 (Fall 1994): 510.

⁵⁶ Blight, 279.

should be righted.”⁵⁷ Wilson’s presidency was not just a triumph for the South but for the Lost Cause, as Rutherford argues: his politics aligned with the white supremacist southern Democrats in power throughout the South, and his first wife Ellen Wilson was revered by white southern women as a model of southern womanhood and femininity, much like the women of the UDC presented themselves. Rutherford offers a more extended and explicit defense of slavery than previous writers such as Constance Cary Harrison later in this 1914 speech. Like other white female southern writers, Rutherford insists, “I am not here to defend slavery,” yet she does as she comments that slavery “under the old regime was no crime” and “no peasantry was ever better cared for, more contented or happier.”⁵⁸ When speaking of slavery itself, she says, “Was the negro happy under the institution of slavery? They were the happiest set of people on the face of the globe,” and later saying, “By the way, we never called them slaves, they were our people, our negroes, part of our very homes.”⁵⁹ Rutherford contrasts with the ill health and behavior of contemporary African Americans, again suggesting that racial equality is impossible and white supremacy preferable. Aside from questions of race, Rutherford defends Jefferson Davis and argues that charges against Confederate prisons such as Andersonville were unfair. Throughout, Rutherford maintains that history as she understands it is the truth, and it should be the goal of the UDC to spread this truth to as many, North and South, as possible. Under Rutherford’s guidance, the UDC would launch a campaign to ‘right’ these wrongs of history and control textbooks and history books of the Civil War.

The UDC, from its inception, regarded textbooks and history education as crucial to transmitting the Lost Cause to younger generations. In their 1895 constitution, under Article II,

⁵⁷ Mildred Lewis Rutherford, *Wrongs of History Righted* (Athens, Ga., 1914), 13.

⁵⁸ Rutherford, 17.

⁵⁹ Rutherford, 16.

the UDC declared that, “The objects of this Association are educational, memorial, literary, social, and benevolent; to collect and preserve the material for a truthful history of [the Civil War].”⁶⁰ Just as the white women who wrote war memoirs believed their memories of the Confederacy to be indispensable for future generations, the UDC believed that control of history textbooks and promotion of approved, pro-southern nonfiction historical works would cement the Lost Cause in historical memory. The UDC waged their own aggressive war against state history textbooks, pushing for the removal of textbooks deemed unflattering to the South and the implementation of approved textbooks that took a pro-Confederate stance.⁶¹ Textbooks that criticized the South for holding slaves or for instigating the war, or criticized its political or military leaders rather than lionizing them, were deemed inappropriate and degrading to Confederate memory. In their place, UDC members approved of, and sometimes themselves wrote, textbooks that inscribed Lost Cause traditions into history education, such as praising southern slaveholders for their benevolence and kindness to “wretched Negroes,” or otherwise painting both free and enslaved African Americans as dangerous to whites; other textbooks omitted slavery altogether, placing the cause of the war squarely on issues over states’ rights and the antipathy of northerners to southerners.⁶² Even states that had not been part of the Confederacy during the Civil War had UDC chapters that campaigned for pro-southern textbooks. For example, a UDC chapter in Missouri demanded the removal of one widely-used textbook from classrooms, and rejected the author’s agreements to remove any “offending” passages.⁶³ While mainly confined to southern states, this example from Missouri, and the

⁶⁰ United Daughters of the Confederacy, *Constitution of the United Daughters of the Confederacy* (Atlanta, Ga.: s.n., 1895), 2.

⁶¹ Fred Arthur Bailey, 1991, “The Textbooks of the “Lost Cause”: Censorship and the Creation of Southern State Histories,” *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 75 (3), Georgia Historical Society: 515-516.

⁶² Bailey, “The Textbooks of the “Lost Cause,” 522.

⁶³ Bailey, “The Textbooks of the “Lost Cause,” 516-517.

presence of UDC chapters across the country, demonstrate how wide-reaching the organization's influence had become by the early twentieth century.

In addition to the authorship and censorship of textbooks, the UDC encouraged pro-Confederate historical research in other ways as well. As historian Karen L. Cox explains, "The UDC encouraged the study of history by establishing essay contests for its membership...they wrote history for local newspapers, published articles in the *Confederate Veteran* and other magazines, and even wrote historical novels or textbooks for use in southern schools."⁶⁴ One such member and nonfiction author was Ann E. Snyder. Snyder was a founding member of the UDC, and her 1890 work *The Civil War from a Southern Standpoint* gained universal acceptance among Confederate groups as well as the approval of the UDC.⁶⁵ Snyder's book tells a comprehensive, pro-Confederate version of the Civil War. Snyder claims that jealousy by northerners over the prosperity of the rural, slaveholding South fueled political issues between the regions, rather than slavery; she also maintains that states' rights and the encroachment of northern politicians on the rights of white southerners were the real causes of conflict, and "the Southern statesman, as representative of the people, began to see that they must have recourse to the last means open to the oppressed—revolution."⁶⁶ Snyder also glorifies Confederate military leaders and ignores their blunders; she excuses war crimes, such as the massacre at Fort Pillow, writing that "the Confederates found opposed to them...a large number of negroes—their former slaves, whom they had reared and cared for, and who now turned to bite the hand that fed them—then one can appreciate the determination and thorough exasperation with which they

⁶⁴ Karen L. Cox, *Dixie's Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2003), 95-96.

⁶⁵ Robins, "Lost Cause Motherhood."

⁶⁶ Ann E. Snyder, *The Civil War from a Southern Standpoint* (Publishing House of the M.E. Church, 1890), eBook Edition, 24.

fought.”⁶⁷ The defense of the South’s racial and gender hierarchy remained imperative to Snyder, as it had to previous white female writers. The rewriting of Confederate history and the textbook censorship crusade that the UDC considered crucial to their preservation of southern culture demonstrates the continued desire to find meaning in a brutal war and defeat, in the end of a slaveholding racial and gender hierarchy, and in the decades of Reconstruction and political and economic change that moved the New South even further from its antebellum roots.

⁶⁷ Snyder, 196.

Chapter 3: African-American Women Writers and the Lost Cause

Though constructed by white men and women, black men and women had been included in the Lost Cause since the end of the Civil War. Whether as passive participants portrayed in novels and histories as loyal mammies, or as writers, educators, and activists who actively fought the Lost Cause, white supremacy, and Jim Crow, black women, in particular found themselves at the center of Lost Cause rhetoric. During the 1880s and 1890s, black women became increasingly visible as educators and writers, advocating for racial uplift. Where previously black women as authors had been focused on slave narratives, often published anonymously, women such as the author Octavia V. Rogers Albert and educator Anna Julia Cooper produced works of fiction and nonfiction. Many of these writers struck back at white writers who produced demeaning racist stereotypes in their works or supported the Lost Cause and white supremacy. Despite being closed out of feminist groups by white women and often ignored by black male activists, women, such as Cooper and the writer, speaker, and anti-lynching activist Ida B. Wells, created their own literary and political spaces.⁶⁸ Black women who confronted racism and sexism in measures that were not shared by either white female allies or black male allies sought to establish their own humanity through their own words and deeds.

Black woman as characters were hardly absent from southern literature of the late nineteenth century. The figure of the elderly, caring mammy, in contrast to depictions of black women as lascivious and tempting, was one of the most significant of all stereotypes in southern literature. After the Civil War, such paternalistic and demeaning characters became crucial in plantation literature, and crucial to the Lost Cause. As the numbers of published slave narratives

⁶⁸ For further discussion of the divide between white and black southern feminists during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996.)

dwindled during the 1870s and 1880s, the popularity of Lost Cause-infused novels replaced figures of people like Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs with crude archetypes.⁶⁹ White southern male writers such as Thomas Nelson Page became literary successes peddling quaint plantation literature to post-Reconstruction audiences. Page's stories exemplified in popular imagination what the prewar South was: stately plantations run by kindly, white patriarchs and their beautiful, gracious wives, served by a staff of loyal but ignorant black slaves. Historian David Blight describes Page's popularity as an antidote to the confusions and upheavals of the 1870s and 1880s: "In the Gilded Age of teeming cities, industrialization, and political skullduggery, Americans needed another world to live in; they yearned for a more pleasing past in which to find slavery, the war, and Reconstruction," where both northern and southern readers could escape to "the rarefied air of gracious, orderly, old plantations" of "gallant cavaliers and their trusted servants."⁷⁰ White women were not missing from the creation of these stereotypes either. For example, in *Flower de Hundred*, Constance Cary Harrison describes "Mammy Judy" or "Mammy Judith" as the slave caretaker of the heirs of the plantation, Dick and Miles. She is described as "a stately old 'mammy' in head-handkerchief and apron" with a "strong, intelligent face," whose is treated as a valued family member rather than a slave.⁷¹ "Mammy Judy" also speaks in a stereotypical slave dialect and fulfills the role of a faithful and devoted slave, as seen later in the novel when she is speaking with Miles: "'Wod de matter wid you, Miles, honey?'" said Mammy Judy, who was accustomed to wait upon his moods, as a dog waits at his master's side and follows his movements with beseeching eyes."⁷² The mammies and faithful slaves that

⁶⁹ Micki McElya, *Clinging to Mammy: The Faithful Slave in Twentieth-Century America* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2007), 12-13.

⁷⁰ Blight, 222.

⁷¹ Harrison, *Flower de Hundred*, 71.

⁷² Harrison, *Flower de Hundred*, 102-103.

African Americans were reduced to in southern literature thus served to reinforce their inferiority and white supremacy during the post-Reconstruction era.

Nonetheless the late nineteenth century was a period of growth for African American literature, particularly among black women. Going back to the poet Phillis Wheatley in the 1770s, a small number of black women had become published authors. In the 1830s, Maria Stewart became one of the first women, of any race, to publicly address audiences on political topics; additionally, she published essays combining antebellum political issues with Christianity, such as in her “Religion and the Pure Principles of Morality,” presented to white abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison for publication.⁷³ Black women wrote both autobiographical slave narratives, such as Harriet Jacobs’s *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, as well as works of fiction (albeit often autobiographical in nature as well), such as *Our Nig: Sketches from the Life of a Free Black* by Harriet E. Wilson. After the Civil War, slave narrative publication declined as the end of slavery lessened the political need for former slaves to publish their memoirs, though women such as Elizabeth Keckley still published their own memoirs during the postwar period. However, education increased amongst newly-freed people, as the Freedmen’s Bureau set up more than four thousand schools across the South.⁷⁴ Black women continued to be marginalized in literary spaces, however, despite increased education, leading educator and writer Anna J. Cooper to write in 1892 of “the open-eyed but hitherto voiceless Black Woman of America.”⁷⁵ Cooper, along with women such as Octavia V. Rogers Albert and Ida. B Wells, begat a new

⁷³ Frances Smith Foster, *Written by Herself: Literary Production by African American Women, 1746-1892* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 3-4.

⁷⁴ Paula Giddings, *When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America* (New York: W. Morrow, 1984), 23.

⁷⁵ Anna Julia Cooper, *A Voice from the South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), II.

flowering of African American's woman literature, which encompassed the political, the historical, and the educational.

Much like Maria Stewart in the 1830s, Octavia V. Rogers Albert combined a deep spirituality and Christian belief with politics and calls for racial quality and uplift in her own writings. Born a slave in Georgia in 1853, Albert later attended Atlanta University, attaining a college education and a place in the educated black middle class that was at the forefront of racial and gender politics of the late nineteenth century. A devout Methodist, Albert's husband was a reverend. *The House of Bondage; or, Charlotte Brooks and Other Slaves* had been published serially in the *South-western Christian Advocate*, a Methodist paper with an audience of both black and white readers based in New Orleans.⁷⁶ The reach of the paper was much wider, however, including simultaneous publications in Cincinnati and New York, and such a diverse audience may be the reason for the preface and introduction added to the final publication of *The House of Bondage*. By this time, Albert had died, shortly before her novel was compiled for book form and only in her thirties, and like many black female writers before her, the authenticity of her narrative voice, of her education and her status as a former enslaved woman, needed to be established for readers.⁷⁷ The published version of *The House of Bondage* therefore contains a preface, written by Albert's husband and daughter, as well as an introduction written by Willard F. Mallalieu, a white Methodist bishop. The preface explains the work and its popularity that allowed it to be published after its serialization: "It was received with such enthusiasm and appreciation that no sooner was the story concluded poured in upon the

⁷⁶ Foster, *Written by Herself*, 165.

⁷⁷ Harriet Jacobs is another example of a black woman required to authenticate her writings, in her case through the words of white abolitionists such as Lydia Maria Child, see Foster, *Written by Herself*, 99-109.

editor...urging him to put it in book form.”⁷⁸ While Albert, as a writer, blurred the lines between fiction and nonfiction in the book itself, the preface assures the reader that, “The conversations herein given are not imaginary, but actual, and given as they actually occurred,” written by a “precious and devoted mother and wife.”⁷⁹ Similarly the truth and authority of the writer is attested to in the introduction by Mallalieu, who writes, “In her young girlhood the author had known the accursed system [slavery], and she knew the joy of deliverance.”⁸⁰ With Albert’s credentials established and the success of her work attested to by family and allies, *The House of Bondage* was able to question and undermine the hegemony of the Lost Cause on late nineteenth century literature and histories of slavery.

While Albert the writer had been born into slavery, as a narrator she remains aloof from her own experiences, documenting the words of older men and women without adding her own voice. *The House of Bondage* is a series of sketches of interviews with a number of former slaves, both men and women, all of whom had lived all or some of their lives in Louisiana. Louisiana was rarely represented in contemporary African American literature, and Albert uses the setting to draw contrasts between the Catholicism of the slaveholders (which is presented as immoral and unable to stop slavery’s evils) and Methodism, the religion of slaves and of genuine Christian piety.⁸¹ The setting also echoes the work of white author Grace King, as both women were likely influenced by local color fiction (King was known for her local color Creole stories), though *Monsieur Motte*’s depiction of an idyllic post-slavery world with a stable, white supremacist racial hierarchy was the antithesis of Albert’s own writing. While King’s influence

⁷⁸ A.E.P. Albert and Laura T.F. Albert, preface to *The House of Bondage, or, Charlotte Brooks and Other Slaves*, by Octavia V. Rogers Albert (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.)

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Willard F. Mallalieu, introduction to *The House of Bondage, or, Charlotte Brooks and Other Slaves*, by Octavia V. Rogers Albert (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.)

⁸¹ Foster, *Written by Herself*, 161.

on Albert's writing, if any, is unclear, the structure and content of *The House of Bondage* is a likely response to the extreme popularity of influential Lost Cause works, such as those by the white male writer Thomas Nelson Page. His 1887 collection of short stories titled *In Ole Virginia; or, Marse Chan and Other Stories* shares similarities with Albert's book, and as Frances Smith Foster explains, "Both Albert and Page wrote to correct misrepresentations and to preserve the truth about the antebellum South but they totally disagreed about what that truth was."⁸² Page's romantic Golden Age of "Ole Virginia" became Albert's "House of Bondage," a period of suffering and violence only redeemed by war.

Albert, as an educated black woman, saw her book as an opportunity to tell the story of slavery that was obscured by the Lost Cause. "The half was never told concerning this race that was in bondage nearly two hundred and fifty years," she writes before introducing the subject of her first interview, Aunt Charlotte.⁸³ Charlotte's story begins the themes that would be repeated throughout the novel: religion as a force of strength for slaves as well its failings among slaveholders, the brutal relationships between slaveholders and slaves, miscegenation and sexual abuse of female slaves, and the desire for freedom. Charlotte herself had children by "old marster's son," though none of her children are alive at the time of the interview.⁸⁴ Forbidden to practice her religion by Catholic slaveholders, she befriends another woman named Aunt Jane, and they practice Methodism together. Unlike the familial relationships described by white writers, Charlotte and the other people interviewed tell only of the cruel treatment by slaveholders and overseers, with comparatively "kind" masters or mistresses still tainted by the evil of slavery. Slavery's evil can bring quick retribution, to slaveholders as much to, as Albert

⁸² Foster, *Written by Herself*, 173.

⁸³ Octavia V. Rogers Albert, *The House of Bondage, or, Charlotte Brooks and Other Slaves* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 2.

⁸⁴ Albert, 14.

implies, to America itself: Charlotte's recounting of a man named George, who is beat and loses an eye for talking about freedom, is followed by the slaveholder injuring his leg and becoming unable to walk without difficulty. Charlotte tells the narrator, "But I thought no good would ever come of him when he put out George's eye," to which the narrator replies, "Yes...we read in the Bible that 'fools, because of their transgression, and because of their inequities, are afflicted.'"⁸⁵ Individual slaveholders, as much as the country that allowed slavery to flourish, are afflicted by their sins, according to Albert.

Albert's narrator also asks her interviewees of the truth of their stories, perhaps to contrast their own memories with the popular and romanticized depictions of slavery. Explaining the disbelief people who never experienced slavery must feel about reading her novel, she tells Charlotte, "For it seems to me that the terrible treatment the slaves received from the hands of their masters was more than any human being could bear," to which Charlotte replies, "But, my child, every word is true. I can't tell you half what my eyes have seen since I have been in Louisiana."⁸⁶ Another man, Stephen Jordon, later replies to her inquiries about his experiences, "I tell you, my dear child, nobody but God knows the trouble we poor black folks had to undergo in slave-time."⁸⁷ Yet another man, Colonel Douglass Wilson, a well-known soldier, tells Albert about the experiences of black soldiers during the Civil War and how this undermined ideas of black inferiority, saying, "They used to say, 'The negro doesn't care to be set free, and but for Northern meddlers you would never hear any complaints from him.' Then they said, 'If you free him he will die out;' but I tell you he is the liveliest corpse this nation has ever handled."⁸⁸ Throughout, Albert attacks the core ideas behind the Lost Cause, of kind treatment of slaves, of

⁸⁵ Albert, 41.

⁸⁶ Albert, 42.

⁸⁷ Albert, 102.

⁸⁸ Albert, 133.

the unwillingness of slaves to accept freedom, and above all of black inferiority. Similarly to women such as Anna J. Cooper, she also supports the role of education, as well as religion, in racial uplift, telling Charlotte, “Yes; I believe religion and education will lift them upon a level with any other of the civilized races on earth.”⁸⁹ Albert allows the testimony within her book determine *who* could be “civilized” and what it meant to be “civilized.” Ultimately, it was not those who had been burdened by centuries of enslavement who could not claim to be uncivilized, regardless of literacy or class or color; it was those who had allowed slavery to exist and who continued to defend it in their own writings which women like Albert, Cooper, and Ida B. Wells would regard as truly uncivilized.

During the 1880s and 1890s, as more black women entered schools and graduated from universities, and as southern politics became more and more white-dominated, more writers began to address overtly political issues in their work. Race men, or race women, were what many writers considered themselves, as exemplars of the African American community who encouraged the progress and uplift of their race. Ida B. Wells was raised by parents who were noted for being stalwart race men and women, and Wells herself would later be deemed a race woman. Even earlier than Wells, however, the writer, educator, and early feminist Anna J. Cooper became one of the most well-known and respected race women in the United States. Cooper had been born in 1859 to a slave mother and a master father, though she wrote little on her experiences under slavery. As a child she received a scholarship to attend a local school and later attended Oberlin College, which had admitted both female and African American students since the 1830s. Cooper attended Oberlin with other notable black women such as activist and suffragist Mary Church Terrell, and chose to pursue the rigorous “gentlemen’s classical course”

⁸⁹ Albert, 54.

rather than the traditional two-year “Ladies’ Course” prescribed for female students, reflecting her early desire for equal education across not only racial but also gender lines.⁹⁰ After graduation, Cooper worked at the historically black Wilberforce University and then at the M Street Preparatory High School (later Washington Colored High School), one of the most notable of all-black schools during the period, as a principal. These positions allowed her to become one of the most notable activists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Cooper’s major and only full-length work was her collection of essays, fully titled *A Voice from the South by a Black Woman of the South* and published in 1892. While the essays vary in subject, the overarching themes remain the same: racial equality and uplift, education for black women, and black feminist thought. Written during the 1890s and the so-called “Women’s Era” of feminist and racial progress, of which women like Cooper and Wells were key figures, it reflects the growing concerns of black women over the masculine direction of African American activism and education as well as the racial issues afflicting the feminist movement.⁹¹ While Cooper, primarily a scholar rather than a political radical, did not directly address the movements supporting white supremacy and the Lost Cause then gaining in strength and power throughout the South (aside from critiques of the mainstream feminist movement), *A Voice from the South* nonetheless provides a potent, and nonfiction, resistance to the work of white women like Grace King or Mildred Lewis Rutherford.

Cooper, in her fourth chapter, “The Status of Woman in America,” directly grapples feminism of the 1890s, both black and white. After referring to the Women’s Christian

⁹⁰ Karen A. Johnson, *Uplifting the Women and the Race: The Educational Philosophies and Social Activism of Anna Julia Cooper and Nannie Helen Burroughs* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 45.

⁹¹ Mary Helen Washington, introduction to *A Voice from the South*, by Anna Julia Cooper (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), xlviii-l.

Temperance Union (WCTU) as the “grande[st] and sure[st] prophecy of the new era and of woman’s place in it” and as “the living embodiment woman’s activities and woman’s ideas,” she turns to the place of black women in a white-dominated feminist sphere.⁹² The black woman, Cooper writes, “is confronted by both a woman question and a race problem, and is as yet an unknown or unacknowledged factor in both.”⁹³ Disenfranchised through not only gender but race as well, black women did not share the activism of the white women of the WCTU and other women’s organizations. Even more than the WCTU, black women like Cooper also rejected the political, social, and economic engagement gained by white women who participated in literary culture and the UDC through the Lost Cause. Marginalized by black male activists and white feminists, women like Cooper, Albert, and Wells used their writings not to curry favor from men or white women but to testify to the experiences of African Americans, especially black women, and to provide a feminist discourse that rejected white supremacy and placed black women’s issues as fundamentally important to all activism. Cooper criticizes politics, particularly the dwindling strength of the Republican Party in the South, as “hardly a school for great minds” and as prizing “highly cultivated selfishness rather than consecrated benevolence.”⁹⁴ The black woman though, a thoughtful observer otherwise denied the vote and any political voice, can bring to the political scene what Cooper feels is sorely lacking: “eternal truth and righteousness.”⁹⁵ As white women ignore black women within their own organizations and support their men in placing a racist Democrat Party into political offices, black women have the unique power to shape future American politics and keep black men politically-involved in their place. Cooper regards the empowerment of black women and their educations as crucial to

⁹² Cooper, 134.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Cooper, 137.

⁹⁵ Cooper, 138.

undermining the white supremacist southern—and even national—politics which allow the Lost Cause, and Jim Crow, to flourish.

Ida B. Wells focused her scope beyond education and into political activism, unique for not only a black southern women but for many white women as well. Though allied with Anna J. Cooper politically—they were both members of the National Association of Colored Women (NACW)—Wells became better-known for her speeches, public appearances, and most importantly her journalistic work. Born in Mississippi in 1862, her parents James and Elizabeth were former slaves, and Wells was born into slavery.⁹⁶ Her father was a race man, a known Republican who campaigned for local black candidates, while her mother, though a supporter of Republican politics as well, focused on the religious upbringing and education of her children. Wells was educated as a child, and when her parents both died when she was a teenager, she became the family breadwinner, working first as a teacher and then, eventually, as a journalist. Her turn to writing was spurred by increasing segregation in the South: while on a train to Memphis in 1884, where she then lived, Wells was forced off the “Ladies’ Couch” after resisting the conductor’s attempts to have her move to the smoking car and away from white travelers.⁹⁷ Following this event, she turned to journalism, penning columns for black newspapers such as *Living Way* under the name “Iola.” Eventually gaining part-ownership of the newspaper *Free Speech*, Wells became one of the few African American women able to support herself through journalism. During the late nineteenth century, teaching was the only employment available to educated black women, aside from domestic work.⁹⁸ Wells, as a young unmarried black woman

⁹⁶ James West Davidson, *They Say: Ida B. Wells and the Reconstruction of Race* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 12.

⁹⁷ Giddings, 22.

⁹⁸ Patricia A. Schechter, *Ida B. Wells-Barnett and American Reform, 1880-1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 44.

who owned her own paper, struck out from even the achievements of women such as Anna J. Cooper, in addition to many white women of the period as well.

In 1892, Wells published the first of her pamphlets on lynching, titled *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases*. It had been inspired by the lynching of three black business owners in Memphis, including Thomas Moss, a friend of Wells, who had urged a boycott of streetcars and bought a pistol to protect herself in the aftermath.⁹⁹ She also perceived the real reason for the lynching of the three men, as she wrote in *Southern Horrors*: “‘The Negroes are getting too independent,’ they [white southerners] say, ‘we must teach them a lesson.’ What lesson? The lesson of subordination.”¹⁰⁰ Wells realized that lynching, despite being attributed to violence committed by African Americans, was a tool of social and racial control more than anything. This formed the thesis of her pamphlet, as she investigated numbers of lynchings and the crimes the victims had been charged. 1892 was also a pivotal year: lynching took the lives of 241 people that year, over half of which were black, and Frederick Douglass had issued his own condemnation of lynching.¹⁰¹ But Wells’ investigations lead her to not only denounce lynching and, more broadly white supremacy, it also lead her to dismantle the rationales given for lynching by white southerners. “One by one the Southern States have legally (?) disenfranchised the Afro-American, and since the repeal of the Civil Rights Bill nearly every Southern State has passed separate car laws with a penalty against their infringement,” Wells writes.¹⁰² After counting a total of 728 African Americans lynched between 1884 and 1892, with a further estimated 150 having been killed by the time Wells was writing, she notes, “The South is

⁹⁹ Schechter, 77.

¹⁰⁰ Ida B. Wells-Barnett, *Southern Horrors and Other Writings: The Anti-Lynching Campaign of Ida B. Wells, 1892-1900*, ed. Jacqueline Jones Royster (Boston: Bedford Books, 1997), 65.

¹⁰¹ Schechter, 82.

¹⁰² Wells-Barnett, 60.

shielding itself behind the plausible screen of defending the honor of its women. This, too, in the face of the fact that only *one-third* of the 728 victims...have been *charged* with rape, to say nothing of those...innocent of the charge.”¹⁰³ Like Octavia V. Rogers Albert, who chronicled the sexual abuse of female slaves despite white silence, Wells openly discussed miscegenation and consensual relationships across the color line as the real danger to a segregated society. This was the most explosive of her revelations: when her editorial was printed in Memphis, her newspaper office was looted and burned, and she was threatened with lynching if she returned (Wells was traveling between Philadelphia and New York at the time, and she was unable to return to the South after this event.)¹⁰⁴ The Lost Cause perpetuated by white writers, including many women, had written of familial relations between slaveholder and slave that stopped short of sexual interaction, and it was presumed this aversion continued past emancipation. “The miscegenation laws of the South only operate against the legitimate union of the races; they leave the white man free to seduce all the colored girls he can, but it is death to the colored man who yields to the force and advances of a similar attraction in white women,” Wells writes, before chronicling a list of cases of white women openly living with black men.¹⁰⁵ Ultimately Wells’ attack on lynching was timely, as well as unprecedented in writings by black women, but it was also its perception and handling of race relations and segregation that caused her fame and notoriety.

Wells continued her attacks on lynching and white supremacy in her 1895 pamphlet *The Red Record*. Like *Southern Horrors*, it covered lynching throughout the South, particularly with Wells’ compiled statistics since 1892. She also expanded her coverage of African American life in the South, presenting a historical record of the value of black lives in a white supremacist

¹⁰³ Wells-Barnett, 61.

¹⁰⁴ Giddings, 29.

¹⁰⁵ Wells-Barnett, 53.

society under slavery, Reconstruction, and finally in the 1880s and 1890s. By 1895 Wells was a nationally-recognized activist and journalist, yet *Red Record*, much like Albert's *The House of Bondage*, opened with a defense given by a respected man (in this case, Frederick Douglass) to assure readers of the veracity of Wells' claims. In the preface, Douglass writes, "Let me give you thanks for your faithful paper on the lynch abomination now generally practiced against colored people in the South," before applauding Wells' truthfulness and the unvarnished record she presents, "You give us what you know and testify from actual knowledge. You have dealt with the facts with cold, painstaking fidelity, and left those naked and contradicted facts to speak for themselves."¹⁰⁶ Wells, even with national recognition and a previously published pamphlet to her name, could expect resistance to her writings simply because she was a black woman; notably, no such preface protected white women and inexperienced writers such as Varina Davis or Sallie Pickett, even when their facts were incorrect and their sources obscured, unlike Wells' journalism. Wells believes that lynching and racial violence was the "inevitable result of unbridled power exercised for two and a half centuries, by the white man over the Negro."¹⁰⁷ Only the economic worth of a slave protected black lives under slavery, according to Wells; once emancipation ended slavery, the economic incentive attached to black lives disappeared, though the racially-charged violence and degradation under slavery did not. Instead, white southerners invented reasons why slavery had been positive, and why freedom for African Americans had damaged the South: the "three distinct eras of Southern barbarism" of Reconstruction, the immediate post-Reconstruction era, and Wells' own time.¹⁰⁸ Though *Southern Horrors* posited that rape of white women was the usual defense given for lynching, Wells articulates the two

¹⁰⁶ Frederick Douglass, preface to *A Red Record*, in *Southern Horrors and Other Writings: The Anti-Lynching Campaign of Ida B. Wells, 1892-1900*, 74.

¹⁰⁷ Wells-Barnett, 75.

¹⁰⁸ Wells-Barnett, 76.

defenses it replaced—race riots and insurrection in the 1860s and 1870s, voting rights in the 1870s and 1880s—which could not be sustained as Jim Crow laws and disenfranchisement kept black men from voting and holding office, and as racial violence initiated by African Americans was rare. Wells also accuses Frances Willard, leader of the WCTU, as collaborating in white supremacy, quoting her as claiming “the great dark-faced mobs” of black men, at the mercy of alcohol and prone to brutality and violence, were one of the greatest threats to (white) women and children.¹⁰⁹ Wells, perhaps even more forcefully than in *Southern Horrors*, here explicitly defines lynching as a tool of white supremacy; it can be further be argued that, during the 1890s, lynching existed, much as Lost Cause rhetoric did, to sustain a New South which was rebuilt onto the foundations of white supremacy and racial violence that had existed under slavery. Wells, by defining lynching as such, and by incriminating white women like Frances Willard in their tacit support for racial control, simultaneously reveals how not just race but gender could inform white supremacy, and how otherwise disenfranchised women might flock to it as a way for political, social, and cultural power.

By the turn of the twentieth century, the gains of emancipation and Reconstruction had receded into legal inequality and Jim Crow segregation across the former Confederacy. The Lost Cause had buoyed Confederate nationalism in the immediate aftermath of defeat, and now was able to provide justification for white supremacy and the diminishment of black political power across the South. Repeated depictions of African Americans as ignorant, faithful slaves who rejected freedom, or mammies who nurtured white children and not their own, became tools in just literary spaces but political spaces as well. Educated black women, who confronted few job options beyond teaching or domestic labor, could find through writing and activism a

¹⁰⁹ Wells-Barnett, 141.

position in a society prejudiced against them on racial and gender terms. Octavia V. Rogers Albert wrote her own responses to the romanticized, literary plantations of the Old South found in writings made by white men and women, letting formerly enslaved African Americans tell their own stories to undermine the Lost Cause narrative. Anna J. Cooper, an educator and scholar, turned to writing to attack ideas of black inferiority and to promote racial uplift and feminism through education and new opportunities for black women. Ida B. Wells, one of the few professional black women to support herself through journalism rather than teaching or domestic work, became a writer to reveal the structures that upheld white supremacy and allowed lynching to occur throughout the South. The Lost Cause's dominance in a southern and then national narrative of white domination and black oppression stifled the opportunities open to many African Americans, but women like Albert, Cooper, and Wells used their writing to complicate and upset this narrative.

Conclusion

The Civil War's end in 1865 did not end the war over its memory and history, which has continued to be fought in the decades since. A print culture surrounding the Lost Cause grew after the war, drawing a heritage of a female-dominated literary marketplace, which had allowed women such as Caroline Lee Hentz and Augusta Jane Evans to produce popular novels which defended slavery and supported the Confederacy. Later women produced war memoirs and fictional novels that contributed to the growing cult of the Lost Cause by lionizing Confederate political leaders and generals, sanitizing the wartime experiences of white women, and defending slavery and implicitly rejecting contemporary moves to enfranchise black men and end white supremacy in the South. White women also joined organizations such as the United Daughters of the Confederacy to promote the Lost Cause and the memorialization of the Confederacy. Women such as Mildred Lewis Rutherford rallied members against embracing emancipationist interpretations of the war or reconciling with the North, instead defending the South's right to secession, slavery and black inferiority, and the Confederacy itself. The UDC would control history textbooks across Southern classrooms, and sometimes beyond, by censoring pro-Union textbooks and approving pro-Confederate ones. Throughout the late nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century, white southern women worked to retain gender and racial hierarchies of the Old South while simultaneously, if tentatively, embracing roles outside the domestic sphere within public print culture. As gender and racial roles and restrictions continued to be debated during the early twentieth century, the gains of Reconstruction rolling back and being placed by decades of Jim Crow and white supremacy, the work of white women as authors and memoirists in defending the Lost Cause and remembering the Confederacy had implications far beyond the domestic world these women inhabited and claimed for themselves.

African American women, from the time of enslavement through the twentieth century, lived in a world dominated by the narrative of the Lost Cause. Particularly as Reconstruction ended and white supremacy and legal segregation were re-established in the South, the notion of a postwar society that no longer defined itself by rigid racial and gender hierarchies was remote. Black women, confined by race and gender, nevertheless found their own place in a public sphere. Through education, activism, and writing, women like Anna J. Cooper and Ida B. Wells were able to become public figures with their writings on feminism, the education of women, lynching, and racism in America. Though less a political writer than a religious one, Octavia V. Rogers Albert wrote explicitly about slavery, rejecting through her own work the Lost Cause and a romanticized Old South. All three women, despite the different focus of their writings, supported racial uplift and the end of Jim Crow and white supremacy in the South. While the Lost Cause was used to support a world defined along the same racial lines as the prewar era and the Confederacy, its journey to becoming a dominant narrative of southern, and national, history was not without its critics. Instead, it became one fiercely supported by many while attacked by others, with the real stakes not the Confederate war dead but the future of a post-slavery and postwar nation.

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