

“I have walked this earth a proud soldier and...ceased to do so.”
North Carolina Confederates Confront Defeat, 1864-1868

David C. Williard

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Approved by:

William L. Barney, History

Joseph T. Glatthaar, History

W. Fitzhugh Brundage, History

ABSTRACT

DAVID WILLIARD: "I have walked this earth a proud soldier and...ceased to do so:"
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(Under the direction of William L. Barney)

As wartime defeat thwarted their ambitions for independence, former Confederates in North Carolina attempted to reconstruct their domestic worlds along antebellum lines while constructing new modes of racial interaction in the wake of the destruction of slavery. Analyzing Confederates' reflections on defeat as a product of their age reveals that younger men met displayed stout ideological resistance, while their elders considered pragmatic solutions to reorder their world. Men younger than thirty expressed continued attachment to Confederate nationalism, strong emotions when writing about African-Americans and their fate, and a commitment to uphold fixed notions of gendered social and domestic roles in their wartime and immediate postwar writings. Men older than thirty, though holding similar convictions to their juniors, conceived of nationalism in terms of sacrifice, race as a temporary obstacle to social and economic tranquility under the guise of white supremacy, and gender as a set of mutating obligations and challenges.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: HISTORICIZING CONFEDERATE DEFEAT

Conventional treatments of United States history in monographs, museums, and classrooms revolve around constructed periodizations. Nowhere does the artificiality of such discrete fragmentation seem more evident than in the separation of the era of Reconstruction from the war that preceded it. Though exceptions have emerged increasingly in recent decades, most historical writing and teaching either concludes with the collapse of the Confederacy in April 1865 or begins with a victorious North and shattered South in May.¹ Even as he employed this classic division of the Civil War from Reconstruction, historian Kenneth Stampp clearly felt something was amiss. “In much serious history, as well as in a durable popular legend,” Stampp writes, these “two American epochs...bear an odd relationship to one another.”²

Revising this traditional break between eras allows scholars to examine previously unexplored questions. Though death, destruction, and physical dislocation profoundly altered landscapes and communities during the Civil War, the same basic populations which planted the seed of conflict in 1860 harvested its fruits in the war’s

¹ A salient example of this periodization is Kenneth Stampp, *The Era of Reconstruction, 1865-1877* (New York: Vintage Books, 1965). Important exceptions include Anne Sarah Rubin, *A Shattered Nation: The Rise and Fall of the Confederacy, 1861-1868* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006) and LeeAnn Whites, *The Civil War as a Crisis in Gender: Augusta, Georgia, 1860-1890* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995).

² Stampp, 3.

aftermath. The origins and techniques of white supremacy and black resistance during Reconstruction had strong antecedents in wartime experience. In North Carolina and in much of the rest of the South, whites adopted two major methods to maintain their political and social control after the destruction of the Confederacy. One strategy embraced violence, as white supremacists “found an outlet for their frustration by attacking those they deemed responsible for their suffering: white Republicans and blacks.”³ The other dominant approach relied on codified legal discrimination, imposing statewide restrictions on the franchise based on literacy tests and preventing landless black workers from migrating off of white-owned plantations.⁴ Examining how white Confederate veterans in North Carolina understood their defeat and its consequences from 1864-1868 partially explains the divergent outlooks that crafted these responses to Reconstruction.

The experience of fighting in the Civil War dominated white Confederates’ postwar mentalities. In a “Retrospective of the Year” written on January 1, 1866, George Washington Finley Harper, a thirty-two year old planter from Caldwell County, North Carolina, contrasted his wartime situation as a slaveholder and officer with his life as a civilian in peacetime. Harper wrote that he “had niggers and have been niggerless, have walked the earth a proud soldier fighting for the right of self-government and have ceased to do so. (What a fall was there-My Country ruined!) Have suffered privations and

³ George Rable, *But There Was No Peace: The Role of Violence in the Politics of Reconstruction* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1984), xi.

⁴ For an account of the various forms that legalized racism took in North Carolina during Reconstruction, see Roberta Sue Alexander, *North Carolina Faces the Freedmen* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1985).

hardships in the march and in the camp and have enjoyed the comforts and blessings of Home.” The retrospective ended with the ambivalent expression “and here I am!”⁵

Harper’s brief diary entry catalogued some of most serious blows that the Confederacy’s defeat inflicted on white male North Carolinians. The Civil War had cost Harper his slave labor force--and with it his social status as master--and destroyed the nation that had claimed his loyalty. Though Harper did not reference challenges to manhood and gendered identity in his “Retrospective,” both he and other Confederates struggled to cope with these as well. From 1864 to 1868, North Carolinians who fought for the Confederacy confronted their defeat in several contexts and responded in personalized ways.

April 1865 marked the political end of the Confederacy, with Jefferson Davis and his remaining cabinet fleeing Richmond and Robert E. Lee’s vaunted Army of Northern Virginia surrendering to the forces of Ulysses Grant. Historians generally agree on this much--and little else--about the collapse of Confederate ambitions for independence. A major point of dispute concerns whether the Confederacy ever really died as a source of identification for most white southerners. At one end of the spectrum, George Rable argues that ex-Confederates not only refused to publicly admit defeat during the war’s closing months but also lacked the ability to internally register the mounting evidence of their cause’s demise. “Refusing to admit even to themselves that the cause was being

⁵ Entry of January 1, 1866, George Washington Finley Harper Diary, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina.

lost,” Rable concludes, Confederates “were already laying the foundations for the cult of the so-called Lost Cause” even before the opposing sides had furled their banners.⁶

Peter Carmichael’s position in his *Last Generation* largely concurs with Rable’s. For Carmichael, however, refusal to acknowledge defeat produced a very different set of consequences. Young Confederates were “a group of young men so driven by hatred, so infused with religious zeal, and so fearful of enduring the humiliation of defeat, that they lost touch with...military reality,” but, when circumstances eventually displaced fantasy, former Confederate soldiers obsessed about the implications rather than retreating to an ideological defense of their failed national experiment.⁷ Gaines Foster finds few lingering personal effects of the Confederacy’s collapse among white southerners: “most acknowledged defeat, realized the inevitability of a new order, and resolved to make their way in it.”⁸ Ideological defenses of the Confederate past were just that—an attempt to vindicate the legacy of a lost ideal, rather than to uphold the remnants of a continuous political tradition. Eric T. Dean, assessing the psychological state of Civil War soldiers through a combination of contemporary sources and the experiences of Vietnam veterans, takes a more limited stance. Both during the war and after, Dean writes, defeat

⁶ George Rable, “Despair, Hope, and Delusion,” in Mark Grimsley and Brooks D. Simpson, eds, *The Collapse of the Confederacy* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 155.

⁷ Peter Carmichael, *The Last Generation: Young Virginians in Peace, War, and Reunion* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 207.

⁸ Gaines Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South, 1865-1913* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 5.

exacerbated wartime traumas, resulting in “fear, anxiety, restlessness, and...the desire to be alone,” as well as apathy and a loss of will in pursuing routine behaviors.⁹

Each of these interpretations explains the mentality of certain segments of North Carolina’s Confederate veterans as they encountered, interpreted, and processed their defeat, which made itself felt in several guises. In explaining particular courses of behavior, however, none offers a comprehensive interpretation of the vast range of responses that defeat generated. Several categories of analysis could potentially make sense of divergent reactions to the collapse of the Confederacy. Veterans hailed from different regions within North Carolina. They also belonged to different economic and social classes and subscribed to varying religious and cultural traditions. This study, however, adopts a generational perspective to explore how soldiers encountered the Confederacy’s failed bid for nationhood and its consequences.

Analyzing Confederates’ reflections on defeat as a product of their age reveals that younger men met defeat with stout ideological resistance, while their elders considered pragmatic solutions to the problems of reordering their world. While no generalization based on age can account for every variation in personal circumstances, men younger than thirty tended to express continued attachment to Confederate nationalism, strong emotions when writing about African-Americans and their fate, and a commitment to uphold fixed notions of gendered social and domestic roles in their wartime and immediate postwar writings. Men older than thirty, although they held similar convictions to their juniors, conceived of nationalism in terms of sacrifice, race as

⁹ Eric T. Dean, *Shook Over Hell: Post-Traumatic Stress, Vietnam, and the Civil War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 103, 108.

a temporary obstacle to social and economic tranquility under the guise of white supremacy, and gender as a set of mutating obligations and challenges.

Why does age influence the ways Confederate veterans contemplated defeat and attempted to rebuild their lives after the war? Scholars of various disciplines find explicit ties between age (as a measure of social and personal maturation) and human responses to life events.¹⁰ The period of transition from adolescence to early adulthood, and concurrently from dependence toward self-direction and self-definition, receives particular attention. Psychologist Erik Erikson defines this stage as “a necessary turning point, a crucial moment, when development must move one way or another, marshaling resources of growth, recovery, and further differentiation.”¹¹ For most of the Civil War’s soldiers, the near-absolute break from the peacetime society they knew came at precisely this transitional point.

Historians have studied age in its broad social context by employing a generational focus. Most often, generational studies focus on catastrophic events, both in terms of social consequences and the lives of individual participants. Wars certainly fit within this paradigm, and Robert Wohl uses generational models to explain, respectively, the impact of World War I on the Europeans who fought in it and the role of youth in the rise of Nazism.¹² More recently, Civil War scholars have begun to speculate about the

¹⁰ For a psychosocial approach to ties between the human life cycle and reception of experiences, see Daniel J. Levinson, *The Seasons of a Man’s Life* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1978).

¹¹ Erik Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1968), 16.

¹² Robert Wohl, *The Generation of 1914* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979); Peter Loewenberg, “The Psychohistorical Origins of the Nazi Youth Cohort,” *American Historical Review* Vol. 76, No. 5 (Dec. 1971), 1457-1502.

influence of age in their field of study. David Herbert Donald writes of a “Southern Civil War Generation,” composed of those “in early manhood or who reached maturity in the 1860’s”—which he locates in those “between seventeen and thirty in 1861.”¹³ Gary Gallagher suggests that viewing Confederate nationalism from “a generational perspective” can “reveal similarities of outlook that predisposed...men in their early twenties to early thirties...to be faithful Confederates.”¹⁴ Peter Carmichael’s exploration of young Virginians is the only Civil War monograph to focus explicitly on a generational cohort. While each of these approaches conceives of those who fought the Civil War as a single generation, vast differences in fact separated those who had gained independence and a firm sense of self before the war from those who made their first major departure from their parents’ homes clad in Confederate gray.

For Confederates of any age, the experience of defeat resonated on several levels. Failure to achieve the military victory necessary to preserve the Confederacy as a political entity undermined southerners’ national aspirations, belying both their claims of battlefield superiority and their capacity to achieve independence.¹⁵ Material sacrifices

¹³ David Herbert Donald, “A Generation of Defeat,” in Walter J. Fraser, Jr. and Winfred B. Moore, Jr., eds, *From the Old South to the New: Essays on the Transitional South* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1981), 7-8.

¹⁴ Gary W. Gallagher, *The Confederate War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 96.

¹⁵ A substantial historiography debates the relative roles of military failure and wartime disillusionment, governmental organization, and political character in contributing to the Confederacy’s collapse. For examples, see William C. Davis, *The Cause Lost: Myths and Realities of the Confederacy* (Lawrence, KA: University Press of Kansas, 1996) and Gary Gallagher, *The Confederate War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).

and labor shortages—resulting from contributions to the Confederate cause and as the byproducts of Union military campaigns through the South’s heartlands—further compromised gender roles, destroying aspirations of wealth and security for planters and yeomen alike. For poorer white southerners, especially small commercial or subsistence farmers, the loss of agricultural products threatened males’ ability to function as providers for their dependents, while a reduction in white male and enslaved labor compelled many southern white women to abandon their domestic ideal and become wartime workers and *de facto* heads of household.¹⁶

In addition to the blows that wartime inflicted on Confederate national and masculine identities, the events of the Civil War fundamentally restructured the oldest pillar of antebellum southern society. White southerners built their world on a foundation of racial slavery, which both required and reinforced ideas of white supremacy. As slaves throughout the South abandoned their masters and even took up arms against their former owners, they challenged white stereotypes that conceived of blacks as incapable of independent action, dedicated to serving benevolent white planters, and utterly lacking in the virtues required of soldiers.¹⁷ North Carolina’s Confederates therefore staked their

¹⁶ Influential studies of gender in the Confederacy and its aftermath include Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994); Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber, *Divided Houses: Gender and the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); LeeAnn Whites, *The Civil War as a Crisis in Gender: Augusta, Georgia, 1860-1890* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995); and Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber, *Battle Scars: Gender and Sexuality in the American Civil War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

¹⁷ For works that explore southern planters’ actions and attitudes toward the slave system in the Confederacy, see Leon F. Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long: The Aftermath of Slavery* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979) and James L. Roark, *Masters Without Slaves* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1995).

masculine image, gendered domestic order, and racially hierarchical social and economic systems to their aspiration for separate nationhood. As wartime defeat thwarted their ambitions for independence, former Confederates attempted to reconstruct their domestic worlds along antebellum lines while constructing new modes of racial interaction in the wake of the destruction of slavery.

CHAPTER TWO

CONFEDERATE NATIONALISM CONFRONTS DEFEAT

At the beginning of 1864, the political outcome of the Civil War remained undecided. Confederate armies had won notable victories in both the eastern and western theaters of conflict but suffered serious reverses as well, most recently at Gettysburg and Chattanooga. Though the South still opposed Union invasion with substantial field armies, Federal forces occupied broad stretches of Confederate territory. While the war's decision remained in doubt, however, the level of sacrifice necessary for the southern population to prolong the struggle was unequivocal in most Confederate minds. Three years of war had forced southerners to cast off any illusions about a quick or easy victory.

The contemplation of further death and destruction forced Confederates to place a value on their commitment to achieving independence.¹⁸ Young men such as Rufus Barrier called for southern whites to prioritize Confederate success over any personal concerns. Unwavering in his expressions of national loyalty, the twenty-eight year old Barrier understood that independence would carry a high price. "I have no doubt but we

¹⁸ For works on Confederate nationalism, see Drew Gilpin Faust, *The Creation of Confederate Nationalism: Ideology and Identity in the Civil War South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), George Rable, *The Confederate Republic: A Revolution Against Politics* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), Paul Escott, *After Secession: Jefferson Davis and the Failure of Confederate Nationalism* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978). Anne Sarah Rubin offers the most comprehensive and chronologically ambitious study of the Confederacy; see Rubin, *A Shattered Nation*.

will suffer many hardships and inconveniences but all this is preferable to submission,” he wrote his father. Even as late as the spring of 1865, Barrier exhorted his countrymen to remain steadfast in their commitment to the Confederate cause. “If there is a single spark of spartan heroism left in our bosoms we must rise above the present crisis and tell the world we will be free if it cost us the last man in the Confederacy,” he declared. “We must fight them and fight them forever if necessary.”¹⁹ Barrier’s personal commitment to Confederate independence matched his ideology, and he remained with his unit until it surrendered at Appomattox.

Other North Carolinians wondered if the enterprise justified the sacrifice necessary to sustain it. ““I feel like quitting the Army and coming home to stay, for I tell you that there is very little spirit of self sacrifice or patriotism in the Army just now,” thirty-nine year old Dr. John Hendricks Kinyoun of the 66th North Carolina wrote to his wife in January 1864. “I feel very much disposed in coming home and let the Confederacy go, a while without my services.”²⁰ While Kinyoun tempered his language by acknowledging his preference for a temporary return home rather than desertion, his language revealed a wavering commitment to the Confederate cause.

Barrier and Kinyoun approached the problem of national loyalty with divergent concerns. For Barrier, a childless bachelor whose only brother William had fallen during

¹⁹ Rufus A. Barrier to Mathias Barrier, March 4, 1865, in Beverly Troxler, ed, “*Dear Father*”: *Confederate Letters Never Before Published* (Concord, NC: Beverly Barrier Troxler and Billy Dawn Barrier Auciello Publishers, 1989), 78; Rufus A. Barrier to Mathias Barrier, January 19, 1865, in Troxler, 74.

²⁰ John Hendricks Kinyoun to Elizabeth Ann Conrad Kinyoun, January 1864, in Joseph Kinyoun Houts, ed, *A Darkness Ablaze: The Civil War Medical Diary and Wartime Experiences of Dr. John Hendricks Kinyoun, Sixty-Sixth North Carolina Infantry Regiment* (St. Joseph, Missouri: Platte Purchase Publishers, 2005), 56.

the Overland Campaign in May 1864, Confederate service held foremost priority. Participation in the Confederate cause likely represented the first serious test of responsibility in the young man's life when he accepted an officer's commission at the age of twenty-four. With a wife and two young children to care for at home, Kinyoun balanced his commitment to southern nationhood with familial obligations that predated the Confederacy. Kinyoun's reflections neither embraced nor refuted the ideological underpinnings of the secessionist nation; instead, they revealed the delicate balance between family and wartime service required of a mature patriarch.

The North Carolina gubernatorial contest of 1864 placed such contrasting sentiments as Barrier's and Kinyoun's in the electoral arena. Incumbent Zebulon Baird Vance, though a harsh critic of the administration of Jefferson Davis, appealed to North Carolinians to continue to resist the Union. His opponent, William Woods Holden, used his position as editor of the Raleigh *Standard* to run a campaign for peace. The campaign sparked fierce debate among Confederate soldiers from North Carolina.

Men younger than thirty reacted to Holden's candidacy with emotions ranging from hatred to mild disapproval. Rufus Barrier's determination to achieve independence led him to view Holden's campaign as an act of treason against the Confederacy. "I think a man that will follow the teachings of Holden is certainly a traitor to his country and is so deranged from his senses of duty to his fellowmen that he is not fit to live," Barrier declared.²¹ Elaborating on his opposition, he attributed defeatism at home and in the army to Holden's fomenting of internal dissent. "Oh! what folly for a sane man to think of supporting a vile traitor whose hands are already dyed with the blood of many of his

²¹ Rufus A. Barrier to Mathias Barrier, January 20, 1864, in Troxler, 37.

countrymen. It makes me shudder to think of it.” Barrier confidently predicted the results of the election among his comrades in arms. “The soldiers are all right for Vance. I think they will support him almost to a unit.”²²

Seventeen-year-old Samuel Collier, who enlisted in the First North Carolina artillery, concurred. “I wonder if Holden would pay us a visit if invited I wish he would. I shall be among [those] to lay hands on him. more than that I would volunteer to cut the halter.”²³ After Vance crushed Holden in the election, however, Andrew Jackson Hughes of the 12th North Carolina infantry noted that many of his comrades rued Holden’s defeat. “A grate many [are] for giving up the Struggle and going back to the Union,” the seventeen-year-old Hughes, a native of Cleveland County, observed in 1865. Hughes himself, however, found that his own motivations for peace differed sharply from Holden’s. “I am as much in favor of peace as W.W. Holden was last spring but I don’t want it on the same principels I want a peace that will do to live with or none attal.”²⁴

Regional orientation perhaps accounted for the respective positions of Collier and Hughes on the question of peace. Collier hailed from the solidly pro-Vance Wake County, while Hughes’s home county of Cleveland lay in the Unionist western part of the state. Yet both repudiated Holden’s peace plan, for it meant the disbandment of the

²² Rufus A. Barrier to Mathias Barrier, April 4, 1864, in Troxler, 42.

²³ Samuel Collier to his sister, March 4, 1864, in Ann J. Thompson, *North Carolina Confederate Letters, 1861-1865*, Volume One (Shelby, NC: Broad River Genealogical Society, 2002), 33.

²⁴ Andrew Jackson Hughes to Captain Plato Durham, February 1, 1865, in Thompson, Volume Two, 98. For the roster giving Hughes’s age, see Weymouth Jordan, ed., *North Carolina Troops 1861-1865: A Roster*, Vol. 5 (Raleigh: North Carolina State Department of Archives and History, 1966), 180.

Confederate army—the crucial institution to both men’s adult identity. Indeed, at seventeen, neither man had reached political or social majority by the war’s end. Their primary investment as men lay in Confederate nationhood, and regardless of Holden’s proposals, neither Collier nor Hughes would willingly abandon the ideals for which they fought.

While Holden provoked Barrier and Collier, both young men from slaveholding families, to fury by undermining the Confederacy’s war effort, his message resonated with older men, especially those of humbler economic position. At thirty-four, George A. Williams of the Seventh North Carolina followed the election with interest.

“Governor Vance has Bin out heare making Speeches though I don’t think they will have much affect more than he will loose many voating Speeking in the way he did,” Williams wrote to his parents. “He wants to fighte until hell freases over and then fight on the ice and we ar not willing to fight So long as that.”²⁵ Williams, like Collier, lived in Wake County, in the secessionist eastern part of North Carolina. His regional origins therefore fail to account for his wavering support for the Confederate war effort. As a man with an established position in his community, however, Williams’s life experience differed from that of Collier and Hughes, who owed their status as adults to the Confederate uniforms they wore.

Commentary on the 1864 gubernatorial election revealed a broad spectrum of commitment to the national cause among North Carolinians serving in the Confederate armies. Diehard nationalists staked all on victory, while more reticent Confederates

²⁵ George A. Williams to his parents, April 5, 1864, in Ann J. Thompson, *North Carolina Confederate Letters, 1861-1865*, Volume Two (Shelby, NC: Broad River Genealogical Society, 2002), 204.

dwelled on the costs of continuing to struggle against overwhelming force. These differing levels of investment in Confederate nationhood influenced the ways in which white North Carolinians confronted the manifestations of defeat. While some viewed the destruction of the Confederacy as a political entity as the culmination of their worst fears, others adjusted to defeat's implications on a circumstantial basis. This disparity emerged as North Carolinians contemplated race relations during and after the death of slavery.

CHAPTER THREE

COMING TO TERMS WITH A NEW RACIAL ORDER

Wartime complicated the question of slavery by compelling many Confederates to look beyond the absolutist association of victory with the preservation of slavery. As Union forces occupied southern territory, slaves deserted their owners, even when in close proximity to Confederate troops. “A plot was discovered on yesterday a great many negroes had intended to leave for the Yankies,” Lieutenant Cicero A. Durham of the 12th North Carolina infantry wrote from Weldon, North Carolina in February 1864. “It is thought that there are some Yankies or Buffalos [white North Carolinians serving the Union] about here for that purpose.”²⁶ Events such as these prompted commentators to express the view that, whichever side ultimately triumphed, slavery could not survive. “And as per slavery,” Dr. John Hendricks Kinyoun wrote to his wife in early 1864, “it is done in the South, and we had as well make up our minds to be resolved to it.”²⁷

The mature Kinyoun, a slaveholder himself, recognized that the pursuit of national independence confronted Confederates with a dilemma that few had foreseen. Critical manpower shortages forced Confederates to choose between enforcing black subjugation and fighting Union armies. By 1864, the objectives of the Lincoln

²⁶ Cicero A. Durham to his father, February 22, 1864, in Thompson, Volume One, 47.

²⁷ John Hendricks Kinyoun to Elizabeth Ann Conrad Kinyoun, January 1864, in Houts, 56.

administration included a commitment to the destruction of slavery. The majority of Confederate sympathizers, including Kinyoun, therefore saw little hope of sustaining slavery within or outside of the United States and determined to sacrifice their bonded labor source in favor of a wholehearted commitment to independence.

By admitting that national survival would require them to accept the demise of slavery, Confederates forced themselves to reconceptualize race relations in the South. Few fathomed a biracial nationalism in which ex-slaveholders would stand alongside their former bondsmen on equal political and social terms. But the forms that white domination would take outside of the traditional structures of slavery sparked widespread debate. John Kinyoun favored compelling black southerners to participate in the Confederate cause. “I discover a great disposition...to free the Negro and put him to fighting and it will come to this before another campaign ends,” Kinyoun reported to his wife in 1864. “If we carry on this war we will be compelled to use [blacks] as soldiers and no mistake and I can not contemplate this feature with much pleasure, yet it may work.”²⁸

Kinyoun’s willingness to accept the arming of slaves to salvage victory exceeded the bounds of what many North Carolinians viewed as acceptable racial control.²⁹ Whereas he could overcome his personal displeasure for the sake of a larger national goal, others balked at the potential consequences of a militarized black population—no

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ For studies of debates concerning the emancipation and arming of slaves in the Confederacy, see Robert F. Durden, *The Gray and the Black* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1972) and Bruce Levine, *Confederate Emancipation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

matter what color uniforms they wore. In the same month of January 1864, Cicero A. Durham wrote to his father on the subject of black soldiers. After encountering black Union infantry, Durham and his companions reacted with revulsion. “Taking prisoners will soon play out in this Department,” Durham confidently predicted. “Col Griffin at Franklin has hung two negroe Soldiers and I understand that he has orders to take no more prisoners.”³⁰

Both the thirty-nine year old Kinyoun and the twenty-year-old Durham came from slaveholding families. Their homes in the respective counties of Yadkin and Cleveland situated them in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, where blacks comprised a smaller percentage of the population than in the piedmont and plantation-oriented eastern portions of North Carolina. Despite the commonalities of class and locale that they shared, however, the two Confederates articulated different priorities in the treatment of black southerners outside the boundaries of slavery. While Kinyoun emphasized racial concession in the interest of national survival, Durham saw violent repression as the necessary solution for maintaining white dominance. Kinyoun, who had owned and managed his own slaves before North Carolina’s secession, trusted freed blacks to participate in the defense of the Confederacy. Durham, who left his father’s house when he enlisted in the army, echoed the sectional rhetoric under which his generation had grown to adulthood when he deemed African-Americans fit only for subjugation.

Durham saw the employment of black troops as a signal that the war had grown desperate for both sides. Other Confederates whose service brought them into contact

³⁰ Cicero A. Durham to his father, January 10, 1864, in Thompson, Volume One, 45.

with black troops showed a similar reluctance to consider them as proper soldiers. As they had done on the subject of emancipation, younger men showed a disdain for blacks that crossed regional lines. At twenty-nine years of age, Eli Peal of eastern North Carolina's Martin County drew no distinction between humans and livestock in his description of the results of a successful Confederate assault. "Our men has plundered and tore amas all of the yankis camps up thire is several dead horsis and niggroe around here and they made a aful sent about here," Peal wrote in May 1864.³¹ The veneer of a civilized conflict and its rules of engagement—such as the taking and exchanging of prisoners—could not coexist with the militarization of former slaves. Rufus Barrier, who shared Peal's age but resided in Cabarrus County, on the western edge of the North Carolina piedmont, recounted his experience of the infamous Battle of the Crater, during the siege of Petersburg:

It was then that the yankeys rushed in their hosts of whites and negroes feeling confident that they would march into the coveted city [Petersburg] but alas for their assurance they never passed our lines. The negroes charged with the battle cry 'no quarters, remember Fort Pillow' and they were received as they asked. Our brave boys fell upon them like an avalanche and but few lived to tell the tale. The negroes were piled up in our ditches six deep. The blood ran in streams from their worthless carcasses. The fight was hand to hand but the nigger soon cried for mercy. Then the slaughter began in earnest. The...nigger realized the awful meaning of the words 'no quarters.'³²

In postwar North Carolina, altered power dynamics required white Confederates to adopt new means of racial interaction with their former slaves.³³ This process began

³¹ Eli Peal to his wife, May 1, 1864, in Thompson, Volume Two, 153.

³² Rufus A. Barrier to Mathias Barrier, August 6, 1864, in Troxler, 60.

³³ For race relations in North Carolina in the Civil War's immediate aftermath, see Alexander, *North Carolina Faces the Freedmen*.

circumstantially rather than systematically. With slavery abolished and its legally sanctioned hierarchies voided by Union victory, the South faced the challenge of constructing economic, political, and social norms through which blacks and whites could occupy the same land. The chasm separating the wartime and immediate postwar legal status of blacks in North Carolina left many whites unable to comprehend their new racial world.

Young men exhibited more intransigence than their elders in adjusting to postwar racial dynamics. Traveling through North Carolina in 1866, Whitelaw Reid found that locals attributed racial discord and violence to “young bloods” without domestic or economic responsibilities.³⁴ In the same year, twenty-year old James B. Jones reacted with astonishment when he learned that a Forsyth County court had indicted him for murdering a black vagrant named Freeman in the war’s closing days. “It is well known to all those who were present at the execution and arrest of the negro that I did nothing more nor less than any soldier would have done under similar circumstances,” Jones maintained. If courts attempted to prosecute everyone who participated in similar actions, “Every man in the service of the Confederate States during the war, who had been in a Court detail or assisted in the arrest or execution of deserting negroes, renegades or, any of this class of men could be indicted with as much propriety as those who were at your last Court. As for this,” Jones concluded, “Gen. Lee & all his inferior Officers & men could be indicted.”³⁵ Raised amidst the racially-charged rhetoric of the 1850s and with Confederate service encompassing his entire young adulthood, Jones

³⁴ Whitelaw Reid, *After the War* (Washington: Library of the House, 1866), 24.

³⁵ James B. Jones to Beverly Jones, April 21, 1866, Jones Family Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina.

could not conceive how, a year after Appomattox, he might be called to account by the court of his home county for actions against a black man.

For older men charged with providing for their families, racial separation imposed practical problems. On George Washington Finley Harper's plantation of Fairfield, black agricultural workers left en masse after completing the fall harvest. Finley's diary entry for October 14, 1865, reported: "Quite a disturbance with darkies threatening to leave," a prospect Finley found "very annoying."³⁶ By the end of the week, the black laborers on Harper's plantation made good their threat. Harper's next entry recorded that he was "Very busy" coping with "the departure of the darkies."³⁷ Harper may have desired to be rid of his black labor force, but their voluntary departure increased his burden as manager of a rural farm and agricultural supply business while illustrating his loss of authority as a former master.

Though Harper preferred to undertake the practical work of rebuilding his prosperity under a tacit, rather than explicit, white supremacy, black resistance and government restrictions led him to reassert his Confederate allegiance. "Registration of voters began," Harper noted on August 15, 1867. "Have the honor to belong to the disenfranchised class."³⁸ Under the new political limitations, Harper's views on race relations hardened. While he merely recorded the presence of a "Negro convention in

³⁶ Entry of October 14, 1865, George Washington Finley Harper Diary, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina.

³⁷ Entry of October 17, 1865, George Washington Finley Harper Diary, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina.

³⁸ Entry of August 15, 1867, George Washington Finley Harper Diary, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina.

town” in August 1867, by February 1868 mundane social occurrences provoked his indignation. A “Negro wedding at church” led Harper to describe the “roads and streets” his hometown of Hillsborough as “rotten.”³⁹ While young men without economic or domestic obligations thought of racial animosity in emotional and rhetorical terms, Harper turned to such language only in futility, with his mastery over former slaves dismantled.

Like Harper, A.C. Jones of Hillsborough, North Carolina found plantation economics in the aftermath of slavery less favorable than he had anticipated. Though crops in the summer of 1866 seemed “very unpromising, both of corn & cotton,” Jones conceded that the situation “is not wholly the result of Free Labor. [T]he negroes have generally done fair-work,” Jones believed. While he would “not regret” the shortfall in production, “as it will show to the whole world the difference between [slave and free] labor,” Jones blamed weather rather than the destruction of slavery on the crops’ decline. “I must however say that I do not regard this test a fair one—the very unfavorable season has done more to produce this result than the want of energy on the part of the Americans of African descent.”⁴⁰ As a mature planter whose economic success depended on his labor force, Jones faced a dichotomy. He retained a racial ideology that consigned African-Americans to an inferior status, but Jones’s personal profit required him to extract “fair-work” from the black laborers he employed.

³⁹ Entries for August 27, 1867 and February 9, 1868, George Washington Finley Harper Diary, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina.

⁴⁰ A.C. Jones to Cadwallader Jones, July 29, 1866, Cadwallader Jones Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina.

Harper, Jones, and other North Carolinians old enough to have managerial responsibilities for black labor opted to adapt white supremacy to postwar conditions rather than lamenting wartime defeat. Indeed, as they discovered that they could continue to make a living after the Confederacy much as they had before it, some former Confederates expressed a decided optimism about the future.⁴¹ Forty-eight year old Thomas Sparrow spent the war as a captain in the Seventh North Carolina infantry. In 1867, with two years between him and the end of the war, Sparrow could imagine a biracial South, albeit one in which whites controlled all of the structures of power.

Notes from a speech Sparrow delivered to a community of freedmen in Beaufort County, North Carolina, outlined conditions under which both races could prosper. If blacks cared for each other, educated their children, and embraced labor, Sparrow predicted prosperity for both races. “All your efforts to improve your conditions can be made without your coming into collision with your white neighbors,” Sparrow reassured his audience. “Indeed they will help you & speed you in the good work. You should seek their friendship, not their enmity.”⁴² Whatever course blacks and whites elected to take, they could not expect separate fates while coexisting in the same location. “We are all inhabitants of one country—we are all Southern citizens—we should live together in peace. Our futures are bound up together. Our interests are the same. Our burdens are the same. We must struggle on together,” Sparrow exhorted.⁴³ While young men such as

⁴¹ For a broad study of biracial thought during Reconstruction, see Dan T. Carter, *When the War Was Over* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985).

⁴² Thomas Sparrow, manuscript of address to freedmen, 1867, Thomas Sparrow Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

James B. Jones and Abram Jones found the problem of race in the postwar world vexing, A.C. Jones and Thomas Sparrow dwelt on the possibilities for biracial economic cooperation as a means to achieve southern whites's return to economic and social control.

CHAPTER FOUR

GENDER AND RECONCEPTUALIZED MASCULINITY

In addition to the problems of race and slavery, North Carolinians in Confederate service also confronted their expectations of gender in the context of war. As military obligations brought men far from their homes, they faced a conflict over the social expectations of manhood. Young men concerned themselves with demonstrating bravery and steadiness while under fire lest they damage their families' honor. "I hope that I may be able to reward you for all your kindness by doing my duty in defence of our glorious cause and...prove myself worthy to be called your Son," Cicero Durham wrote to his parents just before his death in 1864.⁴⁴ Rufus Barrier criticized the manhood of those who, in his estimation, shirked their responsibilities to their homes, families, and nation. "Despondency at home," Barrier wrote in February 1864, stemmed from men "willing to drag a miserable bondage for themselves and their posterity for all to come. Such men are not worthy of the name of...men."⁴⁵ Both Durham and Barrier entered military service as single men without economic responsibilities of their own. For them, duty to

⁴⁴ Cicero A. Durham to his parents, January 10, 1864, in Thompson, Volume One, 45.

⁴⁵ Rufus A. Barrier to Mathias Barrier, February 6, 1864, in Troxler, 41. For a study on the meanings of manhood and honor in the southern Confederacy, see Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *The Shaping of Southern Culture: Honor, Grace, and War, 1760s-1880s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

the state and family honor offered the only measures of manhood with which they could identify.

While southern society imposed gendered expectations on men on the battlefield, it also cast men in the role of household providers. As the South's male labor force, whether black or white, declined in the last years of the Civil War, older men serving in the army expressed anxiety over their inability to simultaneously defend their nation and provide for their families. "I wish...that I could make a living for you somehow for I do not think that I will have anything...until this sacrifice is over," John Kinyoun lamented to his wife.⁴⁶ For small farmers whose familial livelihood rested on the successful raising of crops, absence from home caused acute anxiety.

With slaves unavailable, women shouldered the responsibility for economic production, a source of consternation for men who felt responsible for their families' welfare. Twenty-nine year old Thomas Green, the same age as the bellicose Barrier, wrote to his wife Susan in 1865 and voiced concern over the family's farm. "I want you to write how you are a going to manadge about making a crop whether you can get any person to make a crop or not maby you can get some person for part of the crop. if no other chance," Green concluded, "you can just do [your] best."⁴⁷ Kinyoun and Green subjected themselves to dual expectations of manly behavior. While they bore the duty

⁴⁶ John Hendricks Kinyoun to Elizabeth Ann Conrad Kinyoun, January 1864, in Houts, 56.

⁴⁷ Thomas A. Green to Susan Green, March 4, 1865, in Thompson, Volume One, 81. For the roster giving Green's age, see Weymouth Jordan, ed., *North Carolina Troops 1861-1865: A Roster*, Vol. 13 (Raleigh: North Carolina State Department of Archives and History, 2003), 468.

of soldiers, the two men demonstrated fears about their inability to function as providers during wartime.

As North Carolinians left the army and returned to civilian life at the war's end, a ruptured gender world followed them. Most older men attempted to pick up the pieces of their shattered domestic circumstances. George Washington Finley Harper returned to his Caldwell County home and determined to do the best he could to restore tranquility and prosperity at home. In diary entries, he indicated that he spent May 1865 "[at] Lenoir and Fairfield working on farm and garden occasionally hunting squirrels." Renewed public engagement was too painful for Harper to consider in the immediate aftermath of the war. "No mail and no public business or trading on," Harper emphasized. Unwilling to interact with his neighbors, Harper derived satisfaction in reasserting his role as male provider. On June 8, 1865, his entry read "Trying to thrive by holding the plough!"⁴⁸

Young ex-Confederates found postwar demands on their labor more difficult to accept. The children of slaveholders in particular felt that their white manhood entitled them to a station better than that of manual agriculture. Ellen Ruffin's two sons, great-nephews to the successful planter and jurist Thomas Ruffin and both Confederate veterans in their twenties, found the contrast of their antebellum and postwar stations difficult to bear. "Our boys handle the plough and hoe," Ellen lamented to her uncle Thomas, at which "their pride stood up and made their roughened hands and bronzed faces a mortification to them."⁴⁹ Before the defeat of the Confederacy, the Ruffins had

⁴⁸ Entries of May 8-May 31 and June 8, 1865, George Washington Finley Harper Diary, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina.

⁴⁹ Ellen S. Ruffin to Thomas Ruffin, November 13, 1867, Ruffin Family Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina.

commanded the labor of a large body of black slaves, but when freedmen proved unwilling to sign exploitive labor contracts, these proud scions of a wealthy North Carolina family were forced to shoulder the burden themselves.

Many former Confederates could not assume their roles as peacetime providers so easily. Wounds and chronic diseases acquired during military service incapacitated thousands of North Carolinians. The arrival of peace offered a mixed blessing. It promised a chance to recuperate free of the diseases which ravaged army hospitals, a healthier diet than wartime rations afforded, and access to medical supplies that were scarce in the wartime Confederacy. An enthusiastic Norwood Giles wrote to a wartime comrade that the benefits of peacetime had allowed him to make a nearly full recovery from a leg wound that Giles originally thought would cripple him. "I am living like a fighting-cock!" Giles crowed. "All these blessings [of peace] working together have improved me wonderfully, so much so, that the cripple actually without assistance walked down a long flight of stairs and got into the carriage yesterday."⁵⁰ For cases such as Giles's, rock bottom had come prior to Reconstruction, and a return to family and community meant respite.

Yet returning home less than whole in body also brought a sobering reality: wartime incapacitation had left many wounded men unable to function as providers. Twenty-five year old Reuben E. Wilson suffered the amputation of his left leg during the last days of fighting in 1865. "I cant describe the amount of pain and suffering I have undergone," Wilson wrote to his aunt, Amelia Jones, in May 1865. "Death would have

⁵⁰ Norwood Giles to "Schnapper," October 31, 1867, Giles Family Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina.

been a relief at any time since I was wounded.”⁵¹ Wilson’s wound posed an obstacle for a young man attempting to assume the unaccustomed duties of providing for dependents and seeking to make a life of his own in the postwar world. “I would rather be dead to day than alive was it not for my mother Julia and [younger brother] George but I feel it my duty now to do all I can to assist them.”⁵² Wilson remained committed to the gendered ideal of the male provider despite his wound.

Other young men showed similar attachments to the conventions of gendered labor and household duty. Wilson’s cousin, James B. Jones, instructed his sisters to use their youth and nimbleness to help their aging mother with domestic work in the smokehouse and garden. He criticized his neighbors for allowing their sons to spend their winter days ice skating as they had “no work to occupy them.”⁵³ Only by cooperating with each other and working industriously in their accustomed labor roles, Jones reasoned, could the white men and women of the South rebuild their society.

Many Confederates left unable to provide for their families by crippling wounds turned to the state for relief. While in peacetime such an appeal would have constituted an admission of failure in the face of masculine responsibilities, the experience of war changed how some younger North Carolinians conceived of dependency. If incapacitation came in the service of the state, then the state itself could assume at least partial responsibility for the war’s victims. “Would it not be rite for the goverment or

⁵¹ Reuben E. Wilson to Amelia Jones, May 13, 1865, Jones Family Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ James B. Jones to Ella Jones, December 19, 1866, Jones Family Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina.

state to pay the doctor bill for wounded soldiers? I think it would be, because they are crippled in her defence,” twenty-three year old Zac C. Hardin of the 16th North Carolina infantry appealed in a petition to Governor Zebulon B. Vance in late 1864.⁵⁴

Conceptions of male responsibility, however, remained strong, and Hardin and other petitioners stopped short of asking for direct aid for their indigent families.

Even for soldiers who returned home whole in body, postwar North Carolina presented serious challenges to white masculine identity. Union occupation forces as well as homegrown Unionist sympathizers curtailed public engagement and display of any measure of pride in one’s service to the Confederacy, an imposition that rankled young North Carolinians. Defeat tasted bitter for seventeen-year-old Samuel Collier when he instructed his family to hide his uniforms. “You must pack my uniforms away so that [Union soldiers] can never see it also all military clothes about the house,” Collier wrote in late February 1865, just before returning home.⁵⁵ This symbolic admission of defeat, coupled with Collier’s powerlessness to protect the women of his household, left him angered and enfeebled. The young man expressed his frustration in terms of gendered ideology: “What could we do in their [Union] hands. To have our Mothers and Sisters insulted by the infernal demonz!” Collier lamented.⁵⁶

Any North Carolinian who had served the Confederacy in any capacity and wished to participate in the state’s postwar politics first had to admit his submission to

⁵⁴ Zac C. Hardin to Zebulon Baird Vance, November 26, 1864 in Thompson, Volume Two, 236.

⁵⁵ Samuel P. Collier to his parents, February 21, 1865, in Thompson, Volume One, 36.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

the Union by taking an oath of allegiance.⁵⁷ Older whites viewed restored political rights as a necessary step to prevent total subjection to an alliance of radical Republicans and freed slaves. In his travels through North Carolina in 1866, John Richard Dennett came across a middle-aged farmer of “the better class,” who concluded that he “wouldn’t let [a] durned oath stop him” from reclaiming his rights as a southern man.⁵⁸ Yet taking an oath of loyalty not only constituted public acknowledgement of military failure, but also legitimized the political authority of the United States, a dilemma that ardent young Confederates recognized. In a letter to his relatives, Reuben Wilson concluded that he thought it “the duty of all good men to take the oath of allegiance to the U.S. for the following reasons:”

In the first place we have no government to be loyal to 2nd nor even a state government 3rd tis our duty to try and do the best we can for ourselves no one I presume will be allowed to vote unless they take the oath and we should try and send good men to the legislature or convention. By sending good men to the legislature we will be able to elect good men senators to go to Washington if every southern state will send two good senators we will with the aid of the democratic party (which is bound to be very strong) of the north we will be able to check the republican party in their wild schemes. Now this isnt half I might say of the benefits which may be desired from taking the oath.⁵⁹

Wilson preferred to reclaim some political power for returning Confederate veterans, even if it meant undergoing the humiliation of a loyalty oath. The young Wilson may

⁵⁷ For the significance of oath-taking in the Civil War South, see Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *The Shaping of Southern Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), and Anne Sarah Rubin, *A Shattered Nation: The Rise and Fall of the Confederacy, 1861-1868* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

⁵⁸ John Richard Dennett, *The South as it is: 1865-1866* (New York: The Viking Press, 1965), 106-107.

⁵⁹ Reuben E. Wilson to Amelia Jones, May 13, 1865. Jones Family Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina.

have held his own powerlessness in the forefront of his mind when he advocated taking the oath, however. In mid-May 1865, officers of the Federal government arrested Wilson and charged him with ordering the wartime shooting of at least four Unionists from his hometown.⁶⁰ Wilson may have viewed an oath of loyalty as a means to avert Federal prosecutorial interest. For young men such as he, unaccustomed to considering extra-personal responsibility when weighing their actions and sentiments, the confusing burdens of gendered identity in postwar North Carolina complicated assessments of the proper course to take.⁶¹

New possibilities for blacks to distinguish themselves in the South induced young white males to reconceive the virtues that connoted desirable traits among women. James B. Jones admonished his sister to attend to her education. While he hoped that it would prove fulfilling in its own right, Jones also voiced a social concern unimaginable in the years of slavery. “Maybe some sable wench of African descent has by some little exertion at home during the long winter nights far outstripped [you] in the attainment of knowledge,” Jones warned his sister in late 1866. “Never would I permit this to be said Ella. Study now while you are young & have not the cares & vexations of life.”⁶² Concerned about his siblings’ ability to make a life for themselves in the postwar world,

⁶⁰ Frances H. Casstevens, *The Civil War and Yadkin County, North Carolina* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, 1997), 113.

⁶¹ For a detailed analysis of gender as it affected different classes and races in postwar North Carolina, see Laura F. Edwards, *Gendered Strife and Confusion* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1997).

⁶² James B. Jones to Ella Jones, December 19, 1866, Jones Family Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina.

Jones linked his concerns about their social status to his fears about racial and gendered dysphoria.

As Jones's case demonstrated, radical readjustment of political, social, and gender expectations posed onerous burdens for young men. Without dependent families and established business concerns tying them to their native state, young North Carolinians often sought a means of physical or mental escape. Many refused to attempt biracial coexistence in postwar North Carolina, opting instead to put distance between them and the shattered remnants of a society to which wartime experience made readjustment difficult. James Jones left his native state, residing first in Louisville, Kentucky, and later in Indiana. While he gave no reason for his departure, unwillingness to live in a society that tried him for his conduct toward African-Americans and placed his sister on the same evaluative plane as black women probably contributed to Jones's decision to leave.⁶³

While in the North, Jones initially threw himself into work at an uncle's Louisville-based business, but he found commerce unfulfilling. Like other young men—both those who remained in North Carolina and those who migrated elsewhere—Jones discovered that the realities of postwar life, at once humdrum and insecure, paled when compared to the formative and dramatic experience of soldiering. Erik Erikson has described the psychological consequences of the sudden removal of the external stimulus that social belonging offers at crucial moments in identity formation. “Regression to an

⁶³ James B. Jones to Ella Jones, December 19, 1866, Jones Family Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina.

obsessive need for pseudointimacy takes place,” Erikson writes, “often with a pervading *sense of stagnation*, boredom, and interpersonal impoverishment.”⁶⁴

Seeking to avoid succumbing to such a condition, James Jones began to ardently pursue religion, converting to the Disciples of Christ denomination and becoming a lay minister. Other young men who remained in the South sought occupations to insulate them from mutual dependence between the races and challenges to their views of gendered propriety. James’s brother Abram, twenty-two, enrolled in medical studies at the University of Virginia in 1866. Abram’s letters from 1866-1868 indicated a young man absorbed in his work, who eagerly shared examination results with his parents. In contrast to his outspoken brother, Abram never wrote of the war or its direct consequences in his correspondence.

⁶⁴ Erikson, 138.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION: CONFEDERATE DEFEAT AND WHITE SUPREMACY DURING RECONSTRUCTION

By 1868, white North Carolinians had demonstrated varied ways of confronting the consequences of defeat. The first postwar election to feature both presidential and gubernatorial candidates played a major role in the resurgence of veterans' interest in the political arena. As William L. Barney observes, by 1868 "wartime divisions took the form of fighting for or against the Republicans."⁶⁵ Ex-Confederates young and old, steeped in the oppositional rhetoric by which whites in their section opposed first Yankees and then African-Americans, thus found a channel for the impotence and frustration they perceived. Karin Zipf suggests that politicians and electoral managers attempted to gain support from North Carolina's veterans by publicly appealing to the same problems of race and gender that had sown such discord in their personal lives. "The war," Zipf notes, "had thrust many men into unstable situations, and harsh, unsettling postwar experiences determined the many and varied" arguments about "the Conservative agenda."⁶⁶ Conservatives constructed a series of arguments about citizenship in North Carolina that depicted African-Americans as undeserving of political

⁶⁵ William L. Barney, *The Making of a Confederate: Walter Lenoir's Civil War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 214.

⁶⁶ Karin Zipf, "'The Whites Shall Rule the Land or Die: Gender, Race, and Class in North Carolina Reconstruction Politics,'" *Journal of Southern History* Vol. 65, No. 3 (Aug. 1999), 532.

equality because of the threat that such status would lead to unacceptable social miscegenation.

As the election of 1868 reawakened political interests, Confederate veterans seized the opportunity to project their internal struggles into a public arena. With the familiar framework of politics becoming available once again, self-reflective letters and diary entries became much scarcer. By the 1870s, notes David Herbert Donald, the flourishing familial correspondence of southerners in the antebellum and Civil War years had given way to “short, business-like, perfunctory, and non-literary” communication.⁶⁷ Peter Carmichael likewise finds a “paucity of first-hand documentation” for white southerners’ feelings after Reconstruction took hold.⁶⁸ This trend toward the political and away from the personal does not indicate that the consequences of defeat faded from the minds of ex-Confederates, or that in embracing politics they obtained a lasting resolution. David Silkenat has shown that, once the initial promise of white political resurgence gave way to economic and cultural stagnation in the mid-1870s, suicide rates in North Carolina rose dramatically.⁶⁹ He attributes this trend, prevalent among “disproportionately young white men with some degree of social standing,” to despair over lingering, unresolved legacies from defeat in the Civil War.⁷⁰

Historians have therefore found generational bifurcation along racial and gendered lines to have explanatory significance for political and social conditions in

⁶⁷ Donald, 16.

⁶⁸ Carmichael, 217.

⁶⁹ David Silkenat, *Suicide, Divorce, and Debt in Civil War-era North Carolina* (Ph.D dissertation: University of North Carolina, 2008), 38.

⁷⁰ Silkenat, 41.

postwar North Carolina. From 1864 to 1868, the age at which ex-Confederates recorded their reflections and lamentations coincided with the nature of their contents. Younger men's lack of experience and obligations of responsibility rendered their responses ideological and often strident. They clung to the Confederate nation because it was the only polity most of them had known in their adult lives, resisted racial accommodation because it cut against the rhetoric of racial inferiority on which their section reared them, and turned to gendered conventions as a rubric to make sense of their postwar dislocation. Older men—those who had come to mature adulthood before the war's outbreak—weighed ideology against the practical necessities that came with increased obligations. As husbands and parents, these men considered the cost of nationalism in terms of human sacrifice that extended beyond individual valor. Though they believed in much the same white supremacy and gendered domestic order that motivated their younger neighbors to indignation, men older than thirty generally drew on their prewar and wartime experiences to reconstruct a world that would render their lands and labors profitable. These contrasting conceptions ultimately coincided with the two principal methods for resisting social and political change--violence and legal repression--that white North Carolinians adopted to resist Reconstruction.

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