PATCHWORK NATION: SOURCES OF CONFEDERATE NATIONALISM, 1848-1865

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ABSTRACT

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Patchwork Nation: Sources of Confederate Nationalism, 1848-1865
(Under the direction of Professor Harry L. Watson)

"Patchwork Nation" explores white southerners' conceptions of nationalism during the American Civil War era. The core impetus of Confederate nationalism was the desire to preserve slavery, but my emphasis is on the broad range of intellectual, cultural, and personal sources that white southerners drew upon as they engaged the concept of nationalism in their lives. Investigating these sources pushes our understanding of Confederate nationalism in three previously neglected directions: outward, backward, and inward.

White southerners conceived of Confederate nationalism in light of what they already knew about the concept. Nationalism was then enjoying a golden age in Europe, and transatlantic intellectual currents greatly influenced ideas about nationalism in the American South. Hence our turn outward. But the nationalism with which white southerners were most familiar was antebellum American nationalism, in which most of them had been enthusiastic participants. Hence our turn backward. In defining a new nationalism, they replicated many aspects of the old, in both substantive and conceptual terms. Such replication generated a persistent problem that will concern us throughout: how could the South retain the nationalism of a country from which it had voluntarily departed?

Our final turn takes us inward, into the sphere of everyday life. Confederate nationalism came to matter to individual white southerners because of the ways they connected it to their personal identities and the fabric of their daily lives. Thus they defined individual

responsibility to the nation by using ideas about manhood and womanhood, morality and religious beliefs, sacrifice and daily suffering. Connections between individuals and the nation were especially intense when they involved perceptions of shared victimhood at the hands of the northern enemy. When this sense of victimhood came to encompass not just slavery and politics but personal fears as well, it became the most potent source of nationalism of all.

The image of a patchwork captures the way that white southerners drew on all of these resources in conceiving of Confederate nationalism and in defining their individual connections to it. This was a nationalism crafted by many hands, using varied materials, with a pattern that emerged only in the making.

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The biggest thanks of all goes to the driver who ran over a copy of this dissertation. I had momentarily placed the manuscript on top of my car while I strapped my baby into her car seat. Then I drove off. The dissertation tried to hang on, but, alas, its will to live proved insufficient. Thank you, driver, whoever you are, for only running over it once (I know you could have reversed and done it again), and for ensuring that your tire tracks did not obscure anything too important.

On second thought, the biggest thanks should go to my parents, who have been tremendously supportive in this, as in everything, and to Mindy, without whom I could not imagine having done this at all. While I was busy producing close to three hundred pages of moderately interesting academic prose, Mindy was busy producing close to seven pounds of endlessly captivating baby. She and Alice mean the world to me, and I look ahead with great excitement to our lives together. So far (gurgles notwithstanding), Alice appears to be little interested in my thoughts on Confederate nationalism. Nonetheless, it is my special wish that,

in time, she should grow up to learn an important lesson from this dissertation. Never, dear

Alice, leave anything important on the roof of your car. Not even for a second.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADAH: Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama.

DU: Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Perkins Library, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina.

SHC: Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

SCHS: South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston, South Carolina.

USC: South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina.

VHS: Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia.

INTRODUCTION: NATIONALISM AND ITS SOURCES

For Charles Fenton James, Confederate nationalism was no abstraction. From the trenches near Richmond in February 1865, beleaguered not only by federal troops but by desertion and desperation all around, James wrote to his sister with a prescription for Confederate success. In doing so, he revealed an understanding of nationalism with deep roots in the fabric of his life, and hers.

The fate of the Confederacy, he asserted, rested in the hands of all white southerners. "Let 'duty before pleasure' be the motto of all," he wrote. "There is work for all. There is a responsibility resting upon all and let no one shrink from meeting it." This understanding of the individual's responsibility to the nation was shaped by the lessons of other times and places. "Edmund Burke," he explained, "said that 'nations are never murdered but they sometimes commit suicide.' God forbid that we should be guilty of such folly. Nero fiddled while Rome was burning. Shall it be said of our people that they exceeded Nero and fiddled and danced while the land was draped in mourning?"

James's reference to fiddling and dancing led him to the very heart of the matter, as he went on to relate his broad understanding of white southerners' national responsibilities to the particular case of his sister. Despite the ongoing war, she had been attending dances. This struck James as being not only inappropriate but downright dangerous. What, he asked, would happen if everyone spent their time attending dances? "Would it not be calculated to bring the curse of God upon us? … Both sacred and profane history will tell you of the

wickedness of the people bringing the direct curses upon the nation. Why may it not be the case with us"? If his sister continued dancing, he implied, the fate of the nation, and of the men such as himself who were fighting on its behalf, would be imperiled. He left no doubt as to the gravity of this matter, warning her,

> When you desire to go to these dancing parties, first think of your responsibility, not only to your God but to your country and to your defenders. The people of the South have got to be worthy of freedom before they will get it. Every one has a duty to perform … and on the faithful performance of that duty depends the success of our cause. I hope that you, in the future, will be found doing yours.[1]

James's admonition to his sister helps illuminate how white southerners understood Confederate nationalism. Most striking is his portrayal of a close relationship between the individual and the nation: every white southerner had a direct and powerful responsibility for the fate of the Confederacy. As he made so clear, this was not merely an abstract responsibility, but one that involved the details of everyday life, behavior, and identity. When viewed through a religious lens, the morality of individuals' conduct—even apparently innocuous diversions such as dancing—carried national connotations. These connotations were inflected by gender, with James differentiating between men's duty to protect women, and women's duty to deserve that protection by behaving virtuously. And these connotations were informed by comparative perspectives. This was evident in James's references to Edmund Burke and to the downfall of ancient Rome, and also, if less explicitly, in his understanding of nationalism as a burden—the assumption that shared hardship was the route to national fulfillment—which echoed antebellum American nationalism. Confederate nationalism, in this and in other respects, was based in no small part upon its American predecessor. In all these ways, James's letter indicates that Confederate nationalism was embedded within existing patterns of thought and layers of personal identity.

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[1]Charles Fenton James to Emma James, February 13, 1862, Charles Fenton James Letters, VHS.

This letter, moreover, prompts a new set of questions about the subject of Confederate nationalism. Rather than simply asking what it was, we can ask how it worked and how it came to matter. As James's admonition suggests, nationalism came to matter because of the ways white southerners connected it to their personal identities and the fabric of their everyday lives. The attempt to establish southern independence was driven primarily by the desire to preserve slavery. But the Confederate nationalism that developed around that core impetus had deep-rooted sources: intellectual and cultural materials which white southerners drew on as they made sense of nationalism and its connections to their lives. In addition to religion, morality, and gender, white southerners' understandings of nationalism were also shaped by perceptions of other nationalisms (including American nationalism), and, most potently of all, by a sense of shared victimhood and suffering that drew the personal and the national into close association. These were the sources of Confederate nationalism. As the patchwork image of my title suggests, this was a nationalism crafted by many hands, drawing on varied materials, with an overall pattern that emerged only in the making.

Exploring the sources of Confederate nationalism has, then, involved a turn inward, to analyze how southerners' ideas about nationalism were connected to their personal lives. But it has also involved turns in two other directions as well: outward, to include the comparative, especially the transatlantic, context; and backward, to consider antebellum American nationalism as the most important source of Confederate nationalism. These are the three directions in which "Patchwork Nation" steers the study of Confederate nationalism.

The outward direction is straightforward. As Charles Fenton James's invocation of Edmund Burke and Nero indicates, when white southerners thought about nationalism, they drew on their understandings of nations and nationalism in other times and places. Indeed, it

would have been difficult not to have done so. Across the mid-nineteenth-century western world, nationalism was in the ascendant. Whether they were conceptualizing their American nationalism, or advocating for southern independence, or, later, making sense of Confederate nationalism, they could scarcely have avoided adopting a comparative view. In addition to considering how Civil War-era white southerners themselves drew such parallels, I also draw some comparisons of my own, looking to the expansive scholarship on nationalism to help understand the particular case of the Confederacy.

The third direction—backward—is a little more complicated. My interest in the sources of nationalism has required looking back before 1861, when the Confederacy was formally created, into the cultural and intellectual life of the antebellum South. In part, this has meant examining the radicals who had advocated southern independence for years. But the most important antebellum source of Confederate nationalism was not radical separatism, but rather American nationalism. Not only did white southerners hang on to much of the content of their former nationalism—political ideals and practices, heroes, revolutionary memory—but they also retained much of the conceptual apparatus as well. Thus, as Charles Fenton James captured so well, they continued to define the national responsibility of the individual through the lenses of Christianity and republican political thought, conceiving of nationalism as a personal and collective burden, or what Daniel Webster famously called a "Sacred Trust." In defining Confederate nationalism, white southerners drew deeply on the nationalism they already knew. But even so, the fact that they had seceded from the United States rendered their preservation of American nationalism problematic. How could they claim the nationalism of a nation they had voluntarily left? And if they retained the old nationalism, how could they argue that the South was sufficiently distinct to warrant separate

national status at all? White southerners resolved these problems in part with the argument that they were purifying the genuine American nationalism and rescuing it from errant northerners. But this was never quite sufficient. The dilemma of how Confederate nationalism related to its American predecessor—the problem of preserving the old while fashioning the new—would trouble white southerners throughout the Civil War era, and forms a central theme of the chapters that follow.

White southerners frequently stepped around this problem of continuity versus change, Americanness versus southernness, by emphasizing instead a different opposition: North versus South. As has been the case with many nations, Confederate national identity and its prewar antecedents were frequently defined negatively, against an external enemy, rather than positively, by publicizing the distinctive characteristics that meant that white southerners deserved separate national status. Contrasts between nefarious northerners and noble southerners fueled southern separatism before the war and substantiated Confederate national identity during wartime. Importantly, such contrasts permeated religion, gender, race, morality, political principles, and personal character traits—they traversed and confounded the categories of public or private, in other words, and provide a prime example of how nationalism drew strength from its connections with the fabric of people's lives. This process often took the form of fear. The fear of northerners—their apparent differences and their apparent hostility—united white southerners in a shared community of victimhood and suffering. It was this sense of shared victimhood, not merely in a political or intellectual sense but in a sense that threatened personal life as well, that ultimately alienated the mainstream white South from the Union. And after secession, it was this sense of shared

victimhood and suffering at the hands of an alien North that brought nationalism more forcefully than ever before into the lives of white southerners.

Since nationalism is so notoriously amorphous a concept, it will be useful to offer, if not a comprehensive definition, then at least some clarification of several key terms. By the overarching concept *nationalism*, I mean the modern notion that a given group of people, constituting a nation, ought to govern itself in a sovereign state.[2] As historian Joane Nagel has observed, the concept contains two parts, one relating to action and the other to ideas: "nationalism," as she puts it, "is both a goal—to achieve statehood, and a belief—in collective commonality."[3]

Nationalism is at its clearest in its most extreme form: when a person or group follows the concept to its logical conclusion, deciding that their nation is so deserving of political independence that they must pursue that independence by any means necessary, regardless of the obstacles. I refer to this extreme form as *active nationalism*. Active nationalism often rests on highly theorized intellectual arguments designed to prove that the nation in question deserves independent status. It is often chauvinistic, relying on claims of the absolute superiority of "us" over "them," and the conviction that a given nation has a particular historical mission or destiny. And it often involves violence. In the present work, the southern radicals who launched a movement for southern independence prior to secession are

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[2] In this basic definition, I am in good company. See, for example, E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 9-10; Michael Hechter, *Containing Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 4-6. Hechter and Hobsbawm both point out that this definition is also shared by other major nationalism scholars, such as Ernest Gellner and John Brueilly. As we shall see, it was also widely accepted in the nineteenth century, by both European and American thinkers.

[3] Joane Nagel, "Masculinity and nationalism: gender and sexuality in the making of nations," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 21.2 (March 1998): 247.

the most visible proponents of active nationalism. But it also inspired, at least to some degree, the many other white southerners who used the concept of nationalism to justify their participation in the Civil War.

Several other aspects of nationalism, less extreme and less rigid than active nationalism, are also important to my analysis.[4] While these were all constituent parts of nationalism, they did not necessarily extend to the conclusion of active nationalism. First, I use the term *the principle of nationality* to refer to the general idea that the world is rightfully split into nations, each one clearly distinguished from the rest, and each one in control of its own affairs. I borrow this term from the historian Eric Hobsbawm, who has demonstrated that the principle became particularly widely accepted in the middle decades of the nineteenth century.[5] More problematic, however, are questions concerning precisely which people belonged in which nation, and where the boundaries between the various nations ought to lie. Such questions gave rise to the classic nationalist movements of the nineteenth century, and, in the United States, underpinned the movement for southern nationalism.

The problem raised by the general principle of nationality, then, is the problem of how nations ought to be defined. What makes a nation a nation? Answers to this question often invoke the concept of *national identity*. If the conventional rationale of nationalism is to align (or keep in alignment) a nation with a state, proving that a given group of people is, in fact, a nation, requires proving that they possess a national identity. Possible ingredients of a national identity include race, language, religion, a shared history, an association with a particular territory, and a more general cultural distinctiveness. Most importantly of all, a

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[4]Although I have organized the categories differently than he did, Paul Lawrence's reflections have been especially helpful in thinking through the different aspects of nationalism: Lawrence, *Nationalism: History and Theory* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2005), 3-6.

[5]Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism*, 14-45.

national identity must validate the distinctiveness of its nation from all other peoples. Southern nationalists, as we shall see, based their conception of southern national identity upon the institution of slavery, but also advanced arguments involving other criteria, particularly the notion of a unique southern "culture" or "civilization." While national identities can be benign phenomena, they often become more aggressive, contrasting "us" against "them" in highly negative ways. Such was the case with Confederate national identity, which white southerners defined in contrast to negative images of the North.

While the collective dimension of national identity is a vital aspect of nationalism, so too is the individual dimension. In addition to differentiation between the collectivities "us" and "them," nationalism involves ideas about how the individual relates to the nation, what kinds of obligations membership in a nation imposes upon individuals, and how personal and national identities shape one another. In analyzing the ways individual white southerners conceived of nationalism in their lives, I use the term *national responsibility*. This term encompasses the use of religion, republicanism, manhood and womanhood, and so on, to define individual moral obligations first to the American nation, and, later, to the Confederacy. The concept of national responsibility is especially important to my analysis because of my emphasis on nationalism's connections to everyday lives and identities.

Consideration of these different aspects of nationalism leads us to a vital premise of this study: nationalism is not only one thing. There is no "normal" route to nationalism for either groups of people or for individuals. Nationalisms are ongoing, incomplete processes which hold different meanings and different experiences for different participants.[6] The Civil War-

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[6]This premise is obviously inspired by the general thrust of postmodern scholarship on nationalism (for instance, *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha [New York: Routledge, 1990]), but see in particular Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Nationalism and Sexualities in the Age of Wilde," in *Nationalisms and Sexualities*, eds. Andrew Parker, Mary Russo, Doris Sommer, and Patricia Yaeger (New York: Routledge, 1992), 241.

era American South is an extraordinarily rich place in which to explore this multiplicity. It offers us the remarkable story of a new nationalism emerging as a variant of an existing one: a nationalism that began as a fringe movement but entered the mainstream, and was transformed in the process; a nationalism that was based on slavery but that helped inspire hundreds of thousands of nonslaveholders willingly to sacrifice their lives; a nationalism that derived legitimacy from the ostensibly anti-national principle of states' rights; a nationalism that sought to retain the ideals of the nation whose institutions it had rejected—a nationalism, in short, guaranteed to defy any prior expectations of what nationalism ought to be.

In imposing some order upon this complex story, I am fortunate to be able to build upon two fine bodies of scholarship: one on the history of Confederate nationalism in particular, and the other on the history and theory of nationalisms in general. The recent study of Confederate nationalism was reinvigorated by the 1988 publication of Drew Gilpin Faust's *The Creation of Confederate Nationalism*. Faust helpfully steered historians' attention away from a by-then stale debate about whether Confederate nationalism was strong or weak, genuine or false.[7] Inspired in part by modern theoretical scholarship on nationalism, Faust encouraged readers to take Confederate nationalism seriously: even if it had been created quickly and self-consciously, she contended, that did not make it much different from many of the other nationalisms that scholars were now portraying as being "invented" or "imagined."[8] Faust was also inspired (as I myself have been) by David Potter's path-breaking

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[7]Key works include Paul D. Escott, *After Secession: Jefferson Davis and the Failure of Confederate Nationalism* (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1978), and Richard E. Beringer, et al., *Why the South Lost the Civil War* (Athens, Ga.: The University of Georgia Press, 1986).

[8]These adjectives refer, of course, to two of the most well-known works in the modern study of nationalism: Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd Ed.

1962 essay, "The Historian's Use of Nationalism and Vice-Versa," which observed that granting or denying the label "nationalism" to a given movement is often a "valuative" act: because historians have been reluctant to sanction slavery, they have been reluctant to take Confederate nationalism seriously. Furthermore, Potter and Faust both cautioned, historians' evaluations of Confederate nationalism have been distorted by hindsight. Because the white South failed in its bid to establish political independence, the logic goes, it must not have had a genuine nationalism to begin with. Echoing Potter, Faust urged her readers to jettison such assumptions and try to evaluate Confederate nationalism from the perspective of the time.[9]

Since Faust issued her challenge, it has been taken up, in one sense or another, by several historians. The most comprehensive effort to date is Anne Sarah Rubin's *The Shattered Nation*, in which Rubin provides a solid overview of the basic lineaments of Confederate national identity and traces them through both the wartime and Reconstruction periods. With a strong cultural perspective, Rubin identifies the prominent themes of Confederate national identity: parallels with the American Revolution; Christianity; animosity against the North; slavery; and the gendered roles of women and men. Her work has been an important point of departure for my own, even as I have proceeded in the new directions mentioned above.[10] Also important in setting the stage for my own analysis have been the contributions of George Rable, with his examination of Confederate political culture, and Ian Binnington,

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(London: Verso, 1991); and *The Invention of Tradition*, eds. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

[9]Drew Gilpin Faust, *The Creation of Confederate Nationalism: Ideology and Identity in the Civil War South* (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1988); David M. Potter, "The Historian's Use of Nationalism and Vice Versa," *American Historical Review* 67 (1962): 924-950, reprinted in Potter's *The South and the Sectional Conflict* (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1968), 34-83.

[10]Anne Sarah Rubin, *A Shattered Nation: The Rise and Fall of the Confederacy, 1861-1868* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

who has analyzed the symbolic landscape of Confederate nationalism, covering such symbols as the Confederate Constitution and the artwork on Confederate currency.[11] Gary Gallagher, meanwhile, in his 1997 work *The Confederate War*, forcefully reiterated Faust's and Potter's warnings against the distortions of hindsight, and also drew readers' attention to the crucial role that the Confederate military, especially Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia, played in white southerners' attachment to the Confederate nation.[12]

The historian who has done the most to advance our understanding of Confederate nationalism since the pioneering work of Drew Gilpin Faust is Robert E. Bonner. In his 1998 Yale dissertation, "Americans Apart," Bonner analyzed southern slaveholders' engagement with American nationalism beginning in the revolutionary era and culminating in the failed bid for Confederate independence. Though his analysis focused on slaveholders and was restricted to formal intellectual history, his insightful work suggested a new framework for the study of Confederate nationalism *within* the study of American nationalism. Bonner's subsequent book, *Colors and Blood*, advanced the debate in a different way. Focusing on the national symbolism of flags in Confederate culture, Bonner reminded historians that nationalism has its emotional as well as its intellectual aspects, and revealed the theme of blood sacrifice in Confederate nationalism, a theme which I take up in my final chapter.[13]

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[11]George C. Rable, *The Confederate Republic: A Revolution Against Politics* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1994); Ian Binnington, "'They Have Made a Nation': Confederates and the Creation of Confederate Nationalism" (Ph.D. diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2004).

[12]Gary W. Gallagher, *The Confederate War: How Popular Will, Nationalism, and Military Strategy Could Not Stave Off Defeat* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997). Gallagher's doctoral student, William Blair, expanded on some of the same themes, and advanced a textured, localized interpretation of Confederate nationalism in his *Virginia's Private War: Feeding Body and Soul in the Confederacy, 1861-1865* (New York: Oxford University Pres, 1998).

[13]Robert Bonner, "Americans Apart: Nationality in the Slaveholding South" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Yale University, 1998); Robert E. Bonner, *Colors and Blood: Flag Passions of the Confederate South* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002).

The contributions of all these historians have inspired and provided important foundations for my own interpretation. However, I depart from their approaches in significant ways, too, by steering the study of Confederate nationalism outward, backward, and inward. While several of these historians have drawn scattered parallels with other nationalisms, and most of them have been inspired to some degree by the rich outpouring of scholarship on nationalism in other times and places, none have fully considered Confederate nationalisms in comparative context.[14] Hence my turn outward.

And although several of these historians have mentioned the continuities between American and Confederate nationalism, only Bonner's "Americans Apart" has attempted to ground the analysis of Confederate nationalism within an understanding of its American predecessor.[15] When, in the wake of secession, white southerners defined Confederate national identity and national responsibility, they most often looked to their experience with American nationalism for guidance. It is difficult, therefore, to understand this process without first understanding the way white southerners had conceived of their nationalism before secession and war. Part of the problem stems from the distortion of hindsight. Because

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[14]I have, though, found Don Doyle's *Nations Divided: America, Italy, and the Southern Question* (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 2002) very useful in this regard. And although he has little to say about nationalism in particular, Michael O'Brien establishes the importance of transatlantic exchanges in the intellectual history of the antebellum South in his magisterial *Conjectures of Order: Intellectual Life and the American South, 1810-1860*, 2 vols. (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2004). Existing efforts to view Civil War-era nationalism in comparative perspective have largely focused on nationalism in the American North: see, for instance, Thomas Bender, *A Nation Among Nations: America's Place in World History*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006), 116-181, and C. E. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914: Global Connections and Comparisons* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishing, 2004). Two notable exceptions are Melvin Bruce Cauthen, Jr., "Confederate and Afrikaaner Nationalism: Myth, Identity, and Gender in Comparative Perspective" (PhD diss., University of London, 1999), which presents the "striking parallels" between the two nationalisms; and Bryan P. McGovern, "John Mitchel: Irish Nationalist and Southern Secessionist in Mid-Nineteenth Century America" (PhD diss., University of Missouri, 2003), which follows the career of a prominent Irish nationalist who ended up living in the American South and supporting the movement for southern independence.

[15]Though his study is confined to Virginia men of one age group, Peter Carmichael has demonstrated the value of the long-term approach in his *The Last Generation: Young Virginians in Peace, War, and Reunion* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

the South seceded and established a new nation, it has been easy to assume that it had been following that trajectory for some time. In fact, most white southerners were keen participants in American nationalism right up to secession.

As well as examining American nationalism as a major source of Confederate nationalism, I also examine prewar radical southern nationalists' thought as another such source. In evaluating the radicals' active nationalism, I have learned a great deal from the work of historians such as John McCardell and Manisha Sinha.[16] But whereas they portray a neat and linear progression towards southern nationalism as 1861 got closer—a progression in which southern nationalists willfully and successfully led their contemporaries toward secession and an independent southern nation—I argue that the creation of the Confederacy was the accidental outcome of a process that was fully controlled by no one. Radicals' prewar ideas were certainly a source of Confederate nationalism as it evolved after 1861, but that is not to say that they either caused or controlled the process directly. It is precisely because of the complexity of the prewar story that it is so important to analyze Confederate nationalism in light of what came before.

In both the wartime and prewar chapters, I also shift our perspective inward, into the lives and personal identities of individual white southerners. This goes against the general thrust of most recent studies of Confederate nationalism, which have taken their tone from the "constructionist" model of nationalism studies. Associated most prominently with the work of Benedict Anderson and the contributors to the influential essay collection *Invented Traditions*, this model has viewed nationalism as a self-conscious production, often by

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[16]John McCardell, *The Idea of a Southern Nation: Southern Nationalists and Southern Nationalism, 1830-1860* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1979); Manisha Sinha, *The Counterrevolution of Secession: Politics and Ideology in Antebellum South Carolina* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

political and intellectual leaders.[17] Such a model has obvious relevance for Confederate

nationalism, whose constructed nature is even more visible than in the case of most other

nationalisms. Accordingly, historians have tended to conceive of Confederate nationalism as

a deliberate and self-conscious creation.[18] While I do not reject this approach entirely,

replacing the question *how was nationalism produced* with *how did people make sense of*

nationalism in their lives promises to open up a new perspective on the whole process.

In taking this approach, I have drawn on critiques of the "constructionist" school by

scholars such as Anthony D. Smith. As Smith and others have pointed out, constructionist

interpretations can go too far when they portray nationalism as an instrument used wilfully

by elites to guide the masses. Such accounts, as the critics rightly point out, tend to overlook

the deep-rooted sources of popular nationalism that I am interested in exploring. I do not

precisely replicate existing critiques of constructionism. Smith's contention that some

modern nations have been built upon the foundations of pre-existing "ethnies," could clearly

not be applied to the Confederate case. Rather, I draw upon the general argument that

nationalism is more of a multidirectional process than constructionist interpretations imply.

Nationalisms typically take shape in relation to patterns of thought and layers of identity that

already exist; they develop within the context of what Smith has referred to as "sacred

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[17]Anderson, *Imagined Communities*; *The Invention of Tradition*, eds. Hobsbawm and Ranger. For works that focus on language and writing in the creation of national identities, see *Nation and Narration*, ed. Bhabha; *Writing National Histories: Western Europe Since* 1800, eds. Stefan Berger, Mark Donovan, and Kevin Passmore (London: Routledge, 1999); Richard Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

[18]This is most evident in Binnington, "'They Have Made a Nation,'" whose interpretation is emphatically top-down and rather instrumentalist. Although they are not as heavy-handed, and occasionally gesture in other directions, the work of both Drew Faust and Anne Rubin, discussed above, is also primarily concerned with viewing nationalism as a self-conscious production.

foundations."[19] Inspired in part by the work of Smith, I explore such foundations in the case of Confederate nationalism.

My shift in emphasis from how nationalism was constructed to how people made sense of it in their lives also draws on two other, closely related developments in the scholarship. First is the trend toward what two recent commentators have described as the "local production" of nationalism—especially the aspect that I have termed national responsibility—involving "the ways in which people understand who they are, the nature of the world they live in, how they relate to others and what counts as important to them."[20] Second, my approach is influenced by some scholars' recognition that nationalism matters to people insofar as it is connected to other areas of their lives and identities. As Morton Grodzins recognized in the 1950s, loyalties to intra-national groups were the surest foundation of national responsibility: "one is loyal not to nation but to family, business, religion, friends. One fights for the joys of his pinochle club when he is said to fight for his country." In his pioneering essay, "The Historian's Use of Nationalism and Vice Versa," David Potter applied this insight to the problem of nationalism in the era of the Civil War, observing that various levels of identity can reinforce rather than contradict one another. Here too, Potter's essay has greatly

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[19]Smith has advanced these arguments in a large corpus of scholarship. Important recent iterations include *The Nation in History: Historiographical Debates About Ethnicity and Nationalism*, The Menahem Stern Jerusalem Lectures (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 2000) and *Chosen Peoples: Sacred Sources of National Identity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004). Also useful in considering alternatives to constructionism has been the work of C. E. Bayly: *Origins of Nationality in South Asia: Patriotism and Ethical Government in the Making of Modern India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998); and *The Birth of the Modern World*, esp. 204, 280. Less directly relevant, but nonetheless important critiques of constructionism can also be found in John Armstrong, *Nations Before Nationalism* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), and John Breuilly, "Historians and the Nation," in *History and Historians in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Peter Burke (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 79-80.

[20]Stephen Reicher and Nick Hopkins, *Self and Nation: Categorization, Contestation and Mobilization* (London: Sage, 2001), quoted in Graham Day and Andrew Thompson, *Theorizing Nationalism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 197.

influenced my own approach.[21] More recently, Lloyd Kramer has emphasized a similar

theme in his wide-ranging study of American and European nationalisms, explaining that

"Nationalism flourished by connecting the intimate, personal spheres of individual lives with

the public spheres of politics and collective identity."[22] Tracing such connections in the

chapters that follow promises to greatly enrich our understanding of how Confederate

nationalism came to matter to white southerners.[23]

Of the many ways that white southerners made these connections, and thereby defined

their national responsibility, particularly prominent were the following: gender and sexuality,

morality, religion, and ideas about death. These constitute central themes of "Patchwork

Nation," and in each case my analysis has been aided by studies of nationalisms in other

times and places. Gender has been an especially rich theme of recent scholarship. Like many

others, white southerners use manhood and womanhood as bridges between their personal

and their national identities, and defined southern distinctiveness (especially against the

North) in terms of proper versus improper gender practices. Furthermore, women's

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[21]Potter, "The Historian's Use of Nationalism and Vice Versa," 48 (including Grodzins quote).

[22]Lloyd Kramer, *Nationalism*, Twayne's Studies in Intellectual and Cultural History (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1998), 84-85, 2, 131. See also Joshua Searle-White, *The Psychology of Nationalism* (New York: Palgrave, 2001); and Paul C. Stern, "Why do People Sacrifice for their Nations?," in *Perspectives on Nationalism and War*, eds. John L. Comaroff and Paul C. Stern (London: Routledge, 1995), 109-115.

[23]On this theme I have also been helped along by a body of historiography in U.S. southern history which has used gender to critically analyze and re-evaluate the categories of public and private. For instance: Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations, & The Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Laura Edwards, *Gendered Strife and Confusion: The Political Culture of Reconstruction* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997); Amy Murrell Taylor, *The Divided Family in Civil War America* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2005); Stephen W. Berry II, *All That Makes a Man: Love and Ambition in the Civil War South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

morality—especially sexual morality—was viewed in the South as it has been elsewhere as a national as well as a personal affair.[24]

The dependence of national wellbeing on the everyday morality of individuals has derived more broadly, as Charles Fenton James's letter made so clear, from religious beliefs. Like many national communities, including the United States, white southerners tended to believe that they had a special relationship with God as a "chosen people." God's favor was not automatic, though, and appropriate conduct was necessary if it were to be retained. This imbued everyday behavior with religious and national connotations. My understanding of Confederate linkages between nationalism and religion has been influenced by other scholars who have pointed to religion as a crucial emotional bond between individuals and their nations.[25]

Here, ideas about death, mortality, and connectedness to ancestors and descendants have been especially important. Like religion, nationalism's appeal lies partly in the way it gives larger meaning to human life and death, and enables individuals to relate themselves to past and future generations. This has been most powerful during wartime, with death sacrifice on behalf of the nation constituting a powerful emotional dimension of nationalism.[26] Indeed, as

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[24]The pioneering work was George L. Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality: Respectability and Abnormal Sexuality in Modern Europe* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1985), but the following have also been very helpful: *Nationalism and Sexualities*, eds. Parker et al.; the special issues of *Gender and History* ("Special Issue on Gender, Nationalisms and National Identities," 5:2 [Summer 1993]) and *Feminist Review* ("Nationalisms and National Identities," 44 [Summer, 1993]); Nagel, "Masculinity and Nationalism"; Sonya O. Rose, "Sex, Citizenship, and the Nation in World War II Britain," *American Historical Review* 103:4 (1998): 1147-1176.

[25]Important early work on the connections between religion and nationalism was undertaken by Carlton Hayes: see "Nationalism as a Religion," in *Essays on Nationalism* (1926; New York: Russell & Russell, 1966), 93-125. Of many recent works, the most useful for this study have been Smith, *Chosen Peoples*, and Kramer, *Nationalism*, 62-83.

[26]In addition to Smith and Kramer, cited in the previous footnote, see George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 9-11.
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we shall see, each of these strands of national responsibility—gender, morality, religion, and death sacrifice—tend to be especially powerful during times of war.

In the Civil War-era South, the most potent strand of national responsibility was a sense of shared victimhood at the hands of a hostile North. Perceptions of shared suffering have long been recognized as a stimulus to nationalism. In the late-nineteenth century, the French writer Ernest Renan observed that "suffering in common unifies more than joy does. Where national memories are concerned, griefs are of more value than triumphs, for they impose duties, and require a common effort."[27] Renan's words can help explain why nationalism came to matter to white southerners. Even in their own, mid-nineteenth-century world, they could see examples of perceived oppression generating nationalism in places such as Ireland, Hungary, and Italy. And since then, shared victimhood has been a crucial motivator of many nationalist movements, including postcolonial nationalisms in Asia and Africa.[28] Joshua Searle-White has provided interesting psychological commentary on this phenomenon. Emphasizing the interconnections between personal and social aspects of identity, Searle-White has argued that levels of identity that are felt to be under threat tend to rise to the surface, and, moreover, that victimhood transcends the categories of personal and social to generate attachment to nationalism. These theoretical insights, along with the examples of

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[27]Ernest Renan, "What is a Nation?" (1882), in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Bhabha, 19. Thanks to Don Doyle for suggesting the importance of this quote.

[28]See Michael Hechter, *Internal Colonialism : The Celtic fringe in British National Development, 1536-1966* (Berkeley, Cal.: University of California Press, 1975); Wendy Bracewell, "Rape in Kosovo: Masculinity and Serbian Nationalism," *Nations and Nationalism* 6:4 (Oct 2000): 563-590; Colin Williams, ed., *National Separatism* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1982); Bayly, *Birth of the Modern World*, esp. 119, 217. David Potter also compared postcolonial nationalisms to a prewar southern identity that he saw as being produced by resentment against the North: Potter, *The Impending Crisis, 1848-1861* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976), and "The Historians' Use of Nationalism and Vice Versa." See also Kohn, 114.

other nationalisms founded upon a shared sense of victimhood, have helped illuminate the specific case of the Confederacy.[29]

In addition to drawing on theoretical and comparative models, the theme of victimhood producing community also echoes a point made by prominent commentators on white southern identity more generally. These commentators, including John Shelton Reed, C. Vann Woodward, Sheldon Hackney, and James Cobb, have identified the importance of a "sense of grievance" or a "siege mentality" as being a vital element of white southern identity. More specifically, many commentators have remarked that it was only the experience of defeat in the Civil War that truly united the white South. As "Patchwork Nation" demonstrates, shared suffering did not only generate southern national identity after Appomattox, but during the war and even before secession as well.[30]

The chapters that follow flow partly chronologically, partly topically. The first three consider discrete aspects of the antebellum era: American nationalism, southern nationalism, and the growing disillusionment of white southerners with the Union. The remaining chapters turn to the Confederate period, with the fourth focusing on the formative months of Confederate nationalism in 1861 and the fifth on the period when war was fully underway, 1862—1865.

The first chapter, "Antecedents," establishes the framework of the whole dissertation with an analysis of how antebellum white southerners understood the concept of nationalism, in abstract terms and in the case of the United States. Like their contemporaries in other parts

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[29] Searle-White, *The Psychology of Nationalism*, esp. 91-94.

[30] John Shelton Reed, *The Enduring South: Subcultural Persistence in Mass Cultural Society* (1972; Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1986). Reed discusses C. Vann Woodward's *The Irony of Southern History* and Sheldon Hackney's writings on southern violence. James Cobb has also identified grievance as a central theme of white southern identity, even using part of the same Renan quote I use above—in his case to describe southern identity *after* the Civil War. (*Away Down South: A History of Southern Identity* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2005], 60.)

of the United States, white southerners were active participants in American nationalism between the Revolution and the Civil War. They defined individual national responsibility with reference to Christianity, republican political principles, and the memory of the American Revolution, especially as expressed each year on the Fourth of July. But although these connections between individuals and the nation were strong, they were by no means complete, and nor were they definitively moored to the Union. Tensions inherent to American nationality—universal idealism versus cultural specificity; state versus federal authority; and the distinction between nation and government—combined to create the intellectual space for an alternative nationalism.

This possibility was exploited by the small number of radicals who advocated for southern independence prior to 1860. These early southern nationalists—politicians such as William Yancey and Robert Barnwell Rhett and cultural figures such as the writer William Gilmore Simms—are the subject of the second chapter, "Dreams." The radicals produced an alternative to American nationalism that was based firmly on the desire to protect racial slavery. However, they built upon and extended this simple material calculus to develop a much broader argument for active southern nationalism. Inspired by European ideas about nationalism, they made romantic appeals to a distinctive southern identity based on specificities of place and culture. And inspired by American nationalism, they contended that only southern independence could rescue the true legacy of the American Revolution and purify the true spirit of American nationalism. The radicals also shared an acute frustration at the South's apparent victimization at the hands of an alien North. Continuing with the theme of connections between nationalism and personal life, I argue that the urgency of the

radicals' commitment stemmed in large part from the fact that they felt this victimhood in deeply emotional and personal ways.

In the third chapter, "The Pinch," we turn to the question of how the radicals' dreams became reality. I depict an unplanned route to the creation of the Confederacy—not one shrewdly supervised by scheming radicals. But even though they did not control the process directly, the radicals' intense personal investment in active southern nationalism points the way towards my analysis of how the white southern mainstream shifted from a desire to protect southern rights *within* the Union to an acceptance that secession might be the best option. In examining this shift, I further develop the argument that nationalism is potent insofar as it is interwoven with everyday lives and personal identities. As the sectional conflict encroached further on "private" life, more white southerners came to interpret northern aggression as a personal threat. This generated a potent sense of shared victimhood which, more than any idealized nationalist dreams, made southern independence an attractive (or at least more palatable) remedy to northern aggressions.

Despite the fact that the Confederacy's existence was an unintended consequence of this feeling of shared victimhood, its first months witnessed an outpouring of patriotic euphoria. The fourth chapter, "Definitions," examines early conceptions of corporate national identity and individual national responsibility. Both of these emerged in the context of what white southerners already knew about nationalism: they were heavily influenced by European models of nationalism and by both substantive and conceptual aspects of antebellum American nationalism. How did individual white southerners make sense of the changing landscape of nationalism in their lives? They did so, as they had always done, by drawing

upon existing layers of belief and identity: ideas about manhood and womanhood, the burden of revolutionary memory, religious purpose, and public morality.

Although the general contours of Confederate nationalism were quickly established, that did not mean they were complete. After the euphoria of 1861, the development of Confederate nationalism was primarily shaped by the determinative context of war. Chapter five, "War," shows how the exigencies of war led to newly powerful connections between individuals and the nation, especially sacrifice, and especially the ultimate nationalist sacrifice of death. These developments, leavened by the nationalist fervor of wartime, generated new understandings of individuals' national responsibility, which drew upon yet went far beyond prewar ideas. The sense of shared victimhood that had always been so important was intensified by the passions of war, as the Northern enemy came to seem even more menacing, even more subhuman, and even more different. And war's hardships, interpreted through a religious lens, sanctified that sense of shared victimhood. All of this drew the individual and the nation closer together in sacred bonds of blood and sacrifice—bonds that embedded nationalism more than ever before in the fabric of daily life.

I. ANTECEDENTS: AMERICAN NATIONALISM IN THE ANTEBELLUM SOUTH

Independence Day, 1848, was marked by the white South in the same way it had been for decades. White southerners came together to commemorate the American Revolution and the attainment of American independence, and to celebrate their membership in the American nation. As they had done for decades, they used the occasion to reflect carefully on the nature of American nationality and their contributions to it. Although 1848 marked the beginning of what we have come to call the Civil War Era, there was little indication on the Fourth of July that year that white southerners were aware of the fact.

In Greensboro, North Carolina, E. W. Caruthers, a clergyman and occasional historian, shared his reflections on these subjects before an Independence Day audience of local students. He began by stating the obvious—that the United States was a great nation—and went on to explain what he saw as the principal reasons for this greatness. First, he extolled the liberal political principles upon which the United States had been founded. Unlike previous nations, America's excellence did not derive from a monarch or ruling elite: "Here," on the contrary, "it is the *people*,--their freedom, their intelligence, their prosperity, their national character, that are every thing." Alongside democracy, he identified another important foundation of American nationalism in the centrality of religious belief and the divine favor of God. According to Caruthers, the United States held the distinction of being the only nation since the ancient Israelites which had been founded principally to do God's

work. "We are in fact," as he put it, "a nation of God's own planting." Religious beliefs combined with political principles, then, to define American nationalism.

These twin foundations of democracy and Christianity came together to produce two important convictions. First, that the American nation was an example, a beacon, to nations around the world. And second, that because of the combination of democracy and religion, each individual bore a grave national responsibility. Thus Caruthers warned that "whether we shall go on in our career of increasing prosperity and improvement must depend on the moral and religious character of the nation." This responsibility was especially critical at the present time, as America appeared to be under threat from such challenges as excessive foreign immigration; a material prosperity that could lead to sins of pride, luxury, and vice; political partisanship; and, finally, the sectional conflict between North and South.[1]

E. W. Caruthers's Fourth of July sermon offers valuable insights into the nature of American nationalism in the antebellum South. It suggests, first, that educated antebellum Americans gave careful thought to the concept of nationalism and what it meant in their lives. Furthermore, when they did so, they connected their own circumstances to international events and trends. Until recently, however, scholars largely overlooked this. Studies of nineteenth-century nationalisms tended to focus largely on Europe and to disregard the United States. And studies of American nationalism—those few that existed—tended to approach their subject from the perspective of American exceptionalism, with little appreciation for the comparative context. This is beginning to change. The trend in recent years towards the internationalization of American history has encouraged a much-needed reconsideration of the United States within the broader context of studies of the origins and

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[1]E. W. Caruthers, *A Discourse Delivered at the Alamance Academy, July 4th, 1848* (Greensborough, N.C.: Printed by Swaim and Sherwood, 1848), quotations at p. 6, 25, 27.

nature of nationalism across the world.[2] Viewing nationalism in the antebellum United States in comparative perspective promises to expand our understanding of what it meant and how it worked.

Caruthers's sermon also shows that American nationalism was the subject of careful reflection in the southern and not just the northern states. Indeed, after secession the framework of American nationalism would be a central source of Confederate nationalism. To emphasize such a connection is to disturb two common assumptions. First, that the story of Confederate nationalism's prewar roots is the story of a radical minority which, ever since the Nullification crisis, had endeavored single-mindedly to detach the slave South from the rest of America.[3] And second, that the story of antebellum American nationalism is emphatically a northern story, with little southern involvement.[4] As we shall see, white

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[2]Don Doyle has been at the forefront of such efforts, through his publications (see *Nations Divided: American, Italy, and the Southern Question* [Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 2002], and *Nationalism in the New World*, eds. Don H. Doyle and Marco Antonio Pamplona [Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 2006]) and through the organization he has recently launched, The Association for Research in Ethnicity and Nationalism in the Americas. Thomas Bender's *A Nation among Nations: America's Place in World History* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006) attempts to steer the study of American history, including the study of American nationalism, in a variety of comparative directions. For a thoughtful reflection on how the United States fits in to modern scholarship on nationalism, see Peter J. Parish, "An Exception to Most of the Rules: What Made American Nationalism Different in the Mid-Nineteenth Century?" *Prologue: Quarterly of the National Archives*, 27:3 (Fall 1995): 219-229.

[3]Important works that reinforce this interpretation include Manisha Sinha, *The Counterrevolution of Secession: Politics and Ideology in Antebellum South Carolina* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); and John McCardell, *The Idea of a Southern Nation: Southern Nationalists and Southern Nationalism, 1830-1860* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1979).

[4]The scholarship on antebellum American nationalism focuses almost exclusively on the northern states. In addition to Parish, "An Exception to Most of the Rules," see Paul C. Nagel, *This Sacred Trust: American Nationality, 1798-1898* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971); Hans Kohn, *American Nationalism: An Interpretive Essay* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1957); Clinton Rossiter, *The American Quest, 1790-1860: An Emerging Nation in Search of Identity, Unity, and Modernity* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1971); Wilbur Zelinsky, *Nation Into State: The Shifting Symbolic Foundations of American Nationalism* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), and relevant sections of Lloyd Kramer, *Nationalism*, Twayne's Studies in Intellectual and Cultural History (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1998). Recent works have made their northern focus more overt: Melinda Lawson, *Patriot Fires: Forging a New American Nationalism in the Civil War North* (University Press of Kansas, 2002); Susan Mary Grant, *North Over South: Northern Nationalism and American Identity in the Antebellum Era* (Lawrence, Kans.: University

southerners were in fact active participants in American nationalism even on the eve of the Civil War.[5] And southern understandings of nationalism were just as much influenced by European patterns as were the understandings of their northern contemporaries.[6]

Finally, E. W. Caruthers's Fourth of July sermon reminds us that antebellum American nationalism, like all nationalisms, was unfinished, ongoing, and fractured. According to Caruthers's understanding of Christian theology and republican political principles, the maintenance of the American nation depended upon the sustained moral and religious comportment of its members. If they erred, God would remove his favor. This was quite a national responsibility, and, for the many Americans who shared Caruthers's logic, the fragility of their nation called forth continued effort, involving every aspect of their lives and behavior. Because national survival could not simply be assumed, the connection between individuals and their nation was conceived of as a vital and ongoing moral obligation. This was especially so in light of looming dangers, particularly those of partisanship, materialism, and sectionalism. This latter problem, as I will suggest in the final section of this chapter, was facilitated by the unfinished and fractured nature of American nationalism. Federalism's division of sovereignty, combined with the imperfect coupling of American nationalism to national governmental institutions, opened up the space for alternative variations on American nationalism. These were the fractures that would make Confederate nationalism possible.

Press of Kansas, 2000); and Grant, "Americans Forging a New Nation, 1860-1916," in *Nationalism in the New World*, eds. Doyle and Pamplona, 80-98.

[5]In stressing this point I build on the insights of Robert Bonner, "Americans Apart: Nationality in the Slaveholding South" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1998).

[6]On the broad importance of transatlantic exchange to antebellum southern intellectual life, see Michael O'Brien, *Conjectures of Order: Intellectual Life and the American South, 1810-1860*, 2 vols. (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

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For the North Carolinian newspaper editor and politician William Woods Holden, nationalism defined his century. "As the great idea of the eighteenth century was that of *union against tyrants*," he proclaimed in 1856, "so is that of the nineteenth century, *the independence of nationalities*."[7] And so it must have seemed. The principle of nationality had become an article of faith across the mid-nineteenth-century western world. The American and French revolutions had done much to establish the great truth that a people sufficiently unique, sufficiently distinct from the rest of the mankind, had the right to a national existence, in a national territory, with a national government. Latin Americans had followed, if less successfully, the thirteen colonies' lead in shaking off the yoke of colonialism and asserting national independence. In apparently ancient countries, such as Britain, new ideas about what it meant to be a nation had prompted new political forms and cultural impulses. And across the European continent faith in the irresistible might of nationalism fuelled new movements for independence or unification: examples of what I have termed active nationalism. German writers celebrated the character and spirit of a distinctive people whose shared culture warranted shared political existence. Joseph Mazzini campaigned to the same end in the Italian peninsula. In Poland and in Hungary, legendary figures such as Louis Kossuth struggled to realize their own understandings of which peoples ought to live within which borders, under which government. And with the revolutions of 1848, it seemed as if the whole of Europe were ablaze with the twinned impulses of nationalism and democracy.

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[7]W. W. Holden, *Oration: Delivered in the City of Raleigh, North Carolina, July 4th, 1856* (Raleigh, N.C.: Holden & Wilson, "Standard" Office, 1856), 7. On the broad significances of the "principle of nationality" between 1830 and 1880, see E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 14-45. For a useful overview of the cultural lineaments of American and European nationalisms in the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, see Kramer, *Nationalism*.

Small wonder that from the vantage of mid-nineteenth-century North Carolina, nationalism appeared to define the whole century.

In the eyes of most antebellum Americans who thought about such things, it was right that it was so. For antebellum southerners and Americans more generally, the principle of nationality—the separation of humankind into different nations—was both natural and divinely-ordained. Just as it seemed obvious that the world ought to be divided into nations, it seemed obvious that it was God who directed that division. Thus, in a sense, nations themselves were God's creatures, and national borders were sacrosanct. A reading in a schoolbook designed for southern students began with the pronouncement that "NATIONS are neither accidental nor arbitrary divisions of men. They exist by divine appointment, and are the product of natural laws as truly as families." Because "'God divided to the *nations* their inheritance,'" the fortification of national distinctions, and support of one's own nation, were sacred duties. As the lessons of world history proved, great nations were made great by the active support of their members, and it logically followed that "patriotism" was more noble than "cosmopolitanism and universal brotherhood."[8]

Like the principle of nationality, the national responsibility of individuals to support their country was divinely ordained. Indeed, love of one's country was seen as both a sacred duty and a natural human impulse. Speaking in a small southern town in 1860, the physician and politician James Ramsay reflected on the causes of "patriotism." God had created man— patriotism was, in theory at least, often construed to be an all-male affair—as a fundamentally "social being," thought Ramsay, which caused him to develop strong affections for those around him: first his wife, then his family, and eventually larger

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[8]D. Barton Ross, *The Southern Speaker, or Sixth Reader: Containing, in Great Variety, the Masterpieces of Oratory in Prose, Poetry, and Dialogue* (New Orleans, La.: J. B. Steel, 1856), 61-62.

communities. As humans went on to create political communities and governments, the great

benefits allowed to all members meant that man was "led, by an irresistible impulse, to love

his government—the very soil upon which it is erected—its subjects, and all its essential

auxiliaries." Accordingly, love of one's government, and the land of one's birth, were natural

impulses evident throughout world history, from the Israelites and ancient Romans to

"savage" Indians and "civilized" Europeans. "This love of Country," believed Ramsay,

voicing a widespread assumption, "is as universal as it is holy."[9]

Even if national responsibility were a universal impulse, loving one's country seemed to

be especially important in the United States, a nation that appeared to enjoy a special

relationship with God. The clergy never tired of reminding their congregations of this special

relationship and the special duties which it entailed. William Sparrow, a professor at a

Theology Seminary in Virginia, called attention to the religious foundations of American

nationalism in an 1852 sermon. God was, in Sparrow's estimation, the God of nations. He

had established the boundaries of the United States, and of all countries, and Americans

ought to be grateful that he had blessed them with such a magnificent land, such bountiful

natural resources, so spacious a continent. Americans should also give thanks to God for the

political system under which they lived, which was much fairer and more just than European

equivalents. Emphasizing the close relationship between religion and the national

responsibility of each individual, Sparrow concluded, "In principle, he is the best patriot who

is the best Christian."[10]

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[9]J. G. Ramsay, *Love of Country: An Address Delivered Before the Ciceronian and Platonic Societies of the United Baptist Institute, Taylorsville, N.C., May 31, 1860* (Salisbury, N.C.: J. J. Bruner, Printer, 1860), 3-5. See also Nagel, *This Sacred Trust*, 132.

[10]William Sparrow, *The Nation's Privileges, and Their Preservation: A Sermon Preached on the Day of Our National Anniversary, 1852, in Christ Church, Alexandria, Va* (Philadelphia: T. K. and P. G. Collins, 1852), 38.

David Porter elaborated upon the same idea in front of a Savannah, Georgia audience a few years later. Using Psalm 13:12—"*Blessed is the Nation Whose God is the Lord*"—as his text, Porter began by expressing pleasure that this year, 1858, saw the Fourth of July falling on the Sabbath. He was thereby presented with a perfect occasion to remind his audience "of His overruling agency in the achievement of our Nationality," and to talk more generally about the connections between religion and the state (by which Porter meant the institution of secular government, not the states that united to form the United States of America). Porter began by recalling the ancient Israelites, God's original chosen people. Even though modern countries could not entirely emulate the Israelites' relationship with God—he was, after all, their political ruler in a way that he would never be for another people—the United States could still aspire to a special relationship with him. Porter did not, he was careful to emphasize, recommend any formal establishment of religion. Rather, he suggested that Americans could cultivate God's favor by practicing piety on an individual level. Here, Porter echoed E. W. Caruthers's conception of the role of individuals in their nationalism. Because the nation's health depended on keeping things right with God, and because keeping things right with God depended on individual actions, each individual therefore had a powerful responsibility for the maintenance of the nation. "Every man then in our nation," as Porter put it, "is an element of strength or weakness, just in proportion as he is virtuous or vicious, righteous or sinful, holy or corrupt." "If every citizen were *a true* Christian," then the United States would maintain God's favor and enjoy good health, "But, on the other hand, one corrupt and wicked man, one rotten, crumbling stone, in this national edifice, is an element of weakness," with the potential to endanger the whole. Porter's exposition of the vital moral and religious responsibility of individuals for national health indicates the

importance of Christianity as a major pillar of antebellum American nationalism. Even as he insisted on the separation of church and state as a national ideal, Porter reaffirmed the judgment of William Sparrow: "The best Christian is the truest patriot."[11]

America was, in the 1850s as in other periods, considered by many to be God's country. But religion informed American nationalism in more ways than just the conviction that the United States enjoyed a special relationship with God. In form and in style, as well as in content, religion was a crucial influence on nationalism in the antebellum South. The words used to describe the concept—natural, holy, sacred—indicate that Americans conceptualized their responsibilities to their nation not just as a secular parallel to religious commitment and practice, but as a system of belief intricately and inseparably interrelated with religion—to such an extent that nationalism itself possessed a spiritual dimension and demanded faithful piety. In this regard, antebellum American nationalism was typical of other nationalisms. Its widespread appeal can partly be explained by its formal imitation of several key elements of Christian religion, including legendary heroes, ritualized holidays, and sacred documents.[12]

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[11]David H. Porter, *Religion and the State: A Discourse Delivered in the First Presbyterian Church, Savannah, Georgia, July 4th, 1858* (Savannah, Ga.: Power Press of John M. Cooper & Co., 1858), 5-6, 10-11, 12. For the importance of religion to American nationalism in the antebellum South, see also Eugenius Aristides Nisbet, *Address on the Seventy-third Anniversary of American Independence (July 4th., 1849) Delivered at the Request of a Committee on Behalf of the Citizens of Macon* (Macon, Ga.: Rose, 1849); Coleman Yellott, *Oration Delivered by Coleman Yellott, Esq., of Baltimore, at the Celebration at St. Timothy's Hall, Baltimore County, Maryland, July 5th, 1852* (Baltimore, Md.: Jos. Robinson, 1852); J. C. Coit, *A Discourse Upon Governments, Divine and Human: Prepared by Appointment of the Presbytery of Harmony, and Delivered Before That Body During Its Sessions in Indiantown Church, Williamsburg District, S.C., April, 1853* (Columbia, S.C.: Printed by T. F. Greneker, 1853); Benjamin M. Palmer, *Influence of Religious Belief Upon National Character: An Oration Delivered Before the Demosthenian and Phi Kappa Societies of the University of Georgia, August 7, 1845* (Athens, Ga.: Printed at the Banner Office, 1845). On American conceptions of their divine national mission, see Ernest Lee Tuveson, *Redeemer Nation: The Idea of America's Millenial Role* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1968); and Conrad Cherry, ed., *God's New Israel: Religious Interpretations of American Destiny*, revised ed. (1971; Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

[12]Key works on religion and nationalism in general include Carlton Hayes, "Nationalism as a Religion," in his *Essays on Nationalism* (1926; New York: Russell & Russell, 1966), 93-125; Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd Ed. (London: Verso, 1991); Anthony D.

Like religions, modern nationalisms have often depended on messianic heroes. And as Jesus Christ is the central figure of Christianity, George Washington was the central figure in antebellum American nationalism. While several revolutionary figures were much celebrated in the antebellum years, with some similarity to the worship of saints, it was Washington who loomed the largest in American national remembrance. The generations that followed the founders idolized "the Father of his Country," as he was commonly referred to, to an extraordinary extent—in textbooks, poems and songs, speeches, newspapers, and so on. It would challenge even the most determined historian to find much in the records of the antebellum United States that was detrimental—even neutral—towards Washington. One orator, speaking about Washington to a Savannah audience, concluded that it would be in "vain to eulogize the name of WASHINGTON, a name too grand for song, too sublime for eloquence," and no matter how high they placed him, it could never be as high as he deserved. While much of this praise was secular, it not infrequently took on a religious tone. One clergyman, speaking in the United States Capitol in 1848, raised Washington as high, presumably, as he possibly could, referring to this "one great man, who approached as near to the Saviour's [sic] precepts as man could approach." Washington's sacrifices for his country were comparable to Jesus's sacrifices for humankind.[13]

It is little surprise, then, that a group of patriotic women under the direction of Ann Pamela Cunningham joined together in an enterprise to purchase Mount Vernon, Washington's home, so that it could become something of a national shrine—the "Mecca of

Smith, *Chosen Peoples* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003). For a valuable overview, see Kramer, *Nationalism*, 62-83. On American nationalism as a "civil religion," see Zelinsky, *Nation into State*, 232-245.

[13]*Columbus* [Ga.] *Enquirer*, January 11, 1848; Andrew H. H. Dawson, *An Oration on the Origin, Purposes and Claims of the Ladies' Mt. Vernon Association*. (Savannah, Ga.: E. J. Purse, Printer, 1858), 9. For the significance of Washington to early American nationalism, see Zelinsky, *Nation into State*, 31-35.

our country," as one visitor put it, a place where Americans from all parts of the country could congregate and rekindle "patriotism and brotherly love." Women's efforts to preserve this important site revealed the possibility for female intervention in the supposedly male arena of nationalism, and they were universally praised for it. An Alabama newspaper editor celebrated the women's efforts in language infused with religious sentiment, asserting that "The burial place of Washington ought to be a holy sepulchre, where patriot-pilgrims may pay their homage…. The cause of 'Mount Vernon' is a sacred one, and it has fallen into holy hands." The editor went on to make the Jesus-Washington comparison more explicit, and incidentally to suggest a gendered nationalistic role for women, pointing out that "Mary was earliest at the tomb of the Saviour, and our Marys have been first at the spot where sleeps the body of the Saviour of his country." Washington was, then, a Christ-like idol of American nationalism: a heroic, even perfect, founding figure whose supreme sacrifices deserved supreme veneration—by women as well as men—and the commemoration of whom constituted an important communal ritual.[14]

This was not the only aspect of Christianity for which American nationalism developed an analog. Just as Christians use the Sabbath and other holidays as occasions to perform important rituals and to rededicate themselves to the holy cause, so too did antebellum Americans use the Fourth of July, the principal national holiday, to uphold their nationalism and ritually to rededicate themselves to the cause of the nation. Indeed, the Fourth of July was often called "The National Sabbath." One newspaper editor in Tennessee, writing in

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[14]Charleston *Courier* clipping, August 27, 1856, in William Gilmore Simms Scrapbook E, Part 2, Charles Carroll Simms Collection, USC; *Mobile Daily Register*, July 2, 1857. See also J. Lansing Burrows, "Address before the Mount Vernon Association, July 4th, 1855," *Southern Literary Messenger* 21.8 (August 1855): 514-518. As Don Doyle has noted, Italian nationalist Giuseppe Garibaldi achieved similar status as "a Christ-like cult figure." Doyle, *Nations Divided*, 38, 61-62.

1850, asked "Who does not rejoice that we have a day in which as American Citizens, we can meet each other, and renew our patriotic devotion by the recitation of the pledges of the life, estate and sacred honor, of those who made this day immortal[?]" He went on to draw the religion-nationalism comparison more explicitly: "To the christian, the Sabbath is a day peculiarly adapted to devotion—so this day serves to chasten and to purify the patriotism of the Nation." Other newspaper editors, and other public figures, encouraged Americans to celebrate the Fourth as a patriotic duty, just as the clergy might promote proper celebration of the Sabbath.[15]

By the late antebellum years, Independence Day celebrations had settled into standardized—ritualized—forms: the ringing of bells and the firing of salutes; the mustering and parading of voluntary militia companies; civic processions; meetings of various voluntary associations; public prayer; speeches; and the reading aloud of the Declaration of Independence. The reading of the Declaration, whether in public or private, was analogous to Christians' reading from the Bible. A Mississippi editor made this clear in July 1854, informing his readers that it was "as strictly the duty of every citizen of this Republic, who enjoys civil and religious freedom, to read over this noble Declaration, upon this Sabbath of Liberty … as it is the duty of Christians to read a portion of the Old and New Testament

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[15]*Brownlow's Knoxville Whig*, July 6, 1850. On Fourth of July celebrations, see Diana Karter Appelbaum, *The Glorious Fourth: An American Holiday, an American History* (New York: Facts on File, 1989); Robert Pettus Hay, "Freedom's Jubilee: One Hundred Years of the Fourth of July, 1776-1876" (Ph.D. diss., University of Kentucky, 1967); Matthew Dennis, *Red, White, and Blue Letter Days: An American Calendar* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2002); Len Travers, *Celebrating the Fourth: Independence Day and the Rites of Nationalism in the Early Republic* (Amherst, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997); Zelinsky, *Nation Into State*, 69-73; Fletcher M. Green, "Listen to the Eagle Scream: One Hundred Years of the Fourth of July in North Carolina (1776-1876)," *North Carolina Historical Review* 31 (1954): 295-320, 529-549.

upon the Christian Sabbath." Celebrating the Fourth, and rereading the Declaration, were important means of enacting one's national responsibility.[16]

The primary function of the Fourth, of course, was to celebrate the sacrifices of the revolutionary generation, the commemoration of which was recognized as a powerful and sometimes a spiritual bond of nationalism. Adulation of revolutionary sacrifices was a staple in newspaper editorials, speeches, and after-dinner toasts on the Fourth each year. One toast, given at an 1851 Independence Day celebration near Richmond, was dedicated to the Union: "The tears of patriots—the blood of martyrs, the trophies of war and the blessing of peace— our common glories and common sacrifices—all render it thrice sacred and hallowed." As the toast indicated, antebellum southerners recognized the primal, emotional power that tears, blood, sacrifice, and martyrdom could lend to nationalism—the same kind of primal, emotional power which themes of death, sacrifice, and the promise of immortality lent to religion. In the wake of the Mexican War, Fourth of July toasts commonly came to include tributes such as "The Heroes who have fallen in the Mexican War: A nation's hands have planted laurels on their graves, and a nation's tears will keep them fresh." But the sacrifices and martyrs at the center of American nationalism continued to be the patriots of 1776. A schoolbook published for southern students in the 1850s contained a reading that championed commemoration of the revolutionary martyrs: "Let their memories be eternally embalmed in our bosoms. Let the infants of all posterity prattle their fame, and drop tears of courage for their fate." Ensuring that the nation's founding martyrs lived on in Americans' memory, now and forever, was a fundamental concern of Americans in both South and North.[17]

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[16]*Vicksburg Weekly Whig*, July 5, 1854.

[17]*Richmond Enquirer*, July 8, 1851, July 11, 1848; Ross, *The Southern Speaker*, 351. For several poetic celebrations of the soldiers who went to fight the Mexican War, see William Gilmore Simms, *Areytos, or Songs*

In this glorification of death sacrifice and the promise of immortality to national martyrs, American nationalism manipulated perennial human concerns about death and mortality in much the same way that religion did. Not only did Americans tend to believe that the division of the world into nations was instigated from on high. They also drew on the style and form of Christian religion in celebrating their national heroes and holidays, their national symbols and martyrs. They understood their national responsibility in moral and religious terms. Americans' conceptions of nationalism, in short, were inseparable from their ideas about religion.

Just as Independence Day celebrations highlighted the significances of religion, so too did they showcase the other major intellectual foundation of American nationalism, republican political thought. The Fourth was the day of the year when, according to countless reports, the American people forgot their differences and came together—symbolically, at least—in a unified celebration of their great nation. Many commentators at the time emphasized what we might think of as the simultaneity of American nationalism on the Fourth of July: the fact that people in all parts of the country, from all walks of life, assembled in small groups and communities to enact their national identity and national responsibility, in the full consciousness that they were symbolically sharing the experience with countless compatriots, even though they could not personally observe them. As the anthropologist and theoretician Benedict Anderson has observed, this concept of simultaneity has been a critical element of modern, mass nationalisms in general. And it was everywhere evident on the Fourth of July.

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and Ballads of the South, with other Poems (Charleston: Russell & Jones, 1860). My understanding of the emotional power of the commemoration of blood sacrifice owes much to Kramer, *Nationalism*, and to the work of George L. Mosse, especially *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

In holiday activities across the country, Americans rejoiced at the apparently fantastic country they lived in, pointing to its impressive material resources, the wonderful progress it had made in the first decades of its existence, the glorious future it could look forward to. But most of all, they celebrated the political ideals that America purportedly stood for, and especially the great truth inaugurated by the American Revolution: the principle of self-government. Commemorating this great truth was the animating purpose of the Fourth, and of American nationalism more generally.[18]

On every day of the year, not just the Fourth of July, recollection of the past held great potential as a national adhesive—something which antebellum Americans fully recognized. As John Ward told the Georgia Historical Society in 1858, "A nation without history, is a nation without life." And because a sturdy history seemed such an indispensable component of a sturdy nation, the relative youth of the American nation was a matter of concern to some. The antebellum years saw considerable efforts to correct this, most prominently by Massachusetts historian George Bancroft, who advanced a celebratory nationalist interpretation of America's past, stressing the ideal of liberty as its central theme, in his multivolume *History of the United States*. Still, anxieties persisted. To New York lawyer George Templeton Strong, the nation's tender age aroused a desire for permanence: "We are so young a people," he wrote, "that we feel the want of nationality and delight in whatever asserts our national 'American' existence." Unlike European countries, he went on, America did not have centuries of tradition to bolster its national existence. "Hence the development, in every state of the Union, of 'Historical Societies' that seize on and seal up every worthless reminiscence of our colonial and revolutionary times." Although the first state historical societies originated in New England, the trend quickly spread south, and by the outbreak of

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[18]Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 22-36.

the Civil War just about every southern state could boast a historical society of its own. And southerners saw a clear link between their historical interests and their commitment to the United States. James P. Holcombe, for instance, expressed a commonly accepted truth when he advised members of the Virginia Historical Society, "It is essential to the unity and elevation of our national character" to look back periodically at the early history of the United States.[19]

Charlestonian Bartholomew Rivers Carroll went into greater detail about the importance of history to national identity and national responsibility. "When some Athenian youth inquired of Socrates, How they should become distinguished patriots and useful citizens?" he told Citadel students in 1859, "the philosopher pointed them to the history of their country." And the same, judged Carroll, was true for young Americans such as the group gathered before him. History would be a critical resource no matter what profession they pursued—the study and understanding of past events was of clearly importance to careers in medicine, the law, politics, and just about any other occupation he could think of. "But the chief claim," he explained,

> that should impress itself upon us, is the agency, which history has in the formation of national character. If we would really stamp our country with a national peculiarity— if we would hold ourselves from the rest of the world—free and independent States,

        [19]John E. Ward, *Address Delivered before the Georgia Historical Society, on its Nineteenth Anniversary, February 12, 1858, by John E. Ward*. (Savannah, Ga.: George N. Nichols, Printer, 1858), 5; Strong quoted in Michael Kammen, *A Season of Youth: The American Revolution and the Historical Imagination* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1978), 12; *Historical Consciousness in the Early Republic: The Origins of State Historical Societies, Museums, and Collections, 1791-1861*, ed. H. G. Jones, North Caroliniana Society Imprints, Number 25 (Chapel Hill, N.C.: North Caroliniana Society, Inc., and the North Carolina Collection, 1995); James P. Holcombe, *Sketches of the Political Issues and Controversies of the Revolution: A Discourse, Delivered before the Virginia Historical Society, at their Ninth Annual Meeting, January 17, 1856* (Richmond, Va.: Published by the Society, 1856), 4. For instructive comparisons, see *Writing National Histories: Western Europe Since 1800*, eds. Stefan Berger, Mark Donovan, and Kevin Passmore (London: Routledge, 1999).

we should thoroughly study the institutions and principles which have made us what we are. This is what every State has done before establishing its nationality.[20]

Attention to history was important not just in the establishment of national independence and identity, but in its preservation thereafter. As Carroll pointed out, it was when ancient Greece and Rome neglected to remember, celebrate, and learn from their histories that each declined and fell. Accordingly, it was imperative that Americans appreciate their past if they were to survive as a nation: this was the national responsibility of every individual. The prospect of permanence, as the historical examples of past nations proved, was especially shaky for republics. Carroll reiterated the common conviction that historical knowledge—of America's own past and those of other nations too—was especially vital in a fragile republican polity where political power was widely diffused among citizens. "How are the blessings of our political union to be kept pure and inviolate," Carroll asked, and how were threats such as factionalism, excessive liberty, or despotism to be avoided? "Undoubtedly," he thought, "from the teachings of history." For citizens of a republic, learning from the past was the surest way to avoid catastrophe in the present and the future.

Carroll's words call to mind the broad ideology of republicanism that many historians have identified in American thought. Because power inevitably corrupts, the ideology held, citizens of a republic had to be constantly on their guard against threats to their liberty. Republicanism was underpinned by historical thought. The cyclical theory of history generated the belief that historical examples of threats to liberty—which had caused the downfall of all previous republics—should function didactically. Thus for Carroll, the "teachings of history" were useful lessons in defending his own republic against "the

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[20]Bartholomew R. Carroll, *"The Claims of Historical Studies Upon the Youth of Our Country." An Oration: Delivered Before the Polytechnic and Calliopean Societies, of the Citadel Academy, at their Annual Commencement, April 8th, 1859* (Charleston, S.C.: Walker, Evans & Co., 1859), 5, 11.

nurseries of faction," the "unbridled liberty," and the "despotic power" to which previous republics had succumbed.[21]

Other southerners agreed that Americans had a grave responsibility to learn from the examples of deceased nations. Theories of national decline were often explicitly invoked to draw lessons from history regarding the reasons why nations fell, and thus to suggest means by which the United States could avoid a similar fate. Reflecting on the fall of a range of nations, from ancient Greece to medieval Italy, from Egypt to Brazil, southern writers identified a host of reasons for national decay. Racial characteristics, excessive greed, brutal slaveholding, ungodliness or religious fanaticism, despotism, political radicalism—all were put forth by southerners as explanations for one national demise or another. For South Carolinian Thomas Hanckel, for instance, the downfall of Rome showed that a republic's survival required "that no virtuous and intelligent citizen can rightly withdraw himself from public affairs, or can safely neglect his public duties." Otherwise, "the powers of the state … will be usurped by those who will abuse them"; they would be seized, that is, by tyrants and

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[21]Ibid., 9-10. The key work on republican historical thought remains J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1975). For the revolutionary generation and republicanism, see Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (1967; Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1992), esp. 144-159; Trevor Colbourn, *The Lamp of Experience: Whig History and the Intellectual Origins of the American Revolution* (1965; Indianapolis, Ind.: The Liberty Fund, 1998); Lester H. Cohen, *The Revolutionary Histories: Contemporary Narratives of the American Revolution* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1980); Stow Persons, "The Cyclical Theory of History in Eighteenth Century America," *American Quarterly* 6 (1954): 147-163. The pervasiveness of a republican bent to American historical thought in the nineteenth century is ably demonstrated in Dorothy Ross, "Historical Consciousness in Nineteenth-Century America," *American Historical Review* 89 (1984): 909-928. While the sweeping concept of republicanism has come under fire (see especially Daniel T. Rodgers, "Republicanism: The Career of a Concept," *Journal of American History* 79:1 [June 1992]: 11-38), it remains useful for my specific purposes of characterizing the importance of history and the importance of individual virtue to antebellum American nationalism.

despots who would lead the republic to ruin. If history taught anything, thought Hanckel, it was that "the price of liberty is eternal vigilance."[22]

In a republic, then, each individual had a special responsibility for the maintenance of the nation. Antebellum Americans recognized the special relationship between democratic (or, as they would have preferred, republican) citizenship and modern nationalism. The rise of democracy in the western world, beginning with the American and French revolutions, was not only accompanied by but was also closely interrelated with the emergence of modern nationalism. The two phenomena were joined most directly by the shared premise of popular sovereignty: the idea that ordinary people as well as ruling classes had a stake in their political communities and ought therefore to have some control over their own governance. In the United States—the first new nation, the first democratic nation—common conceptions of national responsibility rested squarely on the assumption that the nation and its governance rested upon the individuals who made up the people. This was true throughout the antebellum era. E. W. Caruthers, as we have already heard, emphasized the exceptional influence of "the *people*" in appraising American nationalism. And decades earlier, in an 1831 Independence Day speech, South Carolinian Frederick Porcher similarly explained that the American political system meant that the very nature of national responsibility was different. Whereas in the Old World notions of "country" began and ended with the

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[22]Thomas M. Hanckel, *Government, and the Right of Revolution: An Oration, Delivered before the '76 Association, and Cincinnati Society, on Monday, July 4th, 1859, by Thos. M. Hanckel, Esq., a Member of the '76 Association* (Charleston, S.C.: Printed by A.J. Burke, 1859), 22; James C. Britton, "The Decline and Fall of Nations in Antebellum Southern Thought: A Study of Southern Historical Consciousness," (Ph.D. diss., The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1988); Ross, *Southern Speaker*, 231-232.

monarchy or aristocracy, things were different in the United States, since "this country comprises every individual within its limits."[23]

Of course, Porcher was a man of his time, and he certainly did not mean to suggest that all individuals—women, say, or African Americans—enjoyed the privileges and responsibilities of American citizenship. Membership in the American political community was, in theory at least, confined to white males. But even so, women were not at all absent from antebellum American nationalism. As a generation of historians has shown, they exerted powerful influences upon just about all aspects of political life, including citizenship. And beyond the sphere of formal politics, women participated in American nationalism in a variety of ways: as symbols of the nation, as nurturers of nationalism in their sons, and as supporters of male nationalism—witness, for example, the central role of women in the effort to purchase Washington's Mount Vernon.

For women as well as for men, national responsibility often rested on the concept of virtue. A graduation speech at the College of Charleston in 1848 summarized the consensus nicely: "National Stability dependant on National Virtue." It is difficult to imagine any opposition to the argument. In speeches, sermons, and elsewhere, the notion that virtue was necessary for the survival of nations was constantly reiterated as a great truth. In the words of the South Carolina writer William Gilmore Simms, "It is the accumulation of personal character, that lays the great foundation of national renown…. The causes which make a nation triumph, have their roots in the successes of the citizen." Similarly, Charles Taggart thought it was not "mere pulpit cant," but rather a worthwhile exercise, to remind his

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[23]Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992); Kramer, *Nationalism*, esp. 18-41; Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism*; Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 7; Frederick A. Porcher, *An Oration Delivered Before the Inhabitants of Pineville, So. Ca., on Monday, July 4, 1831, the 56th Anniversary of the Declaration of American Independence* (Charleston, S.C.: Printed by J. S. Burges, 1831), 13.

Charleston congregation "that as all that gives permanent value to individual character is *moral* excellence, so the only true basis of *national* greatness is *moral* power." These connections between individual virtue and the fate of the nation carried national responsibility into the everyday lives of individual Americans.[24]

Two states to the north, a group of Virginians were being told much the same thing by William Clark, an Independence Day speaker. For the good of the whole, he affirmed, individuals ought to live morally upright lives. Accordingly, and as many other public figures, both clergy and lay, would have agreed, Clark urged Americans to live moral lives themselves and to train their children—the Americans of the future—to do the same. "The energy of a Government," as he put it, "does not repose upon the repulsion of foreign invasion or the subjection of lawless passion, but with its plastic though unseen hand moulds each rising generation to whom its destinies will in turn be committed." Ensuring that one's children—and oneself—lived virtuous lives was a vital national responsibility for citizens of a republic, since a republican form of government depended as no other on the continued virtue of its people. As Clark pointed out, George Washington himself had believed this to be the truth, having commented in his Farewell Address on the dependence of national morality on individual virtue. From the vantage point of 1853, Clark believed that Americans were

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[24]Letter from a student [name illegible] to William Porcher Miles, March 25, 1848, William Porcher Miles Papers, SHC; William Gilmore Simms, *Self-Development. An Oration, Delivered before the Literary Societies of Oglethorpe University, Georgia; November 10, 1847.* (Milledgeville, Ga.: Published by the Thalian Society, 1847), 23; Charles M. Taggart, *The Moral Mission of Our Country. Two Discourses Delivered Before the Unitarian Christians, of Charleston, S.C. on Sunday, July 3d* (Charleston, S.C.: Steam Power-Press of Walker and James, 1853), 8. In an 1842 speech, William Gilmore Simms connected personal and national morality thus: "The vices which have degraded the nation first had their beginning in the household. The character of a popular Government is that of its society." Simms, *The Social Principle: The True Source of National Permanence. An Oration, delivered before the Erosophic Society of the University of Alabama, December 13, 1842.* Reprinted from 1843 edition, with a preface by David Moltke-Hansen. (Columbia, SC: Southern Studies Program, University of South Carolina, 1980). As Peter Parish has suggested, the voluntaristic dimension of American nationalism—the fact that it was viewed as more of a choice than an imposition—"meant that citizens had an interest, a stake, in the national community," and therefore saw close connections between individual success and national success. Parish, "An Exception to Most of the Rules," 223-224.

doing well in this regard: the republican experiment was working. And the most important ingredient for continued national success, he thought, was clear: "that each freeman of the land holds himself the *indispensable* guardian of his country."[25]

Lurking behind many such proclamations lay considerable anxiety that the current generation might not be up to the task; that the great American experiment bequeathed to them by the founders might fail. Such uncertainty had been a constant theme of American nationalism from the start, reflecting an essentially pessimistic conception of human nature, human history, and human destiny. Antebellum Americans, just like their revolutionary forebears, were aficionados of the jeremiad, and never tired of warning each other about the dangers ahead. An unhealthy love of money was one much-berated defect of the national character, as was a brand of politics that came dangerously close to demagoguery, excessive partisanship, or just plain corruption. Slavery in the South, abolitionism in the North, and sectional conflict in general constituted another type of threat that appeared to imperil the very survival of the republic. All these dangers, and more, raised the possibility of national failure, which would have meant a failure in the duty with which the revolutionary generation had entrusted future Americans. "O Fathers," many antebellum Americans worried, "have ye bled in vain?"[26]

Republican thought, then, mandated a similarly grave national responsibility for each individual as did Christianity, the other major pillar of antebellum American nationalism.

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[25]William L. Clark, Jr., *Importance of Integrity of National Character. An Oration, Delivered by Invitation of the Citizens of Winchester, Virginia, in the Old Lutheran Church, July 4, 1853* (Winchester, Va.: Printed by Senseney & Coffroth, 1853), 10, 15.

[26]Using evidence drawn almost exclusively from the northern states, Paul Nagel's *This Sacred Trust* extensively documents antebellum Americans' conceptions of American nationalism as a burden, a trust which they constantly worried they might not be able to fulfill. For concerns that antebellum Americans were not living up to the example of their revolutionary forefathers, and the "O Fathers…" quote, see Kammen, *A Season of Youth*, 49-51.

Indeed, it was often observed—by E. W. Caruthers, for one—that these two combined together to ground American nationalism in the daily behavior of individuals. It was quite a burden that this combination imposed; Americans believed that they had been allotted, as Daniel Webster famously remarked, a "sacred trust."

While many Americans identified the virtuous and pious behavior of individuals as the major determinant of the fate of their nation, ultimately a different set of problems would be more directly responsible for the breakup of the Union. Despite its strengths, antebellum American nationalism was unfinished, a work in progress, and therefore open to diverse interpretations. This enabled the development of certain tensions—tensions between the universal and the particular; the civic and the ethnic; between the idea of the nation and its institutional expression—which fractured American nationalism and opened up the intellectual space within which a southern variant could develop.

These tensions derived in part from the problem of boundaries. Though boundaries—in terms of both territory and people—have been seen by many commentators as a crucial element of modern nationalisms, the boundaries of the antebellum American nation rarely seemed fixed. These boundaries were unsettled not only by new waves of immigrants, but also by the westward expansion that was underway throughout the antebellum years. And even more germane to our present concerns, antebellum Americans believed that their nation and its ideals were becoming more important in the rest of the world as well. In May 1848 one Georgia newspaper, introducing reports of the European uprisings of that year, thought that such events would be of obvious interest to Americans. After all, "It has been the example of the United States which has taught the oppressed of the old world that man is

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capable of self-government," and thereby generated the events of 1848. Americans have rarely been modest about the significance of their nation's founding, but the European revolutions of 1848 elevated national pride to new heights.[27]

Connections between the American and the European revolutions were drawn even more than usual as Americans celebrated their national anniversary on the Fourth of July, 1848. As Nelson Mitchell, addressing an Independence Day crowd in Charleston, explained:

> The American revolution, regarded merely as the division of one country from another was, comparatively, an ordinary occurrence among European nations, but considered as establishing the dogma that governments were to be the work of the popular will, it formed an era in the history of the world.

The implication was that Americans had inaugurated the next stage of world history—the stage defined by the great truth of self-government—and everyone else was still trying to catch up. Such a conviction was not limited to the Charleston elite. Rather, it reverberated across the South that Fourth of July. In Richmond, anniversary celebrations were infused with the conviction that the American Revolution was inspiring Ireland, France, and, ultimately, the rest of the globe. Virginians drank to such toasts as "Our Country, the cradle of Liberty: May her example be followed until the whole world is redeemed from the shackles of tyranny"; and "The Day we Celebrate. Americans hail it as their country's natal day. May all nations ere long date from it their political regeneration." The promise of the American Revolution—the promise of American nationalism—was considered to be exportable, something from which other nations could learn and benefit. Gazing across the

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[27]*Columbus* [GA] *Enquirer*, May 2, 1848. For representative examples, see A. B. Meek "Ireland. A Fragment. – 1848," *Songs and Poems of the South* (Mobile, Ala.: S. H. Goetzel & Co., 1857), 198; Bartholomew Carroll and B. F. Porter, *Speeches of Hon. B. F. Porter, and B. R. Carroll, Esq., Delivered Before the Association of the Friends of Irish Independence, in Charleston, So. Ca., on Wednesday Evening, May 31st, 1848* (Charleston, S.C.: Burges, James & Paxton, Printers, 1848). On the connections between early American nationalism and the transatlantic reform spirit, see Kohn, *American Nationalism*, esp. chapter 1.

Atlantic in 1848, Americans saw fellow lovers of liberty who deserved to share in the blessings of American ideals.[28]

Some historians have rightly pointed out the limitations of such expansive idealism, especially in the South.[29] And it is certainly true that conservative opinion, and especially the anxieties of hierarchy-obsessed slaveholders, quickly soured on the perceived excesses of European radicalism. But even so, mainstream American—and southern—opinion continued to celebrate the extra-national significances of American national ideals. The exporting of those ideals might only be appropriate under certain circumstances, but that did not change the fact that, in theory, they were exportable. Reflecting on sectional dangers to the Union in 1850, for instance, one southern editor declared that the stakes involved were global. "The hopes of mankind" were with the Union, for "It is their Beacon, and its light has attracted the gaze of millions." And Fourth of July toasts in the early 1850s continued to relate America's independence to the "martyrs of freedom in Ireland, Poland and Hungary." Later in the decade, when South Carolinian James Johnston Pettigrew happened to arrive in Italy on the Fourth of July, he too was struck by the same connection between the American Revolution and other nation's struggles for independence and self-government. The principles of liberty and self-government that defined American national identity were not, then, confined to the

[28]Nelson Mitchell, *Oration, Delivered before the Fourth of July Association, by Nelson Mitchell, Esq., on the Fourth of July, 1848* (Charleston, S.C.: James S. Burges, 1849), 16; *Richmond Enquirer*, July 11, 1848, July 18, 1848. Thomas Bender has recently emphasized the connections between European revolutions and American ideals: *A Nation Among Nations: America's Place in World History*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006), 116-181.

[29]Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene Genovese, *The Mind of the Master Class: History and Faith in the Southern Slaveholders' Worldview* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 41-68; Michael A. Morrison, "American Reaction to European Revolutions, 1848-1852: Sectionalism, Memory, and the Revolutionary Heritage," *Civil War History* 49:2 (2003): 111-132; Charles M. Wiltse, "A Critical Southerner: John C. Calhoun on the Revolutions of 1848," *Journal of Southern History* 15 (1949): 299-310. As Michael Hunt has shown, American reactions to the revolutions of mid-century reflected a longstanding American ambivalence toward other countries' revolutions: Michael H. Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New Haven, Ct.: Yale University Press, 1987), 92-124, esp. 102-106.

United States alone. Rather, America had a global mission to perform: to stand as a model for the rest of humanity, and do what it could to ensure that these universal truths spread across the globe.[30]

It was precisely this expansive, inclusive, potentially universal quality of American nationalism that James Ramsay, speaking in a small North Carolina town in 1860, conveyed. "Love of Country," he believed "is the largest philanthropy." And that philanthropy might logically extend even beyond the borders of one's own nation and into the world beyond. British prison reformer John Howard and nurse Florence Nightingale were perfect examples: they had "scarcely been conscious of partiality for England, and yet their love for their brother, enlarged from a part to the whole, until patriotism attended its fullest measure." If one followed the logic of national responsibility, in other words, one might discover that its conclusion, far from halting at a national border, in fact embraced the whole of humanity. And furthermore, because "Love of Country is synonymous with love of liberty and of truth," Ramsay implied that the true patriot might even find himself in a position in which his commitment to abstract values of liberty and truth proved more important than his love for his particular country. Indeed, as Ramsay explained, this was precisely the situation that had activated the American revolutionaries: their pursuit of justice and truth had proved to be incompatible with their affection for Britain, and the course of true patriotism had been to

[30]*Brownlow's Knoxville Whig*, July 6, 1850; *Richmond Enquirer*, July 16, 1850; James Johnston Pettigrew, *Notes on Spain and the Spaniards, in the Summer of 1859, With a Glance at Sardinia. By a Carolinian* (Charleston, S.C.: Steam-Power Presses of Evans & Cogswell, 1861), 1-2. See also William Roane Aylett, handwritten Fourth of July Speech, ca. 1850-1853, Aylett Family Papers, Mss1AY445b918, VHS; Anthony McCulloh, *An Oration Delivered Before the Oglethorpe Light Infantry, at Woodhome Near Savannah* (Savannah, Ga.: Purse's Print, 1856), 7-10; Rossiter, *The American Quest*.

abandon their existing country and create a new one. Membership in a nation had been a matter of rational choice, not geographic destiny.[31]

The connections between American nationalism and global humanitarianism intrigued others, too. Reviewing an early anthology of American poetry, northerner John Dwight questioned whether a true American national literature was possible at all. After all, American ideals were "human, wide, universal, and not merely patriotic and national. It is not the love of country, but the love of man, and the recognition of spiritual equality of all men, which is the idea of our constitution." Such, one presumes, is what sociologist Liah Greenfeld had in mind when she contended that "A nation coextensive with humanity is in no way a contradiction in terms."[32]

The idea of a nationalism with universal aspirations has something of an oxymoronic ring to it. It may not have sounded quite so odd in the mid-nineteenth century: "Nationalism, in its youth," as historian Don Doyle has pointed out, "was cosmopolitan, liberal, humanitarian, and above all international."[33] But even so, the apparent contradiction raises important questions about the character of nationalism in the antebellum United States. If American national identity was based on abstract principles, on universal idealism, what then made it peculiarly American? If its defining ideals were intended for international export, did not that repudiate the very notion of a distinctive American national identity?

This problem exposes an important tension, inherent in American nationalism, between universality and particularity. As we have seen, American nationalism—indeed, modern

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[31]Ramsay, *Love of Country,* 8-10.

[32]Dwight quoted in Kohn, *American Nationalism*, 67. Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 7. The following paragraphs, and this whole section of the chapter, owe much to Greenfeld's analysis.

[33]Doyle, *Nations Divided*, 23.

nationalism in general—emerged alongside and in combination with modern concepts of universal rights, popular sovereignty, and democracy. And while from our perspective the early United States' commitment to such rights was conspicuously limited, the *concept* of universal rights, particularly the sovereign right of self-government, was central to American national thought. In American nationalism just as in other nationalisms, universality—nationalism as a vehicle for liberty, equality, sovereignty, and other ideals which are not confined to one particular place—coexisted uneasily with particularity—nationalism as attachment to place, distinctive culture, race, and institutional expressions of the nation. This tension can be usefully examined in two manifestations: first, the gestures that antebellum Americans were making towards "ethnic" or cultural, as opposed to "civic" or political forms of nationalism; and, second, the problems involved in attaching the ideas of American nationalism to institutional frameworks (attaching the nation, in other words, to the government).

Commentators have generally assumed that America has exemplified the "civic" model of nationalism: a liberal, inclusive, and expandable phenomenon based on shared ideals and open political practices. Much of what we have seen so far supports this view. However, antebellum Americans were also developing other strands of nationalism which tended more towards the "ethnic" model: a more limited and exclusive phenomenon based on particularities of culture, ethnicity, and place. Here, the influence of European ideas was crucial. As we have seen, certain aspects of American nationalism seemed available for export to Europe, and it was also true that certain aspects of European romantic nationalism seemed available for import to America. From Germans Johann Herder and Johann Fichte, Americans both North and South embraced the idea that each nation was defined by its own,

unique national culture, comprising literature and other art forms, language, and ways of life in general. From French historian Jules Michelet, they discovered the notion that each nation had its own spirit, which resided in "the people." And from Italian Joseph Mazzini and Hungarian Louis Kossuth, they learned a faith in the absolute claim of place, and the certainty that genuine nations ought to be allowed to exist, with their own people, in their own homeland. Thus a textbook used in southern schools reprinted a brief passage by Kossuth, a teary-eyed tribute to his primal devotion to the soil of his birth, to the national liberation to which he had devoted his life. Readers were clearly expected to sympathize with Kossuth, the personification of the nineteenth-century romantic nationalist.[34]

There were certainly limits to the importation of European concepts of nationalism. As citizens of a relatively young country, it would have been difficult for Americans to follow some European nationalists and claim an ancient origin for their national identity, divining from the mists of time a recognizable and nationally distinctive people.[35] Of course, that did not stop some from trying, and there were those who would have claimed for white Americans a longstanding racial distinctiveness, derived from a branch of the Anglo-Saxon "race," and a concomitant mystical national "spirit" that lived on. But the large majority of Americans instead recognized their status as a sort of melting pot of a variety of European

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[34]Kurt Mueller-Vollmer, "The Discourse of a National Literature in the Early Republic, 1785-1846," in *Negotiations of America's National Identity*, 2 vols., eds. Roland Hagenbuchle and Josef Raab, in cooperation with Marietta Messmer (Tubingen: Stauffenburg Verlag, 2000), I: 280-295; Ross, *Southern Speaker*, 161. The recent scholars most commonly identified with the civic versus ethnic binary are Liah Greenfeld, Michael Ignatieff, and Rogers Brubaker. However, most commentators would agree that neither model is found in pure form: any given nationalism contains strands of each. See Anthony D. Smith, *The Nation in History: Historiographical Debates about Ethnicity and Nationalism* (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 2000), 5-26.

[35]This is not to suggest that European nationalists were necessarily historically accurate, but rather to observe that the creation of even a spurious legend of ancient national origin would have been much more difficult to sustain in the American case. See *The Invention of Tradition*, eds. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

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peoples (Native Americans and African Americans were considered to be beyond the pale) of relatively recent vintage.

Even so, the idea of a distinctive national culture, if not of a distinctive bloodline, appealed to many. It was generally accepted that a nation's culture, its character, was reflected in its literature. It logically followed that if America were a nation—if it truly possessed a national identity of its own—then it should have a unique literature. And sure enough, antebellum Americans were notoriously sensitive to European scorn about the dearth of distinctive literature in the United States. Many issued calls that the situation ought to be rectified. Such calls emanated most famously from New England—from Ralph Waldo Emerson, Margaret Fuller, and others of their ilk—but they came from southern literary figures as well. The Alabama writer Alexander Beaufort Meek, for instance, followed European thinkers in the belief that literature was a sort of spiritual expression of a people. Accordingly, thought Meek, "The literatures of all other nations are entirely inadequate, unfit for Americanism. We must have a literature congenial to our institutions, to our position, to our great democratic faith." Such a literature was already being developed in the 1840s, when Meek wrote these words, and was based in his estimation on several key peculiarities of American life: the beauty of America's natural environment; the character of the ethnically-mixed American people; the American political ideals of equality and liberty; and, finally, the system of federalism, which minimized the potentially debilitating effects of centralized authority, and promoted creative competition among different states and localities. All of this meant that even though American literature might not yet have reached the highest heights, its potential was great.[36]

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[36]Alexander Beaufort Meek, *Americanism in Literature. an Oration Before the Phi Kappa and Demosthenian Societies of the University of Georgia, at Athens, August 8, 1844* (Charleston, S.C.: Burges and

In a review of Meek's work, William Gilmore Simms, the antebellum South's most prominent writer, lauded his intent and explication. The United States was still in its infancy, Simms conceded, but was nonetheless becoming ready to claim for itself a strong and permanent national identity. "We have," he felt sure, "our own national mission to perform." In order to perform that mission, though, literary Americans had to understand the difference between writing <u>for</u> a people, which any skilled writer might do, and writing <u>from</u> a people, which required intimate knowledge and sympathies, and which alone could establish a true national culture. A nation's "poets and artists," he wrote, "to feel her wants, her hopes, her triumphs, must be born of her soil, and ardently devoted to its claims." Simms here gave voice to a central component of the romantic nationalism that was such a powerful force in mid-nineteenth-century Europe: the notion that a visceral attachment to a particular soil, land, or place, generated powerful connections between individuals and their nation. This clearly contrasted with that important strand of American nationalism which emphasized individuals' voluntary connection to the American nation through ideas: an almost contractual acceptance of the principles of self-government, liberty, equality. Simms revealed, then, an alternative strand of American nationalism, one based more on emotion and time-honored specificity of place than on reason and recognition of common principles.[37]

James, printers, 1844), quotation at p. 30; "National Ballads," *Southern Literary Messenger* 15.1 (January 1849): 10-15; Matt W. Ransom*, Address Delivered Before the Dialectic and Philanthropic Societies of the University of North Carolina, June 4, 1856* (Raleigh, N.C.: "Carolina Cultivator" Office, 1856), 7-8, 21-22; Kohn, *American Nationalism*, 51-70. For prominent New England examples, see Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The American Scholar," and Margaret Fuller, "American Literature," both available in *The Heath Anthology of American Literature*, 2 vols., eds. Paul Lauter, Richard Yarborough, and Bruce-Novoa, 2nd ed. (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath and Co., 1994), I: 1529-1541, I: 1655-1662. As Hans Kohn has observed (*American Nationalism*, 59-70), though, such calls for specificity of culture were challenged in New England by assertions that universalism was a more desirable goal for literature than national "provincialism." This is a prime example of the tension between the universal and the particular in American thought.

   [37]William Gilmore Simms, "Americanism in Literature" (1845), in *The Simms Reader: Selections from the Writings of William Gilmore Simms*, Publications of the Southern Texts Society, ed. John Caldwell Guilds (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001), quotations at p. 272, 277.

Many of Simms's contemporaries agreed that attachment to country derived from instinctive attachment to an immediate locality. "All our public affections," William Rives informed the Virginia Historical Society in 1847, "take their origin in the small, but magic circle, which defines our home, and thence spread, by successive expansions, 'till they embrace and repose upon our country. The more intensely they glow at the centre, the warmer will their radiations be felt upon the circumference."[38]

Even as he drew such a perfectly ordered model of loyalty extending naturally and without diminishment from the local to the national, however, Rives expressed some concern that national responsibility might detract from appropriate fealty to the state, in this case Virginia. W. W. Avery, a North Carolinian, was similarly uneasy that the federal-state balance in his own state was leaning perilously away from Raleigh and towards Washington, D.C. He accordingly thought it important to attempt to inculcate "state pride" into the young men of North Carolina. Avery shared Rives' basic assumption:

> love for the land of our birth, … is one of the strongest instincts of our nature, and incites nobler actions, and induces greater sacrifices, than any other impulse of man's bosom. Love of birth-place and home, is developed simultaneously with those warm affections for parents—brothers—friends, that exist around the family hearth, and which, if cultivated, cluster ever after about the human heart.

Also like Rives, Avery thought that such affection extended outward, "until it comprises within its devotion the entire Government of the country we inhabit." But unlike Rives, Avery was gravely concerned that patriotism was a finite substance, which meant that the

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[38]"Mr. Rives' Address," *Virginia Historical Register* 1 (January 1848), quoted in O'Brien, *Conjectures of Order*, I: 336. See also Bonner, "Americans Apart," 183-185. Rives foreshadowed twentieth-century scholar Morton Grodzin's point: that national loyalty was based on local loyalties, and that "One fights for the joys of his pinochle club when he is said to fight for his country." David M. Potter, "The Historian's Use of Nationalism and Vice Versa," *American Historical Review* 67 (1962): 924-950, reprinted in Potter's *The South and the Sectional Conflict* (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1968), 34-83 (Grodzins quoted at p. 43).

further outward it had to spread, the thinner it became. Because "each successive enlargement of the circle of its sympathy weakens its intensity," the size of a country such as the United States presented a problem. Deriving from an immediate locality, how could patriotism reach the extent of the whole country—how could it underpin a sense of national responsibility—without becoming diluted to the point of nonexistence?[39]

Here Avery confronted an especially troubling iteration of the unfinished, fractured nature of American nationalism. If attachments to a national community derived from local attachments to place, how was the extent of the national community to be determined? Where should the boundaries be drawn? Why should a commitment to the particularities of place substantiate a community defined by the borders of the United States rather than, say, the borders of Virginia or of Cartaret County? In addition to the problem of how American national ideals could define America if they were also exportable to the rest of the world, American nationalism was troubled by the problem of why romantic-style attachments to place or to a distinct culture should bolster a community of one extent rather than another.

Complicating further this problem of boundaries was the system of federalism. In the minds of some, including William Avery, federalism solved the challenge of reconciling local allegiances with national ones. "There exists in this Republic," he explained, "the singular, yet, as time has shown, consistent anomaly of two Governments operating within the several States at the same time, and intended to work harmoniously in the same system." Antebellum Americans were aware that their federal system represented a peculiarity. Most rejoiced in the system which one South Carolinian described as "the sublime spectacle of a nation of republics, each moving harmoniously in its own sphere, and constituting together

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[39]William Waightstill Avery, *Address Delivered Before the Two Literary Societies of the University of North Carolina, June 4, 1851* (Raleigh, N.C.: William W. Holden, 1851), 7-8.

one glorious constellation." Federalism was credited with enabling the United States to expand spatially, yet retain its commitment to republican ideals and avoid the perils of a behemoth state in which centralized power led inevitably to consolidated tyranny. This point was stressed in 1857 to an audience of students at the University of North Carolina. Federalism, declared Henry Miller, was an excellent system, able as it was to "to keep together and harmonize conflicting interests and pursuits, and better adapted to the expansion of the territory, and the enlargement of the population." Others preferred to emphasize that the system had been adroitly designed to promote a certain level of competitiveness and a certain type of state allegiance that benefited states as individuals and as a group. Alexander Meek, we will recall, believed that the diffuse governmental authority of federalism helped stimulate the highest quality of literary production. The pride of belonging to a unit smaller than the whole country inspired Americans to strive for excellence.[40]

Federalism worked well, so long as Americans were able to keep their various allegiances—to locality, state, region, nation—aligned. For most educated white southerners, the flow of these allegiances was clear: from the local to the national. "I know it is very much the fashion now-a-days to talk in swelling phrase of loving your country first and your State afterwards," declared B. J. Barbour in 1854, "but I would reverse this process, for I have ever felt that I should be a better American as I was a truer Virginian." Likewise, writer William Gilmore Simms believed that service to the nation had to start on a local level. Because the United States was so large, contributions to its national literature—an undertaking of which Simms approved very much—had as a practical matter to be carried out at a more local level.

[40]Ibid., 15; Mitchell, *Oration, Delivered before the Fourth of July Association*, 24; Meek, *Americanism in Literature*, 25-30; Henry W. Hilliard, *The Spirit of Liberty: An Oration, Delivered before the Literary Societies of the University of Virginia. On the 27th July, 1859* (Montgomery, Ala.: Barrett and Wimbish, 1860); Henry W. Miller, *Address Delivered Before the Philanthropic and Dialectic Societies of the University of North Carolina, June 3, 1857* (Raleigh, N.C.: Holden & Wilson, 1857), 12.

No one could possibly comprehend the whole American nation in any work of literature, but could only hope to portray a constituent part, and thereby contribute a building block to national literature as a whole. Simms followed through on this belief in his own work, focusing on his native state of South Carolina, and his native region of the South, with the aspiration thereby to strengthen the cause of American literature. Describing one of his own books as "local, sectional," Simms declared that "to be *national* in literature, one must needs be *sectional*."[41]

Yet the nature of American federalism, with its premise of divided sovereignty and allegiance, meant that loyalty to the state (and sometimes other, more local ties) could not always be kept in alignment with national allegiance.[42] Northerner Rufus Choate recognized this clearly. "It is," Choate wrote in the late-1850s, "the great peculiarity of our system … that the affections which we give to country we give to a divided object, the states in which we live and the Union by which we are enfolded. We serve two masters. Our hearts earn two loves. We live in two countries and are commanded to be capacious of both."[43]

Antebellum southerners spent a great deal of time contemplating the varying claims upon them of these two "countries," the state and the nation. A particularly intriguing analysis of this problem came from Alfred Huger, the aging Charleston postmaster. Writing to a politician friend in the summer of 1860, Huger lamented the current state of public affairs.

[41]B. Johnson Barbour, *An Address Delivered Before the Literary Societies of the Virginia Military Institute, at Lexington, on the 4th of July, 1854* (Richmond, Va.: Macfarlane & Fergusson, 1854), 19; William Gilmore Simms, dedication to *Wigwam and the Cabin* (1856), in *The Simms Reader*, ed. Guilds, 9.

[42]As David Potter memorably observed, it was entirely possible for these different levels of loyalty—the local, the state, and the national—to be kept in alignment and even to reinforce one another. Whereas this continued to be the case for Civil War-era northerners, it proved impossible for their southern counterparts (Potter, "The Historian's Use of Nationalism and Vice Versa").

[43]Choate's 1858 Fourth of July address, quoted in Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 472-473. As Forrest McDonald has demonstrated, the balance of authority between the states and the federal government was a major and recurring problem in America's politics and intellectual life for the first century of its existence: *States Rights and the Union: Imperium in Imperio* (Lawrence, Ks.: University Press of Kansas, 2000).

"My personal feelings are, as you know, National & Federal," he wrote; he felt loyalty both to the Union and to the state of South Carolina. Yet he differentiated between the nature of the two loyalties in a way that can help us appreciate the different ways in which other antebellum southerners conceptualized their relationship to their state on the one hand, and their nation on the other. "My allegiance to So Ca, is natural, spiritual, & holy!" he wrote, "it lives in my affections, & it will die only, when my Heart ceases its pulsations! My affinity with this American confederacy is political, but made sacred by Every recollection that can be consider'd 'honourable'!" In other words, Huger's relationship to his state was a visceral, emotional one, charged with religious feeling, whereas his relationship to the American nation was based more on reason and political principle, enhanced by long association. In his case, dual allegiances to state and nation corresponded to the kind of opposition which we have been examining: the romantic and the particular, as against the rational and universal. Though not everyone responded to the problem of dual allegiance in precisely the same way, Huger's insightful distinction between different kinds of allegiance clarifies how the federal system contained the potential to exacerbate one of the principal tensions in American nationalism.[44]

Largely because of federalism, the very concept of "country" was unstable in the United States. Country was sometimes used in the modern sense—to mean a nation with its own, independent government—but was just as often used to signify a single state, and sometimes an area even smaller than that. "If an American be asked abroad of what country are you," the planter and historian William Trescot asserted in 1859, "his first impulse is to answer, I am a New Yorker, a Virginian, a Massachusetts man, or a Carolinian, as the fact may be. Whatever his pride in his nationality, his home instincts and affections are bounded by State

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[44]Alfred Huger to William Porcher Miles, June 1, 1860, William Porcher Miles Papers, SHC.

lines." In explaining the nature of allegiance to the state, Trescot saw its foundation in

lifelong attachment to a specific place. "On every American heart," as he put it, "there is

written the name of some locality, obscure, hidden away from the historians and

geographers ... the spot still around which all that is truly his life revolves." This might be the

place where as a boy he had witnessed a public appearance of the governor, or where he had

cast his vote as a young man—"the spot, in short, where local interests, acting on local

affections, introduced him from boyhood into a sphere of higher activity." For Trescot as for

Huger, then, the primal attachment to one's native locality, a classic foundation of romantic-

style nationalism, attached him not the United States but to the state of South Carolina. The

concepts of country and of nation were, due in large part to the system of federalism,

unstable ones, and they did not necessarily connote the United States as a whole.[45]

The first generations of Americans expended much thought on the problems of the

balance between state and federal authority, allegiance, and identity. Federalism bestowed

upon the United States a nationality of peculiar shape and disputed meaning, which had

generated many a disagreement. Among the most persistent set of questions were those

involving the location of sovereignty and the relationship between individual Americans and

state and federal governments. Ever since the Constitution had been written, Americans had

been debating whether or not it had created a unitary nation. While the contest had taken a

variety of forms, the basic dispute involved two opposing positions: one which held that the

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[45]William H Trescot, "Oration Delivered Before the South-Carolina Historical Society, Thursday, May 19, 1859," in *Collections of the South Carolina Historical Society* (Charleston, S.C.: South Carolina Historical Society, 1859), III: 9-10. Georgian Charles Dunwody similarly used classic foundations of romantic nationalism to explain state allegiance. While he loved his country, he said in 1860, he loved his state more. This attachment was lent emotional power by its association with his dead ancestors and his unborn forbears: "The memories of the departed dead cluster thick around her; beneath her sods rest the remains of those loved ones who gave me birth, and within my bosom my own offspring sleep." Charles A. Dunwody, *Address of Charles A. Dunwody, Before the Citizens of Roswell and the Roswell Guards, July 4, A.d. 1860* (Marietta, Ga.: Statesman Book and Job Office Print, 1860), 12.

Union was a sacred, unbreakable pact; and another which held that the Union was a rational compact of its time, one which the various states, retaining the sovereignty which had enabled them to make the compact in the first place, had every right to revisit, rethink, and perhaps even withdraw from. Leading white southerners in the antebellum years were ever likely to support the latter position. Looking back, it seemed to many that the founding generation had not created—had never intended to create—a unitary nation.

Reflecting in the 1840s on the consequences of the American Revolution, William Gilmore Simms concluded of the revolutionary era that "The common cause did not make us a common family …. The ligaments which now chiefly bind us together, are those of our political union." William Henry Trescot employed a different metaphor to similar effect. He compared the revolutionary–era colonies-cum-states to "the immense masses of ice which sometimes congregate in northern seas, floating in such immediate contact that they must close into one compact body," or face the risk of crashing together. Even so, the founders had really only created a government, not a nation, since "it was impossible that a nation could be made in one generation." After all, "national love must be a matter of feeling, not reason," and even though "reason" had enabled Americans to construct a government, the deficiency of "feeling"—which persisted even in the late-1840s—rendered genuine nationhood elusive. Let us reflect, for a moment, on the language employed by both Trescot and Simms. The United States, as they put it, was a "political union" based on "reason," but did not constitute a "common family" based on "feeling." Their terminology obviously echoes the distinction between "civic" and "ethnic" models of nationalism. While the United States had succeeded

in establishing the former, according to these southern writers, there was little evidence of the strength of the latter.[46]

Elsewhere, Trescot employed a slightly different distinction in appraising the limited success of the founders' nation-building. "While our forefathers framed a government," he wrote, "they failed to create a nation." What they had done was to erect the structure of a government over the bodies of two separate nations—one North, one South—and Americans' sectional problems stemmed from the apparent failure to "reconcile these two people, and to identify the Nation with the Government."[47]

The distinction between nation and government would prove to be a crucial one in the argument for southern nationalism. Many of Trescot's contemporaries differentiated between a government—the institutional apparatus of a national state—and a nation—a community of people who shared common interests, mutual affection, and a national identity. Baltimore's Brantz Mayer used this very distinction to explain what he saw as the failure of Mexico as a nation. In order for there to be a genuine "nation, in the true sense of nationality," he thought, its people "should be intimately united by bonds of interest, sympathy and affection. Such a nation may form a government, but it is difficult for a government to form such a nation." Clergyman Benjamin Palmer recognized a similar gap between nation and government in the

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[46]William Gilmore Simms, *The Sources of American Independence: An Oration, on the Sixty-Ninth Anniversary of American Independence, Delivered at Aiken, South-Carolina, before the Town Council and Citizens Thereof* (Aiken, S.C.: Published by Council, 1844), 31; William H. Trescot, *Oration: Delivered Before the Washington Light Infantry. On the 22d February. 1847* (Charleston, S.C.: Printed by Walter & Burke, 1847), 10-11.

[47]William Henry Trescot, *Oration Delivered Before the Beaufort Volunteer Artillery, on July 4th, 1850* (Charleston, S.C.: Press of Walker & James, 1850), 11-12. Modern scholars have tended to agree that the founding generation may have created a government, but not a nation. See, for example, Parish, "An Exception to Most of the Rules," 220; John M. Murrin, "A Roof Without Walls: The Dilemma of American National Identity," in *Beyond Confederation: Origins of the Constitution and American National Identity*, ed. Richard Beeman, et al. (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1987).

case of the Jews, whom he described as "a people without a country—a nation without a Government—a State without a place."[48]

In distinguishing between a government and a nation, southern nationalists could look to Europe for support and for examples. This distinction underpinned the principle of nationality that prevailed in both European and American thought, and it underpinned the movement of active nationalism that swept nineteenth-century Europe. The basis of the claims of German, Hungarian, Italian, Irish, and other nationalists, after all, was that there existed iniquitous discrepancies between the nation, or people, and the unit of governance. Nationalists demanded that nation and government be aligned: "Every nation a state," as Italian nationalist Joseph Mazzini memorably put it, and "only one state for the entire nation." The British historian Lord Acton, commenting on the Hungarian nationalist movement, phrased it even more concisely: "The state and nation must be co-extensive."[49]

South Carolinian William Porter similarly distinguished between a State—by which, a little confusingly, he meant a sovereign people, a national community—and the government under which they lived. "A State is something higher, more sacred and permanent than its government," he thought: "Surely, Government is the handiwork of man, but States and Nations are of God." And in the case of the United States, he was convinced, the artifice of the federal government had been created by the people of the several states, acting as

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[48]Mayer quoted in O'Brien, *Conjectures of Order*, 206; Palmer, *Influence of Religious Belief Upon National Character*, 16. Even Webster's dictionary assumed that nations did not always match up to governments. A nation was "A body of people inhabiting the same country, or united under the same sovereign or government," but "it often happens that many nations are united under the same government, in which case, the word *nation* usually denotes a body of people speaking the same language, or a body that has formerly been under a distinct government, but has been conquered, or incorporated with a larger nation." (*An American Dictionary of the English Language, by Noah Webster*, Unabridged, Pictorial Edition [Philadelphia, Pa.: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1859].)

[49]Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism*, 101 (Mazzini quotation) *et passim*; Bender, *A Nation Among Nations*, 126-127 (Acton quotation). More recently, as we saw in the introduction, Michael Hechter has observed a "broad consensus" that nationalism can be defined as the effort to equate a nation with a "governance unit." (Hechter, *Containing Nationalism* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2000], 4-6.)

separate and sovereign communities: "our system is Federal, and not National; … the Government is the offspring of the people of the States, and not of the people collectively." The founders had not intended the Union or the government of the United States to usurp the sovereignty of the states; to create a "consolidated" nation. States were the communities that enjoyed independent sovereignty, and states, not the Union, ought to claim the "primary allegiance" of each American. Indeed, the United States should not be thought of as a nation at all:

> We have not now, and never had, a distinctive name as a nation, for 'America' is common to the whole continent on either side of the isthmus; and under the Constitution we are the same 'United States of America' that we were under the articles of Confederation.

For Porter, the lack of a proper national name signified the larger consequence of American federalism: that the United States was no nation at all.[50]

All of this must lead us to the conclusion that American nationalism contained within itself potentially fatal fractures. The system of federalism instituted the problematic concept of divided sovereignty, and therefore divided allegiance. Modern nationalisms have been largely based on the premise that sovereignty, the right of self-government, resides in a distinct community of people. By dividing sovereignty, though, American federalism neglected to define where the boundaries of sovereignty—and therefore the boundaries of national community—actually lay. Did South Carolinians enjoy a sovereignty—and therefore, potentially, a nationality—that was independent of Pennsylvanians? Did the institutional, governmental embodiment of nationality exist in Washington, D.C., or in the state capitals?

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[50]William D. Porter, *State Pride: An Oration Delivered Before the Calliopean and Polytechnic Societies of the State Military School, at Charleston, on the 5th April, 1860* (Charleston, S.C.: Walker, Evans, & Co., 1860), 11-12, 16, 20. Modern scholars, too, have been careful to include a unique name as an important criterion of nationality.

How should Americans balance allegiance to state with allegiance to nation, and which ought to take priority?

Even if the problems of federalism could be resolved, what of the tension between American nationalism as universal idealism and American nationalism as cultural specificity? The nation had been founded, after all, on the supposition that membership in a nation was a matter of choice rather than destiny, and Americans had often viewed their nation's lofty ideals as transcending national boundaries. If American ideals appeared to conflict with the institutional government of the United States, ought not the ideals to take precedence? Was this not precisely what had driven the American revolutionary generation to declare their independence? Of course, by the 1850s the powerful bonds of an apparently distinctive American national identity, influenced by romantic nationalism in Europe, strengthened the sense of a united national community. But just as often, the bonds of blood, kinship, history, and attachment to place pointed southerners towards primary allegiance to the state, or even more localized communities than that. American nationalism was a peculiar creature, rent with potentially devastating fractures.

This is not to say that American nationalism in the mid-nineteenth century was a fragile house of cards, ready to collapse at the first puff of disunionism. Rather, it had grown into a potentially strong framework. It was held up by the pillars of Christianity and republican political principles, which combined to connect individuals' everyday behavior with national responsibility. And American national identity was fortified by historical associations, commitment to an American mission, and notions of a distinctive national culture. But the important point is that these intellectual and cultural elements of American nationalism were not securely fastened to the political union of the states—Americanism, in other words, was

detachable from the federal government. Again, this is not to say that such a detachment was inevitable or even probable. But the fractures produced by federalism and the tension between universality and particularity, leavened with anxiety about the fate of the American experiment, opened up the intellectual space within which alternative conceptions of American nationality might develop. They opened up, that is, the intellectual space within which a handful of radicals could dream of an independent southern nation. It is to their dreams that we now turn.

II. DREAMS: SOUTHERN NATIONALISM BEFORE NATIONHOOD

Not all white southerners valued their membership in the American nation. A small group of radicals argued, instead, for a dismantling of the present Union and the establishment of the political independence of what, in their eyes, was a distinctive southern nation. What motivated these first southern nationalists, and how did they make their case?

In a Fourth of July speech at Whippy Swamp, South Carolina, in 1855, the planter and politician Lewis Ayer laid out the major components of what I have termed active southern nationalism. Other political issues, he contended, were an imprudent distraction from what ought to be white southerners' number one priority: the establishment of "our Southern Confederacy." In advocating southern nationalism, Ayer made the most of the fact that he was speaking on the Fourth of July. Aligning the southern independence movement of the 1850s with the American independence movement of the 1770s, he argued that the North and the South were as different from one another as the colonies and England had been. In both cases, oppression at the hands of central power mandated separation. Furthermore, in describing the inferior status of white southerners within the American nation, Ayer drew international comparisons, including parallels with imperial subjects in places such as India and Ireland. National independence was clearly a better option than these kinds of second-class citizenship. "Who would not rather be a citizen of one of the free Cantons of happy little Switzerland," he asked, "than a subject of immense Russia?"

But why had the South become a lesser partner in the American nation? Why did membership in the United States equal oppression at the hands of the North? Ayer made no secret of the fact that it was slavery that made the South different from the North, nor of the fact that it was the North's increasing distaste for slavery that motivated his calls for national independence. Slavery, he claimed, had enabled the South to develop a truly great society, in which prosperity was shared broadly. And if slavery were abolished, as proponents of northern "fanaticism" desired, Ayer predicted devastating upheavals in southern society—as had already happened in Jamaica. The way Ayer described the nature of the northern offensive reveals the emotional intensity which propelled the radicals toward active southern nationalism:

> We stand like men, who, in the waste of a wide prairie, should see the wildfire circling them all around, leaping, rushing, careering along upon the deep dry-grass, and ever and anon caught up on the arms of a sweeping whirlwind, and lifted until its red flames lick the very clouds.

If white southerners did not "set fire against fire," he cautioned, they would be "overwhelmed."[1]

This image of the white South being encircled by a "leaping, rushing" wildfire provides valuable insight into the personal investment of the radicals in the cause of southern nationalism. They were by no means alone in believing that slavery was the basis of southern society, that slavery made the South superior to the North, and that slavery was endangered by northern assaults. But they were alone, before secession, in the conviction that the proper response was withdrawal from the Union and the establishment of an independent southern nation. The reason why they, and not others, made the progression from valuing slavery to believing that its preservation required national independence lay in the emotional intensity

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[1]Lewis M. Ayer, *Southern Rights and the Cuban Question. An Address, Delivered at Whippy Swamp, on the Fourth of July, 1855* (Charleston, S.C.: A.J. Burke, 1855), quotations at 19, 8-9.

with which they interpreted northern antislavery as a personal attack. Hence the potency of Lewis Ayer's wildfire metaphor.

In emphasizing this sense of personal victimhood, I draw upon psychological interpretations of the radicals by historians such as William Barney and Bertram Wyatt-Brown, and, in the particular case of William Lowndes Yancey, the recent work of Eric Walther.[2] The theme of a personalized siege mentality helps extend the conclusions of most existing studies of the radicals, by explaining their motivations and by analyzing why they proposed a different solution to the commonly accepted problem of northern antislavery.[3] Of course, most serious historians would agree that secessionism and southern nationalism were firmly based on the preservation of racial slavery.[4] This chapter expands our understanding of that fact in exploring why the protection of slavery *mattered* so much to the radicals—and why the concept of nationalism became their solution.

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[2]William L. Barney, *The Road to Secession: A New Perspective on the Old South* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1972), 85-100; Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Hearts of Darkness: Wellsprings of a Southern Literary Tradition* (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 2003), esp. 33-91; Eric H. Walther, *William Lowndes Yancey and the Coming of the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

[3]The most important works are John McCardell, *The Idea of a Southern Nation: Southern Nationalists and Southern Nationalism, 1830-1860* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1979), and Eric Walther's group biography *The Fire-Eaters* (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1992). McCardell describes the transition from "sectionalism" to "nationalism" in various of areas of life, but does not provide a fully-developed argument about *why* this transition occurred. Likewise, Walther's *The Fire-Eaters* contains fascinating insights into the characters of the most prominent radicals, but comes to no overall conclusion about their motivations. Both studies, nonetheless, have been extremely helpful in understanding the radicals' ideas.

[4]For a forceful reminder of the centrality of proslavery to secessionism in South Carolina, see Manisha Sinha, *The Counter-revolution of Slavery: Politics and Ideology in Antebellum South Carolina* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000). Although he has not fully examined secession or southern nationalism directly, Eugene Genovese has been very influential in demonstrating the extent to which southern slaveholders believed that their peculiar institution underpinned a unique "civilization" and "worldview." See especially Genovese, *The Political Economy of Slavery: Studies in the Economy and Society of the Slave South* (New York: Random House, 1965); Genovese, *The World the Slaveholders Made: Two Essays in Interpretation* (New York: Random House, 1969); Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene Genovese, *The Mind of the Master Class: History and Faith in the Southern Slaveholders' Worldview* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

I also depart from existing studies of the radicals by giving serious attention to the way they conceptualized nationalism, both in general terms and in the specific American and southern cases.[5] As Lewis Ayer's invocation of the American Revolution illustrates, the radicals grounded their argument for southern nationalism in particular interpretations of American nationalism. They sought to claim not only the legacy of the revolutionary generation but also the conceptual apparatus of American nationalism, exploiting the very ambivalences and tensions that we discussed in the previous chapter. And, as Ayer's references to Ireland, Switzerland, and Russia indicate, the radicals conceived of their proposed nationalism in comparative terms. Just as mainstream understandings of American nationalism were influenced by transatlantic ideas, so too were understandings of southern nationalism.[6] Having examined the motivations of the radicals in the first sections of this chapter, then, I go on to consider how they related their ideas to American nationalism and to nationalism across the mid-nineteenth century-world.

The radicals espoused what I have termed active nationalism. They claimed that white southerners shared sufficient markers of national identity—deriving from but extending beyond their shared interest in slavery—to warrant political status as an independent nation. They advanced extensive, self-conscious arguments to support these claims, and believed that southern nationalism should achieve fulfillment by whatever means were necessary. They thought of themselves as nationalist leaders in the same sense that,

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[5]Although McCardell's *The Idea of a Southern Nation* examines the movement toward "nationalism" in literature, religion, and so on, he does not fully explain what the radicals actually meant by nationalism, or where their ideas came from.

[6]Here I draw inspiration from Rollin G. Osterweis, *Romanticism and Nationalism in the Old South* (1949; Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1967) and, more generally, from the transatlantic emphasis of Michael O'Brien, *Conjectures of Order: Intellectual Life and the American South, 1810-1860*, 2 vols. (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

across the Atlantic, Kossuth and Mazzini were nationalist leaders. They thought of themselves as agents of the inexorable nineteenth-century force of nationalism.

It is well-known that the desire to protect racial slavery lay at the core of antebellum southern nationalism. Those who advocated for southern independence were typically explicit in pointing to slavery as the principal characteristic that defined their national identity—the overarching characteristic that rendered the South truly distinct. "Our whole fabric of society," declared Frederick Porcher, a professor of history and belles-lettres at the College of Charleston, "is based upon slave institutions." For one thing, he thought, slavery had imbued the region with a unique "considerateness," by encouraging slaveholders to treat their laboring class with more compassion and kindness than the free labor capitalists to the North treated theirs. "And it is this considerateness," he wrote, "which runs through the whole of our civilization, modifies it, gives it its character." For James Chesnut, the South Carolina politician and husband of the famous diarist Mary Boykin Chesnut, the particular form of the peculiar institution made the South unique not just in its own time, but throughout world history: "it may be regarded as *our* characteristic." William Trescot, the South Carolina planter and diplomatic historian, agreed, explaining in 1850 that slavery had "developed the physical wealth of the country;" had created "a civilization combining in admirable measure energy and refinement;" and "informs all our habits of thought, lies at the basis of our political faith and of our social existence." Quite simply, southerners were "indebted to the institution of slavery—for a national existence."[7]

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[7][Frederick A. Porcher], "Southern and Northern Civilization Contrasted." *Russell's Magazine* 1 (May 1857): 98-103; James Chesnut, Jr., "The Destinies of the South," *Southern Quarterly Review* 7 (January 1853): 187; William H. Trescot, *The Position and Course of the South* (Charleston, S.C.: Walker and James, 1850), 6.

The fact of slavery in and of itself did not, however, automatically require separate nationality for the South. There were many white southerners who valued slavery, but who did not conclude that secession was the best means of protecting it. Yet, even though the progression was not an automatic one, proslavery did lead to southern nationalism when the ramifications of the South's unique labor system were interpreted in certain ways. Nationalists cited three major consequences of slavery that necessitated southern independence. First, they argued that slavery allowed a more stable and orderly republicanism in the South than was possible in the free labor North. Not only did the instabilities of northern society threaten the stability of southern society, but the differences between slavery and free labor also generated different economic and foreign policy needs for the two sections. Second, around this same fundamental difference of the presence or absence of slavery—but ultimately transcending it—developed the belief that the South constituted a distinct society, and possessed a distinct national identity, one that it did not share with the North. Third—and most important in driving some but not other supporters of slavery toward southern nationalism—was the tendency of some white southerners to take personally the North's hostility toward slavery. Seeing that "their" institution was under attack, the radicals rallied to defend it, creating a potent sense of shared victimhood that provided a visceral stimulus for southern nationalism.

Slavery, proslavery thinkers argued, underpinned a unique society which was more conservative, more just, and more stable than its free labor counterpart to the North (or, for that matter, than all other countries who were following a similar free labor trajectory). Though not an active secessionist in the 1850s, South Carolinian William J. Grayson strengthened such arguments for southern independence with his well-known poem "The

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Hireling and the Slave," in which he compared the civilization built on southern slavery with that built on free labor. Stressing the security and order which slavery provided for all members of slave society, including the slaves themselves, Grayson portrayed free society as an unstable system marked by inequality and misery. "Guarded from want, from beggary secure," he wrote of the slave, "He never feels what hireling crowds endure."[8]

Nor, Grayson might have added, could he vote—and therein lay another crucial aspect of the distinction that southern slaveholders' drew between their own society and those of the North and western Europe. Slavery, they believed, was an indispensable foundation of true republicanism. Only by excluding the lowest sectors of the population from the voting booth could republican virtue be maintained. The best-known expression of this belief came in an 1858 United States Senate speech by South Carolinian James Henry Hammond. In the course of intervening in the ongoing issue of whether slavery was to exist in Kansas, Hammond warned the North that southerners would be better off in the event of a separation. The great strength of the South's social and economic systems, he made clear, lay in the institution of slavery. "In all social systems," he declared, "there must be a class to do the menial duties, to perform the drudgery of life…. [this class] constitutes the very mud-sill of society and of political government; and you might as well attempt to build a house in the air, as to build either the one or the other, except on this mud-sill." So all societies—including the North— had to have a "mud-sill" class. But whereas at the North the "mud-sill" was of the same race as the ruling class, the South had "found a race adapted to that purpose." And whereas at the North members of the mud-sill were "equals in natural endowment of intellect, and they feel galled by their degradation," at the South slaves were called slaves and, because of the

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[8]William J. Grayson, *The Hireling and the Slave, Chicora, and Other Poems* (Charleston, S.C.: McCarter & Co., 1856), 44. See also William J. Grayson, "The Late Financial Difficulty--Southern and Northern Labor," *Russell's Magazine* 2 (December 1857): 260-263.

marker of race, there was no question that they could be considered even remotely equal to their masters. Importantly, Hammond pointed out, in contrast to the northern mud-sill, "Our slaves do not vote," and therefore they presented no threat to political stability. But because members of the northern mud-sill were able to vote, he warned, and because the color of their skin rendered them desirous of full equality, they did present a threat—a serious one—to the stability of northern society and politics. Because of this, Hammond saw dangers in the excessive democracy of the North, that were entirely absent in the South's stable republicanism that was underpinned by southern slavery.[9]

Several of Hammond's contemporaries likewise highlighted the excesses of democracy and social equality that they saw when they looked north, and contrasted those excesses with the conservative stability afforded by slavery. Particularly stark iterations came from Hammond's fellow South Carolinian, Leonidas Spratt. Of all antebellum southern ideologues, Spratt was probably the most candid in his denunciation of democracy and human equality. In a report arguing that the African slave trade ought to be reopened, Spratt claimed that "two distinct and antagonistic forms of society have met for the contest upon the arena of this Union." Whereas the northern form "assumes that all men are equal and that equality is right, and … is straining its members to the horizontal plain of a democracy," the southern form "assumes that all men are not equal, that equality is not right." Inequality, to Spratt's mind, was especially evident in the difference between the white and black races. Whereas the

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[9]James Henry Hammond, "Speech on the admission of Kansas, under the Lecompton Constitution, delivered in the Senate of the United States, March 4, 1858," in *Selections from the Letters and Speeches of the Hon. James H. Hammond*, ed. Clyde N. Wilson (1866; Spartanburg, S.C.: The Reprint Company, Publishers, 1978), 318-320. The classic study of how earlier generations of slaveholders based their own freedom in part upon slaves' unfreedom is Edmund Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1975). On the efforts of Hammond and his generation to ground freedom and republicanism in racial slavery, see Drew Gilpin Faust, *James Henry Hammond and the Old South: A Design for Mastery* (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), and the works of Eugene Genovese in note 4, above.

North failed to recognize this, the South fully appreciated the fact, and had devised an excellent system—slavery—for enabling two races of such unequal capacities to live together in what Spratt saw as harmony. And whereas northern–style democracy and equality appeared to be the trends of their times, Spratt suggested that perhaps slavery and inequality would ultimately be vindicated as the best means of organizing a society. This is what the lessons of history suggested, after all: pointing to ancient Greece and Rome for examples, Spratt observed, "Whenever States have come to greatness they have exhibited the condition of unequal classes." He clearly believed that the South's basis in inequality resulted in a better society than did the North's basis in what he saw as excessive equality and democracy.[10]

Many defenders of slavery emphasized that the institution represented a superior system of labor-capital relations than that found in free labor systems. Southern nationalists went on to argue that the economic and political consequences of this circumstance mandated a separate polity. The relationship of capital and labor, William Trescot explained, was the "basis of social and political life." Because the North and the South had two different such bases, they had "two individual and inconsistant systems both of representation and taxation." As other southern nationalists never tired of explaining, the federal government's economic policies, specifically the protective tariff, privileged the interest of the commercially-oriented North over the South and its staple agriculture. The two sections had

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[10]"Report of the Slave Trade Committee," reprinted in *The Rising Sun* (Newberry, South Carolina), May 26, 1858. For more on Spratt and other South Carolinians who stressed the dangers of democracy in defending slavery and advocating secession, see Sinha, *Counter-revolution of Slavery*. Spratt went on to serve as a delegate to South Carolina's secession convention. In a speech as secession commissioner to Florida, he repeated his earlier arguments: "Within this government two societies have become developed …. The one is based on free labor, the other slave labor …. The one embodies the social principle that equality is the right of man; the other, the social principle that equality is not the right of man, but the right of equals only." (Charles B. Dew, *Apostles of Disunion: Southern Secession Commissioners and the Causes of the Civil War* [Charlottesville, Va.: University Press of Virginia, 2001], 43.)

different economic systems, which required different economic policies, and which, ultimately, undermined political union between them. This is precisely what a document issued by the University of Virginia's Southern Rights Association held: "The one [section] is manufacturing and navigating, the other planting and agricultural. The interests of the one incline to monopoly and exclusion, those of the other to free trade and competition."[11]

As Trescot explained, this fundamental difference also dictated different foreign policy interests for the South and the North. The whole world was split into "those who produce cotton and those who manufacture it," and because the two regions of the United States lay on opposite sides of that line, each required a different set of relations with the rest of the world. The North was obviously the competitor of manufacturing countries such as Britain, and hence adopted a stance of commercial rivalry toward them; but the interests of the South, as a supplier of such nations, entailed friendly relations. The economic and foreign policy needs of the slave-labor South and the free-labor North called, according to this line of thinking, for a political separation.[12]

Some southern nationalists employed arguments about the social, political, and economic connotations of slavery to argue for a distinctive southern national identity. For James Chesnut, different systems of labor produced different societies, cultures, and ultimately national identities: whereas southern slave-based agriculture promoted a stable and conservative civilization, free labor, commerce, and manufacturing in the North generated a frenzied spirit of competition, selfishness, and recklessness. "These qualities," he went on, 'are unfortunately apt to become national, and shew themselves in politics and morals as in

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[11]Trescot, *The Position and Course of the South*, 11-13; "Address, 1851, of the Southern Rights Association of the University of Virginia to the Young Men of the South," (n.p.), William Henry Gist Papers, USC.

[12]Trescot, *The Position and Course of the South*, 11-13.

industry." Longtime southern nationalist Nathaniel Beverley Tucker agreed. In 1848 he wrote to a friend about how happy he was to live in the slave South. People were so mean-spirited and sneaky in free labor societies, he thought. And the best explanation he could come up with rested on differences in the regions' economic systems: whereas southerners only had to worry about selling their staple agricultural crops once a year, northerners had to sell their products in dribs and drabs, all year round, which produced a constant and an unhealthy acquisitiveness.[13]

North-South differences thus extended beyond economic and political differences to include differences of character and social life. When sectional differences moved into the realm of morality, they came to seem that much more urgent. William Gilmore Simms certainly thought that different conceptions of moral behavior were important. He went to the trouble of clipping a newspaper article entitled "Morals in Free States" and sticking it in his scrapbook. "Really, we shall have to secede," began the article, "some time or other, from what are ironically termed the Free States, on account of their bad morals…. Not a mail reaches us but develops some new specimen of scoundrelism in those regions." The most noteworthy "scoundrelism"s were those involving women: although southerners were known to get up to mischief every once in a while, southerners never heard of women being "dirked or bilked, butchered or beaten," as happened regularly in the North. Other southern partisans similarly recoiled at the apparent immorality of northerners, especially when the northerners in question were abolitionists. A correspondent of William Porcher Miles, for instance, worried that "continual intercourse with those Abolitionists will hurt any decent man," and because they were so obnoxious, "the Halls of Congress are like a <u>dirty privy</u> [:] a man will

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[13]Ibid., 12-13; Chesnut, "Destinies of the South," 200; Nathaniel Beverley Tucker to James Henry Hammond, March 16, 1848, in Nathaniel Beverley Tucker Papers, DU.

carry off some of the <u>stink</u> even in his clothes." Themes of gender, morality, and the perception of disease all made sectional differentiation a more personal and therefore a more urgent issue.[14]

This personalization of sectional difference begins to explain why the radicals progressed from a desire to protect slavery to active southern nationalism. It begins to explain the sense of urgency in their arguments, and to explain why this *mattered* so much. We should not, of course, underestimate the straightforward material interest in slavery. But the fact remains: while there were many white southerners who valued slavery and wished to protect it, there were only a very few who advanced from there to advocate national independence. What made the situation seem so urgent to the radicals was a belief that attacks upon southern slavery were personal attacks upon them; northern antislavery fuelled a sense of shared victimhood at the hands of a hostile and alien enemy. This sense, which merged political ideas with personal identities, drove the radicals to embrace southern nationalism as a means to protect their region's peculiar institution and their individual selves at one and the same time.

In this regard, southern nationalism takes its place among many nationalisms which have derived strength from a sense of shared suffering. Recall the observation of the early theorist of nationalism Ernest Renan: "suffering in common unifies more than joy does. Where national memories are concerned, griefs are of more value than triumphs, for they impose duties, and require a common effort."[15] Renan might well have been talking about

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[14]"Morals in Free States," undated newspaper clipping, William Gilmore Simms Scrapbook A, Charles Carroll Simms Collection, USC; Benjamin Evans to William Porcher Miles, March 4, 1858, William Porcher Miles Papers, SHC.

[15]Ernest Renan, "What is a Nation?" (1882), in *Nation and Narration*, edited by Homi K. Bhabha (London: Routledge, 1990), 19. For instructive comments on the psychological importance of victimhood to nationalism, see Joshua Searle-White, *The Psychology of Nationalism* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 91-94.

antebellum southern nationalism, whose architects constantly emphasized how northern wrongs ought to produce united southern resistance. Consider the words of the South Carolina fire-eater Robert Barnwell Rhett to a Georgia audience in 1850. The southern states ought to be united, he felt, in a "common cause," and "wherever [there] is a Southern heart to beat with indignation at Southern wrongs, there, a Southern tongue may tell the story of their existence, and counsel their redress." Southern unity, for Rhett, derived from shared outrage at "Southern wrongs." Perceived oppression and exploitation at the hands of the North could inspire southern nationalism like nothing else.[16]

The problem was, in part, one of political and economic power. As white southerners contemplated secession in 1850, the Virginia law professor and committed southern nationalist Nathaniel Beverley Tucker reminded them that the Union "is the old story of the Giant and the Dwarf: a partnership in which one gets all the profit, the other nothing but dry blows." Who would want to play the dwarf? As political scientist Jesse Carpenter documented long ago, antebellum southern politicians became increasingly alarmed over their minority status within the Union. First, they watched the North drastically increase its population advantage over the South, which meant a steadily rising sectional disparity in the U.S. House. Then, by mid-century, the South saw the end of sectional equilibrium in the Senate. For those who believed antislavery to be in the ascendant at the North, this could only spell danger, as a resolutely hostile North gained in strength. As the secessionist politician William Porcher Miles wrote to a colleague in early 1860, when one recognized that antislavery sentiment was in the majority at the North, one must conclude that the South could never again be secure within the Union. And along with the threat to slavery, the increasing northern dominance of the federal government threatened to allow increased

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[16]Handwritten speech, delivered at Macon, Georgia, August 22, 1850, Robert Barnwell Rhett Papers, SHC.

economic exploitation. Assertions of such exploitation were favorite devices of southern

nationalists. Edmund Ruffin, for instance, seemed never to tire of reminding his fellow

southerners that they were exploited at the hands of a greedy federal government acting in

the interests of northern commerce and manufacturing.[17]

As well as political and economic power, the white South's "dwarf" complex involved

territory. America's westward expansion and the recurring need to decide whether new

territories should be slave or free was, of course, an issue central to the sectional conflict. As

more and more of the new territory was declared off-limits to slavery, southern slaveholders

felt increasingly beleaguered. In part, the territorial question simply reinforced their concerns

about political power: the more new free states which were admitted, the greater the sectional

imbalance in the Senate and the House would become. But it also produced a sense of being

hemmed in, of being constricted. And this sensation was a crucial stimulant of southern

nationalism. Nathaniel Beverley Tucker, for instance, dated his own conversion to the cause

of southern independence to bitter resentment of the South's territorial cessions in the

Missouri Compromise. Other fire-eaters, too, regularly warned that the slave South was

being constricted by the North. Recall the warning of Lewis Ayer, that white southerners

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[17]Nathaniel Beverly Tucker, *Prescience: A Speech, Delivered by Hon, Beverly Tucker, of Virginia, in the Southern Convention, Held at Nashville, Tenn., April 13th, 1850* (Richmond, Va.: West & Johnson, 1862), 36; Jesse T. Carpenter, *The South as a Conscious Minority, 1789-1861*, ed. John McCardell (1930; Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1990); William Porcher Miles to Christopher Gustavus Memminger, Jan 10 1860, Christopher G. Memminger Papers, SHC; Edmund Ruffin, *The Diary of Edmund Ruffin*, ed. William Kauffman Scarborough, 3 vols. (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1972-1989), January 30, 1858, August 8, 1860. In this sense, southern nationalism fits into the "internal colonialism" thesis which Michael Hechter has developed in reference to separatist nationalisms in Britain: *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development* (1975; New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1999).

were threatened by a "wildfire circling them all around, leaping rushing, careering

along …"[18]

Southern resentment intensified after the Mexican War and the mid-century debate over

what to do with the territories thereby acquired. Would these territories be slave or would

they be free? Speaking in Charleston in 1849 William Porcher Miles lamented that "The

blood shed in union against a common enemy by citizens of all parts of this confederacy,

indifferently, has scarcely dried into the soil," but already "we of the South, who poured out

our blood upon those battle-fields, at least as freely as the rest, are told that we must not set

our feet upon that territory." In spite of their contributions to the national war effort,

slaveholding southerners were being denied its benefits. The historically-minded William

Gilmore Simms thought he detected a pattern. "One might say," he wrote to James Henry

Hammond, "we have shown ourselves solicitous of nationality." Over the years, southerners

had contributed much to the nation's wars, had sacrificed lives, property, and money, "and

yet are denied the national securities, the national respect & sympathies, the protection of the

national Aegis; every thing that should make a nation precious to our love, or valuable to our

interest." The repeated frustrations of their territorial rights convinced southern nationalists

that membership in the United States was no longer worthwhile.[19]

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[18]Walther, *The Fire-Eaters*, 17; Ayer, *Southern Rights and the Cuban Question*, 8-9. For revealing examples of this attitude, see William Lowndes Yancey's letter to the *New York News*, Jan 25 1845, in William Lowndes Yancey Papers, ADAH; and D. H. Hamilton to William Porcher Miles, January 23, 1860, William Porcher Miles Papers, SHC. As Robert May has argued, some of the frustration caused by the exclusion of slavery from new western territories found an outlet in the movement for expansion into the tropics: *The Southern Dream of a Caribbean Empire, 1854-1861*, with new preface (1973; Gainesville, Fla.: University Press of Florida, 2002).

[19]William Porcher Miles, *Oration Delivered Before the Fourth of July Association* (Charleston, S.C.: James S. Burges, 1849), 16-17; William Gilmore Simms to James Henry Hammond, June 10, 1858, in *The Letters of William Gilmore Simms*, six volumes, eds. Mary C. Simms Oliphant, Alfred Taylor Odell, and T. C. Duncan Eaves (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1952-1982), IV: 63. See also Porcher, "Southern and Northern Civilization Contrasted," 106; William Gilmore Simms, MS Lecture, "Antagonisms of the Social Moral, North and South," Charles Carroll Simms Collection, USC; Langdon Cheves, *Speech of Hon. Langdon*

All of these perceptions that antislavery entailed territorial, political, or economic injustice to the South were powerful enough by themselves. But when combined together—and when steeped in a psychological resentment against the northern-dominated federal government—they became even more potent. Southern nationalists tended to interpret the actions of the North and the government it was coming to control as moral insults against themselves and their region. While complaining about southern slaveholders' exclusion from the territories, William Porcher Miles was clearly resentful of the moral slur that that exclusion represented: "We must be fumigated and purified from every Southern taint," he protested, "must pass through a sort of moral quarantine, before we can be allowed to enter the precincts of the free-soil paradise."[20]

The language of southern nationalists was full of prickly resentment about apparent insults from the North. One attendee of the Second Nashville Convention in 1850, for instance, complained that, on top of the injuries of exclusion from the territories and infringement of property rights, northerners had added insults:

> We have been harrassed and insulted, by those who ought to have been our brethren, in their constant agitation of a subject vital to us and the peace of our families. We have been outraged by their gross misrepresentations of our moral and social habits, and by the manner in which they have denounced us before the world.

The implication was clear: white southerners could not remain in a nation with a people who no longer acted like "brethren," but who instead threatened the personal realm; "the peace of our families." Likewise, Louis Wigfall complained that northerners were trying to constrict the slave South within a wall of free states, and went on to emphasize how personally he and fellow southerners perceived northern insults: "You denounce us, degrade us, deride us …

Cheves, in the Southern Convention, at Nashville, Tennessee, November 14, 1850 (?: Southern Rights Association, 1850), 29.

[20]Miles, *Oration Delivered Before the Fourth of July Association*, 17.

you tell us that we are degraded, that we are not your equals." The sense of outrage is palpable in all these statements, and it takes little imagination to see how such outrage could fuel a powerfully resentful southern nationalism.[21]

The feeling of an urgent personal stake in the wellbeing of the region is crucial to understanding why a small group of radicals committed themselves to active southern nationalism prior to the Civil War. As historians such as William Barney and Bertram Wyatt-Brown have suggested, we must reckon with southern radicals' psychological motivations if we are to explain the intensity of their personal attachments to the cause of southern independence. Indeed, such is true of most nationalist ideologues; the connection between psychological needs and dedication to nationalist causes was by no means unique to the antebellum South. As psychologist Joshua Searle-White has argued, part of the reason why nationalism is so appealing is because it fulfils fundamental psychological needs. In many cases, he explains, individuals are attracted to nationalism because it seems to afford some protection to always-fragile personal and collective identities. People are drawn to nationalism because it offers the promise of enabling them to feel better about themselves; nationalism, in short, is "the currency of self-worth." These psychological insights can help clarify why certain individuals were drawn to southern nationalism.[22]

Personal trauma, including the loss of family members and a sense of alienation from the rest of society, contributed to feelings of anger and isolation that made these earliest southern

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[21]William Gilmore Simms, MS Lecture, "Antagonisms of the Social Moral, North and South," Charles Carroll Simms Collection, USC; Wigfall quoted in Walther, *The Fire-Eaters*, 179.

[22]Barney, *The Road to Secession*, 85-100; Wyatt-Brown, *Hearts of Darkness*, esp. 33-91; Joshua Searle-White, *The Psychology of Nationalism*, quotation at p.64. In an article criticizing Barney's "radical as outsider" thesis, Robert May has rightly pointed out that the cause-effect relationship between outsider status and secessionism is not an infallible one: some radicals were not complete outsiders, and many outsiders, or victims of personal trauma, did not become southern nationalists. But May goes too far in dismissing the connection entirely. May, "Psychobiography and Secession: The Southern Radical as Maladjusted 'Outsider,'" *Civil War History* 34 (1988): 46-69.

nationalists particularly sensitive to apparent attacks upon the South. Nathaniel Beverley

Tucker, for example, lost his mother at an early age and, according to Bertram Wyatt-Brown,

projected anger derived from this and other losses onto the North. William Gilmore Simms

also lost his mother as an infant, was raised by his grandmother, and faced what must have

been a traumatic experience as a child when his father sued for custody and the judge

allowed the young Simms to make his own decision: to stay in Charleston with his

grandmother, or follow his father to the Southwest. The child chose his grandmother and

Charleston, but the decision—combined with the earlier death of his mother—seems to have

haunted him, feeding into his literary alienation. Some scholars have suggested that Simms'

staunch southern partisanship, his attempts to strengthen southern community, can be

explained in part by his desire to fit in.[23]

In 1860, comforting a friend who had lost a child, Simms, no stranger to loss himself,

truly empathized. "I grew up without young associates," he wrote. "I grew *hard* in

consequence, hard, perhaps, of manner; but with a heart craving love beyond all other

possessions." We should not stretch this point too far, but it seems likely that Simms' craving

played at least some part in his attraction to the idea of southern national independence. This

is suggested, for instance, in one of Simms' poems which began, "Oh, the sweet South! the

sunny, sunny South! / Land of true feeling, land forever mine! / I drink the kisses of her rosy

mouth, / And my heart swells as with a draught of wine." The next line of the poem read

"She brings me blessings of maternal love." For Simms, the South seems to have fulfilled his

craving for love in a number of ways.[24]

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[23]Wyatt-Brown, *Hearts of Darkness*, esp. 42, 74.

[24]William Gilmore Simms to John Esten Cooke, April 14, 1860, in *The Letters of William Gilmore Simms*, IV: 216; William Gilmore Simms, *Areytos, or Songs and Ballads of the South, with other Poems* (Charleston,

Nationalism held similar kinds of appeal for other radicals, too. For all his successes,

Edmund Ruffin never quite fit in either, and to him the cause of southern independence

offered new meaning to life. A particularly strong argument for the connection of personal to

regional identity can be made in the case of William Lowndes Yancey. When his father died

soon after Yancey's birth, his mother remarried to a northern antislavery man, and Yancey's

hatred for northern abolitionists seems to have been grounded in part in his resentment of his

stepfather. In Yancey's case, southern nationalism also stemmed from the desire to defend

southern honor, which in turn reflected a prickly and violent determination to defend his

personal honor. Yancey was involved in several duels or near-duels during the course of his

life, and it is easy to see a correlation between his sense of personal and southern honor.

Having murdered a man in an 1838 fight, Yancey was not only unrepentant, but was proud of

having acquitted his honor. "I have done my duty as a man," he wrote to his brother, "& he

who grossly insulted me, lies now, with the clod upon his bosom." The dead man's blood,

thought Yancey, should serve as a "warning to others who feel like browbeating a Yancey."[25]

Fulfilling one's "duty" as a man seems to have mattered to many other southern radicals

as well. Their ideas and actions, furthermore, reveal that the imperatives of honor and

masculinity moved back and forth between the realms of personal and southern identity.

South Carolina unionist Benjamin F. Perry astutely described the leaders of southern

separatism as "a set of young enthusiasts inspired with notions of personal honor to be

defended and individual glory, fame and military laurels to be acquired." To some, the cause

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S.C.: Russell & Jones, 1860). The poem was reprinted during the secession crisis: *Southern Literary Messenger*
(Jan 1861): 5

[25]Walther, *The Fire-Eaters*, 49-50; William Lowndes Yancey to Benjamin C. Yancey, September 8, 1838,
William Lowndes Yancey Papers, ADAH. In his recent biography, Eric Walther emphasizes the psychological
reasons for Yancey's radicalism, including his "dysfunctional" childhood: Walther, *William Lowndes Yancey
and the Coming of the Civil War*.

of southern nationalism offered a means by which to prove oneself. Thus there is a striking

similarity in the rhetoric used to justify the "affairs of honor" that men like Yancey, Keitt,

and Wigfall seemed drawn towards, and the rhetoric used to portray the South's need to

defend itself against the aggressions of the North.[26]

Southern and personal honor were nowhere more dramatically joined, though, than in the

notorious caning of Charles Sumner by Preston Brooks in 1856. When the Senator from

Massachusetts insulted not only Preston Brooks' relative but also his state—and, by

extension, the South—he blurred what little boundary might previously have existed between

the personal honor which required Brooks to defend his kin and the group honor that required

him to defend his state, his region, and slavery. And his efforts were much appreciated.

Tributes echoed around the South. "Southern men, Southern States, and Southern Institutions,

have been abused long enough," declaimed one newspaper editor. "It has to be stopped by

blows and blood." And Brooks had, in the eyes of many southern partisans, acted as the

defender of the whole South when he raised his cane in the Senate chamber. "In whipping

Sumner you have <u>immortalized</u> yourself," wrote South Carolina Governor J. H. Adams, and

expressed the hope that Brooks would "continue to <u>serve</u> & <u>honor</u> your country." Adams'

prediction of immortality was, in a sense, prophetic, for when Brooks died the year after the

caning incident, he was indeed celebrated as a martyr for the southern cause. "The South has

lost the foremost sentinel in behalf of her institutions," mourned the Edgefield *Advertiser*.

Likewise, a Georgia newspaper grieved, "Mr. Brooks passed from the field of duty with his

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[26]Perry quoted in John Barnwell, *Love of Order: South Carolina's First Secession Crisis* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 150. (Eric Walther used the same quote to describe Keitt and Wigfall in particular: Walther, *The Fire-Eaters*, 161.) The classic work on honor in the antebellum South remains Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982). More recently, Stephen Berry has imaginatively linked the personal and public ambitions of white southern men in his *All That Makes a Man: Love and Ambition in the Civil War South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

armor on,—ready to the last to vindicate his native South against foes from without or traitors from within." As "citizens of a sister Southern State," they joined South Carolina in mourning its loss. In death as in life, Preston Brooks united self to imagined nation in a potent bond of violence, masculine honor, and blood.[27]

Although the notions of national responsibility with which men such as Brooks and Yancey connected themselves and the putative southern nation were often emphatically masculinist, white women could develop similarly powerful personal bonds to southern nationalism. As the crisis of mid century was gathering steam, for instance, the South Carolinian Louisa Cunningham bristled just as much as male radicals did at the aggressions of the North. If southerners only knew the extent of northern perfidy, she felt sure that secession would be immediate: "*At all and every hazard* we never can get along with them & our interests are too opposite to [theirs] and they have such a spirit of aggression for their own aggrandizement that I believe *it must, it will* end in disunion! *I am ripe for it!*" Cunningham clearly felt very personally the shame that the South would deserve if it submitted to northern aggressions. "*I shall hate my country*," she proclaimed, clearly meaning the South, "*if they yield.*"[28]

This was precisely what Elizabeth Rhett, wife of the fire-eating Robert Barnwell Rhett, ended up doing the following year. When the secession movement of 1851 failed, she was

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[27]Newspaper tributes to Brooks, both after his caning of Sumner and after his death a year later, fill a scrapbook in the Preston Brooks Papers, USC. "Southern men…" quote is from an unidentified editorial therein, entitled "Mr. Brooks' Castigation of Mr. Sumner." J. H. Adams to Preston Brooks, May 26, 1856, also in Preston Brooks Papers, USC. See also Thomas, *Confederate Nation*, 20. Brooks was not the only martyr to this cause. John C. Calhoun was often remembered in a similar way. In an 1859 speech, Robert Barnwell Rhett paid tribute to Calhoun and other departed southern rights advocates, celebrating the fact that "they stood forth the intrepid defenders of the rights and honor of their section." *The Political Life and Services of the Hon. R. Barnwell Rhett, of South Carolina, by a Cotemporary (the Late Hon. Daniel Wallace). Also, His Speech at Grahamville, South Carolina, July 4th, 1859* (n.p.; microfilmed by SCHS), 29.

[28]Louisa Cunningham to Sarah Yancey, March 8, 1850, Benjamin C. Yancey Papers, SHC.

utterly crushed. "I declare to you," she wrote to her husband, "the shock has been so great to me, that I feel giddy, as if I had received a blow, I cannot think at all, & am bewildered. Has God indeed, forsaken our land"? She could not believe that after all her husband's efforts to redeem his people they had disregarded him. Part of her frustration likely derived from sympathy for her husband's reverses, but her own personal investment in the cause is unmistakable. "My heart actually sickens," she moaned, "at the prospect before us—what abject humiliation, what deep degradation is ours."[29]

Degradation and shame, inequality and submission—these were the watchwords of antebellum southern nationalism. In part, these were employed by the radicals as rhetorical devices with which to arouse their fellow white southerners to action. But they also provide a revealing window into the motivations of the radicals—into the reasons why they felt such a sense of urgency about the protection of slavery that their solution was national independence. The radicals were typical of most white southerners in their approval of slavery as a labor system and as a means of organizing race relations. What set them apart from the mainstream was the way that they interpreted northern hostility to slavery in intensely personal ways, perceiving assaults that encompassed not only politics and economics but their personal identities as well.

Although the radicals' motivations were thus largely defensive, they did attempt to substantiate their argument for southern nationalism in more positive ways. These efforts were shaped by what radicals already knew about the concept of nationalism: as one might expect, in fashioning the argument for southern independence, they drew heavily on contemporaneous ideas about the nature of nations and nationalisms. Let us look first at the

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[29]Elizabeth W. Rhett to Robert B. Rhett, October 17, 1851, Robert Barnwell Rhett Papers, SCHS.

general influence of mid-nineteenth-century transatlantic thought, before going on to consider the particular influence of American nationalism.

As southern nationalists made their case, they paid frequent attention to the comparative context. Sometimes this was very explicit, as when they compared themselves to other peoples struggling for independence from oppressive occupiers, and asserted that all genuine nations should be free. In a speech of the late 1850s, Robert Barnwell Rhett located his argument in a transatlantic context. Pointing toward Europe, he saw "a bloody contest for the independence of nationalities." God had meant for there to be national differences—Rhett, too, understood the principle of nationality in religious terms—and a nation's right to independence was particularly strong when it was battling against a foreign occupier, as was the case in places such as Ireland, Poland, and Italy. Aligning his own nationalist cause with the others, Rhett argued that "The people of England and Ireland, Russia and Poland, Austria and Italy, are not more distinct and antagonistic in their characters, pursuits, and institutions, their sympathies and views, than the people of our Northern and Southern States."[30]

Rhett was by no means the only southern nationalist to support the Irish, among others, as fellow freedom fighters, struggling against a similarly oppressive alien power. Indeed, the colonial condition constituted a powerful metaphor for southern victimhood at the hands of the North. "As the Catholics of Ireland were forced to feed a foreign faith," claimed one secessionist, "so we pay to pamper an avowed hostility."[31] Southern fire-eaters identified themselves with famous nationalists. Edmund Ruffin, for example, ranked Garibaldi among

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[30]Rhett, *Political Life and Services*, 42.

[31]Henry L. Pinckney, Jr., *An Oration Delivered on the Fourth of July 1851, before the '76 and Cincinnati Societies* (Charleston, S.C.: Printed by A. E. Miller, 1851), 14.

his heroes, admiring his devotion to Italian independence from Austrian rule.[32] And William

Lowndes Yancey, responding to charges that he was a "rebel," defiantly identified himself

with other nationalist heroes battling colonial-style oppression: "Washington was a rebel!

Lafayette was a rebel—and so was Tell and so is Kossuth—rebels against abuse of power;

and welcome to us be the appellation received in defense of our rights and liberties."[33]

In drawing such comparisons, some southern nationalists relied on the distinction

between nations and governments that underpinned nineteenth-century nationalism in general.

As Lewis Ayer recognized, the fact that European nationalists cast their struggles as efforts

to align nation with government fit well with southern nationalists' efforts to exploit this

same tension in American nationalism. Ayer valued highly the ultimate, God-given right of

sovereignty in each distinct people, and distinguished such divine sovereignty from

temporary, artificial institutions of government. "Governments vanish as the shifting scenery

of a stage;" he explained, "but there is much permanency in a people." Because of this, in

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[32]It is important to note that Ruffin was not completely in support of either Garibaldi or Italian unification. The whole affair was a little too progressive for his taste (presumably he disapproved of Garibaldi's antislavery), and he concluded that the majority of Italians were not really capable of self-government. (Ruffin, *Diary of Edmund Ruffin*, June 22, 1859, May 23, 1860.) Educated white southerners in general seemed torn between the impulse to support Italy's noble struggle for freedom and national independence, and the nagging fear that Italians were not yet ready for self-government, a fear compounded by the uncomfortable awareness that major strands of the Italian independence movement were opposed to slavery. Two articles in Charleston's *Russell's Magazine* neatly summarized the debate: Francis P. Porcher, "A Plea for Italy," (Vol. 3, June 1858): 214-221, and James A. Corcoran, "Prospects of Italy--Italian Liberalism," (Vol.3, August 1858): 452-462. In truth, the movement for national unification in Italy (like that in Germany) was rather dissimilar to the southern effort, which aimed to fragment an existing polity into smaller pieces, rather than unite fragments into a new whole. South Carolina Unionist W. J. Grayson realized this in 1850, criticizing the effort to destroy the Union—the same type of Union that "Italian and German patriots" were striving for. (Grayson, *Letter to His Excellency Whitemarsh B. Seabrook, Governor of the State of South-Carolina, on the Dissolution of the Union* [Charleston, S.C.: A. E. Miller, 1850], 3.)

[33]Yancey quoted in Walther, *The Fire-Eaters*, 62. Rhett also boasted that Washington and other revolutionaries had been "disunionists and traitors" like himself. (William C. Davis, *Rhett: The Turbulent Life and Times of a Fire-Eater* [Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 2001], 54.) The Irish nationalist John Mitchel drew the parallel between Irish oppression at the hands of England and southern oppression at the hands of the North—both, in his estimation, meant that national independence was warranted. Bryan P. McGovern, "John Mitchel: Irish Nationalist and Southern Secessionist in Mid-Nineteenth Century America" (PhD diss., University of Missouri, 2003), 207-208.

cases where "rights of sovereignty … are not recognized, or, at all events, properly appreciated," it was possible—even obligatory—to remedy the discrepancy. Countries such as Ireland, Hungary, and Poland, he thought, were unfairly denied their rights to sovereignty and self-government, and ought to strive to secure those rights. Forms of government created by humankind were by no means fallible, Ayer concluded, and when they were discovered to be in antagonism to the natural rights of a people's sovereignty, they ought to be overturned. The lesson for the United States was clear: two separate nations, North and South, should not be artificially coupled within a single government.[34]

In addition to emphasizing the nation-government distinction, southern nationalists also attempted to align their cause in more general ways with the conceptions of nations and nationalism that prevailed in the mid-nineteenth century western world. Like all Americans, white southerners were influenced by the romantic strains of nationalism that swept Europe: the nationalism of Herder and Michelet, of Mazzini and Kossuth. And so when they set about building an argument for southern independence, it was natural that the romantic model of nationalism should provide, at the very least, some of the language with which they made their claims.[35] Nationalisms were grounded in a spiritual attachment to place, and so southern nationalists emphasized themes of territory and nature. Nations ought to be coterminous with a "people," identifiable by their unique national identity, and so they spoke of the South as a distinct "people" with its own national identity. Nations were supposed to produce unique

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[34]Lewis M. Ayer, *Patriotism and State Sovereignty: An Oration, Delivered Before the Two Societies of the South-Carolina College, on the Fourth of December, 1858* (Charleston, S.C.: Printed by A. J. Burke, 1859), 7, 9-11.

[35]See Markus Kornprobst's argument that "epistemes"—i.e. templates of normative nationality—"delineate those constructions of national identity that are conceivable for and intelligible to elites." ("Episteme, nation-builders and national identity: the re-construction of Irishness," *Nations and Nationalism* 11.3 [July 2005]: 404.) As David Potter has observed, "[A]ny separatist movement in the middle of the nineteenth century could scarcely fail to absorb some of the romantic nationalism that pervaded the western world." Potter, *The Impending Crisis, 1848-1861* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976), 461.

literature and art, and were supposed to educate their youth in nationality—therefore the South ought to do all those things, too. Nations were nations in part because they shared a history, and so some southern writers posited a distinctive southern historical experience. A template of nationality existed, then, and the radicals attempted to fit their cause into it.[36]

As white southern thinkers fully recognized, romantic nationalism treasured ethnicity as the ultimate marker of a genuine nation. And so, although blood and ethnicity were only ever peripheral features of southern nationalism, the radicals did sometimes invoke these features to support their cause. For instance, when Langdon Cheves was promoting secession in 1850, he spoke of the proposed southern nation as "one of the most splendid empires on which the sun ever shone, of the most homogeneous population, all of the same blood and lineage." On other occasions too, the "homogeneousness" of white southerners was pointed to as another reason why the South deserved independence.[37]

In addition to blood, some looked for justification to nature. William Trescot, for instance, believed that geography was a sort of providential destiny. "Rivers, and mountains, and climates are more irresistible agents in the world's history than we are willing to admit," he declared in an 1850 speech, "and a great geographical division always develops a separate and individual nationality." He went on to argue that nature had split American into two halves, roughly divided by the Ohio and Potomac Rivers, around which "two systems of internal improvement and communication have, in the last few years, developed themselves without any preconcerted plan, but in obedience to the national instinct." Though he may

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[36]Though he has devoted little attention to nationalism specifically, Michael O'Brien has done much to establish the importance of European romanticism in southern thought: *Conjectures of Order*, and "The Lineaments of Antebellum Southern Romanticism," in O'Brien, *Rethinking the South: Essays in Intellectual History* (Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 38-56. For connections between European romanticism and southern nationalism that are considerably more tenuous, but certainly suggestive, see Osterweis, *Romanticism and Nationalism in the Old South*.

[37]Quoted in Osterweis, *Romanticism and Nationalism in the Old South*, 134.

have been correct about a sort of sectional bifurcation of transportation and communication

networks, Trescot's notion of the Ohio River as a clear national boundary must have seemed

as dubious in 1850 as it does today. Natural boundaries such as rivers and mountain ranges

did not seem to lend much support to southern nationalism.[38]

Yet geography in a broader sense, especially the climate and its effects, could provide

more convincing substantiation for nationalists' claims. In a curious counterfactual exercise,

South Carolinian John McCrady speculated about the probable result of settling two societies

in different climatic areas of North America. Two settlements, he thought, even of people of

the same racial stock, would naturally develop differences of "occupation, pursuit and

interest" and therefore of "habit and modes of thought." Ultimately, McCrady supposed that

basic differences in climate would generate two separate governments. Other southern

writers made similar contentions in less oblique ways. Frederick Adolphus Porcher, the

College of Charleston professor, wrote in 1857 that "Nature, as well as institutions, have

divided this Confederacy into two pretty equal portions, which we call the North and the

South." The "operation of nature," and especially its provision of abundant resources,

determined that the South would become a "pastoral" people, while "the inhospitable climate

of the North compelled her people to move in a different direction." Mainly because of harsh

winters, "thrift" became a characteristic of the North, while in the South no such frugality

was necessary. Nature, and especially the climate, directed the development of two

inexorably different peoples.[39]

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[38]Trescot, *Oration Delivered Before the Beaufort Volunteer Artillery*, 9-10. See also Trescot, *The Position and Course of the South*, 9. (The latter was an expanded version of the former.) For interesting examples of geography being used to substantiate *American* nationalism, see Merle Curti, *The Roots of American Loyalty* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1946), 42-44.

[39]John McCrady, "A Few Thoughts on Southern Civilization, No. IV," *Russell's Magazine* 2 (Dec 1857): 224-225; [Porcher], "Southern and Northern Civilization Contrasted," 97-98.

Southern nationalists did not stop there, however. Though nature might have established basic features of southern distinctiveness, it was, as Trescot put it, "history, in the action of its providential instinct," that completed the process. Beginning with the differences in the settlement of Plymouth and Jamestown, "The growth of the two great sections, radiated from different centres, diverged in different directions, were developed from different principles, and perfected through dissimilar experiences." Many of Trescot's contemporaries similarly read North-South sectionalism back into the colonial past, identifying a fundamental divergence between a commercially-oriented North and an agricultural South. Frederick Porcher, as professors are sometimes wont to do, elaborated. Sectional differences were not only derived from climatic differences, but also by the fact that the very founding philosophies of Virginia and New England were different. New Englanders' cohesive religious idealism made for a shared purpose and a tightly-knit community that was marked by "mutual supervision" among its members. Those who settled at Jamestown, having "no peculiar views respecting the sacredness of their mission, no pre-conceived theories of religion or of government," initiated a quite different society, in which every member respected and relied upon himself more than on the community as a whole. The individualistic independence of the southern personality—as opposed to northern communalism—was, according to Porcher, the direct result of the history of colonial settlement.[40]

Trescot and Porcher thus attempted to root their claims for southern nationality in history. It was writer William Gilmore Simms, though, who was most vocal about the value of history for southern nationalism. Simms regularly championed the study of southern history,

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[40]Trescot, *The Position and Course of the South*, 19; [Porcher], "Southern and Northern Civilization Contrasted," 98-100. See also [William G. Simms], "Topics in the History of South Carolina," *Southern Quarterly Review* 2 (Sept 1850), 66.

in part as a sort of adhesive for southern unity, and in part as ammunition in the political struggle against the North. Thus he rejoiced when fellow southerners appeared to be taking an interest in their own history—especially when they transcended state lines and tried to make sense of the whole region's shared past—and, more commonly, chastised when they did not. Faced with the political problem of uniting the South, southern nationalists responded in part with the cultural argument of a shared southern historical experience, one sufficiently distinct from its northern equivalent to warrant a separate southern nation. This has been a common nationalist technique; perceptions of a shared past have done much to unite other nations. As historian Stuart Jones has written of late-nineteenth-century European nationalisms, "'nation-building' entailed not just an 'objective' process of national integration, but also telling the nation stories about itself; persuading the nation that it had not just come into being." This was perhaps even more true of southern nationalism before the Civil War, which rested almost entirely on "stories" with few "objective" features at all.[41]

History was just one strand of a larger effort to root the South's political independence in its intellectual independence. Indeed, the lack, or at least the weakness, of the usual "objective" markers of nationality rendered claims of southern cerebral distinctiveness especially crucial. James Chesnut took care to explain that the relative importance of the various criteria had changed over time. In the premodern, and presumably less civilized world, simple differences of race or geography had been the most common dividers of nations. But humankind had progressed, and "under the civilization which rest[s] on moral

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[41]William G Simms, "Pickett's History of Alabama," *Southern Quarterly Review* 5 (January 1852): 182-209; [Simms], "Ramsay's Annals of Tennessee," *Southern Quarterly Review* 8 (Oct 1853): 337-368; Stuart Jones, "Taine and the Nation-State," in *Writing National Histories: Western Europe Since 1800*, eds. Stefan Berger, Mark Donovan, and Kevin Passmore (London: Routledge, 1999), 85; Paul D. H. Quigley, "'That History is Truly the Life of Nations': History and Southern Nationalism in Antebellum South Carolina," *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 106:1 (Jan 2005): 7-33; Jon L. Wakelyn, *The Politics of a Literary Man: William Gilmore Simms* (Westport, Ct.: Greenwood Press, 1973), 115-136.

and mental, rather than material elements," it was obvious that "character and condition, more than physical individuality," would distinguish nation from nation. Such a shift, of course, was most convenient to antebellum southern nationalists. Chesnut's fellow South Carolinian, John McCrady, proceeded from similar assumptions. "The fundamental ideas of the collective intellect of the Southern States are," he believed, "and must continue for a long period, entirely distinct from those of the collective intellect of any other people in Christendom"—and distinct most significantly from the North. And because North and South were "intellectually no longer one, but two distinct unities …. they are in truth two distinct nationalities, and must probably, ere very long, constitute two distinct governments." Intellectual independence underpinned a unique national identity—which in turn mandated political independence.[42]

Because the South constituted a distinct intellectual community, thought McCrady, "the systems of education of other nations can never be adapted to the educational necessities of the South," and, therefore, "the greatest need of the South is a National Education." McCrady's declaration, issued in 1860, was one of a chorus of voices in the antebellum South calling for "A Southern Education for Southrons." These mostly resulted from fears that northern educational institutions and personnel would inculcate southern youth with antislavery opinions, but were often lent urgency by a broader fear of southern intellectual inferiority.[43]

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[42]Chesnut, "The Destinies of the South," 181-182; John McCrady, *"Home Education a Necessity of the South." An Oration Delivered Before the Chrestomathic Society of the College of Charleston, on Friday March 2d, 1860* (Charleston, S.C.: Steam Power Presses of Walker, Evans, & Co., 1860), 26-27.

[43]McCrady, *Home Education a Necessity of the South*, 27; John S. Ezell, "A Southern Education for Southrons," *Journal of Southern History* 17:3 (Aug 1951): 303-327.

For some, southern education was important because it was recognized as a crucial element of national identity and a producer of nationalism. Leonidas Polk, the most important figure in the creation of the University of the South, noted that state-level universities simply were not sufficient for a people who aspired to national independence, since they "have not the claims nor the prestige of anything like nationality about them." The campaign for a particularly southern educational system was not confined to higher education, and nor was it confined to men. The "Southern Education Society" in Dalton, Georgia, was formed in response to the fact that non-southerners were hostile to slavery, and the resulting belief that southerners must actively defend their peculiar institution through a system of female as well as male education. After all, young women were destined to "become the mothers of sons worthy to inherit and qualified to defend our property and our institutions." The society aimed to ensure that southern women would prove equal to the task by publishing schoolbooks, establishing schools and colleges, and publishing a newspaper to publicize their efforts. Their ultimate aim was "To create a literature for the South, by the publication in the South of school books, bibles, hymn books, periodicals, and newspapers, and as far as practicable all other books and publications suited to or required by the public."[44]

These initiatives were part of a broader effort to establish southern literary and intellectual independence. William Gilmore Simms was, unsurprisingly, most vocal. In 1858 he ranked "the formation of our own opinion" as the foremost ingredient of achieving national status for the South. And with Simms this was not just talk. Thus in the early 1850s, having published a volume which offered little promise of pecuniary gain, he took solace in

[44]Southern Education Society, *To the People of the Slaveholding States*, undated circular, Rare Book Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 4, 8; McCardell, *The Idea of a Southern Nation*, 200-226 (Polk quote at p. 217).

the fact that this was "one of the phases by which we are to secure home independence."

Likewise, fellow writer and southern partisan, the Alabamian Alexander B. Meek, wrote to

Simms in appreciation of what was probably the same volume, which, thought Meek, "will

form a fit *avant courier* for Southern Literature and Southern Publication." "I am

convinced," he went on, "that we cannot have *Home* independence of any kind,--in

Commerce, Manufactures, Politics, or what not, until we have a Home Independence of

Mind." [45]

By the 1850s, Simms and others were issuing calls for southern literary independence

that were similar to their earlier advocacy for American literary independence. Both Simms

and Meek, as we have already seen, were much taken with the capacity of place and local

specificity to stimulate literature. But whereas in the 1840s both writers were using this

premise to advocate what Meek had called "Americanism in Literature," by the 1850s they

both saw the value of romantic, place-based literature in specifically southern terms. Thus

when Meek in 1857 repeated the familiar affirmation that "The poetry of a country should be

a faithful expression of its physical and moral characteristics" and that "Verse … is as much

the genuine product and growth of a Land, as its trees or flowers," he did so in order to

introduce a volume entitled *Songs and Poems of the South*, which included such masterpieces

as "Come to the South" and "The Mothers of the South." Though Meek did not explicitly

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[45]William Gilmore Simms to James Chesnut, Jr., February 5, 1852, and Simms to James Henry Hammond, March 27, 1858, both in *The Letters of William Gilmore Simms*, III: 158, IV: 45; Meek quoted in O'Brien, *Conjectures of Order*, 701. On the role of literature in southern nationalism, see John Budd, "Henry Timrod: Poetic Voice of Southern Nationalism," *Southern Studies* 20 (1981): 437-446; Eugene Current-Garcia, "Southern Literary Criticism and the Sectional Dilemma," *Journal of Southern History* 15 (1949): 325-341; McCardell, *Idea of a Southern Nation*, 141-176.

connect his writings to the cause of political independence, this was a classic example of place-based romantic poetry in the service of a putative national identity.[46]

Yet, for all the efforts of Meek, Simms, and others, the various strands of southern intellectual independence—appreciation of a shared history; a distinctive literature and art; and a southern education system—were hardly flourishing, even on the eve of the Civil War. As historian E. Merton Coulter noted many years ago, historical activity in the antebellum South was prosecuted most vigorously at the state level, with no significant regional initiatives until after the Civil War. For all the rhetoric of William Gilmore Simms, neither he nor anyone else wrote a pan-southern history or organized a South-wide historical society.[47] Nor did they successfully produce a recognizably southern literary or artistic tradition that would go on to underpin political independence. Part of the difficulty may have stemmed from the attempt to tie a hazy romantic celebration of place and locale to a southern—as opposed to an American or a Virginian or a Charlestonian—political community. What value would one of Simms' South Carolina neighbors have found in Meek's poetic celebration of "The Homes of Alabama"? Southern nationalism, in other words, involved the same problem of boundaries as did American nationalism: romantic ideas about place, culture, and peoplehood were only imperfectly fastened to either the American or the putative southern national community.

This problem was exacerbated in the southern case by the white South's notorious lack of interest in sustaining a specifically southern literary or intellectual life. Throughout the antebellum years, Simms himself was painfully ambivalent about the South, plagued by the

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[46]A. B. Meek, *Songs and Poems of the South* (Mobile, Ala.: S. H. Goetzel & Co., 1857), v. For the importance of poetry and literature to other nationalisms, see Kramer, *Nationalism*, 42-61.

[47]E. Merton Coulter, "What the South Has Done About Its History," *Journal of Southern History* 2 (1936): 3-28.

conviction that the region to which he had dedicated his life and work did not really appreciate him. "The South don't care a d—n for literature or art," he famously complained, and more than once threatened to move north. And as Drew Gilpin Faust has shown, Simms' "Sacred Circle" of southern intellectual friends felt a similar alienation, frequently commiserating with each other over the lack of appreciation they felt. If southern political independence was to rest on intellectual foundations, the cause hardly seemed a promising one.[48]

Even so—even though features such as place, history, and literature were hardly the strong points of antebellum southern nationalism—the efforts that nationalists made in these areas reveal their determination to draw on transatlantic concepts in order to exploit the fractures of American nationalism which we explored in the previous chapter. Elements of nationalism such as affection for place, literary and cultural distinctiveness, and status as a unique "people" did not fully attach antebellum Americans to the Union. This meant that, in the hands of southern nationalists, the argument, at least, could be made that these elements instead substantiated a southern nation. As they ventured a southern alternative to American nationalism, their concepts of nations and nationalism were shaped by transatlantic intellectual patterns.

The most important comparisons and parallels were drawn not with European nationalisms, however, but with American nationalism, especially as represented in the American Revolution. Radicals took great pleasure in aligning their proposed southern revolution with the earlier American Revolution. This was a longstanding technique. Nullifiers and their

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[48]Drew Gilpin Faust, *A Sacred Circle: The Dilemma of the Intellectual in the Old South, 1840-1860* (Baltimore, Md: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977).

opponents had all laid claim to the heritage of the American Revolution, with each side claiming that their path more accurately conformed to the founders' project. And such claims persisted beyond the Nullification era. In 1844, for instance, William Gilmore Simms had warned that "The same sense of mental independence which prompted our ancestors to enter the field in 1776, with the British oppressor," meant that the people of the South would not tolerate northern injustices much longer.[49]

As the years passed, and northern injustices appeared to continue, such arguments multiplied. Radicals used the Fourth of July and other occasions of revolutionary remembrance to draw parallels between their own struggle against the federal government's oppression and the colonists' struggle against British tyranny. Particularly during the first secession crisis of 1850 and 1851, Independence Day toasts and speeches often compared the secession desired by southerners with that carried out by the colonists. Addressing an 1851 Independence Day audience, John Richardson minced no words. The oppression carried out by the northern-controlled federal government had reached a point at which the South *had* to act. Fortunately, Richardson pointed out, the revolutionary generation provided a valuable example of standing up courageously for one's principles—an example that he thought should be replicated with his state's secession. Another southern nationalist, David F. Jamison, agreed that southerners should follow their ancestors' example, warning of the consequences of not doing so: "If the people of the South shall submit to a worse than colonial subjection to the States of the North, that revolution will have been achieved for them in vain. All celebrations of the day of Independence will then be over with us…." In

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[49]William G. Simms, *The Sources of American Indepedence: An Oration, on the Sixty-Ninth Anniversary of American Independence, Delivered at Aiken, South-Carolina, before the Town Council and Citizens Thereof* (Aiken, S.C.: Published by Council, 1844), 25; Bonner, "Americans Apart," 152-159.

other words, only by standing up for their rights—even if it meant secession—could white southerners preserve the true spirit of the Fourth of July and the American Revolution.[50]

The comparisons that southern supporters of slavery drew between themselves and the revolutionary generation have surprised many subsequent commentators. How did a nationalist movement based on slavery portray itself as the heir of a revolution apparently founded on freedom?[51] Part of the answer lies in the way Americans had always separated white freedom from black slavery in different intellectual compartments. But the answer also lies in the way southerners remembered the Declaration and Revolution and the way they applied the lessons of the past to the present. Because the American Revolution was not a revolution for freedom or equality in any exclusive or absolute sense, southern nationalists could emphasize those aspects of the revolution that suited their needs, and overlook those that did not.

Foremost in the latter category was the apparent assertion of human rights contained in the Declaration's preamble. Though the preamble has symbolized the meaning of the American Revolution for many Americans, this was not at all the case for southern nationalists, nor even for proslavery southerners in general. Their American Revolution did

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[50]John Peter Richardson, *Oration, Delivered in Clarendon, on the Fourth of July, 1851: By John P. Richardson, Jr.* (Columbia, S.C.: Printed at the South Carolinian office, 1851); David F. Jamison, "The National Anniversary," *Southern Quarterly Review* 2.3 (September 1850): 190-191; Trescot, *Oration Delivered Before the Beaufort Volunteer Artillery*; Thomas M. Hanckel, *Government, and the Right of Revolution. An Oration, Delivered Before the '76 Association, and Cincinnati Society, on Monday, July 4th, 1859, by Thos. M. Hanckel, Esq., a Member of the '76 Association* (Charleston, S.C.: Printed by A. J. Burke, Printer and Stationer, 1859); A. V. Huff, Jr., "The Eagle and the Vulture: Changing Attitudes Toward Nationalism in Fourth of July Orations Delivered in Charleston, 1778-1860," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 73 (1974): 10-22; Joseph Ralph James, Jr., "The Transformation of the Fourth of July in South Carolina, 1850 to 1919" (MA Thesis, Louisiana State University, 1987), esp. 26-43.

[51]Manisha Sinha, for example, has portrayed South Carolina secessionists as American counter-revolutionaries: *The Counter-revolution of Slavery*.

not offer the promise of equality for all. Edmund Ruffin, for instance, thought that "the indefensible passage in the Declaration of Independence" was "both false & foolish."[52]

Nor, according to southern nationalists, was the formation of the Union an important part of the revolution's legacy. In reviewing the significances of the revolution, Lewis Ayer reminded his audience of what it was important to treasure and what it was not:

> The great act of Washington in dissolving in blood, the accursed union of government between the American Colonies and Great Britain, should be held up to our admiration and imitation, rather than the wreck and refuse of that government which he established for our use and protection, but which is about to be wrested to our ruin.

Here was an interpretation that southern nationalists could use. "The act of Union," Ayer went on, "was but a mere business transaction." In other words, there was no mysterious American nationalism at work in the American Revolution; the fact that the era concluded with a federation of the states was the result of a simple calculation of interests. The great lesson of the American Revolution was that humans no longer needed to blindly trust in their government: the essence of the movement was the great truth of self-government, and if a particular government was not working, it ought to be replaced with another. The revolution's great achievement lay in dismantling rather than building up, after all, and once southerners recognized this great truth, "soon would be the aspiring shout for a Southern Confederacy wake the welkin with its gladsome note."[53]

This point, of course, relied on the persistent distinction between nation and government which was not only central to nationalist movements in Europe, but which also constituted an important tension within American nationalism itself. It was a tension which the radicals took advantage of, with their assertions that the United States did not really constitute a nation at

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[52]Ruffin, *Diary*, July 20, 1857, and October 20, 1858.

[53]Ayer, *Southern Rights and the Cuban Question*, 3-7.

all—only a government. One of the earliest devotees of an independent South, law professor Nathaniel Beverley Tucker, wrote to a friend in 1836, "We delude ourselves by continuing to think of the U.S. as a Country instead of a mere creature of convention." As he would explain in the years following, the founders had created not a genuine nation, but rather a loose confederation. Though the forces of "centralism," had been present, the forces of "Federalism" had been stronger, strong enough to block the use of "the word National" in the U.S. Constitution. Hence the United States was a dissolvable compact rather than a permanent nation. Other southern partisans agreed, rejecting the idea that the United States was a "consolidated" nation (the word "consolidated" elicited more repugnance in these circles than any other, except perhaps for "Yankee"). A resolution at the second Nashville Convention in 1850 held that "the people of these United States never have been and are not now formed into one people, or nation, but are still, as they ever have been, people of the several States." This notion that the United States had never been a real nation infused southern nationalist thought, particularly its selective remembrance of the American Revolution.[54]

Selective remembrance offered political gain. Just as Thomas Macaulay in England and various liberal historians in mid-nineteenth-century France promoted current political concerns by stressing the moderate aspects of their respective countries' revolutions, so too did southern nationalists' political needs shape the way they remembered the achievement of American independence. Rather than a radical initiation of democracy, the Revolution could be seen as an ideologically conservative act intended primarily to resist repression—"more a

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[54]Nathaniel Beverley Tucker to James Henry Hammond, February 18, 1836, April 27, 1847, and March 13, 1850, Nathaniel Beverley Tucker Papers, DU; William Gilmore Simms, "Southern Convention—Second Session," MS article, November 1850, Charles Carroll Simms Collection, USC. See also Trescot, *Oration Delivered Before the Beaufort Volunteer Artillery*, 11-12; Willoughby Newton to Edmund Ruffin, September 15, 1860, Edmund Ruffin Papers, VHS; Cheves, *Speech of Hon. Langdon Cheves*, 4; Davis, *Rhett*, 72.

separation of States," as Thomas Hanckel put it, "than a social and political revolution."

Minimizing the democratic potential of the Revolution, William Trescot asserted that

American independence "introduced into history a new power, not a new principle." The

revolutionary generation, he explained, "sheltered no wild sentiment, fostered no

mischievous principle of universal democracy"; rather, they "conducted a revolution with the

caution of a lawsuit." By emphasizing the principle of self-government and the conservative

dimension of the American Revolution, while minimizing the democratic radicalism that

could—if desired—be seen in the Declaration, southern nationalists were able to draw

credible parallels between themselves and the Founders.[55]

As part of their effort to lay claim to the mantle of the American Revolution in the

present, southern nationalists called attention to what they saw as the South's unappreciated

contributions to the War of Independence itself. Their endeavors spawned heated disputes.

Once again, William Gilmore Simms was in the vanguard. Simms's displeasure with an 1848

book written by Massachusetts' Lorenzo Sabine, which made much of the high proportion of

loyalists in South Carolina, inspired an acerbic two-part review. "A waste of goodly type and

paper," *The American Loyalists* had, according to Simms, been quite wrong in its claims that

northern troops were more patriotic than southern (in fact, he thought, northerners had been

motivated more by money than by patriotism); and that battles in the South had been won by

the valiant troops of New England. Accepting the high proportion of loyalists in his state,

Simms attributed this to the foreign-born population, and to the fact that South Carolina had

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[55]Ayer, *Southern Rights and the Cuban Question*, 8; Kammen, *A Season of Youth*, 46-47, 51; Benedikt Stuchtey, " Literature, Liberty, and Life of the Nation: British Historiography from Macaulay to Trevelyan," and Ceri Crossley, "History as a Principle of Legitimation in France (1820-1848)," both in *Writing National Histories*, eds. Berger, Donovan, and Passmore, 31, 49; Hanckel, *Government, and the Right of Revolution*, 25; William Henry Trescot, *The Diplomacy of the Revolution: An Historical Study* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1852), 144-154. See Bonner, "Americans Apart," esp. 162, on the distinction between celebrating the Declaration and the Constitution.

no substantial material motivations for rebellion. Indeed, these factors only made his state's hefty contribution more admirable. In conclusion, Simms joined his fellow southerners in insisting that, once the facts were known, "we do not fear but that the deeds and sacrifices of Carolina, and of the whole South, will bear honorable comparison with those of any part of this nation."[56]

Simms was here trying to right the historical record. Yet he also fully understood that conflicts over historical interpretations carried much political weight in such a charged sectional situation. Writing to his friend James Henry Hammond late in 1848, Simms advised him to read the first part of the review, "if you would see, how I have carried the war into Yankeedom, & furnished an argument, much needed, to our politicians." As the politicians took this very argument up, the dispute over contributions to the Revolution spread onto the floors of both branches of the United States Congress. In fact, it was an element of the famous 1856 dispute between Senators Andrew Butler and Charles Sumner which led to the caning of Sumner by Butler's relative Preston Brooks. Part of the honor that Brooks was trying to defend concerned proper recognition of his state's contributions to the revolutionary war. Soon after, South Carolina's southern-rights supporter Lawrence M. Keitt used the occasion of his resignation from the U.S. House to rebut claims that his own state's revolutionary record was less honorable than New England's. Explicitly criticizing Sabine's book, Keitt reiterated Simms' earlier arguments, contending that "Massachusetts embarked in the Revolution for water-falls, spindles, and merchant craft; South Carolina engaged in it for

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[56][William Gilmore Simms], "South Carolina in the Revolution," *Southern Quarterly Review* 14 (July 1848): 37-77 (quotations at 44, 76); [Simms], The Siege of Charleston in the American Revolution," *Southern Quarterly Review* 14 (Oct 1848): 261-337. The review was expanded and published as *South Carolina in the Revolutionary War: Being a Reply to Certain Misrepresentations and Mistakes of Recent Writers, in Relation to the Cause and Conduct of this State* (Charleston, SC, 1853). See also Simms, *The Sources of American Independence*, 20-23.

the royalty of mind." The contention that southerners had played such an important role in the fighting of the revolution strengthened the contention that they more properly represented its spirit in the present day.[57]

In other ways, too, southern partisans sought to lay claim to the mantle of American revolutionary history—and, therefore, of American nationalism. As we have seen, the figure of George Washington was a central element of American nationalism in both the North and the South. As was the case with revolutionary memory in general, though, Washington's memory could be imbued with regionally-specific meaning rather than functioning as an adhesive of American nationalism. One Charleston orator, for instance, referred to Washington as "the Great Southerner," and urged that his example ought to be followed by the present generation of southerners—especially because the North had so patently failed to do so. No less a figure than John C. Calhoun complained about misuse of Washington's memory, stating that "we have a right to claim [Washington] as an illustrious Southerner, for he was a southern man—a southern planter—and we do not intend that he shall be taken out of our hands."[58]

It was a South Carolinian woman, in fact, Ann Pamela Cunningham, who led the attempt to preserve Mount Vernon, and Cunningham's mother, at least, wished zealously to guard the southernness of the whole endeavor. Writing to a potential collaborator, Lousia Cunningham

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[57]Simms to Hammond, December 15 1848, *The Letters of William Gilmore Simms*, II: 465; Andrew P. Butler, "The South's Sacrifices in the Revolution," *De Bow's Review* 21 (Aug 1856), 199; Lawrence M. Keitt, "Patriotic Services of the North and the South," *De Bow's Review* 21 (Nov. 1856): 491-508 (quotation at 492); John Hope Franklin, "The North, the South, and the American Revolution," *Journal of American History* 62 (1975): 5-23.

[58]William E. Mikell, *Oration Delivered Before the Washington Light Infantry on their Fifty-Second Anniversary, at the Institute Hall, February 22, 1859* (Charleston, S.C.: Steam Power Press of Walker, Evans & Co., 1859), 6. Calhoun quoted in Bonner, "Americans Apart," 192, within an insightful discussion of other aspects of Washington remembrance. See also Samuel Gilman and William D. Porter, *Proceedings of the Semi-Centennial Celebration of the Washington Light Infantry, 22d and 23d February, 1857* (Charleston, S.C.: Walker and Evans, 1857), 39.

described how on a recent trip "my heart swelled with emotions" upon coming into the vicinity of Mount Vernon. The effort to save the national shrine was particularly urgent in her mind because of the possibility that the property might otherwise "fall, into the hands of the Yankee speculator." Her prejudice against northerners extended even to those northern women who desired to assist in the enterprise. It had been suggested that part of the name of the organization be changed from "the Ladies of the South" to "the American Ladies," but Louisa Cunningham was dead set against the idea. "Let it be all South," she wrote—"The grave of Washington lies in Southern Soil—let it be solely and wholly ours."[59]

Even in the 1840s and 1850s, then, Abraham Lincoln's "mystic chords of memory" were not functioning for all Americans as a means of unification. Rather than bringing Americans together, shared memories were acting as vehicles of division. And these insistent assertions of their ownership of the revolutionary heritage suggest that, rather than abandoning their existing American national identity, southern nationalists were attempting to define a new nation within the parameters of the old. While they sought a political separation from the United States, they did not intend a rejection of the idea of America: southern nationalism developed as a variant of American nationalism. In 1857 one Charleston orator emphasized that to withdraw from the Union would not mean rejecting America, but rather rescuing it from those who had perverted its real promise: "If that hour of final dissolution comes, then let us claim as our portion the Star Spangled Banner … *rescue it from apostate hands*, and … rededicate it to a more enduring Southern Union." William Trescot similarly believed that secession would renew the promise of America. In 1850, he predicted that, in the event of political separation, "The experiment instituted by our fathers will receive its highest

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[59]Louisa Cunningham to Mary Araminthia Snowden, January 3, 1854, Mary Amarinthia Snowden Papers, USC.

illustration." The southern nation would be more American than the United States. Not that

Trescot wanted to deny southerners' gratitude to the Union. But all the same, he concluded,

"It has achieved its destiny. Let us achieve ours."[60]

But what was the South's destiny? What was the end goal of all of this nationalist rhetoric

and argument? What, in the estimation of prewar southern nationalists, did the future hold for

an independent South? One thing was certain: that future would be a magnificent one. "If this

unholy union could be severed," thought Frederick Porcher, "if we could be left to ourselves,

to work out our own destiny, we see no reason why we should not equal the moral greatness

of any people in history." Most arguments for southern nationalism concluded with a

similarly rousing—and usually a similarly vague—vision of the South's national future.

Some antebellum nationalists, however, did take the time to elaborate a little more fully

on exactly what would be so wonderful about southern independence. Both Edmund Ruffin

and Nathaniel Beverley Tucker even wrote predictive novels in which they dramatically laid

out their visions of what an independent South would look like, and how it might come into

being. Ruffin, Tucker, and other southern nationalists hinted at the content of their dreams in

a variety of other writings as well, which together make possible a sort of composite picture

of what the proposed southern nation might actually look like.[61]

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[60]Drew Gilpin Faust, *The Creation of Confederate Nationalism: Ideology and Identity in the Civil War South* (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), 14, 27; Fleetwood Lanneau, quoted in Huff, "The Eagle and the Vulture," 21; Trescot, *The Position and Course of the South*, 19.

[61]In addition to the sources specifically cited below, the following paragraphs draw upon: Edmund Ruffin, *Anticipations of the Future, to Serve as Lessons for the Present Time, in the Form of Extracts from Letters from an English Resident in the United States, to the London Times, from 1864 to 1870* (Richmond, Va.: J W Randolph, 1860); Tucker, *Prescience*; Cheves, *Speech of Hon. Langdon Cheves*; Simms, "Antagonisms of the Social Moral"; Edward E. Baptist, "Dreams so Real: Secession and Fantasy Fiction," paper delivered to the Southern Historical Association, Memphis, Tennessee, November 5, 2004.

The most consistent characteristic of the southern nation they envisioned was its internal

unity. In view of constant southern division on how to respond to the sectional crisis, the

unity of the South understandably was something of a sensitive point to southern nationalists.

And so, they were insistent—perhaps suspiciously so—in their assertions that an independent

South would be a united South. One secessionist thought southerners would be practically

identical: "Asking the same political privileges—needing the same political protection—their

communities resting on the same basis—their laws the same—their language, tastes,

sympathies, the same—homogeneous in every thing that pertains to their political, civil or

social relations." The actual substance of southern homogeneity and unity were typically

skipped over in these kinds of statements. But when specifics were introduced, slavery

loomed large. Outlining a novel he planned to entitle "A Century Hence," Virginia politician

John C. Rutherfoord envisioned "a united confederacy held firmly together by the

conservative influence of slavery." Others, too, predicted that the national unity that the

United States lacked would be provided in the new nation by southerners' shared stake in

racial slavery.[62]

In planning his novel, Rutherfoord also decided he would "make the South profit and the

North suffer by a dissolution of the Union." Assertions of the prosperity that awaited an

independent South ran through just about all southern nationalists' predictions of the future.

After all, such assertions followed logically from the conviction that the South was currently

exploited economically by the North. As one Virginia secessionist predicted, "a degree of

prosperity, greater than the world has ever known, would await us in a separation from the

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[62]"To the Hon W. J. Grayson," signed "One of the People," n.p., bound at USC with [W. J. Grayson], "Letter to His Excellency Whitemarsh B. Seabrook, Governor of the State of South-Carolina, on the Dissolution of the Union (Charleston, S.C.: A. E. Miller, 1850), 12; "A Century Hence," handwritten notes in Rutherfoord Family Papers, VHS.

selfish and contemptible horde that have fattened on our bounty till they have degenerated into revilers and slanderers." Similarly, Nathaniel Beverley Tucker explained in his own predictive novel, *The Partisan Leader*, that separation from the North and release from the economic burden of the protective tariff would line the South's pockets.[63] In other writings, Tucker specifically emphasized the policy of free trade, particularly with the South's natural ally Great Britain, as a crucial element in post-independence affluence.[64] So too did Robert Barnwell Rhett. With the policy of free trade, combined with the power of cotton (which James Henry Hammond so famously called King), the South could look forward to both wealth and peaceful relations with the rest of the world. William Trescot, for instance, thought that cotton would allow the new nation to become "the guardian of the world's commerce—the grave and impartial centre of that new balance of power."[65] And more generally, as the radicals were fond of pointing out, the South enjoyed all the resources of population, territory, wealth, and nature to enjoy a prosperous independent existence. Such was the underlying argument of Edmund Ruffin, for one, in his fictional prediction of the South's future as an independent nation, *Anticipations of the Future*. Outside the Union beckoned peace and affluence.

Independence promised liberation from territorial constriction as well as economic exploitation. Visions of expansion were another common feature of the radicals' imagined

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[63]Rutherfoord, "A Century Hence"; Daniel H. London, *Speech of Daniel H. London on the Commercial, Agricultural & Intellectual Independence of Virginia and the South, Delivered in the Hall of the House of Delegates on the Night of the 5th January 1860; and his Letter to Joseph Segar, Esq, Respecting the Pilot Laws* (Richmond, Va.: Printed at Enquirer Book and Job Office, 1860), 37; Nathaniel Beverley Tucker, *The Partisan Leader: A Tale of the Future*, ed. C. Hugh Holman (1836; Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1971), esp. 65-66, 249.

[64]Tucker to James H. Hammond, February 17, 1836 and December 27, 1849, Nathaniel Beverley Tucker Papers, DU.

[65]Trescot, *The Position and Course of the South*, 24.

nation. In the minds of both Robert Barnwell Rhett and John C. Rutherfoord, for example, an independent South would b able to lay claim to certain North American territories—New Mexico, Utah, California—from which it was excluded in the present Union. But visions of territorial growth did not stop there. Rutherfoord, Rhett, and others also hoped for expansion further south. As Robert E. May has shown, the acquisition of such places as Cuba became an important goal for southern partisans in the 1850s, particularly in light of the South's failure to acquire new slaveholding territory within the Union. To the radicals, the prospect of a southern confederacy acquiring Cuba, Jamaica, Haiti, and other areas of the Caribbean and even Central America, seemed rosy indeed. Even Lewis Ayer, who cautioned in 1855 against Cuban annexation as a distraction from the priority of southern independence, nonetheless looked favorably upon expansion *after* independence. "An Independent Confederacy of these Slave-holding States," as he put it, "might be enabled to shape the destinies of, not only Cuba, but the whole West India Archipelago; but not until we are masters of our own fortunes, can we do aught good for ourselves, or others."[66]

The dream of an independent South, then, promised to bring with it release from the oppressive constraints which the radicals felt within the Union. In addition to the straightforward protection of slavery, it promised an escape from the economic exploitation, the territorial constriction, the insulting degradation that southern radicals objected to so vehemently. It promised a return to the genuine spirit of the American Revolution, a spirit that had been fatally subverted by the North. It promised purification from the taint of

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[66] Walther, *The Fire-Eaters*, 144-150; Rhett, *Political Life and Services*, 39-40; Rutherfoord, "A Century Hence"; Ruffin, *Diary of Edmund Ruffin*, April 20, 1858; May, *Southern Dream of a Caribbean Empire*; Ayer, *Southern Rights and the Cuban Question*, 22; Nathaniel Beverley Tucker to James Henry Hammond, April 18, 1850. Curiously, Tucker not only envisioned that Cuba and Jamaica would function as outlets for the South's surplus slave population; he also imagined that "a colony [of] our best and most intelligent free negroes" could be established "in the tropical parts of South America where none but Negroes and monkeys can live," and perhaps lay the foundation for eventual emancipation in the very distant future.

association with an immoral and misguided North. And perhaps most important of all, it promised vindication for those prophets who had tried so long to convince the South that its interests and rightful destiny demanded national independence. "But indeed," confessed Nathaniel Beverley Tucker in 1850, "I do not know how to bear the thought of surrendering the hope of being remembered in future time as one of the founders of that glorious Southern Confederacy which I begin to see in prophetic vision."[67] Tucker and the other radicals had invested their lives, their selves, in the dream of southern nationalism. They had tried to substantiate this dream with an array of assertion and argument, drawing on American and transatlantic conceptions of nationalism, all designed to prove that the South deserved— needed—national independence. Only one question remained. Would their fellow white southerners ever agree?

[67]Nathaniel Beverley Tucker to James Henry Hammond, February 2, 1850, Nathaniel Beverley Tucker Papers, DU.

III. THE PINCH: THE SECTIONAL CRISIS HITS HOME

In 1858 James Henry Hammond, the South Carolina planter, politician, and aspiring intellectual, recognized an important truth: that the success of the secession movement would not depend primarily on the nationalist dreams of the radicals. Hammond took issue with the overly simplistic analysis of his fellow South Carolinian, the politician William Porcher Miles, which "divides all Southern men into two classes … those who shape their course for Union at all hazard, and those who shape it for an independent Southern Republic." Such an analysis, Hammond contended, "omits 999/1000 voters & 49/50 men of substance …. This immense body goes for Union until it pinches them & then for dissolving it."[1]

As Hammond understood, the sectional crisis did not provide a neat referendum in which white southerners were asked to choose between the clearly distinguished choices of "American nationalism" versus "southern nationalism." For most, the issue was not so simple; the options were not conceived of as unionism "at all hazard" versus southern independence at any cost. Rather, the majority of antebellum white southerners were advocates of conditional unionism: continued loyalty to the current Union so long as certain conditions were met. This loyalty would stand or fall depending on the extent to which the Union appeared to "pinch" them, more than on the idealized southern nationalism of Rhett, Ruffin, and others of their ilk.

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[1]James Henry Hammond to William Porcher Miles, October 23, 1858, William Porcher Miles Papers, SHC.

But what would be the nature of Hammond's "pinch"? When he wrote about the conditional unionism of the majority in late 1858, Hammond may have been thinking of a letter he had received earlier that year from another South Carolinian, the writer William Gilmore Simms. Simms believed that white southerners would only leave the present Union in response to some immediate and inescapable threat. "No revolution," as he put it, "can be effected, among any people, of the cautious, calculating nature of the Anglo-Norman, or Anglo-American race, until the usurpation shall invade the household, & be brought home to every man's door, in a sense of [personal] danger, or pecuniary loss & privation." An abstract conflict, one carried on miles away in the territories or Washington, D.C., could not provoke most white southerners to action, as Simms explained. The issues had to become personal—had to enter the realm of the individual, the household, the everyday—if they were to really *matter* to ordinary southerners. This is precisely what took place during the course of the 1850s—and this is what ultimately made secession viable.[2]

The insights of Hammond and Simms help steer us away from two common misconceptions about the coming of secession. First, there is the tendency toward what Eric Van Young, in analyzing Mexican nationalism, has termed "outcomism."[3] "Outcomism" has marked interpretations of both the southern and the Mexican cases: because the outcome was national independence, some commentators have assumed that the process must have been driven by nationalism—the type of nationalism that I have termed active nationalism—a movement self-consciously designed to bring a nation and its governance unit into proper

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[2]William Gilmore Simms to James Henry Hammond, January 28, 1858, in *The Letters of William Gilmore Simms*, six volumes, eds. Mary C. Simms Oliphant, Alfred Taylor Odell, and T. C. Duncan Eaves (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1952-1982), IV: 16.

[3]Eric Van Young, "Revolution and Imagined Communities in Mexico, 1810-1821" in *Nationalism in the New World*, eds. Don H. Doyle and Marco Antonio Pamplona (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 2006), 184-207.

alignment, by any means necessary. Because a nation was the result, in other words, a budding nationalism must have been the cause.[4] In fact, as Van Young argues in the Mexican case, even many of the people who participated in the movement that resulted in national independence do not appear to have been motivated by nationalism per se. Instead, they participated for more localized and often personal reasons. The same is true of the southern case. For most white southerners, the acceptance of secession did not result from a positive embrace of the idea that the South possessed some naturally-occurring national identity which mandated national independence. Rather, it resulted from the conviction that the present Union with the North was so detrimental to white southerners that it had to be terminated—with the nature of its replacement mattering much less than the necessity that it be replaced.[5]

The second misconception which Hammond and Simms steer us away from is the assumption that the sectional conflict took place exclusively in the arena of formal national politics. In view of American nationalism's close connections with white southerners' lives, how could their commitment to that nationalism come unraveled without involving their

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[4]The title of the relevant volume in the authoritative "History of the South" series says it all: Avery Craven, *The Growth of Southern Nationalism, 1848-1861*, A History of the South, Volume VI (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1953). For more recent works that reinforce this narrative, see John McCardell, *The Idea of a Southern Nation: Southern Nationalists and Southern Nationalism, 1830-1860* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1979), which charts the apparently neat and inexorable transition from "sectionalism" to "nationalism" in various areas of southern life; and Manisha Sinha, *The Counterrevolution of Secession: Politics and Ideology in Antebellum South Carolina* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), which suggests that a small cadre of thinkers in South Carolina codified a complete version of "southern nationalism" during the Nullification Crisis, and that the story of the next three decades is the story of their single-minded—and, in the end, successful—endeavor to implement it.

[5]This argument, and several of the points I make to support it, build upon the insights of David Potter, *The Impending Crisis, 1848-1861* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976), 469-478 *et passim*. For his suggestion that the sectional crisis was caused by a conflict of interest much more than a clash of distinct national cultures (and the important observation that many twentieth-century postcolonial nationalisms were driven by "a negative political reaction against an existing regime" rather than a distinctive cultural identity), see Potter's influential essay, "The Historian's Use of Nationalism and Vice Versa," reprinted in his *The South and the Sectional Conflict* (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1968), 34-83.

personal lives? For the radical few, as we saw in the previous chapter, nationalism drew

strength from connections with personal lives and identities; in much the same way, the

majority's changing attitudes towards nationalism and allegiance depended upon connections

with everyday concerns. For many white southerners, membership in the American nation—

or, to be more specific, sharing that membership with the North—appeared increasingly

during the course of the 1850s to endanger rather than enrich their lives. When apparent

attacks by the North upon slavery and the South spilled from the abstract and the remote into

the personal and the immediate, white southerners, feeling threatened on an individual and

personal level, came to see secession as a more palatable option.

This approach draws on the findings of a large body of work on secession. While their

emphases and particular arguments have differed, many of the most important studies have

agreed on one overarching idea: that fear of northern threats was the primary motivator of

secession. Some historians have emphasized that northern antislavery presented an economic,

territorial, and psychological threat to the slaveholding white South, which depended upon

the survival of the institution, and even its expansion, in order to protect the economic

benefits of slavery and the social and psychological benefits of white supremacy.[6] Others

have seen secessionism as being driven more by perceived threats to white liberty than to

black slavery.[7] While they disagree on the way white southerners perceived the northern

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[6]Eugene D. Genovese, *The Political Economy of Slavery: Studies in the Economy and Society of the Slave South* (New York: Random House, 1965), esp. 243-270; William L. Barney, *The Road to Secession: A New Perspective on the Old South* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1972), esp. 3-48; William L. Barney, *The Secessionist Impulse: Alabama and Mississippi in 1860* (1974; Tuscaloosa, Ala.: University of Alabama Press, 2004); Steven A. Channing, *Crisis of Fear: Secession in Carolina* (1970; New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1974); Charles Dew, *Apostles of Disunion: Southern Secession Commissioners and the Causes of the Civil War* (Charlottesville, Va.: University of Virginia Press, 2001). Barney's preface to the 2004 edition of *The Secessionist Impulse* provides a valuable overview of the historiography of secession.

[7]Lacy K. Ford, Jr., *Origins of Southern Radicalism: The South Carolina Upcountry, 1800-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); J. Mills Thornton, *Politics and Power in a Slave Society: Alabama, 1800-1860*

threat, both groups would agree that this threat—a threat deriving from, even if it ultimately went beyond, northern opposition to slavery—is what fueled the secession movement.

Even more pertinent is the work of a third group of historians, who have extended the secession-driven-by-fear interpretation to encompass the realm of the household and private life as well as that of formal politics. Stephanie McCurry, for instance, has exposed the connections between fear of the North in the public and the private realms. White southern men, she has argued, viewed the preservation of slavery and the preservation of their roles as heads of households and masters of black and white dependents as part of the same constellation of privilege. When the North threatened the one, it threatened the whole. McCurry's argument meshes well with the work of Bertram Wyatt-Brown and Kenneth Greenberg. They have used the concept of honor to contend that slaveholding southern men viewed the sectional conflict in a manner not dissimilar from a duel or other male rivalry: to appear to be the inferior in an unequal relationship was to be humiliated in public. In the words of Wyatt-Brown, "anger and frustration were the root emotions that drove Southerners to secede, a visceral response to a collective sense of degradation and disgrace." More recently, Christopher Olsen has demonstrated with even greater force that the system of honor and the political culture of antipartyism in Mississippi caused white men to interpret northern acts—especially the election of Abraham Lincoln—as *personal* insults, as degradations aimed at them as individuals, degradations which, according to their shared values, necessitated violent resistance.[8]

(Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1978); Michael F. Holt, *The Political Crisis of the 1850s* (1978; New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1983).

[8]Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations, & The Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), and *The Shaping of Southern Culture: Honor, Grace, and War, 1760s-1880s* (Chapel Hill, N.C.:

These works underpin my own interpretation of the South's course toward secession. The unraveling of American nationalism in the South was not a straight road, to be sure, and nor was its route plotted in advance. But it was driven by what we might think of as a personalization of the sectional drama. From the late 1840s through to the secession winter of 1860-1861, this was how many white southerners began to feel the "pinch" of the Union—this was how membership in the United States came to seem more of a liability than a benefit.

The personal dimension was already very prominent in the language of those who promoted secession during the sectional crisis of 1846-1851. The crisis was spawned by the question of what the United States ought to do with lands conquered during the Mexican War. Should the new territories be slave or free? Before the fighting was even over, a Pennsylvania congressman, David Wilmot, proposed that any lands gained as a result of the war should not permit slavery. The slaveholding South was, understandably, appalled. Wilmot's proposal famously introduced an issue which would divide politicians by region rather than by party. Thanks to the Compromise of 1850, the crisis would not, of course, result in secession. But even so, it provided secessionists with an invaluable dress rehearsal.

The promoters of secession and southern independence drew much of the tone, style, and content of their arguments from the radical southern nationalists we got to know in the previous chapter. Like the radicals, the "Southern Rights" associations and leaders that sprang up across the South stressed above all else their shared victimhood at the hands of a hostile North. Their protest comprised several main complaints: that the North threatened the

University of North Carolina Press, 2001), quotation at p.154; Kenneth Greenberg, *Masters and Statesman: The Political Culture of American Slavery*, New Studies in American Intellectual and Cultural History (Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985); Christopher J. Olsen, *Political Culture and Secession in Mississippi: Masculinity, Honor, and the Antiparty Tradition, 1830-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

white South's interest in slavery, and therefore the racial order it engendered; that the North exploited the slaveholding South with an unfair economic system; and that the North unjustly denied southerners' right of equal access to federal territory. All of this amounted to a general system of unreasonable oppression, in the eyes of many white southerners. And the situation seemed serious, even life-threatening. Thus a constituent of South Carolina Governor Whitemarsh Seabrook wrote to him in 1850 of the need to resist the North now; otherwise, "they" would continue to exploit the South economically and raise African Americans up to equality with whites. The danger was so critical, he thought, "that the issues now submitted to the South, are life or death."[9]

An important dimension of the debate in the South revolved around the question not so much of whether such oppressions existed, but of whether they had yet become serious enough to warrant the ultimate reaction. Moderate South Carolinian William Grayson attracted multiple rebuttals with his insistence that the situation had not yet reached crisis point. According to Grayson, secession would produce instability rather than security; and although northern oppressions of the South did exist, they were not yet acute. And in any case, being confined to the "social" rather than the "political" sphere, they would never warrant political separation, whatever their intensity. Grayson's critics retorted that he misapprehended both the character and the intensity of northern oppressions. "Have you not been identified with an institution, which has been interdicted?" asked one, making clear that the root of the problem lay in northern hostility to the institution of slavery. "Are not you classed with political lepers? [I]s not your republicanism denied, your equality scouted, your right, as a citizen of Carolina, to go to California, with all your rights as a citizen of Carolina, spurned?" "We desire disunion," wrote another critic,

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[9]Thomas [Lekie?] to Whitemarsh Seabrook, September 9, 1850, Whitemarsh Seabrook Papers, SHC.

that we might be freed from the dominion of a majority, whose political creed is their interest, and whose religion is fanaticism…. we consent to our own degradation, when we remain in common bonds with those who regard us as their moral and religious inferiors, and who use the common halls of our government, to give constant expression to that feeling.

As Grayson's critics made clear, the umbrage at being considered inferiors in a relationship which ought to be one of equality helped drive secessionist sentiment during the crisis of mid-century. Grayson may or may not have been correct that northern oppression was more "social" than "political." But even if he was, his critics rejected his assumption that "social" oppressions did not warrant secession. Disrespect in any sphere of life was unacceptable.[10]

Some voices, to be sure, advanced an argument that can appropriately be characterized as active southern nationalism—the idea that, regardless of what the North was doing, the important fact was that southerners were sufficiently distinct from the North and the rest of the world as to necessitate their own independent political existence. Thus the secessionist critics of William Grayson invoked southern unity as one reason for a united southern resistance: "their language, tastes, sympathies, the same," as one put it, "they would almost seem to have been marked out by Providence as a people created for an union among themselves, and with no one else." If this were true, white southerners easily possessed a unique national identity, and, according to prevailing understandings of nationalism, the right to govern themselves as a sovereign nation. Such nationalist claims were heard particularly often in the cooperationist camp. Langdon Cheves was probably the most prominent spokesman of this position, arguing against separate state secession in the language of romantic southern nationalism. "God and nature," he wrote about southerners as a whole in

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[10]William J. Grayson, *Letter to his Excellency Whitemarsh B. Seabrook, Governor of the State of South-Carolina, on the Dissolution of the Union* (Charleston, S.C.: A. E. Miller, 1850), 16; "To the Hon W. J. Grayson," bound with *Letter to his Excellency* in copy held by USC, 5; Benjamin C. Pressley, *Reasons for the Dissolution of the Union, Being a Reply to the Letter of the Hon. W. J. Grayson, and to his Answer to One of the People* (Charleston, S.C.: A. J. Burke, 1850), 8.

1851, "have combined them by such social adhesion, such homegeneousness of interests, by such great and benign sympathies, of blood, of character and historical action, as to make their separation deplorable, dangerous and unwise." A unique and shared national identity mandated political independence.[11]

Yet such pronouncements of natural, divinely-ordained, and blood-based national identity were more often a side-dish to the entrée of secessionist rhetoric: the language of victimhood, humiliation, and oppression. One resolution, delivered at the same cooperationist meeting to which Langdon Cheves had written, captured this clearly:

> That in view of the humiliating condition of the Slaveholding States in this Confederacy—their rights violated—their Institutions proscribed—their character vilified—their offers of compromise rejected—and in view of the still greater dangers which are impending over them, we believe the time has come when this Union should be dissolved, and a new Government organized on the basis of a Southern Confederacy.

Humiliation, violation, proscription, vilification, rejection—these were the feelings which fuelled the secessionist cause.[12]

And they echoed around the mid-century South. "It is a high and sacred duty we owe to ourselves, our country and our children," declared a broadside printed by a Southern Rights association in South Carolina, to preserve southern rights and to resist northern encroachment upon them. If they did not resist, a terrible fate awaited them as "the vassals of the North." Much the same impulse prompted students at the University of Virginia to form their own Southern Rights association. Despite the fact that the South had contributed disproportionately to the recent victory against Mexico, complained the students in a communication addressed to "the Young Men of the South," southerners were being unfairly

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[11]"To the Hon W. J. Grayson," 12; Pressley, *Reasons for the Dissolution of the Union*, 15; "Co-operation Meeting, Held in Charleston, SC, July 29th, 1851" (n.p., n.d., USC), 11.

[12]"Co-operation Meeting," 14.

excluded from the spoils. "And what has been our reward?" they asked. "To have our institutions branded as infamous, and ourselves treated as strangers and aliens in the land purchased by our treasure and our blood; to be debarred of all the benefits flowing from our rich and costly conquests, and to be cut off from their possession, both we and our heirs, forever." The slaveholding South was under attack, they warned; thanks to the growing northern hostility towards slavery, southerners were becoming "hemmed in."[13]

Even those who stopped short of advocating immediate secession employed the language of vassalage and humiliation. The Central Southern Rights Association of Virginia was established in 1850 as a vehicle to advance southern interests inside—rather than outside—the Union. Leaders frequently objected to the "disunionist" label, explaining that their purpose was not to break up the Union, but only to seek means of redress for perceived economic exploitation of the South at the hands of the North, through measures such as direct trade between southern ports and Europe, and the stimulation of southern manufacturing by nonimportation of northern goods. These measures could be carried on within the present Union, and need not necessarily require secession. Even so, the leaders of the Central Southern Rights Association of Virginia were clearly animated by the same sense of victimhood that was so central to the secessionist cause. In early 1851 they kicked into organizational high-gear, having meetings, issuing proclamations and resolutions, and so forth. The problem of dependence and inequality vis-à-vis the North was an especially biting theme. This was largely an economic problem that spilled into the realm of individual psychology. Southerners were not treated with proper respect, they complained: "we are dependent on the free states for the very necessities of life.—We have become a second

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[13]"Association of Claremont Election County for the Defence of Southern Rights," Broadside, October 22, 1850, USC; "Address, 1851, of the Southern Rights Association of the University of Virginia to the Young Men of the South," typescript in William Henry Gist Papers, USC, p. 2.

Ireland." Perhaps even more cutting to white southerners were the personal ramifications of all of this. "We have ceased to be respected," read one report, "and are only the subjects of ridicule." "We are now tributary in every shape to the North," read another. "They are powerful and arrogant—we are weak and poor. Our rights are not respected. Every mail which reaches us brings fresh accounts of outrages upon Southern rights and Southern citizens." Such a condition was simply unacceptable to southern men, was the message— especially Virginian men who could boast such noble revolutionary forebears.[14]

At the end of 1851, with the secession movement in ruins, the Central Southern Rights Association of Virginia continued to advocate for southern liberation from northern economic exploitation. Its president, Daniel H. London, corresponded with prominent Virginia politician Muscoe R. H. Garnett in an effort to keep the movement going. The association thought Garnett would be the perfect author to publicize southern wrongs at the hands of the North. "Our object, as you suppose," wrote London, "is, to diffuse … information, to show to the people of the south, the degrading situation they occupy in the Union, the vasilage they are under, the fraud and deception which have been practiced upon them, from the foundation of the government by a Northern majority in Congress." In the wake of the first attempt at secession, the white South's victimhood seemed more urgent a problem than ever. "We wish Congress and the world to see, that we know our situation," wrote London. "We wish all our grievances grouped in one document, to enable the mind to contemplate the whole at one view."[15]

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[14]"Record of the Organization and Transactions of the Central Southern Rights Association of Virginia," handwritten volume, VHS, quotations at p.46; *The Proceedings and Address of the Central Southern Rights Association of Virginia, to the Citizens of Virginia, Adopted January 10, 1851* (Richmond, Va.: Printed by Ritchies and Dunnavant, 1851), 11.

[15]Daniel H. London to Muscoe R. H. Garnett, December 1851, Daniel H. London Papers, VHS.

Those so inclined would commit themselves to spreading this very message—to "fir[ing] the southern mind," as William Lowndes Yancey memorably put it. Their success or failure would depend on the endurance of the southern majority's stance during and after the mid-century crisis: conditional unionism. The first secession movement failed because most white southerners did not believe that things were bad enough—yet—to warrant the ultimate act of secession; they believed that the Union remained the best option, but only if southern rights could be maintained within it.

This more moderate majority rejected the attempts of the radicals to split the Union. Celebrations of the Fourth of July during the crisis years provide a revealing perspective on how a wide cross-section of the white South struggled with problems of nationalism and allegiance. For those committed to active southern nationalism, as we have seen, the Fourth provided an occasion for aligning their cause with the revolutionary past, and providing historical justification for southern independence. Such behavior was roundly condemned by the moderate majority. One speaker at an 1851 Independence Day celebration in Mississippi raised the question of whether disunionists "should any longer be protected by the sanctity of the great Political Sabbath of our Freedom," and clearly intended that the answer should be no. Disunionists should not be permitted to use the Fourth for their cause. Yet that was exactly what seemed to be happening in South Carolina, where celebrations of the holiday appeared to have been deviously hijacked by secessionists. Newspapers in other parts of the South complained about the disunionist tone of some Independence Day celebrations, and also of June 28th, South Carolina's "Palmetto Day," which commemorated the revolutionary Battle of Fort Moultrie. To editors outside of South Carolina, it seemed like sacrilege to use the memory of the American Revolution for "an orgie of Disunion." The Fourth, and the

Revolution in general, ought to be used to strengthen the bonds of American nationhood, not to tear them apart.[16]

In this spirit, the majority of white southerners continued to hope that the Union could be preserved. The Fourth seemed the perfect occasion to make that clear. In 1849, *Brownlow's Knoxville Whig and Independent Journal* expressed approval of the fact that celebrations of the Fourth remained strong, and urged readers, "in these days of annexation and war, of Wilmot Provisos and threatened Disunion, cling to the glorious arch by which our UNION is sustained, until all factions shall have crumbled under its weight!" The following year, the *Whig* again welcomed the holiday as an occasion when all Americans' patriotism could and should be renewed—a function which seemed ever more urgent as the specter of disunion loomed ever larger. Other white southerners at mid-century feared that they might be marking the last Independence Day with the Union intact, even as they hoped that that would not in fact be the case.[17]

Most white southerners' unionism in the crisis of 1846-1851 was not, however, without qualification. Many celebrations of the Fourth in those years were marked by an emphatically conditional unionism: the hope that the Union would survive, but only if southerners could feel assured that their rights were secure within it. Addressing a Wilmington, North Carolina audience in 1851, Joshua Wright highlighted the serious threat that northern antislavery represented to the Union. But in addition to encouraging his fellow southerners to resist that threat with determined action, he finished his speech with the recommendation that even as southerners ought to "stand up for our rights," they should also "turn no deaf ear to the

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[16]*Vicksburg Whig*, July 16, 1851; *Richmond Whig*, July 4, 1851 ("orgie" quote), July 15, 1851; *Richmond Enquirer*, July 4, July 8, July 15, 1851.

[17]*Brownlow's Knoxville Whig and Independent Journal*, July 7, 1849, July 6, 1850; *Richmond Whig*, July 4, 1851; *Richmond Enquirer*, July 4, 1850, July 8, 1851.

invocations of patriotism, and still maintain our fidelity to the *Compromise*, the *Constitution* and the *Union*." A similar sentiment of conditional unionism was evident at Independence Day celebrations across the South. A militia company in Richmond raised its collective glass in 1851 to several typical toasts: one to the Union, which proclaimed, "we would join our hearts and hands for its preservation, so long as it is worth preserving;" and another to "Our Country," which declared vast amounts of loyalty to the Unites States, and the willingness to sacrifice much on its behalf—but which ended with the qualification, "but it must be *without dishonor*."[18]

Such was the stance of those conditional unionists who, in James Hammond's estimation, continued to enjoy a majority even later in the 1850s. This stance was solidified with southern responses to the Compromise of 1850. As historian David Potter has astutely observed, the term "armistice" is really a more accurate description than "compromise," since, far from settling the underlying conflict, northerners and southerners simply agreed to accept limited fulfillment of their particular demands.[19] The Compromise made nobody happy—its efficacy lay in the fact that all parties recognized that, although they had not got what they wanted, nor had anybody else. From the perspective of the mainstream white South, the Compromise issued a final ultimatum to the North: southerners had generously agreed to give the Union another try, but would not tolerate any further trespasses upon their

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[18]Joshua G. Wright, *An Oration: Delivered in the Methodist Episcopal Church, Wilmington, N. C. on the Fourth of July, A.D. 1851* (Wilmington, N.C.: Printed at the "Herald" book and job office, 1851), 21; *Richmond Enquirer*, July 9 1850.

[19]Potter, *The Impending Crisis*, 90-120.

rights or honor. This was the line drawn in the sand by white southerners: if it were crossed, conditional unionists held, the Union would have destroyed itself.[20]

By the secession winter of 1860 and 1861, the line did indeed appear to have been crossed. How did this shift take place? What had changed between the beginning of the 1850s and the beginning of the 1860s? At the risk of oversimplifying a complex and variegated process, I will emphasize the proliferation of the same sense of being embattled, under attack, besieged, that galvanized the radical southern nationalists. This proliferation was caused more by the development of events than by radicals' propaganda initiatives, but nonetheless their perspective did come to be increasingly shared by former moderates. The sense of being under attack drew special potency from its intrusion into the personal lives of white southerners. As northern assaults came to seem directed not at slavery in general nor at the abstract entity of "the South"—but rather at the everyday lives and identities of individuals— they became more urgent. White southerners' national responsibility toward the United States thereby unraveled and secession became more palatable an option.

In reflecting upon this process themselves, white southerners often employed the language of affection, friendship, fraternity, and even romance. At the center of the radicals' critique of American nationalism, we will recall, lay the contention that Americans were united only by politics or interest, and not by affection or kinship. Without the latter, it was believed, national bonds could hardly be said to exist at all. One of the clearest spokesmen for this position was William Gilmore Simms. Writing to a fellow southern novelist in 1851,

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[20]The principle of conditional unionism continued to set the tone of many Fourth of July celebrations in the following decade, even in South Carolina. See, for instance, the toast to the Union in the Charleston *Mercury*, July 7, 1856: "So long as there is a hope of its continuance, as our Fathers contrived it, so long should we strive to preserve it; but the day it ceases to recognize the political equality of its sovereign members, *should be its last*."

Simms put a slightly different spin on his usual argument that Americans had never enjoyed true national bonds at all. In this particular letter, he wrote that Americans had once enjoyed such bonds, but that they had subsequently been destroyed. The abolitionists, he explained, had "utterly subverted the only bond (that of sympathy) by which the people of our separate sections were ever truly held together. Common cause, common necessities, and the belief in a common feeling—these were the true articles of confederation." Feeling, sentiment, and affection were seen by many of Simms's contemporaries as the proper bonds of nationalism. Later in the decade, to provide just one example, a speaker at the University of North Carolina reminded his audience of a quote attributed to an English statesman: "*The cement of reciprocal esteem and regard can alone bind together the parts of this great fabric*." Such, according to this speaker and many others, was also true of the American nation in the 1850s. And to the extent that these bonds of affection deteriorated, so too would the bonds that had joined northerners and southerners in a shared national community.[21]

Along with the language of affection came the metaphor of romance. When New Yorker William Peirce moved to Mississippi for several years in the 1850s, he could not escape the impingement of the sectional conflict upon his personal and romantic life. His father was against slavery, and therefore (for the two were becoming conflated) the South, and Peirce himself expressed derision for secessionists. None of that, though, stopped him from falling

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[21]William Gilmore Simms to John Pendleton Kennedy, May 12, 1851, *Letters of William Gilmore Simms*, III: 123; Henry W. Miller, *Address Delivered Before the Philanthropic and Dialectic Societies of the University of North Carolina, June 3, 1857* (Raleigh, N.C.: Holden & Wilson, 1857), 24. Somewhat ironically, the quote referred to North American colonists' attempts to depart the British empire. See also the Central Southern Rights Association of Virginia, which, in 1851, advocated a policy of nonimportation on the grounds that "We are sick and tired of our dependence upon a people who have no fraternal feelings for us farther than their own interest." *The Proceedings and Address of the Central Southern Rights Association of Virginia*. Also Ferdinand Jacobs, *The Committing of Our Cause to God: A Sermon Preached in the Second Presbyterian Church, Charleston, S.C., on Friday, the 6th of December; A Day of Fasting, Humiliation, and Prayer, Appointed by the Legislature of South Carolina, in View of the State of Our Federal Relations* (Charleston, S.C.: A. J. Burke, 1850), 3.

in love with a southern woman. But even so, their opposing regional origins ultimately doomed the relationship, with each being unwilling to leave permanently their own section and live in the other—"Her Scylla was Northern life," as Peirce put it, "my Charybdis was Southern life." In reporting the breakup to his sister, Peirce cold not resist drawing parallels to deteriorating relations between North and South. "We have dissolved the union," he wrote—"this great and glorious republic consecrated by the blood of our fathers and the prayers of our mothers is dissolved—is seperated into a north and a south." Their personal problem had been caused by the same "question of north or south that has vexed Congress and the country for thirty years or more—and is still vexing it. But they can neither settle the question nor dissolve the Union. We have succeeded in doing the latter." As William Peirce told it, the sectional conflict both caused and was paralleled by his doomed intersectional romance.[22]

Peirce was not alone in drawing connections between personal love affairs and the conflict between North and South. Indeed, James M. Smythe wrote a whole novel on this very topic. Smythe's *Ethel Somers; or, the Fate of the Union* followed such works as *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in dramatizing the sectional conflict for its readers. In this case, though, the novel favored the South not the North, and, rather than slavery, it took as its main theme relations across the Mason-Dixon line between white Americans. The story revolves around Edward Clinton, a noble and fair-minded New Yorker who falls in love with an archetypal southern belle, Ethel Somers. Among other complications, their love is frustrated by the strained relations between their respective regions. Though Clinton is not at all an abolitionist, he does hold slavery in mild distaste. Unfortunately, due to the sectional climate, even this is

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[22]William Peirce to Ellen Peirce, October 18, 1855, Ellen E. Peirce Papers, DU. The next month (in a letter dated November 30, 1855), Peirce was preparing to leave the South for good, and was predicting civil war because sectional hostility was so intense.

more than his beloved—the daughter of a southern-rights supporting Mississippi planter—can accept.

At first, the connection between national politics and his love-life seems odd to Clinton. When Somers responds ambivalently to his declaration of love, she explains her hesitation with the words "I was thinking of my country" (by "country" she means the South). Puzzled, Clinton asks, "what has your country to do with my love for you?" Before long, though, he becomes painfully aware that in this budding intersectional courtship, national affairs and personal relationships are inseparably intertwined. Updating his cousin on the situation, Clinton reveals that "love and politics are so intimately connected, that I am at a loss to know how to separate them." Herein lies the novel's major premise—that love and politics were inseparable—that sectional relations depended upon personal affections—and that, as the subtitle of the novel suggests, "the fate of the Union" rested upon the ability of our young lovers and their real-life counterparts to sustain their romances. As a northern friend tells Ethel Somers, "The difference between you and Edward is the difference between the South and the North. As it may be reconciled between you and him, so it may be between the two sections."

After almost four hundred pages, numerous plot twists, engagements, deaths, and several other intersectional pairings, Edward Clinton and Ethel Somers manage to overcome the sectional problem and (one presumes) go on to live their lives happily ever after as man and wife. This is not a subtle novel, and it concludes by reiterating the moral of the story: "And now, as the love of woman inspired one to search for truth, and removed the barriers to individual union and happiness, so let the love of our glorious Union produce results as happy for states and people." Affection, sentiment, love, in other words, ought to replace

animosity in North-South relations as in private romances. The conviction that affection was the surest bond of national unity, then, inspired this work of fiction just as it inspired the proclamations of southern intellectuals like Simms.

However, for author James Smythe as for others, the steps that were necessary for such reconciliation were decidedly one-sided. The message of *Ethel Somers* is that the restoration of sectional affection depended upon the North changing, not the South. The onus was on Edward Clinton, and other northern characters, to reconcile themselves with the South and its institution of slavery—for the South and the southern characters in the novel are, for the most part, perfect already. Restoring those bonds of national affection that were critical to the survival of the Union was the responsibility of the North.[23]

And in any case, despite its happy ending, *Ethel Somers* advanced an emphatically partisan interpretation of the sectional conflict, one which revealed more grounds for difference and suspicion than similarity and understanding. While some northerners, such as Clinton, are basically honorable, that characteristic seems tenuous, and far more negative northern characters (such as a wicked abolitionist named Hervey) indicate the fanatical extremes to which antislavery sentiment can lead. The southern characters, in contrast, are unequivocally decent people. And furthermore, the novel contrasts the social systems of the two sections in a way that does more to reinforce the sectional divide than to illuminate a feasible path to genuine reconciliation. Smythe does not miss an opportunity to laud southern slavery at the expense of the northern free labor system—in one subplot, for instance, a slave

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[23]James M. Smythe, *Ethel Somers: Or, the Fate of the Union* (Augusta, Ga.: H. D. Norrell, 1857), 55, 61, 288, 381. The novel was published anonymously; Smythe is identified as the author by the online database, Wright American Fiction (http://www.letrs.indiana.edu/w/wright2/; accessed April 20, 2006). Southern fiction continued to use gender and romance to make sense of North-South relations, both during the Civil War and after it. See Amy Murrell Taylor, *The Divided Family in Civil War America* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 63-89; Nina Silber, *The Romance of Reunion: Northerners and the South, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1993).

who had been hoodwinked into escaping to New York is discovered there in a squalid basement: hungry, ill, abandoned by his former employer, and desperate to return to the South and the security of enslavement.

There are other ways, too, in which *Ethel Somers* contrasts the society of the slave South against the free labor North. The novel encourages its readers to draw several kinds of connections between personal lives and the problem of nationalism in the antebellum South. Just as it personifies the sectional conflict in the figures of our young lovers, it also dramatizes the ostensibly personal issue of proper gender roles and imbues them with sectional meaning. Thus one of the more radical southern partisans we meet, Judge Mortimer, draws a line between North and South in terms of appropriate gender roles:

> We have no women lecturers, no women's-rights conventions here. This usurpation of pantaloons in this country is confined to the free states … women were made to reign in private, and every departure from the modesty of this rule weakens the purity and sanctity of her power, and of course the bands of virtue, decency, and the good order of society. Nature made them women, and condemned them to petticoats.

And there, thought Mortimer, they should stay.[24]

For a range of non-fictional southern spokesmen as well, civilization itself rested on appropriate gender roles and relations. And while the slave South was maintaining the proper order of things, the North was not. In his 1856 graduation address to the Virginia Military Institute, George Rumbough explained that free society was foolish to question the natural and divinely-ordained order of things. Listing the dangerous "isms" he saw to the north, Rumbough included women's rights, Bloomerism, and Free-Loveism, along with socialism, atheism, and abolitionism. The North's distorted ideas about slavery were not only tied up with its misguided ideas about religion, liberty, and government, but also with its foolish misconceptions of manhood and womanhood. Rumbough contrasted the South, "Where

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[24]Smythe, *Ethel Somers*, 355.

woman, the most powerful, the purest, noblest element of society, is considered as an object of love," against the North, where woman "is viewed as an object of distrust, and far from beautifying, transcends the boundries of modesty and decency, and sighs for an MD suffix or the transcendant reputation of a philanthropic lecturer." One of many advantages of basing a society on slavery rather than free labor, according to Rumbough and others, was that the institution safeguarded hierarchies of gender as well as of race.[25]

Southern fears about gender proprieties illustrate how urgent the sectional conflict could become when it entered the realm of the home and family. One Virginia farmer, writing to a local newspaper in 1854, expressed just such fears. Responding to rumors that a female preacher had been plying her trade in the area, the farmer expressed first disbelief and then sharp anxiety. "Some hundreds are right uneasy about their wives," he wrote. "They are afraid that some of them womens rights folks, from the N., are traveling among us, and that some wives are encouraging them." Even an antislavery fanatic would be more acceptable than a feminist, thought the letter-writer. "One would spoil our negroes, but the other would spoil our wives and sweethearts, and either, would be made a bad piece of property." Using the loaded word "insurrection," one strongly associated with slave revolts in the antebellum South, the farmer concluded: "It is feared that there will be an insurrection among the women, and that they will begin to chew tobacco and drink whiskey." Likewise, as historian Stephen Berry has described, North Carolina Congressman David Outlaw recoiled at the apparent immorality of the society he encountered in Washington, D.C. In Outlaw's eyes, it

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[25]George P. C. Rumbough, Handwritten Speech, 4th of July, 1856, VHS. See also Frederick A. Porcher, "Characteristics of Civilization," *Russell's Magazine* 2.2 (November 1857): 97-110; George Fitzhugh, "The Declaration of Independence and the Republican Party," *De Bow's Review* 29.2 (August 1860): 175-187; George Fitzhugh, *Cannibals All! or Slaves Without Masters*, ed. C. Vann Woodward (1857; Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1960); "Education of Southern Women," *De Bow's Review* 31.4-5 (October 1861): 281-390; Michael O'Brien, *Conjectures of Order: Intellectual Life and the American South, 1810-1860*, 2 vols. (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 39.

was the behavior of northern women there that caused moral deterioration. "There is a boldness," he wrote to his wife, "[a] brazenfacedness about Northern city women, as well as a looseness of morals which I hope may never be introduced south." Thus did those white southerners who worried about such matters often sectionalize anxieties about moral decline, and project those anxieties onto their image of the North.[26]

Apparently divergent patterns of gender roles and relations indicated profound moral differences that could not be overlooked. Though it might be possible to compromise on purely political matters, that was not true of the sectional conflict's moral dimensions. As we are beginning to see, a conflict that was perceived to involve everyday notions of appropriate behavior and morality took on a sense of immediacy and emotional urgency. And northerners were performing so badly in this regard that they were no longer fit bedfellows for principled southerners. Fundamental moral difference implied that North and South had developed different national identities. Once that conclusion was reached, the principle of nationality itself mandated separation.

As some contemporaries recognized, this logic rendered ominous the religious schisms of the 1840s. Long before the political secession of the southern states—even before the South's mid-century attempt at secession—the three major protestant denominations had each split into two. The Presbyterian schism, which took place in the late 1830s, involved sectional differences over slavery, and this was even more true of the Methodist and Baptist schisms in,

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[26]Letter quoted in Frederick F. Siegel, *The Roots of Southern Distinctiveness: Tobacco and Society in Danville, Virginia, 1780-1865* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 113-114; Outlaw quoted in Berry, *All That Makes a Man*, 134. See also Victoria Bynum, *Unruly Women: The Politics of Social and Sexual Control in the Old South* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 35-58; Genovese and Fox-Genovese, *Mind of the Master Class*, 551. In his pioneering work *Nationalism and Sexuality*, George Mosse revealed the importance of sex and gender proprieties to European nationalisms in the nineteenth century: the respectability of one's own culture was contrasted against the abnormality of the other culture to substantiate national difference. George L. Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality: Respectability and Abnormal Sexuality in Modern Europe* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1985). For another comparative example, see Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation: 1707-1837* (New Haven, Ct.: Yale University Press, 1992), 237-282.

respectively, 1844 and 1845. It was hardly surprising, really, that the sectional conflict should have religious expression. After all, both northern opponents and southern defenders of slavery had long looked to religion to bolster their positions. And furthermore, as the sectional conflict became entangled with gender, morality, and other aspects of everyday life, it was likely to encompass organized religion too. As Benjamin Morgan Palmer explained in a sermon of November 1860, while he did not ordinarily address politics from the pulpit, the conflict over slavery was an appropriate topic, since it "was in its origin a question of morals and religion." The radical drift of the northern churches came to symbolize fundamental social, cultural, and political difference. "The [northern] churches," one Alabama newspaper piece warned, "are converted into Jacobin clubs, where sedition, violence and civil commotion are systematically and earnestly inculcated."[27]

The fact that sectionalism and slavery sundered the churches did not bode well for the future national unity of Americans in the North and the South. As we have seen, antebellum Americans conceived of their nationalism in moral and religious terms. The individual was connected to the nation, and to fellow members of the nation, by divinely-ordained bonds of shared responsibility. The survival of the nation depended upon each member living a moral and a pious life. But how could a national community, one that was conceived of as being a sacred national community, be expected to endure if northerners and southerners could no longer worship in the same religious organizations? How could it endure if their very conceptions of morality and piety were diverging? The religious schisms—and the larger

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[27]Benjamin Morgan Palmer, *The South: Her Peril and Duty [1860]*, in *Southern Pamphlets on Secession, November 1860-April 1861*, ed. Jon L. Wakelyn (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 66; Mobile *Daily Register*, July 10 1856. On the religious schisms, and more generally on the importance of religion to the sectional conflict, see Mitchell Snay, *The Gospel of Disunion: Religion and Separatism in the Antebellum South* (1993; Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene D. Genovese, *The Mind of the Master Class: History and Faith in the Southern Slaveholders' Worldview* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), esp. 613-635 on the status of slavery as a moral and religious problem.

moral disagreements that they represented—suggested that continued national unity was in serious peril.

Always intertwined with this sense of religious, moral, and social difference, of course, was race and slavery. As few white southerners would have denied at the time, at the root of North-South difference lay slavery and its ramifications. In some cases, this was purely a question of economic interest: The South's economy, and the wealth of its leaders, rested upon slavery, and therefore any challenge to its stability must be resisted. Even those who did not actually own slaves themselves found compelling economic and political reasons to desire the maintenance of the slaveholding regime.[28]

But even more pertinent to the present inquiry is white southerners' psychological investment in slavery and the race relations it supported—an investment so deep that the abolition of slavery became the white South's worst nightmare. George Frederickson has applied the concept of "*herrenvolk* equality" to the antebellum South, arguing that what W. E. B. Du Bois memorably termed "the wages of whiteness" served to unite white southerners of all classes in a rough psychological equality. Because African Americans were slaves—the lowest of the low—all southern whites could feel themselves equal members of the superior race. To many white southerners, abolition would entail the raising to equality of African Americans, the end of their "wages of whiteness," and, perhaps, violent race war. And even if things did not go quite that far, the specter of racial equality was bad enough.[29]

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[28]See the classics of the "republican" school of Old South historiography—Thornton, *Politics and Power*; Ford, *Origins of Southern Radicalism*; McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds*, Hahn, *Roots of Southern Populism*—in addition to Harry L. Watson, "Conflict and collaboration: yeomen, slaveholders, and politics in the antebellum South," *Social History* 10 (1985): 273-298.

[29]George M. Frederickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971); George M. Fredrickson, *White Supremacy: A Comparative Study in American and South African History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 115-244.

Importantly, such fears often encompassed not just interracial political equality, and not just social equality—but interracial sex as well. Such was the fear of Benjamin Perry, an upcountry South Carolina politician who was a consistent Unionist and defender of poorer South Carolinian voters against the planter elite. The North's stance in the conflict over the territories, he proclaimed, sought to make the black slave "the equal of his master" and "to go with him to the polls and vote, to serve on juries … to meet the white man as an equal and visit his family, intermarry with his children and form one society and one family." This merging of sexual and racial fears rendered northern hostility towards slavery a serious matter indeed.[30]

It is worth emphasizing that all of these intertwined dimensions—gender, morality, religion, racial order—really *mattered* to white southerners. They touched their daily lives in immediate and personal ways. This can help explain the emotional intensity with which white southerners apprehended the sectional conflict during the 1850s. Increasingly, the frame within which white southerners viewed sectional relations was one of being under siege, under direct assault from a hostile enemy. It appeared as though their everyday lives, their values, their very persons, were being targeted. As we have already seen, it was just such a frame that activated the radical ideologues of southern nationalism. During the 1850s, this frame came to structure the perceptions of previously moderate white southerners as well.

As the decade drew to a close and gave way to the 1860s, this same frame appeared to explain the ominous developments of a raid and a presidential election. When viewed through the frame of personalized besiegement, these events would constitute precisely that

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[30]Ford, *Origins of Southern Radicalism*, 185-186.

"pinch" which James Henry Hammond had been waiting for. Believing that northern attacks

upon slavery connoted attacks upon themselves, increasing numbers of white southerners

became so disillusioned with the Union that secession came to seem an attractive outcome.

Although John Brown failed in his effort to launch a slave insurrection in Virginia in

October 1859, he did succeed in ratcheting up the intensity of the sectional conflict to a new

degree. Brown's raid, and the apparently widespread sympathy it attracted in the North,

galvanized white southerners, persuading them that northern aggressions had reached crisis

point. "The Harper's Ferry affair," Virginia politician John C. Rutherfoord noted in his diary,

"has had the fortunate effect of revealing to the people of the white South, as if by one vivid

flash of light, the true character of that danger" which John C. Calhoun had foreseen and

cautioned against. But the most alarming aspect of a most alarming event, for Rutherfoord

and for many others, was the broad northern support it seemed to have enjoyed. The raid was

not the work of Brown alone, he thought, but rather was the logical consequence of

Republican Party-style opposition to slavery, which was becoming increasingly popular

across the northern states. Rutherfoord interpreted Brown's Raid as being symptomatic of a

broader and an increasingly dangerous northern hostility toward the slaveholding South.[31]

Another Virginian used different imagery to express a similar conclusion. In a letter to a

northern friend, Nathanial Cabell protested not so much at the raid itself, but more at the

realization that so many northerners seemed to have sympathized with it. "It was as if an

intrusive reptile should strike at the heel of a man who, suspecting nothing, was walking

peacefully in his own garden," he wrote, and for the man subsequently to discover that the

reptile had been placed there by a friend. Again, we see the galvanizing effects of the

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[31]Entries for November 1859 and December 12, 1859, Diary of John Coles Rutherfoord, Section 12,
Rutherfoord Family Papers, VHS. For a solid account of the raid and its repercussions, including the
"emotional" repercussions, see Potter, *Impending Crisis*, 356-384.

perception that a relationship which should have been characterized by mutual affection appeared to be characterized instead by hostility and betrayal.[32]

The same evidence prompted the Central Southern Rights Association of Virginia, whose earlier activities we surveyed above, to reconvene, apparently for the first time in more than five years. Though they were undecided as to what the appropriate response should be, they agreed in late November that "calling a Convention of all the Southern States with the view of forming a Southern confederation" should, at the very least, be an option. By mid-December, the association was busy writing to the state legislature with a memorial that complained about northern aggressions and urged retaliatory action. The urgent sense of resentment at perceived affronts was palpable. "Adding insult to theft and confiscation," read the memorial, "they [northerners] have slandered the owners of the property they have stolen or destroyed, and by epithet and invective, by ridicule and vituperation, by caricature and falsehood and all the artillery of calumny and abuse, they have sought to traduce and degrade us in the eyes of the world." This was the language of honor and shame that historians such as Bertram Wyatt-Brown and Kenneth Greenberg have seen as being so central to antebellum southern culture. Once again, southern perception of degradation and ridicule in front of the entire community cut to the quick.[33]

This sentiment was especially pronounced in Virginia, of course. After all, it was upon that state's soil that Brown had made his attempt. But even for white southerners many miles away from Harper's Ferry, the incident set alarm bells ringing—and loudly. In South Carolina, the state senate passed resolutions warning that "the assaults upon the institution of

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[32]Quoted in Merrill D. Peterson, *John Brown: The Legend Revisited* (Charlottesville, Va.: University of Virginia Press, 2002), 18-19.

[33]"Record of the Organization and Transactions of the Central Southern Rights Association of Virginia," December 16, 1859. For the key works on honor, see note 8 above.

slavery, and upon the rights and equality of the Southern States," had only intensified in recent years.[34] And in a private letter, D. H. Hamilton, a South Carolinian correspondent of William Porcher Miles, was equally worried. Even though Hamilton did not necessarily consider southern independence the best remedy, he was certainly not happy with the current state of affairs. It was becoming increasingly evident that the South must prepare to resist snowballing northern aggression. "John Brown was a type of his class," wrote Hamilton, "a sturdy fanatic, without humanity, without mercy." There would be more, Hamilton warned, where he had come from. "The South," he concluded, "is almost entirely hemmed in and nothing is left to us but desperate fighting."[35]

In addition to the approving wink it seemed to receive from such a broad sector of northern society, the Brown affair seemed so ominous because it threatened white southerners at a personal level. This is captured perfectly in a December 1859 letter written by Mississippian Stephen Duncan to his northern factor. Abstract dangers to the South were one thing, he wrote. "But when our *real, tangible rights* are not only threatened in the worst shape, but *absolutely invaded*," it made "every man owning slave property—a *true Southerner* in *feeling & action*." The threat of northern abolitionists entering southern territory and whipping up an armed slave insurrection was, understandably, terrifying. And even though Duncan stressed the threat to those who owned slaves, it seems very likely that nonslaveholding white southerners would also have been terrified by the prospect of a violent uprising. As Duncan indicated, this prospect represented a much more immediate threat to

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[34] "Resolutions of South Carolina," December 27, 1859, in Christopher G. Memminger Papers, SHC.

[35] D. H. Hamilton to William Porcher Miles, January 23, 1860, William Porcher Miles Papers, SHC.

white southerners than did the issue of whether slavery would be permitted in territories hundreds of miles to the west. It reinforced and personalized the sense of being under siege.[36]

If Brown's raid pushed the white South considerably further towards the precipice of secession, it would take the election of Abraham Lincoln to finally push it off the edge. In 1860, with the presidential election approaching, the same frame of being hemmed in and under attack guided the perceptions of many white southerners. And when it actually happened, Lincoln's electoral success—won, as white southerners constantly reminded each other, without any southern electoral votes—seemed like the final stage of their marginalization. Resentment at this marginalization fuelled the secession of, first, the states of the lower South and then those of the upper South. Because the lower South was more heavily committed to slaveholding, northern hostility to the institution appeared more threatening there, and these states were the first to secede. But even though it would take another stage of escalation, Lincoln's call for troops, before the upper South joined them, the impetus of secessionism in both bands of states was rather similar. Let us first examine that impetus in the states of the lower South.

Radical South Carolina, of course, set the tone. Grace Elmore of Columbia, for example, complained in her diary about northern newspapers' tendency to "laugh at us," and apparently supported the mission of a group of local "minute men" who intended to resist such ridicule. Other aspects of the Northern threat were well publicized in the South Carolina press. Within the first few days of October, 1860, for instance, the Charleston *Mercury* reminded readers in several different articles about the oppressive nature of the North-South

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[36]Quoted in William Kauffman Scarborough, *Masters of the Big House* (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 2003), 282. For southern women's perceptions of Brown's Raid as a domestic threat, see George C. Rable, *Civil Wars: Women and the Crisis of Southern Nationalism* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 42-43.

relationship. One piece observed that whereas the South exported over 214 million dollars worth of products compared to the North's five million, the profits from overseas trade went disproportionately to the North. The problem was clear: northern business interests were exploiting the South economically. A letter to the same newspaper, signed only "W. M.," compared the North to a "rattlesnake" that ought to be dealt with before it was able to strike, and characterized the disagreement between the two sections as a fundamental difference of white supremacy versus racial equality. Another *Mercury* piece, complaining of the North's aggressive stance in the sectional conflict, worried that if they did not act soon southerners would be mere "tributaries, colonists, slaves." Finally, the *Mercury* ran an article comparing the situation in 1850 with that in 1860. "Northern sectional domination" had now rendered the South absolutely "powerless," and if secession had been justifiable in the first crisis, then it was absolutely essential now.[37]

The excitement and the sense of impending upheaval were evident in ordinary people's lives as well as in the radical press. Consider the case of Sarah Lois Wadley, a Louisiana teenager who confided her interpretation of the developing situation to her diary. By late October, 1860, the sectional conflict had touched her everyday life in a number of ways. Her teacher, for one thing, was suspected of holding abolitionist sympathies, and had left town. But even more striking is the sense of excitement in Wadley's diary entries—a palpable sense of personal investment in the burgeoning drama of secession. Wadley hoped that the Union would not fall, especially since she herself was of New England origin but southern residence. But even so, she could not help but worry that "the Union is but a name, there is no concord, no real heart Union any longer." "No real heart Union." In the words of a girl a

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[37]Entry for October 29, 1860, Grace B. Elmore Diary, Vol. III (this third volume is a memoir, written after the war), Grace B. Elmore Papers, SHC; Charleston *Mercury* October 1-4, 1860.

month shy of her sixteenth birthday, here was precisely that breakup of the bonds of affection which, to Simms and other more formal theorists of nationalism, spelled the end of national unity. And behind Wadley's words was precisely that sense of personal peril that underlay the drift of so many white southerners toward disunion. "The Abolitionists have sowed the seeds of dissension and insurrection among us," she wrote, "those seeds are fast ripening and a bloody harvest seems impending; they have burnt our homesteads, killed our citizens, and incited our servants to poison us." In Wadley's repeated use of the word "our," contrasted against the abolitionist "they," we can recognize a powerful sense of identification with a southern community that was being brought together by northern attacks. For Wadley, northerners and southerners were no longer united in national unity: despite her New England heritage, "We can no longer claim them as brothers."[38]

Wadley was by no means the only denizen of the lower South who felt under immediate attack that winter. One preacher in New Orleans captured the personalization of the sectional conflict perfectly in a Thanksgiving Day sermon. "I feel as a Southerner," declared Dr. Leacock. "Southern honor is my honor--Southern degradation is my degradation." Leacock recognized the importance of the fact that this was not so much a conflict between the abstractions of "North" and "South," but more a conflict in which white southerners as individuals felt an immediate stake. Similarly, a private letter written by the South Carolinian George S. Bryan in October 1860 emphasized the domestic dimension of the crisis. Bryan expressed regret that the Union could no longer be maintained, but explained that there was little choice, since "Our household cannot be governed by her household." Connecting the

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[38]Sarah Lois Wadley Diary, October 26, 1860, SHC. As Charles Dew has demonstrated, the commissioners dispatched between southern states during the secession winter similarly emphasized racial fears in promoting secession: Dew, *Apostles of Disunion*.

protection of slavery with the defense of home, he continued, "Slavery is of our hearth and home, and the stranger cannot meddle with it without untold disaster."[39]

Southern politicians capitalized on such connections in promoting secession. For the Alabama congressman Jabez L. M. Curry, the ascendancy of the Republican Party in the North necessitated the end of the Union. "The bond of brotherhood between the North and the South," he told a Talladega audience in late-November, "so far as political parties are concerned, is broken." The new party had sundered the regional friendship. Such was the inevitable outcome of a situation in which "Southern States and citizens of those States, because of the possession of slave property, are stigmatized and *pilloried* and reduced to inferiority." For Curry as for Wadley, as for countless white southerners in the winter of 1860—61, northern insults and attacks had simply gone too far. Curry even quoted a "northern writer" in describing the extent of the Republican Party's threat to southern life: "It threatens…with fire and sword every southern hearth, with death every southern man, and with dishonor every southern female, amid a saturnalia of blood." Curry's conviction that northern attacks were not confined to the abstract political sphere—but instead directly threatened the home, the hearth, southern women, and every individual southern white man—was emblematic, and helps account for the emotional intensity with which white southerners embraced secession. It was time to act, he insisted.[40]

Bombarded with such a message, many white southern men responded with martial bravado. In mid-December Waddy Butler wrote from Florida to his fiancée, Lucy Wood, who lived in Virginia. Butler was pleased to report on the general secession fever in Florida:

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[39]Leacock Quoted in *De Bow's Review* 30.1 (Jan 1861): 126; Bryan letter reprinted in the Charleston *Mercury*, March 5 1861.

[40]Jabez L. M. Curry, *Perils and Duty of the South: Substance of a Speech Delivered by Jabez L. M. Curry, in Talladega, Alabama, November 26, 1860* (Printed by Lemuel Towers, 1860), 3, 4, 6.

"Every man, woman, and child in the State desire secession," he explained, "and are perfectly willing to fight in the 'cause.'" His words were energized by a heady combination of the widespread sense of being under assault from the North along with the typical bluster of the affianced young male. "We are anxious for a bout with the North," he wrote, "and I believe we shall not be disappointed." Butler made clear that he felt personally invested in this conflict. "I shall rejoice beyond all measure," he boasted to his fiancée, "should there arise an opportunity of revenging some of the injustices and insults received by the South at the hands of the North. Should that opportunity ever come the Southern people will give their 'brethren' good cause to remember the day." Just like the teenaged Sarah Lois Wadley, Butler felt that northern attacks had entered the realm of the personal. And just like Wadley, Butler considered the former relationship of affection between "brethren" to be over. In his case, these feelings were compounded by his desire to prove his young manhood in front of his fiancée and the world.[41]

White men across the lower South perceived and pursued the same opportunity that winter. Associations of "minute men"—a term that deliberately recalled noble revolutionary forebears—sprang up everywhere, vowing to defend the South against northern invaders. They convened regularly, complained of the slurs and injuries they were sustaining, and armed themselves, projecting a regimented, military image with their uniforms, their blue cockades and other paraphernalia.[42] Advertisements for meetings of militia companies filled the pages of newspapers like the Charleston *Mercury*. The sentiment and the display of male

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[41]Waddy Butler to Lucy Wood, December 14, 1860, Lucy Wood Butler Papers, SHC. Cf. Berry, *All that Makes a Man*, p. 171: "To be sure, men joined the army to fight for cause, comrades, and country, and they gave fealty to those motives in their public remarks. But privately they were fighting, as they always had, for women and for eminence, and they confused the two as liberally as ever."

[42]For example: "Minute Men, Saluda Association," handwritten minutes, 1860, USC; *Constitution of Minute Men, For the Defence of Southern Rights, Adopted at Laurens C. H., Oct 31, 1860*, broadside, USC.

bravado pervaded the whole region, involving men of all ages. In his mid-fifties by this time, William Gilmore Simms was frustrated at not being in the proper physical condition to fully participate in the martial fervor. He compared himself to "a bear with a sore head, & chained to the stake. I chafe, and roar & rage, but can do nothing."[43] At the other end of the age spectrum were the boys, eager to join the fray. "How strange, how romantic life is now in Charleston! Almost every man is now dressed in some uniform," reported one of Caroline Howard Gilman's daughters in early 1861. She went on to convey the extent of the martial fervor with a haunting image of children playing at war: "Even the boys are arming," she wrote, "with little bodies, but with faces looking fixed and old like those of the men."[44]

The media as well as politicians fueled this mood of aggrieved bellicosity. Jingoistic poems filled the pages of newspapers and were reprinted time and time again. Consider "The Southern Marsellaise," for instance, which urged "Sons of the South, awake to glory!," in order to protect their nearest and dearest ("Your children, wives, and grandsires hoary") against a menacing enemy ("reckless fanatics … mongrel hosts … a thieving band"). Also typical was "The Rally of the South," which appealed to "Gallant men of Southern blood" to heed the warning signs of "Fanatics insane and ranging" and join together, "Our country and our homes to save." The message of this popular poetry was clear: the North represented an urgent and immediate threat to white southern men's everyday lives—their homes, families, wives, and sense of personal honor. The time had come to stand up and fight.[45]

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[43]Simms to William Porcher Miles, December 31, 1860, in *Letters of Simms*, IV: 315. For similar sentiments, see Simms's letters to James Lawson in December 1860, ibid.

[44]Caroline Glover to sisters, January 11, 1861, Caroline Howard Gilman Papers, SCHS.

[45]Charleston *Mercury*, January 1, 1861, January 15, 1861.

And so they did. From all corners of the lower South, they rushed in droves to newly-forming volunteer companies. The motivations for these companies were often laid out at highly-orchestrated sending-off ceremonies in which various sectors of the community would join to express their commitment to the secessionist cause. A particularly rich example comes from Newberry, South Carolina, in January, 1861. Like so many similar occasions, this one was full of potent connections between the broad issues of national allegiance and identity, on the one hand, and the personal lives and identities of the people responding to those issues, on the other. As the male soldiers were leaving town for the army, local women presented them with a flag they had made. The flag and the ceremonies surrounding its presentation made clear why the men were doing what they were doing, and what part the women played. "Our Homes we Guard" was the motto of the flag. The women had written a speech with which to present it—but the speech was actually delivered by a male attendee, presumably to preserve appropriate gender roles. The speech set the image of men going off to fight to defend their women at home within a long historical pattern, one that stretched back to ancient Sparta. The women who had written the speech clearly viewed the men's task as a grave responsibility that had to be borne—not a voluntary opportunity that could be declined. At points their words challenged the men to fulfill their roles and live up to their side of the gender bargain: "will you not prove *worthy* sons of a *noble* ancestry?" they asked, and went on to urge, "Be *brave then* and show yourselves *men*." As was happening across the lower South, the white people of Newberry were navigating the changing claims of national identity and allegiance as a community, making sense of the new situation with reference to their everyday lives, relationships, and responsibilities.[46]

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[46]Charleston *Mercury*, January 22, 1861.

Gender roles in this and other flag presentations were carefully circumscribed. Yet questions such as "will you not prove *worthy* sons?" suggest that white women might, in the new circumstances, be prepared to challenge male authority. If men turned out to be incapable of discharging their duties—if they failed to uphold their end of the gender bargain—women gave notice that they would be held to account.

Such moments revealed the possibility, at least, for new kinds of female interventions in politics. Across the upper as well as the lower South, the popular ferment of the winter of 1860—61 opened up some space for women's involvement in the politics of secession. Remembering the legendary contributions of their female forebears to the American Revolution, some women called for boycotts of northern goods, or suggested that southern women should use their domestic skills to economize during the crisis.[47] Other women submitted patriotic poems to southern newspapers, for instance "C. B. J.," who introduced an ode entitled "Sons of the South!" with a challenge to the manhood of Virginia men. Just like the women of Newberry, whose speech had implicitly wondered whether southern men really *did* have what it took to resist northern aggressions, "C. B. J." goaded males on with a thinly veiled challenge to their manhood: "if any of the luke-warm *sons* of the 'Old Dominion,' find themselves wanting in the courage or resolution necessary to defend her rights," she wrote, "they may learn both from her *daughters*." From the very beginning, then, white southern women issued a warning: if their men wished to enjoy the privileges of manhood, they would have to live up to its responsibilities. The question of whether they would succeed would persist throughout the war, and after.

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[47]For example: *Richmond Enquirer*, November 27, 1860; Lucy Wood to Waddy Butler, January 21, 1861, Lucy Wood Butler Papers, SHC.

"Sons of the South!" exemplifies a body of popular poetry that flooded newspapers in the upper as well as the lower South. Although the second, upper South wave of secession did not come until after Sumter and Lincoln's call for troops, the climax of "the pinch" generated similar discussions and ideas there as it had in the lower South. "Sons of the South!" captures the major themes promoted by secessionists in both upper and lower South. "Sons of our glorious Southern land," it began, "Home of the free and brave," and went on to urge those sons to rise up to confront what was portrayed as a direct threat to their domestic lives: "Our hearths and homes to save," against the menace of former "Brethren" turned "traitors" who "crush our nearest, dearest rights, / Our household gods overthrow." The poem also reminded readers of the severity and immediacy of Brown's Raid, emphasizing northern support for abolitionist "martyrs," and suggesting that further, even more serious invasions of the South were imminent.

The final stanza made another domestic appeal, one which also drew strength from its direct link to white southerners' personal identities. "Shall we thus tamely bide," the poet asked, "The loss of all the dearest rights, / For which our fathers died?" The memory of the American Revolution, as these lines suggest, could promote resistance to the North not just on the intellectual level we have already observed, but also on a more emotional, familial level which played on men's felt responsibility to live up to their fathers—whether those fathers were literal or figurative. In a variety of ways, then, the rhetoric of secessionist propaganda appealed to white southerners' personal identities and everyday lives.[48]

Virginia politician and firebrand Henry A. Wise was particularly emphatic in connecting sectional politics to personal masculinity. Writing to a political associate in January 1861, Wise worried about his state's lack of active resistance. "I see how it all is," he wrote, "we

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[48]*Richmond Enquirer*, November 27, 1860.

are emasculated." Emasculated. This was not the only time he cast white southern manhood as being at stake in the sectional conflict. In one speech Wise literally brought home to southern men the threat that northern aggressions posed to their individual and group masculinities. Of everything they had to fear, he warned his fellow Virginian men, by far the worst was "the peril *of not being found true to ourselves*." Invoking the language of "*shame and dishonor*"—which could be applied to either individual southern men or to the South as a whole—Wise went on to indict the Republican Party for a variety of crimes. The most important charge was that they had fanned the flames of northern hostility towards the South, encouraging northerners to "malign our character, and so to contemn us as to pluck the very beard of our manhood and self respect." If the language of shame and honor did not make it clear enough, Wise's "beard of our manhood" metaphor made his point unmistakable. The northern menace was a direct threat to southern masculinity. Even after Virginia had seceded, Wise told a Richmond audience that northerners "have undertaken to teach you what should be the moral duties of men. They have invaded the sanctity of your homes and firesides, and endeavored to play master, father, and husband for you in your households." One can imagine the effect such words had on the men he was addressing, whose sense of masculinity was built to a considerable degree on their roles as head of household.[49]

In taking this tack, Wise was not alone. Playing up the personal, domestic, and immediate nature of the northern threat was a common technique. Readers of the *Richmond Enquirer* that winter could scarcely avoid such appeals. In addition to poetry, readers' letters, and editorials, there were reports of public meetings held across the state to discuss the crisis. Throughout these features ran a common thread: the conviction that northern aggression

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[49]Henry A. Wise to George Booker, January 20, 1861, George Booker Papers, DU; *Richmond Enquirer*, January 8, 1861, June 4, 1861.

threatened Virginians' homes, families, and personal rights. An announcement "To the Young Men of Lunenburg County," urging them to step up, began with the arresting statement, "Our homes are being invaded." "Our parents," it went on, "whose heads are blooming for the grave, are being foully insulted…. The virtue of our beloved sisters is being slandered." Casting the danger so close to home must have inspired readers to view the threat seriously indeed.[50]

Another *Enquirer* piece reprinted the proceedings of a public meeting in Botetourt County. Virginia deserved equality within the Union, but had not, almost everyone present agreed, been receiving it. Echoing the common assumption that true national unity depended upon mutual affection, the Botetourt citizens complained that "in all the private relations of life instead of fraternal regard a 'consuming hate' which has but seldom characterized warring nations" existed. The sectional divide was not just created by politics in Washington, then, but also by the lack of affection in "all the private relations of life." Perhaps most importantly of all, this deterioration of affection literally threatened the lives of individual Virginians. The Botetourt meeting pointedly referred to Brown's Raid as evidence of this. It was simply unacceptable that there had been not only a "hostile incursion upon our own soil," but also "an apotheosis of the murderers." John Brown, and the sympathy he appeared to have aroused at the North, reminded these Virginians that a Union without mutual affection, esteem, and respect was a Union that threatened their very survival.[51]

The fear of northern abolitionist-inspired slave uprisings haunted the South that winter, as it had done for much of the preceding year. Rumors of slave arson and insurrection in Texas

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[50]*Richmond Enquirer*, December 18, 1860.

[51]Ibid.

lingered from the previous summer—and worried white southerners everywhere.[52] Back in

Virginia, a group of Amelia County citizens were concerned that a local slave arsonist

represented the arrival in their own vicinity of the deadly ramifications of the sectional

conflict. A slave suspected of setting fires and of evading the slave patrol had been acquitted

by the courts. That decision was a worrying one, in the eyes of some locals—worrying

enough for them to assemble on November 24th and issue formal resolutions protesting the

acquittal. It set a bad example, they thought, and could only encourage further slave

disobedience. They stood "ready to protect our fire-sides and property from the torch of the

incendiary." What seems to have made the whole incident especially disturbing were its

apparent connections to the broader sectional crisis. "The offence is in perfect keeping with

Helper's notorious incendiary publication," one resolution read, referring to a southern-

authored critique of slavery that had been enthusiastically received by the Republican

Party—and roundly condemned by the slaveholding South. These concerned citizens

interpreted the slave's actions as "bringing upon us the 'irrepressible conflict,' with all its

consequent horrors." The malfeasant slave, in other words, brought the sectional conflict

home to these citizens, connecting their personal, everyday existence with formerly abstract

political events.[53]

    In the same issue of the *Enquirer* which featured the Amelia county resolutions, another

Virginian, calling himself "Junius," captured the wide range of personal and domestic

concerns which lent the secessionist cause such enormous emotional power. Junius began

with a bald statement of the situation as he saw it. The South had to choose between

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[52]See Channing, *Crisis of Fear*; Barney, *Road to Secession*, 146-152; and Barney, *Secessionist Impulse*, chapter 4.

[53]*Richmond Enquirer*, December 4, 1860.

secession "or submission and utter degradation…. These are the only alternatives." In the lengthy letter that followed, Junius sketched out the reasons why remaining in Union with the North would mean "utter degradation." The North-South relationship had been marked for some time by northern assaults upon southern rights. Northerners were "the enemies of our peace, our constitutional rights and liberties, our homes and firesides." In part, the North was a threat because of its opposition to slavery. But stemming from abolitionism was a much broader set of problems endemic to northern society, which together threatened everything the South held dear. In characterizing this troubled society, and contrasting it against the South, Junius revealed the personal dimension of the sectional conflict with a set of striking images. The North, he warned, was not only "the land of isms and of political heresy," and of "conspiracy, treason, rebellion and mid-night assassination," but was also a place of poverty and want, where women and children were not properly cared for, a place of "infidelity in morals and politics … this land of divorce and free-love; this land of matrimonial poisonings, of spiritualism and hell-born necromancy." All of this merged together, in the perception of Junius and many other white southerners. The threat to the South's racial order; the apparent disregard of morality, religion, gender roles and obligations; the specter of John Brown-style assaults—all these combined the private and the public, the personal and the political, in promoting separation from the North.[54]

To be sure, there were those in the upper South—as there had been in the lower—who advocated secession on more rational, material grounds. This could either mean the simple protection of southerners' investment in slavery, or the expectation that manufacturing interests in the upper South could benefit more from union with the South than with the

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[54]Ibid.

North: "Our customers are in the South," observed one pro-secession delegate at the Virginia

secession convention, "our rivals in the North."[55]

There were certainly those, too, who employed the rhetoric of a naturally-occurring

national identity that united the slaveholding states of the South into a single community, a

community that required national independence. The same Virginian delegate contended,

> There are moral, as well as industrial and political considerations, which unmistakably
> points us to the South. There is to be found our own form of society; there are our nearest
> kindred; there are the habits and institutions of our own people; there we may wield the
> noblest form of power—a moral and intellectual dominion; there we may improve and
> perpetuate our own peculiar type of civilization; there we may build up a splendid
> Confederacy, homogenous in its feelings and its interests—a Confederacy that will
> change the moral sentiment of the world in reference to slavery.

Another delegate used the oft-repeated phrase "bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh" to

characterize what he saw as a united national identity that, according to the principle of

nationality, deserved expression in political independence.[56]

But the key element in the acceptance of secession and national independence for the

South was, as we have seen, the incursion of the northern threat into the realm of the

domestic and the personal. In this regard, the mass psychology of secession in the upper

South repeated the same trends that had already been seen in the lower South. Just days

before the first wave of seceded states were to meet in Montgomery to create the

Confederacy, an editorial in a Charlottesville newspaper explained that there were two

possible causes for the success of secession: interest and honor. The editorial doubted that the

former was a powerful enough reason, but supposed that the latter might be. "If the Northern

people," the editorial went, "or rather the Republicans, will not concede equality to Virginia

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[55]*Proceedings of the Virginia State Convention of 1861, February 13-May 1*, four volumes, ed. George
Reese (Richmond, Va.: Virginia State Library, 1965), II: 104.

[56]Ibid., II: 104, I: 333.

as a member of this confederacy," then secession would be justified. The author did not want to see that happen, but thought that ideals of honor and self-respect might force the issue.[57]

That same month, Virginia politician R. M. T. Hunter analyzed the upper South's situation in *De Bow's Review*. The secession of the lower South was now a fact, he explained, and so the choice faced by the upper South was not one between union and disunion, but whether to remain in the old union with the North or to join the new one with the lower South. In weighing that choice, Hunter felt that economic imperatives, combined with the fact that the upper South shared more culturally with the states to the south than those to the north, pulled the upper South towards the new confederacy.

But he was also careful to impress his audience with the social dimension of the situation. In addition to the other advantages, the upper South would enter the new southern union as *equals*. "We should enter into a government," as he put it, "whose constituents are bound together by common interests and sympathies, and who treat each other with mutual respect." They ought also to belong to a polity in which "our social system"—a common euphemism for slavery—was not "dwarfed and warred upon by the action of the government." If the upper South chose to remain in Union with the North, they would do so in a minority, as inferiors. The ramifications would be devastating. "Who would voluntarily place a son in such a position?" asked Hunter.

> Humbled by the stamp of inferiority, placed upon him by his government, conscious that he was attached to a political system from whose honor he was excluded by the circumstances of his position, and a member of a social system which was assailed and dwarfed by his own government, then it would not be long before he would lose, together with his sense of equality, that spirit of independence to which manhood owes its chief grace and its power.

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[57]*The Review* (Charlottesville, Virginia), January 25, 1861, in *Southern Editorials on Secession*, ed. Dwight L. Dumond (New York: The Century Co., 1931).

Honor, equality, manhood—all were at stake in this decision, according to Hunter, and all had been endangered by union with the North.[58]

Thus was the road to the Confederacy paved for most white southerners not with the romantic dreams of a natural and divinely-ordained nationalism, but with resentment at what James Henry Hammond had termed the "pinch" of the Union. This pinch caused white southerners to reassess the value of continued national unity with their erstwhile compatriots to the north, and thus their commitment to continued membership in the American nation (at least as embodied in the United States) began to unravel. Once that process had taken place, it is difficult to imagine a denouement that did not depend upon the concepts of the nation and of nationalism. This was, after all, the golden age of nationalism in the western world.

The fact that the Confederacy did not result from a widespread, pre-existing active nationalist movement should not cause us, as it caused previous generations of historians, to thereby dismiss the very concept of Confederate nationalism as somehow false. For in this regard it is by no means singular. As the theorist of nationalism W. B. Pillsbury observed long ago, American and Italian nationalisms, amongst others, were born of processes not dissimilar to that which we have explored above. "There was usually some definite abuse or discomfort," as he put it; "efforts were made to remove or to reduce it, and in the process the movement went farther than was at first intended."[59] The process was also similar to more recent events in the former U.S.S.R.: an existing political arrangement became destabilized for reasons other than a nationalist movement, but once the old arrangement began to

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[58]R. M. T. Hunter, "The Border States—Their Position After Disunion," *De Bow's Review* 30:1 (Jan 1861): 116.

[59]Pillsbury quoted in Paul Lawrence, *Nationalism: History and Theory* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2005), 80.

disintegrate, the concept of nationalism became a convenient and appealing outcome.[60] The Confederacy's was neither the first nor the last example of a largely unplanned nationalism.

Nor was it the only nationalism to be animated by perceptions of shared victimhood, perceptions which had grown in the years leading to secession. The sense of being under assault from a hostile North had gained purchase during the sectional crisis of 1846—51. But for the majority of white southerners, northern aggression was still not sufficient to warrant the ultimate act of political separation. Instead, conditional unionism reigned. By the secession winter of 1860—61, however, conditional unionism had been overpowered by the pervasive belief among white southerners that the Union, rather than improving their lives, threatened them in very urgent and very personal ways. At the core of this belief stood the fear that the North's hostility to slavery threatened the South's economy and material well-being—based so heavily upon the peculiar institution. But around that core had sprung up a constellation of anxieties and resentments: the resentment of being considered inferior members of what should be a national community of equals; anxiety about the apparent loss of affection—both romantic and platonic—between North and South; the notion that the two regions had developed not just divergent economies or even just divergent ideas about race, but divergent ideas about fundamental questions of morality, religion, and appropriate behavior. By entering the realms of affection, of personal equality and honor, the realms of morality and gender roles, the sectional conflict appeared to impinge upon white southerners' everyday lives and identities. All of this came to a head during the secession winter, and found an outlet in the climate of exhilaration and catharsis that swept the South. The

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[60]Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, revised edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). 166-167. See also Van Young, "Revolution and Imagined Communities in Mexico."

sectional conflict had come home, and white southerners gave notice that they were ready to resist.

As we shall see in the final chapter, themes of resentment and shared suffering would be crucial elements of Confederate nationalism as it began to mature during the course of the Civil War. The bonds of national responsibility would be wrought with sacrifice and bloodshed. But for a few months in 1861, white southerners connected themselves to the southern nation in more positive, hopeful ways. Once the Confederacy achieved political existence, it was up to white southerners to work out what it would mean to be a Confederate—and why Confederate nationalism should matter to them at all. Their responses to these problems form the subject of the next chapter.

IV. DEFINITIONS: NATIONAL IDENTITY AND NATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY IN THE EARLY CONFEDERACY

As the end of 1861 approached, South Carolinian Grace Elmore took a moment to reflect in her diary on the events of the past year. "What a year it has been," she remarked. Surely it would go down in history. "It has given birth to a great and glorious nation," she went on; "a strong hand has taken the ruins of a government left us by our fathers, an upright people has separated itself from those to whom honor and truth are a fiction." This had not been an easy task. But "this nation" enjoyed great strength of character: "It rather takes the privations and horrors of war than give up that for which their fathers bled. 1861 has witnessed this [parting] of the modern Israel." Fortunately, as Elmore made clear, although the old United States had formerly enjoyed the status of a "modern Israel," in seceding and forming a new nation-state southerners brought the favor of God with them. "The days of the Israelites are returning," as she put it, "so visibly has the power of God been shown in keeping a weaker nation from the hands of the lawless robber."[1]

In this brief diary entry, Grace Elmore captured the major elements of the prevailing narrative of Confederate nationalism that emerged in 1861. First, the overarching fact: a new nation had achieved its independence. It was not, though, entirely new. Rather, it represented a salvaging of the remnants of the Union—a new nation had emerged from the "ruins" of the old. The former United States had, in Elmore's mind, been hijacked and perverted by the northern people, a people without regard for "honor and truth"; a people who stood in stark

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[1]Grace B. Elmore Diary, December 23, 1861, SHC.

contrast to southerners, who were an "upright people" with God on their side. This "upright people" was heroic enough that it was willing to undergo the hardships and the sacrifices of war in order to fulfill the promise of the nation which "our fathers" had originally inaugurated. As Elmore implied, these "fathers" were smiling down upon their descendants in 1861. And so too was God. The Confederacy, in short, was rescuing the best aspects of American nationalism—the sacred favor of God and of the fathers—from errant northerners.

Thanks to the work of historians such as Drew Gilpin Faust, Robert Bonner, and Anne Rubin, we now have a good understanding of the major lineaments of Confederate nationalism.[2] Covering the first months of the Confederacy's existence, this chapter builds upon the strong foundation these scholars have built. But with my emphasis on the sources of nationalism I also push the study of this first phase of Confederate nationalism in three previously neglected directions: outward in context; backward in time; and inward to the realm of the individual and the personal. It was in these three directions that white southerners reached as they attempted to define both national identity and national responsibility in 1861; in these directions lay the sources of Confederate nationalism.

One of the most critical problems confronted by white southerners in 1861 was that of what made the Confederacy a genuine nation. Underlying their responses to this problem was the principle of nationality: the conviction that the world was rightfully divided into distinctive nations, which ought to correspond to units of government. In order for this

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[2]The key works are Drew Gilpin Faust, *The Creation of Confederate Nationalism: Ideology and Identity in the Civil War South* (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1988); Anne Sarah Rubin, *A Shattered Nation: The Rise and Fall of the Confederacy, 1861-1868* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2005); Robert E. Bonner, *Colors and Blood: Flag Passions of the Confederate South* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002); Robert E. Bonner, "Americans Apart: Nationality in the Slaveholding South" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Yale University, 1998). See also Ian Binnington, "They Have Made a Nation: Confederates and the Creation of Confederate Nationalism" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Illinois, 2004); George C. Rable, *The Confederate Republic: A Revolution Against Politics* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1994).

principle to apply to the struggle for Confederate independence, the case had to be made that the South constituted a genuine nation, whose claim to political independence was grounded in a distinctive national identity. We shall first examine how white southerners made such a case. Then we shall go on to consider in some detail one of the most problematic aspects of the contention that the Confederacy represented a genuine nation: the relationship between the national identity of the Confederacy and that of the United States. As we shall see, white southerners' ambivalence about which aspects of the old national identity to retain, and which aspects to discard, constituted a major dilemma, especially in view of the fact that southerners had left the institutional apparatus of the United States in northern hands. Finally, we shall turn inward, to look at how white southerners defined Confederate national responsibility by connecting nationalist imperatives to the fabric of their everyday lives and identities.

Ranging across these three directions will provide a fuller understanding of how white southerners answered crucial questions in those first months of the Confederacy's existence: How could the Confederacy prove that it possessed a distinctive national identity? How was that national identity similar to and how was it different from the national identity of the United States? And finally, what did Confederate nationalism mean for the lives of individual white southerners?

In the wake of the political formation of the Confederacy, white southerners recognized the need to define a distinctive national identity. Only this, according to contemporary opinion, could validate political independence. In doing so, they were influenced by the concepts of nations and nationalism that prevailed in the mid-nineteenth-century western world. Invoking

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both political and cultural ideas, leading white southerners ventured arguments about their place in the world, their status as "a people," and their possession of a distinctive character, especially when contrasted against the North. In short, they advanced their claims to national status.

Sometimes, simply asserting the existence of their nation seemed sufficient. "A nation has been born in a day," proclaimed one Virginia newspaper in the wake of that state's secession, "and that bristling with arms!" "A Revolution has been consummated," declared *De Bow's Review*, "a people united, a Government established, a Constitution adopted, and a vigorous young power, forced upon the perilous career of independent empire, has vindicated its nationality and assumed its position among the powers of the earth." And in Columbia, South Carolina, Grace Elmore marked the inauguration of the provisional president with the words, "The bells are ringing—we are now a nation with our own government, Jeff Davis, President." Everywhere across the South, the bells rang, the bands played, and white southerners reflected on the meanings of national independence.[3]

But how would southern leaders give notice to the world—especially that part of it that lay immediately to their north—that the Confederacy was, in fact, a nation? Grace Elmore's reference to "a nation with our own government" contains a hint. Nationalism in the nineteenth century was understood in part in institutional terms. The project of prewar southern nationalists, like that of their counterparts in Europe, had been to bring the nation and the government into proper alignment. For this reason, as well as the obvious practicalities, the construction of a stable government appeared to many to be the most important foundation of the new nation.

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[3]*Richmond Enquirer*, May 3, 1861; J. Quitman Moore, "The Belligerents," *De Bow's Review* 31.1 (July 1861): 69; Grace B. Elmore Papers, Vol. III: Memoir, February 6, 1861, SHC.

Thus, one newspaper warned in late March, "we have a Government in existence here, able to maintain its nationality against the encroachments of any hostile power." Indeed, leading southerners had seen the urgency of forming a government, and an army, throughout the secession crisis. "What is advisable," wrote Florida's David Levy Yulee in early January, while still a sitting U.S. Senator, "is the <u>earliest possible organization of a Southern Confederacy, and of a Southern Army</u> …. A strong Government, as eight states will make promptly organized, and a <u>strong army</u> with Jeff Davis for General-in-Chief, will bring them to a reasonable sense of the gravity of the crisis." South Carolina's William Henry Trescot, who had given a great deal of thought to nationalism before secession, agreed. In mid-January he wrote to Howell Cobb of the need to "organize a Southern government immediately. We must meet Lincoln with a President of our own." For Trescot, there were military and diplomatic considerations as well: "We want the military resources of the South concentrated at once"; he wrote, "and above all, our foreign relations ought to be assured as quickly as possible. No attempt at foreign negotiations ought to be made by single States." The new nation would need institutional stability as quickly as possible if it were to be accepted as a nation at all. "The condition of weakness and confusion which will result from four or five States floating about is indescribable," explained Trescot. "Weld them together while they are hot."[4]

Trescot's words indicate the importance of creating not just a government, but a government that would be accepted by the rest of the world as the genuine institutional embodiment of a nation. The necessary foreign recognition would elude the Confederacy

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[4]Montgomery *Advertiser*, March 27, 1861; David Levy Yulee to Joseph Finegan, January 5, 1861, VHS, Mss2 Y912a; William Henry Trescot to Howell Cobb, January 14, 1861, William Henry Trescot Papers, USC. See also Francis Pickens to Jefferson Davis, Jan 23 1861, in *The Papers of Jefferson Davis*, VII: 1861, ed. Lynda Caswell Christ (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1992).

throughout its existence. Many commentators have assumed that recognition from one or more of the great powers of the day—Britain, or France, say—would have enabled the South to achieve national independence even over northern objections. And white southerners at the time understood full well that the crucial litmus test of national status was administered by world opinion. Thus in his famous poem "Ode on the Meeting of the Southern Congress," also known as "Ethnogenesis," Henry Timrod rejoiced, "At last, we are / A nation among nations; and the world / Shall soon behold in many a distant [port] / Another flag unfurled!" For the next four years, Confederate diplomacy would be designed to achieve this very goal—and would be frustrated every step of the way.[5]

In those first months, white southerners sought the favor of international recognition in part by appealing to the very power of the principle of nationality. As we have seen, this principle was widely accepted in most parts of the nineteenth-century western world. And white southerners continued to identify their own nationalist project with both the general principle and particular iterations of it in other parts of the world. They were true to the principle of nationality, they claimed; the North was not. Thus an 1861 editorial in one Richmond newspaper complained that northerners' opposition to the South's right of "self-government" was hypocritical, inconsistent as it was with their former support for national self determination. "They were all agog at the notion of freedom for Ireland," protested the editorial. "They exulted at the movement for Hungarian liberty, and rushed forward to flatter and fawn upon KOSSUTH…. They raised a shout of gratulation at the overthrow of Austrian rule in Italy. They hooted at the idea of union between Ireland and Great Britain." All of this made the North's current opposition to southern self-government hypocritical. Southerners

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[5]H. Timrod, "Ode on the Meeting of the Southern Congress," broadside poem, USC. A similar point is made in Bonner, *Colors and Blood*, 34.

thus sought to align themselves with the principle of nationality, and portray northerners as its opponents.[6]

It is hardly surprising, of course, that white southerners' attempts to explain and to justify their national status were shaped by the concepts of nation and nationalism that were then accepted across the western world. As they had done throughout the antebellum years, white southerners conceptualized their nationalism—whether American, southern, or some blend of the two—in ways that owed much to currents of transatlantic thought. Those currents suggested that, no matter how important the swift creation of a national government and other institutions, those alone did not make a nation in the eyes of the mid-nineteenth century. Cultural or racial distinctiveness—or both—were also vital criteria of a genuine national identity. White southerners knew this well in 1861.[7] After all, they had been talking and thinking about the cultural and racial foundations of nations and nationalism for years. If their bid for national independence were to be sustained, they recognized that they had to make a case for their distinctiveness as a "people."

Literature and the arts offered one important testing ground for Confederate national identity. 1861 saw an outpouring of popular poetry and songs designed to celebrate and to substantiate the new nation. These were published widely as broadsides and pamphlets, and reprinted in newspapers across the South. As literature, they tended to have limited merit. As reflections of popular understandings of secession and the creation of the Confederacy, they are very revealing. But most important for our present purposes is the assumption that the composition and distribution of these songs and poems embodied: the notion that literature and the arts ought to be deployed in the service of the nation, not merely as descriptions of

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[6]Richmond *Examiner*, October 3, 1861.

[7]See Bonner, "Americans Apart," 281.

Confederate nationality, but also as means by which dispersed members of the nation could communicate with one another—could imagine, in Benedict Anderson's memorable rendering, their common national identity.[8]

Consider, for example, the way that the *Richmond Enquirer* introduced the lyrics to "Southern Song of Freedom" in May 1861. The newspaper printed the song, submitted by a reader, as a possible "national anthem." The themes of the lyrics were typical, celebrating the South's noble volunteers, national symbols such as the flag, and the defense of southern freedom and homes against perfidious northern attack. But even more revealing about the nature of the emergent nationalism is the way the newspaper chose to introduce it. Under the heading "A National Song," the *Enquirer* explained that "An appropriate national song for the Southern Confederacy" was being much deliberated upon that summer. "Plenty of patriotic poetry can be obtained," it observed, "but a purely American melody, one that will take with the masses, is hard to be found." Leaving aside, for the present, the *Examiner*'s use of the word "American" rather than "southern" or "Confederate" (the relationship between American and Confederate national identities will be taken up later in the chapter), note the assumptions contained in these words about the nature of nationalism and its expression. First, there is the basic assumption that any nation worth its salt required a national anthem. And second, there is the implied belief that that anthem ought to be born of, and satisfy the tastes of, "the masses." (By "a purely American melody," the *Enquirer* presumably meant something like a "native" melody.) This same assumption was reiterated in the words, "Should the people adopt it, it will become our national anthem." Here was a crucial

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[8]A key theme of Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd Ed. (London: Verso, 1991), is the importance of printed literature (from the newspaper to the novel) in promoting a sense of shared nationalism even among people who have never literally encountered each other. On literature and Confederate nationalism, see Rubin, *Shattered Nation*, 25-30; Binnington, "'They Have Made a Nation,'" 141-182.

statement not just of the importance of culture to national identity, but also of the importance of that culture's rootedness in "the people" of the nation themselves.[9]

Cultural definitions of national identity encompassed the higher branches of literature as well as popular songs and poems. Longstanding calls for the southern reading public to support southern periodicals, and southern literature more generally, multiplied in the new circumstances. "I have never before taken interest enough in our periodicals or papers," wrote one Texan to *De Bow's Review*; "but it is now a patriotic duty, as I consider, to use our efforts in getting our people to read our Southern writers." Newspaper editors across the South agreed, printing notices of southern publications and urging that they be supported as never before. Praising the May 1861 issue of another long-running southern periodical, the *Southern Literary Messenger*, the editors of the Charleston *Mercury* declared that literary independence was as important a goal as political independence: "Let our writers write, as our soldiers fight, and our people cheer both parties, whether wielding sword or pen."[10]

Many commentators perceived 1861 as a year of great possibility for southern literature. For too long, they complained (as they had long complained), the South had been dependent on the North in literary affairs just as in commerce and politics. "We have been as servilely dependent on the North," claimed one *Charleston Courier* editorial, "for cheap reading, as for machinery and notions [i.e. trivial manufactured goods]." For precisely this reason, the present crisis offered the promise of "honey in the jaws of the lion." The southern people

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[9]*Richmond Enquirer*, May 14, 1861. Eric Hobsbawm has argued that the "principle of nationality" that was dominant in the middle decades of the nineteenth century did not rest as heavily on "the people" as did the mass nationalisms of the twentieth century. (*Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, Second Edition [Cambridge" Cambridge University Press, 1990], 44-45.) However, although this aspect did increase in importance, there is no denying that cultural nationalists in mid-nineteenth-century Europe leaned heavily on the language of "the people" in advancing their claims. So too did southern and Confederate nationalists.

[10]"Editorial Miscellany." *De Bow's Review* 30.3 (March 1861): 384; Charleston *Mercury*, May 16, 1861.

were at last asserting their independence, learning to act independently of the North. But, the *Courier* cautioned, they should not "neglect the cultivation of that grand and important element of national strength and independence, our mental power." If they were to make the most of this opportunity—if they were to create a strong nation—southerners must achieve intellectual and literary as well as political independence.[11]

Would they succeed? In 1861, opinions were mixed. Running through the debate were old insecurities and anxieties as well as some evidence of a new confidence. As we saw in the previous chapter, the sectional crisis had been stoked by a sort of inferiority complex in the white South. Not even secession and the declaration of political independence quashed this underlying insecurity. Beneath many of the hortatory calls for southern literary enterprise ran the nagging doubt that encouragement alone could not give the South a quality national literature. One article on the "Disenthralment of Southern Literature" worried that, even with political independence, southerners might fall back into the old rut of intellectual dependence on the North. The article described the commercial system that northerners had cunningly developed to ensure the unmerited dominance of their literature, and cautioned that it would take great effort to ensure that that system would be replaced by another, in which southern literature might prosper independently. Though the anonymous author tried to be upbeat about the chances of that happening, he or she could not hide the anxiety that southern literature might never get off its feet: "The old taunt of 'Who reads an American book?' may be revived, with the change, 'Who reads a Southern book?' But, if so, Southerners will only have themselves to blame." As these words reveal, even in those heady first few months, the new nationalism was by no means free from the provincial anxiety that had characterized not

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[11]*Charleston Courier*, July 2, 1861.

just prewar southern nationalism, but American nationalism as well. Here was another way in which Confederate nationalism inherited much of the style of its predecessor.[12]

Other commentators seemed more optimistic about the potential of southern literature in an independent Confederacy. In closing his review of a foreign work that had been translated by a southerner, for instance, George Fitzhugh took the occasion to express the hopeful belief that "the literature of the South is about to be encouraged by the Southern people. No books written in the North, except those on physical science, can safely be read at the South." He thought that, so long as southerners gave their own authors the attention they deserved, "we shall soon have a literature much superior to any in the English language, because it will be more original, profound and comprehensive." In accounting for this prediction, Fitzhugh emphasized the factor that, for him as for so many others, underpinned the South's claim to distinctiveness and nationality: slavery. Because of their unique "institution," thought Fitzhugh, an independent South could look forward to developing a unique literature.[13]

Even for an optimist like Fitzhugh, though, in 1861 a distinctive southern literary culture was only really a potential—or, at best, an imminent—substantiation of the South's national identity. No serious commentator would have claimed that it already existed in mature form. But when it came to culture more broadly—the general system of beliefs, values, and practices that define a group of people—many white southerners in 1861 felt that they stood on safer ground. The contention that southerners were "a people" with a distinctive culture was often made by those who claimed a distinctive national identity for the Confederacy. After all, according to the tenets of nineteenth-century nationalism, one of the primary

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[12]"Disenthralment of Southern Literature," *De Bow's Review* 31.4-31.5 (Oct-Nov 1861): 347-61 (quotation at p. 361).

[13]George Fitzhugh, "Hayti and the Monroe Doctrine," *De Bow's Review* 31.2 (Aug 1861): 136.

requirements of any nationalist movement was to establish the existence of a culturally distinct people who, because they were in possession of a distinct national identity, deserved separate national status. Thus the newspapers, speeches, and (less often) the private writings of white southerners were filled with assertions and explanations of white southerners' cultural status as "a people." This most often took the form of contrasts between southerners and northerners—efforts to demonstrate that they were, in fact, separate peoples. Proving their distinctiveness as a people, especially a people separate from northerners, quickly became an urgent priority.

The argument sometimes employed the vocabulary of race. "No civil strife is this," ran one especially florid iteration in the July issue of *De Bow's Review*; "no struggle of Guelph and Ghibelline; no contest between York and Lancaster; but a war of alien races, distinct nationalities, and opposite, hostile and eternally antagonistic governments." As was often the case, the unnamed author of this article placed the roots of the North-South racial divide in the English Civil War, reflecting a common argument that descendents of one side had settled America's northern states, and descendants of the other the South: "Cavalier and Roundhead," in this interpretation, "no longer designate parties, but *nations*, whose separate foundations were laid on Plymouth Rock and the banks of the James River." An article in the same publication later that year placed the roots of the North-South divide even further back in English history—all the way to 1066, when the French invasion had brought into contact but not proper combination the separate Norman and Anglo-Saxon peoples. Centuries later, when the English settled in America, the two peoples had still not merged together, and each tended to settle in different parts of the country. Whereas the Anglo-Saxons flocked to New England, "the Norman—chivalrous, impetuous, and ever noble and brave—attained its full

development in the Cavaliers of Virginia, and the Huguenots of South Carolina and Florida."

From there it was but a small step to 1861 and the undeniable separation into one nation in

the North and another in the South. Though such arguments were only ever peripheral to the

development of Confederate nationalism, they were made, and they represent the attempt of

some white southerners to fit their new national identity into the model of race-based national

identity that they saw in other parts of the world.[14]

Similar ways of thinking—albeit less formal and less theorized than the articles that

appeared in *De Bow's Review*—characterized other white southerners' comprehension of

secession and the creation of the Confederacy. A particularly revealing example appeared in

a letter written by Louisianian Roland Jones to his brother in late February. Much had

happened since their last communication, he began: "A new republic has sprung into being

like Minerva from the hair of Jove." He went on to describe vividly the differences between

northerners and southerners, to the great detriment of the former. Jones did not talk

specifically about Cavaliers and Puritans, but he did nonetheless racialize the North-South

difference in reading it back into the past. In his brief history of the "Northern scoundrels,"

Jones claimed that "Their ancestors fled from Europe and settled in the wilderness of

America because, in the old country, they could not have their own way about everything." If

anyone dared hold a different opinion than themselves, according to Jones, they would

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[14]J. Quitman Moore, "The Belligerents," *De Bow's Review* 31.1 (July 1861): 69-77 (quotation at p.74);
"The Conflict of Northern and Southern Races," *De Bow's Review* 31.4-5 (Oct-Nov 1861): 391-95 (quotation at
p. 393); see Charleston *Mercury*, April 30 1861, for another example. Useful recent treatments of this
dimension of Confederate nationalism include Robert Bonner, "Roundheaded Cavaliers? The Context and
Limits of a Confederate Racial Project," *Civil War History* 48.1 (2002): 34-59; and James M. McPherson, *Is
Blood Thicker than Water? Crises of Nationalism in the Modern World* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998).
Both authors, in different ways, give rather more weight to the prominence and importance of this theme than is
warranted. For a useful corrective, see Don Doyle, *Nations Divided: American, Italy, and the Southern Question*
(Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 2002), 80.

persecute the dissenter. And "to this day that same spirit animates [the] bosoms of their descendants." Like the more formal arguments presented in *De Bow's Review*, Jones's letter to his brother codified the North-South divide as a racial—and therefore an irreversible—one.

Along with Jones's historical-racial interpretation of the conflict came a sweeping indictment of northern society and character. Typical of northern society in general, he believed, were Republican party leaders, "who look upon nothing as sacred or holy; who scoff at the religion of the Bible, denounce the Constitution, the noble work of our great & good ancestors…. How can we live with these people any longer?" Furthermore, these enemies desired the abolition of southern slavery, which struck Jones as being most disagreeable. In the face of this onslaught, he asked, "would we not ourselves be slaves, if we submitted, would we not be cowards if we did not resist"? Evidently, Jones carried such enmity towards the North and its people that he felt that personal stake in the crisis that, as we saw in the last chapter, had driven so many white southerners to secession. Vividly capturing the personal, domestic valence of the North-South conflict, Jones declared, "I will not live in the same house, sit at the same table & sleep in the same bed with my mortal enemy." As was the case for so many southerners, national bonds that had been cast in terms of domestic affection appeared to have been rent by irreligious, antislavery, and generally nefarious northern designs. Since its former northern compatriots were so disagreeable, the white South must deserve its national independence.[15]

Jones's brief against northern imperfection included most of the traits that others railed against as well: pathological character traits; a wrongheaded opposition to slavery; false religious beliefs; a misunderstanding of how politics, specifically as according to the U.S. Constitution, ought to work. In short, the North was a misguided society headed for disaster.

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[15]Roland Jones to his brother Dabney Jones, February 27, 1861, Roland Jones Letters, ADAH.

As has often been the case with national identities, Jones and many of his peers often defined the Confederacy ("us") not only in positive but also in negative ways—against the North ("them"). It would have been difficult to spend a day in most parts of the South in 1861 without hearing examples of anti-northern invective. With every negative characterization of the North and its people, white southerners asserted their own national distinctiveness and made that distinctiveness appear more positive.[16]

At its most crude, this process took the form of ascribing unfavorable character traits to the northern people. This was not entirely new. As we have already seen, Yankees had long been the butt of southern insults. But such attacks became more common, and more cruel, in the wake of secession and the formation of the Confederacy. Yankees were cheats and liars, it was claimed; they were fickle, faddish, corrupt, hypocritical, intolerant, greedy, and materialistic. They held distorted religious beliefs, having turned their backs on the Bible as the true word of God. Their political practices were stained by corruption, ambition, partisanship, and a tendency towards centralization that belied the proper states-rights heritage of the founding generation and their Constitution. All of this added up to a conviction that the whole society was rotten to the core.

Those educated in history saw ancient parallels. The Charleston *Mercury*, for example, was reminded, when it looked northward, of ancient Greece and Rome on the precipice of decline. "Gorged with ill-gotten wealth, run riot in lavish prosperity, with God behind and Mammon before them, respecters of nothing, believers in nothing," northerners were falling into precisely the same cycle of decay that had destroyed the ancient republics—the same

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[16]For a classic account of how British national identity was defined against the French "other," see Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation: 1707-1837* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992). On the psychology of "ingroup favoritism" and "outgroup devaluation," see Joshua Searle-White, *The Psychology of Nationalism* (New York: Palgrave, 2001).

republics which had always been so important a model for Americans. The present-day North, apparently, called to mind Greece at the height of luxury, corruption, and decay—a country that was "drunk with prosperity. Effeminate in habits, emasculate in mind, all manhood was sunk in levity and licentious imaginings." The message was clear: the North was headed for ruin, and it was good that the South had gone its own way.[17]

The terminology of effeminacy and emasculation was not uncommon. In differentiating their own society against that of their former countrymen to the north, white southerners often invoked gender. Thus in the charged climate of the spring and summer of 1861, southern men often contrasted their own manliness against that of their northern counterparts. Naturally, the southerners came out on top. "The hardy sons of the South," declared an Alabama paper in the days after Sumter, "are not men worn down by servile toil, but men trained from childhood to the use of arms, to habits of self reliance and self command." The "[starving] hirelings of the North" would be no match at all for such fine specimens. Although the newspaper editorialist did not come right out and say so, the way he compared northern and southern masculinities turned on the crucial difference of slavery: surely it was slavery that permitted southern men to avoid "servile toil"; to develop "self reliance and self command" rather than to become like the "hirelings" of the free labor North.[18]

North-South comparisons went beyond manhood to comprise the entire complex of gender roles and responsibilities. For instance, the conventional wisdom among white southerners who thought about such things was that their society had a much better notion of

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[17]Charleston *Mercury*, May 16, 1861.

[18]Montgomery *Advertiser*, April 18, 1861; see also Richmond *Examiner*, July 2, 1861. Interestingly, though perhaps not surprisingly, northern men thought of themselves as the more manly men, in contrast to the fiery secessionists to the South, who were so passionate as to be feminine (Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* [New York: Free Press, 1996], 28; Reid Mitchell, "Soldiering, Manhood, and Coming of Age: A Northern Volunteer," in *Divided Houses: Gender and the Civil War*, eds. Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber [New York: Oxford University Press, 1992]).

the rightful place of women. Articles in 1861 issues of *De Bow's Review*, for example, argued that whereas white southern women adhered to appropriate gender roles, their northern counterparts did not. Southern women, according to one author, "confine themselves exclusively to the pursuits and associations becoming their sex, and abhor the female lecturers and abolition and free love oratrixes, and Bloomers, and strong-minded women of the North." On the subject of the "'Woman's Rights' doctrine," another proclaimed: "for that pestilent doctrine, springing latest-born and ugliest from the foul embrace of Yankeeism and infidelity, we have no sympathy." Echoing and building upon prewar commentary, southern writers continued to contrast the orderly gender relations in the South with apparent gender chaos in the North.[19]

To Georgian Susan Cornwall, northern women's abandonment of proper gender roles constituted one way, at least, in which they had sunk even below the depths of African Americans. "We hear of [white northern] women," she complained to her diary, "who have forgotten their sex and in their immodest love of publicity, have mounted the rostrum and poured forth incendiary harangues teeming with falsehood and disgusting revelations of their own depravity." Cornwall's opinion of African Americans' capabilities was emphatically negative. Yet she did note one glimmer of hope for the race, stemming from the fact that "no black woman has so far belied her sex or forgotten her proper sphere." As white southerners reflected on what distinguished them from northerners, Cornwall and others saw divergent gender roles and relations as a significant part of the divide.

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[19]George Fitzhugh, "The Women of the South," *De Bow's Review* 31.2 (Aug 1861): 147-154 (quotation at p. 153); "Education of Southern Women," *De Bow's Review* 31.4-5 (Oct-Nov 1861): 381-90 (quotation at p. 387).

Sooner or later, though, everything came back to the sine qua non of Confederate national identity: racial slavery. Cornwall's detour into gender conventions occurred within a much lengthier harangue about the racial inferiority of African Americans, a condition which meant that slavery was the best place for them. "While the Northerners profess to see nothing in a state of slavery but degradation for the slave & sin in the slaveholder," she wrote, "we consider it a condition highly honorable to both parties, when viewed in a proper light."[20] Cornwall's words remind us that behind this whole complex of comparisons between South and North—the gender conventions, the political philosophies, the apparent differences in character, religion, and morality—lay the fundamental difference between slavery and free labor. Every characteristic that southerners pointed to when defining their peculiarity as a nation ultimately stemmed from their peculiar institution. White southerners often recognized this. If pressed, few would have denied that slavery lay at the foundation of the arguments they made to support their bid for national status.

Thus, although Jefferson Davis famously minimized the importance of slavery to Confederate national identity—presumably because to do otherwise would have been so problematic for nonslaveholders at home and for the predominantly antislavery western world—other leaders were more candid. Alexander Stephens was, of course, most visibly so. In his famous "cornerstone" speech of March 1861, the vice-president of the Confederate States posited "African slavery" as the "immediate cause" of secession. Unlike the United States, which held a misguided belief in "the equality of the races," the Confederacy recognized the divine truth of racial *in*equality. Indeed, Stephens said, the Confederacy's "foundations were laid, its cornerstone rests, upon the great truth that the negro is not equal to the white man; that slavery, subordination to the superior race, is his natural and moral

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[20]Susan Cornwall Diary, January 31, 1861, SHC.

condition." Herein, for Stephens, lay the essence of the Confederacy's claim to a distinct national identity. "Our new Government," he explained, "is the first, in the history of the world, based upon this great physical, philosophical, and moral truth."[21]

In 1861, there were both Stephenses and Davises: those who unequivocally acknowledged the basis of the new nation in slavery, and those who sought to minimize it. Often, though, the difference between the two approaches was one of emphasis more than substance. Particularly revealing in this respect was an editorial that appeared in the Richmond *Examiner*. "Those who suppose the present difficulties of the United States," it began, "to be the result of an agitation against negro slavery, see only the surface." "The true cause of the approaching separation of this country into two parts," it went on, appealing directly to the great principle of nationality, "is the fact that it is inhabited by two peoples, two utterly distinct nations." Even though those two nations shared much in common, the editorial asserted, they were "now divided as far as the North Pole is distinct from the Equator, and as hostile as the feline to the canine species of animal." Thus far, the *Examiner* seemed to be minimizing the importance of slavery to secession, and emphasizing the importance of national differences. But when it went on to further analyze those national differences, the editorial was led inexorably back to slavery. Apparently contradicting its opening contention that slavery was the mere "surface" of the split, the editorial subsequently referred to slavery as:

> the basis of our lives in the South. It has developed our peculiar qualities and peculiar faults, all of them the exact reverses of those created by the system of leveling materialism and of numerical majorities which has attained in the North a logical perfection of application hitherto unknown and unheard of in any part of the whole world. Under the operation of these causes, we repeat the North and the South have come to be

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[21]Speech of Alexander H. Stephens, March 21, 1861, reprinted in *The Civil War Archive: The History of the Civil War in Documents*, ed. Henry Steele Commager, updated by Erik Bruun (1950; New York: Black Dog & Leventhal, 2000), 566-567.

inhabited by two nations. They are different in everything that can constitute difference in national character; in their persons, in their pronunciation, in their dress, in their port, in their religious ideas, in their sentiments toward women, in their manners to each other, in their favourite foods, in their houses and domestic arrangements, in their method of doing business, in their national aspirations, in all their tastes, all their principles, in all their pride and in all their shame. The French are not more unlike the English than the Yankees are unlike the Southerners.

This was quite a laundry list of national differences between North and South. And as the *Examiner* made clear, all were thought to stem, in one way or another, from the distinguishing feature of slavery.[22]

During the first months of the Confederacy's existence, then, white southerners established an intellectual framework for their new national identity that drew heavily on existing ideas—both conceptual and substantive—about what it meant to be a nation. Appealing to the very principle of nationality that enjoyed such authority in the mid nineteenth century, they made their case to each other and to the world. They valued the institutions they had quickly created—their government, their army—as tangible manifestations of their nationhood. These institutions embodied, they claimed, their status as a distinct "people," with their own character and culture, even if certain aspects of it were relatively underdeveloped. But most all of all, white southerners claimed national independence on the grounds that they were so different—in ways that could only divide nation from nation—from their former compatriots to the north.

In some ways, differentiating the South from the North was the easy part. Far more difficult was the task of explaining how the Confederacy differed from the United States of America. It was one thing to vilify one's enemy, even an enemy who had once been a friend. But it was another thing entirely to leave behind the nation to which southerners had belonged for

[22]Richmond *Examiner*, March 14, 1861.

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not far short of a century: the nation to which they had contributed so much; the nation for which, as recently as the Mexican War, they had bled and died; the nation, perhaps most importantly of all, associated with the very revolutionary legacy and ideological promise that they valued so highly. No white southerner would seriously suggest that the creation of the Confederate States equaled a wholesale rejection of America. Yet none could deny that it was the southern states which had voluntarily left the old Union to create a new one. These facts generated a profound ambivalence about the extent to which Confederate national identity should and could replicate American national identity. How would white southerners reconcile the new with the old? How would they balance continuity and change? What would be the relationship between American and Confederate nationalisms?

Indicative foundations were laid with the drafting of the provisional Confederate constitution. It was for ideological reasons, as well as the obvious practical ones, that the delegates in Montgomery essentially replicated the United States constitution, with only a small number of alterations. To be sure, the changes were not insignificant: the protection of slavery, the invocation of God, extra limitations on the authority of the central government, and safeguards against the corruptions of partisan patronage. But for the most part, these were seen as refinements and perfections rather than new departures. In presenting the new constitution to his constituents, Alabama politician Robert H. Smith explained that it was essentially the same as the old, with a few necessary additions, which in his estimation had "greatly purified our Government." Purification was a popular way of understanding the relationship between the old and the new. As the longstanding secessionist Louis T. Wigfall told a Charleston crowd, they had for the past seventy-five years "been living under precisely such a government as you have today inaugurated, but a false construction has been put upon

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it." The actions of the delegates at Montgomery, he went on, had merely restored that government to the specific form it should have taken all along. Restoration, purification, perfection—these were the terms southerners used to signify that the new government was based very much on the old. Employing a construction metaphor, one commentator declared: "We have builded a new temple out of the materials that composed the old one, and the glory of the latter house is greater than that of the former."[23]

If seceding southerners represented the real America, why should errant northerners retain the trappings of American national identity? Some white southerners argued that they should not—that the South, not the North, deserved to inherit the symbols and heroes of American national identity. As the new government deliberated on the need for a national flag—a crucial component in establishing its nationality in the eyes of the world—there were calls that the South ought to retain the stars and stripes, or something very close to it. Writing to William Porcher Miles, the Chair of the Confederate Congress's Committee on Flag and Seal, M. E. Huger remarked that he was "much interested in the Flag, that is to represent to the world our Southern country." Even though neither he nor Miles cared much for the old stars and stripes, he knew that many of their fellow southerners did. The flag selection committee ought to give it, or some very similar design, careful consideration. It was already "well known and respected, … simple, easily distinguished, easily made & understood, for nearly a century has signified our country to the world, & to which we have a right." With

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[23]Robert Smith, *An Address to the Citizens of Alabama on the Constitution and Laws of the Confederate States of America by the Hon. Robert H. Smith, At Temperance Hall, on the 30ᵗʰ March, 1861* (Mobile, Ala.: Mobile Daily Register Print 1861), 11; Charleston *Mercury*, April 4, 1861; Montgomery *Advertiser*, April 6, 1861; *Charleston Courier*, July 4, 1861. On the constitution as a basis of Confederate nationalism, see Binnington, "They Have Made a Nation," 48-95.

the words "our" and "right," Huger signaled that he fully understood the widespread feeling

that the stars and stripes belonged as much to the South as it did to the North.[24]

Alabamian John Pelham agreed. "Although I am a most ultra secessionist," he wrote to

his family, "I am still proud of the American flag. It does not belong to the North any more

than to us, and has never had anything to do with our wrongs." Because he recognized that

both sides had a claim on it, Pelham thought the best solution would be for each to set it aside,

"as a menmento [sic] of our past greatness and of our Revolutionary renown." But whatever

happened, he rejected the idea that the North should continue to use it as a national standard.

"They have no right to use it," he insisted, "and we should not permit them. It should be

stored away with [our] other household gods, cherished and preserved spotless and unstained,

'not a single stripe erased or poluted, not a single star obscured.'"[25]

Like the United States flag, southerners also advanced claims to ownership of its heroes.

George Washington, of course, loomed particularly large. We have already heard from

antebellum southerners who desired to claim Washington and his legacy for the South alone.

Such claims persisted in the wake of secession and the creation of the Confederacy. Many

saw reminders of Washington's military and political leadership in Jefferson Davis. As the

teenaged Louisianian Sarah Lois Wadley remarked in the summer of 1861, "truly we have in

him a second Washington." Later that year, looking north, Wadley perceived there a drift

toward despotism that mocked Washington's legacy. Northerners "are unworthy of the

heritage of this name," she wrote; "henceforth Washington the Father of our country, his

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[24]M. E. Huger to William Porcher Miles, February 7, 1861, William Porcher Miles Papers, SHC. On flags and Confederate nationalism, see Robert Bonner's insightful *Colors and Blood*, esp. 39-66.

[25]John Pelham to sister, March 19, 1861, John Pelham Papers, ADAH.

memory, his virtue, his valor, they remain the heritage alone of his native state, and the fair sisters that with her form our youthful Confederacy."[26]

When Georgian Susan Cornwall was inspired by the occasion of Washington's birthday, on February 22, 1861, to reflect on his place in Confederate national identity, she reached similar conclusions. "To day is the anniversary," she began, "of the birth of one of the greatest of men. Washington the pure patriot, the sincere Christian." Cornwall echoed Wadley's stress on the hero's southern origin: "We of the South rejoice that he was 'one of us,' trained amid the same surroundings as the Southerner of to day." But Cornwall was even more specific than Wadley about why Washington's memory rightly belonged to the South in the present conflict. "May we not believe," she asked, "that the development of his character was aided by the very institutions so repugnant to the Northern devotee of Liberty"? Washington, in other words, had been a slaveholder (Cornwall made no mention of the fact that he had freed his slaves upon his death), and therefore his memory sustained the slaveholding South rather than the antislavery North. The same point was made that May at a public meeting in Virginia. Washington had been a slaveholder, proclaimed a speaker there, "fighting for the freedom of the white, and the slavery of the black race," and present-day southerners were doing the same thing. The legacy of Washington was claimed for slavery, secession, and the South.[27]

With Washington came the whole revolutionary generation—indeed the whole American Revolution, ideology, results, and all. Affirmations of the continuity between 1861 and 1776

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[26]Sarah Lois Wadley Diary, July 28, 1861, November 15, 1861, Sarah Lois Wadley Papers, SHC. As Richard McCaslin has shown (*Lee in the Shadow of Washington* [Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 2001]), Robert E. Lee became known as a sort of second Washington. But in the first months of the Confederacy's existence, before Lee attained prominence, it was Davis who held that unofficial title.

[27]Susan Cornwall Diary, February 22, 1861, SHC; *Richmond Enquirer*, May 7, 1861.

were legion. They filled politicians' speeches, poems and songs, newspaper editorials, and private writings alike. To give just one, representative example: in the summer of 1861 the Richmond *Examiner* reminded its readers that southerners were at that time "standing where our forefathers stood in the great struggle for colonial independence." Lincoln and his followers in the North "hypocritically" claimed to be doing the same thing, but the South was the real heir of the American Revolution. "They stand alone now," the *Examiner* put it, "in asserting the great principle of the Declaration of Independence, that 'Governments divine their legitimate force only from the consent of the governed.' This great principle their 'brethren' of the North have abandoned." The *Examiner* said what countless other southerners were saying or thinking: the South was faithful to the revolutionary legacy, which it was even then reenacting; the North, in contrast, had deserted it.[28]

As we have seen previously, Americans in both North and South were especially likely to take stock of the revolutionary heritage and their fealty to it on the Fourth of July. Clearly, as the annual holiday approached in 1861, the changed political situation mandated even more serious reflection on the meaning of American Independence Day below the Mason-Dixon line. In the wake of secession and the creation of the Confederacy, there were some who felt that Independence Day should expire along with the United States. This is exactly what the *Vicksburg Whig* had predicted as early as 1849, when, faced with the alarming and undesirable prospect of disunion, its editor worried that if the worst came to pass the

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[28]Richmond *Examiner*, July 11, 1861. For many more examples from throughout the Civil War, see James M. McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 105; Bonner, "Americans Apart," Chapter 5; Faust, *Creation of Confederate Nationalism*, 14, 27; Anne Sarah Rubin, "'76 and '61: Confederates Remember the American Revolution," in *Where These Memories Grow: History, Memory, and Southern Identity*, ed. W. Fitzhugh Brundage (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2000). Overlooking the fact that most Confederates had been staunch American nationalists, Rubin interprets their use of revolutionary symbols as an appropriation, designed to evade the problematic issues of race and slavery. There is certainly some merit to this argument, but I have tried to set white southerners' ambivalent desire to maintain aspects of American national identity within a broader context.

anniversary would be forgotten and the heritage of the revolution lost. "Beyond the existence

of this Union," as the *Whig* put it, "there will be no Fourth of July!" By 1861, one soldier, at

least, thought that this would indeed be the case, noting in his diary on July 4 that year,

"Once the Sons of the South hailed its coming with joy, but now we heed it not for the

United States are no more." And in Charleston, Alfred Dunkin, who had been selected as

1861's Fourth of July orator for one patriotic association, declined to deliver a speech,

observing that "Times have changed." The present was such a volatile time, with the South

fighting for its independence, that he felt it inappropriate to hold forth on "a past

Independence." Instead, he suggested that they ought instead to have a public speech on

December 20, the anniversary of South Carolina's secession, the day "on which was asserted

and vindicated the principles of the 4th July, 1776." So even though they fought for the

principles of the original American Revolution, Dunkin and like-minded southerners felt that

they ought to be publicly celebrating declarations of southern, rather than American,

independence.[29]

The majority verdict, though, was that Confederates had every right—and even a duty—

to continue to celebrate the Fourth. As the editor of the *Mobile Register* put it, the

anniversary "belongs to the South as fully as to the North, … it cannot be dropped from the

National calendar of the Confederate States." And a couple of days later the *Register*'s editor

reprinted an excerpt from a Louisiana newspaper which contained a similar sentiment: "The

Yankees have robbed us of too much already. We have no idea of giving up the national

anniversary--not a bit of it. The Fourth of July is ours." Many others, in newspapers,

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[29]*Vicksburg Whig*, July 3, 1849; G. Ward Hubbs, ed., *Voices from Company D: Diaries by the Greensboro Guards, Fifth Alabama Infantry Regiment, Army of Northern Virginia* (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 2003), 11; *Charleston Courier*, July 6, 1861.

speeches, diaries, and letters, agreed that the Confederacy had a strong claim to ownership of the holiday, based on the apparent similarities between 1776 and 1861.[30]

A newspaper article written at St. James Santee, South Carolina, reported that "The Fourth of July was celebrated in this parish with the usual military display and enthusiasm." The after-dinner toasts reflected the new political circumstances, and included some which claimed ownership of the Fourth for the new Confederacy: the first toast was in honor of "*The Day We Celebrate*—Sacred to the cause of Constitutional liberty; it is ours by inheritance;" and the third was to "*The Confederate States of America*—True to the spirit of '76." After the toasts, a letter from a local politician who had been invited to the celebration, but had been unable to attend, was read out. Giving thanks for the invitation, the politician observed that "for some years past" he had been reluctant to celebrate the Fourth, uncertain as to whether it had "really secured our freedom and independence." But now that the old Union was dissolved, he felt able once again to mark the anniversary in good faith, and, moreover, he recommended that "it ought to be celebrated with renewed zeal." For this South Carolinian, the Fourth was even more appropriate a holiday for the Confederate States than it had been for the antebellum United States.[31]

In claiming ownership of the holiday, some white southerners thought that northerners' failure to live up to the legacy of the Revolution meant that they had forfeited their claim to the Fourth. One Confederate soldier complained to his aunt how hypocritical he regarded northern celebrations when he heard salutes being fired at Washington, D.C. from his camp on the morning of July 4, 1861. "What mocking," he thought, that northerners were

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[30]*Mobile Register*, July 2, July 4, 1861; Fletcher M. Green, "Listen to the Eagle Scream: One Hundred Years of the Fourth of July in North Carolina (1776-1876)," *North Carolina Historical Review* 31 (1954): 535-536.

[31]*Charleston Courier*, July 12, 1861.

"celebrating their independence and at the same time striving to deprive their assistants in the strife of the very boon which they estimate so highly." The North, in his judgment, had no right to continue to commemorate a movement whose principles they had discarded.[32]

In one of the very few formal Fourth of July orations to be held below the Mason-Dixon lines in 1861, Alexander Terrell told his Texas audience that in separating from those northerners, southerners had clearly acted in alignment with the principles of '76. The earlier revolutionaries had provided an invaluable example of courageously standing up for their rights, and refusing to allow a dominant power to exercise control over them. And the principle which that generation fought for was not, Terrell took care to point out, universal liberty, but rather a very limited conception that the right of self-government was appropriate in their particular situation. In fighting for the same ideals, Terrell declared, Confederates were actually fighting in "the second war for independence":

> In view of all the lessons of the past, and the issues of the present, we may reassure ourselves with the conviction that we have not departed from the faith bequeathed to us by the men of Seventy-Six. Constitutional liberty [,] expelled from most Governments upon earth, finds now her abiding place among the Confederate States of America, and so long as they are true to the principles that now govern and control them, so long will the fourth day of July be held in grateful remembrance.[33]

Other southerners expressed a similar sense of relief that their own generation seemed to have succeeded in standing up for their rights. The Richmond *Enquirer* gladly (if a little inaccurately) reported "that the 4th of July will be generally observed throughout the Southern Confederacy." The example of the revolutionary generation had been followed, and the *Enquirer* clearly approved: "Thank Heaven, that thus far at least, the sons have proven

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[32]Dick Simpson to Caroline Virginia Taliaferro Miller, July 4, 1861, in *"Far, Far From Home": The Wartime Letters of Dick and Tally Simpson, Third South Carolina Volunteers*, Eds. Guy R. Everson and Edward H. Simpson, Jr. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 23; *Mobile Register*, July 4, 1861.

[33]Alexander Watkins Terrell, *Oration Delivered on the Fourth Day of July, 1861, at the Capitol, Austin, Texas* (Austin, Tex.: Printed by J. Marshall at "Gazette" Office, 1861), 14, 17.

worthy of their sires!" In encouraging those sons to continue to follow their fathers' example,

the editor of the *Enquirer* referred to the similarities between the principles of the

Declaration of Independence and the principles which actuated the secession of the southern

states and the formation of the Confederacy. In that document, he observed, could be found

the truths that government existed by consent of the governed, and that people had a right,

even a duty, to overthrow and replace despotic governments. Since these ideals lay at the

heart of the Confederacy's formation, thought the editor, "'Tis meet that the South, which

has been ever faithful to free government, should not forget Liberty's first anniversary while

founding a second."[34]

Whereas the *Enquirer*'s editor stressed the absolute similarity of the two revolutions,

others began to concede inconsistencies between the Confederacy's principles and some

aspects of the American Revolution. The editor of the *Richmond Examiner* urged his readers

in 1861 that they should always remember the Revolution and the Fourth of July. But he also

informed them that it was time to consign one element of the holiday—the Declaration's

preamble—to the dustbin. Why on earth, he wondered, would a group of slaveholders tack a

radical statement of universal equality onto the beginning of the document? The Declaration

was based on faulty logic, he concluded; it had functioned as a Trojan Horse, and

abolitionists had used it to destroy the Union. Instead of being hypocritical now, he thought,

southerners should jettison the Declaration and distinguish between the revolutionaries'

actions—which were noble—and their own *explanation* of those actions—which ought to be

ignored. Likewise, the *Charleston Courier* aligned southern secession with certain features of

the Declaration of Independence, and compared the despotism of Abraham Lincoln with that

of George the Third. "While we reject utterly the barefaced and transparent fallacies with

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[34]*Richmond Enquirer*, July 4, 1861.

which the production of MR. JEFFERSON opens," the *Courier* asserted that in seceding the southern states had faithfully acted out another passage of the Declaration: the passage concerning the right of a people to resist oppression and to govern themselves. As these examples show, some commentators selected those aspects of the revolutionary heritage that seemed to fit, and jettisoned those that did not.[35]

Other white southerners similarly felt that while the Fourth should continue to be marked below the Mason-Dixon line, it should not be marked in exactly the same way. Charleston's '76 Association, for instance, an organization formed in the 1830s as a vehicle for annual Independence Day celebrations, deliberated at length on how to mark the anniversary now that the political situation had changed so radically. Like any good organization, the '76 formed a committee to think on it and report back at the next meeting. When the Association met again, the five-member committee recommended that "the usual celebration of the day … by public procession, solemn oration, and political banquet ought to be omitted on the present occasion." The Fourth was too closely associated with the now-defunct Union, and besides, at a time when soldiers from South Carolina and the other southern states were facing off against their northern foe on the battlefield, it just did not seem right to hold the usual public revelry. The other members concurred with the committee's recommendation, and the '76 Association agreed to meet on the evening of the Fourth, but only for a business meeting, without the usual festivities.

There was more to the committee's report. Having laid out their principal recommendation, the committee evidently felt that further explanation was needed. Even though the Fourth should not be celebrated as it had been in previous years, the committee stressed that it did not thereby relinquish all claims to the day. On the contrary, the Fourth of

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[35]*Richmond Examiner*, July 5, 1861; *Charleston Courier*, July 4, 1861.

July acquired its significance from its association with those very principles—state sovereignty and the right of self-government by consent—for which South Carolina had fought for so long, and for which it now was fighting against the North. No, South Carolina and the Confederacy should not give up the Fourth. And who knew what the day might come to mean in the future. Perhaps, once the North saw sense, once the war was over, perhaps then the Fourth would be resurrected—not as a symbol of the resurrection of the Union, but as "a memory of our earlier history," a cultural bond between two countries which previously had been one. While the South should not relinquish the Fourth, then, nor could it continue to celebrate exactly as before; the meanings of the anniversary would have to be pondered further.[36]

Across the South that July, the question of how the Fourth ought to be celebrated—if at all—remained unresolved. One southerner writing from Richmond observed that it was hard to believe it was the Fourth at all. Though he and his peers continued to prize the principles of '76, it was hard to celebrate in view of the severity of the present crisis. "It is a Fourth of July merely in name," he wrote, "suggestive only of mournful contrasts and solemn recollections." Louisianian Sarah Lois Wadley was similarly uncertain about what to make of the holiday. In 1861 she recorded in her diary that the Fourth had passed very quietly, her mind having been "so much occuppied by other things that I had almost forgotten the day." She read in the papers that the anniversary had been marked by the closing of businesses and stores, by the firing of salutes, and so forth, but nothing too raucous. She was glad about that:

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[36]"Journal of the Whig Association," SCHS, #34/306. The Whig Association was formed in 1833 out of a merger of the Revolutionary Society and the '76 Association; it changed its name in 1839 to the '76 Association. An extra meeting was called on May 29, 1861, to decide whether or not to celebrate the Fourth of July that year. Having referred the matter to a committee, the Association met again on June 17, 1861, to make its decision. On South Carolina's general ambivalence about the Fourth of July in 1861, see Joseph Ralph James, Jr., "The Transformation of the Fourth of July in South Carolina, 1850-1919" (MA Thesis, Louisiana State University, 1987), 44-47.

"I think that the day should have been observed with unusual strictness, but it is natural and right that the feeling should have been more of sober thankfulness and religious prayer than of noisy joy." The role of American Independence Day in the Confederacy clearly remained uncertain.[37]

In 1861, then, there was no ultimate resolution to the problem of how Confederate national identity related to American national identity. White southerners did not, as a general rule, wish to yield American national identity to northerners. On the contrary, many in the South believed that northerners had perverted that national identity and had less of a claim on it than did southerners themselves. But the fact that the institutional expressions of American nationalism remained in northern hands rendered this argument problematical. It had been the South, and not the North, that had taken its leave of the Union. And so, despite frequent claims that Confederate national identity was a purified replication of American national identity, and despite attempts to claim selected aspects of revolutionary memory for the South alone, the precise relationship between the new and the old was, for the moment at least, left undetermined.

The problems of national identity and national responsibility did not occur only in the sphere of politics and intellectual activity, but also in the sphere of everyday lives. So far this chapter has been mostly been concerned with the former. Having surveyed the major intellectual lineaments of Confederate national identity, it is possible now to consider how all of this influenced, and was influenced by, individual white southerners and their everyday lives. Many studies of Confederate nationalism have, to a greater or lesser degree,

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[37]*Charleston Courier*, July 6, 1861; Sarah Lois Wadley Diary, July 7, 1861, Sarah Lois Wadley Papers, SHC.

approached nationalism as a deliberate, self-conscious intellectual production.[38] Shifting the

question from *how was nationalism produced* to *how did people make sense of nationalism in*

their lives offers a new perspective on the whole process.

The testimony of white southerners in 1861 reminds us forcefully that people experience

major public events in very personal ways. This is perhaps most clearly visible in the

sorrowful ambivalence with which so many white southerners—even some of the staunchest

of Confederate partisans—viewed the transfer of their allegiance from the United to the

Confederate States. For some, the separation was rendered problematic by the many personal

ties—of family, friendship, and business—that had united southerners to northerners prior to

secession.[39] Although he supported Confederate independence, the separation left a bad taste

in the mouth of Alabamian planter William Proctor Gould. In a scrapbook containing

newspaper clippings on the crisis, Gould included one story, "What the Yankee Nation has

Come To," which detailed the atrocious depths to which northern society had sunk. He felt

compelled to add some notes of his own, explaining his personal response to the public issues

of national identity and allegiance. "Although for many years," he wrote, "indeed, for the

greater part of my life, the South has been the home of my choice, and in all human

probability, in the South my bones will find their last resting place, yet, I cannot, if I would,

forget that Yankee blood courses in my veins." The current state of the North depressed him.

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[38]This is most notable in Binnington, "They Have Made a Nation," which portrays Confederate nationalism as a very self-conscious elite construction that was imposed on, or marketed to, the masses. Other studies (such as Rubin, *A Shattered Nation*, Faust, *Creation of Confederate Nationalism*, and Bonner*, Colors and Blood*) portray it as less of a top-down imposition, and, especially in the cases of Rubin and Bonner, consider nationalism as more of a broad-based cultural or emotional phenomenon. But even so, and despite some perceptive, scattered observations about the relationship between self and nation by Rubin, the focus remains on self-conscious intellectual production rather than on how individuals apprehended nationalism in their lives.

[39]For the many complications—both literal and figurative—that family relationships caused during the Civil War, see Amy Murrell Taylor, *The Divided Family in Civil War America* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

This was, after all, his "native land." But even so, he could not overlook what he saw as the inescapable conclusion. Northerners' behavior had been so egregious that reunion was unthinkable. "Devoted as I once was to the Union of the whole United States," he explained, "if the settlement of the question at this moment depended on my single voice, it would not be given in favor of reconstruction." In considering how white southerners navigated their changing national allegiances, it is crucial that we bear in mind the sorrowful backward glance cast by Gould and so many others.[40]

Sarah Lois Wadley, the Louisianan teenager from whom we have heard before, also reflected with sorrow on the transition, even as she ultimately approved of it. Reporting in her diary that Jefferson Davis and Alexander Stephens had been chosen to lead the Confederacy, Wadley realized that she "had almost written the United States." The slip provoked sorrowful reflection. "How sad to think," she observed, "that we are united no longer, that we are no more natives of one common country, necessary as is the separation how can we think of it without grief." A Union that had been based in no small part on the mutual affection of its members could not be dismantled without some heartache. Like many of her peers, Wadley did not experience the separation with unmixed joy.[41]

Even so, Wadley saw personal opportunity in the new nation. Just days after she expressed ambivalence about the disintegration of the United States, she recorded a more hopeful entry in her diary. Here, again, it appears to have been difficult to separate large-scale public events from the personal and the everyday. Noting a recent development in her personal life—the news that her father would be taking a new job—Wadley connected it to public events. "The new era which I prophesied is drawing very near," she wrote, referring to

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[40]William Proctor Gould Diary, September 6, 1861, ADAH.

[41]Sarah Lois Wadley Diary, February 16, 1861, Sarah Lois Wadley Papers, SHC.

the new job, and commented, "we will enter upon it at the time when our country enters upon hers." A new beginning in her personal life merged with a new national start, and Wadley could not help but consider the two in relation to one another.[42]

Many of Wadley's male contemporaries appear to have embraced the events of 1861 in a similar way. The shifting of allegiances, especially combined with the beginning of military operations, offered the promise of a new start, the chance of proving themselves in the world, to young men across the South. For these men, too, just like for Sarah Wadley, personal and national departures could blend together. The young Georgian H. C. Kendrick, for instance, wrote home from his army posting in Virginia regarding some of the personal ramifications of his position as a Confederate soldier. His youthful, sometimes naïve gusto was typical of many. "I want to be in all the fights … in the war," he wrote to his brother. "I think Thom., that I shall kill a yankee before I get back yet." Most striking of all, H. C. Kendrick appeared to be enjoying his first months in the army. He was in good health. He had learned to cook for himself. To his brother, he wrote, "I enjoy my time the best in the world. [P]atriotism glows within my heart rapidly as the sun runs." And to his father, "I am well & fat as a fig and a little saucy, but not contemptuously so." This was clearly a young man for whom service in the national army offered personal enrichment. With his glowing patriotism and his new found personal independence, H. C. Kendrick was happy.

He was also acutely aware of the responsibility being a soldier entailed. Later in 1861, he reported to his sister that he had been reflecting during a recent military maneuver on the role he played in the war and the new nation. "I was struck," he told her, "with the importance of the post which we hold [,] then the most dangerous of all others. I felt under strong responsibilities knowing that the very destination of our country depended upon the care we

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[42]Sarah Lois Wadley Diary, February 27, 1861, SHC.

took in holding that line." Here was a clear connection between the action of the individual and the fate of the nation. For H. C. Kendrick, his daily duties as a soldier reflected a grave national responsibility.[43]

Perhaps Kendrick had read some of the articles regarding soldierly duty that permeated the southern press in 1861. Under the headline "The Duty Which the Soldier Owes to his Country," for instance, the Richmond *Enquirer* argued that the existence of war meant that every individual ought to subordinate his own needs to the interests of the country. At such a time, it was especially crucial that all soldiers perform their duty vigilantly and maintain absolute obedience to their superiors. A letter printed in another Virginia paper instilled a similar lesson. The letter was written to a young soldier by his father, who cautioned the new recruit that "when a soldier shoulders his rifle under the flag of his country, he must surrender to that country his will, his whims, tastes, fancies & prejudices." Above all, the father admonished, soldiers *must obey orders*. To prove his point, he told a story of a soldier under Napoleon's command who had stayed awake after lights out to complete a letter to his wife. Upon discovering this infraction, Napoleon entered the soldier's tent and instructed him to add a postscript to the letter—informing his wife that her husband would be executed the following morning for disobeying orders. The message was clear. Soldiers had a solemn duty to subordinate themselves to their superiors and, by extension, to their country.[44]

So, men in uniform perceived direct, consequential connections between themselves and the nation. As the testimony of H. C. Kendrick illustrates so well, ordinary soldiers in the

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[43]H. C. Kendrick to brother, July 18, 1861, to father, August 8, 1861, and to sister, November 15, 1861, H. C. Kendrick Papers, SHC. In some ways, Kendrick was similar to the Union soldier Charles Harvey Brewster, of whom David Blight has written: "war became an ordinary man's opportunity to escape from the ordinary." Blight, "No Desperate Hero: Manhood and Freedom in a Union Soldier's Experience," in *Divided Houses*, eds. Clinton and Silber, 58.

[44]*Richmond Enquirer*, June 4, 1861; Richmond *Examiner*, July 18, 1861.

ranks were keenly aware that Confederate nationalism was not the project of intellectuals and leaders alone, but of thousands of lesser known individuals as well. Moreover, if the making of Confederate national identity and national responsibility took place in the ranks of the army as well as the halls of formal power, it also involved ordinary southerners who never donned a uniform at all.

Consider the newspaper article "Our Cause," which was reprinted across the South. "It is quite natural," observed the Montgomery *Advertiser* in introducing its printing of the piece, "that brilliant deeds should attract attention, and plainer but not less substantial proofs of patriotism pass unheeded." But emphasizing the "brilliant" at the expense of "plainer" acts should be avoided: "'An army with banners' excites enthusiasm, but the poor widow who gives her son shows patriotism as lofty as the soldier 'in the imminent deadly breech.'" Southerners should, in other words, recognize that nationalism—its making and its sustenance—was an everyday affair, by no means confined to the more visible efforts of the few. The *Advertiser* made this point by way of introduction to the reprinting of a private letter sent from Charleston, a letter which provided several examples of everyday nationalist commitment in celebrating the efforts of Charlestonians. The letter praised "the quiet patience" of those who performed the "most onerous of the soldiers' duties," along with "the steady perseverance of our women, young and old, in making up knapsacks, haversacks, and cartridges," and the "generous indulgence of employers who do the clerk's work in his absence, and continue his salary all the while." Nationalism, in other words, was an everyday phenomenon. The implication was that all of those nameless people, performing the most

quotidian of tasks, were crucial to the well-being of the new nation. Ordinary individuals could feel a direct and consequential Confederate national responsibility.[45]

This had, of course, been a central tenet of antebellum American national responsibility as well. White southerners knew that their everyday acts as individuals carried national meaning because it had always been that way—whether the nation in question was the United States or the new Confederacy. In many respects, the concepts of nationalism and national responsibility remained constant even as the institutional object of national allegiance was transferred. White southerners continued to conceptualize their individual responsibility to the nation's well-being in strongly moral and often religious terms.

This continuity was evident, for example, in an article entitled "National Morality" that appeared in both the religious and the secular press in the summer of 1861. Beginning with the assertion that "Nations have their moral character," it went on to contend that the fate of any given nation depended to a large degree upon that character. Asking "What shall the moral character of our nation be"? the piece insisted that everyone's response mattered: "Every citizen must bear his part in answering that question." Again, we see the conviction that individuals had a sacred responsibility to safeguard the character—and therefore the destiny—of the nation as a whole. This article specifically pointed to Sabbatarianism as a way for the Confederacy to demonstrate its worthiness. Pointing out that the United States had "been a great a Sabbath breaker," delivering the mail on Sundays, the author fervently hoped that the Confederacy might initiate a new religious as well as a new political departure. "If we really acknowledge God, as a nation," it concluded, "let us keep our cause clear with

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[45]Montgomery *Advertiser*, March 25, 1861.

him by honoring his law." It was plain that the responsibility for this rested with each individual.[46]

White southerners imagined and enacted their individual responsibilities to the nation in other ways, too. The Confederacy's fate rested on their wallets, for one thing, as well as their proper behavior. The new nation could not operate without finances, and one of the Confederate government's initial revenue-raising ventures was to float a national loan. On February 28th, the Confederate Congress authorized the Treasury Department to borrow money from members of the public by issuing ten-year bonds up to a total value of fifteen million dollars. Buying into the loan offered a way of making a voluntary contribution to the upkeep of the nation—a contribution, importantly, which would accrue benefits to oneself as well as one's country. As the *Montgomery Advertiser* put it, "The loan is a matter in which patriotism and pocket are most happily blended," and official notices from Treasury Secretary Christopher G. Memminger made much the same point. "He who lendeth to the Government," asserted another newspaper report, "giveth to the country." Significantly, the loan was made available in small denominations, so that less wealthy southerners could (in theory, at least) also participate. The opportunity to financially enact ones responsibility to the Confederate nation was meant to be accessible to all. "Each man," as one pro-loan group put it, "must feel as though the success of the whole Republic was suspended upon his

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[46]*Mobile Register and Advertiser*, July 7, 1861. As Anthony Smith has shown, many nations which have conceived of themselves as "chosen peoples" have characterized that status as a two-way, almost contractual agreement between themselves and God: in return for God's continued favor, they have the obligation to comport themselves in morally upright ways. Smith, *Chosen Peoples* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), esp. 51.

individual action." Here, then, was a pecuniary analog to the religious paradigm of individual behavior determining the fate of the nation.[47]

As we are beginning to see, white southerners forged personal connections between individual and nation in a variety of ways: from pained ambivalence about northern blood coursing through ones veins, to the perception that the fate of the nation depended upon ones morally upright behavior, to the more straightforward financial contributions that linked ones wallet to the health of the national government. In those first months of the Confederacy's existence, white southerners explored other such connections as well. Drawing on prior understandings of nationalism, as well as on the feeling of personal embattlement that had paved the road to secession, white southerners made sense of their relationship to the new nation by drawing on existing personal identities and experiences.

Gender was crucial. Even an apparently straightforward convention, such as referring to the nation as "she," signaled the importance of ideas about gender to the conceptualization of nationalism. As has been the case with many nationalisms, southern men often imagined their nation as a female, who deserved the same protection from southern men as did individual southern women. Writing to his fiancée in the days after Sumter, Waddy Butler warned that his plans to fight would likely disrupt their relationship for a while. But until the conflict was over, Butler pledged complete devotion to his country: "She shall be my sole mistress, and at her feet I am content to cast everything." Having imagined the new nation in

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[47]Montgomery *Advertiser*, March 20, 1861; Richmond *Examiner*, May 30, 1861; Cotton Planters' Convention quoted in *De Bow's Review*, 31:1 (July 1861): 103. The patriotic rhetoric surrounding the bonds was not dissimilar to that of World War II: see Lawrence R. Samuel, *Pledging Allegiance: American Identity and the Bond Drive of World War II* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997). On national bonds in the Civil War North, see Melinda Lawson, *Patriot Fires: Forging a New American Nationalism in the Civil War North* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2002), chapter 2.

this way, southern men felt keenly—and personally—the duty to protect her from northern enemies.[48]

Writer William Gilmore Simms's longstanding commitment to southern independence also merged ideas about nationalism with ideas about gender. In 1861, his poem "Oh, the sweet South!" was republished—the poem, as we have seen, which sung of the South, "I drink the kisses of her rosy mouth," and "She brings me blessings of maternal love." For Simms, the South could assume a feminine identity in more than one way. And whichever feminine role the South took on, the duty of southern men was clear: to protect the female nation from the northern threat, just as they were determined to protect real-life wives, sweethearts, and mothers. Both images defined male responsibilities to the new nation by merging the masculine imperatives of individual men's everyday lives with the cause of national defense.[49]

Later in 1861, when his son Gilmore was preparing to depart for the war, Simms himself made the connection clear. "You are to remember," he advised, "that you are to defend your mother country, & you natural mother, from a hoard of mercenaries & plunderers, and you will make your teeth meet in the flesh." "Be a man, my son, faithful & firm," he went on, "and put yourself in God's keeping." Simms thus cast the individual male's national

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[48]Waddy Butler to Lucy Wood, April 25, 1861, Lucy W. Butler Papers, SHC.

[49]W. Gilmore Simms, "Oh, the Sweet South," *Southern Literary Messenger* (Jan 1861): 5; Beth Baron, "The Construction of National Honour in Egypt," *Gender and History* 5:2 (1993): 244-255; introduction to *Nationalism and Sexualities*, eds. Andrew Parker, Mary Russo, Doris Sommer, and Patricia Yaeger (New York: Routledge, 1992). Southern men also represented individual southern states as women in need of protection. In a speech in Richmond, for example, L. Q. C. Lamar praised Virginia, often described as the "mother" of the other southern states, for "raising a majestic arm to press back the foe that dare attempt to force her daughters into an unnatural and unwilling Union" (*Richmond Enquirer*, June 4, 1861). See also Rev. John Collins M'Cabe, "Maryland, Our Mother," *Southern Literary Messenger* (Dec 1861): 411. For perceptions of the Civil War as test of manhood, see Berry, *All That Makes a Man*; Leann Whites, *The Civil War as a Crisis in Gender: Augusta, Georgia, 1860-1890* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1995); Gerald F. Linderman, *Embattled Courage: The Experience of Combat in the American Civil War* (New York: Free Press, 1987); Rubin, *Shattered Nation*, 24.

responsibility in heavily gendered terms: in order to perform manhood, his son's duty was to protect both his literal mother and—at one and the same time—his figurative mother, the Confederate nation.[50]

If southern men felt a national responsibility to protect their mothers, both literal and symbolic, so too did they feel a strong sense of duty to their fathers—again, in both literal and symbolic ways. The notion that the Confederacy represented the fulfillment of the revolutionary generation's intent was, as we have already seen, a well developed intellectual argument. But it could also be a highly personal, visceral feeling. Littered throughout both published and private writings in the South in 1861 were pledges of fidelity to "fathers" or "sires." These terms signaled the conviction that white southern men were, in seceding and creating the Confederacy, following in the footsteps of their revolutionary ancestors. This was not merely a political act, but also a very personal one. Southern men had long felt a strong responsibility to live up to the achievements of their male ancestors. The generation of Washington had set a high benchmark for southern manhood, and trying to live up to it could be a difficult, often personal burden.

With this in mind, consider the sense of relief expressed in the summer of 1861 by the Richmond *Enquirer*, pleased that southern men had at last *acted*—had put the ideas of the burden of revolutionary manhood into practice. "Thank Heaven," proclaimed the *Examiner*, "that thus far at least, the sons have proven worthy of their sires! Thank Heaven that in the Southern men of this generation have been found the manliness and the love of liberty that shone in their revolutionary fathers…. Thank Heaven for the example of our fathers, and a thousand times thank Heaven that the sons seem not to fall below it!" Secession and the

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[50]William Gilmore Simms to William Gilmore Simms, Jr., November 7, 1861, *The Letters of William Gilmore Simms, Volume IV: 1858-1866*, eds. Mary C. Simms Oliphant and T. C. Duncan Eaves (Columbia: USC Press, 1955), 379.

creation of the Confederacy presented this generation of southern men with a terrific opportunity to redeem themselves; to reach the benchmark set for them by their ancestors. Even here, though, lingering doubts remained. The sons had only met the standard "thus far at least"; they only "seem[ed]" to have lived up to the fathers' example. Still, southern men could at least be satisfied that they had done something to vindicate their identities as southern men. The burden of southern manhood bequeathed by their forefathers drove southern men to action, and to practice masculine identity in such acts as volunteering could be to practice commitment to the southern nation as well.[51]

The burden of manhood had featured in antebellum American nationalism, and in 1861 was frequently transposed onto the new, Confederate nationalism. But it was often cast in terms of state identities as well. This was especially true of Virginia. There, presumably because of that state's close association with revolutionary heroes, the burden of the revolutionary generation's example seems to have been more often identified with the state than with the South as a whole. Throughout the spring and summer of 1861, the radical Richmond *Enquirer* kept up a barrage. Asking in late March whether Virginia would submit to northern tyranny, one editorial answered "No! Her 'pride of lineage' forbids it." And in a May editorial entitled "The Manhood of Virginia," the *Enquirer* urged Virginia men to prove that they had not "lost the 'breed of noble bloods'"; that they should resist the North by ratifying the secession ordinance, and thereby answer in the negative the question of

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[51]Richmond *Enquirer*, July 4, 1861. See Peter Carmichael's *The Last Generation: Young Virginians in Peace, War, and Reunion* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2006) for the widespread sense among young men of Virginia's slaveholding class that joining the Confederacy and fighting the Civil War offered a chance to reverse their state's apparent decline, to cleanse their political culture of its apparent torpor, and assert their manhood.

"whether the manhood of Virginia has degenerated since she led the sisterhood of States in the first war of American Independence."[52]

But even as the *Enquirer* wrote about a specifically Virginian manhood, it often contained, as we have already seen, references to a similar manhood that was identified as a *southern* version. The two were essentially identical. As this suggests, the rhetoric of southern manhood did not necessarily take shape in opposition to existing identities and experiences such as state pride, American nationalism, or masculinity itself—but rather was often based upon them.

The burden of southern manhood also drew potency from even more local, and even more visceral attachments. Sometimes—and again this was especially true of Virginia—the need to defend the legacy of the fathers was expressed in terms of protecting their graves. In late May, for example, the *Richmond Enquirer* urged Virginians to resist "the invader." "The sacred soil of Virginia," it went on, "in which repose the ashes of so many of the illustrious patriots who gave independence to their country, has been desecrated by the hostile tread of an armed enemy." Attachment to "sacred soil," containing the "ashes" of ones ancestors was, of course, a classic foundation of nineteenth-century nationalism, one with which Civil War-era southerners had been familiar as Americans, and now as Confederates as well. And while this particular iteration defined that attachment to soil and ancestors' graves as a state-level attachment, the same concepts were used to characterize allegiance to the Confederacy as a whole. In this way, national responsibility built on a potent combination of state pride, masculinity, and personal reverence for one's ancestors.[53]

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[52]*Richmond Enquirer*, March 12, 1861, May 21, 1861.

[53]This was similar to what the nationalism scholar Anthony D. Smith has termed an "ethnoscape." One of his doctoral students has usefully summarized Smith's ideas: "the homeland is also consecrated as it

In the very same issue of the *Enquirer* was a poem entitled "The Southern War Song." In urging southern men to fight, the poem invoked two closely related phenomena: attachments to the soil they lived on and attachments to their familial bonds. Southern men ought to fight "For the land our mothers liv'd on"; they ought to fight so that "The invader's foot must never / Be pressed upon our soil …. In which our fathers sleep, / Their blessed graves our care, boys, / Most sacredly must keep." In its final stanza, the poem referred to the "Sweet tears of love and pride, As our wives and sweethearts bid us / Go meet whate'er betide." This was typical of many popular poems and songs which played on southern men's personal identities and familial relationships in urging them to fight. Consider the broadside poem "North Carolina. A Call to Arms." Addressing "Ye sons of Carolina," the poem urged them on by reminding them of their personal obligation to protect their homes and families: "Oh! think of the maidens, the wives, and the mothers, / Fly ye to the rescue, sons, husbands and brothers, / And sink in oblivion all party and section, / Your hearthstones are looking to you for protection!" As North Carolinians, as "sons, husbands and brothers," and as fathers themselves (the poem also referred to their children's unspoken encouragement), these men must fight in order to prove their manhood by defending home and family. And despite the state-specific nature of this exhortation, it seemed clear that all these layers of identity merged into a national one, as they rallied "Round the flag of the South."[54]

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encompasses the terrain on which heroic ethnic forebears led the community in the collective realization of its providential destiny and contains the soil in which they now rest." Bruce Cauthen, "Covenant and continuity: ethno-symbolism and the myth of divine election," *Nations and Nationalism* 10:1 (Jan 2004): 24-25. See also Anthony D. Smith, *Chosen Peoples* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 131-136.

[54]*Richmond Enquirer*, May 28, 1861; "North Carolina. A Call to Arms," broadside poem, Documenting the American South. University Library, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, http://docsouth.unc.edu/call/call.html (accessed August 14 2006). See also McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 21-22.

Southern women as well as men used ideas about gender as a sort of bridge between the individual and the nation. Men sometimes imagined membership in the national community to be an exclusively male affair, but women and femininity played important roles—both symbolic and active—in the Confederate nation.[55] White southern women made sense of their own relationships to nationalism and national responsibility with reference to ideas about gender roles and responsibilities. With gender and nationalism shaping each other, questions of what it meant to be a woman, what it meant to be a southerner—what it meant to be a southern woman—were answered together, not separately.

For many, the implications of 1861's tumultuous political events for women's roles were uncertain. Early that year, a couple of weeks before the delegates assembled at Montgomery to create their new nation, Virginia woman Lucy Wood wrote a letter to her fiancé, Waddy Butler, in Florida. "Though we are foreigners to each other now," she wrote, she was nonetheless certain "that yours will soon be the common cause with us." Personally, she found it difficult to commit herself fully to the Confederate cause: she thought the new nation would reopen the African slave trade, a policy which she could not countenance. "But," she went on—clearly worried that she had crossed a gender divide in expressing this political opinion—"I have no political opinion, and have a peculiar dislike to all females who discuss such matters." Though the convention had always been flouted, American women—perhaps especially white women in the slaveholding South—were in theory excluded from the

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[55]It is emblematic that in the very first sentence of the very first speech he made upon his arrival in Montgomery as provisional Confederate president, Jefferson Davis delivered a ringing declaration of national community that was clearly gender specific: "*Fellow Citizens and Brethren of the Confederate States of America*," he began, "now we are brethren, not in name merely, but in fact—men of one flesh, one bone, one interest, one purpose…." (Jefferson Davis, speech at Montgomery, Alabama, February 16, 1861, in *Jefferson Davis: The Essential Writings*, ed. William J. Cooper, Jr. [New York: The Modern Library, 2003), 197]. Feminist scholars have rightly criticized Benedict Anderson's enormously influential *Imagined Communities* for following the assumption of male nationalists in a variety of times and places that the "deep, horizontal comradeship" of nationalism has been an all-male affair (Parker, et. al., eds., *Nationalisms and Sexualities*, 5*)*.

political arena. But in the upheaval of the secession winter, Lucy Wood was obviously uncertain of what role she *should* strive to fulfill, and ended up adopting a sort of wait-and-see attitude: when the time came, she pledged that she would be "willing to do everything in my power consistent with my character of a southern lady for the sake of my Country; to deprive myself of every comfort of life and to give life itself; and when that time comes I shall learn what part I ought to play, and I shall perform it, let the dangers be what they may." At the moment of the Confederacy's creation, then, the precise nature of the relationship between the Confederate nation and individual women like Lucy Wood was undecided.[56]

We have already heard how Wood's fiancé, Waddy Butler, conceived of his own relationship to the new nation: he was the young soldier who wrote of the South, "she shall be my sole mistress, and at her feet I am content to cast everything." For his fiancée, though, the relationship was more complex, and did not slot so neatly into existing paradigms. Over the next few months, she, like countless other women, defined and enacted her personal responsibility to the new nation in a variety of ways.

Some of these ways were fairly predictable. Like so many white southern women, Wood demonstrated support for departing southern soldiers by waving them off as they left home for army camps and the front. As the purportedly weak maidens whom true southern men were obliged to protect, women provided a powerful sense of purpose for male nationalism. Alabamian James G. Hudson was doubtless not the only soldier who found in female well-

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[56]Lucy Wood to Waddy Butler, January 21, 1861, Lucy W. Butler Papers, SHC. On white southern women during the secession crisis and the early Confederacy, see Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (New York: Random House, 1996); Faust, "Altars of Sacrifice: Confederate Women and the Narrative of War," in *Divided Houses*, 171-199; Edwards, *Scarlett Doesn't Live Here Anymore: Southern Women in the Civil War Era* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000); George C. Rable, *Civil Wars: Women and the Crisis of Southern Nationalism* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1989).

wishers a valuable stimulant. Traveling through Georgia between Alabama and the Virginia front, Hudson cherished the capacity of such well-wishers "to inspire the Soldier with patriotism and nerve his arm for the contest."[57]

But it was obvious from the beginning that simply waving would not be enough. For one thing, in such a large-scale mobilization, outfitting troops with the supplies they needed was a formidable task. Women across the South formed sewing organizations to produce socks, shirts, and so on for their men. These groups provided both material and moral support for men in the armies. When the "Ladies Volunteer Aid Society of the Pine Hills" was formed in Louisiana in the summer of 1861, the woman they chose as their president made clear that their animating purpose was to help "our brave volunteers," who had ventured forth to defend "our country and our homes." Women, she said, could help in very important ways. They could produce and supply the soldiers with the necessaries of life: by sewing and knitting items of clothing, and making foodstuffs such as pickles. "Above all," she went on, "we can pray," and resolved that each meeting should open and close with prayer. The president of this Ladies Aid Society hit on two of the most important ways that women defined their national responsibility in those first few months: sewing and praying.[58]

In this respect, Lucy Wood was typical. In several diary entries in May 1861, she noted the amount of time she and others were spending sewing for the troops. Towards the end of the month, she wrote that amidst all this work the only real exercise she took was "sometimes to walk up to a prayer meeting in the afternoon where we meet together to offer up prayers in behalf of our country, and those who have left this place for our defense." This routine, she acknowledged, could be onerous. But she was determined to continue working. "But what if

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[57]James G. Hudson, "Diary of the Canebrake Rifle Guards," May 1, 1861, ADAH.

[58]Ladies Volunteer Aid Society of the Pine Hills, Minutes, July 11, 1861, DU.

we do grow weary, must we therefore stop?" she asked. "No, our needles are now our weapons, and we have a part to play as well as the rest." In sewing for the troops, in other words, women such as Lucy Wood believed that they were contributing just as much to the cause as their men. Wood had been uncertain earlier that year, we will recall, about precisely what role the shift in national allegiances would require from southern women. Now, she was becoming surer: "Yes, yes, we women have mighty work to perform for which we will be responsible."[59]

Waving, sewing, and praying—these were the staple activities with which white southern women demonstrated their support for their men, their country, and their cause. But this was not all. Like many other southern women, especially the young, Lucy Wood defined national responsibility in other ways, too—some of which fit less comfortably with conventional gender roles. A couple of days after the Confederate victory at Fort Sumter, when Virginia's secession appeared imminent but was not yet official, Wood reported to her fiancé Waddy Butler, "Yesterday I levelled Louis's Union flag to the ground with my own hands, though it was right hard work." Here was an act with unequivocal nationalist implications: the physical demolition of the symbol of the former Union. And here was an act with equally visible gender implications. Did the leveling of a flag fall within the accepted range of female gender roles before the secession crisis? Did it now? In the collisions of nationalism and femininity, Lucy Wood tested the meanings and boundaries of both. Earlier that year, of course, she had resolved to be "willing to do everything in my power consistent with my character of a southern lady for the sake of my Country." In the months following—in acts

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[59]Diary of Lucy Wood, April 16, 1861, April 17, 1861, May 2, 1861, May 7, 1861, May 24, 1861, June 15, 1861, SHC. As Linda Colley has shown, British women participated in nationalism in similar ways during the Napoleonic Wars. Because their contributions had public and civic ramifications, she concludes that these activities represented "the thin end of a far more radical wedge." (Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation: 1707-1837* [New Haven, Ct.: Yale University Press, 1992], 261.)

ranging from waving, sewing, and praying, to the tearing down of a flag, to the shooting

practice she reported doing in June, and, by August, volunteering at a local hospital—Wood

actively remade those key words, "southern" and "lady," and what the two meant in

combination.[60]

There were many Lucy Woods in the South that summer, all of them navigating the

meanings of nationalism and femininity in their own ways. Much was shared, and much was

singular. Before moving on, let us consider one further example, that of Margaret Josephine

Gillis, a young Lowndes County, Alabama woman. Recorded in her diary of 1861 are many

of the same activities with which Lucy Wood and so many others forged their own

relationships with the emergent Confederate nation. Gillis attended barbecues and other

festive send-offs for departing troops. In mid-June she reported that Jefferson Davis had

called a national fast day "for the benefit of our beloved 'Sunny South,'" an occasion that she

had observed "sacredly." She was involved with other local women in sewing shirts for the

troops. And in common with many other white southern women, especially the young,

Margaret Gillis felt a measure, at least, of that same martial bellicosity that drove their young

male counterparts into uniform. Driving through a local town with the intention of viewing

the Confederate flag waving there, Gillis experienced a sentiment of national commitment.

Though she had seen some flag designs which she would have preferred over the one

ultimately selected, Gillis nonetheless proclaimed, "but I love that one because it was chosen

by a Southern Congress, and as I looked at it floating in the breeze, and heard the roll of the

drums from the camp outside town I felt very like taking up arms myself." The categories of

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[60]Diary of Lucy Wood, April 16, 1861, June 8, 1861, September 26, 1861, SHC.

femininity and nationalism clearly collided in sentiments such as this one. In 1861, no one could be certain of the result.[61]

Gillis defined her national responsibility in other ways, too. A particularly interesting example came in late February. Gillis reported news of Jefferson Davis's inauguration, and expressed the hope that more southern states would have seceded by the time Abraham Lincoln was himself inaugurated in early March. The mention of the northern president elect reminded her of something she had done earlier in the month. "I sent Lincoln a right impudent Valentine," she wrote, "but I hope no one will ever find out." Gillis's "right impudent Valentine" is a revealing example of how southern women employed their gender and sexuality to maximum effect. In a similar way, other southern women used their gender-specific power to police national allegiance within the South, sending hoopskirts and underwear, for instance, to southern men who were slow to join the Confederate armies.[62]

Like southern men, then, southern women began to define Confederate national responsibility in 1861 by looking to the materials of their everyday lives and individual identities. In important ways, these definitions replicated those that had been dominant in the antebellum United States. Religion and republicanism combined to create strong individual obligations to the Confederate nation, just as they had created individual obligations to the United States. Other ideas about Confederate national responsibility, however, developed in response to the new circumstances of 1861. The necessity of forming new national institutions, together with the prospect and then the commencement of war, compelled white southerners to create novel connections between the individual and the nation. In so doing,

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[61]Margaret Josephine Gillis Diary, April 28, 1861, May 5, 1861, June 16, 1861, July 29, 1861, ADAH.

[62]Margaret Josephine Gillis Diary, February 24, 1861, ADAH; LeeAnn Whites, "The Civil War as a Crisis in Gender," in *Divided Houses*, eds. Clinton and Silber, 14; George Rable, "'Missing in Action': Women of the Confederacy," in *Divided Houses*, eds. Clinton and Silber, 135; Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 14-15.

both men and women leaned heavily on gender, grounding their conceptions of national responsibility within the perceived responsibilities of masculinity and femininity.

During the first few months of the Confederacy's existence, white southerners defined both an intellectual framework for Confederate national identity and a range of strands of national responsibility. As they did so, they drew on existing intellectual, cultural, and personal resources. Perhaps most fundamentally, they defined their new national identity with reference to existing concepts of nationalism, derived from European thought as well as their previous participation in the American nation. To be accepted as a nation, they recognized, the Confederacy would need institutions such as a government, military forces, diplomatic relations, and so on. But in the context of the mid-nineteenth-century western world, national status also depended upon the existence of a distinct national identity, generated by a unique "people" with its own cultural identity and possibly its own racial identity as well. White southerners sought to establish their distinctiveness in large part by emphasizing their differences from northerners. The worse the Yankees could be made to look, the better—and the more deserving of national status—the southerners themselves would appear.

Even as they went to such great lengths to differentiate themselves from their erstwhile compatriots to the north, however, southerners did not typically wish to divorce themselves completely from the country that the two groups had once shared. The idea of America, and the heritage of the American Revolution in particular, continued to exert a powerful draw even after white southerners declared their political independence from the Union. The separation generated ambivalence among many, however, and the problem of how to reconcile the new with the old would endure throughout the Confederacy's existence. Even

so, it was to the framework of American national identity and national responsibility, in concept as well as in substance, that southerners were most likely to look as they made sense of the new situation. The revolutionary fathers remained a burdensome memory, a benchmark against which to measure themselves. Religion and republicanism still combined to bind every individual to the nation's wellbeing, and to remind those individuals that their moral comportment would determine the fate of the nation.

Enduring strands of American nationalism, then, helped white southerners to conceptualize Confederate national responsibility. They forged other links between individual and nation by drawing on their personal identities, especially gender identities. For men, nationalism both gave significance to and took significance from their traditional roles as protectors of women, children, and homes. And for women, traditional "female" tasks such as sewing, praying, and encouraging their men took on national meaning, even as nationalism held out the possibility of expansion of those traditional roles. For men and women, nationalism interacted with just about every other aspect of their lives. National responsibility took shape in a multidirectional exchange between the large and the small, the abstract and the everyday, the public and the personal.

To some degree, this had been true of antebellum American nationalism. To a greater degree, it was true in the secessionist and early Confederate South. But it was with the escalation of war, as we shall now see, that nationalism and everyday life—especially in the bonds of sacrifice and suffering—would come into more violent collision than ever before.

V. WAR: FORGING BONDS OF NATIONALISM IN BLOOD AND SACRIFICE

The patriotic euphoria of the spring and summer of 1861 was quickly replaced by the sober recognition that achieving national independence with mass violence was a rather different undertaking than merely asserting it with words. The rough draft of Confederate nationalism was in place by the fall of 1861. But during the next few years, conceptions of both collective national identity and the national responsibility of the individual would be expanded and refined in the all-encompassing experience of war. Only with war would nationalism be fully implicated in the fabric of white southerners' everyday lives. Only with war would individual and nation be connected in powerful and sacred bonds of blood and sacrifice.

William Henry Trescot, the South Carolina planter, diplomat, and historian, understood something of this. In a public letter of 1863 to a prewar friend from the North, Trescot averred that the prewar intellectual foundations of southern nationalism had been transformed by war. To be sure, the old ideas remained important. Thus Trescot appealed, as he and other southern nationalists had been doing for years, to the widely-accepted principle of nationality. The Civil War, as he saw it, was merely the most recent response to a problem that had caused many changes in "the political map of the world for the last two centuries": the problem of "how for the peace of the world and the welfare of mankind to make each government the actual representative of the living interests of the people it controls." "The answer," he went on, as was evident in the southern case and in many others, including Greece, Italy, and parts of Latin America, "has been by the restraint or destruction of

overgrown empires, and the creation or recognition of new governments or nationalities." Nationalism was a historical force, in other words, and to resist the proper alignment of a "people" with its "government" was to stand in the way of history itself. Furthermore, in claiming nationality for the South, Trescot drew the well-worn comparison with the American Revolution. That event, in his eyes, had proved "That a colony—a part of an existing nationality—might by the development of its resources, become large enough and complete enough for an independent national existence." This process had caused the revolutions of 1861 just as surely as that of 1776. The American Revolution, and the principle of nationality in general, continued to bolster the argument for southern independence.

However, by 1863, when Trescot penned his public letter, circumstances had fundamentally changed. The passage of time and the experience of war had served, in his estimation, to further divide South from North, and, therefore, to further substantiate the South's national independence:

> If an earthquake had cleft this continent in twain, we could not be further separated than we are by that great, red river of blood, which, swollen by the dismal streams from Manassas and Murfreesboro, Antietam and Fredericksburg, now rolls its fearful barrier between two hostile nations.

It is difficult to imagine a more powerful dividing line than this "great, red river of blood" produced by two years of war. But there was more. The fighting of the war had also, according to Trescot, united the white South. "No man," he wrote, "anticipated the spontaneous, energetic, passionate unanimity of this whole southern people in the cause of southern independence, which this war has developed." The experience of war had fused white southerners into a community that had not previously existed. In concluding his letter, Trescot further distinguished between prewar and wartime nationalism in a very revealing

way, asserting that "The cause to which [the South] devoted herself on conviction," before the war, "is now sacred by the blood of her martyrs, and glorious by the deeds of her heroes." The experience of war, in other words, had transformed the political and intellectual "conviction" of the few into a "sacred" and "glorious" crusade sustained by the tangible "deeds" and emotional commitment of the many.[1]

Trescot's appreciation of the transformative influence of war points us towards a fresh approach to Confederate nationalism. Rather than intervening in the old debate about how strong or weak Confederate nationalism was, we can instead evaluate how existing strands of nationalism persisted and changed in the crucible of war.[2] Rather than trying to quantify a substance with predefined elements, we can instead explore the ways—both new and old—in which white southerners drew on the concept of nationalism to understand their wartime experiences. And rather than assuming that, because the South lost the Civil War, its nationalism must have been somehow inadequate, we can instead examine how white southerners drew on their longstanding engagement with the concept of nationalism to define their responsibility to the Confederate nation in both victory and defeat.[3]

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[1]Public letter from William Henry Trescot to J. R. Ingersoll, printed in *The Record*, August 27, 1863, copy in the William Henry Trescot Papers, USC. Quotations at 99, 102, 104.

[2]Key works on the "weak" side include: Paul D. Escott, *After Secession: Jefferson Davis and the Failure of Confederate Nationalism* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1978); and Richard E. Beringer, *et.al.*, *Why the South Lost the Civil War* (Athens, Ga.: The University of Georgia Press, 1986). For the "strong" side, see especially Gary Gallagher, *The Confederate War: How Popular Will, Nationalism, and Military Strategy Could not Stave Off Defeat* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997); and William Blair, *Virginia's Private War: Feeding Body and Soul in the Confederacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

[3]I follow historians such as Drew Gilpin Faust, Gary Gallagher, and Robert Bonner in approaching Confederate nationalism from the perspective of the war years themselves rather than from the perspective of the South's defeat at the end of the Civil War: Drew Gilpin Faust, *The Creation of Confederate Nationalism: Ideology and Identity in the Civil War South* (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), 1-7; Gallagher, *The Confederate War*, 3-7; Robert Bonner, "Americans Apart: Nationality in the Slaveholding South" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Yale University, 1998).

My emphasis on war's transformative influence on Confederate nationalism builds on the interpretations of other works. As southern historians have shown, antebellum suspicions of centralized political power were overcome by the practical exigencies of war, which called forth the centralization of political power in a strong national government. Conscription, taxation, and other policies altered the terms of citizenship and the relationship between individuals and the national government.[4] While these political aspects have helped inspire my own interpretation, I have been more interested in uncovering the cultural, emotional, and psychological aspects of the transformation. Some students of Confederate nationalism have suggested, at least, the possibilities of such a path.[5] However, I draw on other studies of connections between war and nationalism, as well as on the arguments presented in the chapters above, to go further. A potent blend of ideas about suffering, morality, gender obligations, redemptive religion, and blood sacrifice—ideas that have often, in other times and places, been invigorated and intensified by the existence of war—redefined conceptions of Confederate national identity and national responsibility.[6] These conceptions were rooted

[4]Emory Thomas, *The Confederacy as a Revolutionary Experience* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1970); Bonner, "Americans Apart," chapter 6; Richard F. Bensel, *Yankee Leviathan: The Origins of Central State Authority in America, 1859-1877* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Eugene D. Genovese, "King Solomon's Dilemma—and the Confederacy's," *Southern Cultures* 10:4 (Winter 2004): 55-75; Drew Gilpin Faust, "'The Dread Voice of Uncertainty': Naming the Dead in the American Civil War," *Southern Cultures* 11:2 (Summer 2005): 7-32.

[5]On the emotional impact of war, see especially Robert E. Bonner, *Colors and Blood: Flag Passions of the Confederate South* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002). Anne Rubin has also suggested, though not developed, the importance of the experience of wartime suffering to Confederate nationalism: Anne Sarah Rubin, *A Shattered Nation: The Rise and Fall of the Confederacy, 1861-1868* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 50-52.

[6]Especially helpful have been Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation: 1707-1837* (New Haven, Ct.: Yale University Press, 1992); Barbara Ehrenreich, *Blood Rites: Origins and History of the Passions of War* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1997); *Perspectives on Nationalism and War*, eds. John L. Comaroff and Paul C. Stern (Gordon and Breach, 1995); George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Don Higginbotham, "War and State Formation in Revolutionary America," in *Empire and Nation: The American Revolution in the Atlantic World*, eds. Elija H. Gould and Peter S. Onuf (Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 54-71; Charles Royster, "Founding a Nation in Blood: Military Conflict and American Nationality," in *Arms and Independence: The*

in the conceptions of nationalism that I have traced from the antebellum era to the first months of the Confederacy's existence in 1861. But in the crucible of war they would come to matter to white southerners more urgently than had ever been possible before.

As white southerners continued to define their national identity during the Civil War, they continued to face the problem of how Confederate nationalism should relate to American nationalism. To what extent did the Confederacy represent a purification of the existing American nationalism, and to what extent was it a new departure? The problem had gone unresolved in 1861, and throughout the war it continued to trouble those who gave serious thought to the character of Confederate national identity—to the question of what made the Confederacy a genuine nation.

For some, it was the essential Americanness of the Confederacy that stood out. As they had been doing for years, some white southerners continued to claim the mantle of American nationalism by claiming its heroes and its history. "Rebels! Tis a holy name! / The name our fathers bore" went one poem, which Lucy Butler took the trouble to copy down in her journal. "Our Father, Washington, / Was the Arch Rebel in the fight / And gave the name to us:-- a right / Of father to the son."[7] Washington's prominence in antebellum American nationalism was repeated in wartime Confederate nationalism. It was no accident that his image appeared not just on Confederate currency and stamps, but also on the national seal. It was no accident, either, that Jefferson Davis was inaugurated as elected president of the Confederate States on February 22, 1862—the one hundred and thirtieth anniversary of Washington's birth.

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Military Character of the American Revolution, eds. Ronald Hoffman and Peter J. Albert (Charlottesville, Va.: University Press of Virginia, 1984), 25-49.

[7]Diary of Lucy Wood, January, 1862, Lucy W. Butler Papers, SHC.

Standing beneath a statue of Washington himself, Davis took the opportunity, unsurprisingly, to portray Confederates as the true heirs of the American Revolution, fighting for the same rights the earlier generation had won. Davis, as we have seen, was celebrated in early Confederate culture as a sort of second Washington, before Robert E. Lee rose to prominence and acquired that title for himself.[8]

If it was clear that the South owned the memory of Washington, it was equally clear that the errant North did not. "To-day is Washington's birth day," wrote one Alabama soldier, "& the Yank- guns fired in celebrat. of it could plainly be heard. What a farce that those fanatical wretches should be celebrating the birth day & pretending to have admiration for the grt. & good Wash'g." Likewise, Sarah Lois Wadley, the Louisiana teenager, continued to claim the memory of Washington for the Confederacy, just as she had done in 1861. On "The birthday of Washington" in 1864, she wrote in her diary, "an anniversary sacred to the memory of freedom. Alas, how it is now polluted" by the Yankee occupiers' election that was being held that day. At stake was the ownership of Washington—and the mantle of America itself.[9]

Claims on the American heritage were sometimes made even more explicit. Just over a year into the war, the Richmond *Examiner* took issue with Jefferson Davis's continued use of the name "United States" to describe their erstwhile compatriots to the north. "In using that term," complained the *Examiner*, "the President virtually acknowledges the North as the

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[8]Davis' inaugural address is reprinted in *Jefferson Davis: The Essential Writings*, ed. William J. Cooper, Jr. (New York: Modern Library, 2002) 224-229. On the importance of Washington and the memory of the American Revolution, see Anne Sarah Rubin, "Seventy-six and Sixty-one: Confederates Remember the American Revolution," in *Where These Memories Grow: History, Memory, and Southern Identity*, ed. W. Fitzhugh Brundage (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 85-105; Bonner, "Americans Apart," 295-308. For Lee as the Second Washington, see Richard B. McCaslin, *Lee in the Shadow of Washington* (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 2001).

[9]G. Ward Hubbs, *Voices from Company D: Diaries by the Greensboro Guards, Fifth Alabama Infantry Regiment, Army of Northern Virginia* (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 2003), 147; Sarah Lois Wadley Diary, February 22, 1864, SHC.

United States, and places us before Europe as rebels or revolutionists." In addition to the implications of this for European countries' possible recognition of the Confederacy, it was also a matter of justice. The North did not deserve to retain the name, since it had trampled upon the spirit of the Constitution which had created the United States to begin with. If anything, the South had "more right" to the name because it had done a better job of preserving the Constitution with which it was associated. The Confederacy, the *Examiner* was suggesting, was doing a better job of preserving American values and institutions than the North—and was therefore more entitled to keep the name of the old nation alive.[10] Similar claims were advanced in popular songs and poems. Referring to the national anthem, one poem complained "They are singing *our* song of triumph, / Which proclaimed *us* proud and free— / While breaking away the heartstrings / Of our nation's harmony." The author of the Star-Spangled Banner was, as a note pointed out, a Baltimorean, all of whose descendants were fighting on the side of the Confederacy. Even the flag, the poem protested, had been improperly purloined by the Yankees: "They are waving *our* flag above us."[11]

Most Confederates, of course, were simply too occupied with the war to spend much time debating ownership of the American heritage. The war altered the terms on which Confederates approached questions of national identity and allegiance. But one day each year—the Fourth of July—prompted many white southerners to reflect, for a moment at least, on the former United States and the anniversary of its birth. Celebrations were, as one would expect during wartime, muted. But in spite of the lack of public festivities, some commentators continued to assert continuity between the American and the Confederate

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[10]*Richmond Examiner*, August 21, 1862.

[11]E. K. Blunt, "The Southern Cross," in *War Poetry of the South*, ed. William Gilmore Simms (New York: Richardson & Company, 1866), 16-18.

Revolutions; they continued to assert the South's ownership of the Fourth; and they

continued to insist that the principles commemorated by the anniversary lay at the heart of

the Confederacy's bid for independence. The Fourth even kept its place in at least one

Confederate composition textbook. Among subjects such as "Roses," "A Picnic," and "A

Sleigh Ride" appeared the "Fourth of July." The textbook asked students to answer questions

about the origins and nature of the Fourth, what typically happened on the day, and finally

inquired: "Ought not its observance to be perpetuated?"[12]

Kentuckian Confederate officer Edward Guerrant would have replied to that question

with a resounding yes. On the Fourth of July, 1862, he wrote at some length in his diary

about what he called this "once glorious and happy day." Though the Fourth awakened

sorrow as well as pride, he resolved to restore its glory: "This day 86 years ago our fathers

declared we *would* be free & today we'll prove it or baptize it in our lifeblood." Guerrant's

pledge of blood in the cause of Confederate independence is a perfect example of how the

fact of war infused existing strands of southern nationalism with a new intensity. One year

later, in 1863, Guerrant again noted the occurrence of what he now termed "Freedom's Birth

Day." Again, he stressed the continuity between the American and southern independence

movements, identifying the Confederacy as the only "heir" of the Revolution. For the new

nation, today was "the anniversary of her mothers birth … its memories disgraced by a

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[12]Levi Branson, *First Book in Composition, Applying the Principles of Grammar to the Art of Composing: Also, Giving Full Directions for Punctuation: Especially Designed for the Use of Southern Schools* (Raleigh, N.C.: Branson, Farrar, 1863), 117-118. Perhaps we should not make too much of this: many Confederate textbooks were only very hastily revised versions of United States editions, and perhaps this Fourth of July section slipped beneath the radar. See George C. Rable, *The Confederate Republic: A Revolution Against Politics* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 179-183.

degenerate offspring"—that was, the North. Guerrant promised to "cling with grateful veneration to its hallowed recollections, and revive its spirit in our patriotic actions!"[13]

The Charleston *Courier* also continued during the war to claim ownership of the holiday for the South. In 1862, the *Courier* noted that the occurrence of the anniversary found southerners engaged in a struggle to determine correct interpretation of the Declaration and the Revolution more generally. Both were beyond a doubt "on the side of the South." The following year, the *Courier* asserted that the Confederacy's struggle for self-government was a "logical supplement" to the first revolution. To be sure, there would be no parades or formal ceremonies this year, but the *Courier* thought that was a good thing. It was too hot for that kind of celebration, and besides, the war provided plenty of other things to worry about. Going on to separate the activity from the principle, the *Courier* maintained that, despite the lack of organized celebration, "The day is ours in all its essential and permanent lessons and significance, and we intend to so claim and honor it." Another South Carolina newspaper, the *Sumter Watchman*, conceded in 1862 that the Fourth was strongly associated with the now-defunct Union, but nonetheless believed that southerners should continue to prize the day, since "we are now reasserting the principles of '76." "The Fourth of July," the *Watchman* went on, "is our Anniversary, and Yankeedom has no right to desecrate it by pretending to celebrate the memories of a glorious past, and of which they are unworthy."[14]

Others agreed that northerners had proved themselves unworthy of the holiday and no longer had any claim to it at all. One southerner writing from Knoxville in 1862 thought back to those days when northerners had celebrated the day alongside southerners, and had

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[13]*Bluegrass Confederate: The Headquarters Diary of Edward O. Guerrant*, eds. William C. Davis and Meredith L. Swentor (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1999), 115, 301-302.

[14]*Charleston Courier*, July 4, 1862, July 4, 1863.

claimed to subscribe to its principles. Surely, he thought, the North recognized the fundamental inconsistency between the ideals of Independence Day and its oppression of the South: "Alas! for the Fourth of July to the Northern people." Edmund Ruffin, for whom acerbic criticism of the North was an old habit, had the same thought when he witnessed northerners flying flags and firing salutes on July 4, 1862. "What striking inconsistency— what a farce," he wrote in his diary, that northerners should purport to celebrate the Declaration of Independence, which had established "the *right* of every oppressed people to assert their independence & separate nationality," while they were engaged in attempting to deny with force the South's right to do that very thing. Northerners had diverged so much from the principles of the Fourth—and, for that matter, from the principle of nationality— that they had no right to celebrate it at all.[15]

To many white southerners, then, the situation was crystal clear. The North had betrayed the memory of the American Revolution whereas the South had remained true, which made secession a return to an idealized revolutionary republic. The memory of the American Revolution bolstered the argument for southern independence in the same way it always had. In some ways, though, the war transformed both the terms and the stakes of remembrance. To Grace Elmore, for instance, the realities of war altered the noble rhetoric of emulating the heroes of 1776. Reflecting in November 1861 on the martial spirit in the air, with men riding around on horseback, waving guns about, she commented, "Today (and oh how often lately) the old days of the Revolution seemed to have returned, but how divested of all romance."

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[15]*Mobile Register*, July 9, 1862; Edmund Ruffin, *The Diary of Edmund Ruffin*, ed. William Kauffman Scarborough, 3 vols. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1972-1989), II: 366-367.

She was discovering that actually experiencing revolutionary warfare was much different from reading about it.[16]

For others the holiday became an odd, unsettling occurrence. As we have seen, the question of whether to celebrate the Fourth at all—and if so, how—had been a vexing issue in 1861. And reconciling claims to ownership of the American Revolution, on the one hand, with the fact of having seceded from the Union which the revolutionary generation created, on the other, continued to raise problems.[17] The *Charleston Mercury* captured this when it reported in 1862 that the Fourth "happens strangely at this momentous juncture." Strangely indeed. As the war progressed, when southerners noted the Fourth at all, it was often to remark on how much the day had changed, or to reflect with sadness on its occurrence in such calamitous circumstances. One Virginia woman assumed in an 1862 diary entry that "The fourth was not celebrated I don't expect by either side." That same year, soldier James Kilpatrick similarly observed, "Everything quiet …. No one seems to think that today was once an observed anniversary." Nurse Kate Cumming marked Independence Day in both 1862 and 1863 with disconsolate diary entries. In 1862, she thought it notable that whereas in former years the whole nation had celebrated the day together, now "Part of that nation [was] seeking to enslave the other!" One year later Cumming remarked that this once wonderful occasion was now very different: "one of universal sorrow and gloom." "If we could only visit the homes of many North and South, what a picture of desolation would be presented!"

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[16]Grace B. Elmore Diary, November 25, 1861, SHC.

[17]On the problem of continuity in the Confederacy's selection of a national flag, see Bonner, *Colors and Blood*.

Many Confederates, presumably distracted by the demands of war, did not remember the Fourth at all. [18]

For some of those who did, the anniversary became a bittersweet reminder of the principles for which they supposedly were fighting—and perhaps even then losing. Sarah Lois Wadley had forgotten all about the Fourth until she wrote the date, July 4, 1862, in her diary. And in any case, she noted, "we have no time now to celebrate the birthday of a liberty which we had nearly lost and are now struggling so hard to maintain."[19] Wadley was not the only southern woman uncertain about whether to celebrate the Fourth at all. Writing to her mother in 1864, one woman wondered how the anniversary would be marked this year. She reported that "Ernest & Charlie have got each a gun and are going to get some powder & shot, but it seem melancoly to me[.] I am afraid our independance is gone[.]"[20]

The *Richmond Examiner* epitomized the ambivalent feelings with which many white southerners encountered the Fourth during the Civil War. Having encouraged its readers in 1861 to continue to remember the Fourth, the following year the newspaper only briefly noted the lack of preparations for the anniversary. But by 1863 the *Examiner* was again faulting the North for abandoning the principles of the Declaration and Constitution, insisting that the Fourth should be celebrated with considerable fervor, since "The glorious day surely belongs to the South." By July 1864, the same newspaper had switched position once again, reporting with approval the fact that the Fourth was "'more honoured in the breach than in

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[18]Charleston *Mercury*, July 4, 1862; Anita Dwyer Withers Diary, July 4, 1862, SHC; James Johnson Kirkpatrick Diary, July 4, 1862, in *The 16th Mississippi Infantry: Civil War Letters and Reminiscences*, ed. Robert G. Evans (Jackson, Miss.: University Press of Mississippi, 2002), 90; *The Journal of Kate Cumming: A Confederate Nurse, 1862-1865*, ed. Richard Harwell (Savannah, Ga.: The Beehive Press, 1975), 45, 101.

[19]Sarah Lois Wadley Diary, July 4, 1863, SHC.

[20]Ann McCoy to Lois Richardson Davis, July 3, 1864, Lois Richardson Davis Papers, DU.

the observance.'" The *Examiner* was glad that flag-waving festivities appeared to be a thing

of the past in Richmond, and that "all such exhibitions of rank liberty run to seed is now of

purely Yankee cultivation."[21]

The *Examiner*'s ambivalence toward the Fourth of July symbolized a more general

ambivalence about the relationship between American nationalism, as it had developed in the

United States, and Confederate nationalism, as it was developing during the Civil War. The

problem had been present in 1861. Confederates had seceded from the Union, but wished to

claim aspects of its nationalism for themselves. They had separated from the central

government formed by the American revolutionary generation, but wished to claim the

heritage of that generation, and indeed of Americanism itself, for themselves. This was no

easy task, and the problem of continuity versus novelty persisted throughout the war. Too

little continuity, and white southerners' enduring attachment to the American past might

strain to breaking point. Too much, and their claim of a distinctive national identity became

vulnerable.

War itself went some way toward settling such problems. Escalating violence intensified the

existing tendency to assert a distinctive Confederate national identity by contrasting the

South against the North. In establishing what William Henry Trescot called a "great, red river

of blood," war differentiated South from North to a degree that would not have been possible

in peacetime. And just as war bolstered the claim of a unique national identity in collective

terms, so too did it shape the changing ways in which white southerners conceived of their

national responsibility at the individual level. As we shall see, war imbued connections

between the individual and the nation, particularly connections based on gender identities,

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[21]Richmond *Examiner*, July 5, 1861; July 4, 1862; July 4, 1863; July 5, 1864.

with a new emotional potency that brought nationalism further than ever before into the realm of the personal and the everyday.

In the context of war, assertions of fundamental national disparity between North and South, which had been present even in prewar discourse, multiplied. The Richmond *Examiner* and its contributors were particularly vocal in this regard. In the weeks after Manassas, one correspondent ardently opposed the very possibility of reconstruction with the North. Instead, he urged that southerners ought to institute national distinctiveness from the North in every way possible, from a different system of revenue to different weights, measures, and currency. "Would to God," he concluded, invoking what was seen as a principal marker of national identity by nineteenth-century thinkers as well as by modern scholars, "that our language was different from theirs." As the war progressed, the *Examiner* continued to assert national difference. In April 1862, the Richmond paper approvingly excerpted a passage from the New Orleans *Bee* which detailed racial distinctions between Yankees and southerners. Whereas northerners were intolerant, abusive of power, and inclined toward fads and "isms," southerners were a more honest, moral people who distrusted "new-fangled theories." To the *Examiner*, this confirmed that the war was not only about the protection of slavery against northern assaults, but also about "certain radical and irreconcilable differences of nationable character" between North and South. The theme persisted. In December 1862, for instance, the *Examiner* printed an editorial criticizing Lincoln's claim that the United States was one nation, indivisible—a natural fact, in the opinion of the U.S. president, proved by the lack of any distinct geographical barrier between North and South. Conceding that no such barrier existed, the *Examiner* shifted the terms of the debate with the argument that "moral differences of race, and political differences of

institutions, constitute means of separation as effective and insurmountable as any physical barrier interposed by nature." Jews and Gypsies were adduced as proof that racial distinctiveness could equate to national distinctiveness even in the absence of a distinctly demarcated territory.[22]

Assertions of difference between northerners and southerners had never been impartial. They frequently placed North and South in a sort of moral ranking, with the North and its people, of course, at the negative end of the scale. War heightened the tendency to reinforce southern distinctiveness by using negative representations of the North. In the context of war, Yankees became even greedier, more intolerant, more self-righteous, more crass, more prone to wild "isms," more likely to lie and steal and cheat than ever before. Just as it had for years, the image of the Yankee served as a sort of dustbin into which white southerners disposed of all distasteful human characteristics, and, furthermore, as a negative reference point against which they defined their own character. The worse the Yankees could be made to look, the more admirable and virtuous —the more distinctive—southerners themselves became.

Once war was underway, negative depictions of Yankees became more widespread and more extreme. Such depictions permeated popular culture as well as public and private writings of all kinds. One poem described northerners as a race of tyrants and liars, "Like savage Hun and merciless Dane." Lucy Johnston Ambler recorded a similar impression of the northern cavalry who ransacked her northern Virginia home. Leaving no doubt as to the depths to which they had sunk in her opinion, she asked "Is there a man among them? They seem like demons from the lower regions." The immediate impact of war, in Ambler's case, rendered northern soldiers not just as different, not just as strangers, but as almost subhuman. A little more lightheartedly, one North Carolinian informed his mother that he had recently

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[22]Richmond *Examiner*, September 5, 1861, April 24, 1862, December 16, 1862.

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seen a group of Yankee prisoners, "of all colors, ages, sizes, and sexes, and from all nations."

The soldier viewed this motley crew as a strange bunch, wondering if his younger brother "wants a young Yankee," presumably as some sort of exotic pet. War thus intensified the time-honored technique of substantiating southern national identity with the image of the alien Yankee.[23]

Such images were particularly potent symbols of Confederate national identity's distinctiveness when they highlighted the barbarity of the invading Yankee soldier. Earlier criticism of northerners had been strong enough, but it pales in comparison to wartime portrayals of Yankee soldiers' inhumanity. From the earliest days of the war, Yankee soldiers' callous barbarity became a Confederate article of faith and a crucial element of the burgeoning nationalism. Newspapers were filled with stories of Yankee soldiers contravening the conventions of "civilized" warfare. They had little respect for private property and stole, pillaged, and burned with abandon. They respected neither the injured—firing on hospitals—nor the dead—mutilating Confederate soldiers even after they had been killed. "From every side," wrote one Confederate bureaucrat in his diary, "evidence of the barbarity, savageness, and insolent assumption of the Yankee government in the policy on which they have resolved in the conduct of war, thicken." Northern warfare, with its deportation of families, threats against civilians, and attempts to promote slave insurrection,

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[23]G. W. Archer, "Awake!—Arise!," in *War Poetry of the South*, ed. Simms, 362-364; Lucy Johnston Ambler Diary, July 27, 1863, Ambler-Brown Family Papers, DU; George W. Davis to Rebecca Pitchford Davis, July 7, 1863, Rebecca Pitchford Davis Papers, SHC. Confederates were not the only ones to define their nation by contrasting it against a foreign enemy. As Linda Colley has demonstrated in *Britons*, British nationalism was forged with reference to enemy France during the frequent wars the two countries fought in the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. For the importance of the Yankee to wartime Confederate nationalism, see Rubin, *Shattered Nation*, 86-100; and Melvin Bruce Cauthen, Jr., "Confederate and Afrikaaner Nationalism: Myth, Identity, and Gender in Comparative Perspective" (PhD diss., University of London, 1999), 123-129.

was despicable. "The Earth," he concluded, "contains no race so lost to every sentiment of manliness, honor, faith, or humanity."[24]

Some northern atrocity stories seem unbelievable. In July 1862, one southern newspaper printed an intercepted letter that had purportedly been written by a Philadelphia woman. The woman wanted her correspondent to ask a northern soldier "to cut off the head of a rebel and boil it five hours, so that all the flesh may come off readily, and then saw the skull in two from the front, and he will find the unevenness of the thickness to be mostly inside."[25]

What are we to make of this outlandish report? Whether genuine or not, the fact that this letter was printed in a perfectly respectable southern newspaper indicates the degree to which Confederate culture sought to dehumanize the northern enemy. (If the letter were genuine, moreover, it demonstrates the degree to which the same dehumanizing of the enemy was going on in the North as well.) The insights of psychologist Joshua Searle-White help clarify this process of identity formation through dehumanization of the enemy. Many nationalisms, according to Searle-White, have gained in vigor thanks to the psychological processes of "ingroup favoritism" and "outgroup devaluation." Members of national and other communities tend to magnify differences between themselves and other groups, believing even the most outrageous characterizations if they fit with stereotypes and preconceptions of the "other." When intensified by the passions of war, such tendencies can become even more extreme—making our head-boiling story more understandable, if no less palatable.[26]

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[24]Robert Kean, diary entry, June 7, 1863, *Inside the Confederate Government: The Diary of Robert Garlick Hill Kean*, ed. Edward Younger (New York: Oxford University Press, 1957), 69-71. Atrocity stories filled southern newspapers, diaries, and letters. For a few examples, see Sarah Lois Wadley diary, July 22, 1861, SHC; William Bobo, *The Confederate* (Mobile, Ala.: S. H. Goetzel, 1863); *Richmond Enquirer*, July 4, 1862.

[25]Richmond *Examiner*, July 1, 1862.

[26]Joshua Searle-White, *The Psychology of Nationalism* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), esp. chapter 1.

Though they did not use the language of modern psychology, white southerners certainly recognized the connection between atrocity stories and their ongoing quest to differentiate themselves from northerners. In June 1861, before war had properly commenced, Lucy Wood noted in her diary, "we hear every day of the most atrocious acts that our northern friends (who are so earnestly striving for a reunion with their sister States) are committing." As Wood's ironic references to "our northern friends" and their desire for reunion intimated, news of northern barbarity bolstered the claim of a separate national identity for the Confederacy, insofar as it further hardened the line between South and North. Jefferson Davis certainly appreciated this function. In his inaugural address as elected President of the Confederate States in February 1862, Davis declared that all hope of reunion "must have been dispelled by the malignity and barbarity of the Northern States in the prosecution of the existing war." Davis would repeat this very point throughout the war, never missing an opportunity to protest and to publicize northern methods of waging war. Every time he did so, he broadened the gulf between South and North that little bit more. Like Trescot's "river of blood," the line separating barbarity and civilization promised to strengthen and intensify the Confederacy's claims for distinctiveness and independence.[27]

Confederate representations of Yankee barbarity offered valuable evidence for southern spokesmen and spokeswomen making the case for independence on the international stage. One group of South Carolina women, for instance, solicited help for an 1864 fundraising

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[27]Lucy Wood Diary, June 7, 1861, in Lucy W. Butler Papers, SHC; *Jefferson Davis: The Essential Writings*, ed. Cooper, 225. As Linda Colley has shown, a similar process took place during the American Revolution. Colonists disseminated stories of British atrocities in print, increasing perceptions of the dissimilarity of the two sides by portraying the British as subhuman invaders. In both cases, this was an effective technique for quickly separating from former compatriots who otherwise might not have seemed so different at all. And the fact that Britain and the North used non-white troops meant that in both cases would-be separatists also used race to underline the "otherness" of the would-be unifiers. Linda Colley, *Captives: The Story of Britain's Pursuit of Empire and How Its Soldiers and Civilians Were Held Captive by the Dream of Global Supremacy, 1600-1850* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2002), 222-232.

bazaar from around the world. In requesting sympathy and aid for their cause, the women employed the rhetoric of civilization and of classic nineteenth-century nationalism, depicting Confederates as a people bravely struggling for their freedom against a brutal and oppressive foe. Such a people would not, could not, yield to an oppressor who had "disgraced the civilization of the 19th century." Earlier in the war, the editor of the *Richmond Examiner* had drawn attention to the fact that the North was "doing all it can to envenom the war": using inhumane fighting methods, laying waste to the southern land, stealing private property, arming slaves to fight against their masters, and practically transforming southern whites into slaves themselves. "These spittings of venom in the North," thought the *Examiner*, "do us good. The mask of civilization is taken from the Yankee war; in the eyes of the world it is degenerated into unbridled butchery." Like the South Carolina women's circular, this editorial recognized that portrayals of a barbaric North could help the South's cause on the international stage.[28]

The *Examiner* noted domestic benefits as well. "A brave people," after all, "is not alarmed by the malevolence and brutality of its enemy; it is fired by it, goaded by it, and nerved to almost superhuman deeds by the terrible passion of vengeance." As these words suggest, atrocity stories rendered the sometimes abstract issues of national difference and national defense much more immediate and much more urgent. Atrocity stories helped bring not just the war, but also the issue of nationalism, home to white southerners. When Jefferson Davis, for instance, railed against an enemy who had "laid waste our fields, polluted our altars, and violated the sanctity of our homes," he not only honed the image of northerners as brutal enemies, but also cast the idea of national difference and the imperative of national

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[28]"To the Friends of the Cause of the Confederate States," printed circular, Columbia, May 31, 1864, Mary Amarinthia Snowden Papers, USC; Richmond *Examiner*, July 24, 1862.

defense in very tangible and very urgent domestic forms. The Yankee soldier's threat to the southern home rendered him more alien than ever, and meant that it was more important for southern men to defend their homes and their country at one and the same time.[29]

Such rhetoric of defending the home was frequently laden with overtones of gender and sexuality. A story of "Yankee Outrages" that ran in newspapers across the South, for instance, described northern soldiers "thrusting themselves into people's homes" as well as stealing private property. Even worse, "Several rapes were committed, in one case a gentleman being compelled to witness an outrage perpetrated on his daughter in his house right before his own eyes." Sexualized atrocity stories took the demonization of the North to new heights. According to the Montgomery *Daily Advertiser* in October 1864, a "Yankee Blackguard" had made a speech in which he had threatened southern womanhood. With southern men off fighting, he was reported to have remarked, and southern women at home, northerners had an opportunity to "show them that we can *raise a better breed* than the generation of Southerners that we are now killing off."[30]

Sometimes the North's sexual threat to the southern gender order blended with its threat to the southern racial order. Northern invasions of southern homes imperiled not just southern women's sexuality and gender roles, but also the purportedly stable race relations which the South had built around the institution of slavery. Thus Jefferson Davis and other leaders warned of sinister Yankee designs on southern homes, women, families, and slave discipline—all elements of the same menace. And reporting on "Outrages by the Yankees in

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[29]Abstract of proclamation, September 4, 1862, *Papers of Jefferson Davis*, vol. 8, 377.

[30]*Charleston Courier*, July 2, 1862; Montgomery *Advertiser*, October 11, 1864. For instructive comparisons, see Karen Hagemann, "Of 'Manly Valor' and 'German Honor': Nation, War, and Masculinity in the Age of the Prussian Uprising Against Napoleon," *Central European History* 30 (1997): 187-220; Joane Nagel, "Masculinity and Nationalism: Gender and Sexuality in the Making of Nations," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 21:2 (March 1998).

Mississippi," the *Richmond Examiner* told of women being whipped and hanged by barbaric northern soldiers, and even of women being "ravished by negroes, incited to the deed by Federal soldiery, who stood by and witnessed the revolting scene." Aggravated by the racial component, stories of northern atrocities against southern white women further deepened the line between North and South.[31]

The threat endangered not just individual southern women, but southern womanhood as a whole. Because white southerners had fused their gender identities and their national identities, an attack on a particular southern woman could be interpreted as an attack on the South in general. The individual imperative to protect ones home and the honor of female relatives fused with a burgeoning national imperative to protect southern white women as a group from a generalized northern threat.[32] As we have seen, this connection was established in the spring and summer of 1861, as the white South was mobilizing for war. Thereafter, the realities of war served as an even more powerful cement between individual and national masculinities. Soldiers continued to identify protection of home, family, and country as a primary motivation for fighting—only now the danger was that much more immediate, and the responsibility that much more serious. When in the fall of 1862 the Confederate Congress turned its attention to the design of a national seal, both the House and the Senate versions featured the motif of a male soldier defending both home and a frail female figure.[33] Though

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[31]Jefferson Davis, speech to congress, November 18, 1861, in *The Papers of Jefferson Davis*, vol. 7, 416-417; *Richmond Examiner*, August 18, 1863.

[32]A similar fusing occurred in response to reports of Albanian rapes of Serbian women in the 1980s. According to Wendy Bracewell, "a narrative of threatened masculinity … reinforced by a more general narrative of gender crisis, offered militarism as a way of winning back both individual manliness and national dignity." By the mid 1980s, Serbians had even made "nationalist rape" a separate and more serious offense than conventional rape, illuminating the fusion of nationalism and sexuality. Bracewell, "Rape in Kosovo: Masculinity and Serbian Nationalism," *Nations and Nationalism* 6:4 (Oct 2000): 563-590, quotation at p. 567.

[33]Bonner, *Colors and Blood*, 110-114.

both designs were eventually rejected in favor of a very cavalier-like George Washington, the iconography of the male protector continued to pervade Confederate culture. Everyday ideas about gender acquired greater national significance in the context of war.

Thus one patriotic ode steeled soldiers' masculine resolve with reference to home, ancestry, and women. "Our loved ones' graves are at our feet, / Their homesteads at our back," the poet wrote, "No belted Southron can retreat / With woman on his track." As they had done since the earliest days of the Confederacy, popular songs and poems continued to portray the romantic and sexual benefits of manhood as being contingent upon the fulfillment of nationalist male responsibilities. Two of the South's most accomplished poets employed this very theme. Paul Hamilton Hayne's "My Mother-Land" listed, among the motivations for fighting the war, the masculine duty "to preserve for noble wives / The virtuous pride of unpolluted lives, / To shield our daughters from the ruffian's hand." And writing from the perspective of a woman, Alexander B. Meek posed the question, "Wouldst Thou Have me Love Thee." He went on to explain that if men wanted women's love, they had to deserve it. And in order to deserve it, they had to commit themselves to their country's call. "Dost thou pause?" asked Meek—"Let dastards dally— / Do thou for thy country fight!" Moreover, Meek's female narrator insisted that even death would be preferable to cowardice. "Rather would I view thee lying," she affirmed, "On the last red field of strife, / 'Mid thy country's heroes dying, / Than become a dastard's wife!"[34]

Similar themes of male duty appeared, somewhat less dramatically, in the everyday writings of ordinary southerners. Elizabeth Collier, a North Carolinian, urged her state's men

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[34]A. J. Requier, "Our Faith in '61"; Paul Hamilton Hayne, "My Mother-Land"; Alexander B. Meek, "Wouldst Thou Have me Love Thee." All in *War Poetry of the South*, ed. Simms, 58-60, 117-123, 61-62. Meek's poem is strikingly similar to his Mexican War ode, "The Fields of Mexico," which appeared in his *Songs and Poems of the South* (Mobile, Ala.: S. H. Goetzel & Co., 1857), 9-12. This similarity is a perfect example of how wartime nationalism drew on prewar tropes.

along: "Sleep not, rest not, men of North Carolina, til each armed foe expires." But with encouragement to fulfill their duty came a clear warning of the consequences of shirking. "If there is one coward among you," she wrote, "shoot him down." Desertion and dissent notwithstanding, most southern soldiers appear to have accepted in theory their masculine duty to women, home, and nation. Mississippian soldier Harry Lewis, for example, interspersed a record of daily activities in letters home to his mother with some reflections on the purpose of it all. Responding to her fears that he was unhappy in the army, he acknowledged that the prospect of battle did produce anxiety. "But every sensible and patriotic man," he explained, "knows that on the morrow he must battle for his rights, and on his deeds and bearing hangs the honor and existence of the Confederacy and the sanctity and preservation of home and family." For Lewis, as for so many other southern soldiers, the individual responsibility to protect home and family merged with the national responsibility to protect the nation.[35]

Southern women, too, continued to define their national responsibility in gendered terms. The supporting roles they had earlier carved out for themselves in flag presentation ceremonies and in soldiers' aid organizations became ever more pressing as war stretched the South's resources and drew an increasing proportion of its male population into the armies. "Are your ladies as busy as ours are for the Soldiers?" asked Caroline Howard Gilman in a late-1861 letter to her daughter. "The amount of work done, & the zeal which characterizes it, is wonderful all over the Confederacy." The stereotype of the patient and supportive southern

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[35]Diary entry, September 1, 1861, Elizabeth Collier Diary, SHC; Harry Lewis to mother, May 15, 1863, Harry Lewis Papers, SHC. My understanding of this process owes much to Stephen W. Berry II, *All That Makes a Man: Love and Ambition in the Civil War South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

woman persisted throughout the war (and, we might add, beyond), forming one of the staple motifs of Confederate nationalism.[36]

Although the supporting roles for which women were most often praised hardly liberated them from the constraints of conventional gender roles, war could provide some new opportunities.[37] The simple absence of a large proportion of working-age white men meant that southern white women had to shoulder new responsibilities, in the household as well as the farm and other workplaces. Of most interest to us, though, are the ways that war influenced the valences of nationalism in women's lives. In many ways, white southern women continued to be connected to the nation and the national government largely through their male relatives. But in other ways the context of war enabled women to forge new, potentially empowering national roles for themselves. Their charitable relief activities, for one thing, became so important to the Confederate war effort that the government formed partnerships with women as a necessary means of fighting the war. Caroline Howard Gilman reported in 1863, for instance, that she and other women had been specifically requested by the staff of Confederate hospitals and by "The Confederate authorities" to contribute necessary items such as sheets to the war effort. In 1864 the Confederate Secretary of the Navy wrote to thank a group of "noble women" from South Carolina for the $30,000 they had raised for the "construction of iron clad gun boats." These and many other examples of partnerships between government and female aid organizations crossed the line from private

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[36]Caroline Howard Gilman to Annie, October 20, 1861, Caroline Howard Gilman Papers, SCHS.

[37]For discussion of change and continuity for southern women during the Civil War, see Laura Edwards, *Scarlett Doesn't Live Here Anymore: Southern Women in the Civil War Era* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000); Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (New York: Random House, 1996); George C. Rable, *Civil Wars: Women and the Crisis of Southern Nationalism* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1989); and several of the essays in *Divided Houses: Gender and the Civil War,* eds. Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

charity work into the realm of semi-official national service. They redefined women's

connections to the Confederacy's national government and opened up the possibility, at least,

for women to claim some of the rights—as well as the responsibilities—of citizenship.[38]

To be sure, the old, prewar idea—that women were particularly important to nationalism

because nationalism grew out of the domestic realm—persisted. One orator, addressing an

audience of young women late in the war, reminded them that throughout history women had

been crucial to nationalism, since "being by nature more tender and sensitive than man, more

imbued with pity and enthusiasm," they were more inclined than were men to cherish the

"delightful idealities of home and country."[39]

In the context of war, the import of women's moral authority increased. Such was the

belief of educator Edward Joynes, a staunch advocate for the training of female teachers in

the Confederate South. Because a whole generation of southern men was so occupied with

war, Joynes believed,

> The responsibilities of the women of the South will be greater in the next times than ever
> heretofore, or ever perhaps hereafter. They will occupy a larger space not only in relative
> numbers, but in relative influence, in society, and their intellectual and moral culture will
> exert a profounder influence upon the character and destiny of the country.

Not only would women's influence be greater, according to Joynes; it would also be more

critical than ever. After all, the South stood "on the threshold of a new civilization." It was in

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[38]Caroline Howard Gilman to her children, March 27, 1863, Caroline Howard Gilman Papers, SCHS; copy of letter from Stephen R. Mallory to Richard Yeadon, February 27, 1864, Mary Amarinthia Snowden Papers, USC. The limitations of the transformation are illustrated by the fact that Mallory sent the letter to Yeadon rather than to the "noble women" themselves. For other examples of partnerships between government and women's organizations, see *The Papers of Jefferson Davis*, September 24, 1861, October 13, 1862. One type of female proto-citizenship is well captured by Laura Edwards's description of those southern white women who, even when angered by the Confederate authorities, made their complaints with some expectation of citizenship-style rights: "It was their government. It represented their interests. They had given up their menfolk for it. It should therefore answer their requests." (Edwards, *Scarlett Doesn't Live Here Anymore*, 93.)

[39]D. K. McRae, *On Love of Country: An Address Delivered Before the Young Ladies of the Clio Society of Oxford Female College, June 2nd, 1862* (Raleigh, N.C.: Strother and Marcom, 1864), 6-7. The year 1862 in the title is a misprint; it should read 1864.

the process of fighting for its national independence, and the education that female teachers would provide was absolutely vital to the long-term success of that effort. Education, he explained, "embraces the very sources of the national life, and, conceived in its moral as well as intellectual aspects, it may almost be said to be omnipotent in its influence upon national character." If its bid for national independence were to succeed, the South needed more female teachers with the capacity to generate suitably moral strands of national responsibility.[40]

War thus opened up the potential for some expansion of women's national roles, just as it imbued conceptions of men's national responsibility with new emotional power. As it has so often done, particularly during times of war, nationalism fused with existing ideas about gender and sexuality to collapse the boundaries between private lives and public obligations. War drew a line of blood between North and South, substantiating claims that the South possessed a corporate national identity that was truly distinct from the North. And it drew emotionally urgent connections between the individual and the nation, reshaping conceptions of Confederates' national responsibility.

The most powerful way that wartime nationalism touched everyday lives was in the form of suffering and loss. We have already seen how perceptions of shared victimhood helped animate the prewar radicals and helped unravel American nationalism in the mainstream white South. War carried the importance of shared victimhood to new heights. Now there was no doubt at all that white southerners were under attack by the North, in very domestic and very immediate ways. The losses war inflicted and the hardships it demanded brought

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[40]*The Education of Teachers in the South* (Lynchburg, Va.: Virginian Power-Press Book and Job Office, 1864), 3, 15.

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many white southerners closer together in national community. This was especially so when they viewed war's suffering through a religious lens. Viewed in this way, wartime sacrifices—particularly the ultimate blood sacrifice of death—could strengthen the Confederate nation. God appeared to be testing his chosen people in a fiery crucible, on the other side of which beckoned redemption for the individual and the nation alike.

The national meanings of daily suffering were sometimes gender-specific. Women on the homefront were held up in wartime culture as Spartan women, cheerfully putting up with shortages of food, cloth, and just about everything else. "Hurrah! hurrah! for the sunny South, so dear," went one popular song. "Three cheers for the homespun dress, that / Southern ladies wear." Patiently dealing with the lack of dresses and jewelry of the type available to "the Northern girl" was a marker of a true southern woman. In a similar way, a poem addressed to the "Ladies of Richmond" urged them to "Fold away all your bright tinted dresses" and other luxuries. True southern women, the poem went on, ought to be concentrating instead on helping the wounded. Making clear the national stakes, the poem urged: "You must balsam the wounds of a nation." Other poems and songs defined women's patriotism in the act of willingly sending their men off to fight. "The Southern Matron to her Son," for instance, portrayed a mother who was certainly sad to see her son go--"When thy country in peril has called thee to aid her-- / Though my heart, may in parting, with sadness overflow"—but who nonetheless recognized the necessity of his leaving and accepted it in the cause of the nation. In the context of war, female hardships were imbued with nationalist meaning.[41]

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[41]"The Southern Girl's Song," broadside poem, DU; "Ladies of Richmond," broadside poem, Wake Forest Broadside Collection; "The Southern Matron to her Son," broadside poem, DU. My understanding of the centrality of sacrifice to Confederate women's cultural roles owes much to Drew Gilpin Fausts's article, "Altars of Sacrifice: Confederate Women and the Narrative of War," in *Divided Houses: Gender and the Civil War,* eds. Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 171-199. Faust's article is most often cited for its argument that Confederate women's devotion to the southern cause wavered when their

For both men and women, in fact, gendered responsibilities to the nation were frequently cast in the form of sacrifice. One soldier told his mother he knew it must be difficult to have several sons "enlisted in the cause of freedom," but reminded her that "it is the part of a patriot mother to bear these sufferings cheerfully." Another soldier, John Thurman, writing from an army camp to his wife at home, said that even though he missed her terribly, he believed he was fighting in a noble cause, "and if needs be must sacrifice every other consideration [.] And for my God, my Country, my wife & my children all—to give even my life as a ransom to [save?] our country from disgrace and insult." He truly sympathized with the hardships his wife Sallie had to cope with. But even so, she must not become "dispondant" over her suffering, but should rather "bear them my dear wife like a Christian and Patriotic wife and mother." John Thurman's words make clear his understanding of how war defined gender-specific obligations of national responsibility: while he as a man should leave home to fight in the army and possibly sacrifice his life, Sallie's duties as a woman—as a "Christian and Patriotic wife and mother"—were to stay at home and endure suffering, possibly including the loss of her husband.[42]

Sacrifice thus lay at the core of Thurman's concept of national responsibility. Earlier in 1862, he had foreshadowed his gendered interpretation of national sacrifice with a more general one, urging his wife, "It is the lot of many to make the same sacrifice and … it becomes the duty of every Patriot to make any sacrifice that our country demands." For Thurman and for many other Confederates, the bonds of national responsibility were forged

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sacrifices appeared to result in little gain, but more pertinent here is the process by which connections between individuals and nation were created.

[42]Edmund Stuart to his mother, February 24, 1862, Stuart Family Papers, SCHS; John Thurman to Sallie Ecklin Thurman, May 24, 1862, John Thurman and Sallie Ecklin Thurman Papers, SHC.

in shared sacrifice and suffering. These were powerful bonds that united individual and nation, and united different members of the national community. Recognizing this, Jefferson Davis tried to steel Confederates' resolve by joining an acknowledgment of suffering with remembrance of the revolutionary generation. "To show ourselves worthy of the inheritance bequeathed to us by the patriots of the Revolution," he urged, "we must emulate that heroic devotion which made reverse to them but the crucible in which their patriotism was refined." The suffering of war helped define Confederates' conceptions of national responsibility.[43]

This was, in part, the old story of a South united in shared victimhood. Recall Ernest Renan's observation that "suffering in common unifies more than joy does. Where national memories are concerned, griefs are of more value than triumphs, for they impose duties, and require a common effort."[44] Recall too the prewar radicals' oft-repeated litanies of complaints about northern oppression, and the role that perceptions of northern attacks had played in the unraveling of American nationalism. Southern nationalists had long portrayed the South as a victimized underdog, and whipping up resentment of apparent northern oppression had long fuelled southern nationalism. They recognized a fact of which psychologist Joshua Searle-White has more recently reminded us: when it comes to justifying claims to national independence, victimhood confers power.[45] This was especially true in the nineteenth-century western world, when the principle of nationality was understood to

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[43] John Thurman to Sallie Ecklin Thurman, March 17, 1862, Thurman Papers, SHC; *Jefferson Davis: The Essential Writings*, ed. Cooper, 229. In making this argument, I build upon points made, but not fully developed, by Rubin, *Shattered Nation*, 50-52; Bonner, "Americans Apart," 331-332; and William Blair, *Virginia's Private War: Feeding Body and Soul in the Confederacy, 1861-1865* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998). Judkin Browning has recently demonstrated that, in one North Carolina community, the experience of Union occupation increased rather than decreased loyalty to the Confederacy: Judkin Browning, "Removing the Mask of Nationality: Unionism, Racism, and Federal Military Occupation in North Carolina, 1862-65," *Journal of Southern History* 71:3 (Aug 2005): 589-620.

[44] Ernest Renan, "What is a Nation?" (1882), in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (London: Routledge, 1990), 19.

[45] Searle-White, *Psychology of Nationalism*, esp. 94.

privilege those claims to national independence that were based on allegations of oppression at the hands of a stronger power. The narrative of northern oppression mandating southern national independence was well established.

But because of the realities of war, this old narrative was infused with a new element, one more potent and with more capacity to unite the white South in national community than could ever have been possible in peacetime. The new element was, of course, blood. In addition to filling William Trescot's "great, red river" of national separation, the blood of the Civil War functioned as a sort of sacred adhesive of Confederate nationalism (just as it did, we might add, for nationalism in the Civil War North; and just as it had for postrevolutionary American nationalism), binding individuals to each other and to the nation in the potent and sanctified bond of human sacrifice. One of the defining characteristics of modern nationalism in general is the notion that individuals ought to be prepared to give their own lives in order to protect the nation. Preeminent nationalism scholar Anthony Smith has summarized thus: "The self-sacrificing citizen, the fallen patriot … the mass sacrifice of the people, the glory of patriotic valour, the everlasting youth of the fallen, the overcoming of death through fame—these are the stock in trade of nationalist values, myth, and imagery. They have become standard actors and motifs in national salvation drama, the agents and vehicles of the nation's deliverance and subsequent triumph."[46] This has been, in part, a legal phenomenon. Since the Napoleonic wars, and especially during the world wars of the twentieth century, modern nations have reserved the right to call upon their (almost always male) citizens to enter mass armies and offer their lives for their country. In many cases, including that of the Confederacy, such calls have been formally made in the formal coercion of conscription. But

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[46]Smith, *Chosen Peoples*, 219. See also Kramer, *Nationalism*, 77-83; George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

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they have also been infused with a powerful religious dimension that has rendered the sacrifice of one's life not just a legal obligation but a spiritual duty. Thus William Trescot's observation, in the letter with which this chapter began, that the southern cause had been made "sacred by the blood of her martyrs."

Even before the war had properly begun, the trope of nationalist death sacrifice was already widespread. This should not surprise us. The idea loomed large not only in the European concepts of nationalism from which southerners learned so much, but in antebellum American concepts as well. One of the most vital strands of American nationalism had always been the celebration of the revolutionary generation's wartime sacrifices, especially that of life. This was, in part, why the fathers' graves were so "sacred." So even in the first months of the Confederacy's existence, white southerners instinctively conceived of their national responsibility in terms of death sacrifice.

The glory of serving one's nation through death was frequently iterated. In a speech to departing troops early in the war, the well-known clergyman Benjamin Palmer sought to steel their resolve. If they should fall in battle, he reassured them, "It is little to say that you will be remembered…. you shall find your graves in thousands of hearts, and the pen of history shall write the story of your martyrdom." Similarly, and even more poetically, one contributor to *De Bow's Review* described the many southern men who were ready to fight and, if necessary, to make the ultimate sacrifice of death:

> who, now, with united hands and hearts, and garlands of cypress encircling their brows, cheerfully take their seats around the banquet table of death, and prepare to make the patriot's last, sad sacrifice. And they are cheered by the beautiful and inspiring thought that, though they may perish, yet their country will still survive, and be great among the nations, long after centuries shall have swept over their honored dust; while the soft South winds will come to whisper fond requiems over their manes, and bring the wild flowers of their own native clime to keep sweet vigils over the warrior's long rest!

The "patriot's last, sad sacrifice" would earn him national immortality. Readers must, surely, have thought of the looming memory of the revolutionary generation in American nationalism—must have thought of examples of national martyrdom in Europe, too—as they contemplated the promise of immortality through sacrifice to the nation.[47]

The Confederacy's first major experience with death came with the first major battle of the Civil War, Manassas, on July 21, 1861. Although the South was able to win victory, it was not so complete a victory as some thought it should and could have been. And there were, of course, deaths. These deaths were interpreted in the public discourse as sacrifices to the nation that would be rewarded with immortality and that would, moreover, unite survivors in a renewed determination. "Perhaps there is scarce a neighborhood in the Confederate States," suggested the Richmond *Enquirer*, that was unaffected by the casualties of Manassas. It was only right, then, that the newspaper should do something which might seem distasteful to some: print the names of the dead. "Surely it must be wise to relieve the anxieties of a patriotic people," contended the *Enquirer*. "So far from the record tending to dispirit our citizens, every martyr will have a dozen avengers." The sacrifice of one's life, in other words, deserved to be publicly recorded, and to be avenged.[48]

Jefferson Davis, too, interpreted the deaths at Manassas in terms of national sacrifice. "In a strain of fervid eloquence," went a contemporary account of his post-battle speech, "he eulogized the courage, the endurance and patriotism of our victorious troops and to the memory of our honoured dead, who shed their life's blood on the battle-field in the glorious

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[47]Palmer speech reprinted in the *Bellville* [Texas] *Countryman*, July 10 1861; J. Quitman Moore, "The Belligerents," *De Bow's Review* 31.1 (July 1861): 70.

[48]*Richmond Enquirer*, July 26 1861. For the implications of printing the names of the Civil War dead for conceptions of citizenship and nationalism, see Faust, "'The Dread Voice of Uncertainty.'"

cause of their country, he paid a glowing tribute, which could not fail to dim with tears the eyes of the least feeling among his hearers." In nationalist death sacrifice was a bond between individual and nation with an awesome power.[49]

The nobility of giving one's life in the cause of the nation continued to reverberate through popular culture and private writings. Consider the song "The Red White and Blue." It was primarily intended to convey the fact of national status: "Huzza Huzza we're a nation that's true." And a line repeated in the final two stanzas defined more specifically the nature of Confederate's national responsibility: the resolution to "die by our colors of Red White and Blue."[50] Confederate soldiers expressed this same sentiment in real life as well as in song. Writing from the front in Virginia to his sister back home in Georgia, for example, James Stanley reported that cannons were booming and a fight seemed imminent. Perhaps a little afraid of what the battle might bring for him—and presumably also concerned about her reaction to the danger—Stanley reassured his sister as best he knew how: "If I fall in battle it will be in defense of my country."[51]

Echoing around the Confederacy throughout the war, the message that death equaled nationalist sacrifice performed a number of functions in the logic of Confederate nationalism. To the soldiers themselves, this message offered nothing less than the promise of immortality. In accounting for the power of patriotism, one orator pointed to the way it combined "the love of kin, the love of home, and the desire of a *posthumous* fame among posterity." It was

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[49]Jefferson Davis, Speech at Richmond, July 23, 1861, *The Papers of Jefferson Davis*, Vol. 7: 1861, ed. Lynda Caswell Christ (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992), 261-262.

[50]"The Red White and Blue," handwritten song in Senter Family Papers, ADAH. For a brilliant analysis of how flag imagery embodied the powerful emotional impulse to blood sacrifice in Confederate nationalism, see Bonner, *Colors and Blood*.

[51]James H. Stanley to sister, May 30, 1862, James H. Stanley Papers, SHC. For other examples, see Rubin, *Shattered Nation*, 25.

almost a contract: in return for voluntary death came the assurance of subsequent commemoration: "to the patriots who have perished will the nation pay fitting tribute." As many students of nationalism have shown, part of modern nationalism's appeal to individuals has been its offer of what before only religion could provide: a sort of life after death. Confederate nationalism, in promising white southerners immortality and the chance to connect their life and death with something larger than themselves, was, in this regard, typical.

That death sacrifice would bring immortality seemed obvious to white southerners, who had come of age celebrating the immortality of the revolutionary generation. The promise of a similarly enduring fame for the Confederate dead came naturally. "Another ray of light hath fled," went one poem about a dead soldier, "another Southern brave / Hath fallen in his country's cause and found a laurelled grave— / Hath fallen but his deathless name shall live when stars shall set." In April 1862, wondering about the results of a recent battle, Sarah Wadley resolved that if Confederate soldiers did "die in body, their names shall live in our memory, and when in after days the stains of blood have been obliterated …, we shall remember and generations after us shall bless those who died for their country." Similarly, a newspaper obituary celebrated the life and death of a young patriot who had died for his country, but remarked that at least some consolation was available in the knowledge that "his country will write upon its records his name, as one who freely offered his life to secure that independence." In the present and the future, the sacrifice of one's life to the nation would not go unremembered.[52]

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[52] McRae, *On Love of Country,* 5, 14; M. A. Jennings, "Cleburne," in *War Poetry of the South*, ed. Simms, 280-281; Sarah Lois Wadley Diary, April 13, 1862, SHC; *Charleston Mercury*, July 7, 1862.

This message clearly helped ease the pain felt by grieving families throughout the Confederacy. It was a staple component of informal reports of soldier's deaths as well as printed obituaries. Recording in her diary the results of one battle, Lucy Wood mourned, "there fell one of the truest bravest patriots that all the land contained." She took considerable solace, though, in the knowledge that he had fallen "with heart burning to serve his country, and mark out his nation's freedom." Relatively late in the war, Mississippian Harry Lewis, whom we have already met as an idealistic young soldier fighting for a powerful blend of home, family, and nation, fell in battle. His brother John, writing to their mother with news of Harry's death, echoed Harry's own nationalistic idealism. Along with the fact that Harry had died reasonably free of pain, John felt that "the remembrance of the cause he sacrificed his young manhood for, fills up to me much of his loss." And even if all his mother's sons were lost in battle, John believed it would be worthwhile, since "a man cannot be too good to die for his home—his country."[53]

Sadly, John Lewis was by no means the only southern man to face the difficult task of relaying the news of a brother's death back home. Nor was he the only one who invoked nationalism to ease the pain. "It is a source of great consolation," wrote Thomas Davis, reporting the 1863 death of his brother to their mother, "to know that he died an honorable death, a sacrifice upon the alter of his country." Indeed, the only thing more important than that was that the dead soldier had "lived a life of such immaculate purity."[54] When Thomas himself was killed the following year, a newspaper obituary carried a similar message: the

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[53]Diary entry, October 28, 1861, Lucy Wood Diary, Lucy W. Butler Papers, SHC (Wood was Lucy W. Butler's maiden name); John Lewis to mother, June 10, 1864 [misdated as 1863], Lewis Papers, SHC.

[54]Thomas's letter quoted in Rebecca Pitchford Davis to Burwell, December 20, 1863, in Rebecca Pitchford Davis Papers, SHC.

soldier's death was rendered easier to bear by the fact that he had lived a Christian life, and by the fact that he had taken his place on "the long list of martyrs who have fallen by the hands of our cruel and relentless foe, offering their lives a free sacrifice on the altar of their country." His spirit remained, the obituary went on, "infusing the glow of patriotism in our breasts."[55]

The sacrifice of loved ones, as these last words suggest, could serve to strengthen the commitment of the living to the nationalist cause for which their loved ones had died. Nationalism offered an appealing way to imbue the death of friends and family with sacred meaning. Margaret Preston, for instance, the sister-in-law of Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson, had committed her pen to the southern cause by writing patriotic poetry, just as her husband had committed himself by fighting in the war. When he died, rather than becoming alienated, she instead rededicated herself to the cause in which he had died. She even dramatized her own experience in a long poem, *Beechenbrook: A Rhyme of the War*, which featured a woman who gladly sent her husband off to fight for home and country, even urging him to die rather than to submit. War's hardships become greater for our heroine, and her husband dies. But she does not despair, and, if anything, her devotion to Confederate independence is strengthened by her loss.[56]

Even the deaths of soldiers whom one had never even met could reinvigorate national responsibility. Although he was glad about the Confederacy's recent victory in the summer of 1864, soldier Richard E. Jaques reminded his fiancé that they ought to spare a thought for

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[55]Obituary, *Raleigh Christian Advocate*, November 25, 1864, in Rebecca Pitchford Davis Papers, SHC.

[56]Stacey Jean Klein, "Wielding the Pen: Margaret Preston, Confederate Nationalist Literature, and the Expansion of a Woman's Place in the South," *Civil War History* 49.3 (September 2003): 221-234. For a similar example, see Connie Lester, "Lucy Virginia French: Out of the Bitterness of My Heart," in *The Human Tradition in Civil War and Reconstruction*, ed. Steven E. Woodworth (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 2000).

the bereaved; those who "must shed the scalding tear for some loved one who has offered his life as a sacrifice upon ~~his~~ our country's altar." The fact that Jaques initially wrote "his," then crossed it out and replaced it with "our" is revealing. The act of sympathizing with the dead and their families prompted Jaques to affirm shared membership in a national community—a community united by death sacrifice. He remained hopeful that things would work out in the end. "Youthful confederacy," he wrote, "baptized in the blood of her [martyred] sons may she soon emerge from her trials and proudly hold her [place] among the nations of the Earth."[57]

In addition to uniting them in a community of grief, death sacrifice also placed a heavy responsibility on survivors to ensure that the fallen had not died in vain. Consider the gravity of the newspaper obituary which reported that among the last words of one dying soldier were the following: "Tell my dear mother that I died fighting for my country, and that I have the satisfaction of knowing I did not fight in vain." Such a message, imparted from beyond the grave, must have placed a powerful burden on survivors to continue to fight for the Confederacy. This was precisely the idea that Benjamin Palmer intended his eulogy of a fallen soldier to convey. "*Our country*," he proclaimed, "*is endeared to us by every bereavement we sustain*. This death binds with a new sanction to our heart the cause to which he fell so cheerfully as a martyr." Everyone should be inspired by such deaths, said Palmer, to "rally around the tombs of our dead, and fight the last battle of freedom over their honored dust." The Confederate dead, by the time Palmer delivered this message in late 1862, were

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[57]Richard E. Jaques to Lute, June 13, 1864, Richard E. Jaques Letters, DU.

beginning to replace—or at least take their place alongside—the revolutionary fathers as a sacred trust which must be defended to the last.[58]

The idea of fighting around the graves of the dead was not unique to Palmer. The same thought suggested itself to planter's daughter Kate Foster while she was attending church in occupied Mississippi in 1863. The sight of Union soldiers in the same church as herself sickened her. Later, at home, she comforted herself by resolving to her diary that "When they take all from us, we will rally around the sacred tombs of our honored dead & fight the last battle for freedom on their consecrated graves." Surely they would be successful, she thought. Indeed, they had to be. "Ask our 'honored dead,'" she fumed, "if souls such as theirs could rest, and know the insolent invader had a Southern home, rendered holy by their loving presence in days gone by. No!" Again, the sacrifice of those who had already died placed an inescapable burden on the shoulders of those who survived, compelling them to keep up the fight. And it would be worth it, according to Foster: "we will come out of the furnace doubly purified for the good work and fight that God has given us to do. For to the people of this Confederacy is given the sublime mission of maintaining the supremacy of our Father in Heaven."[59]

As Foster's convictions make clear, the memory of national martyrs derived much of its potency from its religious dimension. Nationalism's promise of immortality did not replace existing religious beliefs; rather, it drew upon and extended them. The bonds of blood and sacrifice with which white southerners connected themselves to the nation were,

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[58]*Richmond Examiner*, July 7, 1864; Benjamin M. Palmer, *Address Delivered at the Funeral of General Maxcy Gregg, in the Presbyterian Church, Columbia, SC, December 20, 1862* (Columbia, SC: Southern Guardian Steam-Power Press, 1863), 7-8. Palmer viewed Gregg's sacrifice as being for the state of South Carolina as much as for the Confederacy as a whole, but the two objects of allegiance seemed to be complementary rather than conflicting.

[59]Diary entry, July 28, 1863, Kate D. Foster Diary, DU.

emphatically, sacred bonds. Confederates considered themselves to be God's chosen people in much the same way as the majority of antebellum Americans, in both the North and South, had. And this religious faith continued to condition, in extremely consequential ways, how Confederates conceived of their national responsibility.

God, for one thing, could be looked to as a sort of director of the Civil War. In the early stages of the war, Grace Elmore fully believed that God was watching over and protecting his people. "The days of the Israelites are returning," she thought, "so visibly has the power of God been shown in keeping a weaker nation from the hands of the lawless robber." Chosenness, in Elmore's judgment, was rooted in the very underdog, oppressed status that had always been so central to southern nationalism. Many others agreed that the events of the Civil War were ultimately controlled by God rather than by man. Thus a small printed pamphlet, entitled "Patriotic Prayer for the Southern Cause," appealed for the favor of "Our Heavenly Father high and mighty King of kings and Lord of Lords—who dost from thy throne behold all the dwellers on earth, and reignest with power supreme … over all kingdoms, empires, and governments." God was the God of nations, and to him Confederates appealed for national legitimacy. Such was the premise behind the many national fast days called for by Jefferson Davis. And such was the message of the countless sermons that rang forth across the country on those occasions. Henry H. Tucker's November 1861 effort, "God in the War," was typical in its admonition that God, not man, controlled the outcome of the war and the destiny of the Confederate nation.[60]

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[60]Diary entry, December 23, 1861, Elmore Diary; "Patriotic Prayer for the Southern Cause," n.p., n.d., VHS; Henry H. Tucker, *God in the War: A Sermon Delivered Before the Legislature of Georgia, in the Capitol at Milledgeville, on Friday, November 15, 1861, Being a Day Set Apart for Fasting, Humiliation and Prayer, by His Excellency the President of the Confederate States* (Milledgeville, Ga.: Boughton, Nisbet & Barnes, State Printers, 1861).

As had been the case with American nationalism before the war, though, Confederates' status as God's chosen people was not necessarily guaranteed. With tremendous advantage came tremendous responsibility. Confederates reminded each other that in order to be good members of the nation, they must be good Christians—and vice-versa. In a sermon reflecting on the fate of a group of deserters who had recently been executed, for example, John Paris told a group of soldiers that to abandon one's duty to the army and nation was to abandon one's duty to God. "The true christian is always a true patriot," he advised. "Patriotism and Christianity walk hand in hand."[61]

Throughout the war, the fate of the nation was frequently and closely linked to the piety and morality of Confederates—both as a community and as individuals. Under the title, "The Word of God a Nation's Life," George F. Pierce cautioned that because "Government is an institution of heaven," the Confederacy ought to take care to be a pious nation, with laws and rulers that were guided by the principles of Christianity. Pierce was glad to report that the Confederate Constitution and its frequent fast days proved its adherence to this necessity. But they were far from perfect, particularly in their love of money, and had to keep trying. "O my countrymen," he appealed, "let us reverence the Lord of Sabaoth, and let us remember that our country is to be preserved and perpetuated, not by science, wealth, patriotism, population, armies or navies, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord." In part, Pierce was contending that the Confederacy's leaders ought to be devout, moral men, if the new nation were to earn God's favor. However, tapping in to one of the leading assumptions of the American nationalism we have already observed in the antebellum South, Pierce noted that in relatively democratic countries such as theirs, "Nations have a sort of collective unity,

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[61]John Paris, *A Sermon: Preached Before Brig.-gen. Hoke's Brigade, at Kinston, N.c., on the 28th of February, 1864, Upon the Death of Twenty-two Men, Who Had Been Executed in the Presence of the Brigade for the Crime of Desertion* (Greensborough, NC: A. W. Ingold & Co., 1864), 12.

and between rulers and people there is a reciprocal responsibility[:] if there be connivance in evil, each is amenable for the guilt of the other." Every individual in the Confederacy—not just national leaders—had a direct responsibility for the moral character of the whole nation, and, therefore, for its very survival.[62]

Many Confederates, soldiers and civilians alike, appear to have taken their national responsibility seriously. Writing home in 1863, for instance, H. C. Kendrick expressed gratitude that he was in his family's prayers. Indeed, he felt that more piety was needed across the land. The situation was not likely to improve, he felt, "until the hearts of the citizens and soldiers, get right and become humble before God." Reporting that his own regiment had been spending a great deal of time attending to their religious lives, he insisted that "We must be soldiers of the cross, as well as of the confederate fields." Countless messages of religious renewal made their way from camp to homefront and back again. North Carolinian Thomas Davis, writing home late in 1864, echoed Kendrick in his approval of the strength of religious activity on the homefront. "Many think that the war is sent upon us as a punishment for our sins and that it will last until we grow better," he reported. Although he did not agree with such a judgment, he was certainly glad to see moral improvement. "Certainly, if all our people were Christians, the war would soon end, for then every man would do his duty, and that is all we need to whip the Yankees." For a variety of

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[62]George F. Pierce, *The Word of God a Nation's Life: A Sermon Preached Before the Bible Convention of the Confederate States, Augusta, Georgia, March 19th, 1862* (Augusta, Ga.: Constitutionalist, 1862), 5, 10, 11. The Confederacy thus shares characteristics with Anthony Smith's analysis of "covenanted peoples" who viewed their continued "chosenness" as being contingent upon their own behavior. Anthony D. Smith, *Chosen Peoples* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), esp. 51, 94. See also Cauthen, "Confederate and Afrikaaner Nationalism," 46-56.

reasons, then, Confederate soldiers believed that the surest way to achieve national victory was for each individual to act as a Christian.[63]

Whereas Thomas Davis gave little credence to the idea that the war and its hardships were imposed on his nation as divine punishment, many of his compatriots felt sure that such was in fact the case. After all, if one believed that God was directing the course of the war, and that each individual bore some responsibility for the moral character of the nation, what other conclusion could be reached? Surely, military defeats were evidence of moral and religious failings among the Confederate people. This was precisely how many Confederates interpreted military defeats and their continued failure to establish their national independence by winning the war. Within the same few days in the spring of 1862, for example, Jefferson Davis received two letters from two different citizens suggesting that military reverses had been caused by lack of proper attention to religion and morality. One writer suggested that God was refusing victory to the Confederacy because of the drunkenness and bad behavior of its officer corps, while another thought it must be due to the fact that the Confederate post office delivered the mail even on Sunday. Indeed, stopping the official delivery of mail on the sabbath became something of a crusade. Documents circulated around the country reminding Confederates of the connection between national piety and national victory, urging readers to campaign for an end to the Sunday mails. "God will not be mocked," cautioned one. "We must serve Him as a nation, in sincerity and truth, if we wish His blessing." For government and people both, only rectitude could secure the survival of the nation. And whereas this belief had deep roots in prewar American

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[63]H. C. Kendrick to mother and father, March 9, 1863, H. C. Kendrick Papers, SHC; Thomas Davis to Rebecca Pitchford Davis, September 16, 1864, Rebecca Pitchford Davis Papers, SHC. On religion in the Confederate armies, see Drew Gilpin Faust, "Christian Soldiers: The Meaning of Revivalism in the Confederate Army," *Journal of Southern History* 53:1 (1987): 63-90.

nationalism, the national import of individual morality was greatly heightened during wartime, when lives and much else besides were so immediately at stake.[64]

As Civil War historians have pointed out, military defeats could be extremely demoralizing for Confederates. Viewed through the logic that defeats were punishments for sinful or immoral behavior, the steadily decreasing success of the Confederate forces in the latter stages of the war naturally produced despair and disillusionment.[65] In some cases, this led to the loss of hope. In other cases, it led to the angry apportionment of blame on others. Many were the harangues against the "traitors" and "croakers" who jeopardized the Confederate cause. And as Drew Gilpin Faust has shown, it was frequently the profiteering "speculators" who took the greater part of the blame for Confederate setbacks.[66]

But sometimes less obvious targets came under attack. One Alabama soldier, clearly losing hope by 1864, wrote to his sister complaining about the "demoralization of female virtue" on the homefront. "What will the country come to," he asked. It appeared as though "the people at home has lost all virtue and lost all religion and respect for Christianity. We will never succeed," he went on, "unless there is a change in people at home who call themselves Christians." Charles Fenton James, the Virginia soldier from whom we heard in the introduction, made a similar point, chastising his sister for attending dances, and warning

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[64]Letters from John W. Hudson, February 28, 1862, and James Hancock, March 1, 1862, calendared in *Papers of Jefferson Davis*, vol. 8; "Circular [on Sabbath Mails]," Batesville, Mississippi, January 4, 1862, Rare Book Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; "To the People of the Southern Confederacy," broadside, n.p., n.d., VHS.

[65]See especially Richard E. Beringer, et al., *Why the South Lost the Civil War* (Athens, Ga.: The University of Georgia Press, 1986) and Rable, *Civil Wars*, 202-220. Though I disagree with the conclusions of Beringer and his coauthors, I have learned much from their interpretation of the significances of religion in the Confederate South.

[66]Faust, *Creation of Confederate Nationalism*, chap. III.

her that the fate of the nation depended upon the everyday moral comportment of its members. Morality, piety—even the rhythm of one's feet—were national affairs.[67]

It is certainly true that the logic which connected individual morality with national survival, by way of an omnipotent God, presented serious challenges to Confederate morale. However, in emphasizing these challenges other historians have largely overlooked the capacity of this logic to strengthen ties between the individual and the new nation. Conditioned by their Christianity to expect divine trials and tribulations, the majority of mid-nineteenth-century southerners, and Americans more generally, viewed reprimands from on high as challenging opportunities rather than as reasons to capitulate. Their Christianity, one might put it, was not supposed to make them feel good. Accordingly, the hardships of war, viewed through the lens of Christianity, could be seen as being not so much destructive as constructive of good character. Thus, North Carolinian Walter Lenoir encouraged his war-weary brother to look on the bright side. War was not so terrible, in the grand scheme of things, he wrote, and there was reason for optimism even if things did become difficult. "When I remember that adversity only serves to develop the better qualities both of men and nations," he concluded, "I can not but believe that your manly and loyal nature will be aroused by the calamities of our country, and that your despondency will give place to a firmness which will even border on cheerfulness."[68]

Lenoir's cousin, William Bingham, elaborated at length on a similar theme in a letter he wrote to Walter the following year. Advocacy for peace with the North, a formidable force by the time Bingham wrote in late 1863, had caused him to rethink his initial certainty that

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[67]L. J. Morgan Letter (to sister), June 8, 1864, ADAH; Charles Fenton James to Emma James, February 13, 1862, Charles Fenton James Letters, VHS.

[68]Walter Lenoir to Rufus Lenoir, February 20, 1862, Lenoir Family Papers, SHC.

the Confederacy would easily establish a great slaveholding republic. Such a prize demanded sacrifice, he thought, and a people who could not endure considerable hardship might not deserve it at all. "If when dangers begin to thicken our people should forget how the hand of Jehovah was outstretched for their deliverance, and should say 'Let us go back into Egypt that we perish not in this wilderness,'" they might not merit their privileged status as God's chosen people. The Confederacy could *only* successfully establish its nationality, he judged, in return for suffering: "if we reach the promised land of independence, it will be after a long and painful journey through the desert." The hardships of war were not meaningless obstacles, in Bingham's understanding. They were the very point. They were the true test of nationality, and the means by which it was to be forged.[69]

Similarly, amidst her complaints about those "miserable croakers" and "traitors" who were unwilling to undergo hardships for the national cause, Elizabeth Collier vowed to sacrifice as much as was necessary, in the belief that victory could not otherwise be obtained. If southerners refused to make sacrifices, she thought, "We do not deserve to be <u>free</u> & rest assured God will not suffer us to be free, for He only helps those who help themselves— unless we are willing to make great personal sacrifices." The war, for Collier, was a divine test of Confederate nationality—and in order to survive it, real Confederates had to learn to sacrifice. "Oh God," she exclaimed in another diary entry, "Thou art purifying us through much suffering." A similar assumption informed a *Richmond Examiner* editorial in the spring of 1862. Though this might prove to be a long, hard war, the editorial urged readers to endure. "JEHOVAH," after all, "kept Moses and the people of His love wandering forty years in the desert ere He gave them a country and independence." The religious logic through which

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[69]William Bingham to Walter Lenoir, December 1, 1863, Lenoir Family Papers, SHC.

many Confederates viewed the world suggested that shared suffering and sacrifices were the only means of achieving national independence.[70]

Other white southerners reached similar conclusions. Suffering and sacrifice simply had to result in victory, thought Kate Foster. "Can any one for a moment think," she asked,

> that God will allow so many of His people to fall in what they thought and think a good cause and then for their deaths to be as naught in the balance of peace. Because God has it seems to us withdrawn his all-protecting hand are we to lose faith in his power? No, we need chastisement…. If we put our trust in Him he will guide us through darkness into light.

Soldier H. C. Kendrick likewise saw good reason for optimism. "I havn't a doubt," he assured his parents, "but that we (the people of the South), are destined to freedom, as the Christian is to inherit eternal bliss in a future state." Kendrick clearly viewed the necessary divine trial of a nation in much the same light as Christianity's prescription of the necessary trial for depraved humans. Granted, eternal bliss may cost many lives. But, Kendrick concluded, that was precisely the point: "the harder the trial, the sweeter the liberty."[71]

Such was the lesson not only of Christian salvation, but also of the very concept of nineteenth-century nationalism. As they looked over the Atlantic and across the globe, it was clear to white southerners that the establishment of national independence frequently entailed suffering through the hardships of war. "All nations which come into existence at this late period of the world," the Episcopal Bishop Stephen Elliott explained, "must be born amid the storm of revolution and must win their way to a place in history through the baptism of

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[70]Collier diary, April 11, 1862, July 3, 1862; *Richmond Examiner*, March 6, 1862.

[71]Kate D. Foster Diary, July 30, 1863, DU; H. C. Kendrick to parents, January 6, 1863, H. C. Kendrick Papers, SHC. Kendrick's fusing of individual salvation and national salvation echoes the historian Kurt Berend's argument that Civil War Chistianity offered soldiers the opportunity, "in dying, [to] save both himself and his country." As Berends insightfully points out, "both Christianity and nationalism posit a role for violence in salvation." Kurt O. Berends, "Confederate Sacrifice and the 'Redemption' of the South," in *Religion in the American South: Protestants and Others in History and Culture*, eds. Beth Barton Schweiger and Donald G. Mathews (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 99-123, quotations at 106, 109.

blood." This idea was, of course, substantiated by the example of the American Revolution. Another southern clergyman, John Paris, told an audience of Confederate soldiers, "War is the scourge of nations." Yet it was, he believed, a necessary trial. "God is no doubt chastising us for our good," he said—and it would be worth it in the end: "We are only drinking now from a cup, from which every nation upon the face of the earth have drank before us. We have walked the bloody road of revolution for three years; and still we face the foe. Our fathers trod it for seven, and in the end were successful." National independence, it seemed, could only be achieved by first suffering through the trials of war.[72]

Paris's reference to the American Revolution echoes the exhortation we have already heard from Jefferson Davis: that Confederates ought to "emulate that heroic devotion" of the revolutionary generation "which made reverse to them but the crucible in which their patriotism was refined." The old intellectual arguments for southern independence— including the identification of 1861 with 1776—continued to be important in Confederates' conceptions of their collective national identity and their individual national responsibility. But four years of war, and the spilling of more blood than anyone could have imagined in 1861, shifted the nature of that remembrance. An independent South was still held up as a purified version of the original America. But now it seemed as though genuine American purity was more of a process than a state. Like their forefathers before them, white southerners believed that they too would have to undergo severe trials under the eye of a watchful God if they were to deserve national independence.

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[72]Paris, *A Sermon*, 12; Elliott quoted in Charles Reagan Wilson, *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause* (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1980), 5. Wilson shows that a belief that the Confederacy had been "baptized in blood" went on to underpin the "civil religion" of the Lost Cause after 1865. As I have argued, this concept was already powerful during the war itself.

The experience of war transformed Confederate nationalism. It filled William Henry Trescot's "great, red river" with the blood of hundreds of thousands, marking the line between South and North in the starkest way imaginable. It brought nationalism home to white southerners: in the literal and symbolic fear of barbaric Yankee invaders; in the national meaning it gave to the everyday ideas and practices of gender; in the ideal of national sacrifice it inflicted upon just about every aspect of daily life. War reinvigorated and elevated to a new plane the existing narrative of a suffering South, a community united by external attack, a community blessed by virtue of its suffering. The injection of blood into the old narrative sanctified the South's claim to national independence. Interpreting the hardships of war through this narrative of undeserved oppression, through the logic of Christian suffering, and through the models of nationalism they observed in other parts of the world, white southerners persuaded themselves that their longstanding victimhood was the surest sign of all that they truly deserved national independence.

All of this, generated by the unprecedented demands of war, brought the individual and the nation into closer and more violent contact than ever before. To be sure, such collisions could result in disaffection and rejection. But they could also form the basis for more emotionally intense conceptions of the individual's national responsibility than had previously existed. Of course, Confederates' bid for independence was defeated on the battlefield. But the bonds of blood and sacrifice, created in the crucible of war, would form the foundations of Lost Cause mythology and an enduring white southern identity which continued to see righteousness in oppression, redemption in suffering.

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