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Elizabeth C. (Bess) Dobbs April 14, 2015

“My pen burns to write it:”

Elite Northern and Southern Women’s Words

in the

American Revolution and the Civil War

by

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An abstract of a thesis
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Abstract

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Early America's patriarchy placed white women at the top of the social hierarchy below white men. Examination of these elite women's writings from the American Revolution and the Civil War show these privileged women struggled with the same set of challenges facing all women during wartime's upheaval. Interrogation of these elite white women's letters and diaries detail they wrote from their domestically-assigned roles as wives, mothers, and caretakers of the sick, as well as from fear produced by war. However, I argue that, while the daily life experiences during wartime of elite white Northern women in the American Revolution and elite white Southern women in the Civil War were in unmistakable parallel to each other, they differed significantly from wartime suffering experienced by women of color, free and enslaved, and by white women in lower economic and social ranks, despite an incorrect perception by these privileged women of an equal shared suffering by all women during war. In truth, suffering differed by relative degrees according to class, race, status, and financial means. However, I further argue that, despite the mirrored experiences of the elite white women, there are discrepancies among these two privileged groups of women and their relationship to each war that produced either a proactive or defensive advocacy. In formulating this assertion with evidence gleaned from their letters and diaries, I address how these middle and upper class white women saw themselves in relation to each other and to other women. I also deconstruct critical aspects of their lives, like gender and class, to reconstruct their visions of themselves. Also, I use the elite white women's writings to determine how race in relation to Native Americans and African Americans and the nation also informs the ways these women viewed themselves. My methodology will employ examination and close reading of a series of primary sources—letters, diaries, and slave narratives, and I will place my analysis in the context of secondary literature.

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I am grateful and humbled by your faith in me.

Bess

My pen burns to write it…

—Roxanna Cole, November 2, 1862

Table of Contents

Introduction

In America's early patriarchal society, white men held the established gender of authority and control over women—both free and enslaved—in every aspect of life. White men occupied all designated positions of power—political leadership, moral authority, legal rule, economic command, educational advantage, social privilege, and control of property. Considered superior, white men dominated society and family largely through the subjugation of women. They required women to be submissive, subservient, and relegated to a male-assigned inferior domestic role that centered on home and children. Men defined women. However, this patriarchy constructed a hierarchy not only predicated on gender but also on social and economic status, as well as race, yielding a distinct privileged class of elite white women. While all women were oppressed, elite white women were the least oppressed, with many either having the benefits of servants or slaves, financial means, societal status, and educational access (though admittedly limited). Patriarchal hierarchy favored upper class women—a position many of these women recognized, embraced, and enjoyed.[1]

Yet, even an entrenched and rigidly-ordered patriarchal society is subject to change, and war, probably more than any other human event, has the power to alter life for men and women. Although women are generally not directly involved in the fighting of wars (with some notable exceptions), armed confrontations affect women profoundly because of the disruption of societal structure and convention. Just as importantly, the potential for permanent alteration of political, economic, and social organization changes

[1] Thavolia Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 21.

the status for both men and women—positively or negatively—enslaved black women saw war as an opportunity for freedom while privileged white women viewed emancipation as a loss of their status and wealth. For some women, war brings fear that life will no longer continue as it had previously existed—a dreaded and devastating possibility when the cherished status quo is in jeopardy. For other women, war's concern centers on protecting and advancing their present position, even bringing freedom through a shifting of power and the opening of opportunity. Women are as vested in the outcome of wars as men, viewing a conflict from a defensive or proactive perspective. Women evaluate war's victory or defeat in terms of the ultimate influence on their lives and circumstances—a posture no different from men.

Nevertheless, war is gendered because society defines war in masculine terms. Almost exclusively, men declare wars, and men fight wars. For centuries, the context of being a warrior and going to battle framed masculinity and male service to the state or nation. Men's gender roles call for participation in hostilities as the protectors of home—both state and personal—homes that include their socially-defined "weak" women and children. Action is required to show dominance, manliness, and authority—each evidenced during wartime, just the same as in peacetime. Social dictates assign appropriate behaviors for men, and aggressiveness, hostility, and physical boldness reflect themselves extremely well in soldiers. The military is classic hegemony at work. War focuses on power, the extension of control, and hierarchy—all aspects synonymous with the male-dominated patriarchal structure of Euro-American society.

Far from interrupting or disrupting men's domination, patriarchy's organization

and strict control continues even in war as the upper echelons of men in society initiate and direct battles, and women continue in their domestic realm—stratified by race, class, and economic standing. Yet, women are uncertain if their men's wartime efforts will maintain, improve, or even destroy their world. War involves risk—personally and for society—and many elite white women have documented their understanding of this fact in their own words.

War affects women regardless of social, racial, or economic status. Thus, women experienced America's first two major wars—the American Revolution and the Civil War—in corresponding ways by virtue of the fact that established existence gave way to wartime chaos. War disturbs virtually all aspects of life. Men within families, communities, businesses, farms, and the nation were not present to occupy their positions of dominance. For society to continue to function in the absence of men, women filled the voids. However, despite the fact that women often assumed tasks previously performed by now-absent men, women never left their culturally-assigned domestic roles, regardless of the other activities wartime forced upon them.

Examination of elite white women's writings from the American Revolution and from the Civil War clearly show specific domestic themes, namely that these women definitely wrote from their positions as wives and mothers, continually dealing with childbirth and sickness. Furthermore, elite women's writings demonstrated a commonality of worry and anxiety. Absent men meant a lack of protection of person and property, and war's upheaval disrupted the male power structure. Women, even "respectable women," were subject to personal and sexual violations by enemy troops as

well as their side's rogue soldiers. Wartime initiated fear and opportunity in all women, regardless of status. Importantly, war held the potential of bringing freedom to the oppressed, and in both of these wars, enslaved black men and women and Native Americans experienced war with a sense of possibility.

For elite white women especially, fear went beyond personal safety. The consequences of war's outcome produced anxiety about whether or not their privilege would continue, be expanded, or cease altogether. The system of patriarchy benefited elite white women to such an extent that, even with their subjugation, they advocated keeping its structure in place. It is within this context of preservation or promotion of status that different experiences unfolded for women during the American Revolution and the Civil War. Paradoxically, the colonial revolt of the American Revolution sought to throw off the chains of the British governmental patriarchy, enabling the emergence of a new nation—a nation still organized under the principles of patriarchy and still employing a societal system that oppressed women and promoted racial slavery. Nevertheless, with a new nation, aristocratic Patriot wives and mothers saw a way to stay at the top of their society, perhaps even realizing an advancement of their standing. Continued British rule would do nothing but diminish colonial men, further subjugating them to the Crown, and by association, further suppressing colonial women. For this reason, Patriot women in the North feared the outcome of a British victory over a Patriot defeat. As evidenced in their letters and journals, women of the time realistically evaluated the Revolution's affect, particularly pertinent for white elite women whose men would direct and control the government and economy of the newly-created United States

of America. Women were anxious about what war could do for them and fearful of the consequences of a failed Revolution.

In contrast, Southern white elite women in the Civil War deeply worried that the war's outcome would end their entire way of life. In the South, white men kept especially strong control over white women and slaves. As slavery continued to expand during the antebellum period and white men went to great efforts to maintain hegemony, the male-defined image of the Southern woman came to dominate society—dictating every aspect of a woman's life.[2] Like Northern women in the American Revolution, Southern women during the Civil War lived in a domestic world governed by patriarchy, and elite white women likewise sat at the top of the social hierarchical ladder behind white men. Furthermore, they defined themselves through their domestic duties as wives and mothers, having babies and tending to the sick. However, white Southern women's choice status derived more from race than it did from social position, monetary wealth, or other factors. For the white Southern mistress, her elevated position depended upon the perpetuation of slavery, and her determination to enforce the institution emerges in the growing and startling evidence of the brutality she welded against black women slaves.[3] Confederate men fought for the South's independence to maintain an economic system built on the backs of African American enslavement. The possible loss of slavery no doubt sent chills up the spines of Southern men just as much as it did for Southern women, perhaps even more so. Yes, fear is a part of women's wartime experiences, but for white Southern women, fear expanded to involve the loss of their socially and

[2] Anne Firor Scott, *The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics, 1830-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), x.

[3] Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage*, 30.

economically constructed world of privilege.

Although the personal written records of Northern white Revolutionary women are not as extensive as those of Southern white Civil War women, abundant documentation exists of women's roles, worries, and wartime experiences, and these records bear witness to both the similarities and differences experienced by both groups. Because colonial working-class white women, African American women, and Native American women left few written sources penned during the Revolutionary War and the Civil War, I focus here on elite white educated women of the middle and upper class as they provide a written account of women's lives during these time periods. For the purposes of my analysis, I define educated in terms of a woman's ability to read and write—her ability to craft letters and keep a diary. I use the words from these sources exactly as they were written to stand as evidence of experiences and expectations. Furthermore, I examine Northern women's writings from the American Revolutionary War and those of Southern women during the Civil War. I concentrate only on writings from the time of the respective wars—from the beginning of the conflict to the end—as these women resided in the areas most directly affected by the two wars. I fully acknowledge that the battles of the American Revolution and the Civil War were fought throughout the regions comprising the country at the corresponding times and that white men and women of all classes as well as blacks and Native Americans were involved in the conflicts. However, considering the numerous sources for the group of white Euro-American women of the middle and upper class, I confine my analysis to this group of elite women only.

Therefore, I argue in this thesis that elite white Northern women in the American Revolution and elite white Southern women in the Civil War experienced daily life during wartime in unmistakable parallel. This assertion derives from interrogating the experiences of these relatively protected women in terms of status, race, finances, and having male relatives in positions of power—and finding multiple similarities. Through their letters and diaries, these elite women document a common story of war. There is validation in the assertion that all women struggle with the same set of challenges during wartime, but without question the effect of the struggle varies according to a woman's social position. In comparing and contrasting the similarities and differences between these elite women across time and place, we see a commonality of experiences confirmed through the evidence of letters and diaries detailing their shared roles as wives, mothers, and caretakers of the sick—universal roles for women vastly complicated in times of conflict.

However, I further argue that—despite the mirrored experiences of these two groups of women, the contexts within which these elite women operated during wartime was wholly different from those experienced by women of color, free and enslaved, and by white women in lower economic and social ranks. Moreover, the perceived shared suffering of elite white women actually differed by relative degrees. Elite women may have felt that all women suffered the same, but that was simply not true. Likewise, there are discrepancies among elite white women themselves and their relationship to each war that produce either a proactive or defensive advocacy. Women embraced wartime as either fighting or building for a cause, or they advocated just the opposite in their desire

to maintain the status quo. In formulating this assertion with evidence gleaned from their letters and diaries, I address how these elite white women saw themselves in relation to each other and to other women. I also deconstruct critical aspects of their lives, like gender and class (with status and financial components), to reconstruct their visions of themselves. Also, I use the elite white women's writings to determine how race, in relation to Native Americans and African Americans and the nation also informs the ways these women viewed themselves.

My argument utilizes an interdisciplinary approach by considering the historical, social, psychological, economical, and political impact on women of the American Revolution and the Civil War. My methodology employs the examination and close reading of a series of primary sources—letters, diaries, and slave narratives, and I place my analysis in the context of the secondary literature. For all primary sources, I retain the original spelling and punctuation whenever possible, allowing the women's words to express correlation and community. Wartime for these elite women begins with an understanding of life circumstances, conditions, and challenges that were remarkably similar during the eruption and duration of each of these wars for independence. Likewise, elite women's writings showed a shared view of themselves as privileged by class and race, whether or not they fully recognized the degree and nature of this privilege. However, source examination and deeper analysis brings forth stark differences between elite women of the American Revolution and those of the Civil War in terms of their experiences, motivations, and how they perceived the impact of victory or loss on their own situation.

The following quote succinctly delineates the distinct relationship between white women of the North and South in two monumental wars occurring eighty-six years apart. In late 1864, Dolly Sumner Lunt Burge of Covington, Georgia, made a profound statement about the Civil War experience for women—a statement directly applicable to the women of the American Revolution. In speaking primarily about the many women war refugees, Burge explained, "Every one we meet gives us painful accounts of the desolation of the enemy. Each one has to tell his or her own experience, and fellow-suffering makes us all equal and makes us all feel interested in one another."[4] In the eyes of Dolly Burge, an elite white planter mistress, all women suffered equally in wartime, which was far from true. All women suffered from war but at different levels and in different ways. Additionally, suffering did not make men, women, whites, Native Americans, and African Americans equal in their experiences or equal from their experiences. Burge's mistaken assertion of equality reflects the Revolution's idealized declaration of "equality" and certainly not the South's entrenched slaveholding society that the Confederacy sought so desperately to retain. Despite Burge's incorrect assessment, this mindset of a common shared suffering among all women during war remained a familiar thought among elite women during both wars, evidencing a position of privilege that blinds. Men defined women, but women defined themselves in relation to others. Wartime words demonstrate this contention.

[4] Dolly Sumner Lunt, *Woman's Wartime Journal: An Account of the Passage over a Georgia Plantation of Sherman's Army on the March to the Sea, as Recorded in the Diary of Dolly Sumner Lunt (Mrs. Thomas Burge),* ed. Julian Street (New York: The Century Co., 1918), 41.

Chapter 1

Wartime Letters of Sickness and Fear

The dominant themes of sickness, childbearing, and fear occupied the daily lives of elite white women during the Revolutionary War and the Civil War. Neither wealth nor status could prevent sickness nor ensure safety in childbirth. As with women of color or white women of lower social or economic standing, elite women's lives revolved around caring for sick family members and having children. Because sickness and childbirth so heavily impacted elite women, their writings contain a preponderance of references to these subjects. While routine chores like cooking, cleaning, washing, and sewing could be accomplished by servants or slaves, childbearing and dealing with illness shaped the lives of all women, regardless of race or class. Letters and diaries written by Northern women in the Revolutionary War and by Southern women during the Civil War indicate that these elite women viewed their life positions primarily from their perspective as wives and mothers. Even with the onset of war, these basic female roles endured, as the accompanying component of fear magnified amid growing hostilities as men engaged in two pivotal struggles for independence, the first from British Rule, the second from the Union itself.

The American Revolution and the Civil War were similar in many ways. Without doubt, these conflicts are two of the most important wars in the history of the United States of America. Without the occurrence of both wars as an ultimate unifying force, the United States would not have formed a country, nor would it have essentially had to

reform itself after the threat of division into two separate countries. Likewise, the American Revolution and the Civil War are technically both civil wars since countrymen fought against countrymen. Interestingly, many white Southerners of the early 1860s referred to the Civil War as the "present revolution."[1] Furthermore, individuals in both the North and South looked back to the Revolution for military examples, diplomatic ideas, and patriotic inspiration.[2] While men dominated both wars in terms of military involvement and impact, women's daily lives reflected life and death struggles as well as the potential of sometimes being directly entangled in armed conflicts. Close examination of these letters and diaries reveals Revolutionary Northern women's experiences of battling disease epidemics and frequent childbirth shared remarkable resemblances to the experiences of Southern women of the Civil War. These two pivotal times marked a familiar path for women, separated by years—but not by experiences, despite differences in each war's ultimate goal and in the geography and economic infrastructure of the North and South.

Geography played a key role in determining the economies that affected women's everyday lives, and these regional attributes proved important as the American Revolution and the Civil War unfolded. Due to its smaller geographic area and closeness of the population, the North experienced greater and more pronounced economic development, including urban growth and industrial expansion. The vast landscape and climate of the South, on the other hand, contributed to the formation of a plantation-type

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[1] James M. McPherson, *Abraham Lincoln and the Second American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 3.

[2] Nina Silber, *Daughters of the Union: Northern Women Fight the Civil War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 18.

economy that produced a scattered and isolated white population. Even by the beginning of the Civil War, the South remained largely rural, had less infrastructure such as roads, and remote plantations placed many people great distances from communities and neighbors. Large-scale agriculture dependent on slave labor dominated the Southern economy.[3] Consequently, elite Southern white women relied on slave labor for their wealth and status. Geographic and economic factors directly influenced all women, not just the elite, as women's specific circumstances unfolded at a time and manner depending on their location. Proximity to population and resources proved to be beneficial whereas distance was detrimental—whether in times of war or peace and particularly for women in their domestic roles as they dealt with the trials of everyday life.

Patriarchal society in both the eighteenth and nineteenth century dictated that women's main tasks were looking after their children and family members, and for most women, this was their primary concern. Women saw themselves as wives and mothers first. Elite women also saw themselves as homemakers even if they were not the primary ones doing the work.[4] Sickness and childbirth affected women of all races and classes. However, white elite women's wealth could give them access to medicine and supposed treatments and cures, but even this access could not save them from succumbing to disease or fatal complications from childbirth.

Women remained at home largely because of their duties, be they endless

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[3] James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom the Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 6-7.

[4] Thavolia Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 22-23.

household chores, many pregnancies, nursing infants, and caring for their children.[5] Distance held a certain risk for women. Living far away from a city or even a neighbor was dangerous for a pregnant woman or a woman who had just given birth.[6] She would have no assistance, and if she became ill, she would not be able to enlist the help of a midwife or physician. Despite more development in the North, sickness knew no boundaries and occurred in both the North and the South. Women had to know how to care for sickness, tend to the ill, and help each other with childbirth. In many aspects, early American women had to develop a level of self-sufficiency. Illness showed no mercy in the colonies, and colonists faced a plethora of life-threatening illnesses. Many people "perished from epidemics of dysentery, smallpox, and throat distemper," as well as numerous other diseases.[7] A shortage of doctors further complicated everyday life. Some small towns in rural areas did not have a resident physician, and it was entirely possible that one city might have "the only doctor available for many miles around."[8]

Northern Women's Letters in the Time of Revolution

Colonists faced a myriad of life-threatening illnesses. By the time of the American Revolution, medicine "had made little progress since the landing of the Pilgrims," and "surgical instruments were primitive."[9] In addition, anesthesia had not been invented, making surgery difficult and painful. Smallpox, yellow fever, and other diseases were rampant in the colonies. In 1776, Mercy Otis Warren received a letter

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[5] Marylynn Salmon, "The Limits of Independence: 1760-1800," in *No Small Courage: A History of Women in the United States,* ed. Nancy F. Cott (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 119.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Elizabeth Evans, *Weathering the Storm: Women of the American Revolution* (New York: Scribner, 1975), 34.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid., 23.

written on July 8 from Hannah Winthrop in Boston stating, "The reigning subject is the smallpox."[10] Correspondence quite frequently discussed the ever-present diseases. Winthrop also related to Warren that "men, women and children eagerly crowding to inoculate" themselves from smallpox had become a common site in Boston.[11] In an effort to prevent the dreaded smallpox disease, "inoculation centers were set up in every major city, using the primitive method of puncturing the skin with live virus."[12] George Washington was instrumental in establishing smallpox inoculation centers to help prevent further spreading of the disease.[13] The desperate colonists actively searched for cures and preventatives to increase their chance of survival.

All women witnessed painful family losses. Learning to deal with death was a life lesson taught to each person during the frequent epidemics. However, death struck some families harder than others, and their loss was absolutely devastating and occurred in a very short length of time. While cities certainly held business and social advantages, cities often held higher risks of contracting diseases due to having great numbers of people crowding into areas with low levels of cleanliness. The lack of sanitation in cities helped promote and perpetuate diseases. The lack of hygiene was also a major factor in spreading diseases.[14] Mercy Otis Warren wrote her husband on September 21, 1775, to inform him that the children were well during this "sickly season" in Plymouth.[15] Warren

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[10] Ibid., 24.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Bruce Chadwick, *James and Dolley Madison: America's First Power Couple* (Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books, 2014), 36.
[14] Evans, *Weathering the Storm*, 24.
[15] Lisa Grunwald and Stephen J. Adler, *Women's Letters: America from the Revolutionary War to the Present* (New York: Dial Press, 2005), 23.

referred to the smallpox epidemic as the "sickly season" with good reason. With many outbreaks of diseases, family members constantly inquired about the health and wellbeing of relatives. Abigail Adams wrote to her husband, John Adams, on October 9, 1775, informing him that "we have yet great sickness in the town."[16] Epidemics waged lengthy wars on the immune systems of colonists. Adams inquired what many people of the era must have wanted to know, and that was "How long, O Lord, shall the whole land say, I am sick!"[17] She displayed her faith and gave praise to God when she proclaimed, "Blessed be the Father of mercies, all our family are now well."[18] Recovery from a disease was indeed a triumph and a great relief for loved ones. Abigail Adams acknowledged to her husband that despite having to endure an environment of sickness, she had "many blessings left, many comforts to be thankful for and rejoice in," and that she was "not left to mourn as one without hope" like so many others of the time.[19] Women and their families led a precarious life at the time, with deadly contagions constantly lurking and ready to strike.

Sickness spread far and wide in the colonies and was often the topic of conversation in letters and duly recorded in diaries and journals, and elite women played a critical role in documenting the concerns and occurrences. Death was a far too common reality, and men and women both looked at religion as a way to cope with such life-changing situations. Faith was often reflected in women's personal writings. With a

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[16]Abigail Smith Adams, "Letter from Abigail Smith Adams to John Adams, October 09, 1775," in *Familiar Letters of John Adams and Abigail Adams During the Revolution,* ed. Charles Francis (New York: Hurd & Houghton, 1876), 105.

[17] Ibid., 106.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid.

shortage of doctors, successful medicines, and sound medical knowledge, faith allowed people an outlet of hope in bleak situations. In the forefront and frequently alone, women confronted health conditions and death, and faith sustained many in the face of often uncertain and tragic outcomes.

Women commonly gave birth to a child only to repeat the process again and again. The average woman "spent almost all of her married life either in pregnancy or in nursing children, half of whom died before reaching the age of ten."[20] Most women gave birth at home with the help of a midwife but occasionally enlisted the services of a doctor.[21] Life was severe for women during this time, even for elite women as they too, faced the many dangers of childbirth.

Death was ever present during the Revolution. Surviving childbirth and living "to become a mother and grandmother many times over" was said to have marked the fulfillment of women's highest destiny and that they had obeyed God, having been blessed with good health.[22] This thought is understandable since childbirth often resulted in the death of the mother or child. If a woman and her children survived to continue on further generations, typically their strong faith led them to the conclusion that they were fortunate in health. As historian, Marylynn Salmon has documented, many middle and upper class women "earned respect and authority through motherhood" and midwifery within their respective communities.[23] Women who had obtained some type of medical knowledge of illnesses or childbirth as healers or midwives became a valuable asset to

[20] Evans, *Weathering the Storm*, 20.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Salmon, "The Limits of Independence," 117.
[23] Ibid.

their families, neighbors, and community. Childbirth was a life-threatening factor for all women during the Revolutionary War, and this aspect of women's lives would remain the same during the Civil War, as well.

Southern Women's Civil War Letters and Diaries

Despite the passage of almost eighty years, women in the Civil War South dealt with the same health situations and similar living conditions as Northern women had addressed as the American Revolutionary War came to a close. The agricultural landscape of the largely rural South lacked the many conveniences of the urban, industrialized North. Large families were still common in the Civil War South, and as historian Tracy J. Revels writes: "Southern women had higher birth rates and twice the maternal mortality rates of their counterparts in New England and the Middle Atlantic states" in the 1860s.[24] Considerable distances separated women living on vast plantations from other women neighbors. Remote homesteads meant that doctors could not reach patients quickly and easily, especially in the case of pregnant women who required immediate attention. A lack of infrastructure such as decent roads proved an obstacle for visiting neighbors and physicians during times of sickness and childbirth. As Revels notes, at the time the Civil War broke out, Southern white women answered to the "demands of a society that resembled the self-sufficient colonial world of their grandmothers more than the market-oriented landscape of their Northern peers."[25] The Civil War South was very similar to the North during the American Revolution, particularly in terms of the material and medical realities of women's lives.

[24] Tracy J. Revels, *Grander in Her Daughters: Florida's Women during the Civil War* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2004), 4.

[25] Ibid., 3.

Since the Civil War South was still largely rural, plantation mistresses still needed to know how to prepare a number of different types of remedies including tonics and medicines, change dressings, apply plasters and poultices, and deliver babies.[26] Medicine and its practice remained extremely limited. For example, Louisiana Burge's May 1861, diary entry reveals she "was taken sick with the whooping-cough," and her cough "grew worse instead of better" with "chills and fever."[27] Since a whooping-cough cure had yet to be invented and as doctors lacked concrete medical knowledge, "various remedies were tried," but she "received little if any benefit from them."[28] Failure to cure illnesses effectively was not from lack of trying on the part of physicians. Medicine had not advanced much in the antebellum years. Some slaveholders even relied on the herbal knowledge of their black women slaves, yet they refused "to grant slave women the kinds of medical authority attributed to white practitioners, male or female."[29]

Just as in the Revolutionary War era, elite women in the Civil War era also "were expected to be nurturing, maternal wives and mothers."[30] Likewise, nursing was still a necessary role for these women—helping the ill, the wounded, and expecting mothers. Women "bore responsibility for nursing sick family members."[31] Women still had to cope with childbirth and many of the same illnesses that had plagued the American Revolutionary period. As during the Revolution, the Civil War brought the stark realities

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[26] Harriet Sigerman, "An Unfinished Battle: 1848-1865," in *No Small Courage: A History of Women in the United States,* ed. Nancy F. Cott (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 265.

[27] Louisiana Burge, "Diary of Louisiana Burge, May, 1861," in *Louisiana Burge: The Diary of a Confederate College Girl,* ed. Richard B. Harwell (Savannah, GA: Georgia Historical Society, 1952), 151.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Sharla M. Fett, *Working Cures: Healing, Health, and Power on Southern Slave Plantations* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 134.

[30] Sigerman, "An Unfinished Battle," 239.

[31] Ibid., 265.

of war to women who had never experienced wartime firsthand. Susan Bradford Eppes of Florida wrote in her diary in December of 1862 that she and other women had "been through so much of grief and horror" and "so much nursing, too."[32] Women were overwhelmed by war and disease both occurring simultaneously. Eppes spoke of "making one cooling poultice after another," and like any woman caring for the ill, she admitted "wondering all the while if anything would ever help the poor sufferer."[33] Nursing was necessary, yet it was also an emotional strain for women.

Smallpox as well as numerous outbreaks of various diseases such as dysentery, typhoid fever, cholera, and malaria had not disappeared in the North or South by the time the Civil War occurred. Diseases were still rampant, and women dealt with constant suffering and death. Historian Carol Berkin asserts that Jefferson Davis and his wife, Varina Howell Davis, as well as numerous others around them, experienced many episodes of poor health because they "lived in the humid, hot incubator for malaria and dysentery known as the Cotton Belt."[34] The South's climate was conducive to large mosquito populations, and malaria was a tremendous danger to the health of Southerners.

The threat of disease remained constant for all. Infancy brought great worry, and "no mother assumed she could safely navigate her baby's way through the threat of dysentery, scarlet fever, or whooping cough" as well as measles, mumps and smallpox.[35] Shortly before Varina Davis' infant son died, she tended to him as his face became

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[32] Susan Bradford Eppes, "Diary of Susan Bradford Eppes, December, 1862," in *Through Some Eventful Years* (Macon, GA: Press of the J.W. Burke Co., 1926), 188.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Carol Ruth Berkin, *Civil War Wives: The Lives and Times of Angelina Grimké Weld, Varina Howell Davis, and Julia Dent Grant* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009), 119.

[35] Ibid., 145.

covered in sore blisters, which left his face "a perfect mat of scabs."[36] Mothers endured the painful task of caring for their sick children through the effects of an illness. Again, disease struck anyone—children, adults, men, and women. Mothers became exhausted from caring for their sick and crying infants, always with a fear of their child dying. On Christmas day of 1862, Eppes stated that "Cousin Martha died yesterday" and "Aunt Sue is in trouble, for little Mary Eliza is sick unto death" with typhoid pneumonia.[37] Disease knew no boundaries. It robbed people of their lives or the lives of loved ones and destroyed the joys of the holiday season by replacing them with grief. Saddest of all was watching a baby struggle and die, and women were the ones who had to muster great strength and faith to stand this ordeal. Sickness was a part of life, and with sickness, death was a real possibility and in many cases, a definite outcome—especially among enslaved black women whose living conditions and access to nutrition were poor.[38] Consequently, religion was a sustaining force for women in both the Revolutionary era as well as the Civil War era to cope with the relentlessness of illness, childbirth, and death. Women's letters and diaries reflected their strong faith and the understanding that life could not be taken for granted.

No one living at the time was truly safe from sickness. Epidemics spread throughout the South during the Civil War, and contracting a disease was very likely. Times of illness served for many as times of reflection on their lives and deeds. At the time, contracting a disease produced great fear, and people, especially women, clung to

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[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid., 191.
[38] Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work and the Family, from Slavery to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), 18-19.

their religious faith. In October of 1865, Catherine Edmondston of North Carolina fell ill once again, "but thanks to a merciful God," she wrote that she had "now recovered & am able once more to enjoy *Life.*"[39] In the midst of ravaging diseases, expressions of thankfulness accompanied good health, and continuing or returning to a state of wellness deserved sincere praise. Christian beliefs placed this praise with the Lord. In her diary, Edmondston asked God to "grant that a sense of His mercies may henceforth follow me & that hereafter my daily life may show forth His praise!"[40]

Despite their privileges, elite Southerners proved no match for the South's prevailing diseases. In January of 1865, Eliza Frances Andrews stated, "I am just getting well of measles, and a rough time I had of it."[41] Living conditions in the midst of war proved hard, and sickness compounded these difficulties. After recovering, Andrews concluded that "measles is no such small affair after all, especially when aggravated by perpetual alarms of Yankee raiders."[42] For Southern elite white women, disease and the war's interruption threatened their lives, just as the Yankees they wrote about as "dreadful" and "intruding" invaded their homeland.

Mistresses oversaw the wellbeing of their families and the running of their households by directing the work of women slaves. Most white slave owners showed little concern for the health of their slaves.[43] Plantation women relied on slaves for

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[39] Catherine Ann Devereux Edmondston, "Diary of Catherine Ann Edmonston, October, 1865," in *Journal of a Secesh Lady: The Diary of Catherine Ann Devereux Edmondston 1860-1866,* eds. Beth G. Crabtree and James W. Patton (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Division of Archives and History, 1979), 717.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Eliza Frances Andrews, "Diary of Eliza Frances Andrews, January, 1865," in *The War-Time Journal of a Georgia Girl 1864-1865,* ed. Spencer B. King, Jr. (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1908), 63.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage,* 44.

childcare. Enlisting slave women for childcare decreased the daily work burden for elite white women but not the physical risk of bearing children. Octavia Stephens exclaimed in 1862 that childbirth "is horrible, horrible, horrible," and Lizzie Neblett wrote in 1863 that she had a "constant & never ceasing horror" of childbearing which lessened with the absence of her husband during the war.[44] This burden, along with the perils of wartime destruction and death, could sometimes be assuaged by religious faith. Leila Callaway revealed her faith when she wrote to her husband in 1862 that with the help of "my Heavenly Father," she safely delivered their son, Morgan.[45] Georgiana Freeman Gholson Walker wrote in her diary in December of 1864, shortly after she gave birth to her child, and expressed "Thanks to kind Providence, I have thus far, passed safely through my troubles."[46] Indeed Callaway and Walker realized they had been very fortunate with their good health. Childbirth and infant mortality rates were high for all women in the South, and wealth and status did little to calm anxiety, even if it created more privileged places in which to give birth. War only served to add increased trepidation.

Documenting Fear North and South

With constant worry and grief over sickness and births, elite women knew war would only make their lives more difficult. As wives and mothers, they feared that war would exacerbate the existing challenges they faced. Sickness was scarier in war as there was less availability of medicine, food, and other resources. Elite women were also afraid

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[44] Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 124.

[45] Ibid., 129.

[46] Georgiana Freeman Gholson Walker, "Diary of Georgiana Freeman Walker, December, 1864," in *Private Journal of Georgiana Gholson Walker, 1862-1865: With Selections from the Post-War Years, 1865-1876,* ed. Dwight F. Henderson (Tuscaloosa, AL: Confederate Publishing, 1963), 115.

that war would render them unable to continue to care for their loved ones—or that war would create more problems for them. Despite bringing the prospect of freedom to the enslaved, war brought fear to all women—white and black and Native American, rich and poor, enslaved and free. However, in the turmoil of war, elite women who could read and write had the unique advantage of being able to communicate with loved ones through letters and to document in written words their apprehensions about military conflict, disease, childbearing, and loneliness. All women feared physical assaults by soldiers, and upper class women in both the Revolution and the Civil War feared that their way of life would be changed for the worse or completely disappear—either with the death of a male relative or with military defeat and a loss of status.[47] In addition to writing about their fears of assault, rape, and death, women who had known the best society could offer wrote anguished letters about not wanting to lose their coveted positions of status.

Mary Gould Almy, a Loyalist of Rhode Island worried about the safety of her Patriot soldier husband. She disclosed in her diary, "I shut myself from the family, to implore Heaven to protect you, and keep you from imprisonment and death."[48] In private, Almy turned to prayer in hopes that the Lord would shield her husband from any danger. Greatly concerned, Almy admitted, "Every dejected look, and every melancholy countenance I saw, I trembled for fear they would say, your husband lies among the slain, or that he is wounded and a prisoner."[49] A paranoid Almy began reading the facial

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[47] Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage*, 129-130.

[48] Mary Gould Almy, "Diary of Mary Gould Almy, August, 1778," in Mrs. Almy's Journal: Siege of Newport, R.I., August 1778 (Newport, RI: Newport Historical Pub. Co., 1881), 34.

[49] Ibid..

expressions of family members and visitors in an attempt to prepare herself in case they brought bad news. Almy did not support the war because she knew her husband would want to serve in the military. His service would cause her great anxiety and could cost her and their children a comfortable life were he to be killed or badly injured since she would then be forced to be the provider for the family—a role that she felt completely unprepared to play. Patriarchy purposely positioned women to be dependent, but war pushed wives and mothers into the responsibility of ensuring the survival of their families, from providing shelter and clothing as well as food, which was critical to existence and often difficult to obtain in wartime.

Elite women did not personally plant or harvest crops, but they relied on each year's harvest to provide food for the table. Elizabeth Porter Phelps of Massachusetts commented in her diary in 1775 on what she considered to be an impending food shortage for her area. Phelps detailed, "Extremely dry we are here and there was a frost last Tuesday night which has cut down almost all the corn hereabouts, the most severe one I suppose ever known at this season of the year."[50] Men, women, and children all depended on food crops to sustain them. While worrying about themselves and their loved ones living through the war, women also had to be concerned about providing food for their families. War was not the only danger women feared; drought and cold spells could prove devastating to the food supply. In pondering the expected major crop failure, a disparaged Phelps wrote, "We are a distressed people."[51] Compounding natural

[50] Elizabeth Porter Phelps, "Diary of Elizabeth Porter Phelps, April, 1775," in Under a Colonial Roof-Tree: Fireside Chronicles of Early New England, ed. Arria Sargent Huntington (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1891), 50.

[51] Ibid.

disasters that affected a woman's access to food, war diverted and diminished critical supplies.

Shortages of supplies such as food, materials, and fire wood plagued the entire civilian population during both the Revolutionary War and the Civil War. In late 1777, a distraught Elizabeth Drinker of Pennsylvania stated, "Provisions of all kinds grow daily more scarce."[52] In hard economic times, women had to form a strategy of how they would provide for themselves, their children, and any servants they might have. Women also had to be forward-thinking to ensure they had adequate supplies for the entire winter to keep their families warm. Pillaging troops compounded the stressful situation. When Hessian troops invaded Elizabeth Drinker's Pennsylvania community, an outraged Drinker exclaimed, "The Hessians go on plundring at a great rate, such things as, Wood, Potatoes, Turnips &c—Provisions are scarce among us."[53] Distraught, Drinker wrote in her diary, "Wood is so very scarce, that unless thing[s] mend there is no likelyhood of a Supply."[54] Desperate soldiers spared no regard for women and children left with much less food to eat and wood to stay warm. Even elite women and their children faced the threat of starvation and cold. Although not the case in many instances, wealth might give upper class women an advantage in hard economic times and shortages, but money could do nothing to spare crops from a devastating cold spell or from plundering soldiers, nor could money buy supplies when none were available for purchase.

Having numerous sick and injured soldiers stationed nearby one's home proved to

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[52]Elizabeth Sandwith Drinker, "Diary of Elizabeth Sandwith Drinker, November, 1777," in *The Diary of Elizabeth Drinker, vol.1,* ed. Elaine Forman Crane (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1991), 252.

[53] Ibid., 250.

[54] Ibid., 251-252.

be a risk to many women—even elites. Though some like Margaret Hill Morris, a Quaker, would argue that offering help to a sick or wounded soldier would have been an act of compassion and Christian duty, caring for soldiers depleted personal and limited provisions that hungry innocent children relied upon. Furthermore, an observant Morris noted, "Several of the Soldiers who were brought into Town Sick, have died, & it is feard the disorder by which they were affected, is infectious."[55] In addition to the emotional burden of caring for the sick and wounded, war made women face an extra fear—the fear of acquiring disease from nursing the ill or by being in the vicinity of the infected. Upper class women like Morris were at risk from healthy soldiers assaulting them and from sick soldiers who unconsciously passed along diseases.

As the American Revolution escalated over time, greater fear developed regarding attacks by soldiers on women and their families. Eliza Farmar of Pennsylvania recounted past events in Philadelphia in 1777 around the time of the Battle of Trenton, stating that many residents "have been stripd of all and turned out of doors and their houses burnt before their faces and some thretend to be burnt in them."[56] She recalled, "The first of our troubles began a little before the Affair at Trent Town when it was said they [soldiers] were comeing to Philadelphia and that the Soldiers were to have three days plunder which put every body into such terror & confution [confusion]."[57] Philadelphia was in chaos as the residents, especially the elite, decided hurriedly to flee the city to escape loose soldiers intent on pillaging. High status and money could not always protect a

[55] Margaret Hill Morris, "Diary of Margaret Hill Morris, January, 1777," in Margaret Morris, Her Journal, ed. John W. Jackson (Philadelphia: G.S. MacManus, 1949), 64.

[56] Eliza Farmar, "Letter from Eliza Farmar, December 04, 1783," in Letters of Eliza Farmar to Her Nephew (Philadelphia: Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1916), 205.

[57] Ibid.

woman and her children from enemy or rogue soldiers, and Eliza Farmar fully realized this fact. If anything, wealth made women a target as soldiers assumed they would find valuables in the homes of upper class women. Likewise, Abigail Adams recounted the war activity in Boston as she described, "Many buildings in town sustained great damages," and "the furniture of many houses was carried off or broken in pieces."[58] When soldiers raided homes, they often destroyed any valuable items that they could not take with them. Soldiers simply took what they needed without any regard for the great inconveniences they caused for women and children. In referring to the British, a disgusted Abigail Adams informed her husband that "among the soldiers, is a spirit of malice and revenge; there is no true courage and bravery to be observed among them."[59] War continued to create numerous dangers and uncertainties.

Dread filled women as they anticipated soldier encounters. Margaret Hill Morris of Burlington, New Jersey, learned that "a large number of Hessians were advancing, and would be in the town" very soon with a "number, as we heard, of 4 or 500."[60] For a woman alone with her children and having had many of her neighbors and friends leave town, facing hundreds of Hessians would have been quite intimidating. To complicate her situation, Morris and other women had heard "the dreadful Hessians were said to be 'playing the very mischief.'"[61] Based on this rumor, she rightfully feared their arrival.

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[58] Abigail Smith Adams, "Letter from Abigail Smith Adams to John Adams, April 14, 1776" in Familiar Letters of John Adams and Abigail Adams During the Revolution, ed. Charles Francis Adams (New York: Hurd & Houghton, 1876), 156.

[59] Abigail Smith Adams, "Letter from Abigail Smith Adams to John Adams, July 16, 1775," in Letters of Mrs. Adams, The Wife of John Adams, 3rd ed., vol.1, ed. Charles Francis Adams (Boston: Little, Brown, & Co., 1841), 53.

[60] Margaret Hill Morris, "Diary of Margaret Hill Morris, December, 1776," in *Private Journal Kept during the Revolutionary War* (New York: Privately published, 1869), 7.

[61] Ibid., 14.

For many wealthy Loyalist women, their situation was precarious as the American army seized property owned by Tories during the Revolution. Because her husband blatantly identified himself as a Loyalist, the American government confiscated Grace Growden Galloway's home upon the conviction of her husband for treason.[62] Since a married woman could not own property, Galloway had no legal power to control the land despite her wealth. Even though she had not committed treason, since husbands represented their wives politically, Galloway had to suffer because of her husband's actions. Loyalists or people associated with Loyalists had a lot to lose. Because of the war, elite women stood the chance to lose their peace of mind, male relatives involved in the conflict, food, wood supplies, belongings, their entire home, and perhaps their way of life.

For all women, war brought tremendous risk and unprecedented endangerment. The threat of soldiers created a tremendous strain. When French battleships neared the Newport harbor, Mary Almy confided her fears in her diary and stated, "I lay down, earnestly praying they would never come so near."[63] Almy spoke for all women in her community of Newport when she declared, "The sound of a cannon, most distressing to women and children."[64] All women lived at risk of being harmed either physically by men or by artillery fire if they were nearby occurring battles. Sheltering her children from the dangerous cannon fire, Almy and her family remained huddled in their home listening to the loud exchange of artillery and believing that it was highly possible that the French soldiers stationed off the Newport coast would come ashore and attack the residents of

[62] Evans, *Weathering the Storm*, 3.
[63] Almy, "Diary of Mary Gould Almy, August, 1778," 20.
[64] Ibid., 22.

the city. Mary Almy described the situation from a mother's point of view, stating, "Neither sleep to my eyes, nor slumber to my eyelids, this night; but judge you, what preparation could I make, had I been endowed with as much presence of mind as ever woman was; six children hanging around me, the little girls crying out, "Mamma, will they kill us?"[65] One can only imagine how terrifying this event would be to a small child, as well as to a mother, knowing she could do nothing to stop the cannons from firing or the soldiers from attacking. Not only did the war impact women, it also greatly frightened children too.

Sleepless from Worry

In December of 1777, Elizabeth Drinker recorded a series of frightening incidents. Drinker recounted, that one night, "about one o'clock I heard a noise" and "look'd out of the Window and saw 2 Men in the Alley, who went out of sight."[66] The next night, Drinker wrote, "We were a little fright'n'd before 11 o'clock by seeing 2 fellows peeping" into my neighbor's window.[67] War placed all women in physical peril as well as psychological strain. For the third night in a row, Drinker again reported that "last night about 11 o'clock when we were going to Bed, we saw 2 Soliders in the Ally, standing by the Fence"[68] With such unnerving happenings, women like Drinker existed in a recurring state of fear and anxiety. Drinker felt certain that it was the same two men who crept outside her and her neighbor's houses late at night. After these two incidences,

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[65] Ibid.

[66] Elizabeth Sandwith Drinker, "Diary of Elizabeth Sandwith Drinker, December, 1777," in *The Diary of Elizabeth Drinker, vol.1,* ed. Elaine Forman Crane (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1991), 264.

[67] Ibid.

[68] Ibid.

Drinker understandably admitted, "I often feel afraid to go to Bed."[69] Drinker was well aware that there was no decent excuse for two strange men to be constantly loitering around her house so late in the night. For women alone with their children, they justifiably feared the actions of rogue soldiers.

Even though the nightly incidents with the two soldiers lurking around Drinker's home ceased days later, a terrified Drinker admitted, "Every noise now seems alarming, that happns in the Night."[70] Drinker worried about the safety of her absent husband, while simultaneously fearing about the safety of herself and her children at home. Without her husband at home and having had three encounters with two potentially dangerous men wandering about her property, Drinker became paranoid of the soldiers coming back for a fourth time—not knowing if they would attempt anything more than looking in yard and windows. One cannot blame Drinker for her fear of noises in the night. Though the prowling soldiers did not steal from or physically harm Elizabeth Drinker, they certainly took her peace of mind. Although not on the battlefield, elite women nonetheless battled their own fears of wartime.

Mercy Otis Warren wrote about the effects of war on women. She boldly drew attention to the dangers posed by British and American soldiers and the vulnerability of women. In 1779, Warren recounted the events of the British in New Haven, Connecticut, where "'hapless females' fell victim to the wanton and riotous appetites of Governor

[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid., 269.

Tryon's troops."[71] Even before the war, women had always been at the mercy of men's advances, but the occurrence of war made their situations worse. Women worried about all the uncertainties of wartime, and their anxiety repeatedly proved both understandable and justifiable.

Elite Southern Women's Fears

Northern Revolutionary and Southern Civil War women faced fears that were similar and those that were regionally specific. Elite Northern women of the American Revolution held a fear of soldiers—mainly of the enemy. Upper class women of the Civil War South feared assaults from Union soldiers and at the same time worried about slave insurrections, uprisings, and the loss of the region's enslaved workforce.[72] Slaves who viewed Union soldiers as an army of liberation refused to work without cash wages or ran away to Union lines. Without workers, elite Southern women could no longer operate their plantations—their wealth and status would be gone. At the mercy of soldiers and slaves, one could argue that plantation women brought on these dangers themselves due to the fact that they actively perpetuated bondage—not infrequently in harsh and sometimes extreme ways.[73] The Civil War, which held the promise of freedom for the enslaved, threatened to upend the security of those elite white women who had depended on and benefitted from slavery throughout their lives. Southern white women of means described these fears in their wartime letters and diaries. These writings documented their views about the wartime world in which they lived between 1860-1865. The fears,

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[71] Susan Branson, "From Daughters of Liberty to Women of the Republic: American Women in the Era of the American Revolution," in *The Practice of U.S. Women's History*: Narratives, *Intersections, and Dialogues,* eds. S. Jay Kleinberg, Eileen Boris, and Vicki L. Ruiz (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers), 52.

[72] Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage,* 129.

[73] Ibid., 123.

frustrations, angers, concerns, and the tribulations they detailed vary from one individual to the next. A select few of these women demonstrated remarkable bravery and courage, learned new skills, and considered new beliefs and ideas. Most others defended a status quo that depended on slavery and oppression, gave way to their fears, pitied themselves, and refused to adapt pragmatically to the extraordinary times in which they lived. Reactions to wartime by elite white women took varied forms across a broad spectrum of response and resilience. One hundred and fifty years later, the words these women wrote detail a powerful narrative of war from the perspective of the white elite.

In May of 1861, Elizabeth Lomax reflected on her life at the outbreak of the war and stated, "Never in my life have I been so surrounded by such a complication of unfortunate circumstances as at the present time" with "the country riven with dissensions."[74] Only a month into the war, in May of 1861, Lomax assessed her situation and stated that she was "obliged to forsake my home, to scatter my children, some here, some there, to know that my darling son is in constant danger, to endure poverty, to see armed men everywhere knowing that they are the enemies of my own people, and never knowing the outcome of this frightful war."[75] Overwhelmed by the chaos and struck with emotion, Lomax concluded by saying, "I feel *desolated.*"[76] Lomax like so many other Southern women worried about the safety of their soldier sons and husbands as well as the safety of themselves and their remaining family. At many points during the war, life for Confederate women looked bleak, as it had for Revolutionary women. Judith

[74] Elizabeth Lindsay Lomax, "Diary of Elizabeth Lindsay Lomax, May, 1861," in Leaves from an Old Washington Diary, ed. Lindsay Lomax Wood (New York: Books, Inc., 1943), 153.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid.

McGuire of Virginia learned that many in her area had “fears of famine” as the Confederacy experienced severe food shortages.[77] From so many sources, fear characterized women’s lives during war, adding to the normal concerns of being a wife and mother.

The constant state of war worry caused women to dread and doubt their futures. Sarah Dawson of Louisiana remarked, “I look forward to my future life with a shudder.”[78] Desperate times had arrived for Southern women. In July of 1862, the war was barely a year old. Sarah Dawson had been told that "better days are coming," however she remarked, “I am getting skeptical,” and “I don't see the light yet.”[79] Indeed, much destruction would follow in the years ahead. Dawson was absolutely correct when she stated that she did not believe that the conflict would soon come to a rest—a sentiment shared by Revolutionary women as that war stretched across eight years.

A Different Type of Loyalist

Elite women’s experiences during America’s two wars for independence produced clear and definite parallels on numerous levels, but some of these parallels proved particularly striking in their almost exact reoccurrence. During both the American Revolution and the Civil War, women with ties to the opposing side faced hostile and devastating consequences—sometimes regardless of their own sentiments. Looked upon with suspicion and often harassed, both American Revolution Loyalists and Unionists

[77] Judith White Brockenbrough McGuire, “Diary of Judith White Brockenbrough McGuire, March, 1863,” in Diary of a Southern Refugee During the War, 3d ed. (Richmond, VA: J.W. Randolph & English, 1889), 197.

[78] Sarah Ida Fowler Morgan Dawson, “Diary of Sarah Fowler Morgan Dawson, July, 1862,” in A Confederate Girl's Diary: Sarah Morgan Dawson, ed. Warrington Dawson (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1913), 104.

[79] Ibid.

living in the South during the Civil often had to flee for their safety. Just as Grace Growden Galloway had her house confiscated during the American Revolution because her husband was a Loyalist, Elizabeth Lomax had her deceased husband's pension confiscated by the U.S. government since she resided in the secessionist state of Virginia. Lomax wrote the grim news in her diary, "The Secretary of the Interior has decided that all persons from the seceded states shall not be allowed to draw their pensions—our only means of support at the present moment."[80] Since her husband's death, widow Elizabeth Lomax had comfortably maintained herself and her seven children with the pension. Without this source of economic support, she would be forced to take measures to provide for her family.

In October of 1863, Judith McGuire of Virginia recounted, "Our dear friend Mrs. S. has just heard of the burning of her house, at beautiful Chantilly. The Yankee officers had occupied it as head-quarters, and on leaving it, set fire to every house on the land."[81] Mrs. S's house, like Revolutionary-era Grace Growden Galloway's house, had been confiscated and used as headquarters of the Union Army. In response to the Yankees' treatment of Mrs. S., an outraged McGuire shouted, "Such ruthless Vandalism do they commit wherever they go!"[82] Wealth could not prevent an elite woman from being forced from her home. War suspended expected actions and reactions and caused women of both war times to live in states of uneasiness, agitation, and overwhelming apprehension. Elite women, used to commanding their households, could not control the circumstances of

[80] Lomax, "Diary of Elizabeth Lindsay Lomax, May, 1861," 156.
[81] McGuire, "Diary of Judith White Brockenbrough McGuire, March, 1863," 198.
[82] Ibid.

their lives in the grip of war. Yet, as their letters and diaries attest, most had no choice but to try.

War tested the astuteness and judgment of elite women to provide for themselves and their families and to keep everyone safe from danger posed by the enemy to persons and possessions. As in Revolutionary times and the absence of men at war, many Southern women had only themselves to determine, decide, and direct their own responses in the ever-recurring dire situations they confronted. With war come reflections about the perils of the times. Detailing her thoughts in her diary on the fourteenth of February in 1862, Catherine Edmondston recalled "How differently has this Valentine's Day been passed from the last! Then I was peacefully" content, and now, in "stern reality am I packing up my household goods to remove them from the enemy."[83] Troops from opposing armies confronted women and children without male protection. Desperate soldiers were known for pillaging, and many elite Southern women tried to hide their valuables, just as elite Northern women had attempted in the Revolution. As war in the South advanced, the life previously known to Southern elite women disappeared. Upon seeing the destruction of the Confederacy as well as her Louisiana homelands and contemplating an evacuation to safety, Sarah Dawson confided in her diary in 1862, stating, "It makes me heartsick to see the utter ruin we will be plunged in if forced to run to-night."[84] Many women and their families fled their homes when Union troops invaded. In preparing to leave, Dawson came to the sad realization, "Not a hundredth part of what

[83] Catherine Ann Devereux Edmondston, "Diary of Catherine Ann Edmonston, February, 1862," in Journal of a Secesh Lady: The Diary of Catherine Ann Devereux Edmondston 1860-1866, eds. Beth G. Crabtree, and James W. Patton (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Division of Archives and History, 1979), 117.

[84] Dawson, "Diary of Sarah Fowler Morgan Dawson, July, 1862," 101.

I most value can be saved."[85] Initially, Dawson contemplated packing up her valuables as Edmondston had done, but she later contemplated if she should vacate her home instead. Southern women, faced the possibility of raids by rogue soldiers, attempted to hide their valuable belongings, and debated whether to flee their homes in search of a safer location just as women had done previously in the War for Independence. A war-weary Sarah Dawson proclaimed, "Everything is almost as bad as ever."[86] Wealth and privilege did not guarantee safety. The Civil War proved no different than the American Revolution, as risks of assault were often realized. Women living in fear became a commonality between both wars. Fearful of having no male relative to protect her family, Dawson realized, "When Charlie joins the army, we will be defenseless, indeed."[87]

Like Dawson, Karolina Hermann, described the emotions of living through war in 1862, when she stated, "The last two years have been trying ones for us; somehow things seem to grow worse instead of better," and while having been both fearful and hopeful, "more of our fears have been realized than hopes," as "we have lived in unrelieved anxiety."[88] Living in a warzone was dangerous and frightening for Southerners, especially the women and children. Hiding from nearby artillery fire, Hermann relayed the terrifying experience, writing, "As long as I live I shall not forget the spectacle of the

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[85] Ibid.

[86] Sarah Ida Fowler Morgan Dawson, "Diary of Sarah Fowler Morgan Dawson, June, 1862," in A Confederate Girl's Diary: Sarah Morgan Dawson, ed. Warrington Dawson (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1913), 62.

[87] Sarah Ida Fowler Morgan Dawson, "Diary of Sarah Fowler Morgan Dawson, May, 1862," in Women of the South in War Times, ed. Matthew Page Andrews (Baltimore, MD: Norman, Remington, 1920), 347.

[88] Karolina Wilhelmi Hermann, "Diary of Karolina Wilhelmi Hermann, November, 1862," in *Memoirs, Letters and Diary Entries of German Settlers in Northwest Arkansas* (Fayetteville, AR: Arkansas Historical Association, 1947), 235.

children sitting huddled together, so frightened, in the cellar."[89] Hermann's ordeal with cannon fire mirrored American Revolutionary Mary Gould Almy's when her frightened children inquired if the warring soldiers would kill them.

War brought many questions to women. After suffering through several years of a most devastating war with great loss of life, loss of food and materials, and loss of peace of mind, Dolly Burge chillingly inquired, "Shall we be a nation or shall we be annihilated?"[90] War imposed such difficulties on women, and for many, the end of the war was not in sight, and some privileged white women like Burge feared they would be completely destroyed. As the war continued, elite Southern women had to face life during food shortages, amongst constant fighting and soldier movement, and mainly without the labor of their slaves. For some elite women, this combination was simply too much to bear. These women were so dependent on their slaves for their comfortable lifestyle, they viewed life without slave labor as so devastating that it would be similar to death. While elite women were not "annihilated," their lifestyle certainly was gone.

At the beginning of 1864, in speaking of the war, an exasperated Dolly Burge of Georgia exclaimed, "Oh, that its ravages may soon be stopped! Will another year find us among carnage and bloodshed?"[91] Men were gone; women were alone. They had to survive—for the sake of protecting their children and themselves. No other choice existed. For slave-owning women at the top of the Southern economic and social hierarchy, the war brought a unique set of perceived hardships, as women of the elite

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[89] Ibid., 236.

[90] Dolly Sumner Lunt, A Woman's Wartime Journal: An Account of the Passage Over a Georgia Plantation of Sherman's Army on the March to the Sea, as Recorded in the Diary of Dolly Sumner Lunt (Mrs. Thomas Burge), ed. Julian Street (New York: The Century Co., 1918), 3.

[91] Ibid.

planter class had to adjust to life without an enslaved workforce at their command. Some Southern mistresses labored as they had once forced their slaves to do. Many prominent women such as Emma LeConte soon found that the war brought "No pleasure, no enjoyment—nothing but rigid economy and hard work—nothing but the stern realities of life."[92] Now on her own, Sarah Dawson described, "I discovered I could empty a dirty hearth, dust, move heavy weights, make myself generally useful and dirty, and all this is thanks to the Yankees! Poor me!"[93] Dawson blamed the Yankees for her misfortune, but white Southerners had long perpetuated an economic system and coinciding lifestyle made possible only through the brutalization and enslavement of African American slaves. Dawson highlighted her self-pity and lack of awareness that she herself promoted this type of manual labor when she had owned slaves. With Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation and prior Union promises of freedom for black male slave enlistees, Southerners lost the enslaved labor force that had made the elite wealthy. Left with large tracts of land and no "free" labor to make the land pay, plantation women used their literacy as a tool to position themselves as helpless victims, erasing their own participation in forms of oppression.

Conclusion

Despite their privileges of wealth and status, elite white women still could not prevent displacement from their homes, physical assaults, pillaging of their belongings, shortages of food, and the frightening of their children during the American Revolution and the Civil War. Likewise, they had not able to prevent disease and eliminate the

[92] Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage*, 109.
[93] Dawson, "Diary of Sarah Fowler Morgan Dawson, June, 1862," 62.

dangers of childbirth as wives and mothers before and during the wars. Life was uncertain, and war increased that uncertainty. These privileged women had a definite self-interest in the war. They had a great deal to lose, and the outcome of the conflict would determine their future social and economic position and shape the course of their children's lives.

Life conditions for Southern women in the Civil War clearly paralleled those of Northern women during the American Revolution. Regardless of position, patriarchal society directed women's daily lives, even in wartime, to the domestic home where women confronted sickness, childbearing, and fear of death and change. Life was difficult, and desperate women looked to religion for strength and reinforcement, especially in the wartime absence of men and the hostilities of combat. Yet, male-dominated religion simply served as another patriarchal mechanism to enforce domestic behavior and the traditional subjugation of women—assigning them to be dutiful wives and mothers—roles elite women played and embraced. Patriarchy defined women in this capacity, and more to the point, women defined themselves in this capacity as well, especially the elite white women who viewed their life positions from the perspective of being wives and mothers. Confronting sickness and childbirth extended across color, economic, and social lines. Money and status could not keep women and their families safe in wartime, and in recognizing this, elite women wrote passionately about their fears and the turmoil of their lives. Elite women feared physical assaults, the loss of their men, financial ruin, and displacement from their coveted position at the upper levels of the social hierarchy. Privileged or not, women had limited control over their lives as

evidenced by the ravages of sickness and childbirth, and war exacerbated this lack of control.

Chapter 2

"Why must the innocent suffer with the guilty?:"

Elite White Women in the American Revolution and the Civil War

Women's prescribed domestic role fostered a sense of responsibility towards protecting their children and caring for their family. During both wars, elite women saw themselves as homemakers—as wives and mothers first, but they also realized their position at the top of the social ladder—a position endangered by war. They and society considered them as the most "respectable" and "worthy" of women, deserving of protection by patriarchal men. Upper class women felt they were pious Christians due to their abiding faith and experiences in dealing with widespread, constant illness and the dangers of having children. Society deemed them moral influences as well and held them up as exemplifying the values of Republican Motherhood. These elite white women enjoyed privilege, but many failed to recognize just how fortunate were their situations until war threatened their continued status. Elite women saw themselves and their children as innocent victims of war. Women and children suffered—if not physically, certainly emotionally—from the general traumatic circumstances of war and at the hands of raiding soldiers on both sides. During the Civil War, plantation wife Dolly Burge voiced in December of 1864, "Why must the innocent suffer with the guilty?"[1] Burge

[1] Dolly Sumner Lunt, *Woman's Wartime Journal: An Account of the Passage over a Georgia Plantation of Sherman's Army on the March to the Sea, as Recorded in the Diary of Dolly Sumner Lunt (Mrs. Thomas Burge),* ed. Julian Street (New York: The Century Co., 1918), 44.

referred to her young daughter as well as other children and women who were at the mercy of soldiers. She underscored the serious consequences of a war that women themselves did not declare. Their place in society as elite wives and mothers affected the image they held of themselves and their relation to other people and to the wars of the American Revolution and the Civil War.

From the earliest days of colonial America, men constructed women's identity in terms of gender and class, as well as race, and assigned women a domestic existence—from upper class to enslavement. Revolutionary women worked in the home, raised children, and saw to the needs of their husbands. They cooked, cleaned, nursed the sick, spun thread, sewed clothes, and did the washing and other household chores to take care of their families, or if they were privileged women, they had their servants or slaves to perform these chores on their behalf. As historian Nancy Cott argues, society dictated a woman should be useful, and her main goal was to make members of her household, especially her husband "happy," which in turn was supposed to make her happy.[2] In a 1775 letter to her husband, Elizabeth Inman of Massachusetts wrote, "Dear Sir,--It has ever given me pleasure to study your happiness & to do everything that I thought was for your interest."[3] As evidenced by her comment, Inman embodied the typical female behavior set forth by the patriarchy, namely domestic duty, docility, and deference to the needs and desires of men.

Free women faced pressure to marry. Society stressed that women remain

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[2] Nancy F Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835, 2nd ed.* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 71.

[3] Elizabeth Murray Smith Inman, "Letter from Elizabeth Murray Smith Inman to Ralph Inman, April 30, 1775," in Letters of James Murray, Loyalist, ed. Nina M. Tiffany (Boston: Privately published, 1901), 191.

"dependent on the care and support" of a male figure, be that a father, brother, guardian, or husband.[4] Independence was not synonymous with womanhood. Accepting a marriage proposal was a major decision for a free woman, and "her response was perhaps her last chance to have control over her life" because "once she said 'yes,' the legal cards would be stacked against her, regardless of her suitor's declarations of love."[5] Many free women realized marriage lead to a lack of control over their lives, but they had few options but to marry. Being single often equated to male rejection and loss of monetary and physical protection, if not un-womanliness. However, a well-arranged marriage carried potential for elevation of social status and financial gain. Married women saw themselves at the mercy of their husbands—and later during war at the mercy of soldiers and the outcome of the war—victory or defeat. Mary Windsor of New Hampshire frankly expressed her thoughts of marriage when she wrote, "It is awful thus to bind one's self for life."[6] Regardless, society dictated marriage for women—for better or worse.

Patriarchy in all its manifestations reinforced women's deference and service to men. Male-controlled religious teachings instructed obedience and submissiveness for women, and "wives were to make the home a haven of restfulness for their husbands."[7] Ministers reinforced women's role in society and in the home. In addition to religion, society's message was repeated in print matter that convinced women that their place was as wives and mothers focusing on their husband's happiness before their own. Directly

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[4] Louise V. North, Janet M Wedge, and Landa M. Freeman, *In the Words of Women: The Revolutionary War and the Birth of the Nation, 1765-1799* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2011), 182.

[5] Michael Goldberg, "Breaking New Ground: 1800-1848," in *No Small Courage: A History of Women in the United States,* ed. Nancy F. Cott (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 181.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid.

and indirectly, men defined and determined women's lives.

Indeed, most women accepted and identified themselves as wives and mothers—and operated with the understanding that their happiness was directly in relation to their husband's happiness as society dictated. Women whether they fully realized it or not were dependent and had limited options in general since men restricted their legal rights, property ownership, employment options, and other means of autonomy. A woman had circumscribed control over her own life outside the home—and even within the home. All women were oppressed, but elite women from their position at the top of society's hierarchy, exercised considerable power, particularly in relation to other women.[8] While white men dominated all women, upper class white women dominated all other women in terms of privilege, status, and finances. This domination of black women by white women became particularly brutal in the Civil War South, in a continuous demonstration of power and the maintenance of privilege.[9]

At the approach of the Civil War, whites in the upper echelons of Southern society lived in a world much of their own making. As historian Drew Gilpin Faust writes, white men and women had long "defined and understood themselves in relation to a number of categories," including religious denominations, politics, and home states. However, the most prominent of these social divisions were race, gender, and class.[10] Race "marked the difference between bound and free, superior and inferior," gender "was designed to distinguish independent from dependent, patriarch from subordinate," and

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[8] Thavolia Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 21.

[9] Ibid., 46.

[10] Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 3-4.

class was "more subtle" but "held distinctions of wealth, power, education, and refinement."[11] The Southern social situation was quite complex. However, all "Southerners inevitably thought of themselves first in terms of blackness or whiteness and maleness or femaleness," because these "attributes" not only "shaped their identities but dictated life choices and aspirations."[12] Class allowed for possible social mobility, but race and gender were permanent defining factors.

Women's historian Anne Scott speculates that slavery was a large factor behind promoting and perpetuating the ideal of the Southern lady so strongly.[13] Owning slaves "maintained a traditional landowning aristocracy" which created an inherent hierarchy.[14] A social hierarchy benefitted mostly white men but also elite white women in that "ladies" were at the top of the women's social scale followed by middle class and poor women and then free and enslaved black women and also Native women. Women, children, and slaves were "expected to recognize their proper and subordinate place and to be obedient to the head of the family," namely men.[15] If anyone went against the "master," that action threatened to undermine the entire social "system," and therefore threatened the stability of slavery.[16] The economic and political situation in the South was precarious in the antebellum period, and maintaining the institution of slavery depended on retaining a rigid social hierarchy.

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[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid., 4.
[13] Anne Firor Scott, *The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics, 1830-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 16.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid., 17.
[16] Ibid.

Self-denial prevailed for women from one revolutionary period to the other during America's first century. A woman's life was a "long act of devotion" to God, her husband, her children, her servants, the poor, and all of humanity.[17] Caroline Lee Hentz, an Alabama housewife proclaimed in her diary, "Tis man's to act, 'tis woman's to endure."[18] Hentz's profound statement concluded that women simply had to make the best of their situation since they had less power to change their lives than did men. As the eighteenth century gave way to the mid nineteenth century, women still had tremendous pressure to marry as it was not acceptable, either socially or economically, to be a spinster or an old maid.[19] For women, their wedding would "fix their fate" because the pleasantness of marriage depended on the husband.[20] Husbands continued to have power over their wives, and married women lacked property rights.[21] Just as Northern women remained at an economic and political disadvantage, Southern women had to endure the many trials of life within a complex society that depended upon slavery and maintaining adherence to rigid social standards—thus perpetuating the institution of slavery.[22] Regardless, elite women enjoyed the privileges their positions afforded them at the expense of others. Just as was the case for women during the Revolutionary era, Civil War era Southern society dictated that a woman should always be subordinate, obedient, and strive to make her husband and children happy. Selflessness was mutually exclusive

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[17] Ibid., 5.
[18] Ibid., 9.
[19] Ibid., 23-24.
[20] Tracy J. Revels, *Grander in Her Daughters: Florida's Women during the Civil War* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2004), 4.
[21] Stephanie McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 24.
[22] Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage,* 45.

of self-determination. However, while elite white women were selfless towards their families, they were not towards their slaves since they violently enforced slavery.[23]

Men dictated and defined marital and home happiness as society required women to place their husband's needs first in silent and willing compliance. Women's behavior supposedly would act as a balance to men's behavior. A wife was intended to be submissive and her "reason for being was to love, honor, obey, and occasionally amuse her husband, to bring up his children and manage his household" as well as use her piety to "restrain man's natural vice and immorality."[24] The image of a submissive woman and an obedient wife continued to be reinforced by the church. Southern women were supposed to "content themselves with their humble household duties" and remain faithful to God and their husbands.[25] Ministers advocated that women "should keep silent in the churches," as men controlled the church as well as the content of the sermons they preached, enabling them to further control women, as well as their slaves.[26] Patriarchy's domination extended to all facets of a woman's life.

Sermons led women to believe that they should not aspire to become an intellectual or think upon the same level as a man. As a result of highly influential sermons composed by men, "no matter what secret thoughts a woman might have had about her own abilities, religion confirmed what society told her—namely, that she was inferior to men."[27] In so many ways, men maintained the ideology of female insufficiency, and women maintained this contention with their compliance. Southern

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[23] Ibid., 5.
[24] Scott, *The Southern Lady*, 4.
[25] Ibid., 7-8.
[26] Ibid., 8.
[27] Ibid., 13.

women in particular preoccupied themselves with acting in accordance with lady-like behaviors except in the presence of their slaves, as historian Thavolia Glymph so powerfully documents. Class had more significance for elite white women in the South because Southern society had a strong racial component. The term "lady" not only "specified gender," but it also "denoted both whiteness and privilege at the same time."[28] Society dictated certain behaviors as proper for women across a spectrum from enslaved to free, black to white, poor to wealthy. Poor, working white women and enslaved women were not taught "feminine delicacy" or that it was "unladylike" to labor.[29] In fact, Southern society relied on their ability to perform hard work. Elite white women, on the other hand, were viewed and viewed themselves as superior to all other races and classes of women.

Revelations of Privilege

Middle and upper class white women viewed themselves and life in general from a position of privilege. As women, they expressed sensitivity to the plight of others at times, yet in other situations, their advantage overshadowed this capacity for concern. For example, in December of 1861, Ella Gertrude Thomas of Georgia confided in her diary her worries about her husband living outdoors in the cold during the Civil War. She lamented, "When I think of my dear Husband as being exposed to such hardships my heart aches."[30] On another December evening, she thought of her husband again as she recalled, "Tonight it was so bitter cold as I was coming from church and to think that he

[28] Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 7.
[29] Scott, *The Southern Lady*, xi.
[30] Ella Gertrude Clanton Thomas, "Diary of Ella Gertrude Thomas, December, 1861," in Secret Eye: The Journal of Ella Gertrude Clanton Thomas, 1848-1889, ed. Virginia Ingraham Burr (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 196.

is exposed to such hardships."[31] The difficulties of the war made many women realize and appreciate their lifestyle advantages previously taken for granted. However, Thomas only noticed her comfort in relation to her husband having to stay out in the cold and fight. In a most telling conclusion, she failed to realize the vast discrepancies between her living conditions and those of her slaves or even poor whites. Living in a warm and comfortable plantation home, Thomas again admitted, "In the midst of luxury and comfort I often think of him"—yet she failed to consider the slaves she owned and saw every day with the same concern. [32] Elite women worried and imagined the worst for the men they loved in the face of the disruption during the war. On the other hand, men and women of different classes, races, or economic standing were often entirely absent from thought.

In Relation to African Americans

Elite white women of both wars saw themselves well above the status of both free and enslaved African Americans. If a woman owed any property—when she married, ownership and control of that property transferred to her husband.[33] Despite a lack of control over property—women had almost complete control over house slaves.[34] While large-scale slavery did not widely occur in the North during the Revolution, slavery was in place in early American society, and a majority of slaves labored as domestic house servants—falling under the supervision and control of the mistress. Glymph asserts patriarchy oppressed all women, but contends that wealthy "white women wielded the

[31] Ibid., 197.
[32] Ibid.
[33] North, Wedge, and Freeman, *In the Words of Women*, 182.
[34] Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage*, 5.

power of slave ownership" within their homes, and they settled "disputes" with force.[35] Although contrary to the traditional view that the brutal white slave master was the sole force in maintaining slavery while the gentle, kind white mistress stood idly by, Southern elite women actually perpetuated slavery—and often through violent ways.[36] Furthermore, elite white Southern women denied their enslaved women the time to be devoted wives and mothers—as enslaved black women were forced to spend their time looking after the white children and were at the mercy of their master and mistress—subject to physical harm and the threat of being separated from their own children and husband.[37] While privileged white women embraced their roles as wives and mothers, they denied the same opportunity to their African American slave women. Certainly, race, status, class, and power worked against elite sympathy and mutual identification of shared domestic roles.

Nearly all elite women from the Revolutionary North or the Civil War South considered slaves' place to be at the bottom of the social hierarchy. Upper class white Southern women felt mixed emotions towards their slaves. Most plantation mistresses saw it as "normal" to keep slaves. These privileged women heavily relied on slaves for labor, comfort, wealth, and status, and many women fully realized their dependency during the Civil War. Many elite women felt entitled to the labor of slaves. Some upper class women felt resentment towards having to oversee slaves and thus often took their

[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid., 8.
[37] Ibid.

frustrations out on their slaves.[38] Some women feared being left alone on a plantation while their husbands were away at war. The thought of a slave insurrection greatly distressed mistresses.[39] A few were ambivalent about slavery but did not take action to free their slaves. The majority of elite white Southern women were not passive slaveholders. Instead, they were actively involved in holding slaves through violent means.[40] However, many elite women did not see themselves as oppressors but rather as good, pious women taking care of the slaves and providing them with a home, food, clothing, and work since the slaves were "unable" to take care of themselves and were "ignorant" and "in need" of guidance. Some plantation mistresses even went as far as to think the enslaved people appreciated the "care" they received.[41] One could argue that owning slaves and actively perpetuating slavery would not be in keeping with true Christian values that elite women supposedly followed. America's wealth and standing as a nation had largely been built off of the labor of slaves, but privileged white women failed to realize or care.

In Relation to Native Americans

Throughout both of these wars, Native American men and women were present and involved, yet they remained largely absent from conversations in elite white women's letters and diaries. Native Americans are not present in the thoughts and ideas exchanged between elite women of the Revolution and Civil War. During the Revolutionary War, many Native men enlisted as soldiers—British and American—in

[38] Crystal N. Feimster, *Southern Horrors: Women and the Politics of Rape and Lynching* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 28.
[39] Ibid., 14.
[40] Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage,* 3.
[41] Feimster, *Southern Horrors,* 30.

hopes of gaining some type of security for the preservation of their respective tribes in the post-war period.[42] In both wars, if Native peoples aligned themselves with the defeated side, they stood to lose everything.

Native Americans do not appear in the writings of these elite white women. If elite women's writings referenced Native Americans, they did so only indirectly by speaking of "Indian root," or suggesting that it was "Indian Summer." As evidenced by their many letters and diaries, writing women were not interrogating their relationship to Native people during the American Revolution and the Civil War. Not being involved in political maneuverings, many women were isolated or in absentia from their own involvement in oppressing Native Americans. In other words, their country formed treaties and coerced Native Americans, but they were not always direct participants in these actions. Native Americans ceased to be of importance for some elite women in both the Revolutionary and Civil War periods; for other women, the importance of Native peoples had never been acknowledged. Few elite women reflected on the social, political, or economic positions of Native Americans. Even Abigail Adams from her unique and educated position did not devote attention to Native Americans. Elite white women placed Native Americans at the bottom rungs of the social ladder, and although some Native peoples were Christian, many elite white women continued to view all Native American men and women as "uncivilized" and "savage." Most Southern plantations occupied Indian lands, yet few acknowledgements were ever made of this stolen or confiscated property. Certainly, neither elite white men and women nor anyone else

[42] David J. Silverman, *Red Brethren: The Brothertown and Stockbridge Indians and the Problem of Race in Early America* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2010), 118.

throughout the history of the nation had the right to force Native peoples off their lands, but entitlement, rather than ethical remorse, carried the day. White elites felt entitled to the land and rationalized their possession in terms of Native Americans not being "civilized" or using the land "correctly."[43]

Native Americans were not dominating the thoughts of women during either war, and this silence of elite women on this topic is significant. One of the only explicit references to Native Americans in the Civil War came from Sarah Dawson. Dawson inquired, "Where is the charity which should ignore nations and creeds, and administer help to the Indian and Heathen indifferently? Gone! All gone in Union versus Secession! *That* is what the American War has brought us."[44] The majority of elite women's wartime writing spared no thoughts of Native Americans potentially because women focused their attention on how they were affected day-to-day, dealing with the threat of starvation, plundering soldiers, possible assaults, and having their homes burned down all while enduring sickness and childbirth. War endangered the very way of life for elite women. Little did these women realize that their experiences could in some ways be considered similar to those of Native women who had lost their way of life, their homes, and family members when Europeans colonized America. Disease, starvation, and physical assaults had ravaged generations of Native women who remained invisible to elite white women whose privilege masked the realities faced by others.

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[43] Theda Perdue, *Cherokee Women Gender and Culture Change, 1700-1835* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 112.

[44] Sarah Ida Fowler Morgan Dawson, "Diary of Sarah Fowler Morgan Dawson, June, 1862" in A Confederate Girl's Diary: Sarah Morgan Dawson, ed. Warrington Dawson (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1913), 80.

Thinking Politically

From their positions as wives and mothers, elite white women in the years of the Revolution and Civil War desired to advance or at least maintain the status quo that most benefited them—providing them with food, shelter, protection, and a way of continuing to care for their children, as well as sick family members. War posed a disruption to society and to elite women's status. Thus, these privileged women reacted within a range of war support, but always in a manner they deemed would most advantage them. As with the colonies' revolt against Britain, escalating hostilities and threat of secession by the South coincided with increased anxiety for women. Just as their sisters in the Northern colonies worried, elite Southern women expressed the same fears about impending upheaval of their lives and loss of their men if war was declared. However, what could not be averted was the dependent fate of women who were completely swept up in the political war maneuverings of men. Elite women saw themselves as having a vested interest in politics even though they could not formally participate. They acknowledged that their lifestyles were at stake. Not only would the social system change, but the economic system would change too.

Just as women had little control over their personal lives, they had no control over politics, but politics had every bit of control over their lives. Rules, regulations, policies, and hostilities of the men in charge governed and constrained women. In reflecting on the great tension at hand, Elizabeth Inman declared, "You know I am no coward, but I would

not put myself in the power of desperate people."[45] Women unfortunately had no choice but to deal with a war they themselves had not started. Both the Americans and the British wanted to emerge victorious, including the women on either side; however, many women, first and foremost, desired the safety and wellbeing of their families and themselves.

Forbidden to participate actively in politics, women still formed opinions and sometimes expressed their political thoughts. Mercy Otis Warren expressed her patriotism through her writing in which she attacked the British in several of her poems.[46] Women followed the political happenings because they knew the changes would directly affect them in some way. In speaking of Britain, a very determined and spunky Abigail Adams proclaimed she "would rather endure any hardship than submit to it."[47] Catharine Greene of Rhode Island echoed Adams' assertion. As a devout Patriot, Greene hoped that "we may Rejoice to gether on our Deliverance from the British yoke."[48] In referring to the British, Greene vehemently proclaimed, "we Shall Drive them Root and Branch from our land."[49] Even Loyalists expressed great interest in the war as they would be deemed traitors if the Americans won. Women possessed political convictions.

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[45] Elizabeth Murray Smith Inman, "Letter from Elizabeth Murray Smith Inman to Mrs. Henry Barnes, February, 1775," in Letters of James Murray, Loyalist, ed. Nina M. Tiffany (Boston: Privately published, 1901), 181.

[46] Rosemarie Zagarri, *Revolutionary Backlash: Women and Politics in the Early American Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 24.

[47] Abigail Smith Adams, "Letter from Abigail Smith Adams to John Adams, December 10, 1775," in Letters of Mrs. Adams, The Wife of John Adams, 3rd ed., vol.1, ed. Charles Francis Adams (Boston: Little, Brown, & Co., 1841), 88.

[48] Catharine Ray Greene, "Letter from Catharine Ray Greene to Benjamin Franklin, June 24, 1781," in Benjamin Franklin and Catharine Ray Greene: Their Correspondence 1755-1790, ed. William Greene Roelker (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1949), 110.

[49] Catharine Ray Greene, "Letter from Catharine Ray Greene to Benjamin Franklin, June 25, 1782," in Benjamin Franklin and Catharine Ray Greene: Their Correspondence 1755-1790, ed. William Greene Roelker (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1949), 117.

As a Quaker, Margaret Hill Morris provided a contrasting view to the strong pro-war opinions of many Patriot women. Morris confided in her diary that she "wishes that this [Burlington, New Jersey] may be a neutral" area.[50] In fact, many women not identified as Quakers would have joined Morris and her fellow Quakers with a wish for peace. The prospect of an impending declaration of war was complex, and women occupied positions on both sides of the matter. Many women like Abigail Adams and Catharine Greene wanted independence from Britain, but they realized there would have to be the sacrifice of men for soldiers. While women supported the war, they voiced concerns over sending their male relatives off to fight—and perhaps die. Abigail Adams detailed that John Adams's mother, Susanna Boylston Adams, was staunchly against her son, John's brother, joining the army. Adams conveyed the situation to her husband and stated, "Your brother is very desirous of being in the army, but your good mother is really violent against it."[51] Women worried about the safety of their husbands, sons, brothers, and fathers. Concern for a family member was a commonality between Patriot, Loyalist, and Quaker women.

Holding Hard to Slavery

Like the Patriot women of the past, Southern women in the years between 1860 and 1865, were largely more enthusiastic for the war effort because their self-described homelands were at stake; they would be directly affected, and the basis for their entire society would also be affected. War was not a distant event for Southern or Patriot

[50] Margaret Hill Morris, "Diary of Margaret Hill Morris, December, 1776," in Private Journal Kept during the Revolutionary War (New York: Privately published, 1869), 17.

[51] Abigail Smith Adams, "Letter from Abigail Smith Adams to John Adams, June 25, 1775," in Letters of Mrs. Adams, The Wife of John Adams, 3rd ed., vol.1, ed. Charles Francis Adams (Boston: Little, Brown, & Co., 1841), 46.

women. Southern women, especially elite women, had a lot to lose—their way of life and their men. Elite women came to believe that if the Confederacy lost, they would lose their privileges. No longer could they define themselves in terms of holding slaves.

While women lacked political voice, they nonetheless voiced their concerns about national affairs. Elite Southern women at the time were interested in politics, as Amanda Sims stated, "Politics engrosses my every thought."[52] Catherine Edmondston spoke for a majority of women when she proclaimed in April of 1861, that "public affairs absorb all our interest."[53] Southern white women knew they would be severely impacted by the war. Some women opposed politics, but most women secretly and a few openly wanted to be involved in politics and found it "irresistible" with all of the "national upheaval," and they "were determined that the South's crisis must be 'certainly ours as well as that of the men.'"[54] Women did not have equal participation in politics as men had, but they had equal interest, as they were directly affected with the politics of the war. As seen previously in the American Revolution, women's involvement in political concerns was inevitable during wartime.

In speaking of her lack of political freedom, Sarah Dawson exclaimed, "Coward, helpless woman that I am! If I was free --!"[55] However, elite women like Dawson were not helpless because they lacked authority to publically participate in politics as men did. In truth, in relation to her slaves, Dawson was completely free and failed to realize it, just

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[52] Faust, *Mothers of Invention,* 11.

[53] Catherine Ann Devereux Edmondston, "Diary of Catherine Ann Edmonston, April, 1861," in Journal of a Secesh Lady: The Diary of Catherine Ann Devereux Edmondston 1860-1866, eds. Beth G. Crabtree, and James W. Patton (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Division of Archives and History, 1979), 50.

[54] Faust, *Mothers of Invention,* 10-11.

[55] Dawson, "Diary of Sarah Fowler Morgan Dawson, June, 1862," 81.

as Revolutionary Northern elite men and women hypocritically claimed they were "slaves" to Britain while they held their own slaves in bondage.[56] By virtue of being a slave, one would not have the power to enslave another. Extra, possibly unfair, taxes and lack of political power did not equal enslavement, yet many elites held the common thought that they were "slaves" economically or politically. Again, privilege often obscured the true hardships and conditions faced by those at the other end of the economic hierarchy.

For the American Revolution and the Civil War, those elite women who supported the fight did so from different perspectives. Many women had apprehensions about what war would bring and how their lives would change because of war. However, many Northern elite women saw independence from Britain as a way to further their status and financial interests. Upper class Northern women of the Revolution realized that breaking from Britain would become a proactive method to building a strong American economy in which their husbands would control, and they as elite women would enjoy life from the top of the pyramid. Likewise, Civil War elite Southern women also advocated keeping their high social positions through the defensive act of separating from the Union. Southern white elites suffered long-standing national attacks, especially by abolitionist organizations, for their beliefs—mainly the perpetuation of the institution of slavery—and yet they vehemently defended their right to this economic and social system. In supporting the Confederacy, as elite wives and mothers, they took a

[56] David Waldstreicher, *Slavery's Constitution: From Revolution to Ratification* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2009), 31.

conservative position through which they sought to safeguard their status, family, home, land, wealth, and slaves—the underpinning of their society and economy.

During the years of the Civil War, white women living on Southern plantations fearfully teetered at the top of the social ladder. Mary Ann Owen Sims, upon the impending departure of her husband, Ben, voiced her protest stating, "Indeed I feel very uneasy I have three children depending on me."[57] White women worried about how they would handle being the sole-provider for their children for an undetermined temporary basis but also on a permanent basis if their husbands did not survive. White women realized that they had to have a means of financial support to care for their families. Even before the war had began, Sims realized her desperate situation as "nearly all my propity is invested in nigroes if the South is forced to submit I am a beggar."[58] Sims only saw her slaves as an investment—the key to her wealth and status—and she completely disregarded the fact that slaves were human beings too. Like the Tories of the Revolution, plantation women fearfully acknowledged the coming of inevitable change, confusion, and chaos resulting from ensuing armed conflict. In the months before the war, "planter women expressed strong political opinions about the wisdom of secession" since they had the most to lose.[59] With the occurrence of the Civil War, came "harsh realities," and elite women "struggled to cope with the destruction of a society that had privileged them as

[57] Mary Ann Owen Sims, "Diary of Mary Ann Sims, January, 1861," in Private Journal of Mary Ann Owen Sims, ed. Clifford Dale Whitman (Fayetteville, AR: Arkansas Historical Association, 1976), 289.

[58] Ibid.

[59] McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning*, 90.

white, yet subordinated them as female."[60] As privileged Lucy Buck of South Carolina astutely proclaimed, "We shall never… be the same as we have been."[61]

While Northern elite women aligned with the Patriot Cause or with a neutral position that succeeded in maintaining and increasing their status, elite Southern Civil War women did not. In a bleak moment, Malvina Waring of a prominent South Carolina family stated, "I fear it is all up with the Confederacy."[62] For Southern elite women, their entire society as they knew it would completely change. Wealth, comfort, and status attained through slavery would be gone and a new system would emerge. Emancipation transformed the plantation homes of elite Southern women as they could no longer force black women to work for them.[63] Elite Southern "white women bent to the task of redrawing class and race lines" in an effort to regain as much of their old society as possible.[64] Bitter elites promoted their whiteness and continued to view African Americans as inferior.

Conclusion

While the letters and diaries of elite white women during the American Revolution and the Civil War reflected similarities of wartime experiences, their words illustrated these women formed distinctive views of themselves and others from positions of privilege. Because these elite women's perspectives were grounded in financial and social benefit, they regularly failed to identify with or even acknowledge other women

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[60] Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 7.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Malvina Sarah Black Waring, "Diary of Malvina Sarah Black Waring, April, 1865," in *South Carolina Women in the Confederacy, vol. 1,* eds. Mrs. Thomas Taylor, and Mrs. Sallie Enders Conner (Columbia, SC: State Company, 1903), 284.
[63] Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage,* 134.
[64] Ibid.

through what could have been shared domestic roles as wives and mothers. Elite women recognized fellow women of comparable class status, but marginalized or discounted other women based on race or class. There was no gender solidarity, nor sisterhood of oppression by patriarchy. The wartime words of elite women documented that they consistently advocated and advanced their own standing, whether in terms of other women or by their proactive or defensive posture on the respective wars in which they found themselves involved. Fear permeated much of these elite white women's wartime writings, but this fear reflected a firm belief in their own innocence as the victims of a war they had not declared and a determined desire to protect their privilege and the security of their loved ones.

Final Thoughts

Created and perpetuated by men, patriarchy defined and confined women to the domestic realm, equating ideal womanhood with being a wife and mother. This femininity standard became the prevailing value system of the white middle and upper class in eighteenth and nineteenth century America, reinforced through societal dictates, religious texts, sermons, literature, and patriarchal ideology—all controlled by men. Although women in general were supposed to emulate this paragon—fulfilling their role of faithful, loving wife and calm, nurturing mother—attainment was difficult. For women of color, lesser financial means, and lower social standing, the possibility of creating a devoted home or bearing children was seriously diminished by the lack of resources, education, and economic opportunity. For enslaved women, the threat of forced separation from loved ones and the effects of violent oppression proved dominate forces in shaping domestic life. Consequently, in keeping with white men's constructed racial, economic, and social hierarchy, only elite white women enjoyed domestic class privilege, the benefits of education, and the advantages of material wealth. The words these women penned during wartime stand as a testament to their lives, their beliefs, and their perspective on the worlds in which they lived during the serious military conflicts of the Revolution and Civil War that shaped the nation.

Examination of educated elite white women's writings from the Revolutionary and Civil War periods reveals that they saw themselves as wives and mothers in this advantaged position, accepting submission and domestic assignment. Letters and diaries reflected that these women subscribed to patriarchal society's pressure to marry, with the

goal of having a “happy husband” and a “happy home” being the overriding aspiration necessary to complete their life’s purpose—according to white men. Elite white women’s relationship to white men was acceptance of subjugation into the expected patriarchy-prescribed domestic role of wife and mother. Elite white men’s purposeful positioning of white women at the upper level of the social hierarchy behind themselves reinforced class, race, and economic standing by structuring society according to male power and authority, pushing other men, those of lower financial means, and men and women of color to the bottom levels of society where they were kept by entrenched custom, political power, and violent force. Elite white women were oppressed, but they were the least oppressed among their gender. They benefited from their social status, and their words document this fact, as well as their determination to maintain their privilege and security, especially in wartime.

The stratifications created by patriarchy affected the ability of elite white women to identify with other women, even during the common harrowing experience of wartime. Potential solidarity as wives and mothers with other women was marked by separation due to race and class that produced the privilege these elite white women enjoyed. Even though privileged women clearly viewed themselves as wives and mothers and wrote about their roles as such, any real extension and recognition of these comparable roles to include other women appeared to be superficial. In practice, women of color were marginalized, exploited, or dismissed and subsequently their standing as equivalent wives and mothers was likewise devalued. For African American servants and slaves, the demands of white Northern Revolutionary women and especially of white

Southern planter women disrupted, compromised, precluded, and even negated the ability of these women of color to legally be wives to their husbands and mothers to their children. In particular, Southern mistresses' letters and diaries and slave narratives gathered in the 1930s indicate planter women's willingness to disrupt or prevent the marriage and maternal relationships of slaves to ensure black women's servitude.

Likewise, white women of the Revolution and the Civil War substantially did not acknowledge Native American women and certainly did not consider their positions as wives and mothers to any degree. Even though Native American men participated in both the Revolutionary and Civil War and forcibly-taken Indian lands were now homes to many elite white women especially in the South, little evidence can be found that elite white women documented any concern for their fellow Native American women. Like African American women, Native American women were considered by elite white women to be lower class, marginalized, absent, and disregarded. Potentially, there could have been mutual identification as wives and mothers among all of these women, but elite white women showed no evidence of embracing this concept. Yes, the aspects of childbirth, sickness, and fear especially during wartime were not dependent upon race, wealth, status, or class to be seen as similarities. However, elite women's ability to see these similarities was affected by race, wealth, status, and class. Suffering definitely did not make women equal despite Dolly Burge's assumption.

Nonetheless, elite white women's writings do translate the basic and enduring experiences of women, namely childbirth, tending the sick, and their ongoing fears that became particularly pronounced during war. The experiences of white women in the

North paralleled those of white women in the Civil War South, as struggles to care for their families moved from peacetime to wartime. While these struggles could have been viewed as universal to all women, they were not. In fact, the overwhelming emphasis on maintaining one's position at the top of the social hierarchy diminished an elite woman's ability to empathize with those on whom she was economically dependent for her wealth and status. The experiences of black and Native Americans warranted no place in the writings of white women of advantage. Race and privilege marginalized women of color and simultaneously advanced white elite women.

Even though elite white Northern and Southern women viewed themselves apart from other women because of privilege, wartime writings documented their views actually differed substantially from each other, despite a shared comparable higher social status. White elite Northern women viewed the Revolution in fundamentally different terms than white elite Southern women perceived the Civil War, as the outcome of each conflict potentially carried diverse meanings and ramifications for each group. These women saw themselves fighting for different things. Northern upper class women like Abigail Adams hoped for "the building up a great empire," which required people to "submit to those [government and societal] restraints, which are necessary for the peace and security of the community."[1] Adams disregarded Native peoples when she expressed her desire for white people of her status to rule over the continent—thus displacing Native Americans. While white elite Northern women assumed a decidedly proactive position during the Revolution, white Southern planter women's war support was

[1] Abigail Smith Adams, "Letter from Abigail Smith Adams to John Adams, November 27, 1775," in Letters of Mrs. Adams, The Wife of John Adams, 3rd ed., vol.1, ed. Charles Francis Adams (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, & Co., 1841), 83.

overwhelmingly defensive, as their privileged life was at stake and only Confederate victory would maintain the enslavement of black men and women that underpinned their status, wealth, and lifestyle. Ella Thomas of Georgia explained the Southern war rationale when she declared, "What are we doing? Striving to defend ourselves against our brethren who would butcher us -- annihilate us if they could."[2] Southern elites struggled desperately to preserve slavery, and while a British victory in the Revolutionary War would have been devastating to the white elite Patriot women, the world of the Southern mistress crumbled as slaves fought for and embraced freedom, almost a generation of men perished, and wartime destruction and physical ruin devastated an economy, a society, and a privileged group of elite women. Georgiana Walker of Virginia reflected, "How many sorrows this cruel war has wrought! Here are people of refinement & cultivation, evidently accustomed to every luxury which wealth could give. -- Now in absolute poverty."[3] Southern planter women like Mary Jones of Georgia were left to wonder, "What hereafter is to be our social & civil status, we cannot see."[4] Since elite Northern Revolutionary women won their war, they did not have to struggle and rearrange their entire world like the Civil War Southern elite women did. The wartime words of Northern women and Southern women clearly extended support to what benefited each group the most, namely protecting their privilege and desiring the war

[2] Ella Gertrude Clanton Thomas, "Diary of Ella Gertrude Thomas, January, 1865," in Secret Eye: The Journal of Ella Gertrude Clanton Thomas, 1848-1889, ed. Virginia Ingraham Burr (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 252.

[3] Georgiana Freeman Gholson Walker, "Diary of Georgiana Freeman Walker, December, 1863," in Private Journal of Georgiana Gholson Walker, 1862-1865: with Selections from the Post-War Years, 1865-1876, ed. Dwight F. Henderson (Tuscaloosa, AL: Confederate Publishing, 1963), 48.

[4] Mary Ann Jones, "Diary of Mary Ann Jones, January, 1865," in Yankees a'Coming: One Month's Experience During the Invasion of Liberty County, Georgia, 1864-1865, ed. Haskell Monroe (Tuscaloosa, AL: Confederate Press, 1959), 76.

outcome that brought the most benefit. Subjugated women and their subjugating men saw eye-to-eye on this point.

The writings of elite women in two separate regions at two separate times of conflict provide insights into how these women saw themselves in times of peace, in times of war, in society, and in relation to others. Many factors shaped the perceptions these elite women had of themselves and of others. Their letters and diaries confirmed that their privilege was granted by patriarchy, leveraged by race, by slave produced wealth, and by social standing. Even before the outbreak of war, such privilege was considered worth the high price of brutality and bloodshed, as planter mistresses became slavery's enforcers against black women. The trauma of war generated reaction, circumspection, and introspection, as elite white women's words reveal a privileged class whose benefits were achieved at the expense of gender solidarity and whose coveted social position teetered precariously in the hostility of war.

Women like Roxanna Cole, whose pen burned to write about her traumatic encounters with Union forces, sought sympathy and comfort in the midst of conflict. She wrote, "Somebody will read it and give me my need of sympathy," and indeed, the words women recorded in eighteenth and nineteenth century letters and diaries continue to reveal the ways in which elite white women of the North and South saw themselves in relationship to white men, to African Americans, and to Native peoples on whose land they lived. [5] These women saw the wars in which they participated, even as supposedly "innocent victims," as bringing irrevocable change. As Lucy Buck proclaimed and as all

[5] Roxanna Cole, "Letter from Roxanna Cole to Blanche Underhill, December 28, 1862," in Echoes of Happy Valley: Letters and Diaries, Family Life in the South, Civil War History, ed. Thomas Felix Hickerson (Chapel Hill, NC: Bull's Head Bookshop, 1962), 70.

American women, particularly the Southern elite, in the years following the Civil War discovered that their lives would never be the same again.

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