

Literature and the material cultures of Confederate remembrance

Kristen Treen

Date of deposit	9 August 2021
Document version	Author's accepted manuscript
Access rights	Copyright © Cambridge University Press 2022. This work has been made available online in accordance with the publisher's policies. This is the author created, accepted version manuscript following peer review and may differ slightly from the final published version.
Citation for published version	Treen, K. E. (2022). Literature and the material cultures of Confederate remembrance. In K. Diffley, & C. Hutchison (Eds.), <i>The Cambridge companion to the literature of the American Civil War and Reconstruction</i> (pp. 213-228). (Cambridge companions to literature). Cambridge University Press.
Link to published version	https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009159173.018

Full metadata for this item is available in St Andrews Research Repository at: <https://research-repository.st-andrews.ac.uk/>



University of
St Andrews | FOUNDED
1413 |

Literature and the Material Cultures of Confederate Remembrance

As she faces the prospect of losing her family's plantation home to advancing Union troops, Scarlett O'Hara hears the furniture around her speak. Her resolution all but spent, the heroine of *Gone with the Wind* (1936) is halfway down Tara's central staircase when the fixtures and fittings of her youth — a life lived in the luxury of the Old South — '[leap] up at her' with a vitality that stops her in her tracks.¹ What they say has to do neither with functional use, nor the practicalities of escape. Yet Scarlett's animated possessions appeal more to her in this single moment than any human character in Margaret Mitchell's epic can. Scarlett O'Hara sees her own life flash before her eyes:

All the homely, well-loved articles of furniture seemed to whisper: "Good-by! Good-by!" A sob rose in her throat. There was the open door of the office where Ellen [her mother] had labored so diligently and she could glimpse a corner of the old secretary. There was the dining room, with the chairs pushed awry and food still on the plates. There on the floor were the rag rugs Ellen had dyed and woven herself. And there was the old portrait of Grandma Robillard [...] Everything which had been part of her earliest memories, everything bound up with the deepest roots in her: "Good-by! Good-by, Scarlett O'Hara!"

The Yankees would burn it all — all!²

This instant of high drama is an object lesson in the white female selfhood of the slaveholding South.

Reliant for her 'deepest roots' on rag rugs and dining room chairs, upon her French grandmother's portrait and her mother's secretary, this Confederate subject is a product of the genteel generations whose colonial nobility and 'diligent labor' created her. Or so Mitchell's whitewashed world would have it. Mitchell certainly permits Scarlett's female forebears more influence than would have been their due within the paternalistic slaveholding home, a Master's domain to which, as Elizabeth Fox-Genovese reminds us, women — like property, and to an extent like slaves — 'belonged'.³ But Mitchell's description is an exercise in poetic license: removing the labour of the enslaved from the equation, Mitchell amplifies the emotional intimacies that a white, slaveholding family shared in their private belongings. Scarlett's privilege, Mitchell reassures us, does not reside in the individuals her family enslaves; as a guardian of white exceptionalism, Scarlett feels for her possessions as

¹ Margaret Mitchell, *Gone with the Wind* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2008), pp. 641.

² Mitchell, pp. 641-642.

³ Elizabeth Fox Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), pp. 37-99; 192-241.

destruction closes in.

Scarlett O'Hara's fraught object-consciousness, like the raid that follows, constitutes a central moment of crisis in the history of white southern domesticity and the property relations integral to elite white womanhood. Staking its epic claim to that history in 1936, Mitchell's novel immortalised a formative episode in the narrative of white southern femininity, which had preoccupied her literary antecedents since the federal government's Confiscation Act of August 1861 authorised Union forces to commandeer Confederate property. Indeed, Scarlett's experience of the Union raid was quite possibly based on one of the innumerable accounts set down in private journals by slave mistresses who, as the Civil War unfolded, had seen their lives smashed with their mirrors and mahogany.⁴ For many such women, fragments of former lives and traces of invasion held the gaze. Scenes of domestic invasion by Union and Confederate troops, of the physical degradation that accompanied Confederate defeat, and of the poverty that spread through the South were replicated across fictional and non-fictional accounts of Confederate domesticity well after the war's end.

Alongside Emancipation's arrival, the military incursion of southern plantations and elite households altered the premises of white possession beyond recall, and the broken objects it left behind became more than just traces of enemy invasion. To the women left to pick up the pieces, they represented a threat to the forms of selfhood and racial pedigree that had defined their antebellum lives. In attending to possessions broken, diminished, and otherwise altered by their associations with wartime violence, and their textual afterlives during the Reconstruction period, this essay will explore some of the ways in which ex-Confederate women used literary narratives to confront the implications of their injured and unruly things. Faced with the challenges Reconstruction posed, these writers undertook to repossess the selves they had lost, and they did so through the textual organisation of their sullied private property. In the process, they began to create a new myth of white, southern identity — one which salvaged and aestheticised the remainders of defeat in the name of Confederate exceptionalism.

As Peter Bardaglio has noticed, '[t]he legend of female sacrifice became a key part of Confederate wartime propaganda and eventually was incorporated into the mythology of the Lost Cause' — a widespread, public movement that we associate, now more than ever, with

⁴ 'Margaret Mitchell WSB Radio interview with Medora Perkerson of *The Atlanta Journal Sunday Magazine*, 3 July 1936', <https://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/margaret-mitchell-american-rebel-interview-with-margaret-mitchell-from-1936/2011/> [accessed 15/01/2021].

the erection of Confederate monuments.⁵ In what follows, I advance an alternative rhetorical and material history of this element of Lost Cause mythology, tracing its beginnings to the physical devastation of the slaveholding home to show how and why ex-Confederate women used their tarnished possessions to articulate, and even commemorate, domestic sacrifice. In keeping with the larger aims of the Lost Cause, this mythology refused victimhood and manipulated literary sentimentality to re-fashion private upheaval into a statement of personal and political defiance. Where Brook Thomas has identified the southern ‘inheritance plot’ as a staple of Reconstruction’s fictional battles over the South’s legal and political futures, attending to the degraded paraphernalia of women’s writing offers us a glimpse of the affective skirmishes southern whites fought, with their own possessions, in the battle for Civil War memory.⁶

*

In contesting the South’s right to keep human chattel, the war put a rhetorical premium on its inanimate property too. In the North, federal congressmen came to blows over the fate of private rebel property, now inextricably tied to the enslaved. The Confiscation Acts of August 1861 and July 1862 — which prepared the ground for later acts of plunder — authorised an unprecedented federal intrusion into civilian lives to deprive the Confederacy of the enslaved labour necessary to the rebellion. While the Acts made Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation viable early in 1863, they raised uncomfortable questions about the treatment of those citizens ‘engaged in armed rebellion against the government of the United States [...] or aiding and abetting such rebellion,’ citizens whose property ‘real or personal’ might be seized and ‘condemned as enemies’ property and become the property of the United States’.⁷ While radical Republicans seeking to punish agents of ‘Treason and Rebellion’ saw confiscation as an effective mode of psychological warfare, others argued that the acts contravened the Fourth Amendment, which guaranteed ‘the right of the people to be secure in their person, houses, papers, and effects against unreasonable searches and

⁵ Peter Bardaglio, *Reconstructing the Household: Families, Sex, and the Law in the Nineteenth-Century South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), p. 130.

⁶ Brook Thomas, *The Literature of Reconstruction: Not in Plain Black and White* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017), pp. 243-283, (p. 243).

⁷ ‘The Second Confiscation Act 17 July 1862’, *Statutes at Large, Treaties, and Proclamations of the United States of America*, 129 vols (Boston, MA: Little and Brown, 1845—), XII, pp. 589-92. See also John Syrett, *The Civil War Confiscation Acts: Failing to Reconstruct the South* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005); Eric Foner, *The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery* (New York: Norton, 2010), pp. 215-216.

seizures'. To appropriate enemy property as federal property was, to some critics, to admit Confederate sovereignty, or affirm the U.S. government's tyrannical treatment of its own people.

It was, perhaps, the Lincoln administration's wish to limit the legislation's damage to the fabric of Union that led Francis Lieber, early in 1863, to acknowledge the sanctity of the South's domestic domain in the revised codes of war he presented for Federal use after Emancipation. Invoking the hallowed halls of the sentimentalised family home, 'General Order No. 100' recognised a broader, cultural devotion to the ties of unity represented by white domesticity in vowing to respect the enemy's 'strictly private property; the persons of the inhabitants, especially those of women; and the sacredness of domestic relations'.⁸ Looking past real estate, which fell under the Master's purview, to protect the untouchable 'paraphernalia' of which most white married women held legal possession under mid-century state laws in the South, Lieber's code honoured the material representatives of white feminine selfhood: clothing, jewellery, the accoutrements of the vulnerable female body.⁹ To lay waste to these intimate domestic effects, he warned, would have serious consequences: 'military necessity does not include any act of hostility which makes the return to peace unnecessarily difficult'.¹⁰

If the legislative treatment of Confederate property opened — and hastily attempted to bridge — a rhetorical rift between the federal government and its Confederate citizens, the approach taken by troops on the ground reified sectional division and left a lasting impression on those who witnessed the manhandling of their personal belongings. Vengeful Union troops with lax commanders were not inclined to handle Confederates' private property with care, especially when military strategy permitted a heavier hand. As General William T. Sherman marked his march through Georgia and the Carolinas with ambiguous field orders which left the door open to domestic destruction, the sacredness of domestic relations — and hopes of an orderly 'return to peace' — went by the wayside. 'No destruction of [private] property should be permitted,' Sherman's 'Special Field Order No. 120' read, 'but [...] should the inhabitants burn bridges, obstruct roads, or otherwise manifest local hostility, then army commanders should order and enforce a devastation more or less relentless according to

⁸ Francis Lieber, *Instructions for the Government of Armies of The United States in the Field, prepared by Francis Lieber, LL.D., Originally Issued as General Orders No. 100, Adjutant General's Office, 1863* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1898), p. 14.

⁹ Suzanne D. Lebock, 'Radical Reconstruction and the Property Rights of Southern Women' in *Half-Sisters of History: Southern Woman and the American Past*, ed. by Catherine Clinton (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994), pp. 110-135.

¹⁰ Lieber, p. 8.

the measure of such hostility'.¹¹ While some officers followed the letter of martial law, others took advantage of the possibilities invited by Sherman's phrasing.¹² The knowing violation of the domestic sphere was what Joan Cashin has identified as a humiliating and oft-repeated act of war, and what Scarlett O'Hara, like her white forebears, experienced as a disturbing derangement of the household's physical and semantic order.¹³

Mitchell's description of Yankees 'swarm[ing] through the house' invoked eyewitness accounts of household invasion that appeared in white women's wartime journals, and found afterlives in print during Reconstruction.¹⁴ Once the Yankees dispersed, these accounts often reckoned with violated possessions that seem to pull away from their owners — to be imbued with a strange new vitality. Lamenting how this 'wicked war of invasion' had 'thrown open' her family's 'very sanctums to a ruthless soldiery', self-professed 'Lady of Virginia' Judith McGuire, for example, was concerned to find that Union troops had 'injured' her sewing machine. 'Perhaps the soldiers knew of the patriotic work of that same sewing machine,' she wrote, 'how it stitched up many a shirt and jacket for our brave boys and therefore did it wrong'. The damage didn't get McGuire down though: in a moment of narrative recuperation, she revived the machine and her dedication to the Confederate cause in declaring that '[i]t shall work all the more vigorously for the wrongs it has suffered'.¹⁵ Other women struggled to find such strength, seeing homes as hostile spaces tainted by association. Sarah Fowler Morgan was shocked to find that, in their riflings, Union soldiers had transformed familiar possessions into menacing things: 'Had this shocking place ever been habitable?' she wondered at her ransacked bedroom; '[t]he tall mirror squinted at me from a thousand broken angles. It looked so knowing!'.¹⁶ Ruined beyond recall, Morgan's once-private refuge had a life of its own, and she intruded upon it as a stranger.

Sarah L. Wadley felt similarly on returning to her family home in Oakland, Louisiana, in 1863. 'My heart is in chaos,' she wrote of her attempts to restore household order: 'the pleasure of seeing things take their old familiar place in the house, of arranging furniture and bringing order out of confusion, which used to be so delightful to me has now lost its charm.

¹¹ Gen. William T. Sherman, 'General Field Order No. 120: 9 November 1864', *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, ed. by the United States War Department, Series 1, 53 vols (Washington, D.C.: Government Print Office, 1880-1898), XXXIX, p. 713.

¹² On Union motivations for plunder and pillage see Joan Cashin, 'Trophies of War: Material Culture in the Civil War Era', *Journal of the Civil War Era*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (September 2011), 339-367; George C. Rable, *Civil Wars: Women and the Crisis of Southern Nationalism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991).

¹³ Cashin, 352.

¹⁴ Mitchell, p. 643.

¹⁵ A Lady of Virginia [Judith McGuire], *Diary of a Southern Refugee During the War*, 2nd ed. (New York: E.J. Hale, 1868); McGuire's emphasis.

¹⁶ Sarah Fowler Morgan, *A Confederate Girl's Diary* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1913), p. 201.

My old room with [...] the firelight brightening the white curtains [...] and gleaming on polished mahogany fails to warm my heart.’¹⁷ Even outsiders noticed the strange new liveliness of white southern furnishings. Visiting Mobile, Alabama, after hostilities ceased in 1865, the northern journalist Whitelaw Reid, who had hoped to witness ‘gradual beginnings’ of a new South ‘[chrySTALLIZING] out of chaos,’ found instead a populace grappling with damaged possessions. He observed ‘the straits to which the people had been reduced. The pianos all jangled, and the legs of the parlor chairs were out of tune quite as badly. Sofas had grown dangerous places for any but the most slow-motioned and sedate’.¹⁸

As Wadley discovered, the war’s invasion of white southern homesteads seemed to cast personal possessions beyond emotional recall and narrative recuperation. Reid identified the source of the dissonance afflicting pianos and parlour chairs alike: writing from Reconstruction’s troubled beginnings, he heard household disharmony echoed in discord on southern streets. Witnessing white attacks against freedmen and -women, Reid deplored southern whites’ tendency to be ‘virulently vindictive against a property that escaped from their control’.¹⁹ Taking root in women’s private journals, these ‘fiction[s] of personified things’ — to borrow Jonathan Lamb’s phrase — exposed the sudden lack of personal control Confederate women experienced in relation to their ransacked property. As Reid implies, they also revealed the extent to which an integral sense of selfhood, and the racial privilege it was founded on, had been disrupted by Emancipation and its agents.²⁰ After all, the narratives of self that white, slaveholding women composed around their household possessions had been held together by the hands of the enslaved.

Bridget Heneghan and Walter Johnson agree that the nature of the slave mistress’s possession was one of leisurely ‘management,’ which consisted of neither personal effort nor exertion, but of a comfortable state in which, as Johnson argues, ‘a white woman could skate lightly across the surface of daily exigency, her own composure unscathed by the messy process required to produce the pleasing tableau of her own life’.²¹ The mediating labour of enslaved African Americans was central to the carefully-managed proximity between self and object which signalled white possession. When Emancipation reconfigured the domestic

¹⁷ Sarah L. Wadley, *Diary: August 8, 1859-May 15, 1865*, <https://docsouth.unc.edu/imls/wadley/wadley.html> [accessed 15/01/2021]

¹⁸ Whitelaw Reid, *After the War, A Southern Tour: May 1 1865 to May 1 1866* (New York: Moore, Wiltach and Baldwin, 1866), p. 10; p. 22.

¹⁹ Reid, p. 418.

²⁰ Jonathan Lamb, *The Things Things Say* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), p. 14.

²¹ Bridget T. Heneghan, *Whitewashing America: Material Culture and Race in the Antebellum Imagination* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2003), pp. 86-89; Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market* (Harvard, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 92.

relationships between the formerly enslaved and the households that held them captive — or prompted them to leave those households altogether — slave mistresses were confronted with objects they didn't know how to handle.²² In freeing human 'chattel,' Emancipation combined with Union pillaging to agitate the bonds of *inanimate* possession, too.

The potency of household possessions as sites of racial and cultural tension increased with Reconstruction's onset, as worsening economic conditions and the realities of widespread white impoverishment vied with questions of remembrance that surfaced in the war's wake. The emergence of a free labor economy in the South, alongside the accumulation of Confederate debts — governmental and private — laid bare new obligations that white southerners struggled even to think of honouring, and that compounded the difficulties many women encountered in taking home lives in hand. The implications for white elite identity were conspicuous, and loudly protested by ex-Confederate statesmen across the South's Reconstruction Conventions as well as by Southern Relief workers seeking to remedy the 'ravages of the Federal army' and the fallen condition of wealthy womanhood. In attempting to keep households afloat and honour war debts, the Ladies' Southern Relief Association of Maryland suggested, white women who 'took in sewing from the negroes' and men who '[worked], as their slaves never thought of doing,' occupied the same positions as their slaves once had, their home lives determined by the humiliating memories and practical burdens of maintaining their own private property.²³

One of the most difficult aspects of domestic disintegration and its meaning for white racial subjecthood was the public forum in which it took place. The wartime violation of Confederate homes was shocking, in part, because it revealed the sudden vulnerability of the self-contained, patriarchal domain of elite slaveholding homes to external forces. Ella Gertrude Clanton Thomas, a prolific diarist and ex-slaveowner from Augusta, Georgia, experienced this disturbance first-hand. Thomas's family properties had escaped Sherman's burning, but she felt her grip on domestic matters slacken on 17 May 1865, when she reported that her formerly enslaved cook, Tamah, had quietly left the Thomas household. Over the following years Thomas shrank from the labor it took to command seemingly unruly objects — she complained 'if a knife or spoon was used by Mr Thomas, if not placed in its proper place' and wondered at the washing-up that accumulated 'if I had dessert, or the plates

²² The nature of these changes has been extensively examined by Thavolia Glymph in *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

²³ *Report of the Ladies' Southern Relief Association of Maryland, September 1st, 1866* (Baltimore, MD: Kelly & Piet, 1866), pp. 16-17.

were changed' at meal times.²⁴ She also recorded the feeling that accompanied the prospect of losing her family home to pay her husband's debts: 'I have often alluded to the pleasure I have derived from the quiet beauty of the scene [of my home and its grounds]', she wrote on 12 December 1870, 'but there was one element mingled in the impression, *possession*, and I know the difference *now*, when I look out upon the same view [...] and realise that element is wanting.'²⁵

What hit home hardest-was the new way in which Thomas was forced to see herself *in connection with* her loss. When Georgia's Reconstruction Convention agreed to alter married women's property laws to protect Confederate capital, legislators placed a new burden upon women who were forced to decide the fate of their property when confronted with the debts of their husbands. They thus created new antagonisms within the patriarchal southern unit. And such disturbances revealed those struggles to the world, as Thomas discovered on 5 December 1870, when she happened upon a notice advertising the pending, public auction of her family seat. 'My eye,' she wrote, 'took in the fact of what my senses could not grasp'.²⁶

*

Thomas tried to comprehend the auction notice by copying it into her diary. We know that, like other women of her ilk, Thomas used her journal as a space in which she felt capable of expressing almost all of her deepest fears and, as Drew Gilpin Faust has argued, of navigating the increasingly public roles women necessarily took on during the war and afterwards.²⁷ Yet Reconstruction presented numerous problems that Thomas could not solve in her journal. Like the public auction of her home, these moments of vulnerability could only be looked upon with horror. In 1869 and 1870, Thomas's writings began to lose the impetus they exhibited before and even during the war: 'I can neither look backward nor forward but feel that I am drifting whither I know not,' she confided on 9 January 1870.²⁸ Scholars believe that Thomas purposefully destroyed her diary recording the events of 1871-1878 because of the dire straits those pages recounted.²⁹ It was perhaps, then, in pursuit of some narrative

²⁴ Ella Gertrude Clanton Thomas, *The Secret Eye: The Journal of Ella Gertrude Clanton Thomas, 1848-1889*, ed. by Virginia Ingraham Burr (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), pp. 267-269.

²⁵ Thomas, p. 348; Thomas' emphasis.

²⁶ Thomas, pp. 343-347, (p. 346).

²⁷ Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), p. 153.

²⁸ Thomas, p. 326.

²⁹ Virginia Burr, 'A Woman Made to Suffer and Be Strong: Ella Gertrude Clanton Thomas, 1834-1907' in *In Joy and In Sorrow: Women, Family, and Marriage in the Victorian South, 1830-1900* (New York; Oxford:

control over her domestic life that Gertrude Thomas decided, in autumn of 1869, to send a different sort of writing to ‘*The Southern Eclectic*’, ‘a story founded upon real life’. Thomas gives no indication of the shape her ‘story’ would take, yet her decision to send it to this North Carolinian periodical offers an insight into her fiction’s preoccupations — and what Thomas hoped its circulation might achieve that her diary could not.

If Thomas had been reading General D.H. Hill’s magazine — officially titled *The New Eclectic* following its merger, in 1869, with *The Land We Love* — she would have been familiar with Hill’s dedication to exposing the violences Sherman’s army wrought on the South. If she had chanced upon any of the eight Civil War stories that appeared in the periodical between 1866-1869, she would also have known that other white southerners, many of them women, had decided to write about ruined homes and possessions that had also been humiliatingly exposed to the eyes of strangers. Alongside the soldierly accounts of war that Hill collected, these stories preserved the remains of what had been lost, committed a memory of it to public record, and staked a claim for the broader significance of these events in ways which may not have been immediately obvious to the traumatised diarist — but which may have inspired her to new forms of narrative repossession.³⁰

One such story, published in the December 1868 issue of *The Land We Love*, revealed the extent of the damage Union troops, widespread destruction, and Reconstruction-era poverty had caused white domestic privacy. ‘In An Old Drawer’ is an unattributed tale which reveals the struggles of the aptly-named ‘Mrs. Grey’ to submit to the public handling of her own private possessions, even by close family friends.³¹ During a visit from a friend’s daughter, the nineteen-year-old Kate Murray, Mrs. Grey is taken by surprise when her young friend, tiring of discussion of “‘the dreadful war’” (155) seeks “‘employment and amusement’” (156) in the stories associated with Mrs. Grey’s stuff. “‘My favourite recreation [...] is simply to rummage,’” she tells her elder companion: “‘in other words, to open and thoroughly expose the contents of any box, trunk, or drawer, that looks as if it was intended to exclude prying eyes, and meddling fingers’” (156; original emphasis). If we hear echoes of Union ransackings in Kate’s strikingly precise definition of ‘rummaging,’ or see shadows of soldierly hands in her ‘meddling fingers,’ then Mrs. Grey’s response to every ‘treasure’ (156) Kate brings to light confirms the grasp that federal forces still exerted over white southern

Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 215-232, (p.227).

³⁰ See Ina Marie Porter, ‘Road-Side Stories, II’, Vol. II, No. II (December 1866), 115-123; ‘Road-Side Stories, III’, Vol. II, No. III (January 1867), 187-194; M.J.H., ‘Rose Cottage: A Real Incident of the War’, Vol. VI, No. IV (February 1869), 279-292.

³¹ ‘In an Old Drawer’, *The Land We Love*, Vol. VI, No. II (December 1868) 155-161.

homes.

While Mrs. Grey ‘laugh[s] at the girlish curiosity of her young friend’ (156-57), agreeing to ‘gratify [her] laudable thirst for knowledge’ as Kate ‘toss[es] over the contents’ of a drawer with ‘rapid fingers,’ the reader is alerted to the unsettled nature of this domestic realm in the host’s admission that “‘I have been from home so long that I have no idea what has accumulated in that drawer during my absence’” (157). As the story progresses, we learn that Mrs. Grey was forced to flee her home as Major General David Hunter and his troops swept through the Shenandoah Valley in the summer of 1864, when they exacted vengeance on raiding bushwhackers and disobedient civilians. The Grey family home, we are told, did not “‘fall before the incendiary fire-brand’” (161), but private possessions were evidently handled by strangers. Young Kate’s careless rummaging — which turns up “‘bundles and boxes of old letters, scraps of old finery, ribbons, silks, and laces’” as well as “‘a pile of morocco cases, hinting strongly of silver and jewellery’” (157) — roots out the same personal ‘paraphernalia’ prized by Union raiders, while hauling Mrs. Grey’s disturbed relationship with her own belongings into the light.

We soon learn that the ‘scraps’ Kate unearths are Mrs. Grey’s “‘bridal presents; the sole remnants of worldly possessions that the war left me; silver that I have had no use for in the wanderer’s life I have led for years, and jewels laid aside in hours of sorrow’” (157). Kate’s further probing elicits neither joyful memory nor nostalgic reminiscence, but a sorrowful reflection: these treasures were gifts bestowed by a close family friend, a “‘chivalrous gentleman, [and] gallant soldier’” who “‘fell while cheering on his men at the disastrous fight of Gettysburg, and lies in a hero’s nameless grave.’” Silver dessert knives recollect a “‘sorrowing widow’” and a pitiful prisoner of war “‘murdered’” by federal forces; a neatly packaged box remains closed as Mrs. Grey silently recoils from the memory of a ‘darling brother, who had fallen in defense of his country’ (157). The terms of private memory and the intersubjective relationships signified by gifts and keepsakes are irrevocably altered by the war’s events, which threaten to usurp objects’ functions and economic worth, but also, more importantly, the ties of kinship that these objects reify. In responding to every item as she does, Mrs. Grey reveals her home’s traumatic topography, which she has been condemned to wander against her will. “‘Yes, Kate,’” she admits, resigned, “‘the trail of the serpent is over all we see’” (161).

Yet the story doesn’t end in resignation. In fact, this early attempt to grapple with the things white Confederate women would rather forget begins, subtly, to suggest what purposeful remembering might look like within the ex-Confederate homestead. There are two

items that elicit a longer story from Mrs. Grey: lockets containing hair remind her of a Revolutionary-era romance between Susan and William, Mrs. Grey's grandmother and her betrothed. Enabling Mrs. Grey and Kate to "leave all our accustomed associations and surroundings, and [transport] ourselves back through those sixty odd years" (159), this story of love and loss, while set in wartime York Town, Virginia, doesn't end with a death in battle at the hands of the English; indeed, it doesn't end in violence at all. Rather, it provides the teller with a means of escape, since it ends in a sickness which, in turn, gives way to a tender death scene, a "hallowed moment" (160) that consecrates the fragile yet intense bonds of young love, and asserts the exceptional nature of those bonds by reaffirming this couple's caste.

As Mrs. Grey narrates, she invites Kate and the reader to enter into her memories and experience the Old Southern home as it was before Emancipation: we "follow the old mammy, who, with sorrowful face, goes swiftly up the broad stair-way, and enters the open chamber door," and, in joining young William's solemn family and their slaves, we witness the entrance of "the betrothed bride [...] the fair young girl [...] arrayed in her bridal robes, a vision of snow-white loveliness" (159). Neither battlefield death nor political partisanship interrupts this wealthy, whiter-than-white family line: the lock of William's hair is "sent to England with directions to have it set in the most costly manner." The "precious relics" (160) Mrs. Grey continues to cherish, then, embody the fortune inherited by the bereaved Susan and passed down through her family; the physical remains they contain index and venerate the stuff of elite white southernness.

The lockets underwent their own trials during the war, nonetheless. Kate observes their dishevelled appearance herself, and Mrs. Grey explains that while her grandmother's pearls "were discolored long ago, I have heard, by grandmamma's wearing the locket in her bosom [...] the other evidences of apparent neglect bring us back to the inevitable war again" (161). But the Civil War doesn't disturb the older memories attached to these 'relics' in the same way it blemishes old lace and sullied silver. Concealed by the Grey sisters "in some hiding place where neither spying negroes, not prying, thieving Yankees could discover them," these objects display forms of degradation that complement each other: the "injuries" (161) they sustain in wartime bespeak a domestic act of defiance on the Grey sisters' part, one fit to honour Susan's enduring love and her survival in grief's wake.

If, however, Mrs. Grey's concluding vow to tend the "injuries" of these family possessions — her "hope, at some future day, to get [them] repaired" (161) — promises a material recuperation capable of buffing the war's blemishes into oblivion, there's something

about this story that suggests the war won't easily be forgotten. Remembrance will require narrative strategies beyond mourning, mending, moving on. Perhaps it's the mingling of temporal residues upon these 'relics,' and the re-articulation of narrative purpose this permits Mrs. Grey in her distress. The nature of Kate's curiosity, however, is the tale's most troubling element: Mrs. Grey's belongings aren't animated, but Kate's probing force certainly is, and its alignment with federal invasion raises significant questions about the war's legacy — about who will remember it, how they will remember it, and how those memories will be transmitted from generation to generation. Yet it is precisely Kate's invasive rummaging that allows Mrs. Grey to link wartime violence with Old Southern heritage, and to make that connection as 'public' as Kate's curious eye suggests it is. Indeed, the story enacts a similar revelation of private disarray within the pages of *The Land We Love*. The story's circulation by a periodical sympathetic to afflicted ex-Confederate women may have provided comfort to readers like Gertrude Thomas. It may also have prompted them to confront, explicitly, the pain of exposure, while offering them a pattern — practical *and* literary — for renegotiating the terms of humiliating defeat in public.

It was a pattern solidified by other women writers of the postwar South. Born a Virginian in 1830 — raised in Dennisville and later Richmond — Mary Virginia Terhune had come to prominence as Marion Harland, a writer of housekeeping manuals. Her most notable work was the best-selling *Common Sense in the Household* (1874), which strove to teach inexperienced housewives the 'method, skill, economy' integral to women's work 'North, East, South, and West'.³² Yet common sense became southern sense when Harland turned her pen to tales of her childhood home, even though she had moved North from Richmond in 1859, following her husband to a pastorate in Newark, New Jersey. Long after the war and Reconstruction were over she professed herself a 'Union lover at the South,' willing to declare that 'allegiance to the general government should outrank allegiance to the State in which one had chanced to be born and to live'.³³ But her Reconstruction-era novella *Wall-Flowers*, serialised in *Godey's Lady's Book* in 1870, reveals something of the emotional pull Harland must have experienced when Union troops ruined her family's home during the fall of Richmond in 1865. Her husband had been one of the first civilians to enter the city under Union rule, seeking to preserve the family's property, and Harland's narrative undertakes a

³² Marion Harland, *Common Sense in the Household: A Manual of Practical Housewifery* (New York: Scribner, 1872), p. 15.

³³ Marion Harland, *Marion Harland's Autobiography: The Story of a Long Life* (New York: Harper, 1910), pp. 380-382.

similar salvaging.

Berthe Temple is a ‘thorough rebel’ striving to make the most of her family’s reduced circumstances.³⁴ We meet her on the eve of her Confederate army-dodging fiancé’s return to Richmond, attempting to mask the war’s invasion of her home, and her family’s poverty, by arranging and re-arranging what remains of their furniture:

The paint was scaling from the window-facings, and the double-leaved front door in unsightly blotches, as if the building had broken out with leprosy. There was a melancholy grandeur in the lofty ceilings, defaced with dust and dampness [...] The upholstery was frayed, and the originally warm tints had degenerated into one uniform shade of reddish brown. (I, 29)

Still unused to domestic dilapidation — which emerges as a chronic illness and, in ‘defacement,’ an act of aggressive defilement — Berthe sternly reminds her self that ‘crying about it would not renovate the tattered cushions or recarpet the floor [...] any more than it would call [her soldier brothers] Maury and Kidder back from their bloody graves’ (I, 32). Her only hope of preventing this leprous home from falling to pieces, and altering the family’s dejected acknowledgement that ‘[t]hey were conquered’ (I, 31), comes from the practical art of ‘arranging the furniture to best advantage, stepping like a young princess, to and fro, carolling lightly’ (I, 32). As it turns out, Berthe’s hopeful display places this heroine at *her* best advantage.

The crooning Confederate belle captures the attention of a passer-by, the northern speculator Robert Dent, whose imminent encounter with her destines the pair for marriage. Dent’s enchantment, though, is undermined by Harland’s own narrative arrangement, which closets Berthe from the northerner beyond her window:

The sun streamed through an unshuttered side window, and glorified her as she stood against the background of a dark portrait — the full-length presentation of some remote ancestor — her light chestnut hair rippling back from her white forehead. [...] She moved away to a dusty old cabinet, still singing, and the spectator, recovering himself with a start, glanced at the upper window as one nervous of observation, and walked on. (I, 32)

Just as Berthe works to aestheticise the shabbiness of her everyday life, Harland uses derelict southern furnishings, dusty with the prestige of Old Southern history, to cast her heroine as a treasure of exceptional pedigree. Unlike the sympathy *The Land We Love*’s readers are

³⁴ Marion Harland, ‘Wall-Flowers: Part I’, *Godey’s Lady’s Book*, Vol. LXXXI, No. 481 (July 1870), 29-36, (p. 30).

invited to feel for the bereft Mrs. Grey, the halo of noble poverty around Berthe's white brow isn't designed to spark sympathetic connections between northerner and southerner.

Indeed, where 'romances of reunion' such as this generally imagined the taming of rebellious belles by upright Union officers, Harland's replacement of soldier with speculator is significant — especially considering his part in the material reconstruction of southern poverty.³⁵ More significant still is the way his acquisitive stare is undermined with a seemingly sentimental flourish. The same song that lures Dent to the window only marks how out of tune he is with the ex-Confederate life of poverty: as speculator becomes spectator, a voyeur into the fascinating interiors he hopes to beautify with 'Northern capital,' so the essential difference between this man of means and the southern figure of 'mutinous grief' (I, 32) are emphasised when he fails to complete Berthe's song. 'The fragment he had caught,' we are told, 'would haunt him until he heard the rest of the air' (I, 32). Where Whitelaw Reid had wondered at faulty footloose furnishings, Harland uses the rare airs of the decrepit Confederate interior to cast Berthe as an unattainable object of desire. Her shabby conditions and fragmented song resist sentimental exchange and ultimately undercut the narrative of sectional reconciliation that unfolds.

Berthe's relationship with this northern speculator only comes to fruition through further destruction. It is only when Dent is caught in the collapse of the Richmond Capitol building that Berthe gives in and returns his feelings. The incident recalls the downfall of the Confederate seat of power in April of 1865, and may symbolise the crumbling, too, of Berthe's rebellious resolve. But Harland stalls narrative progress at the last moment to leave a lingering strain of melancholic ambiguity hanging over the story's conclusion. As Berthe rushes to the scene of destruction, the narrator laments the 'grief of desolate homes, the secrets of stricken hearts, the bewilderment and distress of the oft-smitten town — robbed in one little hour of nearly three-score of her noblest sons'.³⁶ The feeling is political, a lament for the fall of Richmond and the Confederacy itself; sentimental resolution is sacrificed with the Confederacy's 'noblest sons,' and Harland's romance of reunion competes with persistent destruction.

For all her professions of reconciliationist feeling, Harland uses *Godey's* to unsettle the aims of federal Reconstruction, in its broadest sense. The ambiguity of her tale lies in the

³⁵ On the 'romance of reunion' genre see Nina Silber, *The Romance of Reunion: Northerners and the South, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993).

³⁶ Marion Harland, 'Wall-Flowers: Part III', *Godey's Ladys Book*, Vol. LXXXI, No. 483 (September 1870), 221-223, (p. 223).

narrative's play with readerly sympathies: her moments of resistance and recollection rely on the presence of a reader — the afflicted ex-Confederate woman — capable of appreciating rebellious sentiment at the right moment. Berthe's tuneful housekeeping both invites and confounds Dent's speculative gaze but also appeals to readers who might recognise beauty and value in destitution; so Harland's Richmond lament calls for a reader able to see the melancholy ending not as a triumph over the Confederate past, but as a significant moment in the Confederacy's collective memory. Perspective is all: Harland's eddies of sectional sentiment evoke scission and difference, even as they invite the northerner's admiring gaze and use it to conjure a vision of exceptional white, southern femininity which degradation makes exotic, rather than ragged or vulnerable.

The allure of Berthe Temple's 'shabby chic' was replicated across southern plantations and Civil War narratives spanning the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. These stories lingered on heroines whose racial purity and sympathetic appeal were intertwined with dishevelled states that they had learned how to use to their advantage. With this lineage in mind, Scarlett O'Hara's famous curtain dress becomes less a comic diversion in Margaret Mitchell's depiction of Reconstruction, and more a statement of intent. Sewn by Mammy from Ellen O'Hara's prized green velvet drapes in aid of Scarlett's scheme to marry the rich Rhett Butler, this makeshift creation flaunts degradation in the name of Tara's preservation.

Its creator, Mammy, who wears a 'look of grim determination [...] as she [cuts] into the velvet curtains,' is a powerful reminder of the artifice involved in this literary legacy.³⁷ Berthe Temple's strained conclusion that '[n]ecessity made labor honorable' (I, 31) and Scarlett O'Hara's attempts to conjure glamour from the remnants of her Old Southern home depend upon Black labour, even as they deny its existence in favour of exceptional white futures. In spite of themselves, the former slaveholding and Confederate women who sought to assert narrative order over their lives and their possessions would also, implicitly, acknowledge the racial anxieties that haunted the whitest of rebel hands, and brought a troubling new life to mirrors and mahogany. What Reconstruction-era narratives reveal that monuments cannot is the effort of this denial, and the forms of self-fashioning — or self-deception — that lurk at the heart of the Lost Cause project of remembrance.

³⁷ Mitchell, p. 765.