THE SOUTHERN MUSE

CONFEDERATE WAR POETRY DURING THE CIVIL WAR

by

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Abstract

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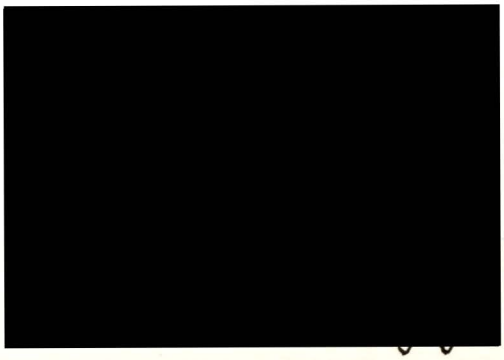
This thesis is a study of Confederate war poetry, researched in the files of nine Southern newspapers from 1861-1865. The poetry divides into three categories each of which corresponds to a different phase of the war, and it is my argument that through these three phases a change in Southern society can be traced. Beginning with the "Old South", which on the one hand proudly claimed to be a cultivated gracious "cavalier" civilization and on the other was tormented by guilt over the evil of slavery, the thesis follows the attitudes of the Southern people as they develop during the conflict. It illustrates that early Southern enthusiasm changed first to determination, then to despair, and finally to nostalgia, until at the end of the war a new society, the "New South" emerged. The thesis shows that through the war the Old Southern way of life was destroyed along with the institution of slavery, and that these changes transformed the South. The thesis argues that before the war the South had been gay, but guilty, while after the war the South was serious but free of guilt. Moreover the thesis concludes that, freed of guilt, the New South was able to develop an idealized picture of its past which gave them identity and unity in the postwar world.



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INTRODUCTION

The crucial Civil War years of American history have been studied in minute detail by historians. Subjects ranging from politics and economics to the institution of slavery have all been examined, for "we need to know what we are not only to explain ourselves to others but also to deal effectively with ourselves."[1] Accordingly it is necessary to examine the Confederate States of America not merely as a political body but as a community of men and women. Like all human organizations the Confederacy was what its citizens made it. Beneath the politics and economics there were people. Alongside the official hopes and fears of leaders were the personal hopes and fears of everyday men and women. Often the thoughts and emotions of common people are neglected in the search for historical truth, but no understanding of the Confederacy is really complete without some understanding of its people.

In political or economic terms it is clear that the war was a bridge between the Old South, with its conservatism, its slavery and its agrarianism, and the New South, with its heightened awareness of business, industry, and finance. What is more important, as far as this study is concerned, is that the war was also a bridge between two ways of thinking. In

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[1]Carl Bode, The Anatomy of American Popular Culture (Los Angeles, 1960), XI.

terms of the South's image of itself and its culture the war is a transition period between the Old South of the "plantation myth," which was drawn together in the common defense of the "chivalrous" Southern way of life, and the New South of the "lost cause myth" which was united by a common defeat and a shared vision of what had once been. It is this transition period in Southern thought that is the focus of this study.

Literature in all its forms is useful in a study of men's thoughts for it often reflects, with unusual fidelity, the moods of a people. The written word is one indicator of the nature of a people and can, to some extent, illustrate men's emotional reactions to events. Moreover it can help men to understand themselves by providing them with a picture of how other men have lived.[2]

"History and literature both attempt to gain . . . some kind of insight into the quality, mood, tempo, and personality of life--not just the fact of the past but the feel of it."[3] It is this "feel" of the past that is of interest. What men have done is not so difficult to discover; what they have felt and thought--the reasons behind their doings--are another

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[2] R. B. Nye, "History and Literature: Branches of the Same Tree" in Essays on History and Literature (Ohio State, 1960), p. 153.

[3] Ibid., p. 140.

matter. It is not so much what is said as how it is said. The tone of literature, and the images created by it, can be as revealing as the content. In the form of poetry, literature can provide an insight not only into men's minds but also into their hearts, for men write not just what they see or do, but also what they feel.

Poetry exists on many levels. On one level stand the giants, the literary geniuses whose work is timeless, while on another stand lesser men, who depend upon the common man for their success and present him with entertainment. The popular poet, as the versifier of lesser stature has come to be known, does not create great art, but he can provide the historian with insights into the nature of a people and time, equally valuable to those provided by high culture.

> The popular artist corroborates (occasionally with great skill and intensity) values and attitudes already familiar to his audience; his aim is less to provide a new experience than to validate an older one. Predictability is important to the effectiveness of popular art; the fulfillment of expectations, the pleasant shock of recognition of the known, verification of an experience already familiar . . .[4]

The popular poet is, partly by inclination, partly by necessity, a reflector of his own society, and thus his importance to the historian is potentially great and is increased when poetry in general enjoys a wide audience. In the nine-

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[4]R. B. Nye, The Unembarrassed Muse (New York, 1970), p. 4.

teenth century the popular poet did indeed have a large following.[5] In the South he was granted a position of respect, and during the short life of the Confederacy the audience for poetry was, in modern terms, immense.[6] As one authority has said, Southern poetry "speaks the language of men and women, and in it we may read, as perhaps through no other medium, the true story of the development of Southern character."[7]

Yet in all the vast bibliography on the Civil War and the Confederacy there is a surprising lack of material that deals with Confederate verse. With this in mind the following study was undertaken and the files of nine Confederate newspapers were examined for the period 1860-1865; the best source of this type of material being the papers.[8] Southern newspapers contained a wealth of occasional verse that is not only difficult to find elsewhere, but has about it in context an immediacy lost in subsequent anthologies.[9] Issue after issue the poetry

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[5] Ibid., p. 100.

[6] E. P. Ellinger, The Southern War Poetry of the Civil War (New York, 1918), p. 10.

[7] Ibid., p. 27.

[8] R. Walker, The Poet and the Gilded Age (Philadelphia, 1963), p. 27. As Walker says: "Especially in newspapers the poet is responding to the news of the day. He is a reflection of the mass of people that make up his culture."

[9] J. C. Andrews, "The Confederate Press and Public Morale," Journal of Southern History, XXXII (November, 1966), p. 275.

columns presented verse covering every possible subject brought up by the war and life in the Confederacy. From these newspapers, which covered the entire life of the Confederacy, and represented not only the major metropolitan centers such as Richmond, Charleston, and New Orleans, but every section of the South, some 2000 different poems were collected and culled. The most revealing, and representative examples of Southern verse have been used in this study.

Upon examination of the material it became clear that while on the one hand the verse merely highlighted the steady destruction and defeat of the Confederacy, on the other it provided certain insights into the changes in Southern thinking brought about by the war. The verse revealed the rapid and complete disappearance of the Old Southern "plantation myth; and the emergence of a new and different conception of the South. After a short burst of enthusiasm, the versifiers exhibited a strange willingness, if not eagerness, to abandon their old cheerful notion of the South for a new and more melancholy one. In fact, as the following study will attempt to point out, long before the war had in fact destroyed the Old South, the poets had begun to think in terms of the "lost cause." In poetry at least the "lost cause myth" was born before the cause was actually lost.

Chapter One
The Old South: 1830-1860

I

Throughout the course of American history men have often viewed their nation in sectional terms. The United States of America came into being, after all, when thirteen separate colonies joined together to form a Union of thirteen separate states in which certain rights and powers were reserved, by law, for the member states. Today, as in the past, Americans speak of the West or the East, of New England or the Deep South, and it is realized that they speak of these areas not simply as geographical locations within the nation but as regions, each with its own distinctive characteristics. Likewise, it is popularly recognized that men from these different sections, though similar in most ways, are at the same time different. The shrewd, practical Yankee, the weather-beaten, taciturn Westerner, and the gracious hot-blooded Southerner are all recognizable types in American history, as in the American present. In most cases the differences between these figures are insignificant. In others, however, the people of a particular section are drawn together in a relationship so basic that it makes them different from their countrymen, and their position in the nation is profoundly affected by their differences. The most obvious example of a strong sectional identity is the South of the nineteenth century.

II

The Old South (1830-1860) was in many ways unique. Its traditions and history had taken it down a road different in many ways to the one travelled by the other states. The South's climate set it apart, for it was much more hot and sultry than that of the North. Southern agriculture, unlike that of the North or West, was based upon money crops, such as tobacco and cotton. The South's religious background was different from that of the "Puritan" North, and as Clement Eaton has pointed out: "Southerners of the ante-bellum period preferred . . . the path of conservatism,"[1] while other Americans tended to be more liberal. Men in the South recognized and cherished those things that made their land different from the North, and in the face of the Northern moral onslaught on the "peculiar institution," did everything they could to encourage their growth. In the years prior to the Civil War, Southerners formed their own image of themselves and their land, and as time passed those things within this self-image that forced the North and South apart, instead of those which brought them together, became the dynamic element in the sectional relationship.

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[1] C. Eaton, "The Civilization of the Old South", in Writings of Clement Eaton, ed. A.D. Kirwain (Kentucky Press, 1968), p. 225.

The Southern self-image, built upon such things as slavery, the plantation system, romanticism, and Southern nationalism, has come to be known as the "plantation myth."[2] Belief in this "myth" united the Southern states into a society whose values were quite dissimilar to those held by other Americans. Admittedly these beliefs were nebulous and vaguely defined, but they did exist and were respected by Southerners.

If the thrust of American life in the ante-bellum period was democratic and egalitarian, that in the South was feudalistic and aristocratic. At a time when the mind of the North turned expectantly to the future, the mind of the South retreated longingly into the past. When Northern society was becoming more open and free, Southern society was becoming restricted and closed. Where the North welcomed prcgressive change, the South resisted change of any kind. As C. Vann Woodward has pointed out:

> In that most optimistic of centuries in the most optimistic part of the world, the South remained basically pessimistic in its social outlook and its moral philosophy.[3]

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[2] R.G. Osterweis, Romanticism and Nationalism in the Old South (New Haven, 1949), p. 26.

[3] C. Vann Woodward, The Burden of Southern History (New York, 1960), p. 28.

According to its champions, the South was a simple land where the time-honoured traditions of a rural society were preserved and nurtured. Southerners felt that their land was the home of aristocrats and gentlemen, of noble yeomen, and faithful bondsmen, blessed by cultural magnificance second to none.[4] During the ante-bellum period the South looked to the past for its inspiration, to "the feudal charm of Sir Walter Scott's novels,"[5] or the romantic glory of the Cavaliers. Men of the South were "committed to a social order in which the landed estate was the prime element and overlordship the prime necessity,"[6] and they tried to develop this feudal outlook to capture, in their own society, the glory and grace of those bygone days.

Southerners staged jousting tournaments, cultivated

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[4] Osterweis, Romanticism, Ch. 3, See also: W. W. Freehling, Prelude to Civil War-The Nullification Controversy in South Carolina 1816-1836 (New York, 1965), Ch. 2; and, C. Eaton, The Waning of the Old South Civilization 1860-1880's (Athens, 1968), Ch. 1.

[5] Eaton, "Civilization of the Old South," Writings, p. 37.

[6] P. H. Boynton, Literature and American Life (Boston, 1936) p. 374.

knightly manners and coined romantic terms such as "Southron"[7] in an attempt to preserve that which they loved. An aristocratic sense of duty, chivalry, an "almost quixotic code of honor,"[8] horsemanship, marksmanship, the thrill of the hunt and other such "medieval survivals"[9] were the elements that flavoured Southern life.[10] As the following passage shows, Southerners went to great lengths to emulate their idols of the past:

> The wealthiest of the Carolina chivalry, as they loved to call themselves, came (to Charleston) in carriages with coats of arms, drawn by high stepping horses driven by Negroes dressed in livery. They came to watch the Jockey Club races on the Washington course, to dance at exclusive balls, to inspect the new fashions, and to indulge in idle chatter. It was a decaying aristocracy but it still displayed enormous wealth and exquisite cultivation, and made Charleston the most

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[7] Osterweis, Romanticism, p. 72: The term "Southron was a unique Southern form of the word "Southern" and was developed to point out the so-called aristocratic background of Southerners. It was an imitation of the word "Norman" and was used because the South liked to think of itself as a child of the Norman race that had once ruled England.

[8] Eaton, Old South Civilization, p. 53; See also: J. Franklin, The Militant South (Cambridge, 1950), p. 76: As the author says: " . . . Nothing was more important than honor. Indeed he (the Southerner) placed it above wealth, art, learning, and the other "delicacies" of an urban civilization and regarded its protection as continuing preoccupation."

[9] Boynton, Literature, p. 374.

[10] Osterweis, Romanticism, p. 42, and: Freehling, Prelude to Civil War, p. 7.

English city in America.[11]

The very nature of Southern society tended to create this idea of chivalry and aristocracy, for unlike the North, the South was a class society structured in almost feudal terms. Southerners argued that their society, in which "Lords" in the form of large planters, "peasants" in the form of average farmers and workers, and "serfs" in the form of Negro slaves lived side by side in harmony and good fellowship, was perfectly balanced. They believed at this time that the South had perfected the art of civilized living. They felt that Southern culture was magnificent and far superior to that of the North. The North, they argued, was hard and mercenary, a land of bankers and businessmen, peddlers and money-lenders where the dollar reigned supreme. To the Southerner, the land of the Yankee was uncivilized and crude, a land of "Saxon" brutes. Southern society was gay, carefree, "Cavalier"; Northern society in contrast was staid, serious, "Roundhead."[12]

> Southerners prided themselves in a belief that they excelled the Yankee in all the finer points of civilization: gracious manners, genuine hospitality, chivalry, gallantry in war, the enjoyment and taste of their aristocracy, the enjoyment of leisure, a harmony with nature, the art of conversation, and the high sense

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[11] Freehling, Prelude to Civil War, p. 1.

[12] Osterweis, Romanticism, p. 60; See also: Eaton, Old South Civilization, p. 70.

of honor of its people.[13]

The South was, however, forced to live within the same house as the barbaric North, giving the gentlemen of Dixie cause for alarm, and strengthening their determination to preserve their sectional uniqueness. Though the South might believe in its own superiority, it was not blind to the power of the North, and during the early ante-bellum period men in the South watched with concern as the North grew rapidly in size and strength. Of the more than four million immigrants that arrived in the United States between 1840-1860 the overwhelming majority settled in the North, while the great increases in economic wealth and agricultural production were all but confined to New England and the Old North-West. Southerners felt they were different and saw developments in the North that threatened to destroy that difference. They watched as the South's security and welfare became more and more dependent on Northern economic power, and they grew fearful. As Hinton Rowan Helper pointed out shortly before the war, Southern life was in fact dominated by Northern economic power.[14]

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[13] Eaton, Old South Civilization, p. 80.

[14] H. R. Helper, "The Impending Crisis" in Ante-Bellum ed. H. Wish (New York, 1960). See also: E. M. Coulter, The Confederate States of America (Louisiana, 1950).

> Observe the routine of his [the Planters] daily life. See him rise in the morning from a Northern bed, and clothe himself in Northern apparel; see him walk across the floor on a Northern carpet, and perform his ablutions out of a Northern ewer and basin . . . See him and his family . . . at the breakfast table, saying grace over a Northern plate, eating with Northern cutlery, and drinking from Northern utensils . . . See him riding to his neighbour's in a Northern carriage, or furrowing his lands with a Northern plow . . . See him with Northern pen and ink, writing letters on Northern paper, and sending them away in Northern envelopes, sealed with Northern wax, and impressed with a Northern stamp.[15]

The greatest cause of Southern concern was not economics however, but the growing abolitionist attack upon slavery and the Southern plantation system. Southerners listened as Northern abolitionists intensified their attacks and they became convinced that their existence was in jeopardy. They saw a "grasping flint-souled race of Saxons jealously bearing down on a chivalrous warm-hearted Norman aristocracy,"[16] and in fear and anger turned to defend the "peculiar institution."

Originally Southerners had looked upon slavery as something evil but unfortunately necessary to maintain order in society. In the early years of the great national debate Southerners had taken a leading role in the search for a solution to the problem. After 1830, however, when the abolitionist campaign began to grow in strength, Southerners, despite themselves, argued that slavery was good, and fought to preserve

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[15] Helper, "Impending Crisis" Ante-Bellum, p. 227.

[16] Osterweis, Romanticism, p. 71.

it. In 1837, John C. Calhoun, the greatest Southern advocate of states rights, insisted that slavery was "instead of an evil, a good--a positive good."[17] In a world which had long since turned against slavery, in a land that was dedicated to liberty and freedom for all, the South insisted that, "If we will not have slaves, we must be slaves."[18]

Herein lies the great tragedy of the South, for in their hearts many Southerners knew, or at least felt that slavery was wrong.[19] They knew, even though they could not bring themselves to admit it, that slavery was evil and that as defenders of slavery they were a party to that evil. Unlike the North, the South's "preoccupation was with guilt, not with innocence, with the reality of evil, not with the dream of perfection."[20] The South was caught in a moral dilemma, for while they might believe slavery to be wrong they were afraid to do away with it. For one thing slaves constituted an enormously valuable property and the institution itself formed a bulwark for the Southern way of life. Moreover, Southerners feared that without slavery the Negro would run wild, and in their fear they con-

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[17] R. Hofstadter, American Political Tradition (New York, 1948), p. 79.

[18] J. B. Hubbell, "Literary Nationalism in the Old South", American Studies in Honor of William K. Boyd, ed., D. K. Jackson (Freeport, 1940), p. 143.

[19] C. G. Sellers Jr., The Southerner as American (Chapel Hill, 1960), p. 81.

[20] Woodward, Burden of Southern History, p. 28.

jured up dreadful pictures of what abolition would bring. Southerners came to believe that the slave, "too barbaric and degraded to adjust peaceably to freedom [would] declare race war the moment he threw off his chains."[21]

Clearly the South's fear and guilt over slavery stood in direct contradiction to its own self-image. How could the South maintain the illusion that it was a glorious and pure land when it was plagued by great evil? How could Southerners argue that their people lived together in harmony, or that the Negro really needed and wanted slavery when they were afraid of slave revolt, and the Negro despised his bondage? How could the South claim superiority over the North, when the North, and indeed the civilized world, justifiably condemned them as slave holders? Try as they may, in the end Southerners could not reconcile the differences between truth and illusion and ultimately it was this "gulf between the plantation myth and the realities of bondage--a gulf evident day after day in the painful dilemmas of discipline"[22] that drove the always defensive South to war and defeat. As C. Vann Woodward has said, the South "writhed in torments of its own conscience until it

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[21] Freehling, Prelude to Civil War, p. 51.

[22] Ibid., p. 69.

plunged into catastrophe to escape."[23]

The years prior to the outbreak of the Civil War were charged with political controversy and crisis. The Nullification Crisis of 1832, the Compromise of 1850, the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 and the Dred Scott case of 1857 were but a few of the incidents which marked the road to war. As the South struggled to defend itself within the Union, it increasingly closed ranks at home, thereby becoming a closed society in which questioning the existing conventions was frowned upon because the correct conclusions had already been drawn. Attacks upon the South were met head on. Debate was cut off, for in its fear of the North, the South felt an attack on any part of it was harmful to the whole. The South which had given birth to Thomas Jefferson, the man who had written the Declaration of Independence, came to believe in the "absolute need for discipline to keep society in proper adjustment."[24]

Quite naturally there developed at this time a desire for independence among many sections of Southern society and many men began openly to advocate secession from the Union. Plagued by their own guilt, and tormented by constant criticism from the North, Southerners seemed to ignore the dangers

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[23] Woodward, Burden of Southern History, p. 28.

[24] P. Buck, The Road to Reunion 1865-1900 (New York, 1959), p. 29, also: Clement Eaton, Freedom of Thought in the Old South (New York, 1958), p. 127.

of their actions until ultimately, they rushed to their own destruction.[25] Led on by the efforts of such Southern nationalists as Robert B. Rhett of South Carolina and William Yancey of Alabama, the South turned its back on the Union and the stage was set for the formation of the Confederate States of America and a war which would destroy the Old South forever.[26]

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[25] Sellers, Southerner as American, p. 97.

[26] Ibid., p. 98.

Chapter Two

The South Goes to War: April 1861-April 1862

"A soldier's life's the life for me"
Charleston Daily Courier, September 16, 1861.

I

The war poetry of the Confederate States of America can be divided into three categories,[1] each of which roughly corresponds to a different phase of the war, and through these three phases the demise of the Old South and the birth of the New can be traced. Beginning with the early years of the war, when Southern poets and citizens alike looked forward with enthusiasm and zeal to the final establishment of their national independence, the poetry moved through the middle period of the struggle, reflecting the changes in Southern society brought about when the realities of war hardened Southerners, robbed them of their gay and once "Cavalier" life style and substituted grim determination to endure, until in the last years of the conflict--when the Old South was gone and the New just emerging--the verse reflected the grief and sorrow of a defeated people searching for a new identity.[2]

The bulk of the verse of the first period dealt with the war itself and the glory of the South and its cause, but other

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[1] Ellinger, Southern War Poetry, Ch. 1.

[2] Eaton, Old South Civilization, p. 97.

concerns, such as life on the home front and sorrow over the loss of loved ones, were also covered. In tone the poetry was like the people who spawned it--determined yet beset with doubt, courageous yet fearful of the unknown, defiant yet insecure. As the years passed the tone would darken as the element of insecurity in the verse grew apace with the larger doubts in the Southern mind and heart. Yet despite their misgivings, or perhaps because of them, after secession and the fall of Fort Sumter, Southerners rushed to the colours by the thousands with the sound of poetic cheers ringing in their ears.[3] "Speed onward to the battlefield,"[4] a myriad of poets urged their fellow Confederates:

> Come young! come old! come rich! come poor!
> In sunshine and in stormy weather,
> United now, and evermore,
> We'll stand and live or die together.[5]

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[3] T. Livermore, Numbers and Losses in the Civil War in America 1861-1865 (New York, 1957), Ch. 2; See also: Bell Wiley, The Life of Johnny Reb (New York, 1943), p. 15: Estimates of the number of men who fought for the South range from a high of 1,000,000 to a low of 500,000, but most sources favour a figure of about 700,000. All sources agree, however, that eagerness to serve was widespread in the South, though not in the North.

[4] "To The South Carolina Volunteers," Charleston Daily Courier, June 24, 1861.

[5] "Now or Never," Memphis Appeal, cited in Charleston Daily Courier, May 15, 1861.

The cry " . . . on to the just and glorious strife"[6] was heard throughout the South:

Fame! Inspire us with thy charm!
Angels! Shield our soil from harm!
Just our cause and strong our arm,
Forward comrades! Do or Die![7]

In some poems men were informed of their duty to the cause:

Southrons up and fight for freedom,
For the angel Liberty,
See! She lives in every blessing,
And in every memory,
Raise yourselves and lift her banner
Till the victory it sees.[8]

While in others Southern valour was praised and the impending destruction of the enemy was proclaimed:

Upon Virginia's sacred soil
The invading crew his foot hath set,
You'll give them trouble for their toil
And teach them what they'll ne'er forget;
We'll teach their raving thievish bands
Where'er our banner proudly waves,
We'll welcome them with bloody hands
To deep and "hospitable" graves.[9]

Within months of the outbreak of the war the ultimate Southern victory and the way it would be won had been foretold

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[6]"On, on to the Just and Glorious Strife," Richmond Daily Whig, April 22, 1862.

[7]"Banner Song," Southern Literary Messenger, cited in Charleston Daily Courier, July 26, 1861.

[8]"Liberty," Richmond Daily Enquirer, July 23, 1861.

[9]"War Song," Charleston Daily Courier, May 19, 1862.

and described by Southern poets. Papers throughout the South published reams of martial verse. Some of it, like the following song which was put to the air of "Columbia the Gem of the Ocean," merely praised Dixie:

> Oh! Dixie the land of King Cotton
> The home of the brave and the free.
> A nation by Freedom begotten,
> The terror of despots to be;
> Wherever thy banner is streaming
> Base tyranny quails at thy feet,
> And Liberty's sun-light is beaming
> In splendour of majesty sweet.[10]

Some dealt with the unbeatable solidarity of the South; a matter of some concern in that "States rights" had always been strong in the South:

> God bless the South! our Northern foe
> Must pierce a living wall,
> And wade through streams of Southern blood
> Ere chains on her can fall.[11]

And still others managed to taunt Northern "brother Jonathan" while glorifying the New Southern nation:

> The time will soon arrive John this wicked war must cease . . .
> And then a gracious Providence will cause the world to know,
> Its garden spot is Dixieland, oh! Jonathan my Joe![12]

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[10]"Land of King Cotton," Charleston Daily Courier, January 29, 1862.

[11]"God Bless the South," New Orleans Times-Picayune, May 27, 1861.

[12]"Oh, Jonathon My Joe," Richmond Daily Dispatch, August 8, 1861.

A few poets were even so sure of victory that they warned Southerners to hurry off to battle before it was all over:

> Arise! For the hour is passing;
> The sound that you dimly hear;
> Is your enemy marching to battle;
> Rise! Rise! for the foe is here!
> Stay not to brighten your weapons,
> Or the hour will strike at last;
> And from dreams of a coming battle,
> You will wake and find it past.[13]

As Southern boys rushed off to do battle before it was too late the new flags of the Southern Confederacy became both a source of inspiration for the poets and a symbol of defiance. Southern versifiers asked "How can that banner fail of grace?"[14]:

> See! our banner floating high,
> Star in freedoms shining sky,
> Soldiers follow it or die,
> Star of death or victory.[15]

Others cried "Proud Old Flag, float on, float on"[16]

> Great standard of liberty
> Long, long may it wave,
> O'er the twelve states of freedom
> We are fighting to save.
>
> With our three bars of glory,
> And blue fields of stars,

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[13]"Now," New Orleans Times-Picayune, March 30, 1861.

[14]"Our Flag, and Our Country," Richmond Daily Enquirer, July 24, 1861.

[15]"Our Battle Flag," Richmond Daily Whig, February 11, 1862.

[16]"Banner Song," Southern Literary Messenger, cited in Charleston Daily Courier, July 26, 1861.

We will humble the traitor
Or die in our cause.[17]

Confidence was the feeling that dominated the verse in the first years of fighting. Poets were proud to point out that Southern "manhood in all its might / And maidenhood in prayer"[18] would see the South to victory. As the war got underway, a versifier writing in the Charleston Daily Courier summed up this sentiment in these words:

Hurrah! for the South--shout hurrah,! and hurrah!
O'er her soil shall no tyrant have sway;
In peace or in war we will ever be found,
Invincible now and aye.[19]

Even before the first battle was fought, Southern verse had affirmed its unshakable faith in victory, and stated it so clearly and so frequently that one is forced to wonder,--Was the South protesting too much? Was all that was written really believed?

For one thing, there are indications in the poetry that those who had to suffer the inevitable hardships of war shared little in the excitement of the times. The disruption of families caused sorrow on the home front, and poets were quick to recognize this sentiment. Though mothers and wives knew that

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[17]"Confederate Flag," Richmond Daily Dispatch, January 11, 1862.

[18]"Battle Hymn," Charleston Daily Courier, June 22, 1861.

[19]"First Camp Song," Charleston Daily Courier, April 10, 1861.

the war was just, they did not find it easy to say good-bye to sons and husbands:

> When the dreary wind on the hill-top
> Is driving the leaves in the blast,
> And speaking to our hearts of our dear-ones
> And the dreary days yet to be passed,
> It brings us deep grief--but our country,
> Our country yet must be free,
> And whether in storm or in sunshine,
> Think of us, watching and praying for thee.[20]

Nor, for that matter, did husbands and sons always find happiness in the army. Many times during this period, poems make reference to the loneliness of young men, far away from their homes and families. As a young soldier in a Virginia outfit, known as the Cresent Rifles, wrote:

> I am lonely, Mother, lonely!
> My soul is dark and drear;
> In this cold and dismal clime,
> No kindness greets my ear.[21]

Just as the pain of parting tempered Southern jubilation at the beginning of the war, the military strength of the United States tempered Southern confidence in victory, for the odds greatly favoured the North.

The population of the South was only nine million--a third of which were Negro slaves--while the population of the North was twenty-two million. Eighty per cent of American manufac-

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[20]"Watching and Waiting for Thee," Atlanta Southern Confederacy, January 1, 1862.

[21]"I am Lonely, Mother," Richmond Daily Enquirer, June 18, 1861.

turing power lay in the North, as did most of the developed mineral resources of the nation. The banks of the North controlled most of the financial strength of America. Northern ports accounted for most of the shipping, and the farms of the "industrial" North produced more food and livestock than the farms of the "agrarian" South, an embarrassing fact that Hinton Rowen Helper had been at pains to point out to his fellow Southerners.[22] Throughout the course of the war the South was never able to maintain an army equal in size to that of the North, nor was it ever able to feed, clothe, or arm its troops as well as the enemy did.[23] The South was an underdog at birth and remained so until its death. Yet despite its occasional doubts, the South, like many underdogs, believed that it possessed the necessary qualities to overcome the odds.

Nor was Southern optimism totally without foundation. Southern men were, on the whole, accustomed to an outdoor life, and prided themselves on their ability as fighting men. Young Southerners had traditionally pursued military careers and many of the most celebrated American soldiers in the past were Southerners by birth. After all, had not General George Washington, the hero of the Revolution, General Andrew Jackson,

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[22]Helper, "Impending Crisis" in Ante-Bellum, Ch. 3; See also: Eaton, Southern Confederacy, Ch. 3.

[23]Wiley, Johnny Reb, Ch. 2.

the hero of New Orleans, and General Zachary Taylor, one of the victors in the Mexican War, all been Southerners? Even W. H. Harrison, the hero of the Battle of Tippecanoe, was born a Southerner. The honour rolls of West Point were filled with the names of Southern boys, and at the outbreak of war thousands of Southern officers resigned their commissions in the Union army and came home to fight for Dixie.[24] Robert E. Lee, the Virginian who was to lead the Southern armies to their greatest triumphs, even went so far as to refuse a position as commanding general of the Union army so that he could be free to fight for the "Old Dominion."[25]

With soldiers and leaders like these, backed up by "King Cotton Diplomacy," which was designed to force helpful intervention on the part of the textile-manufacturing nations of Europe by cutting off their supplies of Southern cotton,[26] the South felt its army was a match for anything the North might throw against it. As the following verse points out:

> The race to the swift does not always belong,
> Nor victory perch on the side of the strong,

24E.J. Warner, Generals in Gray (New Orleans, 1959) XX: Some indication of the number of experienced officers available to the Confederacy at the outbreak of war is evident in the fact that of the 425 men who reached general rank in the Confederate Army, 272 had had previous military experience or training while 146 were graduates of West Point.

25Burke Davis, Gray Fox: Robert E. Lee and the Civil War (New York, 1956), p. 14.

26Eaton, Southern Confederacy, Ch. 3.

But the battle is theirs who faithfully cry,
Pro aris et focis we'll conquer or die.[27]

The South's conviction that it was a match for the North was based upon several things, perhaps most importantly the cherished belief in the basic superiority of Southern society. Southerners believed that they were noble and glorious "knights," but in a score of poems Yankees were referred to as "hounds,"[28] "Hessians,"[29] "lice of Egypt"[30] or "serfs and knaves"[31] and were widely recognized to be nothing more than "base-born hirelings"[32] or "self-righteous, self-glorious" "vassels of pelf"[33] whose armies were little better than "sanctimoneous hordes."[34]

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[27]"Pro Aris et Focis," Spartanburg Daily Express, cited in Charleston Daily Courier, April 13, 1861.

[28]"The Northern Hounds," New Orleans Delta, cited in Richmond Daily Enquirer, October 16, 1861.

[29]"Song of the Mounted Rangers," Richmond Daily Enquirer, June 10, 1862.

[30]"Call All, Call All," Mobile Advertiser and Register, April 16, 1862.

[31]"Battle of Manassass Plains," Atlanta Southern Confederacy, December 15, 1861.

[32]"Come Forth Virginians," Richmond Daily Enquirer, July 29, 1861.

[33]"Farewell to Brother Jonathan," Charleston Daily Courier, May 18, 1861.

[34]"Ballad of the Young South," Wilmington Daily Journal, February 11, 1862.

Southerners believed that the superiority of their society would more than compensate for any material deficiencies. They were asked, "Shall a monkey enslave us . . . ," and they answered " . . . no!:"

> His head to the sword shall be given--
> A death bed repentence be taught the base foe,
> And his blood be an offering to Heaven.
> Then rise fellow freemen, and stretch the right hand,
> And swear to prevail in your dear Southern land.[35]

The "Land of Chivalry,"[36] as the South liked to think of itself was the home of modern cavaliers and as such faced the Yankees, "the saints of Cromwell,"[37] confident that the defeat of the original cavaliers would not be repeated. After all Southern poets cried, "not to be a tyrant's slave / were Southern freemen born!"[38]:

> Ye gentle men of England,
> Whose heartsin other years
> Swelled proudly as ye looked upon
> The gallant Cavaliers;
> Ye planted here no race of fear,
> Ye knights beyond the flood,

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[35]"Rebel Song-Stanzas on the Yankee Invasion," Richmond Daily Dispatch, August 29, 1861.

[36]"The South," Charleston Daily Courier, March 6, 1862.

[37]"Ballad of the Young South," Wilmington Daily Journal, February 4, 1862.

[38]"General Hardee at the Battle of Shiloh," Charleston Daily Courier, September 5, 1862.

For lo! the Roundhead quails again,
Before the better blood.[39]

Springing out of the South's belief in its own superiority was contempt for both Northern soldiers and their leaders. Most Southerners seemed sincerely to believe that a good Southern boy could lick three Yankees.[40] Southern poets were quick to point out that Yankees were cowards, and they dedicated a good deal of verse to this subject. To them fear or, as a New Orleans poet called it, "King Scare," was the ruling passion in the North:

Hurrah for the land of Old Scare then -
Hurrah for the Yankee land!
What a grand old war were this if their men
Could only be made to stand;
How the guns would roar and the steel would ring
And the souls up to Heaven would flare,
If all the Yankees had now for king,
Old courage and not Old Scare.[41]

Northern generals were treated as contemptuously as their men, and while almost all of them were the objects of abuse at one point or another,[42] Southern contempt for Northern gen-

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[39]"Ballad of the Cavaliers," Richmond Daily Whig, September 12, 1862.

[40]Wiley, Johnny Reb, p. 18.

[41]"King Scare," New Orleans Times-Picayune, October 20, 1861.

[42]"No Title," Charleston Daily Courier, April 15, 1861; In this poem Major Anderson, the Southern-born commander of Fort Sumter was given respectful praise for doing his duty.

eralship was reserved in these years for one man--General Winfield Scott, the Virginia-born commander of the Union army. Scott, who had led the American forces that captured Mexico City during the Mexican War, was one of the many Southern-born military leaders of America, and had once been greatly admired by the South. His loyalty to the Union changed all this, however, and he became the target for abuse from Southern versifiers. Scott was considered a traitor to his birthplace and his people. As a Virginia poet said with remarkable venom:

> I had rather be a dog,
> And bay the stars and moon;
> I had rather be a frog,
> With a dungeon for my doom,
> Than to be poor old Scott,
> To fill a traitor's grave
> And there in silence rot,
> Without a soul to save.
> Poor old Scott, let him die.[43]

If General Scott and Northern soldiers inspired scorn among Confederate poets, President Lincoln inspired either mocking contempt or deep disgust. Lincoln was looked upon as an evil man and his actions against the South as treachery of the lowest order. At best Lincoln was portrayed as an inept fool unable to cope with the South, at worst as a heartless villain bent on destruction and murder. Whichever way Southerners

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[43]"Song on General Scott," Richmond Daily Dispatch, September 18, 1861.

pictured him, however, they were unanimous in their dislike of the Northern "monkey."[44] In July, 1861 a poem published in the Richmond Daily Whig summed up Southern contempt for Lincoln in these words:

> I do not like that Abram L--
> The reason why, I'm free to tell,
> No sillier sight on earth doth dwell
> Nor imp within the bounds of H--
> More bloody treacherous false and fell,
> Than the same Abram L--[45]

While a poet from New Orleans had this to add:

> I cannot reunite the states
> That cherished hope is gone,
> And though the link is severed now,
> The cry is still link on.[46]

Another reason for Confederate confidence was the average Southerner's expressed belief in the justice of the Southern cause and the total unholiness of everything Northern. Being Americans, after all, Southerners naturally felt that God and Right were on their side. They were, they claimed, the true defenders of American tradition, and by looking to the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, found ample justification for secession. The South felt it was walking in the

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[44] "Rebel Song," Richmond Daily Dispatch, August 29, 1861.

[45] "Abraham Linkhorn," Richmond Daily Whig, July 2, 1861.

[46] "Abe's Cognitations," New Orleans Delta, cited in Charleston Daily Courier, August 9, 1861.

footsteps of Washington and Jefferson. Their forefathers, Southerners argued, had fought one tyrant and achieved liberty in 1776, and they would do the same again. Southerners proudly called themselves rebels:

> We fight for what our fathers fought
> And freedom was their cry,
> And we will conquer as they did
> Or in the struggle die.
> Go forth our brave defenders armed
> In truth and valors might,
> And ever let your watch word be
> We battle for the right.[47]

"God and Liberty once more,"[48] was the battle cry:

> Freemen, let your watch word be
> Washington and Liberty!
> Neath freemen's swords let tyrants see
> How fierce is freemen's ire!
> On yon proud heights if bugle blow,
> Each patriot strike his foeman low,
> Yon stream with freemen's blood shall flow,
> Ere Freedom's cause expire.[49]

Southerners were told to follow the example of their forefathers, to "seek out the fields where fought our sires / Build up the long neglected fires / And smite till every foe expires"[50]:

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[47]"Never, Never," Memphis Appeal cited in Charleston Daily Courier, May 15, 1861.

[48]"Southron War Song," Richmond Daily Enquirer, August 30, 1862.

[49]"Song," Richmond Daily Dispatch, May 31, 1861.

[50]"Shades of our Fathers," Charleston Daily Courier, February 4, 1862.

Seize thy fathers ancient falchion
Which once flashed as freedom's star!
Till sweet peace--the ban and haligon,
Stilled the stormy strife of war.
Listen! now they country's calling
On her sons to meet her foe!
Sweet is love in moonlight bowers!
Sweet the alter and the flame!
Sweet is springtime with her flowers!
Sweeter far the patriot's name.[51]

That the South felt justice was on its side is clearly indicated in the poetry of the times. Southerners believed, quite sincerely, that Northern evil had violated the principles upon which the nation was built and forced war upon an unwilling South. Words like "right" and "truth" appeared in reference to the South as often as words like "tyrant" and "despot" appeared in connection with the North. Southern versifiers cried:

We are as great as thou, and for the right
Alone we dare to lift our arms in fight,
Come if thou durst, and feel the heavy blow
Of a great people, who, sworn to be free
Glorying will meet thee on the bloody field,
Chastise thy boldness, shoulder up the crown
Of greatness, and gather high renown,
And flame it to the world. We cannot yield
To all thy vaunted power; the world shall know,
That to be free our own arms struck the heavy blow.[52]

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[51]"War Song," Richmond Daily Enquirer, July 29, 1861.

[52]"Fast Day Hymn," Atlanta Southern Confederacy, August 8, 1862.

According to a poet from Charleston, the Union which had been "the glory of our sires"[53] had been corrupted by the North and was now to be happily discarded:

> We hold in scorn the clamourous throng
> Who shout "the Union--right or wrong,"
> No such unhallowed Union binds,
> True, just and glorious Southern minds.[54]

While a second Charlestonian vowed to die rather than exist within the Union any longer:

> We'll divide it, though we perish,
> Each one, upon the field--
> By the names we love and cherish,
> We will never, never yield.[55]

As far as many versifiers were concerned the height of Northern evil was clearly revealed by the invasion of the South. It was one thing to debase and corrupt the principles of men like Washington and Jefferson; it was quite another to attack fellow Americans who, still honouring those principles, had peacefully withdrawn from the Union. Outraged at this ultimate wickedness, Southern poets from Richmond to Charleston damned Northerners for their "black hearts and bloody hands"[56]:

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[53] "The Right and Wrong," Charleston Daily Courier, June 10, 1861.

[54] Ibid.

[55] "We'll Divide It, Tho' We Perish," Charleston Daily Courier, November 23, 1861.

[56] "A Welcome to the Invader," Charleston Daily Courier, May 14, 1861.

The stars in their courses are silent,
The willows in agony weep,
The wind o'er the wave murmurs sadly,
Where the ashes of Washington sleep,
The cypress is shaken with horror,
The glory of morning is furled,
For Lincoln the tyrant usurper,
Would slaughter the lamb with the sword.[57]

Or they cried a warning to their fellow Confederates:

The tyrant with shackles would manacle thee,
Strangle thy spirit dear land of the free,
Trample the banner of Right in the dust,
Yoke thee with iron, proud Queen of the Just,
But hearts of thy sons unappalled by fear,
As their swords leap up and flame in the air,
Swear that it never-no never-shall be,
Queen of the lovely, sweet home of the free.[58]

Some of the most damning verse composed during the war related to this issue of Northern evil, for a number of Southern poets were convinced that Northern society was completely riddled by "disease, decay and death."[59] To some the invasion was an affront to all that was holy:

From North and East and West they seek,
The same disastrous goal,
With Christ upon the lying lips,
And Satan in the soul.
Mocking with ancient shibboleth,
All wise and just restraints -
"To the saints of Heaven was Empire given
And we alone our saints"[60]

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[57]"No Title," Newberry Sun cited in Richmond Daily Enquirer, April 24, 1862.

[58]"The South," Charleston Daily Courier, March 6, 1862.

[59]"National Retribution," Richmond Daily Whig, January 8, 1862.

[60]"A Ballad for the Young South," Richmond Daily Whig, February 3, 1862.

While to others it was deceitful and hypocritical:

> . . . And who are they that in the face,
> Of Justice and of Heaven dare attempt the sacrilege?
> They who have been by our fires,
> They who are pleased to call us brethren . . .
> They are they who seek to crush thee,
> Dear old Dominion,
> Who till late have claimed thee as "their mother,"
> And gloried with thy mighty dead . . . [61]

II

However confident of its strength a nation might be, it cannot quiet its fears until it has been tested in battle. In the South's case, where confidence in the power of its soldiers and society and faith in its cause were balanced by the tremendous material superiority of the North, trial by fire took on additional significance. Even if a good Southern boy could lick three Yankees, would there be enough Southern boys to lick all the Yankees that were bound to follow their defeated comrades? Even if Northern generals were inferior to their Southern counterparts, would the Southern leaders be good enough to overcome the force of superior numbers? Even if Southern society was superior to Northern society, was it strong enough to survive? After all, to use a Southern analogy, had not Rome been defeated by barbarians?[62] Southerners awaited the first

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[61] "Virginia," Richmond Daily Dispatch, July 22, 1861.

[62] "War Song," Richmond Daily Enquirer, May 13, 1862.

meeting of the rival armies with these nagging questions in their minds, praying, no doubt, that their optimism was not unwarranted.

Compounding these doubts about Southern skill and strength were more subtle ones, doubts deeply entrenched in the Southern psyche about the ultimate justice of the Confederate cause. Though it was true that most Southerners felt they were acting on the side of right, many seemed to feel, if only on an emotional level, that there was something basically wrong in what they were doing. Many Southerners went to war "in sorrow not in anger"[63] and many questioned the justice of a cause that would perpetuate slavery if it was successful. Some Southerners were tormented by the fact that they were destroying the Union in the name of those who had built it, while still others found it impossible to look upon an out and out rebellion against fellow Americans as a war for liberty. Poetic evidence can be found throughout the Confederate era to indicate how deeply these persistent doubts penetrated Southern thought. Guilt was the concern of a significant number of Southerners and an emotion not unknown to the majority of Confederate citizens.[64]

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[63] "A Voice from Virginia," Richmond Daily Whig, June 25, 1861.

[64] Woodward, Burden of Southern History, Ch. 1; See also: Sellers, Southerner as American, Ch. 2.

One Southern poet asked is there justice in a war "where brother asks of brother life for life?"[65] While another sympathized with the mourning American eagle even though he felt the war was just:

> While our hearts will cling forever,
> Grief-stricken bird to thee-
> Still thy standard we will sever -
> That our stars may brighter be.[66]

Yet, such doubts aside, on July 21, 1861 the armies of the Confederacy and the Union met at Manassas, "as storm clouds meet in Heaven;"[67] and as the army of Union General Irwin McDowell was routed by the Confederate troops of General P.G.T. Beauregard, the South appeared to have the answer to most of its questions.

The news of the victory at Manassas electrified the South. The underdog Confederate army had not only won the first major battle of the war but had routed the Northern army to boot. The wildest hopes of Southerners had come to pass. It was true after all, Southern soldiers and generals were good enough to beat the best the Yankees had. The quiet, yet ever present fears found in Southern verse were temporarily stilled by Manassas. No other battle during the war, not even the great

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[65] "Invocation to Peace," Charleston Daily Courier, May 23, 1861.

[66] "We'll Divide it, Tho' We Perish," Charleston Daily Courier, November 23, 1861.

[67] "Manassas," Louisville Courier, cited in Richmond Daily Whig, August 9, 1861.

victories of General Lee, inspired so much praise and rejoicing throughout the South. One example of this type of verse came from Virginia:

> Minerva like I see thee stand -
> The victor's sword is in thy hand,
> A tyrant's neck beneath thy heel,
> A tyrant's blood is on thy steel.[68]

More verse was written about Manassas than any subsequent engagement as, in poem after poem, Southern versifiers gave a collective shout of triumph and breathed a collective sigh of relief.

The poetry that deals specifically with the Battle of Manassas reflects the whole variety of sentiments that prevailed in the South at the time. Defiance, contempt and jubilation are all to be found. Yet the significance of this verse is greater than that which preceded it. Southern boasts were no longer hollow. The earlier predictions of great victory had become a matter of record. "History's page in words of light shall tell / How nobly Southern patriots fought,"[69] for, as a poet from Louisville said:

> . . . the North men back and bleeding
> Have been driven,
> And their thunder has been stilled,
> And their leaders crushed or killed,

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[68] "Virginia," Richmond Daily Whig, September 14, 1861.

[69] "Manassa," Richmond Daily Enquirer, July 30, 1861.

And their ranks with terror filled,
Rent and riven.[70]

The tone used by Southern poets to urge their countrymen onward also changed after the battle. Confidence was now based on something more substantial than rhetoric--a smashing victory at arms, and the shining example of Manassas was held up for all the South to see:

Oh! We've beaten them gallantly-back from our soil
We have hurled the invader, and taken the spoil
And ghastly with death wounds all over the plain
Of Manassas, are lying the heaps of his slain[71]

To the poets the most satisfying thing about Manassas was undoubtedly the rout of the Union army. They loved to recall the flight of the Yankees, and every opportunity to remind the world of it. Contempt for the North reached new heights:

The Northmen fly, as chaff before the fan,
And troops that Mars had marshalled to the slaughter,
Were back in wild disorder led by Pan;
Once more across the broad blue shining water.[72]

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[70]"Manassas," Louisville Courier, cited in Richmond Daily Whig, August 9, 1861.

[71]"The Captured Epaulette," Southern Christian Advocate, cited in Charleston Daily Courier, August 8, 1861.

[72]"The Invasion of Virginia," Richmond Daily Enquirer, August 9, 1861.

Yankee Doodle was the laughing stock in Dixie:

> Three cheers! for Yankee Doodle then,
> and for his wild goose chase-
> His merry ride to Richmond town,
> His gallant Bull Run race.
> Three cheers! for all the Southern men,
> who drove him from the plain,
> And when he next doth come to fight,
> We'll run him back again.[73]

After this first test by fire the issue of secession was settled for good in Southern minds, and peace by negotiation was ruled out. The question was asked "shall alien serf, or Northern knave / Drive from his home the free and brave?"[74] The answer was, "no":

> Where ere our brave commanders lead,
> We'll follow and if needs be bleed-
> For freedom shout with our last breath,
> On, on to victory, or Death.[75]

But if Southern confidence was crystallized by victory, so too, in the end, were Southern doubts. For one thing, while most poets in the South found hope and reassurance in victory, a few found the harsh reality of war distressing. To these

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[73]"Yankee Doodle's Ride to Richmond," Atlanta Southern Confederacy, November 29, 1861.

[74]"Battle of Manassas Plains," Atlanta Southern Confederacy, December 15, 1861.

[75]"A Southern Call to Arms," Mobile Advertiser and Register, April 3, 1862.

few the "martyrs of Manassas"[76] and those killed as the war progressed were not the first heroes of a glorious war, but the first victims of a tragic conflict. For one Alabaman, Manassas, with its many deaths, was not all that it had seemed to be in the first wave of enthusiasm:

> Night with all its dreams is over,
> And the morning comes again,
> Bringing news of a fierce battle,
> Fought upon Manassas plain;
> And she reads, with deepest anguish,
> His dead name among the slain.[77]

During the months following Manassas death and destruction became increasingly common and depressing subjects for Southern poets. As the winter of 1861 turned to the spring of 1862 the South suffered serious defeats in the West and along its coast. At this time the Union blocade was beginning to seal off Confederate ports, the Union army under General U. S. Grant was driving the Confederate army out of Tennessee, and it was becoming clear that the Union, in the West at any rate was strong, courageous and well led. Southern hopes were chastened by these defeats and, in a more introspective mood, some poets responded to the situation by asking if the suffering was all worthwhile:

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[76]"Manassas," Richmond Daily Dispatch, August 7, 1861.

[77]"Waiting," Mobile Advertiser and Register, February 3, 1862.

And they tell me to die for one's country is sweet-
To die for liberty and our names,
When life's last throb is the greeting it gives,
To the glory that round the hero comes.
It may be sweet, but oh! is it not sad . . . [78]

Perhaps the best example of how Southern military setbacks chastened Southern poets is given in the following two poems. Each deals with the death of Colonel Turner Ashby, a bold, popular, successful cavalry officer who was killed at the age of thirty-four. The author of the first verse is still hopeful, but the author of the second has seen how costly Ashby's death really is and has obvious doubts. The first verse has these words:

Dead upon the field of glory,
Hero fit for song and story,
Lies our bold dragoon.[79]

The second verse has these:

Heard ye that thrilling word-
Accent of dread-
Flash like a thunderbolt,
Bowing each head-
Crash thro the battle din,
Over the booming gun -
Ashby, our bravest one,
Ashby is dead.[80]

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[78]"Sweetness," Richmond Daily Dispatch, March 1, 1862.

[79]"Ashby," Richmond Daily Enquirer, June 16, 1862.

[80]"Dirge for Ashby," Richmond Daily Enquirer, June 25, 1862.

Although such pessimism was only an undercurrent in the early poetry of the Confederacy, Southern versifiers realized that there was "weeping, and mourning and great lamentation / All over the length and breadth of the land,"[81] and not all of them could find enough glory to compensate for it. They asked themselves and the South as a whole:

> Can glory heal the widow's heart?
> Or . . . dry the orphan's tears?
> Can honour to the loved impart,
> The love of former years?[82]

Of all the emotions revealed in the poetry of the first year of the Civil War, this pessimism and doubt would prove to be the most enduring.

Even so, Southern verse was overwhelmingly optimistic through 1862. Indeed the fighting of that spring and summer, which saw the South thwart the invasion campaign of Union General George B. McClellan marked the greatest period of Southern strength, both in a psychological and military sense. Moreover, it marked the emergence of the South's greatest leader Robert E. Lee, Commander of the Army of Northern Virginia.

In Lee the South had perhaps the most universally admired

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[81] "In Memory of Captain T.S. Moyer," Atlanta Southern Confederacy, September 10, 1861.

[82] "Can the Glory of War Atone for itsMisery," Richmond Daily Dispatch, November 28, 1861.

general in all of America, and one of the finest. Lee was a striking man. Although he was of only average height, his gray hair and beard combined with his good looks and genteel manners to make him an impressive figure. As a military commander he was extremely gifted, and during the war he was never personally defeated as a commander. Lee was perhaps the last "aristocratic" general in history and his deep concern over the lives of his troops won for him their admiration and respect.

Strangely enough, however, very little verse that dealt with Lee appeared in the newspapers during the war. The verse that was written about him was usually written in later years and was dedicated more to his memory than his life. Lee became a hero more of the "Lost Cause" than the Confederacy, though during the life of the Confederacy he was everywhere praised and respected. In thinking back after the war, poets remembered Lee as the "gray-bearded man in the black slouched hat" who went to battle "calm and unmoved."[83] Some indication of what Lee's appearance must have meant to the South is found in the postwar verse. In "The Sword of Robert Lee," which was written in 1866, four years after Lee assumed command of the Army of Northern Virginia, the poet recalls his feelings at the time:

> Out of its scabbard, where, full long,
> It slumbered peacefully,
> Raised from its rest by the battle's song,
> Shielding the feeble, smiting the strong,

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[83]"Lee to the Rear," cited in Confederate War Poems ed., W.B. Jones (Montgomery, 1959), p. 41.

Guarding the right, avenging the wrong,
Gleamed the sword of Lee![84]

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[84]"The Sword of Robert Lee," Confederate War Poems, p. 61.

Chapter Three

The Days of Strength-September 1862-September 1863

"The Southerners die but they never surrender"
Atlanta Southern Confederacy, October 12, 1862.

I

The defeat of McClellan's invasion marked the true beginning of a new phase in the Southern poetic treatment of the war. After this victory not even the failure of Lee's advance into Maryland in September 1862 could shake the resolve of Southern poets. In fact, the only verse written about the Maryland campaign was extremely defiant. Confederate soldiers from Maryland looked forward with joy to the campaign:

> The Maryland boys are coming,
> Dost hear our stiring drum,
> Our homes are now before us,
> Dear Mother we will come.[1]

Those from Delaware, though equally determined, were more serious:

> Their latest thought was of their honor,
> And their latest dying prayer,
> Was that justice might be given,
> To their native Delaware.[2]

The determination that had begun to appear in the poetry before the invasion was entrenched in it after the invasion.

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[1] "Maryland Boys," Richmond Daily Enquirer, July 5, 1862.

[2] "No Title," Richmond Daily Enquirer, July 19, 1862.

In looking back poets saw that skill, courage and brilliant Southern generalship had saved the day. They felt no nation on earth had a better army and no army had such a fine record. The poets saw that in thwarting the invasion of 1862 the South had passed a much harder test than that of 1861, and they approached the war with renewed strength:

> Tho' vandel hosts oppose us
> We stand without a fear,
> Then crucify the spirit,
> Better the blade, the bier,
> Better the blade, the bier-
> Then lift your arms on high,
> And swear to live as free men,
> As free men swear to die.[3]

At the same time poets revelled in the glory and strength of the South and its soldiers:

> There's a grandeur in fight,
> And a terror, the while,
> But none like the light
> Of that terrible smile,
> The smile of the South,
> When the storm cloud unrolls;
> The lightening that loosens
> The wrath in the souls,
> Of her barefooted boys.[4]

A new hardness of tone was evident in the war poetry of the South. Poets looked at the war with clear eyes and told Southerners to look upon war's true face:

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[3]"War Song," Richmond Daily Enquirer, May 13, 1862.

[4]"The Barefooted Boys," Richmond Daily Dispatch, October 7, 1862.

My music is thunder, my element flame,
I revel in storms which no power can tame,
Nations fall at my bidding-I pillage the lands-
Set cities a'flame with the fire of my brands,
Then laugh at the terror and scorn the low wail,
That's born to my ear on the sulfer-fumed gale;
Blight seizes the earth 'neath the shade of my wing,
In the midst of destruction I reign like a king![5]

And to recognize the horror involved in battle:

Clashing steel is called in action,
Bayonets plunge in human blood,
Causing havoc and destruction,
And the men wade through the flood;
Messengers of death are flying
Swiftly thro' the hazy noon,
Thousands of each host are dying-
Thousands seek an answering boon.[6]

Southern versifiers contemplated the new suffering and hardship that the future would inevitably bring to the South and despite everything called for "war to the hilt."[7] Southern versifiers made up their minds, or rather set their hearts, and decided it was better to die for their cause than abandon it. "Southerners were learning to substitute grim bravery for bravado"[8] and the realities of war were beginning to instill

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[5]"Song of Mars," Atlanta Southern Confederacy, October 26, 1862.

[6]"The Battle," Charleston Daily Courier, December 27, 1862.

[7]"The Southern National Anthem," Richmond Daily Enquirer, October 8, 1862.

[8]A. Nevins, The Organized War 1863-64 (New York, 1971), p. 375.

"Roundhead" seriousness in "Cavalier" Southerners.[9]

> Let war burst his quivering heartstrings,
> Let famine raven our dear soil,
> Let wives shriek at husband's death partings,
> Let the heavens ring with sorrow's turmoil.
>
> Still we'll fight with our flag borne proudly,
> Though the harvest of woe and death,
> Still defiant shouts shall peal loudly,
> As we kiss the dear folds with our last breath.[10]

Just as the victory at Manassas had been a symbol of hope and reassurance for the young Confederacy, so the defiance of the besieged city of Charleston became a symbol of steadfastness and resolve for the mature Confederacy. Just as the example of Manassas had been used to urge the South onward, so the image of Charleston, a city "dread to vandels,"[11] was used to urge the South to stand fast. In the spring of 1863, the Union navy attempted, unsuccessfully, to take the city but it was not until General Sherman's army approached overland in February, 1865, that Charleston was finally given up.[12] Throughout the South poets compared the struggle being waged by Charleston to the greater struggle being waged by the Confederacy, and the fate of Charleston was identified with the

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[9] C. Eaton, Southern Confederacy, Ch. 3.

[10] "Virginia," Richmond Daily Dispatch, March 26, 1862.

[11] "Charleston," Yorkville Enquirer, cited in Charleston Daily Courier, November 16, 1863.

[12] Eaton, Southern Confederacy, p. 183.

fate of the South as a whole:

> Shall the foot of the demon soon press
> The green sod,
> Where sleeps our Calhoun? Never!
> So help us God.
> Then quick to the rescue--come, come,
> let us fly,
> Our Charleston to save, or with
> her to die.[13]

The survival of Charleston "still clad in smiles / And with an unscathed brow,"[14] only strengthened the determination of Southerners.

Throughout the Confederacy poets seemed willing to risk everything for the cause of the South. A number of them placed their faith in the courage and might of the South, and argued:

> But, if peace should be hopeless and justice denied,
> And war's bloody vulture should flap his black pinions,
> Then gladly to arms! While we hurt in our pride,
> Defiance to tyrants, and death to their minions.
> With our front to the field, swearing never to yield,
> Or return like the Spartan in death on our shield;
> And the Cross of the South shall triumphantly wave,
> As the flag of the free, or the pall of the brave.[15]

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[13]"The City of Charleston," Greenville Enterprise, cited in Charleston Daily Courier, April 1, 1863.

[14]"Charleston," Richmond Daily Dispatch, February 7, 1863.

[15]"The Southern Cross," Richmond Daily Enquirer, September 29, 1862.

Some who shared this "all or nothing" sentiment felt that a certain nobility would be won whatever the outcome of the struggle, provided the South showed the proper resolve:

> Thou who unmoved has heard the whirlwind chide,
> Full many a winter round thy craggy bed,
> And like an earthbound giant hast outspread
> Thy hundred arms, and Heaven's own bolts defied,
> Now rest along thy native mountainside,
> Uptorn-yet deem not that I come to shed
> The idle drops of pity o'er thy head,
> Or barely to insult thy blasted pride,
> No-still tis thine, tho' fallen imperial oak!
> To teach this lesson to the wise and brave,
> That tis much better, overthrown and broke
> In freedom's cause to sink into the grave;
> Than in submission to a tyrant's yoke,
> Like the vile reed to bow and be a slave.[16]

Others felt that death and defeat did not necessarily spell disaster. A South Carolina poet found the bright side even in the death of the famous "Stonewall" Jackson:

> O gracious God! not gainless is the loss,
> A glorious sunbeam gilds thy sternest frown,
> And while his country staggers with the cross,
> He rises with the crown.[17]

And a Louisiana poet detected glory even in the setbacks in Tennessee:

> Think of the dead by the Tennessee,
> In their frozen shrouds of gore-
> Think of the mothers who shall see
> Those darling eyes no more!
> But better are they in a hero grave
> Than the serfs of time and breath,

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[16]"To an Oak Blown Down by the Wind," Richmond Daily Whig, September 21, 1862.

[17]"Jackson," Charleston Daily Courier, May 23, 1863.

For they are the Children of the Brave,
And the Cheribim of Death![18]

Other versifiers who likewise cast their lot with the South for better or worse chose to put their faith in God, and turned to Him for help:

Be merciful, O God! we know our cause
Is girt about with truth;
For this the foe stand leagued for war,
For this their sabres flashing bright
Would force us, live the Northern slave,
Or dying, fill a gory grave.[19]

His strength would be their salvation:

But should Thy wisdom still deter the day-
The wished for day our freedom shall be won-
Oh, grant us the humility to say,
Not human will, but Thine, Oh Lord be done.[20]

On January 1, 1863 a poem written to commemorate Lee's victory at the Battle of Fredericksburg[21] the previous month was published in the Richmond Daily Whig. In a few short lines it summed up the various emotions that had been evident through the autumn and gave voice to the sentiment that was to dominate Southern verse for the next year:

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[18]"The Battle Cry of the South," New Orleans Delta, cited in Charleston Daily Courier, February 28, 1862.

[19]"Carolina's Hymn," Charleston Daily Courier, July 18, 1863.

[20]"A Prayer for Peace," Savannah Republican, cited in Charleston Daily Courier, November 6, 1862.

[21]Long, An Almanac, p. 296: The Battle of Fredericksburg was a terrible defeat for the North. Union losses in dead, wounded and missing totaled 12,653 while Confederate losses from all causes were only 5,309.

Beside our martyred dead we vow once more;
No tyrant shall tread our native soil,
No chain enthrol the land to them so dear.[22]

During the year of 1863 the tone of Southern verse was one of determination in the face of overwhelming Northern strength. During these months neither the boastfulness of the earlier years, nor the despair that was to come at the end of the war, was paramount. Mature courage and staunch defiance were the hallmarks of the poetry of this period, and most poets preferred to avoid arrogant boasts. They were not defeatists by any means but they were realists. The change in Southern verse produced by this new realism can be seen in the following two poems. By comparing the first verse that was written in the summer of 1862 to the second that appeared in the spring of 1863, the shift can be discerned. In May 1862 a Virginia poet addressed "Him Who Despairs" in these boisterous terms:

Where there's life there is hope
For the death blow prepare,
It is glorious to battle,
It is base to despair.[23]

In February of the following year a South Carolinian was much less sanguine, asking "Is This a Time to Dance?":

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[22]"The Battle of Fredericksburg," Richmond Daily Whig, January 1, 1863.

[23]"To Him Who Despairs," Richmond Daily Enquirer, May 7, 1862.

Go fling your festal robes away!
Go don the mourners' sable veil,
Go bow before your God and pray,
If yet your prayers may aught avail.
Go face the fearful form of death!
And trembling meet his chilling glance,
And then for once with truthful breath,
Answer-Is this a time to dance?[24]

Poets still had faith in eventual victory but they realized what its attainment would cost. Instead of trying to foster blithe confidence and hope as in the past, the poetry of these days attempted to instill the more lasting qualities of resolution and strength.

During the middle period in the life of the Confederacy new qualities were admired and advocated. Steadfastness, devotion to duty, self-sacrifice and the willingness to endure cheerfully were the virtues extolled by Southern poets. Endurance and determination were praised as much as courage and bravery. Honour was accorded equally to the victorious hero and the common soldier who simply did his jobs. Generals and privates were both praised and honoured equally during this period. Poets could cry "Stonewall Jackson's spirit leads us,"[25] and proclaim:

. . . the world shall hear his story;
How on fields of conquest gory,

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[24]"Is This a Time to Dance," Charleston Daily Courier, February 13, 1863.

[25]"Thomas J. Jackson," Richmond Daily Sentinel, May 29, 1863.

Jackson and his gallant legion,
Struck their blow to make us free.[26]

But they could also praise a private with equal vigour:

The need of praise we gladly give
To all who dare the scars,
And care but little what they wear
Coarse gray, or stars, or bars,
But most our love to those belongs,
Who bravely right their country's wrongs,
As privates in the ranks.[27]

Service to the South had become very important to poets in these days. Across the South versifiers attempted to encourage, inspire and even shame Confederate citizens into doing their duty. Men were urged to join the army or work hard on the home front making the materials of war. Women were instructed to protect their families and help if possible in such things as hospitals and nursing homes. Some poets appealed to patriotism and love of country and home to achieve their goal:

We have many dear ones at home boys,
And sometimes we almost despair,
When we think of the hardships here boys
And the joys and comforts there.
But what would be home and friends boys?
And what would be sweetheart and wife?
If the false-hearted tyrant should win boys,
And we should be bondsmen for life.[28]

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[26] Ibid.

[27] "A Private in the Ranks," Mobile Tribune, cited in Charleston Daily Courier, May 27, 1863.

[28] "A Song for the Volunteers," Richmond Daily Dispatch, April 23, 1863.

Others pointedly condemned laggards in an attempt to shame reluctant Southerners into action:

> We strayed beneath the moonlit sky
> His hand was clasping mine;
> He said while lingering by my side
> Life seemed almost divine.
> He asked me then to be his bride,
> I only answered "nay."
> Sir I'll never wed with one
> Who does not wear the gray.[29]

Still others used the example of self-sacrificing fellow Southerners to inspire commitment to the cause. Women, for example, were encouraged to do their bit in one Charlestonian's poem:

> And thus it is throughout our land,where
> suffering reigns supreme,
> To send the balm of love and help is
> women's constant dream,
> What sacrifices she has made? look to
> her home of gloom.
>
> They tell of husband, father, son, all
> buried 'neath the tomb,
> In humble hut or palace gay, our
> women nobly share
> The duties of the hospital which is
> there constant care . . .[30]

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[29]"He Does Not Wear the Gray," Richmond Daily Dispatch, March 21, 1863.

[30]"The Maiden with Her Pail," Charleston Daily Courier, November 10, 1863.

The figure who, according to Southern poets, served the most noble function at this time, was the sentinel or picket who kept his lonely rounds day and night, risking his life for others. In Confederate verse he was elevated to the status of a hero.

Earlier in the war the gallant cavalier-warrior had been the true hero as far as Southern poets were concerned. It was a type epitomized by Turner Ashby, who was "valiant, kindly, knightly, pure / Lustrous as the steel he wore,"[31]--a dashing, bold, devil-may-care type that exemplified everything the young South admired in its men. In the face of the Northern onslaught, such cavalier-heroes could shout:

> We'rethe boys, so gay and happy,
> Whereso'er we chance to be,
> If at home or on camp duty,
> Tis the same-we'se always free.
> So let the guns roar as they will,
> We'll be gay and happy still,
> Gay and happy-gay and happy,
> We'll be gay and happy still.[32]

Yet the same hard fighting that claimed the life of Ashby changed the South's conception of heroism. Thus, although the picket of "All Quiet Along the Potomac Tonight," one of

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[31]"To the Memory of Turner Ashby," Richmond Daily Sentinel, June 26, 1862.

[32]"Maryland Line Camp Song," Richmond Daily Enquirer, May 31, 1861.

the most moving of Southern poems, did not fit the classic Ashby mould in 1863 he was a hero nonetheless:

All quiet along the Potomac to-night!
Except here and there a stray picket
Is shot, as he walks on his beat, to and fro,
By a rifleman hid in the thicket.

All quiet along the Potomac tonight!
No sound save the rush of the river;
While soft falls the dew on the face of the dead,
And the pickets off duty forever.[33]

Throughout the war Confederate poets asked God to protect the sentinel, just as they asked Him to protect the South that he was guarding:

O, Thou whom the winds and the waters
obey,
I pray lull the storm, drive the dark clouds
away,
And to brighten his watch, and his lone
hours beguile,
Send the stars with their light and the moon
with her smile.

And his spirit to cheer, and his bosom
to warm,
Give him memories dear, and sweet
thoughts of home;
And may hope paint the future in colors
so bright,
As to lighten about him the darkness of
night.[34]

If there was an "Unknown Soldier" hero of the South, the sentinel, by common consent, was awarded this honour.

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[33]"All Quiet Along the Potomac Tonight," Richmond Daily Whig, January 10, 1863.

[34]"The Sentinel," Atlanta Southern Confederacy, January 21, 1863.

The quality most pronounced in the sentinel and most praised at this time in Southern verse was a spirit of willing self-sacrifice for the South. Southern poets came to believe in these months that the "fittest place where man can die / Is where he dies for man,"[35] and they meant by this that death for one's fellows was not only glorious but somehow even desirable. In recalling the sacrifices made at The Battle of Sharpsburg,[36] one poet gave voice to this sentiment in direct terms:

> . . . I'm dying for my country,
> Her honor and her laws-
> Tis sad to die and leave you-
> Tis sweet in such a cause.
> . . . For life holds nothing nobler,
> Within its feeble span,
> Than to bleed and die, for Liberty -
> For Liberty, to man.[37]

Such hard yet positive words were not common, but the message was. Poets in the South used many different types of verse to try to prepare Southerners to die for their land. One common tactic was to cite the example of someone who had already fallen in the cause. As a dying soldier cried

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[35]"The Place Where Men Should Die," Charleston Daily Courier, December 16, 1862.

[36]Long, An Almanac, p. 267. Sharpsburg was another name for the Battle of Antietam, September, 1862.

[37]"A Lay of Sharpsburg," Richmond Daily Whig, March 9, 1863.

in one poem:

> Heart of youth might well be shaken,
> Dying thus in strength and pride;
> But, in death, I do not perish
> With this sweet assurance won,
> That my sire and country cherish
> Proudest memories of their son![38]

Perhaps a poem published in the Mobile Advertizer and Register and reprinted in the Richmond Daily Whig best summed up this somber determined mood:

> A cup to the dead already,
> Hurrah! for the next that dies.[39]

The resolve found in the war poetry of this period was matched, for the most part, in the poetry of the home front. Yet, surprisingly, the domestic verse was often grimmer than that concerned with battle. Those on the home front did not live in such danger as the soldiers, but neither did they have the direct emotional outlet in fighting that the soldiers had. Life on the home front was far from easy. The demands of the war in both men and material caused serious shortages and numerous hardships.[40] Women were left alone with small children and expected to manage both a home and

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[38]"Tell Me Cried the Youth," Richmond Daily Enquirer, June 11, 1863.

[39]"Revelry of the Dying," Mobile Advertiser and Register, July 21, 1863.

[40]Bell Wiley, The Plain People of the Confederacy (Baton Rouge, 1943), Ch. 1.

in many cases a plantation or farm. Labour shortages made even the simplest task a difficulty, and the needs of the soldiers for such things as food, clothing and livestock meant that the price of goods and services skyrocketed. Likewise with the male population off at the front, the old fear of slave insurrection grew. To compound these difficulties the home front was also faced by increasing inflation and the threat of Northern raids that could easily wipe out what little remained of the once prosperous South.[41] The South, after all, was the theater of war and war's reality was impossible to ignore.

Endurance on the home front required as much strength and determination as it did elsewhere, but on the home front an added premium was placed on patience. Poets across the South, the majority of whom were part of the home front, turned to their fellow citizens and said:

> Let us, then, be up and doing,
> With a heart for any fate;
> Still achieving, still pursuing,
> Learn to labour and to wait.[42]

Those at home were urged to be strong, to put aside their

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[41]Eaton, Southern Confederacy, Ch. 7; E.M. Coulter, The Confederate States of America (New Orleans, 1950), Ch. 10.

[42]"A Psalm of Life," Richmond Daily Sentinel, June 19, 1863.

cares, keep going, and trust in the "Angel of Patience."[43]

As far as Southern verse was concerned the most important duty of the mothers and wives left behind was to insure that they themselves never became a burden to the soldiers in the field. Poets tried to encourage the home folks to stay cheerful and show the troops that they need not worry about the domestic situation. They sought to assure the soldiers in the field that they were remembered and loved by those left behind, and that the sacrifices they were making were cherished by the civilian population of the South:

> . . . Tom! the arm that has turned to clay,
> Your whole body has made sublime,
> For you have placed in the Malvern earth
> The proof and pledge of a noble life-
> And the rest, hence forward in higher worth,
> Will be dearer than all to your wife.[44]

The versifiers of the home front made it clear in many ways that the soldiers' fight was also the civilians' fight, although one might wonder whether the morbid type of woman revealed in the following poem was really worth fighting for:

> Yet Southern men and brothers! trust
> us ever;
> Though you all perish by the stranger's
> steel,

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[43]"The Angel of Patience," Richmond Daily Sentinel, August 31, 1863.

[44]"The Empty Sleeve," Charleston Daily Courier, January 14, 1863.

We guard your infant sons and never,
never shall they as vassels kneel.
We'll whisper "vengeance" with our
latest breath,
And die content when their young
lips can falter,
Their fathers war cry "Liberty
and Death."[45]

Although the resolve and determination of this period was strong it did not prove to be lasting. The summer of 1863 was to mark the major turning point in the war and the verse would soon indicate that Southerners were beginning to tire.

II

During the Summer of 1863 men began to talk of the " . . . happy past / The sun crowned long ago"[46]:

This little song is from the past
And ever breaths to me,
Of other days, as little shells
Sing ever to the sea.[47]

As they thought of happier, more peaceful times, some poets became melancholy. That sense of loss which would dominate the verse near the end of the war, now made its appearance as poets dwelt on the frail mortality of man and

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[45]"The Women of the South," Charleston Daily Courier, January 30, 1863.

[46]"Memories," Charleston Daily Courier, March 16, 1863.

[47]"Why I Love That Song," Houstan Telegram, cited in Charleston Daily Courier, January 24, 1863.

his works in the face of time:

> Science fade and Faith grow weak,
> Thrones shall crumble and decay,
> Art shall moulder into dust,
> Worlds and Glory pass away,
> Hearts shall wither, souls shall fly,
> Graves shall open at my call,
> I am power! I am King!
> Lord and Master overall![48]

The fighting of the Spring and Summer of 1863 would not bring reassurance to the South as had the campaigns of 1861 and 1862. On the contrary, the South's military fortunes had reached their zenith in the spring and with the summer the long and painful collapse of the Confederacy began.

Between the Spring of 1863, when Lee destroyed General Hooker's invasion at Chancellorsville, and the Summer of 1863, when Lee was defeated at Gettysburg and Grant took Vicksburg, the South's last foothold on the Mississippi, the Confederacy's chances for ultimate victory disappeared. By the end of the summer the South had been fighting for over two years, but victory was still as elusive as ever. When Lee returned from his Northern campaign all hope of victory was lost. The South had given everything that it had to give, only to find that it was not enough. The determination and resolve that had sustained Southern verse through the hardest times finally broke and the insecurity and pessimism that had always rested just below the surface welled up. The Southern

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[48]"Song of Time," Charleston Daily Courier, March 14, 1863.

poets surrendered to their grief and sorrow. From the Fall of 1863 until the end of the war, Southern poetry reflected a depth of loss and suffering that only a defeated people can know.

Chapter Four

Days of Defeat and Despair: September 1863-April 1865

"Peace-God of our Fathers, grant us Peace!"
Richmond Daily Sentinel, January 9, 1865

I

The autumn months of 1863 mark the beginning of the third and final phase of the war both in the military sense, and as far as Southern verse is concerned. After the disasters of the summer, Southern generals were faced with a succession of defeats, and Southern poets found it increasingly difficult to find any cause for hope. Defeatism was in the air and it would soon come to dominate the poetry until the end of the war. Some poets still tried to discount the course of the war and be strong and reassuring:

> For two long years the wine press
> have we trodden,
> Sure Thou will harken as we turn
> to Thee,
> Lifting our bridal robes all
> stained and sodden,
> With red tears of wounded purity!
> Sure Thou wilt bear Thine arms
> avenging might,
> Till in Thy glorious Kingdom
> upon earth,
> We stand a nation of nations bright,
> In all the grandeur of heroic birth!
> Clad in purple, yet with mourning
> weeds,
> The proud heart throbbing, even while
> it bleeds.[1]

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[1]"A Prayer for Peace," Charleston Daily Courier, November 11, 1863.

But now ever more poets recognized the senseless horror of prolonging the war and advocated peace. In fact they not only advocated it but cried out for it.

O Father! interpose Thy aid
And stop this cruel strife,
Does Justice unappeased still call
For sacrifices of life?
The bravest of our Southernsons
Sleep low beneath the sod,
How saddened hearts now grieve
for them,
None knows but Thou, Oh God![2]

The winter of 1863-1864 was for Southern verse "the winter of despair."[3] All about them poets saw their "withered hopes, like autumn leaves"[4] lying dead, killed, like the soldiers who fell fighting. They realized that the war was lost and would eventually devastate the South, and they saw clearly that all the suffering and hardships and deaths had been in vain. Versifiers no longer thought of victory or liberty or other noble sentiments, but only of the day the war would cease. Too many men had died and too many people

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[2]"God Bless the South and Bring Us Peace," Mobile Advertiser and Register, February 5, 1865.

[3]"A Reflection," Charleston Daily Courier, February 13, 1864.

[4]"The Autumn Leaves," Charleston Daily Courier, October 2, 1863.

had been hurt. In their despair poets implored God to " . . . speed us good tidings, give us, give us peace"[5]:

Bring peace, sweet peace, again Father
Let no more blood be shed,
Our hearts are bound in sorrow down
We weep the noble dead.

The living too our dearest ones
They suffer far away,
Father, oh Father end this strife,
And bless us all today.[6]

They sought His aid, sure that He would not forsake the South:

Faint fall the gentle voice of prayer
In the wild sounds that fill the air,
Yet, Lord, we know that voice is heard
Not less than if Thy throne it stirred!

Thine ear Thou tender one is caught,
If we but bend the knee in thought;
No choral song that shakes the sky
Floats farther than the Christians sigh.

Not all the darkness of the land
Can hide the tilted eye and hand,
Nor need the changing conflict cease,
To make Thee hear our cries for peace.[7]

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[5]"Prayer for Peace," Richmond Daily Sentinel, January 9, 1864.

[6]"Our Father," Charleston Daily Courier, October 1, 1863.

[7]"Hymn," Charleston Daily Courier, November 8, 1864.

Although their fierce pride and courage would not allow them to surrender, Southerners longed for the war's end. More and more the agony of defeat seemed the lesser evil when compared to the suffering that would result from further bloodshed. The illusion of the glory of war could no longer be maintained and, as the poets said:

> A friendless warfare lingering long
> Through weary day and weary year,
> A wild and many weaponed throng
> Hangs on the front, and flank, and rear.[8]

Southern versifiers who had once been able to find adventure, excitement and honour in war now asked:

> What's war but death, destruction dire,
> Famine and fear, the sword and fire,
> And after all a funeral pyre
> Wet with a tear!
> But sacred peace its train shall bring,
> Joy, for hearts that to its virtues cling;
> Would it were here.[9]

In these troubled times some men in the South wanted more than peace. There are indications throughout the poetry that for some, peace, or an end to the killing was somehow not enough. The years of toil and destruction, disappointment and defeat had sapped their spirit and

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[8]"The Battlefield," Charleston Daily Courier, November 3, 1863.

[9]"Invocation for Peace," Charleston Daily Courier, April 29, 1864.

drained it away. Many Southerners simply wanted to escape, to forget, to retreat to a position of emotional safety. Reality with its mounting casualty lists, its disrupted lives and shattered dreams, held no attractions. Honourable defeat, glory and the few minor compensations that might be expected after a valiant struggle meant nothing to these Southerners. To them escape was the only consideration. One soldier asked nothing more than to be granted a rest when his time was done:

> And if, Oh God! it be my lot,
> To be among the noble slain,
> While this life's blood is ebbing fast
> And this poor body racked with pain!
>
> And when my moments here are few,
> Before my soul from earth is risen,
> A soldier's grave is all I ask-
> And then, Oh God!, a home in Heaven.[10]

While to a Virginian, an all encompassing sleep seemed the answer:

> Oh! could the troubled, hopeless
> soul be blessed
> In the dominions of unconscious rest
> Where joys and sorrow are alike forgot-
> Where griefs are lost, and woes are
> needed not-
> Where thought subsides,and passions
> sink to peace!
> O, Somnes! come! . . . [11]

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[10]"The Soldier Boy," Richmond Daily Whig, February, 12, 1864.

[11]"Sleep," Richmond Daily Whig, March 13, 1864.

Often men transformed this desire for escape into a search for some idyllic place, real or imaginary, that was better than that which they knew. Heaven, "beyond death's cloudy portal,"[12] "Where sin and sorrow can approach no more,"[13] was the solution for some:

> There is a gathering when joy shall abound,
> Where the call to depart is not given,
> Where sorrow is not, but eternal bliss,
> Tis the gathering of friends in Heaven.[14]

The thoughts of many a lonely soldier turned to such dreams:

> Oh sing to me of Heaven
> When I come to die;
> Sing songs of holy esctacy
> To waft my soul on high.[15]

For others the desired refuge was a kind of Shangri-la, "The Land of Rest"[16]:

> I know o'er that land, so wondrous bright,
> One star beams soft and clear;
> No sun goes down, no moon gives light,
> For night comes never there . . .

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[12]"Heaven," Richmond Daily Sentinel, May 2, 1864.

[13]"Rest Weary Soul," Gainsville Independent, cited in Richmond Daily Sentinel, October 3, 1864.

[14]"The Gathering of Friends," Charleston Daily Courier, February 24, 1864.

[15]"Sing to Me of Heaven," Richmond Daily Sentinel, March 14, 1864.

[16]"Patience," Richmond Daily Dispatch, March 10, 1865.

There is no pain, but pleasures sweet,
No sad or aching breast;
Earth's pilgrims bathe their weary feet
In the streams of the land of rest.[17]

Only the end of the war, however, could bring the escape that these men desired and in the end Southerners did find the Shangri-la they had sought in the glorious image of the Old South that they developed.

It is not peculiar that Southern verse should exhibit such defeatism and despair at this time. As 1863 ended, Chattanooga, had fallen in the West opening a doorway into the heart of the South.[18] Between July and December 1864 Union General William T. Sherman and the Army of the Tennessee used this doorway,[19] as they marched through Georgia and demonstrated to the helpless South and the world the true meaning of modern war. In the East as well, the Spring of 1864 marked the beginning of the end for the Confederacy as General Grant, the hero of Vicksburg, began an invasion campaign that would eventually drive Lee to

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[17]"The Land of Rest," Charleston Daily Courier, March 2, 1864.

[18]Dupuy and Dupuy, Civil War, p. 256: Chattanooga was secured by Federal troops in such battles as Chikamauga. Lookout Mt. and Missionary Ridge, between September 19 and November 25.

[19]Ibid., p. 331: Sherman's Atlanta Campaign included such battles as New Hope Church, Kenesaw Mt. and Atlanta between May 25 and July 28.

Appomattox and surrender in April 1865. Moreover the Union blocade, which from the beginning of the war had been quite successful, was now all but air-tight and the South was slowly being starved and strangled to death. Southern food supplies were all but gone, Southern manufacturing was crippled from lack of equipment and material, and Southern stores of arms and ammunition could not begin to fill the demands without importation. Even Southern cotton production, that great weapon with which the South was to have forced helpful intervention from Europe, was hampered by lack of tools.[20] Perhaps a poem published in the Richmond Daily Sentinel best sums up the economic plight of the South in these times:

> Almighty Father, hear, oh hear, the poor,
> The poor and needy pray-
> Hasten the time of peace,
> Whilst yet a spark remains to
> fire the breast
> Of those who, lost to every sense of good,
> Bid famine reign, where Thou hast granted food.[21]

Clearly the South was in desperate straits both on the home front and the battle front, and death was, understandably, the major concern of these times. So many people had lost friends and relatives that the war was totally personalized:

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[20] E.M. Coulter, Confederate States 1861-1865, p. 42.

[21] "The Refugee's Lament," Richmond Daily Sentinel, July 25, 1864.

I said to Autumn
   Where are they?
Friends who loved the flowers so,
Friends who loved the wood-birds lay,
And the gay brooks murmuring flow,
   Friends we loved, oh! where are they?
And a low voice in the air
Answered sadly, where, oh! where?[22]

Poets covered the subject thoroughly and looked at death in all its many different forms. Some described how death affected not only the South, as a whole, but families and individuals as well, and they realized that for those who had lost their entire families the pain was crushing:

Oh Father! then for her and thee
Gushed madly forth the searing tears,
And oft, and long and bitterly
   Those tears have gushed in later years;
For the world grows cold around,
   And things take on their real hue;
   Tis sad to learn that love is found,
   Alone above the stars with you.[23]

Some dealt with the death of hundreds all over the South:

Oh! sad wert thou, to many a heart
   But few rejoiced in thee,
For many a much loved one did find
   A grave in '63.[24]

While others spoke of death as it concerned particular families:

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[22]"Lines," Charleston Daily Courier, May 17, 1864.

[23]"My Father," Richmond Daily Sentinel, November 16, 1864.

[24]"The Year of '63," Charleston Daily Courier, January 21, 1864.

Poor Frank, his sisters idol, mother's pride,
At Fredericksburg has prematurely died,
E'er boyhoods bloom his ruddy cheek had left;
George lies at Gettysburg of life bereft,
And Jack, the leader of each harmless prank,
Has breathed his last in dungeons dream and dank.
Oh, war! insatiate in your iron grasp-
Allied to death with cold and nerveless clasp,
How many patriots on Virginia's soil
Have been compressed in thy remorseless coil?[25]

Finally poets dealt with the deaths of individual soldiers:

Who was he-that single one-
Who, of all the conquering throng,
Lay all stark when the fight was done,
Deaf to triumphal shout and song?

Ask them-you need not seek them far-
Not once alone has the picture filled-
And you'll know the price at which
heartless war
Buys its "glory" where "one is killed."[26]

Poets seemed to be obsessed with death at this time and they could not talk on any subject without mentioning it. But in all this perhaps the most horrible death they could imagine was the lonely death and the thought of it inspired that grieving tone that would, according to W. J. Cash, make Southerners in the postwar years "the most sentimental people in history."[27] Throughout the South men

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[25]"Reflections on Valentines Day," Richmond Daily Sentinel, February 5, 1864.

[26]"Only One Killed," Richmond Daily Sentinel, October 19, 1864.

[27]W.J. Cash, The Mind of the South (New York, 1960), p. 130.

were dying alone. They lay on deserted battlefields or in mass graves. They became nameless, faceless, unknown victims of the war. Thousands of Southern boys went off to war and vanished as if "insatiate Death"[28] had simply erased all traces of their existence:

> He sleeps within a nameless grave,
> With aught to mark the spot,
> Save a tall pine, whose branches move
> To the wildwinds. Comrades, his lot
> May soon be ours, and you and I,
> Like him, beneath the sod may lie.[29]

Across the South such tales were retold again and again. Each town had its list of soldiers who were dead or missing and often no one ever knew exactly what had happened to them:

> Thou maiden, sweetly dreaming of thy
> loved one far away,
> Thou knowest not he's dying in the
> thickest of the fray . . .
> Thou mother, sad and lonely, with a
> vague and fearful dread,
> Thy darling boy is sleeping among the
> honored dead . . .
> Thou father, with paternal pride,
> telling thy son's "good part"-
> He has fallen 'mongst the bravest
> pierced by the foeman's dart.[30]

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[28] "The Moonlight Battlefield," Charleston Daily Courier, March 16, 1864.

[29] "The Discharged Soldier," Columbia Guardian, cited in Charleston Daily Courier, January 28, 1864.

[30] "The Absent," Richmond Daily Sentinel, November 2, 1864.

Likewise in the following verse a lone soldier lies in his grave but nobody, not even his wife, knows how or where he died:

God pity the bride who waits at home,
With her lily cheeks and her violet eyes,
Dreaming the sweet old dreams of love,
While her lover is walking in Paradise.
God strengthen her heart as the days go by,
And the long dreary nights of her vigil follow;
No bird, nor moon, nor whispering wind
May breath the tale of the hollow;
Alas! Alas!
The secret is safe with the woodland grass[31]

With the threat of death hanging over the heads of their loved ones, fear was the constant companion of those on the home front and many poets shared their anxiety. All over the South thousands of mothers and wives waited alone for news of their sons and husbands, never knowing what their fate might be. As the war dragged on and the casualty figures mounted, each scrap of good news was cherished, for no one could tell if the next bit of news would be good or bad. As the following verse shows, word from the front could be a mixed blessing:

Half in trust, and half in terror,
She sat in the twilight glow,
And seemed to wait for something
She did not dare to know;
So up, with a doubtful anxious hope
To the solemn vault she gazed,
While her fair frame shook with a
struggling fear
As her pleading looks were raised;

---

[31]"Missing," Richmond Daily Dispatch, January 14, 1865.

Twas longing for news of the battle,
And dread to see appear
His name on the roll of the fallen,
Who was battling for home and her.[32]

Separation was particularly hard on married couples. On January 18, 1864 one Charleston poet took the husbands' side:

Now war's divorce,
With cruel force,
Hath borne her from me
And sad and alone, I pine and moan
That we apart should be;
My wife and I.[33]

While the very next day another poet answered for the wives:

How sad I feel,
And now reveal,
The grief that fills my heart
That we so far, by war's rude jar,
And forced a while to part;
My love and I[34]

II

While the disintegration of the Confederacy continued, a new sense of melancholy began to affect both Southern verse, as a whole, and individual Southern poets. As the following poet said:

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[32]"In the Rear," Atlanta Southern Confederacy, June 15, 1864.

[33]"War's Divorce-My Wife and I," Charleston Daily Courier, January 18, 1864.

[34]"War's Divorce-The Wife's Reply," Charleston Daily Courier, January 19, 1864.

Oh! twas not meant for me-the joy
That other mortals know ;
It was not meant that I should bask
In sunshine here below . . .[35]

Now as perhaps never before there was a unity in Southern poetry, for the despair of these days was universal in a way that the jubilation and determination of the earlier periods had never been. Whereas there had always been poets who saw sadness in secession or found tragedy in victory, no one could find hope in these days. For the vast majority of Southern versifiers life no longer held any joy:

God's hand has planted another year,
In the fruitful toil of time;
To the tragic poem of human life
Is added another rhyme;
And I sit here in a stranger town,
-Widowed of all the joy
I used to know at the glad New Year.[36]

In the midst of the total collapse of the Confederacy poets cast their minds back to better days. They recalled the times when the South was still strong and the comparisons they made between the state of the South and their own lives were pitiful:

All the world is sleeping round me-
But the memory of the years
Is watching-in the starlight,

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[35]"Sunshine," South Carolinian, cited in Charleston Daily Courier, March 21, 1864.

[36]"Looking Backwards," Macon Confederate, cited in Charleston Daily Courier, September 24, 1864.

Is raining-in the tears,
My heart is all a'tremble
With the music tones of yore
And I hear the wind-harps whisper,
Ah! never, never more.[37]

For the following poet the old broken canoe of his childhood home seemed to symbolize not only the fate of the South but his own fate as well:

But now as I lean o'er the rocking side,
And look below in the sluggish tide,
The face that I see is graver grown,
And the laugh that I hear has a sober tone,
And the hands that lent to the light skiff wings,
Have grown familiar with sterner things,
But I love to think of the hours that flew,
As I rocked where the whirls their wild spray threw,
Ere the blossoms moved or the green grass grew,
O'er the mouldering stern of the Old Canoe.[38]

With each passing day more and more verse of this type appeared in Southern newspapers. During the autumn and winter of the Confederacy poets began to think and write of the autumn and winter of men's lives:

My life is like a shattered wreck
Cast by the waves upon the shore,
The broken mast, the rifted deck,
Tell of the ship wreck that is o'er;
Yet from the relics of the storm
The mariner his raft will form
Again to tempt the faithless sea;
But hope rebuilds no barque for me.

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[37]"Memories," Charleston Daily Courier, March 16, 1864.

[38]"The Old Canoe," Richmond Daily Sentinel, April 15, 1864.

My life is like the print of feet,
   Left on Tampa's desert strand,
Soon as the rising tide shall beat,
   All trace shall vanish from the sand;
Yet as if grieving to efface
   All vestige of the human race
On that lone shore land mourns the sea;
   But none shall thus lament for me.[39]

When the war finally came to an end with General Lee's surrender at Appomattox Court House, Virginia, in April 1865, Southern despair and sorrow was complete. For the North the sun shone with new brilliance, but for the South black night came down like a funeral shroud.

Evening cometh with its shadows,
   And the darkness cover thee,
And the flowers that bloom brightly
   Neath a summer's warming skies,
Winter's icy breezes chillith,
   Till with drooping head,it dies.[40]

Fittingly enough the poets who had urged the South to take up arms in 1861 now urged them to accept defeat. Shortly after Lee's surrender a poem, charged with grief, asked Southerners to give up the cause for which they had fought:

Furl that Banner, for 'tis weary;
Round its staff 'tis drooping dreary;
   Furl it, fold it, it is best;
For there's not a man to wave it,

---

[39]"My Life," Richmond Daily Sentinel, November 2, 1864.

[40]"A Reflection," Charleston Daily Courier, February 13, 1864.

And there's not a sword to save it,
And there's not one left to love it
In the blood which heroes gave it;
And its foes now scorn and brave it;
   Furl it, hide it-let it rest! . . .

Furl that Banner, softly, slowly!
Treat it gently-it is holy-
   For it droops above the dead
Touch it not-unfold it never
Let it droop there, furled forever
   For its people's hopes are dead![41]

After four years of the most bloody conflict that Americans have ever known, the question of secession was settled for once and all.[42] The South's dreams of glorious freedom lay shattered among the ruins of a once prosperous and proud land.

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[41]"Furl the Banner," Confederate War Poems, p. 22.

[42]Long, An Almanac, p. 710-711: Casualties are as follows (approximate figures):

Union-Dead-363,222	Confederate-Dead-258,000
Wounded-277,391	Wounded-194,026
Total-640,613	Total-452,026

Grand Total - Both Armies - 1,092,634.

Chapter Five

The Birth of the Lost Cause Myth

"Into the arms of Fame." Richmond Daily Whig, July 23, 1862

I

While the poets pondered their own fate in terms of the fate of the South as a whole, many of them discerned a particularly personal link between the South as a nation and individual Southerners. It was not as if the South had been a nation defeated by a foreign foe, and then left to recover as best it could. On the contrary, the end of the war meant the end of Southern independence--of the Southern nationality--and the re-establishment of a Union in which the South would be watched and supervised by the victorious North. The death of the Confederacy meant also an end to the old way of life that the South had fought to protect. Thus peace brought with it new and possibly even greater dangers than had been experienced during the war. As peace approached one poet warned:

> . . . night is here-
> The night of sorrow-and the night of fear,
> I mourn the ill that now my steps attend,
> And shrink from others that may yet impend.[1]

The postwar problems facing the South were staggering.

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[1]"No Night Shall be in Heaven," Richmond Daily Dispatch, February 10, 1865.

Everything that Southerners had staked their futures on was gone. Southern hopes and dreams lay shattered by war. The great Southern nation, and with it the doctrine of secession had ceased to exist. The prewar Southern dominance in politics and government was no more. The South was now more dependent upon the North for its survival than it had ever been before the war, and many Southerners realized that they would have to act quickly if they were going to salvage any of the South's past greatness. As a new era of Southern woes began a new war, the War of the Pen, broke out.

In the postwar years Dixie's future in the nation depended upon the North's willingness to forgive and forget. Many Southerners came to believe that they could speed Northern acceptance of the South by explaining and if possible justifying the South's actions. They set to work "to convert the Northern disbeliever," by painting a picture of the South and the Confederacy that would cover the old evils and highlight the virtues." "The writers combined a respect for the traditions of Dixie with a belief that the South was an intregal part of the Union" and carefully explained the South, and its cause in terms that would find sympathy and understanding in the North.[2]

For example, they dealt with Southern soldiers and

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[2]Buck, The Road to Reunion, Ch. 3.

war heroes not as if they had been rebels, but as if they were simply brave "American" boys fighting for what they believed in with traditional "American" dedication and courage. Southern writers highlighted the fact that Southern soldiers had exhibited in their actions the finest qualities of "American" manhood, knowing that Union veterans would appreciate the difficulties that their Southern counterparts had overcome and give credit where credit was due. In "The Jacket of Gray," a poem written shortly after the war, the question of right or wrong was not discussed. Instead, the subject was the death of a noble and courageous soldier who, though defeated, remained, as any true "American" would, undisgraced:

> We laid him to rest in his cold narrow bed
> And graved on the marble we place o'er his head
> As the proudest tribute our sad hearts could pay-
> "He never disgraced it,-the jacket of gray"[3]

The problem that most concerned these postwar Southern champions was not the war, however, but the question of the Negro. Southern authors saw that just as slavery had been the greatest single point of difference between the Old South and the North, so too the problem of the freed Negro would be a serious obstacle to the South's re-establishment

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[3]"The Jacket of Gray," Confederate War Poems, p. 38.

in the Union. They carefully avoided the question of morality or justice when they described the now dead "peculiar institution," and instead painted an idealized picture of contented, well-cared-for slaves being protected by their benevolent White masters.[4] Southern writers insisted that slavery in the South had always protected the Negro and argued that because of their long experience with him, Southerners were best qualified to supply the freed Negro with the guidance now needed to adjust to his new position in society. Southern authors characterized the Old South as a land where white planters and black slaves lived together in harmony and good fellowship. In story and verse they developed the idea that the White Southerner was the Negro's best friend in an effort to forestall Northern interference in Southern affairs.[5]

Over the years the work of Southern "propagandists" produced what today is often called the "Lost Cause Myth." So successful have the proponents of the "Lost Cause" been that the Confederacy has been awarded something of a "moral" victory in the Civil War, despite its military defeat. Evi-

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[4] Buck, Road to Reunion, Ch. 3.

[5] Ibid., See also: Eaton, Old South Civilization, Ch. 2.

dence of this victory can be seen clearly in the popular images of the Old South and the Confederacy that still prevail today. For example, the highly romanticised image of the cultured Southern "colonel" guiding with loving care the destinies of the slaves who worked his fields persists even today, as does the image of the old faithful "mammy" raising, as her own, the children of her beloved "massa." Likewise, the modern conception of the Confederate Army as a magnificent fighting machine that came so close to victory only to be overwhelmed by numbers is also common.[6] Perhaps the best example of the Southern victory in the War of the Pen is seen, however, in the fact that General Robert E. Lee, the man who nearly led the South to victory--at least in legend--is today accepted as an American hero almost equal in stature to President Abraham Lincoln.

II

The development of the "Lost Cause Myth" is perhaps the most fascinating aspect of the literary side of the Civil War and though, strictly speaking, it is a postwar development, there are indications in the war poetry that the base

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[6]Examples of this "myth" can be seen in the literary works of William Faulkner and in the classic twentieth century "Lost Cause" novel, Gone With The Wind.

of the myth was laid well before the cause was actually lost. Even in the earliest stages of the war subtle evidence can be found to indicate the birth of the myth. It is almost as if some of the poets could see into the future and were hedging their bets, so to speak, in preparation for the South's defeat.

The question of slavery was one of the prime concerns of these early "myth-makers," and long before postwar Southern poets began their task of justifying the South to the North, war poets showed a deep desire to justify slavery to themselves and the world. In the ante-bellum "plantation myth" Southerners, according to one historian, had "expressed their craving for a kindly paternalistic slave system . . . where master and slave lived together in rich comradeship"[7] and in numerous war poems Southern versifiers again expressed this desire by putting words into the mouths of slaves to show that they were indeed happy and well treated in the Old South. In one verse a runaway slave returned and begged to be taken back by her master:

> O, Massa William, see me kneeling!
> O, Missus, say one word for me!
> You'll let me stay? Oh! Thank you massa.
> Now I'm happy, now I'm free.

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[7] Freehling, Prelude to Civil War, p. 65.

I've seen enough of Yankee freedom,
I've had enough of Yankee love!
As they have treated the poor Negro,
Be't done to them above.[8]

In another a slave told her little mistress that the possibility of being freed by Northern troops held no attractions for her:

De only freedom dat I want, is dat
   I'll hab in Heaven,
De only hopes dat cheers my life
   Are dem de Lord hab given,
And when He calls for Dinah she
   am prepared to go,
Till den she'll lub ole Georgia, wid
   her cottonfields like snow.[9]

Other poems dealt with the love that Negroes had for their White masters, and the sorrow they felt when the war separated them. In one poem an old black "mammy" longs for the return of her White master:

But goodness me! I'm talking yet
   About that darling honey son,
Well, I declare! I did forget-
   There's all my work I haven't done;
Well, I must go-I hope he's well-
   I know he's brave as brave can be,
And I'll be glad when he comes back,
   Comes back to Missus, home and me.[10]

In another, a black man comforts his mistress over the loss of her young son:

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[8]"The Contraband's Return," Richmond Daily Whig, May 26, 1864.

[9]"Philanthropy Rebuked," Atlanta Southern Confederacy, April 10, 1862.

[10]"The Old Mammy's Lament for her Young Master," Richmond Daily Whig, December 5, 1863.

And poor Afric, who so loved him-
Afric, from the land of palm-
Said,"Las night, I heer'd de angils
Weaving robes for dis dear lamb,
Missus, honey, don't set grieving
Massa Jesus does de right-
He have took away your candle-
So you seek de Fader's light."[11]

The Southern poetic treatment of death and defeat also presaged the postwar myth. As the war ran its course some poets saw that despite the outcome of the struggle, the South had won a very real and valuable victory. They saw that in defending itself against a stronger foe the South had won fame that would not die, and they insisted that this in itself was a magnificent achievement. In several poems Southern versifiers discerned a moral triumph in dying undefeated. "Oh, call it not defeat my friends / It was a glorious gain," one poet intoned:

Though every brave not murdered then
Should wear a life-long chain,
Not since the day when Sparta's King
With his heroic few,
Repelled for long proud Persia's host,
Did earth such valour view.[12]

For those who had died for the South victory came in

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[11]"Poet Willie," Mobile Advertiser and Register, March 16, 1862; See also: "A Southern Scene from Life," New Orleans Times-Picayune, November 15, 1861.

[12]"Defense of Fort Donelson," New Orleans Sunday Delta, cited in Charleston Daily Courier, March 20, 1862.

the form of everlasting life in the "annals of fame."[13] Immortality was their reward according to a poet from New Orleans:

> Upward, forever upward,
> I see their march sublime,
> And hear the glorious music
> Of the conquerors of time.[14]

Even in the face of the South's total defeat a number of poets believed that the South's cause would not-could not die. They maintained the conviction that justice was on the South's side and claimed that "Truth crushed to earth shall rise again"[15] thereby directly anticipating the "Lost Cause" credo-"The South shall rise again":

> Never despair!
> Disappointment bear.
> Though hope seemeth vain, be patient still,
> Thy good intent God doth fulfill;
> Thy hand is weak, His powerful will
> Is finishing thy life work still.
> The good endeavor
> Is lost-no never![16]

Perhaps in the retrospective light of the success of the Southern myth-makers, these war poets were right.

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[13] "Jackson," Charleston Daily Courier, May 14, 1864.

[14] "The Celestial Army," New Orleans Times-Picayune, March 9, 1862.

[15] "The Battlefield," Charleston Daily Courier, November 3, 1863.

[16] "Nothing is Lost," Atlanta Southern Confederacy, April 19, 1864.

Though a nation had died, its death had produced a higher victory of sorts. Southerners had defended their honour and won everlasting fame and glory. Though Dixie had lost its fight for national independence and lost the right to hold slaves, it had won the right to love and cherish what it had once been, without having to defend itself to anyone. The guilt and fear that had always married the South's self-image had been set to rest, and the South was free to romanticize and idealize its past. The Old South that had been so resistant to change no longer existed, but by the same token, change in the postwar world could never damage the New South's memory of it. However intangible this prize might be, it was one that could never be taken away from the South.[17]

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[17]Eaton, Old South Civilization, p. 109.

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THE SOUTHERN MUSE

CONFEDERATE WAR POETRY DURING THE CIVIL WAR

Author [redacted]

Signature

JOHN STUART McINTYRE

Name

March 11, 1973

Date