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Monuments and Maidens

How the White South (Almost) Came to Terms With Defeat in the American Civil War

In 1860 and 1861 several Southern states seceded from the American Union and formed the Confederacy. Although the Confederacy was defeated in the Civil War that followed secession, it has attracted and still attracts more popular and academic interest than the Northern Victory. Susan-Mary Grant discusses the Southern response to its defeat and its implications for the historical perception of American history.

The South was not defeated in the American Civil War; this is not as counterfactual a statement as it may seem, since the South did not engage in the Civil War. With the sesquicentennial (150 years) of the war almost upon us, we must remember that what seceded from the American Union in 1860/61 was not a coherent national entity named ‘The South’ even if there already existed what we, following Eric Hobsbawm, might term a ‘proto-nationalism’ that was distinctively (white) southern.¹ The Confederate States of America was an essentially incoherent construct, whose white men fought for the Confederacy while the four million or so African-Americans who comprised almost 45 percent of the South’s population either fought on the side of the Union or swiftly began to dismantle a way of life that the Confederacy had been raised to defend. By the war’s conclusion, that way of life was fully on the road to extinction; with the 13th Amendment slavery was abolished; with the 14th, America finally produced its first definition of citizenship, a citizenship based on the nation, not the state, on rights, not race. Whose victory was represented, then, at Appomattox in 1865; and whose defeat?

In the context of the approaching sesquicentennial, this question is more than academic; broader public perceptions of America’s history are involved.

1 E.J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (1990. Reprint. Cambridge 1991) 46.

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The world, fascinated by the election of Barack Obama may be watching even more closely than it did on the occasion of the war's centennial starting in 1961. That took place in an atmosphere of civil rights' agitation and in the broader context of the Cold War. Yet the nation as a whole did not expend much effort, as might have been expected in such troubled times, in projecting American ideals of freedom and democracy through the lens of a conflict that had held that nation together and effected the eradication of chattel slavery. The Civil War may have been, as Robert Penn Warren, one of America's foremost authors and literary critics, mused at the start of the centennial celebrations, the nation's 'felt history', the 'great single event' of its development, but it was hardly recognised as such between 1961 and 1965.² As leading African-American historian Charles H. Wesley noted at the time:

'from the opening of this first Centennial year, 1961, there has been a preoccupation with the glorification of the drama of the War as it opened in 1861, with Southern dominance and victories due to the initiative seized by those under arms in the South.'³

Wesley was sharply critical of what he perceived to be 'a halo to the Southern tradition of the Civil War', one that represented the 'death and suffering' of the conflict as little more than a pageant reminiscent of 'an ancient Roman holiday in an amphitheatre.'⁴ This was the 'Lost Cause' version of the Civil War; a romanticised gloss on a brutal four-year period of America's history that promulgated a version of the war as one fought for states' rights, not slavery, for a gracious, essentially agrarian antebellum lifestyle of a South both antithetical and superior to that of the acquisitive and urbanising North, and for race relations that had provided stability, not threatened social upheaval. It offered no challenge to the white hegemonic perspective that had underpinned the 'Old South' and that the 'New South' struggled to grasp had gone forever. Wesley's was not the sole voice to express dismay. 'If the next five years of commemorating proceed along the lines of the first few months', the *New York Post* commented acerbically, 'they'll be whistling "Dixie" at the Appomattox Courthouse enacted in 1965, and General Grant

2 Robert Penn Warren, *The Legacy of the Civil War: Meditations on the Centennial* (New York 1961) 3.

3 Charles H. Wesley, 'The Civil War and the Negro-American', *Journal of Negro History* 47:2 (April, 1962) 77-96, there 79.

4 Wesley, 'The Civil War and the Negro-American', 78.

will hand his sword to General Lee.⁵

In light of the approaching sesquicentennial, historian David Blight has described the centennial as 'a political and historical debacle', and expressed the hope that the nation will 'do better this time.'⁶ So far, however, the signs are not wholly encouraging. Simply typing in 'Civil War sesquicentennial' into Google provides some idea of the general slant and location of Civil War memory, even in 2009. The majority of sites that appear relate to the forthcoming celebrations in the former Confederate states. In commemorative terms, this does indeed seem to be the victory of defeat.

How the white South translated military defeat into a form of cultural victory is worth our consideration for what it reveals not just about the tenacity of white southern identity but the significance of defeat as a paradigm for our understanding of mourning, memorialisation and the struggle for meaning in the aftermath of conflict generally. Despite the vast amount of literature on the South, on the Confederacy and on Southern nationalism, when it comes to the white South, scholars still tend to orientate themselves via the guidebook produced by the 'Lost Cause' tradition inaugurated in 1866 in the work of Edward Pollard. Traversing a landscape saturated with monuments to the dead and memorials to the missing, past graveyards hallowed by the 'sacred remains' interred there, and informed by any number of military memoirs and constitutional justifications produced by the former combatants and their political leaders, scholars frequently locate the 'origins of the New South' in the physical and psychological pathways trampled by the Civil War. The South is, accordingly, positioned as that part of America 'where these memories grow'. In historiographical terms, however, the memory bank has seen vast expansion since the Civil War centennial to include those not 'baptized' in the blood of the Confederacy. Nevertheless, as far as defeat is concerned it is as well to begin with the most extreme example, that of the Confederate dead and the death of the nation they failed to bring into being.⁷

5 *New York Post* (February 17, 1961).

6 David Blight, 'Will we do better this time?', *Chronicle of Higher Education*, (May 26 2009) 1.

7 Edward Pollard, *The Lost Cause* (New York 1866) and *The Lost Cause Regained* (New York 1868); Alexander Yelverton Peyton Garnett, *Burial Ceremonies of the Confederate Dead* (Washington 1875) 5; C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913* (Baton Rouge 1951); on this point see also James C. Cobb, *Away Down South: A History of Southern Identity* (New York and Oxford 2005) 60-74; W. Fitzhugh Brundage ed., *Where These Memories Grow: History, Memory, and Southern Identity* (Chapel Hill 2000).

Death and the Birth of a Nation

The Confederacy was undoubtedly defeated, but in a national sense white southerners took from the war more than they put in. The idea of the 'Lost Cause' may be something of a misnomer, with scholars increasingly convinced that the idea of 'The South' as an emotional and in some senses nationalist construct was the product of and not the precursor to conflict. In American terms, this position has a strong precedent. Edmund Morgan famously asserted that the American 'nation was the child, not the father of the revolution', and it may not be surprising that some southern historians have argued, from Wilbur Cash onwards, that a similar process was at work in the South during the Civil War. Focusing on the symbolic manifestation of the Confederacy in the form of its flag, Robert Bonner proposes that a shift took place during the war itself. A flag initially raised as a reminder that 'the Confederacy was first and foremost a collection of sovereign states' became a banner that invoked a single entity.⁸ This point was not lost on English journalist William Howard Russell of the *London Times*, who recognised the 'magical powers' inherent in 'a piece of bunting', and mused:

'In this Confederate flag there is a meaning which cannot die - it marks the birthplace of a new nationality, and its place must know it forever. Even the flag of a rebellion leaves indelible colors in the political atmosphere. The hopes that sustained it may vanish in the gloom of night, but the national faith still believes that its sun will rise on some glorious morrow.'⁹

The core of that meaning, for the white South, resided in both death and defeat. It may be that nationalism finds defeat a more sustaining prop than

8 Wilbur J. Cash argued that the Civil War 'created the concept of the South as something more than a matter of geography, as an object of patriotism' in *The Mind of the South* (1941, Reprint. New York 1991) 66; more recently Gary Gallagher has explored the strengthening of white southern loyalties during the war in *The Confederate War: How Popular Will, Nationalism and Military Strategy Could Not Stave off Defeat*, (New Edition, 1999); see also Drew Gilpin Faust, *The Creation of Confederate Nationalism: Ideology and Identity in the Civil War South* (Baton Rouge 1988); Anne Sarah Rubin, *A Shattered Nation: The Rise and Fall of the Confederacy, 1861-1868* (Chapel Hill 2005); Edmund Morgan, *The Birth of the Republic, 1763-89* (Chicago and London 1977) 100; Robert E. Boner, 'Flag Culture and the Consolidation of Confederate Nationalism', *The Journal of Southern History* 68:2 (1002) 293-332, there 325.

9 William Howard Russell, *My Diary North and South* (Boston 1863) 216.

victory. As Ernest Renan proposed in the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War, 'suffering in common unifies more than joy does', since 'griefs are of more value than triumphs, for they impose duties, and require a common effort'.¹⁰ For the former Confederacy, however, the 'national faith' derived not just from defeat but from death itself. 'We may say', observed Robert Penn Warren, 'that only at the moment when Lee handed Grant his sword was the Confederacy born'. Through death, he proposed, 'the Confederacy entered upon its immortality'.¹¹

Such immortality as the Confederacy achieved was predicated, at least initially, on mourning individual deaths. The dead were 'transformed into an imagined community for the Confederacy', Drew Gilpin Faust has argued. It was this 'shadow nation of sacrificed lives' that informed the white South's immediate response to defeat.¹² When it comes to the commemoration of the Confederate dead, most people think first of the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC), but before they ever came into existence, in 1894, Ladies Memorial Associations (LMAS) across the South organized themselves in support of the Confederate soldier, the Confederate dead, and the Confederate nation. Their activities were centred on commemoration of the dead; theirs was mourning with a political and gendered purpose. Women had always been central to Victorian mourning ritual before the war, but the sheer number of deaths and subsequent funerals during the war necessitated an alteration of response. Unable to maintain antebellum mourning rituals, Confederate women did more than set aside traditional mourning dress; they shifted the meaning of mourning itself.

Challenging both the conclusions of those historians who propose that Confederate women moved back to the domestic sphere as soon as the troops returned and that an overwhelming spirit of despair characterised the immediate post-war South, scholars such as Scott Poole, William Blair and Caroline Janney reveal a story of politically-motivated activity on the part of elite white southern women. This did not cease at the war's end, but both facilitated the acceptance of and informed the white South's response to defeat in the period of Reconstruction (1865-1877) and for decades afterwards. In their sorrow, white Southern women shed 'no tears

10 What is a Nation (1882), via <http://www.nationalismproject.org/what/renan.htm> (10 February 2009).

11 Warren, *Legacy of the Civil War*, 15.

12 Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York 2008) 83.

of penitence', in Scott Poole's phrase, but rather inaugurated a process of what Blair terms 'guerrilla warfare through mourning' that transformed private grief into a public defence of the Confederate cause.¹³

For many former Confederates the graveyard functioned as a sanctuary from Federal interference. Keen to prevent overt public displays of sympathy for the Confederacy, especially following the 1867 Reconstruction Acts, Federal officials found it difficult to deny white women the right to mourn their dead. The exclusion of the Confederate dead from the new National Cemeteries established by the Union only reinforced a separate mourning tradition, fuelled by a sense of outrage that took little account of context. 'The nation condemns our dead', the *Richmond Daily Examiner* declaimed. 'They are left in deserted places to rot into oblivion.' Unwilling to relinquish Confederate remains in unmarked graves, the LMAS organized a massive retrieval and re-internment program for these, acting as 'surrogate government agencies...to care for the defunct nation's dead'.¹⁴

This new and expanded female mourning enterprise represented an American variant of what George Mosse identifies, in the context of the First World War, as the 'Myth of the War Experience'. Drawing on classical precedents, this elevated the role of the volunteer soldier in the age of people's war, in which warfare was fought for national ideals and death in war 'was a sacrifice for the nation'. The 'burial and commemoration of the war dead were analogous to the construction of a church for the nation', Mosse argues, one devoted not to religion, but to nationalism. Ultimately designed 'to mask war and to legitimize the war experience' by portraying it as sacred and providing future generations with 'a heritage to emulate', the parallels with the activities of the LMAS are striking.¹⁵

Devoted to repatriating the remains of Confederate soldiers, raising the money for memorials, tidying and remounding Confederate graves, and organizing Memorial Day activities, the LMAS ensured that the Confederate dead would be interred not just in southern soil, but at the heart of the

13 W. Scott Poole, *Never Surrender: Confederate Memory and Conservatism in the South Carolina Upcountry* (Athens and London 2004) 67-8, 70; William Blair, *Cities of the Dead: Contesting the Memory of the Civil War in the South, 1865-1914* (Chapel Hill 2004) 54.

14 *Richmond Daily Examiner* quoted Blair, *Cities of the Dead*, 53; Caroline E. Janney, *Burying the Dead But Not the Past: Ladies Memorial Associations and the Lost Cause* (Chapel Hill 2008) 88.

15 Janney, *Burying the Dead*, 52-54; George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (New York and Oxford 1990) 7, 32-3.



Confederate Cemetery, Franklin, Tennessee
(Photo © S-M Grant)

white South's memory of the Civil War. So far from serving as supports for the defeated survivors the women of LMAS 'saw themselves as patriots performing vital civic duties for their communities and the larger South'. Through the efforts of the LMAS, the South became itself a shrine, almost an extended rural cemetery in its function as a 'didactic landscape'.¹⁶ It promised no resurrection of the dead, yet it did harbor the hope that the cause for which they died might yet survive. Echoing the sentiment on many an antebellum tombstone, one southern author, Sallie Brock Putnam, concluded her 1867 volume of reminiscences of the war by looking forward to a future when the white South might rise again.

'[O]ver every desolate hill and valley, on every wasted homestead, upon every ruined hearthstone', she intoned, 'is written as with an angel's pen, in letters of fire, the magic word RESURGAM!'.¹⁷

Good Deaths and Bad

In dealing with the dead of war, the white South faced a problem with roots in the very distant past, and very far from the South. Although keen to position their former soldiers almost as chivalrous knights of old (an image later fully encapsulated in the J.E.B. Stuart Memorial Window in St. James's Episcopal Church in Richmond) this alignment with a mythical medieval past was problematic. As Phillip Ariès noted, societies 'founded on chivalric and military ideals', and we might extend that to the Confederacy in its imaginative form at least, had no difficulty in incorporating the death of the warrior in ritual form. Yet as early as the thirteenth century the

16 Janney, *Burying the Dead*, 87; the phrase 'didactic landscape' is David Schuyler's, quoted in Mark S. Schantz, *Awaiting the Heavenly Country: The Civil War and America's Culture of Death* (Ithaca and London 2008) 71.

17 Sallie Brock Putnam, *Richmond During the War* (1867. Reprint. Lincoln and London 1996) 389.

death of the soldier was set apart from the 'Good Death' unless the soldier in question fell in a just war. Echoes of this perspective appear again in the Civil War, particularly in the tension between the 'good' (Union) and 'bad' (Confederate) warrior; this complicated, but also informed the reactions to death and, in the case of the Confederacy, defeat in the Civil War.¹⁸

The most obvious challenge to the idea that the Confederate warrior had died a 'Good Death' came from the Union, and from its victory in a conflict that had saved the nation. Union soldiers could be more readily accommodated by the post-war nationalist rhetoric espoused north of the Mason-Dixon line and that legitimated their sacrifice in the national cause. A more proximate challenge came from African Americans, whose ceremonial responses to the Civil War were clearly not focussed on defeat, but on the victory represented by emancipation, on the promise of the future, not the trauma of the past, on the living, not the dead. Beginning during the war and gathering momentum after it, freedom celebrations across the South undermined white hegemony on several levels, not least in the assertion of black agency that such overt public displays implied in an environment long used to directing, and constraining, the lives of African Americans.¹⁹

Essentially, what was at stake in the various contemporaneous yet completely contradictory memorial occasions were the public spaces of the 'New South', and the position, and interpretation of Confederate defeat within these spaces and within the nation as a whole. During Reconstruction, as Kathleen Ann Clark argues, two conjoined processes were at work: 'the transformation of slaves into citizens and the reconstitution of the nation'. Both 'required cultural labor that rested...on the ability to make history...to assert particular understandings of the past', yet both struggled to come out from under the 'shadow nation' of the Confederate dead. Memorial Day itself, first celebrated as 'Decoration Day' by black South Carolinians and white abolitionists in Charleston on May 1st, 1865 is a case in point. The speed with which the day shifted focus from one devoted to the celebra-

18 Philippe Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death* (1977, Reprint. London 1983) 12.

19 On the Union dead, see Susan-Mary Grant, 'Raising the dead: War, memory and American national identity', *Nations and Nationalism* 11:4 (October 2005) 509-29; Janney, *Burying the Dead*, 72-4; Kathleen Ann Clark, 'Celebrating Freedom: Emancipation Day Celebrations and African American Memory in the Early Reconstruction South' in Brundage ed., *Where These Memories Grow*, there 116-7; see also Clark, *Defining Moments: African American Commemoration and Political Culture in the South, 1863-1913* (Chapel Hill 2005) 83.

tion of freedom by African Americans to a day devoted primarily to the decoration of war graves and the invocation of the dead revealed the desire to avoid the issue of what each side's sacrifice had been for. For the white South, the difficulty was especially acute, since the redemptive message of Confederate Memorial Day ritual had to be squared with the reality of defeat, with the fact that Confederate sacrifice had been in vain. The solution arrived at was to take the message beyond the cemetery, to challenge the new African American presence in the urban locations of the South, to set in stone, quite literally, the Confederate interpretation of the war; in short, to build monuments.²⁰

Monuments and Memories

Confederate monuments were, as the titles of two studies suggest, both 'monuments to memories' and 'symbols of the South'.²¹ Initially, they represented a form of funerary statuary, were located within local cemeteries, and were the product of private enterprise. Some were relatively modest affairs, others dramatic gestures, most notably the imposing granite pyramid in Hollywood Cemetery in Richmond. By far the bulk of these monuments, however, and especially those in the civic spaces of the South, were dedicated later in the century, but it was still women, in the main, who promoted their construction. The LMAS had by then ceded authority to the United Daughters of the Confederacy, but female agency in the preservation and popularisation of Confederate memory remained a constant.

By the time many of these monuments appeared, women's efforts toward the construction of physical and psychological props for the defeated Confederate states were bolstered by the political and broader cultural invocations of the 'Lost Cause' across the South but also by a national environment more receptive to the idea of reconciliation between North and South than had been the case during Reconstruction and for at least a decade afterwards. Indeed, both the Union and the 'Lost Cause'

20 Clark, *Defining Moments* 9; David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, MA, 2001) 64-70; Gaines M. Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South* (1987, Reprint, New York and Oxford 1988) 43; Blair, *Cities of the Dead*, 50-51, 78.

21 Benjamin J. Hillman, *Monuments to Memories: Virginia's Civil War Heritage in Bronze and Stone* (Richmond 1965); Ralph W. Widener, Jr., *Confederate Monuments: Enduring Symbols of the South and the War between the States* (Washington D.C. 1982).

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tended to invoke similar sentiments as far as monument inscriptions were concerned. Favourites included Horace's '*Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*' (it is a sweet and glorious thing to die for one's country) and an extract from a poem composed in the aftermath of the Mexican-American War (1846-48), Theodore O'Hara's 'The Bivouac of the Dead', which invoked 'Fame's eternal camping ground' on which the dead soldiers' 'silent tents are spread,/And Glory guards, with solemn round/The bivouac of the dead.'²²

Naturally, there were distinctions between the memorial messages on monuments North and South, although the similarities are perhaps more revealing than the differences. Most obviously, Confederate inscriptions tended, as Thomas Brown has noted, to be 'written in a higher emotional pitch'. Whilst Union inscriptions clearly invoked the death of the soldier in the name of the nation but few mentioned emancipation, Confederate memorials tended to stress courage, patriotism, valour, defence of home and, later, states' rights but few mentioned slavery. Confederate memorials were more ambitious in terms of the texts selected for permanent fame. The Confederate 'poet of the dead', Father Abram Ryan, was an obvious choice, since he was given to morbid meditations about the 'grandeur in graves' and the 'glory in gloom'. As Charles Reagan Wilson observes, whilst 'the plantation nurtured prewar romanticism, the graveyard nourished that of the post-war generation', and the monuments to the Confederacy were, in many respects, gravestones enlarged, misery made manifest in marble. They also functioned as liminal structures, operating on the threshold between past and present; except that the plantation



Confederate Memorial at Arlington, inaugurated June 4, 1914, by which time sectional reconciliation was all but complete. The monument acknowledged the decision by the federal government to allow for burial of the Confederate dead in the national cemetery. (Photo © Peter Wilson)

22 On female agency, see Thomas J. Brown, *The Public Art of Civil War Commemoration: A Brief History with Documents* (New York 2004) 22-3, 36-7. See also Cynthia Mills and Pamela H. Simpson ed., *Monuments to the Lost Cause: Women, Art, and the Landscapes of Southern Memory* (Knoxville, TN. 2003).



Beaufort National Cemetery, South Carolina (Photo © S-M Grant)

memorials, even as they undoubtedly aligned themselves, psychologically, with the message they conveyed.²³

The South Carolina monument in Columbia offers a case in point. It is volubly informative as far as ‘Lost Cause’ rhetoric was concerned, commemorating men

‘Whom power could not corrupt/Whom death could not terrify/Whom defeat could not dishonor’ who ‘glorified a fallen cause/By the simple manhood of their lives/The patient endurance of suffering/And the heroism of death.’²⁴

This inscription, composed by the diplomat William Henry Trescot, certainly ‘added a major new text to the canon of commemorative literature’, but reading between the lines allows some of the contradictions that lay behind monument construction to emerge.²⁵

The construction of this particular monument was the work of The South Carolina Monument Association, founded by some of the elite women of the state in 1869, and initially headed by one of the most notable female writers and thinkers of the South, Louisa McCord. Although Poole suggests that McCord ‘certainly would have seen the work of memorializing the dead’ as intrinsic to the preservation of ‘the conservative ethos of the South

23 Brown, *Public Art*, 38; the lines from Father Abram Ryan are from his poem ‘A Land Without Ruins’. On Ryan as ‘poet of the dead’, see Charles Reagan Wilson, *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause, 1865-1920* (Athens, GA. 1980) 59; see also Wilson, ‘The Religion of the Lost Cause’, *Journal of Southern History* 46 (May 1980) 220-38.

24 For the inscription, see Robert S. Seigler, *A Guide to Confederate Monuments in South Carolina* (Columbia 1997) 216-7.

25 Brown, *Public Art*, 40.

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against the tides of time', McCord could not maintain this stance for long; less than a year, in fact.²⁶ She soon found that she 'could not salvage any meaning out of the preservation of the memory of the Confederate dead', and resigned her presidency of the commission on the grounds that, as she put it, 'South Carolina is fast becoming to me, but as one great grave of the great past'.²⁷

When the monument was finally unveiled in 1879, the ceremony was all that might be expected on such an emotive occasion. The unveiling itself was effected by four young women attended by four veterans 'who had each lost an arm', evocative both of women's role in the memorialisation of the Confederacy and the physical costs of the war.²⁸ Yet whilst the visibly disabled veteran proved a valuable prop at such events, in actuality their post-war lives were frequently less glorious and far more challenging than their appearance on ceremonial occasions might suggest. Indeed, the former Confederate states struggled to support their wounded veterans, with considerable success given the circumstances, but they did so despite, and not because of the emergence of the 'Lost Cause' as a cultural, religious and, in many cases, directly political phenomenon. South Carolina as a state managed to find \$20,000 toward amputee support immediately following the war; The South Carolina Monument Association, however, managed to raise just over half that amount, some of it donated by the poorest counties in the state, toward the construction of a monument which had so much to say on the subject of the dead but, in the context of the post-war South, actually said a lot more about the cultural, political and racial ambitions of the living.²⁹



Confederate Monument, Columbia, South Carolina (Photo © S-M Grant)

26 Poole, *Never Surrender* 71.

27 Leigh Fought, *Southern Womanhood and Slavery: A Biography of Louisa S. McCord, 1810-1879* (Columbia and London 2003) 181.

28 *Charleston News and Courier* (14 May, 1879).

29 See Ansley Herring Wegner, *Phantom Pain: North Carolina's Artificial-Limbs Program for Confederate Veterans* (Raleigh, NC. 2004) 19-20; figures for South Carolina from *The South Carolina Monument Association, origin, history and work, with an account of the proceedings at the unveiling of the monument to the Confederate dead; and the oration of Gen. John S. Preston at Columbia, S.C., May 13, 1879* (South Carolina 1879).

Conclusion

Ritual responses to the dead of war do not require military defeat to render them necessary and meaningful to the survivors. Yet they represent only one aspect of the emotional, cultural, and political impact of conflict on a society. The former Confederate states differed in no substantial way from other post-war societies, or indeed from their former opponents in the North, when it came to commemoration of the Civil War dead. In the North, too, graves were decorated, monuments constructed, the cause of the nation invoked in print and on pediments, in memorial addresses and on marble, in literature, and art, and music, from pulpits, beside gravesides and at battlefield cemeteries. Civil War memory coalesced around the ceremonies that accompanied the unveiling of another monument, the dedication of a memorial chapel, the death of a veteran, or Memorial Day itself. It found a voice through veterans' organisations, the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) in the North, the United Confederate Veterans (UCV) in the South. Where the South did differ from the North was in the debate over the war's meaning resulting from the clash of memorialisation between the UCV, the LMAS, and later the UDC, and the former slaves. The latter's version of the war's purpose would forever contradict that of the white elites who directed Civil War memory and elevated defeat into the religion that became the 'Lost Cause'.

Ultimately, what the 'Lost Cause' offered the white South was confirmation of the antebellum tendency to position the South as different from the rest of the United States and to locate the essence of that difference within defeat itself. Leading historian of the South C. Vann Woodward proposed that the 'South had undergone an experience that it could share with no other part of America...the experience of military defeat, occupation, and reconstruction'. History, he concluded, had happened in the South.³⁰ Woodward's thesis was echoed by British military historian, John Keegan, who identified in the South 'the lingering aftermath of defeat' which, he argued, gave that part of America an affinity with Europe, a 'continent of defeated nations'. The South, for Keegan, was the exception in a nation for whom victory was the norm. The South's defeat in the Civil War conferred upon it an authenticity that the rest of America lacked. 'Pain

30 C. Vann Woodward, 'The Irony of Southern History', *The Journal of Southern History* 19 (February 1953) 3-19, there 5. Woodward's article was a meditation on Reinhold Niebuhr's study of American national character, *The Irony of American History* (New York 1952).

is a dimension of old civilizations,' Keegan asserted. 'The South has it. The rest of the United States does not.'³¹

Such views have not gone unchallenged; nor should they. Responding to Woodward's argument, historian Richard Shryock critiqued the implication 'that the death of thousands of fathers and sons in the North aroused no lasting feeling' of grief, that, indeed, when 'victory was followed by prosperity' as in the North, one might assume that 'there was hardly even a surviving awareness of national tragedy'.³² The 'Lost Cause' response to defeat, however, and both the general public's and the historical profession's response to the 'Lost Cause' has not only diminished the impact of the Civil War on the North, but also its impact on the white South. In some senses, the white South did manage to transform military defeat into a cultural victory. The defeat of the Confederacy has undoubtedly attracted greater public and academic interest than the victory of the Union, an interest measured not only in monuments but in movies, in academic theses and popular book sales, in Civil War Round Tables and re-enactment societies, and in the persistence of the Confederate flag controversy in some southern states to this day. The broader psychological and physical response to defeat has, however, been all but obliterated by too ready a willingness to accept the 'Lost Cause' as the last word on the Confederacy, and to view the monuments commemorating the Confederate dead as a form of *memento mori* for a nation that died, a nation 'where these memories grow', whereas individual memory was the one thing these monuments stifled. Defeat may, as Robert Penn Warren argued, have rendered the Confederacy immortal; but the essence of immortality is to exist outside of time, to be forever static, petrified, perhaps, in stone as the Confederacy was, and the South most emphatically was not.

31 John Keegan, *Warpaths: Travels of a Military Historian in North America* (London 1995) 42-43; On the South as different, see Susan-Mary Grant, *North Over South: Northern Nationalism and American Identity in the Antebellum Era* (Lawrence, KS. 2000); on its response to defeat, see Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Culture of Defeat: On National Trauma, Mourning, and Recovery* (London 2003) 47-53.

32 Richard H. Shryock, 'A Medical Perspective on the Civil War', *American Quarterly* 14 (1962) 161-173, there 172-3; see also Shryock, 'The Nationalistic Tradition of the Civil War: A Southern Analysis', *South Atlantic Quarterly* 32 (1933) 294-305.