



# Southern Rebel Women during the American Civil War (1861-1865)

Lise Servat

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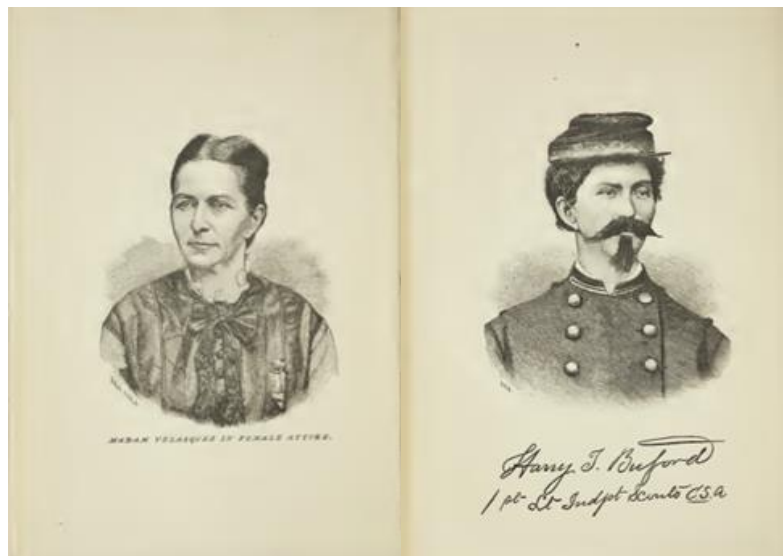
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Lise SERVAT

## **Southern Rebel Women during the American Civil War (1861-1865)**



*“Women are not just witnesses to history but actors and makers of it.”*

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## Introduction

When I was in the United States, I began to think of a subject I wanted to work on for the second year of my Master's degree. I am enthralled by the nineteenth century, and notably with women's place during the nineteenth century, but I had no idea about the precise topic. I started to go to the University of Iowa's women's archives and I found out that some women fought during the American Civil War. I was astonished because I had never heard of women soldiers during this war. It aroused my curiosity and I wanted to know more about these women, to understand why they chose to fight. So, I continued to do some research in the archives, where I found more documents about Union female soldiers than Confederate female soldiers. Although it was logical that I should find more documents in a Northern state about Northern women, I started to question the reasons for women to fight for the Confederacy, which enslaved African-Americans and which subordinated women. I learnt that most of the women who fought were illiterate – notably because of their social background – so I knew it would be difficult to find information about them, because what I am interested in is what they said about their commitment to the Cause, not what other people said about it. This difficulty turned out to be a sort of challenge, which motivated me even more to work on this subject. I do not want to be the devil's advocate but simply to try understand their choices and to give them a chance to share their voices.

Before starting to study some authentic texts, I needed to know more about the Civil War and about what has already been written about it. I read historical texts, articles, in which the authors related women's actions and places within society. I was also advised to read Faulkner's *The Unvanquished*, which illustrates women's deeds during the war and notably the fact that there were two general types of women. The first one is the women who stayed on the home front and who still experienced the war in harsh ways. This type of women includes the big majority of Southern women: from the poorest to the wealthiest. As their men were gone to the war, these women were left alone and had to fend for themselves, notably by taking men's places. Taking men's places were unusual and sometimes difficult for women, who – in the antebellum period – were venerated by their position in society. The second type of women is those who decided to do more than what was expected from them. This includes female soldiers and female spies. It was obviously forbidden for them to enlist in the army, but these women found stratagems not to be found out as women. They



risked a lot by enlisting: the most serious crime was to break with gender conventions and to tarnish their reputation as ladies, but we will see this in more details later. The soldier/spy type of women was generally influenced by the deeds of ancient female soldiers, the most famous being Joan of Arc. Women soldiers had always existed and it proves that women have always been concerned with the fate of their nation. However, one wonders why Southern women defended a society to which they were subordinated. This question applies to women who stayed on the home front too, because the fact that they did not fight on the battlefield did not mean they were less patriotic. As I did not find enough female soldiers whose history could be studied in this dissertation, I decided to include some women who wrote about the war, during the war, through diaries. Indeed, the simple fact of writing about it represented another form of battle.

We will mostly focus on the Civil War period, from 1861 to 1865. I will not deal with the Reconstruction period because most of women's writings stopped after the war. They had a real need to express themselves during the war and when the Union won the war, they did not see the point of going on writing anymore. Although it could be interesting to discuss this notion, I will end the analysis when the diaries and accounts end. Therefore, the question is as follows: why did they choose to write about their experience of the war and their transgressions from the Confederate system? Why did they choose to fight for a lost Cause? What was the purpose of their actions? What were the differences and similarities of the two groups of women?

To introduce Southern rebel women, I have chosen to focus on the Confederate ideological background and on some factual information about rebel women. We will try to understand the reasons which led to the start of the Civil War and we will see that women were more concerned than one may think. Indeed, the Civil War can be interpreted as a gender issue. To comprehend it, we will need to observe the Southern system in the antebellum period in order to understand the strong refusal of the Confederate States to stay in the Union. When one thinks of the Civil War and more particularly of the Confederate states, one thinks of slavery and of the fact that the Confederacy seceded to protect their evil institution of slavery. However, it is more complex than the simple preservation of slavery. Women and slaves were more connected than what is believed and the protection of slavery also meant the protection of Southern women. Southern women, though subordinated – were placed on a pedestal and to abolish slavery meant to remove women from their pedestal. In

the first part, we will also have an overview about women's actions during the war, including the two groups of women. We will discuss women's roles on the home front, on the battlefield, all the hardships they had to go through and how they overcame them. We will also see that Southern women faced a dilemma, they really wanted to work for the Confederacy and make a difference in the outcome of the war, however, they were often blocked by gender conventions.

In the second part, entitled "Fighting the War", we will pay attention to the writings of three women: Loreta Janeta Velazquez, who fought and spied for the Confederacy, Rose O'Neal Greenhow and Belle Boyd, who were both famous Confederate female spies. All three wrote their own accounts in which they relate their experiences on the battlefield and operations against Union authorities. I will try to demonstrate, through the voice of Loreta Janeta Velazquez, that female soldiers were not simply Tomboys and that the personal journey of a female soldier was complex. We will also discuss the notion of transvestism, which was unavoidable for a woman to be able to fight. Male attire can represent a necessary tool to go to the battlefield, but Velazquez's relation to male attire gives rise to the notion of identity. When she stopped her soldiering activity and started that of spying, she keeps male attire on several occasions, though a woman aroused fewer suspicions than a man. Rose O'Neal Greenhow and Belle Boyd were famous spies and to perform their duties, never dressed as men. On top of their spying activities, their accounts are also interesting because they show what lied behind the Confederacy. They do not always praise the Confederacy and show that the Confederacy sometimes lacked unity. In this part, we will also focus our attention on several newspaper articles that dealt with female soldiers and spies. In the articles I selected the three women are mentioned: Velazquez, Greenhow and Boyd. Thanks to these articles, I aim to demonstrate that everybody knew there were female soldiers, and that a lot of people turned a blind eye to this, because women soldiers were good soldiers and proved very useful. The three spies worked for the Confederacy at some point of their career even if it was considered as an unladylike activity. These articles help us understand what was the real problem with these women who broke with gender conventions. The problem was not necessarily women fighting or spying but it had deeper roots.

Eventually, in the third part, we will focus on highbrow women: women who stayed on the home front but who, in their own way, were as dangerous as the female soldiers and spies. These women wrote diaries during the war and expressed their feelings and opinions

about the war and about their experiences of the home front. I chose to separate the writings of the women of the second part from those of the third part according to their contributions. The women of the second part physically participated in the war and on the battlefield whereas the women of the second part stayed on the home front. This last part is divided between the women who wrote diaries and women who wrote fiction. The diarists we will observe are Mary Boykin Chesnut, the most famous Civil War diarist we know today, Clara Solomon, who had a special relationship with her diary and Ellen Renshaw House, the typical Southern rebel. The three of them belonged to the Southern elite and could not allow themselves to break with gender conventions. They succeeded in being rebels, being daring patriots in a ladylike manner. Finally, we will observe two novels: Augusta Jane Evans's *Macaria; or, Altars of Sacrifice* and Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind*. The first one was published during the war and it is very interesting to see what a woman – who was experiencing the war while writing – said about women in the war. The second novel was published years later but is a classic of the Civil War novels and gives a true image of the evolution and struggle of women during the war and the hard transition between the Old South and the New South. In this last part, I try to prove that writing was as powerful as fighting and spying.

I hope this survey will enable the reader to both have an overall and a detailed vision of the complexity, the paradoxes of the war as well as the place of Southern women within the conflict in the United States.

## I – The Civil War as a Gender Issue

### A- The Confederacy Fought for Women

#### 1- The Southern system

Southern culture was unique and differentiated itself from that of the North: Southerners considered themselves a different people within the United States and this is also the reason why eleven states decided to secede in 1861. What is called today the Old South had several particularities that defined it. Indeed, the Southern culture of the antebellum era was characterized by cotton plantations, slavery, aristocracy and agriculture. When the Southern States declared war against the Union, its purpose was mostly to maintain the status quo: “they feared fundamental change in their way of life” (Wilson & Ferris, 1989: 608). Southerners thought they would win the war and that their unity as a Southern people would be enough to defeat the Union.

The Old South had a well-defined vision of women and gender. Sex roles were assigned and more particularly those of women. Women were subordinate to men, a situation which granted them protection and a position in society. Women, notably upper-class women, were both submitted and venerated. Maintaining the status quo also meant maintaining the position of women in society.

The most “peculiar institution” of the Old South was slavery, which was considered by White men as a paternalistic institution. Indeed, the White man defined this institution as a form of mutual support in which – by working for the White man – the Black man received protection from his master (Gilpin, 1992: 197). Masters were also helping slaves by offering them a civilized state they could never have without their masters. The fact that slaveholders believed they were helping Black people in protecting them was one of the justifications for slavery. The slaveholding system was the foundation of the Southern economic system. White Southerners relied on free labor and, after the war, the abolition of slavery had a tremendous impact on their economy. Before the war, Southerners argued that the abolition of slavery would create unemployment and hence would not assuage African-American’s plight. Defenders of slavery pleaded that slavery had always existed, had always been part of mankind and that even in the Bible there are references to masters and slaves. Being

deeply religious people, they relied on the Bible to justify the slave system and the subordination of Black people. Moreover, at the time, Black people had no legal status in the country. They were considered as property, and since the Constitution protected man's properties, it protected slavery.

Not only did men deal with slavery, but also women. Indeed, slaveholders' wives were in charge of the households and had duties toward their slaves. However, Southern White planters' wives and slaves are often compared in terms of submission. As a matter of fact, marriage and slavery were extremely linked: "marriage and slavery were inseparable in the legal, religious, and political ideology of the South" (Edwards, 2000: 15). Challenging a husband came down to challenging a master, and often the husband and the master were the same man. Women could not choose to own slaves. Just like for slaves, wives were property and had to cope with what their husbands imposed upon them. Being in charge of the household and having duties toward slaves meant being a mistress and "many hated slavery, if not for its immorality and injustice, then for the burden it placed upon them as plantation mistresses. They were exhausted by their duties as arbiters of so many complex and tension-filled interracial and intraracial relationships" (Edwards, 2000: 15). However, as I mentioned before, Southern White women were venerated in the South and knew that slavery was the institution that helped them get their positions in society. Even if they were subordinate, wives were given a major importance notably thanks to the slave labor system.

Southern womanhood was one of the identities and ideologies of the Old South, if not the most precious one. The myth of the Southern Belle appeared in the antebellum period; however, this was challenged by the war. Women had to cope with the ruling of plantations, to take care of the wounded soldiers and had to supply men who were at war: the Southern Belle<sup>1</sup> was given a new role (Wilson & Ferris, 1989: 609). Once married she became a lady and a lady's role was to content her husband, raise his children and bolster the ideals of the South. (Wilson & Ferris, 1989: 609). The Southern woman had to embody several qualities

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<sup>1</sup> The Southern Belle "is the fragile, dewy, just-opened bloom of the southern female: flirtations but sexually innocent, bright but not deep, beautiful as a statue or painting or porcelain but, like each, risky to touch. A form of popular art, she entertains but does not challenge her audience. Instead, she attracts them – the more gentlemen callers the better – and finally allows herself to be chosen by one." (Wilson & Ferris, 1989: 1527).

and virtues like female benevolence, loyalty, piety and stoicism (Rable, 1989: 48). She was also a slave mistress: “a premier manager yet also a slave to the patriarch” (Wilson & Ferris, 1989: 1528). Both, Belles and ladies, represented the traditional South. To this extent, men’s relationships with Belles and ladies were a reflection of a relationship with the South. It explains why Southern White women were so important in society and why the Confederacy declared war to maintain the status quo. On the other hand, man “may be idolatrous worshipper, lord and master, dashed and demoralized failure; in any case, he acts as subject to her object as knower to her known. The gender roles thus work together to prevent change and to obscure reality both between human beings and with the South’s conception of itself” (Wilson & Ferris, 1989: 1528). Most upper-class women were satisfied with their lot since it gave them recognition. For instance, Louisa McCord, who was a plantation owner and, owned her own property, who was educated, who was a writer, was against women’s emancipation because it would make women vulnerable to male physical superiority. She thought women needed men’s protection and even if she was not the traditional lady, she recognized men’s superiority.

## 2- Social order

Southern culture included social order and the latter was synonymous with racial order. The white race was believed to be superior to the black race and both considered their respective women to be inferior. Even within women’s population, women were ranked and White upper-class women were more powerful and more important than working-class women. One did not have the same life or chances according to his or her social rank. The power of birth was indeed very significant in the South. Women had no real identity in the Southern States, they had no real status except within marriage, which represented a form of governance. After her father, a woman’s husband was her legal representative and had all rights over her (McCurry, 2019: 21). This looks like a master-like relationship, in which women were enslaved by their husbands. By getting married, White women, unlike slaves, accepted and recognized this form of governance.

Even if White upper-class women were subjected to patriarchal society, they were also part of the labor system which subordinated enslaved people. Upper-class women

participated in the slave system and even benefited from it. This labor system was what granted them their position in society. Indeed, women had to take care of their husbands and children to be protected and venerated in exchange. Taking care of their husbands, and to a larger extent of their households meant approving and participating in the slave system. They became trapped and involved in this system of paternalism and horrors, and one can even say that they were torn by a system which venerated them but also submitted them. Women not only benefited from slavery but also defended it. There were obviously some White upper-class women who condemned slavery. However, they were few and they did not condemn it on account of the slaves' plight but because of the harm it could do to the white race. They also condemn it because of the burden slavery put on mistresses. Moreover, women and slaves were more connected and linked than one could think, which resulted in a complex relationship between slaves and mistresses: a "complex and tragic paternalism in which racial pride partly compensated for sexual subordination" (Rable, 1989: 33). Mistresses were supposed to be more humane toward slaves than their male counterparts. However, mistresses treated their slaves like pets, they underestimated their ability to think by themselves or to make their own decisions – marriage for instance. What could have been associated with humane affection was in fact the kind of affection one would show for a pet: there were instances in which mistresses treated their slaves like their "favorite dog" (Rable, 1989: 34). Slaveholders worked on the basis that Black people could not live without them, that slaves could not fend for themselves without the help of their masters and mistresses. Paternalism was the key word of the racial and gender order. Men protected women, who protected and took care of slaves. Paternalism could have been a relief to slaves, for it lessened the physical treatment they could receive. Nevertheless, paternalism also accentuated the degree of dependence between the two races and revealed the psychological harshness of subordination, for both slaves and women (Rable, 1989: 34). The two races lived together but not on the same level and were dependent on each other. Masters and mistresses needed their slaves for the plantations and the slaves needed their masters and mistresses as well, in order to live in a slaveholding society. However, one can assert that this co-dependent relationship was absolutely not treated equally since it was only for the masters and mistresses' sake. White women were men's accomplices to the harshness of slavery and were staunch supporters of this labor system.

White upper-class women were loyal to this system because they were the ones who benefited most from it. Some of them were educated and paradoxically were those who most supported slavery: like Thomas Jefferson, they thought that free African-Americans and White people could not live together. This was a shared belief amongst men's slaveholders. Women were brainwashed by White men into thinking that Black men were dangerous and as a consequence, women feared rapes and murders. The case of Louisa S. McCord, the prominent women slaveholder, shows how mistresses could support a system that oppressed both them and the slaves and how they benefited from it. We saw that she was a writer and she notably wrote about slavery and defended the institution. She was born in the South but was educated in the North. However, she remained a major opponent to the release of Black people as well as an unflinching defender of the gender system. When she returned to the South, although she was not married, her father gave her her plantation and some slaves. According to her, Black people and women had to be submitted to White men in order to benefit from their protection. She believed in racial and sexual inequalities. She wanted to remain single but got married – however, late – because of her acceptance of the social order: marriage was a woman's duty (Fought, 2018: 43). Regarding slavery, she considered it a “relationship of class”, “a relationship of race” and finally as a “relationship of property” (Fought, 2018:43). According to her, we can clearly see that even if they were not seen as equals, slaves and women were extremely linked, notably regarding submissiveness and the need for protection. McCord considered that African-Americans' freedom would lower the white race to the level of the black race. However, like her counterparts, she felt affection for her slaves and thought she had a duty to love and raise them (Rable, 1989: 38).

Before the war, the sentiment of antislavery rose in the North, notably due to a new understanding of domestic rights and particularly due to the shift of mothers' place in society and women's work. The private and public spheres for women began to be blurred and mothers were publicly recognized as “bearer and rearer of life”, which was not the case in the South (Whites, 2005: 12). For Southern White women, the true woman was to be a Belle and then a lady; they only existed in the system that subordinated them and in the system that enslaved Black people. They were mothers to their children but also the “mothers” to their slaves (Whites, 2005: 12-13). This is what made them powerful in a way, and this is the reason why they defended slavery. Just before the beginning of the war, Northern women entered the public sphere more and more, contrary to Southern women. In 1860, 270,000



Northern women started to work in the textile, shoe, clothing, printing and publishing industries and 135,000 worked in the New England factories which represented 65% of the region's industrial labor. However, Southern women had fewer opportunities to work because of the Southern system; only 12,000 Southern women worked in factories – agriculture had still the upper hand over industry (Massey, 1994: 5). Not only did upper-class women remain loyal to the Southern social order, but so did lower-class women – whether they were aware of it or not.

When the war broke out, gender was one of the most important matters of the Civil War. The main reason to wage war was to maintain the status quo, to preserve the relation between classes, between races and between men and women. However, the war turned the Southern social order upside down. When Southern men went to war, women and slaves were left to fend for themselves and to take men's place. Slaves were supposed to defend their masters' properties and wives had to take care of what their husbands took care of in the antebellum period. As Whites asserts, "the Civil War opened the door to the visibility of gender as a socially constructed and socially constructing part of the social order. Indeed, if gender mattered in the Civil War, it became critical in the Civil War that emerged as a result" (Whites, 2005: 5-6).

The Confederacy decided to leave the Union in order to maintain the status quo of the Southern system: in other words, it meant maintaining the position of what was the most representative of the South: women. Indeed, we can assert that the Confederacy fought the Union in the name of women because they wanted to protect them for many reasons. The first and the most obvious one, was the belief that Black and White people could not live peacefully together. As a matter of fact, White people thought they could not trust Black people and they feared that once released, they would attack White women, rape them and murder them. Therefore, African-Americans could not be emancipated.

Moreover, freeing slaves would have lowered the white race. Indeed, Black and White people being at the same level – free people – would have lessened the importance of the white race and White people thought they could not mingle with free Black people on equal terms since they could never be equals. Religion also played a great part in this belief. Regarding the position of female slaveholders, men had the duty to protect and defend women's position. Indeed, this social hierarchy gave women a form of identity because it

offered them veneration and protection. Freeing slaves would have lowered women's position in society, which was unthinkable. Women benefited from the institution of slavery, therefore men had to defend it. Finally, women were governed and even owned by their husbands – the same way men owned slaves – and it was also their duty to protect and defend their properties. Maintaining the status quo is what one must remember for the outbreak of the Civil War and all the reasons to maintain the status quo turned around women. Protecting and defending women were the most important elements in maintaining the status quo.

The Confederacy fought for women but women were as eager to defend this status quo as men. The Confederacy fought for women but women were then left alone in the South and had to take care of what was attributed to their men before the war. The Confederacy fought for women but it does not mean women were passive. The simple fact that women were left alone when men went to war means that they were automatically involved in the war. Women had to help defend the South, and it means they had to do what men did in the antebellum period. We will see that women were as patriotic as their male counterparts – if not more. Even though the Confederacy decided to wage this war for their women, women did not wait for victory but did what they could at their level to help the Cause.

## B- Women Fought for the Confederacy

### 1- Women's position toward the war

Due to the social order of Southern culture, it was difficult for women to physically take part in the war, either on the political level or on the battlefield. What was expected of them was self-sacrifice. In other words, women had to sacrifice their sons, brothers, fathers, husbands and themselves for the Cause. As mothers, women had to accept and encourage their sons to go to war. Otherwise, their sons would suffer humiliation and would not be worthy of Southern freedom and liberation (Whites, 2005: 20). This was their roles and it was meant to reinforce their subordinate status in society; women agreed with it – at first. Their role was spiritual, they were believed to help the defense of the order and to protect the family through self-sacrifice. Even if they agreed with it, they were often unwilling to embody these new roles because it challenged the social order of the South.

The Confederate States believed that sacrifice was the key to men's victory and to the triumph of their country. In that context, women had to stand together since sacrifice was expected from every woman. Class division was thus less present because it threatened the survival of the nation. A new "class" had been created through sacrifice and those women who were left alone at home bonded over the need to protect and insure the survival of the Confederacy. The notion of the "Confederate woman" was promoted to blur their social and economic differences in order to unite the country, or what was left of it: female citizenship (Faust, 1990: 1201). It was believed that women would help play a big part in the victory or in the defeat of the Confederacy.

Regarding male roles, going to war meant to honor his family as well as a Christian duty. According to this, women had no choice but to submit to self-sacrifice which was at the time, considered as "the basis of Confederate womanhood" (Ott, 2008: 46). Some refused to attend social events in commitment to the Cause. This is the case of Virginia Hankins who refused to go to a party because her brother served in a Virginia regiment; she opted to stay at home to pray. She wrote her brother that she "could not mingle in such scenes at such times" (Ott, 2008: 46). Self-sacrifice represented their patriotic duty and they were encouraged to do so by the men in their families. Self-sacrifice represented a political duty and included material sacrifices too. Indeed, women's way of life changed radically – mostly for upper-class

women. They had to get rid of their wealth – clothes, jewels, etc. – and even feeding became difficult. In 1864, a lot of women died from starvation. Upper-class women lost nearly everything they had during the antebellum era: they gave up their men as well as what made them so special (Faust, 1990: 1201).

During the war, women also had the duty to mourn the men who died as martyrs. Women's grief and mourning were believed to give more importance and value to the deaths of their men and to make them live forever in the Southern memory. Death was the last commitment men could offer God; they saw it as a Christian sacrifice, religion being as important as slavery for Southerners<sup>2</sup> (Faust, 1990: 1214). However, by honoring "men's supreme offering", women were reminded that their own sacrifices were meaningless and insignificant in comparison to those of their men (Faust, 1990: 1214). Although women were losing everything, they might have had the feeling of sacrificing themselves in vain or at least the feeling that it was not enough. And, as the war advanced, women began to lose faith in the notion of self-sacrifice. They were not rewarded for their efforts. The rising number of deaths also contributed to the dismantling of the notion of self-sacrifice. By the last months of the war, more and more men died and it was no longer bearable for women. In 1863, "bread riots" occurred in Savannah, Georgia; Mobile, Alabama; High Point, North Carolina; Petersburg, Virginia; Milledgeville, Georgia; Columbus and in Richmond (Faust, 1990: 1225). Crowds of women tried to take bread and other provisions that they thought belonged to them. What was expected from the Confederate woman was no longer feasible. Women had reached a point of no return and needed to take back what had been taken from them during the war. By the end of it, women no longer accepted to sacrifice themselves and deserted the ranks. When he surrendered, Commander Robert E. Lee stated that the Confederate effort had become a "useless sacrifice" (Faust, 1990: 1228). As a matter of fact, the Confederate effort had been a failure, and Faust asserts that the issue of gender had been a contributing factor in the defeat of the Confederacy, notably because women failed to unite the country. Indeed, they did not endure long to support the efforts on the home front because their interests were denied, which gave them few reasons to support the efforts any longer.

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<sup>2</sup> Slavery had a religious origin for Southerners. They justified slavery with the Bible and notably with the Curse of Ham. This biblical episode was a means to prove and explain the treatment of the black race.

As Clinton explains in *Stepdaughters of History*, the war turned out to be “a trial by fire” for upper-class women who were taught from their childhood to be submissive and who were treated as inferior. With the war, they were left alone on the home front with the burdens that accompanied it and had to be loyal to this country without really knowing what it would cost. Their patriotic duty was to pay total service to a new country without questioning their roles (Clinton, 2016: 1). In hindsight, the word “sacrifice” takes on its full meaning.

As seen before, men and women thought that their efforts for the Confederacy would help win the war and keep intact the traditional family status. Mothers often separated themselves from their children and told them that in order to endure the separation, they too had to sacrifice themselves for the Cause. As a matter of fact, the war turned the social order upside down and men’s roles were reshaped. As women had to take men’s place, their daughters also had to assume new roles. The purpose of taking men’s place was to maintain the Southern economy as it used to be before the war in order to preserve it after the victory of the South.

Women of the slaveholding class had to supervise their husbands’ plantations and slaves. The destiny of the Old South and of the social order relied on these women and more particularly on their management of slaves and plantations (Faust, 1992: 198). They did not have a choice; if they could have acted on their free will, they probably would have refused it, for they knew the burden it would put on their shoulders. Moreover, it was nearly impossible for slave-owning women to succeed in the management of the plantations for two reasons. The first reason is a practical one: women scarcely knew a thing about agriculture. They were reluctant to take part in farming activities. It happened that they would ask their neighbors for help or that their husbands would send them letters with farming advice. However, on the whole, they were left on their own (Edwards, 2000: 77). The second reason is that they lived in a paternalistic society in which White men had all power. Slaves feared their masters, when the latter left, slaves became a real threat in women’s eyes. White men had power over slaves but also over women. Even if according to the Southern social order, White women were superior to Black people, they both faced the domination of the White man. It then became easier for slaves to escape the plantations and very difficult for women to rule over the plantations. Moreover, in the antebellum period,

women were protected by their men thanks to the slaveholding system; however, during the war men were absent and could not protect them anymore. Women were left alone, unprotected, and had to defend a system which they benefited from, like men. They were torn between the feeling of sacrifice they owed to their men and the fear of the slaves and their possible – if not inevitable – escape from the plantation. On top of that, nothing was made by the Confederate government to help these women. Indeed, the government did not provide means to control plantation slaves, which made a lot of Confederate mistresses feel terrified, abandoned and betrayed (Faust, 1990: 1213). Women did not succeed in managing the slaves because they thought they could not “do a man’s business.” This was not a suitable role for a woman and they did not want to be so either (Faust, 1992: 210). Under such circumstances, Southern mistresses wished to escape their burdens – either by dying or by giving up the slaves. The other and major reason why it could not have worked is violence. Violence was what made a master powerful – because he was feared and so looked down upon – and due to the gender roles, women could not be so powerful as their husbands, even in their absence. Violence was a man’s matter and without men, the slaveholding system could not stand, even with all the efforts women could have made (Faust, 1992: 210).

Not all the slaves left their masters’ houses. Some of them stayed with their mistresses but not really out of loyalty, contrary to what slaveholders believed or wanted to believe. Slaves often decided to stay because it was quite reassuring: they had a place where to live. If they left, they did not know what to expect from their lives. Some stayed because they were too old to escape and the Union often ill-treated former slaves who escaped. It even happened that Union soldiers ordered slaves to stay with their slaveholders.

As underlined before, during the war, food became scarce and sometimes, some slaves fetched food for their mistresses (Ott, 2008: 86). These acts of kindness reinforced the feeling of slaves’ loyalty. The Southern system was turned upside down: on the one hand, some of the slaves started to take care of their slaveholders when it was supposed to be the opposite. Slaves could be perceived as children who would take care of their aging parents. On the other hand, there were mistresses who saw slavery as the very cause of their plight and burden.

Women who did not own slaves had to take men’s places too. The shift between the antebellum period and the wartime period also applied to the younger generation of

Confederate women: Confederate daughters. Like their mothers, they accepted their new roles as a duty, through sheer patriotism, at home and outside. The purpose was still to maintain the status quo, that is to say the well-being and survival of the family, the preservation of the household economy and the roles and values of the South (Ott, 2008: 74). Before the war, daughters did not have to deal with the chores of the house but rather enjoyed music, needlework and art. Their mothers took care of the domestic work, helped by servants. During the war, daughters had to do this domestic work to help their mothers, who often left home to work or to go and visit relatives. Indeed, mothers had to replace their husbands as protectors and guardians of the family and the household. They had to protect their homes and their children from the Union occupation but also to provide for the family's needs, which sometimes meant finding a job. By the end of the war, the younger generation of Confederate women was more detached from the patriarchal dependency thanks to their efforts to maintain the domestic economy (Ott, 2008: 75).

Because of all these new roles assigned, women were often compelled to seek jobs outside of home. During the first year of the war, upper and middle-class women did everything they could to avoid working outside of home. As a matter of fact, this did not correspond to the ideals of Southern womanhood. However, as the war went on, they had little choice but to adopt new roles outside the house. They needed money and there was a big demand for female employees. Upper and middle-class women worked in the teaching, nursing or clerking fields, for it was not too much of a challenge to the traditional role of a lady. Daughters followed their mothers' example but it was much easier for them: contrary to their mothers, they were not married and thus had fewer constraints upon them. The government also offered paid work for young women in lower position jobs such as in the Post Office, the Quartermaster Department or the office of the Commissary General. Offering them these positions did not challenge the traditional roles for women because they had low positions supervised by men and because it was meant to be temporary (Ott, 2008: 95-96). Taking men's place was another form of sacrifice – a lot more for mothers than for daughters – and women thought it would not last long and once the war over, they could get back to the traditional roles of Southern Belles or ladies.

All of the above are the roles that were accepted for women during the war. However, there were also women who wished to do more than what was expected from them or who wished to do differently. Some women were real patriots, maybe more than some men. Some

women thought it was their war as much as it was men's and some women were willing to do more.

## 2- The will to do more

Some Confederate women wished to have been born men in order to fight alongside their fellow countrymen. Unfortunately, the weight of gender conventions was too heavy to challenge the norms. However, Confederate women did not only sacrifice themselves but found other ways to show their patriotism and to resist Union invasion on the home front. Confederate women who stayed at home turned out to be dangerous rivals to Union soldiers. Indeed, this was not only a men's war but also a women's war and they made the Union know it. As Edwards explains, "the war was fought on two fronts: at home and in the battlefield. Often it was impossible to distinguish the two" (Edwards, 2000: 70).

First, we have to distinguish young women from older women, for youth enabled daughters to express their political voices more easily. While their mothers were involved to needlework, clothing, social activities, relationships with relatives and protection of the family, young women participated in public events and expressed their support to the Confederacy. Daughters still aimed to maintain the conventions of the antebellum period but with much more freedom than their mothers (Ott, 2008: 36). For these Confederate daughters, the line between public and private life was blurred. Their participation in the home front was the most daring way to show their patriotism by complying with gender conventions. Indeed, they wanted to serve their country as much as men did but they realized how their gender limited their actions. These activities on the home front were a substitute for men waging war on the battlefield. This did not prevent women from wishing to do more. Elizabeth Collier of Goldsboro (North Carolina) asserted: "I am but a feeble woman, would God I were a man" (Ott, 2008: 47). Some did enlist in the war but the vast majority of upper-class women did not dare to step out of "the confines of their sex", for it would possibly prevent them from getting married and becoming mothers. Under such circumstances, the majority of elite women chose to enter female associations or activities that were considered ladylike. Fashion and dress also became a form of political expression. Before the war, dressing had only an aesthetic purpose whereas during the war, dressing had a patriotic



purpose. However, they could not transform radically and had to remain close to the Southern expectations of respectability. For instance, they did not dare wear “pantaloon” like their Northern counterparts. Nevertheless, they found other ways to show their loyalty to the Confederacy, such as sewing little Confederate flags to their dresses for example. Southern women could not step out of the dictates of respectability and as long as they respected this, they could use dresses as a form of political expression, the purpose being to attract the attention of Union soldiers. Youth permitted these women – unlike their mothers – to be more rebellious.

The Civil War triggered off a plethora of writings and notably through diaries. Women wrote for several reasons. One of them was to express their political ideas. Writing is probably the most significant form of political expression because it remains forever. Before the war, keeping a diary for White Southern women was common practice but when the war broke out, it became a necessity. During the war, women focused on battles and political events. They wanted to be as accurate as possible in reporting the events, even if most of the diaries were not meant for publication. The other reasons for writing were to tell the Southern story of the war, to support the soldiers, to free themselves from the tensions of the war – a kind of psychological outlet – and for political reasons. Gardner defines these women as “pen and ink warriors” (Gardner, 2003: 16). Some women wanted their diaries to be published and managed to do so. However, they could not publish them under their real names out of fear of public rejection. Indeed, it was not considered conventional for women to write about the war and even less to publish these diaries. By publishing, women were stepping out of their spheres. Therefore, they used pseudonyms or simply published them anonymously. Thanks to these diaries, we know the impact of the war on civilians, the invasion of the enemy, how it was experienced, the ordeals of life during the war, their feelings and ideas. The diaries that remain today are those from upper-class educated women who could not express their views publicly but who still wanted to express them. The gender conventions were too strong for elite women to overthrow them (Massey, 1994: 190).

Some women wrote accounts of their wartime activities as spies or soldiers and published them during or after the war. Let’s take the example of Rose O’Neal Greenhow, a Confederate spy, who published the account: *My Imprisonment and the First Year of Abolition Rule at Washington* in 1863. This account is very political since she gives her opinion about Union soldiers and abolitionists. Moreover, Greenhow is very daring in her

writing. She describes the Union as people “who insist on compelling us [the Confederacy] by force to live with them in bonds of fellowship and union” and she claims that she “ha[s] a right to [her] own political opinions” (Greenhow, 1863: 2 & 59). She chose to express them through an account. I will deal with some accounts of war in details in the second part.

Other women wrote novels and out of 512 war novels written by 371 authors, 107 were women. Writing novels was a way for women to break with traditional domestic writing. For instance, Augusta Jane Evans with *Macaria; or Altars of Sacrifice* (1863), spreads propaganda about the Confederacy and denounces the Union. During the war, her book was even banned in Federal camps. This shows that with a supposedly harmless weapon – a pen – women were considered powerful and dangerous. In her novel, Evans broke with the conventions of the antebellum era since she describes battles which were then reserved for male writers. However, there are still common points with the conventions of feminine writing of the antebellum period: support of the war heroes and celebration of women’s contribution to the war efforts. This last point might also have been a reason why it attracted female readers (Gardner, 2003: 30). Through the medium of a book, Evans shared her position toward the war.

We have to understand that, in the context of the war, it was important and nearly essential for Southern White women to share their voices. Some thought it could contribute to the war efforts. These rhetorical works represented a form of self-protection as well as a weapon against the Union. Indeed, Mary Eliza Powell Dulany writes in her diary: “my tongue being my only weapon” (Harrison, 2013: 27). By writing, Southern White women left the proofs that during the war they were both victims and protectors. Writing represented a form of resistance and women sometimes had audiences. This was deemed dangerous by the Union because their writings had indeed an impact. Some women were imprisoned or banished from Union territories because of the resistance they displayed in their writing (Harrison, 2013: 56). However, some elite women found themselves in a dilemma: they wanted to share their voices but still wanted to behave as ladies. The social order was kind of oppressive and constrained women. They could pay a heavy price and lose their reputation as ladies. This is the reason why their diaries were most of the time not meant for publication. Nevertheless, those who openly displayed “rhetorical resistance” were dangerous enough to risk being imprisoned or exiled.

To understand it better, we have to take an interest in a new law of war that was authored by the Lincoln administration in April 1863. At the beginning of the war and in the general American vision (the Confederacy and the Union), women were part of, and associated with the realm of family and peace, not with the state and the war. Confederate women had to be protected from the war even if they were the wives or daughters of rebels, because of the notion of women's innocence. At first, the Union tried to convince civilians to rally to the cause and tried to protect women. However, they faced rebel women who actively participated in the war through writing, smuggling or, spying for example. Under such circumstances, they began to recognize Confederate women as enemies and real threats. The law that was authored in 1863 is called the Lieber's Code. It comes from Francis Lieber, who was a German-born American political philosopher and jurist. He named and authored this treaty for the Union. The treaty was written to govern the conduct of the U.S armies. It represented a break with the Enlightenment tradition and reflected a new way of waging war (McCurry, 2019: 15). What raises our interest in the code is the distinction between soldiers and civilians, the civilians being the noncombatants or in other words, those who did not bear arms. The Lieber's Code stated what an army could do to civilians during a war. The Civil War broke with the traditional women's behaviors during a war: Union soldiers found unexpected women's behaviors which subverted the assumptions of women's innocence, political status and identity. Therefore, the protection of noncombatants had to be reviewed. This is why the Lieber's Code was formulated, for it enabled to deal with the problems posed by Confederate women even if, at first, how to deal with rebel women was not mentioned in the code. According to Helen M. Kinsella – a political theorist – it is impossible to deal with noncombatants and combatants without dealing with women and gender (McCurry, 2019: 18).

Women were thought to be innocent because they were "outside the war". This distinction was based on the gender order in which women were entitled protection by their husbands. They had neither real identity, nor real status and were governed through marriage since a woman's husband was her legal representative. At the beginning of the war, Union soldiers relied on the assumption that women were outside of the war and that one does not make war on women and children. An Illinois soldier made the following statement: "it is the men with arms in their hands upon whom we make war. The women are entitled to protection even if they are the wives and daughters of rebels" (McCurry, 2019: 24). But the

thought of women being outside of the war was obviously challenged and this is the reason why new laws of war were written.

Women turned out to be enemies to the Union. They challenged the gender order, which made difficult the way the Union had to deal with them. Even if some prominent spies were arrested and imprisoned, White women were still entitled to protection, and only White women were. Cheyenne and Arapaho women were slaughtered by the Union in 1864; African-American women and children faced a total disinterest from the Union although Northerners were supposed to be allies. Southern White women, contrary to their other female counterparts, “were given the benefit of the doubt, their innocence and status as civilians assumed even as evidence to the contrary mounted” (McCurry, 2019: 26). Southern daughters of prominent families were often raised in the detestation of the “Yankees”, they were therefore raised in a sense of patriotism to the South. This was the case of Ellen Renshaw House, a real patriot to the Confederacy who displayed rhetorical resistance. She was born in Georgia in 1843. Her father was a planter and had slaves. In 1860, the family moved to Knoxville, Tennessee, and when the war came out, they supported the Confederacy (Renshaw House, 2008). Ellen Renshaw House was a Confederate rebel. When the Union occupied Knoxville in 1863, she was an adult but still a daughter. Indeed, she was not married and she was thus under the protection of her parents, which made it possible for women to display rebellious behaviors and escape punishment. Ellen had “temper” and ended up being ordered to leave Knoxville because she would have had insulted the wife of a Union officer. She had already been required to watch her temper in order not to be forced to leave. Before her exile she claimed: “I certainly shall not let them think I am a Lincolnite, but will behave as a lady” (Harrison, 2013: 79). This shows how reputation was important and despite her rebellious attitude, she still considered herself “as” a lady. The choice of the preposition proves that she acknowledged she was a lady, but that she did not feel compelled to behave as one, since she considered it was her identity and she wanted to keep her reputation. Being exiled, House was recognized as a possible threat, so was her political power. She, too, understood the political power of her support to the Confederacy and considered her exile as a “badge of honor” (Ott, 2008: 36).

During the summer of 1862, Union authorities forced civilians to swear an oath of allegiance to the Union in order to be protected by the government and to be able to work, travel and trade in the Union territory (McCurry, 2019: 30). This oath was meaningful and

symbolic for women because it granted them political significance. Renshaw House refused to take the oath of allegiance and required her family to do so because she thought it would minimize “the chances of punishment” (Harrison, 2013: 80). By doing so, she was stepping out of the expectations of a daughter and sister. When Knoxville was first occupied, she wanted to “behave as a lady” but after six months of occupation, she changed her mind: “I cant let them think for one moment I am any thing but a Rebel, heart & soul” (Harrison, 2013: 80). She was conscious that her attitude was not ladylike but asserted that this was out of her control: “I expect sometime, I will do something devilish – that is just the word, though not a lady like one. [...] Lady like – very – but people are not responsible for what they do while living among such creatures” (Harrison, 2013: 81). According to her, it was not her fault, the Union soldiers made her do what she did; she did not choose to behave that way. For her, she was a lady and a rebel but the soldiers had led her to become a rebel. Maybe, taking this excuse was a way to protect her reputation as lady. The primary purpose of writing her diary was to prove to herself she was a lady and a real Southerner, loyal to the Southern cause.

By March 1863, there were no more assumptions of women’s innocence because “assumptions of women’s innocence could prove deadly” (McCurry, 2019: 38), notably because of the women spies and smugglers. The Civil War is the proof that men are not the only makers of history and that women also fight. A lot of women took active actions but the records of them are set aside and had to be forgotten.

Clara Judd, who was a prominent spy during the war is one of the best examples of what the Lieber’s Code had cautioned about civilians’ possible behaviors: “noncombatants who employ their protection under the law of war as a dangerous disguise. However, what the Lieber’s Code did not expect at first, is that the noncombatant was a woman” (McCurry, 2019: 43). In March 1863, the Lieber’s Code added a particular reference to women. It then questioned the status of women and did not rely on false assumptions anymore. It also recognized that women were indeed not outside of war, not passive to the ordeals of their people and country.

The issue surrounding women’s innocence and civilians’ protection shows the difficulty in accepting women’s participation in the war and the will to forget everything they did once the war was over (McCurry, 2019: 61). Women’s participation, again, turned upside down

all the assumptions and beliefs of the gender order of the time. However, the need to hold onto the gender order explains why women's participation was denied during and after the war. Moreover, it was as difficult for women to detach from these gender roles and this is also why they tried to find ladylike ways to help the Confederacy. When the Confederacy lost the war and White Southerners lost their properties, White women were the most bitter of all. Indeed, they lost everything: their war, their sacrifices, their men, their goods, and on top of that, they were denied their actions.

On the other hand, there were women who were less afraid to lose their reputations or who considered the defense of their country more important than their ladies' reputations. Indeed, there were women who decided to completely break with gender conventions and to do what they thought useful to help the Confederacy.

### 3- Breaking with gender conventions

A lot of women served as soldiers in both armies; it is said that four hundred women fought in the Civil War and that more were spies. These women came from all social classes: working-class women, middle-class women and even upper-class educated women. The differences between them is what they left behind and their roles in the war even if it is not so clear-cut. Women from lower classes were often soldiers or army scouts and women from higher classes, generally worked in hospitals. However, spies came from all classes. Most upper-class women were educated and could write on their exploits. Lower-class women did not have less to tell but most of them were illiterate and there are little traces of what they did (Hall, 2006: 122). What all these women have in common is their boldness. Indeed, despite all the obstacles they had to overcome, nothing could prevent them from achieving what they believed in. They were determined to serve their nation, at all costs. If they were unmasked, they enlisted again. They risked everything but never gave in their goals. Unfortunately, most of the sources we can find today about what happened in the ranks of the Civil War were written by men. Very few female combatants wrote about the war. Blanton and Cook explain that it is possible that women soldiers' writings have not survived but that it is more probable that they did not write. Since most of the women soldiers were working-class women and illiterate, they left nothing as "proofs" behind them.

Consequently, illiteracy and biased history were problems we were faced with. We know that during and after the war there was a will to forget what women achieved, so it is very likely that men did not tell everything in their writings.

A lot of women wished to break with gender conventions, for they were as determined to serve as men but it was very difficult and risky. Cordelia Scales, a Southern woman, said: “it seems so hard that we who have the wills of men should be denied from engaging in this great struggle for liberty just because we are ladies” or Lucy Breckinridge: “I wish that women could fight”, “I would gladly shoulder my pistol and shoot some Yankees if it were allowable. If some few Southern women were in the ranks they could set the men an example they could not blush to follow.” Or moreover, Sarah Morgan of Louisiana said: “O! if I was only a man! Then I could...slay them with a will” (Blanton & Cook, 2002: 25). And others instead of lamenting on their fate, acted and joined the conflict. A group of twenty women from the Shenandoah valley actually wrote to the Confederate Secretary of War to ask for the permission to join the army. They said they had organized “a volunteer regiment for purposes of local defense.” But obviously, the Confederate Secretary refused.

Enlisting was easy. Women had only to cut their hair short, put on male clothing, take an alias and find a recruiter, a regiment or an army camp. Everybody was allowed in the troops even if it was supposed to have a physical examination but it was hardly respected, otherwise, they must have soon realized they were women. The recruiters only looked for healthy people who were able to fight. Moreover, at the beginning of the war, there were no limitations of age and young boys enlisted. The latter had high-pitched voices, which made things easier for women to enlist and pass the examination. Before dealing in details with women soldiers, I would like to deal first with spies. Usually, women who spied were “patriotic individuals”, in other words, they were not supervised or “hired” by the Confederacy but acted on their own. Female spies contributed a lot to the war and took great personal risks, often risking their own lives. They spent their time looking for information about the opposite army – here the Union – to give to the Confederate government (Hall, 2006: 88).

Ginnie and Lottie Moon, two sisters, worked as spies for the Confederacy. They were the daughters of a physician and were born in Virginia but raised in Ohio. In appearance, they fitted the expectations of Southern Belles – in terms of dressing and social customs –

but in reality, they were real rebels. Ginnie always bore a gun and knew perfectly how to use it. Even if they had grown up in Ohio, they were really attached to their Southern culture, they were true Southerners. Their spying careers started when Confederate couriers came to the Clark Household – the place where they lived – while carrying secret messages. One day, one of them arrived with dispatches that had to be delivered to General Kirby Smith in Kentucky. Lottie volunteered to deliver these dispatches. She put on the attire of an old woman to pass through the lines without being found out. This was the starting point of her career since she accomplished several other missions in Virginia (Hall, 2006: 91). Another prominent spy whom I must mention is Antonia J. Ford. She came from an aristocratic family in North Virginia. She pretended to be a loyal Unionist but in reality, she was a spy for the Confederacy. In front of people she praised the Union cause and her loyalty to the Union, whereas she was at the same time spying for the Confederacy. She used her female attributes – a form of prostitution – to steal information from Union soldiers or couriers. When the Union found out that she was a spy, she was arrested (Hall, 2006: 94). Other women wrote letters to high-positioned Confederate officers to tell them about the location of Union soldiers or of their artillery.

Two of the most prominent spies of the Confederacy, whom we know today notably thanks to their accounts are Belle Boyd and Rose O’Neal Greenhow. In her account of war, Boyd recounts her adventures as a daring spy and how she deeply wanted to act for the Confederacy even if the price she paid for it was her freedom. Boyd was extremely important for the Confederacy. Indeed, the Confederacy even organized exchanges for her: the Confederacy would release Union spies for the “famous Confederate spy Belle Boyd” (Hall, 2006: 95). Rose O’Neal Greenhow was also a famous Confederate spy during the Civil War. Like Boyd, she tells her exploits in an account. I will deal with these two women in the second part to explain what they did for the Confederacy thanks to their respective accounts of war.

Some women both fought and spied. This is the case of Loreta Janeta Velazquez, a Cuban-born American, who after having served as a soldier, spied for the Confederacy. Contrary to the majority of spies, she worked both under the supervision of the Confederacy – more precisely for the Richmond authorities – and on her own. For most of the duration of the Civil War, Velazquez wore male attire. She was arrested and imprisoned several times because she was suspected of being a woman. At the time, every woman in male attire was



thought to be a spy, and this is what she became. Velazquez's major exploit was when she penetrated the Federal detective company as a double agent. She told Lafayette C. Baker that she was working for him whereas she was in reality working for the Confederacy. Mary Ann Pitman, like Velazquez, first served in the Confederacy as a soldier. She was wounded after a battle and so decided to serve as a secret agent and gunrunner for Forrest – whom she served in the cavalry when she had been wounded. Being a spy, Pitman put on her female attire again and used the name of Mary or Mollie Hays. She had been captured by the Union and as a consequence became a double agent. Unlike Velazquez, she began spying in reality for the Union after her capture. We do not really know how many women changed sides during the war. We can suppose that they changed sides for adventure, indeed, a lot of them enlisted because they were seeking adventure; patriotism came after. We can imagine that the Union offered Pitman a more interesting job than the Confederacy and therefore that she decided to spy for them.

Women in the army were as brave as their male counterparts and were for sure, as effective as male soldiers. In order to deal with women soldiers, I will mostly focus on Loreta Janeta Velazquez as representative of the whole. Velazquez married an army officer before the Civil War. When the war broke out, Velazquez asked her husband to leave the army and enlist in the Confederacy. She says in her autobiography that if he had not left the U.S. army, she would have left him (*TWB*: 51)<sup>3</sup>. Loreta, too, wanted to serve but her husband refused. When he went to the war, she put on male attire, tried to behave like a man and started to recruit men for her own battalion<sup>4</sup> in order to give the command of it to her husband. Unfortunately, he died before she had time to do so. He died during a training accident. She then gave the command of the battalion to Lieutenant DeCaulp – who was to be her next husband – and decided not to be attached to any particular regiment. During the battle of Manassas (or the First Battle of Bull Run), July 21, 1861, Velazquez alias Lt. Harry T. Buford arrived as an independent soldier. Nobody had commissioned her/him but at the beginning of the war, having irregular soldiers was accepted (Blanton & Cook, 2002: 9). Even if the Confederacy won this battle, Velazquez started to lose faith in battles and to be

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<sup>3</sup> The abbreviation *TWB* refers to Velazquez's *The Woman in Battle*.

<sup>4</sup> She recruited 236 men in the battalion.

disillusioned. However, she continued to fight. During the battle of Ball's Bluff (October 21, 1861) she was in command of a company because of some missing officers who had been killed or wounded. However, she was not experienced in battle nor in commands and fortunately for her, the battle took place in the woods, which made it easier to command. On December 17, 1861, she engaged in an action in the Western Theatre near Woodsonville, Kentucky; so was another female soldier under the alias of Alfred J. Luther. The battle of Shiloh was the last battle for Velazquez. She had been wounded in the arm and shoulder because of a flying shrapnel. She was not the only female soldier fighting for the Confederacy in this battle. The other one was Pitman alias Lieutenant Rawley. Pitman was wounded at the battle of Richmond, Kentucky, August 30, 1862 at the leg. Pitman was arrested because they found out she was a woman and imprisoned by the Union. She survived her wound and was paroled.

For now, it seems that there were more women fighting in the Union than in the Confederacy. It can be explained by the oppressive social order which put so much pressure on Southern women. In the battle of Shiloh, five women fought for the Union against two for the Confederacy. During the battle of Atietam, seven women in the Union against only one in the Confederacy, and the Confederate woman was killed (Blanton & Cook, 2002: 14). During the battle of Gettysburg: two women fought for the Union and three for the Confederacy. This last battle lasted three days and nearly 7,000 soldiers died. The three Confederate women were wounded, one of whom had her leg amputated. The major battle of the war was at Resaca, Georgia from May 13 to May 15, 1864. Several Confederate female soldiers died in the final assault and Sergeant Robert Ardry from the 111<sup>th</sup> Illinois Infantry wrote: "They fought like demons, and we cut them like dogs... I saw 3 or 4 rebel women soldiers in the heap of bodies" (Blanton & Cook, 2002: 19).

We can wonder what was the role of African-American women in the war. Indeed, they must have been even more concerned than White women about the outcome of the war. In the South, a lot of Black women conspired against the Confederacy and engaged in secret activities. Some of them wore the uniform, others were scouts, spies or nurses (Hall, 2006: 204). Maria Lewis or Lizzie Hoffman enlisted in the Union with male attire once the Union enabled colored men to join the army. A lot of Black women who enlisted followed their

husbands. A former slave of a slaveholding family, Mary Elizabeth Browser, used the name of Ellen Bond and succeeded in being a servant in the White House of Jefferson Davis. After a few months of good services, Davis divulged military secrets in front of Ellen Bond, which turned out to be a real mistake. Indeed, Bond was a spy for the Union and she gave the information to Miss Van Lew (a wealthy Union spy) who told the Union government (Hall, 2006: 205).

Slavery was founded on the “race of inferiority” and the “mental or intelligence superiority” of the white race. White Southerners were not suspicious of Black women because of their so-called intelligence inferiority and Black women took advantage of it. I did not find anything about African-American women who would have fought or helped in deeds the Confederacy, which I think is not impossible, since there were Black soldiers in the Confederacy. The motivations of Black women in helping the Union are easy to guess and are legitimate, if I may say so. However, what were those of White women who fought and/or spied for the Confederacy?

First, and it has to be stressed upon, every single woman who enlisted did it by choice. The majority of women in the ranks enlisted to follow a loved one: a father, a brother or a husband. They could not bear being separated from them. Others saw the opportunity to experience adventure and independence – either they acted on their free own will or they no longer wanted to be under the yoke of oppressive families or intolerable marriages. Velazquez for example, was seeking adventure. On the contrary, when the war killed women’s families – others had little choices but to enlist and they often wanted revenge. For lower-class women it was a way to escape something they considered worse: prostitution. Indeed, they needed to earn a living and they had the choice between two options: prostitution or soldiering. And finally, most of them were real patriots, just like men, and saw war as the end of their patriotic duty (Redfern, 2013: 26). Women could let nothing prevent them from fighting, even when they were found out as being women and sent home: they reenlisted again. The biggest problem for these women was their gender identity. They had no other choices but to adopt a male identity and disguise themselves to pose as men. It was kind of easy to disguise as men since the notion of gender was clear-cut in the South: women in dresses and men in pants. Pants were associated with male identity (Clinton, 2016: 46-47). The uniforms were loose enough to hide their female shapes. Velazquez had the

money to buy a uniform that perfectly fitted her, she wore wire shields under the uniform to conceal her true form and a fake moustache (*TWB*: 57).

Menstruation may have been a problem for women at war. Little is known about how they dealt with it in the nineteenth century. It is presumed that they used cotton rags to protect their clothes. However, it was nearly impossible for them to wash their clothes while being in the ranks. It is probable that they did not wash them and that the blood could pass as a mark of little injuries. It is also possible that the periods stopped because of the stress-inducing environment in which they lived, in addition to the athletic trainings and the poor diets. Bathing and changing clothes were minor problems because soldiers were seldom able to wash and they never undressed to go to bed (Blanton & Cook, 2002: 46). In fact, the biggest problem they could have was to hide their “female mannerisms” and these mannerisms were often what betrayed women (Hall, 2006: 205).

Their disguises had to be successful because being found out meant losing their reputations and being women “of loose morals” (Jodlowski, 2012: 30). It was in their interests not to be found out: in order not to be arrested and also in order to preserve their reputations. Gender conventions were indeed a problem but mostly on the home front. Men in the army did not depict women soldiers in a pejorative way but found them “rather prepossessing.” General Philip Sheridan (Union) said: “‘she dragoon’ found in the ranks of his cavalry escort and the men admired their courage” (Hall, 2006: 121). Sometimes, officers knew there were women in their regiments but chose not to report them because they were good soldiers. It is very possible that there were more women who fought than what had been reported. Gender conventions were also a problem for women themselves. Wearing male attire was also a way to escape these conventions and to gain male independence, power and enjoy the same privileges as men. Indeed, women outside marriage had few opportunities, and being a man gave them a wide range of opportunities. It is said that some of them even voted under a male identity in the election of 1864. Women, as I mentioned before, were real patriots and were ready to accept their fates. For instance, when they were imprisoned, it is possible that they would have been paroled if they had confessed they were women but they chose not to do so. I think it can be understood either as an acceptance of their fates, like men, or as a will not to be found out as women because of their fear of public rejection. It may have been both.

What we can regret about those women is that if they succeeded in their tasks, they remained “unheralded heroines” (Clinton, 2016: 57-58) because they acted in the shadow of men. What I regret too, is that we will probably never know how many women really fought in this war. However, they did not have other choices than those they made. Under such circumstances, I think we must conclude on what Clinton explains: “‘wearing the pants’ might constitute something as innocent as expression of political opinion”, indeed the act of transvestism was in fact the boldest way they found to express their political opinions. Clinton also asserts that these women did serve their country, “their country right or wrong” (Clinton, 2016: 73-74).

The Civil War represented indeed a gender issue. Southern States decided to secede in order to maintain the status quo. The status quo meant the submission of women, protecting their innocence and their status of venerated women as well as protecting the slaveholding system from which they benefited. Maintaining the status quo went hand in hand with the preservation of the social order. Women were supportive of the social order since it gave them recognition within society. However, this social order gave them few options outside of marriage which could oppress some of them, notably the younger generation: Confederate daughters. When the war broke out, the Southern situation obviously changed, which triggered women’s involvement. Upper-class women’s way of life changed radically, for they had to do a man’s work. They did not have other choice but to step out of their proper sphere in a way. For mothers it was much more difficult than for their daughters, who took quite advantage of it to free themselves a little from patriarchal oppression. However, upper-class women, mothers and daughters, stepped out of their spheres in a tolerable way. Indeed, they did what was expected from them. Even during wartime, women could not allow themselves to do whatever they wished. Gender conventions were too strong and women often feared public rejection if they did not respect what was expected from a Southern Belle or a lady. Under such circumstances, they found feminine ways to be rebellious. Confederate daughters could allow themselves to be more rebellious than their mothers, notably due to the fact they were not married. Older women turned to writing which I think also represents rebellion. They did not want to change the Southern system but wanted to do more than what they were able to. Therefore, writing may also have represented a way of escaping the oppressive gender conventions in order to express their loyalty to the Confederacy.

However, the war changed the Southern system just enough for women to step into the breach. The war changed the Southern system just enough for some women to openly challenge these gender conventions – however, they had to take a male identity. Because of the gender order, women had no choice but to disguise to go to war. They were willing to go to war; they could not stay at home. They were bold and tried their best to achieve their patriotic duty. Nevertheless, they remained and some of them still remain unheralded heroines because nobody had to know they were women. All of these women unfortunately fought on the wrong side, but still fought. What they achieved is worth-telling because under the system in which they lived, to be so daring as to step out of their spheres at that extent is quite impressive. Moreover, it is interesting to hear from their voices what their real motivations were for spying and fighting. In this second part, we will study the writings of a soldier who also spied, Loreta Janeta Velazquez and of the two famous spies, Belle Boyd and Rose O'Neal Greenhow.

## II- Fighting the War – Women who Physically Took Part in the War

### A- Fighting

More women than one could think literally fought during the Civil War. We saw in the first part that the majority of them were working-class women and therefore illiterate. However, what raises most my interest in this dissertation are the women who obviously fought for the Confederacy but more particularly, the women who voiced their experiences. Unfortunately, I only found one war autobiography about a female soldier: that of Loreta Janeta Velazquez. Nonetheless, the subject of female soldiers was heavily commented upon by newspapers and it may be relevant to see what correspondents said about those female soldiers. In this part we will mostly deal with what people said about female soldiers and with what Velazquez says about her soldiering experience.

#### 1- Everybody knew there were women soldiers

All the women who are mentioned in the collection of articles of Betts<sup>5</sup> are women who had been found out and exposed. Most of the correspondents who deal with Confederate female soldiers are from the Southern States and are rather positive toward female soldiers (see appendix n°1). We will see that the most serious crime they were accused of was adopting male attire. The correspondent of the first article is quite neutral, he does not give his opinion about women performing this kind of patriotic duty but he mentions the reasons she was charged with: “she plead<sup>6</sup> guilty to the charge of belonging to what is generally denominated the softer sex.” This is also the case of the woman mentioned in the fourth article, her crime was to be a woman: “the soldier was charged of being a woman.” However, the correspondent is less objective and asserts that the reasons for her disguise are good

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<sup>5</sup> Betts gathered several Southern and Northern newspaper articles, which deal with women who physically took part in the war.

<sup>6</sup> As written in the article.

enough to forgive her to be a woman. He goes even further and qualifies her as being a “heroine.”

In the second article, the correspondent seems thrilled to deal with this kind of women, who would do anything to help the Confederacy: “that she is an extraordinary woman there is no question, and our curiosity is excited to know more of her history and her adventures in male attire.” Contrary to what we might expect, he does not seem shocked by a woman in male attire but he seems to be more interested in what she can do under this male identity. He understands that, male attire, is the only way for this woman to follow the career she chose and he tries to justify her need and obligation to wear this disguise: “her reason for the course she had adopted is, that she is collecting material for a history of the war, and that she adopted male attire as the plan best calculated to enable her to carry out her design.” However, it was not the case of all correspondents, and the one from the third article is definitely opposed to a woman wearing male attire. The use of the pronoun “I” stresses his opposition on the question: “I am teetotally<sup>7</sup> opposed to women ‘wearing the breeches’, and hope our city authorities will permit no more feminines to pass through the city in that sort of disguise.” It seems that his strong opposition is due to women stepping out of the private sphere into the public sphere and due to the non-respect they displayed toward men’s status: “it is an infringement upon the ‘rights of men’ that ought not for a moment to be tolerated.” He does not even deal with the help she could have brought to the Confederacy because the horror and the shock of the disguise took the upper hand. It seems that the problem was not that women were fighting but the real problem was that they were entering the public sphere with their disguise.

There are also several occurrences about Velazquez in the collection of articles. I chose three of them (appendix n°2), which cover her soldiering activities. In the first article, I am not really sure that it deals with Velazquez, because in her account she always calls her first husband William or William C., however the story fits with the one she tells in her autobiography. In the three articles, Velazquez is praised for her actions toward the Confederacy. She is qualified as “heroic”, as brave, as “devoted”, and even compared to Joan of Arc. The three articles discuss the issue of transvestism, indeed, if they knew the

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<sup>7</sup> As written in the article.



existence of Velazquez – whose real name they did not know back then – it was because she had been found out by the authorities. However, the correspondents of the articles do not have a negative opinion about her disguise, but simply tell readers about the facts themselves: “her sex was discovered by the Federals, and she was regularly paroled as a prisoner of war, but they did not permit her to return until she had donned female apparel”, or “in the garments of more becoming her sex.” The third article shows the importance that Velazquez granted to her disguise: “she persists in sporting her military costume, and it was this that got her into trouble with the Richmond authorities.” As a matter of fact, male attire was very important for Velazquez, and we will see in the next sub-part, that it was not simply a disguise.

This selection of articles enables us to have a quick view on the fact that everybody knew there were female soldiers. Indeed, the role of a correspondent was to inform the public, therefore, thanks to them, the public knew the existence of female soldiers. What is interesting is that most of the articles are quite positive toward female soldiers: the only crime they committed was to wear male costume, not fighting. On the contrary, fighting was seen quite positively since they were helping the Confederate Cause. Transvestism is an interesting and complex subject because it is heavily linked with gender conventions, but also with the issue of identity. In the antebellum period, women were given an identity that some of them did not keep during the war. Velazquez deals a lot with the issue of identity, and this is what we are going to discuss in the next part; we will also pay attention to her contributions as a soldier.

## 2- Loreta Janeta Velazquez and *The Woman in Battle* (1876)

The most renowned female Confederate soldier during the Civil War was Loreta Janeta Velazquez. She wrote and published in 1876 *The Woman in Battle: A Narrative of the Exploits, Adventures, and Travels of Madame Loreta Janeta Velazquez, Otherwise Known as Lieutenant Harry T. Buford, Confederate States Army*. The first part is about her soldiering activities, which are linked with the issue of identity. Indeed, to be able to fight, Velazquez had to assume male attire. (See appendix n°3). It does not seem to be only a disguise for her but we can feel that there is something behind the simple fact of adopting

the attire of the opposite sex. By wearing male attire, Loreta indeed hid her true sex, or the one she was born with, to accomplish things she believed in. We can thus wonder if by altering her identity she was not actually revealing her true identity. From her early childhood, Velazquez had already high aspirations concerning her life, she saw herself as the new Joan of Arc. But before tackling these themes, we should first mention some biographical facts.

Loreta Velazquez's family came from Castilian nobles. Her father was highly educated, he went to universities in France and in Spain and he was a staunch Catholic. Her mother was the daughter of a French naval officer and of an American lady. Loreta Velazquez was born in 1842 near Havana and was the last child of a family of six children. Later, her family moved to Mexico, to Saint Louis Potosi and to Central Mexico. Her father was a businessman. After the Mexican War, as they resided in the lands that were seceded to the USA, they became part of the country; however, her father did not want to live under a government he disliked. Therefore, they moved to Cuba where her father became even more successful and was very wealthy. Loreta was educated by an English governess with whom she learnt the English language. In 1849, she was sent to New Orleans to perfect her education, where her mother's only sister lived.

By taking up arms Loreta Velazquez was transgressing the Southern conventions of the time. However, this was not the first time Velazquez had broken with the expectations of an individual of her kind: a Latina and a woman of her rank. When she lived with her aunt in New Orleans, Loreta liked putting on her cousin's clothes and looking at herself in the mirror: "it was frequently my habit, after all in the house had retired to bed at night to dress myself in my cousin's clothes" (*TWB*: 42). Right from the start she was transgressing the norms of a girl of her age and dressed herself in the opposite sex attire. This first mention of Loreta dressing in male attire foreshadows what she did when she was older and shows that she was destined to break with gender conventions as well as destined to step out of the private sphere. She was probably considered as a tomboy but we will see later that it was more than that. Moreover, by this transgression, Loreta already altered the identity of a girl like her.

Women who took active actions in the war had a lot to lose if they were found out, their reputations, for example, which was very important back then. It is explained by the

fact that these women subverted the status quo that Southerners wanted to defend (Clinton, 2016: 53). The case of Velazquez is even bolder, if we may say so, she did not consider men as higher in hierarchy, on the contrary and this is one of the reasons which pushed her to accomplish what she did. In her book, Clinton refers to Lilith and it is interesting to make a link with Velazquez. Lilith was the first wife of Adam and when she refused to recognize the superiority of her husband, she was expelled from Eden. Like her, Velazquez defied patriarchal society, her own inferiority and the social gender conventions of her time: “I am neither a man nor born in this country, but my heritage and my sex are no impediment to patriotism.” In this society, women like Velazquez were thus thought to be dangerous and were banished. Hall explains that women who were discovered in male attire were thought to be “up to no good in any case since they were violating conventional sensibilities” and it also explains the reaction of the correspondents in the articles, as well as those of the authorities (Hall, 2006: 36). Velazquez was conscious of this but was not frightened of it. What she thought, what she was or wanted to be, was much more important than what society expected from her.

At the beginning of the autobiography, Velazquez explains where her will to fight comes from. It comes from her childhood and she gives a list of women who fought for their countries and convictions; the most important model for her being Joan of Arc. She wants to be the new Joan of Arc, or we can even say, the American Joan of Arc: “my imagination fires with a desire to emulate the glorious deeds of Joan of Arc, the Maid of Orleans. A religious enthusiast, as well as a horn leader of men [...]” (*TWB*: 36). Velazquez wants to be recognized, like Joan of Arc, as a revolutionary but more importantly Velazquez wants to be seen and remembered as a war heroine: “and many a time my soul burned with an overwhelming desire to emulate her deeds of valor, and to make for myself a name, which like hers, would be enrolled in letters of gold among the women who had the courage to fight like men” (*TWB*: 37). When the State in which she lived decided to secede, she did not lose sight of her objective of being the new Joan of Arc: “I felt that now the great opportunity of my life had arrived, and my mind was busy night and day in planning schemes for making my name famous above that of any of the great heroines of history, not even excepting my favorite, Joan of Arc” (*TWB*: 51). The parallel with Joan of Arc has to be made since several similarities can be seen. Joan of Arc wanted to prevent the fall of Orleans, and Velazquez –

by taking up arms – wanted to prevent the fall of New Orleans and on the whole, of the Confederacy. Both of them were fighting against what they thought to be intruders. As Velazquez says in the book, Joan of Arc was a determined woman, dressed as a man in order to perform her duty even if transvestism was considered as a crime. Joan of Arc aroused respect from everybody, and more importantly from men, which was also Velazquez's desire. Velazquez may have been inspired by the deeds of Joan of Arc and may have started her career as a soldier, basing herself on the story of the Maid of Orleans. All this poses the issue of gender – notably women who wanted to fight a war – and as a consequence, the issue of gender triggers off a process of othering oneself.

Contrary to the other female soldiers who fought during the Civil War, Velazquez did not want to be an unheralded heroine but wanted to be famous and renowned for what she had done. It seems that her first motivation was thus to know herself, and taking up arms was a way of looking for her identity by altering her own to become another person: Joan of Arc. By wanting to resemble the Maid of Orleans she would be known and would gain recognition by others. Her goal was not to operate behind the scenes and this is also why she wrote this autobiography.

It seems also that throughout the autobiography she wanted to prove that she could equal men if not surpass them. When she told her husband that she would fight by his sides, he tried to convince her not to do so but she would not listen and “resolved more firmly than ever, so soon as he took his departure, to put [her] plans into execution” and “to show him that his wife was as good soldier as he” (*TWB*: 56). Even during the war, she was persuaded that “no man on the field that day fought with more energy or determination than the woman who figured as Lieutenant Harry T. Burford”<sup>8</sup> (*TWB*: 105). Her identity is always blurred by the alterity she displays.

To become a soldier, Velazquez had to create another identity: a male identity. She became Lieutenant Harry T. Burford (she had this idea because she saw a trunk with that name on it) and went even further to perfect this new identity: she bought a slave, Bob, as if she totally embraced an ideology also based on racism. Blanton and Cook explain that “by

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<sup>8</sup> Lieutenant Harry T. Burford was the name she gave to herself as a soldier.

taking a male social identity [women's soldiers] secured for themselves male power and independence, as well as full status as citizens of their nation. In essence, the Civil War was an opportunity for hundreds of women to escape the confines of their sex" (Blanton & Cook, 2002: 5). This was exactly the case for Velazquez, and later, we will see in details how she escaped the confines of the sex she was born with.

Loreta's identity was much more complex than just being a tomboy. From her early childhood, she was already tempted to be a man – as a little girl she already put on male clothes. In the book she says recurrently that she would have wanted to be a man: "I wished that I was a man"; "I was especially haunted with the idea of being a man" etc. (*TWB*: 42). The Civil War was then the perfect occasion for her to be a man and she gave herself a new identity, that of Lieutenant Harry T. Buford. But before that, she had to dress as a man, which she calls "unsexing [her]self" (*TWB*: 53). The first time she had been in the streets of New Orleans in male attire, she had braided her hair very close, put on a man's wig and a moustache, wore pantaloons that she tucked in her boots and that was enough to pose as a man for the moment. However, she knew that this disguise was not enough to last over the long run so she went to a French tailor to have her costume made. The tailor "understood how to mind his own business but not bothering himself too much about other people's affairs, and [she] had him make for [her] half a dozen fine wire shields [...] they proved very satisfactory in concealing [her] true form, and in giving [her] something of the shape of a man" (*TWB*: 57-58). She also "learned to act, talk and almost think as a man" (*TWB*: 58). The preposition "as" is interesting, she could have used "like" but she chose "as". It seems that she was already considering herself as a man, more than pretending to be – or comparing herself to a man. She took her role very seriously and as I mentioned in the first part, she built her own battalion – that she originally planned to give to her husband but he died before she had the time to do so – and succeeded in recruiting 236 Arkansas men. She declares that "in spite of my being a woman, I was intended for a military leader, and I resolved, more firmly than ever, to let nothing stand in the way of my winning fame I coveted" (*TWB*: 86). However, when she learnt about her husband's death, she decided to be an independent soldier and it is as an independent soldier that she fought her first two battles. The Battle of Bull Run was the first battle in which she fought. Excitement was her strongest feeling, she could finally take part in a great battle and work for the Confederacy: "I was now about to

enter upon the realization of all my dreams, to see some real warfare, to engage in real battles, to do some real fighting, and, as I fondly hoped, to have some opportunities of distinguishing myself in a signal manner” (*TWB*: 95). She was more motivated and determined than ever to fight for her beloved South and to show the enemy that it was a mistake to try “to coerce the Southern people” (*TWB*: 98). She implicated herself personally, for she saw the men in front of her as personal enemies and when the Confederate general gave the order to fall back, she felt it was personal defeat. Her participation in this battle was actually the reward for all she had undertaken from the beginning: “I would not have missed it for the wealth of the world, and was more repaid for all that I had undergone, and all the risks to my person and my womanly reputation that I incurred in being not only a spectator, but an actor, in such a sublime, living, drama” (*TWB*: 104). We understand that self-sacrifice, which was expected from Southern women, was indeed not enough for Velazquez and that she was ready to put at risk her reputation to help the country, to actively and literally help the South.

The battle of Ball’s Bluff was a turning point in Velazquez’s career as a soldier. It is during this battle that she started to be disillusioned. Even if she was as eager to fight as during the battle of Bull Run, she realized that she was participating in a real slaughter. She knew what to expect from the battlefield but this time was different. However, she stayed until the end because “Southern blood” ran in her veins. During the battle of Ball’s Bluff, the enemy was driven down the bluff, a lot of them were struggling not to sink and not to die. This is exactly what made her change her mind toward her soldiering activities:

This horrible spectacle made me shudder; for, although they were my foes, they were human beings, and my heart must have been hard, indeed, could it not have felt for their sufferings. I was willing to fight them to death’s door in the open field, and to ask no favors, taking the same chances for life as they had; but I had no heart for their ruthless slaughter.” (*TWB*: 123)

Unfortunately, a boat full of wounded and dying Union soldiers sank into the river, which hurt Velazquez even more. She was obviously glad of the Confederate victory, “although at a terrible sacrifice” (*TWB*: 125). She was satisfied with the fact that she had done her duty but torn at the sight of the slaughtered soldiers. She says that she would have done something if she had been able to. The horrors of the battlefield haunted her days and nights and she was disappointed with fighting. This is then that she performed her first experiences as a spy. However, this was not the end of her male identity.

Between battles, Velazquez went even further to hide her “true” identity and flirted with women and even dated others. It was for her a “good opportunity to gain some valuable experience in that line; for it occurred to me that if I was to figure successfully in the *rôle* of a dashing young Confederate officer, it would be necessary for me to learn how to make myself immensely agreeable to the ladies” (*TWB*: 75). This is only one example among others.

Altering her identity seems to have started a process of in-betweenness for Velazquez. She seems to be torn between these two identities and it seems difficult for her to really associate herself with one. When she refers to women, she uses “them” instead of what we could expect, “us.” Indeed, what she accomplished as a man “would enable them to fortify themselves against the temptations constantly assailing them” (*TWB*: 59). But at the same time, she still considers herself as a woman: “I was compelled to sink my sex entirely” (*TWB*: 60). Moreover, in terms of education, she was superior to her female soldier counterparts and in terms of social hierarchy – as a woman – she was inferior to her male soldier counterparts. Therefore, it seems very difficult for Velazquez to find her place as an individual in this society. However, she likes playing on it, and this in-betweenness does not seem to be negative at all. Indeed, even if at that period she could accomplish more as a man, she also appreciated the fact of being a woman, and more particularly toward men. The man who became her second husband, a Confederate officer, “knew [her], both as a man and as a woman, but who little suspected that Lieutenant Harry. T. Burford, and his intended wife, were one and the same person” (*TWB*: 191-192). It seems that she could be at the same time a man and a woman, she seems to be torn between these two identities but appreciated to choose one or the other according to her schemes.

This is exactly the case when she decided to spy instead of fighting: “when I saw that the fact of my being a woman would enable me to play another *rôle* from that which I had first intended, I did not hesitate, but readily accepted what Fate had to offer” (*TWB*: 115). It seems that by altering her identity ceaselessly, she finally found out who she really was: “to be a second Joan of Arc was a mere girlish fancy, which my very first experiences as a soldier dissipated forever; and it did not take me long to discover that I needed no model, but that, to win success in the career I had chosen, I must be simply myself, and not a copy” (*TWB*: 128). However, the wish of being a man never stopped: “I have no hesitation in saying that I wish I had been created a man instead of a woman. [...] But being a woman, I was

bent of making the best of it; and having for some time now figured successfully in the garments of the other sex. I could accomplish as a woman” (*TWB*: 130). It seems that she might feel either a man or a woman and by gliding between the two genders she finally finds her real identity. She was born a woman but wished to have been a man and so she found the perfect middle by sliding between the two. When she was arrested in New Orleans on the suspicion of being a woman in disguise, the mayor questioned “whether [she] was a man or a woman” and it seems that this is the real question of Velazquez’s autobiography and quest for identity (*TWB*: 179). Even if it is an anachronism to say so, she might have experienced what we call today transgender or genderfluid: the sex she was born with did not correspond with her ambitions, or the frontier between the two sexes was blurred and Velazquez could choose one or the other according to her schemes. Clinton declares that she might have experienced “gender dysphoria” (Clinton, 2016: 43). In any case, I think that it is by altering her identity that Loreta found her real one; and each part of her identity could help her achieve her goals.

During a particular episode, while she was within the Confederate lines – as Lieutenant Harry T. Buford – she came across the Arkansas boys whom she had recruited at the beginning of the war, a year before. At that moment, a desire to fight with them fired inside her. She went to see the captain in command, Captain DeCaulp, to ask for his permission to join them and she spoke loud enough for the other soldiers to hear her and to understand that “[she] belonged to the special corps and was doing a share of the fighting just for the love of the thing” (*TWB*: 205). This battle was her last one: the battle of Shiloh. It was a desperate battle for the Confederates and Velazquez was severely wounded in the arm and shoulder when a shrapnel burst out next to her. A surgeon examined her and began to suspect something, Velazquez had no choice but to reveal her female identity. This marked the end of her career as a soldier but “the uniform of Lieutenant Harry T. Buford was carefully put away for future use if need be” (*TWB*: 231).



The autobiography looks like an epic story. Some contemporary critics even said that everything she has written was false – indeed it did not fit with the ideology of the Lost Cause. Some were more mitigated and said that she “embellished” the story. Others said that the autobiography was “the greatest Civil War book ever written” (Clinton, 2016: 47). What is sure is that she did fight – the newspapers prove it – however it is very likely that she exaggerated a little bit what she accomplished. Clinton asserts that she “achieved more as an author than as a soldier” because of the risk she took in publishing this book with her own name and also because she struggled to have it published. In the preface, Velazquez declares: “I have nothing to be ashamed of. Had I believed that my book needed apologies on this score, it would never have been written; and, having written it, I am willing to submit my conduct to the judgment of the public, with a confidence that I will at least receive due credit for the motives by which I was animated” (*TWB*: 6). It is interesting because she really wants people to know what she did, to know how she became that person. It is very clear that this autobiography reflects her quest for identity<sup>9</sup>. This book may have helped her know who she was. Indeed, this autobiography is wholly about being the other – either Joan of Arc, a man, a soldier, a woman, a spy, a spouse, or a mother – and this autobiography also makes her identify herself as a writer. Moreover, considering that the autobiography is embellished, writing was also a way of describing her ideal self or to prove to herself that she could be whoever she wanted to.

We can assert that Velazquez had a surprising process of identification for her time. First of all, she transgressed all the conventions imposed on women right from the start. Since her early childhood, she had known her life would be different from those of the girls of her age, and she had already wished to have been born a man instead of a woman. Indeed, who she was deep down and what she believed in were more important than society. The start of the war between the Southern States and the Northern States was the perfect occasion for Velazquez to implement her plans. However, the side for which she fought – whatever wrong it was – does not have a big importance here: what I assume more important is what

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<sup>9</sup> It is also worth mentioning that she signed the autobiography with her two names: Loreta Janeta Velazquez and Lieutenant Harry T. Buford.

she accomplished and achieved as a woman of her time. Her quest for identity is reflected in the autobiography. Her goal was first to be the new Joan of Arc and to become a famous soldier who could lead men to glory. She wanted to show she could be as bold and powerful as Joan of Arc, as well as any man on the battlefield. This is why she dressed as a man, behaved as a man, lived as a man; and not like a man. This was indeed successful since a lot of people never knew – even at the time she wrote the autobiography – that behind Lieutenant Harry T. Buford was Loreta Janeta Velazquez: “it is probable that a vast number of my late associates will now for the first time learn that the handsome young officer [...] was a woman” (*TWB*: 38). When she realized that being the new Joan of Arc was a “girlish fancy”, she took advantage of her being a woman and started to spy. She played on this double identity and when she was a woman or when she was a man, she was always in that in-betweenness. She was gliding from one gender to another according to her plans. The process of becoming the other took time, energy and a lot of disillusion but it seems that it is precisely in that in-betweenness that she found her real identity. Velazquez’s autobiography deserves to be known and read, even if it is probably exaggerated, for the process of writing from a woman of the nineteenth century and what she tells readers in it, is quite astonishing and worth reading.

The accounts of the most famous female spies – including Velazquez – are also worth reading and give a good insight into what their real motivations and contributions were during the Civil War. Thus, in the next part we will deal with Rose O’Neal Greenhow, Belle Boyd and Loreta Janeta Velazquez.

## B- Spying

### 1- Their motivations

We know that a lot of women spied during the war – either for the Confederacy or for the Union – however, few of them wrote on their exploits. Three of the Confederate spies did – Rose O’Neal Greenhow, Belle Boyd and Loreta Janeta Velazquez – and I find it relevant to study their writings and to wonder why they chose to tell their stories. Rose O’Neal Greenhow wrote *My Imprisonment and the First Year of Abolition Rule at Washington*, which she published in 1863. Belle Boyd wrote *Belle Boyd in Camp and Prison* – in two volumes – which she published in 1865; and finally, Loreta Janeta Velazquez wrote *The Woman in Battle* in 1876. What is worth mentioning, though obvious, is that the three of them published their accounts under their real names. As we saw before, the majority of women who published accounts of the war, used a pen name or published them anonymously because of the fear of public rejection. Nevertheless, these three women used their real names to tell their stories of the war. By doing so, they stepped out of their proper spheres twice, by spying and by publishing their accounts under their real names. We will see later what their reasons were, but first we will deal with their motivations for spying for the Confederacy.

Rose O’Neal Greenhow was born in 1815 in Montgomery county, Maryland. She married a prominent physician, Robert Greenhow in 1835, who died twenty years later. With their four children, they lived in Washington. Rose O’Neal Greenhow decided to stay in Washington after his death and when the Southern States seceded. At the outbreak of the war, her Southern roots took the upper hand – she was a staunch pro-slavery lady – and did what was in her power to help the Confederacy. Her major motivation to engage in the activity of spying was her love for the Southern States. When the first states seceded, she saw the inhabitants of Washington as “mortal enemies” and felt “oppression and shame” in the symbols of the Union (*MI*: 4)<sup>10</sup>. Contrary to her counterparts, she does not detail her motivations, but mostly focuses on what she achieved as a spy. Boyd and Velazquez really

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<sup>10</sup> The abbreviations *MI* and *BBCP* respectively refer to Greenhow’s *My Imprisonment and the First Year of Abolition Rule at Washington* and to Boyd’s *Belle Boyd in Camp and Prison*.

wanted to fight for the South; like Greenhow, these women were real patriots. Like Greenhow, Boyd lived in Washington when the States seceded, but contrary to her, Boyd, “at this exciting crisis” decided to return to Martinsburg, Virginia – her native village (*BBCP* V1: 48). Boyd was born in 1844 in Martinsburg. Her family was prosperous and even if they were among Union supporters, the family remained strong defenders of the Confederate Cause. When the war broke out, she did not intend to take part in the war but as the excitement she felt to equip her father ceased, she could only experience “sadness and depression” at knowing her loved ones in the battlefield. She was required to show self-sacrifice which she considered “too tame and monotonous” to satisfy her person. (*BBCP* V1: 52). Boyd first helped in hospitals, and already showed Federal generals that she was a “rebel lady” (*BBCP* V1: 59). She was not married, she was still a daughter – around twenty years old during the war – and could therefore allow herself to have a rebellious attitude. Boyd became a spy by chance; indeed, Martinsburg was within the Federal lines, and one day, it happened that, in self-defense, she killed a Federal soldier who had entered her house and threatened to put the Federal flag in front of her mother and herself. There was an examination by the Federal officer in command, who ended up saying that Boyd had “done perfectly right”. After that event, the Federal officer ordered sentries to guard the Boyd house and this is how she became acquainted with Federal officers and how she became the famous “rebel spy” (*BBCP* V1: 70). She took advantage of the situation, and it enabled her to gain important information. This is how she sent her first dispatches. However, these messages fell into the hands of the Union: she was reprimanded and ordered to leave Martinsburg. On top of patriotic motivations and being eager for adventure, she was then seeking for revenge. However, she had become a suspect for the Union, which she was satisfied with: “it is with unfeigned joy and true pride I confess that the suspicions of the enemy were far from being unfounded” (*BBCP* V1: 75). Boyd asserts that fame was not part of her motivations: “neither a desire of fame nor notoriety has been my motive for enacting the *rôle* I did in this sad drama” (*BBCP* V1: 142). On the contrary, as we saw, fame was one of the main motivations for Velazquez. As Velazquez was disappointed by the fighting and horrors of the battlefield, she decided to contribute by spying. As a soldier she was dressed like a man, and as a spy she decided to dress again like a woman and to alternate between the two until the end of the war. Like Boyd, Velazquez was looking for adventure, indeed, she decided to leave “the *ennui* of the camp” and to spy (*TWB*: 129). Velazquez also believed that she had duties

toward the Confederacy and as she was not satisfied with her soldier's activity, she decided to perform her duty as a spy. Like Boyd, she was thrilled by the "excitement" of all the dangers that the spying activity brought (*TWB*: 296). But most of all, Velazquez spied for herself and to prove to herself she was capable of helping the Confederacy. She needed to be recognized for her actions, for she was very proud of herself. She says that she spied for "my own satisfaction and for the sake of showing what I was capable of" (*TWB*: 273). She was persuaded that she "could scarcely fail to accomplish something that would be satisfactory to [herself], and of value to the cause" and was very disappointed at "not being able to obtain the kind of official recognition [she] desired" (*TWB*: 345-346).

These three women had similar but at the same time different motivations to serve the Confederacy. In her diary, Greenhow does not linger on her motivations for being a spy. It can be explained either by the fact that she did not look for recognition from the readers, by the fact that she considered her motivations were obvious, or by the fact that she was older than Boyd and Velazquez when the war broke out and did not have the passion of youth. Boyd and Velazquez, like Greenhow, also wanted to fight for the South, but were definitely looking for adventure and thrill. Both of them could allow themselves to be more rebellious thanks to their youth. Contrary to Greenhow and Boyd, Velazquez – in her opinion – did not receive enough official recognition for her participation in the war. This recognition was also a major motivation for trying to do her best throughout the war; she wanted to prove to herself and to prove to others that she could be a key factor in the success of the Confederacy. The three of these spies were, indeed, considered important and dangerous spies and we are going to see what their contributions were during the war.

## 2- Their contributions

The three women deal with their contributions during the war. It may be interesting to link what they say about their contributions with what the newspapers said about women spies. I will not deal with all of their contributions – it would be too long – but I will deal with the major ones. There were plenty of newspapers which dealt with female spies, soldiers and vivandieres. We will use Vicky Betts' collection of articles, and we will focus only on some of the articles dealing with Greenhow, Boyd and Velazquez.

The first dispatch that Greenhow sent, was on July 16, 1861 to Manassas. It arrived later that day and she received an answer the day after, stating: “Yours was received at eight o’clock at night. Let them come: we are ready for them. We rely upon you for precise information. Be particular as to description and destination of forces, quantity or artillery, &c. (Signed) Thos. Jordon, Adj.-Gen” (*MI*: 16). She does not tell us what her message was, however we can guess, thanks to the answer, that she was probably offering her help. Being in Washington, she was at the heart of the Union and could obtain information easily. On the 17<sup>th</sup>, she sent another dispatch informing her Confederate countrymen that “the enemy” planned to cut the Winchester railroad in order to intercept Johnson They wanted to prevent him from reinforcing Beauregard, who had a small command at Manassas. She also received a dispatch from Manassas: “*Our President and our General direct me to thank you. We rely upon you for further information. The Confederacy owes you a debt.* (Signed) Jordon, Adjutant-General” (*MI*: 18). Right from the start, she was recognized as helpful and received official recognition. According to this last answer, we can assume that from that point, she was officially working for the Confederacy.

The city of Washington became more and more dangerous for her – for a Confederate spy – and she was urged to leave the city more than once but she never did so. She justifies her choice: “at whatever peril, I resolved to remain, conscious of the great service I could render my country, my position giving me remarkable facilities for obtaining information” (*MI*: 23-24). Indeed, she considered that her fate was to work for the Confederacy, she did whatever she could to do so and did not step back in front of danger. She was in almost daily correspondence with Manassas.

In her diary, Greenhow explains that she was not the only woman in correspondence with Confederate officers. She does not name them but it shows that women were more involved in spying activities than one may think and that they remain unheralded heroines: “The Southern women of Washington are the cause of the defeat of the grand army! They are entitled to the laurels won by the brave defenders of our soil and institutions! They have told Beauregard when to strike! They, with their siren arts, have possessed themselves of the plans and schemes of the Lincoln Cabinet, and warned Jeff. Davis of them” (*MI*: 39). The phrase “siren arts” is interesting because women used the false assumptions that rested upon them – their so-called innocence – and their charm to take information from the Union. It also reflects the issue posed by the Lieber’s Code in which White women were not seen as

potential enemies at first. However, the Union became more and more suspicious toward women and summoned detectives from all over the country to watch potential women spies. Under such circumstances, Greenhow explains: “for several weeks I had been followed, and my house watched, by those emissaries of the State Department, the detective police. This was often a subject of amusement to me [...]; we would turn and follow those who we fancied were giving us undue share of attention” (*MI*: 39). Even if she was an adult woman during the war, she displayed rebellious behaviors. It shows how powerful and dangerous spies were considered.

Greenhow was arrested on August 23, 1861 by two men while entering her own house. One of them did not wear the uniform of the U.S. army – she does not mention his name – and the other one was wearing the uniform and was named Major Allen, the chief detective police of the city. She was herself in possession of an important note which she put into her mouth and destroyed. She was rebellious during her arrest: “I have no power to resist you; but, had I been inside of my house, I would have killed one of you before I had submitted to this illegal process” (*MI*: 54). She and her “Little Rose” were then prisoner of their own house and it had to be kept secret. Greenhow was considered “as the head of the conspirators at Washington” and her house as “the headquarters of Secessionists.” The detectives were expecting to catch other spies (*MI*: 57). The detectives found papers, however not so suspicious and told Greenhow:

‘Well, madam you have no reason to feel anything but pride and satisfaction at the ordeal you have gone through for there is not a line amongst your papers that does not do your honour. It is the most extensive private correspondence that has ever fallen under my examination, and the most interesting and important is not a distinguished name in America that is not found there. There is nothing that can come under the charge of treason, but enough to make the government dread and hold you as a most dangerous adversary’ (*MI*: 60).

They recognized that she must be proud and they considered her as dangerous. This is also an acknowledgement of the power of women and some recognition that like any man, women could fight for their nation and do whatever they could to achieve their goals. Greenhow never confessed anything during her imprisonment in her house. She had very important papers, papers according to which she could have been accused of treason. She was ready to burn the house to the ground if she could not destroy them. She succeeded in destroying them and her house was being searched for seven more days. She rejoiced in having accomplished this exploit: “I now watched their clumsy proceedings free from

anxiety, as I had, under their own eyes, sent off or destroyed all my papers of value” (*MI*: 69).

On August 30, she was told that other prisoners would be brought in her house. The detectives needed legal evidence against her and tried to make her talk by threatening her against her “life and reputation” (*MI*: 95). This is very interesting. First, life and reputation are associated and this sentence reflects what we saw in the first part: how reputation was important for ladies – since most of them did not get more involved in the war, being afraid of putting at risk their reputation. This was apparently not the case of Greenhow and she would not confess even with the threats against her reputation. She did not have the impression that she was stepping out of the confines of her sex but she was only performing her patriotic duty, which was expected from a Southern woman.

She finally learnt that she was sent to another prison: the Old Capitol. At that time, a friend of hers, Miss Poole, took the oath of allegiance. It is worth mentioning because it marks a change in the perception of women. From that point, they were considered as powerful and were granted significant importance. I do not think it is innocent on the part of Greenhow to mention it. Being imprisoned at the Old Capitol was far from putting an end to her spying career. Even if her letters were scrutinized by the detective police, she still succeeded in delivering intelligence; however, she does not tell how. The detective police used chemical process to extract treason and she let them believe that she used sympathetic ink by deliberately leaving a preparation to divert attention from her real means of communication, and it worked (see appendix n°4). The article proves that she was playing on them and that they easily fell into her trap. Despite the title, “The Female Traitors”, the correspondent is rather factual in his article, he does not give his opinion about women spies. He also reports the words of Lieutenant Sheldon, who was in charge of the prison quarters, and who said that Greenhow was “the most ladylike in her manners” (*MI*: 208). It proves that a woman could be a spy and a lady at the same time, it was not paradoxical.

Greenhow stayed on for the whole nine months in the Old Capitol. She was then taken to Baltimore on the supposition of Jackson going to Washington. It was in reality her release. She arrived in Richmond and was summoned and praised by Davis. Here is her reaction: “And I shall ever remember that as the proudest moment of my whole life, to have received the tribute of praise from him who stands as the apostle of our country’s liberty in



the eyes of the civilized world” (*MI*: 322). She travelled to Europe to praise the Southern Cause and returned to the United States. In 1864, she was aboard a rowboat, trying to escape a Union boat and she got drowned. She was given a funeral worthy of a war hero and her body was wrapped in the Confederate flag.

Boyd, like Greenhow, worked for Beauregard, and for Jackson too. Boyd first played the role of courier when she visited her father at Manassas. When she returned to Martinsburg, her will to help the Confederacy did not stop. On one occasion, she displayed courage by playing a trick on Federal soldiers. She was riding out one evening with two Confederate officers, when her horse was frightened by something and ran away with her still on his back. She could not stop him and the horse carried her within the Federal lines. Boyd did not know how to act but rapidly made up her mind and thought that “valour would be the better part of discretion” (*BBCP* V1: 81). She went straight to the officer in command, she apologized and embodied the role of the perfect Belle, saying that she was their captive and begged them to allow her to return. He accepted and two officers suggested escorting her, saying: “I suppose there is no fear of those cowardly rebels taking us prisoners” (*BBCP* V1: 82). Boyd accepted their offer and reassured them about the cowardly rebels. She kept her calm whereas she was boiling at those words. They arrived within the Confederate lines and the four officers – Confederates and Federals – stared at one another surprised. Boyd broke the silence and said: “here are two prisoners that I have brought you” and told the Federal officers: “here are two of the ‘cowardly rebels’ whom you hoped there was no danger of meeting!” (*BBCP* V1: 83-84) The two Federal officers asked who she was, she told them her name, to which they responded: “Good God! The Rebel spy!” (*BBCP* V1: 84) This story shows how underestimated female power was and how easy it was for women to manipulate men. Moreover, it proves that men had false assumptions about women’s innocence. This story also demonstrates that Boyd was known by all during the war, and probably feared too.

Later in the war, Martinsburg was occupied by the Federal forces but Boyd and her mother were given a pass to go to Front Royal, which was occupied by General Shields. Boyd and her mother arrived at Boyd’s aunt’s place, which was the residence appropriated by General Shields – it was a Federal headquarters. General Shields thought he was safe in this house but Boyd asserts that he “forgot that a woman can something listen and remember”

(BBCP V1: 104). The night before Shields was to leave to “whip Jackson”, a council was held and Boyd was in the room above them, which had a hole on the floor and permitted her to observe the men. She thought she could make an account of her discovery. She listened to the conversation and wrote everything down in cipher, which she delivered herself right away in the middle of the night. She gave it to Colonel Ashby. She was very daring and motivated; every occasion was good to help the Confederacy.

At her aunt’s house was Mr. Clark, a reporter of the *New York Herald*. He made advances to Boyd that she rejected. Because of her refusal, he turned out to behave like an “inveterate enemy” (BBCP V1: 123). On the 23<sup>rd</sup>, the Federals were rushing in the streets because the Confederates were approaching. Boyd taunted Mr. Clark, telling him to prepare to go to prison. Boyd went to the opera-glass to watch the Confederates, but on her way, she had to pass by Mr. Clark’s door, which was open with the key on the outside. She thought of making him a prisoner. Therefore, she locked herself down into his room. From the balcony, she could see the Confederates approaching. She had found important information and had to convey them to Jackson. She assumed that thanks to the intelligence, the victory would be secure. The intelligence she was in possession of stated that General Banks was at Strasbourg with 4,000 men and the small force at Winchester could be readily reinforced by General Whites. It also stated that General Shields and Geary were at a short distance while Fremont was beyond the valley and that these separate divisions should cooperate against Jackson (BBCP V1: 128-129). She asked several men to deliver the intelligence but all of them refused. Therefore, she went by herself; the Federals were everywhere and did not hesitate to target her. She was not hit. When women represented too much danger, they did not hesitate to shoot. According to what she says, we can say Boyd was the most courageous of all. She defines it as “feminine courage” (BBCP V1: 133). When she arrived within the Confederate lines, soldiers were surprised to see a woman: it was indeed not common. Thanks to the information she gave to the Confederates, the soldiers arrived in time to prevent the destruction of their bridges and therefore the Union retreated. As a consequence, the Federals could not flee from Front Royal and the Confederates captured Federals, among whom was Mr. Clark. At that time, she was not aware she had been of service to her country and declares that she did not do it for fame. However, she received official recognition for her action by Jackson (see appendix n°5).

A few months later, she was arrested by Major Sherman and was imprisoned at the Old Capital in Washington. During her first night in prison, she heard the sound of a knife scooping out the plaster of the wall. Within a few minutes, the knife became visible and she rapidly understood what it meant: she could cooperate with the other prisoners. They shared notes and it was the beginning of a clandestine correspondence. Boyd mentions Greenhow and tells that Greenhow's former cell was just above hers. Either they knew each other, either Boyd had heard about Greenhow, or Boyd had read her book. In any case, Greenhow was known as being a spy. Boyd exchanged letters with her cell neighbors and this is how they transmitted intelligence. She was released a few weeks later and sent to Richmond. She was determined to visit Europe in order to spy outside the borders of the U.S. and Davis approved. Her mission was to bear dispatches. However, she does not tell the reader why she could collect useful information in Europe.

She was aboard the *Greyhound*, on her way to Europe. She knew it was a desperate journey but relied on fate, which she thought made her part of "the greatest dramas ever yet enacted upon the stage of the world" and she thought she would be "the handmaid of a daring enterprise" (*BBCP V2*: 31-32). On the *Greyhound*, there were two other adventurers, Mr. Newell and Mr. Pollard who was the editor of the *Richmond Examiner*. They laughed together even if they were aware of the imminent danger. Boyd used an alias – Mrs. Lewis – in order not to be found out under her real identity, which was very famous by that time. A Union boat – *the Connecticut's* – found them and sent shells onto the boat without touching the passengers of the *Greyhound*. The captain of the boat said to Boyd: "Miss Belle, I declare to you that, but for your presence on board, I would burn her to the water's edge rather than those infernal scoundrels should reap the benefit of a single bale of our cargo." To that she answered: "Captain, 'Henry,' act without reference to me – do what you think your duty. For my part, sir, I concur with you: burn her by all means – I am not afraid. I have made up my mind, and am indifferent to my fate, if only the Federals do not get the vessel" (*BBCP V2*: 39-40). He eventually exclaimed that they must surrender. Captain Henry then hauled down the flag to show the Union he had surrendered. It shows the importance of Boyd, or the importance of women in general, or – maybe more probable – the importance of the dispatches she carried. For Boyd, the most important was to defend intelligence.

While on the deck of the *Connecticut's*, she saw a Federal officer, whom she found handsome, and who was to become her husband. He treated her very well: as "a passenger,

not a prisoner”; however, her identity had not yet been found out (*BBCP* V2: 58). His name was Mr. Hardinge. He proposed to her while she and her comrades were still prisoners of the boat. She accepted. Boyd and captain Henry intended to win over the boat to escape, and within a moment of inadvertence on the part of the Federals, Captain Henry succeeded. A few days later, the Federals became sure that Mrs. Lewis was in fact Belle Boyd. The Marshal advised her to depart as soon as possible, if she did not want to be arrested and shot. On the next Monday, she left to Montreal. She was forced into exile. Mr. Hardinge was charged with complicity in the escape of Captain Henry but was paroled and could arrived in time to say good-bye to Boyd. It was very difficult for Boyd to say good-bye to her native land:

With a sad heart I had bidden good-bye to Mr. Hardinge, although I trusted that he would soon rejoin me; and I enjoyed the delightful prospect of breathing free Canadian air. Yes, I should be free! Free from prison bars and irksome confinement; but, alas! An exile! Each step towards freedom carried me farther and farther from my native land; whilst, did I turn back, a heavy penalty awaited me. My father dead, and my dear mother far away! Truly I was alone in the wide, wide world! And I had left one generous heart behind that I knew would miss me sorely. (*BBCP* V2: 100-101)

While in exile, she never stopped spying, she met Southern families and was accompanied by Captain Henry and other Confederate spies. Then she sailed to Europe and more particularly to England. She arrived in London and received a letter from Mr. Hardinge. This letter stipulated that he was looking for her in England, she asked him to meet her in London. They married on August 25, 1864, “and journalists were pleased to treat the world to some portions of the romance<sup>11</sup>” (*BBCP* V2: 110). The wedding was widely commented upon, English, American and even French newspapers reported it. See appendix n°6, for two instances. The French article reports the wedding but also Boyd’s exploits during the war. The journalist portrays her as “l’héroïne de tant d’exploits aventureux”, describes her as having “une énergie et un courage qui se rencontrent rarement chez une femme” and ends the article stating that she persuaded her husband to change sides and to support the South. The American article also deals with the “marriage of a Confederate Heroine”. This journalist goes even further and considers Boyd as “a modern Joan of Arc.” He had the pleasure to announce that she persuaded her husband to join the Confederacy. We can

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<sup>11</sup> Indeed, that story is the typical North-South sectional romance, like a Southern version of *Romeo and Juliet*.

conclude that Boyd was known all around the world and that she was praised for her actions. This proves that it was possible to be a woman and to fight for a nation.

Velazquez's first experiences as a spy were on her own and were not very conclusive. She considered those first experiences as a sort of self-training: "this, it must be remembered, was simply a reconnoitring expedition, undertaken entirely on my own account, without authority from anybody [...] my real object was more to make an experiment than anything else" (*TWB*: 139). This expedition in question was led thanks to a friend of her late husband – an officer of the Federal army – and this man took her to visit places of interests in Washington: the Patent Office, the Treasury Department and the War Department. Velazquez told him she would like to meet the man who held the position of Secretary of War. This is how she managed to meet Secretary Cameron. She found that he must have been "a hard man to deal with"; she also met the Commissary General of Prisoners, General Wessels, who made a better impression on Velazquez. She even met Lincoln and the meeting with him was "an agreeable disappointment" to her (*TWB*: 141). Indeed, she was at ease with him, and she thought he was not a bad man but an honest man: "my change of sentiment with regard to Mr. Lincoln, as may be supposed, did not influence me in the least with regard to my own opinions concerning the rights and wrongs of the contest between the North and the South, not did it allow it to interfere in any way with the carrying out of my plans" (*TWB*: 142). After this tour of the city, she was then sure it was the place she could operate in and she decided to go back South, in a male's attire. She went to New Orleans and was less precautions because she thought she was among friends, contrary to Washington. It did not take long before she was arrested on the suspicion of being a spy, and taken to the provost marshal. She enraged because her patriotism was doubted: she was arrested by her own camp. She had in mind to prove to them by all means she was a staunch Confederate except to reveal her real identity. She was released but re-arrested the day after, but "this time on suspicion of being a woman" (*TWB*: 179). The mayor ordered her to change her apparel, and she answered: "Sir, prove that I am a woman, it will be quite time, when you do that, for you to give me an order to change my dress." She was very bold and as she considered her disguise as part of her mission, she did not want to abandon it. It also shows that women with their proper attire rose less attention than men. However, she had no choice but to confess and hope she would be released if she explained to the mayor the reasons and

motivations for such an unconventional attitude. As a result, she was sentenced to ten days of imprisonment and fined \$10. She paid a high price for her disguise and it proves that women could not and must not step out of the confines of their sex. She went too far by adopting male attire. She explains that because of her discovery she “had been subjected to gross indignities, simply because [she] chose to perform a man’s rather than a woman’s work” (*TWB*: 184). This demonstrates how important reputation was and how heavy the gender conventions were. But, at the same time, it shows that Velazquez was quite ahead of her time and that she could easily detach from the pressure of patriarchy.

In Richmond, she was arrested again “on the charge of being a woman in disguise and supposedly a Federal spy” (*TWB*: 278). Both the mayor and his wife – particularly the wife – were shocked that a woman could adopt male attire and do a man’s work. This is interesting that it was the woman who was the most shocked but it proves how trapped they were by gender conventions and by the image they had to give. The mayor and his wife roundly encouraged her to dress as a woman and the mayor told her she could be useful to the Confederacy. He ordered General Winder to release Velazquez and the latter assigned her to a position in the secret service corps. She asserts that “in the proper attire of my sex it would be easier for me to pass the pickets, and avoid being suspected of having any end in view to which objection could be taken” (*TWB*: 294). For this new job, she embodied the role of a widow, Mrs. Williams, to perform several missions. The newspapers of the time prove that she was successful because they called her “Mrs. Williams”, they did not know her real identity, contrary to Greenhow and Boyd (see appendix n<sup>o</sup>7).

Velazquez’s major exploit during the war was when she played the role of a double agent. She was approached by Lieutenant Shorter of Arkansas who offered her a job. She said that she would not risk her life again without recognition. She wanted to be officially recognized as helping the Confederacy. He responded that the job would be worth it. She had to carry a dispatch though the Federal lines and give it to a certain party. Shorter had captured a Federal spy who had dispatches about several Confederate forces, Shorter modified them and Velazquez had to deliver them to the Federal General Washburn, who would think she had obtained them from the Federal spy. She also had dispatches to deliver to Forrest, which she had to give to another Confederate spy in Memphis. For this mission, she adopted the costume of a poor countrywoman, Mrs. Fowler, who had lost everything during the war and who was searching for protection by the Union. She succeeded in finding

the Confederate spy in Memphis. This spy told her that before leaving, she needed to know what the Federal troops were preparing. She found the information and the spy left to deliver the dispatch to Forrest, who made his raid. She also succeeded in her double game and after some time, she managed to be hired by the Federal secret service corps, by Colonel Baker. She gave him real important information in order that he might believe her. The information helped him materially. She is very proud of what she did because at the same time, she was also spying for the Confederacy “almost under his eyes” (*TWB*: 400). Baker did not suspect anything and was impressed with her.

During summer 1864, she had planned to free Confederate spies who were imprisoned at Johnson Island, Ohio; and for that, she needed Colonel Baker. She told him that she heard that an important Confederate spy who was imprisoned, could communicate with the outside. Therefore, she offered her help by going to Richmond – passing as a Confederate – to find information about this man: where he was, what he and the Confederacy were trying to do etc. Velazquez told Baker that she only needed money for the trip. Baker was afraid she might be captured but eventually accepted and gave her \$5,000. When she arrived in Richmond, she immediately communicated with the Confederate authorities, delivered her dispatches and gave the information about the position of the Federals. She was given a package to deliver to Canada; she went back North and headed toward Canada.

She was back in the U.S when she heard about Lincoln’s murder and the end of the war. She knew it also meant the end for her, so she decided to go into exile as soon as possible. Like Boyd, Velazquez was torn at the idea of leaving her country: “it was not with a pang of regret that I watched [the shores] of America fading in the distance. This, after all, was my country” (*TWB*: 519). She went to Europe, then to Mexico and finally to South America.

Greenhow, Boyd and Velazquez did contribute to the Confederate war effort and were, indeed, effective spies (see appendix n°8). Boyd and Greenhow were mentioned in the Northern newspapers, in which the correspondents warned people against them. However, the newspapers did not show portraits of them, which made the task difficult to actually recognize them. Nevertheless, what has to be highlighted, is that the three of them

chose to tell their stories of the war in their accounts and there must be a reason. By reading these war autobiographies, we can hear their voices; it is as if they were talking to the reader. They do tell the reader their stories, but what for?

### 3- Their voices

The three of them chose to publish their accounts so it means that they had a message to get across. The three of them address their readers. Greenhow's account was published in 1863 so it is very likely that she addresses American readers. Boyd's account was published in 1865 and she addresses her "English readers"; indeed, she had been forced into exile in England just before the end of the war. Finally, Velazquez published her account in 1876 and addresses "the great public": she is trying to reach as many people as possible. What did they have to say? What was their purpose in writing these accounts and in sharing their voices?

Greenhow starts her accounts by addressing her readers in order to attract them and in order to make them want to read her story. Here is what she says:

It is natural for those who have suffered captivity to exaggerate the importance and interest of their own experience; yet I should not venture upon publishing these notes and sketches merely as a narrative of indignities heaped upon myself personally. It is hoped that the story may excite more than a simple feeling of indignation or commiseration, by exhibiting somewhat of the intolerant spirit in which the present crusade against the liberties of sovereign States was undertaken, and somewhat of the true character of that race of people who insist on compelling us by force to live with them in bonds of fellowship and union. (*MI*: 1-2)

Taking into account that the narrative was published during the war, we can wonder if she was trying to encourage other women to pursue the career of a spy, advising them later on how to act and how not to be caught thanks to her own story. Her narrative shows that she did help the Confederacy, so other women could do likewise. Moreover, still in the introduction, it is very likely that she tries to debunk the false assumptions on women's fragility: "The chief projector of all these horrors, too, were well aware that I knew their plans and machinations intimately; and that, weak woman as I was, I possessed both the means and the spirit to throw serious obstacles in their way" (*MI*: 6). This is very ironical, she probably did not consider herself as a weak woman, on the contrary, and by writing those words, she tries to prove that women were not weak and that they could work for their nation.



As a consequence, we can wonder if she was taking the role of a mouthpiece for women's rights. Indeed, the Union tried "to break [her] spirit" but they failed because she could "possess [her] own soul" and because she always managed to correspond with the Confederacy even when she was imprisoned (*MI*: 6-7). She depicts herself as a strong and independent woman and she asserts that nobody could break her. Unlike her, Boyd did not consider herself as a mouthpiece for women's rights: "I do not set myself up as an advocate of the woman's right doctrine, but would rather appear in the character of a quiet lady expressing her sentiments, not so much to the public as to her immediate friends" (*BBCP* V2: 273). Boyd did not do what she did so as to help the cause of women's rights but she did it for herself and for her country. It seems that gender had nothing to do with her actions. Like both of them, Velazquez expresses herself on the case of women:

For certain kinds of secret service work women are, out of all comparison, superior to men. [...] One reason for this is, that women, when they undertake a secret service job, are really quicker witted and more wide awake than men; they more easily deceive other people, and are less easily imposed upon. [...] for an enterprise that requires real *finesse*, a woman will be likely to accomplish far more than a man. (*TWB*: 364)

Is she an advocate for women's rights and recognition? I am not sure, even if her ideas and behaviors revealed that she was very modern and revolutionary, I do not think that her goal was to promote women's rights but rather to be recognized for her actions without taking into account her gender. It looks like a kind of narcissistic attitude. When she tells the story on how she played a double game on Colonel Baker, she writes: "the reader will think rather astonishing" (*TWB*: 400). It is as if she were inducing us to feel what she wants us to feel about her and not necessarily about women in general.

Unlike Velazquez, Greenhow insists on the fact that the purpose for publishing this book was absolutely not recognition. She received official recognition during her duty as a spy and this was enough for her.

I do not desire to take any special credit in the eyes of the public. I only performed my duty, and have already been gratified by the thanks of those who best can judge of the services which I endeavoured to render; and the matter is mentioned here merely as one of the reasons why it had been thought that a narrative furnished by one who enjoyed such opportunities of observation may be found not uninteresting (*MI*: 7).

This sentence also adds a clue to the fact that her real purpose for publishing was to push other women or people to help the Confederacy. Sharing her voice was not innocent at all

and all her rhetoric had a purpose: denouncing, encouraging people and rebelling. Greenhow tries to persuade Southerners not to submit to the Union but to keep fighting and resisting.

At all events, I have endeavoured in this sketch of my captivity to discharge a great duty. That duty was to contribute what I myself have been and known of the history of the time. If the exposure therein made of the Yankee character, in the first year of its luxuriant and rampant development (after long compression in a condition of inferiority), shall add to the feeling of execration for such a race of people, and deepen the universal gratitude at the happy change which had severed us from them, and made it still more and more impossible that we can ever submit to any kind of political association with them again, then my poor narrative will not have been written in vain (*MI*: 9-10).

Contrary to Greenhow, the introduction to *Belle Boyd in Camp and Prison* was written by a friend of Boyd's. Even if it is not Boyd's voice, what he says is relevant. Indeed, in this introduction, her friend keeps talking about Boyd's voice. The two met at the Old Capitol and what struck the man about Boyd was her voice: "I heard her voice" (*BBCP* V1: 13). He compares her voice to a spell, as if she could bewitch people with her voice. Her friend says that in her voice was:

Such a peculiar expression as to touch even sensibilities which did not sympathize with the cause which inspired the song.<sup>12</sup> It was difficult to listen unmoved to this lady, throwing her whole soul, as it were, into the expression of sentiments of devotion to the South [...]. The pathos of her voice [...] affected all who heard her, not only with compassion for her, but with an interest in her (*BBCP* V1: 13-14).

And we experience the same feeling while reading her account, despite the camp for which she fought. We cannot help but be interested in her story. Moreover, what he says shows how intriguing Boyd's voice was and we are going to see what she had to tell.

In the introduction to *The Woman in Battle*, Velazquez gives the reasons for having written her autobiography. Velazquez had high aspirations concerning her life and notably concerning her contributions during the war. She also wanted more than anything to be recognized as helping the Confederacy; one of her main purposes was fame and by writing her book this is also what she tried to achieve, as well as to share with the public the aspirations of a woman at odds with her time. Like Greenhow and Boyd, Velazquez reveals her real names<sup>13</sup> but it is different for her. Indeed, her female name was not known during

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<sup>12</sup> The song was "Maryland, my Maryland."

<sup>13</sup> The name of her female identity and the name of her male identity.

the war (see the newspapers) and she probably exemplifies her actions<sup>14</sup> in order to be famous and recognized as being someone. This is what she says for writing: “I only attempted authorship because I had, as others assured me, and I myself believed, something to tell that was worth telling. [...] I hope that the narrative will prove of sufficient interest” (*TWB*: 5). In the account, Velazquez keeps repeating that she had nothing to envy from any man. One can wonder if it is to prove to the public or to herself – or both – that she was a strong woman and that women could be strong and independent if they wished so. Velazquez’s voice is very modern. It is difficult to imagine that it was indeed a nineteenth century woman who wrote these lines. In the introduction she warns her readers about the content of her book and affirms her position concerning its publication:

My career has differed materially from that of most women; and some things that I have done have shocked persons for whom I have every respect, however much my ideas of propriety may differ from theirs. I can only say, however, that in my opinion there was nothing essentially improper in my putting on the uniform of a Confederate officer for the purpose of taking an active part in the war; and, as when on the field of battle, in camp, and during long and toilsome marches, I endeavored, not without success, to display a courage and fortitude not inferior to the most courageous of the men around me, and as I never did aught to disgrace the uniform I wore, but, on the contrary, won the hearty commendation of my comrades, I feel that I have nothing to be ashamed of. Had I believed that my book needed any apologies on this score, it would never have been written; and, having written it, I am willing to submit my conduct to the judgment of the public, with a confidence that I will at least receive due credit for the motives by which I was animated (*TWB*: 6).

In this paragraph, she debunks the ideal of the Southern lady. Gender seems not to be what makes a person but what seems to make a person is her/his personal courage, ambitions and motivations. She seems not to care about what could be said about her actions because she is proud of what she did and wants to share her story with as many people as possible. She lays herself bare and waits for judgment, which she assumes will be positive since she thinks that she deserves “due credit.”

Like her counterparts, she addresses her readers and, on several occasions, she comes back on her actions and explains what could have been done. Unlike Greenhow and Boyd, Velazquez wrote the account eleven years after the end of the war and so had the benefit of hindsight.

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<sup>14</sup> I also read that she published it in order to have money for her child. Here I only take into account what she says in the autobiography.

Greenhow, unlike her counterparts, has a strong opinion concerning politics and does not hesitate to share it. Indeed, when Lincoln was elected and things started to turn bad for the South, she declares that the purpose of the Union was “to deprive the South of her sovereign equal rights, and to reduce her to a state of vassalage; for a feeling of bitter jealousy had been festering and strengthening in the North mind against her” (*MI*: 12-13). She is the only one who gives her political opinion with that determination and passion. Boyd gives her political opinion from time to time and Velazquez never does. Greenhow explains here why she fought for the South and we understand that her aim was to maintain the political status quo. She does not deal with slavery at first but later in her account. She was an educated woman and could not help it but she needed to express herself; and she considered this expression as a right she deserved. Her voice had to be shared no matter the consequences could be.

The Yankee Government and Yankee Congress were now exercised upon the subject of reorganizing their shattered hosts. The military committee was specially charged with the task, and certainly grave efforts were being made to this end, the primary object being to mystify the people as to the past, in order to make them blind instruments in the future; for it was now truly a nation of subterfuges and humbugs. At this time the solemn face was enacted of admitting as U.S senators the *bogus* members from Western Virginia. I was in the gallery of the Senate at the time, and happened to remark upon the proceedings to my own party, when a man sitting before me in the uniform of lieutenant-colonel of Yankee volunteers, in company with a number of other officers, turned and said, ‘That is treason; we will show you that it must be put a stop to; we have a government to maintain,’ &c. This was the first effort of the kind to repress freedom of opinion which had come under my observation, and the beginning of that reign of terror for which we should be obliged to seek precedents in the age of Nero or Caligula. Yet I confess that it did not surprise me. I leaned forward and said deliberately, ‘My remarks were addressed to my companions, and not to you; and if I did not discover by your language that you must be ignorant of all the laws of good-breeding, I should take the number of your company and report you to your commanding officer to be punished for your impertinence!’ (*MI*: 28-29)

She considers this event as an attack on her “liberty of speech” (*MI*: 32). She was kind of revolutionary for her time and for her social class too.

Like Greenhow, Boyd is very passionate in her writing concerning the situation of the South:

How many thousands of our sons have fallen in battle, against oppressors who would not confess that our freedom was beyond their power! How many hapless women and children have perished miserably, or been driven forth to beg their bread in foreign countries, before enemies who with heavy hands have sought to rivet our chains – enemies who could not discern the truth of the Irish’s orators memorable axiom, and acknowledge that the genius of Liberty is universal and irresistible! (*BBCP* V1: 41-42)

She gives her opinion on the Civil War and more particularly on the Union. Like Greenhow, Boyd advocates that the reason for the war was that the Union wanted to deprive the South of their equal rights: “exclude the landed proprietors of the South” (*BBCP* V1: 44).

Concerning the outbreak of the war, Greenhow wants to restore the truth and asserts: “I think I can correct some grave misconceptions of the event which have gained credence” (*MI*: 324). What she mentions first is slavery and she explains that it “was not the producing cause of the dissolution” but that it was only an excuse from the North to gain more power. She takes up the words of Mr. Webster – a Federal spy – about slavery: “that is not a moral question: it is a question of political power” (*MI*: 325). The reason for declaring war on the Southern side was to maintain the status quo: “they contended for the right of extending their social institutions, not to propagate slavery – not to make a single being a slave that would otherwise be free – but simply to preserve the equilibrium of power between the two sections” (*MI*: 326). It shows that Southern women were willing to maintain the Southern status quo and notably the slave labor system. Greenhow was pro-slavery – as an elite Southern lady, she benefited from it – according to her, African-Americans and White people could not live together freely and peacefully:

Two races – one civilised, the other barbarous – being locally intermingled, what does the good society require – the freedom or servitude of the barbarous race? The South believe<sup>15</sup> that the freedom of blacks, under such circumstances, would result certainly in their final extermination, and that servitude is best adapted to their intellectual and moral condition. (*MI*: 348-349)

She thinks that freedom was not adapted for African-Americans and that Southerners were benefactors to Black people. Indeed, she agrees with the ideology that Southerners granted them civilization, a state they could never have without slaveholders. Southerners taught slaves “usages” that were not required by the law, under such circumstances Southerners were to be thanked. She tries by all means to justify the slave labor system.

Concerning slavery, Boyd has the same opinion as Greenhow: “Slavery, like all other imperfect forms of society, will have its day; but the time for its final extinction in the Confederate States of America has not yet arrived. Can it be urged that a race which prefers servitude to freedom has reached that adolescent period of existence?” (*BBCP* V1: 45) She

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<sup>15</sup> As written in the account.

speaks for them and explains that slaveholders thought they were helping the black race by enslaving them. Velazquez does not deal with the issue of slavery but it seems that her opinion toward Black people was less clear-cut than that of her counterparts. There are only two instances in her book, first when she explains how she became a soldier and later when she deals with the proceeding of a battle. To perfect her disguise, she went to the barber's to trim her hair and it was a Black man who did it and whom she referred to as her "colored friend" (*TWB*: 64). To perfect even more her disguise she bought a slave, Bob. When she recounts a battle, which she fought with Bob, she says: "My colored Bob was a better soldier than some of the white men who thought themselves immensely his superiors" (*TWB*: 121-122). It seems that for Velazquez, slavery was not one of the factors to fight the war.

Throughout the account, Boyd addresses her reader to explain her behavior and there is an interesting instance when she was aboard the *Greyhound*:

Gentle reader, before you accuse us of levity, or of a reckless spirit of fatalism, reflect how, in the prison of La Force, when the reign of terror was at its height, the doomed victims of the guillotine acted charades, played games of forfeits, and circulated their *bon mots* and *jeux d'esprit* within a few hours of a violent death. Remember also that the lovely Queen of Scots and the unfortunate Anne Boleyn met their fate with a smile, and greeted the scaffold with a jest (*BBCP* V2: 33).

She tries to defend herself and explains that it was better to face one's fate smiling and enjoying than crying. While on the *Greyhound*, Boyd knew that they had been found out because of a Southern traitor and this is what she says about him: "it is with reluctance that I record this instance of dishonour on the part of a Southerner; but I am resolved to be an impartial historian, and, although often severe to the Yankees, by dint of telling plainly their shortcomings, I will not shrink from the truth when it is unfavourably to my countrymen" (*BBCP* V2: 61). Was it her reason for writing? Did she want to re-establish the truth or her truth?

Like Boyd, Velazquez had in mind to restore the truth about the South when writing: "History does not record any such magnificent resistance as the South made; and however opinions may differ with regard to the original merit of the quarrel, not even the bitterest enemies of the Confederate cause can refuse to admit that it was defended with splendid courage" (*TWB*: 275). Both of them could not let the South be misjudged and felt the need to defend it when they considered it needed to. However, Velazquez clarifies her words and

explains that her real purpose is not to write History but to write her story, her aspirations and her exploits:

But it is no part of my purpose to produce a history of the war. The story of the great contest has been written by abler pens than mine. I only aim at giving in plain language an unadorned narrative of the personal experiences of a single adherent of the Confederacy – experiences which gain their chief interest from the fact that they were different in a marked degree from those of any other participant in the war on either side, and I can only hope that the story of my adventures had proved sufficiently attractive to the reader to induce a perusal of it to the end (*TWB*: 275).

This is really an account about herself and her accomplishments. Unlike Greenhow and Boyd, she never deals with politics, she only deals with her personal story. It seems that she had a real need for recognition. When she quitted her soldiering activity for her spying one, she explains her reasons to the reader. She explains that a soldier is “lost in the crowd” and that he/she has no individuality, whereas as a spy, she felt her position was different:

I now had on hand, my own personality necessarily asserted itself in the strongest manner. The plan of action was mine; its execution depended upon myself; mine alone was the peril; and should I succeed in accomplishing my first point, in gaining the Federal lines in safety, the prosecution of my enterprise would be a contest of wits between myself and those with whom I was brought in contact, and from whom I expected to gain information I was after. [...] acting as a spy within the enemy’s lines, was in many ways much the most interesting to myself (*TWB*: 296-297).

As a soldier she was not seen and so not recognized, whereas as a spy she could gain visibility and recognition. Like often in the account, she begs her reader to keep reading: “I hope, however, that the reader, having followed the story of my fortunes and misfortunes thus far, will have sufficient curiosity to keep with to the end” (*TWB*: 297). She clearly says that she was looking for recognition and since she did not really receive it during the war, she is looking for it with her story: “I may as well say here, that in mentioning the disappointments I have felt at different times at not being able to obtain exactly the kind of official recognition I desired” (*TWB*: 346). Moreover, we know that she added facts to her story and that she exaggerated her contribution – we can guess why.

Boyd and Velazquez had the chance to witness the end of the war, contrary to Greenhow. The two of them concluded their accounts of the war with the assassination of Lincoln. Even if they did not concur with his ideas, they respected the man. This is what Boyd declares:

I can appreciate and admire fully the character of such men who exemplify the sentence, “Out of nothing came something.” As such I looked upon Lincoln, when, month after month, and then year after year, of his presidential term rolled by, and I saw how firmly he held the reins of the Federal cause, which from time to time toppled upon the verge of a yawning chasm. Now all is changed. Can any one believe that Mr. Johnson is the man who is to restore the Republic to what it was, save the nation from bankruptcy, and bring peace and good-will to America? It might not have been impossible with Mr. Lincoln; for that gentleman held out the olive-branch, concealing no deadly weapon beneath it, to General Lee and his little band of heroes. With Mr. Johnson at the head of the Government of the North, who can foresee anything save anarchy and dissolution? He will fiddle whilst Rome is burning.

Politically I did not like Mr. Lincoln, for in him I saw the destroyer. As long as it served his purpose, Mr. Lincoln boldly advocated the right of *Secession*. I trust that the accusation will not startle my readers; but such was the case (*BBCP* V2: 272-273).

Indeed, it may seem paradoxical but they were able to differentiate the man from the politician. Velazquez says: “I felt that it could work nothing but harm to the South. I also felt for Mr. Lincoln and his family; for I liked him, and believed that he was honest and kind-hearted man, who tried to do his duty, as he understood it, and who was in every way well disposed towards the South” (*TWB*: 510).

Boyd’s final words are for her readers, she begs them to be indulgent and not to think that every Southerner wanted the death of Lincoln. She is aware that the publication of her account would harm her reputation and that it would probably prevent her from returning to the United States. However, sharing her voice seems to have been more important than all that: “I appeal to Europe to judge discriminately between North and South. Do not pronounce too hastily your judgment, nor cast upon a brave and chivalrous people the stigma of assassination. Many have advised me to suppress these volumes, urging that their publication will probably cause my life-long banishment. But I cannot – I will not recede” (*BBCP* V2: 279).

Like Boyd, Velazquez’s final words are for the readers:

Perhaps my story was worth the telling, perhaps not – the great public, to whom I have ventured to confide a plain and unpretentious account of my adventuresome career, will be a better judge of that than I am. All I claim is, that my conduct, under the many trying and peculiar circumstances in which I have been placed, shall be judged with impartiality and candor, and that due credit shall be given me for integrity of purpose, and a desire to do my whole duty as I understand it. For the part I took in the great contest between the South and the North I have no apologies to offer. I did what I thought to be right; and, while anxious for the good opinion of all honorable and right-thinking people, a consciousness of the purity of my motives will be an ample protection against the censure of those who may be disposed to be censorious (*TWB*: 606).



There are different things in the paragraph. First, she lays herself bare waiting for judgment, which she hopes will be indulgent. She is aware of the harm it will do to her reputation and also to the ideology of the Lost Cause, but it was unimportant since she thinks that she performed her duty and is proud of it. She hopes she will not be censored – she is more than stepping out of her proper sphere – because, according to her, her motives were fair.

These three women, thanks to their accounts and their voices, shifted from the sphere in which they were expected to stay – the private sphere – to the public sphere. Indeed, everything they tell should have been reserved for the private sphere, for their homes but they chose to voice loud and clear what their situations were during the war. Were they considered as heroines of the Lost Cause? Can we consider them as heroines of the Lost Cause? Greenhow may have been considered as a heroine of the Lost Cause since she praised the South, died during the war and were given a funeral worthy of a heroine. However, Boyd and Velazquez were probably not considered as heroines of the Lost Cause, indeed, even if they loved the South more than anything, they showed that it was not all black or all white. Boyd asserts that some Southerners were traitors, Velazquez talks about corruption on the part of the Confederacy... Velazquez's account was the target of criticisms when it was published.

Contrary to Boyd's and Velazquez's, Greenhow's voice is very political and she is probably the one who stepped out the least of her proper sphere. Boyd's and Velazquez's voices – mostly that of Velazquez – can be considered as modern. Indeed, they were younger and could allow themselves to be more rebellious.

During the Civil War, everybody knew there were women soldiers, indeed, newspapers dealt with it, some officers and male soldiers knew it, however this is not what we remember today, what we learn today in our History books. We can also regret the absence of records on the part of women soldiers but it tells us something important about the society of the time. Indeed, during the war it was difficult to reproach these women for their actions whereas they were actually helping the Cause. However, once the war was over, their active contributions had to be forgotten because it was not the place of women. Women were expected to sacrifice themselves, not to fight and even less to adopt male attire. This disguise was indeed the biggest issue because they were entering the public sphere. This

disguise also triggered off concerns about the notion of identity. Women wearing male attire did not stick with the identity they were given; they did not respect gender conventions assigned to them and they were actually breaking with the status quo which Southern men wanted to maintain so much. Fortunately, there is at least one record which survived time, about a female Confederate soldier: that of Velazquez. She completely broke with Southern conventions. She claims her infringement upon the patriarchy and her freedom of movement and action thanks to her disguise. She had big aspirations and did not hesitate to make them come true, and transvestism played a great part in it. She was definitely one of the most radical women. Even if she performed a men's work, she had to prove her valor a hundred times more than men; and this is why her autobiography is so precious. The autobiography helps us understand why a woman wanted to perform such daring works for their time, either soldiering or spying. Women spies were probably hardly more numerous but they belonged to different social classes, which enabled them to receive an education and so to be able to write. The three women we saw in this part had on the whole the same motivation: they strongly believed in the Southern Cause. These three spies were very effective and they were feared. This raises another issue about social conventions because women aroused fewer suspicions, on account of being women, and this granted them a lot of power. These three spies and notably Greenhow showed that, in times of war, reputation could be pushed into the background although it was possible to have ladylike manners and to be a formidable spy anyway.

This kind of women is not the only one who contributed to the war. Other women were active during the war, on the home front, while respecting gender conventions, by adopting rebellious attitudes toward the Union or simply by brandishing a pen. The advantage they have over the female soldiers or spies is that it is easier to know more about them, easier to hear their voices. Women writers succeeded in rebelling just by writing: they are what we can call "pen and ink warriors." We will deal with these women, but not only, with other writers that dealt with the Civil War years later because it proves that women in the war is a topic which was and still is fascinating and which one likes to debate on. Because they did and do have their places in wars.

### III- Writing the War – Women who stayed on the Home Front

#### A- Highbrow women

When the war broke out, women did not have the choice but had to fend for themselves and to face all the consequences of the war on the home front. Women were left alone and required to sacrifice themselves for the Cause. The war triggered off a plethora of diaries – even if some women did write before the war – women felt the need to write about everything that was happening to their husbands, sons, brothers, country and to themselves. In this part, we will focus on three Civil War diaries, written by women from high social ranks. The first one is from Mary Boykin Chesnut, which was published in 1981 by the editor Vann Woodward. The second one is from Clara Solomon, who only deals with the first two years of the war. The diary was published in 1995 by Elliott Ashkenazi. The last one is from Ellen Renshaw House, published in 2008 by Daniel E. Sutherland. Contrary to Solomon, Renshaw House does not deal with the first two years of the war but starts her diary in 1863 when one of her brothers enlisted in the Confederate army. We will also deal with Louisa S. McCord: even if she did not write a diary during the war, she was a writer and deeply concurred with slavery and the submission of women.

The context of publication of Mary Boykin Chesnut's diary is complex. Before the 1981 version, two editions had been published: one in 1905 and the other in 1949, both under the title: *A Diary from Dixie*. The title had been chosen by the editors without evidence that Chesnut would have used or authorized such a title. (Woodward, 1981: xxviii). The 1905 version was published by Appelton Edition and notably by two editors: Isabella D. Martin, who had the manuscript and who thought that her friend Mary Chesnut allowed her to use it as she wanted, and Myrta Lockett Avary, who already published a memoir about the Civil War. Woodward asserts that this version is not faithful to the original diary of Chesnut and that "the work was done in considerable haste" (Woodward, 1981: xxviii). The 1949 edition was published by Ben Ames Williams, a novelist, who also took liberties with the text. Therefore, like the previous version, it is biased. The 1981 version by Woodward tend to remain the most faithful and true to the original text. From time to time, Woodward adds comments to help the reader understand better, but he does not change Chesnut's words. To carry out this work, Woodward approached Mary Chesnut's heirs in 1974, who were in

possession of the manuscripts and who gave him a large number of private documents. After years of research and helps from other people, this version eventually saw the light in 1981.

Elliott Ashkenazi was working on a study of the nineteenth Jewish Community in Louisiana when he first looked at Clara Solomon's diaries. He decided to edit them for publication for a simple reason: in the late twentieth century, there was an emphasis on women's history and women's experiences of the Civil War. Like Woodward, Ashkenazi wanted to remain the most faithful as possible to the original text. He only made editor's corrections like misspelling, omissions, question marks etc. All of what is written are Solomon's words (Ashkenazi, 1995: xiii – xiv).

Ellen Renshaw House never intended that someone should read her diary and the latter was therefore never meant for publication. When Ellen died, one of her granddaughters, Cynthia Rutledge Barnes, came into possession of the diary but kept it out from the rest of the family, out of jealousy, asserting that the diary was incomplete. In 1992, the diary was eventually found by Ellen Allran and Victoria Guthrie, great-granddaughter and grand-niece of Ellen Renshaw House. Sutherland declares that the diary's publication would have been impossible without their help. They offered the manuscript to the University of Tennessee Press, and scholars began to work on it, to check its historical accuracy and completeness. (Sutherland, 2008: xiii – xiv). The purpose for publishing it was to give a real image of a woman experiencing war in an urban setting, in opposition to the image of Scarlett. Frank L. Byrne of Kent State University affirms that "the color of real life challenged that of the fictional Scarlett" (Sutherland, 2008: xii).

## 1- Resistance and rebellion

Mary Boykin Chesnut was born on March 31, 1823 at Mount Pleasant, South Carolina. She was the daughter of Mary Boykin and Stephen Decatur Miller. Her father was a prominent politician who praised the "positive-good" effect of slavery on society (Woodward, 1981: xxxi). In 1833, her father resigned from the Senate and the family moved to Mississippi, where they owned three plantations and hundreds of slaves. Mary Boykin Chesnut grew up in a pro-slavery atmosphere. On April, 23, 1840, she married James, Jr.

Chesnut, the son of one of the most prominent and wealthiest planters in the state. James, Jr. Chesnut studied law in college and became an important lawyer. He was close to Jefferson Davis: the Chesnuts and the Davises became friends and allies. From the beginning of the war, Mary Chesnut was in contact with Varina Davis, Jefferson Davis's wife. Chesnut had her own opinion about the Confederacy and the war. She moved a lot during the war. Clara Solomon and Ellen Renshaw House were younger at the time of the Civil War. Indeed, in 1861 Clara Solomon was only 16 years old. She was part of a Jewish family, her parents were Emma and Solomon Solomon, who came from South Carolina. Clara Solomon was born in New Orleans and still lived in New Orleans when the war broke out. Ellen Renshaw House was 18 years old in 1861 and lived in East Tennessee, where there were divided loyalties: most of the population supported the Union and a minority supported the Confederacy. Ellen and her family were deeply Confederate. As it was mentioned in the first part, her father had slaves when they lived in Savannah, Georgia; but when the family moved to Knoxville in 1860, they had none. However, it is said that they hired two African-American women but little is known about whether or not they were slaves.

What is striking in the diaries of these women is how their environment changed during the war. Indeed, even if they were not on the battlefield, they also experienced the war climate and their lives were very different from the antebellum period. Their world changed as much as for their men. Chesnut writes in her diary in 1861: "I have been sitting idly today, looking out upon this beautiful lawn, wondering if this can be the same world I was in a few days ago<sup>16</sup>" (*MCCW*: 51)<sup>17</sup>. Even if they concurred with the necessity of this war, it did not prevent them from being quite bewildered at first. Solomon and Renshaw House were younger and were more vehement in the expression of their feelings concerning their changing environment. Solomon had mixed feelings; at the very beginning of the war she describes her new environment as "our Camp" (*CWDCS*: 17)<sup>18</sup>. But when New Orleans was occupied by the Union, she may have become aware that their lives were doomed to change forever and was less excited about the war: "But now, how different! A deep sorrow

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<sup>16</sup> She was in Charleston.

<sup>17</sup> The abbreviation *MCCW* refers to Chesnut's diary: *Mary Chesnut's Civil War*.

<sup>18</sup> The abbreviation *CWDCS* refers to Solomon's diary: *The Civil War Diary of Clara Solomon*.

is brooding, and “He<sup>19</sup> is gone to the war” (CWDCS: 129). When Renshaw House started her diary, East Tennessee was already occupied by the Union and, like Solomon, Renshaw House was very vehement, however in a more rebellious way: “The Yankees are here. [...] How I hate them. Four came here and we have to give them something to eat. That was too much” (VVR: 4-5)<sup>20</sup>. All three were, indeed, surrounded by foes and one can feel their need to fight and repel them. We first saw it when Solomon describes New Orleans as their “Camp”, it is as if they became soldiers themselves and had to protect their city, their nation, their home. It is also the case of Chesnut: she heard that they were surrounded by Union spies, among whom the family of Lincoln’s wife, and she declares: “I should watch them” (MCCW: 57). Renshaw House does not use the same kind of metaphors as Solomon but expresses her disgust to be surrounded by Union soldiers: “it completely nauseates me. I have been sick to my stomach ever since the creatures have been here. Wont I be happy when they go. I am afraid I shall go crazy” (VVR: 19). Renshaw House and Solomon could allow themselves to behave more rebelliously than could Chesnut, notably thanks to their youth. Chesnut was 38 years old during the first year of the war; she had married an important lawyer and was close to the Davis’ family. She is more temperate than her two counterparts.

However, they all shared the same plight and burden: self-sacrifice. We just saw that Solomon was desperate at the idea of her father being fighting. Throughout the diary, she is hoping to see her father again and to have news from him; one can feel the burden to sacrifice a loved one. It seems that she considers herself too young to undergo this self-sacrifice: “How cruel in this short life thus to be separated from those we love” (CWDCS: 259). This was not her role, at 16 years old she should not take upon her shoulders the weight of sacrifice but enjoy the advantages of a Belle’s life. Chesnut did not have relatives fighting during the war but she rubbed shoulders with women who sacrificed their sons and husbands for the Confederacy, and could witness how painful it was for women to be on the home front knowing that their sons and husbands were being killed without being capable to do anything: “Does anybody wonder so many women die? Grief and constant anxiety kill nearly

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<sup>19</sup> Her father.

<sup>20</sup> The abbreviation VVR refers to Renshaw House’s diary: *A Very Violent Rebel*.

as many women as men die on the battlefield” (*MCCW*: 371). Unlike men, women were not killed on the battlefield but killed by the sacrifices the war forced them to make. Renshaw House had her father and her brothers fighting for the Confederacy and in her diary one can feel the pain not to have news from them: “If we could only hear from them some times I would not mind the Yankees so much” (*VVR*: 14). It seems that the most difficult ordeal for these women was to know their loved one fighting the war and being powerless about it. To cope with it, Chesnut and Renshaw House chose to work in order to help the soldiers. Both of them sewed for the soldiers’ uniforms. They also helped in hospitals to nurse wounded Confederate soldiers. Chesnut waited for the war to advance before contributing as a nurse: “I think I will wait for a wounded man, to make my first effort as a sister of charity” (*MCCW*: 85). She rapidly made her first effort and she probably did not imagine how much wounded soldiers were to need her, nor how traumatic it was going to be for women: “I take my hospital duty in the morning. [...] That fearful hospital haunts me all day long – worse at night. So much suffering, loathsome wounds, distortion, stumps of limbs exhibited to all and not half cured” (*MCCW*: 641). Chesnut also belonged to associations which helped soldiers with other women, among whom was Louisa S. McCord. It happened that they had to give a name to a gunboat and McCord called it “She-Devil” (*MCCW*: 329). Even if a boat is referred as “she”, it may have been an allusion to all these women who helped and who gave everything they could to protect their men and their country. They were more determined than ever. On top of sewing and working as a nurse, Renshaw House also went to see Confederate prisoners in jail to relieve them a little. After several visits, the controls were reinforced and she was denied the right to speak to the prisoners without a permit. Renshaw House did not really understand why but presumes: “there is good news for us and they are afraid that someone will tell the prisoners” (*VVR*: 27). It may also be a question of women’s power. Indeed, by 1863, both governments did not assume anymore that women were all innocent and recognized the power they could have. The fact that Renshaw House was denied the right to speak to the prisoners may have been out of fear of what she could have told the prisoners. The guards may have been suspicious of her being a spy or simply dangerous. Solomon did not work but was willing to make sacrifices on food, she was ready to feed only from corn meal.

All three obviously deal with the war and report battles. However, the way they deal with it is different. Chesnut is very serious when she deals with it, she comments on battles

or events with a critical eye, for example: “war seems a game of chess – but we have an unequal number of pawns to begin with” (*MCCW*: 331-332). Chesnut was able to reflect on what was happening. On the contrary, Solomon and Renshaw House only report facts and sometimes share their feelings. Indeed, they experienced excitement about the movement of the troops. When they heard about a Confederate victory, no matter how small, they experienced it as if it were their own victory: “Considerable excitement in town today. Father heard a Yankee officer say he was shot at by the Rebels only three miles from town. There is quite a force four miles above, & the report says Gen Hardee is coming up, and they will be completely surrounded. Many are expecting another siege. I would not care. Any thing for a little excitement” (*VVR*: 92). Solomon was also amused to watch the “‘hurrying to and fro’ of anxious people” (*CWDCS*: 159). Even if they were more or less active on the home front, one can wonder how they felt about themselves, did they consider themselves witnesses or actors of the war?

Their perception seems biased. Chesnut may have considered women as helpers to the Cause because she compares a friend of hers as a “regular heroine” for her help to provide weapons and clothes for the soldiers (*MCCW*: 84). Chesnut also reports instances which prove that women were considered dangerous by the authorities. She declares that some ladies in New Orleans were punished “for their insolence” toward Federal officers (*MCCW*: 343). However, when the two others, Solomon and Renshaw House, report battles, they seem helpless and only witnesses of what was happening. The way Solomon deals with battles is interesting, here is an example: “Oh! I am so worried! I hope there will not be a destructive battle. God guard ‘*our* Battalion’. How selfish!!” (*CWDCS*: 34) She is at the same time helpless, she is only a witness of the slaughter which was happening and part of the army. By using “our”, she includes herself in the Confederate army. One can also see it when she heard of the Union’s plan to occupy New Orleans, she declares: “Let them try it” (*CWDCS*: 125). Solomon knew that she could not prevent it but at the same time she could not let them do it without reacting. Reacting was the only thing she could do and this may be the reason why she considered herself as part of them. When Renshaw House reports battles, she seems to place herself as a witness but also as a supporter, she does not pretend to be part of the



army like Solomon: “They were fighting all night<sup>21</sup>. I could not sleep. I would doze a little when bang would go two or three guns and of course I was wide awake. I could see the flash of the cannons where I was in bed, since during the night there was very heavy firing of musketry, and I could hear our boys cheering distinctly” (VVR: 52). Moreover, she did not understand why she was being watched and thought that there was no need for it. She declares: “not that I would not do any thing but because I had not the power” (VVR: 128). She seems to consider herself only as a witness, not as an actor because she was powerless.

However, this did not prevent Renshaw from being highly patriotic. She is the one who proved the most her patriotism toward the Confederacy in her diary. Indeed, she was the archetype of the rebel<sup>22</sup> woman. As a matter of fact, she deemed it indispensable to show the Union that she was “any thing but a Rebel, heart & soul” (VVR: 105). She even told a Federal officer that she would “sell her soul and body” and give her life if it could do the Confederacy the least good (VVR: 113). Renshaw House played with it, she liked taunting the Federal officers with the rebellious behaviors that women could show. She considered that rebellious behaviors were what proved women’s patriotism. What is interesting is that Renshaw House considered as a fact that patriotism gave women the power to help wounded soldiers better; and that Confederate female patriotism was stronger than that of the Federal women. Therefore, Federal women<sup>23</sup> performed their duty less efficiently than Confederate women:

It is really amusing to think that the Yankee Officers are so mad with the Rebel girls here because they don't take any notice of them whatever. They would rather be insulted by us for then they would have a chance for revenge. As it is they can't help seeing what a contempt we all have for them – and yet no chance for resenting it. They say the ladies go to the jail and brush past without noticing them in the least – and go in and talk to all the prisoners. The Doctors at the Hospital too say that the Rebel ladies do not treat their sick in the same manner the Union ladies do their friends – the Secesh<sup>24</sup> are so kind and attentive to their soldiers (VVR: 18).

Renshaw House participated in demonstrations in which women waved their handkerchiefs boldly, “as only she rebels know how to make.” The consequence of her participation was

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<sup>21</sup> Beginning of the attack on Fort Sanders.

<sup>22</sup> Southern women had a paradoxical attitude: they were rebel women against the North but subordinate women in the South. They concurred with Southern values but not with Northern ones; this may be the reason why they could rebel against the North and submit to the South.

<sup>23</sup> It is likely that Northern women had other concerns, such as women’s rights for example.

<sup>24</sup> Probably female secessionists.

that Renshaw House was ordered to go South<sup>25</sup> and to take the oath of allegiance (*VVR*: 90). She was therefore ordered to leave the town and her mother told her to take the oath, which she refused to do so. She was willing to go South but would never take the oath of allegiance. She finally left Knoxville on April 11 to go to Eatonton, Georgia.

Chesnut was not less patriotic but her discourse was more self-controlled. She calls this patriotism “the war spirit”, which animated everybody. She was conscious that her position as a woman did not offer a plethora of opportunities to help the Cause. Under such circumstances, she declares on several instances that she wished to have been a man: “If I were a man, I’d be there, too<sup>26</sup>” (*MCCW*: 64). Those words are reported-speech, because she actually uttered them and was reproached for having done so. A male friend of hers told her that “it was not [her] duty to talk so rashly and make enemies” (*MCCW*: 65). As a matter of fact, a woman of her rank and of her age could not allow herself to say such words out loud, even if that was what she felt deep down. Chesnut was reluctant to break with gender conventions too much, notably because of her social background. She did what was deemed acceptable for women, that is to say nursing, sewing, but also motivating the troops. She considered the latter as a cornerstone for the Cause since without women, men would not fight as bravely as they did. Chesnut experienced the war as if she were fighting in it. Everything that she heard or saw was as if she experienced it. It hurt her. It is as if she were a passive actor of the war. It may have been even more difficult for her because she could do anything but undergo everything that was happening, but at the same time it shows how committed she was.

Solomon was the least daring in her demonstration of patriotism. She used Confederate flags or dressing to show her patriotism: with her sister they usually added flags on their dresses or even sewed dresses with a fabric that had a Confederate flag pattern: “A [Alice] had on her Flag dress” (*CWDCS*: 179). She never took part in demonstrations like Renshaw House or followed the troops like Chesnut. Solomon tried to keep her life as it was

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<sup>25</sup> She was also wrongly accused of having insulted the wife of an officer: “they had been thinking of sending me South for some time, but the immediate cause was my insulting Mrs McAlister. It is about the only think they could accuse of that I have never done & I have never done that. I almost wish I had now” (*Renshaw House*, 2008: 127).

<sup>26</sup> She makes reference to the fight at Norfolk with Beauregard.

before the war, that is to say, going to school, reading, going to see friends and relatives etc. However, it did not prevent her from choosing a side during the war, that of the Confederacy, and having an opinion about it: "It will be a bloody conflict and will result either in an entire subjugation by the North or a brilliant achievement of the Confed. States" (CWDCS: 77). According to her, it seems that patriotism was something more personal, even maybe intimate, that she kept for herself. She disagreed with the girls of her school who wore black mourning clothes to show their disapproval of the occupation of New Orleans by the Union. Solomon declares: "Do we go in black for a very sick person? Our *cause* is not *dead*, it is only *sick*. The Yankees are here on a *visit*. I also disapprove of Confederate flags about the persons for they are well aware of the feeling & sentiments of Southern women" (CWDCS: 354). All three had different visions on how to demonstrate patriotism.

Mary Chesnut's relation to slavery is interesting. She was a member of the slavery-owner society, she was deeply patriotic, she was close to Jefferson Davis and his wife; however, she hated slavery. Throughout the diary, she expresses her strong feeling against this institution. On one occasion she says: "Slavery has to go, of course – and joy go with it. These Yankees may kill us and lay waste the land for a while, but conquer us? Never!" (MCCW: 88) She supported the Confederate States' rights against the Northern invaders who came to take Southerners' freedom but she did not support the Confederacy to maintain slavery, on the contrary. She denounced that institution for the plight of the slaves but mostly for the burden it put on mistresses. Indeed, according to her, women and slaves shared the same plight, they were all slaves to the patriarch. Moreover, she wanted slavery to be abolished because of the sexual assault that female slaves were the victims of. However, it was not really for the sake of female slaves but for the sake of the planters' wives: "we are surrounded by prostitutes" (MCCW: 29). She charges the White man who brought humiliation on the White woman: "A magnate who runs a hideous black harem and its consequences under the same roof with his lovely white house and his beautiful and accomplished daughters? He holds his head as high and poses as the model of all human virtues to these poor women who God and the laws have given him." (MCCW: 168) Her hatred toward slavery made her come to the conclusion that women were the victims of the oppressive patriarchal system and not beneficiaries of it. Therefore, this is why she writes "I am always on the women's side" (MCCW: 183). In her study of the Civil War, LeeAnn

Whites explains that slavery within Southern households distorted and degraded the relationships of a same family: between wives and husbands, mothers and children, brothers and sisters. The relationship between wives and husbands was the most at risk because the husbands could sexually abuse the female slaves. Therefore, it resulted in a disloyal relationship between husbands and wives<sup>27</sup>. Whites argues that “it was in this core failure of loyalty that the seed of national disloyalty was initially planted and grew” (Whites, 2005: 38).

The sort of poem that Chesnut wrote (see appendix n°9) testifies to her feeling toward the oppressive patriarchal system, for women were considered as another property, just like slaves. Later on in her diary, Chesnut declares that Southern women did whatever they could do to alleviate this evil of slavery within society. She goes even further and speaks her mind toward the society in which she lived and participated:

Now, I assert, the theory upon which modern society is based is all wrong. A man is supposed to confide his honor to his wife. If she misbehaves herself, his honor is tarnished. How can a man be disgraced by another person's doing what, if he did himself (that is, if he committed the same offense), he would not be hurt at all in public estimation? [...] If an action did not disgrace him, how could the same action by his wife disgrace her – or him? (*MCCW*: 343)

She can be considered as an early feminist, however she did nothing to stop it; to alleviate this “evil”, or to make her status as a woman better. One can presume that she did nothing because this system was too implanted in her way of life or she did not feel strong enough to revendicate those ideas or simply to challenge this system. These declarations are quite paradoxical in light of her position in society and her defense of the Confederacy which fought to maintain the status quo.

Solomon never makes an allusion to slavery<sup>28</sup> but Renshaw House does. Renshaw House was only 18 years old and so she did not have the same experience and the same vision as Chesnut. Renshaw House was in favor of slavery and when she heard that Jefferson Davis was willing to abolish slavery in order to stop the war and to stay in the Confederacy, she could not believe it and thought: “It would be disgraceful in my opinion” (*VVR*: 116). Contrary to Chesnut, Renshaw House did not challenge women's status in society but

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<sup>27</sup> Wives also feared miscegenation.

<sup>28</sup> She may have made this ellipsis in her work because she had other concerns. This also may be due to her young age.

blamed the Union for her behavior: “the vile creatures have contaminated the morals of the whole place” or the fact that she “cant<sup>29</sup> contain herself” and “say every thing impudent that comes into [her] head” was because of the Union (VVR: 117-118). She absolutely does not question the place of women in society nor the attitude that was expected from them. She tries to justify her behavior, not to accept it.

## 2- Their diaries

As the war progressed and the years passed, the three women started to be disillusioned about the outcome of the war. It started more or less early depending on the diarist. The first to have been disillusioned was Clara Solomon in 1862 when she knew that the Confederate authorities would not win over New Orleans. It was so difficult for her that she could not record the events right away: “a gloom has settled o’er my spirit, a gloom envelopes our dearly-beloved city. My breaking heart but aches the more, when I am prepared to record event, which can never fade from my memory, & did I not consider it a duty, I should spare myself the unpleasant task” (CWDCS: 343). In July 1862 she was then sure that there was not “a shadow of hope remaining” (CWDCS: 433). Like Solomon, Chesnut and Renshaw House found it difficult to report the defeats of the Confederacy – “I have no heart to write about it<sup>30</sup>” (MCCW: 782), “I have felt so badly for some time past I could not write. Our last hope is gone [...]” (VVR: 165). Ellen Renshaw House had hoped until “the last day of 63.” She did not expect the Union to take the upper hand over the Confederacy and she expected her brother to be back home soon<sup>31</sup>. In 1864, Renshaw House declared that “a leaden cloud hangs over our spirits” and that “a gloom will gather around us and darken many an hour” (VVR: 76). Chesnut began to question the usefulness of the struggle for the Confederacy in 1864 when she thought about all these men who lost their lives for nothing and began to wonder: “is anything worth it?” (MCCW: 625). Indeed, women sacrificed their men, who sacrificed their own lives, to lose the war in the end. It had

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<sup>29</sup> As written in the diary.

<sup>30</sup> The fall of Richmond.

<sup>31</sup> Johnnie, her favorite brother, was imprisoned in a Northern prison.

to stop. Chesnut realized that the war was already lost and that men had to stop fighting and dying on the battlefield. She witnessed men leaving the army, the streets emptying and more important, she witnessed women asking their husbands to desert the army and go back home because they had a family to take care of. Renshaw House also expressed the fact that they sacrificed their men's lives in vain, "all the blood shed ha[d] been for nothing, worse than nothing" (VVR: 165). Women's and men's commitment and their eagerness to wage war was faltering little by little, which may have accelerated the defeat of the Confederacy.

A part of those three women died with the fall of the Confederacy. The war really marked a break with their previous lives and the defeat killed their last hope for a return backward. They knew that nothing would be as it used to be and it saddened them a lot. When Ellen Renshaw House heard about the defeat of the Confederacy in 1865, she nearly lost her temper and asserted that the Southern people deserved their fate<sup>32</sup>. If they did not win, it meant that they did not deserve their freedom. It is interesting, at the beginning of the diary, she refers to the Southern people with the personal pronoun "we" and in the end, after the defeat, she uses "they", as if she were not a Southerner anymore. It may be because she thought she had done her duty, as a woman, and men had not been worth women's sacrifices or had not made the best of it.

Chesnut and Renshaw House stopped writing their diaries at the end of the war and the reader can see how difficult it was for them to record the fall of the Confederacy. Solomon stopped her diary in 1862 because she had no other choice; indeed, her parents did not pay attention to the fact that she kept a diary and she could not buy another by herself. One can wonder what was the purpose of writing those diaries during the war.

Chesnut's diary has a particularity that the two others do not have. Indeed, the version quoted here was written between 1881 and 1884 from the papers she actually wrote during the war – diaries, drafts etc. She called the diary she kept during the war, a "journal" or "notes" (Woodward, 1981: xvii). What she called her "diary" was published posthumously and was meant for publication, unlike the journal. Therefore, the diary published by Vann

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<sup>32</sup> This is also due to the religious background.

Woodward in 1981 is probably less spontaneous than the journal since she had time to choose her words and to select what she wanted to share. Therefore, one may wonder why she chose to write a diary that was meant for publication. Maybe she meant to show people what the sufferings of women on the home front were during the Civil War. Maybe she wanted to show that a woman from the nineteenth century could have a political opinion and share it, or it may have been a kind of self-promotion for everything that she had done during the war. Chesnut comments upon battles or political decisions and asserts that she would not have done things this way for example. Apart from her diary, could she find another way of voicing her ideas? She knew she had a privileged position in society, which gave her advantages and disadvantages: she could lead a thriving life, however, she was like invisible since she was governed by the rules of etiquette. She could not share her ideas in the public sphere. The fact that the diary was meant for publication was probably a way to stage herself, to reach visibility and to finally have a voice. Moreover, the will to publish the diary also proves that Chesnut was aware of the power of rhetoric and in a way that she wanted to break with gender conventions. Even if she tells the reader all the sacrifices she had to make, the diary is the means she found to talk about herself, her ideas and her condition of woman; she becomes the main character. When she wrote during the Civil War, the purpose may have been different. It may have been a way to escape the suffocating atmosphere of the war – although she was not in the worst position and was well preserved compared to other women. When she deals with the war, it enables her to put words on something quite unrealistic and to free her spirit from all the wrongs of the war: the death and destruction of the same people. She re-centers on herself and can think about what was happening. Simply, it may also have been a way to remember everything. Her last entry dates from July 1865, and this is what she says: “I do not write often now – not for want of something to say, but from a loathing of all I see and hear. Why dwell upon it? (*MCCW*: 834) She had lost any hope and did not see the point to go on writing anymore.

Clara Solomon’s diary, contrary to Chesnut, was never meant for publication. She stopped writing in 1862 because she could not buy another notebook and give her diary, what she calls, another “robe.” She probably would have continued because the editor of Solomon’s diary, Elliott Ashkenazi, asserts that she used it not only to record events but also to express herself and to improve her writing. Ashkenazi considers that Solomon “used her diary sometimes as a poet or writer would use their modes of expression” (Ashkenazi, 1995:

5). Indeed, she was free from judgment and could exercise as much as she wanted. She personified her diary, just as if it were her double, or her friend, and named it Philomen. There are several instances in which she started to tell the proceedings of her day by “Oh! Philomen”, or “Dear Philomen.” She created a real link with her diary: “you are nothing more to me than my “dear Philomen” [...] we are best friends, bound by ties which can never be unlinked” (*CWDCS*: 96). Philomen is her companion, it helped her escape the ordeals posed by the war and is a friend to whom she could confess everything without shame or restraint. It seems to have had a liberating effect on Solomon. Sometimes it seems that writing was a way to face reality for her as well as a way to escape reality. There is an instance in which she mentions a Confederate defeat and she tells Philomen “I dread to tell you”, as if she were afraid to report it because she did not want to realize that it was indeed real (*CWDCS*: 432). When Solomon wrote to Philomen, she could indulge in an activity only for herself: she is part of the story of the war, but the diary is about her. As I have just mentioned, Philomen was her true friend, the only one to whom she could speak freely of the war and of her feelings. It represented a sort of way-out of the oppressive women’s sphere – especially in times of war. This is why the last lines of the diary are for Philomen: “Every man is insignificant when compared with you, & from the depths of my heart springs the wish had I never known you. [...] Good bye, my love!!” (*CWDCS*: 438)

Ellen Renshaw House started her diary when her father and brothers went to war, and especially for her brother Johnnie. At the very end of the diary, she says that she started this diary for Johnnie, for him to know what was her life on the home front while he was fighting for the freedom of the Confederate states. When she heard about his death at the end of the war, she did not see the point to continue it anymore. Indeed, like Chesnut, the violence of the war and the useless sacrifices nearly killed her. Renshaw House used her diary to create or keep a link with her brother, when he died, she had no reasons anymore. However, it seems that the diary had other purposes. The most interesting one is more or less the same as Solomon’s diary – Renshaw House used it to express ideas she could not express in public. It was a way of dodging censorship. For example, she had her own opinion about how to wage war: “The Report says that Gen Gracie was in command now. I know that he is down the road. Mrs Kains Capt says the war will be over by Christmas. What a fool. He does not know that every advantage they gain lengthens it instead of shortening it. He will find himself mistaken when the time comes” (*VVR*: 12). Like Chesnut, except to her diary,



Renshaw House could not have expressed those ideas to anyone. Unlike the two women, Renshaw House paid less attention to the way she wrote: the construction of her sentences, the choice of words or typographies. The diary seems to be a way to relieve herself from her wrath. It is her confessor. Renshaw House's relation to her diary is different from her counterparts; she started it for her brother, not for herself. Unlike the two others, she seems to have only been a pawn to what happened during the war, she does not stage herself. When the war was over and her brother dead, her character died with them. She is probably the one who best fit the ideology of the Lost Cause.

In this context, the expression "the pen is mightier than the sword" takes on its full meaning. It seems that these three women achieved more than the soldiers did on the battlefield. The soldiers lost but the writers won at least one battle: for a while, these three women succeeded in escaping the confines of their sex and found someone, here a diary, to share their burdens. And today we are still listening to their voices and we are trying to understand what they have been through. Indeed, the war changed the society just enough for women to go into the breach. Writing can represent the breach: it was not as innocent as it may seem today. Louisa S. McCord understood the real meaning of writing and its power. Louisa McCord's life was full of in-betweenness, which is highlighted by writing. She was trapped between her desire to write and the patriarchal society, which she totally approved of and defended. A view on what she stood for and on her writing is indispensable to understand the real power of writing for a Southern woman.

### 3- Submission VS writing – Louisa S. McCord

As we saw in the first part, Louisa S. McCord was part of the Southern elite and when she got married, she already had her own slaves. When her husband died fifteen years later, she was in charge of the plantation in parallel with her intellectual activities. When the war broke out, she was of course in favor of the Confederacy since she defended the slave system. She was very committed to the protection of the Confederate States and set up a hospital on the campus of the university. She was a rebel in her own way, she resisted Union soldiers as much as she could to protect other women on the home front. Chesnut deals a lot with McCord in her diary and Chesnut experienced mixed feelings about McCord's strength;

sometimes Chesnut was ashamed by this strength and sometimes she admired it and inspired herself from it (Fought, 2018: 2). Louisa S. McCord was a complex figure of Southern womanhood. She was enthralled by philosophy, literature and by writing, however she knew that her gender was not really compatible with her passions.

Before marrying, she wrote several essays and plays in which she defended slavery and the oppressive gender system. She was known for her essays and is now considered as the “only female essayist of the antebellum South” (Fought, 2018: 3). However, she did not publish a lot although she wrote a lot – she would not challenge the social order, which she concurred with. She believed that the place of women was “within doors” and the role of a wife toward her husband and offspring – sons – was to help them fulfill their “destiny” (Fought, 2018: 81<sup>33</sup>). She got married late, at the age of 30, when all her siblings left home, she did not have the choice but to marry, according to her principles. She declared that it was time to “submissive bow and, *be content*” (Fought, 2018: 82). She sacrificed her own ambitions to perform her duty as a woman, which is synonymous with marriage and subordination. She married Davis James McCord, a lawyer and politician from Irish descendants. They had three children, a son and two daughters. Davis James McCord died in 1855 and as a widow, Louisa S. McCord could pursue her literary career, be independent as a slave-owner and landowner and more importantly, still be a respectable woman.

She married and had children in order to respect the hierarchy of the social order. She benefited from it and would never have challenged it out of fear to lose all of her so-called feminine privileges. Under such circumstances, one can imagine that during the war she was ready to sacrifice everything – as she did during her whole life – in order to perform the role that was expected from her. The most painful sacrifice that she made was to surrender her only son. There is no mention of a diary that she would have written but as Chesnut explains in her diary, McCord was very engaged on the home front. She worked in the hospital which she set up and, even if she was from the Southern elite, she did not hesitate to give her services as a nurse. During the war, McCord suspended her life to devote herself entirely to the Cause, which she believed in, and to her son who was fighting for their freedom. Chesnut asserts that McCord had “the brain and energy of a man” (*MCCW*: 304). McCord devoted

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<sup>33</sup> From McCord’s play *Caius Gracchus*.

her life to Southern society and when her son died in 1863 during the battle of Bull Run, it is naturally that she lost any hope she had left. That was a real blow for her, who was persuaded that her destiny was to help her son fulfill his own; and he died for a lost Cause. She became aware that her life had no purpose anymore and that she sacrificed herself in vain: “the thought that their lives had been given up in vain was very bitter to them” (*MCCW*: 702). McCord wrote a letter to Chesnut, in which she cannot even express her suffering for the loss of her son and for the loss of her faith (see appendix n°10). After the war, she lost her strength and dove into a deep breakdown. She went to Canada because she did not want to take the oath of allegiance and then returned to the United States where she fell ill and died in 1879.

Louisa S. McCord is the proof that writing was indeed a form of rebellion. She abandoned her ambitions to write and to be known for it in order to submit to the patriarchal system. Even if these four women were not on the battlefield, were not spies, they were still rebels. For the big majority of Southern women, breaking through the confines of their sex was too difficult or too early. However, they could not wait for the war to end without doing anything. They had to resist and to act too. Under such circumstances they turned to their diaries, in which they confessed their pains and their anger, as well as their political and feminine voices. They understood the power of rhetoric. Other women chose to write as well, not diaries but fiction. We will see two novels written by women about the Civil War, one published during the war and the other years later. However, even if the latter was published after the war, it is interesting to hear a feminine voice about women in the war. Who is the best placed to deal with women if it is not a woman?

## B- Fiction

The way women wrote their diaries is close to fiction. Sometimes the frontier between diaries and fiction seems blurred. Diaries and fiction are, at the same time, different and alike. Diarists tell their stories of the war, novelists tell other women's stories of the war; in each case we have a woman's perception. However, novelists chose to invent an imaginary story, something that did not happen but, in our context, something that could have happened. The major common point is women on the Civil War home front, trying to survive. The major differences between diaries and fiction are authenticity and the target readership. Indeed, diaries are supposed to be more authentic than fiction and are generally not meant for publication. However, Chesnut chose to publish it and so maybe her diary is the one who is closer to fiction. Moreover, fiction often depicts caricatural or stereotyped characters, a point that we do not have with diaries; real characters are more shaded. What is certain is that, in the context of the Civil War, it is interesting to read fiction after the diaries, because fiction shed light on the authentic texts.

### 1- Women writing fiction

Both of the novels we are going to discuss, would require a whole dissertation to tackle all the themes that are dealt with in them. I will only focus on a few elements that are relevant to the study of this dissertation.

Augusta Jane Evans [Wilson] was one of the most popular sentimental novelists of the period of the Civil War. She succeeded in what several men failed: being financially independent as a writer (Wilson & Ferris, 1989: 840). She was from Alabama and in 1864 she published *Macaria; or, Altars of Sacrifice*. She had written it while nursing wounded Confederate soldiers and dedicated the novel to the Confederacy. It had an enormous success and was not only read by Confederate women, but also by Confederate soldiers when they were waiting for the next battle or when they were recovering in hospitals. Even in the Union the novel was read. The Union authorities forbade it out of fear Union soldiers would rally to the Confederate Cause (Faust, 1990: 1217). Thanks to the title, one can imagine what the

story is about. Macaria, the mythological figure, sacrificed herself for the gods to save Athens when it was at war. Evans, in *Macaria; or, Altars of Sacrifice*, portrays a young woman, Irene Huntington who is motherless and who is an only child. Irene is an intellectual and becomes an astronomer. She acts for the Confederacy during the war with her friend Electra by sewing, nursing, cooking and even by establishing an asylum for orphans. One understands later on in the novel that she tries to find personal fulfillment through sacrifice. She sacrifices her father and her beau to the Cause and sacrifices her life as a married woman in order to better perform her duty on the home front. She is conscious that married life would be happier but she considers that life was not meant to be happy, and that she would be more useful if she was not married: “Be sure I shall live and die Irene Huntington” (*MAS*: 141)<sup>34</sup>. The woman’s fate was to share her higher morals and sentiments to those who suffered; that is why Irene dedicated her life to help save the Confederacy. As Faust argues, Irene’s wish to be useful is fulfilled by the war and the war has to be celebrated and not endured, precisely because it enables her to achieve her ambitions (Faust, 1990: 1219). However, Irene is not the typical submissive Southern lady and she appears sometimes as what one can call today, a modern woman. Indeed, she rebels herself against her father and her beau. Her father wants her to marry her cousin Hugh in order to keep the lands in the family. At the beginning of the novel Hugh tells her that she belongs to him, to what she answers: “No! I belong to God and myself” (*MAS*: 13). Irene considered it immoral to marry her own cousin and so defied the authority of her father. She is the only one who can hold the reins of her life and as she asserts herself as independent, one can conclude that she deliberately chooses to sacrifice her life because she knew it was the way she could find self-fulfillment.

Self-fulfillment through self-sacrifice does not mean it was easy for Irene. When her father left for the war, although she knew it was the right choice, she could not refrain from wishing to be a man and go and fight with him. She was aware that her gender was an impediment to go and was afraid to be “useless and inactive” on the home front (*MAS*: 135). Irene’s father blames her for her refusal to marry her cousin, and before he left for the war,

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<sup>34</sup> The abbreviations *MAS* and *GW* respectively refer to Evans’s *Macaria; or, Altars of Sacrifice* and to Mitchell’s *Gone with the Wind*.

Irene explains to him the reasons of her refusal: “if in anything I have ever seemed obstinate or undutiful it was not because I failed in love for you, for from an unhappy difference of opinion as to my duty under very trying circumstances” (MAS: 135). She could resist her father’s will but at the same time sacrifice her life for other people; and it seems that it is in this context that she fully realizes herself. Through Irene, Evans “transforms emotional sacrifice into an active rather than a passive role” and so gives importance to the women, like Evans herself, who really experienced the war and self-sacrifice (Flint, 2016: 458).

The second heroine of this novel is Irene’s friend, Electra Grey, who is a destitute orphan and a painter. Like Irene, she helps the Confederacy and engages in more daring enterprises: she spies, she paints and she nurses. Electra’s journey resembles that of Irene, in the way that her sacrifices help her achieve her goals. Electra’s aim is to establish a Southern School of Design to broaden the artistic perspectives of Southerners and have a real Southern art. Irene is going to help her establish it because she has the money that Electra does not have, and on the other side, Electra is the artist that Irene is not. Flint argues that by empowering these women “to lead a revolutionary movement of art and aesthetics”, Evans lessens the ideology of self-sacrifice which the novel is meant to promote” (Flint, 2016: 458). However, one can assume that what Evans portrays in the novel is the *mise en abyme* of her own literary career and of the career that other women pursued. These women still concurred with the ideology of the South but took advantage of the power they were given when men were gone, to achieve some of their personal goals.

At the end of the novel, Irene establishes a women’s school of design to be directed by Electra in order to promote national culture and in order to enable women, who lost everything during the war, to work and to fend for themselves. This school sticks to the women’s sphere but at the same time, allowed White women to open to a new world that was then difficult to enter (Voloshin, 1994: 173). This can be seen as a reflection of Evans’s own life; she did not step out of the private sphere but at the same time she pursued a literary career which was not common for women. This career gave Evans the means to be financially independent.

*Macaria* is a bildungsroman. Evans focuses on the growth of her two protagonists in the context of the war. Even if they are not children at the beginning of the novel, they change from the beginning to the end and they seem to find the place where they belong. Their

growth is nearly spiritual, they made an introspective journey to find themselves and it is very likely that it would not have been possible without the war and the sacrifices that it required of women. The last words of the novel tackle this issue, and one can see that Irene succeeded in finding self-affirmation she was so deeply seeking:

The rays of the setting sun gilded her mourning-dress, gleamed in the white roses that breathed their perfume in her rippling hair, and lingered like a benediction on the placid, pure face of the lonely woman who had survived every hope; and who calmly fronting her Altars of Sacrifice, here dedicated herself anew to the hallowed work of promoting the happiness and gladdening the path of all who journeyed with her down the chequered aisles of Time<sup>35</sup>.

“Rise, woman, rise!  
To thy peculiar and best attitudes  
Of doing good and of enduring ill,  
Of comforting for ill, and teaching good,  
And reconciling all that ill and good  
Unto the patience of a constant hope  
Henceforward, rise, aspire,  
To all the calms and the noble ends,  
The sanctified devotion and full work.  
To which thou art elect for evermore!” (MAS: 183)

Margaret Mitchell’s *Gone with the Wind* is considered as the typical Civil War novel. Mitchell depicts the story of the personal growth of the novel’s heroine: Scarlett O’Hara. Like *Macaria*, *Gone with the Wind* is a bildungsroman. The story takes place during the war and the reader can witness the evolution of Southern Culture, which changes because of the war. The war destroys gender roles and Scarlett takes advantage of it, even if she is not interested in the war nor willfully committed to helping the Confederacy. Right from the start, the narrator relates Scarlett’s “lack of interest” in the war, which was misinterpreted: since people considered that “war was men’s business, not ladies’ [...] they took her attitude as evidence of her femininity” (GW: 6). Scarlett is different from the girls of her age and from her sisters; she is more independent and less ladylike in her thoughts, indeed, she “found the road to ladyhood hard” (GW: 56). She could not be like her mother, Ellen, who is so resilient and who accepts all the woes Southern society imposes on women. From the beginning, the reader knows that Scarlett’s story is going to be different from that of the stereotyped Belle, who is embodied by Melanie.

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<sup>35</sup> All the stereotypes of the Southern Belle are present here: beauty, purity, whiteness, innocence...

Scarlett is in love with Ashley Wilkes, Melanie's future husband, and is determined to marry him. Ashley is the perfect gentleman, ready to sacrifice his life for the Southern States. However, he is engaged with Melanie and even if he loves Scarlett, Ashley rejects Scarlett's advances. It is a real blow for Scarlett who was so confident. This scene is important because she meets Rhett Butler, who is going to change the course of Scarlett's life. Rhett Butler heard the whole conversation between Scarlett and Ashley, and tells Scarlett that she is not a lady, because ladies do not have the courage she has and that she is someone of "rare spirit" (*GW*: 115). Scarlett is offended but throughout the novel, Rhett Butler is always more or less by her side and drives her to behave in an unladylike way, or push her to behave as she really wants. Rhett Butler is cynical, and he uses the Civil War to make profits. It seems that he is the triggering factor who permits Scarlett to show her real colors because in reality, they are alike. Even if Scarlett marries another gentleman, Charles Hamilton – who dies at the beginning of the war – Scarlett is torn between her love for Ashley and Rhett Butler's charisma. One understands later that Scarlett is in fact trapped between the Old South's conventions and the New South; and she finally chooses the New South, in which she can express herself fully.

Scarlett is a complex character. She is clever, she is strong, she is a self-made woman and she is manipulative. During the war, she works in a hospital because she has to, not because wants to help. When Atlanta was taken by the Union, Scarlett and Melanie escape to Tara, the plantation of Scarlett's father. However, her mother is dead and her father becomes a lunatic and cannot take care of the plantation anymore. Scarlett would never let Tara disappear and decides to take charge of it. Here, one can see the importance of land for Southern women. This is at this moment that Scarlett reveals her real nature: "As God is my witness, as God is my witness, the Yankees aren't going to lick me. I'm going to live through this, and when it's over, I'm never going to be hungry again. No, nor any of my folks. If I have to steal or kill – as God is my witness, I'm never going to be hungry again" (*GW*: 405). She takes her father's place and figuratively men's place. Yet, it is not for a specified period, she intends to be in charge of the plantation forever. She is determined to survive all the hardships she has to go through and would let anyone stop her. After the war, the Union authorities set out taxes on Tara, however Scarlett does not have the money and has to find it. She thinks of asking Rhett Butler, who is in a Northern prison. Her plan is to seduce him, to become his mistress in order to have money. Rhett Butler finds out her scheme and refuses,



either way he did not have the money. The most important for Scarlett was survival, not moral – contrary to Irene and Electra – and the survival went hand in hand with the keeping up of the ex-plantation. In order to have the money, Scarlett betrays her sister and manipulates her sister's future husband to marry him because he could give her the money. They married and Frank – her actual husband – falls ill. Scarlett takes the opportunity to run his business and becomes the only businesswoman in Atlanta and, at the same time, a social outcast. Frank “felt that everyone disapproved of Scarlett and was contemptuous of him for permitting her to ‘unsex herself’<sup>36</sup>. She did so many things a husband should not permit, according to his views, but if he ordered her to stop them, argued or even criticized, a storm broke on his head” (GW: 609). Scarlett pursued every opportunity which arose and lived her life as she wanted to. She was young when the war broke out and used the war to achieve her real life goals. She stepped out of the private sphere to succeed in the public sphere, like many women who really existed.

The multiple dimensions – romanticism, modernism and realism – of the novel makes it special. Indeed, the background of the novel is stained with the horrors of the war but Scarlett is capable of growing in this atmosphere (Wilson & Ferris, 1989: 958-959). The novel is genuine on historical grounds, before publishing it for the first time, Harold Latham of the Macmillan Company checked for months the accuracy of historical facts, which makes it even more realistic (Wilson & Ferris, 1989: 1136). Like for *Macaria*, from the day it was published (June 30, 1936), *Gone with the Wind* became a best-seller. The novel praises female intelligence and gives a true image of Southern situation and how women coped with it, in the antebellum period, during the war and during Reconstruction.

## 2- When fiction meets reality

We already saw the importance of being a Belle or a lady in the context of the Civil War, and this myth is as important in fiction. Some authors, like Mitchell or even Faulkner,

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<sup>36</sup> Velazquez used the same phrase. It is a reference to Lady Macbeth in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (Act 1, Scene 5, p.2: “Come, you spirits that tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here.”) There is also the figure of Joan of Arc.

chose to portray women who decided not to play the role of the Belle, which had “grave consequences” for the characters (Wilson & Ferris, 1989: 869). Indeed the fate of Drusilla could have been different if she had respected the societal codes. In *The Unvanquished* (1938), Faulkner portrays several characters that we can assimilate to some women we studied in this dissertation. Drusilla is the female soldier. She is the narrator’s mother’s cousin. Drusilla has a lot of common points with Loreta Janeta Velazquez. As a matter of fact, self-sacrifice for Drusilla is not enough and after having lost her father, she enlists in the Confederate army “to hurt Yankees” and gives up on marrying the man she was supposed to (*TU*: 237)<sup>37</sup>. She enlists in John Sartoris’s troops. Bayard, the narrator, describes her appearance the first time he has seen her since she enlisted and she looks very masculine: short hair, sunburnt, worn-out hands and in a male attire: the Joan of Arc figure. Bayard, who is a child, does not seem shocked by his cousin’s deeds, he simply describes her as he sees her with his child’s perspective. However, this is not the case of the other characters, and notably Aunt Louisa, who is Drusilla’s mother. Aunt Louisa is both ashamed of and powerless toward her daughter’s behavior. Because by fighting, Drusilla was forsaking her reputation as a lady and was becoming an outcast for the rest of her life. The narrator reports Aunt Louisa’s words and this is what she says: “there had been reserved for Drusilla the highest destiny of a Southern woman – to be bride-widow of a lost cause – and how Drusilla had not only thrown that away, she had not only become a lost woman and a shame to her father’s memory, but she was now living in a world that Aunt Louisa would not even repeat<sup>38</sup>” (*TU*: 236-237). “A shame to her father’s memory” is interesting because it reminds us of what Chesnut argued about how women’s misbehaviors hurt her male kin. On the other hand, a man could be forgiven for sins a woman was blamed for. Faulkner may have wanted to shed light on the difficulties posed by Southern society for women: the problem was not that they fought, the problem was the consequences of their courage. One can see how Drusilla is trapped by this system since when she is on the battlefield, she is a fierce soldier, but when she returns home she is like a child submitted to her mother – her mother representing the patriarchal figure since Drusilla’s father died – and so submitted to female

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<sup>37</sup> The abbreviation *TU* refer to Faulkner’s *The Unvanquished*.

<sup>38</sup> Drusilla and John Sartoris had an intimate relationship.

conventions. The character of Drusilla is the stereotype of the tomboy, we saw with Velazquez that it was more complex in reality.

The second character that I want to focus on is Rosa Millard, who embodies the figure of the protector of the family, like many women during the war. Rosa Millard is Bayard's grandmother and when John Sartoris leaves for the war, she has to protect Bayard and Ringo against invasion. Rosa Millard is deeply patriotic and still believes in the Old South's codes, notably concerning men's attitudes toward women. However, they were not applied anymore by the end of the war and Rosa Millard's failure was not to see society change. Ab Snopes takes advantage of it and betrays her, which leads her to her death. As Françoise Buisson asserts, her fall was also caused by her non-respect of the lady's position: lying and stealing, even if her motivations were fair. As she did not see the decline of the Old South coming, she expected men to treat her as a lady. She is "the victim of her own code" (Buisson, 2016: 9). Despite her tragic fate, Rosa Millard is depicted as heroic and ready to sacrifice herself for her family, like the women we studied in this part. Faulkner's characters show the readers that women were imprisoned in the patriarchal system and were the victims of it, and yet, on top of that, they defended it. Stepping out of their spheres, even in the context of the war meant a brutal return to reality after the war. Notwithstanding, women found new roles to worship the Old South and the Lost Cause, notably through associations: first the Ladies Memorial Association (LMA) in the war's aftermath and the United Daughters of the Confederacy in the 1890s.

Mitchell also shows the consequences of stepping out of the private sphere with the case of Scarlett. Even if Scarlett does not seem to be concerned with her reputation, she is not happy in the end. Every person that she loves dies or abandons her: she is left alone in Tara. She remembers her life as a child, in the Old South, when she belonged to society, when her reputation was not tarnished by her actions and decisions. She wishes to return to the past and her only link with the past is her Black Mammy, who is also a stereotyped figure. Until the end she is torn between the Old South and the New South but she made up her mind and chose the New South. She knows that she went too far and that she cannot step backward anymore, therefore, "she raised her chin" and thinks of tomorrow (GW: 984). It seems that there is no possible happy end for rebel women.

The novel *Macaria; or, Altars of Sacrifice* is different from the two previous ones because it was published during the war and so, men and women could possibly identify with the characters. Even if Irene and Electra are rebels and resist male authority on moral grounds, they are still subordinated to their “male guardians” and so to the patriarchy. This may be also the reason why they are not considered as outcasts because they respected their status. Flint explains that both heroines are “unable to overthrow paternal authority” because even if they defy their authorities on moral grounds by refusing to marry, they sacrifice their personal happiness to satisfy the paternal figure. Their defense of the Confederacy is synonymous with the defense of the most barbarous institution: slavery. The violence of slavery being softened by the so-called “gentle and refining influence” of women. Therefore, Evans portrays these two women as morally superior to men, which concurs with the Southern ideology of slavery. Irene and Electra are more moral than their male guardians, precisely because they are subordinated to them. By placing themselves as superior to African-Americans, Irene and Electra agree with Southern social hierarchy and so with the subordination of women (Flint, 2016: 466-467). One does not know if that paradox was intentional on the part of Evans but it gives the reader another view of the complexity of women defending the Confederacy.

*Macaria; or, Altars of Sacrifice* had precise purposes. Evans aimed at prompting women to support the Confederacy like her protagonists and to show women that their sacrifice was as important as the “sublime self-abnegation” of Confederate soldiers (Voloshin, 1994: 173). Indeed, Evans wanted to give women a sense of usefulness of their sacrifices and to show that in this war, there were two groups of actors: men and women – since one could not succeed without the other. Voloshin argues that “*Macaria*, the culmination of southern discussions of gender and war, finally provided southern women with the sense of agency for which so many longed” (Voloshin, 1994: 173).

Fiction meets reality by several ways: the story and the character but also thanks to the message it sent to the readers. However, I agree with Chesnut on the fact that nothing can equal the testimonies of women who experienced the war – “life is so real, so utterly earnest – fiction is so flat, comparatively” (MCCW: 359).

Thanks to all these diaries and novels, one can see how powerful writing was during the war and even after. Chesnut, Solomon and Renshaw House had a particular link with their diaries, it was at the same time their confident, their catalyst, their way-out but also a way to face and accept reality. In their diaries, they deeply defended the South and the Confederacy, and gave importance to the sacrifices they made for the Cause. They were rebel women in several ways, Solomon and Renshaw House by their actions, Chesnut by her will to share her diary after the war and by her point of views. They did not fight on the battlefield but they did fight the war using their pen and ink as formidable weapons. The simple act of writing was indeed a form of rebellion, and the case of McCord underlines it very well. The perfect lady could not allow herself to achieve a literary career and one can imagine the burden these women bore on their shoulders. They sacrificed their lives for the benefit of the Southern system, they sacrificed their ambitions, they sacrificed their men's lives during the war: their whole lives were based on sacrifice and subordination to Southern conventions. If we have to choose a word to sum up women's contributions to Southern society; the keyword would be sacrifice or subordination.

Even if fiction is not the subject of this dissertation, it portrays the lot of those trapped women, who, after the war, were forgotten and made responsible for the defeat of the Confederacy. Fiction shed light on their paradoxes and ambiguity in regard to society as well as all their sacrifices for the Cause. Fiction also helps understand how women were used to justify slavery and how White men reassured themselves and reassured women on this evil by assuming that women's moral superiority softened the violence of this institution and of patriarchy. We understand maybe better thanks to fiction that women had no way-out, they could not escape the confines of their sex nor the influence of the patriarchal society. If they did, they were considered as lost women. In a way, those three novels, are close to reality, especially *Macaria; or, Altars of Sacrifice*.

## Conclusion

As a conclusion, one can assert that Southern women's relation to the Civil War was complex and sometimes paradoxical. They had a real desire to be part of it and to be driving factors. Thousands of women acted for the Confederacy but it is difficult to know exactly the proportions of women who occupied a certain type of activities during the war. I did not find any census or real numbers about their occupations. What is mentioned is only what fields they worked in: nursing, farming, plantation-supervising, soldiering, spying, clerking, sewing...

Highbrow women's will and desires about the outcome of the war were quite contradictory. We can mention for example Chesnut, who defended the South heart and soul but who hated slavery, the institution which gave her the position of a lady in society. Chesnut also voiced women's point of view: according to her, they were trapped in Southern society because of slavery and notably because of the treatment of female slaves by their masters. Nevertheless, she did defend the Confederacy during the war and made heavy efforts and sacrifices for Southern men who were fighting for their freedom. On the other hand, there were other women who defended all the institutions of the South, like the subordination of women and the enslavement of African-Americans.

The most vehement woman in support of the Southern institutions was Louisa McCord. Louisa McCord was maybe the most paradoxical and complex figure of the Southern lady. She started her life with desires and ambitions which did not fit with Southern society, nor with her perception of it. She sacrificed everything to stick to gender conventions, which she believed in, whereas she yearned for unladylike activities and financial independence. The proceedings of the war were brutal for her: when she lost her son, she lost every hope of the survival of the Southern system and may have realized that she gave up her life in vain. She gave up her life to be once again trapped by the Union government that Southerners disliked. We saw that the age of women during the war was also a determining factor. Indeed, the younger they were, the more rebellious they could be because they were protected by the father figure and by their youth. They were thought to be innocent and so not really able to behave themselves. However, once married, the shame and rejection of their acts and behaviors fell on their husbands – and on themselves. Women

could lose everything, the worst being their reputations as ladies. Breaking with gender conventions was synonymous with social death. Southern women grew up in a stifling atmosphere, in which they had to watch each of their steps and an atmosphere in which their lives were dedicated to those of their male figures – fathers, husbands, sons, brothers... They did not really challenge it even if the context of the war forced them to be more independent and to rely on themselves. Indeed, the war created a sort of new environment, in which some women took advantage of men's absence and could begin to think that they could also count on themselves.

Southern women were bitter concerning the defeat of the war. Some historians argue that women were the most bitter of all, and we can understand why; they did all they could for their men, who, in the end, lost the war. Their sacrifices were useless and we observed in the diaries that a part of them died with the Confederacy. They belonged to the Old South and many died with it. Historians argue that women entered the public sphere temporarily during the war, and returned to their private sphere in the postbellum period. This is not a specific feature of the American Civil War but a permanent feature after most wars. After World War II, women returned to their proper sphere whereas, just like Southern women during the American Civil, they had highly participated in the war. Southern women's return to their private sphere can be illustrated with the accounts and diaries that ended at the same time as the war.

Women who fought or spied during the Civil War were forced to exile at the end of it. Indeed, they went too far, they had been found out and were considered as enemies of the Union. They enlisted or worked for the Confederacy because they believed in the South and did not want to live enslaved by them. Sacrifice was not enough, they had to act in deeds for their nation. Velazquez, by adopting male attire, proved that women could detach themselves from gender conventions and could achieve great things, just like men. As a spy – and with her two other counterparts – she proved that women could use the false assumptions that rested upon women to manipulate men and to accomplish her goals. It is likely that men's vision of women changed after the war and their thoughts about women's so-called innocence died. Even if women's personal reasons were different, they all shared the same patriotic feeling and we can conclude that they did help the Confederacy. They were daring women, who risked their own lives for their country. However, female soldiers, spies, diarists, rebels in a more general vision, all fought to maintain the status quo. This is exactly

this need to maintain the antebellum status which explains why women's actions during the war were denied and why there was a will to forget what they did once the war was over. Nevertheless, today one can read their testimonies and have an overview of their participation.

On top of being authentic, those women's diaries and accounts have a literary dimension. Indeed, it seems that we are reading a story: there is a plotline and most of the texts have a real ending. This is also why I thought it was important to compare and contrast them with real fiction. On the one hand, diaries and accounts depict the true experiences of women in the war and enable us to understand these women's feelings, to compare their visions and point of views. On the other hand, fiction sheds light on the authentic texts but also gives value and recognition to women's sacrifices as well as to their participation during the war. However, sometimes, fiction displays caricatured or stereotyped characters and this is why fiction is complementary with the diaries and accounts. This complementarity can also be seen the other way around: because of their literary dimension, diaries and accounts can be associated with fiction. It is all the more obvious with Velazquez's account – maybe that of Chesnut too – which hovers on the border between autobiography and autofiction. Moreover, just like writers, women who voiced their experiences of the war created a special relationship with writing and even if it is difficult to truly answer to the problematic, I would say that writing was like a catharsis, in the dual sense. A catharsis in the sense of the purification of the soul because they were transgressing gender conventions and rebelling against the Union as well as Confederate society. A catharsis in the sense of the externalization of the emotional crisis they were experiencing in order to make sense to what was happening in the United States. In each case, writing enabled them to alleviate the sufferings of the war. Writing is indeed mightier than the sword and these women proved effective and very powerful during the war. To conclude, as McCurry says, “women are not just witnesses to history but actors and makers of it” (McCurry, 2019: 3).

What one can regret about this dissertation is the biased vision that we have. Indeed, we only dealt with White women and educated women – without taking into account the women who succeeded in hiding their gender on the battlefield and whose existence one will never know – what about women from working-classes or African-American women? This raises the issue of power, privileges and hierarchy once again. Voices were given to those who had power – though it is already significant that some women could talk or write about



it – but the women who were down the social ladder had neither opportunities nor chances to express themselves. However, the women who had the power to voice their point of views could have given voices to these unprivileged women, but they did not. Privileged women regretted their subordinate position toward patriarchy but they respected the hierarchy toward those who were under their positions.

Women's status improved during Reconstruction. Historians agree on the fact that this was due to their ability to be more independent, an ability they gained thanks to the war. "The war had created a generation of women without men" and women had to enter the public sphere during Reconstruction, notably by working<sup>39</sup> (Scott, 1970: 106). The improvement of their status may be due to the influence of Northern women as well. However, one has to mention that the relationship Southern women had to their men, at home, did not really change. As we saw in the dissertation, women were thought to be morally superior and had the duty to help their men fulfill their destinies and also to remind them, in a way, that men were at the top of the social hierarchy. One can assume that Southern men used Southern women as foils. After the Confederate defeat, Southern men experienced a heavy blow, they were not at the top of the social hierarchy in the Southern public sphere anymore. However, at home, Southern women were still there to remind them of their position and men could be "kept alive by finding that, though abroad may be all darkness and humiliation, yet there is still a little world at home of which he is monarch" (Whites, 2005: 85). Moreover, Southerners found it difficult to accept defeat and the fact that the war had challenged the traditional roles of men and women and the dynamics of male-female relationship after the war. It seems that surrender triggered off a feeling of emasculation (Foster, 1978: 29). Southerners could not maintain the sex roles' standards of the antebellum period: men had not been able to protect their women. The Northern printmaking firm, Currier & Ives, made fun of this and depicted Jefferson Davis escaping Union soldiers in female attire, as if men and women had switched roles during the war (see appendix n°11). Southern men had lost credibility in the eyes of Union men. However, Southern women supported their men; it has its importance because it lessened men's doubts

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<sup>39</sup> More and more had access to education – even women from low social classes – and to professional fields that were not accepted in the antebellum period.

about their lost manhood. Southern women supported them, notably through memorial activities and the establishment of the Ladies Memorial Association (LMA) in the war's aftermath.

With the LMA, Southern women aimed at memorializing the Confederate dead and at praising the Lost Cause. They devoted their time to organize memorials and to find money to finance them. The LMA had been the largest Southern female association from the 1870s to the 1890s. This association has been viewed in different ways by historians: some think that it was the start for women's struggle for independence, whereas others think that it was only the continuity of women's subordination to men: mothers of men (Whites, 2008: 87). Indeed, most Southern women filled their time with supporting the Lost Cause and Confederate soldiers who died on the battlefield, while Northern women struggled for women's reform movements in the 1870s and 1880s (Wilson & Ferris, 1989: 1524). It seems that Southern women could not detach themselves from the antebellum sex roles: they strove to maintain them and to maintain the patriarchal hierarchy. It seems that fundamentally, Southern women had never been really subversive during the war. However, there were some Southern women who could detach from that society: the Grimke sisters. They came from an elite slaveholding family and were destined to experience the perfect life of a lady. However, religion helped them question and challenge the institution of slavery as well as the subordination of women. Angelina, the youngest, joined the antislavery movement in 1853. With her sister, they became part of the public sphere by participating in conventions, lecture tours and by teaching (Wilson & Ferris, 1989: 1578). During the war, on the one hand, they fought against slavery and so against the South; and on the other hand, they fought for women's rights. The case of the Grimke sisters is an exception but still proves that Southern women – when educated – could reflect on their situations as well as those of helpless women, and work against it.

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Boyd, Belle. *Belle Boyd in Camp and Prison*. Vol.1, London: Saunders, Otley, & Co., 1865. *Internet Archive*, <https://archive.org/details/belleboydincampp01boy/page/n8>.

Boyd, Belle. *Belle Boyd in Camp and Prison*. Vol.2, London: Saunders, Otley, & Co., 1865. *Internet Archive*, <https://archive.org/details/belleboydincampp02boy/page/n6/mode/2up>.

By sharing her voice, Belle Boyd tells how she participated in the war, notably through the experience of spying and the consequences that resulted from it. The notion of heroism is very important in the text.

Chesnut, Mary Boykin Miller, & C. Vann Woodward (ed.). *Mary Chesnut's Civil War*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981.

In her diary, Chesnut tells how she experienced the war on the home front. Chesnut was willing to show her patriotism and made the Union soldiers know. Her relation to her diary is also interesting.

Greenhow, Rose O'Neal. *My Imprisonment and the First Year of Abolition Rule at Washington*. London: Richard Bentley, 1863. *Internet Archive*, <https://archive.org/details/myimprisonmentfi00gree/page/n8/mode/2up>.

The war account of Greenhow gives an overview of what women could do during the war as spies. Even if Greenhow only served during the first year of the war, her exploits cannot be denied. The way she tells her story is very interesting because she constantly adds comments and gives her opinion about the politics of the time.

House, Ellen Renshaw, & Daniel E. Sutherland (ed.). *A Very Violent Rebel: The Civil War Diary of Ellen Renshaw House*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2008.

Ellen Renshaw House was neither a soldier nor a spy, but her diary deals with the war and notably how it was experienced by women on the home front. More particularly, women who would have wished to fight or to help more than they did. This is interesting to compare her diary to the other accounts of females who spied or fought, and understand the differences.

Solomon, Clara, & Elliott Ashkenazi (ed.). *The Civil War Diary of Clara Solomon: Growing Up in New Orleans, 1861-1862*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995.

In her diary, Clara Solomon tells her experience of the first years of the war as a young woman. The diary gives an overview on how the war changed women's conception of life.

Velazquez, Loreta Janeta, & Worthington C. J. (ed.). *The Woman in Battle: A Narrative of the Exploits, Adventures, and Travels of Madame Loreta Janeta Velazquez, Otherwise Known as Lieutenant Harry T. Buford, Confederate States Army*. Hartford: T. Belknap, 1876. *Internet Archive*, <https://archive.org/details/womaninbattlenar00velarich/page/n10>.

In her account, Velazquez tells her story as a woman soldier and spy for the Confederacy during the Civil War. She tells her life from her early childhood, when she read books about female heroines, to the postbellum period. She explains the reasons why she became a soldier and a spy, how she fulfilled what she thought to be her destiny. In this book, she shows that she had a voice in the war and still after the tragic episode.

## ARTICLE

Betts, Vicki. "Women Soldiers, Spies, and Vivandieres: Articles from Civil War Newspapers". *Special Topics*, vol. Paper 28, 2016. *Scholar Works*, [https://scholarworks.uttyler.edu/cw\\_newsttopics/28/](https://scholarworks.uttyler.edu/cw_newsttopics/28/).

This article provides copies of newspapers' articles of the Civil War period. Thanks to these articles, we realize that a lot of women took actions in the war, as many in the Confederacy, as in the Union. What is said about these women is very relevant.

## **SECONDARY SOURCES**

### **BOOKS**

Blanton, DeAnne, & Lauren M. Cook. *They Fought Like Demons: Women Soldiers in the American Civil War*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002.

This book deals with the fact that the division between men and women during the Civil War was not as clear-cut as we may think. Indeed, the Civil War is mostly associated on the one hand with male combatants, and on the other hand with the self-sacrifice of women who stayed at home. Therefore, this book provides information about women who fought for either the Confederacy or the Union, how and why they enlisted, how they behaved, how they dressed, how they hid, etc. It gives a good overview of the whole war, in which a lot of women fought.

Clinton, Catherine. *Stepdaughters of History: Southern Women and the American Civil War*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2016.

In this book, Clinton gives a panorama of women who were real patriots to the Confederate Cause and she notably gives information about Loreta Janeta Velazquez. She also explains what happened after the war for women.

Edwards, Laura F. *Scarlett Doesn't Live Here Anymore: Southern Women in the Civil War Era*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000.

This book provides information about the status of women and the importance of their social background before, during and after the war. It also deals with the importance of Southern culture for Southern women.

Foster, Gaines M. *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South, 1865 to 1913*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987.

This book gives an overview about how Southern women coped with defeat and how they adapted to their new lives during the Reconstruction.

Fought, Leigh. *Southern Womanhood and Slavery: A Biography of Louisa S. McCord, 1810-1879* (2003). Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2018.

This book is the biography of Louisa S. McCord who was an intellectual woman and a slaveholder. Her life experience is quite astonishing because, among other things, she was the owner of a plantation, without being married. In the biography, Fought explains not only all the controversies and paradoxes of Louisa McCord, but also her career as a writer.

Gardner, Sarah E. *Blood & Irony: Southern White Women's Narratives of the Civil War, 1861-1937*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003.

In this book, Gardner explains the importance of writing for upper-class Southern women. When the war broke out, upper-class Southern women did not stop writing, on the contrary, there was a plethora of diaries, stories of the war and even some fictions. Gardner also draws a picture of the postbellum South and helps us understand how the voices of these women helped to build a new culture and identity.

Hall, Richard. *Women on the Civil War Battlefield*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2006.

This book relates the stories of several women spies and tells the reasons why they were so eager to serve and to defend their South.

Harrison, Kimberly. *The Rhetoric of Rebel Women: Civil War Diaries and Confederate Persuasion*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2013.

In this book, Harrison deals with the power of rhetoric of White Southern women. She demonstrates how these women resisted and rebelled against the Union invasion thanks to writing. This rhetoric is tightly linked with gender and Southern women's roles in society at that time.

Massey, Mary Elizabeth. *Women in the Civil War*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994.

In this book, Massey demonstrates that the Civil War served as a catalyst for women to write. She explains that women needed to write about what they were experiencing more than ever. Massey also deals with the status of "women and Negroes" and how the war had an influence on it.

McCurry, Stephanie. *Women's War: Fighting and Surviving the American Civil War*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2019.

In this book, McCurry demonstrates that the American Civil War was not only a men's war but also a women's war. She explains how women fought and acted for their nation and how it helped to be granted political significance.

Ott, Victoria E. *Confederate Daughters: Coming of Age during the Civil War*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008.

This book deals with the traditional Southern Belle and her role in society, mostly during the Civil War. Ott demonstrates that gender was a big issue for some of these women. They wished to have been born men so as to fight alongside their loved ones. Some of them did, but most of them participated in the war on the home front. What is also interesting, is the link that Ott makes between women and slaves.

Rable, George C. *Civil Wars: Women and the Crisis of Southern Nationalism*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989.

In this book, Rable explains how defeat and reconstruction were experienced by Southern white women.

Scott, Anne Firor. *The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics, 1830-1930*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970.

In this book, Scott explains how Southern women's lives changed during the Reconstruction period.

Whites, LeeAnn. *Gender Matters: Civil War, Reconstruction, and the Making of the New South*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.

In this book, Whites explains how gender mattered during the Civil War and Reconstruction. She also explains how women's roles were challenged during the war.

## ARTICLES

Buisson, Françoise. "William Faulkner's 'My Grandmother Millard' (1943) and Caroline Gordon's 'The Forest of the South' (1944): Comic and Tragic Versions of the Southern Belle Myth." *Journal of the Short Story in English*, no. 67, 2016. *Open Edition Journals*, <https://journals.openedition.org/jsse/1765>.

In this article, Françoise Buisson helps us understand the myth of the Southern Belle in fiction, notably through the character of Rosa Millard in *The Unvanquished*.

Faust, Drew Gilpin. "Altars of Sacrifice: Confederate Women and the Narratives of War." *The Journal of American History*, vol. 76, no. 4, 1990, pp. 1200–1228. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/2936595](http://www.jstor.org/stable/2936595).

This article deals with the place of women during the conflict and female patriotism. Indeed, their participation was based on self-sacrifice. Participating in more concrete actions was



considered as non-respectable. The article deals with the issue of gender women had to face during the conflict.

Faust, Drew Gilpin. “‘Trying to Do a Man’s Business’: Slavery, Violence and Gender in the American Civil War.” *Gender & History*, vol. 4, no.2, 1992, pp. 197-214.

In this article, Faust underlines the difficulty that women faced while taking their men’s place, notably with the management of the plantations and slaves.

Flint, Azelina. “‘Do You Want to Throw Yourself into the Jaws of Death. . . . You Obstinate, Ungovernable Piece of Marble!’”: Self-Sacrifice as Self-Affirmation in Augusta Jane Evan’s *Macaria; or Altars of Sacrifice*. *The Mississippi Quarterly*, vol. 69, no.4, 2016, pp. 457-480. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/26575834](http://www.jstor.org/stable/26575834).

This article sheds light on the personal journey of *Macaria; or, Altars of Sacrifice*’s two heroines through self-sacrifice during the war.

Jodlowski, Margaret. “Clothing, Identity, and Combat: Sarah Rosetta Wakeman and Cross-Dress in the American Civil War”. *Primary Source*, vol. 3, n° 2, 2012, pp. 30-36. *Indiana University*,

<http://www.indiana.edu/~psource/PDF/Archive%20Articles/Spring2012/2012%20-%20Spring%20-%206%20-%20Jodlowski,%20Margaret.pdf>.

This article deals with Sarah Rosetta Wakeman and her male attire, but also more generally, with women wearing male attire to hide their female attributes in battles.

Redfern, Rachel. “Women Soldiers”. *Civil War America: A Social and Cultural History with Primary Sources*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., Routledge, 2013. *The University of Iowa Libraries*.

In this article, Redfern exposes the reasons why women soldiers chose to take up arms, how they hid their female attributes and how women soldiers “fought like demons”. (Blanton & Cook, 2002).

Voloshin, Beverly R. *Legacy*, vol. 11, no. 2, 1994, pp. 171–174. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/25679136](http://www.jstor.org/stable/25679136).

Voloshin makes a review of *Macaria; or, Altars of Sacrifice*, and helps us understand the aims of Evans in publishing this novel.

## **BACKGROUND SOURCES**

Evans, Augusta Jane. *Macaria; or, Altars of Sacrifice* (1864). Richmond: West & Johnston, 1865. *Internet Archive*, <https://archive.org/details/marcariaaugusta00evanrich>.

This is fiction but the novel was written during the war by a Southern woman, Augusta Jane Evans, who dedicated it to Confederate soldiers. Evans tells the stories of two women who work for the Confederacy on the home front, and who sacrifice their lives to protect Southern society.

Faulkner, William. *The Unvanquished* (1938). London: Chatto & Windus Ltd., 1960.

Even if this novel is a fiction and was written long after the war, it illustrates perfectly well how the war was waged and experienced. As a matter of fact, the book deals with a lot of different characters with different roles in the war. Moreover, it also deals with the importance of Southern culture and shows that until the end, Southerners wanted to protect their South.

Mitchell, Margaret. *Gone with the Wind* (1936). London: Pan Books, 2014.

*Gone with the Wind* is the most famous novel about the Civil War, even if it was written long after the end of the war. This novel is interesting to draw a parallel between fiction and the testimonies of women who experienced the war.

Wilson, Charles Reagan, & William R. Ferris (eds.). *Encyclopedia of Southern culture*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989.

This encyclopedia gives a good background of Southern culture and helps us understand some features of the war, notably before and after it.

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## **Appendix n° 1: Newspapers' articles about female soldiers.**

1.

DUBUQUE HERALD, April 13, 1862, p. 2, c. 3

A Female Acting as Lieutenant on the Potomac.--The Troy Budget learns from a private correspondence that one of the companies on the Potomac has been for a short time in command of a good-looking Lieutenant, who turns out to be a lady from that city. Being a woman she could not well put away womanish ways, and she was arraigned before a military tribunal, where she plead guilty to the charge of belonging to what is generally denominated the softer sex. It would seem that she was engaged to the Captain of the company and adopted what she considered the best, if not the most proper way of manifesting her attachment to him. We presume that she was tendered leave of absence as a result of the investigation.

(Betts, 2016: 6).

2.

DAILY CHRONICLE & SENTINEL [AUGUSTA, GA], April 30, 1862, p. 2, c. 2

Female Soldier.--Yesterday a female, dressed in soldier's clothes, surrendered herself to the mayor, and was sent before the provost-marshal. She gave Arnold as her name.

We had not the pleasure of an introduction to this female patriot, but learn from those who were fortunate, that she appears to be a woman of intelligence and gentle breeding. She gave the names of respectable houses here in the city who knew her in her proper sphere, when she resided in Arkansas, where she says she owns a plantation. Her story is quite a romantic one.

She asserts that she was arrested at Richmond on suspicion of being unfriendly to the South, but was treated very civilly while held as a prisoner. She claims to have been in the battles of Manassas and Belmont, and to have been with the army in Kentucky.

She says she left here in response to the call of Gen. Beauregard for ninety days' volunteers, and that she was in the battles of the 6th and 7th, in which she was wounded in the foot and hand. She came back to the city with the wounded.

Her reason for the course she has adopted is, that she is collecting material for a history of the war, and that she adopted male attire as the plan best calculated to enable her to carry out her design.

She has no desire to abandon her project if permitted to prosecute it in her own way. There are others engaged with her, but their names she deems proper to withhold. That she is an extraordinary woman there is no question, and our curiosity is excited to know more of her history and her adventures in male attire.

(Betts, 2016: 7).

3.

SOUTHERN CONFEDERACY [ATLANTA, GA], May 23, 1862, p. 2, c. 2  
Our Special Correspondence from Rome.

Rome, Ga., May 15, 1862.

... A female woman arrived in our city a few days since, dressed in the male uniform of a Confederate soldier, accompanied by a gentleman who represented himself as an officer in the Confederate army. Suspicions were excited and the parties arrested and examined, when they told a plausible tale about being in pursuit of a spy, &c., and were released. I learn that they have since been arrested in Chattanooga, Tenn., and are now held in limbo. I am teetotally opposed to women "wearing the breeches," and hope our city authorities will permit no more feminines to pass through the city in that sort of disguise. It is an infringement upon the "rights of men" that ought not for a moment to be tolerated. ...

What Not.

(Betts, 2016: 11).

4.

WEEKLY COLUMBUS [GA] ENQUIRER, August 19, 1862, p. 3, c. 6

A Female Volunteer:--In calling the roll of a regiment of conscripts who had just entered the camp of instruction at Raleigh, N.C., last week, one more "man" was present than called for by the list. The Winston Sentinel says:

This, of course, involved an investigation, when it was discovered that the features of one claimed to be a conscript were quite too fair and fine for one of the sterner sex. The soldier was charged of being a female, when she confessed the truth and acknowledged that she had determined to accompany her friends in the perils of war, and avenge the death of a brother who fell in the fight near Richmond. We have heard nothing in any degree to implicate the good character and standing of this gallant heroine.

(Betts, 2016: 14).

## Appendix n° 2: Velazquez as a soldier.

1.

SOUTHERN CONFEDERACY [ATLANTA, GA], January 11, 1863, p. 3, c. 1

A Female Soldier.--Among the strange, heroic and self sacrificing acts of woman in this struggle for our independence, we have heard of none which exceeds the bravery displayed and hardships endured by the subject of this notice, Mrs. Amy Clarke. Mrs. Clarke volunteered with her husband as a private, fought through the battles of Shiloh, where Mr. Clarke was killed--she performing the rites of burial with her own hands. She then continued with Bragg's army in Kentucky, fighting in the ranks as a common soldier, until she was twice wounded--once in the ankle and then in the breast, when she fell a prisoner into the hands of the Yankees. Her sex was discovered by the Federals, and she was regularly paroled as a prisoner of war, but they did not permit her to return until she had donned female apparel. Mrs. C. was in our city on Sunday last, en route for Bragg's command.--Jackson Mississippian, Dec. 30.

(Betts, 2016: 21).

2.

WEEKLY COLUMBUS [GA] ENQUIRER, October 6, 1863, p. 3, c. 3

The Female Lieutenant.

The public will remember the numerous paragraphs published concerning one "Lieut. Harry Buford," nee Mrs. Williams, with a history romantic in war as that of Joan of Arc. Last summer the Lieutenant got into Castle Thunder, her sex not corresponding with the dashing

uniform she wore. She was released, and went from Richmond to Chattanooga, where she joined Gen. Bragg's army, got upon the staff of Gen. A. P. Stewart, and for a time was employed in the secret service, effecting important arrests of spies, and doing some very daring things.

The other day she visited Richmond again, not as the gay Lieutenant, but in the garments more becoming her sex, and bearing the name of Jeruth DeCaulp, she having, in the interval, married an officer of the Confederate States Provisional army of that name, first obtaining a divorce from her first husband, Williams, who is in the army of General Grant.

In consideration of her services the Confederate Government has commissioned Mrs. DeCaulp with the rank of Captain, and since her arrival in Richmond, she has drawn \$1,800 back pay.—She is now at the Ballard House, en route for Georgia, and the home of her new husband.

The heroine of this sketch is a native of Mississippi, and a devoted Southern woman.—Richm. Ex.

(Betts, 2016: 31-32).

3.

SAVANNAH [GA] REPUBLICAN, July 15, 1863, p. 2, c. 2

The Female Lieutenant.—"Lieutenant Buford," the female Lieutenant from the South, arrived in this city, and sent to Castle Thunder, has been released by General Winder. The charge of being a Yankee spy was never alleged against her, and she is indignant that such a thing was ever insinuated. She persists in sporting her military costume, and it was this that got her into trouble with the Richmond authorities. Her real name is Mrs. S. T. Williams, and her husband is a 1st Lieutenant in company E, 13th Connecticut regiment, under Banks, in Louisiana. Her father is Major J. S. Roche, of Mississippi, but she was born in the West Indies. Her people were wealthy, and her annual income before the war was \$20,000, most of which she spent in getting medicines for the Confederate Government. Her penchant was to follow the army in a private ambulance with medicines, bandages, and servant, and apply herself to the relief of the wounded, though she was known to lend a helping hand with the musket at several battles in which she participated.—Richmond Examiner.

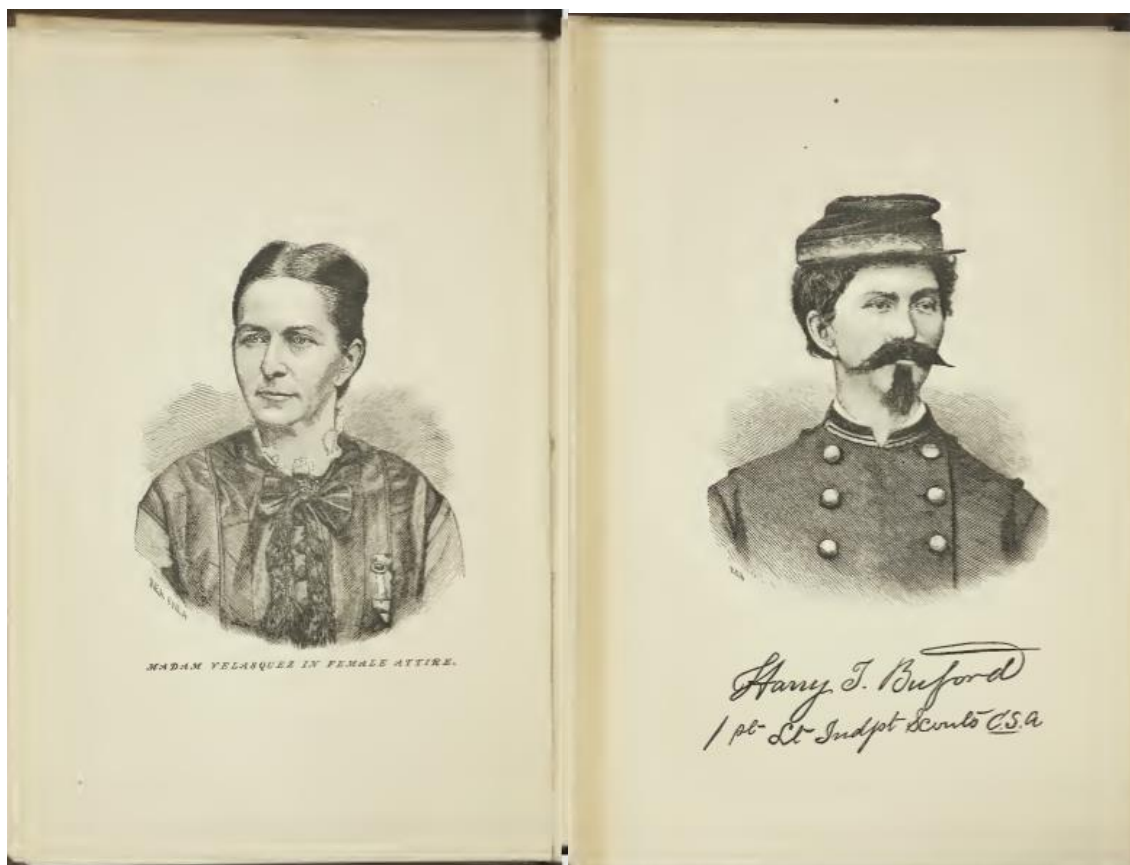
SAVANNAH [GA] REPUBLICAN, July 24, 1863, p. 2, c. 1

A Woman Among the Prisoners.—"Lieut. Buford," alias Mrs. Williams, was sent from Richmond to Atlanta on the 16th. The Examiner says: "She quite took Castle Thunder before she left. She got acquainted with every [illegible] about, and by her bustling manner and [illegible] ways threw the commandant quite in the [illegible]."

(Betts, 2016: 28).



Appendix n° 3: Velazquez in female and male attire.



(TWB: 1&60).

Appendix n° 4: "The Female Traitors" Washington Press. Jan. 19, 1862.

Now that the prisoners had departed, we were invited up into the rooms formerly occupied by them. The room in which Mrs. Greenhow was lately incarcerated is situated in the second-story back room. Besides this, Mrs. Greenhow was allowed the use of the library, the property of her husband, who was a lawyer. The library is chiefly stored with law books, interspersed with books in the French and Spanish languages. Most of the time of Mrs. Greenhow was spent in this room, which was neatly furnished, and containing, besides, a sewing machine, upon which the lady named did a great amount of sewing during her confinement.

After night set in, she employed her time in reading as well as writing, and many of the fugitive verses written by her are still preserved. She frequently remained in this room until midnight before retiring to her apartment for the night. On the desk of the sewing machine, this morning, we found standing two bottles of fluid, which were frequently used by her in her correspondence to her friends outside the prison, so as to disguise it to the eyes of the guard. The plan pursued was to interline her letters by one of the fluids, which, on the application of a second, only known to those who were in the secret, was rendered perfectly intelligible. Thus it was that contraband information could be conveyed by her to those who aided and abetted her in her treason.

We are informed by Lieutenant Sheldon that of all the prisoners confined here, Mrs. Greenhow was the most lady-like in her manners and in her conversation. She is possessed of the finest education of any lady who has ever visited Washington; and although rather severe at times in her denunciations of the North, yet she has shown herself to be possessed of a woman's heart in her sad mo-

ments, as witness the parting from her guard on Saturday. She had a great horror of being conveyed to Fortress Monroe, as was first feared by her, and her change is the most acceptable one that she could have.

#### THE FEMALE PRISON AT WASHINGTON.

A correspondent of the Philadelphia 'Press' gives a description of a visit to the house on Sixteenth Street, in Washington, where female spies and rebels have been confined. He writes:—

'When we visited the establishment referred to, we were admitted to the parlour of the house, formerly occupied by Mrs. Greenhow, fronting on Sixteenth Street. Passing through the door on the left, and we stood in the apartment alluded to. There were others who had stood here before us—we have no doubt of that—men and women of intelligence and refinement. There was a bright fire glowing on the hearth, and a *tête-à-tête* was drawn up in front. The two parlours were divided by a red gauze, and in the back room stood a handsome rosewood piano-forte, with pearl keys, upon which the prisoner of the house, Mrs. Greenhow, and her friends had often performed. The walls of the room were hung with portraits of friends and others—some on earth and some in heaven—one of them representing a former daughter of Mrs. Greenhow, Gertrude, a girl of sixteen summers, with auburn hair and light-blue eyes, who died some time since.

'In the picture a smile of beauty played around the lips, and the eyes are lighted with a strange fancy, such as is often seen in the eyes of a girl just budding into womanhood.

(MI: 208).

Appendix n° 5: Jackson's acknowledgment.

“ May 23rd, 1862.  
“ MISS BELLE BOYD,  
“ I thank you, for myself and for the army, for  
the immense service that you have rendered your country  
to-day.  
“ Hastily, I am your Friend,  
“ T. J. JACKSON, C.S.A.”

(BBCP V1: 142).

## Appendix n° 6: Newspapers dealing with Boyd's wedding.

IN CAMP AND PRISON.

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(*Le Moniteur Universel de Paris.*)

### "UN MARIAGE A LONDRES.

"On écrit de Londres: Un mariage singulièrement romantique vient d'avoir lieu aujourd'hui, à onze heures, à l'église Saint-James. La fiancée était la célèbre Belle Boyd, l'héroïne de tant d'exploits aventureux pendant la guerre civile d'Amérique et surtout au moment des brillantes campagnes du général Stonewall Jackson, dans la vallée de Shenandoah.

"M<sup>lle</sup> Boyd est à peine âgée de vingt ans, d'un caractère très-doux, douée de grands avantages personnels, et liée par la parenté avec quelques-unes des plus influentes familles du Sud. Il paraît que les scènes de la guerre, dont elle était témoin, depuis ces dernières années, avaient développé en elle une énergie et un courage qui se rencontrent rarement chez une femme.

"Les courses à cheval, au milieu de la nuit, à travers marais et forêts, jusque dans les lignes de l'ennemi, d'où elle rapportait aux généraux du Sud des renseignements d'une importance immense, forment le thème de nombreux récits autour des feux de bivouac dans toute l'armée confédérée.

"Elle était tombée entre les mains des fédéraux, mais un jeune officier lui donna les moyens de s'échapper

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BELLE BOYD,

et la suivit dans sa fuite. C'est lui qui, après l'avoir accompagnée en Angleterre, vient de lui donner son nom.

"Dans quelques jours, le jeune époux doit repartir pour les Etats confédérés, où il va s'enrôler comme simple soldat. Ceci a été une des conditions du mariage exigées par la fiancée comme preuve du dévouement de son époux à une cause qu'il combattait dernièrement encore l'épée à la main.

"Le mariage a été célébré sans aucune pompe, mais ensuite un élégant déjeuner préparé à l'hôtel de Brunswick, rue Jermyn, a réuni les jeunes mariés et tous les confédérés de marque et de distinction actuellement à Londres.

"Dans l'après-midi, les deux époux sont partis pour Liverpool, où le futur soldat du Sud va s'embarquer pour les Etats confédérés. On assure que les autorités fédérales ont mis sa tête à prix."

(BBCP V2: 111-112).

BELLVILLE [TX] COUNTRYMAN, November 1, 1864, p. 1, c. 2

Marriage of a Confederate Heroine.—On the 25th, a most interesting ceremony of marriage took place at the church of St. James, Piccadilly, London. The bridegroom, Lt. Samuel Wilde Hardinge, who is about 30 years of age, was an officer in the United States navy, holding the rank of Lt. on board the American war steamer *Connactacu*. The lady, who is about the same age as the gallant bridegroom, was the daughter of Gen. Boyde, of the army of the Southern States, who lately expired in prison, having been made a prisoner by the Federals. The lady's career is full of the most eventful, heroic, and romantic features. Her father, who possessed vast estates in Virginia, early embraced the cause of Southern independence, early embraced the cause of Southern independence [sic] was soon entrusted with command, obtaining the rank of general. His daughter, the bride, enthusiastically embraced the cause, followed her father to the field and accompanied him throughout his campaign with the celebrated "Stonewall" Jackson, and on two occasions, heroically, as a modern Joan of Arc led on the troops to battle; She was, however in a skirmish captured, and made prisoner, and conveyed to Washington where she was imprisoned. Here she remained 13 months, when she was exchanged for Gen. Cochrane, who had been made prisoner by the Confederates. On her return to the South, she went on board the *Greyhound*, Confederate steamer which was captured by the Federal steamer *Connactacu* while running the blockade. Lt. Hardinge was sent on board the *Greyhound* as a prizemaster, with his young heroine as a prisoner. The result was that they mutually became enamoured and escaped together from the ship, and found their way to this country, the bride having succeeded in withdrawing her lover from his allegiance to the United States flag, and enlisted his sympathies and support for the South. It is the intention of Lt. Hardinge with his bride to leave this country at the latter end of Sept. to run the blockade and enter the service of the Southern States. The marriage cortege was comparatively private, being confined to the bridesmaid and two or three lady friends, the bridegroom being attended by a number of American gentlemen connected with the South. After the conclusion of the ceremony the parties repaired to the Brunswick Hotel

Jermyn street, where the bridegroom has resided since his sojourn in this country, and partook of an elegant dejeuner.—London Paper.

(Betts, 2016: 42).

## Appendix n° 7: Newspapers dealing with Velazquez as a spy.

SAVANNAH [GA] REPUBLICAN, June 30, 1863, p. 1, c. 3

### Career of a Female Volunteer.

Among the registered enemies of the United States government who have been recently sent across the lines from New Orleans, there is now in Jackson, Mississippi, a lady whose adventures place her in the ranks of the Mollie Pitchers of the present revolution. At the breaking out of the war Mrs. Laura J. Williams was a resident of Arkansas. Like most of the women of the South, her whole soul was enlisted in the struggle for independence. Her husband was a Northern man by birth and education, and a strong Union man. After Arkansas seceded from the Union he went to Connecticut, he said, to see his relations and settle up some business. Mrs. Williams suspected his purpose and finally she received information that he had joined the Yankee army. The Jackson Mississippian gives the rest of her history:

She disguised herself in a Confederate uniform, and adopting the name of "Henry Benford," she proceeded to Texas, where she raised and equipped an independent company and went to Virginia with it as 1st Lieutenant. She was in the battle of Leesburg and several skirmishes, but finally, her sex having been discovered by the surgeon of the regiment—the 5th Texas Volunteers, to which the company had been attached—she returned to her home in Arkansas. After remaining there a short time she proceeded to Corinth, and was in the battle of Shiloh, where she displayed great coolness and courage. She saw her father on the field, but, of course, he did not recognize her and she did not make herself known to him. In the second day's fighting she was wounded in the head, and was ordered to the rear. She wrote to her father, and then came on down to Grenada, where she waited for some time, but never saw or heard from him.

She then visited New Orleans, was taken sick, and while sick the city was captured. On recovery she retired to the coast, where she employed herself in carrying communications and assisting parties to run the blockade with drugs and cloths for uniforms. She was informed on by a negro and arrested and brought before Gen. Butler. She made her appearance before Gen. B. in a Southern homespun dress. She refused to take the oath—told him she gloried in being a rebel—had fought side by side with Southern men for Southern rights, and if she ever lived to see "Dixie" she would do it again. Butler denounced her as the most incorrigible she rebel he had ever met with. By order of the Beast she was placed in confinement, where she remained three months. Some time after her release she was arrested for carrying on "contraband correspondence," and kept in a dungeon fourteen days on bread and water, at the expiration of which time she was placed in the State Prison as a dangerous enemy. Her husband, it so happened, was a Lieutenant in the 13th Conn. regiment, and on duty as provost guard in the city. He accidentally found her out and asked if she wanted to see him. She sent him word she never wanted to see him so long as he wore the Yankee uniform. But he forced himself upon her, tried to persuade her to take the oath, and get a release, when he said he would resign and take her to his relations in Connecticut. She indignantly spurned his proposition, and he left her to her fate. When Gen. Banks assumed command he released a great many prisoners, but kept her in confinement until the 17th of May last, when she was sent across the lines to Meadesville with the registered enemies.

(Betts, 2016: 25)

SAVANNAH [GA] REPUBLICAN, July 15, 1863, p. 2, c. 2

The Female Lieutenant.—"Lieutenant Buford," the female Lieutenant from the South, arrived in this city, and sent to Castle Thunder, has been released by General Winder. The charge of being a Yankee spy was never alleged against her, and she is indignant that such a thing was ever insinuated. She persists in sporting her military costume, and it was this that got her into trouble with the Richmond authorities. Her real name is Mrs. S. T. Williams, and her husband is a 1st Lieutenant in company E, 13th Connecticut regiment, under Banks, in Louisiana. Her father is Major J. S. Roche, of Mississippi, but she was born in the West Indies. Her people were wealthy, and her annual income before the war was \$20,000, most of which she spent in getting medicines for the Confederate Government. Her penchant was to follow the army in a private ambulance with medicines, bandages, and servant, and apply herself to the relief of the wounded, though she was known to lend a helping hand with the musket at several battles in which she participated.—Richmond Examiner.

SAVANNAH [GA] REPUBLICAN, July 24, 1863, p. 2, c. 1

A Woman Among the Prisoners.—"Lieut. Buford," alias Mrs. Williams, was sent from Richmond to Atlanta on the 16th. The Examiner says: "She quite took Castle Thunder before she left. She got acquainted with every [illegible] about, and by her bustling manner and [illegible] ways threw the commandant quite in the [illegible]."

(Betts, 2016: 28).



## Appendix n° 8: Boyd and Greenhow: effective spies.

PEORIA (IL) MORNING MAIL, November 21, 1862, p. 2, c. 2

Charleston, Va., Nov. 14, 1862.

... One of the phenomena of this [fold in paper] the development of an intense hate towards our troops and government exhibited by the female rebels. I am led to this statement from the positive evidences of the fact witnessed by me since my arrival there. These females have generally descended from the high and dignified spheres of the social circle and domestic fireside, and metamorphosed themselves into the shape and status of politicians, columniators and traducers of their country and its flag. Nor does the picture end here. It is from these females, who have played the successful scouts and spies, that the rebel leaders have gathered their best information. These women, practising [sic] a deception on our own generals, sometimes in the guise of ladies and again in the disguise of the rustic, have been permitted to pass our lines, visit our camps, and those of the first named have been feted by our officers. It is unnecessary to individualise [sic] instances of this kind in passing the subject. I will only mention the names of Belle Boyd and Mrs. Greenhow as heading the list of one hundred female rebels who have made for themselves infamous reputations. I have an instance fresh to my mind which was related to me recently by an officer of worth, who told me of a case in which one of our two star generals was deceived most egregiously by one of these female rebel adepts. He was enchanted, as it were, by her personal beauty, her volubility of language and innocent manner. She was allowed the liberty of the camp for several days; but suddenly she was non est inventus. She gained the information she came for, and her departure was as mysterious as her advent.

I will forbear to mention names or localities, as that general soon discovered his mistake, and has repented sincerely for his fatuity. In justice to the officers of this department I will say the affair did not occur in Western Virginia. To explain the phenomenon I have referred to still further, I will add from my own experience that I have seen young ladies in this town who at a superficial view, from their appearance, apparent intellectuality and exterior accomplishments, seemed an honor to their sex. Presto, and the scene is changed, the social picture is robbed of its charms, when I have seen some of them contort and set all sorts of gyrations with their faces, as an officer would pass along the road, in token of their depreciation of the defenders of our flag. The grimaces of these rebel ladies have been followed with

scurrilous and low remarks, which in some stances would disgrace a cyprian. There is a family in town, the head of which once held a federal position. This gentleman is known here as a Union man, but his example has not comported to his professions. This gentleman has a son in the rebel army who recently resigned his commission and returned home. He has another child, a daughter of twenty summers. This young lady (?) is proverbially known throughout Charleston as a rabid secessionist.

Last winter, while a portion of our army was in town, her father frequently gave social parties to Federal officers. On these occasions she used to make them serve her to give vent to her secession proclivities, by innuendo and at times by downright insult to her father's guests. On other occasions, when Federal officers would visit her father's house, she would hide herself until they had retired. This young lady is considered a Virginian of the first water. She is known here as the mouthpiece of the whole family. The loyalty of all is very much questioned.

(Betts, 2016: 16-17).



**Appendix n° 9: Southern women.**

Is there anything in beauty to make a woman hardhearted? They are, the beauties.

The lovely maid whose form and face  
Nature has decked with every grace  
But in whose breasts no virtues glow –  
Whose heart ne'er felt another woe –  
Whose hand ne'er smoothed the bed of pain –  
*Or eased the captive's galling chain.*  
But like the tulip caught the eye  
Born just to be admired and die,  
When gone no one regrets its loss  
Or scarce remembers that it was.

(MCCW: 231).

**Appendix n° 10: Louisa S. McCord's letter.**

After Cheves's death –

Forgive me, my dear friend, if only in a few words I can answer your kind letter.

The light of my life is gone, my hope fled, and my pride laid low. God pity my poor girls. I can scarcely rouse myself to take care of them. My helpless daughters! And his poor young wife, who daily expects her confinement.

I cannot write more, but only to thank yourself and Colonel Chesnut for your efforts to help my darling.

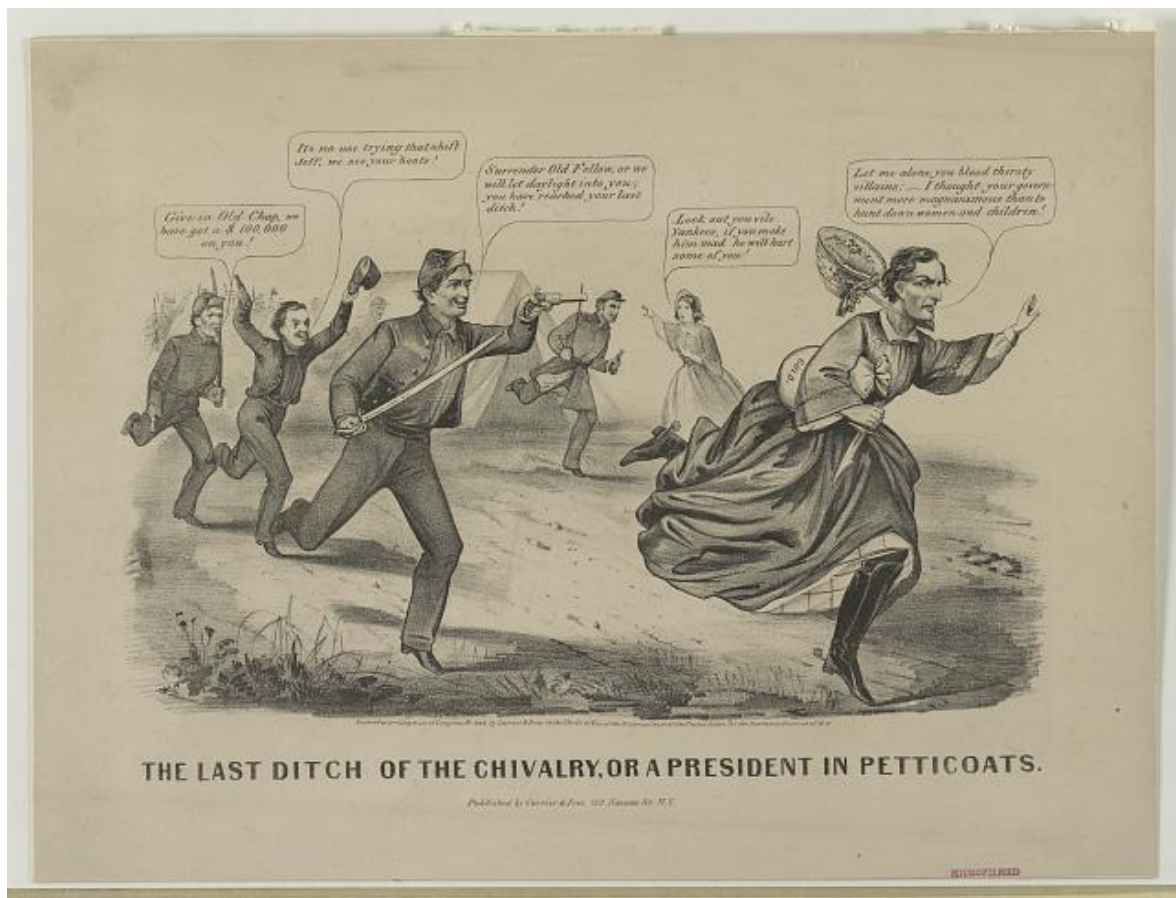
It is all over now, and it is right perhaps that the country will never know how much it had lost in my glorious boy.

Affectionately your friend

*Louisa S. McCord*

(MCCW: 788)

**Appendix n° 11: Jefferson Davis in female attire. (Northern Cartoon).**



Currier & Ives. "The Last Ditch of the Chivalry, or a President in Petticoats." 1865, *Library of Congress*, <https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/96511718/>.

## Résumé :

La Guerre de Sécession a marqué une rupture aux Etats-Unis. Ce fut une guerre sanglante dans laquelle les Etats Confédérés se sont battus contre l'Union dans le but de garder leur indépendance et leur souveraineté. Tous les hommes furent impliqués, cependant on ne parle pas assez souvent de la place des femmes pendant la guerre, ni de leurs contributions. Comme les hommes, les femmes sudistes voulaient maintenir le statu quo de la période d'avant-guerre. Comme les hommes, elles étaient patriotes et comme les hommes, elles se sont battues pour défendre les Etats Confédérés. Certaines ont revêtu les atours du sexe opposé et se sont engagées dans l'armée Confédérée, certaines étaient espionnes, certaines ont protégé le front intérieur en équipant les soldats d'armes ou d'uniformes et en les soignant. Beaucoup de ces femmes ont écrit des journaux intimes, ou des témoignages de guerre, dans lesquels elles relataient leurs expériences de la guerre. Le simple fait d'écrire sur des sujets appartenant à la sphère publique était une forme de rébellion. Les écrits de femmes nous offrent un aperçu de leur vie dans la société sudiste, de leur détresse, de leurs ambitions, de leurs sacrifices et de leurs paradoxes. Certaines auraient souhaité être nées homme dans le but de poursuivre une carrière autre que celle réservée aux femmes, mais peu se sont détachées des conventions liées à leur identité sexuelle. Elles ont fait de leur mieux pour défendre une société qui avait réduit non seulement les Afro-Américains à l'esclave, mais aussi les femmes. Le paradoxe est que l'esclavage conférait aux femmes une position de vénération dans la société. On pensait que la supériorité morale des femmes allégeait la violence de l'esclavage. La plupart des femmes sudistes étaient satisfaites de leur sort, ce qui explique leur défense du Sud. Cependant, elles ont été témoins de la chute des Etats Confédérés ainsi que de la leur. Ce déclin est mis en avant dans les écrits des femmes. C'est intéressant d'écouter la voix de ces femmes, de connaître leurs sentiments, d'essayer de comprendre leurs raisons, et de voir leurs désillusions finales à la fin de la guerre.

## Abstract:

The Civil War marked a shift in the United States of the nineteenth century. It was a bloody war in which the Confederacy fought the Union in order to keep their independence and remain sovereign. Every man was involved; however, we do not speak often enough of women's place and contributions during the war. Like men, Southern women wanted to maintain the status quo of the antebellum period. Like men, they were patriots and like men, they fought to defend the Confederacy. Some adopted male attire and enlisted in the Confederate army, some spied, some protected the home front by providing weapons, clothes for soldiers and by nursing them. A lot of these women wrote diaries or accounts in which they related their own experiences of the war. The simple fact of writing on subjects related to the public sphere was a form of rebellion. Women's writings offer an overview of their lives in Southern society, their plights, their ambitions, their sacrifices and their paradoxes. Some wished to have been born men in order to perform unladylike careers but few broke with gender conventions. They did their utmost to defend a society which enslaved African-Americans as well as women. The paradox is that the institution of slavery conferred women a venerated position in society. It was believed that women's moral superiority alleviated the violence of slavery. Most Southern women were satisfied with their lot, which explains their defense of the South. However, they witnessed the fall of the Confederacy as well as their own fall. This descent is highlighted in women's writings. It is interesting to hear these women's voices, to know their feelings, to try to understand their reasons, and to see their disillusionment by the end of the war.

**Mots clefs / Key words:** Femmes/Women; Soldats/Soldiers; Espionnes/Spies; Guerre de Sécession/American Civil War; Témoignages de guerre/ War accounts; Diaristes/Diarists; Voix/voices; Sacrifice personnel/Self-sacrifice; Conventions liées au genre/Gender conventions ; Esclavage/Slavery.