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A Novel Look at Confederate Women:

Perspectives from Augusta Jane Evans's *Macaria; or, Altars of Sacrifice*

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Introduction

At the outset of the Civil War, Augusta Jane Evans of Mobile was a nationally known novelist, having garnered praise for her second novel, *Beulah* (1859). During the war, Evans supported the Confederacy in almost every way a woman could. She volunteered at a hospital; she sang songs to rally the Confederate soldiers; she set aside her personal romantic interests; she organized Mobile women in necessary war work. Yet the young novelist knew that her greatest weapon was the pen; and so she wrote *Macaria*; *or Altars of Sacrifice*, which she expressly dedicated "TO THE ARMY OF THE SOUTHERN CONFEDERACY." Published in Richmond in 1864, the novel was subsequently reprinted for the Union audience. *Macaria* was widely read in both the Union and the Confederacy.[1]

Through *Macaria*, Evans defended the honor of the South and contributed to an emerging Confederate national culture. Moreover, the behavior of the book's heroines mirrors the actions of Evans and other Confederate women during the Civil War. The author thereby encourages her fellow Confederate "sisters" to keep working, even in the face of exhaustion and discouragement. By dramatizing typical female wartime actions in this novel of purpose, Evans reminds white Southern women that they are as crucial to winning the war as are Confederate soldiers and *Macaria*'s Confederate heroines. Evans served the Confederate cause with genuine loyalty, and offered the Southern nation her

[1] Augusta Jane Evans, *Beulah*, ed. Elizabeth Fox-Genovese (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1992); "Beulah," *The Mobile Daily Register*, October 9, 1859; "Literary," *Harper's Weekly*, October 15, 1859; "Mrs. Wilson in War Times," *The Mobile Register*, May 11, 1909; Brenda Ayers, *The Life and Works of Augusta Jane Evans Wilson, 1835-1909* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2012), 81-82; William Perry Fidler, *Augusta Evans Wilson, 1835-1909: A Biography* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1951), 85-86, 89; Evans to L. V. French, January 13, 1861, in *A Southern Woman of Letters: The Correspondence of Augusta Jane Evans Wilson*, ed. Rebecca Grant Sexton (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2002), 33; Augusta Jane Evans, *Macaria; or, Altars of Sacrifice*, ed. Drew Gilpin Faust (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1992), 3; Melissa J. Homestead, *American Women Authors and Their Literary Property, 1822-1869* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2005), 192.

greatest "sacrifice" in *Macaria* itself. Yet Evans's message in the book reaches beyond the Civil War. As about half of the adult, white male population of the South had been wounded or killed by 1864, many young women faced a marriageless future. Recognizing this coming change, Evans addressed the struggle of single women in *Macaria* and offered a solution through her own theology of single womanhood.[2]

This thesis will analyze *Macaria* in three broad contexts: literary, historical, and theological. There are several ways in which *Macaria* can be addressed as a literary work, including the context of female authors and readers in the mid-1800s, the debate over the genre of *Macaria*, and Evans's contribution to the creation of Confederate national culture. As a novel of a particular historical period, *Macaria* presents a variety of historical comparisons. These involve the novel, Evans herself, and women in the Confederacy. The novel explores such issues as the role of women in secession, women encouraging men to enlist, instances of female involvement in the military, female commitment to encouraging the troops, female supplying of the military, women's work as nurses, changing views on the place of women, and women's singleness in wartime and after. This thesis will also address theological concerns within *Macaria*, specifically the general religious context of the Civil War, the issue of slavery within the novel, and Evans's theology of single-womanhood. These three aspects of the novel, the literary, historical, and theological, show that in *Macaria*, Evans sought to address a growing need in her society, specifically the female desire to be useful and the increasing fear of

[2] H. E. Sterkx, *Partners in Rebellion: Alabama Women in the Civil War* (Cranbury: Associated UP, 1970), 194, 187; George C. Rable, *Civil Wars: Women and the National Crisis of Southern Nationalism* (Illini Books edition, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 206, 209, 215; Phillip D. Beidler, *First Books: The Printed Word and Cultural Formation in Early Alabama* (Paperback edition, Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2012), 114; Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 172.

remaining single after the war. Her solution to these needs was both practical and spiritual. Women, especially single women, she argues, are called by God to play an important role in the Civil War and they will continue to be vital after the war in establishing the Confederate nation. Before considering these aspects of the novel, it is essential to understand Evans's life, her novel, and the current scholarship on her writing.

The Author

Macaria, like most of Evans's novels, has autobiographical aspects to it. Augusta Jane Evans was born in the young city of Columbus, Georgia on May 8, 1835. Although her father, Matt Evans, was a prosperous merchant for a time, in 1839 he went bankrupt and lost his home of one hundred and forty-three acres, thirty-six slaves, and all his other possessions. It would not be until Augusta Evans's first literary success in 1859 that the family regained sure financial footing. Although her family may have never had the money and possessions of Southern elites, social privilege was nevertheless her birthright, as both parents descended from South Carolina planters.[3]

[3] Augusta Jane Evans Wilson, "Biographical Memoranda in Reference to Augusta Evans Wilson," December 17, 1907, item 3; Fidler, *Augusta Evans Wilson*, 12, 19; Ayers, *The Life and Works*, 21, 36; Mary Forrest, *Women of the South: Distinguished in Literature* (New York: Charles B. Richardson, 1866), 329; Anne Goodwyn Jones, *Tomorrow is Another Day: The Woman Writer in the South, 1859-1930* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1981), 57; Amy Thompson McCandless, "Augusta Jane Evans" in *The History of Southern Women's Literature*, eds. Carloyn Perry and Mary Louise Weaks (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 2002), 150; Elizabeth Moss, *Domestic Novelists in the Old South: Defenders of Southern Culture* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1992), 8.

In 1847, the Evans family relocated to San Antonio, Texas, where they lived until 1849. Returning east, they settled in Mobile, Alabama, which was not a large city at the time, but important in the slave trade. By 1850, Evans was the eldest of eight children. The family continued to struggle financially; similarly, many of Evans's characters face financial difficulty. At age seventeen, she began to write her first novel, *Inez: A Tale of the Alamo*, which was published anonymously in 1855. She based the descriptions of Texas on her own experiences and the family in the story is similar to her own. As Benjamin Buford Williams described, *Inez* did "not foreshadow the successful career as a novelist that came to its author."[4]

Augusta Jane Evans
Alabama Department of Archives and History

Undeterred by *Inez*'s lack of success, Evans began a second novel, which also contained an autobiographical element. Published by Charleston's Evans and Cogswell in 1859, *Beulah* describes an orphan girl's religious and romantic journey. A work of

[4] Forrest, *Women of the South*, 330; Ayers, *The Life and Works*, 24, 20; Harriet E. Amos, *Cotton City: Urban Development in Antebellum Mobile* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1985), 239, 85; Fidler, *Augusta Evans Wilson*, 38, 27, 45; Forrest, *Women of the South*, 330; Benjamin Buford Williams, *A Literary History of Alabama: The Nineteenth Century* (Cranbury: Associated UP, 1997), 185.

domestic fiction, *Beulah* stands out for its philosophical passages. Evans's spiritual journey was similar to that of her heroine: from religious doubt to skepticism, after which both women returned to their faith. *Beulah* sold twenty-three thousand copies by December of 1860, and the proceeds allowed the Evans family to purchase the house they had been renting.[5]

Financial success and a national reputation went hand in hand. *Harper's Weekly*, a Northern paper, declared that *Beulah* was "in the foremost rank of novels by American women. Possibly…the first of that class." Of primary interest to Southern reviewers was Evans's literary potential. *The Mobile Daily Register* commented that "the book is more remarkable for…the promises it affords." Similarly, *The Cosmopolitan Art Journal* declared, "we, therefore, look forward to her future with hope of further offerings upon the altar of pure, ennobling, beautiful literature." In the coming years, Evans would sacrifice "further offerings upon the altar of…literature" with her Civil War novel, *Macaria*.[6]

While further details of Evans's life during the Civil War will be addressed in Chapter 2, Evans was active during the Civil War in a variety of ways. Besides engaging in war work and writing *Macaria*, Evans wrote newspaper articles in which she, as Jennifer Lynn Gross describes, assessed "the state of the Southern home front while attempting to bolster Confederate morale." While these articles themselves are not extant, her letters from the war years offer insight into her thoughts. In these letters, Evans discusses some of her war work and comments upon many of the issues she addresses in

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[5] Walter L. Fleming, *Civil War and Reconstruction in Alabama* (New York: P. Smith, 1949), 221; Beidler, *First Books*, 114; Fidler, *Augusta Evans Wilson*, 42, 48; Williams, *A Literary History of Alabama*, 185; "Augusta Jane Evans," *Cosmopolitan Art Journal* 4, no. 4 (1860), 166; Ayers, *The Life and Works*, 36.
[6] "Literary," *Harper's Weekly*, October 15, 1859; "Beulah," *The Mobile Daily Register*, October 9, 1859; "Augusta Jane Evans," *Cosmopolitan Art Journal* 4, no. 4 (1860), 166.

Macaria, including, as Elizabeth Fox-Genovese describes, "the appropriate place of religion, writing, and marriage in a woman's life." Some of the letters were written to friends or family members, while others were written to prominent Southern men, including Robert Toombs, Confederate Secretary of State; William L. Yancey, senator, diplomat, and Alabama's leading "fire-eater" on the question of slavery; Benjamin Hill, Georgia senator; J. L, M. Curry, Alabama congressman and Baptist minister; P. G. T Beauregard, Confederate general; and Franklin Buchanan, Confederate admiral.[7]

Remarkably outspoken for a woman in her day, these letters condemn the Exemption Act. Evans believed the legislation damaged Confederate morale because it unjustly benefited the wealthy, as those owning twenty or more slaves would be exempt from military service. She also criticized women of the planter class in an 1863 letter to Curry, saying that they were lazy. In other letters, Evans criticized Confederate President Jefferson Davis, whom Evans believed was a weak leader. She also compared Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson, a famous Confederate general, to Gustavus Adolphus, a seventeenth century Swedish king who was a successful and highly innovative military commander. Finally, she lamented that the Confederacy was not making good use of women's skills. Yet Evans wanted her pen to do more than write letters: *Macaria* was the fulfillment of that desire.[8]

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[7] Jennifer Lynn Gross, "Augusta Jane Evans: Alabama's Confederate *Macaria*" in *The Yellowhammer War: The Civil War and Reconstruction in Alabama*, ed. Kenneth W. Noe (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2013), 128, 129; Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, "Days of Judgment, Days of Wrath: The Civil War and the Religious Imagination of Women Writers" in *Religion and the American Civil War*, eds. Randall M. Miller, Harry S. Stout, and Charles Reagan Wilson (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998), 244.

[8] Moss, *Domestic Novelists*, 180, 30; Gross, "Augusta Jane Evans: Alabama's Confederate *Macaria*," 129-130; Bell Irvin Wiley, *Confederate Women* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1975), 173.

The Novel

Macaria, as Sarah E. Gardener describes, begins with "a standard domesticity plot but ends in a most unconventional way." *Macaria* tells the story of two young, Southern women: the aristocratic Irene Huntingdon and the social-outcast Electra Grey. When the story begins, both are children, and Evans traces their lives until after the Battle of Malvern Hill in July 1862, at which point they have both dedicated themselves to the Confederate nation. Before the war, both girls study in New York. Irene's father, Mr. Huntingdon, sends her there because of her stubborn refusal to wed her cousin, Hugh Seymore. In New York, Irene meets Harvey Young, who is romantically interested in her, but he eventually moves west to become a minister; later in *Macaria*, he has become a chaplain for a Texan regiment. Electra has artistic aspirations, and trains with a New York artist, Mr. Clifton, who attempts to wed her several times.[9]

As both young women avoid persistent suitors, they seek to form their own destinies. In the end, they find their true calling in service to the Confederacy. Drew Gilpin Faust provides an excellent summary of the novel's theme**:** "Self-realization, toward which [they have]…been striving in the first two-thirds of the novel, is now defined as finding its fullest expression in self-denial." Both women sacrifice the opportunity to be with their loved ones, specifically Mr. Huntingdon, Irene's father, and Russell Aubrey, Electra's cousin and the true love interest of both young women. Both men are casualties of the Battle of Malvern Hill; this battle was a great defeat for the Confederacy, as 5,000 soldiers died and the regiment in which Evans's brothers served

[9] Sarah E. Gardener, *Blood and Irony: Southern White Women's Narratives of the Civil War, 1861-1937* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 15.

was decimated. Uncharacteristically for both American women during the 1800s and this type of novel, both Irene and Electra remain single at the end of *Macaria*.[10]

However, so much of the novel takes place before the Civil War that readers might be surprised when the focus shifts. While in New York, Irene longs to go back home, and her musings serve to bolster the reader's positive image of the South. In Chapter XX, Russell tells Electra he will attend "a great political meeting" because he is "most deeply interested; no true lover of his country can fail to be so at this juncture." Although he offers no details about the meeting, it is clear from the following chapters that it concerns sectional issues, that is, issues concerning North versus South. This allusion to sectional issues appears a little over half way through the novel. In Chapter XXI, there is further political discussion, but it is not clearly anti-Union. Amid Irene's personal crises, the intimations of coming war grow stronger. However, *Macaria* suddenly shifts to secession in Chapter XXVII, afterwards focusing on the war itself.[11]

The sudden shift in *Macaria*'s focus raises an important question: when did Evans begin writing *Macaria*: before or during the Civil War? Possible answers support the claim that Evans wrote this novel with a specific purpose in mind. Fidler suggests that *Macaria* was written between June 1862 and March 1863. While there is no doubt that Evans worked on the novel during these months, writing the entirety of so dense a novel amidst her other wartime activities would have been an incredible feat. Moreover, in August of 1861, Evans admitted in a letter that she was thinking more about the

[10] Faust, "Altars of Sacrifice: Confederate Women and Narratives of War," 1219; Jennifer Lynn Gross, "'Lonely Lives are not Necessarily Joyless': Augusta Jane Evans's *Macaria* and the Creation of a Place for Single Womanhood in the Postwar South," *American Nineteenth Century History* 2, no. 1 (2001): 34.
[11] Evans, *Macaria*, 215, 218-220, (sectional issues appear on page 215 of 415).

Confederacy "than pen, and letter." If Evans was mentally overwhelmed by the prospects of a long war, how could she write all of *Macaria* while it was raging?[12]

The same 1861 letter provides a solution to the riddle. Evans wrote to her friend Rachel Lyons, saying, "I received a letter from Mr D [that is, J. C. Derby, New York publisher of *Beulah* and her friend] a few days ago, acknowledging the receipt of my previous *MS*; and expressing himself as very much pleased with it!"[13] Rebecca Grant Sexton, in her collection of Evans' letters, suggests that this "MS" is an early manuscript of *Macaria*. If this is true, Evans may have changed the focus of her book after the war began, rededicating it to a more specific purpose – the Confederate cause. This explains the fact that there is very little mention of sectional tensions in the first half of the book. However, even if the sudden shift to sectional, secessionist, and war themes was intentional, Evans's purpose for *Macaria*, once the war was underway, remains clear. As Gross argues, Evans's purpose was more than financial gain, as she could "have tempered some of her anti-Union sentiment in order to render the novel more palatable in the North–something she did in postwar reprints of the novel." Rather, the strength of its Confederate tone serves Evans's role both as a champion of the Confederacy and as an encourager of Southern women.[14]

During the war, there were few publishing houses open in the South. New literature was almost exclusively published in Atlanta, Richmond, or Charleston, as W. G. Clark and Co. of Mobile published mostly textbooks during the last two years of the

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[12] Fidler, *Augusta Evans Wilson*, 105; Evans to Rachel Lyons, August 20, 1861, in *A Southern Woman of Letters*, 35-36.
[13] Note: all italics in quotes from Evans's letters signify Evans's own underlining of these words.
[14] For Sexton's comment see *A Southern Women of Letters*, 35-36, footnote 5; Hutchison agrees, see Coleman Hutchison, *Apples and Ashes: Literature, Nationalism, and the Confederate States of America* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2012), 80; Gross, "Augusta Jane Evans: Alabama's Confederate *Macaria*," 131.

war. Fleming notes that S. H. Goetzel, also of Mobile, published "text-books, works on military science and tactics, fiction, translations, music." Goetzel bound his books in rotten pasteboard and wall-paper. Due to the shortage of supplies in the Confederacy, most new books were similarly published during the war. West and Johnson printed *Macaria* in April of 1864 in Richmond "on crude wrapping paper," as Fidler describes. The novel appeared much later than Evans had hoped, as she wrote to her friend Lyons in November of 1863. A Northern version was printed in New York a few months later. According to Derby, he received a copy of *Macaria* in 1863 "printed on coarse brown paper." Although Derby arranged for the book to be published, he discovered that Michael Doolady's firm planned to print a bootleg edition of *Macaria*. Derby insisted that Doolady entrust him with royalties, which Derby gave to Evans after the war. This money later saved the Evans family from poverty.[15]

Macaria was one of the most read books in the Confederacy. Some soldiers later claimed that the book saved their lives on the battlefield. It was one of the very few novels written and published during the war, and Faust notes that "*Macaria*'s subject matter and its patriotism enhanced its timeliness and appeal." Northerners also enjoyed the novel, although Fidler tells a story about Union General G. H. Thomas banning the novel and burning copies because it was "contraband and dangerous;" as no other sources can substantiate this claim, it is most likely a fabrication, but one that highlights the book's widespread readership. Hutchison notes that due to "limited wartime editions," it is not possible to document how many copies were sold. However, Gross confirms from

[15] Fleming, *Civil War and Reconstruction in Alabama*, 221; Arthur Bergeron, *Confederate Mobile* **(**Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 1991**)**, 95; Homestead, *American Women Authors and Their Literary* Property, 192; Fidler, *Augusta Evans Wilson*, 106, 123; Evans to Rachel Lyons, November 21, 1863, in *A Southern Woman of Letters*, 88; Hutchison, *Apples and Ashes*, 63.

available records that "there were more than twenty thousand copies of *Macaria* circulating in the [South] by the end of the conflict." When reading *Macaria* today it is essential to remember that when Evans wrote, the outcome of the war was unknown; although the Confederacy had suffered many defeats, especially the twin defeats at Vicksburg and Gettysburg in the summer of 1863, she nevertheless hoped for Confederate victory.[16]

The Scholars

Evans has garnered various levels of scholarly attention throughout the years. For a time, scholarship focused on *Beulah*, as the novel that truly began her career, or her fourth novel and bestseller *St. Elmo* (1866), as the novel that secured her stature in the literary world. In recent years, more attention has been given to *Macaria.* While she lived, Evans was included in literary compilations with biographical sketches on female authors. The first, Mary Forrest's *Women of the South Distinguished in Literature* (1866), did not mention *Macaria*, although the novel was a fairly recent publication. Perhaps Forrest's book was produced too soon after the Civil War to include pro-Confederate literature. The second, Laura C. Holloway's *The Women's Story: As Told by Twenty American Women* (1889), devoted substantial discussion to *Macaria*, stressing Evans as a Southern author.[17]

William Perry Fidler's 1951 biography constituted the first effort to detail Evans's life, incorporating firsthand accounts from her relatives and friends. However, Fidler fails

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[16] Elizabeth Young, *Disarming the Nation: Women's Writing and the American Civil War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 161; Hutchison, *Apples and Ashes*, 69, 63, 114; Moss, *Domestic Novelists*, 183; Fidler, *Augusta Evans Wilson*, 72, 107; Gross, "Augusta Jane Evans: Alabama's Confederate *Macaria*," 130.

[17] Augusta Jane Evans, *St. Elmo*, ed. Diane Roberts (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1992); McCandless, "Augusta Jane Evans Wilson," 155; Laura C. Holloway, ed, *The Woman's Story: As Told by Twenty American Women* (Google books. New York: Hurst, 1889), 152.

to address critical issues such as Evans's view of slavery and segregation. In 1992, the University of Louisiana Press published scholarly editions of *Beulah* and *Macaria*; also in 1992, the University of Alabama Press published a scholarly edition of *St. Elmo*. Rebecca Grant Sexton's *A Southern Woman of Letters: The Correspondence of Augusta Jane Evans Wilson* (2002) is a useful addition to Evans scholarship, making Evans's personal thoughts accessible, augmenting her public thoughts in her novel. Brenda Ayer's biography, *The Life and Works of Augusta Jane Evans Wilson, 1835-1909* (2012), seeks to discuss Evans and her novels "in full context" because "her messages are just as relevant and potent…today" as they were in her own time; in this work, each of Evans's novels receives an individual chapter.[18]

Scholars have included Evans in book chapters and articles. In particular, Melissa J. Homestead, Coleman Hutchison, and Jennifer Lynn Gross devote excellent chapters to *Macaria*. Some studies focus primarily on the characters in Evans's books.[19] More generally, several scholars have devoted attention to women's writing during the Civil War.[20] Although others have noted the appeal of *Macaria* to Southern women,[21] and although Drew Gilpin Faust outlined the ideological and cultural background to

[18] Ayers, *The Life and Works*, 5.
[19] Louis Decimus Ruben, *The History of Southern Literature* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1985), 226-227.
[20] Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, "Days of Judgment, Days of Wrath: The Civil War and the Religious Imagination of Women Writers" in *Religion and the American Civil War*, eds. Randall M. Miller, Harry S. Stout, and Charles Reagan Wilson, 229-249 (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998); Gardener, *Blood and Irony*; Frank Jr. McSherry, Charles G. Waugh, and Martin Greenberg, eds. *Civil War Women: American Women Shaped by Conflict in Stories by Alcott, Chopin, Wetly and Others* (Little Rock: August House, Inc., 1988); Elizabeth Young, *Disarming the Nation: Women's Writing and the American Civil War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).
[21] Benjamin Buford Williams, *A Literary History of Alabama*, 186.

Macaria's appeal, offering some comparative details,[22] there has been no detailed study of how *Macaria*'s heroines mirrored both Evans and other Confederate women.

[22] Drew Gilpin Faust, "Altars of Sacrifice: Confederate Women and Narratives of War," *The Journal of American History* 76, no. 4 (1990): 1200-1228.

Chapter 1: Literary Considerations

Before considering *Macaria* as a work containing historical insights, one must consider it as fiction. In the years leading up the Civil War, female authors and female readers dominated the American literary scene. Evans must be understood within this context. Moreover, *Macaria* is a fascinating work to study in terms of genre. In *Macaria*, Evans followed some period genre conventions but ignored others, revolutionizing typical domestic fiction. Evans's own views on national culture, before and during the war, help readers to understand *Macaria*'s literary context. Moreover, the Civil War created authors out of many women. According to Faust, the female literary output has become "the most significant source for our understanding of them and their era."[23]

Women as Writers and Readers

In the years leading up to the Civil War, female authorship and readership became common. As early as the 1820s, professional authorship was becoming more common, due in part to the great numbers of female readers. Primarily, women of the middle and upper classes read novels. According to Fox-Genovese, in these years, "women's writing had established an uncontested, if not always prestigious, place in American letters." These women wrote domestic novels and poems. Even in these kinds of writing, their works often contained a political voice, addressing issues such as abolitionism, temperance, and social morality. In this way, although excluded from government, women participated in public discussions. Writing was an appropriate way for women to speak publically, for as Faust explains, literature

> did not require ladies to leave the home or to undertake demeaning physical labor that would threaten their class status; although it did expose their works and

[23] Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 161.

> sometimes their names to public scrutiny, it left their actual persons sheltered within the domestic sphere.

Moreover, women writers earned public admiration, giving credence to the value of women's opinions.[24]

Southern authors, just like northern authors, were successful before the Civil War, although southern authors relied upon northern publishers for their works' wider distribution. Remarkably, Karen Manners Smith notes that "lengthy reviews of southern women's novels appeared on the same pages as reviews of books by male American authors and British literary giants such as Tennyson and Thackeray." Literature was one way in which elite, southern, white women could influence political dialogue, although southern women did not address the women's rights movement as frequently as their northern peers, due in part to the fact that the Southern elite way of life required the preservation of the household and women in the domestic sphere. Elizabeth Moss notes that in this, southern literature served to "formalize and codify" an author's way of viewing the world. These novels have only recently been acknowledged for their serious political comments. Moreover, literature served to show differences between north and south. Northern readers enjoyed stories of southern life, so northern publishing houses gladly printed the novels of southern women.[25]

During the Civil War, women read and wrote in new ways. Faust notes that reading during the war provided women "a world beyond suffering, war, and death, a world in which they found an order, a meaning and a sense of control and purpose too

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[24] Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 154, 153, 167, 165; Fox-Genovese, "Days of Judgment, Days of Wrath," 231; Frank McSherry Jr., Charles G. Waugh, and Martin Greenberg, eds., *Civil War Women: American Women Shaped by Conflict in Stories by Alcott, Chopin, Wetly and Others* (Little Rock: August House, Inc., 1988), 7.

[25] Karen Manners Smith, "The Novel" in *The History of Southern Women's Literature*, eds. Carloyn Perry and Mary Louise Weaks (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 2002), 50, 51, 54; Moss, *Domestic Novelists*, 18, 12.

often lacking in their disrupted, grief-filled lives." As before the war, most female readers were of the middle and upper class, as lower-class women were typically illiterate. The Bible was the most widely read of all books and newspapers provided information about the war and loved ones in military service. Women also found in literature ways to explore their world, the changes in women's roles, and the disaster of war such that, as Faust explains, "both the pleasures and the instructions of reading came to assume even greater importance for Confederate women than they had in antebellum years."[26]

During the war, many women wrote privately in diaries or in letters. Many of these diaries are stylistically beautiful, but taken as a whole, they also provide historic insights into the lives of these women during war. Gardner notes that as women did not take direct political action, corresponding in private letters "offered southern women another avenue for expressing their doubts, concerns, hopes, and criticisms of the Confederacy to trusted recipients." In diaries and letters, these women also often expressed prayers, believing that prayer was the duty of a patriot. Although many of these diaries and letter collections are now published, many of these women never intended their writing for public eyes.[27]

However, some Confederate women wrote with a public audience in mind, publishing their work during the war. Evans herself is a prominent example, but there were others whose writing had a propagandist bent. Greenhow and Ford are two prominent examples of women whose writing was published during the war, and there are few others. Confederate spy Rose O'Neal Greenhow published a book about her work for the Confederacy in 1863. Published in 1864, *Raids and Romance of Morgan and His*

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[26] Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 153, 4; Wiley, *Confederate Women*, 169.
[27] Kimberly Harrison, *The Rhetoric of Rebel Women: Civil War Dairies and Confederate Persuasion* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 2013), 7, 126; Gardener, *Blood and Irony*, 22.

Men, written by Kentuckian Sallie Rochester Ford, focused on the Confederacy's heroic cavalry raider who was killed in action in 1864.[28]

Confederate women wrote to fulfill a variety of roles: as propagandists, as encouragers of the Confederate cause, and as contributors to Confederate culture. As propagandists, these women fought for their civilization with their pens. Gardener comments that as encouragers, women wrote "to bolster the spirits of both fighting men and noncombatants" by envisioning "a triumphant Confederate nation." According to Faust, as contributors to Confederate nationhood, women recognized "[t]he cultural needs of the new nation." When these women wrote, Gardener explains, "the outcome of the war remained unknown" and accordingly "their narratives exude a sense of optimism, excitement, and uncertainty."[29]

After the Civil War, the war itself became a popular topic among female authors and readers. Many women who had lived through the war recounted their experiences, others publishing their wartime diaries. A prominent example is Mary Chestnut. She recorded her daily life during the war. After the war, she transcribed her diary and destroyed most of the originals. Chestnut is a prime example of a woman who wrote during the war, but, recognizing the value of her thoughts, reworked them for a post-war audience. According to Gardener, in works such as this, women expressed their "attempt to come to terms with the meaning of defeat." The example of Chestnut's diary is both comparable to and different than the writings of Evans: both women recognized the importance of the events they were experiencing and decided to write about them, but unlike Chestnut's work, Evans's novel was written from the perspective of not knowing

[28] Gardener, *Blood and Irony*, 31, 25, 26; Harrison, *The Rhetoric of Rebel Women*, 3.
[29] Gardener, *Blood and Irony*, 15, 26, 7; Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 167-168.

how the war would ultimately end. Accordingly, Muhlenfeld notes that Chestnut's diary is "unquestionably a product of the postwar years."[30]

As a female, southern, and Alabama author, Evans was a member of a very select group of writers. She was one of a small but growing number of women whose profession was writing. According to Philip D. Beidler, Evans was one of the women who "helped ensconce Alabama even more firmly on the national map." As a female author writing during the war, Evans was one of few. Her audience was not post-war America like the audience of Kate Cumming, but the women who were living in the Civil War. She did not write to inform people of past events, but instead wrote for people who were experiencing what she was discussing. This fact lends to her novel a special purpose. Of all the southern, female writers, Evans was comparably undereducated, as she received no formal education because her family moved often. Nevertheless her novels, full of philosophical ideas and classical allusions, express that she read widely. [31]

There are numerous references to *Macaria* and Evans in the diaries and letters of other Civil War women; from this, it is evident that her book was widely read. Faust describes the reception of *Macaria*: "Nearly every Confederate woman who discussed her reading in a diary or in her correspondence mentioned *Macaria*. Some expressed their frustration at not being able to procure a copy." One woman listed Evans among the other authors regularly read by her women's reading group; the other prestigious authors on

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[30] Wiley, *Confederate Women*, 4; Elisabeth Muhlenfled, "Mary Chestnut" in *The History of Southern Women's Literature*, eds. Carloyn Perry and Mary Louise Weaks (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 2002), 120, 122; Gardener, *Blood and Irony*, 3.

[31] Amos, *Cotton City*, 93; Sterkx, *Partners In Rebellion*, 18-19; Beidler, *First Books*, 102; Mary Elizabeth Massey, *Women in the Civil War* (Bison Book Edition, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 185; Williams, *A Literary History of Alabama*, 170 (Williams notes that Jeremiah Clemens's *Tobias Wilson* was the only other Civil War novel composed during the Civil War. However, Sallie Rochester Ford's *Raids and Romance of Morgan and His Men* came out in 1864); Smith, "The Novel," 50; McCandless, "Augusta Jane Evans Wilson," 150, 152.

this list included Charles Dickens, Wilkie Collins, and Victor Hugo. Some women compared their own lives to characters in *Macaria*, wishing their husbands to be more like one of the male heroes of the novel, Russell Aubrey.[32]

The Genre War

Macaria must be understood in the context of the types of novels being written in the mid-1800s. While *Macaria* can be viewed as propaganda, the novel has much in common with domestic literature of the 1880s, but the ways in which it breaks this mold are significant. *Macaria* is primarily a novel of purpose: that is, a creative work written with a particular message, to convince the audience to respond in a particular way. All other considerations serve the message Evans puts forward.

Although *Macaria* has propagandist features, it is simplistic and misleading to label it merely a propaganda novel. Unfortunately, this is what many scholars have termed *Macaria*. Williams plainly states that *Macaria* "is a propaganda novel," Betina Entzimger describes it as "a piece of wartime propaganda," and Smith writes that *Macaria* was "a fierce piece of pro-Confederate propaganda." Similarly, Mary Elizabeth Massey declares, "Miss Evans emerged as the foremost feminine propagandist of the Confederacy." Accordingly, Coleman Hutchison notes with disdain for past scholarship that "today *Macaria* is treated as a piece of wartime propaganda and largely ignored."[33]

Evans's novels, *Macaria* included, can be termed domestic, or sentimental, literature. This genre of literature is concerned with women's often idealized lives and romantic relationships; these themes were both popular and lucrative in the mid-

[32] Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 175, 156, 135, 159.
[33] Williams, *A Literary History of Alabama*, 189; Betina Entzimger, *The Belle Gone Bad* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 2002), 66; Smith, "The Novel," 57; Massey, *Women in the Civil War*, 184; Hutchison, *Apples and Ashes*, 64, 97.

nineteenth century. Domestic literature also followed another tradition, the tradition of the *Bildungsroman*, in which a young character develops into an adult; some of these novels are psychologically complex. Throughout a domestic novel, women work towards one goal which they achieve by the novel's end: marriage. This ending in marriage was especially common in Southern literature, as Northern authors sometimes wrote of women who transcended traditional domestic roles. Domestic literature was, as Fox-Genovese put it, "[t]he heart of this [female reading] tradition."[34]

While the first nineteen chapters of *Macaria* fit the domestic novel genre, Hutchison points out that in later chapters "Evans essentially remakes the southern domestic novel—outfitting it, as it were—for war." Unlike the heroines in southern domestic literature, Evans's heroines do not marry, and the book discusses politics and even describes war. The shift in the novel's genre outraged some readers, because Evans broke genre conventions. Therefore, it is simplistic to view *Macaria* as merely domestic literature, as some have done. However, there is no denying that *Macaria* has many features of domestic novels. Gross explains that "[t]he sentimental trappings of the love story in the literary tradition of the domestic novel certainly pleased Evans's female audience." By giving the novel a domestic beginning, Evans ensured that readers enjoyed the comforts of familiarity.[35]

Evans's *Macaria* is best described as a novel of purpose, and Evans had three purposes for *Macaria*. First, for its Northern audience, *Macaria* was pro-Confederate

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[34] Beidler, *First Books*, 102; Jones, *Tomorrow is Another Day*, 51; Stevenson, *The Victorian Homefront: American Thought and Culture, 1860-1880* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1991), 168; Williams, *A Literary History of Alabama*, 183; Massey, *Women in the Civil War*, 15; Smith, "The Novel," 53-54; Gross, "Augusta Jane Evans: Alabama's Confederate *Macaria*," 132; Fox-Genovese, "Days of Judgment, Days of Wrath," 231.

[35] Hutchison, *Apples and Ashes*, 65; Smith, "The Novel," 57; Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 176; Gross, "Augusta Jane Evans: Alabama's Confederate *Macaria*," 133, 131; Williams, *A Literary History of Alabama*, 194; Gardener, *Blood and Irony*, 30.

propaganda. Second, *Macaria* contributed to national Confederate culture. Third, *Macaria* encouraged Southern women to keep up the good fight by dramatizing the typical wartime actions of Confederate women, actions Evans herself had taken. Moreover, she also provided a solution to post-war singleness, which many women were facing due to the deaths of numerous soldiers. The purpose of *Beulah* had been to promote personal faith over skepticism in the lives of young women, and *Macaria* also addresses issues important to women. However, Evans repackaged the issues for a wartime context. Evans mixed the forms of Southern literature, domestic literature, and propaganda into her own novel of purpose.[36]

Confederate National Culture

The propagandist features of *Macaria* are undeniable. Evans sent her New York publisher, Derby, a copy of the novel, intending both monetary and propagandist aims. Therefore, the opinions of Williams, Entzimger, and Massey – that the book is mainly propagandistic – have merit. Moreover, Williams is correct to note that *Macaria* is "not so much anti-Union as it was pro-Confederate." Homestead adds, "Evans attacks the North in the strongest terms, but she also celebrates the Confederate nation and its values and portrays all elements of that nation, rich and poor, black and white, men and women, as united in support of the war effort." This kind of propaganda is seen by the absence of slavery in *Macaria*. The word "slavery" is used only once, and that is in reference to the enslavement of African Americans in Irene's explanation of the South's future. Evans prefers the more appealing term "servants," which can be viewed as a euphemism for slaves or simply the common term used for identifying household slaves. However, if a

[36] Gross, "'Lonely Lives are not Necessarily Joyless,'" 33 (Gross notes three purposes for Evans's novel, purposes similar, but not identical, the purposes outlined here); Ayers, *The Life and Works*, 47, 57.

positive portrayal of slavery had been Evans's chief purpose, she could have devoted more content to the argument besides the above mentioned speech. Therefore, it is inadequate merely to label *Macaria* "propaganda," at least for the pro-slavery argument.[37]

Early in the Civil War, Confederates realized the need for a national culture. Hutchison argues in *Apples to Ashes: Literature, Nationalism, and the Confederate States of America* that Evans wrote *Macaria* to contribute to this need. Evans had joined the debate about "national" literature before the Confederacy was formed by writing four anonymous articles in Mobile's *Daily Advertiser* in October and November of 1859. She argues, in part, that the South should ignore regional literature and contribute to national American literature. The Civil War changed the application of the principle, but not the principle itself; Evans was still interested in building a national culture, but now the national culture would be Confederate. Accordingly, in *Macaria*, Evans never specifies where her heroines are from, besides the general locality of the South, a town called "W—." Moreover, while Evans's characters are protestant Christian, no denomination is specified. Because *Macaria*'s W— could be almost any Southern town and her characters could belong to any protestant denomination, Evans's Southern readers could easily identify with her characters.[38]

Evans was not alone in understanding the importance of building Confederate culture. Publishing did not totally halt during the war, as publishing houses in Atlanta,

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[37] Williams, *A Literary History of Alabama*, 186; Entzimger, *The Belle Gone Bad*, 66; Massey, *Women in the Civil War*, 184; Melissa J Homestead, "The Publishing History of Augusta Jane Evans's Confederate Novel *Macaria*: Unwriting Some Lost Cause Myths," *Faculty Publications - Department of English*, Paper 73, University of Nebraska-Lincoln (2005): 685; Evans, *Macaria*, 367, 249, 302, 305, 336, 343, 348, 364 .
[38] Stevenson, *The Victorian Homefront*, 165-166, Hutchison, *Apples and Ashes*, 15; Fidler, *Augusta Evans Wilson*, 70-72 (Fidler argues that Evans is the author of the articles, two entitled "Northern Literature" and two "Southern Literature," and scholarship generally accepts his argument).

Richmond, Charleston, and Mobile were active during the conflict. Men and women realized that their national culture needed to be defined as distinct from the culture of the North. Daniel W. Harrison notes that to achieve this goal, "nationalism was cultivated often self-consciously through, though not limited to, literature, newspapers, school instruction and texts, and religious publications and sermons." When women like Evans wrote novels, they wrote with Confederate national culture in mind.[39]

[39] Fleming, *Civil War and Reconstruction in Alabama*, 221; Harrison, *The Rhetoric of Rebel Women*, 12, xii.

Chapter 2: Historical Comparisons

Because Evans lived in Mobile, she was not as directly affected by the war as were many women who lived further north, even within Alabama. Although Evans's wartime experience differed from the experiences of most of these Confederate women, she nevertheless shared in the sufferings. The lives of her characters in *Macaria* reflect many of the realities of Southern women's lives during the war. A brief overview of the history of Mobile directly before and during the war will place Evan's experiences in context.

Mobile, by the time of the war Alabama's largest city, was primarily a city based on the cotton trade. In 1860, the slave population of Mobile was 7,587 and the free population was 21,671; only 817 were free African Americans. Fleming notes that Mobile was little affected by the war early on as "the defenses of Mobile were made impregnable" between 1861 and 1862. Although the port was blockaded in 1861, there were no attacks until 1864, when Fort Gaines was besieged in August. As a result, the lifestyle of most Mobilians remained intact during the conflict. According to Fleming, "there was a forced gaiety throughout the war. Many marriages took place, and each wedding was usually the occasion of social festivities." Many criticized this "bright social life," while participants argued that they held parties for the soldiers and officers who came to Mobile. As Mobile's access to trade was reduced and supplies became hard to come by, families found substitutes for common items. There was also a shortage of food, resulting in the bread riot in September of 1863. [40]

[40] Claudia Dale Goldin, *Urban Slavery in the American South, 1820-1860: A Quantitative History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 13, 52, 53; Fleming, *Civil War and Reconstruction in Alabama*, 69, 241; Bergeron, *Confederate Mobile*, 92, 93, 97-98, 101.

Faust notes that in 1800s America, "politics was regarded as the privilege and responsibility of men." In many ways, political questions were also social questions, and although women did not speak publically, they were generally informed. Throughout the war, Southern women bound together in newly formed associations. In these associations, women worked for the cause, and state legislatures, as Fleming notes, "thanked women for their patriotic devotion, their laborer sacrifices, constancy, and courage." Through the war, women became political, devoting their attention towards patriotic duty. Faust notes that "most Confederate women confronted dramatic changes in their domestic environment." In this way, Southern women participated in public life in new ways through the Civil War.[41]

As women took on new roles in the course of the war and therefore had much to do, they also had much to worry about. Most Confederate women would have had at least one loved one serving in the war. Bill Wiley notes: "The fact that a white population of about five and one-half million Southerners provided armed forces of about one million men meant that families who sent no one to war were rare and that those who provided several were not uncommon." Women were able to send and receive letters from the front, but the mail service was unreliable, often leaving women without contact for months and wondering if their relative had survived a particular battle. As they wondered what had become of their loved ones, women faced new realities without their men. These realities included "mourn[ing] the loss of male protection," which, as Faust notes, was "physical, emotional, and financial" protection. [42]

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[41] Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 10, 23, 16-17, 33; Fleming, *Civil War and Reconstruction in Alabama*, 230, 246.
[42] Wiley, *Confederate Women*, 154-155; Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 116, 121.

Evans engaged in many activities during the Civil War, and her conduct was similar to that of her Confederate sisters. Thus, it is inappropriate to portray her wartime actions as different or more important than those of the other women in the Confederacy. However, she does stand apart because she consistently dramatized these actions in *Macaria*. When one compares Evans's life, the lives of her Confederate sisters, and the events of *Macaria*, the purpose of *Macaria* becomes manifest. Evans accurately portrays Confederate women's manifold service to the cause. Such service including promoting secession, encouraging men to enlist, and bolstering their morale afterwards. Women were involved in female military service, in supplying the military, and in nursing soldiers. Finally, many remained romantically unattached and unmarried during the war. By depicting such behavior, Evans provides an accurate reflection of Civil War life for white pro-Confederate women. She thereby shows another way in which her novel is a valid historical source for appraising the wartime actions of such women. However, Evans did not include these historical details for the benefit of modern readers. She wrote to glorify the actions of Confederate women so that they will continue to sacrifice.

"prompt, immediate state action:" Women and Secession

Evans depicts the period of secession in her novels, and her descriptions overlap with the experiences of her Confederate sisters. Evans was a staunch secessionist. "In postwar letters to friends and professional acquaintances," Gross writes, "Evans repeatedly defended the right of secession and the glorious cause." On November 15, 1860, about two months before Alabama seceded from the Union, she wrote to her friend Rachel Lyons about "the political question of the day," saying:

> It is an issue of such incalculable solemnity and importance that no true Southern *man* or *woman* can fail to be deeply interested and impressed. For this great

> political problem I can perceive but one solution—the unanimous cooperation of the Southern states in *secession, prompt secession.*

This sentiment is evident in *Macaria*. The first sentence just quoted strikingly resembles the moment in the novel when Russell declares his interest in politics, and the last sentence quoted from the letter is reminiscent of the description of Russell as a spokesman for "prompt, immediate state action," namely, secession. Irene agrees with Russell's position, thereby "openly confront[ing] her father's wrath on political grounds." Irene later explains to Electra, "I was, from the beginning, a Secessionist." Evans's novel corroborates the historical record. Wiley points out that "Southern women were among the most ardent advocates of secession." Women who wanted the South to secede were quite vocal, as Whites said, "packing the galleries of secessionist congresses, hissing at the delegates who opposed secession and cheering on its advocates." Others became involved in the secession movement simply through their prayers for God's favor to the movement.[43]

In the same 1860 letter to Lyons, Evans explained the state of her fellow Mobilians: "The feeling here is intense; not noisy, but deep, and the faces of the people are stamped with stern, desperate resolve." Just so, in *Macaria*, Evans describes, before Lincoln was elected, "the mutter of the storm which was so soon to sweep over the nation." Through the fact that Irene's father disagrees with secession, Evans admits that not all Mobilians, and accordingly not all Southerners, so easily made the choice for secession. Nevertheless, when W—'s state votes to secede, Evans writes that "W— was vociferous" and describes Irene watching "the distant but brilliant rows of lights flaming

[43] Gross, "Augusta Jane Evans: Alabama's Confederate *Macaria*," 139; Evans to Rachel Lyons, November 22, 1860, *A Southern Woman of Letters*, 15; Evans, *Macaria*, 215, 300, 365; Wiley, *Confederate Women*, 140; Whites, "The Civil War as a Crisis of Gender," 14; Harrison, *The Rhetoric of Rebel Women*, xv.

along the streets" as her townsmen and women celebrate. This description also parallels reality, because there were similar celebrations in Mobile, and celebrations were held throughout the south. Fleming lists "dress parades, exhibit drills, picnics, [and] barbecues" as popular events. Further, Evans herself was so excited about the possibility of secession that she journeyed to Montgomery and was there for the celebrations when Alabama seceded on January 11, 1861.[44]

"do your duty:" Women and Soldiers

Confederate women both encouraged enlistment and then supported their men throughout the war. Not only were Confederate men expected to enlist, but Confederate women were expected to encourage them to enlist. "When hostilities erupted in the spring of 1861," Wiley explains, "mothers, wives, and sweethearts with few exceptions rallied to the support of the Southern cause." A newspaper from Troy, Alabama berated women "for not doing anything in behalf of encouraging enlistments." Southern women proved effective at encouraging enlistment by ridiculing men who refused to fight. Victoria E. Ott explains that men who hired a substitute to fight for them or took advantage of exemption laws were often labeled "shirkers and cowards."[45]

Although it is not clear how much Evans encouraged her brothers to enlist, they did in fact serve. Her brothers Howard and Vivian were in the Third Alabama Regiment, as Evans describes in her letters and as regimental records clearly show. Evans says in a letter, "My *Father* and *Brothers* belong to the garrison at *Fort Morgan*." This comment

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[44] Evans to Rachel Lyons, November 22, 1860, *A Southern Woman of Letters*, 15; Evans, *Macaria*, 298, 300; Amos, *Cotton City*, 222, 237; Sterkx, *Partners in Rebellion*, 30; Fleming, *Civil War and Reconstruction in Alabama*, 231-232; Fidler, *Augusta Jane Evans Wilson*, 89.
[45] Wiley, *Confederate Women*, 140, 141-142; Sterkx, *Partners In Rebellion*, 43; Victoria E. Ott, *Confederate Daughters: Coming of Age During the Civil War* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 2008), 55.

suggests that although her father did not enlist in the military, he apparently accompanied his sons to Fort Morgan in a civilian capacity. In *Macaria*, Evans depicts the enlistment of soldiers. Irene does not explicitly prompt her father to enlist; rather, she presumes correctly upon his character that he would enlist. Mr. Huntingdon says, "to-day I have come to a determination which will doubtless surprise you." Irene responds, "No, father; I am not surprised that you have determined to do your duty." She further explains when he questions her that the Confederate nation "expects that every man will do his duty." Mr. Huntingdon later agrees that he "could not possibly stay at home" in the midst of war. Again, Irene states "every man in the Confederacy who can leave his family should be in our army." Through these statements, Evans not only speaks through Irene for the necessity of male military service, but reminds women that they must be vocal about the duty of their male relatives.[46]

Macaria also favorably depicts the soldiers of the Confederacy, both in describing Russell's regiment and through a glorifying account of Russell in uniform. Irene also lauds her friend Dr. Arnold because he has decided to join Russell's regiment, saying, "Every good surgeon in the Confederacy should hasten to the front line of our armies." By reporting Irene's words, Evans not only encourages men to enlist, but prompts her Confederate sisters to encourage men to enlist, even though they know that it will be hard to say goodbye to them. By describing soldiers in war as glorious in life and death, Evans

[46] Alabama Department of Archives and History, Alabama Civil War Service Database, entries for Evans, H. J. and Evans, Vivian, R.; Evans to Rachel Lyons, June 26, 1861, *A Southern Woman of Letters*, 33; Evans to L. V. French, January 13, 1861, *A Southern Woman of Letters*, 29; Filder, 97; Evans, *Macaria*, 301, 302, 204.

served, in Beidler's words, as "a literary spokeswoman for the Southern military cause."[47]

Evans also depicts what it was like for soldiers to leave to go to war. Evans's picture of Russell Aubrey, or Col. Aubrey as he is later called, stirs romantic but also military imagination: "Clad in the handsome glittering uniform, which showed his nobly-proportioned and powerful figure so advantageously, the officer stood, hat in hand, the long sable plum dropping toward the floor." Before Aubrey departs, Irene gives him a Bible in which she has written, "Colonel Russell Aubrey, with the life-long prayers of his best friend." Believing they will never meet again in life but only after death, they pray together and Russell leaves, after which Irene prays aloud, "Thy will, not mine, oh, Father! Give me the strength to do my work; enable me to be faithful to the bitter end." Here, as Irene says farewell to a loved one, she turns to prayer, as many women did, acknowledging that they were now in God's care. Faust describes how the departure of soldiers was celebrated:

> Communities often gathered en masse to wish the soldiers farewell and often to present them with uniforms or flags sewn by local ladies. Patriotic addresses were the order of the day, and the soldiers marched off.... Ceremonies of colorful uniforms, waving banners, patriotic speeches, and martial music displayed all the romance of war as well as unbounded expectations of personal courage and glorious victory.

Soldiers would also be celebrated as they passed from town to town on the way to the front. Women were active in encouraging these men as they went to war.[48]

Once men were serving in the military, Confederate women did not forget them, but encouraged them in their service. Accordingly a key female role during the war was

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[47] Evans, *Macaria*, 308, 320, 301, 338, 340; Wiley, *Confederate Women*, 140; Beidler, *First Books*, 114.
[48] Evans, *Macaria*, 320, 328, 330; Wiley, *Confederate Women*, 140, 141; George C. Rable, *God's Almost Chosen Peoples: A Religious History of the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 73; Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 15.

that of encourager. Confederate women, including Evans and her literary heroines, devoted themselves to rallying the troops through a variety of means. Even early in the war, women saw encouraging as their duty. Women often did this by visiting encamped soldiers, even though it was debated throughout the war if this was appropriate. Evans alludes to this kind of behavior in *Macaria* when Irene expresses a desire to visit her father should he be wounded. He responds that "The neighborhood of an army would not be a pleasant place for you." Nonetheless, Irene does visit a camp, with her uncle as a chaperone, when Russell Aubrey is mortally wounded at the Battle of Malvern Hill. Although the propriety of such actions was questioned, it was not uncommon for Confederate women to visit camps and sing for soldiers. Evans and her mother visited troops encamped at Lookout Mountain, where her brother Howard was were stationed; she sang "Maryland, My Maryland," a tune often requested by soldiers.[49]

"womanly devotion:" Female Military Service

In *Macaria*, Evans addresses the female desire to join the military. When Irene's father enlists, Irene declares, "Oh, father! if I were only a man, that I might go with you—stand by you under all circumstances. Could n't you take me anyhow? Surely a daughter may follow her father, even on the battle-field?" Electra also laments that as a woman, she is unable to serve in the military. George C. Rable notes that the phrase "If only I were a man" "appears countless times in letters and diaries written by southern

[49] Leeann Whites and Alecia P. Long, *Occupied Women: Gender, Military Occupation, and the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 2009), 1; Faust, "Altars of Sacrifice: Confederate Women and Narratives of War," 1211; Sterkx, *Partners In Rebellion*, 54; Massey, *Women in the Civil War*, 72; Evans, *Macaria*, 303, 339; Fidler, *Augusta Jane Evans Wilson*, 99.

white women during the war." In such letters and diaries, Wiley notes that "women expressed annoyance" that they could not enlist.[50]

Yet some Confederate women did serve in the military, disguised as men, while others served as secret agents. In their book *They Fought Like Demons: Women Soldiers in the American Civil War*, DeAnne Blanton and Lauren M. Cook report that at least 250 women served as soldiers in the Civil War. Some women enlisted with a male relative or sweetheart, while others enlisted with no one's knowledge or approval. Woman had many motives for enlisting, including revenge, patriotism, familial or romantic love, or a desire for adventure. With some exceptions, these women were not well educated, coming from farming and middle class families. Interestingly, it was well-known during the war that women were serving because the newspapers published accounts of women who were discovered. Unless the woman was serving because she desired adventure, the press was generally favorable. Most of these secretly enlisted women were discovered, although not all. Richard Hall describes that there were often negative connotations when a woman was discovered, for such women might be viewed in one of several ways: as "prostitutes, or spies, or mentally disturbed individuals, or devious people of some kind, up to no good in any case since they were violating conventional sensibilities." After the war, interest in these women continued, as they wrote memoirs and novels.[51]

There were other, more acceptable ways for women to participate in military action. Wiley explains that women participated in the military effort by "smuggl[ing]

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[50] Rable, *Civil Wars*, 151; Faust, "Altars of Sacrifice: Confederate Women and Narratives of War," 1200; Evans, *Macaria*, 302, 363; George C. Rable, "'Missing in Action:' Women of the Confederacy," in *Divided Houses: Gender and the Civil War*, eds. Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1992), 136; Wiley, *Confederate Women*, 142.

[51] Massey, *Women in the Civil War*, 81-83; DeAnne Blanton and Lauren M. Cook, *They Fought Like Demons: Women Soldiers in the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 2002), 7, 30, 32, 40-41, 37, 145, 148, 153; Wiley, *Confederate Women*, 142; Richard Hall, *Women on the Civil War Battlefront* (Lawrence: UP of Kansas, 2006), 120.

pistols, medicines, and other scarce items through the lines in their clothing or baggage." Women fulfilled these roles both officially and unofficially. In this way, women could have an active part to play while remaining at least publically within social conventions. Of course, because this work was by its nature secret, it was never apparent that social conventions had been violated.[52]

While Evans does not depict women dressing as men to serve in the military, she does include two episodes of espionage in *Macaria*. The first is an account of "a young lady of Washington" who smuggled military dispatches "through womanly devotion" and by braiding the paper in her hair. Evans based this story on events that took place before the Battle of Manassas, when a female spy named Duval assisted General P. G. T. Beauregard. The second instance is when Electra expresses her own "female ingenuity" by smuggling dispatches inside of her paintings as she travels. Chapter XXXI describes her dangerous journey from Havana to Mobile in a small ship, which is fired upon by Union ships. Electra assures the captain that she is not afraid of the voyage; after all, she has "a splendid brace of pistols." In this minor comment, Evans references the fact that many Confederate women learned how to handle weapons to protect themselves because they were in fear of Union soldiers and slave rebellions when the war began. Electra expresses bravery amidst the fray, exclaiming, "I would not have missed this for any consideration." While not every Confederate woman will serve the Confederacy as the "young lady of Washington" or Electra, Evans acknowledges and does not belittle the desire.[53]

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[52] Wiley, *Confederate Women*, 143; Hall, *Women on the Civil War Battlefront*, 88.
[53] Evans, *Macaria*, 332-333, 346, 350, 359; Evans to General Beauregard, March 17, 1863, in *A Southern Woman of Letters*, 56; Rable, *Civil Wars*, 152.

"give the soldiers everything they need:" Women's War Work

Although few Confederate women wore the uniform, there were other capacities for service. Evans deliberately depicts these capacities in *Macaria*. One of the primary capacities was through supplying the army in a variety of ways, so that women thereby redirected their domestic skills for military purposes. Many scholars have noted that during the Civil War, women's lives still focused on the domestic, but here the domestic took on new facets and became connected to the national good. H. E. Sterkx lists common activities in Alabama: "spinning, weaving, sewing, and knitting military apparel." Moreover, wealthy women often bore the financial burden by paying for the necessary materials.[54]

There are ample instances of such endeavors in *Macaria*, as Irene, herself a wealthy woman, engages in similar activities. This was a common pattern during the war, as Leann Whites explains, for "women within households containing a surplus of domestic resources were able and willing to donate some of that surplus to care for the needs of soldiers." Irene explains how she needs "to see about giving out some sewing for the 'Huntingdon Rifles'" (her father's unit). She commissions women to sew seventy-five overshirts and haversacks. Through these efforts, Irene fulfills her father's wish to "give the soldiers everything they need" from her own pocket; she even helps to take care of their poor families. She also prepares hospital supplies for Dr. Arnold before he leaves, and promises to send further resources. When Irene works diligently to knit gloves, she explains, "It is cold work holding a musket in the open air, such weather as it is." Evans is perhaps reflecting upon Alabama Governor A. B. Moore's plea for private donations of

[54] Leeann Whites, "The Civil War as a Crisis of Gender" in *Divided Houses: Gender and the Civil War*, eds. Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1992), 16; Whites and Long, *Occupied Women*, 88; Sterkx, *Partners In Rebellion*, 94, 103.

winter clothing for soldiers. Later, Electra and Irene work together, "tearing off and rolling bandages…[and] scrap[ing] lint from a quantity of old linen." When Electra travels to Richmond to be a nurse, she brings more hospital supplies from the women of W—.[55]

When not writing, Evans devoted herself to supplying the military. On January 13, 1861, Evans wrote to her aunt, Mrs. L. V. French, that she had begun making sandbags for the ramparts at Fort Morgan. By February 2, she reported to her friend Rachel Lyons that "We ladies went to work at once, and have finished over *9,000* Bags." She also worked on making cartridges for the cannon at Fort Morgan. There were a great many aid organizations founded in Mobile, such as the Mobile Military Aid Society and the Female Benevolent Society. Women in Mobile specifically gave the military hospitals. Evans infused war-work into her character Irene, who "constantly engaged in superintending work for the soldiers."[56]

The war not only granted women's usual domestic work public value, but the war itself necessitated their involvement, as the Confederate military could not supply all the soldiers' needs. Whites and Long note that "without women's contributions, the war for either side would have ground to a halt." Military rations were poor, so women supplied their loved ones and others. It was to meet the demand for suitable attire that sewing societies were created, clothing and supplies being regularly sent out. Moreover, it was

[55] Whites, "The Civil War as a Crisis of Gender," 51. Evans, *Macaria*, 311, 313, 315, 318, 375, 363, 371; Sterkx, *Partners In Rebellion*, 98.
[56] Evans to L. V. French, January 13, 1861, in *A Southern Woman of Letters*, 29, 30-31; Bergeron, *Confederate Mobile*, 93-94, 97; Evans, *Macaria*, 371.

recognized that women were necessary to Confederate victory, and women were regularly and publically thanked.[57]

The work was not always viewed just as "work," though. Although there was less time for social activities and entertainment, women made the work pleasurable by doing it together. Sewing societies were productive and effective, also allowing women to converse and share news. Fleming describes these communal activities:

> 'Quiltings' were held at irregular intervals, to which every woman came armed with a needle and thimble. At other items there would be spinning 'bees,' to which women would come from long distances and stay all day, bringing with them in wagons their wheels, cards, navy cotton.

This war work became a way for women of all ages to socialize while serving the cause. Moreover, war work was seen not only as patriotic, but as a religious duty before God, a necessary way in which Christian women showed their commitment to the betterment of their male relatives and their country.[58]

In some instances, the government became involved in supplying the military by funneling supplies and funds to women's organizations, thereby allowing them to complete the work. As early as 1861, the Alabama Governor's Office recognized ninety-one women's organizations to which raw goods were distributed to be made into supplies for the soldiers. Some women, especially elites, had to learn new skills once the war began, as they were unaccustomed to sewing clothes. Before the war, wealthy women would have embroidered, so, as Faust explains, "knitting and dressmaking often represented a new departure." One Alabama woman said that the Civil War had transformed the Southern home into a "miniature factory in itself." In depicting a wide

[57] Whites and Long, *Occupied Women*, 88-89, 89; Wiley, *Confederate Women*, 145-146; Fleming, *Civil War and Reconstruction in Alabama*, 244, 246.
[58] Fleming, *Civil War and Reconstruction in Alabama*, 241, 246; Wiley, *Confederate Women*, 166.

range of war work in *Macaria*, Evans supported the idea that this war work was suitable for women and, even though difficult, could be sometimes fun, but always necessary for the Confederacy. Because many women would recognize themselves in the actions Evans described, Evans encouraged them to feel that their work was worthy of being dramatized in a novel and worthy of being continuously pursued.[59]

"the least the women can do:" Women in the Hospitals

At the beginning of the war, there were no organized, government-sponsored efforts to provide nurses and hospitals. During this period, private individuals continued medical care, establishing hospitals in homes where wealthy women paid. In 1862, the Confederate government belatedly centralized relief efforts. By the end of the war, the Confederacy had established 153 hospitals. Most of the nurses in the South were untrained, and even up until the end of the war, there was a need for more nurses. Yet some women did sacrifice themselves by volunteering in hospitals as nurses. Due to a lack of official training, many women were only qualified to nurse because they had done so before. Evans had experience as a volunteer nurse before the war during the yellow fever epidemic of the 1850s. She opened a hospital and convalescent facility near her home; it was called "Camp Beulah," after her second novel. She wrote to Lyons concerning her volunteer work:

> Oh! my darling if I could tell you of all I have witnessed, and endured since I became a hospital nurse! There has been an appalling amount of sickness among the Brigades stationed in, and around Mobile but at last it seems to be abating. Out of the 200 cases at our hospital we have lost but two men. A number of them were alarmingly ill for weeks, with typhoid fever and pneumonia, and many might have rolled away as I sat with my fingers on their fluttering pulse, stimulating them constantly with brandy, ammonia and quinine. God bless our

[59] Fleming, *Civil War and Reconstruction in Alabama*, 245; Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 24, 49, 51.

> noble army! and preserve it from the pestilence which has decimated its ranks during the past few months.

Not surprisingly, Evans's Irene proves an effective nurse because she had experience before the war tending to sick families in a part of W— called "Factory-row." Electra explains her own desire to be a nurse to Irene: "It is not my privilege to enter the army, and wield a sword or musket; but I am going to true womanly work—into the crowded hospitals, to watch faithfully over sick and wounded." Irene approves of the plan, saying, "I…think it your duty." It has been Irene's "long-cherished plan" to follow Electra to Richmond, for as she tells her uncle, "the men in our armies are not hired to fight our battles; and the least the women can do is to nurse them when sick or wounded."[60]

One of the most moving chapters in *Macaria* is Chapter XXXIV where Irene nurses two dying soldiers, one "[r]aving with delirium, a light-haired, slender boy of seventeen" and the other "an emaciated, wrinkled old man, with gray hair." In *Macaria*, her description of the young soldier is reminiscent of a letter Evans sent to General Beauregard on August 4, 1862. The boy in the novel hallucinates that Irene is his mother, calling out to her, telling her how he did his duty, and holding her hand tightly; she reassures him and insists that he sleep. Evans similarly wrote to Beauregard:

> three days ago, I was sitting beside a sick soldier, who was entirely delirious with fever;—suddenly opening his eyes, he grasped my hand, and asked eagerly—"did you say General Beauregard was on Arlington Heights?" I answered, "be quiet, and go to sleep; *he will be there soon, very soon*."

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[60] Jane E. Schultz, *Women at the Front: Hospital Workers in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 14, 1; Rable, *Civil Wars*, 121: Sterkx, *Partners In Rebellion*, 115; Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 95; Faust, "Altars of Sacrifice: Confederate Women and Narratives of War," 1215-1216; Massey, *Women in the Civil War*, 48; McCandless, "Augusta Jane Evans Wilson," 152; Fidler, *Augusta Jane Evans Wilson*, 90-91; Evans to Rachel Lyons, January 22, 1862, in *A Southern Woman of Letters*, 39; Evans, *Macaria*, 253 (Chapter XIV throughout), 363-364, 376.

Evans was not the only Confederate nurse who experienced such heartbreaking situations, and this cathartic scene acknowledges their sorrow and reminds the women yet again that their work is necessary.[61]

For many, nursing wounded soldiers took on a religious meaning. Their faith helped them as they dealt with tasks that were frightening and difficult both physically and emotionally. Moreover, many women understood death in Christian terms. As Rable notes, Confederate women

> treasured opportunities for staying with soldiers during their final moments of life, reading the Bible, praying, or even bringing about a deathbed conversion. Those assigned to watching sick and wounded soldiers at night might have one last priceless opportunity to converse with a man about his immortal soul.

After the war, female hospital service was understood in religious terms: these women were described as saints and their work was described as "Christian sacrifice."[62]

Nursing also brought issues of class to the forefront. Race was not **as** large an issue among female nurses in the South as it was in the North, for as Jane Schultz notes, "Southerners were more accustomed to interracial labor." However, many southern elite women struggled with hospital work because it was viewed as lower class work. Shultz lists the types of women who served as nurses: "adolescent slaves, Catholic sisters, elite slave-holders, free African Americans, abandoned wives, and farm women. Some were mothers and grandmothers, others childless or unmarried." In the end, Shultz continues, most elite women preferred jobs as matrons while "working-class, slave, and immigrant women constituted the majority of Confederate hospital workers." Women who worked in hospitals and as nurses had many duties, for as Shultz describes, they "washed, dressed, and fed patients; they wrote letters for, read to, and helped patients endure the

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[61] Ibid., 382-383; Evans to General Beauregard, August 4, 1862, in *A Southern Woman of Letters*, 43.
[62] Schultz, *Women at the Front*, 12, 20, 46, 75, 55; Rable, *God's Almost Chosen Peoples*, 2, 210.

tedium of convalescence." Regardless of rank and although elite women often required slaves to do undesirable tasks, the jobs were shared. Soldiers preferred female over male caregivers and dying soldiers often spoke to the nurses as if they were female relatives. In Macaria, Evans portrays the nursing work of her two characters in similar veins, although Irene is upper class and Electra is lower-class; in this, Evans reminds her readers that all single women have a part to play.[63]

It is difficult to number the women who served as nurses in the Confederacy for two reasons. First, official records were lost in a fire in Richmond in 1865. Second, many nurses simply worked near their homes, unofficially, and accordingly, their service was never recorded. Although there were a variety of Confederate hospitals throughout the south and many women even served as nurses near battlefields, many women were able to remain at home and care for soldiers. They also welcomed the wounded into their homes, many of which also became makeshift hospitals. Legislatures gave money to women to establish these home-hospitals and "Wayside Homes," as Fleming describes, "for the accommodation of soldiers traveling to and from the army."[64]

Some women received compensation for their work in hospitals, but they "said little publically about their wages." Hospital work was deemed socially appropriate for men and women from the lower classes. Accordingly, women who volunteered felt superior to those who were paid for their duties. Some women had no choice but to seek wages for their work. When women went to work as nurses, they were sometimes advised not to do so, as this profession challenged accepted gender norms. Evans herself was at

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[63] Schultz, *Women at the Front*, 4, 12, 17, 33-34, 38, 19; Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 110, 102; Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008), 12.

[64] Schultz, *Women at the Front*, 20-21, 18, 108; Wiley, *Confederate Women*, 143; Fleming, *Civil War and Reconstruction in Alabama*, 245.

one point told not to volunteer as a nurse by her brothers. Nursing was seen by some as unacceptable for women because women would be exposed to men's bodies; some women were accused of looking for husbands or wanting to flirt. Although there was a great deal of public debate within the Confederacy concerning whether or not nursing was an appropriate role for females, in *Macaria* Evans argues that the work of nursing is necessary and suitable for women.[65]

Some women became rather well-known for their hospital work and they were outspoken about the need for women to step up. Juliet Opie Hopkins, a prominent Mobilian, and other Southern women contributed early on to establishing hospitals; Hopkins's husband was appointed to oversee hospitals during the war and Hopkins herself earned the name "Florence Nightingale of the South." Another Mobilian and, as Shultz describes her, "[t]he most vigorous upholder of women's right to nurse was a single, Scottish-born Alabamian—Kate Cumming." As Faust describes, Cumming saw nursing as a "Christian and feminine imperative of service [that] far outweighed superficial notions of female delicacy." Cumming believed that Confederate women never volunteered in the numbers necessary; her belief was so strong that she said that the refusal of Southern women to volunteer played a role in the Confederacy's loss of the war.[66]

Richard Barksdale Harwell describes how Kate Cumming's journal was "obscurely published in 1866" under the title *A Journal of Hospital Life in the Confederate Army of Tennessee from the Battle of Shiloh to the End of the War: With Sketches of Life and Character, and Brief Notices of Current Events Dating That Period*.

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[65] Schultz, *Women at the Front*, 40, 42, 49, 123; Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 92, 110, 92-93.
[66] Schultz, *Women at the Front*, 14, 49, 101, 111.

In 1895, a condensed version of her journal was published as *Gleanings from Southland*; this work, Harwell notes, contains a "spirit of reconciliation" which "though representative of a noble motivation, cancels the lively defiance and courage so notable in the first version." In her journal, it is clear that Cumming saw nursing as her duty: and she did not think it took away from her status as a lady. Her family disapproved of the fact that she went to the front to nurse, so she worked collecting supplies for a time, much like Evans. Cumming eventually left Mobile on April 7, 1862 and returned to Mobile finally on May 27, 1865; she moved in and out of Mobile several times during the war as she served.[67]

Cumming notes that many women, including Evans whom she knew, served with "heroic deeds and patient suffering." Nevertheless, she argues that not enough women volunteered. Cumming wrote vehemently about her conviction that nursing soldiers was a duty and respectable:

> It seems strange to me that the aristocratic women of Great Britain have done with honor what is a disgrace for their sisters on this side of the Atlantic to do. This is not the first time I have heard these remarks. Not respectable! And who has made it so? If the Christian, high-toned, and educated women of our land shirk their duty, why others have to do it for them. It is useless to say the surgeons will not allow us; we have our rights, and if asserted properly will get them. This is our right, and ours alone.

Although Evans's published words in *Macaria* were never so bold as Cumming's post-war words, Evans encouraged nursing in *Macaria* as both Christian and feminine. Her message was similar to Cumming's, although their audiences differed.[68]

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[67] Richard Barksdale Harwell, "Introduction" in *Kate: The Journal of A Confederate Nurse* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana State UP, 1959), v, xviii, ix, xi, xix.
[68] Cumming, *Kate: The Journal of A Confederate Nurse*, ed. Richard Barksdale Harwell (Baton Rouge, Louisiana State UP, 1959), 4, 65.

“new avenues” for Southern Women

The Civil War brought about many changes for Southern women, changes which would remain after the war. First, issues of class were challenged. Second, women’s roles in general were changing and accepted gender norms were challenged. Third, the very nature of the domestic realm changed. Fourth, writing became a more firmly fixed outlet for women’s political opinions. Fifth, women left the home and sought employment. While Evans touches on these changes in her novel, she expressly devotes attention to the need for women to find employment.

First, the Civil war brought about challenges to class structures in the South, as elite women had to work with lower-class women in a variety of ways. Even some upper-class women had to seek out employment. According to Faust, “The Civil War made privileged women more insistent about their rank and position even as it drew the bases for such distinction increasingly into question.” Moreover, “females in slaveholding families had the most to lose from warborn transformation.” Evans’s *Macaria* does not focus only on upper-class women though, as Electra Grey is a lower-class character who has opportunities for education only through patronage and after she proves her skills. Although Irene takes leadership at the end of the book in establishing her school, she nevertheless calls upon her friend Electra to preside over the school. Perhaps for Evans, coming from an elite but poor family, the issues of social class were not so divisive. Moreover, as Hall reports, in the Civil War, all types of women “from across the economic and social spectrum, ranging from poor and sometimes illiterate young girls to highly educated upper-class women” volunteered, working together. In *Macaria*, Evans

acknowledges that many elite and common women will share the fate of remaining single; therefore**,** they ought to continue working together.[69]

Second, the Civil War also challenged accepted views of gender roles. These changes were seen in a variety of ways. Although women's associations were common in the north, this was the first time southern women had come together in such great numbers to accomplish similar social goals; their effectiveness in making supplies showed them what they could do once officially unified. By volunteering outside the home in support of the Confederacy, women expressed a newfound independence. Before the Civil War, women's work was still home-based and described in family terms.[70]

This shift during the war, so that women's work did not just take place within the home, was drastic. Work outside the home became a necessity in the South towards the end of the war, for, as Whites and Long describe, "adult civilians were basically women." Because women's help was needed in the war, women were publically recognized outside the home; they, like men, Whites notes, "could enter into the heart of the struggle." Whites stresses that as women took on male roles at home and supported the men who were away, "Confederate men increasingly had to recognize their own dependence upon women." Some women were left totally manless and therefore self-reliant. Evans reflects this reality in *Macaria*. Irene and Electra at the end of the novel are on their own; they have taken on male-like duties during the war and they will continue to direct their own lives after the war. In this way, they challenge socially acceptable gender roles.[71]

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[69] Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 113, 7; Hall, *Women on the Civil War Battlefront*, 1.
[70] Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 23; Hall, *Women on the Civil War Battlefront*, 1; Rose, *Victorian America and the Civil War* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1992), 83, 70.
[71] Whites and Long, *Occupied Women*, 2; Whites, "The Civil War as a Crisis of Gender," 15, 17, 4.

Third, the domestic realm for women was also changed in the Civil War for, according to Whites, their "patriotism took on a peculiarly domestic cast." Whites and Long explain:

> During the Civil War, the relationship between women's domestic duties and the public realm of politics and war increased in importance…. Wartime home-front activity was intimately connected to public affairs. Throughout the Civil War female patriotism was expressed through the expansion of traditional domestic boundaries for the larger war effort. Women's wartime activities were done in the name of service to their men on the front lines, and women understood themselves as 'supporters and helpmeets of men.'

While women generally remained in the domestic realm, their actions were recognized outside of the home and linked to the public good. As such, it was necessary during war for typical, female, domestic work to be redirected for the betterment of those outside the household. Women were still seen as wives and mothers, but now they cared not only for their own family relations, but for the relations of other women as well. In this way, although it was unintentional, women's work that once was private became a very public affair.[72]

Fourth, in the Civil War, women's writing became even more political not only in personal letters and diaries, but in the letters women wrote to public officials asking for help. Rose argues that before the Civil War, women were becoming more political, saying, "Far more than their mothers, women of the middle class whose adulthood spanned the Civil War followed political developments with informed interest." According to Faust, women wrote to Confederate President Jefferson Davis seeking employment, "emphasizing their need for assistance, the sacrifices they had made for the Cause, and their dependence, in the absence of other male support, on the Confederate

[72] Whites, "The Civil War as a Crisis of Gender," 16, 56, 51; Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 33; Whites and Long, *Occupied Women*, 88, 89, 116.

president." Women recognized that such letters were no longer private and domestic, written to family members about family matters. Politics in the south changed. Women, Stephanie McMurry says, "emerged into authority and even leadership on a range of issues that lay at the very heart of popular politics in the Civil War South." Political and social questions were no longer left completely to the men. Evans herself is a prominent example of this development; for example, she wrote to Congressman J. L, M. Curry on July 15, 1863 addressing her opinions about the question, "Is the character of Southern women prejudicially affected by Slavery?"[73]

Fifth, during the Civil War, many women sought employment outside the home not necessarily because they wanted to do so, but because this was necessary for financial survival. Yet women were often criticized for taking jobs outside the home, as this went against the accepted norm. Faust notes that, between "1861 and 1865 in the South, significant numbers of middle- and upper-class white women left their homes to undertake paid work for the first time." Women found employment often from the Confederate government itself. Wiley describes typical women's work: "Some worked in ordnance plants making minié balls, paper cartridges, percussion caps, fuses, and shells. Other labored in textile mills and garment factories. Still others performed routine tasks in the Confederate Post Office and Treasury Departments." Other women found employment as teachers, and Evans points to teaching in her novel as a promising opportunity for young women.[74]

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[73] Rose, *Victorian America and the Civil War*, 205; Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 88, 162-163, 10; Stephanie McMurry, "Women Numerous and Armed: Gender and the Politics of Subsistence in the Civil War South," in *Wars within a War: Controversy and Conflict over the American Civil War*, eds. Joan Waugh and Gary W. Gallagher (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 1; Evans to Curry, July 13, 1863, in *A Southern Woman of Letters*, 65.

[74] Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 81, 91, 80; Wiley, *Confederate Women*, 146.

Before the Civil War, most young elite women attended an academy. While northerners had embraced teaching as an appropriate role for women, in the South, teaching was the province of men or women from the north. Ott accordingly notes that women who became teachers during the Civil War experienced "problems stemming from class and gender prejudices." Yet school and learning became a replacement for marriage and many families began to encourage their daughters to prepare for teaching. Women who became teachers found that it was difficult to get students and the pay was very bad.[75]

Yet by the end of the Civil War, ideas were changing. Faust explains that "many schools explicitly presented themselves as havens for displaced young women" and many women found that teaching was the only option. In *Macaria*, Evans acknowledges that many qualified young women will have to become teachers; yet she presents this in a positive light, as someone will need to educate these unmarried women so that they can take care of themselves in the future. Irene discusses this alternative with Electra, toward the end of *Macaria*, saying "numbers of women in the Confederacy will be thrown entirely upon their own resources for maintenance." Irene founds a school to teach women "new avenues of support" in the years after the Civil War. Evans understood well the changes that were coming for women after the war, and in *Macaria* she gave women hope that there would be a way.[76]

[75] Ott, *Confederate Daughters*, 16, 98, 97; Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 82, 143, 88; Wiley, *Confederate Women*, 147.
[76] Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 39; Evans, *Macaria*, 410.

"I have nothing to bind me here:" The Blessing of Singleness

While Southern women were typically married by the age of twenty, Evans remained single until she was thirty-two, and much like her heroines, her singleness was a benefit during the Civil War, allowing her to serve the Confederacy with greater dedication, as she had no dependents and no marital responsibilities. Yet in *Macaria*, Evans does not undermine the value of married women to the Confederate cause. For example, one character, a wife and mother, Mrs. Baker, works on sewing haversacks and overshirts. Although she cannot work as hard as Irene because she has a family to care for, she still declares, "no soul loves the Confederacy better than I do, or will work harder for it. I have no money to lend the government, but I give my husband and child—and two better soldiers no state can show." However, Evans argues in *Macaria* that single women, such as herself, Irene, and Electra, are especially well-equipped to serve the Confederacy. Irene tells her uncle why she can serve as a nurse: "Mothers and wives are, in most instances, kept at home; but I have nothing to bind me here." In this respect, singleness is a blessing, and "blessing" is the meaning of the Greek word Μακάριος, from which the name Macaria is derived.[77]

By stressing the usefulness of unmarried women, Evans addressed a very real concern that Rable details: "With each passing month, as more and more young men were killed and wounded, a quiet desperation (occasionally mounting to panic) spread among single women." Irene's refusal to marry her father's chosen suitors had been a major theme in the story, and before he goes to war, Mr. Huntingdon expresses his concern once again: "I should feel much better satisfied if you were married." Similarly, Dr. Arnold, a family friend, tells her, "You might have been married like other people,

[77] Entzimger, *The Belle Gone Bad*, 66; Evans, *Macaria*, 312, 376.

and been happier." In Chapter XXIX Irene finally reveals her love for Russell, whom her father despises due to a family grudge; out of devotion to her father's wishes, Irene will not marry him, and she determines "to live true to my first and only love, and die Irene Huntingdon." The only thing that will content her in this state of singleness, besides her firm belief that she and Russell will be together in Heaven, is her usefulness to her country. She declares to Russell, "I give my all on earth—my father and yourself—to our beloved and suffering country." Faust puts the death of Confederate soldiers in context:

> The need for military manpower was unrelenting, until by the end of the war, three-fourths of white Southern men of military age had served in the army and at least half of those soldiers had been wounded, captured, or killed, or had died of disease. This left almost every white woman in the South with a close relative injured, missing, or dead.

Although Evans did not lose a family member in the Civil War, the severe emotions that Electra and Irene display when they learn of the deaths of Mr. Huntingdon and Russell show that she understood the loss that many of her Confederate sisters suffered.[78]

Moreover, Evans sacrificed her own love interest before the war began. Visiting New York after the publication of *Beulah*, she met James Reed Spaulding, a young New York editor, who had praised her novel. In June of 1859, Spaulding visited the family in Mobile. The two became engaged. However, they never married, for their loyalties were too different; Evans declared to her aunt on November 26, 1860 that she would never marry "a Black Republican," that is, a Northerner who supported abolition. Such a union would have been abhorrent to many of her Southern peers for, as Sterkx notes, romantic relationships with Unionists "were accounted unpatriotic and…discouraged or prohibited

[78] Rable, *Civil Wars*, 51; Evans, *Macaria*, 304, 310, 325, 326, 329, 345, 405, 406 (Irene faints when her father's body is brought home, and Electra faints when she learns of Russell's death); Faust, "Altars of Sacrifice: Confederate Women and Narratives of War," 1206.

altogether." Although she clearly held Spaulding in disdain after they broke off the engagement, she must have felt a serious initial attraction to him, for they had known each other for only a short period before they became engaged. Much like Irene and Electra, then, Evans sacrificed love and marriage for the Confederacy.[79]

The sacrifice of marriage was no small sacrifice. Before the Civil War, the ritualized process of courtship and marriage defined a woman's life. However, the Civil War ensured that many young women who had always envisioned themselves as wives would never be married. The statistics can be stated in a variety of ways. About half of the Northern men served in the military, while three of every four southern, white, military age men served. Faust lays out the Confederate death toll: "Confederate men died at a rate three times that of their Yankee counterparts; one in five white Southern men of military age did not survive the Civil War." These are devastating statistics for a civilization as a whole, and personally detrimental for the young women who would never be able to find a spouse. Fleming provides startling figures for Alabama: "The census of 1866 contains the names of 8957 soldiers killed in battle, 13,534 who died of disease or wounds, and 2639 disabled for life." As Fleming notes, the deaths of many soldiers has gone unrecorded, and there is therefore no way to verify the statistics for Alabama, let alone for the South in general and the United States as a whole.[80]

There were a variety of responses to the rising male death toll among the Confederate female population. Many women became widows. While many remained widowed, others sought to remarry; such women, Faust notes, "defied conventions about

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[79] Gross, "'Lonely Lives are not Necessarily Joyless,'" 48; Ayers, *The Life and Works*, 81; Evans to her aunt, probably Mary Howard Jones, November 20, 1860, in *A Southern Woman of Letters*, 23; Sterkx, *Partners In Rebellion*, 25.

[80] Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 140-141, 151, 30, xi; Ott, *Confederate Daughters*, 100, 15; Whites and Long, *Occupied Women*, 1; Fleming, *Civil War and Reconstruction in Alabama*, 252.

faithful grieving wives living only for their husbands' memories." Some women relied more strongly on female friendship. Evans portrays this at the end of *Macaria*, for Irene and Electra are no longer just friends, but sisters who rely upon one another. Irene tells Russell that Electra "shall be the only sister I have ever known." Some adopted negative views of marriage perhaps "to minimize," Faust conjectures, "the pain of lost opportunity." Some rushed to find a husband while they still could. For these women, marriage became an urgent business. Faust also argues that the necessity of "financial as well as emotional security" prompted some women to lower their standards, sometimes abandoning hopes of marrying for love. Some refused to acknowledge that many women would remain unmarried in the years following the war. Many young women continued to view marriage as their ultimate fate, regardless of statistics.[81]

However, some accepted singleness as their likely fate and sought ways to work through this new reality; their expectations were forever changed. "The scarcity of available men in some areas created obstacles for young women," Ott says, "forcing them to ponder a life without romance." In fact, Faust finds that singleness was regarded by some southerners "as one of the most significant social transformations brought about by the war." When *Macaria* came out in 1864, Faust notes that "nearly half the white male population of the South [had been] wounded or killed." Evans, with incredible foresight, sought to make singleness a bearable if not "desirable" life."[82]

Even more than Irene and Electra are models for single women during the war, Evans presents her heroines as models for life after the war. By presenting these women as hardworking and responsible, Evans argued that single women should be respected

[81] Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 150, 151, 140, 148; Ott, *Confederate Daughters*, 106, 101; Evans, *Macaria*, 330.
[82] Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 139, 150, 172; Ott, *Confederate Daughters*, 105.

and socially acceptable in the coming years. Not only should single women be accepted and respected, but they themselves could be happy "in the same way," Gross explains, "that marriage and children made other women happy." Moreover, Evans envisioned a Confederate nation in which single women would be unquestionably useful, not just during the war, but beyond. Some readers were taken aback by the ending of *Macaria*, in which the two women remained unmarried and did not care but rather made plans to continue as single women. Perhaps Evans, aged twenty-six when the war began, believed she herself would never marry; the fates of her characters are not disconnected from her own life, as she too was sacrificing marriage and finding blessing in singleness.[83]

[83] Gross, "Augusta Jane Evans: Alabama's Confederate *Macaria*," 134, 136, 138, 135; Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 173, 177.

Chapter 3: Theological Concerns

In her second novel, *Beulah*, Evans tells the story of one young woman's journey from child orphan to skeptical youth to Christian wife. This novel is autobiographical in the spiritual journey of the protagonist. Evans herself went through a period of deep religious doubt, even atheism. In *Beulah*, Evans displays her impressive knowledge of philosophy and literature. In the novel, Beulah doubts her faith, becoming cynical after reading these texts, as similarly happened to Evans. Yet Beulah and Evans both returned to the faith of their childhood. In the novel, Beulah leads her benefactor to faith and they become husband and wife. For Evans, this new found faith came to animate her works, as she often explores a woman's place not just in society and in the literary world, but also in religion.

This concern is also seen in *Macaria*, as increasingly throughout the novel religious themes become prominent. While some have noted that *Macaria* is less explicitly religious than *Beulah*, the ideas of sacrifice and calling that Evans speaks of repeatedly are theologically rich, Christian ideas. Evans, like many Americans in the North and the South, saw the Civil War through a religious lens. For Evans, religion and war highlighted the question of women's place in the world. She developed her ideas of women's place in the world through the Christian idea of calling, creating her own theology of single womanhood.[84]

War, Women, and God

The religious background of the Civil War has drawn the attention of scholars in recent years. It is appropriate to consider the religious background of the war because

[84] Gross, "Augusta Jane Evans: Alabama's Confederate *Macaria*," 133.

Evans was herself very religious and her novels take place within a world where Christianity held sway. America was very religious during the Civil War period, as church membership increased before the war. During the war in the South, church and state spoke similarly of supporting the Confederate war effort. As revival swept through the Confederate troops during the war, religious lethargy eventually set in at home. In this sense, Evan's *Macaria* is not merely a call to female action, but a call to female spirituality.

Although most Americans were not officially affiliated with a church in the mid-nineteenth century, America was a nominally Christian nation with a strong Protestant leaning. Political leaders in the United States were either members of a particular Christian denomination or understood the importance of Christianity in American society; they accordingly framed their words and actions. In 1800, an estimated one in fifteen Americans was a church member; by 1850, one in five were members. In 1860, although only a third to two-fifths of Americans were members of churches, historians estimate that double those numbers of people were involved in churches. During this period, church involvement and attendance was viewed as appropriate for women, but the Civil War allowed clergy to address southern men in a new context.[85]

Many Americans understood their world, and certainly the Civil War, in religious terms. When children were taught to read, they read the Bible and popular literature. Accordingly, biblical ideas shaped the minds of most Americas, even though the Bible

[85] Noll, *Civil War as a Theological Crisis* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 14, 76; Drew Gilpin Faust, "'Without Pilot or Compass': Elite Women and Religion in the Civil War South," in Religion and the American Civil War, eds. Randall M. Miller, Harry S. Stout, and Charles Reagan Wilson (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998), 250; Eugene D. Genovese, "Religion in the Collapse of the American Union" in *Religion and the American Civil War*, eds. Randall M. Miller, Harry S. Stout, and Charles Reagan Wilson (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998), 75; Rable, *God's Almost Chosen Peoples*, 11; Rose, *Victorian America and the Civil War*, 24; Berends, "Confederate Sacrifice and the 'Redemption' of the South," 106, 107.

was taken as personal advice rather than as solid theology. Religion was used in the North and the South to mobilize support for the war. As the editors of *Religion and the American Civil War* note, everyone used religion to make sense of their experience:

> Politicians on both sides of the conflict invoked God to justify their actions, soldiers and their families prayed for God's blessing, religious-based organizations mobilized relief and urged reform, and the slaves reaching for freedom praised God for their day of Jubilee.

Religion helped to explain the war and offered comfort concerning death. Just as God controlled all aspects of life, so God was in control of both defeats and victories.[86]

Churches themselves were very vocal about the war. Although many denominational newspapers hoped for peace, they nevertheless declared, once war was imminent, that the war was just. In the South, clergymen were active in promoting the war. According to Eugene D. Genovese, the clergy preached against "the impiety, selfishness, corruption, and profiteering that threatened to bring God's wrath down on the Confederacy." Many churchmen were also concerned that congregations were losing their religious fever and interest in the things of God during the war. Organized religion was significant during the war, producing religious materials and directing the "internal life" of the North and the South.[87]

Men and women during the Civil War often painted the war in terms of good versus evil. For example, Southerners believed that although their independence was

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[86] Rable, *God's Almost Chosen Peoples*, 2, 5; Noll, *Civil War as a Theological Crisis*, 79, 4-5; Rose, *Victorian America and the Civil War*, 19, 59, 21, 17; Berends, "Confederate Sacrifice and the 'Redemption' of the South," 101; Randall M. Miller, Harry S. Stout, and Charles Reagan Wilson, *Religion and the American Civil War* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998), v, 4; Pauldan, "Religion and the American Civil War," 30; Daniel W. Harrison, "Southern Protestantism—1861 and After" in *Civil War History* 5, no. 3 (1959): 279-280.

[87] Harrison, "Southern Protestantism—1861 and After," 276; Eugene D. Genovese, *A Consuming Fire: The Fall of the Confederacy in the Mind of the White Christian South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998), 47; Drew Gilpin Faust, "Christian Soldiers: The Meaning of Revivalism in the Confederate Army" in *The Journal of Southern History* 53, no. 1 (1987): 67; Noll, *Civil War as a Theological Crisis*, 13;

fated by God, God was nevertheless using the war to punish or reprimand them for social failings. Americans believed that God would choose who was to have the victory. During the Civil War, the state and church often spoke as one. Believing their nation to be God's people, public officials in the north and south called days of prayer and fasting. Secular and sacred were mixed together in the North and in the South. For example, Faust notes that in the south, God and religion were spoken of repeatedly in public, including "in the Confederate Constitution itself, in Jefferson Davis's proclamations of fast days, [and] in generals' announcements of military victories." Religious language was ubiquitous.[88]

Not only was American society saturated in religious language, but religious revival, when many people newly professed faith in Christ, became common in the Confederate army beginning in late 1862 and lasting until the end of the war. This is linked to the way in which ministers reframed salvation and sacrifice. Ministers began to speak, Kurt O. Brends argues, "less of God's role in salvation and more of the individual's role." By presenting the Confederacy as God's chosen land, preachers often stated that sacrificing one's self for the Confederacy secured salvation. The great number of Confederate religious revivals, which typically occurred after a defeat on the battlefield, does not indicate that the Confederate army was more religious than the Union army. Statistics are difficult to pin down, but Faust reports of one contemporary source which claimed that "as many as 150,000 soldiers were 'born again' during the war." Religion strengthened faith in the face of death.[89]

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[88] Harrison, "Southern Protestantism—1861 and After," 277-8; Faust, "Christian Soldiers," 64; Randall et. all, *Religion and the American Civil War*, 4; Pauldan, "Religion and the American Civil War," 24; Rable, *God's Almost Chosen Peoples*, 21, 73; Faust, "'Without Pilot or Compass,'" 252.

[89] Faust, "Christian Soldiers," 63, 65, 72; 65; Berends, "Confederate Sacrifice and the 'Redemption' of the South," 108, 99, 109, 111; Reid Mitchell, "Christian Soldiers? Perfecting the Confederacy" in *Religion and the American Civil War*, eds. Randall M. Miller, Harry S. Stout, and Charles Reagan Wilson (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998), 302.

The Civil War also encouraged Americans to view women differently in a religious sense. Primarily, lay people became more involved in religion, both personally and nationally. This change was especially true for women, as women could engage in war work under the banner of Christ. To this extent, men and women acknowledged that "Christian nurturing was part of Christian war making," and accordingly, as Philip Shaw Pauldan argues, "Christian soldiers were now both male and female." Prayer for the wellbeing of the Confederacy especially became viewed as an appropriate war work for women, even a duty. Even in the early period of secession, women's prayer, even in private, was viewed as having public consequences, as women called on God to intervene, and in this way gave women an active role. Devotion to prayer and military success were often linked in the minds of women and in the minds of the Confederate public. Prayer was viewed as so vital that some women even coordinated their times of prayer with other women in the South.[90]

For women, religion provided hope, comfort, and what Faust calls a "framework" for understanding war, just as it did for men. Women sent their soldiers off with prayer and continued to pray once they were gone. Waiting for word from the front and in receiving news of the death of a loved one, many women, Fox-Genovese explains, turned to prayer and a "sense of religious purpose" to "sustain and inspire." Although religion played a comforting role, many women struggled with the reality of military defeats, deprivation at home, and the death of loved ones. Accordingly, Harrison notes that

[90] Randall et. all, *Religion and the American Civil War*, 11; Pauldan, "Religion and the American Civil War," 25, 26-27; Harrison, *The Rhetoric of Rebel Women*, xv, 122, 126, 129; Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 185.

"prayer and devotion became more difficult as God seemed less and less the loving father women had envisioned before the war."[91]

Although there was religious revival within the military, there was no such revival at home. By 1864, the need for renewed religious dedication was great, as women's sacrifices became great and many began to give up hope. Accordingly, the press criticized women for their lack of patriotism, especially, Faust notes, the Confederate elite as many women "replaced [self-sacrifice with] excess." While women attend the church more often than normal in the early days of the war, during the two last years of the war, congregations shrank. While material factors, such as a lack of ministers, can account for this decrease, spiritual exhaustion certainly played a part as many women, Genovese notes, "struggled to maintain their faith as the Yankee rolled through their beloved South." In this, it is clear that *Macaria* addresses the waning of religious fervor among her fellow women. Although the Confederate soldiers were coming to Christ in great numbers and dedicating themselves to his service, women at home were growing weary.[92]

Silence and Slavery

Slavery, too, was often understood in religious terms. Pauldan describes what slaveholders generally believed about their religion and their slaves: "slavery was blessed by the Bible, had existed throughout human history, (a sure sign of God's approval), and established a sacred duty upon masters to be as benevolent towards their slaves as God was towards mankind." Of course, that was one interpretation of Scripture. Many

[91] Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 179-180; Faust, "'Without Pilot or Compass,'" 251; Rable, *God's Almost Chosen Peoples*, 73; Fox-Genovese, "Days of Judgment, Days of Wrath," 230; Harrison, *The Rhetoric of Rebel Women*, 120.
[92] Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 185, 234-235, 238, 243-244; Wiley, *Confederate Women*, 156; Faust, "'Without Pilot or Compass,'" 253; Genovese, *A Consuming Fire*, 62.

historians agree with Mark that during this period, debates on what the Bible said about slavery were heated: "No common meaning could be discovered in the Bible, which almost everyone in the United States professed to honor and which was, without rival, the most widely read text of any kind in the whole country." Genovese notes that this division over the meaning of the Bible betrays a deeper rift between Southerners and Northerners in their view of morality and society. As prominent abolitionists, such as William Lloyd Garrison, denounced the Bible in favor of abolitionism, Southern Christians held more strongly to their belief that slavery was Biblically sanctioned.[93]

Southerners acknowledged that the Bible had negative things to say about slavery, or rather, the abuses of slavery. Some Christian Southerners saw the Civil War as punishment from God. Genovese notes that "the list of sins to be repented of did include slavery: not slavery per se, but its abuses." Conscientious slaveholders felt that perhaps their practice of slavery was not Christian enough. In this way, the war was a sign from God that slaveholders needed to reform their ways. Harrison notes that many believed they needed to "satisfy…their responsibilities as slaveholders" before God.[94]

Considering Evans's religious bent in the novel and her staunch support of the Confederacy, it is surprising that she is comparatively silent on slavery. Scholars have noted that Evans's second novel, *Beulah*, does not address the issue. Jones explains that: "little in the novel directly reveals its southern roots—there is no plantation, there are no slaves." In part, this is explained by the fact that Evans wanted to write national

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[93] Pauldan, "Religion and the American Civil War," 22; Mark Noll, "The Bible and Slavery" in *Religion and the American Civil War*, eds. Randall M. Miller, Harry S. Stout, and Charles Regan Wilson (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998), 4; Genovese, "Religion in the Collapse of the American Union," 84; Noll, *Civil War as a Theological Crisis*, 6-7, 32, 43-44.

[94] Genovese, *A Consuming Fire*, 51; Pauldan, "Religion and the American Civil War," 32; Harrison, *The Rhetoric of Rebel Women*, 135-136.

American literature during this period. Similarly, although the characters in *Macaria* speak favorably about the South and support the cause against the North, there are few direct references to slavery except to household slaves, who are referred to as servants in the book, and to Irene's family plantation, which is briefly mentioned. As already discussed, the word "slavery" is used only once in the novel as a reference to the enslavement of African Americans in the midst of Irene's speech concerning the future of the South.[95]

This aspect of the book has been surprisingly misrepresented on at least one occasion. Mary Louise Weaks described *Macaria* by asserting that "the novel presents an idealized portrait of faithful slaves and kind masters and mistresses and celebrates southern war victories." This summary of the book's content misrepresents *Macaria* as mere propaganda. Perhaps Weaks was misguided by another source or wrongfully assumed that any pro-Confederate novel would stress the two above-quoted elements. While Weaks's claim may align with Evans's personal view of slavery, this description of the book is both simplistic and misleading; if Evans idealizes anything, it is the relationship between single women and their future in the Confederate States of America, as very little content of the book deals with slaves at all. It is even misleading to stress *Macaria*'s focus to battles; battles are present, but the text focuses elsewhere, on the home front.[96]

Several facts can be gathered about Evans's view of slavery. As previously discussed, some Southerners believed that the practice of some slaveholders was not Christian enough. Evans falls into this camp, as she was critical of Southern women,

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[95] Jones, *Tomorrow is Another Day*, 53; Evans, *Macaria*, 249, 302, 305, 336, 343, 348, 364, 377, 367.
[96] Mary Louise Weaks, "Introduction to Part II," *The History of Southern Women's Literature* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 2002), 128.

particularly those who relied on slaves to preform domestic chores. She does not cite slavery as the cause of lethargy among slaveholding women, but rather their own laziness:

> look at the physical and mental *status* of Southern women. Are they not enervated, lethargic, incapable of enduring fatigue, and as a class, afflicted with chronic lassitude? Why? Simply because they never *systematically exercise*.

Evans adds, "Brooms, rolling pins, dashers and hoes have grown obsolete." Evans stresses that slavery is not the cause: "I do not regard this inertia as inseparably bound up in the system." She claims that "Southern women might be exalted by the institution" by engaging, for instance, in "the advancement of Art;" slavery then, when properly used, might allow Southern women to dedicate themselves to building Confederate culture. Elsewhere, Evans also writes that northern literature undermines the natural social order of segregation. As is evident, Evans did not object to the morality of slavery and believed it could be a profitable part of Southern life. Yet Evans makes no arguments about slavery in *Macaria*. The question is why.[97]

As Evans believed slavery was a fine and even admirable part of Southern culture, the lack of slavery in *Macaria* is puzzling. There are several reasons why she could have omitted discussions, defense, and detailed descriptions of slavery. It is possible that she was uncomfortable publically writing about the issue. This solution is flawed, though, for a majority of her Southern audience would not have objected to such references. Moreover, if she feared offending northern audiences, she would have redacted many of her anit-union sentiments throughout the latter half of the book; Gross notes that "she did [this] in post-war reprints of the novel." Additionally, Evans makes it clear that she is not

[97] Moss, *Domestic Novelists*, 30; Evans to Curry, July 15, 1863 in *A Southern Woman of Letters*, 65-66; Moss, *Domestic Novelists*, 165.

unafraid to address difficult subjects in her novel, as is evidenced by Irene and Electra remaining unmarried at the end of the book. Therefore, it is unlikely that some form of fear caused Evans to leave slavery and justifications for it out of the novel.[98]

Three other possibilities remain. First, plantation life was not a part of Evans's personal experience. As is evident from an 1865 letter to Curry, her family did own slaves, but Evans and her immediate relatives were never as wealthy as others in their extended family or those of their own social class. As has previously been stated, Matt Evans lost his estate and numerous slaves when Augusta was a girl; it was through the profits of Evans's second novel, *Beulah*, that her family was able to purchase their home in Mobile. This lack of experience with great numbers of slaves is seen in *Beulah* as well. Second, slavery is simply not the point of *Macaria*; her focus, as this thesis argues, is the relationship of single women to the Confederacy. Accordingly, Evans's single-minded presentation of her focus stresses just how important this focus was for her. Third, in Evans, we see an example of a staunch southern woman who did not see slavery as the end-all-be-all of her life. She certainly did support it, but she is not obsessed with defending it. Michael O'Brien presents the historiographical debate into which Evans fits:

> Historians have wished to explain the great facts of slavery and the Civil War, and they have culled the minds of the Old South for these purposes. Some believe that Southerners thought seriously *only* about these subjects. Slavery and politics are supposed to be sufficiently inclusive of the antebellum Southern mind. Others, less extreme, concede the existence of more but insist upon its importance.

Evans's omission of slavery in *Macaria* helps support the second view that O'Brien describes. For Evans, slavery is a part of Southern life, but it was not her focus. Certainly, this does not excuse Evans's racial attitudes, so chilling to the modern mind and to abolitionists of her period. Yet such an acknowledgment seeks to understand Evans in her

[98] Gross, "Augusta Jane Evans: Alabama's Confederate *Macaria*," 131.

own period and in the terms in which she thought. Something else was more important to her than the defense of slavery.[99]

Calling: Theology of Single Womanhood

As slavery is not the focus of *Macaria*, Evans devotes her creative powers to an issue that spoke to her personally and affected her daily life. *Macaria*'s message for women, specifically single women, is the defining point of the novel, the essential factor of Evans's aim. The message of *Macaria* blends Confederate nationalism, womanly usefulness, and the blessed and sacrificial calling of single women. In this, Evans created a theology for single women in war time and beyond. In addressing these issues, Evans responded to a felt need in her society.

As argued in Chapter 1, *Macaria* is much more than pro-Confederate propaganda or a contribution to Confederate national culture. Virtually all Southerners firmly believed that women were an essential part of the war effort. Faust explains, "Particularly in the South, where human and material resources were stretched to the utmost, the conflict demanded the mobilization of women, not for battle, but for civilian support services." Faust notes that for these reasons *Macaria* "might justly be regarded as the most systematic elaboration, and in many ways the culmination, of the discussion that had preceded it." As has been elaborated in Chapter 2, Evans described a myriad of options for women's work during the war. Harrison argues that in doing so, Evans "contributed to discussions about Confederate women's patriotic responsibilities." Evans argued for the necessity of "Womanly Usefulness" in wartime.[100]

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[99] Evans to Curry, October 7, 1865, in *A Southern Woman of Letters*, 107; Michael O'Brien, *Rethinking the South: Essays in Intellectual History* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1993), 29.
[100] Sterkx, *Partners In Rebellion*, 11, 73; Faust, "Altars of Sacrifice: Confederate Women and Narratives of War," 1200, 1217; Harrison, *The Rhetoric of Rebel Women*, 3; Evans, *Macaria*, 380.

Before the war, women's spirits were high, the prospect of war was viewed with excitement, and victory seemed sure. However, by late 1863, morale waned. As Union armies advanced on Richmond and Atlanta in 1864, it only became worse:

> By the summer of 1864, the range of female opinion had narrowed, hovering somewhere between weary hopefulness and unrelenting gloom…. The novelty of suffering and sacrifice had long since disappeared, leaving behind a dull and steady pain often heightened by new tragedies.

According to Harrison, the argument that "[t]he Southern women grew tired of the war and its deprivations with their disillusionment fueling Confederate defeat has become a dominant historical narrative." Evans would have experienced this growing disillusionment. As a self-appointed morale booster, she dramatized the actions of her Confederate sisters to encourage them with their own example. Accordingly, as Williams says, *Macaria* "is a patriotic appeal to Southern women to [not merely] accept the sacrifices imposed by war," but to continue accepting them.[101]

Sacrifice is a prominent theme in *Macaria* and in popular religious expression at the time. In his article "Confederate Sacrifice and the 'Redemption' of the South," Brends notes that "No longer was Jesus' death the only efficacious death. Many southerners became convinced that death on behalf of the Confederacy was also salvific." Evans describes sacrifice in *Macaria*: her characters sacrifice **loved ones,** opportunities to study art in Europe, and the possibility of future marriage. Sacrifice is an essential idea in the Christian narrative and Evans, by presenting her characters as she does, argues that their sacrifice is the female equal to the sacrifice of men on a battlefield. Sacrifice is implied by the very title of the book, *Macaria*. Μακάριος is Greek for "blessed," an often used word in the Bible. Yet the classical Greek story of Macaria is also a part of Evans's

[101] Rable, *Civil Wars*, 203, 215, 206, 209; Sterkx, *Partners In Rebellion*, 110, 194, 187, 195; Harrison, *The Rhetoric of Rebel Women*, 13; Williams, *A Literary History of Alabama*, 186.

message. Many scholars have noted that her erudite style often relies on classical references. Toward the end of the novel, Evans explains, through Irene, the significance of the title of the book. Macaria, daughter of Heracles, allows herself to be burnt as a sacrifice to the goddess Persephone, as an oracle declared that only through the sacrifice of a virtuous woman would Athens be saved from the invader at the gates. By her choice of title and subtitle, Evans stresses the centrality of female sacrifice in the Confederate experience.[102]

Towards the end of the novel, the heroines of *Macaria* use increasingly powerful religious language to explain their understanding of the world and themselves. For instance, Electra has high ambitions to be a great painter, such that she offers "Thoughts, hopes, aspirations, memories, all centered in the chosen profession" as "sacrificial offerings." She explains to her cousin Russell:

> I, too, want to earn a noble reputation, which will survive long after I have been gathered to my fathers; I want to accomplish some work, looking upon which, my fellow-creatures will proclaim: 'That woman has not lived in vain; the world is better and happier because she came and labored in it.' I want my name carved, not on monumental marble only, but upon the living, throbbing heart of my age!—stamped indelibly on the generation in which my lot is cast…. Upon the threshold of my career, facing the loneliness of coming years, I resign that hope with which, like a golden thread, most women embroider their future. I dedicate myself, my life, unreservedly to Art.

However, after Fort Sumter falls, Electra abandons her studies in Florence, Italy, and risks her life to return to the South. In so doing, "her hopes and feverish aspirations…found their graves" and she resigns herself to what she calls "her future cheerless life, her lonely destiny." This is her sacrifice to God and the South, in which she relinquishes her own selfish dreams. She actually repents of her past desires at the end of the novel, saying, "Once I was wedded to life and my Art… I live now in hope of reunion

[102] Berends, "Confederate Sacrifice and the 'Redemption' of the South," 99.

[with Russell Aubrey] in God's eternal kingdom. I have been selfish, and careless, and complaining." Again, the religious language is evident. After dedicating herself as a nurse until she herself becomes ill, she returns with Irene to W— and there undertakes to create "the first offering of Southern Art, upon my country's altar." As it is likely that Evans planned *Macaria* as a different novel, and changed it when the war began, here Electra does the very thing that Evans did with *Macaria* itself: rededicate her artwork as a first contribution towards necessary Confederate national culture.[103]

While Electra knows her calling and is able to repurpose it during the war, Irene cannot find a calling. This plagues her existence. The idea of calling is very Biblical and Evans would have understood the implications of this idea. Christians are called to new life in Christ; ministers are called to preach the gospel; more significantly, all Christians are called to serve God and further his kingdom, regardless of their careers. This calling gives all believers a purpose in life and assures them of usefulness, usefulness that is particular to their circumstance and character. Accordingly, when Evans speaks of womanly usefulness, her Christian background is coming into play. By exploring calling with her characters in the context of the Confederacy, Evans creates and propagates her theology of single womanhood.

In *Macaria*, Irene is obsessed with her lack of calling. In Chapter XXII, Harvey Young, Irene's minister friend from New York, visits her in W—. Irene expresses her despair because she feels useless "I thought once that God created every human being for some particular work—some special mission.… But, like many other useful theories, I have been compelled to part with this, also." This is a very biblical idea, as Paul wrote to Timothy that God "saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but

[103] Evans, *Macaria*, 204, 213, 347, 358, 413, 409.

because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began." Accordingly, Irene asks Harvey, "What shall I do with my life?" and he tells her, "Give it to God." Irene's calling is slowly revealed to her, as she begins, in Chapter XXIV, to use her time and money to care for the ill and less fortunate. By performing these actions, Irene fulfills a biblical maxim: "In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" Nevertheless, Irene reaffirms her fear of being useless when her father leaves for war: she worries about having "to stay here, useless and inactive!"[104]

By repeating the words "useful" and "useless," Evans acknowledged a real concern in the hearts of her Confederate sisters. Faust notes, "'Useless' was a dread epithet, repeatedly directed by Confederate women against themselves as they contemplated the very clear and honored role that war offered men." Again, when Dr. Arnold leaves, Irene declares:

> I hope to do some good in the world while I live. I want to be useful—to feel that I have gladdened some hearts, strengthened some desponding spirits, carried balm to some hearth-stones, shed some happiness on the paths of those who walk near me through life.

She observes that "The emptiness of my former life" has awakened her to her commission, her calling, from the Creator. After refusing to marry Russell, she affirms that she has "a holier, a more disinterested, unselfish ambition to serve only God, Truth, and Country." In Richmond, she finds Harvey, who has joined a Texas regiment as their chaplain. He praises her in her war work, saying, "I have prayed that you might become an instrument of good to your fellow-creatures, and tonight I rejoice to find you, at last,

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[104] Ibid., 234, 237, 304; 2 Timothy 1:9, Acts 20:35, ESV.

an earnest coworker," adding, "You have found your work, and learned contentment in usefulness." At *Macaria*'s conclusion, recognizing that "numbers of Confederate women will be thrown entirely upon their own resources for maintenance" due to the number of soldiers dying in the war, Irene plans to open a School of Design for Women so that they can work and care for themselves. Irene asks Electra to preside over the school, and her friend agrees. In this way, Evans envisions that the holy calling of her characters will continue after the war.[105]

The Civil War provides for Irene and Electra the true calling that they have desired all of their lives. Evans sums it up by writing, "Thus, by different, by devious thorny paths, two sorrowing women emerged upon the broad highway of Duty, and, clasping hands, pressed forward to the divinely-appointed goal—Womanly Usefulness." At the novel's conclusion, Irene encourages Electra to believe that "lonely lives are not necessarily joyless; they should be, of all others, most useful." Further, she says, "You and I have much to do, during these days of gloom and national trial." Irene is speaking to Electra in these examples, but in these final pages of *Macaria*, Evans is also directly speaking to her Confederate sisters.

Ultimately, Evans addressed the place of women in her world through religious language. Her argument for "Womanly Usefulness" is rooted in the Biblical idea of calling. Evans encourages single women not to feel downcast, but to dedicate themselves continually to God. Her message aligns with Paul's words in the book of Romans: "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose." Evans frames this specific call to single women as a

[105] Faust, "Altars of Sacrifice: Confederate Women and Narratives of War," 1206; Evans, *Macaria*, 317, 387-388, 410.

blessing; hence the title of the novel, *Macaria*, after the Greek Μακάριος. Evans argues that because the Civil War offered men and women the opportunity for something bigger than themselves, it should be viewed a blessing from God.[106]

[106] Ibid., 380, 412, 414; Romans 8:28, ESV; Rose, *Victorian America and the Civil War*, 70.

Conclusion

Macaria begins with a grand dedication "TO THE ARMY OF THE SOUTHERN CONFEDERACY," accompanied by eloquent praise for the sacrifices of soldiers, but it ends with a poem aimed directly at women. Evans writes, "Rise, woman, rise! …[To] The sanctified devotion and full work, / To which thou art elect for evermore!" The author is explicitly addressing and appealing to her Confederate sisters, exclaiming with Irene, "—oh! my lot, and that of thousands of my countrywomen, is infinitely more bitter than the fate of Macaria!" Likewise, as Irene prays for herself, Evans encourages her Confederate sisters to pray, "Thy will, not mine, oh, Father! Give me the strength to do my work; enable me to be faithful even to the bitter end." When Evans wrote *Macaria*, she was unaware that the war would have a "bitter end" for the Confederacy; but with this novel she offered Confederate women the best encouragement she could produce. [107]

Although *Macaria* begins as domestic literature, it concludes with pro-Confederate propaganda. Still, the novel serves a more personal purpose. Augusta Jane Evans poured her own Civil War experiences into the lives of Irene Huntingdon and Electra Grey; even more: she poured the sacrifices of her Confederate sisters into these heroines. For this reason, she could have prefaced the novel with the words "Based on the true story" or "Inspired by actual events." Evans's descriptions of the varied roles of women during war serve to glorify the sacrifice of Confederate women. At the conclusion of *Macaria* she might just as well have written, "Although Irene and Electra's story ends here, your story – my Confederate sister – your story goes on; do not give up, but

[107] Evans, *Macaria*, 3, 414, 329, 330.

continue to fulfill your divine calling by sacrificing yourself on the altar of national duty."

Finally, *Macaria*'s special message for single women is its most defining characteristic. In presenting singleness as a blessed calling from God, Evans addressed in literature the fears and hopes of her fellow single women. While *Macaria* is a work of fiction, it is nonetheless the Civil War story of actual Confederate heroines, such as Evans herself and her Confederate sisters. For modern readers, it provides insights into the thoughts of this highly popular novelist. Moreover, modern readers experience the struggles and desires of Confederate women through this work of fiction. In this respect, *Macaria* is a reminder of how literature and history can and often should go hand-in-hand. Literature provides special insight into the lives of people in the past when readers take the time to understand the historical context and beliefs of the author.

Epilogue

The war did not end as Evans, Irene, and Electra envisioned. Readers and scholars will never know what happened to Irene Huntingdon and Electra Grey. Yet Evans's story continued, as did the stories of the southern women to whom she wrote. Although Evans's life after the Civil War sheds no light on her purpose for *Macaria*, her life nevertheless provides further insights into the lives of southern women. Moreover, although *Macaria* is little remembered today, except by select scholars, Civil War fiction was popular after the war and remains so even today, for, as Elizabeth Young notes, "generations of Southern white women returned repeatedly to the Civil War in their fiction." Two prominent post-war novels were Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* (1936) and the less well-known, although more popular when it was written, *Foundation Stone* by Lella Waren (1941). *Macaria*'s literary importance is established additionally because these later novels consider many of the same themes, but from an entirely different perspective.[108]

While *Macaria* is Evans's Confederate novel, her greatest financial success was her post-war novel, *St. Elmo*. Soon after the war, Evans published the novel while raising funds for Confederate monuments; critics were reading *St. Elmo* by December of 1866. Evans's post-war work to memorialize the Confederate dead was a common female role after the war. *St. Elmo*, whose heroine is a novelist, was possibly, as Smith writes, "one of the five most successful novels in all nineteenth century America" and the third most read novel of the period, ranking behind *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Ben Hur*. A 1909 newspaper article declared that *St. Elmo* was the "most praised and best abused novel ever written."

[108] Young, *Disarming the Nation*, 4.

Regardless of its flaws, Ayers notes that *St. Elmo* established Evans as "the most famous and wealthiest novelist of her time." Bertram Wyatt-Brown describes the novel's themes as "southern nationalism, social conservatism, and young women's coming of age," all themes "that had characterized the earliest novels into the period of Reconstruction." Amidst national fame, Evans cared for her ill father and her brother, Howard, who was wounded in the war.[109]

Although the Civil War had left many women perpetually single, and although she wrote *Macaria* to prepare them for that singleness, this would not be Evans's fate. On December 2, 1868, the thirty-two year old novelist married Lorenzo Madison Wilson. Wilson was sixty-year-old widower, owner of a large Mobile estate called Ashland, and father to four children, the youngest of whom was nineteen. This marriage mirrored Evans's novels, as the heroines of *Beulah* and *St. Elmo* also marry older men. As wife, mother, and hostess at Ashland, Evans was still able to

Augusta Jane Evans Wilson
Photo by W. A. Read of Mobile, AL
Alabama Department of Archives and History

[109] Ayers, *The Life and Works*, 226, 119; Fidler, *Augusta Evans Wilson*, 121, 127, 146; Gross, "Augusta Jane Evans: Alabama's Confederate *Macaria*," 141; Faust, *This Republic of Suffering*, 239-240; Smith, "The Novel," 49; Frances Arant, "'St. Elmo' Recalled as Latest Best Sellers Swamp Book Weary Nation," *The Birmingham News*, April 3, 1927; "South's Most Glorified Writer," *The Mobile Daily Item*, December 18, 1902; Louise L. Stevenson, *The Victorian Homefront*, 162; "Augusta Evans Wilson, Noted Novelist, is Dead," *The Mobile Register* 89, no. 100, May 10, 1909; Bertram Wyatt-Brown, "Church, Honor, and Secession" in *Religion and the American Civil War*, eds. Randall M. Miller, Harry S. Stout, and Charles Reagan Wilson (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998), 103; Evans to Rachel Lyons, September 24, [1864], in *A Southern Woman of Letters*, 105.

write, publishing three novels as Augusta Jane Wilson before her husband's death in 1891: *Vashti* (1869), *Infelice* (1875), and *At the Mercy of Tiberius* (1887). She published two more novels before her own death: *A Speckled Bird* (1902), and *Devota* (1907).[110]

Her post-war novels speak against feminism, the growing industrialism and materialism of the North, and populism. Although the war was over, Evans remained true to many of her pre-war convictions. Yet surprisingly, it was not until 1892 that Evans publically mentioned he Civil War, and her reference was offered in what Moss describes as "an overtly conciliatory manner." Thus it can be seen that the effect of the Civil War long remained: sacrifice and suffering for the Confederacy, even though the war was lost, created "a sense of identity among" Southerners. Even though Evans's vision for the post-Civil War world did not come to fruition, she nevertheless continued speaking to women through her novels. Augusta Jane Evans Wilson died in Mobile on May 9, 1909. The next day, the *Mobile Register* concluded a lengthy article with the words of "[a]n eminent critic," saying, "Who has not read with rare delight the novels of Augusta Evans?" Today, although Evans has been forgotten in the popular realm, her novels provide comparative insight into the world in which she lived.[111]

[110] Wilson, "Biographical Memoranda in Reference to Augusta Evans Wilson," item 17; Ayers, *The Life and Works*, 111; Fidler, *Augusta Evans Wilson*, 150-151.
[111] McCandless, "Augusta Jane Evans Wilson," 153; Moss, *Domestic Novelists*, 220; Berends, "Confederate Sacrifice and the 'Redemption' of the South," 115; "Augusta Evans Wilson, Noted Novelist, is Dead," *The Mobile Register* 89, no. 100, May 10, 1909.

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