

RACE AND REUNION

**THE CIVIL WAR IN
AMERICAN MEMORY**

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self-liberated in a terrible war, given equal billing in this memory theater with the tragic Southern planters and the awesome symbol of Yankee destruction and victory, William Tecumseh Sherman.

Then, in a stunning metaphor about passion and memory in the New South, Du Bois characterizes "two figures" that typified the postwar era and demonstrated the power of its legacy:

the one a gray-haired gentleman, whose fathers had quit themselves like men, whose sons lay in nameless graves; who bowed to the evil of slavery because its abolition threatened untold ill to all; who stood at last, in the evening of life, a . . . ruined form, with hate in his eyes;—and the other a form hovering dark and mother-like, her awful face black with the mists of centuries, had aforesaid quailed at that white master's command, had bent in love over the cradles of his sons and daughters, and closed in death the sunken eyes of his wife,—aye, too, at his behest had laid herself low to his lust, and borne a tawny man-child to the world, only to see her dark boy's limbs scattered to the winds by midnight marauders riding after "damned niggers."

Without a pause, Du Bois pressed the issue. "These were the saddest sights of that woeful day," he concluded, "and no man *clasped the hands* of these passing figures of the present-past; but hating, they went to their long home, and hating their children's children live today." Past and present met in this imagery with frightful intensity; the picture Du Bois paints is an alternative vision of the meaning of the Civil War. Here were not the customary forms of old soldiers who had met in battle and could now "clasp hands across the bloody chasm" in the time-honored slogan of many a Blue-Gray reunion.⁷⁵ Rather, Du Bois's "two figures" are *veterans* of another conflict, the primary players in the tragedy that caused the war of the Blue and the Gray. Du Bois's alternative Civil War veterans are an old male slaveholder—the broken symbol of wealth, power, and sexual domination—and an old black woman, representing "Mammy," mother, and survivor. The heritage of slavery lives on in these "passing figures of the present-past," demonstrating that racial reconciliation, unlike sectional reconciliation, demanded a confrontation with the hostility rooted in rape, lynching, and racism. Bridging this chasm remained the unfinished—and for many, all but unknowable—work of the culture of reunion.

EIGHT

The Lost Cause and Causes Not Lost

The capacity to live in the past by memory also emancipates the individual from the tyranny of the present. He can choose, if he wants, to reverse a present trend of history in favor of some previous trend. He can, if he wishes, seek asylum from present tumults in a past period of history, or use the memory of a past innocency to project a future of higher virtue.

—REINHOLD NIEBUHR, *Faith and History*, 1949

THE RELICS WERE READY; over the doorway of elegant rooms the names of states were emblazoned in gold. Swords, epaulets, field glasses, Bibles, spurs, bits, saddles, blankets, uniforms, letters, even a pair of slippers made from the original carpet were all in position. The windows were curtained with Confederate flags; a platform stood in the main room beneath portraits of Jefferson Davis, Stonewall Jackson, and Joseph E. Johnston. On the platform stood a table draped with a tattered Confederate battle flag. On Saturday afternoon, February 22, 1896, the Ladies Memorial Association was ready for the formal exercises that dedicated the White House of the Confederacy in Richmond, Jefferson Davis's executive mansion in 1861–65, as the "treasure house of Confederate history and relics." Women made up the entire committee that had managed the rehabilitation of the three-story mansion. The Reverend Moses Hoge delivered the opening prayer. Hoge declared the mansion a place of "sacred trust," a "shrine" to "sorrow-shrouded glories

of our departed Confederacy," as well as a means of "turning from the strifes and sorrows of the past" in order to "face the future."¹

Of the two orators of the day, Governor Charles T. O'Ferrall took the podium first. As a New South governor, O'Ferrall represented the Lost Cause as a holy heritage, the story in which white Southerners would always nourish their "fealty to traditions" and honor the matchless bravery of their soldiers. O'Ferrall recited central tenets of the Lost Cause creed, especially that of a Confederacy "whose life was crushed out of it under the Juggernaut wheels of superior numbers and merciless power." But he also urged the gathering to hold "no lingering feeling of bitterness" and proclaimed his fellow Virginians "loyal sons and daughters of the Union." Such a claim, though, rested securely on Southern terms. In their new patriotism, said O'Ferrall, Virginians had "no retractions to make, no recantations to sing." They would remain "true to ourselves, to our martyred dead . . . to our traditions and civilizations."²

Above all, O'Ferrall paid tribute to the Southern women who had endured the war and restored the mansion as a museum. As "Spartan wives and mothers" and "ministering angels," women had saved Southern civilization. The cause not lost and the reason for the dedication, O'Ferrall maintained, was "Southern women's love for the memories of a generation ago; Southern women's devotion to the cause." Finally, he laid the ultimate burden of the Lost Cause on the war generation's daughters. "Oh, women of the Confederacy, your fame is deathless," proclaimed O'Ferrall. "Young maidens, gather at the feet of some Confederate matron in some reminiscent hour, and listen to her story of those days . . . how God gave her courage, fortitude, and strength to bear her . . . sufferings . . . and live." Two generations of white Southern women grew up with at least some sense of this burden-inspiration; they were to be the caretakers of Lost Cause tradition.³

O'Ferrall then turned the lecturn over to the principal speaker of the occasion, former Confederate general Bradley T. Johnson. Johnson, who had a controversial military record, was a popular Confederate memorial speaker. Along with Jubal Early, D. H. Hill, and others, he had led the effort in the 1860s and 1870s to preserve Confederate traditions in Virginia. Johnson had long been a major spokesman for an especially unreconstructed brand of Lost Cause ideology. The occasion of the opening of the White House of the Confederacy was George Washington's birthday, as well as the thirty-fifth anniversary of Jefferson Davis's inauguration as president of the Confederacy. Declaring Washington the "first rebel president," Johnson gave the Lost

Cause its longest lineage. The occasion, he said, "commemorates an epoch in the grandest struggle for liberty and right that has ever been made by man."⁴ The revolution of 1861 was merely the continuation of that of 1776. By the 1890s, secession had become a sacred act, even to many who had opposed it at the moment of truth.

Johnson too honored the women, extending special thanks to Thomas Nelson Page for his stories of the sacrifices of mothers and wives. Then he served up a potent mixture of Confederate triumphalism and white supremacy. To him, there was nothing "lost" about the South's cause. "The world is surely coming to the conclusion," announced Johnson, "that the cause of the Confederacy was right." White Southerners had only "resisted invasion!" the General insisted. With a historical logic that came to dominate popular, as well as scholarly, understandings, Johnson boldly declared that the "South did not make war in defense of slavery; slavery was only the incident, the point attacked." And the attack had been that of a "free mobocracy of the North" against a "slave democracy of the South." By all manner of "deliberate intent," Northern interests had made social and political war on Southerners who were "ambitious, intellectual and brave, such as led Athens in her brightest epoch and controlled Rome in her most glorious days." Here, indeed, was the full-blown myth of the Lost Cause—a glorious, organic civilization destroyed by an avaricious "industrial society" determined to wipe out its cultural foes.⁵

Since Johnson had begun with the premise that "success is worshipped, failure is forgotten," his rhetorical sleight of hand may have been hardly detectable to his audience. Above all, Johnson delivered a racial message at this special occasion. In a classic statement of proslavery ideology, Johnson defined slavery as "the apprenticeship by which savage races had been educated and trained into civilization by their superiors." Fueled by the profits of Yankee industrialists, the North had waged a war of social destruction. "The negro . . . against his will, without his assistance," said Johnson, "has been turned loose in America to do the best he can in the contest with the strongest race that ever lived." According to the former general, the South itself had been made the "slave" to Northern banks and stockholders, and worst of all, to ballots in the hands of "these children" (blacks). Slavery had provided the "sentiments, the family of a people" that held the South together. Industrial society had no such sentiment. A corporation, like the Yankee armies, understood only "conquest"; "not a tradition hallows it, not a memory sanctifies it," lamented the old soldier. Johnson summed up the legacy of the Civil War

in a declaration to which many Americans had come to at least benignly acquiesce. "The great crime of the century," he concluded, "was the emancipation of the Negroes."⁶

THE LOST CAUSE took root in a Southern culture awash in an admixture of physical destruction, the psychological trauma of defeat, a Democratic Party resisting Reconstruction, racial violence, and with time, an abiding sentimentalism. On the broadest level, it came to represent a mood, or an attitude toward the past. It took hold in specific arguments, organizations, and rituals, and for many Southerners it became a natural extension of evangelical piety, a civil religion that helped them link their sense of loss to a Christian conception of history. Like all great mythologies, the Lost Cause changed with succeeding generations and shifting political circumstances.⁷

From the late 1860s to the late 1880s, diehards, especially though not exclusively in Virginia, tended to shape the Confederate memory. They made Robert E. Lee into the God-like embodiment of a leader whose cause could be defeated only by overpowering odds. Thus ennobled in a revolution crushed by industrial might, and newly emboldened by a sense of righteousness born of successful resistance to radical Reconstruction, the Lost Cause emerged by the 1890s as that oft-told explanation of history that O'Ferrall and Johnson had represented at the dedication of the Confederate Museum. But by the 1890s, and until at least World War I, the Confederate memorial movement came under the control of new leadership and organizations, especially the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) and the United Confederate Veterans (UCV). The mass of rank-and-file former Confederates (the majority of whom now lived in states west of the eastern seaboard) formed the grassroots of Lost Cause ritual activity. During this surge of Lost Cause sentiment Southerners succeeded, by and large, in helping shape a national reunion on their own terms. By the turn of the century, the Lost Cause (as cultural practice and as a set of arguments) served two aims—reconciliation and Southern partisanship. For natural reasons, some Lost Cause traditions began to wane in the wake of the Spanish-American War of 1898, and through the patriotic upheavals of World War I. But many of the assumptions of Confederate memory forged over fifty years endured to haunt America into the 1920s and beyond.⁸ Especially in racial terms, the cause that was *not* lost, as Johnson had insisted in 1896, reverberated as part of the very heartbeat of the Jim Crow South.

Throughout the spread of the Lost Cause, at least three elements attained overriding significance: the movement's effort to write and control the *history* of the war and its aftermath; its use of *white supremacy* as both means and ends; and the place of *women* in its development. From the earliest days of memorial activity, the diehards were determined to collect and write a Confederate version of the history of the war. Frequently disclaiming partisanship, and eager to establish what they so frequently called the "truth of history," diehard Lost Cause advocates, many of them high-ranking officers and political leaders of the Confederacy, forged one of the most highly orchestrated grassroots partisan histories ever conceived.

From his prison release in 1867 to his death in 1889, Jefferson Davis set the tone for the diehards' historical interpretation. In private and public utterances, Davis's fierce defense of state rights doctrine and secession, his incessant pleas for "Southern honor," and his mystical conception of the Confederacy gave ideological fuel to diehards. It was forever a "misnomer to apply the term 'Rebellion'" to the Confederacy, Davis wrote in 1874. "Sovereigns cannot rebel." Diehards could look to Davis for endless expressions of solemn faith. "We may not hope to see the rebuilding of the temple as our Fathers designed it," Davis counseled a friend in 1877, "but we can live on praying for that event and die with eyes fixed on the promised land."⁹

In his two-volume, 1,279-page memoir, *The Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government*, Davis wrote what may be the longest and most self-righteous legal brief on behalf of a failed political movement ever done by an American. He placed responsibility for secession and the war entirely at the feet of the North. The South's action was merely to protect its natural rights against the "tremendous and sweeping usurpation," the "unlimited, despotic power" of the federal government. Every war measure enacted by the Lincoln administration or by Congress, from confiscation to emancipation, was a further step in the "serpent seeking its prey." In his defense of the Confederacy, Davis developed a case for what James McPherson has called the "virgin-birth theory of secession: the Confederacy was not conceived by any worldly cause, but by divine principle."¹⁰

In language that became almost omnipresent in Lost Cause rhetoric, Davis insisted that slavery "was in no wise the cause of the conflict, but only an incident." Moreover, he contributed a defense of slavery itself that was as direct as any written in the postwar South. "Generally," Davis claimed, African Americans' ancestors "were born the slaves of barbarian masters, untaught in all the useful arts and occupations, reared in heathen darkness, and, sold by

heathen masters, they were transferred to shores enlightened by the rays of Christianity." In this benevolent environment now crushed by Yankee armies and politicians, blacks had been

put to servitude . . . trained in the gentle arts of peace and order and civilization; they increased from a few unprofitable savages to millions of efficient Christian laborers. Their servile instincts rendered them contented with their lot, and their patient toil blessed the land of their abode with unmeasured riches. Their strong local and personal attachment secured faithful service . . . Never was there happier dependence of labor and capital on each other. The tempter came, like the serpent of Eden, and decoyed them with the magic word of "freedom" . . . He put arms in their hands, and trained their humble but emotional natures to deeds of violence and bloodshed, and sent them out to devastate their benefactors.¹¹

Davis helped give the Lost Cause its lifeblood. Here again were the faithful slaves, the natural-born laborers in the idyll of the Old South performing a new service—they were the broken symbols of lost glory and Yankee idiocy. It is telling to observe that virtually all major spokespersons for the Lost Cause could not develop their story of a heroic, victimized South without the images of faithful slaves and benevolent masters—the "sovereigns" of a state had to be protecting something besides principles on parchment. And so, in such reasoning, was the Civil War about and not about slavery.

Davis had many predecessors upon whose work he built his mystical defense of the Confederacy. The diehard era (1860–late 1880s) of the Lost Cause emerged in several polemical books in the immediate postwar years, and especially in new magazines founded as the vehicles of Southern vindication. In his book *The Lost Cause* (1866), Edward Pollard warned that what the South had lost on battlefields it would carry on in a "war of ideas." Only two years later, with his militancy under more control and no longer urging Southerners to still take up arms, Pollard wrote a campaign tract, *The Lost Cause Regained* (1868), in which he counseled reconciliation with conservative Northerners on Southern terms. Those terms coalesced in a central idea. "To the extent of securing the supremacy of the white man," wrote Pollard, "and the traditional liberties of the country . . . she [the South] really triumphs in the true cause of the war." Alfred Taylor Bledsoe, a former professor of mathematics at the University of Virginia and undersecretary of war in

the Confederacy, led the diehards in the defense of secession. His *Is Davis a Traitor, or Was Secession a Constitutional Right before 1861?* (1866) and *A Constitutional View of the Late War between the States* (1868–70) laid out a vehement justification of state rights doctrine. Most importantly, Bledsoe created a polemical magazine, the *Southern Review*, in Baltimore in 1867. Along with D. H. Hill's *The Land We Love*, founded in 1866 in Charlotte, North Carolina, the *Southern Review* kept up an intensive defense of the Confederate legacy until the end of Reconstruction. Indeed, the political and racial struggles over Reconstruction policy itself became central themes of these magazines, most of which faded away with the steady growth of political reconciliation in the late 1870s.¹² In organizations, however, the Lost Cause found new and more permanent footing.

The earliest Confederate veterans' groups formed around two aims: charity to members and families, and as the Charleston, South Carolina, Survivors' Association put it, to create "a Southern history." In these first years after the war, Confederate veteran activists devoted themselves to the most basic duty of memorialization, tabulating elaborate rolls of honor of both the living and the dead. But with meager resources at the local levels, they sought to carry on the battle for historical memory as well. In 1869, the leader of the New Orleans Survivors' Association invited his counterpart in Charleston to share in this historical enterprise. "We wish to collect," wrote Reverend B. M. Palmer to Edward McGrady, "everything that can illustrate the history of our Southern country . . . to publish volumes of transactions, spreading before our people and before the world the very documents from which all true history is to be drawn." Within the South Carolina association, a Rock Hill veteran wrote to the leadership, endorsing as its central objective "the necessity of transmitting the *truth* to posterity."¹³ In its earliest manifestations, therefore, the Lost Cause was born out of grief, but just as importantly, it formed in the desire to contend for control of the nation's memory. Whatever the extent of Union victory on the battlefield, the verdicts to be rendered in history and memory were not settled at Appomattox.

From its beginnings in New Orleans in 1869, in its original circular letter, the Southern Historical Society (SHS) declared its object to be the "collection, classification, preservation, and final publication" of the Confederate story. The founders of the SHS announced that their society would not represent "purely sectional" interests, "nor that its labors shall be of a partisan character." But in all its work the organization sought to "vindicate the truth

of history."¹⁴ Many ex-Confederates put enormous faith in history as their source of justification. While the history they had lived ruined them, the history they would help write might redeem them.

The editor of the *SHS Papers*, J. William Jones, and the society's members who wrote so vigorously, labored as though they were under a literary siege. Like all polemicists, in the sheer repetition of the word "truth" they claimed credibility and sought justification. The SHS's fifth annual report acknowledged contributors of "material for a true history of the war," offered its aid to writers "elucidating the truth of Confederate history," and praised supporters for choosing the "cause of truth" over money with their donations of personal collections. For all to see, the official seal of the SHS, blazoned on the cover of every volume, contained the slogan: "Truth Is the Proper Antagonist of Error." The SHS worked from the assumption that the war's victors would never do them justice in the history books or in the emerging memoir literature. Based on the collection they had assembled in the offices reserved for them in the Virginia state capitol, the SHS leadership put their faith in the power of documentation.¹⁵ These ex-soldiers demanded respect and would try to argue their way to righteousness before the bar of History.

In the early years of forging Lost Cause ideology, diehards fashioned a historical creed, demanded discipleship, and worked with urgency to counter Northern histories. "Our adversaries leave no stone unturned to defeat us through the South," wrote former general John B. Gordon in 1872 as vice president of a publishing firm. "Their offensive books" demanded answers, Gordon maintained. "We must meet their attacks when it seems wise to do so." To the charge from Jubal Early that he had become too infected with "progressive ideas to care for the preservation of history," the former presidential candidate and Confederate general John C. Breckinridge assured Early that he "would know better some day. I seek no man's society who speaks of us as 'traitors,' nor will I associate with our former adversaries upon the basis of mere sufferance." Early told a fellow diehard in 1871 that he kept very active fighting Northerners' false history. "Every now and then," he wrote to D. H. Hill, "I manage to land a bomb against the enemy, in the way of exploding some of their lies, and that affords me some consolation." In his windy way, P. G. T. Beauregard rejoiced over the creation of the SHS: "After having taken an active part in *making* history," he wrote to Early, the job of the generals was to "see that it is correctly *written*." Robert S. Dabney, a chaplain and chief of staff for Stonewall Jackson during the early part of the war and one of the most unreconcilable of the diehards, saw the Lost Cause as a

sacred trust that required theological devotion and a strong sense of denial. In his *A Defense of Virginia and through Her of the South* (1867), Dabney was obsessed with historical judgments about the war and Southern slaveholding. He believed the South had "been condemned unheard," and that the "pens" of its "statesmen" had been too silent. In the tradition of the older proslavery writers, Dabney praised the South as an "organic" society, the bulwark against all the disorder now championed by radical Republicanism. In one of the most desperate expressions of the diehard spirit, Dabney called on Southerners to wield the pen and count on God. Yankees would ultimately meet their just fate, Dabney believed, "in the day of their calamity, in the pages of impartial history, and in the Day of Judgment."¹⁶

Until his death in 1894, Dabney was never at home in the world the war had made. Almost as much as he hated Yankee rule, he eventually condemned the New South movement for its materialism and anti-agrarianism. Dabney believed Southerners needed major literary works that would do for them what John Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* had done for seventeenth-century English Protestants. "The South needs a book of 'Acts and Monuments of Confederate Martyrs,'" he told D. H. Hill in 1873. Dabney argued that Southern writers should model the pathos of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, but in reverse. "Paint the picture skillfully," he urged, "of Southern martyrdom under ruthless abolition outrages." He called for "helpless sufferings of *weakness* under the brute hand of merciless *power*."¹⁷ This was not quite the kind of Lost Cause that Thomas Nelson Page would give the nation, but it did eventually find its author in Thomas Dixon's *The Clansman* (1905) and its immortal place in motion pictures in D. W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* (1915).

As in most lost causes, ex-Confederates had scores to settle with each other as well as with their former enemies. In their canonization of Lee, Virginians in particular sought to make James Longstreet the scapegoat for the Southern loss at Gettysburg. In a speech at the dedication of the Lee Chapel in Lexington, Virginia, in January 1873, William Nelson Pendleton, Lee's chief of artillery, attacked Longstreet. Longstreet was a Georgian and scorned by the diehards for renouncing Lost Cause sentiments and urging his fellow Southerners to get on with rebuilding their economy as early as 1867. He was especially vilified for being "so slow" in his attacks on the second and third days of the battle of Gettysburg. A bitter controversy raged until the end of the century over these charges against Longstreet and lasted even longer in the enduring Lee legend. In spite of ample evidence to demonstrate that Lee himself had deeply respected Longstreet, this dispute had a long life in the

pages of the *SHS Papers* and elsewhere because essential tenets of the Lost Cause were at stake—the military and moral infallibility of Lee, and the myth of Confederate invincibility.¹⁸

By the late 1870s, diehards were no longer merely explaining defeats; they had a victory to bequeath to history as well. From the beginning, Lost Cause diehards attacked Reconstruction policy nearly as much as they appealed for history true to the Confederate cause. After acknowledging Ulysses Grant's appeal for "peace," Jubal Early ended an article on federal numerical superiority during the war with a diatribe against the current situation in the South in 1870. The elections of 1870, claimed Early, were "superintended by armed agents of the United States Government . . . for the purpose of perpetuating the power of the ruling faction, through the instrumentality of the ballot in the hands of an inferior race." When John T. Morgan addressed the 1877 annual meeting of the SHS, he portrayed the period 1868–77 as the "nine years war of Reconstruction" and the era of "dishonorable oppression for an unworthy cause." Reconstruction, Morgan maintained, had been the "second war." "If we have now met in peace and reconciliation upon the broad concessions, mutually accepted, that the war was not a crime," he said, "we need not inquire who was right or who was wrong." In such language, Lost Cause advocates found a victory narrative. They had won the second war over Reconstruction; they had thrown off "Negro rule" and redeemed their states. In a speech to a group of veterans of the Army of the Tennessee in July 1878, Jefferson Davis made the victory over Reconstruction an explicit element of Lost Cause ideology. The normally morose Davis described a cause reflowering in a new season. "Well may we rejoice in the regained possession of local self-government," Davis said, "in the power of people to . . . legislate uncontrolled by bayonets. This is the great victory . . . a total non-interference by the Federal Government with the domestic affairs of the States."¹⁹ By regaining home rule, defeating black equality, and throwing off all vestiges of Reconstruction, the South had found a new cause: a story of redemption and victory that could serve the ends of both diehards and reconciliationists.

ALTHOUGH SOME DIEHARDS remained thoroughly unreconstructed for the rest of their lives, what made possible the reconciliationist phase of the Lost Cause (1880s and beyond) is that Southerners found they could transform loss on the battlefield into a reunion on terms largely of their own choosing. New South promoters and Lost Cause diehards may have differed

somewhat over how slavery should be remembered, but most shared a refurbished commitment to white supremacy and a desire for renewed economic growth. Reconciliationist spokesmen of the Lost Cause could announce acceptance of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments, as John Goode did at a monument unveiling in Culpeper, Virginia, in 1881, but equally claim that "all powers of the earth could not compel us to write the word 'traitor' with our own hands upon the graves of our heroic and martyred dead." At the same unveiling ceremony, Virginia's ex-governor James Kemper and future governor Fitzhugh Lee (both former generals) declared that they had "never done any treason" in a cause more "free of crime" than any in history.²⁰ Keeping diehards like Early in check, Kemper and Lee were conservatives who helped usher their state into the era of reunion with a proud and respected sense of their Lost Cause.

As Southerners began to unveil their local soldiers' monuments, and as their victory over Reconstruction became part of their narrative of Confederate heritage, Lost Cause orators moved from mournful to more triumphant tones. At the October 1878 unveiling of the Confederate monument in the town square of Augusta, Georgia, one of that state's most popular Lost Cause voices, Charles Colcock Jones Jr., argued that the South had fought for "liberty" and "freedom" and had lost only because it had been "overborne by superior numbers and weightier munitions." Then he quickly shifted to a victory narrative. The ultimate verdict of the war awaited the history of their own time. "Nothing has been absolutely determined except the question of comparative strength," said Jones. "The issue furnished only a physical solution of the moral, social, and political propositions." To Jones, the South could still win the war politically. The "political privileges" and "vested rights" of Southerners, he declared, "are, in a moral point of view, unaffected by the result of the contest."²¹

Thus was the Lost Cause transformed into national reunion on Southern terms. A Memorial Day speaker in Baltimore in 1879 invested such sentiments even deeper in local pride and vindication. At bottom, argued A. M. Keiley, it was "love of state and love of home" for which Southerners fought the war. In a speech that was otherwise not very reconciliationist, Keiley announced that he found "reconciliation easy with him who says, 'I answered the summons of Massachusetts or Ohio,' for I answered the summons of Virginia, and hers alone." Keiley predicted that each year "this platform of reconciliation will more and more assert itself" and the nation would revive from its roots in state sovereignty and local rule.²² Keiley may have been only

partly right with this prediction; a new nationalism fueled the reunion, as did fear of radical populism. But retreats to this sense of "home," and all the vestiges of control over social institutions and race relations that it implied, were at the heart of the American reunion. For Lost Cause advocates, a narrative of loss had become a narrative of order, revival, and triumph.

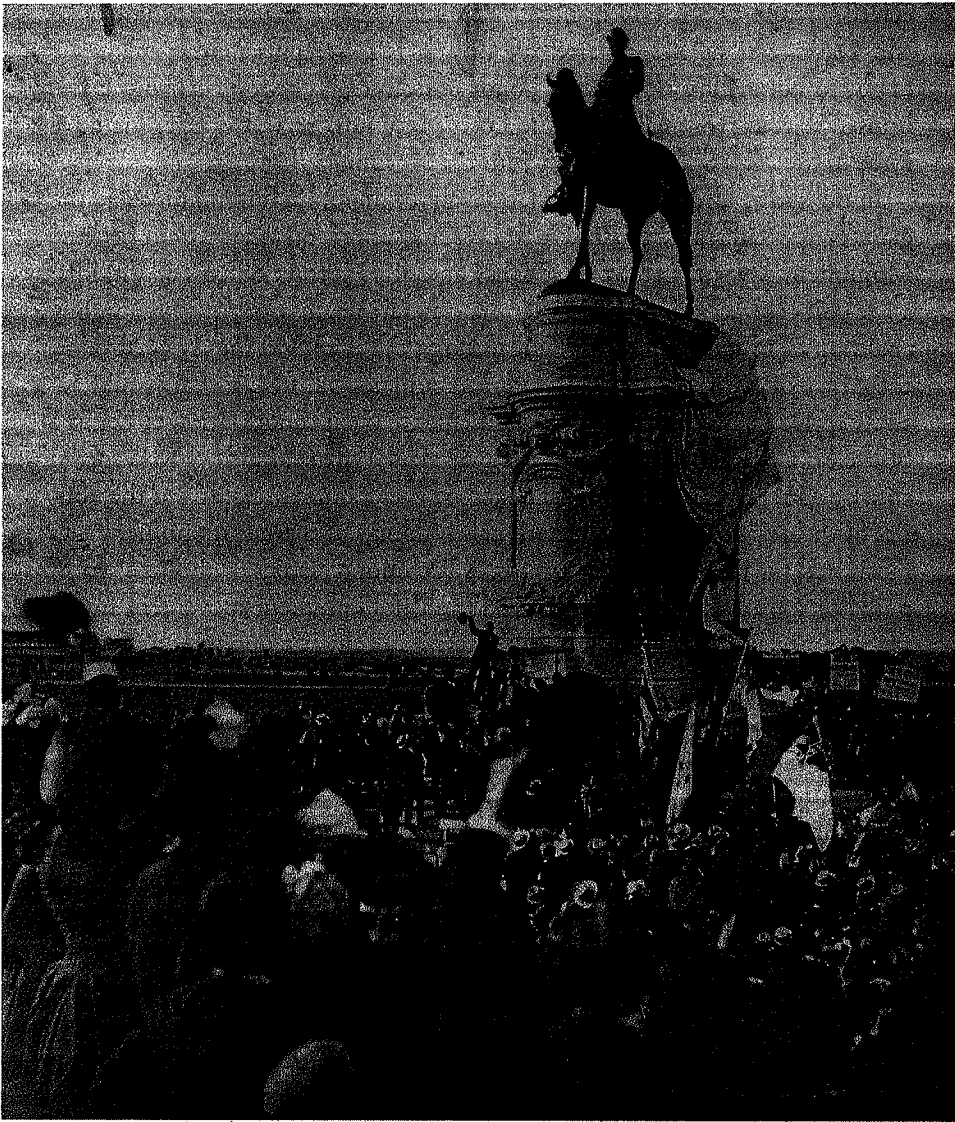
The Lost Cause became an integral part of national reconciliation by dint of sheer sentimentalism, by political argument, and by recurrent celebrations and rituals. For most white Southerners, the Lost Cause evolved into a language of vindication and renewal, as well as an array of practices and public monuments through which they could solidify both their Southern pride and their Americanness. In the 1890s, Confederate memories no longer dwelled as much on mourning or explaining defeat; they offered a set of conservative traditions by which the entire country could gird itself against racial, political, and industrial disorder. And by the sheer virtue of losing heroically, the Confederate soldier provided a model of masculine devotion and courage in an age of gender anxieties and ruthless material striving. For those who needed it, the Lost Cause became a tonic against fear of social change, a preventative ideological medicine for the sick souls of the Gilded Age. It also armed those determined to control, if not destroy, the rise of black people in the social order.²³

In the 1880s Americans digested the soldiers' literature of reunion in magazines and memoirs along with the evolving Lost Cause mythology. Two signal events at decade's end marked the change in both the leadership and the character of Confederate public memory. In December 1889, Jefferson Davis died during a visit to New Orleans. Cities and towns held memorial services as the entire South seemed to go into mourning. Davis had made a celebrated public tour of the South in 1886 accompanied by his daughter, Winnie (*the* "daughter" of the Confederacy, since she had been born during the war), during which he was cheered by huge crowds. Indeed, Winnie Davis, who appeared in white dresses and became the object of veterans' adoration, was forced to play the symbolic model of purity and perfect young womanhood at many public gatherings. She became a gendered icon of the social order—the cause and the future—for which Southern white men had fought. Often aloof or rash in his defense of Confederate memory, Davis himself emerged before death as a hero, a symbol of the South's "suffering" both during the war and through Reconstruction. A floral inscription, "He Was Manacled for US," adorned the front of his train during the triumphal 1886 tour. White Southerners used these occasions to proclaim the glory of

their failed revolution and to refurbish their self-respect. "There never has been anything at the South equal to the ovation which Mr. Davis has received," wrote D. H. Hill in 1886. "You know that I have no reason to like Mr. Davis, but he has suffered for us and is our representative man. We ought to honor him in order to honor ourselves."²⁴ However harshly Davis himself rejected reconciliation, the Lost Cause now served as a regenerative force in the New South's reunion with the North.

In the spring after Davis's death, on May 29, 1890, Richmond unveiled the giant equestrian statue of Robert E. Lee in a suburb on what would become Monument Avenue. Led by Jubal Early and other former officers of Virginia, a Lee cult evolved immediately after the general's death in 1870. This Virginia coalition of mystic diehards sought through the SHS and the Association of the Army of Northern Virginia to create a memorial to Lee that would actively revive Confederate history and memory. Their canonization of Lee as a blameless Christian soldier, a paragon of manly virtue and duty who soared above politics, was not really challenged by their competitors. It was the politics of the design as well as the national meanings of the Lee monument that motivated the two competing groups. A Richmond "ladies committee" composed of upper-class matrons, entered the Lee monument movement in the 1870s, especially as fund-raisers and as critics of artistic designs. And under two Virginia governors, Kemper in the 1870s and Fitzhugh Lee in the late 1880s, the Lee Memorial Association took over official control of the campaign. Intense controversy marred both the fund-raising and the artistic competitions. But in 1886, Governor Lee managed to solidify all the factions under one committee, which pushed the project to completion and gave the commission to the French artist Antonin Mercie. The diehards had opposed several previous designs as simply not true likenesses of "Marse Robert," and Early even objected to the use of Maine marble for the base of the statue (he was overruled by the governor, who acknowledged that Richmond marble companies had colluded to keep their prices high). In the end, the women's committee, led by Sarah N. Randolph, won control over the design, the governor chose the site (in a new suburb, symbolic of future progress), and Early was left with the consolation of being master of ceremonies at the unveiling.²⁵

Attended by a crowd estimated between 100,000 and 150,000 people, the unveiling of the giant Lee equestrian was an extraordinary event held on the weekend of the national Memorial Day. The parade of some twenty thousand participants to the outskirts of the city was festive in every way. Bands played "Dixie" and other Southern airs, and countless Confederate flags



The unveiling of the Robert E. Lee monument in Richmond on Memorial Day, 1890, marked the entry of the Lost Cause into the national mainstream. (The Museum of the Confederacy, Richmond, Virginia)

mixed with U.S. flags along the march. The orator, Archer Anderson, treasurer of the Tredgar Iron Works, set the tone for the Lee remembered, the man of "moral strength and moral beauty." The monument, said Anderson, stood not for "a record of civil strife, but as a perpetual protest against whatever is low and sordid in our public and private objects." As General Joseph E. Johnston pulled the cord to unveil the statue, deafening cheers ensued in the huge throng.²⁶ Sectional hostility was not an overt theme of this public ritual. But clearly, Southern pride rose restored on that odd landscape on the outskirts of a new, but as yet undeveloped, Richmond. Twenty-five years after a massive civil war, the military leader and the heroic symbol of the side that lost now sat high astride his horse, looking northward on a nation soon to incorporate him into its own pantheon. Reconciliation now appeared to be dependent upon the dead leader of the cause that lost. More than ghosts emerged from the Richmond unveiling of 1890; a new, more dynamic Lost Cause was thrown into bold relief as well. Early and his Virginia diehards had lost influence, but the Lee legend was now something the whole country had to interpret.

Some Northern newspapers openly objected to the aggressive display of Confederate flags in Richmond. The Republican *New York Press* reported that it received more letters "denouncing the liberal display of rebel flags" than it could print. The *Chicago Inter-Ocean* declared in "sorrow, not in anger" its regret at the "unfurling and waving of the flag of the so-called Confederate States" at the unveiling. The *Minneapolis Tribune* lamented that the "Lee cult is much in vogue, even at the North, in these days." The Minnesota editors disclaimed the "fashion" of surrounding Lee with "a sort of halo of moral grandeur, military genius, and knightly grace, as a man of finer and better mold than his famous antagonists." The *Salt Lake Tribune* (Utah), also Republican, was willing to condone such an "ostentatious display of affection for their dead" on the part of ex-Confederates, as long as they continued to confess that their defeat was "mercy in disguise." All was understandable, claimed the Utah paper, because "human affections have their way; and as the mother loves best her crippled child, so it is natural for a people who have been defeated in a cherished project . . . to return . . . and to bewail it with all their hearts."²⁷ In the far-off West, the unveiling of the Lee monument in Richmond apparently seemed a benign exercise.

But the Lost Cause on display in Richmond in 1890 was less an act of mourning and more of a celebration. Southern newspapers rejoiced over the Lee monument and its surrounding events declaring, as the *New Orleans Pic-*

ayune did, that on this Memorial Day the South had demonstrated that its hero was among the "truest of Americans," and that Lee belonged in the nation's "common heritage." The *New York Times* echoed this sentiment, placing Lee at the heart of reconciliation. Lee's "memory," announced the *Times*, was "a possession of the American people, and the monument . . . a National possession."²⁸ This mixture of reactions indicates that a debate still ensued in the land about just how much the Lost Cause ought to be incorporated into national culture. But that incorporation was well under way and critics could hardly have stopped it.

African Americans reacted to the Lee cult generally, and the Richmond monument specifically, with a combination of silence and defiance. As early as 1871, when the Lee cult took root, Frederick Douglass denounced its potential as a source of Southern political revival. Douglass feared a "devoutly cherished sentiment, inseparately identified with the 'lost cause.'" He denounced the "bombastic laudation of the rebel chief" and lamented that he could "scarcely take up a newspaper . . . that is not filled with nauseating flatteries of the late Robert E. Lee." "It would seem," he wrote as though trying to answer Early and the diehards, "that the soldier who kills the most men in battle, even in a bad cause, is the greatest Christian, and entitled to the highest place in heaven." By 1890, Lee certainly had his high place above the landscape of Richmond, as well as in national Civil War memory. But the three blacks who survived politically on the Richmond city council voted against the city's appropriation for the monument. Those who wore the "clinking chains of slavery," wrote John Mitchell, editor of the *Richmond Planet*, had a perfect right to "keep silent" about the monument. The black editor denounced the Lee monument, its fund-raising committees, and the spectacle of its unveiling. In this era of labor unrest, Mitchell chose to remind white Virginians that blacks also participated in Memorial Days, North and South. "He [the Negro] put up the Lee Monument," warned Mitchell, "and should the time come, will be there to take it down. He's black and sometimes greasy, but who could do without the Negro?"²⁹

Silence or rhetorical condemnation were about the only options open to blacks in 1890. Their place in the Confederate commemoration, as well as in the Lost Cause, had become carefully prescribed. Mitchell reported hearing an "old colored man" who "after seeing the mammoth parade of the ex-Confederates on May 29th and gazing at the rebel flags, exclaimed, 'The Southern white folks is on top—the Southern white folks is on top!'" Who

can really know what an elderly black man in Richmond must have felt looking up at the giant Lee statue: Fear? Outrage? A sense of irony and inevitability? Perhaps he might even have laughed at the extraordinary extent that white folks would go to forget while remembering. According to Mitchell, the old man took heart. "A smile lit up his countenance as he chuckled with evident satisfaction, 'But we've got the government! We've got the government!'"³⁰ The Republican Benjamin Harrison had defeated Grover Cleveland in the 1888 presidential election. But the old black man's hope notwithstanding, Republican commitments to black rights had steadily eroded since Reconstruction. The Lee monument now represented a South seeking reunion and respect, a society poised to forge a new racial system that would reinvigorate the cause Lee had fought for, even though the legend makers, along with thousands of sincere believers, would endlessly claim that he and his men never made war for slavery. The Lost Cause thus transformed into a new cause.

The old man in Mitchell's article had reasons to mix his smile with dread. Blacks remained quite active in Virginia politics during the 1880s in a fledgling Republican Party as well as a variety of "readjuster" tickets. Yet even Virginia, which was not nearly as notorious as its neighbors to the South in its record of racial violence, had averaged two lynchings per year in the 1880s, while its governors, including Fitzhugh Lee, had remained silent. As the celebration of the Lee monument was taking place in Richmond, the U.S. Congress was about to debate Henry Cabot Lodge's "Force Bill," a law that would have reinforced an 1870 enactment enabling the federal government to supervise all phases of registration and voting in national elections. Born of the Republican Party's desire to end the Democratic Party's widespread practices of fraud and intimidation in some Southern state elections, the Lodge bill passed the House of Representatives but failed narrowly in the Senate. That defeat was a harbinger of the great upheaval to come in the 1890s in American society and politics. Indeed, the bitter Congressional debates over the Lodge force bill were a public symposium on the memory of emancipation and Reconstruction. The unveiling of the Lee monument came just before the final substantive national debate the country would have in the nineteenth century over the black man's right to vote and the responsibilities of the government to protect that right. Moreover, between August and October 1890 the state of Mississippi convened a constitutional convention and passed the first explicit disfranchisement law aimed at blacks. Through a va-

riety of contrivances—property qualifications, literacy tests, and a poll tax, all of which were replicated over the next two decades in each former Confederate state—blacks were effectively eliminated from Southern political life.³¹

As the Lost Cause found its new, forward-looking voice of reconciliation, the Southern terms on which it flourished included the demeaning of black people as helpless, sentimental children and the crushing of their adult rights to political and civil liberty under the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. In the next two decades Jim Crow danced his steps at hundreds of Confederate monument unveilings and veterans' parades. High atop his monument in Richmond, Lee represented many of the inspirations Southerners now took from their heritage: a sense of pride and soldierly honor, an end to defeatism, and a new sense of racial mastery.

DURING THE 1890s, three entities took control of the Lost Cause: the United Confederate Veterans (UCV), founded in 1889; a new magazine, the *Confederate Veteran*, founded in 1893 and edited in Nashville by Sumner A. Cunningham; and the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC), founded in 1894. Both the UCV and the UDC grew rapidly as organizations that complemented one another. The UCV was born in New Orleans in June 1889, out of a growing impulse among local veteran organizations to amalgamate into larger groups. Survivors' associations and associations of particular armies had long engaged in fraternal support and local remembrance. But as the national reunion took hold, so too did ex-Confederates seek more national forms of expression. The UCV's first commander-in-chief was former U.S. Senator and then governor of Georgia, John B. Gordon. Gordon was a New South politician with heroic credentials, and he provided an eloquent voice for both Confederate memory and reconciliation on Southern economic and political terms. By 1896, the UCV had 850 local camps, and by 1904, they had 1,565. The geographical distribution of UCV camps included at least one in 75 percent of the counties of the eleven former Confederate states. The best estimate of membership in the UCV seems to be 80,000 to 85,000 in 1903, a peak year.³² Appealing to the interests of the ordinary veteran, especially against the fears and trials of 1890s economic collapse and political turmoil, the UVC became a safe haven of comradeship and celebration for the full range of Lost Cause attitudes and rituals.

For its part, the UDC spread across the South and also established some chapters in the North. By 1900, the UDC boasted 412 chapters and 17,000

members in twenty states and territories. By World War I it may have had as many as 100,000 members engaged in a wide variety of memorial activities. The generally well-heeled UDC women were strikingly successful at raising money to build Confederate monuments, lobbying legislatures and Congress for the reburial of Confederate dead, and working to shape the content of history textbooks. They distributed tens of thousands of dollars in college scholarships to granddaughters and grandsons of Confederate veterans. The UDC ran essay contests to raise historical consciousness among white Southern youth, and by the turn of the century they had launched an ongoing campaign to designate "War between the States" as the official name for the conflict. In all their efforts, the UDC planted a white supremacist vision of the Lost Cause deeper into the nation's historical imagination than perhaps any other association. Working largely from women's sphere as guardians of piety, education, and culture, many UDC members nonetheless led public-activist lives; although most opposed women's suffrage, many of their leaders were intensely political people. Behind, and often at the center of, every Confederate reunion (their pictures adorning the pages of nearly every issue of the *Confederate Veteran*) were UDC women, old and young, the "auxiliaries," "sponsors," and "maids of honor" without which the Lost Cause could not have dominated Southern public culture as it did.³³

The UDC served its patrician class interest, but its activists both eroded and hardened the bonds of Southern womanhood. UDC women included advocates of women's suffrage as well as those who opposed it. Women such as Lila Meade Valentine of Richmond might grow up ensconced in the planter class and weighted down with the full burden of the Lost Cause as well as the expectations of a Southern "Lady." But some, as in Valentine's case, became gradualist, progressive reformers and persistent crusaders for women's rights. Valentine embraced most tenets of the Lost Cause, but also became president of the Equal Suffrage League in Virginia. Within women's sphere, and while preserving a genteel white supremacy, women like Valentine believed the "New South Lady" could be the agent by which the whole South could transcend the legacies of defeat and Reconstruction.³⁴

At a proliferating array of veterans' reunions that Southern cities competed to host, and in oratory and writings, Confederate memory transformed into a set of arguments for a cause not lost. Ex-Confederates still had much to mourn, but the Lost Cause now appeared more as chapters in a victory narrative. This new ideology still nurtured dogmatism and mysticism, but it took hold in five potent arguments. First, veterans and the Daughters continued

to glorify the valor of Southern soldiers and to defend their honor as defensive warriors who were never truly beaten in battle. Second, Lost Cause advocates of the 1890s especially promoted the Confederate past as a bulwark against all the social and political disorder of that tumultuous decade. Third, the UCV and the UDC established history committees that guarded the Confederate past against all its real and imagined enemies. Fourth, contrary to the norm in Blue-Gray fraternalism, many Lost Cause writers and activists during the reconciliationist era were not at all shy of arguing about the *causes* of the war. Fifth, and most strikingly, a nostalgic Lost Cause reinvigorated white supremacy by borrowing heavily from the plantation school of literature in promoting reminiscences of the *faithful slave* as a central figure in the Confederate war. Together, these arguments reinforced Southern pride, nationalized the Lost Cause, and racialized Civil War memory for the postwar generations.

Sentimental journeys into Civil War memory had become a national pastime. In *The Mind of the South*, Wilbur Cash observed that "the growth of the Southern legend was even more sentimental than it was grandiloquent." It was both. Under the influence of Thomas Nelson Page and others, the Lost Cause spread by pathos and pompousness. In his fictional stories, Page touched every chord of Lost Cause emotion. "The Gray Jacket of 'No. 4'" (1892) ends with a Confederate veterans' parade where, in a crowd rising as a "tempest" at the sight of the old soldiers,

Men wept; children shrieked; women sobbed aloud. What was it! Only a thousand or two of old or aging men riding or tramping along through the dust of the street, under some old flags, dirty and ragged and stained. But they represented the spirit of the South; they represented the spirit which when honor was in question never counted the cost; the spirit that had stood up . . . against overwhelming odds . . .; the spirit that is the strongest guaranty to us today what the Union is and is to be; the spirit . . . glorious in victory . . . yet greater in defeat.

And in his nonfiction such as *The Old South* (1892), Page gave Lost Cause ideology full voice. The heroism of the South almost surpassed understanding, according to Page. The North had arrayed the "world against her . . . its force was as the gravitation of the earth—imperceptible, yet irresistible."³⁵ The South had lost, but only by gloriously resisting the engines of nature itself.

Here was the South as America's fallen man, the source of sacrificial blood for the remission of national sins—"greater in defeat." Hence the reunion was dependent upon a New South still draped in images of the Old. As with soldiers' reminiscence, such sentimentalism met with a warm welcome among powerful Northern publishers. In 1890, Richard Watson Gilder imperiously rejoiced at "how much more national" Northern periodicals had become because of the presence of Southern writers. "It is well for the North, it is well for the nation," said Gilder, "to hear in poem and story all that the South burns to tell of her romance, her heroes, her landscapes; yes, of her lost cause."³⁶ Thus did Gilder and other Northern editors nurture the rise of the Confederate Lost Cause as a national heritage.

In 1896 a Southerner, Albert Morton, attended a UCV reunion in Richmond and a GAR reunion in Saint Paul, Minnesota. He found a "marked contrast" between the two events. Both involved enormous crowds and festooned streets. In Richmond, Morton found "tumultuous" enthusiasm, the singing of Confederate songs by "thousands of throats," and tears everywhere as women kissed old flags and people cheered wildly for the marching veterans. In the more staid Saint Paul, Morton was disappointed at a parade where "the heart was lacking." He found himself "astounded at the apathy, the woodenness of the onlookers." Hardly anyone cheered the Union veterans as they marched by; Morton saw even a "cripple who hobbled along on his crutches amidst profound silence." Judging by the character of these reunions, Morton concluded: "I felt, as I watched the blue coated veterans pass, that I would rather have been a soldier under the Southern cross."³⁷ When it came to commemorating the war, Southerners seemed to have more passion and more fun.

Moreover, in 1894, the *Confederate Veteran* reported a story of a Southern mother and her son attending a production in Brooklyn, New York, of the play *Held by the Enemy*. The boy asks his mother, "What did the Yankees fight for?" As the orchestra strikes up "Marching through Georgia," the woman answers: "For the Union, darling." "Painful memories" bring sadness to the mother's face as she hears the Yankee victory song. Then, earnestly, the boy asks, "What did the Confederates fight for, mother?" Before the mother can answer, the music changes to "Home Sweet Home," which fills the theater with "its depth of untold melody and pathos." The mother whispers her answer: "Do you hear what they are playing? That is what the Confederates fought for, darling." "Did they fight for their homes?" the boy counters. With the parent's assurance, the boy burst into tears, and with the "intuition of

right," hugs his mother and announces: "Oh mother, I will be a Confederate!"³⁸ Apocryphal or not, this tale represents a place that the Confederate veterans and their cause had reached in American popular culture. They had lost the war in 1865, but were winning the hearts of millions and providing a healing balm for the worried and disruptive society of the 1890s. Their conservative rebellion now seemed an antidote to the new ethnic invasion of America's shores, and especially to farmers' and workers' revolts. In the bewildering technological and industrial society, and amidst resurgent racism, a white boy growing up in America in the 1890s might find safe havens in the past and present by just *being a Confederate*.

Many Confederate Memorial Day speakers embraced memories of the Old South as a way of denouncing the New. At an 1895 gathering in Savannah, Georgia, the orator, Pope Barrow, rejected all "prating of a 'N—South.'" He set the Lost Cause off as the protector of the real America now under threat. "The Southern people are the Americans of Americans," proclaimed Barrow, "and ex-Confederates of today are representatives of an American army—not an army made up largely of foreigners and blacks fighting for pay . . . I believe in the Old South." These code phrases for racial supremacy and nativism often spilled into more explicit expressions. At Memorial Day ceremonies in Nashville in 1894, a U.S. district judge, G. R. Sage, embraced reconciliation by warning of impending threats to the American political order. "How soon the crisis may be upon us . . . we do not know," offered Sage. But he called on North and South to "stand shoulder to shoulder and present a united . . . front against the vicious and revolutionary and communistic elements which threaten the public safety." At a reunion in Waco, Texas, another judge, George Clark, told assembled veterans that their cause was "not lost" and "could not be lost" in the nation's new hour of peril. Pointing to a Confederate flag, Clark declared that it stood for "the right of the enjoyment of our liberty and that equal dignity of right to enjoy the fruits of our labor." Clark made the new enemy clear. He called on his comrades to join ranks "against the aggressions of government, against the aggressions of anarchy, against the aggressions of communism in every shape."³⁹ In the 1890s the Lost Cause emerged as a useful weapon against radicalism and a bulwark against social diversity and disorder. Indeed, many of our controversies at the turn of the twenty-first century over the continuing presence of Confederate symbols, especially the battle flag, can be traced to this era when the Lost Cause changed its skin and became both a force of reunion and reaction.

During this second era of Lost Cause discourse, its advocates accelerated the fight to control historical interpretation of the Civil War. UCV and UDC history committees, in conjunction with a proliferation of state history associations, engaged in what one historian has called "a grand crusade to secure in the hearts and minds of the region's young" what it had lost on battlefields, and to "immunize southern children against democratic reforms then threatening the South's ruling class." "Thought is power," declared Mary Singleton Slack at a Louisville, Kentucky, meeting in 1904. She called on the Daughters to build the "greatest of all monuments, a thought monument" for the "pulsing hearts and active brains" of Southern youth.⁴⁰ Slack captured much of what was at stake in the struggle to control Civil War memory in turn-of-the-century America.

Since the 1860s every organ of Lost Cause thought had declared itself a bulwark against prejudiced Yankee history. In 1893, as S. A. Cunningham launched his *Confederate Veteran*, he announced a "fraternal" mission of peace. "Bitterness," he said, would not be his stock in trade. Above all else, though, Cunningham declared that his magazine would "vindicate the truth of history at all hazards." The *Confederate Veteran* became the voice of the UCV, the clearinghouse for Lost Cause thought, and the vehicle by which ex-Confederates built a powerful memory community that lasted into the 1930s. Many veterans wrote to Cunningham expressing their love for the journal, which with "every succeeding year," wrote a Tennessean, "adds luster to the Lost Cause." Similar to the role that *Century* played with its war series in the 1880s, the *Confederate Veteran* attracted hundreds of poems, copies of war records, and reminiscences from old soldiers and their wives and families. New South reconciliationists, as well as the most unreconstructed rebels, seemed to find their interests met in Cunningham's popular repository of Confederate heritage.⁴¹

Cunningham himself was no towering intellect, but he was a dogged defender of the South and a tireless organizer of veterans' activities. He was often at odds with the UCV leaders, who practiced too much Blue-Gray fraternalism for his taste. Cunningham made white supremacy central to the magazine's vision, welcoming to its pages frequent tributes to "faithful slaves" and denouncing the racial equality attempted during Reconstruction. Eventually, Cunningham all but banished the terms "Lost Cause" and "New South" from the journal because they did not sufficiently vindicate the Confederacy's wartime goals. His brand of reconciliation folded easily into the South's new victory narrative. "No! No! Our cause was not lost because it was

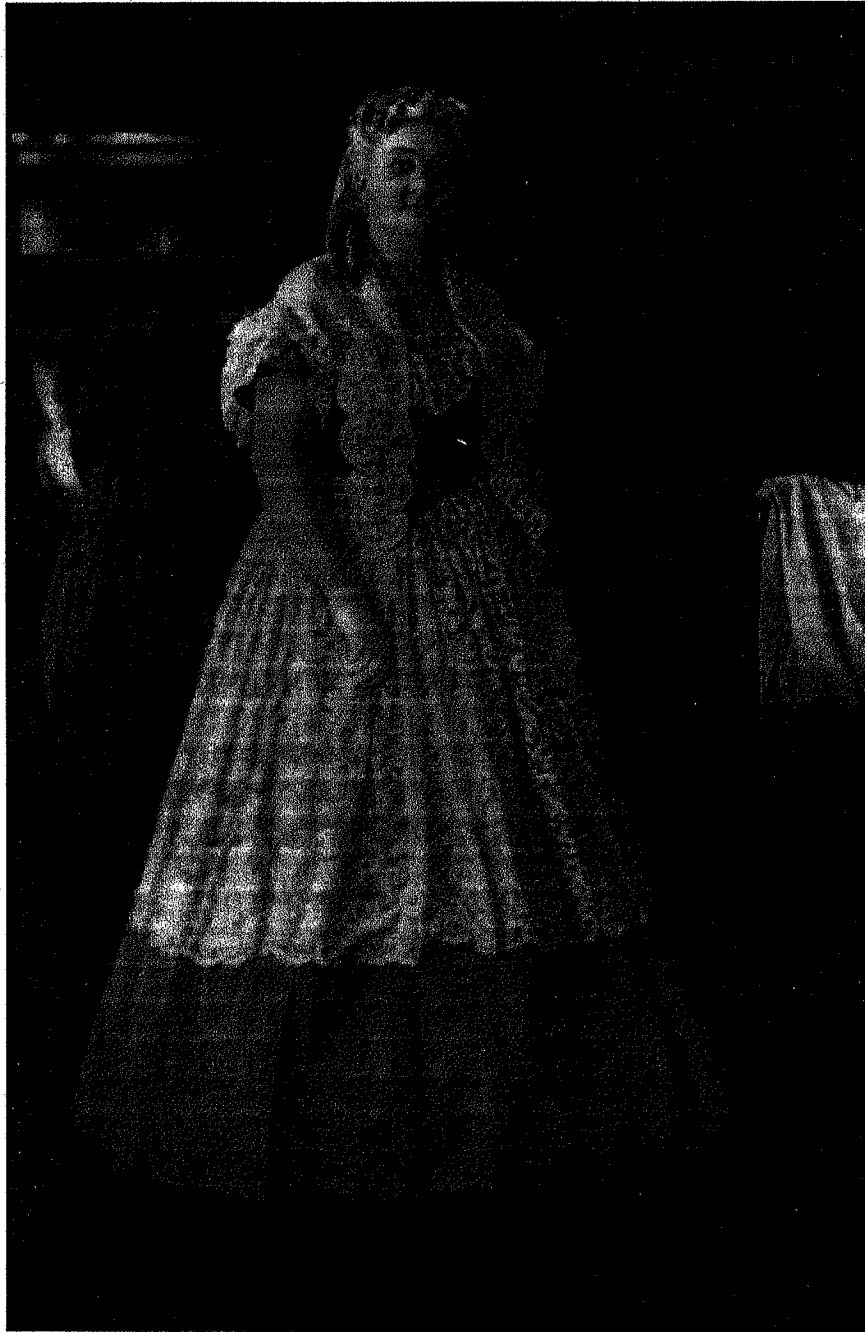
wrong," he announced in 1909. "No! No! Our cause was not lost for the reason that it was not wrong." Cunningham reprinted or endorsed hundreds of speeches from reunions and dedications, none more forcefully than Bradley T. Johnson's tribute to Confederate triumphalism and white supremacy at the opening of the Confederate Museum (quoted near the beginning of this chapter), which he contended "should become a part of the education of every child in the South."⁴² In endless refrains about true history and nonpartisanship, the preservers of the Confederate tradition built one of the most enduring and partisan mythologies in American experience.

As early as 1899, UDC chapters endorsed a pro-Southern textbook and began their decades-long crusade to fight what many perceived as a Yankee conspiracy to miseducate Southerners.⁴³ When UDC women took up the cause of history they did so as cultural guardians of their tribe, defenders of a sacred past against Yankee-imposed ignorance and the forces of modernism. They built moats around their white tribe's castles to save the children from false history and impure knowledge. But they did so by manning the parapets and by constant incursions into enemy territory. Many UDC leaders were anything but pious, quietistic women adorning irrelevant parlors with approved books. They were activists eager to fight to control America's memory of slavery, the Civil War, and Reconstruction. They delivered public speeches, wrote in the popular press, and lobbied Congressmen. On a popular level, they may have accomplished more than professional historians in laying down for decades (within families and schools) a conception of a victimized South, fighting nobly for high Constitutional principles, and defending a civilization of benevolent white masters and contented African slaves. If the Lost Cause now marched to a victory song, the UDC provided much of its spirit and its righteous indignation.

Many UDC activists harbored abiding memories of wartime loss and suffering. Janet Weaver Randolph, the founder and spirit of the Richmond UDC chapter, was seventeen when the war ended in 1865. She spent the entire war on her family's 179-acre farm near Warrenton, in northern Virginia. Her thirty-eight-year-old father had died of typhoid as a Confederate private, and her mother had been captured and detained as an alleged Confederate spy while trying to reach relatives in Philadelphia for financial help. The Weavers boarded and cared for wounded men on both sides, and young Janet's memorial work began even before the war ended with Sunday rituals of placing flowers at gravesites of dead soldiers. In 1880, Janet Weaver married Norman V. Randolph, a Confederate veteran active in the Lee Camp in

Richmond. She was a founding member of the women's group that converted the White House of the Confederacy into a museum, and with time she became the UDC's most effective lobbyist with politicians. Her long efforts to get the Congress, War Department, and two Presidents to reinter the Confederate dead from Northern cemeteries to their various Southern homes, as well as to erect monuments to the prison dead at Northern sites, resulted in an extensive reburial of Southern soldiers in Arlington National Cemetery in 1903. Fiercely loyal to the Lost Cause, Janet Randolph nevertheless used her memorial work to struggle against some of the barriers encircling women's sphere. In an interview in 1916, she called herself an "uneducated woman" who had grown up with the hardships of the war. "The women who spend their all to get the advantage of even a few months at the University," she complained, "are not accorded the degrees that will rank them with the men. Do you call this chivalry to women? Is it placing them on that lofty pedestal our opponents so delight to talk of?" Randolph reflected on the obstacles in her own life and seemed to recognize that she lived on the cusp of a new age. "I am not a suffragist," she said, "but it is just such injustice that will cause the women of Virginia to become suffragists."⁴⁴

The UDC woman who may have had the greatest influence on Southern historical consciousness was Mildred Lewis Rutherford of Athens, Georgia. Serving as historian general of the UDC from 1911 to 1916, Rutherford gave new meaning to the term "diehard." A prolific lecturer, writer, and organizer, Rutherford was the most conspicuous woman among many who prompted local chapters to conduct essay contests and to solicit reminiscences—the collection of which, along with similar efforts by the *Confederate Veteran* and some libraries, produced an extensive oral history of the Lost Cause. From the late 1890s onward, Rutherford was active in historical work, and for twenty-seven years she was principal of the Lucy Cobb Institute, a school for girls in Athens. She considered the Confederacy "acquitted as blameless" at the bar of history, and sought its vindication with a political fervor that would rival the ministry of propaganda in any twentieth-century dictatorship. She assembled dozens of scrapbooks, documenting every conceivable aspect of the Lost Cause and white supremacy. Rutherford traveled the country in period gowns with hoop skirts and delivered speeches entitled "Wrongs of History Righted" or "Historical Sins of Omission and Commission." Her conception of Southern history included large doses of romantic plantation imagery. "How restful the old life was!" went a typical expression. "What a picture of contentment, peace and happiness it presented! It was something



Mildred Lewis Rutherford of Athens, Georgia, historian general of the United Daughters of the Confederacy from 1911 to 1916, traveled the country lecturing and organizing in support of the Lost Cause and white supremacy. (The Museum of the Confederacy, Richmond, Virginia)

like our grandmother's garden." She seemed to borrow directly from Page's stories. "The Negroes under the institution of slavery were well-fed, well-clothed, and well-housed," she claimed. "How hard it was for us to make the North understand this!" Rutherford's absolutism flowed in endless recitals of the "horrors" of Reconstruction. She peddled the theory of black racial decline since emancipation. Had blacks "benefitted by freedom"? she asked in speeches. "As a race," she answered, "unhesitatingly no!" Slave health had been exemplary, she claimed. "I never saw a case of consumption . . . and now negroes are dying by the hundreds yearly. I never heard of but one crazy negro before the war. Now asylums cannot be built fast enough to contain those who lose their minds."⁴⁵

For all who would listen, Rutherford fashioned Confederate memory into a revival crusade and the Old South into a lost racial utopia. In an era when patriotism and history instruction were thoroughly conflated in the public schools, Rutherford insisted that the Confederacy be ranked in glory with the American Revolution. She lectured teachers to display and teach about the Confederate battle flag, and urged that pictures of Confederate heroes be hung in every school. She provided to instructors lists of Civil War causes (five primary and ten "aggravating"), all of which placed responsibility at the feet of abolitionists. And Rutherford spoke with utter certainty that the American reunion was a victory for Southern righteousness. "While we are trying to right the wrongs of history and literature," she declared in 1915, "let us be very careful to do it in the spirit of truth and peace. Surely the South can best stand gracefully for peace, for she has the most to forgive."⁴⁶

The UCV entered this history crusade earlier than the UDC, and the fervor of its efforts no doubt inspired the women. Under the leadership of former general Stephen D. Lee, the UCV Historical Committee issued a remarkable report at its 1895 reunion in Houston, Texas. The committee portrayed itself as a political force engaged in a moral struggle for the soul of the South. They urged a social and educational awakening that would demand "vindication of the Southern people, and a refutation of the slanders, the misrepresentations, and the imputations which they have so long and patiently borne." The committee defended the right of secession and rejected slavery as the cause of the war. "Slavery," said the UCV committee, "was the South's misfortune, the whole country's fault." "The true cause of the war between the states," it further argued, "was the dignified withdrawal of the Southern states from the Union . . . and not the high moral purpose of the North to destroy slavery, which followed incidentally as a war measure." The

target of the report was "New England historians" who had foisted upon the country histories full of "prejudice" and "passion." In the need to organize themselves into an "influential agency" of a proper historical memory, the UCV committee demonstrated above all else its embrace of a particular conception of history.⁴⁷ The implicit assumption at work in its report was that history, especially for those who judge themselves aggrieved, is at heart a form of political advocacy. Historical memory, therefore, was a weapon with which to engage in the struggle over political policy and a means to sustain the social and racial order.

The UCV's attempt to produce a "deeper, surer . . . permanent mode of vindicating the South" was nothing less than a political movement, a quest for thought control aimed at shaping regional and national memory of the war. The Historical Committee ranked school histories of the United States in three categories: first, Northern books that were "pronouncedly unfair to the South"; second, Northern-authored works that were "apparently fair" but still judged "objectionable"; and third, "Southern histories," those that passed all of some nine tests, including whether a book had properly represented the "unparalleled patriotism manifested by the Southern people in accepting" the war's "results." Eight books, all written by Southerners, made the recommended list. Mildred Rutherford and the UDC produced similar approved lists and condemnations of Northern histories. "We are absolutely powerless if we permit ourselves to be dominated by the book trust," she charged, "and allow Northern publishing houses to place books unfair to us in our schools." Everywhere she went, Rutherford urged that "no library should be without" approved Southern histories and "all of Thomas Nelson Page's books."⁴⁸ In such constant appeals for "truthful history," Lost Cause ideology, especially the notions that slavery really did not cause the war and that Reconstruction was the vicious oppression of an innocent South and the exploitation of ignorant blacks, sunk deeper with each passing year into the South's and the nation's memory.

No argument in the Lost Cause formula became more an article of faith than the disclaimer against slavery as the cause of the war. In reunion speeches, committee reports, and memoirs, it is remarkable to note the energy Southerners spent denying slavery's centrality to the war. Some, like John B. Gordon in his *Reminiscences* (1903), allowed that slavery was the "immediate fomenting cause" of conflict, "the tallest pine in the political forest around whose top the fiercest lightnings were to blaze." But "responsibility" for slavery, he contended, could not be "laid at her [the South's] door." So fa-

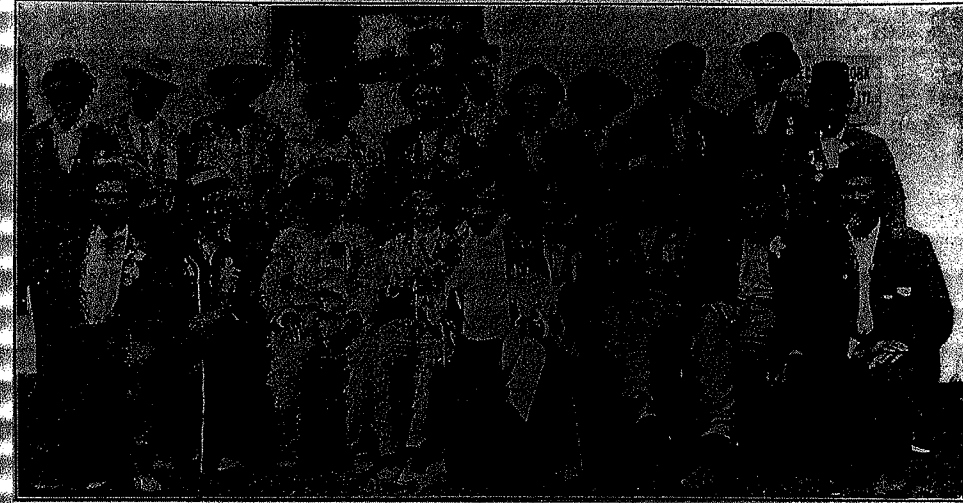
miliar and ubiquitous were these arguments that they flowed effortlessly from Southern pens. "It was not the desire to hold others in bondage," contended a Richmond Memorial Day orator in 1894, "but the desire to maintain their own rights that actuated the Southern people throughout the conflict." At a Franklin, Tennessee, Memorial Day in 1901, an orator carried the argument about responsibility to its utopian conclusion. "In 1861," declared Judge H. H. Cook, "the southern people were the best informed, most energetic, the most religious, and the most democratic people on earth." They had "no classes" and "perfect equality" among whites. As for the slaves, who had been imposed on them by Northern traders, they had nobly "civilized and Christianized 4,000,000 of this unfortunate race."⁴⁹ The Lost Cause imagined millions of willing and contented slaves in its nostalgic remembrance, with slaveholders in the role of providers and mentors for African bondsmen.

So eager were ex-Confederates to deny responsibility for slavery's existence, as well as their role in causing it, that it would have been impossible to grow up in the South from 1890 to World War I and not have heard or read such arguments many times over as the common sense of white Southern self-understanding. Many Confederate veterans wrote of their refusal to "be handed down to the coming generation as a race of slave-drivers and traitors." The stock Confederate Memorial Day speech contained four obligatory tributes: to soldiers' valor, women's bravery, slave fidelity, and Southern innocence regarding slavery. Robert E. Lee, grandson of the famous general, hit all of these chords at an Atlanta gathering of five thousand people in April 1911, but with an assertion of Southern innocence he twisted history inside out. "If the South had been heeded," said Colonel Lee, "slavery would have been eliminated years before it was. It was the votes of the southern states which finally freed the slaves."⁵⁰ In such strange logic, the Lost Cause not only absolved Southerners of responsibility for slavery, but made them the truest abolitionists. Protected by such mists of sentiment, the past could be anything people wished.

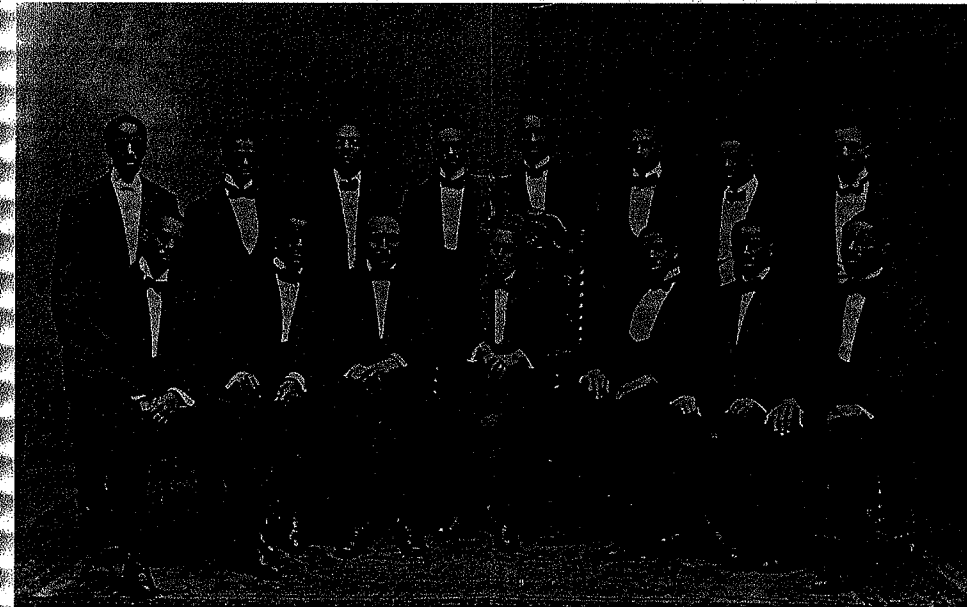
With time, women's organizations and state departments of education took over much of the responsibility for historical work, publishing elaborate guides containing defenses of secession and condemnations of the antislavery movement.⁵¹ From this combination of Lost Cause voices a reunited America arose pure, guiltless, and assured that the deep conflicts in its past had been imposed upon it by otherworldly forces. The side that lost was especially assured that its cause was true and good. One of the ideas the reconciliationist

Lost Cause instilled deeply into the national culture is that even when Americans lose, they win. Such was the message, the indomitable spirit, that Margaret Mitchell infused into her character Scarlett O'Hara in *Gone with the Wind* (1936), and such, perhaps, is the basis of the enduring legend of Robert E. Lee—through noble *character*, he won by losing.

IF LOST CAUSE IDEOLOGY gained long-term strength from its success in controlling history books, and by banishing slavery from the war's causation, it drew its staying power from the image of the faithful slave and the overall ideology of white supremacy. An outpouring of loyal slave narratives in the *Confederate Veteran*, in reminiscences collected by the UDC, and in popular musical entertainments produced the vernacular equivalent of Page's fiction. The image of the loyal slave may be one of the most hackneyed clichés in American history, but no understanding of the place of race in Civil War memory is possible without confronting its ubiquitous uses in turn-of-the-century culture. From its beginning, admiring readers of the *Confederate Veteran* urged its editor to reach out to the younger generation and counter the "tons of literature giving the dark side of slavery." "Let each issue of your paper contain something telling the bright side," wrote Manly B. Curry, son of a Tennessee veteran, "of the corn shuckings, the quiltings, the barbecues, the big meetings, the weddings." Show that "the slaves enjoyed life," Curry urged Cunningham, "and were not eternally skulking in dark corners dodging the whip." Cunningham needed little prodding; he saw contemporary race relations as the best reason to promote stories of faithful slaves of yore. In a 1905 issue of the magazine devoted largely to material about "old-time darkies," Cunningham offered a "lesson" for "young negroes": "Their aspirations for social equality will ever be their calamity. If they will observe the situation as it really exists, they will see that not an old-time negro lives in the South to-day faithful to white people who has not among them sustaining friends." In such devotion, Cunningham believed, young blacks should find their models for life. "The only solution of this matter is for negroes to accept the situation," the editor concluded; "treat the whites with deference, and they will soon realize the best they need ever hope to exist between the races."⁵² In its racial fervor, the Lost Cause seemed to find new energy from the growth of national reconciliation and a segregated society.



Some Confederate reunions and United Daughters of the Confederacy events honored elderly blacks—deemed "loyal slaves" or "faithful Confederates"—for their service to their former owners and to the Lost Cause. (From *Confederate Veteran*, July 1910)



These young men, representing the third generation of emancipated blacks in 1913, offer a powerful response to the "faithful slave" ideology as they pose with dignity and confidence. (From *Crisis*, February 1913)

From the mid-1890s to as late as 1930, the *Confederate Veteran* published hundreds of tributes to faithful slaves, often written by former masters. Stories of "Negro devotion," of faithful servants saving their masters from wartime battlefields, of old blacks paying tribute to their old "marster" or "mistiss," and photographs of old slaveowners with their surviving ex-slaves became regular features in the magazine as well as in newspapers. The zeal with which white Southerners marshaled the faithful slave idea to support the Lost Cause tells us more about tensions in the Jim Crow South than it does about antebellum history. "It is my fixed opinion," declared B. G. Humphreys, a Mississippi politician, in 1903, "judging the negro who grew to manhood in slavery and the negro who has grown to manhood in freedom, that as a race he reached his zenith in all those qualities which make for civilization . . . under the old regime." As though he might have heard some early blues or work songs that he found repulsive, Humphreys longed for "the songs that have come down to us from the old plantation" because they were "not the songs of the caged bird; there is no wailing of the soul crying out to its God for deliverance."⁵³ This Mississippian left a telling statement of how much some white Southerners were affected by black music, but in the long run how little they comprehended it.

In dialect poems written in the voices of loyal slaves, in "darky" minstrel performances, and in unpublished family reminiscences, white Southerners strove to convince themselves that emancipation had ruined an ideal in race relations. Festivals under such titles as "Old Plantation Days," at which ex-slaves would swap staged stories with Confederate veterans, became common in Southern public culture. Such an event in Grant Park in Atlanta in 1913, sponsored by the Country Collective Society, featured black storytellers and hominy tastings by "uncles" and "captains." UDC chapters nationwide made "Stories of Faithful Slaves" one of their primary subjects of essay contests. In an essay denying any role for Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation in freeing the slaves, Fanny Selph, historian of the Nashville UDC, reassured her readers that the "tie between master and servant was not only beautiful, but it was strong." She invoked "tender memories" of all "black mammies" and honored the loyalty of black laborers since the war in protecting the South from "the low class of foreigners." This fidelity had enabled the South to "preserve in its purity our Anglo-Saxon population," contended Selph. "We have been spared the great troubles that come from anarchy, strikes, and labor agitations which have disturbed the North and East." Loyal slaves, who never really wanted their freedom, were far more prominent in the Southern

imagination in 1915 than they had ever been in 1865. In a reminiscence dictated to her daughter, North Carolinian Bertha Lucas Smith recited how the slaves at the family plantation, Meadow Hill in New Hanover County, had been a "happy and contented lot." "Life held all happiness," it seems, until the war came, when in its final year, "every male slave except old Uncle Jim left my Father to join the yankee forces." The runaways further demonstrated their "loyalty" by stealing their master's box of special papers, thinking it contained money. Smith's nostalgic remembrance includes a tribute to the "true heroism" of white Southern women, but her main message remained one of incredulity at how such a "happy past" could have vanished.⁵⁴

Such nostalgia was rooted in an assumption that the slaves had protected their masters during the crisis of their own freedom. Or, as an Alabaman put it in 1914 in advocating a monument to faithful slaves, "exceptions to the affectionate loyalty of the negroes were practically unknown." In this flood of testimony about faithful blacks at the heart of Civil War memory, history gives way completely to mythology. The thousands of slaves who escaped to contraband camps, joined the Union army and navy, or fled when opportunities came while working in Confederate hospitals or on railroads and fortifications—as well as the daily revolution that occurred in the master-slave relationship during the war—had been steadfastly repressed in Southern memory. The "faithful slave" was of course not a complete fiction. The complex, ambivalent, fearful reaction of many slaves to the prospect of freedom and their often heroic protection of their owners' property from Union forces all gave some basis to the claim of fidelity. But ignored were the myriad ways that blacks joined the revolution for their own freedom. Lost to near oblivion in white memory by the early twentieth century were the countless wartime testimonies of planters about the "defections" and "betrayals" of their most trusted slaves. The stories of the Louisiana planter who saw a "perfect stampede of the negroes" in his parish and observed one of his plantations "cleaned out" in an apparent work stoppage had no place in Lost Cause memory. The South Carolina planter's admission in 1865 that "we were all laboring under a delusion" that slaves were "content, happy, and attached to their masters" fell into a record that the UDC did not care to collect by 1900. All those planters "betrayed by *pet* servants," in the words of another Louisianan during the war, fell silent in the new paradigm of Lost Cause memory, only to be rediscovered more than a half-century later by scholars working with new questions and assumptions.⁵⁵

The compulsion to remember faithful slaves led many Southerners to ad-

vocate formal monuments in their honor. At least one such monument was erected before World War I, as part of a remarkable ensemble of memorials in Fort Mill, South Carolina. The brainchild of Samuel E. White, a Confederate veteran and local cotton mill owner (the richest man in the area), the Fort Mill faithful slave monument was dedicated in May 1896. Beginning in 1891, White brought about four monuments on the village green: a standard soldier monument, a monument to Confederate women, a monument to the local Catawba Indians who had supported the Confederacy, and a marble obelisk to loyal slaves. This unique paean to slavery included two panels, one depicting a mammy sitting on the porch of a columned mansion, holding a child in her arms, and the other a male laborer sitting on a log holding a sickle, his hat lying restfully on the ground. In such repose, with images of dedicated labor and loving care, the faithful slave received a permanent place in the Lost Cause landscape. White's inscription summed up a well-rehearsed story: "Dedicated to the Faithful Slaves who, loyal to a sacred trust, Toiled for the support of the Army with matchless Devotion, and with sterling fidelity guarded our defenseless homes, women, and children during the struggle for the principles of our 'Confederate States of America.'" At the unveiling, White found some local blacks to pull the cords (probably mill employees) and to provide part of the huge audience.⁵⁶

The idea of faithful slave and mammy monuments had only begun its career of inspiration in Lost Cause circles. Indeed, beginning at least as early as 1905, the UDC carried on a campaign for nearly two decades to erect mammy memorials in every state, and lobbied Congress for a national mammy memorial in Washington, D.C. Support for mammy monuments was widespread within the UDC; many elite white women believed that they "must remember the best friend of their childhood," as Mrs. B. Bryan wrote to Janet Randolph in Richmond in 1910. Randolph, however, was not so sure; she frequently favored relief efforts for poor black children. "While remembering these poor little creatures," Randolph wrote in a public letter, "remember the old negro. No monument to them, if you please, until we have attended to their earthly wants." Such a progressive impulse found less enthusiasm within the UDC, however, than building monuments that advanced the organization's social agenda. The national effort for a mammy memorial ebbed and flowed during the World War I era, culminating in the passage in 1923 of a \$200,000 appropriation in the Senate to build such a monument on Massachusetts Avenue near Sheridan Circle. The monument design, by the Hungarian-born George Julian Zolnay (a popular sculptor of

Confederate memorials), provided for a large fountain and a majestic mammy sitting as if on an altar, surrounded by three children. The bill failed, however, in the House of Representatives. The nation was only narrowly spared the ironic spectacle of unveiling a major memorial to faithful slaves on a prominent avenue in Washington only one year after the dedication of the temple of freedom and union the country has known ever since as the Lincoln Memorial.⁵⁷

Short of building stone memorials, many Southerners went to great lengths to acknowledge former loyal servants as actual Confederate veterans. Ex-slaves participated at some Confederate reunions in various capacities, primarily as laborers and cooks. In 1900 in Brazos County, Texas, a black farmer, Henson Williams, and his son were murdered by whites while plowing in a field. Because he had "fought through the civil war as a Confederate soldier," the local UCV camp buried him with honors and threatened to lynch his assailants. At an occasional UCV parade or ceremony, an old black man or two would appear in uniform and march as a "veteran." In Memphis, Tennessee, in 1904, Preston Roberts, called "Uncle Pres" by the Confederate veterans, was given a "cross of honor" by the local UDC. Roberts had been a cook for Nathan Bedford Forrest's cavalry during the war. The *New York Sun* wrote admiringly of Roberts as a "typical antebellum darky" and so loyal a "negro rebel" that during the war he would relieve weary soldiers on picket duty, shoulder the musket himself, and sleeplessly defend the men "whose chattel he was." Similarly, the *Atlanta Journal* marveled in 1900 at "Uncle" Amos Rucker, "the only colored United Confederate Veteran member" who had marched with a Georgia camp. Rucker, who had also been a camp cook in the war, marched in a suit of gray with Confederate buttons and badges, and he seemed to fulfill white expectations for Negro authenticity. Although the Atlanta reporter acknowledged that his type was hardly seen anymore "outside of the novel," Rucker "never wanted to be free," and his hair was "like Uncle Ned's of song fame." Blacks who participated in Confederate memorial events, and who even courted the designation of "veteran," no doubt had complex motives. Old black servants who could secure white witnesses to vouch for them actually received modest pensions in some Southern states.⁵⁸

In her capacity as historian general of the UDC, Mildred Rutherford assembled a massive collection of the racist underworld of the Lost Cause. Essay contests on the glories of the Ku Klux Klan and personal tributes to faithful slaves fill several of her scrapbooks. A Louisiana chapter claimed to have

received more than three thousand essays on Confederate generals in one year. Northern chapters in such cities as Chicago, Dayton (Ohio), and New York all gave annual essay prizes. In 1915 in Seattle, Washington, a young girl received the annual "loving cup" for her prize piece honoring the men of the Klan. Rutherford was inundated with hundreds of reminiscences of every kind, many of which focused on the lives of white women and their relationships with faithful blacks. Demonstrating that the racial dimension of women's Lost Cause activism was not confined to the deep South, the Los Angeles chapter of the UDC sent Rutherford an especially large batch of faithful slave essays in 1915. Many women wrote about battles and wartime policies, some choosing condemnation of emancipation as their theme; others wrote of the oppression of Reconstruction. Rutherford did not confine her collecting duties to written texts; included in her scrapbooks are scores of photographs and postcards of Klansmen, lynchings, and especially "loyal" ex-slaves.⁵⁹ All UDC members and leaders were not as virulently racist as Rutherford, but all, in the name of a reconciled nation, participated in an enterprise that deeply influenced the white supremacist vision of Civil War memory.

Mrs. A. B. Lindsey, a member of the Lancaster, Virginia, chapter of the UDC in 1913, paid effusive honor to the "fidelity" of her former slaves. "Uncle Nelson," admired as a "life-long Democrat," was always in the "foremost ranks of every Red Shirt parade." If Nelson "lacked courage, it was a weakness of nature." And "Aunt Nancy," the laundress, was remembered lovingly because "she literally dropped from the ironing table, for she worked much harder after freedom than before." Lindsey spiced her narrative with her own poem, "What Mammy Thinks of Freedom," which concluded with the lines: "Ef dis is freedom—God forbid! / I calls it simply knabery. / An' w'en I gits ter hebben, Lord, / I hope I'll find it's slabery." Lindsey ended with a warm sense of assurance about the travail she saw in the New South. "In God's providence slavery came and went," she concluded, "and while the race question of today is a vexing problem, we can always feel sure that white supremacy is God-given and will last." In such explicit terms, the UDC collected the past and imagined the present.⁶⁰

The men of the UCV embraced no less explicit forms of white supremacy in their imaginings. At a reunion in Augusta, Georgia, in 1903, the popular orator J. C. C. Black held the veterans spellbound. With cheering men standing on chairs and tables, waving hats and canes, Black proclaimed: "We did not fight to perpetuate African slavery, but we fought to preserve and perpet-

uate for our posterity the God-given right of the freedom of the white man." For the "supremacy of the white man," Black continued, the veterans must carry on a new "war of moral suasion" in the new age. The only struggle over "bondage" in the Civil War epoch had been that inflicted on Southern whites by their postwar Northern oppressors. And the only liberation to be commemorated, he maintained, was that of "Anglo-Saxon emancipation."⁶¹ In such language, the Lost Cause emerged in the early twentieth century as a Southern narrative of racial victory, a major force in the collective memory in which the American reunion flourished.

BY THE TURN of the twentieth century the reunion was all but a fully completed political fact, and the short adventure of the Spanish-American War helped solidify it. But the Southern terms from which the reunion drew its life had to be defended at all costs. White supremacy, a hardening of traditional gender roles, a military tradition and patriotic recognition of Confederate valor, and a South innocent of responsibility for slavery were values in search of a history; they were the weapons arming the fortress against the threats of populist politics, racial equality, and industrialization. For UDC and UCV leadership, those values were a social elite's last, best protection against the progressive and democratic society they most feared. Among some in the new generation of Southern intellectuals, defending the Lost Cause became a positive, mystical vocation. Just after 1900, Douglass Southall Freeman, who grew up in Lynchburg, Virginia, surrounded by Confederate veterans whom he all but worshipped, launched his successful career as Robert E. Lee's prolific and loyal biographer and one of the South's most partisan historians. For Freeman, the Lost Cause was Virginia's civil religion. His deepest appeals were to the mysticism of Confederate heroism amidst the battlefields around Richmond where, as he proclaimed in a 1918 speech, "wind and water, and sky and ground alike, are vocal with the chords of our dead fathers. Oh! did a people ever live in the midst of such great traditions as ours? To count ourselves Virginians, men, is to count ours the greatest heritage ever given to a people."⁶² In real-life policies as well as in mysticism, the Lost Cause had a hold on the American imagination.

Just as reminiscence reflects essentially the need to tell our own stories, so too crusades to control history demonstrate the desire to transmit to the next generation a protective and revitalizing story. An almost desperate need for sectional and racial justification compelled Lost Cause history crusaders to

equate virtually any form of Southern defense with "truth." Hence one of the conclusions in the UCV Historical Committee's 1897 report: "Works in vindication of the course of the South before and during the civil war will be invaluable . . . but controversial literature is not history, and is out of place in political instruction." The need to convert Southern defeat into a victory narrative was never so explicit as in that same committee's 1900 report. In the postwar South, the UCV maintained, the Confederate veteran had won several "victories of peace." "First, came the political victory, from which he rescued his State from the carpetbagger and adventurer," argued the report; "second, came the social victory, by which he restored the time-honored institutions and redeemed the social fabric; third, came the industrial victory, by which he readjusted the labor system and created the industrial progress of the South; fourth, came the financial victory, by which he recuperated his own wasted fortune." This story, and these terms, had so firm a hold on the popular Southern historical imagination that the UCV committee could conclude without the slightest irony: "This association has ever been the promoter of patriotism and reconciliation between the several sections of our common country, and the advocate of nonpartisan history."⁶³

In 1900, William Faulkner was a three-year-old boy growing up in New Albany, Mississippi. He would eventually drink in Southern Civil War memory and then reimagine it as few others in American letters. Given the character of the "history" demanded by the Lost Cause, it is little wonder that a new generation of Southern writers had by the 1920s rebelled against its strictures and insisted in a variety of ways on forging a literary "renaissance." Robert Penn Warren may have retrospectively captured this need to break out of an inheritance of doctrinaire tradition in his tribute to Faulkner's work in 1946. Warren pondered the condition of Southern memory and the treatment of blacks laced throughout Faulkner's writing:

If respect for the human is the central fact of Faulkner's work, what makes that fact significant is that he realizes and dramatizes the difficulty of respecting the human. Everything is against it, the savage egotism, the blank appetite, stupidity and arrogance, even virtues sometimes, the misreading of our history and tradition, our education, our twisted loyalties. That is the great drama, however, the constant story.⁶⁴

The Lost Cause left just such a legacy; it was not essentially inhuman in character, but its very existence depended upon dehumanizing a group of people:

And as a reactionary revitalization movement, it constricted creative impulses and stultified historical understanding. The Lost Cause made itself a ready target; it forced a confrontation with the past that bred a Faulkner, a Warren, a Flannery O'Connor, and many others in white Southern letters. Piety rarely lasts forever as a substitute for knowledge among those determined to probe the depths of human drama, and twisted loyalties can produce good literature.

But the Lost Cause had always bred dissenters. The scalawags, ex-Confederates who joined the Republican Party during Reconstruction, were the first dissenters from Lost Cause ideology. The much maligned James Longstreet of Georgia, former colonel and legendary partisan cavalry leader in Virginia John S. Mosby, political leaders such as James W. Hunnicut in Virginia, James Lusk Alcorn of Mississippi, Amos T. Ackerman of Georgia, and Thomas Settle Jr. of North Carolina, and many others embraced new economic development and acted with a spirit of unionism to resist Lost Cause mythology. Moreover, in the wake of Reconstruction the "Readjuster" movement in Southern politics brought another form of rejection to the Lost Cause. Successful especially in Virginia, the Readjusters took their name from a growing, class-based resistance to the insistence of conservative Democrats (the Bourbons) on paying off all public debts from the war era in order to preserve state "honor." The Readjusters demanded repudiation of those debts, and instead favored public investment, the expansion of schooling, and economic development that served ordinary people, black and white.⁶⁵

Led in Virginia by the former Confederate general, railroad entrepreneur, and brilliant political organizer William Mahone, the biracial Readjuster insurgency swept to power in that state in 1879-83, taking control of the governor's office, the legislature, and six of ten seats in Congress, and sending Mahone to the U.S. Senate. Mahone's amazing success, especially his sincere willingness to build a biracial coalition, demonstrated the possibilities for an economically and racially just New South. Mahone's New South vision, contrary to Grady's or Page's, had no place for Lost Cause doctrine. "I have thought it wise to live for the future," Mahone wrote to a fellow former Confederate in 1882, "and not the dead past . . . while cherishing honorable memories of its glories." The Readjuster phenomenon caught on to a lesser degree in several other Southern states, but by the mid-1880s the Democrats' rabid appeals to white supremacy had swept Mahone and others out of office almost as quickly as they had appeared.⁶⁶

The great hopes represented by the Readjusters—that the color line might

be broken and that education might be truly modernized and democratized—resurfaced in the 1890s with the even larger Populist movement. With its roots in the resistance of farmers' alliances to the power of banks, railroads, and grain elevators in the 1880s, Populism took its urgency from economic depression in the 1890s. At the heart of Populism was a rebellion against oligarchy and privilege, and therefore, by its very character, it was hostile to Lost Cause tradition. For a while during the upheaval of the nineties, the Populist revolt forced a viable two-party system into Southern politics, and most importantly, it brought blacks into political life more vigorously than at any time since radical Reconstruction. The Populists, whether their leaders fully intended it or not, threatened to overthrow the political, if not the social, color line.

But for most white Southerners in the 1890s, the growing rage to separate the races, to crush black liberty, and to kill alleged black criminals in hideous public rituals festered in raw memories of Reconstruction. The "fusion" tickets, forged in some states between Populists and Republicans, threatened conservative white Southerners as nothing had since 1868–70. When Thomas L. Nugent, the Populist candidate for governor in Texas in 1894, condemned his former party, the Democrats, for abandoning their principle of "equal rights to all, special privileges to none," or when the Georgia Populist Tom Watson appealed to class as a means for blacks and whites to "daily meet in harmony . . . and wipe out the color line," the leaders of the Lost Cause—the UCV or Democrats in state houses—mobilized their crusade to control the nation's history and the South's social order.⁶⁷ It is no coincidence that the UCV, UDC, and *Confederate Veteran* all emerged in force in the very years that Populism peaked in power.

The model dissenter in Southern literature was George Washington Cable, who after 1885 lived the remainder of his life as an expatriate of a sort in Northampton, Massachusetts. Cable's dissent from the sentimental literature of reunion contained a political challenge that only grew in significance with time. In his extraordinary essay "The Silent South," first published in the *Century* in September 1885, Cable reasserted his "faithful sonship" to the South. He wrote with near mystical admiration for the Robert E. Lee monument in New Orleans, Cable's hometown. Lee's image might yet be the source of a more humane, progressive Southern spirit. The marble Lee "symbolizes our whole South's better self," he wrote, "that finer part that the world not always sees; unaggressive, but brave, calm, thoughtful, broad-minded . . . and, in the din of boisterous error round about it, all too mute." With more

subtlety and intelligence than perhaps any other nineteenth-century white Southern thinker, Cable challenged "traditionalists" to alter their habits of "evasion," to "move on" and cease their fears of miscegenation and "social equality" with blacks. Demanding that the future must offer civil and political equality to blacks, Cable taught his own history lessons. He took his critics back to the dreaded era of "Reconstruction agony" and asked them to remember their own deepest impulses. They were governed, he charged, by "our invincible determination—seemingly to us the fundamental condition of our self-respect—never to yield our ancient prerogative of holding under our discretion the colored man's status, not as a Freedman, not as a voter, but in his daily walk as a civilian." Reaching out for reason and comity with his critics, Cable only demonstrated how irreconcilable his views were with the racial vision of Lost Cause tradition. "This attitude in us," he claimed, "with our persistent mistaking his [freedman's] civil rights for social claims, this was the taproot of the problem."⁶⁸ Cable and Lost Cause "traditionalists" might agree about the "taproot" of Southern racial woes, but not on their own mistakes. That "daily walk" of black civilians haunted debate over whether memory or the future should reign in the South.

With the professionalization of history in the 1890s, the training of scholars in "scientific" seminars under Herbert Baxter Adams at Johns Hopkins University or William A. Dunning at Columbia, new forms of Lost Cause dissent came on the scene. Some young historians, such as William E. Dodd, John Spencer Bassett, William P. Trent, and eventually Ulrich B. Phillips countered the control that veterans and the Daughters exercised over historical memory. In 1902, Dodd complained in the *Nation* about how the UCV had forced history teachers to "subscribe unreservedly to trite oaths" about Southern righteousness on secession and a war that had nothing to do with slavery. Most Southern professional historians did participate in Confederate Memorial Days and other celebrations, and many of their works were either cautiously or openly supportive of Lost Cause arguments. Many who did criticize orthodoxy in Southern memory or society, however, paid a price.⁶⁹

In 1901, Bassett, a product of Johns Hopkins and a professor at Trinity College (later Duke University) in Durham, North Carolina, founded the *South Atlantic Quarterly* to "counteract the reactionary feeling in the Southern press in matters on which tradition had developed ideas provincial and intolerant." In 1903, Bassett created a storm of protest with an article "Stirring Up the Fires of Race Antipathy," in which he attacked racial demagoguery among politicians, condemned lynching, and suggested that blacks

might one day rise and demand their equality. Almost incidentally, Bassett remarked that Booker T. Washington was the "greatest man, save General Lee, born in the South in a hundred years." These opinions drove some members of the Trinity board of trustees and much of the white North Carolina press to seek Bassett's ouster. His case became a cause célèbre of free expression in higher education. By a vote of 18 to 7, Bassett retained his job, although many faculty distanced themselves from his views. Bassett believed in black inferiority and segregation. But he was one of the first Southern historians to study African American history. He wrote two books on slavery and black religion in North Carolina, and more than any other professional white Southern historian of his time, he engaged the black experience seriously as a scholar, essayist, and reviewer. The staunchly conservative historian Walter Lynwood Fleming interpreted Bassett's provocative 1903 essay as a "martyrological, superior, new Southern, jackassical attitude . . . toward all things of the Old South." Bassett was purposefully provocative. But he also simply sought the freedom to write history as he found it. In 1906, he left his native North Carolina and took a teaching position at Smith College, where he became Cable's permanent neighbor in Northampton, Massachusetts.⁷⁰

Other such cases of historical orthodoxy and academic freedom rocked Southern universities. In 1911, native Southerner Enoch M. Banks, a professor of history and economics at the University of Florida, wrote a fiftieth-anniversary piece on secession in the New York-based *Independent*. In the spirit of "a free estimate of our past," he said, "and a frank realization and acknowledgement of its errors, where errors are found," Banks offered his assessment of the birth of the Confederacy. He declared that the "fundamental cause of secession and the Civil War, acting as it did through a long series of years, was the institution of slavery." Banks believed that "calm history" would demonstrate that those who work for the "best interests of advancing civilization are in the right in the highest and best sense of the term right." He concluded, therefore, in assessing responsibility for the war, that "the North was relatively right, while the South was relatively wrong." A whirlwind of protest and defense ensued. The UDC called for Banks's resignation, he was condemned in the Florida press for his "false and dangerous" views, and rumors circulated that the state would cut off funds to the university. Although he was defended by some Southern newspapers, including the *Atlanta Constitution*, Banks resigned his teaching position, ruined by the irony that his effort at "calm history" could so easily be blown away by sudden storms of Lost Cause dogmatism.⁷¹

Perhaps the most intriguing, if mercurial, dissenter to the Lost Cause was the "Gray Ghost," John Mosby. Mosby's exploits during the war—he was the guerrilla cavalry leader who raided Union forces and supply trains, captured a Union general out of his own headquarters, and even hanged prisoners—made him one of the conflict's most romantic figures. Educated at the University of Virginia before enlisting as a private in 1861, Mosby remained fiercely proud of his military service throughout his long life (he died in 1916). But in 1872, he became a scalawag and worked for Grant's reelection in Virginia, beginning a long relationship with the Republican Party that would land him appointments in the foreign service as well as the Justice Department. As a dissenter from Lost Cause mythology, Mosby set a standard for candor. He loathed Confederate reunions and refused to participate in large veterans' organizations, although he did relish the small meetings with comrades in his former command, the mysterious Forty-third Battalion Virginia Cavalry.⁷²

Mosby's political stand during Reconstruction made him one of Virginia's most prominent political exiles; after 1877, he lived most of the rest of his life in San Francisco, Washington, D.C., or abroad, and for one sixteen-year period, he never set foot back in Virginia. The Virginia diehards never forgave Mosby's apostasy from the Lost Cause. They slandered him as a turncoat, as "the most serviceable partisan Grant has in Virginia." During the election campaign of 1872, Mosby lamented his loss of place in the South. "It is but seldom now that I receive a word of cheer from a Southern source," he wrote to Alexander H. Stephens, "and the last few months have been to me like a passage through 'the Valley of the Shadow of Death' so great has become the intolerance of our poor infatuated people." Mosby's political realism led him to support the Republican Rutherford B. Hayes in 1876. In a public letter to a former Confederate comrade that year, he warned that the Lost Cause was a dead end. "You speak of the bitter hostility of the North toward the South," he said. "Well, four years of hard fighting is not calculated to make men love each other; neither is an everlasting rehearsal of the wrongs which each side imagines it has suffered going to bring us any nearer to a better understanding. Peace can only come with oblivion of the past." Mosby was dead as a Virginian. "I did change my politics because politics changed," he reminisced in 1897. "I did not, according to the cant of the day, 'go with my people.'"⁷³

Mosby had firm ideas about how the meaning of the war ought to be remembered and how Confederate soldiers ought to seek public respect. "I have never apologized for anything I did during or since the war," he wrote in

1895. "How little we know about the future," he wrote of the spring of 1861, when he followed the "tocsin of war." "It was our country and we fought for it and we did not care whether it was right or wrong." In 1910, breaking completely with normative Lost Cause arguments, Mosby declared that "I committed treason and am proud of it." He participated in numerous literary feuds and disputes, and frequently complained about the orthodoxy of the Lee cult. Mosby was hardly reluctant to "take sides with truth," he said in 1910, but "the whole trouble I have is butting up against the popular belief in the infallibility of Gen. Lee."⁷⁴

Most importantly, Mosby contributed some of the most candid expressions by any ex-Confederate about the place of slavery in the South's cause. He remained hostile or ambiguous on racial equality. But while a former slaveowner himself, he viewed slavery apologetics by the 1890s as the most debilitating element of the Lost Cause. "I don't go to reunions," he told an old comrade, "because I can't stand the speaking." He despised the "oratorical nonsense" of so many speakers who recycled the ideas that the South neither fought for nor was responsible for slavery. Referring to one such speech, Mosby reacted: "Why not talk about witchcraft if as he said, slavery was not the cause of the war. I always understood that we went to war on account of the thing we quarrelled with the North about. I never heard of any other cause of quarrel than slavery." Mosby spurned virtually all Lost Cause arguments about slavery. "I can't see how setting the negroes free could have saved the Union," he remarked in 1894, "unless slavery was the cause of the breach." And in 1902, he left a telling guide to all lost causes in a letter to a member of his battalion. "Men fight from sentiment," wrote Mosby. "After the fight is over they invent some fanciful theory on which they imagine that they fought."⁷⁵

In 1907, Mosby also reacted to an especially righteous report of the UCV Historical Committee written by George Christian, in which slavery was depicted as a system of "patriarchal" happiness. Mosby wrote to a friend in "disgust." "According to Christian the Virginia people were the abolitionists and the Northern people were *pro-slavery*," complained Mosby. "He says slavery was 'a patriarchal' institution. So were polygamy and circumcision." Mosby denounced the idea that "Old Virginians" (founding fathers) were antislavery. Then he delivered a dagger at the heart of Lost Cause mythology:

Now while I think as badly of slavery as Horace Greeley did I am not ashamed that my family were slaveholders. It was our inheri-

tance. Neither am I ashamed that my ancestors were pirates and cattle thieves. People must be judged by the standard of their *own* age. If it was right to own slaves as property, it was right to fight for it. The South went to war on account of Slavery . . . I am not as honored for having fought on the side of slavery—a soldier fights for his country—right or wrong—he is not responsible for the political merits of the course he fights in. The South was my country.⁷⁶

If such honesty and spirit of debate had prevailed in Southern confrontations over the Lost Cause, the career of Civil War memory in America might have been different. That it did not and could not tells us much about the tragic interdependence of race and reunion. That the Mildred Rutherfords prevailed in Southern memory over the John Mosbys demonstrates how and why the Lost Cause left such an enduring burden in national memory.