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Chambersburg: Anatomy of a Confederate Reprisal

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WHEN THE CIVIL WAR BEGAN IN 1861, Americans shared romantic assumptions about its nature. Hostilities opened amid a festive atmosphere of flags, martial music, colorful uniforms, and patriotic speeches. The young men who flocked to the Union and Confederate armies viewed combat as a chivalrous, even knightly, adventure. Professional soldiers also envisioned a brief, limited contest in the eighteenth-century manner. The genteel traditions of a bygone era taught that social concerns had little impact on strategy, that campaigns should be conducted with minimal bloodshed, and that noncombatants should be carefully spared the exigencies of military operations.

Four years of bitter fighting shattered these comfortable illusions and transformed the conflict in ways no one had anticipated. By 1864, the imperatives of total warfare inextricably mingled social, political, and strategic objectives. The resulting dynamic brought to a climax the civil-military relationship established at the beginning of the struggle. As the war expanded beyond the battlefield, idealistic enthusiasm gave way to the determination to conquer a peace at any cost. The cycle of ferocity spiraled ever upward, while civilians suffered under a ruthless new ethic that countenanced retaliation, destruction of private property, even occasional atrocities, all justified in the name of great democratic principles. Following Federal army efforts to stamp out guerrilla activity in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, Confederate raiders burned Chambersburg, a small town in Pennsylvania. Major General Philip H. Sheridan then unleashed a policy of devastation that left much of the valley a desolate ruin. Meanwhile, Major General William Tecumseh Sherman waged a campaign in Georgia and the Carolinas that made his name a legendary byword for cruelty. "The war became base and desperate," Emory M. Thomas has written, "and the baseness and desperation produced a kind of counterpoint, a sad, minor theme to accompany the major chords."¹

In recent years, the relationship between Civil War soldiers and American society has attracted renewed interest from historians such as Gerald F. Linderman, Reid Mitchell, and Joseph T. Glatthaar. Linderman has argued forcefully that the trend toward escalation derived from frustrated ideals of courage, manhood, and personal valor. The young men who entered service at the start of the war inherited these strong moral values from civilian society. But the stark reality of combat alienated their convictions by demonstrating the futility of bravery on the battlefield. Disillusioned, soldiers turned instead to a value system based on vengeance

¹ David Herbert Donald, *Liberty and Union* (Lexington, Mass., 1978), 97–99, 110, 122–24; Emory M. Thomas, *The Confederate Nation, 1861–1865* (New York, 1979), 274.



The ruins of Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, in the wake of John McCausland's Confederate raid on July 30, 1864. The scene is at the corner of Main and King Streets near the center of town. These images, originally released as stereoscopic views, were taken shortly after the raid by Charles E. Meyer, a Philadelphia photographer. (Library of Congress)

and annihilation. Mitchell's work has emphasized, among other themes, the contempt veterans felt for enemy society and their growing desire to remake it through violence, a finding echoed in Glatthaar's careful study of Sherman's army during the March to the Sea and the Carolinas campaign. All three scholars have examined the ways in which changing military ethics brutalized participants on both sides. Their research has added to contemporary understanding of the total war mentality and the savage forces that emerged with it.²

² Gerald F. Linderman, *Embattled Courage: The Experience of Combat in the American Civil War* (New York, 1987), esp. 1–3, 180–215; Reid Mitchell, *Civil War Soldiers* (New York, 1988), 90–180; Joseph T. Glatthaar, *The March to the Sea and Beyond: Sherman's Troops in the Savannah and Carolinas Campaign* (New York, 1985), 66–80, 134–55. Glatthaar compared and contrasted Linderman's and Mitchell's work in his review of *Civil War Soldiers*, in *Civil War History*, 35 (June 1989): 187–88.

The burning of Chambersburg in July 1864 by troops detached from the Army of Northern Virginia provides a rare glimpse into the sources of Confederate behavior under wartime pressure. Because most of the fighting took place on Southern soil, Northern attitudes toward such subjects as enemy civilians and retaliation are easier to determine and have been investigated more thoroughly. However, the questions that must be asked of a Confederate reprisal are basically the same. What are the forces that motivated Southern soldiers and shaped their reaction to new modes of warfare? To what degree do they resemble the forces that characterized Northern conduct? Why were these passions focused on Chambersburg? How did Confederate soldiers rationalize their actions within the context of a self-image that asserted moral superiority over the North? Finally, in what ways do the events at Chambersburg contribute to the continuing effort to comprehend the complex interrelationship of war and society?

Evidence suggests that the answers to these questions lie in attitudes that soldiers in Robert E. Lee's army formed toward the Northern population during their invasion of Pennsylvania in the summer of 1863, a year before the town was destroyed. Prior to the Gettysburg campaign, Confederates serving in the eastern theater had little direct knowledge of the North. Consequently, their brief experience as invaders conditioned their opinions. Between June 15 and July 2, 1863, Chambersburg served as the concentration point for nearly the entire Confederate army. General Lee himself established his headquarters there; thousands of troops passed through its streets, and at one point almost two-thirds of the infantry were encamped in the woods and fields nearby. What these soldiers encountered was the typical Pennsylvania German culture of the Cumberland Valley. It appears that to many of Lee's troops this culture epitomized enemy civilization. To a greater extent than has been generally realized, Chambersburg became to the curious occupiers the virtual embodiment of Yankee society and Yankee institutions.

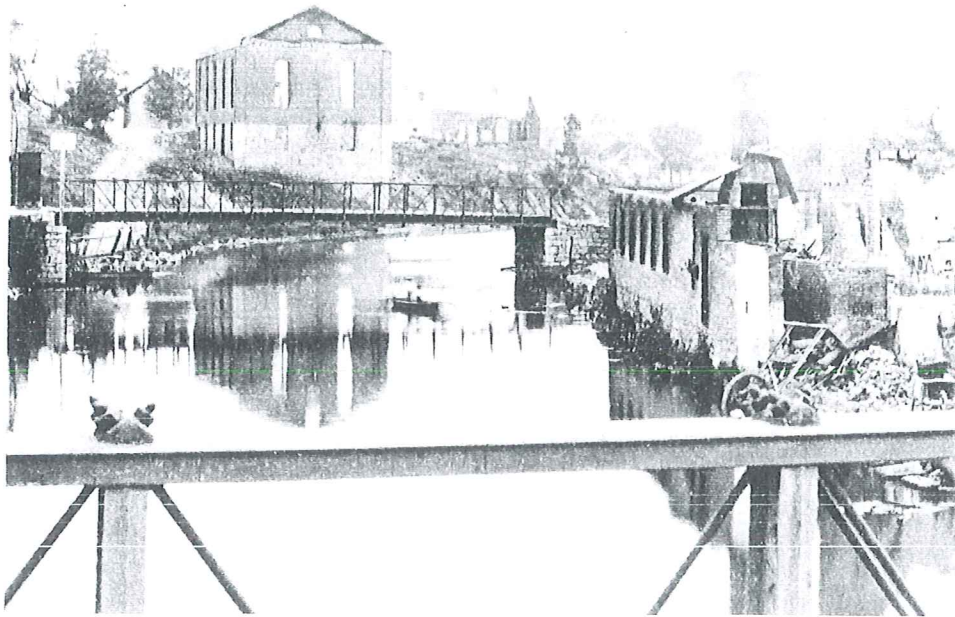
Throughout the Gettysburg campaign, the Confederates behaved with commendable restraint, carefully protecting private property and treating civilians with considerable respect. But their attitudes toward the local residents were characterized by arrogance, nativist and chauvinist prejudices, and anger at what seemed to be an insufficiently submissive reception. Depiction of the enemy as an inferior being, a process known as depersonalization, is a psychological technique commonly practiced by warriors to lessen their sense of guilt. It often presages an increase in belligerence. Confederate perceptions of Northern society were further corrupted by honor, the convoluted ethic to which most white male antebellum Southerners ascribed. Honor dictated magnanimous conduct toward inferiors but demanded deference in return. Violence constituted an acceptable response to those who refused to show subservience to their betters, for such defiance challenged the fundamental assumptions of a society founded on slavery. In 1863, military discipline, reinforced by the prevailing doctrine of forbearance toward noncombatants, was still strong enough to prevent immediate repercussions. By the following year, the escalation of conflict had eroded these constraints. The possibility thus exists that Chambersburg was destined for reprisals more than a year before they occurred. Under the pressures generated by total war, the soldiers who sealed its fate were responding both as Americans and as Southerners to values deeply embedded in their society.

LONG A SYMBOL OF CONFEDERATE ASCENDANCY in the East, the Shenandoah Valley furnished food and military commodities to the armies defending Richmond. It was the setting for Stonewall Jackson's brilliant maneuvers in 1862 and had served as an invasion route into Northern territory on several occasions. Its capture was part of Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant's strategy to seize the Southern capital in 1864. But two Federal expeditions under Major Generals Franz Sigel and David Hunter failed to achieve their objectives, and in early July a Confederate counter-attack led by Lieutenant General Jubal A. Early reached the outskirts of Washington, D.C., momentarily threatening to reverse the entire course of the war. General Sheridan then consolidated command of the Union forces in the region. His victories over Early in September and October ended Southern supremacy in western Virginia and set the stage for Grant's eventual triumph at Appomattox.³

Confederate operations in the Shenandoah Valley were often accompanied by guerrilla fighting, a form of resistance many Federals regarded as little better than terrorism. During his tenure in command, General Hunter attempted to solve this problem by holding private citizens responsible for partisan acts occurring in their vicinity. His troops carried out his hard-line policies with a heavy hand. Most of the property destruction Hunter justified as punishment for specific attacks on his men, but in early July he burned the homes of Andrew Hunter, Alexander R. Boteler, and Edmund Jennings Lee in Jefferson County, West Virginia, for no apparent reason beyond the fact that the owners were prominent Southern sympathizers. This incident triggered the sequence of events that brought catastrophe to Chambersburg. On July 28, following a small battle with Hunter's men near Kernstown, Virginia, Early placed Brigadier General John McCausland in charge of a cavalry detachment composed of two brigades and an artillery battery. Approximately half these men had visited Pennsylvania the previous summer in the mounted brigade then led by Brigadier General Albert G. Jenkins. Early's written orders instructed McCausland to occupy Chambersburg, some twenty miles north of the Mason-Dixon line, and to demand of its inhabitants the sum of \$500,000 in greenbacks or \$100,000 in gold as compensation for the houses burned at Hunter's direction. In default of payment, McCausland was commanded "to lay the town in ashes."

McCausland's troopers reached their destination at dawn, Saturday, July 30, 1864. Forewarned of the approaching raiders, the local bankers had decamped with their cash assets during the night. While some citizens urged the cavalrymen to abate their demands, others reacted defiantly, unable to believe the Confederates would actually carry out their threat. The town council refused even to meet with the invaders. After waiting an interval variously estimated at three to six hours, the general put the town to the torch. A few soldiers resisted their orders outright or found ways to avoid putting them into effect. Colonel William E. Peters of the 21st Virginia Cavalry Regiment refused to obey and was placed temporarily under arrest; the day after the raid, all charges against him were dropped. But individual episodes of compassion were quickly submerged in the tidal wave of violence that engulfed the town. McCausland's men fanned out through the streets, breaking into homes and turning out the terrified families on ten minutes' notice. Few victims managed to save much more than the clothing on their backs. Twelve blocks

³ Standard sources for the Shenandoah Valley campaign of 1864 include William C. Davis, *The Battle of New Market* (Garden City, N.Y., 1975); Marshall Moore Brice, *Conquest of a Valley* (Verona, N.J., 1965); Frank E. Vandiver, *Jubal's Raid: General Early's Famous Attack on Washington in 1864* (New York, 1960); and Jeffrey D. Wert, *From Winchester to Cedar Creek: The Shenandoah Campaign of 1864* (Carlisle, Pa., 1987).



The view east along Conococheague Creek. At right are remains of the W. F. Eyster and Brother Foundry. In the background are the walls of the Bethel Church of God, burned by the Confederates under the mistaken impression that it belonged to a black congregation. (Library of Congress)

surrounding the central square were soon on fire. The roar and surging, the crackling and crash of falling timbers and walls mingled in terrible dissonance with the cries of animals trapped in their pens. Fearful whirlwinds sent piles of burning debris shooting skyward. A lurid column of smoke, punctuated by flames, ascended over the countryside.

As the fire spread, many of the participating units lost all sense of military discipline. Officers found it impossible to control their men. Drunken Confederates cavorted among the ashes, pillaging freely and robbing citizens of sums large and small. Some inebriated troopers attempted to carry off women with them. At one home, soldiers locked a woman into an upstairs bedroom while they set the dwelling on fire beneath her. At another, they poured gunpowder under an elderly invalid's chair, swearing they would teach her to walk. Neighbors rescued both women before the flames reached them. At a third house, where the owner's wife had just died in childbirth, the soldiers interrupted the wake, forcing the mourners



The view west along Main Street from the central square, or Diamond. The raiders destroyed twelve blocks of buildings in the central portion of town. (Library of Congress)

to inter the body in the garden to save it from the flames. One sick child was rushed to safety on a shutter. "I never witnessed such a site in all my life," wrote one Southerner to his wife. "Nancy, the poor wimmen and children and also gray heard men was runing in every direction with a little bundle of cloths under there arms crying and skreaming." Miraculously, despite numerous close calls, no one died in the conflagration. When the incendiaries concluded their task on the afternoon of July 30, more than 3,000 civilians were homeless. The fire destroyed three-quarters of the central business and residential district, including 266 buildings valued at

\$783,950. A state commission later evaluated total damage to real and personal property at \$1,628,431.⁴

General Early, whose orders unleashed this cataclysm, provided the Confederate explanation for it in a long series of postwar publications. The general maintained that he bore Chambersburg no grudge, and that he had offered the populace a genuine chance to save their homes. He claimed the town was selected "because it was the only one of any consequence accessible to my troops, and *for no other reason*" (emphasis in original). In one letter written for a Richmond newspaper, he averred that the three houses for which he exacted recompense "were worth fully \$100,000 in gold and I demanded that, or what I regarded as equivalent in greenbacks." In another letter, he reminded his readers that he had levied ransoms on several previous occasions, including a \$200,000 assessment on Frederick three weeks earlier: "I had no knowledge of what amount of money there might be in Chambersburg. I knew it was a town of some 12,000 inhabitants. The town of Frederick, Maryland, which was a smaller town than Chambersburg, had . . . very promptly responded to my demand on it for \$200,000. Some of the inhabitants who were very friendly to me expressed the regret that I had not made it \$500,000."⁵

One may question whether these assertions tell the true story of the reprisal. Early's state of mind with regard to the purpose of the raid may have been best revealed in a private, unpublished letter to Edmund Jennings Lee in 1872: "[I]f I

⁴ Diary entries, Captain Achilles James Tynes (Assistant Commissary of Subsistence, staff of Brigadier General John McCausland), July 29–30, 1864, Achilles James Tynes Letters, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (hereafter cited as SHC); diary entry, J. Kelly Bennette (Hospital Steward, 8th Virginia Cavalry Regiment), vol. 2, July 30, 1864, J. Kelly Bennette Diary, SHC; M. T. Norman (37th Virginia Cavalry Battalion) to Nancy Norman, August 9, 1864, M. T. Norman Letter, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. The quotation is from Norman's letter. Brigadier General Bradley T. Johnson's report of the raid is in *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (1880–1901; rpt. edn., Harrisburg, Pa., 1985), series 1, vol. 37, part 1, 354–56; vol. 43, part 1, 4–8 (hereafter cited as *Official Records*). Other Confederate sources include Jubal A. Early, *War Memoirs: Autobiographical Sketch and Narrative of the War between the States*, Frank E. Vandiver, ed. (1912; rpt. edn., Bloomington, Ind., 1960), 401–05; Brigadier General John D. Imboden, "Fire, Sword, and the Halter," *The Annals of the War Written by Leading Participants North and South* (1879; rpt. edn., Dayton, Ohio, 1988), 169–83; and John McCausland, "The Burning of Chambersburg," *ibid.*, 770–74. For contemporary Union accounts, see the Franklin County *Repository*, August 24, 1864; the Reverend B. S. Schneck, *The Burning of Chambersburg, Pennsylvania* (1864; rpt. edn., Chambersburg, Pa., 1949); and Jacob Hoke, *Reminiscences of the War; or, Incidents which Transpired in and around Chambersburg during the War of the Rebellion* (Chambersburg, 1884). Secondary materials on the raid include Liva Baker, "The Burning of Chambersburg," *American Heritage*, 24 (August 1973): 36–39, 97; and Catherine Henderson, "The Man Who Never Knew Defeat" (General McCausland), *Civil War Times Illustrated*, 23 (June 1984): 36–45.

⁵ Baker, "Burning of Chambersburg," 38 (first quotation); Early, *War Memoirs*, 402, 478 (second quotation); Edward S. Delaplaine, "General Early's Levy on Frederick," *To Commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the Battle of Monocacy, "The Battle That Saved Washington"* (Frederick, Md., [1964]), 54 (third quotation).

On June 28, 1863, during the Gettysburg campaign, Early levied an assessment of \$100,000 in cash plus various military stores on York, Pennsylvania. The inhabitants paid \$28,600. After entering Maryland in July 1864, the general made three levies as follows: Hagerstown, \$20,000 (July 6); Middletown, \$5,000 (July 8); and Frederick, \$200,000 (July 9). Early later claimed that he intended to collect \$200,000 from Hagerstown as well but that McCausland, his emissary, missed a digit. Hagerstown and Frederick paid their ransoms in full; the mayor of Middletown negotiated a reduction from \$5,000 to \$1,500. On July 30, during the retreat from Chambersburg, McCausland halted briefly in Hancock, Maryland, and assessed it \$30,000, but Union pursuers forced him to continue the withdrawal without collecting any money. On this occasion, the Confederates were apparently willing to deal, a flexibility they did not display farther north. Although Early described his final ransom as "compensation," there is no evidence he intended to aid private sufferers with the proceeds. His other levies were justified as requisitions, contributions, or taxes on the Northern population for the use of the Confederate army.



Only the shell of the Franklin County Courthouse remained standing after the raid. (Library of Congress)

had had an opportunity I would have done much more burning in the enemy's country."⁶ Likewise debatable is Early's contention that he set his levy at a reasonable figure to enable the townspeople to redeem their possessions. However finely appointed the homes burned by General Hunter may have been, it is unlikely that their collective worth was \$500,000. The most expensive residence lost in Chambersburg was valued at \$15,000, exclusive of furnishings. The Franklin County Courthouse was appraised at \$45,000. Moreover, Early was incorrect in his statement that Chambersburg was a larger and more prosperous urban center than Frederick and thus presumably able to pay a bigger ransom. Frederick, with a population of 8,000, customarily added the appellation "City" to its name to distinguish itself from its smaller neighbors. The population of Chambersburg was

⁶ Jubal A. Early to Edmund Jennings Lee II, September 26, 1872, Edmund Jennings Lee II Papers, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina.

only 6,000. The amount paid by Frederick was an onerous burden on the municipal government, which required eighty-seven years to discharge its indebtedness to the five banks that put up the money. Yet the payment expected of Chambersburg, which had one bank, was more than twice as large.⁷ Taken together, these circumstances indicate that Early's intention from the beginning was to destroy the community. They also demonstrate the need for a more satisfactory explanation of the impulses that culminated there in so tragic and explosive a manner.

NORTH OF THE POTOMAC RIVER, the Shenandoah Valley becomes the Cumberland Valley, stretching through Maryland into central Pennsylvania. Scotch-Irish and German pioneers first settled here early in the eighteenth century. The German majority imparted to the region a distinctive ethnic flavor that it enjoys to the present. Founded in 1764 on Falling Spring, a small tributary of the Conococheague River, Chambersburg prospered almost from the moment of its birth. It became the seat of Franklin County, an important early ironworking center, and a junction on the Cumberland Valley Railroad linking Hagerstown, Maryland, with the state capital at Harrisburg. By 1860, its commercial assets included a foundry, an edged tool factory, a paper mill, one bank, two breweries, and four hotels.⁸

By virtue of its location, the town was destined to attract the attention of Confederate forces operating north of the Potomac. Initial contact occurred in the autumn of 1862 as a consequence of one of Major General J. E. B. Stuart's frequent circuits around the Army of the Potomac. Having received orders to reconnoiter the Union army and to destroy the iron railroad bridge across Conococheague Creek, a short distance north of town, Stuart crossed the Potomac at McCoy's Ford on October 10 at the head of 1,800 picked cavalry. Chambersburg, occupied that evening, surrendered without resistance. The following morning, the Confederates plundered a quartermaster depot and attempted unsuccessfully to remove the railroad bridge. Then, proceeding east and south, they recrossed the Potomac near Leesburg on October 12. While this visit was too short to create lasting impressions, it did engage Confederate interest for the first time. As the earliest Southern incursion into Pennsylvania, it received considerable publicity throughout the Confederacy and was widely celebrated as "Stuart's Chambersburg Raid," even though Chambersburg was in no sense its objective.⁹

More significant was the campaign that began in June 1863, as Lee's army surged across the Potomac and advanced down the Cumberland Valley toward Harrisburg. Brigadier General Albert G. Jenkins's cavalrymen, the first troops to reach Franklin County, clattered into Chambersburg on June 15 and remained two days. One week later, Lieutenant General Richard S. Ewell, commanding the Second

⁷ Schneck, *Burning of Chambersburg*, 45, 47; Delaplaine, "General Early's Levy on Frederick," 47, 54.

⁸ Paul Swain Havens, *Chambersburg: Frontier Town, 1730-1794* (Chambersburg, Pa., 1975), 21-29, 54, 117-20; Milton Rubincam, "Population Characteristics of the Cumberland Valley in 1860," in Francis Coleman Rosenberger, *The Cumberland Valley of Pennsylvania in the 1860s* ([Chambersburg], Proceedings of the Rose Hill Seminar, June 8, 1963), 67-70; Schneck, *Burning of Chambersburg*, 42-52.

⁹ First Lieutenant Richard Channing Price (Aide-de-Camp, staff of Major General J. E. B. Stuart) to Mrs. Thomas R. Price, October 15, 1862, Richard Channing Price Papers, SHC; R. O. McAdams (2d South Carolina Cavalry Regiment) to His Father, October 24, 1862, Confederate Miscellaneous Papers, SHC; *Official Records*, series 1, vol. 19, part 2, 52-59; H. B. McClellan, *I Rode with Jeb Stuart* (1885; rpt. edn., Millwood, N.Y., 1976), 136-66; Lieutenant Colonel W. W. Blackford, *War Years with Jeb Stuart* (New York, 1946), 164-81.

Corps, occupied the town and established headquarters in the courthouse. Two of his infantry divisions camped close by; the third (Early's) marched along a parallel road some ten miles east through Waynesboro and Greenwood. On June 26, as Ewell's men departed north along the Harrisburg Turnpike, Lieutenant General A. Powell Hill's Third Corps arrived from the south. With Hill came General Lee, who pitched his tent in the woods just outside town and remained there directing the army's operations for the next four days. By June 28, with the arrival of Lieutenant General James Longstreet's First Corps, no fewer than six Confederate infantry divisions held positions in the immediate vicinity. Meanwhile, Ewell's corps had penetrated as far north as Carlisle and as far east as Wrightsville, threatening the state capital. The next day, having learned that the Union army was advancing, Lee began a reconcentration of his forces twenty-five miles farther east, at Gettysburg. Major General George E. Pickett's division, designated the rear guard, remained at Chambersburg until July 2, a circumstance that delayed its arrival on the battlefield and determined its employment in the climactic third day's assault.

During the course of this three-week period, Chambersburg played unwilling host to more than 60,000 Southern soldiers. According to Edwin B. Coddington, a Pennsylvania historian and author of a definitive study of the campaign, no community suffered more from the invasion. There was, he added, a second unique distinction as well: "Chambersburg had the additional dubious honor of being the first and most important testing place for Lee's occupation policies in a territory that the Confederates considered completely alien." Lee's men had encountered Unionist sentiment in Maryland the year before during the Sharpsburg or Antietam campaign. Western Maryland, however, was a border area where the South had many friends. The region beyond the Mason-Dixon line was unquestionably enemy terrain.¹⁰

The Army of Northern Virginia conducted its summer offensive in 1863 in an elevated spirit established by its commanding officer. A proponent of limited warfare, Robert E. Lee believed in sparing civilians unnecessary suffering. In one preinvasion conversation, he promised "to carry on the war in Pennsylvania without offending the sanctions of a high civilization and of Christianity."¹¹ On June 21, as his troops began crossing the Potomac, he issued General Orders Number 72, which forbade injury to private property and set orderly procedures for requisitioning and purchasing supplies.¹² Six days later came an even more specific statement of his principles in General Orders Number 73—issued, as a mocking fate would have it, while the army was headquartered in Chambersburg:

The commanding general considers that no greater disgrace could befall the army, and through it our whole people, than the perpetration of the barbarous outrages upon the unarmed and defenseless and the wanton destruction of private property, that have marked the course of the enemy in our own country . . .

It must be remembered that we make war only upon armed men, and that we cannot take vengeance for the wrongs our people have suffered without lowering ourselves in the eyes of all whose abhorrence has been excited by the atrocities of our enemies, and offending against Him to whom vengeance belongeth.¹³

¹⁰ Edwin B. Coddington, *The Gettysburg Campaign: A Study in Command* (New York, 1968), 159–208, quote 160.

¹¹ Quoted in Douglas Southall Freeman, *R. E. Lee: A Biography*, 4 vols. (New York, 1935), 3: 55.

¹² *Official Records*, series 1, vol. 27, part 3, 912–13.

¹³ *Official Records*, series 1, vol. 27, part 3, 943.

However naïve this idealism may now seem (and it had its critics even in 1863), there is little doubt that Lee believed in it wholeheartedly. His model of civil-military relations was perhaps best exemplified in a famous quotation: "The forbearing use of power does not only form a touchstone; but the manner in which an individual enjoys certain advantages over others, is the test of a *true gentleman*. The power which the strong have over the weak . . . the forbearing and inoffensive use of all this power or authority, or a total abstinence from it, when the case admits it, will show the gentleman in a plain light." In a recent gloss on this statement, William C. McDonald has shown that Lee throughout his life sought to endow the traditional Southern definition of gentility with deep moral and spiritual properties of his own.¹⁴ There is also ample evidence that his sentiments enjoyed widespread support among the rank and file. "Gen. Lee has issued very stringent orders about private property," noted Lieutenant Colonel Franklin Gaillard of the 2d South Carolina Infantry Regiment. "He is very right . . . [W]e must not imitate the Yankees in their mean acts."¹⁵ Echoed Sergeant Major Preston H. Turner of the 14th North Carolina Infantry Regiment, "I think it is right to show them we are gentlemen."¹⁶ And Sergeant H. C. Kendrick, a soldier in the 9th Georgia Infantry Regiment, doubtless spoke for many others when he wrote, "I feel like retaliating in the strictest sense. I don't think we would do wrong to take houses; burn houses; and commit evry depredation possible upon the men of the North. I can't vindicate the principle of injuring, or insulting the female sex, though they be never so disloyal to our Confederacy and its institutions. Could I ever condescend to the degrading principle of taking from a female's person, a piece of jewelry?, Shall I ever become so thoughtless of my character or forgetful of my raising,? God forbid."¹⁷

Throughout their stay on Pennsylvania soil, the Confederates attempted to live up to their commander's high expectations and their own. Not everyone behaved in a manner above reproach. The worst lapse from propriety was probably the effort to round up runaway and free blacks and to ship them southward into slavery. But commercial destruction was limited to legitimate targets of war such as Thaddeus Stevens's ill-fated Caledonia Iron Works. The army seized military commodities, including thousands of horses and cattle, for which it paid in Confederate currency or requisitions on the government. General Early levied a ransom of \$100,000 on York but allowed the city council to escape with a payment of \$28,600. Most of the looting that occurred involved petty seizures of hats, shoes, fence rails, vegetables, fruit, and other articles that officers and enlisted men alike tended to regard as fair pickings. The vast literature on the campaign contains no mention of rape and only occasional references to other violent crimes. Two

¹⁴ William C. McDonald, "The True Gentleman: On Robert E. Lee's Definition of the Gentleman," *Civil War History*, 33 (June 1986): 119–38, quote 120. But see below, note 52.

¹⁵ Franklin Gaillard (2d South Carolina Infantry Regiment) to David Gaillard, June 28, 1863 (transcription), Franklin Gaillard Letters, SHC.

¹⁶ Preston H. Turner (14th North Carolina Infantry Regiment) to His Parents, June 28, 1863, Preston H. Turner Papers, SHC.

¹⁷ H. C. Kendrick (Company E, 9th Georgia Infantry Regiment) to His Mother, June 8, 1863, H. C. Kendrick Letters, SHC. For additional comment on the endorsement of Lee's policies by the rank and file, see Linderman, *Embattled Courage*, 181–82. Mitchell, *Civil War Soldiers*, 148–57, provides an extended discussion of the behavior of Confederate troops during the Gettysburg campaign. Citing General Longstreet and Major John S. Mosby, the famous partisan leader, Mitchell argued that the principal purpose of General Orders Number 73 was not to protect Pennsylvanians but to preserve morale and discipline. He also pointed out that the policy of forbearance was aimed at influencing Northern and foreign opinion. Mitchell's emphasis on military necessity is a valid point but may underestimate the strength of Lee's idealistic appeal.

soldiers were apparently hanged for the murder of an elderly man. Rumors circulated that others had been executed for plundering homes or robbing women of their jewelry. Even Coddington, who titled his chapter on this subject "The Confederates Plunder Pennsylvania," admitted that the local residents' experiences could have been a great deal worse.¹⁸

Confident that they had vindicated their reputation as magnanimous conquerors, many Confederates waxed self-congratulatory, even a bit smug. "[Y]ou may believe that the people was very near skird to death but wee treated them with respect," proudly noted Private Jonathan Fuller Coghill of the 23d North Carolina Infantry Regiment.¹⁹ "I have heard of no case of outrage to person or property," averred Captain Thomas Gordon Pollock, a Virginia staff officer. "Such is Genl Lees order . . . And what Genl Lee says the army does down to the lowest private because they say 'I reckon he knows.'"²⁰ James B. Sheeran, a Catholic chaplain serving with the 14th Louisiana Infantry Regiment, thought "it was remarkable to see how orderly our men conducted themselves on this march . . . This I think redounds more to the honor of our army than a dozen victories over the enemy on the battlefield."²¹ John Overton Casler, a private in the Stonewall Brigade who was by his own admission a less-than-model soldier, reported a fellow infantryman for stealing a ham. Casler professed himself "as well satisfied as if I had eaten a hearty meal."²² Repeatedly, and at greater length than was probably appreciated, the troops reminded the civilian population of how courteously they were behaving.²³ The legend of Confederate rectitude only grew in the retelling. By postwar times, it had reached truly preposterous extremes. In his memoirs, compiled years after the war, General Early advanced the improbable claim that his men had not touched so much as a single fence rail. His subordinate, Brigadier General John B. Gordon, admitted the destruction of one fence but maintained that he personally returned the horse his men had tried to steal.²⁴

YET THE PRESUMPTION OF SUPERIORITY carries with it the corollary that others are inferior. Over and over, even as they praised themselves, the Confederates also expressed arrogant contempt toward the Pennsylvanians they encountered. Fueling their disdain for Yankee society were corrosive ethnocentric and chauvinistic prejudices, compounded by anger at what they regarded as their unappreciative reception.

The existence of anti-German prejudice in the Confederate army should surprise no one familiar with middle nineteenth-century American social and

¹⁸ Diary entry, Charles Edward Lippitt (Surgeon, 57th Virginia Infantry Regiment), June 28, 1863, Charles Edward Lippitt Book, SHC; Second Lieutenant Iowa Michigan Royster (Company G, 37th North Carolina Infantry Regiment) to Mary Ashley Royster, June 29, 1863, Iowa Michigan Royster Papers, SHC; Linderman, *Embattled Courage*, 181; Mitchell, *Civil War Soldiers*, 152–53; Coddington, *Gettysburg Campaign*, 153, 154, 177.

¹⁹ Jonathan Fuller Coghill (Company G, 23d North Carolina Infantry Regiment) to His Family, June 25, 1863, Jonathan Fuller Coghill Papers, SHC.

²⁰ Thomas Gordon Pollock (Assistant Adjutant General, staff of Brigadier General James L. Kemper) to Abram David Pollock, June 30, 1863, Abram David Pollock Papers, SHC.

²¹ *Confederate Chaplain: A War Journal of Reverend James B. Sheeran, c.s.s.r., 14th Louisiana, C.S.A.*, Joseph T. Durkin, ed. (Milwaukee, Wis., 1960), 47–48.

²² John O. Casler, *Four Years in the Stonewall Brigade* (1906; rpt. edn., Dayton, Ohio, 1982), 178.

²³ Hoke, *Reminiscences of the War*, 49; Major Robert Stiles, *Four Years under Marse Robert* (1903; rpt. edn., Dayton, Ohio, 1977), 203.

²⁴ Early, *War Memoirs*, 264; John B. Gordon, *Reminiscences of the Civil War* (New York, 1903), 144–46.

political trends. The rapid increase in both the Irish and German populations during this period produced a substantial nativist backlash throughout the United States. Although the South had only a small ethnic minority, it was by no means immune to the intolerance sweeping the rest of the nation. The Know-Nothing party, which often catered to such bigotry, controlled an estimated 29 percent of the Southern delegation in the House of Representatives during its brief heyday. It strongly influenced politics in several states, among them Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Missouri, and Texas. According to Ella Lonn, who has studied the history of foreigners in the Confederacy, all minorities suffered at the nativists' hands, but none more so than the Germans, who were regarded with particular suspicion because of their alleged proclivities for freethinking, liberal politics, and abolitionism.²⁵

The Civil War only fanned the flames of Southern xenophobia. Many Southerners cherished the belief that the Union army was made up of German mercenaries, just as the British army during the American Revolution had been. In Alexander St. Clair Abrams's novel *The Trials of the Soldier's Wife: A Tale of the Second Revolution* (1864), the villainous merchant and landlord who persecuted the heroine were both described as Germans. Disregarding an impressive record of commitment to the cause, Confederate authorities frequently discriminated against ethnic soldiers and civilians. Some rabid nationalists looked forward to a postwar South freed from foreign as well as Northern influences. Francis Warrington Dawson, a British soldier of fortune who ran the blockade to join the Southern army, described one superior who hoped an independent Confederacy would rid itself of all "d——d foreigners." When criticized for his attitude, the officer responded violently, striking at Dawson with his fist. For Southern nativists, the Gettysburg invasion was no doubt an opportunity to vent their prejudices on an enemy population that was conveniently alien to boot. As the Dawson incident indicated, the potential for violence in this situation existed from the beginning.²⁶

Certainly, many Confederates had little but scorn for the predominantly Teutonic culture of the region through which they were passing. Major General Lafayette McLaws remarked on a meeting with Southern sympathizers in western Maryland: "I was very glad to meet them as I thus had in my mind the contrast between the Southern gentlemen and ladies and the very different species I soon encountered, as I crossed the line into Pennsylvania."²⁷ Chaplain Sheeran discovered similar distinctions between the inhabitants of both sections: "Here you find none of that grace of manners, high-toned sentiment, or intellectual culture that you find in old Virginia. Indeed, with all their wealth they appear little advanced in civilization."²⁸ The supposed contrast between the beauty of the countryside and its low human condition was a common theme. James Peter Williams, a corporal in the Richmond Howitzers, noted that his unit had been "marching constantly & through the finest country I ever laid my eyes on, inhabited by the hardest looking set of people—*abolition Dutch*. We have passed through such a number of little towns that I can't remember the names of half of them but the principal ones were

²⁵ W. Darrell Overdyke, *The Know-Nothing Party in the South* (1950; rpt. edn., Gloucester, Mass., 1968), 91–126, 167; Ella Lonn, *Foreigners in the Confederacy* (1940; rpt. edn., Gloucester, 1965), 417–38.

²⁶ Lonn, *Foreigners in the Confederacy*, 383–416, 420; Drew Gilpin Faust, *The Creation of Confederate Nationalism: Ideology and Identity in the Civil War South* (Baton Rouge, La., 1988), 48–49; Francis W. Dawson, *Reminiscences of Confederate Service, 1861–1865*, Bell Irvin Wiley, ed. (1882; rpt. edn., Baton Rouge, 1980), 102–03.

²⁷ Lafayette McLaws to Emily Allison Taylor McLaws, June 28, 1863, Lafayette McLaws Papers, SHC.

²⁸ Sheeran, *Confederate Chaplain*, 47.

Chambersburg & Shippensburg. The former is a place of about 10,000 inhabitants, all Dutch & the meanest looking white people I ever saw."²⁹ Second Lieutenant James E. Green of the 53d North Carolina Infantry Regiment expressed a similar opinion: "[T]his is a fine country the fields all covered with the finest Wheat I ever saw . . . And the People Generly Ugly. they are a mixed People, Dutch, Irish, &c."³⁰ Colonel Collett Leventhorpe of the 11th North Carolina Infantry Regiment was even more blunt: "This is the best farming country I almost ever saw. But such stupid, boorish people—genuine Dutch!"³¹

Rebel chauvinism was even more striking than Rebel ethnocentrism. Given their patronizing attitude toward Yankees in general and German Yankees in particular, it is likely that Lee's soldiers would have regarded Northern women with condescension under any circumstances. But there is an additional clue to the intensity of Confederate feeling on this subject: the demeanor of the women in the various towns along the line of march. As the long gray columns wound through Mercersburg, Shippensburg, Greencastle, and especially Chambersburg, the women filled the windows and sidewalks. They jeered at the passing soldiers' ragged condition, held their noses at the smell, resolutely turned their backs to the street, sang Union songs, waved Union flags with enthusiasm, and made pointed remarks about Pharaoh's army and the Red Sea. Captain Dawson, whose horse stumbled on Chambersburg's cobblestones, sending him sprawling, was vexed to hear a female voice exult, "Thank God, one of those wicked Rebels has broken his neck." Lieutenant Colonel James Arthur Lyon Fremantle, an officer in the Coldstream Guards who was visiting the Confederate army, felt that the natives regarded the troops "in a very unfriendly manner." He described Chambersburg women as "viragos" and recorded that they "were particularly sour and disagreeable in their remarks."³²

On the surface, Lee's men responded to this treatment with cheers and laughter, bandying words with the civilians or simply ignoring them. But there are frequent hints that the provocation made a stronger impression than the soldiers admitted to:

I often felt as if I was amidst heathen they all looked grim and angry not a wave of Hankerchief was made for us after we left Maryland.

Lieutenant Thomas Frederick Boatwright,
44th Virginia Infantry Regiment³³

²⁹ James Peter Williams (1st Company, Richmond Howitzers) to His Father, June 28, 1863, James Peter Williams Papers, SHC, emphasis in original. The word "Dutch," a corruption of Deutsch, was a common synonym for "German."

³⁰ Diary entry, James E. Green (Company I, 53d North Carolina Infantry Regiment), June 25, 1863 (transcription), James E. Green Papers, SHC.

³¹ Collett Leventhorpe (11th North Carolina Infantry Regiment) to Unknown, June 29, 1863, Collett Leventhorpe Papers, SHC.

³² Coddington, *Gettysburg Campaign*, 156–57; Dawson, *Reminiscences of Confederate Service*, 93; James Arthur Lyon Fremantle, *The Fremantle Diary*, Walter Lord, ed. (1863; rpt. edn., London, 1956), 190, 194, 191. The colonel, who included among his remarks the statement that Pennsylvania Germans "speak an unintelligible language" (p. 196), appears to have either shared or mirrored the attitudes of his hosts.

³³ Thomas Frederick Boatwright (Company C, 44th Virginia Infantry Regiment) to Anne E. Boatwright, July 9, 1863, Thomas Frederick Boatwright Letters, SHC.

People [in Greencastle] strong Unionist & looked mad & sullen at our appearance a great many closed doors; stores all closed.

Private Thomas Lewis Ware, 15th Georgia Infantry Regiment³⁴

Nearly a month after the campaign concluded, Colonel Gaillard complained that the people “looked at us with sour faces, long faces, and indifferent faces.”³⁵ Lieutenant Green found the residents of Chambersburg “very grum,” adding that they had nothing to say unless spoken to.³⁶ Underlining this sense of resentment, Colonel Fremantle remarked on “the singular good behavior of the troops towards the citizens” in Chambersburg but noted that “I heard soldiers saying to one another that they did not like being in a town in which they were very naturally detested.” He concluded that the natives seemed not “the least thankful” for Confederate forbearance.³⁷

An even more ominous development was the soldiers’ tendency to dehumanize the women they observed. These comments were frequently coupled with negative remarks concerning the women’s behavior:

At Green Castle on the road to Chambersburg, several young ladies were assembled engaged in scoffing at our men as they passed, but they were treated with contempt or derision. I heard of nothing witty said by any of them. It was made evident however that they were not ladies in the Southern acceptation of the word . . . The people of Chambersburg are decidedly hostile. The men dare not show it but by their looks. The women tried to be sarcastic on various occasions but succeeded in being vulgar only. They are a very different race from the Southerner. There is a coarseness in their manners and looks and a twang in their voices, which grates harshly on the senses of our men.

Major General Lafayette McLaws³⁸

This is a most magnificent country to look at, but the most miserable people. I have yet to see a nice looking lady. They are coarse and dirty, and the number of dirty looking children is perfectly astonishing. A great many of the women go barefooted and but a small fraction wear stockings. I hope we may never have such people . . . Their dwelling houses are large and comfortable . . . but such coarse louts that live in them. I really did not believe that there was so much difference between our ladies and their females. I have seen no ladies.

Major General William Dorsey Pender³⁹

What a race of people! Until yesterday when we reached this place [Carlisle], I have seen nothing approaching to good looks in the women. Real specimens

³⁴ Diary entry, Thomas Lewis Ware (Company G, 15th Georgia Infantry Regiment), June 27, 1863 (transcription), Thomas Lewis Ware Diary, SHC.

³⁵ Gaillard to Maria Porcher, July 17, 1863 (transcription), Gaillard Letters, SHC.

³⁶ Green Diary, June 23, 1863 (transcription), James E. Green Papers, SHC.

³⁷ Fremantle, *Fremantle Diary*, 195, 196.

³⁸ McLaws to Emily Allison Taylor McLaws, June 28, 1863, Lafayette McLaws Papers, SHC.

³⁹ *The General to His Lady: The Civil War Letters of William Dorsey Pender to Fanny Pender*, William W. Hassler, ed. (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1965), 254.

of the Dutch boors. The heavy brutish lips, thick drooping eyelids indicate plainly the stupidity of the people.

Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Swift Pendleton, Second Corps staff⁴⁰

The people in the towns seem to stir about as much as usual or more, and behave pretty well, except that now & then the women turn their backs on us, or bring up a decided pout, which as they are naturally very much uglier & coarser than ours, doesn't improve them, in fact it is a trial their faces are not equal to.

Major G. Campbell Brown, Second Corps staff⁴¹

[P]assed through Chambersburg . . . Stores closed but streets & windows filled in with men and women, the latter very common looking, not to compare with our Southern females . . . Some of the women were very impudent.

Surgeon Charles E. Lippitt, 57th Virginia Infantry Regiment⁴²

I believe I never told you any thign [*sic*] about the Girls of Pennsylvania. Neither is it necessary that I should, for they are the ugliest set of mortals I ever saw, long faced bare footed big nose and every thing else that it takes to constitute an ugly woman. I do not say this out of any disrespect, but because it is the truth.

Private John Alexander Barry, Phillips's Georgia Legion⁴³

Since ancient times, soldiers have attributed subhuman characteristics to their foes. Such trends are always dangerous, for as sociologists Everett C. Hughes and Lewis A. Coser have pointed out, they establish a social climate more conducive to cruelty toward the enemy while simultaneously rationalizing away inconvenient feelings of guilt. According to Hughes, wartime dehumanization can create an unconscious social mandate for oppression, "a distillation of what we may consider our public wishes . . . [together with] a sort of concentrate of those impulses of which we are or wish to be less aware."⁴⁴ The Civil War experience suggests that these tendencies were linked with some frequency to attitudes toward women and to issues of

⁴⁰ Alexander Swift Pendleton (Chief of Staff, Second Corps) to Anzolette Elizabeth Page Pendleton, June 25, 1863, William Nelson Pendleton Papers, SHC.

⁴¹ G. Campbell Brown (Assistant Adjutant General, staff of Lieutenant General Richard S. Ewell) to Hattie S. Brown and Lizinka Campbell Brown, June 25, 1863, Polk, Brown, and Ewell Family Papers, SHC.

⁴² Lippitt Diary, June 27, 1863, SHC.

⁴³ John Alexander Barry (Rifle Battalion, Phillips's Georgia Legion) to Sallie J. Barry, July 26, 1863, John Alexander Barry Letters, SHC. To emphasize his point, Barry included a sketch of a Pennsylvania girl, titled "A Sample." For additional examples of dehumanization, see Colonel Gaillard to David Gaillard, June 28, 1863 (transcription), Gaillard Letters; Ordnance Sergeant George Whitaker Wills (Company D, 43d North Carolina Infantry Regiment) to Lucy Wills, June 28, 1863, George Whitaker Wills Letters, SHC; and the soldiers' opinions quoted in Coddington, *Gettysburg Campaign*, 157; and Mitchell, *Civil War Soldiers*, 150.

⁴⁴ Everett C. Hughes, "Good People and Dirty Work," *Social Problems*, 10 (Summer 1962): 3–11; Lewis Coser, "The Visibility of Evil," *Journal of Social Issues*, 25 (Winter 1969): 101–09. The quotation is from Hughes, 8. Some of the philosophical implications of depersonalization are explored in Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, Ronald Gregor Smith, trans. (New York, 1958). See also the discussion of colloquial language and its relationship to philosophy in William Barrett, *The Illusion of Technique* (Garden City, N.Y., 1978), 64–73. A feminist perspective on the same issue is provided in Robin Lakoff, *Language and Women's Place* (New York, 1975).

deportment. Both Linderman and Glatthaar have cited instances in which the reaction of Southern women to a Northern presence differed dramatically from soldiers' expectations, thereby creating a desire to retaliate that was intended to punish not only disloyalty but "unwomanly" conduct as well. Whether these episodes are indicative of a more widespread pattern of discrimination among Northern troops is uncertain.⁴⁵

THE PERSISTENCE WITH WHICH CONFEDERATE SOLDIERS expressed ethnocentric and chauvinistic sentiments indicates that wartime pressures ignited passions already smoldering beneath the surface of their society. In addition, it is likely that other influences were at work. The behavior of Lee's troops is consistent with what many historians have described as the regional values of the antebellum South, especially the concept of honor. These values constituted an explosive ideology that easily could have aggravated resentment, focused hostility, and even rationalized the eventual outcome. Honor, an ancient complex of beliefs with deep roots in the Indo-European tradition, has characterized many societies past and present. Bertram Wyatt-Brown has argued that in the American South it comprised not only a personal moral code but a social system that created communal order. Honor defined a properly organized society as one in which all classes knew their rightful place and deferred naturally to their superiors. Not surprisingly, it contributed far more to nineteenth-century Southern culture than the courtesy and gentility with which it is usually associated. Southerners believed they had created an ideal society based on honorable precepts, and they never tired of proclaiming its virtues to the outside (and often disbelieving) world.⁴⁶

The harsh reality of the Southern character belied such easy assumptions. The ideology of the Old South was an ethic of white male power, created by the dominant race, gender, and class for the dual purpose of protecting slavery and preserving the status quo. It complacently tolerated the subjugation of anyone the rulers defined as inferior. Black slaves were its most obvious victims, but in fact the spectrum of inferiority was much broader and included practically anyone who was not white, male, native-born, and Protestant. These preconceptions systematically excluded both ethnic groups and women from participation in the power structure.⁴⁷

Studies of Southern women have stressed the centrality of male dominance in preventing any challenge to the slave regime. Masters who demanded absolute obedience from their servants were quick to realize they must require it of their families as well. Mingled love and fear of women were evident in the well-known Southern adulation of ladyhood, which stressed the submissive virtues of restraint,

⁴⁵ Linderman, *Embattled Courage*, 195; Glatthaar, *March to the Sea and Beyond*, 71–72. One Illinois soldier claimed, many years after the war, to have burned down the home of a Mississippi woman who spat on him while he was a prisoner. "Thus may it be," the arsonist declared, "with all who descend from their high pedestal of womanhood and disgrace themselves"; *Army Memoirs of Lucius W. Barber, Company "D," 15th Illinois Volunteer Infantry* (Chicago, 1894), 137.

⁴⁶ Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Honor and Violence in the Old South* (New York, 1986), vii–x. This work is an abridgment of *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York, 1982). References in this article are to the shorter work, which focuses on the theme of violence and its relationship to antebellum Southern culture. Additional insights into this theme, together with a useful critique of Wyatt-Brown's work, are provided in Elliott J. Gorn, "'Gouge and Bite, Pull Hair and Scratch': The Social Significance of Fighting in the Southern Backcountry," *AHR*, 90 (February 1985): 38–42.

⁴⁷ Wyatt-Brown, *Honor and Violence*, 4.

abstinence, and self-sacrifice and consequently ensured that women would be at least outwardly subservient to male will. By the middle of the nineteenth century, women in other regions of the country were beginning to question their stereotyped lot with increasing insistence and some small degree of success. Such direct confrontations were virtually unknown in Dixie, however. Indeed, given the intolerance associated with the cult of honor, they would have been extremely dangerous. The Southern woman who flouted traditional mores risked abandoning the protection ladyhood afforded her and subjecting her person to more direct forms of repression.⁴⁸

Southern apologists spelled out these risks in language combining exhortation with thinly veiled threats. William Harper, author of a "Memoir on Slavery," originally delivered in 1837 before the South Carolina Society for the Advancement of Learning, took the common line that civilization was based on hierarchical arrangements in society that produced affection between masters and dependents. With regard to the consequences of improper behavior by women, he was blunt: "Here [in the South], there is that certain and marked line, [below] which there is no toleration or allowance for any approach to license of manners or conduct, and she who falls below it, will fall far below even the slave . . . Not only essential purity of conduct, but the utmost purity of manners, and I will add, though it may incur the formidable charge of affectation or prudery,—a greater severity of decorum than is required elsewhere, is necessary among us."⁴⁹

Even more emphatic was George Fitzhugh, whose *Sociology for the South; or, The Failure of Free Society* appeared in 1854. Fitzhugh, like Harper, believed that reciprocal respect between the races and sexes flourished only in a state of dependency. The slaveowner and patriarch, his character ennobled by the peculiar institution, was "lofty and independent in his sentiments, generous, affectionate, brave and eloquent." These qualities guaranteed the rights of the women under his control. "A man loves his children because they are weak, helpless, and dependent; he loves his wife for similar reasons . . . He ceases to love his wife when she becomes masculine or rebellious." Lest his readers miss this point, Fitzhugh explained it at length:

So long as she is nervous, fickle, capricious, delicate, diffident, and dependent, man will worship and adore her . . . In truth, women, like children, have but one right, and that is the right to protection. The right to protection involves the obligation to obey. A husband, a lord and master, whom she should love, honor, and obey, nature designed for every woman . . . If she be obedient, she is in little danger of mal-treatment; if she stands upon her rights, is coarse and masculine, man loathes and despises her, and ends by abusing her. Law, however well-intended, can do little in her behalf.⁵⁰

Given such themes in the prevailing ethic, the careful distinction drawn by Confederate soldiers between their own "Southern ladies" and the "Northern

⁴⁸ Wyatt-Brown, *Honor and Violence*, 35–38, 85–91. The place of women in Southern society has been studied in numerous sources, including Anne Firor Scott, *The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics, 1830–1930* (Chicago, 1970); Catherine Clinton, *The Plantation Mistress: Women's World in the Old South* (New York, 1982); and, most recently, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1988). The relationship between Southern rhetoric and the role of women is explored in Virginia Kent Anderson Leslie, "A Myth of the Southern Lady: Antebellum Proslavery Rhetoric and the Proper Place of Women," in Caroline Matheny Dillman, ed., *Southern Women* (New York, 1988), 19–33.

⁴⁹ William Harper, "Harper's Memoir on Slavery," *The Proslavery Argument, As Maintained by the Most Distinguished Writers of the Southern States* (Philadelphia, 1853), 66.

⁵⁰ George Fitzhugh, *Sociology for the South; or, The Failure of Free Society* (1854; rpt. edn., New York, n.d.), 244, 247, 214–15. See also the commentary in Leslie, "Myth of the Southern Lady," 24, 26–32.

females" of Pennsylvania may be regarded as an observation fraught with more significance than might appear at first glance.

Clearly, Southern honor was a tense, volatile value system, wracked by internal inconsistencies capable of being resolved only within a narrow range of behavior. On the one hand, it was capable of instilling great personal virtue in the individual. Robert E. Lee fashioned from its idealistic elements a code that guided him throughout his life, and thousands of others emulated his example. The Confederate captain who prayed "that I may leave the low, sordid, selfish and mean and strive after the honorable, upright, just, noble and generous" was not simply gushing, as the cynical modern observer might be tempted to suspect, but rather was expressing genuine expectations that he took with complete seriousness.⁵¹ Yet, at the same time, the paradoxes embodied in the ethic were capable of undermining the very virtues it was supposed to maintain. With no conscious irony, Southerners asserted that they guided their lives by the highest ethical standards, while they simultaneously engaged in practicing oppression and inequality. Both sides of the Confederate character were much in evidence during the Gettysburg campaign, and an appreciation of the underlying dichotomy has much to suggest concerning their behavior. General Orders Number 73 and the expressions of rectitude accompanying it reflected one side of this character. The proclivity to brutalize German Americans and women reflected all too obviously the other.⁵²

Soldiers imbued with an ethic of honor would have been unlikely to respond temperately either to mockery or to the perception that their virtuous conduct was insufficiently appreciated. Since time immemorial, profound psychological and symbolic meanings have clustered around the concept of surrender. In his thoughtful study of the origins of Reconstruction, Eric L. McKittrick has observed that submission implies more than mere physical acquiescence to superior force. The conqueror also has deeper psychic needs that must be satisfied by appropriate demeanor on the part of the conquered. In particular, the emotional acceptance of defeat is as important as the actual laying down of arms. Through suitable displays of compliance, the vanquished signify their willingness to submit and in so doing encourage a magnanimous response. As a case in point, McKittrick contrasted Southern intransigence in the wake of Appomattox with Japanese capitulation following World War II. In the former instance, the South's refusal to act out the rituals of defeat prolonged sectional bitterness, poisoned early efforts at reconciliation, and ultimately provoked a punitive response. In the latter, Japanese

⁵¹ *Diary of Captain Henry A. Chambers*, T. H. Pearce, ed. (Wendell, N.C., 1983), 83. Chambers was an officer in the 49th North Carolina Infantry Regiment.

⁵² In this regard, it may be noted that there seem to have been limits even to Lee's humane sensibilities. McDonald wrote that Lee's definition of the gentleman "takes dead aim at the underpinnings of an ethic of honor which tolerated, indeed encouraged, a recourse to violence. Instead of a highly developed sense of insult, his honorable gentleman demonstrates patience; in the place of satisfaction, this man puts kindness and studied forgiveness . . . He obeys an inner moral law rooted in an ethic of humility, following which the courage to fight becomes the courage to endure offense"; "The True Gentleman," 135. It is possible to take exception with this conclusion. While there is no reason to hold Lee responsible for the decision to destroy Chambersburg, it is equally true that he neither denounced it nor reprimanded Early in any way. Lee's writings during and after the war contain not one word of regret that the incident took place. In one postwar letter, Early argued that Lee's silence demonstrated at least tacit endorsement of what he had done: "I gave the order on my own responsibility, but General Lee never in any manner indicated disapproval of my act, and his many letters to me expressive of confidence and friendship forbade the idea that he disapproved of my conduct on that occasion"; Early, *War Memoirs*, 478. Wyatt-Brown, who devoted an extended passage to Lee in his discussion of gentility, noted also that the acquiescence of political and religious hierarchies played an important role in violent group demonstrations to uphold the Southern social order; *Honor and Violence*, 51-61, 188. See below, notes 54-57.

eagerness to reform their society under American direction quickly provided a catharsis for wartime hatred and dehumanization, and defused potential vindictiveness. In both cases, American attitudes toward women appear once again to have played a formative role in determining the occupiers' bearing. Southern ladies virtually defined an antagonistic social climate by rejecting even the most superficial gestures of amity. Japanese women, on the other hand, accepted fraternization freely.⁵³

The Confederate invasion of Pennsylvania was, of course, a Northern "surrender" only in the most limited, temporary sense. Yet the argument is persuasive in this context, too. Antebellum male Southerners regarded public opinion as indispensable to personal honor, a gauge of identity and self-worth. Men measured their reputations by the approbation of an approving world and were touchy about any slight that signified insufficient appreciation. The famous code duello was the most obvious manifestation of this impulse on an individual level. Having placed their ideals and magnanimity on public display during the campaign, Lee's men expected an appropriately grateful response. The failure of the citizenry to reciprocate would thus have been seen as an affront to propriety rendered all the more objectionable because of the inferior status of those responsible for it. Only social equals could engage in the affairs of honor so carefully delineated in the duelists' manuals. But for impudence of lower degree, depending on the gravity of the offense, there were many other gradations of shame and punishment available.⁵⁴

THE MAINTENANCE OF THE SOUTHERN VALUE SYSTEM rested on brute force. The close relationship between violence and Southern culture is a topic that has long fascinated historians.⁵⁵ Honor sanctioned the use of violence, legally or otherwise, against those who were perceived as challenging the established order. This effect was not the product of hypocrisy or self-delusion. On the contrary, it was integral to the honorable society and was often encouraged by the climate of public opinion.

⁵³ Eric L. McKittrick, *Andrew Johnson and Reconstruction* (Chicago, 1964), 31–41. McKittrick acknowledged the obvious limitations of his analogy. The American conquest in World War II heralded a virtually complete emancipation of Japanese women, accompanied by sweeping transformations in their status and condition. The Federal occupation in the postwar South offered Southern women no such incentive for friendly feelings. Nor did relations between American men and Japanese women always run as smoothly as articles in the popular press (on which McKittrick based much of his argument) tended to imply. Nevertheless, the behavior of Japanese women apparently helped reduce tension and hostility in an atmosphere that could easily have been tainted by the racist, dehumanizing propaganda of the wartime years. The American response may also indicate consistency over time in male attitudes toward appropriate female roles. Theodore Cohen, one of the architects of American policy in postwar Asia, discussed fraternization and the clash of cultures in *Remaking Japan: The American Occupation as New Deal*, Herbert Passin, ed. (New York, 1987), 123–28, 135–36. See also John Curtis Perry's comments on dehumanization and fraternization in *Beneath the Eagle's Wings: Americans in Occupied Japan* (New York, 1980), 34–35, 184–87, 209.

⁵⁴ Wyatt-Brown, *Honor and Violence*, 27, 30–32; Dickson D. Bruce, Jr., *Violence and Culture in the Antebellum South* (Austin, Tex., 1979), 21–43; Jack R. Williams, *Dueling in the Old South: Vignettes of Social History* (College Station, Tex., 1980).

⁵⁵ W. J. Cash, *The Mind of the South* (New York, 1941); John Hope Franklin, *The Militant South, 1800–1861* (Cambridge, Mass., 1956); and the works by Wyatt-Brown, Gorn, Bruce, and Williams already cited analyze Southern violence in the nineteenth century. For the modern context, see Sheldon Hackney, "Southern Violence," *AHR*, 74 (February 1969): 906–25; and Becky L. Glass, "Women and Violence: The Intersection of Two Components of Southern Ideology," in Dillman, *Southern Women*, 191–201. Not all historians believe that the South was inherently more violent or militaristic than the rest of the country. Marcus Cunliffe, *Soldiers and Civilians: The Martial Spirit in America* (Boston, 1968), presents a countervailing opinion. See especially Chap. 10, "A Southern Military Tradition?"

The ethic of honor existed to protect both the conventional order and the status of the ruling elite therein. The white native-born males who occupied the summit of the social pyramid demanded proper respect for their position and reacted defensively to any threat to it. Their automatic reaction to either real or imagined danger was to strike out instantly. As Dickson D. Bruce, Jr., has commented, the threat of violence was greatest when the unwritten rules of society had been broken, necessitating extreme sanctions to restore an appropriate sense of communal order. Coercion was efficacious as well as necessary, a process whereby society affirmed existing authority, defended its security against internal or external threat, and reanimated its attachment to prevailing ethical norms. It also permitted honor to emerge, unscathed and triumphant, from whatever ordeal had momentarily endangered it.⁵⁶

One of the most common instruments of group violence and social control in the Old South was the charivari or "shivaree," a festive, almost ecstatic rite that mingled justice with bacchanalia, releasing tension in spectacle. Its sanctions ranged from mild shaming to deadly vengeance and were frequently accompanied by raucous, inebriated celebrations. The acquiescence, sometimes the supervision, of those who held power was essential to its success. Society's leadership often condemned the charivari, and a few progressives occasionally even attempted to interfere with it, but the majority endorsed its activities either through their participation or their silence. Once in a while, as in the case of a lynching or the aftermath of the Nat Turner rebellion in Virginia in 1831, the charivari exploded in rage and anarchy. But most of the time, as in the case of a tar-and-feathering, it expressed itself in stylized, almost formal rituals, upholding stability by circumscribing how far the participants could go. Its importance was determined by its role in expiating social evil and in defending traditional mores, especially the core values of status and family sanctity. Defense of reputation or true womanhood was typically a potent call to community action. Those who violated the ethics of their sex were likely to encounter a particularly grim fate. Through acts of moral purification involving the sacrifice of one or more victims, virtue was reconfirmed and an object lesson served on anyone who might contemplate future offenses.⁵⁷

If the residents of Chambersburg drew down upon themselves the collective ire of the Confederate army in 1863 by violating Southern standards of propriety, then the destiny that befell them the following year may be understood as a charivari in which the inhabitants of an entire town were brought to account, punished, and humiliated for their conduct. Numerous reports testify to the breakdown of military discipline and to the atmosphere of dark carnival that attended the event. "After the order was given to burn the town of Chambersburg and before," wrote Brigadier General Bradley T. Johnson, who commanded the second of the two participating brigades, "drunken soldiers paraded the streets in every possible disguise and paraphernalia . . . I tried, and was seconded by almost every officer of my command, but in vain, to preserve the discipline of this brigade, but it was impossible; not only the license afforded was too great, but actual example gave them excuse and justification."⁵⁸ Added the local Presbyterian minister, the Reverend J. S. Nicolls, "The ferocity of the Rebel soldiers during this

⁵⁶ Bruce, *Violence and Culture*, 87–88; Wyatt-Brown, *Honor and Violence*, 154, 186.

⁵⁷ Wyatt-Brown, *Honor and Violence*, 187–213.

⁵⁸ *Official Records*, series 1, vol. 63, part 1, 7–8.

affair seems almost incredible. With all their fierce passions unrestrained, they seemed to revel, as if intoxicated, in the work of destruction."⁵⁹

The diary of J. Kelly Bennette, a hospital steward in the 8th Virginia Cavalry Regiment, provides additional insight into the perceptions of those who did the burning. Young Bennette forded the Potomac in early July with bitterness in his heart at the sight of General Hunter's numerous depredations. Two pretty Marylanders, who burst into tears at his approach in the approved fashion, momentarily assuaged his thirst for retaliation. "I thought before I crossed the river how heartless I would be toward the Yankee women & all," he noted, "but fiddlesticks when I saw these two girls with tears trembling in their eyes my wrath & spirit of revenge all passed away & I felt like saying or doing anything in the world just to remove their tears . . . Say what you will a lady is a lady be she union or secesh & a *gentleman* will not be long in recognizing the fact." Only three weeks later, however, Bennette commented approvingly on his comrades' actions in Pennsylvania and the presumed restoration of order that followed it. "[W]hen reason had time to regain her seat I believe that they all thought as I thought at first; that it was Justice & Justice tempered with mercy . . . That burning *per se* is wrong no one can deny . . . But there may be circumstances under which it is not only *justifiable* but becomes a duty—stern it is true but nevertheless binding." Bennette equated the reprisal with the protection of Southern womanhood: "We are in this war to defend the *women*—if we try one expedient & it fails we are recreant in our duty if we persevere in that expedient instead of changing the prescription." He acknowledged that "there were some who having become drunk seemed to glory in destruction," but he pleaded strong provocation in their behalf.⁶⁰ The formal, ineffective protests by some Confederates in authority, and the silence of General Lee thereafter, the inebriated celebrations, the revelry in destruction, the mingling of the twin themes of saturnalia and justice, and the association of ladyhood with the need for retaliation, all fit the tragic pattern of the charivari and support the interpretation that the raiders viewed their requital in social as well as military terms. This belief would have had the added advantage of rationalizing their conduct within an ethical framework that all understood, thereby mitigating guilt and even permitting them to emerge from their grim work with a renewed sense of virtue.

IT IS NOT LIKELY THAT the average Confederate soldier could have identified, let alone analyzed, the preconceptions leading him to regard Chambersburg as a center of Yankee subversion or to welcome the opportunity to destroy it. Nevertheless, it is hardly surprising that he behaved as he did. In his famous treatise *Vom Kriege* (1833), Carl von Clausewitz speculated that warfare had been forever altered by public involvement in affairs of state and, in consequence, had come closer to achieving its "absolute perfection"—by which he meant a state of pure violence, unrelieved by conventional restraints—than ever before. A cautious scholar, Clausewitz was unwilling to predict whether the democratic nationalism unleashed by Napoleon would lead to even more violent future wars. Yet he was not hopeful, for he believed that the passions of the people, once engaged, could not easily be

⁵⁹ Quoted in Schneck, *Burning of Chambersburg*, 38.

⁶⁰ Bennette Diary, vol. 1, July 5, 1864 (first quotation), vol. 2, July 30, 1864 (remaining quotations), SHC, emphasis in original.

restrained.⁶¹ Alexis de Tocqueville, who toured the United States during the same period, reached similar conclusions about the relationship of warfare to popular will. A democracy, he surmised, would fight with irresistible determination because of the totality of its involvement: "War . . . in the end becomes the one great industry, and every eager and ambitious desire sprung from equality is focused thereon."⁶² Clausewitz and Tocqueville were among the first to realize that total warfare reflects the national characteristics of those fighting it and in a democracy may be shaped by many different forces. As McKittrick has remarked, the moral coercions of such a war arise not from state decree but from consensus within the community. These coercions are "the hardest of all to resist, for no one can really personify their source; they emanate, in the ultimate sense, from 'the people.'"⁶³ Southern soldiers, no exception to this rule, expressed cultural beliefs and assumptions through their behavior. Like warriors in societies everywhere, they attempted to fight their war as an affirmation of their ideals.

As one might imagine, the sources of Confederate conduct are difficult to isolate or to categorize. Some aspects of warfare are universal, with roots deep in the human psyche. Depersonalizing tendencies can be found throughout recorded history. The Civil War also had its particularized elements drawn from the American experience. In Lee's army, dehumanization seems to have been verbalized most frequently in the context of ethnic and chauvinistic prejudices. Whether or not this is a distinctly Southern phenomenon remains to be seen. Federal troops also voiced derogatory opinions of enemy civilians. Their letters and diaries emphasized physical unattractiveness and reinforced familiar Southern stereotypes such as sloth, shiftlessness, and cultural inferiority.⁶⁴ Logically, one would expect to find fewer nativist expressions in Northern writings because the Southern population was less diverse. Further research into the strange synergy of gender, deportment, and violence will be needed before its prevalence in the North can be assessed. Whatever the degree of particularity, the evidence suggests that, among Confederate soldiers at least, the total war mentality was closely linked to social tensions present in nineteenth-century American society.

The ideology of slavery exerted additional influence over men in gray. During the antebellum period, apologists for the peculiar institution made strenuous efforts to construct an alternative regional value system in opposition to the beliefs of the rest of the nation. This ethos enjoyed widespread support among white male Southerners of all conditions. Even in peacetime, maintenance of a social order based on the inhumane values of slavery required force. It is reasonable to suppose that, once unleashed, these values contributed to Southern ferocity while the conflict was underway. In keeping with David Herbert Donald's dictum that Northerners and Southerners were "fundamentally similar, fundamentally part of the same great people," recent studies have tended to stress aspects of behavior that both sides exhibited.⁶⁵ Yet a shared national identity need not preclude the existence of significant sectional differences in outlook. Linderman's provocative

⁶¹ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, Michael Howard and Peter Paret, ed. and trans., rev. edn. (Princeton, N.J., 1984), 579–94. For further discussion of Clausewitz's concepts, see Theodore Ropp, *War in the Modern World* (Durham, N.C., 1959), 141–42; Raymond Aron, *Clausewitz: Philosopher of War*, Christine Booker and Norman Stone, trans. (London, 1976).

⁶² Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, J. P. Mayer and Max Lerner, eds., George Lawrence, trans. (New York, 1966), 630–32, quote 632.

⁶³ McKittrick, *Andrew Johnson and Reconstruction*, 25.

⁶⁴ Mitchell, *Civil War Soldiers*, 90–147.

⁶⁵ Donald, *Liberty and Union*, 121.