

**THE RE-CONSTRUCTION OF MEMORY AND LOYALTY IN NORTH CAROLINA,
1865-1880**

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ABSTRACT

Brian K. Fennessy: *The Re-construction of Memory and Loyalty in North Carolina, 1865-1880*
(Under the direction of Harry L. Watson and William L. Barney)

This thesis aims to recast the story of how white Southern identity and political culture evolved during Reconstruction. It does so by taking seriously anti-Confederate or “Unionist” memories of the Civil War that do not fit the later “Lost Cause” consensus. More particularly, it examines the public narratives told by leading spokespersons in North Carolina. By telling narratives of Union loyalty and resistance to the Confederacy, the state’s political aspirants tried to reckon with their wartime past, make sense of a postwar world, and present themselves favorably in it. During Reconstruction, Southern Unionist narratives flourished in competition with pro-Confederate ways of remembering that would only triumph by the end of the 1870s. As the context of state and national politics continued to shift, local elites responded by making one or another part of their reservoir of memory more salient, ultimately shaping the evolution of white Southern identity.

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I. INTRODUCTION

During the early years of Reconstruction, white Southerners grappled with the meaning of Confederate defeat. “If we cannot justify the South in the act of Secession, we will go down in History solely as brave, impulsive but rash people who attempted in an illegal manner to overthrow the Union of our Country,” warned one former Confederate general. Other native white Southerners thought this was precisely how the men most responsible for secession and the prolonged war effort should be remembered. At the 1865 state constitutional convention in Raleigh, North Carolina, James B. Odum shouted at Confederate apologists “secession wellnigh [*sic*] ruined the country. It is odious to me and I care not how strong the language in which I express my detestation of it.” He wanted the convention to do more than repeal the state’s secession ordinance—he wanted it declared null and void, “if I can get nothing more pungent,” for this would make it clear that the ordinance was never legal and cast stigma on the men who had passed it. A majority of the convention agreed that secession should be nullified, and E. J. Warren believed that this condemnation of disunion would “speak the sentiment of our children for all time to come.” These men were determined to imprint an anti-secession verdict in the memories of all future generations.¹

Historians of Civil War memory have told the story of the Confederacy’s afterlife in white Southern memory. Excellent studies show that in the late nineteenth century, Confederate

¹ Clement A. Evans, quoted in Gary W. Gallagher and Allan T. Nolan, *The Myth of the Lost Cause and Civil War History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 13. Sidney Andrews, *The South Since the War: As Shown by Fourteen Weeks of Travel and Observation in Georgia and the Carolinas* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004), 159, 164

veterans groups, women's memorial associations, and fiction writers contributed to a "Lost Cause" narrative that justified the Confederacy's failed war for independence. By the 1880s, with the end of Reconstruction and the consolidation of regional power by white Southern Democrats, the "Lost Cause" narrative became the dominant way of talking about the Confederacy in the public sphere. In order to track the roots of this "collective memory" and the political culture that shaped and was shaped by it, historians like David Blight, Anne Sarah Rubin, and Caroline Janney have, quite reasonably, looked back to its roots in white Southern bitterness during Reconstruction. Unfortunately, this line of inquiry has shown a tendency to neglect alternative modes of white Southern remembrance during Reconstruction that did not fit the later "Lost Cause" consensus.²

Though most white Southerners mourned the loss of loved ones killed in battle, it was far from certain in 1865 that reverence for the "Lost Cause" of the dead Confederacy would dominate sectional-racial memory by the 1880s. For many who had held ambiguous and shifting loyalties during the war, repudiation of the Confederate past made more sense and they quickly adopted a "Unionist" identity. Postwar Southern whites defined Unionism in different ways, calling upon a variety of reference points such as opposition to secession, wartime dissent, and participation in the peace movement. They could make Unionism mean what they needed it to mean, and their self-interested remembering often distorted the past. Self-interest did not mean

² W. Fitzhugh Brundage, "Introduction: No Deed but Memory," *Where These Memories Grow: History, Memory, and Southern Identity*, ed. Brundage (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 2-3. The most influential work on Civil War memory, David Blight's *Race and Reunion*, found little significance in white Southern dissent from the "Lost Cause," and Caroline Janney's more recent work, *Remembering the Civil War*, revises Blight's account in many ways, but actually gives less recognition to divisions within the white South. Building on Anne Sarah Rubin's argument in *A Shattered Nation* that Southern nationalism persisted into Reconstruction, Janney suggests that "the Lost Cause helped foster a separate sectional identity, an extension of Confederate nationalism that would encourage resistance and defiance for years to come." By focusing on sectionalism, the conventional narrative elides differences between different groups of Southern whites. David Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001), 2-5, 293-299; Anne Sarah Rubin, *A Shattered Nation: The Rise and Fall of the Confederacy, 1861-1868* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 1-8; Caroline E. Janney, *Remembering the Civil War: Reunion and the Limits of Reconciliation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 134.

that their recollections were necessarily insincere. Individual white Southerners claimed a Unionist record as a way to reckon with their wartime past, make sense of a postwar world, and present themselves favorably in it.³

Rather than debating who should be counted as a *real* Unionist, more can be gained by asking how contemporaries constructed and assessed narratives of political loyalty. Configuring and reconfiguring political loyalty involves three distinct, though interrelated components—personal memory, public speech, and social response. The first includes an individual’s personal conviction of loyalty based on lived experience, as well as his or her mental ordering of that experience in a way that makes sense for the individual. Second, the individual articulates that self-assessment to others, as in a stump speech or political pamphlet for a public spokesperson. Finally, the audience responds to the individual’s claim by either accepting or rejecting it. If one’s claim about loyalty is publically validated, it may create a new reality and reinforce personal conviction. If the claim is rejected, or if the narrative proves problematic under new and unanticipated circumstances, memory and identity may shift. To understand how loyalties were

³ A handful of studies address the postwar legacy of Southern Unionism, though usually in a dismissive vein. In *When the War Was Over*, Dan Carter points out that white Southern moderates appropriated the mantle of Unionism to claim legitimacy, but they often come across as insincere or unimaginative. Anne Sarah Rubin suggests in *A Shattered Nation* that Confederates took false oaths of loyalty as a way to regain their citizenship rights and continue the battle for Southern home rule. Gordon B. McKinney, in an article analyzing pardon applications in western North Carolina, comes the closest to the approach suggested here. He admits that self-interested distortion was likely and must be taken into account, along with the degree to which knowledge of the final outcome of the war would influence narratives. Nevertheless, he points out that the applications offer narratives of loyalty before any “Lost Cause” consensus could emerge, and the fact that most applicants identified themselves with a loyalty other than the Confederacy, such as family, community, or state, may help explain why larger national loyalties were so malleable. Dan T. Carter, *When the War Was Over: The Failure of Self-Reconstruction in the South, 1865-1867* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985), 3-5, 26-27; Rubin, *A Shattered Nation*, 141-145, 166; Gordon B. McKinney, “Layers of Loyalty: Confederate Nationalism and Amnesty Letters From Western North Carolina,” *Civil War History* 51, no. 1 (2005), 5-22. See also Jeffrey J. Crow, “Thomas Settle Jr., Reconstruction, and the Memory of the Civil War,” *The Journal of Southern History* 62.4 (Nov 1996): 689-726; Steven E. Nash, “‘The Other War Was but the Beginning’: The Politics of Loyalty in Western North Carolina, 1865-1867,” *Reconstructing Appalachia: the Civil War’s Aftermath*, ed. Andrew L. Slap (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2010): 105-134; Victoria E. Bynum, *The Long Shadow of the Civil War: Southern Dissent and Its Legacies* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Anne E. Marshall, *Creating a Confederate Kentucky: The Lost Cause and Civil War Memory in a Border State* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); and Adam H. Dombey, “‘Loyal to the Core from the First to the Last’: Remembering the Inner Civil War of Forsyth County, North Carolina, 1862-1876,” M.A. thesis (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2011).

reconstructed, we must look at the discursive relationship between individual memory, narrative construction, and reception.⁴

Taking anti-Confederate or “Unionist” memories seriously will recast the story of white Southern memory, identity, and political culture during the Reconstruction era. As the political ground of the Reconstruction South shifted, local white Southern elites responded by making one or another part of their reservoir of memory more salient. Repudiating the Confederacy and presenting themselves as Unionists at the beginning of Reconstruction, they could see themselves as carrying their section into the future. However, many of the same elites also had real ties to the Confederate government and had at various moments supported the war effort. After becoming disillusioned with Reconstruction—whether because of racial conservatism, anti-statist opposition to congressional power, or as some white Southern Republicans later felt, a sense of being abandoned by the national wing of the party—white dissenters privileged another set of memories that put sectionalism over nationalism, race over wartime loyalty, and which would enable them to close ranks with the apostles of the “Lost Cause.”

Though the contest over white Southern memory and its gradual transformation occurred throughout the Reconstruction South, the reservoir of memories that white Southern spokespersons could draw upon differed between different states and sub-regions. This paper will focus on North Carolina, where experiences varied greatly from east to west in the state, and

⁴ My understanding of political loyalty as a discursive process draws on Bertram Wyatt-Brown’s explanation of honor in *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 14-15, the scholarship on historical memory, as well as the theory of cognitive dissonance, which helps explain how internal contradictions can be resolved through the revision of personal memories and narratives. On historical memory, see particularly Geoffrey Cubitt, *History and Memory* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2007), as well as W. Fitzhugh Brundage, “Contentious and Collected: Memory’s Future in Southern History,” *Journal of Southern History* 76.3 (Aug 2009), 752-756 for the application of memory theory to Southern history. Joel Cooper, *Cognitive Dissonance: Fifty Years of a Classic Theory* (London: Sage Publications, 2007), particularly 6-10, provides an excellent introduction to the psychological theory.

where the politics of memory were the most deeply divided after the war. An effort will be made here to show how pervasive anti-Confederate or Unionist narratives were in the state, but the examination of how individual narratives shifted will require a closer focus on select spokespersons. Though the views articulated in these sources will not perfectly reflect the whole range of white Southern memory and the privileged position of these local leaders must be taken into account, their public claims to representation, to speaking *for* others and not just *to* others, also require critical consideration. Moreover, if it is true that the words of a political elite often dominated the public discourse of the nineteenth century, it is equally true that political elites did not always share the same memories, speak the same words, or hold the same expectations. It is a basic contention here that such differences matter to the unfolding of history.

The first section of the paper explores the wartime experiences of white North Carolinians that would make up the reservoir of memory that spokespersons could draw upon after 1865. It also looks at the multiple ways that such leaders attempted to define Unionism. The second section returns to the question of how historians should assess these claims about Unionism and what they meant to postbellum North Carolinians. The third section explains how personal and collective memory changed in tandem with the shifting political order of Reconstruction. After the possibilities and limitations that Congressional Reconstruction placed on political life became clearer, some whites stepped back from the discourse of Unionism, while others endorsed a biracial version of Unionist memory institutionalized in the Republican Party. The final section suggests that the latter group reconciled with the rest of the white South after 1877 by blaming black freedmen and Northern Republicans for Reconstruction's failures and by minimizing the legacy of white dissent and their own agency in it.

II. AMBIVALENT HEARTS AND AMBIGUOUS RECORDS

North Carolina's postwar conflict over memory had a real basis in wartime divisions. During the "secession winter" of 1860-1861, a majority of white North Carolinians staked out a moderate position between what they saw as extremists on both sides—disunionists in the Deep South and abolitionists in the North. Only after the commencement of hostilities at Fort Sumter and President Abraham Lincoln's call for volunteers to suppress the rebellion did public opinion in the state turn toward resistance and a commitment to the Confederacy. Some white North Carolinians felt so betrayed by Lincoln's actions and stirred by state and regional loyalty that they became enthusiastic Confederates, but rarely did they attach themselves unconditionally.

Men and women naturally had overlapping identities to nation, region, state, local community, and family, which could compete with or reinforce each other depending on shifting contexts. Moreover, political ideology, economic self-interest, and concerns for safety and security weighed heavily in the minds of Southerners as they made decisions about how to situate themselves on the shifting grounds of the 1860s. They acted as best they could on the politics of the moment, often leading to contradictory behavior.⁵ Thus, even as prominent Whig

⁵ This study conceives of "loyalty" as an attachment that is never unconditionally given to one entity, as men and women naturally have overlapping identities to nation, region, state, local community, and family. As David Potter demonstrated in his essay, "The Historian's Use of Nationalism and Vice Versa," *The American Historical Review* 67, no. 4 (Jul 1962), 925-26, 931-32, depending on a particular context, these loyalties can be competing or they could be reinforcing of each other. Paul Quigley, *Shifting Grounds: Nationalism and the American South, 1848-1865* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 5-6, addresses the problematic way in which some historians have continued to deal with Confederate nationalism as a box in which a person is either wholly within or wholly without and judged by how many individual are inside it. Instead, more in the tradition of studies on Southern Unionism, Quigley remains "sensitive to the existence of fine shades of loyalty that are contextual, relational, and changing." See also John C. Inscoe and Gordon B. McKinney, "Highland Households Divided: Family Deceptions, Diversions, and Divisions in Southern Appalachia's Inner Civil War," *Enemies of the Country: New Perspectives on Unionists*

politician Jonathan Worth reluctantly went with the tide of disunion, he wrote to his sons, “I am pained that I occupy a place in the public counsels, because I am impotent to do anything which my judgment and conscience approve.” He believed that the “the South is committing suicide,” but decided to yield to the opinion of those around him. He would go on to serve as state treasurer during the war, even though he believed that “it is evident to all good men that the Prince of Evil directs the operations of both belligerents” and that even if Confederate independence were achieved, “we shall have a worthless government.”⁶

White North Carolinians serving in the Confederate army and their familial ties to the home front helped mobilize hatred for the foe and inspire commitment to national independence. Yet as the demands of the war and the Confederate nation-state increased, tension began to rise and aggravate earlier doubts. Although most of North Carolina remained within Confederate lines during the war, the manpower and resources of the state were heavily depleted by the Confederacy’s need for soldiers, money, food, and war materiel. As a result, North Carolinians made great sacrifices for the Confederacy, but also deserted in greater numbers and became embittered toward their government. Leading men struggled to negotiate between the authority of their state to command loyalty, their private feeling that the war should not have happened in

in the Civil War South, ed. Inscoe and Robert C. Kenzer (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001), 54-72; David Brown, “North Carolinian Ambivalence: Rethinking Loyalty and Disaffection in the Civil War Piedmont,” in *North Carolinians in the Era of the Civil War and Reconstruction*, Paul D. Escott (ed.), (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 7-31; and Judkin Browning, *Shifting Loyalties: The Union Occupation of Eastern North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2011), 4-5 and My work follows from this same essential premise and extends its significance into the postwar years. For studies that instead emphasize the strength and persistence of Confederate nationalism, see Gary W. Gallagher, *The Confederate War: How Popular Will, Nationalism, and Military Strategy Could Not Stave Off Defeat* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997) and Anne Sarah Rubin, *A Shattered Nation: The Rise and Fall of the Confederacy, 1861-1868* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005). Works on Southern Unionist dissent are numerous and are catalogued most comprehensively in Gallagher’s historiographical essay, “Disaffection, Persistence, and Nation: Some Directions in Recent Scholarship on the Confederacy,” *Civil War History* 55, no. 3 (Sep 2009): 329-353.

⁶ Worth to T. C. and B. G. Worth, 13 May 1861, to D. G. Worth, 15 May 1861, to Joseph A. Worth, 13 Aug 1863, and to David G. Worth, 8 Dec 1863, all in *Correspondence of Jonathan Worth*, ed. J. G de Roulhac Hamilton (Raleigh: North Carolina Historical Commission, 1909), Vol. 1, 141-142, 144, 256-257, 273

the first place, and the opinions of those around them whose support for the war also ebbed and flowed. North Carolinians who saw Confederate President Jefferson Davis's policies of conscription, impressment, taxation, and martial law as threats to civil liberties formed a new political party of "Conservatives" and denounced their opponents as "Destructives." Public voices like the editor of the Raleigh *Standard*, William Woods Holden, positioned themselves as loyal dissenters within the Confederacy. In 1863 and 1864, local peace meetings took place throughout the state calling for negotiations for Confederate independence, reconstruction into the Union, or an unspecified peace settlement left intentionally vague to attract more supporters. Holden ran for governor in the fall of 1864 on such a platform, though he lost to the incumbent Zebulon Vance, a Conservative who opposed centralized Confederate authority while still urging faithful support of the war effort.⁷

Dissent also reached outside the bounds of political parties. Coastal Carolinians who had opposed secession and believed Union troops could better protect their property than Confederates resumed old loyalties after Union forces occupied the Outer Banks and eastern counties in early 1862. Disputes with their occupiers, especially after emancipation, would cause allegiance to waver again, further testifying to the ambivalent and shifting nature of loyalty. Beginning on the coast, white North Carolinians also joined Union regiments. With recruits making their way from the piedmont and mountain regions, the number of white natives in North Carolina Union regiments reached roughly 3,100, plus another 4,000 who served in regiments from outside the state. "It is clear that the South is divided within herself," wrote militant mountain Unionist Alexander Hamilton Jones in an April 1863 editorial. He maintained that even Confederate service should not be taken as a sure sign of Southern unity, for "there are now

⁷ George C. Rable, *The Confederate Republic: A Revolution Against Politics* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 150-153, 200-205, 245-247, 265-271

thousands who have been forced into the army, who do not believe the cause of the South is just any more than myself, and thousands more if the veil of disguise was thrown off would be of the same opinion.”⁸

Enclaves of Unionists, draft-dodgers, and Confederate deserters in the piedmont vexed Confederate authorities to the extent that Governor Vance called upon Confederate troops as well as the local home guard to capture dissidents. Orders that the militia should arrest anyone regardless of age or sex who could give information about deserters led to brutal atrocities. In Moore County, Colonel Alfred Pike tortured the wife of a well-known Unionist leader by suspending her from a tree by her thumbs, and when she still refused to reveal her husband’s location, he crushed her fingers between fence rails. Circuit Court Solicitor Thomas Settle Jr. reported that in three other counties “some fifty women in each county & some of them in delicate health and far advanced in pregnancy were rudely (in some instances) drag[g]ed from their homes & put under close guard & kept for some weeks. The consequences in some instances have been shocking—women have been frightened into abortions almost under the eyes of their terrifiers.” Unionists responded with their own acts of violence and by coordinating their activities through a secret organization, the Heroes of America, also referred to as the “Red Strings.”⁹

Although most white civilians did not take their frustration with Confederate authority to the extent of seeking its overthrow, many more registered their dissent by calling on the state and

⁸ Browning, *Shifting Loyalties*, *passim*; Richard Nelson Current, *Lincoln’s Loyalists: Union Soldiers from the Confederacy* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1992), 61-73; Alexander Hamilton Jones, *Knocking at the Door. Alex. H. Jones, Member-elect to Congress: His Course Before the War, During the War, and After the War. Adventures and Escapes* (Washington: McGill & Witherow, Printers, 1866), 13

⁹ Settle to Vance, 4 Oct 1864, as quoted in Crow, 697; Stephanie McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010), 124-132; Paul D. Escott, *Many Excellent People: Power and Privilege in North Carolina, 1850-1900*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 64

national government to become more responsive to their needs. Such was the goal of soldiers' wives and mothers who wrote to leading officials asking that their male relatives be exempted from army service or demanding that the government regulate the prices of essential foodstuffs.¹⁰

Varieties of dissent and their goals ranged across a wide spectrum, but by the end of the war almost everyone could remember some point of aggravation with Confederate authority. David M. Carter, a Unionist Whig who served two years in the Confederate army as a colonel and then represented the coastal county of Beaufort in the General Assembly, sensed by March 1864 that the mass of North Carolinians “have rejected, with bitter hatred, the men who led them into their present perils—they have lost confidence in the Confederate Government—they are appalled at the dangers and hardships which encompass them—their situation is entirely novel—and they turn instinctively to those old leaders, who foretold their present situation, for counsel and instruction.” By this, Carter meant men like himself who had opposed secession, resented the growth of the Confederate government, and desired an early surrender.¹¹

Out of ambivalent feelings, hard choices, and contradictory behavior, a shared Unionist memory emerged after Confederate defeat in April 1865, as individuals organized the fragments of the past into a narrative that helped them to make sense of disaster. William Woods Holden, recently appointed provisional governor, sounded several of its major themes in a proclamation to North Carolinians:

You have just been delivered by the armies of the Union from one of the most corrupt and rigorous despotisms that ever existed in the world.... Many of you have been torn from your homes, or hunted down like wild beasts in the forest, and forced into the rebel armies as conscripts, to fight for the continued enslavement of the colored race, and also for a state of slavery for yourselves and your children. Some of you have been subjected to imprisonment and torture on account of your opinions; and all of you have been

¹⁰ McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning*, 133-177, 182-183

¹¹ David M. Carter to William A. Graham in *The Papers of William Alexander Graham*, Vol. 6, edited by Max R. Williams and J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton (Raleigh: North Carolina Archives and History, 1976), 44-47

deprived for years, up to a recent period, of freedom of speech and of the press, and of every essential guarantee of liberty and of protection to person and property, which is contained in the Constitution of the United States.¹²

This narrative merged diverse individual memories of stress experienced under the Confederacy into a social memory of shared oppression. It also made clear that the Union armies were the heroes, Confederate leaders the villains, and the ordinary citizens of the state, including those who served in the Confederate army, victims.

Misgivings about secession provided one reason for claiming a Unionist past. William A. Graham, despite having represented his state as Confederate senator, recalled in a public letter in late 1865 that until the war started he was “conscious of having never by word or deed, through the press, by speech, or the support of public measures, done anything to encourage” secession, which he called “that fatal heresy, party madness and folly” and “the fruitful source of our present calamities.” On the basis of this record, he felt “it not presumptuous to present my views freely, in the wreck which has ensued, on the course now leading to re-union [*sic*] and harmony.”¹³ Even men who served in the Confederate army as officers or in the ranks reasoned their way around personal responsibility for the rebellion. Cicerro Charlotte, a twenty-two-year-old clerk and veteran of the 1st North Carolina Confederate Cavalry, maintained in his application for presidential pardon that “his general conduct during the war was marked by submission to circumstances and events that he could not control.”¹⁴ James A. Bryan, a twenty-one-year-old law student at the commencement of the war, offered a unique explanation for his role as an artillery officer by drawing a tenuous line between military service and political

¹² Raleigh *Daily Standard*, 13 Jun 1865

¹³ William A. Graham’s application for pardon, 25 Jul 1865 and open letter from William A. Graham to William E. Pell, 16 Oct 1865, both in Graham, *The Papers of William Alexander Graham*, 6: 334, 411

¹⁴ Cicerro Charlotte, Application for Presidential Pardon, Amnesty Papers, National Archives Microfilm Publication M1003, Record Group 109, Roll 38, accessed at www.fold3.com

attachment. He first denied that his service was “voluntary,” having been convinced by others around him that the South’s lack of men would eventually lead to conscription. He had “ever been a warm supporter of the cause of the union” and could “consciously say that my sympathies were never with the so-called Confederate Government.” He affirmed that his “opinions as a loyal citizen of the United States both before and *during* the existence of the Rebellion, & my position in 1860 as an advocate of the Union and in opposition to the doctrine of Secession...are well and publically known.” Thus, he concluded, “I can therefore say without fear of contradiction that my relations with the Davis Government, were a matter of necessity & not of choice.”¹⁵ The dissonance between public service and privately held doubts could be set aside under pressures of war, but when those pressures were gone, memories of dissent began to carry more weight and individuals could adopt new forms of political subjectivity.

Others believed that it took more to call oneself a Union man. Leander S. Gash, a state senator for the western part of North Carolina after the war, scornfully remarked that “it does not require as much moral courage to be a Union man now as it did during the rebellion, hence so much noise about it by men who were scarcely known to be Union men then.” However, such skepticism did not prevent Gash, who had been assaulted for advocating an early peace settlement in 1863, from basing his own public authority on having chosen the right side: “I claim to be a Union man of the original pane, when it took some moral courage to be a Union man.”¹⁶ During the war, proposals for an early peace settlement were typically reconciled with Confederate patriotism, but after the war they became evidence of Union loyalty. President

¹⁵ James A. Bryan, Application for Presidential Pardon, Amnesty Papers, National Archives Microfilm Publication M1003, Record Group 109, Roll 37, accessed at www.fold3.com

¹⁶ Leader Sams Gash, "To the Voters of the 49th. Senatorial District of N.C.", 2 Mar 1867, Raleigh *Daily Sentinel*, 5 Jul 1867

Andrew Johnson appointed William Woods Holden provisional governor of the state in May 1865 on the basis of his wartime dissent. On 18 October 1865, as Holden prepared for reelection, the *Standard*, now managed by Holden's son, reviewed the provisional governor's record—as Holden and his supporters remembered it. “When disunion was forced upon us” by the other Southern states, Holden worked to preserve civil liberties against “the hatred and vengeance of the Davis despotism” and he actively obstructed the “so-called Confederate government.” As soon as he possibly could, he struck for “PEACE *on the basis of reconstruction*.” He was an “an unflinching *national Union man*,” and his patronage appointments likewise “have been during the war consistent Union men, so far as they could be.”¹⁷ The qualification in this statement, *so far as they could be*, revealed the complexity and ambiguity of political loyalty during and after the Civil War. What should be even more striking is that such complexity and ambiguity allowed so many North Carolinians access to a Unionist narrative of the war.

¹⁷ Raleigh *Daily Standard*, 18 Oct 1865

III. LOYALTY'S CALL AND RESPONSE

Once it began to appear that almost everyone was appropriating the mantle of Unionism, it should not come as a surprise that claims about loyalty were sometimes treated with little credulity. In a satirical piece for the *Standard*, the fictional backwoods yeoman Tony Fulps commented, “We ar all union men now. Uncle Jim says his old coon dog lyon has got to be union, and its union every whar and every body, some how or somehow else.” John Flaps, a captain of the home guard who “ketched the desarters, and sich as he could’nt ketch he shot, he’s union.” Even Mr. Clump, a war man who paid bribes to keep his sons out of the fight and rejoiced at the torture of Unionist women, “he’s union too.” Fulps thought back on his own history—he had opposed secession, supported peace, voted for Holden in 1864, fought with “about twenty Ceceders” including Mr. Clump when he tried to take the oath of loyalty—but when he went to cast his vote for Holden in November 1865, he was shocked to be told by Mr. Clump that Holden had once voted for secession, that he was the disloyal candidate, and that anyone who supported Holden was a secessionist. “I sum times look at the glass and wonder ef its me....Are *you* union? Am *I* union? ...Have I gone astray, or am I what I was? This is a distressin question.”¹⁸ Another satirical piece copied in the Raleigh *Sentinel* from an out-of-state paper took the form of a ex-Confederate ready to say all things, and in substance nothing at all, in order to win election to the 1868 state convention: “I’m for Union—Union of some sort—dis

¹⁸ Raleigh *Weekly Standard*, 17 Jan 1866

Union or dat Union, or some other sort not yet discovered.”¹⁹ Claims to Union loyalty could appear deceptive, even empty, when individuals disagreed on what kind of Union the postwar United States was to become.

Historians have encountered the same problem in trying to assess pro-Union memories when they come from the mouths of Southern whites. There are three main ways that such memories could be assessed. First, memory could be taken as the factual truth, the past preserved intact for later recollection. However, most historians who use memory in their work understand it to be a subjective reconstruction of past facts, which ultimately says as much, if not more, about present concerns as about an objective past. A second approach to claims of wartime Unionism would be to treat them as self-interested deception. This cynical formulation assumes that politicians will say anything to win office, and it squares with what most historians of Civil War memory understand to be the primary goals of postwar Southern whites: the restoration of regional home rule and white supremacy. If these ends were in sight, one historian has suggested, they had no qualms lying about their allegiance.²⁰ Some may have been so deceptive, just as some may have been telling the absolute truth. However, for the great majority, an explanation that accounts for both self-interest and sincerity in hand, while doing more justice to human cognition, would be apt. Individuals commonly restructure their autobiographical narrative to see themselves as consistent, avoid internal contradiction, and adapt to new circumstances. After a time of rapid change, the memory of Unionism seemed like the easiest and most logical way for white Southerners with ambiguous and shifting loyalties to make peace with their own past. In the case of leading men, it also allowed them to seek peace for the politically exhausted

¹⁹ Raleigh *Daily Sentinel*, 6 Nov 1867

²⁰ Rubin, *A Shattered Nation*, 141-145, 166

constituents they represented. It does not require hints of duplicity or insincerity to say simply that they remembered the past as they needed to remember it.²¹

More can be learned from looking at how contemporaries evaluated narratives of political loyalty. When spokesmen presented their own record before the public, they often did so with a particular audience in mind, and their legitimacy as “representative” men relied on public validation. An article in the *Sentinel* suggests that public men felt the importance not only of remembering themselves as loyal, but also of appearing loyal. Darius H. Starbuck, a federal district attorney in North Carolina after the war, found himself charged with perjury in June 1867 for having taken the loyalty oath despite the fact that he had been a member of the secession convention. The accusation held little merit in his view since, as Starbuck explained, he did not sit in the convention when it passed the secession ordinance; he only joined in February 1862, and then as “a well known Union man, over an opponent entertaining the opposite principles.” While in the convention, he had hoped to protect the civil liberties of North Carolinians and if possible to help repeal the secession ordinance. Nevertheless, he wanted a full investigation to be made of his conduct in a matter “seriously affecting my character” so that “I may have the opportunity to vindicate my innocence.” He believed that his character was “dearer to me than to than life itself,” and “a deep sense of duty, which I owe to the Court, to my family and myself” motivated him to establish that “what I have done, I have done conscientiously.” He maintained

²¹ This explanation derives from the theory of cognitive dissonance. Positing that individuals do not like inconsistency, something that white Southerners had a lot of by 1865, the theory suggests that when one cognition—which is any piece of knowledge, whether a personal belief, a remembered action, or an awareness of the outside world—becomes inconsistent with another equally important cognition, the situation creates a feeling of dissonance, or internal discomfort. Dissonance can then be reduced in multiple ways, including altering one of the cognitions. See Cooper, *Cognitive Dissonance*, 6-10. In this case, the resolution is the reconstruction of personal memory. According to cognitive psychologist Jerome Bruner, the “self is a perpetually rewritten story” because it is always incomplete and individuals continually explore different ways of telling it. Our one-time expectations are defeated, abandoned, and revised in light of new experience, and such modification prompts a person to rethink where past experiences were leading. See Geoffrey Cubit, *History and Memory* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2007) 92, 107, where Bruner is cited.

that he “did no act with any hostile intent towards the Union, and never for one moment abandoned my earnest desire for its preservation.”²²

After investigating Starbuck’s case, Justice Bartholomew F. Moore found that the district attorney had acted properly on the advice of the attorney general’s office in Washington and that Starbuck’s loyalty was further confirmed by the recommendation of Benjamin Hedrick, a North Carolina Republican who had been forced out of the state in 1856, but remained close to Unionist circles. Finally, another leading Unionist on the court, Samuel F. Phillips, recalled a statement made by a justice during the 1865 convention that “Mr. Moore of Wake, and Mr. Starbuck of Forsythe, were the only men he knew, not within Federal lines, who had, during the whole war, uniformly been consistent Union men.” The court acquitted Starbuck, confirming his honor and loyal record, in Judge Moore’s words, “as well for the good of the public as in justice to Mr. Starbuck.” By broadcasting Starbuck’s testimony and the verdict in print, the *Sentinel* transformed its readers into an audience for the district attorney’s story and implied that they too should do justice to his claims.²³

The first election in North Carolina after the Civil War illustrated the dialectical process of reconstructing loyalty through public pronouncements and public perceptions. By October 1865, it had been clear for several months that Provisional Governor William Woods Holden aspired to be the state’s first elected governor in the reconstructed Union. In his past career as newspaper editor and politician, Holden had placed himself on every side of the major issues—he started as an apprentice at a Whig newspaper, but later became chief Democratic editor of the *Standard*, boldly asserting Southern rights and threatening secession; he moderated his position as a conditional Unionist after Lincoln’s election, and then reluctantly supported secession after

²² Raleigh *Daily Sentinel*, 22 Jun 1867

²³ *Ibid.*

Fort Sumter and Lincoln's call for volunteers; as a wartime "Conservative" he helped Zebulon Vance to win the gubernatorial chair in 1862, but became a peace candidate against Vance in 1864 and maintained an awkward balance of anti-Confederate dissent and Confederate loyalty until the war ended and Johnson appointed him provisional governor. Opportunism was the obvious theme, as his opponents, and later historians, would point out.²⁴ Nevertheless, opportunism did not prevent him from thinking of himself as consistent and portraying himself that way before the public. In fact, the mixed bag of his political past allowed him amazing flexibility during Reconstruction. Holden both responded to the shifting ground of the 1860s and helped create it: after the war, there would be "a new order of things," he declared in the *Standard*. Now firm Union men like himself would lead the state back into the Union, for "our people are not willing to trust the secession leaders or their allies in this business."²⁵ Holden saw himself as a man who had always been true to the real interests of his state, and in hindsight he believed that those interests had always been most secure in the Union.

Holden had to position his loyalty carefully before multiple audiences—President Andrew Johnson, who wanted a quick reconstruction settlement; Northern Congressmen, who doubted the legitimacy of so-called Southern Unionists; and his own North Carolina constituents, whose past loyalties and experiences stretched across a wide spectrum. Thus, he represented himself and the majority of North Carolinians as loyal citizens forced against their will to

²⁴ J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton's work on North Carolina attributed Holden's odyssey across the political spectrum to an ambitious and vindictive personality, *Reconstruction in North Carolina* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1914), 6, 343. More recent biographers of Holden have contributed to a more balanced and comprehensive portrait that recognizes his pragmatic approach to politics as well as an underlying democratic ideology that was consistent throughout. However, scant attention has been paid to how Holden rationalized his migration from one political position to another. See Edgar E. Folk and Bynum Shaw, *W. W. Holden: A Political Biography* (Winston-Salem, NC: John F. Blair, 1982), x, 241-243; Horace W. Raper, *William W. Holden: North Carolina's Political Enigma* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), xii, 252; William C. Harris, *William Woods Holden: Firebrand of North Carolina Politics*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987), 3-7

²⁵ *Raleigh Daily Standard*, 17 Apr 1865

participate in the Confederacy, and he tried to fill over three thousand patronage appointments with the “straitest sect” of Union men, but he also held out reconciliation and forgiveness for those who had taken up arms against the Union. Holden quickly realized that balancing the support of Johnson, Congress, and his state was more difficult than he imagined. Johnson backed his appointee, but Northerners criticized Holden for approving former secessionists for pardon or office, and ex-secessionists accused him of only giving pardons and patronage to his personal followers.²⁶

Then, in October, Holden’s secretary of the treasury, Jonathan Worth, challenged him for the position of governor, boldly asserting that Andrew Johnson “would rather a Union man, of any consistent record, were elected over Mr. Holden.” Despite the fact that Worth had reluctantly accepted secession, taken an oath to the Confederacy as state legislator and treasurer, and managed wartime finance until surrender, he privileged his opposition to disunion, constant disdain for the Confederacy, and longing for a return to the old union, sentiments which he had indeed been expressing in confidential letters through the entire war. Thus he saw a continuous line from his opinion in February 1861 to that of October of 1865: “I assent to this sense of duty with the painful feeling with which I recorded my vote in 1861, against the call of a Convention. If the result shall be now, as then, against the popular will, I shall have now, as then, a consolation of which nobody can deprive me...the conviction that I have done my duty.”²⁷

At the same time, Worth made it clear that he was more loyal to the South and North Carolina than his opponent. He issued a circular arguing that Johnson’s lenient voting

²⁶ Raleigh *Daily Standard*, 13 Oct 1865 and 23 Oct 1865

²⁷ Worth to John Pool & Lewis Thompson, 16 Oct 1865, to A. M Tomlinson, 18 Oct 1865 in Worth, 1:429-431, 435-436. Richard L. Zuber’s biography of Worth provides a detailed account of his life, but does little to analyze its many contradictory elements and paradoxes, *Jonathan Worth: A Biography of a Southern Unionist*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1965).

qualifications and amnesty policy meant that the president was willing to let penitent ex-Confederates vote and even elect officials like himself who had been politically active during the Confederate years. Reluctant Confederates could have a role in the South's self-reconstruction because they had maintained deep reservations about disunion and because their constituents recognized them as capable leaders. Worth maintained that his election would "encourage a spirit of mutual forgiveness" and reconciliation.²⁸

Public perceptions of Holden and Worth would determine the legitimacy of their claims. The *Standard* warned that "every man in North Carolina, who is a secessionist at heart, will vote for Jonathan Worth."²⁹ As Holdenites predicted, the counties that had once provided the strongest support for secession turned out to help win Worth the election, but Worth insisted that ex-secessionists supported him only "because they hate Holden, their late associate who mainly contributed to getting up the strife and then deserted them while they represented me as a constant and honest opponent." More likely it was Worth's public record as state treasurer and his invocation of Confederate pride that won their support, rather than his consistent Unionism. Regardless, Worth won both the election and the immediate skirmish for memory in North Carolina. "We did not go voluntarily into the late calamitous rebellion," he declared in his inaugural address. "The action of coterminous States forced us to take sides in the strife. We elected to go with our section; and having taken our position we acted with good faith to our associates and bore ourselves gallantly in the fight. Being vanquished we submit as a brave

²⁸ "Mr. Worth's Circular," published in the Raleigh *Sentinel*, 18 Oct 1865, in Worth, *Correspondence of Jonathan Worth*, 1:436-440

²⁹ Raleigh *Standard*, 19 Oct 1865

people.” The memory of the war would be a mixture of original Unionism, reluctant Confederate patriotism, and Unionism reborn.³⁰

Not all “Union men” felt that such a narrative represented their experience. The editors of the *Standard* concurred with Worth’s address up to a point, but “the truth of history” compelled them to take exception with the claim that North Carolinians “acted with good faith to our associates” because that seemed to “endorse Davis and the whole business of the rebellion from first to last. Forced as we were into the war, it was the earnest wish, at all times, of every true Union man in the State to get out of it as soon as possible on their terms.” “Every true man, Mr. Worth included,” the *Standard* insisted, desired release from the Confederacy and a return to the Union. The editors gave credence to Worth’s claims for himself, but his narrative of the war did not seem to portray accurately, in their view, the reality of anti-Confederate dissent and Union loyalty upon which the postwar government should be based.³¹

As the rivalry between Holden and Worth in 1865 reveals, narratives of the war were reconstructed in the mind, on the stump, and by an audience. One result of this process was conflict and division over the memory of Unionism. It also allowed individuals to respond to new political contexts, causing memory to shift over time. Political spokespersons sought not only to speak *to* an audience about their record, but also to speak *for* the past experiences and future expectations of others. The response of different segments of the listening public created a feedback loop by which spokesmen might take cues from their audience and revise future articulations of the narrative they told accordingly.

³⁰ Worth to J.M. Worth, 23 Nov 1865, and “Governor Worth’s Address to the People,” both in Worth, *Correspondence of Jonathan Worth*, 1:449-51, 457-459; Zuber, 206-210; Carter, 271

³¹ Raleigh *Weekly Standard*, 10 Jan 1866

IV. THE BONDS OF MEMORY RAVEL AND UNRAVEL

Reaction to Congress's intervention in Reconstruction policy increased the rift between the South's self-proclaimed Union men. In 1866, Congress passed what contemporaries referred to as the "Howard Amendment," which after ratification would become the Fourteenth Amendment. By defining national citizenship, reducing state representation in proportion to male citizens denied suffrage, banning from office anyone who violated an oath to the United States by participating in the rebellion, and repudiating rebel debts, the amendment's supporters meant to enshrine the fruits of Union victory in the Constitution. Then, in early March 1867, after the Southern states had refused to ratify the amendment and reports of former rebels persecuting white Unionists and freed blacks made their way north, Congress passed the first Reconstruction Act. This measure provided military protection for freedmen and white Unionists, declared the elected Southern governments provisional only, and set up a process for readmission to the Union that would require the election of delegates to a new state constitutional convention. This time, electors would not be limited by race, and Confederates who had been disqualified from office by the Fourteenth Amendment would not be allowed to vote. Only after submitting for Congressional approval a constitution that provided manhood suffrage and ratified the Fourteenth Amendment would the state's representatives be recognized. Cooperation with or resistance to these policies would impact how self-proclaimed Union men remembered their wartime past. Participating in Congressional Reconstruction might strengthen the movement

away from the Confederate past in both cognitive and political terms, while resistance to national power would necessitate a reevaluation of Southern Unionist memories.³²

Jonathan Worth's recollection of the war continued to shift as the political ground of the Reconstruction South shifted. When Worth ran for reelection, which was only six months later in the summer of 1866, he issued a circular that laid out the same Unionist credentials as before. Yet in the course of calling for "a *sincere* and *universal* reconciliation" between the sections and a disregard of radicals both North and South, he began to refer to Northerners as "our late foes."³³ This was not a complete revision of Worth's memory of the war, but it shifted emphasis from the secessionist foes that he sought to defeat in 1865 to those who he would resist throughout the rest of his postwar career.

Benjamin S. Hedrick, a friend of Worth's and supporter of his earlier campaign, pointed out to Worth that the remark seemed to ignore the individual basis of loyalty, giving support to the wrongheaded notion prevalent in Congress that "all are Union North and all are rebel South." Hedrick went on to argue that just as Lincoln never recognized the Confederacy officially, neither should Governor Worth: "The only parties in the contest are the lawful authorities of the U.S. and *the individuals* who set that authority at defiance." This interpretation would have been more consistent with Worth's stance as a Unionist, even though it would ignore the fact that Worth did set the United States government at defiance during the war.³⁴

Nevertheless, Worth responded, "All the people in each section did not concur in the war, but the great body of the people arrayed themselves on the side of their sections... [Northerners]

³² Some historians have addressed the roots of Southern Republicanism in wartime Unionism, most notably James Alex Baggett's *The Scalawags: Southern Dissenters in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003). However, looking forward from anti-Confederate dissent into the postwar period, rather than backward from Southern Republicanism reveals a more complex picture.

³³ "Governor Worth's Circular," June 1866, in Worth, *Correspondence of Jonathan Worth*, 1:613-616

³⁴ B.S. Hedrick to Jonathan Worth, 13 Jun 1866, in Worth, *Correspondence of Jonathan Worth* 1:620-21

were certainly our late foes.” The subtle shift in Worth’s memory of the war reflected his increasing sense that Northerners *in late 1866* were also his foes. In a letter to Darius Starbuck, Worth objected that the Howard Amendment would qualify a good majority of leading Confederates for postwar office, so long as they had taken no previous oath to the Union, while it would exclude men like himself who only acceded to the Confederacy as a “*de facto* government.” Writing to another correspondent, Worth defined his position in relation to both the past and the new present: “I am, as a Union man, as much opposed to the Howard amendment as I was opposed to Secession in 1860.”³⁵

William Woods Holden, on the other hand, after being defeated at the polls in late 1865, began a conversion from Johnsonian provisional governor to a strong supporter of Congressional Reconstruction and leader of the state’s biracial Republican Party. In a message to the people of the state, printed in the *Standard* in September 1866, Holden chastised voters for failing to elect undoubted Unionists to state and national offices and argued that the consequent reconstruction terms from Congress were a fulfillment of the president’s plan with which disloyal white North Carolinians had failed to comply. North Carolinians should accept it now, as he did, rather than continue their resistance and risk another civil war. Raising himself as a model for North Carolinians, he explained that “I could have gone to a party with which I once acted,” that is, the Democratic Party, now titling itself Conservative in the South and setting up opposition to Congress. “But, I could not do it. I could not [have] abandoned the cause of the Union. The path

³⁵ Jonathan Worth to B.S. Hedrick, 16 Jun 1866, to D.H. Starbuck, 29 Sept 1866, and to S.S. Jackson 10 Oct 1866, all in Worth, *Correspondence of Jonathan Worth* 1:628-29, 2:794-99, 2:840

of duty was rugged and thorny, but I continued to walk in it. I am in it still. I will never leave it.”³⁶ The path of Union led Holden to the Republican Party.

It would also bring him to a more inclusive definition of Unionism than he would have been willing to admit at any time prior to the final weeks of 1866. In late 1865, Holden had rejected the idea of black political inclusion because he felt that it “ignores hundreds of thousands of white Unionists in the South,” while “it puts the freedmen above them.” By the end of the following year, he endorsed the proscription of “disloyal” whites and extending suffrage to include only North Carolina’s “loyal white and black citizens.”³⁷ In 1868, Holden was elected North Carolina’s first Republican governor under a new state constitution, and at his inauguration, he proclaimed the end of the rebellion and the preservation of the Union, “not only on its former basis of liberty for one race, but its foundations are [now] broad enough for the whole people, of whatsoever origin, color or former condition.” While marking the culmination of a Unionist counterrevolution, he also asked that North Carolinians “come out of the caverns of the past” and forget “whatever is not worthy to be remembered.”³⁸ Such was the biracial Unionism of the future, as Southern apostles of Congressional Reconstruction imagined it.

Memory and state politics did not evolve only in response to actions in Congress. Prospective alliances within North Carolina and their implications for the future also demanded a reassessment of memory in a way that was even more psychologically arresting and politically divisive. A biracial alliance between whites and blacks who both claimed Union loyalty in the postwar period could entrench a pro-Union narrative in the discourse of white Southerners. On

³⁶ “To the People of North Carolina,” *Standard*, 26 Sept 1866, in William Woods Holden, *The Papers of William Woods Holden*, ed. Horace W. Raper, vol. 1 (Raleigh: Division of Archives and History, 2000), 291

³⁷ Quoted in Carter, *When the War Was Over*, 60, 257

³⁸ “Inaugural Address of Governor W.W. Holden,” in *The Papers of William Woods Holden*, 1:319, 325

the other hand, choosing a rapprochement with those whites who were considered responsible for the war could threaten to erase the public presence of anti-Confederate memory altogether.³⁹ The correspondence between John Pool, a leading manager of North Carolina's Republican Party, and David Miller Carter, a collaborator of Pool's who eventually parted ways, can clarify how the political alliances created by a Unionist narrative of the past began to unravel.

A prominent planter in coastal Pasquotank County, John Pool had been a Whig politician prior to the war, candidate for governor in 1860, and an opponent of secession in early 1861. Once North Carolina left the Union, he supported the Confederacy, but also advocated an early peace settlement in the state legislature. Following the surrender, Pool was one of North Carolina's two unseated senators-elect, and when Reconstruction took a more radical turn under Congressional direction, he blamed secessionists for the bloodshed of the war and for the difficulty that the Southern states now faced in reentering the Union. In late March 1867, Pool gave an address to the people of North Carolina through the *Standard* that characterized the conflict in loaded terms for present and future generations. "Secession was treason," Pool declared. "When the war began, it was rebellion. When it was continued, from obstinacy or revenge, beyond all reasonable hope of success it became wholesale murder. Thus will posterity characterize the guilt of those who inaugurated it, and persisted until disarmed and subjugated by actual force from legitimate authority." More grievous, following the election of disloyal men in

³⁹ Recent scholarship has given greater attention to biracial political alliances in the postwar South. Jane Dailey's study of the Virginia Readjuster Party's biracial coalition in *Before Jim Crow: The Politics of Race in Postemancipation Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000) challenges the tendency to see "white racial animosity and anxiety as inevitable" (78). Hyman Rubin III's *South Carolina Scalawags* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 2006) reaches a similar conclusion that some of South Carolina's scalawags found "white supremacy neither inevitable, nor desirable" (xxvi). Finally, Margaret M. Storey's excellent study *Loyalty and Loss: Alabama's Unionists in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Press, 2004) suggests that even though African Americans and white Unionists had very different motivations for working together, mutual interest could bring them into alliance. The question that should be raised from this scholarship is to what extent shared interest and political collaboration holds the potential to revise racial assumptions.

late 1865 and 1866, the “secession element” raised its head, engaged in a more thorough organization, and revived passions against its enemies: “The guilty leaders of treason dared even parade the epithet of *traitor* as applicable to those in the blood of whose sons and brethren they had so lately stained their hands, and under whose counsels of mercy they had just escaped, unrepentant and ungrateful, a traitor’s doom.” Pool was determined that amnesty and pardon for leading Confederates and reconciliation within the state should not mean a reversal of moral signifiers. He considered it presumptuous that such a group of wicked individuals “assume to constitute the State, and claim that anything said or done against them is said and done against North Carolina.” Pool spoke for the loyal majority that he still imagined and insisted upon, and he became even more upset whenever outsiders assumed that all white North Carolinians were disloyal instead of discriminating between individuals.⁴⁰

Pool’s address allowed him to set his current political position on Reconstruction within the context of the past and to make a clear statement about North Carolina’s future. Concerning the disqualification of certain rebel leaders, he blamed the “secession element” for bringing it upon themselves. Moreover, he approved of extending the suffrage to black freedmen on grounds of civic justice, the need to counterbalance conservatives’ appeals to white solidarity, and ultimately the future safety of the Union: “The question of securing protection and suffrage to the freedmen has thus become connected with the national question of providing against a repetition of the rebellion.”⁴¹ Two years later, Pool, by then a Republican senator, gave a Fourth of July oration in Elizabeth City that emphasized the importance of American Union to all, black and white. Pool told his audience that though he always revered the national holiday, “it was

⁴⁰ John Pool, *Address of the Hon. John Pool to the People of North-Carolina* (Raleigh, N.C.: Standard Book and Job Office print, 1867)

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

never celebrated in the full significance of the immortal Declaration which taught that *all* men are born *free* and *equal*, and are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, among which are life, LIBERTY, and the pursuit of happiness.” A lengthy struggle had been necessary to force a full recognition of those rights, and now “as we enjoy this Freedom and this Liberty, we should remember—*all of us*, white and black—that they impose obligations and duties—to use the blessings vouchsafed to us...never forgetting to teach, by precept and example, a love for our country, reverence for the flag and *loyalty to the Government!*”⁴² The applause of his audience echoed the sentiment.

Yet not all white North Carolinians did, including some of those leaders who stood alongside Pool in the early phases of Reconstruction and had once spoken similar words of mystic, resurgent Unionism. David Miller Carter hailed from Hyde County on the coast, not far from Pool’s native Perquimans, and he too was a wealthy pre-war Whig. Carter likewise opposed secession, accepted the Confederacy enough to serve as a colonel in its army, and then supported peace while in the state assembly, writing to William A. Graham that the people would no longer confide in the leaders who got them into the war. After the surrender, Governor Holden reappointed him to his prewar position as state solicitor, and he maintained alliances with Union men who would later divide between Republicans or Democratic Conservatives. By the summer of 1867, Carter was attracting criticism from conservative men who suspected him of radical sympathies. Kemp Battle, a prominent North Carolinian whose political career was similar to Carter’s, defended him in a pseudonymous article in the *Sentinel*, though the editors decided, “all men will be judged by the company they keep.” In fact, Carter did find himself at a crossroads as

⁴² Elizabeth City *North Carolinian*, 8 Jul 1869

to the company that he would choose to keep, though the time that he took to make a decision suggests the agonizing uncertainty that must have preceded that choice.⁴³

Pool invited Carter to confer with him and other Union men at the Republican Party convention on September 2nd that would meet to decide on party principles prior to the state constitutional convention. Although Carter did not attend, doubtless he disapproved when it rejected resolutions that Pool had introduced to formally disavow white disenfranchisement and confiscation. Holden and several African American leaders wanted to keep these options on the table, mainly as leverage. Pool asked for Carter's aid again, this time in supporting his more moderate and less antagonistic faction of the Republican party, and the Raleigh *Register* assumed that Carter stood alongside Pool and others like D.H. Starbuck, B.F. Moore, and Thomas Settle in adhering to Republicanism despite alienation from the Holden faction.⁴⁴

Carter's response came in a public letter to Pool, printed in the *Sentinel* on November 1, 1867, in which he abjured the complicated alliances of North Carolina Republicanism. He first acknowledged Pool's efforts to prevent secession in 1860-1861 and the support that Carter gave him in those days. Carter then reviewed his own service in the Confederate army, a duty that prevented him from voicing apprehensions about the success of the war. His position in the Assembly later required him to speak and he, like Pool, blamed wartime leaders for not pushing for an early peace settlement. He further accused the state's leadership of folly for not accepting the president's plan of reconstruction or one based on the Fourteenth Amendment. However, now that North Carolinians were given the choice to vote for or against holding a constitutional convention according to the congressional plan, Carter argued that North Carolinians should vote

⁴³ David M. Carter to William A. Graham in *The Papers of William Alexander Graham*, 6:44-47; Raleigh *Sentinel*, 22 Jun 1867

⁴⁴ John Pool to David M. Carter, 19 Aug 1867 and 1 Oct 1867, David Miller Carter Papers, Southern Historical Collection, UNC; Raleigh *Register*, 6 Sep 1867 and 15 Oct 1867

it down because “that plan embraces *universal negro suffrage*, and *limited white suffrage*. It clothes with the highest rewards of citizenship every negro in the State, and it puts under the ban for life the most intelligent and capable of the whites.” An additional point of irritation was Congress’s failure to repeal the wartime tax on cotton and help the South rebuild its shattered economy. He appealed to the North for renewed clemency and a harmony of interests: “I repeat, what the North demands of the South is not this plan or the other, but *loyalty*. If our people will demonstrate their wish to identify themselves with their Government in feeling and sentiment—to defend it and support it, as their ancestors did—the expectant North will throw this plan to the winds, and receive us with open arms.” For Carter, sectional reconciliation had become more important than building a biracial alliance of Union men within North Carolina.⁴⁵

The shift was subtle. Anti-Confederate memories, disdain for Southern obstinacy in the first two years after the war, and a continued insistence on postwar Union loyalty all entered into Carter’s narrative. Yet now an alliance of loyal men North and South required significant concessions from African Americans and greater incentives from the North. Moreover, by emphasizing present over past loyalty, Carter implicitly elevated reconciliation between white North Carolinians above the alliances and possibilities offered by the Republican Party. This party stood the best chance of institutionalizing Southern Unionist memory because of the alliance that white members would have to maintain with their black colleagues, who had even more reason to claim the just deserts of Union loyalty. The discourse of anti-Confederate memory opened possibilities for political alliances, as it did for John Pool, but Carter realized that memory could also set limits on political sociability, standing in the way of a fuller rapprochement with other former Confederates.

⁴⁵ David M. Carter to John Pool, 1 Nov 1867, David Miller Carter Papers, Southern Historical Collection, UNC

Memory affected politics, and new political contexts affected memory. While Pool's collaboration with black North Carolinians would sustain a Unionist narrative, Carter's movement into the Democratic Conservative Party demanded a memory of white Southerners united for national independence in 1861-1865 and united against the demands of Reconstruction thereafter. In subsequent years, Carter refused offers from North Carolina's Republican leaders to rejoin the party, and in 1872, he ran for a congressional seat against the incumbent Clinton L. Cobb, a young native white Republican who introduced a bill to prosecute the Ku Klux Klan and served on the Southern Claims Commission that handled the petitions of Southern Unionists for wartime damages. While the local conservative paper assailed Cobb for vindictive radicalism on the one hand and the endorsement of possibly fallacious claims, the Republican paper charged Carter with having participated in a biracial "Union League" prior to his apostasy from the Republican party. Though Carter alluded to having done so in his 1867 letter, the needs of his position in 1872 required his firm denial.⁴⁶

Kemp P. Battle, another rising figure in North Carolina politics, business, and education, grasped something essential about the Reconstruction period when he wrote to Carter back in 1867, "I think our people are plastic. They give up old ideas & adopt new ones with wonderful submission to events."⁴⁷ John Pool envisioned the possibilities for the future in both generational and millennial terms. Pool, who was only 39 at the end of the Civil War, wrote to Carter, four years his junior, "the times are revolutionary and changing.... The management of public affairs must soon pass into the hands of the energetic young men of talent, who have already made a mark. The old men who now feel that we are pushing them off the stage, will soon pass off by

⁴⁶ Elizabeth City *Economist*, 8 Jul 1869; Elizabeth City *North Carolinian*, 24 Jul 1872

⁴⁷ Kemp Battle to David Miller Carter, 22 Jun 1867, David Miller Carter Papers, Southern Historical Collection, UNC

Nature's order, & take with them the remnants of the *antebellum* period. A new heaven and a new earth (politically) must be the theatre of our exploits."⁴⁸ The future would indeed be different and it would be made by a new generation, though it would be a generation that paid homage to Confederate memory rather than anti-Confederate memory, and it would usher in a future for the New South far different from the one that Pool, in his political youth, imagined.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ John Pool to David M. Carter, 8 Nov 1867, David Miller Carter Papers, Southern Historical Collection, UNC

⁴⁹ Though Barton Myers suggests based on the Southern Claims Commission records that Unionists were of an older age than the shapers of Lost Cause memory, and that this prevented the former from gaining a hold on generational memory, the Union men who were most prominent in the political discourse were actually quite young. The malleability of personal memory may be necessary to supplement one based on generational change. Myers, "Rebellions Against a Rebellion': Southern Unionists in Secession, War, and Remembrance," Ph.D. dissertation (Athens: University of Georgia, 2009), 223.

V. “LOST CAUSE” MEMORY AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF A SOLID SOUTH

Carter lost his 1872 campaign for congressional office, and Republican governors presided in North Carolina for five years after that. However, during the 1870s, disenchantment with the Republican Party increased at a broader level. The use of federal intervention against the Ku Klux Klan revived rhetoric against an aggressive federal government, and in resistance to national authority, conservative whites found a “usable” Confederate past.

As historian Jeffrey Crow has shown, North Carolina’s former Confederate governor, Zebulon Vance, returned to his old position in 1877 by running a campaign that employed “Lost Cause” memory to his advantage. Admiration for Confederate sacrifices, memorialization of the Confederate dead, and a cult of martial valor shared by both rebels and Yankees entered into the narrative that Vance and Democratic newspapers told. Vance pointed out that he had opposed secession and as wartime governor placed the interests of North Carolinians above the demands of Confederate authorities, but more importantly, he told voters that North Carolinians had not died in vain, that they fought for a just cause—the Confederate one—and were proud of the sacrifices they made for it. His opponent, Thomas Settle Jr., revived the core components of the Unionist memory by portraying North Carolinians as unwilling rebels who were victimized by their Confederate and state leaders. Settle’s campaign revealed weaknesses in the Union narratives that ultimately made the “Lost Cause” more enduring. White North Carolinians undoubtedly found a version of events that allowed them to be proud of their sacrifices for the Confederacy more satisfying than one that told them they were victims. If they considered

themselves victims at all now, they had more reason to consider themselves victims of the postwar Republican governments that Democrats accused of corruption. “Lost Cause” memory allowed Southern whites to band together against Reconstruction and redeem the South from black freedmen, carpetbaggers, and scalawags. Vance’s triumph became an assertion of white unanimity both past and present. As the newly elected lieutenant governor put it, this was the “great vindication by the white people of the State.... Truth has triumphed over falsehood— Right over wrong.”⁵⁰

The growing power of “Lost Cause” collective memory, alongside disgust with party competition, corruption, and black political power, resulted in a hegemonic “Bourbon” Democratic Party in the “Solid South.” Some men who still held onto Unionist loyalties and anti-Confederate memory like Daniel Russell continued to defy Bourbonism. Elected to Congress as a member of the Greenback party, this native white North Carolinian must have startled his colleagues when in 1879 he called for “unqualified loyalty to the flag, universal obedience to and absolute equality before the law, complete toleration, entire freedom of speech, of thought, and of action.” This, he maintained, would not become possible “until the last vestige of Bourbonism is trampled out; until the white South shall cease to whine and weep over the lost cause, and shall frankly and sincerely confess that the God of battles was right and we were wrong.” Fusion politics would lead to his election as Republican governor in 1897, but the views he espoused on Civil War memory were the exception by late 1870s.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Crow 717-726; Thomas J. Jarvis to Z.B. Vance, 16 Nov, 1876 quoted in Crow 723

⁵¹ Russell’s speech in the House of Representatives, 21 Apr 1879, Russell Papers, and *Public Documents of the State of North Carolina*, 1897, Doc. A., both quoted in Jeffrey J. Crow and Robert F. Durden, *Maverick Republican in the Old North State: A Political Biography of Daniel L. Russell* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977), 40, 81

John Pool's reflections in 1880 said more about the failure of Unionist memory to create a new political heaven and earth. In response to a public letter with the heading "The Solid South—Why Solid, and who is Responsible," Pool blamed Northern Republicans more than the South's Bourbon Democracy. "I am sorry I cannot say that the Southern people have been without fault, but I can say they have had ever-recurring provocation and have been steadily growing less and less in fault." Pool directed his bitterness toward "Republican managers North," for whom it did not matter who was a loyal Southerner and who was not. "Their proscription and malevolence have fallen, like the rain of heaven, alike upon the just and the unjust," Pool lamented. "No amount of patriotic devotion to the Union, no heroic sacrifices in the cause of social order, no acknowledged correctness and acceptability of sentiments, nor even party services, have sufficed to relieve any native white man from the dark pall of distrust and degradation which they have kept hanging over the whole Southern people." At the same time, Pool characterized the Southern freedmen as "ignorant, unthrifty, docile and submissive" and accused Northern Republicans of trying to make them the governing power in the South. Pool believed that this involved no agency on the part of the freedmen, nor kindness on the part of Northerners. It merely inflamed racial prejudice and allowed Northern Republicans to maintain their party in power. By abandoning Southern Republicans and using black freemen to stoke the flames of racial prejudice, they had given "a new phase" and "a new form" to sectionalism, driving all white Southerners into the Democratic Party. Having dedicated his life to the principle of nationalism over sectionalism, Pool threw his support to the Democratic presidential candidate, former Union General Winfield Scott Hancock.⁵²

⁵² John Pool to Joseph B. Cherry, 16 Aug 1880, printed as "The Cherry Letter," (Washington, D.C.: R.G. Polkinhorn, 1880)

Pool's perspective missed the role that "Lost Cause" memory had played in undermining the Southern Republicans, just as he failed to recognize African Americans as equal actors in the biracial party he had once dreamed of establishing. There was some truth to the accusation that Northern Republicans never fully appreciated the potential of dissenting Southerners to transform the region. Northern congressmen scapegoated Southern Republicans, black and white, for the failure of Reconstruction in the region, and turned instead to the non-reconstruction issues that mattered more in their own states.⁵³ At the same time, Southern Republicans like Pool scapegoated the North, and in doing so eased their own abandonment of the fight. Northerners did not create Southern racial violence or postwar sectionalism. That had more to do with the politics of "Lost Cause" memory. Pool's explanation allowed him to join the new political orthodoxy of the Democratic South, and it showed that the issue of sectionalism and sectional reconciliation had replaced the conflict between Southern Union men and Confederates. By becoming complicit in white line politics and a Democratic Solid South, Pool even contributed to this development and helped empower the hegemonic memory of the "Lost Cause."

⁵³ Works by William Gillette and Richard H. Abbott demonstrate the lack of commitment at the national level and among the Northern public toward cultivating and sustaining the Republican Party in the Southern states. See Gillette, *Retreat from Reconstruction, 1869-1879* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979), 367, 371-376 and Abbott, *The Republican Party in the South, 1855-1877: The First Southern Strategy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 235-244. Michael W. Fitzgerald builds on these insights, adding that real and perceived corruption, factionalism, and the difficulty that Southern Republicans had in creating a positive public image undermined the staying power of Southern Reconstruction. *Splendid Failure: Postwar Reconstruction in the American South* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2007), 82-83, 117-118, 119, 182.

VI. CONCLUSION

In 1865 and 1866, a startling number of white North Carolinians believed that they had been Unionists, whether because they opposed disunion during the secession winter, gave aid and comfort to Union forces, joined the Federal army, deserted from the Confederate army, or lost faith in the Confederacy some time before Appomattox. Anti-Confederate and Unionist narratives helped them to make sense of their past and to adjust to a restored nation. The fluidity of memory also opened up new possibilities for party alignments and black political inclusion.

Had a shared memory of Southern Unionism been better cultivated in late 1865 and 1866, it is not inconceivable to imagine a political alliance between white Southerners and other groups who attached practical and sentimental value to Union loyalty—Northern whites and the black freedmen. Certainly all of their interests were different, but if their interests led them in the same direction, into a political coalition or party based on the benefits of national power, could assumptions such as distrust for strong federal government and others like racial prejudice have shifted over the following decades? There were those who believed it possible.

As it turned out, responses to Congressional Reconstruction and second thoughts about the shifting alliances of the postwar South undermined such a possibility. While Unionist memory became institutionalized in the biracial Southern Republican Party, this development also allowed conservative whites to quarantine it there in the long run. Meanwhile, native white Republicans blamed the national party for caricaturing them just as they would violent conservatives. In fact, by 1880, enough of those 1865 “Union men” had clasped hands with former secessionists and Confederates that the differences between white Southerners were less

discernible. Southern Democrats and ambivalent white Southern Republicans placed the adjustment of white interests over any significant political interaction with African Americans. This choice naturally emboldened the apostles of “Lost Cause” memory, which not only marginalized the struggle for black liberty, as many scholars have pointed out, but also encouraged later generations to remember white Southerners as having been consistent and unconditionally loyal Confederates.

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