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The Southern Historical Collection and Civil War and Reconstruction History: A Past and a Future

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History should be constructed so that Negroes shall appear not only as the recipient of liberty but as the winners of it, not only for themselves but also for others.—Charles H. Wesley^[1]

Suppose the slaves of 1860 had been white folk. Stevens would have been a great statesman, Sumner a great democrat, and Schurz a keen prophet, in a mighty revolution of rising humanity. Ignorance and poverty would easily have been explained by history, and the demand for land and the franchise would have been justified as the birthright of natural freemen.—W. E. B. Du Bois^[2]

In the late nineteenth century and increasingly in the early twentieth century, despite an outpouring of published reminiscences, diaries, regimental histories, innumerable books written in tribute to the soldiers and women of the Confederacy, and widely publicized reunions of Union and Confederate soldiers, many white southerners concluded that the state of southern history was dismal. The South, they believed, had been short-changed in histories of the United States that favored the Northeast and the West, misrepresented southern history, and slandered southerners. Beyond the attention paid to men of the Revolutionary generation like Thomas Jefferson, American history had failed to account for the contributions of the South to the history of the United States; it had failed signally in writing the history of the Civil War and Reconstruction.

But the blame was not laid just at the door of northern historians. Southerners believed they were themselves partly to blame for this state of affairs through their inattention to the preservation of historical records, indeed, a “striking disregard of the importance of records,” as well as their failure to found great libraries as northerners had. It was this perspective that galvanized J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton to call for the establishment of a southern archive, “a great collection of Southern material, gathered in one place.”^[3] New England had the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University; the Midwest, the Clement Library at the University of Michigan, the Burton Library in Detroit and the Wisconsin Historical Society at Madison; the West and Southwest, the Bancroft Collection and the University of Texas Collection, but where, Hamilton asked, “is any great inclusive collection for the South?” A collection that would tell the story of the rich and “the life and thought of the masses of the people,” Washington and Jefferson and “a host of lesser lights,” and “the realities of slavery.”^[4]

In large measure Hamilton’s vision has been realized. The Southern Historical Collection (SHC) at the University of North Carolina is today a premier archive of records and manuscripts pertaining to the

South, and one of the most widely consulted in the United States, attracting scholars as Hamilton had hoped from around the world. In the field of Civil War and Reconstruction history, it has been a particularly important resource for scholars. It is a measured victory, however, for Hamilton's vision for the SHC has had some unintended benefits. The collection has, as Hamilton wished, advanced the study of the South but not always in the manner Hamilton had in mind. Its establishment was ultimately to redound to the benefit of the least literate and the most oppressed of southerners whose sense of the "realities of slavery" and the Civil War and Reconstruction was the opposite of Hamilton's. And, it remains a fertile ground for continued explorations of southern history. This paper looks at some of the ways the SHC remains a vital resource for established historical questions and explores ways in which it might support our efforts to pose new questions about the Civil War and Reconstruction South.

As Hamilton, of course, knew—though his argument for a southern collection might indicate otherwise—the history of the South in the Civil War and Reconstruction had not lacked for attention. In the South, the work of documenting that experience had begun even before the surrender at Appomattox and by the early twentieth century had been thoroughly embraced.^[5] The founding of the Southern Historical Society in 1869 by prominent Confederate veterans was part of the movement in the South was part of a much larger effort, couched in the vernacular of pride and justice, to reinvent the past. Vindication would be "an acquittal from posterity," wrote Wade Hampton.^[6] Nor had general American history textbooks, most published by major northern publishing houses, rejected the interpretation of events of the war and its aftermath favored by white southerners.^[7] But southern critics were still not satisfied and would not be with anything short of an interpretation that gave as the cause of the Civil War, not slavery but states rights or "economics." The "seeds of sectional discord," according to a report of a textbook committee commissioned and published by the Sons of Confederate Veterans, "were laid in the field of economics." And they wanted slaves reduced to spectators and loyal Confederates. In 1931, southerners erected a memorial at Harpers Ferry to Heyward Shepherd, a free black who died during the raid led by John Brown, in honor, they said, of the loyalty of slaves during the war. The memorial to Shepherd was meant to stand for the "character" of the masses of black people "who so conducted themselves through four years of war that no stain was left upon a record which is the peculiar heritage of the American people."^[8]

As well, even as Hamilton and others spoke of the need for a southern archive, the intellectual landscape was shifting even more momentously in favor of the South and the version of history white southerners believed all Americans should learn and believe in. Two developments signaled most clearly signaled this shift. Among white southerners themselves, there were repeated calls for greater objectivity and a turn away from the female-authored romantic portraits often supported by the Daughters of the Confederacy, and newly trained southerners with training in graduate programs at Johns Hopkins, Columbia, and Harvard were beginning to write scholarly, "scientific" studies. These too glorified the Old South, slavery, and the Confederate cause and castigated the era of Reconstruction. There was no change in interpretation, just a marshaling of footnotes as proof of a scientific approach.^[9]

The effort to found the Southern Historical Collection (SHC) was designed to further this objective. It would, founder J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton told audiences in the South and North, make possible a "fresh interpretation of the nation's history." In speeches, newspaper articles, and private audiences with prospective donors, Hamilton tirelessly promoted the project as the key to rectifying the South's historical negligence in valuing and preserving documents. Much had been lost but hidden treasures remained to be uncovered in "storage rooms and outhouses . . . closets, garrets, and cellars." Building upon the work of antebellum southern historical societies, Confederate memorial societies, and the fledgling efforts of the University of North Carolina Library, the SHC would document the history of the South from a southern point of view. The SHC would be a home for these papers and available to scholars from around the world, the foundation for a new history of the South and the nation.

“Sectional the collection may be,” Hamilton wrote, “but the purpose of it, its ultimate goal, is national.” Hamilton titled one of his appeals for support, an article that appeared in the *Baltimore Sun* in 1928, “A National Southern Collection at the University of North Carolina.”^[10] The idea of the SHC as a national treasure, he knew, would resonate well in the rest of a nation enamored with the romantic idea of reunion.

In the first decades of the twentieth century, as the faculty at southern universities became increasingly defensive about the disproportionate role played by northern universities in the training of southern professors and occasionally critical of some of the views these students brought back to the South, the establishment of southern archives took on a new urgency. The establishment of university manuscript collections like the SHC was also heir to a larger movement to institutionalize the collection of historical papers and artifacts which gained momentum in the mid-nineteenth century United States with a proliferation of state and local historical societies nation-wide.^[11] Perhaps the most numerous of these societies were ones organized around claims of ethnicity. Americans of French, Polish, African, Jewish, Norwegian, German, Hispanic, Dutch, Russian, Irish, Scandinavian, Norwegian, Swiss, and Finnish ethnicity, for example, organized local and state historical societies to correct what each of these groups saw as omissions or racism in standard accounts of United States history. In the South, historical societies were founded in nearly every state between 1831 and 1854, and here the inherent partiality of archival collections to the study of the elite was particularly drawn.^[12]

In his pleas for support of the SHC, though, Hamilton described a more democratic mission which would distinguish the SHC from historical societies established before the Civil War. “It will contain,” he wrote, “not only papers and letters of prominent families but all kinds of records which reveal the life and thought of the masses of the people.”^[13] Yet, while Hamilton talked about a collection that would be a resource for telling the story of all southerners not just the elite, it is doubtful that he actually believed this. At least he seems to have devoted his energies primarily in searching out planter papers.

Mostly, Hamilton envisioned a collection that would articulate the world view of elite white men and women and thus validate dominant southern traditions and understandings of race and society. It would invalidate William Wells Brown’s pioneering effort to account for “the part which the Negro took in suppressing the Slaveholders’ Rebellion.”^[14] Some two decades before he launched the SHC, Hamilton himself had devoted much effort to precisely the opposite agenda. His seven-hundred-page *Reconstruction in North Carolina*—begun as a dissertation at Columbia under the legendary unreconstructed historian William A. Dunning—argued for white supremacy despite disclaimers in the preface proclaiming his intent to write an objective study. Hamilton wrote that he “sought throughout the work to divest himself of any prejudice,” that he “held no thesis, but has sought to present the truth, and, in the main, to relate rather than interpret.”^[15] Yet, he concluded that one of the most important legacies of Reconstruction was a lasting belief in state rights as a bulwark against “a repetition of the past, when selfish politicians, backed by the federal government, for party purposes attempted to Africanize the State and deprive the people through misrule and oppression of most that life held dear.”^[16]

The book is in other ways as well hardly evidence of an exercise in restraint. Hamilton also maintained that the Klan had served mainly a positive force in southern life for having “lifted the South from its slough of despond,” and as a result of its existence “women of the South once more could leave their doors without the accompaniment of a deadly terror.” It was a necessary “remedy” which had accomplished “much of good” in giving “heart” to “despairing whites” and ensuring that “the supremacy of the white race and of Anglo Saxon institutions was secure.” Whatever impact it had on politics was “purely incidental.”^[17] “I write in a field,” Du Bois could only conclude as he brought *Black Reconstruction*

to a close, “devastated by passion and belief . . . I stand at the end of this writing, literally aghast at what American historians have done to the field.”^[18]

While Hamilton’s vision has resulted in one of the richest manuscript collections in southern history, what Hamilton could not have imagined was that this collection would one day be used to tell a story much different from the one he and his colleagues were penning, that its riches would be mined and marshaled to tell the story of slaves and their descendants; indeed, that one day, arguably the most popular subject of monographs on the South would be the history of black southerners, though this has not been an unproblematic development.

Today, we also recognize that the accounting to be gained here is a partial one, a partiality informed by the political, social, and intellectual world in which the SHC was born and the traditional class and race biases of archival collections which made them principally repositories for the records of the literate who were generally the politically powerful, the social and economic elite.

The planters whose papers Hamilton so assiduously collected, looked at with different objectives and methodological tools, conveyed a history at odds with the Dunning School and played an indispensable part in enabling later generations of scholars to revisit and substantively revise the school of thought Hamilton championed. The result has been a near wholesale revision of the work of turn-of-the-twentieth-century scholars like Herbert Baxter Adams and William Archibald Dunning, and the students they trained respectively at Johns Hopkins University and Columbia University who collectively produced a body of work that dominated the field of southern history for more than half a century.^[19] The long term effect has been no less than revolutionary. This development had been aided over time by a growing and ever expanding commitment to collecting the records of the poor as well as the rich and black as well as white.^[20]

The establishment of archives at universities also made possible another important milestone in the relationship between archives and scholars—more equitable access to manuscript and other archival collections. Unlike antebellum historical societies which had been organized as private organizations with paid memberships and whites-only admission policies, many of which remained in place into the second half of the twentieth century, most archives at universities did not adopt overtly discriminatory policies. It is well to recall that well into the twentieth century, most southern manuscripts resided either in historical societies which as private organizations could maintain discriminatory admission policies or remained in private hands where access was equally restricted and granted to historians on a personal basis, often by way of letters of introduction.^[21]

The footnotes to Ulrich Bonnell Phillips’ *American Negro Slavery* (1918) are exemplary in this regard, a study in race privilege and archival provenance. Typical are such citations as: “records in the possession of Wm. Bridges of Richmond . . . For copies of them as well as many other valuable items I am indebted to Alfred H. Stone of Dunleith, Miss.”; “Diary of Dr. J. P. R. Stone. MS. in the possession of Mr. John Stone Ware, White Castle, La. For the privilege of using the diary I am indebted to Mr. V. Alton Moody of the University of Michigan”; “MSS. in private possession”; “MSS. in the possession of Mrs. Hawkins K. Jenkins, Pinopolis, S.C.”; “The Manigault MSS. are in the possession of Mrs. H. K. Jenkins, Pinopolis, S.C.”^[22]

Yet Phillips’ work has been hailed as exemplary for its use of archival sources, particularly the records of the southern planter class. Indeed, some scholars have argued that Phillips’s pioneering work in manuscript sources mitigates the racism that inhabits his work.^[23] This misleading and mistaken view has not been seriously challenged. The more remarkable and relevant historiographical facts, however, are the weak grounding in manuscript sources that characterized the work of the first generation of

professional white historians of the South and the fact that for Phillips and other white scholars of his generation, membership in the white race not only gave them privileged access to professorships and publishing houses but also to the privately-held source materials. It is of no small consequence that the vast majority of the manuscript papers Phillips consulted for his work came by way of access to papers held in private hands, not from publicly available archival collections.

A decade later in 1929, when Claude G. Bowers published *The Tragic Era: The Revolution after Lincoln*, little had changed. Like Garner and Phillips before him, to the extent that he consulted manuscripts, Bowers relied mainly on privately held papers.^[24] The principal source materials consulted by historians of the Dunning School were not archival manuscripts but public records such as newspapers, court and legislative records, and other published documents such as census records, the *Official Records of the Rebellion*, memoirs, and travel accounts. In the work of historians of the Dunning School, manuscript papers constitute the least cited type of primary source. Neither James Garner's *Reconstruction in Mississippi* published in 1901 nor J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton's *Reconstruction in North Carolina* published in 1914, for example, made any significant use of manuscript sources; the few they do cite were still largely privately held.^[25]

Unsurprisingly, none of these sources seem to have been available to Afro-American historian Charles H. Wesley as he was writing his seminal book, *The Collapse of the Confederacy* published in 1937, more than a decade after the founding of the SHC. Wesley does not cite any southern archival collections; he relied instead on published memoirs, official documents, and reports and manuscript papers at the Library of Congress. Wesley's work thus reminds us of the obstacles black historians faced and why, despite their limitations, the founding of archives at universities was so important.^[26] In the end, this development removed a significant encumbrance to scholarly pursuit, benefiting the work of white as well as black scholars.

The transfer of planter papers from private to public hands made them more accessible to historians who had no social or family ties to the slaveholding class and its descendants or whose race alone would have denied them access to privately held papers. Thus they helped pave the way for a transformation in the writing of southern history. John Hope Franklin would not have to depend on private doors opening up to him—a doubtful proposition at best—although he did have some trouble occasionally with public ones.^[27] Within a decade of the founding of the SHC, Franklin, then a Ph.D. candidate at Harvard, arrived to conduct research for his dissertation which would be published in 1943 by the University of North Carolina Press as *The Free Negro in North Carolina, 1790–1860*. A few years later, Helen G. Edmonds's research for what would become *The Negro and Fusion Politics in North Carolina 1894–1901* (Chapel Hill, 1951) also took her to the SHC.^[28] Franklin and Edmonds were, thus, in the vanguard of revisionist scholars to make use of the SHC to challenge the traditional portrait of the Old South and the Civil War era South painted by historians of the Dunning School largely prior to the founding of university-held archives such as the SHC.^[29]

By the middle of the twentieth century, a small number of white historians had begun to take issue with the Dunning School and to make systematic use of the SHC.^[30] These studies expanded upon the work of black scholars like Brown, Wesley, Du Bois, Benjamin Quarles, Alrutheus A. Taylor, and Franklin and gave more attention to the “life and thought of the masses of the people.”^[31] A growing body of work, then, explored and reversed the previous focus on battles and generals, the heroic Confederate cause, and the tragic reconstruction period. To Hamilton, for example, Robert E. Lee was a study in what Hamilton called “sturdy Americanism.” In this way Lee became an engineer of a reunited nation and one of its “preservers,” no less than Abraham Lincoln. Lee, Hamilton wrote, was “the greatest force in the country toward the creation of a national spirit” and “sturdy Americanism” defined his “essential greatness.”^[32] An icon of honor and courage in defeat, wrote another historian, Lee “bequeathed to

Americans a heritage more glorious than the triumphs of . . . any conqueror of whom we read in the history of any country.”^[33]

This attempt at a political realignment of American history, as Hamilton well knew, could not be so easily realized, a principle obstacle being the insistence of former slaves that no national spirit had been created. In small and large ways, African Americans challenged the proposition that sectional peace was good enough especially, a peace that rested on the denial of the basic rights of citizenship to millions of American citizens, an “almost unspeakable disregard for the neglect of the basic problems of freedom and democracy that existed at the end of the war.”^[34]

On the surface, ratification of thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth amendments to the Constitution seemed compelling enough evidence that the nation supported black people’s challenge; that the state was prepared to remake itself in the name of democracy secured in 1865, as it had been at the nation’s founding, by force of arms. It is perhaps ironic that the ratification of the fifteenth amendment and the death of Lee both came in 1870. Together these two events might have signaled, at least symbolically, the birth of a new order. But one only has to turn to the outpouring of sentiment—North and South—that accompanied Lee’s death to see a different construction in the making. In its eulogy of Lee, the *New York Herald*, wrote of a

Mighty voice of sorrow, resounding throughout our country, and extending over all parts of the world where his great genius and his many virtues are known. For not to the Southern people alone shall be limited the tribute of a tear over the dead Virginian. Here in the North, forgetting that the time was when the sword of Robert Edward Lee was drawn against us—forgetting and forgiving all the years bloodshed and agony—we have claimed him as one of ourselves; have cherished and felt proud of his military genius as belonging to us; have recounted and recorded his triumphs as our own; have extolled his virtue as reflecting upon us—for Robert Edward Lee was an American.^[35]

Years of bloodshed were to be wiped away, “erased by this common bereavement.”^[36]

Southern archives arose to sustain the story of a “common bereavement,” of a virtuous fight led by virtuous men. They were seen as—and marketed as such to prospective donors—repositories for documents that would tell story of a great civilization that had endured the crucible of war and destruction, of a people who had revolted against a tyrannical government and lost the military contest but not the ideological one nor their claim to American citizenship, a people who now deserved the magnanimity of the government they had rebelled against. This paradigm proved sturdy and defiant not just in the face of insistent calls early on by black scholars like John R. Lynch, George Washington Williams, W. E. B. Du Bois, Charles H. Wesley, John Hope Franklin, and Helen Edmonds and white scholars like Herbert Aptheker, for studies of the Civil War and Reconstruction that told the story of black people’s contribution to the victory of the United States and the re-framing of questions of freedom, liberty, and citizenship. To recognize what even white southerners knew at the time: that black people interpreted the Civil War, as one wrote, as “a crisis in their lives that must be taken advantage of.”^[37]

Southern archival collections, even those whose origins developed out of and continued to inspire a narrow sense of whose papers were worthy of collecting, whose voices worthy of remembering, nevertheless became rich repositories for recovering the voices of the those less powerfully armed in the exercise of sovereignty. During and after the Civil War, the southern elite whose papers dominate the holdings of the SHC and other similar collections famously recorded much about black people and these records eloquently refute much of what former masters and mistresses “remembered” in

reminiscences after the war. These collections document, that is, a record of the oppressed and the world they envisioned. They record ideas about freedom, liberty, and democracy at odds with those expressed by white southerners.

The postwar ideology of white superiority took its pulse in large measure from the opposing fight waged by African Americans which challenged racism and also from the reverberations of freedom struggles elsewhere. The SHC is therefore a critical resource for telling the story of the Civil War and Reconstruction as the story of liberty writ large, the stage for which was the South, the North, the West, the Caribbean, Africa, Europe, and Asia. But the paradigm of “sturdy Americanism” must be abandoned fully.^[38]

As an intellectual project, the story of the making of freedom in the United States continues to be hobbled by the notion of “sturdy Americanism” abetted by a scholarly focus on the coming of freedom in the United States rather than its making or realization (despite the many monographs which take as title or subtitle the phrase “the making of freedom” or some variant of it), more with readjustment—of race relations, political power, economic recovery—than with liberty. In this analysis, freedom arrived by way of the Emancipation Proclamation, northern victory in the Civil War, and the postwar constitutional amendments. Then it was “lost”—through the reestablishment of white supremacy, disfranchisement, and Jim Crow Laws with the concomitant judgment that Reconstruction must ultimately be “judged a failure.” “Perhaps,” Eric Foner concludes, “the remarkable thing about Reconstruction was not that it failed, but that it was attempted at all and survived as long as it did.”^[39] Other scholars have concluded that despite its limitations, Reconstruction was a revolutionary moment that must be judged for what it did achieve, as reflected in the constitutional amendments and black institutional development, as much as what it did not.^[40]

The failure versus revolutionary dichotomy, while useful perhaps for broad assessments is ultimately too inexact and cumbersome, too narrow an analytical tool, to capture fully the defeats and triumphs that measured the making of freedom and the struggle for liberty in the era of the Civil War. With fifty years of revisionist scholarship behind us today, we pride ourselves on having overturned and thoroughly debunked the scholarship of the Dunning School. We are certain that Hamilton, Dunning, Philips and others of their generation would scarcely recognize the historical South which this body of work has unearthed. This certainty though might be a bit premature.

As a result of sustained archival research by historians over the past forty years or so, we know certainly a great deal more today about the complex labor systems that emerged after emancipation but even that is a quite partial understanding. An obvious strength of manuscript collections is the extraordinary record they contain of the postwar labor settlement—labor contracts, account books, diaries and letters that detail the protracted struggles over land and labor along with the violent outrages that took black people’s lives in staggering numbers. One gets a sense of the stunting of the human condition more generally. Less clear—though not impossible to see—are the ways in which black people’s claims to freedom and citizenship, that is, the struggle to realize freedom, articulated, shaped, and informed the discourse surrounding the definition of citizenship and liberty in the postwar South. And how, in turn, the claims of black people and the counterclaims of white Americans were locally and globally situated.

A paradigm that situates the South and southerners transnationally as well as locally and nationally might suggest new and fruitful ways of thinking about the making of freedom in the era of the Civil War and Reconstruction. Such a paradigm would need to: pay more attention to the power of the state; consider new modes of domination which resonated transnationally; and would take seriously the transnational experiences of white southerners. Comparative studies have a long and respectable history in southern

history. Charles Wesley and Dorothy Porter were among its earliest students and advocates; in the 1980s historians began to fully embrace this methodology.^[41] Studies of the transnational experience may prove equally rewarding and result in a more complicated knowledge of the South and southerners.

Scholarship on the Civil War and Reconstruction social history remains tethered to static portraits of southerners that root their ideas about race, nation, freedom, liberty and democracy squarely, and nearly solely, with the “American” experience of these ideas. Intellectual provincialism thus handicaps the study of the South in the same way that inattention to comparative frameworks once did. In studying the transnational experience of southerners we might discover, as scholars did in comparative work, “the possibility of redefining traditional problems, revealing what needs explanation, shaping fresh periodization, discovering unsuspected relationships, proving what seemed ordinary to be rare or unique and what was assumed exceptional to be quite common.”^[42]

The defeat of the Confederacy and the emancipation of slaves forced a confrontation over all of these ideas that Americans believed fundamental to their experiment in republicanism and, in particular, the question of liberty. Former slaves and former masters and their descendants, perforce, had to rethink and renegotiate all that they associated with their identities as Americans and new citizens, to take on multiple and shifting identities.^[43] This was nowhere more apparent than in the struggle for liberty, to redefine citizenship, the function of the state, and their relationship to each other. Former Confederate soldiers who ended up on the payroll of the Egyptian government in the 1870s, former slaveholders who sought to regain a financial footing by encouraging trade with black Caribbean nations, southerners who found themselves fighting Afro-Cubans in 1898, like former mistresses forced to negotiate the sale of an old dress to a former slave, were all challenged in some fundamental way to think hard about these ideas and the ideology of white supremacy. The challenges they faced at home made their experiences abroad all the more salient, and unsettling.

Throughout the Civil War, as slaves abandoned plantations and farms, or otherwise defied the authority of masters and mistresses in countless ways, white Americans were called to account for these actions. Of the many languages available to them, they chose one that placed black people outside of the transnational experiences shaping notions of citizenship, race, the state, power and modernity—the modern world let loosed by industrialization and the abolition of slavery. They couched black people’s resistance to slavery and the Confederacy in the less discomfiting language of “disorderly conduct,” a language that had served antebellum southern slave society well but whose adaptation to the rapidly shifting ground of freedom proved more vexing.

We need studies that focus not just on whether or not former slaves secured garden plots but also on the language black people used to frame their demands for garden plots. Such studies might explore where and how this language drew on transnational experiences and conversations on the meaning of freedom and liberty and the making of the modern world, and the role of southerners in these conversations. During the Civil War, black women in South Carolina sang, “We must fight for liberty.”^[44] How did they come to frame the problem in this particular way? Where did they get the language and what did they mean by it?

We, of course, know the answer in part. In the warmongering so pervasive in southern political discourse in the decades before the Civil War, in the often desperate wartime pleas of masters and mistresses for slaves to stand by them, in the discourse of northern free labor and antislavery ideology, in the rumors of black rebellion that swept the Atlantic world and the knowledge of actual ones, in the memory of slave resistance during the American revolutionary war and the ones who made it to freedom, slaves caught wind of the ideas of freedom and liberty that were defining the modern world. More often than not these ideas appeared as but fragments of the full-blown project but by piecing them

together with the experience of slavery, slaves came to understand something of the birth of the modern world and to see how they might contribute to it—enough to couch their ambitions in the language of freedom and liberty. In raising their own voices, they *collaborated* in the making of modernity. Black people, in other words, did not simply borrow a language of liberty but helped to shape and define it.

When slave women sang about fighting for liberty, they revealed an understanding of a particular concept of freedom, that is, “liberty,” along with the dynamics of power. Liberty could be fought for.^[45] And victory would be citizenship. Thus from among a crowd in South Carolina gathered on 1 January 1863 to celebrate the Emancipation Proclamation there arose the voices of three former slaves, “singing, as if by impulse that could no more be repressed than the morning note of the song-sparrow—‘My country, tis of thee, Sweet land of liberty, Of thee I sing!’”^[46] White southerners put such expressions down as a contagion of “disorderly conduct.”

Throughout the western world, liberty was an intoxicating experience—for American revolutionaries in the fight for independence from England no less than for French Jacobins, Russian peasants, or slaves in Haiti or the United States South. It was only when the intoxication spread to former slaves, however, that it became problematic and appeared unseemly, reminiscent actually of the widely disparaged exaltations of the ordinary white Americans in the wake of the American Revolution. The calls for liberty by former slaves were nonetheless different from that expressed by the generation that fought the war against England for independence.

As John Hope Franklin writes, the generation that fought the war against England for independence “could hardly be called a spontaneous, inspired struggle for independence,” and “never assumed the proportions of a truly heroic struggle.”^[47] As well, in the aftermath of the Civil War, liberty in the United States would have to stand without slavery, which was the point of black soldier Calvin Holly’s letter to the head of the Freedmen’s Bureau, Oliver O. Howard. The former slave’s letter was an indictment of federal sovereignty as practiced in the South and a call to democratic principles based in liberty. The “colored people,” Holly wrote, were “being outraged *beyond humanity*” (emphasis added), “knocked down for saying they are free,” fired upon, their homes set afire and the people themselves thrown into the houses to be “consumed in the flames.” In the language of republicanism and modernity, Holly exhorted Howard to act:

I think the safety of this country depends upon giving the Colored man all the rights of a white and, and especially the Rebs and let him know that their [sic] is power enough in the arm of the Government to give justice to all *her loyal citizens* (emphasis added) I would suggest to you if it is not incompatible with the public interest to pass some laws that will give protection to the colored man and meet out justice to *traitors in arms* they are doing all they can to prevent free labor, and reestablish [sic] a kind of secondary slavery. Now believe me as a colored man that is a friend to *law and order*, I believe without the intervention of the General government in the protection of the colored people there will be trouble in Mississippi.^[48]

Holly wrote in the language of republicanism but questioned the efficacy of a democracy that could not protect its loyal citizens against traitors when it had at its disposal the instruments of state power to do just that. The “secondary slavery” allusion spoke to the understanding that freedom was not liberty and the state could be reckless in protecting it. It was a language understood and used by former slaves throughout the Atlantic world.^[49] Such reckonings of freedom and justice challenged racial ideology generally and “the Northern idea of wrong, justice, injustice, humanity, and inhumanity.”^[50] In Guyana, when the governor of Georgetown, facing labor unrest, read the Riot Act to striking workers,

concluding with the slogan “God Save the King,” one of the workers reminded him that “The king don’t know a dam’ about us. He don’t care about us and our pay.”^[51]

Slaves, wrote a Union officer “bolster themselves up by making the uninformed believe [sic] that this is a war upon African slavery,” a war, that is about emancipation. The call for liberation was not far behind. “We defy anyone to dispute our *rights* as soldiers and men,” Henry Carpenter Hoyle wrote, shifting in the process, the debate to something more than emancipation/freedom, that is, to liberty and human status in America, “to make that national community live up to the promises inherent in its political and judicial rhetoric.” This indeed was one of the original insights of Du Bois.^[52] It was the point made by a former slave who informed her former mistress that “she cared no more for white folks than she did black ones” and “would take one to the court house just as soon as she would the other,” when the white woman attempted to intervene a quarrel between her and another woman. The Civil War was about emancipation; the postwar struggle about liberty. When the white woman sought advice from her husband, he advised her that her options were frankly limited. They were nonetheless powerful options: She could either “dismiss them or shoot them,” a response that exposed the precariousness of the state of liberty in the United States.^[53]

Black people pushed the nation to move beyond an ideology of anti-slavery to an ideology of liberty. That they did so in part by adopting the “the liberal model of debate and discussion” is significant but the error in our thinking about this and the language of liberalism lies in the belief that, 1) black people did not contribute to this model and 2) that their language replicated precisely the dominant discourse. The latter view is particularly pernicious: The dominant discourse, after all, held that African Americans had no place in the modern body politic where as Du Bois noted, “Liberty, Justice, and Right get marked ‘For White People Only.’”^[54]

Manuscript sources reveal the extent to which “the very concept of right often stood revealed as a void.”^[55] How else but as a rights void were black people to interpret the sentiments of planters like Thomas Gaillard of Alabama who, predicting a “sanguinary and merciless war,” encouraged white southerners to remember that they “must do battle not only for their civil and political rights but for their property, their lives, and their domestic households.”^[56] How as anything but a rights void could the call of the Mississippi *Jackson Clarion* in the fall of 1875 for white Mississippians to “remember their inalienable rights, and not forget that the price of liberty is eternal vigilance,” and thus compel black people to vote the Democratic ticket. Should they resist or refuse, the *Clarion* advised white people to be prepared to kill them.^[57] The price of liberty was defined here as premeditated murder, a rights void.

I want to turn my attention now to address more specifically how the SHC might help us to tell the story of the call to liberty, to re-imagine the Civil War and Reconstruction as an emancipatory project that forced black and white people to move forward even when they may have looked like they were standing still. We have come quite a ways from the plantation as romance period of writing characterized, for example, by the narrative written by Herbert Ravenel Sass, a descendant of a once powerful planter family, which claimed forthrightly:

Slavery is not a good name for the institution as it existed on the plantations of the Carolina Lowcountry. The planter did not speak of his negroes as slaves; he called them his ‘people’ and as he spoke of them he thought of them—they were his people, not his chattels, and many of them were his loved and devoted friends.”^[58]

And from the declarations of historians like Francis Butler Simkins who, writing in 1947, deemed the emancipatory project a mainly uncomplicated affair. “Even though the period was marked by many outbursts of race hatred and conflict,” he wrote, “on the whole it was characterized by racial

harmony.”^[59] This was not the way Keziah Brevard experienced the Civil War or Reconstruction. Troubled enough by the political state of affairs in the spring of 1861 and the refusal of her slaves to obey, Brevard heard from a female slave child a blunt assessment of white rule. She “has told me,” Brevard wrote, “I did not know how my negroes hated white folks & how they talked about me.”^[60]

Brevard’s experience of slave knowledge was replicated countless times in southern households throughout the war and the postwar periods as former mistresses and enslaved women moved to confront the meaning of liberty. Nancy Johnson’s story is instructive. After leaving her mistress to seek freedom, Johnson was forced to return because she could find no other place to live. Another way to say this is that she was unable to pursue liberty. When she went back, she stated, “my old Missus asked me if I came back to behave myself & do her work & I told her that I came back to do my own work.” When she refused to milk the cows and work like a “nigger,” saying she was free, her former mistress called her a “stinking bitch.” Johnson left again and even though she still had no place to go to, this time she did not return.^[61]

Black women’s pursuit of liberty compelled former mistresses to bargain with them, and white women found that it was not the same as bargaining with slave women. Even when one gave in to the refusal of a slave assigned to cook, to make the bed in addition, that person remained your slave. “It seems humiliating,” Eliza Andrews wrote, “to be compelled to bargain and haggle with our former servants about wages.”^[62] The experience, however, contributed to the pursuit of liberty by white women on their own account, though this development was slower in coming and harder for white women at the time to see as a positive one.

All such matters call attention to the ways in which slave emancipation and the struggle for liberty called into being new multiple identities necessary to navigate the new terrain. This is not the flat landscape of resistance versus revolution. White women facing the direst poverty put aside and gave up fundamental parts of who they were or had been in the hopes of maintaining some small part of their old selves. Even if broke, they could maintain the appearance of racial superiority by hiring black women who had even fewer resources to cook, clean, and wash for them. But sometimes they could only afford to hire black women by hiring out their own labor power. They could not keep black women from dressing in the latest fashions but they could use that desire to maintain themselves in the latest fashion. But far from dissipating, the challenges to white supremacy mounted. Importantly, such challenges did not have to take the form of “resistance” traditionally defined to present fundamental challenges as the experience of white southerners in Africa during the waning years of the Reconstruction era attest.

In the story of one small group of former Civil War soldiers who tried to recoup their pride and fortunes in Africa, the contradictions and absurdities of racism abound. It is also a story that suggests the profit to be gained from the exploration of questions of identity, freedom, and liberty from a transnational perspective.

In 1870, former Confederate Major General William W. Loring went to Egypt. He would be joined that year by at least fourteen other Americans and over the next eight years, a total of some fifty men who had fought in the Civil War had made their way to Egypt—half former Confederate soldiers and half, former United States Army. During their service there, they welcomed former General William T. Sherman and former general and United States President Ulysses S. Grant for brief visits, Sherman in 1872 and Grant in 1878. These Americans became in effect ex-patriates—even if temporary ones—in Africa. They were paid soldiers—mercenaries—in Khedive Ismail’s Egyptian Army. Ismail needed help building an army that might one day help him win independence from the Ottoman Turks who nominally controlled the country and, in the interim, assistance in scouting—with the goal of annexing—neighboring countries for the empire he intended to build for himself.

White men who believed black people inferior and Africa, a continent of uncivilized tribes, found themselves under the command of Africans working for so many guineas per month. They signed contracts to serve at the pleasure of “His Highness the Khedive . . . dependent upon the faithful and official performance of all official duties as well as upon good moral habits and behavior.” What did they bring to this experience and take away from it? How did it change or challenge their racism?

Charles Iverson Graves, a former Confederate naval officer, was one of these men. Graves’s papers in the SHC document in excruciating detail his three years in Egypt. He and his wife, Margaret Graves, who remained behind in Rome, Georgia exchanged hundreds of letters. Like his fellow Americans, Graves joined the Egyptian army, in his case taking a commission as Lieutenant-Colonel of Engineers. His reason for going, he wrote, was simple: “for the same reason that Joseph’s brothers went—to get corn for my family.” This was after nearly a decade of struggling but failing to make a profit from cotton.^[63]

Cairo was a sophisticated city, and Graves and his fellow Americans experienced a vastly different culture—Turkish baths, market women selling roasted corn, harems, mocha coffee, Istanbul tobacco, camels, and black people, some of whom were slaves but most of whom were not. Among the latter were black people who held important positions in Egyptian society.^[64] Graves admired much of what he saw, but the freedom of black Egyptians horrified him. Encountering the “horrors of racial equality” in the presence and power of a “black Nubian Negro . . . the most powerful man in Egypt after the Khedive’s own sons,” he refused to give the customary salute by rising from his seat when the African entered the room. Rather than “give deference to this negro,” he wrote, “I kept my seat.”^[65]

When the encountering the more familiar—captured slaves in Dafur, for example—the Americans were gladdened. Though rare, such sights comforted them in their view that Africans were “fit for nothing else in fact.” On an expedition to Sudan, one American wrote of the Kodofan people: “They are a mean-spirited, incontinent, rascally race in whom I see the material for very good slaves.” Another, a former colonel in the United States Army, thought to win the good will of a powerful Ugandan chief whose land the Khedive coveted with, among other things, red cloth, a mirror, and a music box that played Dixie. He also gave himself the title M’Bugaru, the White Prince.^[66]

Like other Americans in Egypt, Graves faced a new order but in a strange land. He could not help but be revolted at the spectacle of racial equality. At the same time, he was powerless to change Egypt.^[67] He was after all a hireling of an African leader. Like former slaves, he signed a contract pledging loyalty, obedience, and good moral conduct. In Egypt, the Americans found that membership in the white race counted for little as they found themselves sometimes treated as servants as when James Morgan was asked by the prefect of the Cairo police to fetch a glass. His dignity insulted as a southerner and a gentleman, Morgan threatened to resign.^[68] “Africa is a country accursed of God,” Marylander Charles Chaillé-Long wrote his father. The dances put on to honor him, he thought resembled the dances of African Americans and he viewed them likewise with scorn.^[69]

Even though Americans in Egypt regularly disparaged African culture and customs, they could hardly return to the United States unchanged in their racial beliefs. Those who arrived in Egypt in 1870, and perhaps those who went in 1871 as well, would have been privy to the excitement surrounding the 1871 premier in Cairo of Giuseppe Verdi’s opera, *Aida*. Some no doubt attended as guests of the Khedive.^[70] They relied on Sudanese soldiers some of whom were international travelers. Some had served in Mexico. Others they relied on as interpreters and guides.^[71] For each of them, it was their first encounter with so cosmopolitan, globally situated, and fluid a culture where Englishmen and Frenchmen mingled with Turks, as well as African peoples from Sudan, Uganda, and Ethiopia. The experience as soldiers in the Egyptian Army challenged their sense of racial privilege as had emancipation and the

struggle for liberty in the South. Papers in the SHC can tell us much about this challenge and other experiences former Confederates had in the emerging world of modernity.

The point is that the South after the Civil War would be less and less an insular, provincial place, and the turn to an increasingly aggressive program of racial proscriptions against African Americans may say nearly as much about the challenge to white southerners' sense of identity from without as from within. Turn as they might to romantic revocations of the past, the South also had to confront modernity. Charleston, having lost with the destruction of slavery, profits from the immense trade that called at its port, at the turn of the century pinned its hopes of reinvigorating the port on building trading networks with the West Indian nations as the primary focus. To this end, it launched the South Carolina Inter-State & West Indian Exposition Company and held a world's fair in 1901/1902 to promote the port.^[72] The fair was a dismal failure, but it highlights the growing sense that no matter how distasteful they found the experience, there was no road that would take them back the past.

My interest in these questions and southern history in general is both professional and personal. In the year that the Southern Historical Collection was founded, my mother was an eight-year-old girl in the upcountry of South Carolina and my father, twelve years old. Both were destined, because some of their ancestors had been slaves, to grow up in a world blighted by racism—of poor schools and low expectations for black children, of hard labor trying to make a crop of cotton and buy a piece of land. They were witnesses and victims of the refusal of the nation to commit itself to democratic principles. Yet they were also witnesses to and participants in the on-going struggle for liberty. This symposium is most fundamentally, it seems to me, about that struggle and the work of scholars in trying to understand it. And I think most of us gathered here would agree that we have only pierced the outermost layer of that understanding.

My paper is in a fundamental way a talk about my parents and their parents and grandparents and the shaping of our knowledge about their world. I wanted to consider here the connections between the world they inhabited and the archival world that we rely on so heavily to reconstitute that world. It is an opportunity to think about, for example, my maternal great grandmother's relationship to her community and sense of self and identity, indeed the multiple identities she adopted—what it may have meant to her to be the first person in her rural community to own an automobile but also a to be a wife, the mother of thirteen children, and a farmer and about one of those children who was my grandmother and why she insisted on taking out her gun periodically, going outside and shooting into the air. She said it was to remind white people that she had a gun. I think her action had something to do with the making of liberty into the twentieth century, that it stood as a declaration of liberty's still unmet promises and the multiple and complex identities the defense of that declaration called forth. I must say in conclusion that this is what I think about each time I enter the Wilson Library to explore and grapple with the world my great-grandparents, grandparents and parents inhabited and to learn something about their efforts to shape it.

In conclusion, while I have spent a good bit of time here talking about the SHC as a key resource in this pursuit, I would like to close with some thoughts about its limitations. Because it took so long for the SHC and similar archives to mount serious efforts to seek out papers in the attics and closets of African Americans, so much has been lost: family Bibles, letters from black soldiers from the South fighting the wars of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries to their families and the letters they received, receipts of all kind that would document spending patterns (beyond what we have in the records of plantation stores), tax returns, marriage certificates and birth records before state governments began collecting this information. African Americans might have responded as enthusiastically to the SHC as they did to Charles Wesley when they learned that he was interested in telling the story of black soldiers in the Civil War. "Several persons have sent to me the discharge papers of their grandfathers

who were in the Union Army,” Wesley wrote.^[73] Imagine the collection the SHC might today have. Yet in the final analysis, it is well to remember that many of the problems I have talked about here reside but partly in the nature of the sources collected. The intellectual agendas of scholars matter as much. As we move forward, scholarship on the Civil War and Reconstruction might benefit greatly if those intellectual agendas included critical analysis of the ways in which normative notions citizenship, freedom, and democracy block the interrogation of the meaning of liberty and how multiple realities and identities situated locally and transnationally shape the struggle for liberty and democracy.^[74] For African Americans, the meaning of liberty was clear. In the eloquent words of Philip Smith, an ex-slave: “We are free and we wish an onrable [sic] life.”^[75]

Notes

[1] Charles H. Wesley, "The Reconstruction of History," *Journal of Negro History* 20, no. 4 (Oct. 1935): 424.

[2] W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America: An Essay Toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860–1880* (1935; reprint, Millwood, N.Y.: Krauss-Thomson Organization, Ltd., 1976), 726.

[3] Joseph Grégoire de Roulhac Hamilton, "A National Southern Collection at the University of North Carolina," ([Baltimore?]: n.p., 1928).

[4] *Ibid.* Hamilton's call received the public endorsement of newspapers across the South and the *New York Times*.

[5] Much of this work was undertaken by white women as exemplified by the project of the South Carolina Daughters of the Confederacy to collect materials on the role of women in the war, which resulted in Mrs. A. T. Smythe, Miss M. B. Poppenheim and Mrs. Thomas Taylor, *South Carolina Women in the Confederacy*, (Columbia, S.C.: The State Company, 1903). The book received a subvention of \$500.00 from the state of South Carolina to ensure its placement in the public schools.

[6] Richard J. Gray, *Writing the South: Ideas of an American Region* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 76.

[7] See for example, American history textbook for junior high school students, Matthew Page Andrews, *American History and Government* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1921) and James Ford Rhodes, *History of the United States from the Compromise of 1850 to the Final Restoration of Home Rule in the South in 1877* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1892–1906). For excerpts from textbooks of the time, see Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 711–20.

[8] Matthew Page Andrews, *Report of the Text Book Committee, Sons of Confederate Veterans. Being A Protest Against Provincialism, Matthew Page Andrews, Litt. D. Chairman: Presented at the Thirty-Seventh Annual Convention in the City of Richmond, Virginia, June 21–24, 1932* (Richmond, Va.: General Organization, Sons of Confederate Veterans, 1932). The committee was galvanized into action on this occasion by the adoption of a secondary school textbook written by David S. Muzzey to replace John H. Latane's *History of the American People*. Muzzey's work was charged with "serious sins of omission, partisan deductions, and outright errors." This despite the fact that among the conclusions Muzzey reached was that Reconstruction "was an orgy of extravagance, fraud, and disgusting incompetence." (As quoted in Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 712). In the meanwhile, the United Daughters of the Confederacy petitioned Congress to change the name of the Civil War to the War between the States. John Hope Franklin, "A Century of Civil War Observance," *Journal of Negro History* 47, no. 2 (April 1962): 101.

[9] Thavolia Glymph, "The Civil War Era" in *A Companion to American Women's History*, ed. Nancy A. Hewitt (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 167–92.

[10] Hamilton, "A National Southern Collection at the University of North Carolina."

[11] These included the Louisiana Historical Society founded in 1836; the Georgia Historical Society in 1839; the Maryland Historical Society and North Carolina Historical Society in 1844; the South Carolina

Historical Society in 1855; the Mississippi Historical Society in 1858; and the Virginia Historical Society in 1831; the Tennessee State Library in 1854; the Texas State Library in 1837. The Tennessee Historical Society did not organize until 1949. The establishment of state departments of archives and history and state libraries with some combining missions of state libraries and archival departments, was mainly a twentieth-century development. The Alabama Department of Archives and History, for example, the first state department of archives and history in the United States, was founded in 1901, with the stated mission of promoting a more informed citizenry and honoring those who had served in the Confederacy. Today, its mission includes telling “the story of all people who have contributed to the building of the state.” The Mississippi Department of Archives and History was founded in 1902; the Arkansas Historical Commission in 1905; the Texas Library and Historical Commission in 1909; the Florida State Library in 1925, the Maryland State Archives in 1935; and the Tennessee State Library and Archives, dedicated to the men and women who had served in WWII, in 1953. The establishment of university manuscript programs proceeded apace beginning in the late nineteenth century. Duke University’s Manuscript Department was founded in 1931 and the South Carolina at the University of South Carolina, formally in 1937 with a specific mandate to stem the flow of materials to out-of-state repositories. In the South after the Civil War, many of the historical societies merged with or absorbed the work of Confederate memorial societies. Parallel developments in the North saw the founding of the Indiana Historical Society in 1830, the Wisconsin Historical Society chartered in 1845, the Archeological and Historical Society of Ohio in 1831, and the Illinois Historical Society in 1899. By 1860, historical societies were organized in every state east of Texas with the exception of Delaware. Professional historical societies also began to be founded in the late nineteenth century. See Charles H. Wesley, “Racial Historical Societies and the American Heritage,” *Journal of Negro History* 37, no. 1 (Jan. 1952): 11–35.

[12] Charles H. Wesley, “The Reconstruction of History,” 411–27; Charles H. Wesley, “Racial Historical Societies and the American Heritage,” 11–35; Charles H. Wesley, “Creating and Maintaining an Historical Tradition,” *Journal of Negro History* 49, no. 1 (Jan. 1964): 13–33; Charles H. Wesley, “W. E. B. Du Bois—The Historian,” *Journal of Negro History* 50, no. 3 (July 1965): 147–48. The very nature of the immigrant experience made for a different kind of collecting program. Among the organizers were working men and women unlike the situation in the South.

[13] *Ibid.*

[14] William Wells Brown, *The Negro in the American Rebellion: His Heroism and His Fidelity* (Boston: Lee & Shepard, 1867).

[15] Joseph Grégoire de Roulhac Hamilton, *Reconstruction in North Carolina* (1914; reprint, Gloucester, Mass., P. Smith, 1964), v.

[16] Hamilton, *Reconstruction in North Carolina*. See also R. D. W. Connor, William Kenneth Boyd, and Joseph Grégoire de Roulhac Hamilton, *History of North Carolina* (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Co., 1919) and *Party Politics in North Carolina, 1835–1860* (Durham, N.C.: Seeman Printery, 1916). The latter was a collection of a series of articles that had first appeared in the *Charlotte Observer*, 21 March to 15 August 1915.

[17] Hamilton, *Reconstruction in North Carolina*, 453–4. This version of events was repeated over and again in histories of the period including textbooks. In the textbook he prepared for junior high school students, Matthew Page Andrews wrote that the Klan was a “remarkable organization,” which had “saved the civilization of the South from perhaps irredeemable depths of degradation and despoliation.” Matthew Page Andrews, *American History and Government*, 361 n. 24.

[18] Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 725.

[19] Hamilton completed his dissertation under William A. Dunning at Columbia University in 1906.

[20] Examples of this branching out include the Southern Oral History Program Collection, a part of the SHC, established “to render historically visible those whose experience is not reflected in traditional written sources.” Also the establishment of the John Hope Franklin Collection for African and African-American Documentation as a division of the Duke University Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library in 1995.

[21] Membership in the Louisiana Historical Society, for example, was limited to “ladies and gentlemen.” W. O. Hart, “History of the Louisiana Historical Society,” <http://www.louisianahistoricalsociety.org/>

[22] Ulrich B. Phillips, *American Negro Slavery: A Survey of the Supply, Employment and Control of Negro Labor as Determined by the Plantation Regime* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1918). Most of the publicly available manuscripts Phillips consulted such as the Hammond Papers were from the Library of Congress. The SHC did not begin acquiring the Manigault Family Papers (#484) until the 1940s. Some of the criticism of Philip’s work, beyond its racism has concerned his heavy reliance on the records of large planters and distortions this created in his analysis. This critique neglects an important dimension of this imbalance, that it was more a factor of the sources that were most readily available to him—records held privately, which tended to be letters, diaries, and other manuscript materials held by the descendants of planter class—than perhaps a conscious effort to neglect small planters and farmers.

[23] Indeed, I was taught early as an undergraduate that I must read him for this reason alone in spite of his racism and the way in which he permitted his racist views to determine his historical analysis. If I looked beyond the racism I was taught, I would find the mind of a first-rate scholar and researcher.

[24] W. E. B. Du Bois placed Bowers’ work in the category of propaganda which he defined as works whose “authors select and use facts in order to prove that the South was right in Reconstruction, the North vengeful or deceived, and the Negro stupid.” *Black Reconstruction*, 732. Though he did not examine manuscript sources for this monumental work, citing a lack of time and opportunity, Du Bois references several at the Library of Congress and Harvard that he believed should be consulted. *Black Reconstruction*, 724.

[25] It is not surprising, then, to find that the most popular syntheses followed this pattern of using few or no manuscript papers. See, for example, William B. Hesseltine, *A History of the South, 1607–1936* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1936); Francis Butler Simkins, *A History of the South*, 3rd ed. (New York: Knopf, 1963), and R. S. Cotterill, *The Old South: The Geographic, Economic, Social, Political, and Cultural Expansion, Institutions, and Nationalism of the Ante-bellum South* (Glendale, Ca.: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1936).

[26] As a graduate student at Harvard, Wesley was forced to abandon the idea of writing his dissertation on the internal collapse of the Confederacy because the thesis contradicted the work and beliefs of Albert Hart, a powerful professor in the department. See Francille Rusan Wilson, “Racial Consciousness and Black Scholarship: Charles H. Wesley and the Construction of *Negro Labor in the United States*,” *Journal of Negro History* 81, no. 1/4 (Winter, 1996): 76.

[27] See John Hope Franklin, “A Life of Learning,” in *Race and History: Selected Essays, 1938–1988* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989), 288–9. Even with the establishment of public repositories in the twentieth century, racist policies at many research institutions in the South could prove as

effective as personal relationships in maintaining “closed” archives as Franklin discovered in 1939 when he attempted to do research at the North Carolina Department of Archives and History and the North Carolina State Library, and later at the Louisiana Department of Archives and History. In Tennessee and Alabama, however, he discovered, facilities were not segregated, another example, Franklin notes, of the vagaries of racism. Decades earlier, George Washington Williams conducted research at the Maryland Historical Society apparently without incident as well as at northern institutions such as the Massachusetts Historical Society and the American Antiquarian Society while preparing his monumental *History of the Negro Race in America, 1619–1880: Negroes as Slaves, as Soldiers, and as Citizens; Together with a Preliminary Consideration of the Unity of the Human Family, an Historical Sketch of Africa, and an Account of the Negro Governments of Sierra Leone and Liberia* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1883). Charles H. Wesley, *The Collapse of the Confederacy*, Washington, D.C.: Associated Publishers, Inc., 1937. While Wesley wrote a splendid book, he might have written an even better one had he had the same access to family papers as Phillips or Bowers, a point Du Bois also made.

[28] Helen G. Edmonds, *The Negro and Fusion Politics in North Carolina, 1894–1901* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1951).

[29] The class and race biases of the collection, however, meant that revisionist scholars still faced great odds. Helen Edmonds recorded her frustration in trying to tell the story of fusion politics in North Carolina with lop-sided documentation: “such source materials as private papers, campaign literature, newspapers, periodicals, and memoirs which set forth the Democratic side of the question are in greater abundance and are more centrally located than those materials which present the Fusion side.” Edmonds, 4. The libraries at Duke University, the University of North Carolina, and the North Carolina State Library along with the North Carolina Department of Archives and History, Edmonds noted, contained valuable papers for the study of Democratic party politics but not the party’s adversaries. To get at the role of the black vote and black politicians, Edmonds was forced to rely heavily on personal interviews, newspaper accounts, and “relatives.” (5–6.)

[30] A partial list would include: Howard K. Beale, George Tindall Brown, Vernon Lane Wharton, Joel Williamson, Willie Lee Rose, James M. McPherson, Straughton Lynd, C. Vann Woodward, Eric McKittrick, and Kenneth Stampp. John Hope Franklin would continue to occupy an important place in the evolving historiography with the publication of *Reconstruction After the Civil War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961). James M. McPherson’s *The Negro’s Civil War: How American Blacks Felt and Acted During the War for Union* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1965) was the first documentary history of the war from the perspective of African Americans. The two decades of the twentieth century proved a fertile period for Reconstruction studies.

[31] This development, however, did not gain much steam until the 1970s.

[32] Joseph Grégoire de Roulhac Hamilton and Mary Cornelia Thompson Hamilton, *The Life of Robert E. Lee for Boys and Girls* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1917), ix, 194–5.

[33] Andrews, *American History and Government*, 353. Numerous recent studies explore the “Lost Cause” movement. An excellent discussion of the point here is Gray, *Writing the South*, 75–121.

[34] Franklin, “A Century of Civil War Observance,” 101.

[35] Hamilton, *The Life of Robert E. Lee*, 191–2.

[36] Ibid., 192.

[37] From Mary Elliott Johnstone to Anne Hutchinson Smith Elliott, 15 [December 1861], in the Elliott and Gonzales Family Papers #1009, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Charles H. Wesley's important but neglected study, *The Collapse of the Confederacy* may find a new audience with the recent publication of Armstead Robinson's, *Bitter Fruits of Bondage: The Demise of Slavery and the Collapse of the Confederacy, 1861–1865* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2005), which is in many ways a tribute to Wesley.

[38] This is a large task. One still hears, as I did during a recent panel discussion following a viewing of the PBS documentary, "Slavery and the Making of American," such comments as "I never knew slavery was so bad." Such sentiments also come from our students. There is no question that the idea that slavery was not so bad and Reconstruction, an error, persists and continues to inform debates about the place of people of African descent in the United States. The persistence of such ideas also finds fertile ground in the way in which southern history is marketed at plantation museums. The dilemma was posed starkly recently at Historic Brattonsville, site of the former Bratton plantation in York, S.C., when African American "re-enactors" refused to continue to recite a script meant, they said, "to beautify slavery" and which called upon them to act, in their words, "mindlessly happy." So they changed the script, ad-libbed, provoking a reprimand from museum officials and veiled racism from some visitors who are said to have complained to museum officials that they found the changes, which spoke to the horrors of slavery, "offensive." Quotes respectively from Ellen Barry, "A Hard Truth to Portray," *Los Angeles Times*, 4 June 2005, sec. A1 and Fred Kelly, "Digging into a Painful Past: Former Re-Enactors Dispute Brattonville's Accuracy," *Charlotte Observer*, 17 May 2005, sec. 1A.

[39] Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863–1877* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 603.

[40] See, for example, Willie Lee Nichols Rose, *Rehearsal for Reconstruction: The Port Royal Experiment* (New York: Vintage Books, 1964).

[41] Charles H. Wesley, "The Struggle for the Recognition of Haiti and Liberia as Independent Republics," *Journal of Negro History* 2, no.2 (Oct. 1917): 369–83. C. Vann Woodward, *Thinking Back: The Perils of Writing History* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1986). In 1968, Woodward edited a collection of essays designed to provoke scholars to engage the comparative perspective. See C. Vann Woodward, ed. *The Comparative Approach to American History* (New York: Basic Books, 1968).

[42] Woodward, *Thinking Back*, 123.

[43] On diasporic multiplicity, see Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 122.

[44] Elizabeth Hyde Botume, *First Days Amongst the Contraband* (1893; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1968), 152.

[45] Throughout this paper, I am using "liberty" as a condition related to but distinct in important ways from "freedom." Liberty is "the condition of being free from restriction or control" and freedom, "the condition of being free; political independence; possession of civil rights." A secondary meaning that attaches to freedom is "ease of movement" or "unrestricted use or access."

[46] Thomas Wentworth Higginson, *Army Life in a Black Regiment* (Boston: Fields, Osgood & Co., 1870), 40.

[47] Franklin, "A Century of Civil War Observance," 97. See also, Wesley, "The Reconstruction of History," 418.

[48] From Calvin Holly to Oliver O. Howard, 16 December 1865, in the Letters Registered, Records of Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands RG 105, National Archives and Records Service.

[49] The provincialism that pervades the study of the American South must be countered with our eyes turned outward to take into account the global as well as the local. Frederick Douglass after all reminded black people that they must "fight like the Sepoys of India." Scholars of the American South who have grappled with the transnational include Eric Foner, Thomas C. Holt, Eugene Genovese, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, and Demetrius Eudell.

[50] Sidney Andrews, *The South Since the War* (1866; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1969), 4.

[51] Walter Rodney, *A History of the Guyanese Working People, 1881–1905* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), 215.

[52] For a discussion of Du Bois's thinking on this point, see Gilroy, *Black Atlantic*, 122–3; quote from p. 123.

[53] Virginia Ingraham Burr, ed., *The Secret Eye: The Journal of Ella Gertrude Clanton Thomas, 1848–1889* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 316.

[54] W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folks* (New York: Bantam Books, 1989), 145.

[55] Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 128.

[56] From Thomas Gaillard to John S. Palmer, 24 May 1861 in *A World Turned Upside Down: The Palmers of South Santee, 1818–1881*, ed. Louis P. Towles (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996), 305.

[57] James W. Garner, *Reconstruction in Mississippi*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1968), 392–3.

[58] Herbert Ravenel Sass, "The Rice Coast: Its Story and Its Meaning," in Alice R. Huger Smith, *A Carolina Rice Plantation of the Fifties: 30 Paintings in Water-Colour*, Narrative by Herbert Ravenel Sass with Chapters from the Unpublished Memoirs of D. E. Huger Smith (New York: W. Morrow and Company, 1936), 39.

[59] Francis Butler Simkins, *A History of the South*, 296.

[60] John Hammond Moore, ed., *A Plantation Mistress on the Eve of the Civil War: The Diary of Keziah Goodwyn Hopkins Brevard, 1860–1861* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1993), 111.

[61] Testimony of Nancy Johnson, [22 March 1873], claim of Boson Johnson, Liberty Co., Georgia case files, Approved Claims, ser. 732. Southern Claims Commission, 3d Auditor, Records of the Accounting Officers of the Department of the Treasury RG 217, National Archives and Records Service.

[62] Eliza F. Andrews, *The War-Time Journal of a Georgia Girl, 1864–1865* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1908), 319.

[63] From Charles I. Graves to S. L. Merchant, 30 June 1875; Endorsement from Col. O. M. Poe to Wm. Sherman, 1 July 1875 in the Charles Iverson Graves Papers #2606, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The enlistment of Americans in the Egyptian Army was aided by General W. T. Sherman who recommended men, including Graves, and also permitted a few to take leave of the United States Army for service in Egypt. William B. Hesselstine and Hazel C. Wolf, *The Blue and the Gray on the Nile* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 62–3. 93.

[64] From Charles I. Graves to Charles I. Graves, Jr., December 1875 and Extract of letter from Graves to Chichi [Margaret Graves], June 1877, Journal, in the Graves Papers.

[65] Hesselstine and Wolf, *The Blue and the Gray on the Nile*, 62–3. The story of American Civil War soldiers in the Egyptian Army has been the subject of a several books, including some by the soldiers themselves. In addition to Hesselstine, see, for example, Charles Chaillé-Long, *My Life in Four Continents* (London: Hutchinson and Company, 1912); William McEntyre Dye, *Moslem Egypt and Christian Abyssinia; or Military Service under the Khedive, in His Provinces and Beyond Their Borders, as Experienced by the American Staff* (New York: Atkin & Prout, printers, 1880); William W. Loring, *A Confederate Soldier in Egypt* (New York: Dodd, Mead, & Co., 1884); and Pierre Crabités, *Americans in the Egyptian Army* (London: G. Routledge & Sons, 1938). In 2000, a group of Americans in Egypt placed a new ten-foot obelisk at the grave of the last of the Americans to serve in the Egyptian Army, former Union officer Erasmus S. Purdy, in honor of his service as the highest ranking United States military officer in Egypt. “Civil War Officer Honored in Egypt, Associated Press, 6 November 2000.

[66] Hesselstine and Wolf, *Blue and the Gray on the Nile*, 132, 147, 156–7.

[67] In Cuba, at the end of the century, southerners were also taken aback by the sight of Afro-Cubans rebelling against not only Spanish authority but American as well. See Nisbet and Marye Family Papers #4478, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

[68] Hesselstine and Wolf, *Blue and the Gray on the Nile*, 108–9. The Americans proved a troublesome bunch, often running up bills with local merchants and landlords, destroying property, going on drunken sprees, and generally making a nuisance of themselves. Charles Graves lamented the case of Georgian D. G. White who drank to abandon, “abandoned himself to lewd women,” and then deserted, “left the country and is branded as a liar and a coward and a thief.” (Ibid., 109–19, quote on p. 119).

[69] Ibid., 155–6.

[70] Although it did not premiere until 1871, *Aida* was commissioned by the khedive to mark the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 and the opening of Ismail’s 850 seat opera theater in Cairo. It premiered in the United States in 1873 and remains one of the most popular of Verdi’s operas. The Khedive had also recently consulted with the sculptor Auguste Bartholdi who presented plans for a statue of a robed female Egyptian peasant to be unveiled at the opening of the Suez Canal. The work was never commissioned by the Khedive, but it is thought that Bartholdi later used it as the model for the Statue of Liberty.

[71] Ibid., 156.

[72] Among the manuscript papers available to pursue this question are: South Carolina Inter-State & West Indian Exposition Company Receivers' Accounts #3718 and Daniel Augustus Tompkins Papers #724 in the Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. South Carolina Interstate & West Indian Exposition Company, "Charleston Welcomes Cincinnati: February 11, 1901 (Charleston: The Company, 1901), Pamphlet #7270, in the Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University.

[73] Wesley, "The Civil War and the Negro-American," *Journal of Negro History* 47, no. 2 (April 1962): 94. The work of black people to preserve a record of their lives over the course of American history—the Moorland-Spingarn Collection, the Schomburg Collection, and the archives at Mother Bethel A.M.E. Church in Philadelphia are notable examples—has been impressive but does not mitigate the historical neglect of archival programs like the SHC. And the *Journal of Negro History* played an indispensable role in providing a scholarly outlet for research on the Civil War and Reconstruction that took seriously the contributions of African Americans and unflinchingly attacked the racism in the field.

[74] A good place to begin is the work of Achille Mbembe. See *On Post Colony* and "Necropolitics," *Public Culture* 15, no. 1 (Winter, 2003): 11–40.

[75] From Philip Smith to "freemansburo," 5 April 1866, Unregistered, Records of Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands RG 105, National Archives and Records Service.