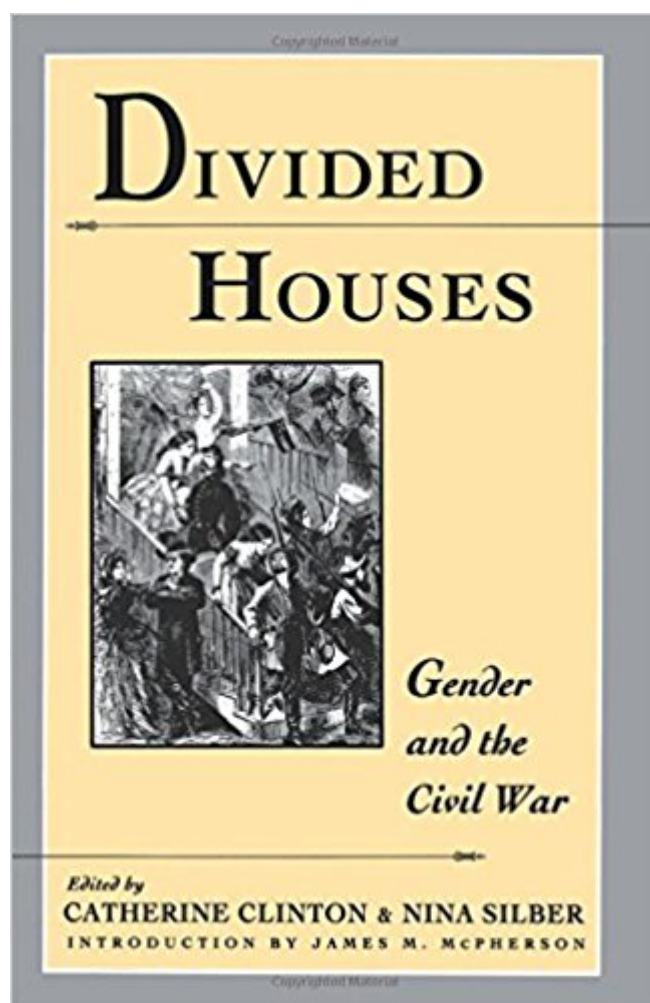


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Divided Houses: Gender And The Civil War (Harc Global Change Studies; 1)



Synopsis

No American needs to be told that the Civil War brought the United States to a critical juncture in its history. The war changed forever the face of the nation, the nature of American politics, the status of African-Americans, and the daily lives of millions of people. Yet few of us understand how the war transformed gender roles and attitudes toward sexuality among American citizens. *Divided Houses* is the first book to address this sorely neglected topic, showing how the themes of gender, class, race, and sexuality interacted to forge the beginnings of a new society. In this unique volume, historians Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber bring together a wide spectrum of critical viewpoints--all written by eminent scholars--to show how gender became a prism through which the political tensions of antebellum America were filtered and focused. For example, *Divided Houses* demonstrates that the abolitionist movement was strongly allied with nineteenth-century feminism, and shows how the ensuing debates over sectionalism and, eventually, secession, were often couched in terms of gender. Northerners and Southerners alike frequently ridiculed each other as "effeminate": slaveowners were characterized by Yankees as idle and useless aristocrats, enfeebled by their "peculiar institution"; northerners were belittled as money-grubbers who lacked the masculine courage of their southern counterparts. Through the course of the book, many fascinating subjects are explored, such as the new "manly" responsibilities both black and white men had thrust upon them as soldiers; the effect of the war on Southern women's daily actions on the homefront; the essential part Northern women played as nurses and spies; the war's impact on marriage and divorce; women's roles in the guerilla fighting; even the wartime dialogue on interracial sex. There is also a rare look at how gender affected the experience of freedom for African-American children, a discussion of how Harriet Beecher Stowe attempted to distract both her readers and herself from the ravages of war through the writing of romantic fiction, and a consideration of the changing relations between black men and a white society which, during the war, at last forced to confront their manhood. In addition, an incisive introduction by Pulitzer Prize-winning historian James McPherson helps place these various subjects in an overall historical context. Nowhere else are such topics considered in a single, accessible volume. *Divided Houses* sheds new light on the entire Civil War experience--from its causes to its legacy--and shows how gender shaped both the actions and attitudes of those who participated in this watershed event in the history of America.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In these 18 essays, historians and other academics examine not just gender and its part in the Civil War, but the effects of race and class too. The oft-discussed "separate sphere" of women in that period is shown to have been a "privilege" only of upper-class white women, and a close reading of Harriet Beecher Stowe's portrait of Sojourner Truth explains how Stowe's view of Truth as a regal and noble character, even while portraying her as a naive, semiliterate creature, reflected used the expectations of her own upper-class, white, educated social circle. to represent Truth as a regal and noble character, even while portraying her as a naive, semiliterate creature. Most of these essays, though, follow a distinct pattern. The writers take up interesting topics (the role of women spies, changes in divorce patterns following the war) and open them to further exploration by quoting extensively from fascinating primary sources (such as diaries and court records), but then fail to draw meaningful conclusions. An admirably comprehensive bibliography is obviously meant to stimulate further research, and fortunately, as Clinton (*Plantation Mistress*) states in her open-ended discussion of black women's status after the war, "there is no statute of limitations on historians" as they set out to uncover and explicate the past. Silber is assistant professor of history at Boston University. Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

How did one of the Southern states arrive at the conclusion to secede from the United States? And why? This work answers these questions by bringing together, for the first time, the speeches given

in late 1860 in Milledgeville, Georgia. The essays, written as Georgia debated the secession question, were penned with feeling and emotion by seven highly respected Georgia gentlemen politicians. Preceding each essay is a short but thorough description of the politician and his importance in the secession debate. Perfect for all large public and academic libraries and for any library with an interest in Southern history.- Tina A. Oswald, Huntsville, AlabamaCopyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

IT was long winded in some aspects of the book, but over all intersting in how thing came about to bring on the war.

VERY GOOD BOOK.ENJOY READING THIS BOOK.I SUGGEST THIS BOOK TO EVERYONE ...

This book was a requirement for my class and pretty darn interesting. When you trade hardbacks back into to , you get nice returns in dollars. When you try and return a paper back you get pennies on the dollar.

About half of the essays in this volume are an important contribution to understanding the ways in which gender visions and the nation's greatest war interacted with each other. LeeAnn Whites's provocative opening essay suggests the many insights that can emerge and essay after essay illustrates these new possibilities. Some essays open up profitably traditional questions about the conflict. Why did the South lose? Drew Faust suggests that Southern women abandoned the rebellion as its demands for self-sacrifice and self-denial escalated beyond tolerance; they urged husbands to desert, gave up their own contributions to their society to care for their families, and peace came. How much better than slavery was freedom for blacks? Catherine Clinton asserts (too strongly I believe, but still posing an important possibility) that "emancipation escalated the degree of sexual violence" that black women faced (p. 318). How did the Confederacy maintain its wartime economy and its determination to fight? Stephanie McCurry says look at the contributions of yeoman women and consider also that yeomen espoused the same patriarchal ideas at home that planters applied to all of Dixie. What explains the need for "Beast" Benjamin Butler's infamous "Women's Order"? George Rabie and Nina Silber suggest that New Orleans women decided that they should try to act like men since their men had acted like women in giving up the city. Why did John Brown get such powerful support from allegedly pacifist Northerners? The enemies of abolition had for so long painted abolitionists as effeminate that Brown was a vital contradiction. As Francis

Lieber put it: "He died like a man, and Virginia fretted like a woman." Why did men go to war? It offered a chance for both blacks and whites, as Reid Mitchell and Jim Cullen show, to become men and to know unambiguously what manhood meant, even though soldiers themselves and civilian society referred to soldiers as "boys". Other essays expand the meaning of the war by asking new questions spawned by looking at issues of gender. There were over 2,000,000 slave children in 1860. Peter Bardaglio shows the importance of considering the war through children's eyes. When Sherman's soldiers weakened Rebel will by destroying plantations and farms they were destroying the only homes that black children had ever known. When Union armies impressed black men into service on farms or into the army they took away someone's father and husband, leaving women and children with few defenses against economic want. How did the war affect family stability? Victoria Bynum's essay on divorce law suggests that war may have changed North Carolina from a place where family stability stifled almost every chance for divorce into one where especially men, but women to a lesser degree, could escape their marriages. David Blight shows the ways that soldiers kept their ties to homes which they both treasured and felt alienated from, and how soldiers learned the moral courage to describe the failures of courage in battle. Martha Hodes uses the Freedmen's Inquiry Commission to reveal the extent of consensual interracial sex in slavery and to note how that evidence was kept from the public. Kristie Ross shows conflict within women's ranks over what role nurses should play in the war as well as showing how the army used the "domestic" organizing skills of elite women to support the war. These essays, the strongest in the book in my opinion, expand understanding and open new perspectives on war, society and culture in the 19th century. As with any exploration outside traditional boundaries, authors occasionally claim too much for their new path. White's assertion that the war "was struggle between competing visions of manhood" (p. 12) is too sweeping, for the war was about other things as well. This assertion and other claims in this volume need to be balanced by Joan Scott's observation, cited here by Jim Cullen, that "an awareness of sexual difference as a factor has always been important, though the concept of gender as a separate analytic category is very much a late twentieth century invention" (p. 77). If modern analysis derives from contexts that the Civil War generation did not share, historians need to be careful not to subsume that past within modern visions. As this fine volume shows so well, there are important insights to be gained from asking modern questions of the past, but we need to be aware that our ancestors had additional questions on their minds and were not driven by desires to expand the field of historical inquiry. They had the nation's greatest war to fight and the nation's most awesome and intricate dilemma of race and slavery to deal with. They faced these fused and boiling challenges as men and as women, but also as citizens and consumers and

laborers and capitalists, and revivalists and penitents and sinners and saved, as complex individuals who balanced all these roles in varying degrees amidst the swirl of change not easily understood in single categories, no matter how revealing that category may be.

Divided Houses: Gender and the Civil War is a collection of essays pertaining to the crisis in gender relations that accompanied the Civil War in America. As a collection, the essays present a narrative that chronicles the various impacts on gender that affected men and women, the North and the South, as well as slaves and non-slaves. What emerges is a cohesive body of text that is informative, illuminating, and instructive. The themes most explored in this volume are those of empowerment through abolitionism. In *The Civil War as a Crisis in Gender Relations* by Leann Whites, the two groups most perceptive of the gender crisis were Northern feminists and black abolitionists. During the Civil War, the public status of motherhood increased. This leads to another theme that will later be explored in following essays, that of the State as family. In this first essay, Leann Whites argues that the Civil War created circumstances for gender equality, both diminishing white Southern male masculinity and increasing black manhood. Ideas of manhood during the Civil War are further investigated in Part II and in Reid Mitchell's *Soldiering, Manhood, and Coming of Age: A Northern Volunteer*. The journey from civilian to soldier was mirrored in the transition from boyhood to manhood, and the constitution of manhood evolved as a delicate balance of masculinity and manly restraint. During the Civil War, the body politic as well as the army assumed familial ties to facilitate solidarity. Despite the changes in notions of manhood, for the black male population the "empowerment" was not always beneficial. Jim Cullen's *Gender and African-American Men* details how conceptions of black manhood changed during the Civil War, with the mastery over one's own body leading to mastery in warfare. Despite being placed on some of the most dangerous fronts, black soldiers endured low pay and high disease in exchange for their mastery over their bodies. In Part III of *Divided Houses: Gender and the Civil War*, the themes move from issues of manhood to those relating to women. In *Arranging a Doll's House: Refined Women as Union Nurses* author Kristie Ross writes about female volunteers on hospital transports, and she draws from the familial theme by presenting the hospital transport as the rearrangement of a doll's house to appear domestic. Ross also reveals a sense of agency for women volunteers, claiming that many felt "...an eagerness to seize an occasion to escape the routine pattern of their lives and a familiarity with genteel standards of household organization." (101) Lyde Cullen Sizer's *Acting Her Part: Narratives of Union Women Spies* also deals with the issue of female agency during the Civil War, but Sizer further examines the repercussions women felt depending on whether they were white or black. For

white women spies, their efforts were more dramatic than substantial, whereas for black abolitionists like Harriet Tubman the cause and consequences of being a spy were much more realistic. Sizer's essay is also an attempt to place female spy narratives in a literary context from which they have been excluded. Of all the essays in *Divided Houses*, none is more colorful and titillating than Michael Fellman's *Women and Guerrilla Warfare*. Through his dramatic prose, Fellman explores how peacetime morality was subverted through guerrilla warfare, with male guerrilla fighters attacking traditional values while physically attacking women. Fellman, doubtless, is presenting a form of psychological history by claiming "there was also an additional element here of bad boys acting out against a nagging, smothering mother." (151) For many Kansas guerrilla regiments during the Civil War, the "freeing" of slaves was an act of defiance rather than a moralistic pursuit. Guerrilla warfare finally reinforced the need for love, security, and family. The fourth part of *Divided Houses* closely examines dynamics on the Southern homefront. Peter Bardaglio's *The Children of Jubilee: African-American Childhood in Wartime* explains how prior to the Civil War, slave children were age-segregated but not gender-segregated. With freedom as a concept first emerging for many slaves during the Civil War, play activities among children became more gendered. Martha Hodes's *Wartime Dialogues on Illicit Sex: White Women and Black Men* further draws on the theme of black male power as a political issue emerging during the Civil War, which consequently led to sexuality itself becoming a political issue. With most yeoman farmers at war, the homefront became a location for "illicit" sex as well as the performative stage for class discord. The Southern states were not the only ones to feel the impact on gender relations that the Civil War created: Part V examines gender issues on the Northern homefront with Patricia R. Hill's *Writing Out the War: Harriet Beecher Stowe's Averted Gaze*. In Part VI, essays examine how the politics of Reconstruction became gendered, with Northern women beginning to campaign for the vote and new labor opportunities for African-American men and women. In spite of these advances, however, the ruling classes in the South still attempted to exert authority and black women were still subjected to southern white male violence, as evidenced in Catherine Clinton's concluding essay, *Reconstructing Freedwomen*. *Divided Houses: Gender and the Civil War* is a combination of various historiographical methodologies; cultural, social, psychological, intellectual and political, which simultaneously present a coherent and evocative study of wartime's affect on gender relations. In addition to mapping themes in gender relations during war, narratives of women's undertaking of professional and managerial duties while men were fighting in the Civil War provides a historical anchoring of the themes of female labor that were to arise again during the First, and especially Second, World War.

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