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Confederate Female Spies: Changing Northern Perceptions in Fiction and Nonfiction and it's
Affect on Popular Opinion of the Confederate Cause

Since the end of the American Civil War, popular perceptions of crucial events and key players during the war have been influenced and shaped by the literature of the era: both fiction and non fiction. According to historian Alice Fahs, the shift of popular literature away from Northern heroines towards the soldiers on both sides of the conflict, as well as sympathetic wealthy white Southern heroines has helped to soften the harsh views of the Confederacy that existed during and after the war. This perspective promotes a romanticized view of the antebellum South and raises Confederate agents onto pedestals equal to that of their Northern enemies.¹ The effect of this on American history is visible. While typically, the losing side in any war is shunned and marginalized, the Confederacy has been revered throughout the nation, with plaques, statues, and fiction created to immortalize its cause. The respect and fascination with the Southern cause can be seen in the case of white female Confederate spies. In the years following the Civil War, accounts of white female Confederate spies appeared on bookshelves, captivating the nation. In this paper I will discuss how literary fascination shifted onto Southern heroines between the years 1865 to 1920 by analyzing the Northern public's perceptions of Confederate women spies during the war compared to portrayals of female Confederate spies in post war literature. I will support Alice Fahs' theory that romantic literature focusing on Southerners helped shape a sympathetic view of the Confederacy and its cause in the eyes of the American public.

¹ Alice Fahs. "The Feminized Civil War: Gender, Northern Popular Literature, and the Memory of the War, 1861-1900." *The Journal of American History* 85, no. 4 (1999): 1490, accessed September 28, <https://academic.oup.com/jah/article/85/4/1461/751791?searchresult=1>.

The topic of wealthy Southern white women in fiction is a popular one, largely because in fiction authors can recreate a world that has since been lost or severely damaged, and do so in a way which brushes over the imperfections of the past. The romantic view of the Old South, which Fahs argues sprang up in the Reconstruction era, replacing fiction focusing on Northern heroines, revolved largely around the domestic sphere of the Southern belle.² This domestic sphere, where Southern women could court gentlemen, and dance at debutante balls, was the romantic side of the Confederacy and the Old South. This was the side that post-war authors, hoping either to reconcile Northern readers with their former enemies or preserve the traditions of the South, would focus on. The focus on the Southern belle and the genteel ways of life presented a sympathetic, if not romantic viewpoint of the South, which helped in turn to mend relations between Northerners and Southerners. Fahs writes that many of these reconciliation stories focused on a romanticized Southern belle marrying a Union officer, representing the reconciliation of the entire nation.³

This pleasant viewpoint of wealthy Southern women was not the only one to arise from the post war era, however. Fahs neglects to mention literature which presents Southern women as anything other than a peaceful reconciliatory force. No doubt inspired by tales of daring Southern women during the war, namely the most famous: Belle Boyd and Rose O'Neal Greenhow, post war fiction also presented a more ferocious view of Southern women.⁴ Often focusing on Confederate spies, several books and short stories were published presenting a daring and often dangerously enticing Southern woman, who was capable of flirting with Union officers to aide

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ "Women in the War." *The United States Service Magazine* 4, no. 3, (September, 1865), accessed November 5, 2017, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/127505800?accountid=14696>.

her beloved Confederacy. Though less popular than books focusing on women performing traditional roles as a means to reunite North and South, these books do present an interesting interpretation of Southern women. Though these books took a different approach than those romanticizing docile Southern belles, these women were used in a very similar manner to represent and idealize the values of the Old South.

The main focus of this paper is to analyze Confederate women spies in literature and their role in the normalization of Northern public appreciation for the Confederate cause, yet it is important to understand the driving force behind the actions of the Southern spies who inspired these tales. While women were used as a noble and reconciliatory force in literature, the reality behind many of the real women spies' actions lies in the darker side of the Confederacy, the one that literature often hid or romanticized.

When the Civil War broke out it ripped through the domestic sphere of the Southern elite by threatening the institution of slavery, the very core of what allowed wealthy white women to perform their domestic rituals. As Betina Entzminger states "though they [Southern women] may have had conflicting views about the enslavement of another race, they overtly validated the patriarchal family structure of a strong, benevolent husband-father and physically weak but morally strong wife-child, a hierarchical configuration that rested on slavery and was wrapped in the Old South's defense of the institution."⁵ This indicates that alongside the institution of slavery was the clearly developed hierarchy with white men at the pinnacle, and white women just below them, in a subordinate yet dignified position above blacks. Whether the elite women of the South acknowledged this or not, it is true that the Civil War threatened their way of life and the life in the Old South because it sought to remove the labor force which allowed them to

⁵ Betina Entzminger, *The Belle Gone Bad: White Southern Women Writers and the Dark Seductress*, (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2002) 2.

enjoy cultivating their lavish lifestyle without having to work for it. With this threat to the institution of slavery, and with the men largely being away in the war, Southern women were forced to react to the realities of the world. They could not remain within their domestic spheres where they would usually pursue and cultivate their social graces; instead they were forced to defend the Confederacy and its institutions as a way of defending their way of life.⁶ While most women preserved this way of life by continuing to operate their plantations while their men were away—overseeing their enslaved workforce and defending against the tides of Union troops that swept across their properties—some women took a more direct action against their Northern enemies: by becoming spies.

Becoming a spy for the Confederacy was no simple task, however. Espionage in the 1860's was far different than espionage of today. When the Civil War broke out in 1861, neither the United States nor the Confederate States of America had formal intelligence agencies. The Bureau of Military Information was the Union's primary source on military intelligence, however it operated for specific generals, not for the entirety of the U.S military. The Confederacy, benefitting from the southern position of the Union capitol, had a more extensive network of spies in Washington D.C. In addition to this, the Confederate Signal Corps, "devoted primarily to communications and intercepts" housed the Secret Service Bureau, which ran espionage operations throughout the North. Through these operations several women, key among them Rose O'Neal Greenhow, became spies for the Confederacy.⁷

The popular image of a daring woman, risking all odds for the Confederacy, did not arise during the war, however. True to the Union, Northern newspaper reports detailing the

⁶ Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War*, (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996) 5-8.

⁷ US Central Intelligence Agency, "Intelligence in the Civil War", 4, accessed November 3, 2017, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/intelligence-history/civil-war/Intel_in_the_CW1.pdf.

involvement of female Confederate spies during the Civil War are a far cry from the later fiction that would be written about them. Writing in August of 1861 to *The Philadelphia Press*, Colonel Forney of the Union Army remarked that “the most malignant and mischievous of the spies are females. Some of them are ladies of high position too, who, shielding themselves behind the so called weakness of their sex, reject the disguises assumed by their husbands, fathers and brothers, and proclaim their sympathy with treason.”⁸ In the same month, an editorial from *The Hartford Daily Courant* remarked that a female rebel spy is no different from a male and “could and should be hung, as an example to the rest of the traitors.”⁹ Writing a year later, *The Chicago Tribune* reported on a Mrs. Clara Judd, who was caught noting the positions of Union troops and was found in possession of large quantities of medicine to be sent south, describing her offense as “most flagrant.”¹⁰ Regarding a collection of female Confederate spies held under arrest in Washington, the most famous among them being Rose O’Neal Greenhow, the *Tribune* reported in 1861 that the women “have been tolerated already too long, and their petticoats will shield them no longer from richly merited punishment.”¹¹

Yet despite these vehement declarations that female spies were just as treacherous as their male counterparts and should be punished accordingly, the punishments afforded to Confederate female spies was far different than that of male spies. Numerous accounts across the four years that the Civil War was fought give record of the executions of male Confederate spies by the federal government. According to the Central Intelligence Agency, it is not known how

⁸ "Spies at Washington." *The Independent*, Aug 15, 1861, accessed November 6, 2017, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/90084553?accountid=14696>.

⁹ *Hartford Daily Courant*, Aug 31, 1861, accessed November 4, 2017, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/553346222?accountid=14696>.

¹⁰ "FEMALE SPY." *Chicago Tribune*, Dec 27, 1862, accessed November 4, 2017 <https://search.proquest.com/docview/175281822?accountid=14696>.

¹¹ "The Female Spies at Washington." *Chicago Tribune*, Aug 30, 1861, accessed November 5, 2017 <https://search.proquest.com/docview/175230385?accountid=14696>.

many spies were executed on either side due to “the lack of records and the secrecy that surrounded most executions.”¹² A claim made by the *New York Times* on May 1, 1863 which stated that “no spies have been hung by our [United States] military authorities since the war began,” was soon undermined twenty-eight days later, when the *Alexandria Gazette* reported the execution of four Confederate spies: Thomas Perkins, John R. Lyle, George P. Sims, and George S. Burgess, who were all sentenced to hanging.¹³ Ten days later, two more male Confederate spies, Colonel Lawrence Williams and Lieutenant Walter G. Peters were hanged in Franklin, Tennessee.¹⁴ In November of the same year, Sam Davis was hanged, going down in “Confederate legend... as a spy... ‘the South’s Nathan Hale.’”¹⁵ It was clear that espionage was a terrible crime and those who attempted it risked meeting a violent end.

This was not the case for female spies during the Civil War, however. According to the CIA, “neither side ever executed a woman as a spy.”¹⁶ It was not because no woman was ever captured as such during the Civil War. Many accounts detailing the capture and imprisonment of female spies were published in various newspapers during the war. Famous accounts detail the imprisonment of Rose O’Neal Greenhow, the charge against her being “maintaining treasonable correspondence with the enemy” and Belle Boyd, who “for a long time past has been engaged in

¹² US Central Intelligence Agency, “Intelligence in the Civil War” 14.

¹³ “A Spy Condemned to Death”, *New York Times*, May 1, 1863, accessed November 6, 2017, <http://www.nytimes.com/1863/05/01/news/a-spy-condemned-to-death.html>; *Alexandria Gazette*, 29 May 1863, accessed November 6, 2017, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85025007/1863-05-29/ed-1/seq-2/>.

¹⁴ Execution of Spies at Franklin, Tenn.; Interesting Narrative of the Concluding Scenes. The Trial. Preparations for the Execution. The Execution and Burial. The Object of their visit.” *New York Times*, June 21, 1863, accessed November 5, 2017, <http://www.nytimes.com/1863/06/21/news/execution-spies-franklin-tenn-interesting-narrative-concluding-scenes-trial.html>

¹⁵ US Central Intelligence Agency, “Intelligence in the Civil War”, 14.

¹⁶ US Central Intelligence Agency, “Intelligence in the Civil War”, 18. An important exception to this may be Mary Surratt, who was implicated and charged in the assassination of Abraham Lincoln and was executed by the federal government. However, she was not charged with espionage and was executed after what most consider to be the end of the Civil War.

carrying rebel mails from points within our lines to Richmond.”¹⁷ Other accounts of lesser known female spies also littered newspaper reports during the war. Some include the aforementioned Clara Judd, a woman named Jane Ferguson (who was captured in Burkesville Kentucky and held in the Military Prison there) and a Sarah Jane Smith, who was arrested and “convicted of giving information to the rebels,” as well as Mrs. Phillips of Alabama and her two daughters, who were imprisoned alongside Greenhow for the same charge.¹⁸ The results of these imprisonments, as with all other instances where women spies were caught during the Civil War, was release—either during the war or immediately after. Therefore, despite the condemnation of these women by Northerners, veiled sympathy seemed to spare these women from the punishment that would normally fit their crime. Even during the war, the Northern military harbored a soft spot for Southern women, solely on the grounds of their sex. After the war, this soft spot would be seized upon and manipulated to create a genre of Southern women as reconciliatory and exciting figures, even while acknowledging their active role in the conflict.

The shift from this negative view of Confederate women spies as “active and mischievous” agents, who moved in “the first society of the North” and committed “treason and wicked deeds” to exciting and heroic figures began not long after the war.¹⁹ A striking change to popular opinion can be found regarding the case of Belle Boyd. Already famous in both the

¹⁷ “The Female Spies at Washington.” *Chicago Tribune*, Aug 30, 1861; “From Baltimore---Capture of Belle Boyd, the Female Spy.” *Hartford Daily Courant*, Aug 04, 1862, accessed November 6, 2017 <https://search.proquest.com/docview/553391879?accountid=14696>.

¹⁸ “Female Spy. Mrs. Jane Ferguson” *New York Times*, July 3, 1864, accessed November 8, 2017, <http://www.nytimes.com/1864/07/03/news/female-spy-mrs-jane-ferguson.html>; “FROM MISSOURI: Cruelty of Rebels Continued--Attack on Fayetteville, Ark.--Military Changes--Guerrillas in the South-East--Thanksgiving for the Soldiers--A Dangerous Female Spy”, *The New York Daily Tribune*, Dec 1, 1864, accessed November 7, 2017, <https://search.proquest.com/hnpnewyorktribune/docview/570727843/abstract/8DB818A1C9134C05PQ/1>; “The Female Spies at Washington.” *Chicago Tribune*, Aug 30, 1861.

¹⁹ “Women in the War.” *The United States Service Magazine*, 4, no. 3 (August, 1865): 235

North and the South for her flashy methods of espionage, Boyd was once referred to as the “chief of” Southern female spies, who possessed “acknowledged superiority for machinations and intrigue” which had “given her the leadership and control of the female spies in the Valley of Virginia.”²⁰ She was a pest to the Union army, given her publicized actions against the Northern cause, yet her publication of her memoirs *Belle Boyd in Camp and Prison* was met with interest from Northern audiences in the months following the end of the Civil War. Originally published in London, where it was met with great acclaim, Boyd’s autobiography soon made its way to American audiences. While the *New York Daily Tribune* maintained in July of 1865 that Boyd’s new book was “unsavory,” and referred to the Confederacy as “the enemy,” and *The Nation* said of the book that “it is not worth a reprint,” other Northern newspapers were reprinting articles from London newspapers regarding Boyd’s new book and advertising Boyd’s book in new book lists.²¹ The *American Literary Gazette and Publishers Circular* out of Philadelphia advertised Boyd’s new book by reprinting a review from the *London Saturday Review* for its Northern audience, which concluded that “the tendency to find fault is lost in the sense of gratification with which we welcome the heroine of so many thrilling escapades, and the narrator of so many telling anecdotes.”²² Already the sense of adventure had trumped patriotism for the Northern cause. A month later, in August of 1865, this same newspaper acknowledged the recent

²⁰ "Southern Female Spies--Miss Belle Boyd." *The Sun*, Jul 21, 1862, accessed November 7, 2017, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/533680755?accountid=14696>.

²¹ "New Publications." *New York Daily Tribune*, Jul 27, 1865, accessed November 8, 2017 <https://search.proquest.com/docview/570676659?accountid=14696>; "Literary Notes." *Nation*, 1865, *The Nation Archives*, accessed November 10, 2017, <http://web.a.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=2&sid=6fe7c0c5-7e55-4297-8a65-8d104d112ea6%40sessionmgr4006>

²² "Advertisement 11 -- no Title." *American Literary Gazette and Publishers' Circular*, Jul 01, 1865, accessed November 10, 2017 <https://search.proquest.com/docview/89704608?accountid=14696>.

publication of Boyd's book in the United States.²³ This was just a mere five months after General Lee's surrender at Appomattox and President Lincoln's assassination. In November of that year, the *Burlington Free Press* out of Burlington, Vermont listed Boyd's autobiography under its New Books section, as did the *Alexandria Gazette*.²⁴ Though not as forceful an endorsement as reviews from newspapers in London, or that which was printed in *The American*, it is telling that a book written by a traitor to the Union was soon published and promoted in Northern newspapers not even a year after the end of the conflict. The case of Belle Boyd was just the beginning of the shift from the cautious and resentful views of Confederate women spies during the war to the fascination that would surround the literary genre in the years following the war.

The mixed reception of Boyd's book in America asserted that, while Northerners were willing to accept former traitors to the Union back into the fold of American society, the country was not immediately ready to embrace the Confederate cause. At the time, the reconciliation between the North and South to the point where Confederate statues would be erected nationwide likely would have seemed absurd to Northern citizens in 1865. The intense desire for reconciliation, however, was not absurd. Conciliation between North and South was desired by Northerners, and it is reflected in literary works that were written after the conflict. According to Nina Silber, however, efforts of reconciliation by Northerners had "less to say about the real-life South and more to say about the ideal and desired South."²⁵ Idealizing the South to fit the victor's approval included expanding the literary scene to include sympathetic or otherwise

²³ "LIST OF BOOKS RECENTLY PUBLISHED IN THE UNITED STATES." *American Literary Gazette and Publishers' Circular*, Aug 01, 1865, accessed November 10, 2017, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/89700211?accountid=14696>.

²⁴ *Burlington Free Press*, October 20, 1865, accessed November 11, 2017, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84023127/1865-10-20/ed-1/seq-4/>; *Alexandria Gazette*, November 13, 1865, accessed November 10, 2017 <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85025007/1865-11-13/ed-1/seq-2/>.

²⁵ Nina Silber, *The Romance of Reunion*, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 2.

heroic views of the South. One small subsection of this literary genre was devoted to female spies.

As stated before, the shift to pro-Southern literature was not instantaneous, however. In *Harpers New Monthly Magazine*, the April, May, June, July, and August issues focused on the war through a Northern lens. The April 1865 issue of *Harpers*, which was published in the last month of the war, featured “Recollections of Sherman.”²⁶ Similar articles appeared in the following issues including “Recollections of Thomas,” “Recollections of Grant,” as well as “Recollections of Lincoln” and “Recollections of Sheridan.”²⁷ Also featured in the July issue of the magazine was an article entitled “Prison Life,” which was a Union soldier’s recollection of his time as a Confederate prisoner of war, and “Chip,” a work of fiction where the protagonist was a war weary Union soldier.²⁸ This pattern reflects the popularity of Northern literature throughout the war. In the year 1862, of the forty-six war stories that were published in *Harpers Weekly*, less than sixteen included Southern heroines, while the remaining thirty stories represented Northern women’s struggles. The same can be said in the year 1863, where of the forty-one war stories published in *Harpers*, over half of them were devoted to Northern characters.²⁹ It is evident that literature was still focusing on Northern issues in the first few months after the end of the war, much as it had throughout the war. In September of that year however, “Margaret Bronson” was published, featuring a wealthy Southern belle who, having

²⁶ William Franklin Gore Shanks, “Recollections of Sherman,” *Harpers New Monthly Magazine*, April, 1865, 640-646.

²⁷ William Franklin Gore Shanks, “Recollections of Thomas,” *Harpers New Monthly Magazine*, May 1865, 754-759; William Gore Shanks, “Recollections of Grant,” *Harpers New Monthly Magazine* June, 1865, 68-76; William Franklin Gore Shanks, “Recollections of Lincoln,” *Harpers New Monthly Magazine* July, 1865, 222-230; William Franklin Gore Shanks, “Recollections of Sheridan,” *Harpers New Monthly Magazine*, August 1865, 287-297.

²⁸ B.S. Calef, “Prison Life,” *Harpers New Monthly Magazine* July, 1865, 131-150; Helen Wall Peirson, “Chip,” *Harpers New Monthly Magazine*, July, 1865, 254-258.

²⁹ Fahs, *The Feminized Civil War*, 1463.

freed all her slaves, haunts her plantation until one day she is met by her old sweetheart, a Union soldier, whom she resolves to join in battle.³⁰ Though not alone in its theme of Southern women falling in love with Union soldiers, it did represent a distinct reconciliatory tone which would soon become popular in the years following the war. Stories similar to this littered the pages of *Harpers* after the war and contributed heavily to the “conciliatory culture” that Northerners hoped to promote after the war to mend the divide between North and South.³¹

In the late 1860’s and early 1870’s, fictionalized accounts of the war abounded, as did tales of Antebellum fiction and “plantation fiction,” which was enjoyed by many Northerners and is what perhaps led Drew Gilpin Faust to conclude that white Southern “won the popular battle for its [The Civil War’s] memory.”³² Where during the war, sympathetic views of Southern women had been far less prevalent in fiction, and women Confederate spies downright loathed by the Northern public, soon they became exciting topics in literature. In June of 1867, a story called “Mrs. F’s Waiting Maid” was published in *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine*. Describing a Southern spy, a woman who he had loved in his youth, the protagonist remembers woefully that she was a “soft voiced siren,” with “dark brilliant eyes” that had “set his heart beating with old memories.” This dark romantic viewpoint presents the Southern woman in a dangerous yet appealing light. The conclusion of this novel is reminiscent of the conclusions that were drawn by the Federal government during the war. The Southern spy was afforded a “gentle judgment,” having avoided criminal punishment, due to “her youth and her sex” and leaves the Union officer to mourn her departure, despite the fact that her final remark to him is one of respect: “You have done your duty, Major Luce, and I honor you for it.” The conclusion drawn

³⁰ Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, “Margaret Bronson”, *Harpers New Monthly Magazine*, September, 1865, 498-504.

³¹ Silber, *The Romance of Reunion*, 2

³² Fahs, *The Feminized Civil War*, 1490.

by this work was one of mutual respect. Her honor to her country, the protagonist concludes, was equal to that of his. Therefore, the beauty of the Southern woman, and her duty to her state made her actions admirable, despite the fact that she was acting illegally against the federal government.³³ This story was widely read by Northern audiences (*Harpers Magazine's* readership at the time was over 100,000), thus promoting a fantastical and admirable element to female Confederate agents that differed from the perceptions of Southern spies by Northerners during the war.³⁴ Ellen Peck's *Renshawe*, published in the same year and which also focused on a female spy, likely had a similar effect on Northern audiences.³⁵

As the years went on, novels with Southern heroines as the main characters continued to be published, with a small section of the genre devoted to female rebel spies. One anecdote—a poem entitled “The Little Black Eyed Rebel”—saw a little rebel girl steal letters from a young boy, all which are addressed from the front by men “fighting for freedom that they meant to gain or die.” She fools him by offering a kiss.³⁶ As seen in “Mrs. F's Waiting Maid,” yet another male Northerner is fooled by an enticing Southern girl. The playful nature of the poem, which was complete with a rhyme scheme and illustrations, is a far cry from the wartime reports that saw women imprisoned in federal jails for the same crime. No doubt an attempt to make light of the past in accordance with the Northern goal of reconciliation, literature like this began to hint at a brand of forgiveness which went beyond mere toleration and crossed over into the territory of acceptance. Perhaps Northerners, in their intense desire for a national healing, were willing to look over the crimes which had once been reason enough for war.

³³ Nora Perry, “Mrs. F's Waiting Maid”, *Harpers New Monthly Magazine*, June, 1867, 74-79.

³⁴ *Harpers Weekly*, June 15, 1861, 369.

³⁵ Ellen Peck, *Renshawe*, (New York: Carlton, 1867).

³⁶ Will Carleton, “The Little Black Eyed Rebel”, *Harpers New Monthly Magazine*, June, 1876, 156-157.

This theme would continue. In August 1882, *Harpers* published “The Rebel,” a short story in which yet another Union officer is fooled by a beautiful Southern spy, this time to his death. The fantastical events of their passionate kiss in the night (“they kissed for the first time—and the last,”) his deliverance and then destruction by her hands (“she drew it and levelled it at her lover...she shot him through the heart,”) and her putting her love of country above her love of him (“I love my country and I hate her enemies”) all made for an sensational read, and likely would have engaged *Harpers* readers.³⁷ With the war seventeen years passed, it was no longer fresh in the public’s minds, and the thought of a dead Union soldier at the hands of a Southerner was uncontroversial enough to be published in a popular Northern magazine without the fear that it may provoke outrage. After all, it was just fiction. Perhaps the years of reconciliation had reunited the nation. The literature of the era, which was able to look either humorously (in the case of “The Little Black Eyed Rebel”) or romantically (as in “The Rebel”) represented the drastic change in Northern public opinions since the war.

This pattern continued. In 1888, James J. Kane published *Ilian* in Philadelphia. This too, centered around a Southern woman who was described by Albert J. Menendez in his *Civil War Novels: An Annotated Bibliography* as “a beautiful Southern spy” who, “captivates all she meets.”³⁸ No doubt that Kane capitalized on the fascination with female spies to write his heroine, ignoring or perhaps not even considering the implications that popularizing a female Confederate spy would have on the public viewpoint.

The implications of these changes are perhaps most evident in works of nonfiction twenty to fifty years after the conflict. As early as 1889, *The Baltimore Sun* released an article which put

³⁷ Julian Hawthorne, “A Rebel”, *Harpers New Monthly Magazine*, August 1882, 408-414.

³⁸ Albert J Menendez. *Civil War Novels: An Annotated Bibliography*, (New York, NY: Garland Publishing Inc., 1986) 77.

Belle Boyd in an undeniably fashionable light. Seemingly unbothered by Boyd's violent actions against the Union, the *Sun* reprinted passages of Boyd's own story, describing it as "remarkable."³⁹ Similarly, the *The Sun* out of New York City, printed "Belle Boyd, The Rebel Spy" in February of 1891, describing Boyd in similar terms. *The Sun* praised Boyd's "striking appearance," her "devotion to the South," and her "excellent West Virginia family."⁴⁰ Three years later, in February of 1894, *The Wilmington Daily Republican* out of Wilmington, Delaware, printed an ad for Boyd's lecture series, describing her adventures as "daring deeds and dashing exploits."⁴¹ The continued attention given to Boyd and the words of praise bestowed upon her—which differed from the initial reactions to her in Northern newspapers immediately after the war—indicates the fantastical element that began to surround real female Confederate spies in the later years of the 19th century, just as it had surrounded their fictional counterparts.

While it is tempting to dismiss Boyd as the exception, not the rule for female Confederate spies after the Civil War given her fame, Boyd was not the only female spy given this sort of positive attention. This was particularly noticeable in the 1910s, the decade that marked the war's fifty-year anniversary. In 1912, *The Washington Post* printed "Women Who Served in the War", which was essentially a suffragist publication that highlighted the efforts of women in the Civil War. The pamphlet lavishes praise upon four different women spies. Of these four, three were Confederate spies, while only one was a Union spy. The pamphlet describes Rose O'Neal

³⁹"The Real Belle Boyd: A Famous Confederate Spy." *The Baltimore Sun*, February 12, 1889, date accessed November 7, 2017,

<https://search.proquest.com/docview/535116110/fulltextPDF/2D6ADB79B04240F0PQ/1?accountid=14696>.

⁴⁰"Belle Boyd, The Rebel Spy" *The Sun*, February 21, 1891, date accessed December 14, 2017,

<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030272/1891-02-21/ed-1/seq-2/#date1=1889&index=0&rows=20&words=Belle+BELLE+BOYD+Boyd&searchType=basic&sequence=0&state=New+York&date2=1900&proxtext=belle+boyd&y=15&x=15&dateFilterType=yearRange&page=1>.

⁴¹"Belle Boyd Coming" *The Wilmington Daily Republican*, February 19, 1894, date accessed December 14, 2017,

<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn88053055/1894-02-19/ed-1/seq-4/#date1=1889&index=1&rows=20&words=BELLE+Belle+Boyd+BOYD&searchType=basic&sequence=0&state=Delaware&date2=1900&proxtext=belle+boyd&y=21&x=11&dateFilterType=yearRange&page=1>

Greenhow as a “zealous and most trusted friend of the Confederacy;” Belle Boyd as “an ardent daughter of the Confederacy” who “risked her life time and time again” for the cause; as well as Nancy Hart, who’s adventures were described as “stirring” and whose person was labeled as “intrepid.”⁴² A similar display of respect for female Confederate spies could be found in *Harpers New Monthly Magazine* in the same year when *Harpers* published a biography of Greenhow in their March edition, which described Greenhow as “beautiful, accomplished, wealthy, and noted for her wit and forceful personality.”⁴³ This study of Greenhow is oddly similar to those which focused on Union generals nearly fifty years before. The same year, *The Washington Post* published another celebration of female spies which equated the deeds of Southern spies to Northern ones in a single sentence: “the Northern girl and the Southern Lassie rushed into danger for their country’s sake.” Clearly, female Confederate spies were celebrated in the same manner as their Northern counterparts.

In 1913 and 1914 respectively, two new celebrations of Rose O’Neal Greenhow emerged. One, published on January 12, 1913 in *The Boston Globe* entitled “Famous Scouts and Spies of the Civil War”, referred to Greenhow as a woman of “great charm and originality.” A year later, *the Globe* published “The War Day by Day, Fifty Years Ago” and referred to Greenhow as “the most celebrated spy in the Confederacy” who possessed “talents and [an] attractive personality.” It is therefore easy to ascertain a sort of veneration to these women, which mixed a respectful acknowledgment of their patriotic duty to their country and an interest in their attractive features and personalities— both qualities that were reflected in works of post-war fiction involving Confederate female spies. Therefore, it can be understood that the changing

⁴² “Women who Served in Warfare”, *The Washington Post*, July 8, 1912, accessed November 13, 2017, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/145188508/abstract/D039BC9C66F043C2PQ/6>.

⁴³ William Gilmore Beymer, “Mrs. Greenhow”, *Harpers New Monthly Magazine*, March 1912, 563-578.

attitudes towards Southern spies after the Civil War affected the Northern population so much so that they began to celebrate in newspapers the spies who were once written in print with detest.

With this change, however, came the erasure—or at the very least—idealization, of what had initially caused the conflict. The fiction focusing on Southern women had, according to Alice Fahs, “bathed slavery in a nostalgic glow.”⁴⁴ The crimes of real-life female spies, similarly, were glamorized, which overrode the truth that many of these upper-class women were, by defending the Confederacy, intrinsically defending the institution of slavery. Popular fascination with female spies has brushed over this topic, just as the stories of reconciliatory Southern belles in Fahs’ essay have done. As Nina Silber states “forgetfulness, not memory, appears to be the dominant theme in reunion culture.”⁴⁵ Northerners seemed to forget that wealthy white women in the antebellum South owed their now romanticized lifestyle to the hierarchy of the South which rested on the oppression and enslavement of blacks. As Drew Gilpin Faust says, “as the women who benefitted most from the South’s class and racial arrangements, females in slaveholding families had the most to lose from war born transformation,” and thus were the most determined to defend it.⁴⁶ The actions of wealthy Confederate women spies, while captivating for the public, ignore this and thus has helped reconcile citizens of the United States with the actions of the Confederacy, hereby raising the Confederacy to a position equal, and in some places above that of the Union.

⁴⁴ Fahs, *The Feminized Civil War*, 1464.

⁴⁵ Silber, *The Romance of Reunion*, 4.

⁴⁶ Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 7.

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