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'Champions of Contending Armies': The Ancient Rivalry Between Massachusetts and South Carolina, 1829-1856

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“CHAMPIONS OF CONTENDING ARMIES”: THE ANCIENT RIVALRY BETWEEN
MASSACHUSETTS AND SOUTH CAROLINA, 1829-1856

A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirement for the Degree
Master of Arts
History

by
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Accepted by:
Dr. Paul Christopher Anderson, Committee Chair
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ABSTRACT

The focus of this work is the “ancient rivalry” between Massachusetts and South Carolina, as it played out in the antebellum era. Although little attention has been devoted exclusively to the study of this rivalry, it exercised a considerable degree of influence over the nation on its path to civil war. Most notably, this rivalry directly impacted the emergence of an American national identity between 1830 and 1860. The self-perpetuating rivalry between South Carolina and Massachusetts helped define the parameters of American identity, and ensured the eventual exclusion of South Carolina from such an identity. Filtered through three specific episodes, this work will show how a unique South Carolina psychology and identity emerged in response to the state’s exclusion from American identity. This psychology gave South Carolinians the individual and collective social capacity to play an unparalleled role in the American Civil War. This role was characterized by their ability to inaugurate the secession movement and do so unanimously; their ability to embrace secession and celebrate its realization; their ability to offer a greater degree of support to the Confederate cause than their neighbors—including lower exemption and desertion percentages, higher enlistment and casualty percentages, and a more cooperative relationship with the Confederate government.

The first chapter will present the Great Debate between South Carolina’s Robert Young Hayne and Massachusetts’s Daniel Webster. This chapter will show how Webster, over the course of the debate, established the historical legitimacy of a perpetual union and the historical illegitimacy of state interposition. In doing so, he excluded

South Carolina nullification from his conception of American identity, and initiated the process by which all South Carolinians would eventually be excluded. In addition, the debate between Hayne and Webster helped engender a number of perceived foibles that would become associated with South Carolina over the next few decades, alienating the state from the rest of the nation.

The second chapter will depict the controversy between Massachusetts's Lorenzo Sabine and South Carolina's William Gilmore Simms. This chapter will relay how Sabine excluded the majority of white South Carolinians from the nation's unifying historical experience, thereby establishing a separate, aberrant South Carolina historical narrative. Because of the relationship between historical experience and collective identity, this episode ensured the emergence of a distinct South Carolina identity.

The final chapter will explore Charles Sumner's critique of South Carolina and Preston Brooks's subsequent retaliation. Sumner's treatment of South Carolina was an extension of the remarks made by Webster and Sabine. Decrying the entire history of South Carolina, Sumner provided for the unconditional exclusion of South Carolinians. With this exclusion, South Carolina witnessed the evaporation of unionism within the state. Barred from American nationality, South Carolinians turned to their state for a source of identity.

DEDICATION

For my Mother and Father

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The journey that has culminated in the completion of this thesis was begun five years ago. Regarding Master's degrees in general, the length of time which it has taken to complete this work has been remarkably long. Having been so long accustomed to view the process I was engaged in as interminable, I am now inclined to view its termination as nothing short of a miracle. Reaching the miraculous end of my protracted journey, I must now convey my ineffable gratitude to all the invaluable parties who have aided me along the way.

Dr. Paul Anderson has been my greatest academic mentor. I consider it one of my life's greatest privileges to have had the opportunity to learn from him both as an undergraduate and as a graduate student at Clemson University. And I consider it one of my greatest misfortunes to have not had the opportunity to take more of his classes. He is a brilliant man, and has given me a great deal of insight into the South, history, and people in general. Dr. Rod Andrew and Dr. Christa Smith are prime examples of why Clemson's Department of History and Geography epitomizes what every academic institution should be, a place where intellects engage in a network of understanding and ideas, with mutual respect and support, for the advancement of education and the betterment of society. All three of these professors are great scholars, but, more importantly, they are *good* people. Their support and advice has been tremendous.

I am indebted to the staffs and personnel at the South Caroliniana Library in Columbia, the Strom Thurmond Institute at Clemson, The Cooper Library at Clemson, and the Laurens branch of the Laurens County Library. These people have generously

provided the research assistance necessary to the completion of such a monumental task. I am also grateful to the people of South Carolina, past and present, old and young, black and white, man and woman. They have been a constant source of inspiration.

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I am grateful to the members of College Street Baptist Church, and the members of my faith at large, for the many, many prayers and intercessions made on my behalf during this process. Their faith has strengthened mine, and their love is a testament to the love of God.

Finally, I owe an eternal debt of gratitude to my God, the Maker of men, and my Savior, Jesus Christ. Eugene Genovese once concluded that the Christian faith of African-Americans was the only thing that could explain how they were able to survive the numerous tribulations they have endured for centuries. I believe this is a fitting explanation for how any Christian individual is able to survive the many trials of life. This thesis was long and arduous, and there were countless nights when I felt like giving up. It is through my faith alone that the light of hope survived. God believes in us all, and this is the greatest source of strength I can imagine.

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INTRODUCTION

“Massachusetts and South Carolina. The two representative States of the Union, like the two champions of contending armies, are doomed to settle between them the great struggle which must continue to be kept up between the North and the South.”

-New York Daily Times, 27 May 1856

Sue McDowell, opening her journal on New Years Day 1861, wrote: “Gloriously my loved Carolina, have you moved in these hours which try mens souls. Your sons do no dishonor to the soil which germinated a Marion and Sumter...and time will indelibly stamp your name upon the pages of history, with the 21st of December as the era from which to date your sovereignty.”¹ Spartanburg farmer David G. Harris confided in his journal: “I do hope the State or rather the Republic of South Carolina will not concede or retract, or submit in no respect whatever. She has taken a bold and noble stand, she must and will maintain it let it cost as much blood and money as it may. I for one am glad she has committed herself, and do not fear the consequences.”² The *Keowee Courier* proclaimed: “The long looked for and long hoped for period has at length arrived when a sovereign State (long oppressed by her enemies, who should have been her friends,) would throw aside the shackles by which she was bound, arise in the majesty of her power, and declare herself a free and independent Government.”³ A correspondent for the *Carolina Spartan* wrote, “And thus was passed, ratified and sanctioned in the city of Charleston, the 20th of December, 1860, the glorious act of secession, which is to make

¹ Sue McDowell, *Journal of Sue McDowell*, January 1, 1861, South Caroliniana Library archives, Columbia, SC.

² David G. Harris, *Piedmont Farmer: The Journals of David Golightly Harris 1855-1870*, ed. Philip N. Racine (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1990), 168.

³ *Keowee Courier*, January 5, 1861.

the Southern States the greatest people under the sun, and South Carolina the greatest State of them all.”⁴

These testimonies, and numerous others like them, reveal the peculiar implications of secession to the people of South Carolina. By 1860, the Union was an institution most northerners were willing to go to war to save, and one most southerners were only willing to destroy as an extreme last resort, and even then with extreme apprehension and reluctance. The sole exception was South Carolina, where secession was embraced ardently, anticipated eagerly, and celebrated almost universally. To be the first state to pioneer such uncharted waters, South Carolina displayed the least hesitation and apprehension.

As the quotes of McDowell, Harris, the *Courier*, and the *Spartan* reveal, secession, for South Carolinians, was more than a pragmatic attempt to preserve slavery, or the forceful assertion of the validity of the States Rights doctrine. The passion with which many South Carolinians received secession indicates disunion meant something entirely different in South Carolina than anywhere else. This thesis isn't an examination into the motives behind South Carolina secession, which have been examined time and again. Rather, it is an exploration of the act of seceding, how and why it occurred as it did in South Carolina, and what it meant to the people of South Carolina.

The circumstances surrounding the South Carolina secession movement were an appropriate expression of what James M. Banner dubbed “The Problem of South Carolina,” in reference to South Carolina’s unique antebellum radicalism. When Banner

⁴ Spartanburg *Carolina Spartan*, Jan. 3, 1861, as quoted by Harold S. Schultz, *Nationalism and Sectionalism in South Carolina, 1852-1860: A Study of the Movement for Southern Independence* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1950),

coined this term, he unknowingly pioneered a subject that would become the focus of continual historical discussion and examination. Seeking to explain “the problem of South Carolina,” Banner argued that the state’s unique political culture—preeminently defined by the absence of a two-party system--created an atmosphere conducive to radical behavior. Kenneth S. Greenberg also advanced a political explanation.

According to Greenberg, the American Revolution altered the political practices of every American state save South Carolina. Dedicated to a system of virtual representation in an era of actual representation, the widening gulf between South Carolinians and their countrymen resulted in aberrant behavior.⁵

Both Manisha Sinha and William W. Freehling explain the “Problem of South Carolina” as a product of the planter aristocracy’s dominance in state politics. Manisha Sinha claims this ruling class of Carolinians became wedded to an emerging “political ideology of slavery.” According to Freehling, the planter aristocracy developed a unique “planter psychology,” as they shifted “between one of the most debilitating inferiority complexes in nineteenth-century America and one of the most soaring superiority complexes any ruling class will ever develop.” However, Sinha and Freehling both credit the South Carolina aristocracy with too much influence.⁶

According to Lacy K. Ford and Stephanie McCurry, South Carolina’s planter aristocracy did not exercise nearly as much control as Freehling and Sinha would have us

⁵ James M. Banner, Jr., “The Problem of South Carolina,” in *The Hofstadter Aegis: A Memorial*, ed. Stanley Elkins and Eric McKittrick (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1974), 60-93; Kenneth S. Greenberg, “Representation and the Isolation of South Carolina, 1776-1860,” *The Journal of American History*, vol. 64, no. 3 (Dec., 1977), 723-743, in JSTOR [database online]; accessed 18 April 2005.

⁶ Manisha Sinha, *The Counterrevolution of Slavery: Politics and Ideology in Antebellum South Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 2-13, 24-25; William W. Freehling, *The Road to Disunion: Secessionists at Bay, 1776-1854* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 213-252.

believe. The inclusion of yeomen in the democratic process, and high voter turnout in several closely contested elections, forced the state's political elite to recognize the opinions and wishes of their less privileged neighbors. Examining the historiography of South Carolina extremism, James Haw notes this contradiction, conceding that Freehling was probably correct in noting "that one key to the state's antebellum extremism lies in its individual and social psychology." However, if the conclusions of Ford and McCurry are credible, and the planter class was not as dominant as Freehling indicates, Haw suggests "an explanation broader than *planter* psychology may be called for."⁷

That is precisely what this thesis aims to do--provide a broader explanation by tracing the development of a broader psychology: a *South Carolina psychology*. Only a broad, all-inclusive South Carolina psychology can explain the presence of "the Problem of South Carolina" among South Carolina women, yeomen farmers, and inhabitants of the state's white-majority districts not dominated by planters and plantations. The impetus for such a psychology must be applicable to all relevant segments of the population. In searching for this impetus, I found a substantial amount of evidence indicating a gradual and sustained effort to exclude South Carolina from an emerging national identity, eventually leading to the universal exclusion of South Carolinians. This exclusion was the catalyst for "the Problem of South Carolina."

The prevalence of exclusion is central to the development of nationality. "Wherever and whenever nationalism has developed in notably vigorous form," writes David M.

⁷ Lacy K. Ford, Jr., *Origins of Southern Radicalism: The South Carolina Upcountry, 1800-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 99-144; Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations, and the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Lowcountry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 240, 92-93, 127, 104-106, 115-116, 255; James Haw, "'The Problem of South Carolina' Reexamined: A Review Essay," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine*, vol. 107, no. 1 (January 2006), 25.

Potter, “it has been in circumstances of conflict between the nationalizing group and some other group. In such a situation, the rejection of the out-group not only strengthens the cohesion of the in-group, but imparts to the members of the in-group a greater awareness of what they share.” According to Susan-Mary Grant, the South became the out-group described by Potter, as “northerners managed to exclude the South from their vision of American national identity. Indeed, they came to rely on the South as the essential negative reference point in the construction of that identity.” While the basic premises of Grant’s argument are certainly valid, her thesis has greater relevance when applied specifically to South Carolina as the negative point of reference. The concept of a union for the sake of union, central to the development of American national identity, was articulated by Daniel Webster and broadcast to a receptive national audience in direct contrast to the doctrine of nullification, whereby South Carolina alone was aligned against the Union. And Lorenzo Sabine’s history of the American Revolution set South Carolina’s past, in particular, against the history of the rest of the country. Early American nationalism took shape by using South Carolina as a negative point of reference.⁸

This thesis is a study of national identities, and traces the simultaneous development of an American national identity predicated upon the exclusion of South Carolina, and a

⁸ Eric Foner, *Who Owns History? Rethinking the Past in a Changing World* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2002), 150-151: “Nowhere is this symbiotic relationship between inclusion and exclusion—between a national creed that emphasizes democracy and freedom as universal rights and a reality of limiting these entitlements to particular groups of people—more evident than in debates over that fundamental question ‘Who is an American?’”; David M. Potter, Don E. Fehrenbacher, ed., *The Impending Crisis, 1848-1861* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), 450; Susan-Mary Grant, *North Over South: Northern Nationalism and American Identity in the Antebellum Era* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2000), 56; Harlow W. Sheidley, “The Webster-Hayne Debate: Recasting New England’s Sectionalism,” *The New England Quarterly*, vol. 67, no. 1 (Mar., 1994), 24, in JSTOR [database online]; accessed 5 June 2007. According to Sheidley, Webster’s reply to Hayne was “the most widely read congressional speech of its era.”

South Carolina identity whose emergence was a reaction to this exclusion. Although I focus on the term identity throughout, and rarely refer explicitly to psychology, I am using the term within its contextual relationship to a South Carolina psychology. The South Carolina psychology and South Carolina identity have correlative relevance. South Carolina's behavior was influenced by an emerging South Carolina psychology, and this psychology was engendered and defined based upon how South Carolinians saw themselves and their perceptions of how others saw them. In this sense, South Carolina identity is understood to be intrinsically bound to a South Carolina psychology. For the purpose of this thesis, any reference to South Carolina identity and a South Carolina psychology should be understood to regard white South Carolinians. Although there is some evidence to suggest free blacks had access to the emergence of a state psychology, the majority of antebellum South Carolinians were slaves of African descent with no inclination to develop the same psychological outlook of white Carolinians.⁹

The existence of a third identity—Southern, or Confederate, identity—has oftentimes muddled the distinctions between American and South Carolina identities. For the purpose of this thesis, Southern identity can be delineated to the defense of sectional interests. According to David M. Potter, the conflict between the North and the South resulting in the Civil War was the result of conflicting sectional interests and the inability

⁹ For evidence suggesting free black South Carolinians may have developed a similar outlook to that of white Carolinians, see Michael P. Johnson and James L. Roark, *Black Masters: A Free Family of Color in the Old South* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1984), 293. Johnson and Roark quote an address to the Governor of South Carolina signed by eighty-two free mulattoes from Charleston, expressing their attachment to South Carolina: "We are by birth citizens of South Carolina...Our attachments are with you, our hopes of safety & protection from you. Our allegiance is due to So. Ca. and in her defense, we are willing to offer up our lives, and all that is dear to us." Also, William S. McFeely, review of *Black Masters*, by Michael P. Johnson and James L. Roark, *The Nation*, 240 (February 1985), 151, in Expanded Academic [database online], accessed 19 April 2005. McFeely mentions William Ellison of Statesburg, South Carolina, a free black planter whose support for the Confederacy rivaled that of his white neighbors. Ellison owned more slaves and ninety percent of the white population, and transferred his plantation output to produce food for the Confederacy. Ellison also had a grandson fight for the Confederate army.

to sustain political equilibrium in a growing, multi-sectional democracy. “For the major premise of a democracy, that the majority shall rule,” writes Potter, “is predicated upon the assumption that the majority is part of some larger whole, whose existence as a totality is identifiable enough to give assurance that those persons who are imposing their will on the one hand, and those who are submitting to the imposition on the other, are really part of the same people and are, as one whole, bound by the will of their larger part.” As the country expanded west, the North outpaced the South in the accumulation of states, population, and political clout, and was thus able to recast their sectional interests as America’s national interests.¹⁰

With regard to the South in general, sectional interests were not secure *because* southerners were considered part of an American totality. Democracy sanctioned the will of the majority, in this instance the North, over the minority. Disunion was a means of protecting their sectional interests when democracy failed to do so. But with regard to South Carolina, disunion meant more than the protection of sectional interests. South Carolina’s exclusion from national identity didn’t mean exemption from the will of the majority. It meant a negation of the rights and safeguards afforded to all members of a totality, and a denial of self-government. Just as South Carolina’s slaves were unable to exercise control over their own destiny because of their skin color, white South Carolinians witnessed the emergence of an America in which being a South Carolinian automatically conferred a sense of inferiority and powerlessness. This is why South Carolina’s behavior was more radical than other southern states, why secession took on a

¹⁰ David M. Potter, “The Historian’s Use of Nationalism and Vice Versa,” *The American Historical Review*, vol. 67, no. 4 (Jul., 1962), 924-950.

unique flavor in the Palmetto State, and why South Carolina's commitment to the Confederacy and the war effort surpassed all other southern states. Disunion was to white South Carolinians what insurrection was to their slaves--the last desperate attempt to assert authority over their own destiny, not merely in the narrow sense relating to the protection of temporary, sectional interests, but in a broader respect encompassing all aspects of their lives, their liberty, and any and all interests they might ever have.

Several historians and contemporaries have noted the existence of an "ancient rivalry" existing between South Carolina and Massachusetts. This terminology has been employed to describe the rivalry in a qualitative, rather than chronological, sense. It is meant to convey an epic enmity, not an aged conflict. It was a rivalry akin to that of Athens and Sparta, Greece and Persia, Rome and Carthage, and any of the other grand, transcendent rivalries in human history. I have framed the emergence of a South Carolina psychology against the backdrop of such a rivalry, because three prominent episodes of this rivalry adequately explain the inception, maturation, and proliferation of a unique South Carolina psychology and South Carolina's exclusion from American identity: the Hayne-Webster Debate (1830), the Sabine-Simms Controversy (1847-1856), and the Brooks-Sumner Affair (1856).

The presence of history in this rivalry is of critical importance. In each episode, history is central to the ensuing debate. It was precisely this presence of the past that facilitated the development of conflicting identities. During the course of the Hayne-Webster Debate, Daniel Webster depicted South Carolina nullification as having no historical precedence in America's past. Seventeen years later, Lorenzo Sabine depicted

South Carolina as, by and large, a British ally during the American Revolution, thus, occupying a separate past from other Americans. Finally, Charles Sumner argued that the history of South Carolina contributed nothing to the history of the United States, nor civilization, and was virtually worthless. History was both the pivotal catalyst for—and the potent conduit of—the dissensions and aspersions which dominated this rivalry during the antebellum years. More importantly, history was the means by which Webster, Sabine, and Sumner excluded South Carolina from their construction of American identity. Their usage of history was responsible for “the problem of South Carolina.”

CHAPTER ONE

DUELING TONGUES: THE HAYNE-WEBSTER DEBATE

“As we shall see in his 1850 Compromise speeches, Webster liked to use the states as microcosms of geographic sections and build his arguments from that inductive position. In a way, the battle between Hayne and Webster was synecdoche for the battle over how South Carolina and Massachusetts would be perceived....”¹¹

“South Carolina reproached by Massachusetts!” thundered the eloquent Charlestonian from the floor of the Senate.¹² Robert Young Hayne was answering charges made by the equally talented Daniel Webster of Massachusetts. The ensuing debate between these two silver-tongued masters of oratory has rightly been remembered in the pages of American history as “The Great Debate.” Originating in the winter of 1829-30, the debate between Hayne and Webster represents the dawning of a new age in American history. As is the case with the dawning of any age, the figurative day ahead was both thrillingly new and menacingly unpredictable. As the founding generation of Americans faded into memory, a new generation grappled with the ambiguous nature of their union, egalitarian reforms, and the emergence of historical consciousness, national identity, and sectional politics. Because all of these issues, and more, converged in the debate between Hayne and Webster, it is perhaps one of the most inestimably complex and important events in American history.

* * * * *

¹¹ Craig R. Smith, *Daniel Webster and the Oratory of Civil Religion* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2005), 112.

¹² *Register of Debates in Congress*, 21 Cong., 1 Sess., 51.

“Far, indeed, in my wishes, very far distant be the day, when our associated and fraternal stripes shall be severed asunder, and when that happy constellation under which we have risen to so much renown, shall be broken up, and be seen sinking, star after star, into obscurity and night.”¹³ Such was the somber depiction of disunion conveyed by Massachusetts senator Daniel Webster in his memorable debate with Robert Young Hayne of South Carolina. Although this entire metaphor is important in understanding the significance of the Hayne-Webster Debate, two words in particular are of critical importance: *have risen*. By 1830, according to Daniel Webster, the Union was not a happy constellation under which its several stars *were rising* or *would rise*, but one in which they had already risen.

The phrase *have risen* is specifically important because it is a reference to the past, to an historical occurrence. It is an admission of historical consciousness. For the second generation of Americans, such as Hayne and Webster, American identity was rooted in a common historical experience.¹⁴ In his debate with Hayne, Daniel Webster sought to define American identity upon the foundation of a perpetual union. But by 1830, American identity was based upon the past, and defining it meant establishing the historical legitimacy of his argument. Webster ultimately succeeded not because he merely established the historical legitimacy of his own argument, but because he was able to depict nullification as historically illegitimate—in accordance with the country’s two

¹³ *Ibid*, 38.

¹⁴ Eileen Ka-May Cheng, “American Historical Writers and the Loyalists, 1788-1856: Dissent, Consensus, and American Nationality,” *Journal of the Early Republic*, Vol. 23, No. 4 (Winter, 2003), 495; Susan-Mary Grant, *North Over South: Northern Nationalism and American Identity in the Antebellum Era* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2000), 28, 56; J. V. Matthews, “‘Whig History’: The New England Whigs and a Usable Past,” *The New England Quarterly*, Vol. 51, No. 2 (Jun., 1978), 193.

rivaling interpretations of history—excluding the doctrine of state interposition, and its proponents, from American identity and endowing South Carolina with an enduring, multifaceted notoriety.

* * * * *

Although the contest between Webster and Hayne would eventually be remembered in the pages of American history as The Great Debate, theirs was but one in a prolonged series of debates over the American Union. Its greatness was not manifested in their essential arguments and assumptions over the union, neither of which were novel. When Webster argued for a perpetual union, necessary to the blessings of a composite American people, he was restating the claims of Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, and the Federalists. And when Hayne portrayed the American Union as a confederation of sovereign states, he was reflecting earlier sentiments expressed by Richard Henry Lee and the Anti-Federalists.¹⁵ Hayne and Webster did not differentiate themselves from their predecessors by reasserting old arguments, but by placing those arguments in a broader historic context.

For the founding generation, the legacy of the American Revolution, or what they hoped would be the legacy, was achieving a perfect balance of liberty and power. “As too much power leads to despotism,” explained Alexander Hamilton, “too little leads to anarchy, and both eventually to the ruin of the people.”¹⁶ The founders saw the union as a great experiment in self-government. While all were committed to the success of the

¹⁵ Kenneth M. Stampp, “The Concept of a Perpetual Union,” *The Imperiled Union: Essays on the Background of the Civil War*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 5-33.

¹⁶ James H. Read, *Power versus Liberty: Madison, Hamilton, Wilson, and Jefferson* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000), 63.

experiment, they lacked a consensus on what the nature of the union should be as to ensure success. The Federalists advocated a strong central government to maintain order, while the Anti-Federalists believed the concentrated power of such a government would threaten liberty.

Thus, when Webster advocated a strong central government and a perpetual union, necessary to “our prosperity, felicity, safety,” he was restating the claims of the Federalists.¹⁷ Alexander Hamilton had forewarned, “the states will be dangerous” to the authority of the federal government, and “ought to be extinguished;”¹⁸ and John Jay, in *The Federalist no. 2*, concurred:

A strong sense of the values and blessings of union induced the people, at a very early period, to institute a federal government to preserve and perpetuate it....It is worthy of remark that not only the first, but every succeeding Congress, as well as the late convention, have invariably joined with the people in thinking that the prosperity of America depended on its Union. To preserve and perpetuate it was the great object of the people in forming that convention....¹⁹

Just as Hayne and the South Carolina Nullifiers would later contest the logic of Webster’s perpetual union, the arguments of Hamilton and Jay were checked by those from Anti-Federalists such as John Randolph, who described the union as a “means of securing the safety, liberty, and welfare of the confederacy and not itself an end to which these should be sacrificed.”²⁰ And from this disparity of opinions America’s earliest political divisions ensued.

* * * * *

¹⁷ *Register of Debates in Congress*, 21 Cong., 1 Sess., 29.

¹⁸ As quoted by Kenneth M. Stampp, “The Concept of a Perpetual Union,” 17.

¹⁹ John Jay, “The Federalist. No. II,” *The Federalist: A Commentary on the Constitution of the United States* (New York: M. Walter Dunne, Publisher, 1901), 16, 18.

²⁰ As quoted by Stampp, “The Concept of a Perpetual Union,” 20.

With the passing of the founding fathers, the second generation of Americans inherited this ambiguously defined union, along with their fathers' dual fears of anarchy and tyranny. But by the 1820s America was seen less as an experiment and more of as a success, and the meaning of America was consigned to its past. History assumed a place of central importance in American politics. Rivaling interpretations of American history emerged along ideological lines. Having never been resolved, the questions over the nature of the union, and the balance of liberty and power, remained relevant. But by the time Hayne and Webster sparred on the senate floor, they had assumed historic underpinnings.

Whig and Democratic versions of world history developed into two contrasting interpretations of the past, and although these interpretations were central to many political debates, they were not strictly confined along partisan lines. A member of the Whig party could adhere to the Democratic interpretation of history, and vice versa. Webster's depiction of the "happy constellation" was an expression of the Whig interpretation of history. Indirectly, this interpretation was an extension of the Federalists' case for a perpetual union; directly, it was a response to Jacksonian Democracy. In the early republic, participation in government was restricted to the "natural aristocracy", the only class of men believed to be both capable (in a material sense) and worthy (in a virtuous sense) of guiding the affairs of state.²¹ The rising tide of egalitarianism, however, relegated the aristocrat to a position of negligible importance in

²¹ Robert M. Weir, " 'The Harmony We Were Famous For': An Interpretation of Pre-Revolutionary South Carolina Politics," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Ser., Vol. 26, no. 4 (Oct., 1969), 476-77, accessed on JSTOR, 22 Jan. 2005; William W. Freehling, *The Road to Disunion: Secessionists at Bay, 1776-1854* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 39-40.

the political and social arenas of the United States. The rise of the common man, culminating in the 1828 election of Andrew Jackson, invoked fresh fears of the anarchy forewarned by Alexander Hamilton. A woman attending Jackson's first presidential inauguration described the ensuing chaos:

“But what a scene did we witness! The *Majesty of the People* had disappeared, and a rabble, a mob, of boys, negroes, women, children, scrambling, fighting, romping. What a pity what a pity! No arrangements had been made no police officers placed on duty and the whole house had been inundated by the rabble mob. We came too late. The President, after having been *literally* nearly pressed to death and almost suffocated and torn to pieces by the people...had retreated....Cut glass and china to the amount of several thousand dollars had been broken in the struggle to get refreshments...Ladies fainted, men were seen with bloody noses and such a scene of confusion took place as is impossible to describe....I fear, enlightened Freemen as they are, they will be found, as they have been found in all ages and countries where they get the Power in their hands, that of all tyrants, they are the most ferocious, cruel and despotic. The noisy and disorderly rabble in the President's House brought to my mind descriptions I had read, of the mobs in the Tuileries and at Versailles....”²²

With such scenes conjuring up images of the French Revolution, the descendants of America's Revolutionaries sought to reign in the uncertain implications of their past.

The Whig solution proposed educating the public with an interpretation of national history designed to restrain the wild and impulsive nature of man, placing the current generation of Americans in a broader historic context:

It corrects the cold selfishness which would regard ourselves, our day, and our generation, as a separate and insulated portion of man and time; and awakening our sympathies for those who have gone before, it makes us mindful, also, of those who are to follow, and thus binds us to our fathers and to our posterity by a lengthening and golden chord.²³

²² Margaret Smith to Mrs. Kirkpatrick, 22 March 1829, as quoted by Harry L. Watson, *Andrew Jackson vs. Henry Clay: Democracy and Development in Antebellum America* (Boston & New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2000), 164-165.

²³ As quoted by Matthews, 195-196.

By fostering an allegiance to all preceding and successive generations, Whigs hoped they could curb the selfish passions of the people.²⁴ In an era when national allegiance was based upon allegiance to a national past, the ability of the past to command allegiance rested upon faith in its capability to solve national problems. Herein lies the impetus for the Whig interpretation of American history.

The Whig interpretation of history depicted the past as an ongoing narrative of progress, as humanity searched for harmony and civility in a savage and tumultuous world. They saw the American Revolution as a climactic moment in this narrative, securing the ascendancy of order and harmony: a revolution to end all revolution. Accordingly, American history was placed within that framework, depicted as a direct product of the past.²⁵ “Our American liberty,” Webster argued, “has an ancestry, a pedigree, a history. Our ancestors brought to this continent all that was valuable...in the political institutions of England, and left behind them all that was without value.”²⁶ The American Whig saw the American Revolution not as a revolution that overthrew the established order, but as a culminating moment in the narrative of humanity, the ascension of light over darkness. To the American Whig, their fathers’ legacy was the establishment of order out of chaos. “American liberty is no opinionated, will-strong, untamable passion, bursting all bounds of moral restraint, and hungering after anarchy and license,” claimed Whig Edwin P. Whipple, “but a creative and beneficent energy,

²⁴ Matthews, 194-195; Daniel Walker Howe, *The Political Culture of the American Whigs* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), 72.

²⁵ Howe, 70-71, 73; Matthews, 201-203, 205-206.

²⁶ Daniel Webster, “The Rhode Island Government,” *The Works of Daniel Webster*, vol. 6 (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1890), 220.

organizing itself in laws, professions, trades, arts, institutions.”²⁷ To a Whig, the union created from the American Revolution was an institution that fulfilled an instrumental role in civilization. Accordingly, they defined loyalty to the legacy of the American Revolution in terms of “loyalty to its offspring: the nation, its institutions, the union.”²⁸

The Democratic interpretation of history described the past as an ongoing tale of oppression. The American Revolution had been an escape from, or triumph over, history.²⁹ “Probably no other civilized nation,” heralded the *Democratic Review*, “has at any period of its history so completely thrown off its allegiance to the past, as the American.”³⁰ To the American Democrat, the legacy of the Revolution was about overthrowing despotism and establishing the right of self-government, a legacy that must be vigilantly guarded. Andrew Jackson warned of the inherent dangers, referring to his political enemies as “the aristocracy” and conveying his express desire to prevent them from corrupting the constitution, making “the Government an engine of oppression to the people instead of the agent of their will.”³¹

Although both interpretations of the past claimed to check the dual threats of anarchy and tyranny, they advanced very different ideologies for doing so. As an extension of the Federalist ideology, the Whig interpretation depicted a strong central government as the only power capable of combating anarchy and chaos. As an extension of the Anti-Federalist ideology, the Democratic interpretation advanced the doctrines of States Rights as a safeguard against the concentrated, and potentially despotic, power of the Federal

²⁷ As quoted by Matthews, 207.

²⁸ Matthews, 206.

²⁹ Howe, 70.

³⁰ As quoted by Howe, 70.

³¹ As quoted by Watson, 233-35.

Government. Accordingly, the Democratic interpretation claimed the concentration and abuse of power would inevitably lead to disunion. Ultimately, Webster triumphed over Hayne because his interpretation of American history depicted South Carolina's Nullifiers as both anarchists and tyrants, uniting the nation's rivaling ideologies in support of their mutual need for a balance of order and liberty.

* * * * *

The debate between Hayne and Webster began with a resolution proposal from Connecticut Senator Samuel Foote calling for a restriction on the sale of public lands in the West. Foote's proposal was met with sharp opposition from Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri, who accused New England of seeking to profit at the expense of the West. Hayne, recognizing an opportunity to nurse an alliance between the South and West, rushed to the support of Benton. Criticizing the government's current policy of selling western lands and placing the profits in the general treasury, Hayne advocated the free distribution of western land.

Hayne's first speech exuded elements of the Democratic interpretation of history. Referencing the recent fortunes of South Carolina, he forewarned of the dangers of a consolidated government:

In that devoted region, sir, in which my lot has been cast, it is our misfortune to stand in that relation to the Federal Government, which subjects us to a taxation which it requires the utmost efforts of our industry to meet. Nearly the whole amount of our contributions is expended abroad: we stand towards the United States in the relation of Ireland to England. The fruits of our labor are drawn from us to enrich other and more favored sections of the Union; ...we exhibit the extraordinary, the wonderful, and painful spectacle of a country enriched by the bounty of God, but blasted by the cruel policy of man. The rank

grass grows in our streets; our very fields are scathed by the hand of injustice and oppression.³²

Hayne depicted a government analogous to the many despotic regimes of the past, a recklessly oppressive government unaware of, or unconcerned with, any sense of wrongdoing or injustice. He presented his audience with the all-too-familiar image of an unprincipled power incapable of restraining its own tyrannical impulses.

Hayne went on to accuse New England politicians, able to influence governmental policy via numerical majority, of selfishly wanting to restrict the sale of lands in order to prevent emigration, supplying the wealthy industrialists of the East with a stable number of workers. Unable to obtain land in the west, the common man, prevented from the opportunity to secure personal independence and better his fortunes, would be forced to relive the ancient narrative of oppression and repeat the cycle of history, as he exhausted his energy for the profit of another. Appearing to represent the interests of the common people, Hayne recommended the unrestricted distribution of the public lands, so as to provide for those people “who in any portion of the country may find themselves unable to procure a comfortable subsistence by the means immediately within their reach.”³³

Discussing the corruptible influence of a national treasury, Hayne continued to display Democratic tendencies, asking, “Would it be safe to confide such a treasure to the keeping of our national rulers?”³⁴ With an ambiguous reference to “our national rulers,” Hayne issued a latent appeal to the widespread fears of despotism, while depicting himself as the champion of liberty:

³² *Register of Debates in Congress*, 21 Cong., 1 Sess., 33.

³³ *Ibid.*, 34.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 33.

...perhaps I stand alone here in the opinion, but it is one I have long entertained, that one of the greatest safeguards of liberty is a jealous watchfulness on the part of the people, over the collection and expenditure of the public money—a watchfulness that can only be secured where the money is drawn by taxation directly from the pockets of the people.³⁵

With a vigilant eye on the liberty of the people and the “independence of the States,” Hayne declared “there is no evil more to be deprecated than the consolidation of this Government.”³⁶ Here Hayne borrowed directly from the political vocabulary of the Anti-Federalists, who had continually decried the threats of a consolidated federal government in the early days of the republic.³⁷

Webster countered Hayne’s assumptions in his first reply. Claiming the free distribution of public lands would allow the best lands to be bought up en masse by the country’s wealthier citizens, he asked “who can say what mischiefs would have ensued, if Congress had thrown these territories into the hands of private speculation?”³⁸ Paying homage to Democratic sentiments, Webster depicted the government’s past and present policies as the least oppressive: “Congress has disposed of the soil in smaller and still smaller portions, till, at length, it sells in parcels of no more than eighty acres; thus putting it into the power of every man in the country, however poor, but who has health

³⁵ *Ibid*, 33.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 34.

³⁷ Stamp, 19: According to Richard Henry Lee, “The plan of government now proposed is evidently calculated totally to change, in time, our condition as a people. Instead of being thirteen republics, under a federal head, it is clearly designed to make us one consolidated government.” Whitehill of Pennsylvania complained that the phrase “We the People of the United States” meant that “the old foundation of the Union is destroyed, the principle of confederation excluded, and a new and unwieldy system of consolidated empire is set up upon the ruins of the present compact between the States.”

³⁸ *Register of Debates in Congress*, 21 Cong., 1 Sess., 37.

and strength, to become a freeholder if he desires, not of barren acres, but of rich and fertile soil.”³⁹ He then went on to address Hayne’s charges of government corruption:

According to the system of sales, a fixed proportion is every where reserved as a fund for education. Does education corrupt? Is the schoolmaster a corrupter of youth? The spelling book, does it break down the morals of the rising generation? And the Holy Scriptures, are they fountains of corruption?...Whatever is positively beneficent, whatever is actively good, whatever spreads abroad benefits and blessings which all can see, and all can feel, whatever opens intercourse, augments population, enhances the value of property, and diffuses knowledge—must all this be rejected and reprobated as a dangerous and obnoxious policy...?⁴⁰

According to Webster, the sale of public lands funded roads, schools, and any number of expenditures beneficial to all Americans. The Federal Government, he claimed, was the benefactor and guardian of the people, not their enemy. According to Webster’s first reply, Hayne was the advocate of anti-democratic policies.

Hayne’s first speech had very little to do with the Union per se, and dealt exclusively with the powers of the Federal Government and the distribution of western lands. Using government and union interchangeably, Webster turned Hayne’s critique of the government into an attack on the Union:

Consolidation!—that perpetual cry, both of terror and delusion—consolidation! Sir, when the gentlemen speak of the effects of a common fund, belonging to all the States, as having a tendency to consolidation, what do they mean? Do they mean, or can they mean, any thing more than that the Union of the States will be strengthened, by whatever continues or furnishes inducements to the people of the States to hold together. If they mean merely this, then...the public lands as well as every thing else in which we have a common interest, tends to consolidation; and to this species of consolidation every true American ought to be attached; it is neither more nor less than strengthening the Union itself.

³⁹ *Ibid*, 37.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 38-39.

This is the sense in which the framers of the constitution use the word consolidation;...This, sir, is General Washington's consolidation. This is the true constitutional consolidation. I wish to see no new powers drawn to the General Government; but I confess, I rejoice in whatever tends to strengthen the bond that unites us, and encourages the hope that our Union may be perpetual.⁴¹

While equating Hayne's critique of a consolidated government with a lack of devotion to the Union, Webster also sought to establish the historic credibility of his argument, by declaring his unmitigated support for "General Washington's consolidation." In doing so, Webster depicted Hayne's opposition to consolidation as an attack upon the legacy of the Founding Fathers.

To strengthen the association between disunion sympathies and Hayne's critique of consolidated government, Webster immediately went on to reference the well-known comments of one of Hayne's constituents:

I know there are some persons in the part of the country from which the honorable member comes who habitually speak of the Union in terms of indifference, or even of disparagement....They significantly declare, that it is time to calculate the value of the Union; and their aim seems to be to enumerate, and to magnify all the evils, real and imaginary, which the government under the Union produces. The tendency of all these ideas and sentiments is obviously to bring the Union into discussion, as a mere question of present and temporary expediency; nothing more than a mere matter of profit and loss. The Union to be preserved, while it suits local and temporary purposes to preserve it; and to be sundered whenever it shall be found to thwart such purposes. Union, of itself, is considered by the disciples of this school as hardly a good. It is only regarded as a possible means of good; or on the other hand, as a possible means of evil. They cherish no deep and fixed regard for it, flowing from a thorough conviction of its absolute and vital necessity to our welfare.⁴²

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 38.

⁴² *Ibid*, 38.

Webster was referring specifically to Thomas Cooper, the English-born emigrant to South Carolina, who, as president of South Carolina College, had led the Southern nationalist wing of the South Carolina Nullification party.⁴³ In July of 1827, Cooper delivered his infamous “Value of the Union” Speech, in which he questioned the benefits received by the South in a Union “whose effect will be to sacrifice the south to the north, by converting us into colonies and tributaries—to tax us for their own emolument—to claim the right of disposing of our honest earnings--...in short, to impoverish the planter, and to stretch the purse of the manufacturer.”⁴⁴

There is a clear parallel between elements of Coopers “Value of the Union” Speech and Hayne’s first speech on Mr. Foote’s Resolution, in which he lamented how the “fruits” of southern “labor are drawn from us to enrich the other and more favored sections of the Union;...”⁴⁵ This, then, creates an implicit connection between Hayne and the “party of men” Webster was explicitly referring to in his First and Second Replies. Webster’s reference to Cooper was important because it implied a calculating, conditional devotion to the Union, indicative of an absence of the selflessness prized by both Whigs and Democrats as a restraint on anarchy and tyranny. Furthermore, Webster began to associate Cooper with the negative stereotypes typically reserved for “Yankees.” Webster bolstered these claims during his second reply to Hayne. More importantly, by claiming this party of South Carolinians calculated the value of the union for “local and temporary purposes,” he separated them from both legacies of the American Revolution.

⁴³ John McCardell, *The Idea of a Southern Nation: Southern Nationalists and Southern Nationalism, 1830-1860* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1979), 38.

⁴⁴ William W. Freehling, ed., *The Nullification Era: A Documentary Record* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 21.

⁴⁵ *Register of Debates in Congress*, 21 Cong., 1 Sess., 33.

As he neared the conclusion of his first reply, Webster delved into a defense of New England, depicting the region as historically, and selflessly, securing the interests of the West. “She solicits for no especial thanks;” proclaimed Webster, “but, in the consciousness of having done her duty in these things, uprightly and honestly, and with a fair and liberal spirit, be assured she will repel, whenever she thinks the occasion calls for it, an unjust and groundless imputation of partiality and selfishness.”⁴⁶ Webster made the most of his opportunity to defend his region and dispel some of the negative aspects of its past. In conjunction with his implication of South Carolina selfishness, this was the bait which all but guaranteed Hayne would respond by matching Webster’s provincial stance, thereby changing the course of the debate entirely. To this end, Webster then reminded the Senate that a South Carolina representative, George McDuffie, had in 1825 objected to the construction of western roads on the grounds that it would drain the population of eastern states.⁴⁷ This showed the earlier policy of certain South Carolinians to be the same policy Hayne was now pinning on Webster and New England.

Finally, Webster closed his first reply, declaring “As a true Representative of the State which has sent me here, it is my duty, and a duty which I shall fulfill, to place her history and her conduct, her honor and her character, in their just and proper light, so often as I think an attack is made upon her so respectable as to deserve to be repelled.”⁴⁸ Webster’s valiant defense of Massachusetts enticed Hayne to rush to the aid of his own besieged homeland. Through his ambiguously worded criticisms of South Carolina, and

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 40.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 40-41.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 41.

his inspiring defense of Massachusetts, Webster was confident Hayne would respond with the predictable passion of a South Carolina representative.

The implications of Webster's first reply to Hayne were threefold. It began establishing the historical legitimacy of the case for a perpetual union, it equated opposition to a consolidated Federal government with disunion, and it effected a change in the course of the debate. With regard to the latter, Hayne accommodated Webster in his rebuttal. As the nation eagerly awaited Hayne's response, *The Boston Advertiser* was sure he "was bound to repel" Webster's accusations.⁴⁹

As expected, Hayne responded with the predictable passion and fiery rhetoric of South Carolina's antebellum politicians. After voicing his reluctance to engage in the debate, Hayne compulsively took a militant stance as he charged Webster:

He has crossed the border, he has invaded the State of South Carolina, is making war upon her citizens, and endeavoring to overthrow her principles and her institutions. Sir, when the gentleman provokes me to such a conflict, I meet him at the threshold. I will struggle while I have life, for our altars and our firesides, and if God gives me strength, I will drive back the invader discomfited. Nor shall I stop there. If the gentleman provokes the war, he shall have the war. Sir, I will not stop at the border; I will carry the war into the enemy's territory, and not consent to lay down my arms, until I shall have obtained "indemnity for the past, and security for the future."⁵⁰

Leaving the West to fend for itself, Hayne's rebuttal came off as militant, arrogant, extreme and selfish—and in this regard, he couldn't have assisted Webster more completely if Webster had scripted Hayne's response himself.

⁴⁹ *The Boston Advertiser*, 9 February 1830, as quoted by Harlow W. Sheidley, "The Webster-Hayne Debate: Recasting New England's Sectionalism," *The New England Quarterly*, vol. 67, no. 1 (Mar., 1994), 12; also, Sheidley writes in footnote 25 on page 12: "Wiltse, *Calhoun: Nullifier*, pp.56-57, correctly understands that Webster deliberately goaded Hayne in this speech."

⁵⁰ *Register of Debates in Congress*, 21 Cong., 1 Sess., 50.

Although Webster had only specifically referenced “some persons” from South Carolina “who habitually speak of the Union in terms of indifference” and calculate its value, Hayne’s response seemed to indicate that he interpreted Webster’s remark as “habitually, South Carolina speaks of the Union in terms of indifference, and declares it is time to calculate its value.” The tone of Hayne’s rebuttal appears to have had the intent of combating the latter:

If there be one State in the Union, Mr. President (and I say it not in a boastful spirit), that may challenge comparison with any other for uniform, zealous, ardent, and *uncalculating devotion to the Union*, that State is South Carolina. Sir, from the very commencement of the Revolution up to this hour, there is no sacrifice, however great, she has not cheerfully made, no service she has ever hesitated to perform. She has adhered to you in your prosperity; but in your adversity she has clung to you with more than filial affection. No matter what was the condition of her domestic affairs, though deprived of her resources, divided by parties, or surrounded with difficulties, the call of the country has been to her as the voice of God. Domestic discord ceased at the sound; every man became at once reconciled to his brethren, and the sons of Carolina were all seen crowding together to the temple, bringing their gifts to the altar of their common country.⁵¹

The bulk of Hayne’s second speech was an unequivocal objection to the suggestion that South Carolina had a calculating devotion to the union. Hayne’s declaration of South Carolina’s “uncalculating devotion to the union” was indicative of his motive to refute the very vague implication of South Carolina having a “calculating devotion to the union.” He went on to recite a roster of historic credentials designed to prove South Carolina’s “uncalculating” devotion to the union. He created a narrative of South

⁵¹ *Ibid*, 50.

Carolina self-sacrifice, beginning with the American Revolution before moving onto the Revolution of '98 and the War of 1812.⁵²

Hayne, implying his disbelief that South Carolina would be “reproached by Massachusetts,” contrasted his narrative of South Carolina’s selfless devotion to the Union with a history of Massachusetts and its role during the War of 1812 and the Hartford Convention:

But it seems Massachusetts was to reserve her resources for herself; she was to defend and protect her own shores. And how was that duty performed? In some places on the coast neutrality was declared, and the enemy was suffered to invade the soil of Massachusetts, and allowed to occupy her territory, until the peace, without one effort to rescue it from his grasp. Nay, more, while our own Government and our rulers were considered as enemies, the troops of the enemy were treated like friends; the most intimate commercial relations were established with them, and maintained up to the peace.⁵³

Operating in a pre-relativistic age, Hayne and Webster were opposing counsels in the courtroom of American politics. Each sought to triumph over their opponent by introducing evidence. This was why Webster referenced Cooper and McDuffie and South Carolina’s earlier support for the tariffs. This was why Hayne referenced the War of 1812, the Federalists, and the Hartford Convention. And although Hayne’s “evidence” followed the same conventions of Webster’s, Webster later managed to transform this rebuke into an unwarranted attack upon a sister state.

Hayne also attempted to add historic validity to the South Carolina doctrine of Nullification and reveal the disunion threat of a strong central government. Referring back to his original criticism of consolidated government, Hayne quoted the similar

⁵² *Ibid*, 50-51.

⁵³ *Ibid*, 53.

concerns of Thomas Jefferson.⁵⁴ Asking his audience “why, sir, does Mr. Jefferson consider consolidation as leading directly to disunion?” Hayne answered: “Because he knew that the exercise by the Federal Government, of the powers contended for, would make this ‘a Government without limitation of powers,’ the submission to which he considered as a greater evil than disunion itself.”⁵⁵ While depicting Nullification as a measure preventative of disunion, Hayne continued to employ history to support his claim: “The South Carolina doctrine...is the good old Republican doctrine of ’98; the doctrine of the celebrated ‘Virginia Resolutions’ of that year, and of ‘Madison’s Report of ’99.’”⁵⁶ Hayne further expounded upon this equation, quoting the legislatures of Virginia and Kentucky, before coming to the conclusion that South Carolina had “not gone one step further than Mr. Jefferson himself was disposed to go.”⁵⁷ Just as Webster had defended “General Washington’s consolidation” in the hopes of lending historic validity to his argument, Hayne sought to place nullification within the framework of American history by referencing the precedents established by Jefferson and Madison.

Hayne’s rebuttal to Webster was a thorough vindication of South Carolina. It sought to establish the state’s history within the Union as anything but calculating. It questioned the propriety and credibility of attacks leveled at the state from Massachusetts, a region

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 55: “In another letter Mr. Jefferson adds: ‘I doubt whether a single fact known to the world will carry as clear conviction to it of the correctness of our knowledge of the treasonable views of the federal party of that day, as that disclosed by this the most nefarious and daring attempt to dissever the Union, of which the Hartford Convention was a subsequent chapter; and both of these having failed, consolidation becomes the fourth chapter of the next book of their history. But this opens with a vast accession of strength from their younger recruits, who having nothing in them of the feelings and principles of ’76, now look to a single and splendid Government, &c., riding and ruling over the plundered ploughman and beggared yeomanry.’—(4 vol. 419,422) The last chapter, says Mr. Jefferson, of that history, is to be found in the conduct of those who are endeavoring to bring about consolidation: ay, sir, that very consolidation for which the gentleman from Massachusetts is contending—the exercise, by the Federal Government, of powers not delegated in relation to ‘internal improvements,’ and ‘the protection of manufactures.’”

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 55.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 56.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 57.

plagued with the ignominy of the Hartford Convention. It established the historic precedence that could validate the state's political doctrine of state interposition. It was the eloquent attempt to depict nullification as a measure designed entirely to preserve the Union, the Constitution, and the rights of the people. And if the rest of the nation had accepted the interpretation of the past presented by Hayne, it would've been successful in its efforts. Unfortunately for Hayne and the South Carolina Nullifiers, this ideal opportunity for justification also provided Webster with an equally ideal chance to challenge Hayne's interpretation of the past, by introducing his own interpretation of American history.

From the outset of his second reply to Hayne, Webster evinced elements of the chaos and disorder feared by Americans:

Mr. PRESIDENT: When the mariner has been tossed, for many days, in thick weather, and on an unknown sea, he naturally avails himself of the first pause in the storm, the earliest glance of the sun, to take his latitude, and ascertain how far the elements have driven him from his true course. Let us imitate this prudence, and, before we float farther, on the waves of this debate, refer to the point from which we departed, that we may, at least, be able to form some conjecture where we now are.⁵⁸

After having Samuel Foote's resolution re-read, Webster pinned this "storm," and its attendant chaos, on Hayne: "We have thus heard, sir, what that resolution is...and it will readily occur to every one, that it is almost the only subject about which something has not been said in the speech, running through two days, by which the Senate has been now entertained by the gentleman from South Carolina."⁵⁹

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 58.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 58.

Throughout his first and second replies to Hayne, Webster presented a scintillating example of the Whig interpretation of history, portraying the Union as the ascendancy, facilitator, and guardian of order, harmony and civilization. He depicted all the benefits that had resulted from the Union, and forewarned against the hardships that would befall Americans outside of it. He described nullification as inevitably resulting in violence. In accordance with Whig moorings, the Union was depicted as antedating the States. Yet despite the strong presence of the Whig interpretation of history, Webster paid equal attention to the Democratic ideology, incorporating elements of it throughout his second reply to Hayne. “The first settlers of North America,” claimed Webster, “were enterprising spirits, engaged in private adventure, or fleeing from tyranny at home. When arrived here, they were forgotten by the mother country, or remembered only to be oppressed.”⁶⁰ Webster also harped on the sovereignty of the people: “It is, sir, the people’s constitution, the people’s Government; made for the people; made by the people; and answerable to the people.”⁶¹ Referencing Hayne’s championship of liberty, Webster recast Nullifiers as the real oppressors: “But what sort of liberty? The liberty of establishing their own opinions, in defiance of the opinions of all others; the liberty of judging and deciding exclusively themselves, in a matter in which others have as much right to judge and decide as they; the liberty of placing their own opinions above the judgement of all others, above the laws, and above the constitution.”⁶² Such a form of liberty was indicative of autocratic, rather than democratic, governments.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 63.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 74.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 74-75.

While Webster's incorporation of both Whig and Democratic elements helped unite the country in opposition to South Carolina's doctrine of state interposition, he ultimately succeeded at excluding nullification from his construction of American identity because he was able to present it as historically illegitimate. According to Webster, there was no historic precedence to validate the South Carolina doctrine. He drew a clear distinction between nullification and Massachusetts's earlier course:

In such a case, under such circumstances, how did Massachusetts demean herself? Sir, she remonstrated, she memorialized, she addressed herself to the General Government, not exactly "with the concentrated energy of passion," but with her own strong sense, and the energy of sober conviction. But she did not interpose the arm of her own power to arrest the law and break the embargo....Her principles bound her to two things....First, to submit to every constitutional law of Congress; and secondly, if the constitutional validity of the law be doubted, to refer that question to the decision of the proper tribunals....We thought it a clear case; but nevertheless, we did not take the law into our own hands, because we did not wish to bring about a revolution, nor to break up the Union; for, I maintain, that, between submission to the decision of the constituted tribunals, and revolution, or disunion, there is no middle ground; there is no ambiguous condition, half allegiance, and half rebellion.⁶³

Webster continued to assess the validity of Hayne's arguments, turning to the Virginia resolutions. The language providing for interposition in the Virginia and Kentucky resolutions, Webster claimed, was too ambiguous to unequivocally determine the nature of said interposition, and he refused to believe that its author "was ever of the opinion that a State, under the constitution, and in conformity with it, could, upon the ground of her own opinion of its unconstitutionality...annul a law of Congress..."⁶⁴ According to Daniel Webster, there was no constitutional premise to support the doctrine of

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 76.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 77.

nullification, and the only precedence for it in America's history was in the ineffective Articles of Confederation, abandoned in 1789 for the current constitution.⁶⁵

In presenting his case for a perpetual Union, Webster appealed to nearly all segments of the American population. By the time he delivered his memorable speech, the Union had become an institution seen by and large as inherently valuable. By 1830, many Americans could accept a narrative of progress, order and harmony, because that was precisely the narrative their personal lives bore witness to. Anyone over the age of fifteen had been alive during America's defeat of the British in the War of 1812, the "Second War of Independence." The years following the close of the war had been marked by rising patriotism and national confidence. The second generation of Americans were exceedingly jubilant over the survival of the United States, their fathers' greatest legacy. International peace was accompanied by apparent domestic harmony. The policies of economic nationalism and internal improvements had helped foster economic prosperity. Territorial expansion had opened up land and opportunities out West, and Indian removal helped limit the dangers of frontier life. And although the South was largely Democratic at this time, the Whig case for a perpetual union found receptive audiences throughout the nation. A South Carolina contemporary remarked on its appeal: "To the great body of the Southern People, the Union is the only tangible &

⁶⁵ Throughout his second reply to Hayne, Webster made repeated references to state sovereignty and the earlier Confederation: "If this had not been done, we should not have advanced a single step beyond the old confederation." (p.76); "or else we have no constitution of General Government, and are thrust back again to the days of the confederacy." (p.77); "The people had had quite enough of that kind of government, under the Confederacy." (p.77); "With these, it is a constitution; without them, it is a confederacy." (p. 78)

appreciable representation of Order, & it is solely on this account that they love & sustain it. Its oppressions must be grievously felt before they will violate Order to resist them.”⁶⁶

These were the sentiments Daniel Webster appealed to during his contest with Hayne. Fully aware of the atmosphere of the era, and the affinities of his audience, Webster delivered his speech with the general public in mind. After concluding his second reply to Hayne, Webster supervised the publication of his speech, making numerous revisions to strengthen his case for a perpetual union. He added terminology to reinforce the perception of Hayne, and nullification, as violent and disruptive. He removed sentences which might discredit New England, or lead someone to believe that Hayne’s remarks on the Hartford Convention were valid. After shoring up any vulnerabilities, almost forty thousand copies of Webster’s reply to Hayne were printed by Gales and Seaton, making it “the most widely read congressional speech of its era.” It was the argument for a perpetual union, made directly to the American people.⁶⁷

“Forty years,” wrote Kenneth Stampp, “had afforded time for the emergence of numerous interest groups possessing practical reasons for wishing to preserve the Union, especially those involved directly or indirectly in interstate commerce. Indeed, hardly any group existed that would not be in some degree adversely affected by disunion.”⁶⁸ By 1830, the Union represented a safeguard against oppression and anarchy. By equating nullification with disunion, Webster facilitated the alienation of South Carolina nullifiers. Furthermore, Webster presented his argument in accordance with the nation’s two

⁶⁶ As quoted by John Barnwell, *Love of Order: South Carolina’s First Secession Crisis* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 187.

⁶⁷ Sheidley, 19-24.

⁶⁸ Stampp, 30.

rivaling interpretations of the past, uniting both Whig and Democratic history in support of a Union for the sake of union. The popularity of the Union and the patriotic fervor of the day, coupled with a desire for liberty and order, ensured Webster's success. Thus, with his closing remark, their fates were made inevitable: "that other sentiment, dear to every true American heart,--Liberty *and* Union, now and for ever, one and inseparable!"⁶⁹

These words, ringing out over the floors of Congress, later to be penned, published and propagated throughout the American public, signaled the victory of Webster and Massachusetts over Hayne and South Carolina. By depicting nullification as historically illegitimate, Webster only specifically provided for the conditional exclusion of a party of South Carolinians, the nullifiers, from his construction of American identity. However, nullification meant a great deal more to the people of South Carolina than elsewhere. Although Kenneth Stamp wrote of the near universal benefits the Union supplied the people of the United States, the majority of white South Carolinians proved to be the exception.

The economic stimulus for South Carolina's advocacy of nullification revolved around the exportation of cotton. Within ten years of the introduction of Eli Whitney's cotton gin to South Carolina, "the entire state was in the middle of a tremendous cotton boom."⁷⁰ Whitney's invention enabled the success of the plantation economy throughout the state, transforming the backcountry into a younger, more populous replica of the low-country parishes. South Carolina, producing forty percent of America's total cotton

⁶⁹ *Register of Debates in Congress*, 21 Cong., 1 Sess., 88.

⁷⁰ Margaret Kinard Latimer, "South Carolina—A Protagonist of the War of 1812," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 61, No. 4 (Jul., 1956), 923.

exports, with only 3.6 percent of the nation's total white population, accounted for 10.3 percent of American GDP. The Palmetto State had the highest percentage of exports, per capita, of the United States.⁷¹ With an export driven economy, the tariffs of 1824, 1828 and 1832 were particularly detrimental to the prosperity of South Carolina. The Tariff of 1816 set a 25% tax on imported goods, which was increased to 33% with the Tariff of 1824, and finally to 50% with the 1828 Tariff of Abominations. The price of cotton exports dropped in accordance with the increase on tariffs. While a pound of cotton could fetch 18 cents from 1810-19, it could only go for 12 cents from 1820-29, and 9 cents from 1829-32.⁷² Furthermore, as if to add insult to injury, the internal improvement policies harming South Carolina the most were benefiting the state the least. According to Reynolds, "out of a total expenditure of \$1,344,000 for internal improvements made up to 1829, only \$189,000 had been spent in the South. And of this amount, South Carolina had received not a single dollar."⁷³ As other states prospered and thrived under the power of the federal government, South Carolina suffered and languished. William R. Taylor noted the effects: "South Carolinians were quick to associate their economic decline with the growth of the federal government....The bountiful days had come, they knew, before the Revolution, when South Carolina was still a semi-independent colony doing its own business and making its own decisions."⁷⁴

⁷¹ *Ibid*, 926.

⁷² William W. Freehling, *The Road to Disunion: Secessionists at Bay, 1776-1854* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 256-257.

⁷³ William Martin Reynolds, *Deliberative Speaking in Ante-Bellum South Carolina: The Idiom of a Culture* (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1980), 133.

⁷⁴ William R. Taylor, *Cavalier & Yankee: The Old South and American National Character* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1969), 263.

The depression resulting after the Panic of 1819 affected South Carolina more severely than other states. According to Taylor, “During the eighteen twenties a depression of such severity struck South Carolina that Virginia by comparison seemed to be enjoying flush times.”⁷⁵ The first phase of the depression, occurring from 1819 to 1822, affected the entire nation, plunging planters throughout South Carolina alongside their fellow Americans “into their worst depression since the founding of the Republic.”⁷⁶ The second phase of the depression, from 1822 to 1829, was particularly harmful to the farmers of the South Carolina upcountry.⁷⁷

The political makeup of South Carolina during, and after, the Nullification controversy, can be broken down into three factions: Unionists, Calhounites, and Southern Nationalists. The Unionist and Calhoun factions were both led by members from the state’s traditional aristocracy. The Southern Nationalists, on the other hand, were self-made men. They counted among their leaders George McDuffie, James Hamilton, Jr., Francis W. Pickens, Robert Barnwell Rhett, Thomas Cooper, E. W. Johnston, and E. W. Davis. Unlike their opponents, neither the wealth, nor the social and political status, of these men was inherited from prestigious forbears. And just as they rose up in the world, the Federal Government threatened to destroy the very fortunes they had made.⁷⁸ For these men, a perpetual union offered no guarantees of prosperity, order, harmony, or opportunity.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 262.

⁷⁶ William W. Freehling, *Prelude to Civil War: The Nullification Controversy in South Carolina, 1816-1836* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1965), 26.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 27.

⁷⁸ See McCardell, 39-40; McCardell writes of these men: “When economic disaster struck them, their reaction to the high tariff took a predictably extreme form, for the tariff seemed to threaten their economic prosperity.”

Stating the importance of South Carolina's economic climate and political makeup during this period is not necessarily meant to explain the motives behind the Nullification Movement, but rather to establish why South Carolina's perception of the Union differed from that of the rest of the nation. During the Nullification period, a great many South Carolinians could not appreciate the argument for a perpetual Union because the Union was yielding very different results in South Carolina than in other states. Most Americans were calculating the value of the Union in 1830, but only in South Carolina did the calculation yield a negative sum.

As South Carolina became the first state to formally test the doctrine of state interposition, they clung to the legacy of the American Revolution and the language of Hayne, Webster, and their forefathers:

...South Carolina now bears the same relation to the manufacturing States of this confederacy, that the Anglo American Colonies bore to the mother country....[T]he majority of Congress [are] our inexorable oppressors....They are tyrants by the very necessity of their position. With us, it is a question involving our most sacred rights—those very rights which our common ancestors left to us as a common inheritance....It is a question of liberty on one hand, and slavery on the other.⁷⁹

But the Hayne-Webster Debate had undermined this claim, and South Carolina alone recognized the parallels.

South Carolina's extenuating circumstances resulted in the formal act of Nullification in 1832, and with it, a great deal of enduring hostility emerged between the rest of the nation and South Carolina. "The nullification movement," writes John

⁷⁹ "Address to the People of the United States by the Convention of the People of South Carolina," as quoted by McCardell, 47.

Barnwell, “endowed South Carolina with a reputation for arrogance, for extremism, and for pursuing her own course regardless of its impact on her neighbors.”⁸⁰ Barnwell is correct in his observation of South Carolina’s unflattering reputation, but the debate between Hayne and Webster deserves as much credit for it as the actual act of nullifying a federal law. Webster depicted South Carolina as arrogant, as extreme, as selfishly pursuing her own interests with disregard for the welfare of other states. In the process of excluding the South Carolina doctrine from American identity, Webster, with the unwitting assistance of Hayne, helped engender a number of stereotypes which would stick with South Carolina throughout the antebellum period, helping further prevent their inclusion.

When Robert Hayne “carried the war into enemy territory,” he was only helping the rest of the nation associate himself and his state with the belligerence and conflict they feared. Webster seized upon the opportunity. After denying any ill-intent towards South Carolina, and seconding Hayne’s tribute to the Palmetto State, Webster was able to recast the nullifier’s chivalrous display of self-defense as an unprovoked call to war on a sister state: “Carried the war into the enemy’s country!...It is an invasion of this sort, that he flatters himself with the expectation of gaining laurels fit to adorn a Senator’s brow!”⁸¹ Capitalizing on Hayne’s quest for war, Webster declared: “If the gentleman wishes to increase his stores of party abuse and frothy violence; if he has a determined proclivity to such pursuits; there are treasures of that sort south of the Potomac, much to his taste, yet

⁸⁰ Barnwell, 45.

⁸¹ *Register of Debates in Congress*, 21 Cong., 1 Sess., 70.

untouched; I shall not touch them.”⁸² Hayne’s chivalric posture was monumentally helpful as Webster painted a vivid illustration of nullification unavoidably leading to “war—civil war.”⁸³ More importantly, in terms of long-term consequences, the debate between Hayne and Webster supplied the nation with evidence of South Carolina hostility toward the rest of the nation, an element that would become central to the nation’s perception of South Carolina.

Accusations of South Carolina’s intended hostility toward the other states emerged shortly thereafter. During the nullification crisis, Georgia’s Governor Lumpkin candidly gave his assessment of “the destructive heresies and acts of South Carolina”:

South Carolina...has openly assumed a position tending to disunion, and has actually commenced the organization of a separate and distinct government, based on belligerent and warlike principles. Her new form of proposed government is not only founded on principles of hostility to her old confederates, but is arbitrary, despotic and tyrannical in the extreme, to all that own portion of her own citizens who have the honesty and patriotism to dissent from her novel and wild career of revolution...⁸⁴

Lumpkin’s remarks evince the antebellum perception of South Carolina truculence, and reveal the success of Webster and others in attaching America’s greatest fears to nullification. According to Lumpkin, South Carolina was simultaneously the champion of lawless revolution and chaos, and “despotic and tyrannical in the extreme.” Robert J. Breckinridge came to a similar conclusion in a sermon delivered over thirty years later:

We have already seen constitutional government...trampled under foot by the convention of that State; and all the powers of sovereignty itself, both ordinary and extraordinary, assumed by it in such a manner that life, liberty and property have no more security in South Carolina than

⁸² *Ibid.*, 70.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 79.

⁸⁴ As quoted by Richard E. Ellis, *The Union at Risk: Jacksonian Democracy, States’ Rights and the Nullification Crisis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 114.

anywhere under heaven where absolute despotism or absolute anarchy prevails....⁸⁵

According to Lumpkin and Breckinridge, South Carolina represented the exact opposite of a balance between liberty and order.

In addition to the stigmas of anarchy and tyranny, the perception of South Carolina belligerence survived the following three decades, and was re-articulated by the *Richmond Whig* in January 1861:

We have never had a doubt that it was the deliberate purpose of South Carolina, by some rash, illegal steps, to involve all her sister Southern States in the calamity of Civil War. She is not content to be allowed to go out of the Union peaceably. Her object is to “drag” other States with her and involve them all in a common and terrible conflict with the General Government.⁸⁶

As Americans began to associate the Union with peace, harmony and order, South Carolina began to embody the chief threat to their much-desired tranquility.⁸⁷ A week before South Carolina seceded, the *New York Times* published a letter from Henry J. Raymond to William Lowndes Yancey, in which Raymond wrote of South Carolina: “From the very outset she has been at war with the dominant ideas of the Confederacy. She has done more to embroil the country in controversy, to disturb the public peace and sow the seeds of disloyalty and strife than all the other States.”⁸⁸ “The South Carolinians,” reported another article, “never were willing to be considered a part of this American nation—they were a nation by themselves. They hold that the world is

⁸⁵ As quoted by Jon L. Wakelyn, ed., *Southern Pamphlets on Secession, November 1860-April 1861* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 250.

⁸⁶ As quoted by Donald E. Reynolds, *Editors Make War: Southern Newspapers in the Secession Crisis* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2006), 165.

⁸⁷ See William R. Taylor, *Cavalier & Yankee*, p. 114, for more on the American appreciation of harmony.

⁸⁸ *New York Times*, 13 Dec. 1860.

constituted of two peoples—South Carolinians and barbarians. If this war were over, with the Confederacy triumphant to-morrow, we verily believe that South Carolina would declare war against Georgia and North Carolina before the close of the week.”⁸⁹

Hayne’s belligerence on behalf of South Carolina was matched in intensity by his praise of South Carolina:

Never was there exhibited, in the history of the world, higher examples of noble daring, dreadful suffering, and heroic endurance, than by the whigs of Carolina, during that Revolution. The whole State, from the mountains to the sea, was overrun by an overwhelming force of the enemy....The “plains of Carolina” drank up the most precious blood of her citizens!....Driven from their homes, into the gloomy and almost impenetrable swamps, even there the spirit of liberty survived, and South Carolina (sustained by the example of her Sumpters{sic} and her Marions) proved by her conduct, that, though her soil might be overrun, the spirit of her people was invincible.⁹⁰

Contrasted with the ostensible humility of Webster, this expression exemplified the arrogance and conceit South Carolinians became synonymous with. One southern pastor lamented “all the possible and all the imaginable arrogance of South Carolina” from his pulpit.⁹¹ The *Wilmington Daily Herald* refused to be “dragged into revolution and anarchy,” to please South Carolina, “who, by her insufferable arrogance, and conceited importance, has been a source of annoyance and disquietude to the whole country, North and South, for the last thirty years.”⁹² North Carolina Whig James Johnston Pettigrew bemoaned his impending “sojourn in a state of disunionists and conceited fellows.”⁹³ “Her arrogance and rashness have arrayed even her Southern neighbors against her,”

⁸⁹ *New York Times*, 19 Apr. 1863.

⁹⁰ *Register of Debates in Congress*, 21 Cong., 1 Sess., 50.

⁹¹ As quoted by Wakelyn, 252.

⁹² As quoted by Charles Edward Cauthen, *South Carolina Goes to War, 1861-1865* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1950, 2005), 30.

⁹³ As quoted by Barnwell, 47.

wrote a Virginian. “She will not be supported by a single State. I have not heard a voice raised in her behalf.”⁹⁴ The *New York Times* similarly spoke of “the insolent vanity of South Carolina,” and “the already stupendous vanity of the South Carolina chivalry,” before predicting the State’s unavoidable doom: “And with its subjugation will tumble down the pride and arrogance of the vainest and meanest brood of traitors on this continent.”⁹⁵

Furthermore, Hayne’s abandonment of the West in order to defend and praise South Carolina, his opposition to support public works in other states, South Carolina’s flip-flop on internal improvements, and his attack on Massachusetts worked in conjunction with his apparent display of arrogance to foster the image of South Carolina selfishness. Philip Hone later described South Carolinians as “the most clannish, selfish people in America. They have no affection for anything except South Carolina.”⁹⁶ Another northerner wrote, “It is the one State where hatred to the Union, the Constitution, and the laws has infected nearly the whole population. With characteristic selfishness, the South Carolinians from the very beginning of the rebellion, showed their anxiety and determination...to keep the war out of their borders.”⁹⁷

Another element influencing Webster’s success in the debate was the unique political culture of South Carolina. Confronted with the rising tide of egalitarianism, South Carolina resisted some of the reforms that swept across the rest of the nation. Although South Carolina was the first State to legalize universal white male suffrage, it was also

⁹⁴ “Personal Recollections of the War,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine*, Vol. 33, No. 193 (June 1866), 2.

⁹⁵ *New York Times*, 19 Apr. 1863.

⁹⁶ Philip Hone, *The Diary of Philip Hone, 1828-1851* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1910), 53.

⁹⁷ George Whitfield Pepper, *Personal Recollections of Sherman’s Campaigns: In Georgia and the Carolinas* (Zanesville, Ohio: Hugh Dunne, 1866), 298.

the last state to allow its voting populace to directly choose their presidential electors. By 1832, South Carolina alone required its legislature to vote for president. In the age of Jacksonian Democracy, such practices bore the stench of the Old World and were off-putting to many Americans. This worked to Webster's advantage as he spoke of a government of the people. Hayne, as the representative of South Carolina, provided the appropriate antithesis, and the contrast between them helped engender the perception of South Carolina as antidemocratic. Decades later, the *New York Times* traced this history back to colonial South Carolina: "Having the least democratic government, South Carolina was almost from the first distinguished as the worst governed, most insubordinate, and most licentious and immoral of all the English settlements in America...."⁹⁸ Frederick Law Olmsted described South Carolinians as having a "profound contempt for everything foreign except despotism" and a "scornful hatred especially for all honestly democratic States."⁹⁹ "There is, in that State," one southerner concurred, "an ancient and fixed opposition to a government by the people. They have an early prejudice against this thing called democracy."¹⁰⁰ In addition to alienating the State, this also helped augment South Carolina's reputation for despotism and selfishness. Throughout the antebellum period, South Carolinians would be referred to as "monarchists" and "aristocrats."¹⁰¹ George Templeton Strong revealed a degree of

⁹⁸ *New York Times*, 17 Jun. 1861.

⁹⁹ As quoted by Grant, 81.

¹⁰⁰ As quoted by Wakelyn, 310.

¹⁰¹ *New York Times*, 1 Jul. 1861;

personal pride when he wrote: “I belong to the insurgent plebians of the North arming against a two penny South Carolina aristocracy.”¹⁰²

While a reputation for belligerence, anarchy, despotism, arrogance and selfishness did little to help South Carolina’s case for inclusion in an American national identity, the most important, and damaging, stigma resulting from the Great Debate was that of South Carolina disunionism. By equating the South Carolina doctrine of state interposition with disunion, Webster helped engender the image of South Carolina being committed to disunion for the sake of disunion. This perception gained ascendancy during the nullification movement and persisted up until the Civil War. In a letter to Joel R. Poinsett of South Carolina, President Andrew Jackson expressed his desire to “unite the whole people against the nullifiers, & instead of carrying the South with the nullies, will have the effect to arouse them against them when it is discovered their object is nothing but disunion.”¹⁰³ He carried through with this plan, proclaiming in his Nullification Proclamation: “Their object is disunion. But do not be deceived by names. Disunion by armed force is treason.”¹⁰⁴ “It cannot be too strongly impressed on the public mind,” wrote Amos Kendall, “that the avowed object of South Carolina is not a redress of Southern grievances, but the final and irretrievable destruction of the Union...”¹⁰⁵ In an era when Americans were crafting their national identity upon the central concept of a *union for the sake of union*, nothing could be more un-American than the idea of disunion

¹⁰² as quoted by William E. Geinapp, *The Origins of the Republican Party, 1852-1856* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 360.

¹⁰³ Andrew Jackson to Joel R. Poinsett, 24 January 1833, quoted by Charles J. Stille, “The Life and Services of Joel R. Poinsett,” *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, vol. 12, no.2, 287.

¹⁰⁴ Andrew Jackson, “Nullification Proclamation,” Dec. 10, 1832, in Henry L. Watson, ed., *Andrew Jackson vs. Henry Clay: Democracy and Development in Antebellum America* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 1998), 208.

¹⁰⁵ Amos Kendall, William Stickney, ed., *Autobiography of Amos Kendall* (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1872), 618.

for the sake of disunion.

Years later, Henry Clay reaffirmed Jackson's assertion, "From developments now being made in South Carolina, it is perfectly manifest that a party exists in that state seeking a dissolution of the Union, and for that purpose employing the pretext of the rejection of Mr. Tyler's abominable treaty."¹⁰⁶ The responses to South Carolina's secession in 1860 are evidence of Andrew Jackson's success at sustaining his claims. "South Carolina rejoiced over the election of Lincoln," Isaac Newton Arnold later wrote, "with bonfires and processions. His election furnished a pretext for rebellion. A conspiracy had existed since the days of nullification, to seize upon the first favorable opportunity to break up the Union."¹⁰⁷ Over a month before South Carolina seceded, the *New York Times* hinted at the conceivable future with a reflection on South Carolina's past:

It was not so much any particular grievance under the Union that she resented, as the very theory of the Union, regarded as a bond of restraint. Her hostility to it had been the most active element in her for a generation—had fermented in every vein, and rankled in every tissue. It was a feeling that had its origin in the loftiest sentiments and finest sensibilities,...¹⁰⁸

After formally seceding, South Carolina waited upon the other southern states to imitate her course of action, while the *Freeman's Journal* failed to recognize the ingenuity of South Carolina's behavior: "Disunion for the sake of disunion rules the day there."¹⁰⁹

At a time when the vast majority of Americans could comprehend no reasonable

¹⁰⁶ Henry Clay to Stephen Miller, 1 July 1844, in Melba Porter Hay, ed., *The Papers of Henry Clay* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1991), 10: 79.

¹⁰⁷ Isaac Newton Arnold, *The Life of Abraham Lincoln* (Chicago: Jansen, McClurg & Company, 1885), 172.

¹⁰⁸ *New York Times*, 13 Nov. 1860

¹⁰⁹ as quoted by Paul J. Foik, *Pioneer Catholic Journalism*, vol. 12 (New York: United States Catholic Historical Society, 1930), 12: 203.

stimulus for disunion, South Carolina's regional and national influence became stagnant in light of the stigma of disunionism. The calculating devotion of South Carolina, alluded to by Webster, remained a prevalent perception across the South. Declining an invitation to a Southern Convention in 1850, the Virginia General Assembly expressed its belief that such a convention was "calculated to destroy the integrity of this Union."¹¹⁰ Up until 1861, South Carolina was unable to organize a united southern resistance, to counter the growing threats to slavery and southern institutions, because of the South's hesitancy to follow the lead of disunionists. Manisha Sinha clarifies: "accusations that the southern movement was merely an old Carolinian ruse for disunion undercut the strength of secessionists."¹¹¹ Furthermore, while not specifically preventing it, the association of South Carolina with disunion undercut South Carolina's ability to seek inclusion in the emerging national identity.

At a time when the ability of South Carolinians to influence the nation, or at the very least the South, was crucial to protect their future, this preventive brick wall laid by Webster was especially frustrating. The bleak circumstances transforming their state had already introduced an unusual degree of sensitivity, ushering in an "atmosphere of injured pride, poverty, and resentment."¹¹² When Webster criticized the loyalty of South Carolina, he added insult to injury. By questioning South Carolinians' motives and their nature, Webster undermined their credibility and rendered them politically impotent. This impotence left them unable to prevent the isolation and exclusion of South Carolina

¹¹⁰As quoted by Avery Craven, *The Coming of the Civil War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 265.

¹¹¹ Manisha Sinha, *The Counterrevolution of Slavery: Politics and Ideology in Antebellum South Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 106.

¹¹² Quoted by James Haw, "The Problem of South Carolina' Reexamined: A Review Essay," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine*, vol. 107, no. 1 (Jan. 2006), 11.

from the national narrative. When Hayne and Webster sparred over the histories of their states, it was merely the harbinger of a long and bitter series of indictments.

Although Webster had provided a means, however impractical, for the inclusion of South Carolinians in his construction of American identity, he subtly laid the groundwork for a more expansive exclusion in his second reply to Hayne: “[Hayne] traced the flow of Federal blood down through successive ages and centuries, till he brought it into the veins of American Tories, of whom, by the way, there were twenty in the Carolinas for one in Massachusetts.”¹¹³ Here Webster planted a future seed of disunion. Having already isolated South Carolina’s politics from the rest of the nation, Webster took the next step and began the process of excluding South Carolina from the nation’s unifying historical experience. This slight, a forgotten whisper from a perpetually remembered oration, was one of the earliest examples of the northern interpretation of American history.

In the wake of the Nullification Crisis, Rufus Choate advocated the production of an American literature, “a treasure of common ancestral recollections,” immortalizing the colonial period and the American Revolution. Choate hoped such a literature would help preserve the Union: “reminded of our fathers, we should remember that we are brethren.”¹¹⁴ Such a literature did begin to emerge, and when Webster mentioned the ratio of South Carolina and Massachusetts Tories, he gave credit to a topic that would become a dominant theme of that emerging literature. Americans would be reminded of

¹¹³ *Register of Debates in Congress*, 21 Cong., 1 Sess., 71.

¹¹⁴ as quoted by Matthews, 196-198.

their fathers, but Choate's prediction was wrong. Rather than help them remember that they were brethren, their reminiscence did the exact opposite.

CHAPTER TWO

DUELING PENS: THE SABINE-SIMMS CONTROVERSY

“It was a strange spectacle indeed. Here were two sections that were virtually at war with each other in the 1850s, not merely over the current problems that beset them but also over their comparative strengths and weaknesses during the War for Independence.”¹¹⁵

“Yet the first shaft at South Carolina comes from the quiver of Massachusetts,” decried William Gilmore Simms as he delivered a lecture in New York City in the Autumn of 1856.¹¹⁶ Objecting to what he believed was an unfair critique of his native state, Simms crafted a defense of South Carolina’s past, complementary to the earlier one made by Robert Hayne. And with it, the battle Hayne had waged in the political arena was carried into the intellectual sphere, in an exchange that would later be dubbed the Sabine-Simms Controversy.

* * * * *

On October 4th, 1860, John W. Palmer of Unionville, South Carolina wrote a letter to William Gannaway Brownlow, editor of the *Knoxville Whig*, requesting to have his subscription to the *Whig* canceled on the grounds that Brownlow was “a traitor to the South.” Brownlow responded with a brief recounting of American history, presenting an historical narrative in which South Carolina had been the home of traitors, and the

¹¹⁵ John Hope Franklin, “The North, the South, and the American Revolution,” *The Journal of American History*, 62, no.1 (June 1975), 17.

¹¹⁶ William Gilmore Simms, “South Carolina in the Revolution: A Lecture,” *The Letters of William Gilmore Simms*, Volume Three: 1850-1857, Mary Simms Oliphant, Alfred Taylor Odell, and T.C. Duncan Eaves, eds. (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1954), 526.

descendants of traitors, since the birth of the American Republic.¹¹⁷ Months later, when South Carolina seceded from the Union, the national reaction to the inaugural secession revealed Brownlow was not alone in his conception of American history. Like countless other Americans, Brownlow's narrative of American history was the product of an evolving interpretation of the past introduced thirteen years earlier by Lorenzo Sabine.

When Lorenzo Sabine published his *The American Loyalists* in 1847, it was "the first ambitious and comprehensive study" of Tories in the American Revolution.¹¹⁸ It was also representative of the increasing sectional disparity of his time. Sabine's book was couched in language vainglorious to the New Englander, provocative to the Southerner. His criticisms of the southern states were counterbalanced with laudation of the northern states. He argued that the larger populations of Virginia and North Carolina fielded fewer troops than the smaller states of Connecticut, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island: "with a population double that of New Hampshire, how did it happen that the number of continental troops furnished by [North Carolina] was 5,223 less?"¹¹⁹ Furthermore, the recipient of Sabine's most complimentary praise was Massachusetts, where "the Revolution had its origin and the Old Bay State furnished a large part of the men and the means [necessary] to carry it forward to a successful issue."¹²⁰ Sabine's lavish praise of Massachusetts was counterbalanced with his biting censure of South Carolina: "The public men of South Carolina of the present generation, claim that her

¹¹⁷ William Gannaway Brownlow, *Sketches of the Rise, Progress, and Decline of Secession; with a Narrative of Personal Adventures among the Rebels* (Philadelphia: Applegate & Co., 1862), 65-74.

¹¹⁸ John Hope Franklin, "The North, the South, and the American Revolution," *The Journal of American History*, 62, no.1 (June 1975), 8.

¹¹⁹ As quoted by William L. Welch, "Lorenzo Sabine and the Assault on Sumner," *The New England Quarterly*, Vol. 65, No. 2 (Jun., 1992), 299.

¹²⁰ *Ibid*, 299.

patriotic devotion in the Revolution was inferior to none, and was superior to most of the States of the Confederacy,” he charged. “As I have examined the evidence, it was not so.”¹²¹ Directing more criticism at South Carolina than any other state, Sabine’s history was both an extrapolation of Daniel Webster’s Reply to Hayne and the predecessor to Charles Sumner’s “Crime against Kansas.” As such, Sabine’s book was largely disagreeable to many white South Carolinians.

The American Loyalists was particularly successful at ruffling the feathers of William Gilmore Simms, South Carolina’s historian laureate and “the leading southern interpreter of the Revolution.”¹²² After reading Sabine’s book, Simms fervently retaliated with a two-part book review published in the *Southern Quarterly Review*. Simms attributed Sabine’s criticisms to a recurrent Yankee flaw, being “diseased by prejudice...a common misfortune with New England writers and New England politicians.”¹²³ It was a flaw, said Simms, that appeared so expansively and so habitually that it must “be regarded with the indulgence shown cases of acknowledged infirmity and chronic incapacity.”¹²⁴ But Simms himself did not accept his prescribed indulgence. His scathing reviews failed to appease his angst, and in the autumn of 1856 he left his home in South Carolina to deliver a series of lectures throughout the North, hoping to vindicate South Carolina’s role in the American Revolution. It was a short-lived mission. Simms abandoned his lecture tour after his first lecture was received with hostility and apathy.

¹²¹ Lorenzo Sabine, *Biographical Sketches of Loyalists of The American Revolution* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc., 1979), 40.

¹²² Sean R. Busick, *A Sober Desire for History: William Gilmore Simms as Historian* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2005), xi.

¹²³ as quoted by Welch, 300.

¹²⁴ *Ibid*, 300-301.

Although Simms's lectures did not fulfill their intended purpose, they, along with his reviews and Sabine's book, were the core of the Sabine-Simms Controversy.

Although South Carolina was not the only southern state criticized by Sabine, it was the state he criticized most harshly, and it was the only state to direct substantial attention to rebutting his version of the American Revolution. Thus, Sabine's book, rather than being merely a controversial interpretation of the past, became the catalyst of a prolonged controversy and the continuation of the ancient rivalry between Massachusetts and South Carolina. Throughout this controversy, the ancient rivalry began to show signs of its evolution.

The Sabine-Simms Controversy forms the crux of this thesis, because it represents the critical moment when Americans began to view South Carolina as experiencing and occupying an historical narrative separate from their own. Lorenzo Sabine's rendition of the American Revolution, and his portrayal of South Carolina's role in that event, was a dramatic revision of American history. Whereas Daniel Webster had alienated a small number of his South Carolina contemporaries by accusing them of selfish disloyalty to a unifying past, Sabine alienated a majority of South Carolinians, claiming they had inherited a past entirely different from that of other Americans. At a time when antebellum Americans were acknowledging a growing contrast between South Carolinians and themselves, Sabine introduced the perception of an equally stark contrast existing between their ancestors. America's acceptance of Sabine's revision allowed the country to believe South Carolina was historically juxtaposed against the rest of the nation.

As a geographical entity, South Carolina's significance in the American Revolution was incontrovertible. More battles and skirmishes of that war were fought in South Carolina than in any other colony, including some of the Americans' more crucial victories, such as Sullivan's Island, Kings Mountain, and Cowpens. Sabine confronted this directly, claiming: "The exact question is, then, not *where* were the battlegrounds of the Revolution, but what was the *proportion* of men, which each of the thirteen States *supplied* for the contest."¹²⁵ According to Sabine, the proportion of Whigs in the state was easily eclipsed by an overwhelming number of Tories. South Carolina, he wrote, "could not defend herself against her own Tories; and it is hardly an exaggeration to add, that more Whigs of New England were sent to her aid, and now lie buried in her soil, than she sent from it to every scene of strife from Lexington to Yorktown."¹²⁶ With this claim, Sabine acknowledged South Carolina's relevance as a critical arena of the American Revolution, while giving New Englanders the credit for fighting in that arena. If the American Revolution was the common struggle of thirteen American colonies against the British Empire, Sabine crafted a narrative in which South Carolina's contributions were offset by its detractions; or, to put it in other terms, he created a narrative in which South Carolina made virtually no measurable contribution to American victory.

As Sabine continued his narrative, South Carolina seemed increasingly akin to an enemy combatant:

¹²⁵ Lorenzo Sabine, *The American Loyalists, or Biographical Sketches of Adherents to the British Crown in the War of the Revolution* (Boston: Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1847), 31.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 32.

South Carolina, with a Northern army to assist her, could not, or would not, even preserve her own capital....its citizens did not rally to save it, and Gen. Lincoln was compelled to accept terms of capitulation....the inhabitants, as a body, preferred to return to their allegiances to the British crown. The people, on whom Congress and Gen. Lincoln depended to complete his force, refused to enlist under the Whig banner; but after the surrender of the city, they flocked to the royal standard by hundreds. In a word, so general was the defection, that persons who had enjoyed Lincoln's confidence joined the royal side....the whole State had yielded submission to the royal arms, and had become again a part of the empire.¹²⁷

Here we see the continuation of a theme from Webster's Reply to Hayne, via Sabine's implication that South Carolinians were fundamentally self-interested and unwilling to help the other states whenever it became inconvenient or perilous to do so, and with an underlying intimation that South Carolina's unprovoked selfishness was ultimately harmful to everyone else. More explicitly, by claiming the whole state again became part of the British Empire during the middle of the conflict, Sabine paints the image of South Carolinians as the historic enemies of Americans.

Lorenzo Sabine's interpretation of American history was a marked departure from conventional accounts, and his treatment of South Carolina, although not entirely baseless, was a stark contrast from traditional histories such as Parson Weems's biography of Francis Marion. Following the close of the American Revolution, Francis Marion, one of South Carolina's famous guerilla patriots, achieved a lofty level of national fame. Washington-biographer Mason Locke Weems, enjoined by a public eager to learn more about another one of their young country's great heroes, published a biography of Francis Marion in 1824.

¹²⁷ *Ibid*, 32.

Although the book claimed to be a biography of Marion, it was riddled with anecdotes and mini-biographies that devoted a great deal of attention to the heroic deeds and struggles of the numerous patriots surrounding Marion, familiarizing the literate public with the names of many heroic Carolinians, such as the sergeants Jasper, M'Donald, and Newton, Mrs. Elliot and Mrs. Jones, Col. Laurens, General Horry, Captain Snipes and Rebecca Brewton Motte, among others. According to Weems, Marion was but one of a vast array of American patriots from South Carolina.¹²⁸

While Lorenzo Sabine certainly didn't deny the patriotism and merits of South Carolinians such as Francis Marion, he did reevaluate what Marion represented. Sabine didn't deny Marion's place in American history, he merely depicted him as a remarkable exception rather than a representative example: " 'One swallow does not make a summer,' nor 'One feather make a bed;' and so, a Laurens, father and son, a Middleton, a Rutledge, Marion, Sumter, and Pickens, do not prove that the Whig leaven was diffused throughout the mass of her people."¹²⁹ According to Sabine, Francis Marion was both an American patriot and a South Carolina anomaly.

In addition to depicting South Carolina's Whig heroes as exceptions within the state, Sabine isolated them from the larger body of American patriots based upon the intensity and animosity existing between them and South Carolina Tories. Because of the resulting atrocities, Sabine claimed, "the Whigs disgraced the cause and the American

¹²⁸ Brig. Gen. P. Horry and Parson M. L. Weems, *The Life of General Francis Marion: A Celebrated Partisan Officer, in the Revolutionary War, Against the British and Tories in South Carolina and Georgia* (Winston-Salem, NC: John F. Blair Publisher, third printing, 2004).

¹²⁹ Lorenzo Sabine, *The American Loyalists or Biographical Sketches of Adherents to the British Crown in the War of the Revolution* (Boston, 1847), 30, 32, as quoted by Franklin, 9.

name.”¹³⁰ Again Sabine’s narrative was a contradiction to Weems. Weems relayed a tale of mutiny among Marion’s ranks, and Marion’s forgiving attitude toward both the mutineer and the enemies:

...With such worthies by our sides, with such a CAUSE before our eyes, let us move on with joy to the battle and charge like the honored champions of God and of human rights. But, in the moment of victory, let the supplicating enemy find us as lovely in mercy, as we are terrible in valor. Our enemies are blind. They neither understand nor desire the happiness of mankind. Ignorant, therefore, as children, they claim our pity for themselves. And as to their widows and little ones, the very thought of them should fill our souls with tenderness. The crib that contains their corn, the cow that gives them milk, the cabin that shelters their feeble heads from the storm, should be sacred in our eyes. Weak and helpless, as they are, still they are the nurslings of heaven—our best intercessors with the Almighty.¹³¹

Weems even goes on to describe the reaction to Marion’s epilogue: “The satisfaction which it gave to the officers was so general and sincere, that I often heard them say afterwards, that since the mutiny was suppressed, they were glad it happened; for it had given them an opportunity to hear a lecture, which they hoped would make them better men and braver soldiers too, as long as they lived.”¹³² Nor was Marion’s mercy an isolated event. However terrible the conflicts between South Carolina Whigs and Tories may have been, John Jay also testified to the humanity of South Carolina Whigs in their treatment of Tories.¹³³

Furthermore, Sabine’s narrative of New Englanders fighting the battles of South Carolina was a direct contradiction to the history presented by Weems, who described the

¹³⁰ Sabine, 42.

¹³¹ Weems, 140-41.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 141.

¹³³ See Gregg Singer, *South Carolina in the Confederation* (Philadelphia: Privately Printed, 1941), 121. Singer quotes Jay, who wrote “Although much severity was naturally expected and would have been excusable in South Carolina considering the manner in which she has been treated, yet great regard to justice and an uncommon degree of benevolence, humanity, and mercy have marked her conduct toward her offending citizens.”

northern armies as abandoning Carolina: “Thus are all our hopes from the north entirely at an end, and poor Carolina is left to shift for herself.”¹³⁴ By no means does Weems deny the overwhelming presence of South Carolina Tories, writing “not one in a thousand of [South Carolina’s] own children will rise to take her part; but, on the contrary, are madly taking part with the enemy against her.”¹³⁵ But Weems differs from Sabine in the credit he gives for the defeat of South Carolina’s Tories. According to Weems, Marion, Sumter and South Carolina’s Whig minority, “fought and conquered for Carolina,” in spite of the overwhelming Tory opposition and “the many follies and failures of northern armies and generals.”¹³⁶

Parson Weems’s history of the American Revolution was no more accurate than Lorenzo Sabine’s. Neither were written primarily out of a need for historical accuracy, but rather to service some national need. When Weems wrote his history in 1824, he was doing so at a time when Americans wanted a unifying history of their country’s beginnings. He was writing for a public that wanted South Carolina’s inclusion in the national narrative. When Sabine wrote his version of the Revolution over two decades later, he was writing for a very different public, with very different wants.

Whereas Weems acknowledged South Carolina Toryism in 1824, he did so in a manner that facilitated South Carolina’s inclusion in a historical narrative alongside the other twelve colonies, giving South Carolina’s Whig minority the credit for neutralizing the state’s Tories and delivering devastating blows to the British, ultimately making a critical contribution to the American cause. Sabine did the exact opposite. By giving

¹³⁴ Weems, 101.

¹³⁵ *Ibid*, 101.

¹³⁶ *Ibid*, 115.

others credit for the American victories in South Carolina, by bringing South Carolina Toryism into the spotlight, by making a distinction between South Carolinian and American Whigs, and by treating Francis Marion as an exception, Sabine's book sent a latent message: South Carolina had ultimately fought against her sister colonies during the country's defining moment.

The differences between Weems's account and Sabine's represented a critical shift in how Americans viewed their past. The remarks and perceptions of other Americans, southerners as well as northerners, testify to the eventual success of Sabine's message. A decade later, Hinton Rowan Helper of North Carolina asked, "Is it not notoriously true that the Toryism of South Carolina prolonged the [Revolution] two years at least?"¹³⁷ Massachusetts congressman Anson Burlingame even referenced Lorenzo Sabine when he addressed the House of Representatives in 1856, contending "there is no proof that [South Carolina militia units] were ever engaged in any battle." According to Burlingame, "few South Carolinians fought in the battles of Eutaw or Guilford. They were chiefly fought by men out of South Carolina, and they would have won greater fame and greater laurels if they had not been chiefly opposed by the citizens of the soil."¹³⁸

Henry Wilson of Massachusetts seconded these claims in the Senate:

...thousands and tens of thousands of [South Carolina's] sons sought protection under the British flag. When the army of Greene was starving, the British army in Charleston was receiving all that the fertile valleys of South Carolina could produce, carry into Charleston, and exchange for British gold. When Greene and his patriot army wanted oxen and horses to carry supplies, they were hustled off into the forest by people who had,

¹³⁷ Hinton Rowan Helper, *The Impending Crisis of the South: How to Meet It* (New York: Burdick Brothers, 1857), 115.

¹³⁸ *Appendix to the Congressional Globe*, 34 Cong., 1 Sess., 655.

to quote the words of General Barnwell, “far greater attachment to their interests than zeal for the service of their country.”¹³⁹

Captain Smith W. Fowler depicted a similar scenario, referring specifically to Charleston:

Far away, upon the Atlantic coast, there stands one of the oldest cities of the Union. ‘Tis the only city in the nation where a British soldier found a hearty and almost unanimous welcome, in the old Revolution for liberty. ‘Tis the city where the fires of Toryism have not gone out since the war for Independence--....Down in South Carolina, away from the dwelling place of patriots and patriotism....¹⁴⁰

“There were more Tories,” insisted one Tennessee editor, “[in South Carolina] during the Revolutionary War than in all the other States put together.”¹⁴¹

With regards to the impending sectional conflict, the implications of Sabine’s message cannot be underestimated. For any collective body of people, a unifying historical experience is crucial in establishing a common identity. James C. Cobb describes the past as “the raw material, the virtual DNA-equivalent, from which a sense of group identity must be constructed and by which it must be nurtured and sustained.”¹⁴² The function of history, in its relationship to group identities, is not limited merely to the role of establishing such identities. History also serves as the means by which such identities are “nurtured and sustained.” History maintains a constant presence whenever a collective identity is being defined and clarified. This is equally applicable to national bodies, as another historian points out, “all nations rely on the past, or on some version of

¹³⁹ *New York Daily Times*, 23 Jun. 1856.

¹⁴⁰ Smith W. Fowler, *Autobiographical Sketch of Capt. S. W. Fowler, Late of the 6th Mich. Inf’t’y* (Manistee, MI: *Times and Standard Steam Power Print*, 1877), 20.

¹⁴¹ Brownlow, 22.

¹⁴² James C. Cobb, “An Epitaph for the North: Reflections on the Politics of Regional and National Identity at the Millennium,” *The Journal of Southern History*, vol. 66, no. 1 (Feb., 2000), 22, accessed in JSTOR, 25 Sep. 2006.

the past, for national definition.”¹⁴³ Identities are rooted in the past, and nineteenth century American identity was rooted in the American Revolution, the common plight of the people of thirteen sister colonies. Taking particular pains to exclude South Carolina from America’s historical narrative, Lorenzo Sabine redefined American identity when he recast the American Revolution as the common struggle of the people of twelve colonies. Sabine’s history was tantamount to South Carolina’s exclusion from American identity. In doing so, he stripped the majority of South Carolinians of their identity, forcing them to first seek inclusion, and, after failing, forge a new identity. At the same time, he induced all other Americans to recognize a new national identity, one whose historic bearings afforded no room for the people of South Carolina.

Faced with the threat of exclusion from the American historic narrative, South Carolinians began to display a greater sense of historical awareness, which manifested itself in the growing need to assert their voice in the historical record. Throughout the first decades of America’s existence as an independent country, South Carolinians, like most southerners, remained largely negligent of recording American history, leaving historical writing and interpretation to be dominated by northern scholars and writers. In an era of more harmonious sectional relations, this was neither contentious nor objectionable, and “southerners seemed content with the desultory pursuit of Revolutionary history largely by northern writers.”¹⁴⁴ However, notes Eileen Ka-May Cheng, with the escalation of sectional tensions, regional biases began to poison multi-regional histories, “as George Bancroft and his New England colleagues gave a distinctly

¹⁴³ Susan-Mary Grant, *North over South: Northern Nationalism and American Identity in the Antebellum Era* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press), 56.

¹⁴⁴ Franklin, 7.

sectional cast to their interpretation of American history.”¹⁴⁵ According to Susan-Mary Grant, “nineteenth-century northerners rarely missed an opportunity to make sectional capital out of the national past.”¹⁴⁶ Lorenzo Sabine’s *The American Loyalists* was one of a number of New England historians transcribing American history from a northern perspective. Without a substantial body of southern writings to oppose or contradict them, New Englanders could redefine American history to serve narrow sectional agendas, virtually unchecked. But as soon as they began to redefine American history via the exclusion of South Carolina, South Carolinians began to foster an active interest in recording America’s past, making sure their presence was acknowledged.

Throughout the 1840s and 50s, a number of South Carolina’s intellectuals began to advocate increased emphasis on South Carolina’s unique role in American history. Delivering the inaugural address to the South Carolina Historical Society in 1855, Frederick A. Porcher lamented their previous negligence:

Fellow citizens, the people of the South have in many respects been false to themselves, and in none more than this, that utterly regardless of their own past, they have consented to receive instructions from others, and under interested teachers their history has been falsified. What child has not been taught to believe rigorously that all that is good, all that is noble, all that is venerable in our country is derived from the Puritan who landed on the rock of Plymouth?¹⁴⁷

In addition to what was said in this inaugural address, the date of the inaugural address itself is pertinent. Whereas most states had begun forming state historical societies in the 1820s and 30s, South Carolina was a relative latecomer. Postdating the establishment of

¹⁴⁵ Eileen Ka-May Cheng, “American Historical Writers and the Loyalists, 1788-1856: Dissent, Concensus, and American Nationality,” *Journal of the Early Republic*, vol. 23, no. 4 (Winter, 2003), 512.

¹⁴⁶ Grant, 28.

¹⁴⁷ As quoted by Paul D. H. Quigley, “‘That History is Truly the Life of Nations:’ History and Southern Nationalism in Antebellum South Carolina,” *The South Carolina Historical Magazine*, vol. 106, no. 1 (Jan., 2005), 8.

other state historical societies by over two decades, the South Carolina Historical Society did not enter the scene until the history of South Carolina became jeopardized. Similarly, July 4th celebrations had been a common annual occurrence in Charleston during the 1820s and 30s. The 1850s witnessed the emergence of Palmetto Day as a viable and widely accepted commemoration in South Carolina, and an alternative to the July 4th celebrations of previous decades.¹⁴⁸ As South Carolina's relevance in Revolutionary history was being altered on a national scale, South Carolinians developed a self-centered perspective of American history. Three years after Porcher's inaugural address, William Porcher Miles implored his fellow Carolinians to "cherish...the recollection of our revolutionary glory as the highest and purest in all our past record..."¹⁴⁹

Perhaps no event pinpoints this transition better than the sentiments of William Gilmore Simms. As late as 1843, Simms, delivering a July 4th oration, informed his Aiken audience that South Carolina's Revolutionary history did not need to be written down, because it was "deeply engraven upon the everlasting monuments of the nation. It is around us, a living trophy upon all our hills. It is within us, an undying memory in all our hearts. It is a record which no fortune can obliterate—inseparable from all that is great and glorious in the work of the Revolution."¹⁵⁰ And as late as 1845 he remained a proponent of the development of a national literature and a national history.¹⁵¹ It wasn't until after Sabine's history of the American Revolution questioned South Carolina's

¹⁴⁸ Kevin M. Gannon, " 'The Sabbath of Liberty': The Invention of Palmetto Day in 1850s Charleston," delivered at the annual meeting of SHEAR [Lexington, KY], July, 1999, <http://www.h-net.org/~shear/s99abs/KevinGannon.htm>

¹⁴⁹ As quoted by Franklin, 16.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 11-12.

¹⁵¹ John W. Higham, "The Changing Loyalties of William Gilmore Simms," *The Journal of Southern History*, vol. 9, no. 2 (May, 1943), 221, in JSTOR [database online]; accessed 20 June 2007.

“deeply engraven” place in American history that Simms, and other South Carolinians, began devoting greater attention to South Carolina’s particular relevance in the American Revolution.

These South Carolinians began to produce a body of works designed to solidify South Carolina’s place in American history by explicitly emphasizing the historic contributions of South Carolina. Simms’s lecture on South Carolina in the American Revolution is a perfect example of this. In an attempt to stress South Carolina’s inclusion in America’s historic narrative, Simms asked:

How happens it that South Carolina is identified with so many glorious passages in our history;--with so many of the brightest deeds;--with so many fields of battle;--with so many names of deathless men, which, in the National records, are the recognized representatives of the noblest heroism—in fact, the received models of heroism whenever the song or story of the Revolution is the subject? How is it that she has acquired a spurious military and patriotic reputation, so distinguished in spite of the chronicle? How is it that it has been left to the present day to make discoveries of her shortcomings in the past, of which the Past, itself, knew nothing?¹⁵²

The final sentence in this quote reveals what Simms’s was specifically reacting to--the *present day* emergence of a historic narrative which emphasized South Carolina’s heretofore undiscovered “shortcomings.”

The whole tone of Simms’s lecture conveys an underlying agenda to convince the North that South Carolina occupied an unequivocal place in American history. “Her merit,” Simms argued, “consists in being able, while contending with a formidable home faction, to make contributions of strength, wisdom, patriotism & valour, to the Common Cause, which no other State in the Union has ever exceeded, tho’ placed under

¹⁵² Simms, “South Carolina in the Revolution: A Lecture,” 522.

circumstances far more advantageous!”¹⁵³ Presented with a version of American history in which South Carolina’s presence was either marginally important or important only as an antithesis to the rest of the nation, William Gilmore Simms labored to produce a South Carolina-centric version of American history.

In a way, Simms and the others were overcompensating for their previous negligence. In doing so, they created a uniquely South Carolinian interpretation of American history. This interpretation of the past has since become a subject of examination by historians such as Paul D. H. Quigley. Pointing out the relationship between history and nationalism, Quigley concluded that South Carolina’s reinterpretation of American history was evidence of a deliberate and cognizant attempt to construct a separate southern nationalism:

Recovering the character of this relationship between history and nation clarifies some of the central ideological and cultural assumptions that lay behind secession. It reveals that a small group of southern intellectuals had spent a great deal of time before the war carefully considering the meanings and implications of southern independence, constructing an extensive intellectual scaffolding for the new nation within the historical contexts of southern, American, and world history.¹⁵⁴

Because the writings of William Gilmore Simms, William Henry Trescot, Frederick Porcher and others emphasized the uniqueness of South Carolina history, culture and nature, Quigley points to their works to support his argument. “Trescot and Porcher,” he writes, “attempted to establish southern nationalism as fact by crafting a unified narrative of southern history. This has been a common nationalist technique.”¹⁵⁵ Quigley is

¹⁵³ *Ibid*, 529-530.

¹⁵⁴ Quigley, 10-11.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 15.

correct in identifying this as a common nationalist technique, but the presence of a common nationalist technique is not irrefutable proof of deliberate nationalist activity.

Quigley's interpretation has a sufficient amount of evidence to substantiate his claims. It does, however, overlook a considerable amount of evidence that might be deemed contradictory to his thesis. There is plenty of information to suggest that South Carolina's unique interpretation of the American Revolution was not an unprovoked plot motivated by sectional or political imperatives. Simms's lecture implies his primary objective was to refute Sabine's accusations in an appeal for inclusion, rather than deliberately crafting the "intellectual scaffolding" that would validate South Carolina's exclusion:

South Carolina asks only to be tried by the standards which are applied to other States. She asks no favour, but she demands justice. She requires, that, while you expose her faults, you do not suppress her virtues. Be sure of this, that if there be stains upon her shield, they are of virgin whiteness in comparison with those, which a diligent delver in the sewers of history, may discover, on many others, which now most loudly vaunt their purity!¹⁵⁶

The whole tone of Simms's lecture carries the allusion of an objection to preceding charges. "South Carolina, asserting abstract principles, rather than present necessities," Simms insisted, "raised the banner of Revolution in sympathy with Massachusetts—raised it among the first—nay, the very first, and sent their succours to Massachusetts, from the first moment when she was stricken by the enemy. Yet the first shaft at South Carolina comes from the quiver of Massachusetts."¹⁵⁷ The "shaft" Simms was referring

¹⁵⁶ Simms, "South Carolina in the Revolution: A Lecture," 524.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 526.

to was Sabine's book, and this quote implies Simms was trying to attach South Carolina to the history of Massachusetts and America, rather than separate from it.

We can also presume Simms's intentions based upon how he depicts South Carolina:

I contend that purer patriots were never found—that hands cleaner of self and of offense—freer from the reproach of base and selfish motive,—never grasped the weapons of war—never more bravely, or faithfully carried life, property & sacred honour, as their pledges into the field, or of more generous and national purposes.¹⁵⁸

His insistent declarations of South Carolina's selflessness were a direct protest to Sabine's allusion to South Carolina selfishness. In this regard, his reaction was very similar to Hayne's. Both men struggled to prevent the perception of South Carolina as primarily self-serving and introverted. Their concern with how South Carolina was perceived by the rest of the nation reaffirms the argument that they were seeking inclusion rather than exclusion.

In his private correspondence, Simms was explicit in outlining his motives and intentions for going North, and his reasoning for focusing on South Carolina's role in the Revolution. When James Henry Hammond asked "what demon possessed"¹⁵⁹ Simms to go North to deliver a series of lectures on South Carolina, Simms responded:

I gave the true history, of S. C. and referred to other regions only where it was necessary to establish a just standard by which to judge of what ought to be expected of S. C. in the Revolution....I had to do this, in order to show why, & on what points, I had undertaken to correct the vulgar mistakes or misrepresentations of her history.¹⁶⁰

Simms similarly explained his actions to Lorenzo Sabine, writing: "You assailed my country, as I thought, & still think, unjustly, and in a bad temper: and I defended her, as

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 527.

¹⁵⁹ James Henry Hammond to William Gilmore Simms, Nov. 27, 1856, *The Letters of William Gilmore Simms*, 3: 465n.

¹⁶⁰ William Gilmore Simms to James Henry Hammond, Dec. 8, 1856, *The Letters of William Gilmore Simms*, 3: 466.

well as I could.”¹⁶¹ Thus, in a private letter to one of his closest friends, and in another letter to his avowed adversary, Simms disclosed his primary intention: to correct the mistakes regarding South Carolina’s history. His earlier concern for a national history had been supplanted with a dedication to South Carolina’s history, because South Carolina’s history was under attack by historians from other parts of the nation. Political and sectional motivations played a negligible role in his action.

Furthermore, through this series of letters, both Hammond and Simms reveal that Simms did what he did on behalf of South Carolina, not the South or the nation. Recognizing Simms’s motives, Hammond rebuked him for having “martyred” himself “for So Ca, who will not even buy your books.”¹⁶² Simms rejoined:

You are right in saying that S. C. had no claim of self-sacrifice upon me. But, mon ami, neither you nor I,—are quite capable, whatever the wrongs or neglect we suffer—to contemn, discard, or escape from our own impulses. My *heart* (suffer me to have one) was *slavishly* in these topics of S. C. I could no more fling them off from it, than I could fly. And my mind followed my heart. In this field, I was the champion, and my heroism did not stop to ask whether I should ever win thanks or a smile from the disdainful sovereign whom I was prepared to serve with my life. Do not *you* reproach me with this *weakness*, in which I could not suffer a selfishness to share. I expect nothing from S. C., but I have been too long accustomed to toils & sacrifice for her, to feel her injustice now.¹⁶³

Based upon the explanation provided to Hammond, Simms was compelled to defend South Carolina’s honor and vindicate her history.

Even in his fictional works, Simms conveys a motive of vindication. In *Katherine Walton*, one of Simms’s first fictional works written after the publication of Sabine’s *The*

¹⁶¹ As quoted by Cheng, 512.

¹⁶² James Henry Hammond to William Gilmore Simms, Nov. 27, 1856, *The Letters of William Gilmore Simms*, 3:465n.

¹⁶³ William Gilmore Simms to James Henry Hammond, Dec. 8, 1856, *ibid.*, 3:468-469.

American Loyalists, General Andrew Williamson, a Whig-turned-Tory, justifies his shifting allegiance:

As God is my judge...I never deserted [the cause] until it had deserted me! My officers recommended the protection—our troops were scattered—we had no army left. Beaufort was cut to pieces—our cavalry dispersed—Congress would, or could, do nothing for us—and, in despair of any success or safety, not knowing where to turn, I signed the accursed instrument which...offered us a position of neutrality, when it was no longer possible to offer defense.¹⁶⁴

One can't help but wonder if this passage contains an allegorical subtext justifying the Tories of South Carolina, especially the citizens of Charleston who, according to Sabine, "flocked to the royal standard by hundreds" after the surrender of the city. Perhaps this passage even contains a more fascinating subtext. Perhaps Simms, the unionist-turned-secessionist, was vindicating his own personal shift in allegiance, indicting the Union for abandoning (by way of exclusion) South Carolina.

Additionally, many of the quotes Quigley uses to support his thesis are revealing when analyzed in relation to preceding northern statements. Among the representative examples he provides was Simms, who did "not fear but that the deeds and sacrifices of Carolina, and of the whole South, will bear honorable comparison with those of any part of this nation."¹⁶⁵ Andrew Butler and Lawrence Keitt were even more specific.

According to Butler, "South Carolina has poured out hogsheads of blood where gallons have been poured out by Massachusetts."¹⁶⁶ Similarly, Keitt claimed "Massachusetts embarked in the Revolution for water-falls, spindles, and merchant craft; South Carolina

¹⁶⁴ as quoted by William R. Taylor, *Cavalier & Yankee: The Old South and American National Character* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1969), 283.

¹⁶⁵ As quoted by Quigley, 29-30.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 30.

engaged in it for the royalty of mind.”¹⁶⁷ Quigley references these quotes as evidence of South Carolina’s immoderate behavior. Referring to Simms’ reaction to Sabine, Quigley writes: “Once again, a radical South Carolinian had taken a strand of moderate southern thought and steered it in an extremist, sectional direction.”¹⁶⁸ Quigley’s analysis is speculative and inconclusive. Although the quotes he mentions, and others like them, are good examples of the sectionalized nature of South Carolina’s interpretation of the past, they must be framed within a larger context in order to understand their motivation and meaning.

Oftentimes, quotes such as those referenced by Quigley came on the heels of antagonistic statements made by Sabine and others. “Massachusetts furnished more men in the Revolution than the whole South...and more by ten-fold than South Carolina,” declared Anson Burlingame of Massachusetts in June of 1856. “More New England men now lie buried in the soil of South Carolina than there were of South Carolinians, who left their State to fight the battles of the country.”¹⁶⁹ Therefore Andrew Butler’s remark about South Carolina pouring out hogsheads of blood in comparison with Massachusetts’s gallons, made in August 1856, could’ve easily been a rebuttal to Burlingame’s statement. The same is applicable to the many remarks Simms made, regarding Massachusetts, during his lecture. As they focused on American history, South Carolinians specifically mentioned Massachusetts time and time again because Massachusetts had been previously mentioned in direct contrast to South Carolina. Given the large number of disparaging remarks directed toward South Carolina, the

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 30-31.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 29.

¹⁶⁹ As quoted by Franklin, 16.

“unique South Carolina invocation and reinterpretation” of American history takes on a new form in light of these critiques.

Finally, we in the historical field are forced to come to grips with the main subject matter that characterizes Simms’s lecture, “South Carolina in the American Revolution,” and the parameters in which it was delivered. If Simms was primarily concerned with the construction of a separate southern nation, why did he focus on the history of South Carolina instead of a unifying history of the South in the American Revolution? Why did he and others single out Massachusetts time after time, instead of the North in general? Why did he go on a northern lecture tour instead of a Southern lecture tour? Why would he care about the opinions of northerners as he prepared to form a new nation? Why would he try to convince them South Carolina occupied a place in *their* past? One explanation can answer all these questions: William Gilmore Simms, and the other South Carolinians who produced works on South Carolina’s history, were not seeking the construction of a historical narrative to support a separate southern nation; they were seeking a historical narrative that would secure South Carolina’s permanent inclusion in the national narrative of the United States. They focused on South Carolina because their behavior was primarily defensive, and they focused on Massachusetts because, more often than not, the condemnations of South Carolina came from Massachusetts. And Simms went on a northern lecture tour in a desperate attempt to prevent South Carolina’s exclusion from American identity.

Unfortunately for Simms, he was too late. Webster and Sabine had done their job so thoroughly and successfully, that when Simms arrived in the North intending to

enlighten his misinformed compatriots, he was instead met by a group of Americans who had developed a predisposition to view him as the representative of a society wholly at odds with their own. His pleas fell on the ears of a people who had, by 1856, already come to the conclusion that he, a South Carolinian, was an outsider. “With an impudence unsurpassed,” harangued Buffalo’s *Morning Express*, “he comes into our midst and makes an harangue abusive of a Northern State and running over with fulsome and false praise of the least deserving State of the Union.”¹⁷⁰ There are two elements of this critique deserving of attention. The first is the line “he comes into our midst,” a line conveying an image of Simms as an outsider, an alien, an unwelcome intruder invading “our” space. The second is the reference to South Carolina as “the least deserving State of the Union.” The latter reveals this reporter’s perception of South Carolina. Simms delivered his lecture hoping his audience would recognize South Carolina’s place in America’s past, only to find his audience viewed his entreaty as an affront.

Northerners had no interest in the history of their rival, and immediately dismissed him with an ominous foreboding: “Damn South Carolina & all that belongs to her—we want to hear no blowing about South Carolina.”¹⁷¹ Simms couldn’t make the case for South Carolina’s inclusion in American history, because American history had been redefined in contrast to South Carolina. Shortly into his lecture tour, William Gilmore Simms came to the realization that South Carolina’s inclusion in American history was impossible, and he abandoned his errand into the North to return home; and along with it, his national allegiance. Simms shed his earlier unionists sympathies and

¹⁷⁰ As quoted by Oliphant, Odell, and Eaves, eds., *The Letters of William Gilmore Simms*, 3: 457n.

¹⁷¹ William Gilmore Simms to James Henry Hammond, Dec. 8, 1856, *The Letters of William Gilmore Simms*, 3:468.

became an avid supporter of secession. Nor was he alone. Simms's abandonment of his lecture tour was symbolic of South Carolina's concurrent abandonment of American identity.

Lorenzo Sabine's critique of South Carolina's Revolutionary history was paramount at driving thousands of South Carolinians toward a new identity. When Daniel Webster relayed a narrative of American history, he was careful to provide for the conditional inclusion of most South Carolinians, and only specifically excluded a minority of South Carolinians. Lorenzo Sabine, however, excluded the majority, and by using history to do it, he precluded the conditional inclusion of most South Carolinians. In fact, Sabine's only exceptions were applicable to members of the State's ancient aristocracy. In doing so, Sabine helped to unite the majority of white South Carolinians around a new identity.

On the final page of Lacy K. Ford's *Origins of Southern Radicalism*, Ford describes a scene that conveys the importance of history in antebellum South Carolina:

Two of South Carolina's wealthiest men spent a warm fall evening on the porch of a big plantation house currying the favor of a well-digger who still had mud from his day's work oozing from between his toes. Neither Boykin, a planter of Federalist lineage, nor Chesnut, who would ultimately serve the Confederacy on Jefferson Davis's personal staff, provided the controlling presence on the Boykin piazza. Instead, the man at the center of attention, the man who seemed most satisfied and at ease with his situation, was the common white, Squire McDonald....After all, the Squire was "a free white man," and if Chesnut and Boykin were members of old and prominent South Carolina families, McDonald also had blood ties to heroism and the proud Revolutionary heritage....The rich and supposedly powerful were mesmerized by his presence and respectful of his heritage.¹⁷²

¹⁷² Lacy K. Ford, Jr., *Origins of Southern Radicalism: The South Carolina Upcountry, 1800-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 373.

This scene testifies to the influence of Revolutionary heritage in antebellum South Carolina society. Squire McDonald possessed an unusual presence on that porch, and his authority had nothing to do with his social class, his gender, his skin color, his occupation, or whether or not he owned slaves. He derived his power through his ties to the legacy of the American Revolution, a consideration that superseded all others in this situation. When Sabine attacked the Revolutionary legacy of South Carolina, he wasn't just attacking elites like Boykin and Chesnut; he was attacking anyone with a tie to that all-important legacy. Thus, he alienated South Carolinians from all walks of life, rich and poor, planter and yeoman, male and female, upcountry and lowcountry, slaveholder and non-slaveholder.

Denied inclusion in an emerging American identity, South Carolinians looked within as they searched for answers to their identity crisis. "The parochial outlook," explained William R. Taylor, "which such men finally adopted was forced upon them by their growing awareness of the singularity of their historical situation...."¹⁷³ And the sectionalized historical narrative they had constructed, in the hopes of solidifying their place in the American historical experience, became the foundation of a South Carolina identity that would allow them to secede with unwavering resolve.

South Carolinians eventually accepted the legacy of traitor, but they redefined what that legacy meant. In 1850, Robert Barnwell Rhett exclaimed, "Let it be, that I am a Traitor. The word has no terrors for me....I have been born of Traitors, but thank God, they have been Traitors in the great cause of liberty, fighting against tyranny and

¹⁷³ Taylor, 261.

oppression. Such treason will ever be mine whilst true to my lineage.”¹⁷⁴ At a banquet in St. Helena Parish, a banner similarly read: “Oh that we were all such traitors.”¹⁷⁵

Having created an historical narrative in which their ancestors were the highest examples of heroism and liberty, they armed themselves with the confidence necessary to inaugurate the secession movement. As William Porcher Miles implored his fellow Carolinians to “cherish” their Revolutionary heritage, he declared “there we see no timidity or time serving—no want of faith or manly self-confidence....There we see bold wisdom and wise bravery—prudence warmed by valor, and courage tempered and informed by reason.”¹⁷⁶ Their ancestors had been a minority facing unfavorable odds; and yet, they had emerged victorious. This was an historical lesson of inestimable worth, as the outnumbered Carolinians attempted to break away from the union.

By the time South Carolina seceded from the Union, South Carolina’s historic separation had permeated deep into the national psyche. South Carolinians were not a rogue generation of Americans out to destroy the legacy of their fathers, but the inheritors of a very un-American legacy, destined to follow in the footsteps of their forbears. When Americans reacted to the secession of South Carolina, they alluded to the existence of a distinctly South Carolinian historical experience, antithetic to their own. “The Toryism,” wrote one Virginian, “of 1776 has never died out in South Carolina.”¹⁷⁷ In a letter to William Lowndes Yancey, Henry J. Raymond concurred, “a majority of her inhabitants were Tories in the Revolution, and were opposed to independence. Their descendants

¹⁷⁴ As quoted by Avery Craven, *The Coming of the Civil War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 275.

¹⁷⁵ William C. Davis, *Rhett: The Turbulent Life and Times of a Fire-eater* (Columbia, University of South Carolina Press, 2001), 280.

¹⁷⁶ As quoted by Franklin, 16.

¹⁷⁷ “Personal Recollections of the War,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine*, Vol. 33, No. 193 (June 1866), 2.

have inherited their political sentiments. South Carolina has never had a particle of sympathy with the fundamental principles which lie at the basis of our Republican institutions. From the very outset she has been at war with the dominant ideas of the Confederacy.”¹⁷⁸ West Virginia Governor F. H. Pierpoint found it “incomprehensible” that “Virginia should have linked her fortune with South Carolina, whose history is tainted with Toryism.”¹⁷⁹

When John Palmer accused William G. Brownlow of treason to the South, Brownlow delved into the past for his rebuttal:

Now, sir, what is your pedigree? You hail from a State which mustered more Tories in the War of the Revolution than all the other States in the Confederacy put together....it was the resort of Tories, and the home of traitors, during that dark and trying period of our history....I have no doubt there are Tories enough still in South Carolina, and the descendants of Tories, to influence an attempt to go out of the Union in the event of Lincoln’s election. And I think it a great misfortune that the Constitution does not provide some means of letting the State out peacable.¹⁸⁰

Palmer and Brownlow condemned one another for the same crime, charges of treason. The difference was they had two very different definitions of what treason was, because they had two very different interpretations of American history. The Sabine-Simms Controversy had armed both men with rivaling interpretations of the past, and in so doing, they also armed them with separate identities. But Palmer and Brownlow were hardly the only Americans impacted by this episode of the Ancient Rivalry, and the conflict between them was neither the only one, nor the most intense, of its kind. When

¹⁷⁸ Henry J. Raymond, “The Disunion Question: Third Letter from Mr. Raymond to Hon. W. L. Yancey,” *New York Times*, Dec. 13, 1860, *ProQuest Historical Newspapers*, The New York Times (1851-2004).

¹⁷⁹ F. H. Peirpoint, “To The People of Virginia”

¹⁸⁰ Brownlow, 71.

Lorenzo Sabine published his interpretation of American history, he also armed Senator Charles Sumner with the ammunition needed to engage in the increasingly virulent politics of the nation's capital.

CHAPTER THREE

THE CANING OF MR. SUMNER: THE BROOKS-SUMNER AFFAIR

*“We entreat you to preserve the Union; but we warn you that
this is not to be done by assailing South Carolina.”
-the United States Telegraph¹⁸¹*

“You have libeled my State and slandered a relative who is aged and absent and I am come to punish you for it,” bellowed the Carolina firebrand as he raised his outstretched arm above the seated senator from Massachusetts.¹⁸² And punish him he did. Preston Smith Brooks rained down blow after blow upon a bewildered Charles Sumner, with a palpitating furor only mitigated when the Gutta Percha cane clutched between his whitening knuckles began to splinter and fragment. The stunned senators crowded around the blood-drenched heap on the floor of the senate chamber; it was a scene reminiscent of Caesar’s broken body on the floor of the Roman senate. Unlike Caesar, Sumner lived on, ensuring that although his republic, like his body, might be easily mangled, it was not so easily destroyed.

* * * * *

Six months after the first shots of the American Civil War rang out over Charleston harbor, George Francis Train, in a letter to the editor of the *London American*, wrote on “How to Punish Traitors”:

When the secession balloon shortly collapses, the Federal forces should make fast the event in history. Treason is about to die. Why, then, let the traitor live? South Carolina has been, is now, and will continue to be, the

¹⁸¹ As quoted by David B. Sachsman, S. Kittrell Rushing, Debra Reddin Van Tuyl, eds., *The Civil War and the Press* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2000), 32.

¹⁸² As quoted by Orville Vernon Burton, *In My Father’s House Are Many Mansions: Family and Community in Edgefield, South Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 94.

national assassin, unless summarily executed. Nullification followed Toryism, Secession succeeded Nullification, and Death should be the sequence of Secession. Bury then South Carolina in her damning villany, and forgive the erring States she has led astray. How can this old pirate craft be destroyed? We cannot scuttle her, nor can we burn her to the water's edge; but we can divide her, and give her rotten State Rights timber to the adjoining States (that is, if they will accept them.) The *partition* of Poland was a national crime, and the land is still dressed in the deepest mourning; but the *partition* of South Carolina would be a national retribution worthy of the great nation she sought to ruin. Blot her abhorrent name out of the map of our fair Western World, and let us try and forget that this hell-creating Province was ever one of the more or less *United States* of America. Enormous crime deserves enormous punishment. South Carolina was born a traitor, has lived a traitor, and should die the death of a traitor.¹⁸³

As a bleak age of war dawned on the American horizon, Train's recommendation was to forgive the erring states *except* for South Carolina. While every Confederate state was guilty of secession, slavery and open rebellion to the Federal Government, only South Carolina warranted "retribution worthy of the great nation she sought to ruin," and only South Carolina should be forgotten as having been "one of the more or less United States of America."

Like so many Americans of his time, southerners as well as northerners, Train drew a clear distinction between South Carolina and the rest of the South. At the root of this disparity were elements far more profound than the inaugural secession. An entire generation of Americans had come to view South Carolina not as a southern leader, trailblazer, or exception, nor as a northern antagonist, adversary or antipode. "In the same way that a whole generation of South Carolinians had grown up with disunion thought," explained Tennessee's Andrew Johnson, "a whole generation of Americans had

¹⁸³ George Francis Train, *Union speeches delivered in England during the present American War* (Philadelphia: T. B. Peterson & Brothers, 1862), 46.

grown up with union in response to South Carolina antagonism.”¹⁸⁴ In the minds of many antebellum Americans, South Carolina embodied the American antithesis.

The process by which many Americans came to view South Carolina as the American antithesis was a long and arduous one. Through the Hayne-Webster Debate, Americans were familiarized with the idea that South Carolina did not share their unconditional devotion to the Union, democracy, peace, and the legacy of their forefathers. Through the Sabine-Simms Controversy, Americans were introduced to an interpretation of American history in which South Carolina had been aligned against them at the most critical moment of their past. Finally, through the Brooks-Sumner Affair, Americans listened to the proclamation that South Carolina contributed nothing to the rest of the nation; it was a shroud of darkness contrasted with the radiant light of Kansas. This ongoing dichotomy engendered two distinct, well-formed identities by the outbreak of the Civil War: an American identity predicated upon the exclusion of South Carolina, and a South Carolina identity responding to the denial of inclusion.

* * * * *

The defamation that had originally angered Preston Brooks was a continuation of the statements made by Daniel Webster and Lorenzo Sabine. Delivering a speech entitled “The Crime Against Kansas” on the Senate floor in May of 1856, Sumner took Sabine’s history a step further. Here, the Republican Senator from Massachusetts proclaimed to the country that the ripe young territory of Kansas was more American than one of the

¹⁸⁴ As quoted by Jon L. Wakelyn, ed., *Southern Pamphlets on Secession, November 1860-April 1861* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 305-306.

thirteen original founding states; and unlike Sabine, who acknowledged some of South Carolina's historic attributes, Sumner recognized none:

And yet the Senator, to whom that "State" has in part committed the guardianship of its good name, instead of moving, with backward treading steps, to cover its nakedness, rushes forward in the very ecstasy of madness, to expose it by provoking a comparison with Kansas. South Carolina is old; Kansas is young. South Carolina counts by centuries; where Kansas counts by years. But a beneficent example may be born in a day; and I venture to say, that against the two centuries of the older "State," may be already set the two years of trial, evolving corresponding virtue, in the younger community. In the one, is the long wail of Slavery; in the other, the hymns of Freedom. And if we glance at special achievements, it will be difficult to find any thing in the history of South Carolina which presents so much of heroic spirit in an heroic cause appears in that repulse of the Missouri invaders by the beleaguered town of Lawrence, where even the women gave their effective efforts to Freedom. The matrons of Rome, who poured their jewels into the treasury for the public defence; the wives of Prussia, who, with delicate fingers, clothed their defenders against French invasion; the mothers of our own Revolution, who sent forth their sons, covered with prayers and blessings, to combat for human rights, did nothing of self-sacrifice truer than did these women on this occasion.¹⁸⁵

These comments, when placed within the context of those made by Webster and Sabine, provide a fitting bookend to South Carolina's graduated exclusion from American identity and a unifying national narrative. It was an exclusion that had begun a generation earlier, with the nullification crisis and the concept of a perpetual union. It found historic credibility through Lorenzo Sabine's history of the American Loyalists. And it finally culminated with Sumner's comparison of Kansas to South Carolina. Sumner's speech signaled the finality of South Carolina's exclusion, and with it, the emergence of a new identity, a South Carolina identity. It was this South Carolina

¹⁸⁵ *Appendix to the Congressional Globe*, 34 Cong., 1 Sess., 543.

identity that allowed the people of South Carolina to play their peculiar role in the coming war.

* * * * *

When reviewing the Brooks-Sumner Affair, historians have tended to overlook Sumner's remarks regarding the history of South Carolina, choosing instead to emphasize the importance of his remarks on slavery and Senator Butler. Although such remarks were important, the comments pertaining to South Carolina's history were just as important, if not more important, in influencing Brooks's reaction. When Brooks approached Sumner, the first accusation he charged his adversary with was libeling South Carolina.¹⁸⁶ In a letter to his brother, written shortly after the incident, Brooks similarly described his motives: "Sumner made a violent speech in which he insulted South Carolina and Judge Butler grossly....I felt it my duty to relieve Butler and avenge the insult to my State."¹⁸⁷ Six days later, he again professed: "I deem it proper to add that the assault...was not because of his [Sumner's] political principles, but because of the insulting language used in reference to my State and absent relative."¹⁸⁸ Giving an account of his actions before the Senate, Brooks explained:

Some time since a Senator from Massachusetts allowed himself, in an elaborately prepared speech, to offer a gross insult to my State, and to a venerable friend, who is my State representative, and who was absent at the time. Not content with that, he published to the world, and circulated extensively, this uncalled for libel on my State and my blood. Whatever insults my State insults me. Her history and character have commanded

¹⁸⁶ David Herbert Donald, *Charles Sumner and the Coming of the Civil War* (Naperville, Illinois: Sourcebooks, Inc., 2009), 246, 363n.

¹⁸⁷ Preston Brooks to J. H. Brooks, May 22, 1856, in Elmer D. Johnson and Kathleen Lewis Sloan, eds., *South Carolina: A Documentary Profile of the Palmetto State* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1971), 308.

¹⁸⁸ as quoted by Burton, 94.

my pious veneration; and in her defense I hope I shall always be prepared, humbly and modestly, to perform the duty of a son.¹⁸⁹

Brooks maintained this same tone and sentiment when he addressed his constituency:

...I silently vowed that, though nature should deny me the privilege of adding even an humble intellectual flower to the chaplet of South Carolina, I would be a sentinel to her honor and guard the glories, with which better and abler men had graced her brow. On the 19th and 20th of May last past, a Senator from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts falsified her history and defamed her character. I remembered my resolve, and performed my vow.¹⁹⁰

According to Brooks's various testimonies, his motives were always attached to

Sumner's criticism of South Carolina's history.

When Senator A. P. Butler returned to the Senate, he justified Brooks's

unprecedented display of violence by focusing on the unprecedented nature of Sumner's speech:

I shall ask the gentleman another question: whether the Senator from Massachusetts is not the first, the very first, and the only one, as far as I know, who has used his privilege, or his position here...to assail the revolutionary history of any State in the Union? Is there another instance in which one member of the Senate of the United States has gone out of his way to assail the revolutionary history of one of the "Old Thirteen?" He is the first who has put his profane hand upon that sacred volume....By what tenure does he hold his place here as a judge to pronounce judgment on the history of South Carolina?¹⁹¹

Like Brooks, Butler believed Sumner's criticism of South Carolina's history was central to this incident.

¹⁸⁹ *Appendix to the Congressional Globe*, 34 Cong., 1 Sess., 831.

¹⁹⁰ *South Carolinian*, 18 July 1856.

¹⁹¹ *Appendix to the Congressional Globe*, 34 Cong., 1 Sess., 664.

Brooks's explanation for, and Butler's justification of, his action reveals an acute sensitivity to the honor of South Carolina and its past. Nor were they alone in this regard.

In a letter published by the *Edgefield Advertiser*, R. C. Griffin confided:

My proudest recollections of Washington will be associated with my humble, yet zealous defense of my State against aspersions against her honor and patriotism. You should have known, my dear colonel, that here it is very popular, and very fashionable to abuse South Carolina. It has been my pride and pleasure, on every occasion, when I have heard a word of reproach against her, to raise my voice in her defense.¹⁹²

Griffin made an important observation when he pointed out how it was both “popular” and “fashionable” to criticize South Carolina in the nation's capital. The remarks of Sumner, as well as similar comments made by Anson Burlingame and other northern politicians, furnish the evidence to support this claim. This was the atmosphere in which South Carolina's politicians were expected to govern, exercise diplomacy, and represent the interests of their constituency. Just as Hayne and Simms had been quick to defend South Carolina's historic record in the 1830s and 40s, South Carolina's representatives in the 1850s were equally active in responding to criticism. Following the caning of Sumner, South Carolina Senators Butler and Evans, and Representative Keitt, all delivered orations defending the history of South Carolina.¹⁹³

More importantly, the people of South Carolina revealed their sensitivity to the history and honor of their state through their reaction to the Brooks-Sumner Affair. One South Carolinian threatened Sumner with a “worse thrashing” if he ever “insult our little

¹⁹² *Edgefield Advertiser*, 24 Dec. 1860.

¹⁹³ *Appendix to the Congressional Globe*, 34 Cong., 1 Sess., 625-630; *ibid*, 702-709; *ibid*, 833-838.

state” again.¹⁹⁴ Like Brooks, the Charleston *Mercury* found Sumner detestable not because of any political reason, but “because he has dared, in contravention of all propriety, and with studied contempt of all decorum, to introduce our State in his debate, in terms so gross and insulting that no son of hers could have remained unmoved.”¹⁹⁵ After Brooks resigned his seat in the House of Representatives, the *Mercury* correctly predicted he would return home to “be received by his constituency with open arms, and sent in triumph back, to confront, and, if need be, *we trust, to punish*, the enemies and calumniators of his State.”¹⁹⁶ Revealing a preoccupation with the past, the *Mercury* then went on to praise the event for contributing “to a more complete vindication of the Revolutionary fame and history of South Carolina, than was ever before made in Congress.”¹⁹⁷ Again, the Revolutionary heritage of South Carolina became a point of contention, just as it had been during the Hayne-Webster Debate and the Sabine-Simms Controversy. Finally, the *Mercury* leveled its own punishment of Sumner, declaring “wherever manhood is prized and truth admired, the name of CHARLES SUMNER will descend upon the lips of men, from father to son, as the perfect synonyme of cowardice and baseness. May such be the end of every calumniator of South Carolina!”¹⁹⁸ Through these editorials, the *Mercury* indicated its belief that the chief issue of the Brooks-Sumner Affair revolved around Sumner’s critique of South Carolina and its history.

¹⁹⁴ As quoted by Frederick J. Blue, *Charles Sumner and the Conscience of the North* (Arlington Heights, IL: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1994), 95.

¹⁹⁵ The Charleston *Mercury*, May 28, 1856.

¹⁹⁶ The Charleston *Mercury*, as quoted by the *New York Times*, July 29, 1856.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

The *Yorkville Enquirer* offered a similar assessment of the affair to its readers. “A very large portion of the speech, however, was taken up in vilifying and heaping the most insulting abuse upon our State and her venerable Senator,” a Washington observer conveyed to the editors of the *Enquirer*. “South Carolina may well feel proud of her son. Not only has he bravely sustained her honor upon the battle-field, and added additional lustre {sic} to her name in the council hall of the nation, but he has shown his willingness to avenge her insulted honor, no matter where the insult is offered or by whom. In Sumner he has met and justly chastised our calumniators, and in the only manner, too, which is now left to us.”¹⁹⁹

Newspapers and assemblies across the state echoed the opinions of the *Mercury* and *Enquirer*. At a meeting in Columbia, a committee of citizens met with Brooks, “for the purpose of receiving some testimonials of their appreciation of your gallant conduct in defending the honor of our State.”²⁰⁰ They commended Brooks for “inflicting upon Senator Sumner the punishment he so richly earned by his libelous attack upon the State of Carolina and its faithful Senator.”²⁰¹ The public meeting in York District unanimously adopted the following resolution:

Resolved, That in the opinions of this meeting, the severe castigation inflicted upon Charles Sumner, of Massachusetts, by Col. Preston S. Brooks, of this State, was a richly-deserved chastisement for an unprovoked and insulting imputation upon the honor and reputation of our State, and of one of her beloved and venerable Senators.²⁰²

¹⁹⁹ the *Yorkville Enquirer*, 29 May 1856.

²⁰⁰ the *Carolina Times*, 30 Aug. 1856, as quoted by the *New York Times*, 4 Sept. 1856.

²⁰¹ As quoted by the *New York Times*, 10 June 1856.

²⁰² *Yorkville Enquirer*, 5 June 1856.

The Carolina *Spartan* complained of Sumner's "libels upon Judge Butler and South Carolina of the most mendacious character," and the Edgefield *Advertiser* proclaimed: "Well, we have borne insult long enough, and now let the conflict come if it must."²⁰³ At the first meeting in South Carolina held to praise and approve the actions of Brooks, the citizens of Newberry explained their appreciation:

Our Senators and Representatives in Congress have for a series of years patiently submitted to these tirades of calumny and vituperation, and they have in vain attempted to meet insults by argument and reason. We were not surprised, therefore, that the spirit of resentment should break forth into acts of violence. Ordinarily we might not be ready to justify such measures of redress, but the aggravated insults given by the Senator from Massachusetts on the occasion referred to, in keeping with his uniform conduct, furnish an ample justification of our Representative.²⁰⁴

According to these South Carolinians, Brooks's behavior was excusable because South Carolinians had been the recipients of criticism and condemnation for years, with previous attempts to mitigate the insults proving unsuccessful. Three years later, the Laurensville *Herald* advocated the uniform adoption of "the precedent of Mr. Brooks," before issuing its verdict on the union: "we say, while we are in the Union, let us *demand* that courtesy and justice to our Representatives and State which is awarded to our sister States of the Confederacy."²⁰⁵

By the time Sumner attacked the Palmetto State, South Carolinians had developed an accentuated sensitivity to the honor and reputation of their state precisely because it occupied a precarious position in American national identity. Having been largely excluded from Massachusetts's construction of American identity, South Carolinians

²⁰³ *Carolina Spartan*, 29 May 1856; *Edgefield Advertiser*, 28 May 1856.

²⁰⁴ As quoted by Harold S. Schultz, *Nationalism and Sectionalism in South Carolina, 1852-1860: A Study of the Movement for Southern Independence* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1950), 119.

²⁰⁵ *Laurensville Herald*, 6 June 1859.

cherished their state identity because it had replaced a national identity they were being barred from. Clearly, the patriotism of South Carolinians was being tempered by a devotion to, and awareness of, the besieged honor of their State.

* * * * *

To understand how and why a unique South Carolina psychology and identity emerged as a result of their exclusion from American identity, we must understand that there was, indeed, a discernable exclusion. Once upon a time, South Carolina had been included in the American narrative and portrayed in a positive light. The testimonies of the founding fathers reveal direct contradictions to the assertions later made by Charles Sumner and others. The claim that South Carolina's contributions to the American Revolution were counterproductive is undermined by John Adams's praise:

I feel a strong affection for South Carolina for several reasons. 1. I think them as stanch patriots as any in America. 2. I think them as brave. 3. They are the only people in America who have maintained a post and defended a fort. 4. They have sent us a new delegate whom I greatly admire, Mr. Laurens, their Lieutenant-governor, a gentleman of great fortunes, great abilities, modesty and integrity, and great experience too. If all the States would send us such men, it would be a pleasure to be here.²⁰⁶

Similarly, the assumption that South Carolina was a bulwark against civilization and humanity, driven by selfish and savage motives, were a blaring contrast to the accolades of John Jay. "Although much severity was naturally expected and would have been excusable in South Carolina considering the manner in which she has been treated," wrote Jay, "yet great regard to justice and an uncommon degree of benevolence,

²⁰⁶ John Adams to Abigail Adams, 19 Aug. 1777, in Frank Shuffelton, ed., *The Letters of John and Abigail Adams* (New York: Penguin Group, 2004), 295.

humanity, and mercy have marked her conduct toward her offending citizens.”²⁰⁷ Thus, when Charles Sumner and other antebellum Americans indicated that South Carolina contributed little, if anything, to America and Civilization, they were taking a position that would’ve been found untenable at an earlier period in America’s history. And even if the opinions of Adams and Jay were inaccurate, they represent a perception of South Carolina that facilitated the State’s inclusion in America.

The graduated process from inclusion to exclusion went hand in hand with the deteriorating popularity of unionism in antebellum South Carolina. When Daniel Webster replied to Hayne in 1830, he only excluded a small minority of South Carolinians. As such, there existed a small, but viable, unionist party in South Carolina throughout the nullification crisis. Shortly after the Sabine-Simms Controversy, the vast majority of South Carolinians fell into two groups of disunionists: cooperative or separate state secessionists. And following Sumner’s vicious critique of South Carolina history, the presence of unionism in South Carolina had, with the exception of a handful of noteworthy leaders, eroded away completely. Interestingly enough, Hayne, Simms, and Brooks had all fostered strong nationalist, or unionist, sympathies earlier on in their careers. Their personal transformations are a testament to the broader transformation in sentiment occurring throughout South Carolina. Unionist sympathies died away after coming into direct confrontation with the role South Carolina played in the Union, as it was perceived by other Americans. For the rest of the nation, the United States of America was a country in which South Carolina’s place was becoming more and more

²⁰⁷ As quoted by C. Gregg Singer, *South Carolina in the Confederation* (Philadelphia: Privately Printed, 1941), 121.

tenuous.

Whereas Webster and Sabine had provided specific limitations and parameters for their exclusion of South Carolina from the rest of the nation, Sumner introduced a broad, all-encompassing exclusion of South Carolina, not only from the Union, but from the rest of humanity, civilization, and light. His speech barred *every* South Carolinian from inclusion in a grand American narrative. Old, young, rich, poor, male, female, white and black were all excluded from his conception of worth:

Were the whole history of South Carolina blotted out of existence, from its very beginning down to the day of the last election of the Senator to his present seat on this floor, civilization might lose -- I do not say how little; but surely less than it has already gained by the example of Kansas, in its valiant struggle against oppression, and in the development of a new science of emigration. Already, in Lawrence alone, there are newspapers and schools, including a High School, and throughout this infant Territory there is more mature scholarship far, in proportion to its inhabitants, than in all South Carolina. Ah, sir, I tell the Senator that Kansas, welcomed as a free State, will be a "ministering angel" to the Republic, when South Carolina, in the cloak of darkness which she hugs, "lies howling."²⁰⁸

Sumner did not merely bar South Carolinians from an American narrative of worth, but from civilization in general. This claim resonated throughout the North. Frederick Law Olmstead corroborated Sumner's claim, referring to South Carolinians:

Yet scarce anything has been accomplished by them for the advancement of learning and science, and there have been fewer valuable inventions and discoveries, or designs in art, or literary compositions of a high rank, or anything else, contrived or executed for the good of the whole community, or the world at large (cotton and rice growing excepted), in South Carolina, than in any community of equal numbers and wealth, probably in the world.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁸ *Appendix to the Congressional Globe*, 34 Cong., 1 Sess., 543.

²⁰⁹ Frederick Law Olmsted, *A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States, In the Years 1853-1854, With Remarks on Their Economy* (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1904), 2:138.

And George Templeton Strong described South Carolina as a “preposterous little state...utterly below the city of New York or Boston or Philadelphia in resources, civilization, importance, and anything else.”²¹⁰ If, as Webster and the American Whigs had earlier suggested, America was the pinnacle of civilization, then the declarations of Sumner, Olmstead and Strong were indicative of South Carolina’s separation from America.

Sumner’s “cloak of darkness” remark provided a fitting conclusion to a portrayal commenced by Daniel Webster, who, as he initiated the process leading to South Carolina’s eventual exclusion, forewarned of the day “when our associated and fraternal stripes shall be severed asunder, and when that happy constellation under which we have risen to so much renown, shall be broken up, and seen sinking, star after star, into obscurity and night!”²¹¹ By 1856, in the eyes of Sumner and the nation, that was precisely what South Carolina had done. Its star had fallen into obscurity and night.

* * * * *

The ancient rivalry between Massachusetts and South Carolina became analogous to a rivalry between America and “anti-America.” Massachusetts was a member of the Union with the power to remain identified with the rest of the nation. People from Massachusetts, such as Webster, Sabine, Sumner, Emerson, and others, wielded a greater amount of influence, than their South Carolina contemporaries, in their ability to define America on their own terms. South Carolina’s rivalry with Massachusetts determined that the former would be set outside the parameters of American identity, as it was

²¹⁰ As quoted by Susan-Mary Grant, *North over South*, 68.

²¹¹ *Register of Debates in Congress*, 21 Cong., 1 Sess., 38.

defined by Massachusetts. And Massachusetts's definition of American identity, at least within the context of defining an American identity without South Carolina, increasingly became the standard for the rest of the nation.

In journals, letters, speeches & newspapers, Americans revealed that the perception of South Carolina as un-American was widely accepted throughout the country by the time of the Civil War. Two days after the state's secession, the New York *Courier and Enquirer* declared the people of South Carolina were "no longer our brethren, but a band of Rebels and Traitors."²¹² Another described the unity of sentiment regarding South Carolina: "there is now but one party—one earnest and angry sentiment, ready to break forth at any moment and wipe out the traitors."²¹³ Other, more offensive remarks testified to the efficacy of Sumner's critique of South Carolina. "The white people of South Carolina," observed Union Major George W. Nichols as he traveled through the state, "are among the most degraded specimens of humanity I ever saw—lazy, shiftless; only energy to whine. The higher classes in South Carolina represent the scum, the lower, the dregs of civilization. They are not Americans; they are merely South Carolinians."²¹⁴

Northern attitudes towards South Carolina, contrasted with those regarding the South in general, provide perhaps the best evidence of South Carolina as the American antithesis. Just as Train had called to forgive the other southern states while forgetting South Carolina's existence, numerous northern sentiments indicated that Confederates

²¹² as quoted by Kenneth M. Stampp, *And the War Came: The North and the Secession Crisis, 1860-1861* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1970), 68-69.

²¹³ As quoted by Stampp, *And the War Came*, 74.

²¹⁴ As quoted by James C. Hemphill, "The South and the Negro Vote," in George Harvey, ed., *The North American Review*, vol. 202, no. 1 (July 1915), 215.

were considered their former and fellow countrymen, with the sole exception of South Carolina. Among the most telling accounts were those calling for the nation to allow South Carolina's withdrawal. In a letter to the editor of the *New York Times*, one man describes a meeting of gentlemen, attended by Democrats and former Whigs, where "it was unanimously agreed that it would be much better for this country to let South Carolina go peaceably out of this Union, with, however, the distinct understanding that she *forever stays out*, and never makes an application to be readmitted;... We say, *in the name of common sense*, let her go on her own terms—but *never let her come back*."²¹⁵ "If [South Carolina] will, let her go," wrote the *Chicago Tribune*, "and like a limb lopped from a healthy trunk, wilt and rot where she falls."²¹⁶ Similarly, "if South Carolina could be dealt with singly in this matter," Henry L. Raymond believed, "she would go out of the Union with the unanimous consent of the other States."²¹⁷

Some suggested the government "buy up South Carolina, clear the people all out & stock it anew with good honest men willing & able to work with their own hands."²¹⁸ And others were even so bold as to advocate complete eradication: "I hope we may be able to exterminate the whole breed of South Carolina, she is too overbearing and should be wiped out from the earth."²¹⁹ "If we," advised Charles L. Redmond, "recommend to the slaves of South Carolina to rise in rebellion, it would work greater things than we

²¹⁵ Anonymous, "Why not let South Carolina Secede?," *New York Times*, 13 Nov. 1860, *ProQuest Historical Newspapers*, The New York Times (1851-2004).

²¹⁶ as quoted by Stamp, 22.

²¹⁷ Henry J. Raymond, "The Disunion Question: Third Letter from Mr. Raymond to Hon. W. L. Yancey," *New York Times*, Dec. 13, 1860, *ProQuest Historical Newspapers*, The New York Times (1851-2004).

²¹⁸ As quoted by Stamp, 258.

²¹⁹ As quoted by Charles Royster, *The Destructive War: William Tecumseh Sherman, Stonewall Jackson, and the Americans* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 5.

imagine.”²²⁰ In a war fought to preserve the American union, these quotes reveal that many Americans did not consider South Carolina a part of that union. Regardless of whether their prescription was separation, deportation, or extermination, they all conveyed the conviction that South Carolinians and Americans did not constitute a singular identity.

Reflecting these attitudes, the war on the Confederacy often resembled a war against two distinct enemies: former Americans and South Carolinians. By no means did the Union adopt a uniform policy for the entire Confederacy. As General Sherman’s army approached South Carolina, soldiers forewarned of the disparity in treatment the Carolinians would receive: “we have laid a heavy hand on Georgia, but that is light compared to what South Carolina will catch.”²²¹ Another told a Georgia woman: “You think the people of Georgia are faring badly, and they are, but God pity the people of South Carolina when this army gets there, for we have orders to lay everything in ashes—not to leave a green thing in the State for man or beast....Here our soldiers were held in check...and when we get to South Carolina they will be turned loose to follow their own inclinations.”²²² From Savannah, Orlando Poe wrote his wife: “We are on her borders, ready to carry fire & sword into every part of that state.”²²³

Sherman himself wrote Major General Henry Slocum to remind him of the transition which should follow after crossing the Savannah: “Don’t forget that when you have

²²⁰ as quoted by Stanley Harrold, *The Abolitionists and the South, 1831-1861* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1995), 61.

²²¹ As quoted by Walter Brian Cisco, *Wade Hampton: Confederate Warrior, Conservative Statesman* (Washington, D.C.: Brassey’s, Inc., 2004), 151.

²²² As quoted by Bradley Tyler Johnson, ed., *A Memoir of the Life and Public Service of Joseph E. Johnston* (Baltimore: R. H. Woodward & Company, 1891), 142.

²²³ As quoted by Cisco, 151.

crossed the Savannah River you will be in South Carolina. You need not be so careful there about private property as we have been. The more of it you destroy the better it will be....Now is the time to punish [the people of South Carolina.]”²²⁴ “Boys, this is old South Carolina,” an Ohioan reminded his compeers, “lets give her h-ll.”²²⁵ Another soldier wrote home: “Shermans policy for South Carolina is understood to be destruction as we go.”²²⁶ “It was universally understood,” another claimed, “that the little finger of the army in South Carolina was to be thicker than its loins in Georgia.”²²⁷ And just as these soldiers had forewarned, destruction began immediately after the army entered the state.

General Sherman wrote that the real march of his army did not begin until February 1st, the day his troops crossed into South Carolina.²²⁸ This was the day the armies of the North began their march against the people of South Carolina, against the people whose memory had been erased from the pages of American history by Sabine and Sumner. This was the day they marched against a people whose only legacy was that of treason to the Republic. To Sherman and countless others, this legacy was the root of the war, and the preeminent purpose of their march through the South was to eradicate it. This was the march that would both validate and avenge Charles Sumner. The march through

²²⁴ *Ibid*, 151.

²²⁵ As quoted by Mark Grimsley, *The Hard Hand of War: Union Military Policy Toward Southern Civilians, 1861-1865* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 201.

²²⁶ As quoted by Royster, 344.

²²⁷ Charles D. Kerr, “Address by Colonel Charles D. Kerr,” *Glimpses of the Nation’s Struggle: A Series of Papers Read Before the Minnesota Commandery of the Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States* (St. Paul, MN: St. Paul Book and Stationary Company, 1887), 219.

²²⁸ William Tecumseh Sherman, “Sherman’s Campaigns: Operations in the Carolinas-His Official Report,” *New York Times*, 25 April 1865.

Georgia had been about reclaiming a portion of America in rebellion; the march through South Carolina was about destroying anti-America.

Reaffirming this sentiment, one historian writes, “from the moment the Federals crossed the Savannah River, however, incidents of pillaging and arson accelerated dramatically.”²²⁹ “There was a recklessness by the soldiery in South Carolina,” another described, “that they never exhibited before and a sort of general ‘don’t care’ on the part of the officers.”²³⁰ William Hazen confirmed these declarations, giving his firsthand account of the destruction:

We were not out of sight of Port Royal Ferry when the black columns of smoke began to ascend. Within half a mile of Pocotaligo we halted near a large farm-house while the head of the column was skirmishing. As we waited here, I was requested by a staff-officer to send and burn the house. I did give the order, but quickly withdrew it, and sent my men away. This did not save the house, which was soon in flames. Here began a carnival of destruction that ended with the burning of Columbia....There was scarcely a building far or near on the line of that march that was not burned. Often I have seen this work going on in the presence of the highest officers, with no word of disapproval.²³¹

A reporter traveling with Sherman’s army similarly recorded the differences which occurred on opposite sides of the Savannah: “As for wholesale burnings, pillage, devastation, committed in South Carolina, magnify all I have said of Georgia some fifty fold, and then throw in an occasional murder, ‘just to make an old, hard-fisted cuss come to his senses,’ and you have a pretty good idea of the whole thing.”²³²

²²⁹ Grimsley, 200.

²³⁰ As quoted by Stephen V. Ash, *When the Yankees Came: Conflict and Chaos in the Occupied South, 1861-1865* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 56.

²³¹ William Babcock Hazen, *A Narrative of Military Service* (Boston: Ticknor and Company, 1885), 337.

²³² As quoted by Sarah E. Gardner, *Blood and Irony: Southern White Women’s Narratives of the Civil War, 1861-1937* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 203.

The stark contrast witnessed during the army's transition from Georgia into South Carolina was again seen, in reversed form, as it crossed from South Carolina into North Carolina. On March 7th, Sherman wrote to Kilpatrick, "Deal as moderately and fairly by the North Carolinians as possible and fan the flame of discord already subsisting between them and their proud cousins of South Carolina."²³³ As the Army of the Tennessee marched through the South on behalf of the Union, Sherman's advice to Kilpatrick is noteworthy. If northerners were fighting for the preservation of their fathers' Union, why did Sherman want to "fan the flames of discord" between North and South Carolina? It is probable that Sherman's words indicate a military strategy designed to divide and conquer the states of the Confederacy, but such an explanation cannot account for why Sherman didn't adopt that strategy as his army crossed the borders between other Confederate States. If Sherman's words are placed within the context of differential treatment applied to South Carolinians and other Confederate States, they reflect South Carolina's exclusion from American identity. Sherman cared very much about the preservation of the Union, but in his eyes, and in the eyes of many Americans, South Carolinians were not a part of that Union, at least not in the same sense that North Carolinians and Georgians were. In a war fought between brothers, South Carolinians were merely "proud cousins."

Just as soldiers had been notified as they crossed into South Carolina, announcements were issued when they left it. Joseph T. Glatthaar writes, "Once the army crossed over into North Carolina, officers issued orders to remind the soldiers that

²³³ As quoted by John G. Barrett, *Sherman's March Through the Carolinas* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1956), 120.

North Carolina had been the last state to secede and had a strong Unionist minority. They urged troops to distinguish between the people of the Tarheel State and South Carolina.”²³⁴ It was easy for American troops to make this distinction, and “from the moment of entering North Carolina the whole demeanor of the army changed, and the men yielded with alacrity to the customary restraints of discipline.”²³⁵ For these soldiers, North Carolinians and Georgians were just Americans that had been “led astray.” South Carolinians, on the other hand, were national enemies.

After learning that his newborn nephew would be named after him, an Indiana soldier revealed, in a letter to his sister, the degree to which he believed South Carolinians were his nation’s enemy:

I fear you cannot get him into the service soon enough to help us in this war, but there may be other wars hereafter. Be sure you teach him to despise South Carolinians and there is no danger of his ever fighting on the wrong side.²³⁶

A new American had entered the world, and the best parental advice this Hoosier could provide was “teach him to despise South Carolinians.” He did not feel it necessary that his nephew be taught to despise slavery, nor secession, nor states-rights, nor aristocracy, nor anti-democratic government, nor southern separatism, nor rebellion, nor treason, but South Carolinians, the perceivable enemy of all future wars. South Carolina had become, in the mind of this American, the emblematic antithesis of everything American.

²³⁴ Joseph T. Glatthaar, *The American Civil War: The War in the West, 1863-1865* (Great Britain: Osprey Publishing, 2001), 62.

²³⁵ S. M. Bowman and R. B. Irwin, *Sherman and his Campaigns: a Military Biography* (New York: Charles B. Richardson, 1865), 353.

²³⁶ as quoted by Barrett, 39.

Nor were the distinctions and animosities exhibited toward South Carolina limited to north of the Mason-Dixon. Southerners were often equally virulent when they spoke about South Carolinians. Sally Campbell Preston McDowell, daughter of Virginia Governor James McDowell and ex-wife of Maryland Governor Francis Thomas, responded to the caning of Charles Sumner:

I admit Sumner was insulting; but that was no excuse for the dastardly conduct of the other. However, I am prejudiced. I despise South Carolina,...In fact, it wd be well if all S. Carolina would have a whipping. She is so troublesome and supercilious; so full of airs and swell and bombast; so exacting and so lazy; so presuming and so good-for-nothing; she seems to me like a petted, spoiled, selfish, irritable silly woman—the very most despicable thing I know; unconnected with absolute vice.²³⁷

Sue Morgan Dawson wrote to a friend, complaining of South Carolinians, who “alone believe in the fiction of their law, justice or decency...they are an unprincipled, mongrel, ungrateful race, playing at ‘honor’ and ‘chivalry.’”²³⁸ Others described South Carolina as “a nuisance,” “a pestiferous grumbler,” and a state apt to act in a “frenzy [which] surpasses in folly and wickedness, anything which fancy in her wildest mood has yet been able to conceive.”²³⁹ The Vicksburg *Whig* declared: “Our heart sickens at the rashness of a misguided and demagogue-ridden commonwealth.”²⁴⁰

Over a month before South Carolina’s secession, the Wilmington *Daily Herald* proclaimed: “There are no two adjoining states in the Union whose people have so little

²³⁷ Sally McDowell to John Miller, May 31, 1856, in Thomas E. Buckley, ed., “If You Love that Lady Don’t Marry Her”: *The Courtship Letters of Sally McDowell and John Miller, 1854-1856* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2000), 596.

²³⁸ As quoted by Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *The Shaping of Southern Culture: Honor, Grace, and War, 1760s-1890s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 279.

²³⁹ As quoted by David M. Potter, *The Impending Crisis, 1848-1861* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), 506.

²⁴⁰ As quoted by Donald E. Reynolds, *Editors Make War: Southern Newspapers in the Secession Crisis* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2006), 149.

community of feeling as North and South Carolina.”²⁴¹ The *Herald* was ardently opposed to secession and highly critical of South Carolina, advising its readers not to be “dragged into revolution and anarchy, and all to please South Carolina, who, by her insufferable arrogance, and conceited importance, has been a source of annoyance and disquietude to the whole country, North and South, for the last thirty years.”²⁴² The *Savannah Republican* echoed these sentiments: “Georgia will not become an appendage of this political comet [South Carolina]—which is ever ready to dash into the midst of our glorious constellation of stars and destroy the harmony of their orbits.”²⁴³ The figurative imagery employed by the *Republican* exudes the language of exclusion. As a comet, South Carolina was a threat to, not a part of, the glorious constellation of American stars.

Many southerners agreed with Northern prescriptions for dealing with South Carolina. “We say, let them go,” announced the Charlestown *Virginia Free Press*. “The Union will be rid of some pestiferous grumblers, who, like Lucifer, would have become tired of the golden streets and adornments of Heaven itself.”²⁴⁴ South Carolina, declared the *Virginia Free Press*, no more belonged in the Union than Satan belonged in Heaven. “We look to that unfortunate little State,” declared a Tennessee newspaper, “and exclaim with MacBeth, ‘Out d—d spot.’”²⁴⁵ “You may leave this vessel [the Union], you may go out in the rickety boats of your little state and hoist your miserable *cabbage-leaf* of a

²⁴¹ As quoted by Potter, *The Impending Crisis*, 507n.

²⁴² Charles Edward Cauthen, *South Carolina Goes to War, 1860-1865* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1950, 2005), 30.

²⁴³ as quoted by John Barnwell, *Love of Order: South Carolina's First Secession Crisis* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 79.

²⁴⁴ as quoted by Reynolds, *Editors Make War*, 149.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 149.

Palmetto flag; but depend upon it, men and brethren,” forewarned the Knoxville *Whig*, “you will be dashed to pieces on the rocks.”²⁴⁶

Mary Chesnut described Confederate Virginians as “proud of their heroic dead and living soldiers—but are prepared to say with truth that [they] always preferred to remain in the Union and ready to assure the first comers of Yankees that they have always hated South Carolina seceders and nullifiers as much as the Yankees do.”²⁴⁷ “Travelling through the State,” John Townsend Trowbridge similarly noted, “I found a majority of the people professing to have been at heart Union men all the while. They could never forgive South Carolina for the evil course in which she had led them; and it was very common to her the wish expressed, ‘that South Carolina and Massachusetts were kicked out into the Atlantic together.’”²⁴⁸

South Carolinians were keenly aware of the stigmas and perceptions attached to their state as they interacted with other southerners. William Henry Trescot wrote home, telling of “how they laughed at little South Carolina” in Washington.²⁴⁹ Oscar Lieber, traveling through Alabama in July of 1851, reported to his mother that South Carolina had “not many admirers here. The other day a blacksmith accosted me: ‘Capt. I say, now you’s from Sou Calina is you? Well maybe you can tell me vot she’s a kicking up such a dust about. Seems to me as long as I can remember, an I aint young nether, she’s

²⁴⁶ As quoted by Potter, *The Impending Crisis*, 507n.

²⁴⁷ Mary Boykin Miller Chesnut, Ben Ames Williams, ed., *A Diary From Dixie* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1976), 494.

²⁴⁸ John Townsend Trowbridge, *The South: A Tour of its Battlefields and Ruined Cities, A Journey through the Desolated States, and Talks with the People, 1867* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2006), 234.

²⁴⁹ As quoted by William W. Freehling, *The Road to Disunion, Volume II: Secessionists Triumphant, 1854-1861* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 372.

been a kicking up about some ***damn thing or other.”²⁵⁰ Daniel Wallace of Union District was upset to discover a great deal of “prejudice against South Carolina,” in Mississippi, “on account of the Doctrines of 1832,” and James Hamilton, Jr. reported that “Georgia came to dislike us...more than the people of Massachusetts.”²⁵¹ Likewise, James Henry Hammond congratulated William Gilmore Simms “on having won laurels in Georgia, where every thing Carolinian is received with such bitter prejudice.”²⁵² The northern and southern criticisms of South Carolina, coupled with the awareness of South Carolinians, helped destroy the bonds uniting South Carolina to the union.

Amid the turmoil of the Nullification Crisis, the *United States Telegraph* urged moderation, forewarning, “we entreat you to preserve the Union; but we warn you that this is not to be done by assailing South Carolina.”²⁵³ Richard E. Merrill of New Hampshire had a similar understanding of attacks on South Carolina and the security of the union. In a letter to John C. Calhoun, Merrill wrote:

These treasonable, fanatical, political jugglers, create considerable prejudice against the South...and the despicable faction led on by John P. Hale [Senator-elect from N.H.] take particular pains to abuse South Carolina in an especial manner. The course of your Legislature in regard to the N. Hampshire Resolutions was the most proper rebuke that could be administered. I have the pleasure of living in a town whose inhabitants are of a different character from the above. We honour the home of the Sumpter’s, Marions, Pin[c]kneys & Hayne’s. “The union—it must be preserved,” is our motto.²⁵⁴

²⁵⁰ As quoted by Barnwell, *Love of Order*, 175.

²⁵¹ *Ibid*, 85, 47.

²⁵² James Henry Hammond to William Gilmore Simms, 17 Nov. 1847, in Mary Simms Oliphant, Alfred Taylor Odell, and T.C. Duncan Eaves, eds., *The Letters of William Gilmore* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1954), 2:371n.

²⁵³ As quoted by Sachsman, 32.

²⁵⁴ Richard E. Merrill to John C. Calhoun, 4 Jan. 1847, in Clyde N. Wilson, ed., *The Papers of John C. Calhoun* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), 24:53.

Unfortunately, Webster, Sabine, Sumner and other Americans failed to heed this advice, and for three decades their continual verbal assaults slowly eroded South Carolina's ability to be committed to a union in which it was constantly disparaged.

The slow process by which South Carolinians were excluded had destroyed the sentimental attachments to the union present in every other Confederate state. By 1860, the vast number of South Carolinians had shed any emotional attachments to the Union. Addressing an upcountry audience, William King Easley asked, "What has this union with the Yankees been to us that we should love it above all things else?"²⁵⁵ David G. Harris was even more adamant in his assessment: "As [South Carolina] has declared her independence, I had rather see her blotted out of existence, than to apply for admittance in the union again. Let her stay out if she perishes for it. Let her die rather than so humble herself."²⁵⁶ T. H. Spann echoed this sentiment: "We have been grossly cheated by the North and I would rather that every soul of us would be exterminated than we should be allied to her again."²⁵⁷ These feelings had been slowly brewing in the hearts of many South Carolinians. A decade earlier, John Pendleton Kennedy wrote in his journal, "The present generation of South Carolinians are educated in the most settled hatred of the United States."²⁵⁸

Reporter Sidney Andrews later observed: "In South Carolina there is very little pretense of love for the Union, but everywhere a passionate devotion to the State, and the

²⁵⁵ William King Easley, c. 1860, South Caroliniana Library archives.

²⁵⁶ David G. Harris, *Piedmont Farmer: The Journals of David Golightly Harris, 1855-1870*, ed. Philip N. Racine (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1990), 172.

²⁵⁷ As quoted by William C. Davis, *Look Away!: A History of the Confederate States of America* (New York: The Free Press, 2003), 31.

²⁵⁸ John Pendleton Kennedy, Journal, vol. 7, 1 Aug. 1851, as quoted by Michael O'Brien, ed., *An Evening When Alone: Four Journals of Single Women in the South, 1827-67* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993), 416n.

common sentiment holds that man guilty of treason who prefers the United States to South Carolina.”²⁵⁹ Union General Daniel Sickles reported similar findings, noting: “In South Carolina there is very little pretense of loyalty. I believe I found less than fifty men who admitted any love for the union. I have not seen an American flag raised by a Carolinian. If one floated over a dwelling, or a hotel or a shop, the population would avoid the place as they would a pesthouse filled with lepers.”²⁶⁰

As a result of South Carolina’s exclusion from a national identity, disunion was perceived entirely different in South Carolina than in other parts of the country, and the doctrines of secession and state sovereignty became sacrosanct within the state. South Carolina was the only state at the Confederate Congress to support a constitutional amendment specifically guaranteeing the right of secession.²⁶¹ After the fall of the Confederacy, South Carolinians were willing to admit defeat, but were not willing to concede the validity of secession. The following is an excerpt from an 1866 interview with Alexander P. Ketchum, a Union captain stationed in South Carolina during Reconstruction, in the *Report of the Joint Committee on Reconstruction*:

Question. Do the mass of the people of South Carolina seem to have repudiated, or laid aside, the doctrine of the right of secession?

Answer. No, sir.

Question. They accept the position, though; acknowledge the fact that they are subdued, and that their scheme of secession, for the present, is a failure?

Answer. They acknowledge that fully.

²⁵⁹ Sidney Andrews, *The South Since the War: As Shown by Fourteen Weeks of Travel and Observation in Georgia and the Carolinas* (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1866), 391.

²⁶⁰ As quoted by Mark R. Jones, *Wicked Charleston: The Dark Side of the Holy City* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2005), 102.

²⁶¹ Cauthen, 88.

Question. Do I understand you to say that no instance has come under your observation where a South Carolina secessionist has renounced the doctrine of the rightfulness of secession?

Answer. Not one.²⁶²

This mindset persisted long after the defeat of the Confederacy. Ben Robertson, remembering his grandmother, wrote in 1942:

To justify secession seemed constantly on her mind, an essential that she must explain. It disturbed her incessantly, and she would repeat to us time and again the legal reasons that had made it lawful under the Constitution for us to dissolve the Union. The Union had been a pact, a mutual agreement, and in any court of law a compact under circumstances could be abolished.²⁶³

It was easier for Georgians or Virginians to see secession as unviable because they were considered parts of a totality. For Georgia and Virginia, it was as if the Union was a human body, of which they were the arms. Thus, disunion would be comparable to amputation, painful to the body and ruinous to the appendage. But because of South Carolina's exclusion from a national identity, South Carolina both was and wasn't a part of the body; it would've been more like an accessory. Therefore, disunion in South Carolina's case would've been more like the act of removing a wig. Whereas Georgians and Virginians feared the prospect of disunion, South Carolinians shared no such ambivalence.

* * * * *

Denied inclusion in an American national identity, South Carolinians were forced to supplant American identity with a newly constructed state identity. As early as the nullification crisis, British traveler G. W. Featherstonhaugh noted the emergence of such

²⁶² "Report of the Joint Committee on Reconstruction at the First Session, Thirty-Ninth Congress," (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1866), 235.

²⁶³ Ben Robertson, *Red Hills and Cotton* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1942), 109.

an identity. While attending a dinner party in South Carolina, another guest informed him: “If you ask me, if I am an American, my answer is No, sir, I am a South Carolinian.”²⁶⁴ The development and proliferation of this identity increased during the antebellum period. Hayne, Simms, and Brooks all contributed depth and substance to it, and it persisted throughout the course of the war. When the C.S.S. *Nashville* encountered a mysterious ship in the Georgetown harbor, Lieutenant W. C. Whittle’s inquiry, as to whether its occupants were Federals or Confederates, was met with the reply: “We are South Carolinians.”²⁶⁵ Likewise, upon learning of Robert E. Lee’s surrender at Appomattox, General Martin W. Gary separated himself and his troops from their fellow Confederates. “We,” proclaimed Gary, “are South Carolinians and don’t surrender.”²⁶⁶ Dying on the fields of Virginia, Maxcy Gregg showed little regret as he reflected upon his impending death, considering he “cheerfully gave his life for the independence of South Carolina.”²⁶⁷

Following the defeat of the South, Daniel Huger provided perhaps the most eloquent expression of a South Carolina identity, even as he prepared to rejoin the union:

She is my mother; I have all my life loved what she loved, and hated what she hated; everything she had I made my own, and every act of hers was my act; as I have had but one hope, to live with her, so now I have but one desire, to die on her soil and be laid in her bosom. If I am wrong in everything else, I know I am right in loving South Carolina,--know I am right in believing that, whatever glory the future may bring our reunited country, it can neither brighten nor tarnish the glory of South Carolina.

²⁶⁴ As quoted by Ritchie Devon Watson, “‘The Difference of Race’: Antebellum Race Mythology and the Development of Southern Nationalism,” *The Southern Literary Journal*, vol. 35, no. 1 (Fall 2002), 7.

²⁶⁵ John Baldwin and Ron Powers, *Last Flag Down: The Epic Journey of the Last Confederate Warship* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2007), 43.

²⁶⁶ Edward M. Boykin, *The Falling Flag: Evacuation of Richmond, Retreat and Surrender at Appomattox* (New York: E. J. Hale & Son, 1874), 59-60.

²⁶⁷ As quoted by W. Scott Poole, *South Carolina’s Civil War: A Narrative History* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2005), 109.

She has passed through the agony and the bloody sweat; as we now return her to the Federal Union, let every man do his duty bravely before the world, trustfully before God, remembering each man for himself that he is a South-Carolinian....²⁶⁸

This unique state identity was largely responsible for the enthusiasm of most South Carolinians following their state's secession. Furthermore, this identity shaped and defined South Carolina's role in the coming war.

South Carolina played an unparalleled role in the American Civil War; a role whose exceptionality should not be limited to being the first state to secede, the only state of the Deep South to do so unanimously, and the first to fire the shots of war. Although those three anomalies are noteworthy in their own right, they are merely a few of the numerous idiosyncrasies which defined South Carolina's role in the war. Nor should the act of embracing and celebrating secession be relegated solely to the advocacy of slavery. The development of a unique South Carolina psychology bears at least partial responsibility for the state's oddities. The disparity between South Carolinians and other Confederates was politically, militarily, culturally and diplomatically evident. The state's exclusion from an American identity, and the subsequent emergence of a South Carolina identity, directly influenced and guided every aspect of this disparity.

One might assume that the emergence of a state identity, and an awareness of how other southerners viewed them, might inhibit South Carolina's commitment to the Confederacy. And to some degree, it did. Some South Carolinians expressed a great deal of ambivalence over the formation of a new union. "A consolidation with Georgia and Tennessee," intimated Maxcy Gregg, "I regard only not quite so great an evil as

²⁶⁸ as quoted by Andrews, 52-53.

consolidation with New York and Ohio.”²⁶⁹ Lewis Malone Ayer seconded this sentiment, telling his constituency he “should have as great objection to South Carolina becoming a part of a Southern consolidation of States, as of the consolidation she is presently threatened with.”²⁷⁰ Even during the middle of the war, this mindset persisted. A North Carolinian traveling through the Palmetto State via train overheard a fellow Confederate describing his home state: “I really think North Carolina is the tail end of the Confederacy, and Tennessee is but little behind her—both these States are rotten to the core—neither of them is possessed of any national pride.”²⁷¹ Yet, South Carolina did join the Confederacy, and offered it unwavering support. South Carolinians had not willingly sought exclusion from American identity. It had been forced upon them. Perhaps the majority of South Carolinians cherished the idea of union every bit as much as other Americans. Their commitment to such a union, however, was contingent upon their inclusion.

South Carolina’s role within the Confederate States of America was a stark contrast to its role within the United States. Politically speaking, South Carolina went through something akin to a rebirth after joining the Confederacy. When Charles Edward Cauthen penned the history of South Carolina in the American Civil War, he found that South Carolina was more cooperative with the Confederate Government than the neighboring states of Georgia and North Carolina:

²⁶⁹ as quoted by W. Scott Poole, *Never Surrender: Confederate Memory and Conservatism in the South Carolina Upcountry* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004), 31.

²⁷⁰ As quoted by Manisha Sinha, *The Counterrevolution of Slavery: Politics and Ideology in Antebellum South Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 115.

²⁷¹ As quoted by Frank Moore, ed., *Anecdotes, Poetry, and Incidents of the War: North and South: 1860-1865* (New York, 1866), 399.

Through it all South Carolina on the whole stood loyally and courageously for the Confederate cause....The masses of the people remained firm and determined long after the hope of ultimate victory seemed slim indeed. Probably no state officially cooperated more fully with the Confederate government.²⁷²

It is particularly striking that South Carolina, the state that cooperated least with the Federal Government in the era preceding the war, would be the most cooperative with the Confederate government.

Just as South Carolina's exclusion from American identity had facilitated the universal support for, and celebration of, secession, and just as it had facilitated political cooperation, so too did it enable South Carolinians to carry their war effort to a greater degree than other Confederates. On average, South Carolina reported higher percentages of enlistments, and lower percentages of substitutions, exemptions, and desertions, than other Confederate States. When the Confederacy permitted the hiring of substitutes, 15,000 Virginians, 7,050 Georgians, and 2,040 North Carolinians took advantage of the opportunity to have someone else fight in their stead, whereas only 751 South Carolinians did so. At the time of Sherman's invasion of South Carolina, the state had 5,839 exemptions, "a number small in comparison with other Southern states," despite having the most exemption categories of any Confederate State.²⁷³

Upcountry districts in the state matched the lowcountry districts in recruitment, despite the different demographic makeup of the region and the absence of planter

²⁷² Cauthen, 229.

²⁷³ Walter Edgar, *South Carolina: A History* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), 358-360; Cauthen, 171, 177; Wallace Hettle, *The Peculiar Democracy: Southern Democrats in Peace and Civil War* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001), 97.

dominance.²⁷⁴ South Carolina was also the only Confederate State to raise not a single white regiment for the Union.²⁷⁵ South Carolina led the nation in percentage of casualties, and led the Confederacy by six percentage points, sacrificing 23% of its fighting men, whereas North Carolina—the state with the second highest casualty percentage—only lost 17%.²⁷⁶ Likewise, 84% of South Carolina’s soldiers expressed patriotic sentiments, versus 48% of North Carolina’s.²⁷⁷ South Carolina’s commitment to the war effort was the product of their exclusion from national identity, and their awareness of a South Carolina identity. Long-time unionist leader Benjamin Perry of Greenville wrote that South Carolinians were “all now going to the devil, and I will go with you. Honor and patriotism require me to stand by my State, right or wrong.”²⁷⁸

In addition to being the most loyal to the government, and the most dedicated to the war effort, South Carolinians were also the most fervent in their hatred of the enemy. While conducting a series of interviews after the war, northerners found that “the great masses of the people of South Carolina hate the government of the United States.”²⁷⁹ John Townsend Trowbridge came to a similar conclusion: “I found in South Carolina a more virulent animosity existing in the minds of the common people, against government and the people of the North, than in any other State I visited. Only in South Carolina was

²⁷⁴ Edgar, 358-360; J. Roderick Heller III and Carolynn Ayres Heller, eds., *The Confederacy is on Her Way Up the Spout: Letters to South Carolina, 1861-1864* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), 14-16.

²⁷⁵ Jack Bass and W. Scott Poole, *The Palmetto State: The Making of Modern South Carolina* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2009), 47.

²⁷⁶ Frederic Cople Jaher, *The Urban Establishment: Upper Strata in Boston, New York, Charleston, Chicago, and Los Angeles* (University of Illinois Press, 1982), 399; Donald Cartmell, *The Civil War Book of Lists* (Franklin Lakes, NJ: Career Press, Inc., 2001), 95.

²⁷⁷ James M. McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 101; After noting this disparity, McPherson writes, “in the Union army there was no such regional variation”

²⁷⁸ As quoted by Cauthen, 75.

²⁷⁹ “Report of the Joint Committee on Reconstruction at the First Session, Thirty-Ninth Congress,” (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1866), 218.

I treated with gross personal insults on account of my Northern origin.”²⁸⁰ “There is nothing in all the dark caves of human passion,” observed a reporter for the *London Times*, “so cruel and deadly as the hatred South Carolinians profess for Yankees.”²⁸¹

All of these anomalies and idiosyncrasies, when analyzed together, yield an aggregate conclusion: what this war meant to South Carolinians was entirely different from what it meant to other Confederates. After the close of the war, a Yankee prisoner of war reflected upon the time he spent imprisoned in both Virginia and South Carolina:

Here let me say a somewhat personal word about South Carolina. Wanton as was her conduct, there was an intensity, directness and courage about her action which challenges admiration. The qualities which characterized her as a state, I found in her people. During six months experience as a prisoner of war in the States of Virginia and South Carolina, I had, for a prisoner, rather exceptional opportunities for meeting people of both States. The South Carolinians were like open and avowed foes, who had no fear that kindness to a prisoner would compromise their attitude of rebellion. With the Virginians there was a kind of sneakiness—a bearing half apologetic for the State’s secession, and half timidity for fear any show of magnanimity or kindness would cast doubt upon their disunionism which made them very disagreeable jailors. I came home feeling that the South Carolinians were good enemies.²⁸²

Virginians were included in the antebellum construction of American identity, and were thus forced to grapple with the implications of conflicting identities and allegiances during the war. South Carolina’s exclusion allowed the people of the Palmetto State to remain totally committed to the cause of the Confederacy. Just as northern soldiers could pillage the state of South Carolina and believe they were doing something ultimately

²⁸⁰ as quoted by Trowbridge, 568.

²⁸¹ As quoted by W. Scott Poole, *South Carolina’s Civil War*, 14.

²⁸² W. H. Withington, *Michigan in the Opening of the War: A Paper Read Before Michigan Commandery of the Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States, March 2nd, 1887* (Detroit: Ostler Printing Company, 1887), 4.

noble, South Carolinians could imprison northern soldiers without a guilty conscience. They weren't in a war with their former countrymen, but their ancient enemies.

The use of history, by Webster, Sabine, and Sumner, was the means by which Americans excluded South Carolina from their conception of American identity, and it was the process by which South Carolina became emotionally detached from the Union. By severing South Carolina from American identity through historic vehicles, rather than current actions and behavior, Sumner precluded the opportunity for the conditional inclusion of any South Carolinian. This exclusion helped drive the South Carolina secession movement—not in the sense that South Carolinians seceded as a result of it, but in that they celebrated and embraced secession because of it. Every other southern state resisted the disunionist impulse because it was *their* union. The exclusion of South Carolinians from that union—in perception if not in actuality—allowed them to sever their ties with other states universally and wholeheartedly. At the root of this severance was an acute awareness of their negligible place in the union, forced upon them by Webster, Sabine, and Sumner.

The words of Webster, Sabine and Sumner fueled the extremism of Hayne, Simms and Brooks. If these men were reacting to the attacks upon South Carolina's history, isn't it probable that those attacks induced a similar reaction in other South Carolinians? No other State behaved like South Carolina in the decades leading up to the Civil War, and no other State was nationally criticized like South Carolina. Herein lies the impetus for the Problem of South Carolina. By 1856, no South Carolinian was exempt from the condemnation of Americans like Charles Sumner. South Carolina's awareness of, and

sensitivity to, this condemnation cannot be underestimated. One week before South Carolinians dissolved their bonds with the United States of America, the *Yorkville Enquirer* included a poem, entitled “From S. Carolina to the North,” previously printed in the Charleston *Mercury*:

Too long for the sake of the faith I once plighted,
Have I borne to be cruelly slandered and slighted—
Till patient endurance, o’er burthened{ sic } at last,
All tender regrets from my memory cast—
Away rolled the mist of affectionate blindness,
In the balance of truth I weighed your unkindness,
No touching remembrance of sires before us,
Who lifted together their voices in chorus,
In the holiest hymn independence e’er heard,
When the chords of their souls by her presence were stirred,
Can counterpoise wrongs and oppressions, for years
Inflicted on Sovereign States, your compeers.
Every son on the soil or snowy-fleece born,
Feels for you and your minions, ineffable scorn.²⁸³

For decades South Carolinians had been slandered and slighted by their fellow Americans, and by 1860, there was no history powerful enough to keep them in the Union. As South Carolinians awaited the disunion of other southern states in the days immediately following their own secession, the *Keowee Courier* optimistically declared: “In a few days the majority, if not all of the Southern States, will be out of the Union, and we will then form a Southern Confederacy—not such a Confederacy as we have just left, but a Confederacy of States and people who love, cherish and respect each other.”²⁸⁴

²⁸³ *Yorkville Enquirer*, 13 December 1861.

²⁸⁴ *Keowee Courier*, 5 January 1861.

CONCLUSION

*“...the nation survives as a unit because people continue to feel a psychological sense of unity.”*²⁸⁵

-David M. Potter

Susan-Mary Grant, analyzing the development of northern nationalism and its influence on American identity, detailed how northerners excluded the South from their construction of American nationality. “National construction requires some kind of negative reference point against which to define the nation,” writes Grant, “. . .the South was the obvious—and perhaps the only—negative reference point for northerners to turn to.”²⁸⁶ As Grant adeptly shows, South Carolina was not alone in its exclusion from an American national narrative. However, South Carolina was the paradigm for this process. South Carolina was excluded earlier, more thoroughly, more explicitly and more completely than the rest of the South. Furthermore, South Carolina was excluded by both the North and the South. Between 1829 and 1856, South Carolina underwent a very different experience from that of other Southern States. This disparity was critical to the development of a distinct South Carolina psychology.

By 1860, Daniel Webster had excluded South Carolina’s doctrine of State interposition, Lorenzo Sabine had excluded South Carolina’s history, and Charles Sumner had excluded South Carolina, in its entirety, from an American national narrative. South Carolina’s remarkable role during this period of American history merits a remarkable explanation. If South Carolinians were displaying aberrant, extraordinary behavior, the stimulus for such behavior would have been distinctly

²⁸⁵ Potter, “The Historians Use of Nationalism and Vice Versa,” 928.

²⁸⁶ Susan-Mary Grant, *North Over South: Northern Nationalism and American Identity in the Antebellum Era* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2000), 154.

applicable to South Carolinians and South Carolinians alone. Exclusion from American history became distinctly applicable to South Carolinians during the decades preceding the Civil War. And just as this exclusion invoked radical behavior from Robert Young Hane, William Gilmore Simms, and Preston Smith Brooks, it evoked similar behavior from the rest of white South Carolina.

Norman W. Spaulding summarizes the implications of such exclusion:

Stable and coherent national narratives do not simply provide emotional legitimacy. In modern liberal democracies, where sovereign power operates on the principles of consent, public accountability, and constitutional restraint, national narratives also confer political legitimacy—they define the discursive space for the negotiation and justification of political power by regulating the collective memory of a nation’s fundamental commitments.²⁸⁷

South Carolina’s exclusion from the American national narrative rendered its people politically illegitimate and, thus, unable to influence government policy. Every position they supported was impotent because their support made it unviable and un-American. Like all Americans, South Carolinians had inherited the right to representative self-government. They were entitled to a voice, a vote, and a place in the democratic process. When they were excluded from the national narrative, they were denied their rights. They became powerless to influence their destiny within the union. This is what drove their extremism. This is what engendered “the problem of South Carolina.” Other southerners could protest and protect their interests within the union, while South Carolina was forced to seek redress outside of it. Secession was their only option.

²⁸⁷ Norman W. Spaulding, “Constitution as Countermonument: Federalism, Reconstruction, and the Problem of Collective Memory,” *The Columbia Law Review*, vol. 103, no. 8 (Dec., 2003), 1998, in JSTOR [database online]; accessed Dec. 4, 2007.

More importantly, recognizing South Carolina's exclusion from a unifying national narrative alters the history of South Carolina secession and the American Civil War. The argument for northern opposition to secession was predicated upon the basic premises of democracy and the inclusion of South Carolinians in an aggregate American whole. "Unless a minority really is identified with and part of such a totality, the decisions of the majority lack any democratic sanction. Hence the question whether the controlling group and the dissident group form a real, verifiable totality is vital and decisive."²⁸⁸ According to Daniel Webster and Abraham Lincoln's conception of the Union and American nationality, nullification and secession were only unviable so long as the seceding minority was considered an essential part of an American whole. By 1860, South Carolina was not.

²⁸⁸ Potter, "The Historian's Use of Nationalism and Vice Versa," 929.

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