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Tara Revisited: Women, War, & the Plantation Legend

Catherine Clinton

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Cutting through romantic myth, this captivating volume combines period photographs and illustrations with new documentary sources to tell the real story of southern women during the Civil War.

Drawing from a wealth of poignant letters, diaries, slave narratives, and other accounts, Catherine Clinton provides a vivid social and cultural history of the diverse communities of Southern women during the Civil War: the heroic African-American women who struggled for freedom, the tireless nurses who faced gruesome duties, the intriguing handful who donned uniforms, and those brave women who spied and even died for the Confederacy.

Photographs, drawings, prints, and other period illustrations bring this buried chapter of Civil War history to life, taking the reader from the cotton fields to the hearthsides, from shrapnel-riddled mansions to slave cabins. Clinton places these women within the context of war, illuminating both legendary and anonymous women along the way.

Tracing oral traditions and Southern literature from Reconstruction through our era, the author demonstrates how a deadly mix of sentiment and fabrication perpetuates tales of idyllic plantations inhabited by benevolent masters and contented slaves. The book concludes with Clinton's perceptive and often witty discussion of how, over the years, we continue to embrace mythic figures like Scarlett and Mammy in aspects of popular culture ranging from Hollywood epics to pancake syrup.

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