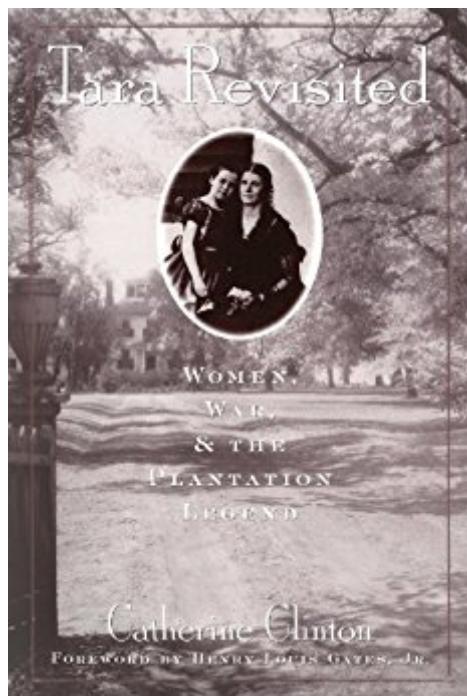


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Tara Revisited: Women, War, & The Plantation Legend



Synopsis

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.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

There was a land of Cavaliers and Cotton fields called the Old South | here in this pretty world Gallantry took its last bow. Here was the last ever to be seen of Knights and their Ladies Fair, of Master and of Slave . . . Look for it only in books for it is no more than a dream remembered . . . A Civilization gone with the wind . . . The preceding is the title card screen prologue to a 1939 epic film that was so tightly woven into the fabric of popular culture that no American of my generation, or the two generations that preceded it, could be unfamiliar with it. Its musical score was as imprinted upon our DNA as were any number of snippets of dialog, such as the frightened slave Prissy screeching "De Yankees is comin!," the antihero Rhett Butler uttering the scornful retort, "Frankly, my dear, I don't give a damn," and the manipulative vixen Scarlett herself, in the final scene, voicing an irrepressible optimism with "Tara! Home. I'll go home . . . After all . . . tomorrow is another day." Tara. That was the storybook plantation home of Scarlett O'Hara, the locus for the romantic legend in the novel by Margaret Mitchell and its movie adaptation, that title card writ large in an imaginary dimension where gallant giants walked the earth and dutiful slaves like Mammy and Prissy lived in terror of invading Yankees instead of in gleeful anticipation of fleeing to freedom in their lines. And much more than a classic movie, *Gone with the Wind* served as the most successful paean to the myth of the "Lost Cause" since *Birth of a Nation*, with less malevolence and a much larger and more enduring audience.

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