



# HOW THE DEAD KEPT LIVING



Mental Illness from the Battlefield to the Homefront in the American Civil War

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# THE HORRORS AND TRAUMAS OF THE CIVIL WAR



- At the end of the American Civil War about 620,000 lives were lost.
- Mass bloodshed= A change in Men and Women's Identity and their psyche.
- Men's Identity Shift: harrowing conditions, mass violence, disease, killing, and being surrounded by death
- Women's Identity Shift: anxiety of loved ones never returning, starvation, loss of homes, newly acquired independence.
- Civil War Conditions= Symptoms of psychological trauma as evidenced through letters and diaries.

# IDENTITY IN FLUX: SOLDIERS



- Killing and Mass Violence: Disassociating and Numbness
- Suicide → Case Study: John Roland
- Key Words/Indicators of symptoms of Mental Illness: combat fatigue, soldier's heart, heart irritability, nostalgia, and in some cases acute mania. Even less specific terms for their feelings were used such as, "...phrases such as 'the blues,' 'lonesome,' 'disheartened,' 'downhearted,' 'discouraged,' 'demoralized,' 'nervous,'..."



# CASE STUDY: OLIVER CASWELL KING

- Born: August 4<sup>th</sup>, 1841 in Virginia
- Parents: Leander Montgomery King and Penelope Louise Massengil King
- Family moved to Tennessee when Oliver was at a very young age
- Education: College Level
- Social: Falls in love with Katherine Rebecca Rutledge (King)
- Joins Confederate Army on June 6<sup>th</sup>, 1861 as a private under Captain A.L. Gammon's company, 19<sup>th</sup> Tn. Infantry
- In June 1864, under Col. James Carter at the Battle of Piedmont, Oliver is life-threateningly injured and is taken prisoner. He lives, but walks with a cane the rest of his life.



# IDENTITY IN FLUX: WOMEN



- Line Between Battlefield and Homefront blurred, particularly in the South.
- Day to Day: Fear of destruction of property, starvation, work outside the domestic sphere different gender role expectations... (Emma Laconte, Case Study)
- Identity in Flux → Head of household/business+ primary decision maker+ protector + provider for family= self-hatred, anxiety, doubt, and grief of death of who they were.
- Key Words/ Indicator of symptoms of Mental Illness: Words such as "blues", "painful", "suffering", "speechless agony", "anger", "torture", "anxieties", "poor heart", "sorrow", "misery", "forlorn", "resigned", "unprotected", "afraid", "distressed", "miserable", "unbearable," and "powerless"



# CASE STUDY: RACHEL CARTER CRAIGHEAD

- Born: 1837 in Nashville
- Parents: Daniel F. Carter and Mary J. Buntin Carter
- Spouse: Marries Thomas D. Craighead in 1859
- Journals her experience living in a Union occupied Nashville.
- Death of her Brother, John.
- Many arrests of her father.
- Evident symptoms of continues depression.
- "What a wilderness will life be these long, long dreary days, to us and what is there beyond. Nothing but desolation. Oh! They have killed my only Brother. Our dear soldier boy. I feel like I must die too."

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