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### On the move again

*Tracking the 'Exploits, Adventures, and Travels of  
Madame Loreta Janeta Velazquez'*

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**Abstract** The 1876 Civil War narrative, *The Woman in Battle*, narrates the chaotic life and times of Loreta Janeta Velazquez, a Cuban-born, cross-dressing Confederate sympathizer, soldier, and spy. This essay argues that the Velazquez narrative is a restless text: one that moves dexterously and recurrently across lines of nation and region and remaps the American Civil War within a global system of immigration, foreign intervention, transnational capital, and competing nationalisms. Velazquez as narrator has a keen eye for the international aspects and implications of the war. Indeed, her narrative recapitulates and her rhetoric underscores internationalism, forcing readers to acknowledge the ways this bloody and harrowing conflict exceeded the provincial limits and logics of 'North versus South'. In all, Velazquez's awareness of a world outside of the United and Confederate States helps to disrupt the insularity of Civil War narrative convention and to tell the belated story of a Confederacy in and of the world.

**Keywords** American Civil War • Confederate States of America • internationalism • *The Woman in Battle* (1876) • Loreta Janeta Velazquez

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I wished that I was a man, such a man as Columbus or Captain Cook, and could discover new worlds, or explore unknown regions of the earth. (Loreta Janeta Velazquez)

In 1876, the Philadelphia publisher H.W. Kelley produced a broadside advertisement for a new Civil War narrative, *The Woman in Battle: A Narrative of the Exploits, Adventures, and Travels of Madame Loreta Janeta Velazquez*. The broadside claimed with seeming hyperbole that *The Woman in Battle*

charts a 'career of adventure which has never been paralleled on this continent'.<sup>1</sup> Yet, after reading the book, subscribers might have felt that the broadside undersold Velazquez's dizzying adventures, which were indeed unparalleled, and by no means limited to 'this continent'.

For readers not familiar with Velazquez's pulpy, 600-plus-page book, here is a brief précis: *The Woman in Battle* narrates the chaotic life and times of a Cuban-born, cross-dressing Confederate sympathizer, soldier, and spy. Born in Havana in 1842 to a wealthy Spanish official and his French-American wife, Loreta Janeta Velazquez had a peripatetic childhood in St. Lucia, Mexico, Texas, and New Orleans. At 14, Velazquez eloped with an unidentified US Army officer and moved to Kansas. With the onset of the American Civil War, Velazquez persuaded (or compelled) her not-long-for-this-world first husband to renounce his commission and fight for the Confederate States instead. Soon after, Velazquez, whose childhood dream had been 'to see some real warfare, to engage in real battles, to do some real fighting' (*WB* 95), 'unsex[ed]' herself, donning men's clothing in order to fight for the 'cause of Southern independence' (*WB* 53).

Passing as Lieutenant Harry T. Buford, Velazquez recruited a company of 236 men, fought in the battles of First Bull Run, Fort Donelson, and Shiloh, and proved to be quite the 'ladies' man' (*WB* 288).<sup>2</sup> After being wounded and having had her gender revealed numerous times, Velazquez 'resume[d] the garments of [her own] sex' (*WB* 292) and worked as a spy, blockade-runner, and secret service agent. Most impressively, late in the Civil War Velazquez infiltrated Lafayette C. Baker's shadowy US Secret Service as a double agent. After the defeat of the Confederacy, Velazquez fled the newly re-United States, traveled extensively, married two more times, and became involved with a Venezuelan emigration plan for Confederates and a number of money-making schemes in the western United States.

In all, Velazquez's 'adventuresome career' (*WB* 606) took her through nearly every state in the United and Confederate States of America and to Canada, England, France, Germany, Poland, Mexico, Cuba, St. Lucia, Puerto Rico, Venezuela, Demerara, Trinidad, Barbados and St. Thomas. Along the way, Velazquez met dozens of Civil War luminaries, including Presidents Davis and Lincoln, and assumed a daunting number of disguises and personae. In addition to Harry T. Buford, Velazquez passed as a Spanish officer, a white Northern woman, a Canadian woman, an English woman, a French Creole woman, and a Spanish woman. Or so *The Woman in Battle* claims. Not surprisingly, the authenticity of Velazquez's spectacular narrative has been in question since the moment of its publication in Richmond, Virginia, and Hartford, Connecticut, in 1876.<sup>3</sup> While recent scholarship has uncovered documentary evidence that substantiates several of Velazquez's narrative claims and personae, it seems unlikely that the authenticity of *The Woman in Battle* will ever be fully determined.<sup>4</sup> In the absence of full authentication, Velazquez's most recent editor, Jesse Alemán, concludes judiciously that 'Velazquez's very existence, as with the narrative attributed to her, rests somewhere in between history and story, where even a seemingly inauthentic

author can nonetheless produce an authentic cultural text that embodies and enacts the prevailing beliefs and anxieties of its historical context' (Alemán, 2003: xix).<sup>5</sup>

This essay considers an under-studied aspect of both the Velazquez narrative and its historical context. I argue that *The Woman in Battle* elegantly 'embodies and enacts' the international dimensions of the American Civil War. *The Woman in Battle* is a restless text, one that moves dexterously and recurrently across lines of nation and region. As Velazquez travels from state to state, nation to nation, and continent to continent, her narrative effectively remaps the American Civil War within a global system of immigration, foreign intervention, transnational capital, transatlantic slavery, and competing nationalisms. In *The Woman in Battle* the Civil War is played out not only on the battlefields of Shiloh and Manassas but also in a series of unexpected contexts: Europe, South America, and the Caribbean. Perhaps because of her cosmopolitan background, Velazquez as narrator has a particularly keen eye for the international aspects and implications of the war. Indeed, her narrative recapitulates and her rhetoric underscores such internationalism, forcing readers to acknowledge the ways that this bloody and harrowing conflict exceeded the provincial limits and logics of 'North versus South'. In all, Velazquez's awareness of a world outside of the United and Confederate States helps to disrupt the insularity of Civil War narrative convention. Moreover, because the narrative sets up a loose representative relationship between the Confederacy and its restless 'Woman in Battle', Velazquez's 'Exploits, Adventures, and Travels' also become, to some degree, those of the Confederate States. Thus *The Woman in Battle* tells the belated story of a Confederacy in and of the world.<sup>6</sup>

## The urge for going, the wings to go

Before moving to consider the ways the narrative frames the internationalism of the American Civil War, we would do well to understand Velazquez's decision to devote herself to the Confederacy – a decision that would literally take her around the world. Although the steadfastness of Velazquez's commitment to the Confederate 'cause' is never in doubt, the motivation behind that commitment is surprising. Velazquez states again and again that she was moved to fight for the Confederacy because she desired fame and excitement; more to the point, she wanted earnestly to become part of an unbroken and cosmopolitan chain of women in battle. The narrative opens with a breathless and learned history of 'the woman in battle': Deborah, Semiramis, Boadicea, Bona Lombardi (the 'Italian peasant girl'), Catalina de Eranso (the Spanish 'nun-lieutenant'), Molly Pitcher, Agostina Domenech (the 'maid of Saragossa'), and Apollonia Jagiello (*WB* 33–6).

As she compasses the globe in search of women in battle – the Middle East, Africa, England, Italy, Spain, the United States, Hungary, Poland, and France – Velazquez reserves her strongest praise for 'the greatest and noblest of them all':

From my early childhood Joan of Arc was my favorite heroine; and many a time has my soul burned with an overwhelming desire to emulate her deeds of valor, and to make for myself a name which, like hers, would be enrolled in letters of gold among the women who had the courage to fight like men – ay, better than most men – for a great cause, for friends, and for father-land. (*WB* 37)<sup>7</sup>

Joan of Arc is a recurring presence in Velazquez's lengthy narrative. Yet her veneration of the Maid of Orleans is idiosyncratic; Velazquez emulates the French heroine in order that *her* name can also be 'enrolled in letters of gold'. As Elizabeth Young notes, Velazquez 'admires Joan of Arc for her fame, not her patriotism' (Young, 1999: 162). Refreshingly, Velazquez pulls no punches; she states flatly, 'my heart was fixed on achieving fame, and of accomplishing even more than the great heroines of history had been able to do' (*WB* 62). This frank declaration renders immediately intelligible why Velazquez wants to fight in a war, but it raises the questions, why *this* war, and why fight for the Confederacy?

Unlike nearly every woman-in-battle before her, Velazquez's cause involves a community she cannot claim as her own. Velazquez is, after all, a southern sympathizer, not a Southerner *per se*; she is careful throughout the text to refer to Southerners as 'my *adopted* country people' (*WB* 6; emphasis mine). Without a default patriotic *raison d'être* – 'I am fighting for my land and my people' – Velazquez's relationship to the Confederate cause remains obscure, especially given her Cuban (or Spanish colonial) background and transient childhood. To this end, one of the most peculiar aspects of Velazquez's narrative is the absence of any discussion of states rights, 'northern despotism', slavery, cultural difference, 'Old South' gentility – the standard reasons offered by Southerners and southern sympathizers to justify their support of the Confederacy. Although Velazquez deploys the phrase the 'cause of Southern independence' repeatedly (e.g. *WB* 70, 95, 127, 159, 161, 177, 218), she does not account for why such independence is necessary or advantageous. Velazquez's reiteration of the rhetoric of cause without a concomitant discussion of its specific merits is conspicuous, especially given her tenuous connection to the southern states.<sup>8</sup> Instead, Velazquez admits, in starkly mercenary terms, that the American Civil War offers her 'an opportunity' to 'carry-out my long-cherished ideas' (*WB* 37). Those ideas involve celebrity rather than patriotism, political ideology, or sense of duty. Given this bald confession, it seems fair to conclude that the Civil War was a convenient and timely occasion for Velazquez to fulfill her dream, among others, to engage in the business of war. And yet, motivation aside, Velazquez did in fact 'see the thing through' with remarkable dedication and initiative, and in the face of a series of major obstacles (*WB* 37).<sup>9</sup>

Velazquez's decision to fight in the American Civil War was complicated by the fact that she did not have an officer's commission, and 'had no fancy' to lead the life of a private soldier (*WB* 182). (The Confederate States of America did not, as a matter of course, give commissions to foreign-born women.) As a result, almost all of Velazquez's actions during the war were 'undertaken entirely on [her] own account, without authority from anybody' (*WB* 139).

This afforded Velazquez (and Buford) a great deal of autonomy and frustration. The lack of an official commission meant that Velazquez could go where she pleased, but it also meant that she could not count on steady employment as either a soldier or a spy. Velazquez notes, '[b]y entering the army as an independent, I secured a freedom of action and opportunities for participating in a great variety of adventures that I otherwise would not have had, but I also cut myself off from opportunities of regular promotion' (*WB* 346). As a result, Velazquez's 'independence' forced her into itinerancy throughout the war. Indeed, had she been able to secure a long-term, official commission as either a soldier or a spy, it seems unlikely that *The Woman in Battle* would have been as restless or international a text.<sup>10</sup>

In any case, Velazquez seemed well-suited to an 'independent' life, one in which she did not have to 'depen[d] upon the authority of another' (*OED*). Logistically, her ability to come and go as she pleased proved essential because camp life, with its repetitive drilling and long periods of boredom, was maddening for 'Lieutenant Harry T. Buford'. As Velazquez confesses, 'It was an absolute necessity for me to be in motion, to be doing something, and the slow and inconclusive progress of the military movements annoyed me beyond expression' (*WB* 126). Though she 'determined to be as patient as [her] impatient disposition would let [her]'<sup>11</sup> (*WB* 147), Velazquez nonetheless 'chafed under the *ennui* of the camp, and felt irresistibly impelled to be moving about and doing something' (*WB* 129).

Yet there is more at stake in Velazquez's 'independence' than mere freedom of movement. Throughout the narrative Velazquez celebrates causes of independence, both personal and political. Her championing of Southern, Cuban, and Polish independence can be read as an index of her steadfast belief in the virtues of self-government – in every sense of that phrase. As an independent, Velazquez stayed in constant motion, flitting from place to place, company to company, and intrigue to intrigue with alarming frequency. That motion allowed her to witness the American Civil War played out on an international stage. Moreover, through such motion Velazquez becomes a figure for an independent and eventually cosmopolitan Confederacy. Against constructions of the South as provincial backwater, Velazquez's movements suggest a worldly Confederacy, one with international connections and imperial aspirations.<sup>11</sup>

## The destinies of continents

Throughout *The Woman in Battle* Velazquez seems to have a preternatural awareness of the global importance of the events that are unfolding around her. Midway through the narrative she discusses the 'irresistible fascination in being an active participant in the great events upon which the destinies of a continent were hanging' (*WB* 318).<sup>12</sup> Although she confesses that her fascination is a function of her desire to be 'immortalized', her sense that the

American Civil War was a conflict that had implications for the whole *continent*, not just the United and Confederate States of America, testifies to Velazquez's wide-angle perspective on this so-called 'war between brothers'. Such a perspective is unusual in the popular literature of the war, and it has gone all but unnoticed in the small body of scholarship that treats the Velazquez narrative.

In truth, the American Civil War involved the destinies of several continents, a fact that *The Woman in Battle* underscores through its incessant movements north, south, east, and west. For instance, the possibility of foreign intervention is a recurrent concern. Early in the war, Lieutenant Buford is asked his opinion on foreign intervention: 'This was something I had never given even a thought to; but I answered very boldly, and in a style that I thought would be appreciated by my auditors, "We don't want any foreign help in a war like this. I reckon we can manage to do our own fighting"' (*WB* 67–8). Buford's performative response gains the approbation of his audience, but the question haunts Velazquez for the remainder of the narrative.

France and England's potential involvement in the American Civil War was a source of international prognostication, debate, and anxiety during the war years. As Confederate historian Emory Thomas notes, 'if Europe intervened, the distribution of world power would be at stake' (Thomas, 1979: 170). The so-called 'American question' – whether or not to recognize the nascent Confederate nation – proved particularly precarious for England, whose largest industry in 1860 was based on cotton. While both countries could 'imagine benefits' to a 'permanently disunited States', both worried about being drawn into an international war (Thomas, 1979: 170). As a result, Union and Confederate agents abroad worked tirelessly for their respective national causes, laboring to win official recognition from Europe in general and from France and England in particular.<sup>13</sup>

Perhaps because in the end France and England stayed out of the war, few Civil War battle narratives spill much ink over the issue of foreign intervention. Relegated to the realm of the counterfactual, the promise of France and England's involvement in the war exists only as a spectral presence in most Civil War narratives.<sup>14</sup> Yet Velazquez is constantly thinking about the 'Old World' and the ways it could aid and abet the 'Old South' – this despite the fact that she is composing her narrative in 1876, more than a decade after the Confederacy's diplomatic efforts failed. For instance, after the fall of New Orleans, Velazquez finds herself trapped in a Federal-occupied city and imprisoned under suspicion of spying for the Confederacy. With no way to flee the city, and desperate to continue her espionage, Velazquez uses a set of papers she had bought from a British woman sympathetic to the Confederacy. The ruse of 'invoking the protection of some foreign power' works wonders (*WB* 240). Armed with her British papers, Velazquez claims the 'protection of the British flag' and enlists the assistance of acting British Consul George Coppel. Much to the chagrin of General Benjamin Franklin ('Beast') Butler, she successfully passes as an Englishwoman, escaping both prison and the city of New Orleans (*WB* 262).

As she leaves prison, Velazquez trades barbs with several Union troops who brag about 'how they were going to thrash Johnny Bull' (*WB* 264). Characteristically, Velazquez refuses to hold her tongue: 'I could not resist the temptation of turning to Mr. Coppell, who must also have heard the remark and saying, "That fellow must be crazy. He and his friends had better wipe out secession first, before they talk about whipping Johnny Bull"' (*WB* 264). This pointed exchange reveals the fault-lines in US–British relations during the period, reminding readers that the 'war between the states' could easily have extended beyond North America. Moreover, Velazquez's British cross-dressing escapade as a whole insinuates a cultural kinship between the Confederacy and England. This passage suggests that, with little effort, the Confederate 'Woman in Battle' can become 'Johnny Bull'.

As the war progresses, and as the Confederate future begins to look bleak, the Velazquez narrative represents growing impatience with the noncommittal British and French governments. Velazquez recalls

Great expectations were also built upon foreign intervention, which every one felt had been delayed longer than there was any just reason for, but which it was thought could not but take place shortly. Every little while exciting rumors were set afloat, no one knew how or by whom, that either France or England had recognized the Confederacy, and many bitter disappointments were caused when their falsity was proved. (*WB* 342)

As desperate Confederates found fewer and fewer bellwethers of foreign intervention, impatience turned to resentment and bitterness. Late in the war Velazquez herself consented to take part in a complicated counterfeiting and securities fraud that had as its victims 'Britishers', whom Velazquez and her co-conspirators considered 'fair game' (*WB* 474). Velazquez seethes, 'we regarded their conduct as treacherous to both parties in the great contest, and thought that they might as well be made to pay some of the expenses of conducting it. From first to last the British government had deluded the people of the Confederacy with false hopes of recognition and interference' (*WB* 474). (Apparently the irony of a double agent using the rhetoric of delusion is lost on Velazquez.) This withering assessment of the British government is remarkable if only for its focus on transnational capital. Taking advantage of 'gross immoralities' in the US Treasury, Velazquez's complicated scheme involved exchanging counterfeit Confederate and Union securities and currency for British securities and gold, which were then converted into US greenbacks (*WB* 477). The decision to 'go for Johnny Bull's pocket' (*WB* 475) meant flooding the international market with bogus notes. Thus, Velazquez's scheme entangled countries and economies outside those of North America, a fact that suggests the range of contexts in which the American Civil War signified.

As one of the chief architects of the scheme, Velazquez had to follow the trail of those bogus notes. In the final weeks of the war, she traveled to London and Paris to oversee the execution of her swindle. Indeed, Velazquez learned while returning to New York on a British steamer that Lee had surrendered

to Grant. Velazquez spends her first postwar hours on Wall Street trying to settle her transatlantic accounts amid a chaotic mass of agitated bankers and brokers. What she witnesses on Wall Street is, to her mind, unprecedented: 'It was a spectacle to be remembered; nothing that I had ever beheld – and I had certainly participated in many exciting scenes – at all resembled it' (*WB* 506). Given the hundreds of pages of spectacle that precede this sentence, this claim is startling. Velazquez continues, 'some momentous event had occurred which had seriously affected innumerable important financial operations, and that in a moment great fortunes had been lost and won' (*WB* 506). The Velazquez narrative captures with remarkable clarity the tumult and uncertainty that attended the conclusion of the American Civil War. Yet it does so by focusing on an unexpected topic: the postwar fate of international financial markets, here embodied by Wall Street, an emerging economic hub. In the final days of the war, Loreta Janeta Velazquez is the woman in financial, not martial, battle.

Britain and France, of course, are not the only nations involved in these markets and intrigues. Canada and several Latin American and Caribbean countries play important roles in the Velazquez narrative as well. As a result, *The Woman in Battle* becomes something of a hemispheric text, one that locates the American Civil War on a map that extends well beyond both the Tropic of Cancer and the 45th parallel north. For instance, in the summer of 1864 Velazquez became involved with a group of Confederates in Canada who were planning what came to be called the 'Lake Erie Conspiracy'. Until 1867, Canada comprised a loose set of British colonies, not yet a federated nation. Thus, as a collection of British North-American colonies, Canada was officially neutral in the war. Yet despite close economic and cultural ties with the North and strong anti-slavery sentiment in the colonies, Confederates found Canadians who were sympathetic to the cause of 'Southern independence' – and especially to the possibility of having a significantly smaller and diminished United States as its neighbor to the south.<sup>15</sup>

It is in this vexed political context that Velazquez claims to have made a bold run to Canada in 1864. Passing once again as an Englishwoman, but this time employing an Irish brogue, she smuggled correspondence, packages, and \$82,000 in US currency (*WB* 413–15). The monies and documents Velazquez carried were to be used for an ambitious raid on Johnson's Island, a large prison camp on Lake Erie near Sandusky, Ohio. Once freed, the Confederate prisoners planned to join with southern sympathizers, incite Native Americans to hostility, and begin a border war with the United States. The conspirators hoped that such a conflict would pull Union troops away from the southern front and cause sufficient panic in England to draw that nation into the war at last. As Velazquez notes, '[w]e also placed great reliance on the effects of the panic which, it was hoped, would be created, and also on British intervention, which it was expected would be brought about by a border war, in which it would be impossible to prevent trespass upon British territory' (*WB* 441; see Mayers, 2003: 79–89).

Needless to say, none of this came to pass. A Confederate turned traitor and revealed the details of the plot to Union troops days before the raid; the US Gunboat *Michigan* was waiting for the conspirators in Sandusky Bay, and the mission was aborted. In any case, Velazquez's narration of these riveting events highlights again the fragility of US–British relations during the war. Moreover, it reveals the political and imaginative importance of the US–Canadian border – one of the lesser-known 'fronts' in Civil War lore. Not least, this section of the *Woman in Battle* invites counterfactual questions. What if a border war had broken out? Would the American Civil War have escalated into a world war? As Velazquez notes, with no small amount of pride, the excitement generated by the failed raid suggests just 'how great would have been the panic that the successful execution of the scheme would have caused' (*WB* 443).

After the unsuccessful raid on Johnson's Island, a furious Velazquez turned her full attention to blockade-running, an activity she had engaged in periodically throughout the war. Although her discussion of blockade-running is sparse, it too reveals the centrality of transnational capital and international markets to the progress of the American Civil War. By her own account, Velazquez's pithy description of blockade-running constitutes a 'secret history of the war', in which bodies, goods, and money snaked their way across borders of region, nation, and continent, as well as lines of allegiance and ideology (*WB* 459). The blockade-running that Velazquez describes finds commodities moving variously among Lewes (Delaware), New York, Philadelphia, Liverpool, La Havre, Antwerp, Watling's Island (San Salvador), St. Thomas, Havana, Nassau, and Barbados, among other West Indian ports, and various southern states (*WB* 411; 461). Velazquez's narration of this international circuit once again places the Confederacy in the world, revealing the Confederate States' ambitions to be a player in a world economy. Despite her implication in such trade, Velazquez is irritated throughout the text by the 'purely pecuniary light' in which blockade-runners view their 'very paying business' (*WB* 462). She reserves particular venom for those runners who show a 'total indifference to the fate of the Confederacy' (*WB* 462).<sup>16</sup> But if the bad business of blockade-running reveals to Velazquez the 'unveiled depths of human depravity' (*WB* 458), it reveals to her readers a dense, global web of fungible capital. Thus, Velazquez's partisan anger reminds readers that the American Civil War had an immense effect on the global economy. As Velazquez observes immediately after cessation of hostilities, 'great fortunes had been lost and won' because of the American Civil War. We might add: great fortunes had been lost and won all over the world.<sup>17</sup>

While involved in this lucrative transnational and transatlantic trade, Velazquez also became enmeshed in substitute-brokering and bounty-jumping schemes, with which she hoped to reduce 'the strength of the Federal armies in the field, by preventing the re-enforcements demanded by the government from reaching the front' (*WB* 464). Through these complicated machinations, Velazquez realized that commodities were not the only things moving fluidly across those borders of region, nation, and continent during the war. In one

of its most affecting scenes, *The Woman in Battle* narrates schemes that enlisted emigrants under false pretenses:

They were surrounded [at Castle Garden] by crowds of shouting and yelling brokers until they were fairly bewildered, and found themselves enlisted before they well knew what was the matter with them. To those who hesitated, the most lavish promises were made; their wives and children were to be cared for; they were to receive one hundred and sixty acres of land; money in larger sums than they had ever beheld before was flaunted in their faces. (*WB* 491)

She goes on to describe these duped foreigners as ‘poor devils’, ‘who came over here to better their fortunes, had but little chance to become anything but food for Confederate bullets’ (*WB* 492). Velazquez recalls one particular enlistment conspiracy involving Irish emigrants. The ‘poor foreigners’ were promised that once the Confederacy was defeated, the Federal government intended to declare war with England in retribution for the Trent Affair. Such a war would lead of course to ‘the liberation of Ireland’ – especially if a sufficient number of Irishmen enlisted in the US Army to fight against the Confederacy first (*WB* 493).

Velazquez discloses that such schemes were themselves transnational in nature, with emigrants having been ‘picked up in Europe by agents, under all kinds of pretexts and promises, and shipped for this side of the ocean just like so many cattle’ (*WB* 492). The specter of slavery and race makes a sudden appearance in the narrative as Velazquez laments a transatlantic traffic in German emigrants: ‘Captain P. considered himself as their owner, and he sold them to the government exactly as he would have sold cattle, if that sort of traffic had been as profitable as dealing in white human beings’ (*WB* 492). In accordance with an emerging ‘lost cause’ ideology, *The Woman in Battle* makes little mention of black slavery up to this point, despite the fact that throughout the war Velazquez is ‘attended’ by a slave, Bob, whom she forces, under the threat of death, to fight for the Confederacy. Velazquez’s quotidian descriptions of Bob’s ‘service’ to her and to the Confederate States have the force of normalizing her exploitation of him. Yet, even in a postwar, post-emancipation context, Velazquez has little to say about slavery as a social institution – unless, as in the case of emigrant enlistment schemes, it involves *white* slavery.<sup>18</sup> Velazquez’s image of cattle and her horror at the prospect of white chattel suggest that slavery is intelligible in the narrative only through a lens of whiteness. That is, slavery is unremarkable when it involves black bodies, but an act of ‘villainy’ when white bodies are trafficked (*WB* 458). In the narrative’s final pages, such *sub rosa* racial politics are put on full display as Velazquez searches in vain for a new homeland.

## A new South and a new world order

Following the collapse of the Confederacy, Velazquez beat a hasty retreat, fleeing the continent in order to travel through Europe with her brother.

Although she felt a 'pang of regret' at leaving, Europe promised both a safe refuge and some distraction from the cataclysmic destruction and unrest Velazquez left behind (*WB* 519). For Elizabeth Young, the final eight chapters of the narrative pass by in 'carnavalesque flux' (Young, 1999: 156).<sup>19</sup> Indeed, in its last one hundred pages, as Velazquez wanders through Europe, Latin America, the Caribbean, and the US west, *The Woman in Battle* becomes something of a travel narrative, with gracious recommendations about points of interest in various ports of call. Despite such shifts in narrative convention and tone, we need not cordon off Velazquez's postwar travels from her wartime exploits and adventures. Instead, I want to suggest that the restlessness of the narrative's final eight chapters continues the work of its first 44: to place the American Civil War in a global context. In doing so, these chapters also narrate the fate of a post-Confederate South in the medium of a new personification, 'The Woman *after* Battle'.

As she travels aimlessly through Europe, the late war and the fate of her adopted country haunt Velazquez. In Paris, she cannot help but notice the 'great contrast' between the 'manifold pleasures of Parisian life' and her recent experiences 'wearing a uniform of gray, and living the roughest kind of a life in camp and on the battle-field' (*WB* 522–3). Likewise, a proposed visit to the catacombs draws out painful memories of wartime trauma and guilt. *Les carrières de Paris*, 'filled with the mouldering remains of poor humanity', causes Velazquez to shrink back: 'I feared not the dead; but to have gone among these skeletons would have revived memories of the past that were anything but pleasant ones. It made me shudder to think how many poor souls I had seen launched into eternity without a moment's warning, some of them, perhaps, by my hand' (*WB* 524). Later Velazquez feels great sympathy for the Polish people, whom she hopes will soon 'regain their independence. They are cruelly oppressed now, and their beautiful country is a waste and desolation' (*WB* 527). Wherever Velazquez goes, she seems to find either the echoes or the ghosts of the Confederacy and its costly war.

After the political unrest of the immediate postwar period abated, Velazquez returned to the newly re-united USA and embarked on a tour of the 'late Confederacy' (*WB* 531). While in the South, Velazquez took a fervent interest in local emigration schemes: 'I longed to quit the scene of so much misery, and fully sympathized with those who preferred to fly from the country of their birth, and to seek homes in other lands, rather than to remain and be victimized, as they were being, by the wretches who had usurped all control of the affairs of the late rebel states' (*WB* 536). Velazquez's strident account offers us insight into the motivations – or the stated motivations – of Southerners who refused to confront Reconstruction and the realities of the world the war made.<sup>20</sup>

In the years following the cessation of hostilities, thousands of former Confederates fled the South for destinations west and north; others sought an Old South life in the 'Old World' of Europe; many more looked to Latin America for a fresh start. Gaines Foster has described this emigration movement as 'the "utopian dream" of Confederates who would not accept the

results of the war' (1987: 16).<sup>21</sup> Predictably, such dreams often turned into logistical and financial nightmares, as Velazquez learned firsthand when she traveled to Venezuela to 'go and see what was to be seen' in one of the lesser-known Confederate emigrant colonies (*WB* 537). Velazquez writes that from afar Venezuela seemed 'like a second Garden of Eden, where all was peace, happiness, and prosperity, with no free negroes or carpet-baggers to intrude upon them' (*WB* 539). Yet when she and her fellow colonists arrived in South America, they discovered a less idyllic new world than they had hoped to find. Most troubling, they learned that there were in fact 'free negroes' in their second Eden. After having had two successive 'negro' pilots, the captain of the expedition asks:

'Good Lord, are all the officials in this country niggers?' A good many of the emigrants were quite as much disgusted as the captain, and seemed to think that if the negroes were of as much importance as they seemed to be in Venezuela, it would have been just as well to have remained at home and fought the battle for supremacy with the free negroes and carpet-baggers on familiar ground. (*WB* 543).<sup>22</sup>

Here the Confederate exiles are horrified to have their colonial fantasy of a white paradise disrupted by Venezuelan racial diversity. That these pilots are 'officials' – people of color who are of some 'importance' to the Venezuelan state – is all the more distasteful to those Southerners who were fleeing Reconstruction and its promises of enfranchisement for '[a]ll persons born or naturalized in the United States'. After spending several months in and around Bolívar, Velazquez advised her 'adopted country people' to 'remain at home', citing the instability of the Venezuelan government, lack of centralized credit system, and dearth of available building supplies as reasons.<sup>23</sup> Appropriately enough, the narrative closes with Velazquez on the move again, this time through a number of sites associated with struggles for independence: Demerara, Trinidad, Barbados, St. Lucia, St. Thomas and Cuba. Finally, Velazquez works her way 'across the continent': Utah, Nevada, California, Colorado, New Mexico and Texas.

I want to end this tour of Loreta Janeta Velazquez's feverish Civil War world where it began: Cuba. It is a little acknowledged fact that Velazquez's narrative does not spend much time in Cuba. She made two brief trips to Havana during the war, and one immediately after. In fact, Velazquez spent minimal time there as a child; her father's official duties seem to have kept the family on the move throughout the Spanish-speaking world. Of the six Velazquez children, Loreta was the only one born in Cuba, and she notes that she was 'almost one year old' when her father 'fell heir to a large estate in Texas' (*WM* 40). Although the family returned to Cuba after the Mexican-American War (1846–8), young Loreta was sent to New Orleans shortly thereafter, sometime in 1849. Given all of this, it should come as little surprise that the words 'Cuba' and 'Cuban' appear only 24 times in this capacious text.<sup>24</sup>

Yet recent criticism of *The Woman in Battle* has focused almost entirely on its Cuban connections, and has tended to overstate the imaginative importance of Velazquez's 'native island' in the text (*WB* 248).<sup>25</sup> In so doing, critics have privileged a single location, when, as we have seen, Cuba is but one among many backdrops against which Velazquez's 'Exploits, Adventures, and Travels' play out. In fact, when Velazquez finally goes 'home' at the end of the narrative – to the 'family burying ground' and 'the old-fashioned stone house where [she] had lived with [her] father and mother, and brothers, and sisters, when a little girl' – it is not to Cuba but to St. Lucia, where she spent a significant part of her childhood (*WM* 560–1). Predictably, her visit is brief:

I was reluctant to leave the place, but felt impelled to go on and seek the destiny that awaited me in another land. . . . Before leaving the tomb I knelt down to pluck some ivy leaves, to carry away as remembrances, but as I stretched out my hand to gather them, something restrained me, and I went away empty-handed as I had come. (*WM* 561)

Velazquez's inability to take away a 'bit of home' provides a graceful figure for the estrangement and displacement that pervades the text – and an injunction against identifying her with any single location or nationality.<sup>26</sup> We would do well, then, to keep the Velazquez narrative on the move, as it were. To privilege Velazquez's place of origin – or any other single stop on her never-ending tour of duty – is to deny the purposeful waywardness of her transnational movements and to place a limit on what I take to be a signal achievement of the narrative: to situate the American Civil War in a truly international context.

When we take seriously its restlessness – when we track its various movements and chart its transnational routes – the Velazquez narrative allows us to revisit and revise the ways we conceptualize the American Civil War. Too often this bloody conflict is read in provincial terms, as either a 'war between brothers' or a largely domestic dispute in a 'house divided'. The predominance of these familial metaphors works to obscure the international nature of the conflict between the United and Confederate States of America.<sup>27</sup> Even if one begs the question of the Confederate States' sovereignty, one must acknowledge that at any number of moments the American Civil War threatened to become an international conflict, one into which Mexico, Germany, France, Britain, and others might well have been drawn. Yet, perhaps as a function of a critical tendency to overstate the 'civil' aspects of the conflict, literary and cultural historians have to date been unable to tell a compelling story about the internationalism of the American Civil War. The book subtitled the 'Exploits, Adventures, and Travels of Madame Loreta Janeta Velazquez' tells just such a story. As I have argued, the Civil War narrative offered by *The Woman in Battle* is resolutely international. As such, it offers a series of emergent fields and methodologies – New World, New South, Comparative American, Transnational American, and Hemispheric American Studies – an uncommon opportunity to re-map the American Civil War along new axes.

## Notes

1. Kelley's broadside also claimed that *The Woman in Battle* was 'The most intensely interesting war book ever published', and that Velazquez was the 'MOST REMARKABLE WOMAN OF THE DAY' (Advertisement, 1876: 1). Future references to Velazquez's text (Velazquez, 1876) will appear in the text preceded by the initials *WB*.
2. Elizabeth Young offers an elegant and forceful reading of the 'protolesbian' aspects of the narrative (Young, 1999: 173), and of the ways cross-dressing 'serves in this text as a metaphorical point of exchange for intersections between individual bodies and the national body politic' (p. 156).
3. Former Confederate General Jubal A. Early dismissed *The Woman in Battle* in particularly withering terms. On the motivations behind Early's condemnation of the narrative, see Blanton and Cook (2002: 180–3), Alemán (2003: ix–xxvi) and Young (1999: 156, 158–160, 170, 178–80, 192–4). For a litany of other skeptical readings see Hall (2002: 237–8), Blanton and Cook (2002: 197) and Alemán (2003: ix–xix). Velazquez's publishers seem to have anticipated such skepticism. The Kelley broadside devotes a full page to 'unsought testimonials' to Velazquez's character (Advertisement, 1876: 4). On the lack of evidence of Velazquez's pre-1876 existence, see Alemán (2003: xvi–xvii). One-time US naval officer C.J. Worthington edited *The Woman in Battle*. Scholars have not been able to determine the degree of Worthington's involvement in the composition of the narrative (see Hall, 2002: 229; Leonard, 1999: 256).
4. This despite the heroic efforts of scholars such as Richard Hall. Hall concludes, 'the evidence is increasing that her memoirs contain a basically true story' (1993: 230). (See also Hall, 1993: 207–11; 2002: 231–7; 2006: 192–200.)
5. See also Elizabeth Young, who takes 'the charge of "fiction" as a point of departure for literary analysis rather than as the cause for historical censure' (Young, 1999: 156).
6. Despite all her extraordinary adventures, the book's editor, C.J. Worthington, described Velazquez as 'a typical Southern woman of the war period' (Worthington, in Velazquez, 1876: 10). As Sylvia Hoffert notes, '[a]nyone who reads her book can clearly see that there was nothing typical about Loreta Velazquez' (Hoffert, 1978: 28).
7. See also Velazquez (1876: 42, 51). For a discussion of Velazquez's departure from the 'Female Warrior' tradition in 19th-century literature, see Blanton and Cook (2002: 178). For a perceptive discussion of the cultural work of Joan of Arc 'as myth and legend', see Elshtain (1987: 173–7).
8. Later in the narrative, Velazquez notes that she is, 'by instinct and by education', a partisan – someone who *must* choose sides: 'It is an impossibility for me to limit or divide my affections and predilections' (*WM* 161). In this devotion to, and optimism about, the Confederacy, Velazquez admits 'I trusted to my impulses, perhaps, more than to my reason; but every strong partisan must do this, in a greater or less degree' (*WM* 162–3).
9. For a further discussion of Velazquez's motivations, see especially *WM* 239; also Leonard (1999: 260–3) and De Grave (1995: 97). On men's motivations for fighting in the American Civil War, see McPherson (1997: 12). As one might expect, her first experiences on the battlefield force Velazquez to revise significantly her 'Dreams of Delusion' (see *WM* 128–9, 145–6).
10. On Buford/Velazquez's plight as 'the little independent lieutenant' (*WM* 220), see

- WM* (182–3, 186–7, 272–3, 345). At one point Harry T. Buford was so frustrated by his lack of an official commission that he offered an officer \$500 for his (*WM* 96). See also Elshtain (1987: 173).
11. See also *WM* (108, 133, 340–1). As Blanton and Cook suggest, such ‘restlessness, impulsiveness, and impatience were serious character flaws in a soldier, especially in an officer, and these traits impinged upon her military career’ (2002: 70). Jubal Early deemed such movements ‘simply incredible’ (quoted in Hoffert, 1978: 26). Hall, responding to Early’s deep, abiding skepticism about the veracity of *The Woman in Battle*, admits that such independence would have been more or less unprecedented (see Hall, 2006: 211; 2002: 229).
  12. Of course, she also acknowledges that she is writing her memoir from memory, several years after the war; whether she had such awareness during the war is an open question. For Velazquez’s own discussion of the ‘treacherous’ nature of memory, see *WM* (5–6).
  13. The history of Confederate diplomacy in Europe has been told many times. As one historian suggests, it can be characterized as ‘a series of dashed hopes – great expectations followed by greater frustrations’ (Thomas, 1979: 169). See also Cullop (1969: 135), Jones (1992: *passim*) and Hubbard (1998: *passim*).
  14. Kevin Willmott’s 2004 film, *The Confederate States of America*, offers a counterfactual narrative of Confederate victory in the Civil War – a victory due almost entirely to foreign intervention by France and England. Willmott’s film, which uses as its narrative frame a *faux* British documentary, also underscores the internationalism of the American Civil War but through a fictitious alternative history (see also Gallagher, 2007).
  15. Not surprisingly, the British government watched closely the US–Canadian border, increasing its colonial garrisons throughout the war (see Winks, 1960: 1–11).
  16. Velazquez is more forgiving of Cuban blockade-runners: ‘I could not help acknowledging, however, that their money was fairly earned, and that while accumulating magnificent profits by their operations, they were doing a great deal in a certain way towards sustaining the Confederacy in the mighty struggles it was making for independence’ (*WM* 250).
  17. See Foner (1988: 18–34), O’Brien (1988: 11–20), Ransom (1989: 253–88) and Thornton and Ekelund (2004: 88–103).
  18. The narrative addresses slavery as a social institution only a few times. See, for example, *WM* (367–8). One might usefully compare Velazquez’s treatment of Bob to her manipulation of an ‘old negro woman’ in order to cross Federal lines: Velazquez convinces the old woman that she is on an important mission for the Union, and that if the woman aids Velazquez emancipation will surely follow shortly (see *WM* 131–2).
  19. See Young’s provocative reading of *The Woman in Battle* as a picaresque novel (especially Young, 1999: 160–1). Reading the multiple significations of the word ‘pass’, Young argues persuasively that Velazquez’s ‘geographic movements between regions provide a metaphorical gloss on her oscillation between genders’ (p. 166).
  20. In truth, Southerners had complex reasons for emigrating. As Foster notes, ‘[s]ome sought better economic opportunities, others could not face life in a society with free blacks, and a few simply longed for adventure in a strange new land’ (Foster, 1987: 16). See also Griggs (1987: 1–4).
  21. There have been extensive studies of Confederate colonies in Venezuela, Mexico,

- Brazil, Peru, British Honduras (Belize), and various provinces in Canada. See, respectively, Hanna and Hanna (1960), Burden (2004), Harter (1985), Griggs (1987), Dawsey and Dawsey (1995), Werlich (1990), Simmons (2001) and Rescher (2003). Several of these studies suggest that approximately 10,000 Confederates – ‘less than two-tenths of 1 percent of the white population of the South’ (Foster, 1987: 17) – went into exile in foreign lands (Foster, 1987: 116–17; Hanna and Hanna, 1960: 11; Dawsey and Dawsey, 1995: 13). See Foster’s compelling interpretation of the emigration movement (especially Foster, 1987: 15–17).
22. See also *WM* (552–4 and 558). After returning to the USA, Velazquez is similarly appalled to find ‘the freedmen and carpet-baggers were having things completely their own way throughout the length and breadth of the late Confederacy’ (*WM* 570).
  23. I suspect that the colonists’ ‘disgust’ at the racial state of affairs also informed her recommendation (see *WM* 549). Despite Velazquez’s recommendation, a Confederate colony was in fact set up in Venezuela; Hanna and Hanna describe the endeavor as ‘both unsuccessful and tragic’ (1960: 20).
  24. Velazquez does claim Cuban identity a handful of times in the narrative (e.g. *WM* 502); however, she also aligns herself with Spanish colonial rule (see *WM* 39–40 and 247). On her ambivalent desire for Cuban independence see *WM* 248, and Alemán’s superb discussion (2003: xxxiv–xxxv). After meeting with her, Jubal Early remained dubious about Velazquez’s ‘Spanish birth or origin’ (qtd. in Young, 1999: 193). As Hall notes, ‘the entire question of her alleged Spanish background via Cuba rests solely on her words as of now’ (Hall, 2006: 211). See Young’s perceptive discussion of Velazquez’s ‘self-proclaimed status as Cuban’ (1999: 191–4). See also Alemán (2004: 112, 120–2).
  25. See for instance Alemán, who argues that the text ‘works to blur the ethnonational differences between Cuba and the South to enact a literary and historical merger between two geopolitical regions connected by a common history of slavery, a shared fiction of Old World white gentility, and a mutual enemy in Yankee economic and territorial expansion’ (Alemán, 2004: 113). I propose that the text enacts *several* mergers among *several* geopolitical regions (see also Levander, 2006: 827). I am indebted to Alemán and Levander, who have tellingly illuminated the shadowy relations between Cuba and the Confederacy.
  26. For a discussion of Velazquez’s ‘homelessness’, see Alemán (2003: xxxvi; 2004: 121–2).
  27. On the insidiousness of these metaphors and rhetoric, see Anderson (1991: 201). See also Hutchison (2007: 621–4).

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