

# Imagining a Confederate Woman: Augusta Jane Evans' *Macaria* and Its Radical Envision- ing of Female Sphere

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Augusta Evans is one of the most popular female writers of the 19th century, known especially for her domestic and sentimental stories *Beulah* (1859) and *St. Elmo* (1867), both of which focus upon the heroines who pursue their writing careers but give them up in exchange for the culmination of their romance: marriage. *Macaria* (1864), however, published in the final phase of the Civil War, has a totally different structure: a Confederate war story grafted onto a domestic novel.

This paper explores the function of this structure in terms of Southern gender norms, Confederate nationalism, and the norms of the genre of domestic fiction. The grafting enables heroines to transcend the limitation of their gender norms and of domestic fiction through defining themselves directly in terms of their nation, i.e. the Confederate, instead of a man (father, lover, or brother) and also through the rhetoric of their war effort as womanly self-sacrifice.

The last chapter reveals a radical re-definition of gender roles and family; two heroines are living together, with Irene a successful manager of an orphanage and Electra a successful artist, and they form a pseudo-family as if they were a loving couple, together with Irene's uncle Eric and Irene's father's best friend Arnold. With Elizabeth Browning's *Aurora Leigh* cited repeatedly in crucial scenes, the war story provides the opportunity to introduce the radical redeployment of Southern womanhood.