

“Mudsills versus Chivalry!': Class Conflict and Total War in the Occupied South”

**Michael E. Woods
Assistant Professor of History
Marshall University**

**Fall 2014 Filson Institute Conference
“The Hard Hand of War: Civilians and Irregulars in the Civil War”
Louisville, KY**

[Please do not cite, quote, or circulate without permission of author]

Union veteran Eugene Ware began his history of the First Iowa Infantry by explaining the “miraculous speed and spontaneity” with which northern “workingmen” answered Lincoln’s call to arms. He underscored the battle between social classes embedded in the ostensibly sectional conflict that provoked civil war. Union workingmen resented the arrogance of southern planters. They loathed reactionary theories about the superiority of slave-labor societies. They sensed that their own liberty hinged on the defeat of an aristocratic rebellion. For these reasons, Ware concluded, the Civil War was “in fact a great labor movement.”¹

Numerically, the Union army was dominated by men who worked with their hands.² But their influence went beyond numbers. To understand the significance of soldiers’ class backgrounds, we must place the war in a broader political context. Studies of the character and conduct of Civil War soldiers often begin in April 1861 amid the echoes of South Carolina artillery. But even raw recruits could be veterans of political conflict that raged long before Fort Sumter fell. As Ware suggested, insights from antebellum history should inform Civil War scholarship. *Why* men fought shaped *how* they fought. In particular, the ideological baggage that northern soldiers carried into the conflict influenced the “hard war” they waged against the Confederacy.³ The pillaging and destruction associated with hard warfare represented more than a chapter in military history; it was laced with political purpose. Union soldiers regarded hard

war as part of a wider campaign against an elite class long perceived as personally insulting and politically dangerous. To trace hard war's political history, I focus on the proslavery "mudsill" doctrine that clarified and intensified conflict between northern workingmen and southern elites.⁴ Building on prewar precedents, Union volunteers refashioned the mudsill epithet into a proudly subversive label. Memories of mudsill talk shaped their wartime experiences, from enlistment and combat, to encounters with enemy civilians, in ways that help explain why so many soldiers believed, from the outset of the war, that hard warfare was essential to genuine victory. They fought not just for reunion, but also to protect their class by purging the nation of aristocratic taint. Victory demanded a realignment of political and economic power. It required demolishing the foundations of southern aristocracy, and this meant waging hard warfare on multiple fronts.

Three years prior to Fort Sumter, South Carolina planter and senator James H. Hammond threw down the gauntlet before northern laborers in his so-called "Mudsill Speech." Thereafter, mudsill doctrine was identified with Hammond's state and class as a signature of the slave power. Hammond was new to the Senate in 1858. He arrived amid the fierce clash over admitting Kansas under the Lecompton Constitution, but cared little for territorial sparring or constitutional hairsplitting. He believed the slave states had plenty of land; now they must consolidate their power and savor their command of the cotton market.⁵ Hammond's March 4th address honed these ideas into a two-pronged rhetorical attack. First, he praised Dixie's economic and military strength, boasting that a southern republic could dominate the industrialized world. Then he took the increasingly popular proslavery tenet that slavery provided the ideal relationship between labor and capital, and cast it in especially offensive terms. Hammond proclaimed that every society needed an ignorant class to perform brute labor. Yankees erred by filling it with resentful white voters. But the South was blessed by racial

slavery, in which inferior and politically powerless bondsmen did the dirty work. In a war between these societies, the South would prevail.⁶ These ideas were not new,⁷ but Hammond articulated them in alarming language on a national stage.⁸ Most infamously, he declared:

In all social systems there must be a class to do the menial duties, to perform the drudgery of life. That is, a class requiring but a low order of intelligence and but little skill....It constitutes the very mud-sill of society, and you might as well attempt to build a house in the air, as to build either the one or the other, except on this mud-sill. Fortunately for the South, she has found a race adapted to that purpose....We use them for our purpose, and call them slaves....I will not characterize that class at the North by that term; but you have it; it is there; it is everywhere; it is eternal....The difference between us is, that our slaves are hired for life and well compensated....Yours are hired by the day, not cared for, and scantily compensated.⁹

From Boston to San Francisco, outraged northerners erupted in protest. The insult stung, particularly because of its timing. The Panic of 1857 had shaken the northern economy and thousands remained unemployed. Hammond had kicked the “mudsills” while they were down.¹⁰ He also legitimized existing fears that slaveholders threatened the freedom of all workers, regardless of race or region.¹¹ And by braiding proslavery theory with southern nationalism, he primed northerners to regard secession not merely as a bid for independence, but a plot against liberty. Massachusetts Republican Henry Wilson later recalled that Hammond’s “open avowal” of sentiments “opened the eyes of [northern] men to the spirit, aims, and purposes of the Slave Power as perhaps no previous demonstration had been able to effect.”¹² The “mudsill” slur encapsulated everything about elite southern politics northern laborers feared and despised.

Hammond's words immediately galvanized northern resistance; before they fought against slaveholders, northern workers battled them at the polls. Workers swiftly transformed his epithet into a humorously subversive badge of regional and class identity and a basis for political mobilization. In the summer of 1858, "mechanics and laborers" founded "Mud-sill Clubs" throughout the North. Members urged workingmen to "beat the very life out of that sham Democracy," Hammond's party, and vote Republican.¹³ Laborers linked working-class pride to Republican success, quoting proslavery propaganda to inflame voters' hostility to the slave power. A banner hoisted at one of the Lincoln-Douglas debates read: "Small-Fisted Farmers, Mud Sills of Society, Greasy Mechanics, for A. Lincoln."¹⁴ Two years later, A. Lincoln's national triumph propelled eleven slave states down the road to disunion.

Memories of 1858 remained fresh in 1861 and informed workingmen's views of secession. Because Hammond's speech had fused southern nationalism with proslavery politics, northerners readily blamed the latter for disunion. Indeed, mudsill doctrine's arrogant tone and reactionary content seemed to explain secessionists' motives. One northern recruit opened his wartime diary by exploring the connection: "The slave oligarchy of the southern states...having lost their former political control of the government and not being minded to submit to the humiliation of sharing that control with the mud sills of the north...determined to succeed from the federal union and form a confederacy of their own based on the foundation rock of slavery."¹⁵ Other self-described mudsills itched to confront rebellious slaveholders in battle. Mudsill talk shaped both enlistment and combat motivation. All that one impatient soldier wanted was a chance to "teach the rebel scoundrels a lesson which will convince them that the 'mud sills' of the north are fully equal to any *chivalry* the F[irst] F[amilies of] V[irginia] can produce."¹⁶ Some volunteers even appropriated the epithet for their military units; Company G of

the 10th Kansas was styled the “Ogden Mud-Sills.”¹⁷ Not every Union soldier pondered mudsill doctrine, but its wartime uses reflected the lasting importance of antebellum class antagonism.

Union soldiers were politically sophisticated, and recollections of mudsill doctrine informed their understanding of the war’s stakes.¹⁸ After years of conflict with a hostile slaveholding class, many soldiers believed that secession was yet another plot to bolster masters’ continental power. In a widely reprinted June 1861 article, the *New York Tribune* reported that the phrase “‘I am a mud-sill’ is now a common expression of the Soldiers who fight for liberty.” Recruits recalled Hammond’s effort to “degrade the laborer of the North to the level of the slave of the South.” They understood that if “the rebel states...prevail in this contest,” northern workers would fall to a “degrading position, socially and politically.”¹⁹ This popular analysis may have misread secessionist goals – but it revealed the logic of workingmen’s Unionism, in which defense of class, region, and nation fused together.

Union recruiters and opinion-makers evoked mudsill talk to sustain enthusiasm for the war. When Edward H. Serrell sought recruits for an “Engineers and Artisans Regiment,” he warned that the “so-called SOUTHERN CHIVALRY” meant to “place the NORTHERN MECHANIC on the same grade as the Southern slave” and reminded readers that slaveholders called them “NORTHERN MUD-SILLS AND GREASY MECHANICS.” By joining his regiment, skilled workers could weaponize their craftsmanship.²⁰ Patriotic songs and poems also called “mudsills” to the colors. A song entitled “Northmen, Come Out!” appeared in May 1861 and remained in print throughout the war. One verse urged recruits to come “Out in your strength and let them know/How Working Men to Work can go./Out in your might and let them feel/How Mudsills strike when edged with steel.”²¹ More sophisticated was the 1861 poem by Goram P. Stevens entitled “March of the Mud-Sills.” Celebrating Union soldiers’ working-class roots,

Stevens defiantly recalled “the taunting words of old/When the mud-sills were derided, and the gentlemen extolled.” Stevens appropriated the label: “the taunting name of Mud-sills,” he declared, “we adopt it here today.” After revisiting these familiar themes, Stevens analyzed the balance of power between northern workers and southern aristocrats. National prosperity, he argued, depended upon workingmen, and the war would expose Hammond’s misreading of American political economy. Working-class armies would sweep southward to vindicate the freedom and dignity of labor against an aristocratic foe. They would rebuild the Union on a democratic basis, aligning political with economic power so that “the class that built the nation, from their energy and skill/ Shall be free to mould its progress by the edict of their will.” Early in the war, Hammond’s critics resolved not merely to restore the Union, but to make it safe for working people by wresting power away from a dangerous aristocracy.²²

Whether scribbling in diaries or publishing in newspapers, northerners interpreted the war as a collision between classes as well as sections. After tasting combat, northern recruits ironically recalled mudsill talk as they relished their battlefield triumphs. A Union soldier reported on an 1862 skirmish with Confederate cavalry, who “came dashing on, in all the pride of the Southern Chivalry.” As they closed with a Massachusetts regiment, the “*mudsills* from Mass” unleashed “a storm of whistling, stinging, humming minniballs. Saddles are emptied and the noble sons of the sunny South bite the dust.”²³ The mingling of regional and social identities obscured where the sectional struggle ended and the class struggle began. Union soldiers and their admirers also savored opportunities to use artisanal skills in the field. In an article entitled “What ‘Mudsills’ Undertake,” an effusive Pennsylvania correspondent reported that Union “mechanics” needed just forty-eight hours to rebuild a bridge destroyed by retreating Confederates, exulting that an army “composed of such material will not long allow any

obstacles the rebels may place in their way to impede their southward march.”²⁴ Yankee ingenuity and a free-labor ethic gave mudsill armies a strategic edge.

Most importantly, the insulting idiom of mudsill doctrine shaped interactions between Union soldiers and enemy citizens in ways that underscored the necessity of hard warfare. As they captured Confederate territory, Union soldiers collided with hostile noncombatants, many of whom hurled “mudsill,” among other epithets, at the occupiers. A Union private who tried to drink from a well on a Mississippi plantation provoked a “Southern Cyclone” of a woman who “called him all the names in the Southern vocabulary that had ever been applied by the chivalry of the South to Northern men, from ‘mudsills’ to ‘Lincoln hirelings.’”²⁵ These confrontations validated Union soldiers’ darkest suspicions about slaveholders’ attitudes and ideology. Scholars have shown that hard war was carefully calibrated and fell particularly heavily on planters – and on South Carolina planters heaviest of all.²⁶ These patterns are consistent with soldiers’ class-inflected war aims. Frequently-refreshed memories of mudsill doctrine shaped their destructive strategies. Encounters with defiant civilians confirmed that genuine victory required the demolition of the slaveholding class.

Some of the destruction was psychological. Politically astute Federals yearned to humiliate their foes, and not merely for revenge. In 1863, a Pennsylvania colonel reported that his men despised politicians who called for compromise. The key to a lasting victory was to subdue the southern spirit. “We must whip the South into proper respect for us.”²⁷ The argument was unassailable if one blamed elite hauteur for the war. When Hammond boastfully anticipated southern independence, he taught northerners to associate secession with planter arrogance. In response, Union soldiers attacked the psychological mainspring of secession.²⁸ Sometimes, humiliating civilian foes meant hastening slavery’s demise. An artillerist reported from

Virginia's Eastern Shore that his comrades thwarted a local master who boarded their transport to recover runaway slaves. Seizing the planter, "a perfect specimen of a fine Virginia gentleman," who was "too fine to look at a laboring man, unless he was a black one," the men tossed him overboard. The exhilarated Yankee asked his parents to imagine the aristocrat "being tossed fifteen feet in the air, three times, by Union soldiers – Northern mudsills."²⁹ His comrades simultaneously vindicated northern laborers and emancipated southern slaves. They fought on psychological and economic fronts: the drenched master lost dignity and property in one instant.

This inclination toward hard warfare appeared early in the conflict, long before the notorious 1864 campaigns, and originated in the ranks, among men who most keenly felt the sting of Hammond's remarks.³⁰ Scholars who argue for a grassroots impetus for hard war often point to soldier psychology or the proverbial unruliness of volunteer armies.³¹ But their important arguments can be strengthened by attention to the class politics of the Civil War era. Northern soldiers itched to unleash hard warfare against aristocratic enemies. To conciliate the self-proclaimed chivalry seemed deferential and counterproductive. Writing from near Memphis in 1862, John Cheney complained of having to be "too gentlemanly." Cheney was an entrepreneur, not a laborer, but he identified with working-class soldiers and keenly felt the sting of southern insults. His comrades instinctively sought to demolish the cotton kingdom, and they had begun to do considerable damage "in the way of cotton burning." But officers quickly stopped them, and this, Cheney believed, made them look weak. "The result is we are only taken for cowardly mudsills who are here courting Southern favor." He yearned for a more aggressive approach. "[I] would be glad if we could only be allowed to subsist ourselves on the property of traitors and hang every guerrilla we could find to the nearest tree," Cheney wrote. "Then they would feel a little differently and be compelled to submit or die." For his part, Cheney waged

hard war through unauthorized emancipation. “I have helped hide a way a smart Mulatto slave tonight,” he confided to his wife, “and by God I will try and find some way to get him north.”

Determined to strike the Achilles’ heel of a slaveholding republic, Cheney became a liberator.³²

Psychological warfare and emancipation were, of course, accompanied by physical devastation. The multi-pronged strategy was calculated to obliterate the mental and material foundations of the southern oligarchy. Yankees especially delighted in the destruction of cotton. Hammond’s “Mudsill Speech” was, after all, also his “King Cotton Speech,” and to destroy a cotton bale – or a cotton gin or press – was to sap the foundation of the Confederacy.³³ It was not only a mode of economic warfare; it was also a revolutionary act in which maligned free workers demolished the material basis of the slave power. An Ohio soldier reflected in depth on this point in a letter, written from Alabama, to his hometown newspaper in late 1863:

Here one sees the aristocratic Southern planter, with his large plantation stocked with negroes, counted by hundreds, and fabulous wealth.... Cotton was then king, and his subjects lived and reigned in the highest style, surrounded by all the luxuries of a sunny clime. This was in times before they undertook to ‘go it alone.’ King cotton has been dethroned, and his subjects humbled....The mud sills of the North roam at will over the plantations, burn rails, forage on the country, and the negroes flock into our camps, leaving their lordly masters helpless and dependent....Sneering and turning up noses at Yankees is ‘played out,’ and charity is acceptable. They vie with the mud sills in barter and traffic, and get anything from a chicken to a horse....Cotton is whipped, and corn is king, triumphant. Alas! for the pride and boasting of the chivalrous subjects of King cotton!...Where pride is once humbled there is hope of repentance.³⁴

This passage encapsulated the class conflict embedded in the Civil War, revealing how it shaped soldiers' understandings of why the war came and how it could be won. The author began with a caricature of elite southern life validated by firsthand experience. His description of aristocratic grandeur dramatized the contrast between antebellum prosperity and wartime ruin. He savored planters' self-destruction, connecting their desire to "go it alone" with the ruinous consequences. As "mud sills" roamed at will across cotton plantations, they shattered the wealth and pretension of aristocratic enemies. Rebellious planters no longer insulted them. Instead, they acted more like Yankees, watching the bottom line in order to survive. The national balance of power had shifted northward and the future looked bright. Indeed, the Ohioan anticipated reconciliation through the repentance he believed would accompany defeat. Humiliation, destruction, and deprivation would topple the pillars of aristocracy, bringing lasting and legitimate peace.³⁵

Defiantly proud mudsills who burned and emancipated their way across the cotton kingdom strove to finish a fight that began years before the Civil War. Sectionalism mattered, as was evident in the "Yankee" epithet often coupled with "mudsill." But workingmen-turned-soldiers knew that this was more than a confrontation between a monolithic "North" and "South" and they targeted elitist enemies for especially hard warfare. Their urge to vindicate both class and section prompted them wage hard warfare on multiple fronts. But theirs was only a partial victory. The continued use of the mudsill epithet after 1865 alarmed many northern onlookers, who cited it as evidence that the spirit of secession remained.³⁶ Some northerners, including former Democrats, responded by embracing the Radical Republican vision of Reconstruction. Nevertheless, Union veterans long remembered the sweetness of their victory over Hammond's peers.³⁷ For them, hard warfare was the culmination of a long struggle that began before 1861 and became an emancipatory crusade. As one veteran put it in 1888, the Civil War had "decreed

that capital shall not own labor, and that the 'mudsill,' the 'mechanic' and the 'operator,' as free men...are the bed-rock of the best civilization."³⁸ Rightly remembered as a watershed in the struggle for racial justice, the Civil War, according to men who wore the blue, was also a milestone for working people of all colors.

NOTES:

¹ Eugene Fitch Ware, *The Lyon Campaign in Missouri: Being a History of the First Iowa Infantry* (Topeka: Crane & Company, 1907), 33-34. Some historians have pursued this line of inquiry and interpreted the war as a clash between northern labor and the southern “slave power,” with nonslaveholding southern whites in between, most of them siding with their section, and a minority aiding the Union cause. See especially: Bernard Mandel, *Labor: Free and Slave. Workingmen and the Anti-Slavery Movement in the United States* (New York: Associated Authors, 1955). But Mandel paid little attention to the conduct of the war itself and thus did not address the question of hard warfare as a necessary means to destroy the planter class.

² Nearly half were farmers, one tenth were unskilled laborers, and most others were craftsmen. Earl J. Hess, *The Union Soldier in Battle: Enduring the Ordeal of Combat* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1997), 133. Of course, those who called the Union military machine an “army of mudsills” – whether they meant it as an insult or a compliment – overlooked class divisions among the men in blue. On masculinity, class, and conflict in the Union army, see Lorien Foote, *The Gentlemen and the Roughs: Manhood, Honor, and Violence in the Union Army* (New York: New York University Press, 2010). The self-appropriation of the “mudsill” epithet by Union officers suggests that they interpreted it as a sectional rather than purely social insult, and that they shared working-class Union volunteers’ antipathy for the southern aristocracy. The “mudsill” term’s blend of class and sectional overtones may therefore have mitigated some of the class conflict among Union soldiers, though as Foote demonstrates, it remained powerful throughout the war.

³ Mark Grimsley’s flexible definition of “hard war,” which encompasses “the destruction of enemy economic resources (whether publicly or privately owned), forced evacuations, or confiscation of property without recompense,” including slaves, is especially useful, partly because it circumvents theoretical debates over whether the Civil War was a “total” war. Mark Grimsley, *The Hard Hand of War: Union Policy Toward Southern Civilians, 1861-1865* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 5.

⁴ Many Civil War scholars briefly touch on the “mudsill” doctrine, particularly when it appears in a wartime quotation, but few have given it sustained analysis; this is in contrast to several excellent studies of its origins written by antebellum political historians. One exception to this is Charles Royster, *The Destructive War: William Tecumseh Sherman, Stonewall Jackson, and the Americans* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991), 87-89. Royster notes that the term, and the attitude and political values it reflected, inspired considerable hostility toward southern civilians among northern soldiers. His analysis of this topic is suggestive but necessarily brief, given the tremendous scope of his book. James M. McPherson also alluded to the importance of the term and its effects on Union soldiers; see James M. McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 154-155.

⁵ Drew Gilpin Faust, *James Henry Hammond and the Old South: A Design for Mastery* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), 340-345.

⁶ For the entire speech, see *Congressional Globe*, 35 Cong., 1 Sess., appendix, 68-71.

⁷ On the shift toward a class-based defense of slavery, see Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene D. Genovese, *Slavery in White and Black: Class and Race in the Southern Slaveholders’ New World Order* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008). Fitzhugh was especially adamant, urging his allies not to defend “mere negro slavery.” “Domestic slavery,” he insisted, “must be vindicated in the abstract, and in the general, as a normal, natural, and, in general, necessitous element of civilized society, without regard to race or color.” George Fitzhugh, “Southern Thought,” *DeBow’s Review* 23, no. 4 (October 1857), 339, 347. Historian Arthur C. Cole once suggested that Lincoln’s concept of the “House Divided” between slavery and freedom was a response to this proslavery innovation. Lincoln was not a labor leader, but he wanted northern workers to understand that slaveholders threatened them as a class. Arthur Charles Cole, *Lincoln’s “House Divided” Speech: Did It Reflect a Doctrine of Class Struggle? An Address Delivered before the Chicago Historical Society on March 15, 1923* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1923).

⁸ Mark J. Stegmaier, “Intensifying the Sectional Conflict: William Seward versus James Hammond in the Lecompton Debate of 1858,” *Civil War History* 31, no. 3 (September 1985): 197-221.

⁹ *Congressional Globe*, 35 Cong., 1 Sess., appendix, 71. George M. Fredrickson has emphasized the fundamentally racist nature of Hammond’s doctrine, pointing out that Hammond believed that only unequal races could harmoniously coexist in such a hierarchical fashion. See “Masters and Mudsills: The Role of Race in the Planter Ideology of South Carolina,” in Fredrickson, *The Arrogance of Race: Historical Perspectives on Slavery, Racism, and Social Inequality* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1988): 15-27. Hammond’s racism is unquestionable, but if anything, it made his comparisons between northern and southern “mudsills” even more

insulting for white northern workers, whose feeling of degradation would only have increased with their assumptions of personal superiority over enslaved blacks. Moreover, Hammond's elitism approached his racism in intensity, particularly when he grouped slaves and wage workers together in the "class requiring but a low order of intelligence and but little skill."

¹⁰ James L. Huston, *The Panic of 1857 and the Coming of the Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987), chap. 5, esp. p. 126.

¹¹ In the 1850s, northern Republicans routinely warned that slavery could spread beyond the South and that proslavery politicians dreamed of making chattels of northern whites. They worried that the Supreme Court might overturn free state laws, just as it had struck down territorial prohibitions in the *Dred Scott* decision, and they pointed out that interracial sex was rapidly "whitening" the slave population. Neither law nor color necessarily exempted northerners from enslavement. Jonathan A. Glickstein, "The Chattelization of Northern Whites: An Evolving Abolitionist Warning," *American Nineteenth Century History* 4, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 25-58; Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War* ([1970] New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 62.

¹² Henry Wilson, *History of the Rise and Fall of the Slave Power in America*, 2nd ed., 3 vols. (Boston: James R. Osgood and Company, 1875), II, 550.

¹³ "The Ground Tier Moved!" *Lewisburg (PA) Chronicle*, August 20, 1858; *Bangor (ME) Whig*, reprinted in the *Randolph County (IN) Journal*, August 19, 1858.

¹⁴ James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 196-198. This longer quotation often appeared in Civil War-era rhetoric; it originated in an editorial outburst from the *Muscogee (GA) Herald* widely reprinted in northern newspapers, including the *New York Tribune*: "Free Society! we sicken at the name. What is it but a conglomeration of greasy mechanics, filthy operatives, small-fisted farmers, and moon-struck theorists?" Quoted in McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 197. The fact that many northerners combined these insults with the mudsill epithet suggests the prevalence of the latter in their thinking, as well as their broad familiarity with proslavery propaganda.

¹⁵ William Wiley, entry for August 1862, in *The Civil War Diary of a Common Soldier: William Wiley of the 77th Illinois Infantry*, ed. Terrence J. Winschel (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001), 1. On Union soldiers' interpretation of the rebellion as aristocratic and elitist more generally, see Earl J. Hess, *Liberty, Virtue, and Progress: Northerners and Their War for the Union*, 2nd ed. (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997), 18-22, 78-80. For similar analysis from editors and authors, see: "The War," (Bloomsburg, PA) *Star of the North*, May 22, 1861; Orestes A. Brownson, "The President's Policy," *Brownson's Quarterly Review* (January 1863), in *The Works of Orestes A. Brownson*, vol. 17, collected and arranged by Henry F. Brownson (New York: AMS Press, 1885), 391.

¹⁶ Charlie to My own darling wife, May 3, 1862, in Charles T. Bowen, *Dear Friends at Home: The Civil War Letters and Diaries of Sergeant Charles T. Bowen, Twelfth United States Infantry, First Battalion, 1861-1864*, ed. Edward K. Cassidy (Baltimore: Butternut & Blue, 2001), 82. See also: Ware, *Lyon Campaign in Missouri*, 95; and Julius Augustus Lemcke, *Reminiscences of an Indianan: From the Sassafras Log Behind the Barn in Posey County to Broader Fields* (Indianapolis: Hollenbeck Press, 1905), 150.

¹⁷ S.J. Reader to Friends and Relatives, August 4, 1861, in "Letters of Samuel James Reader 1861-1863, Pioneer of Soldier Township, Shawnee County," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 9, no. 1 (February 1940), 40; (Junction City, KS) *Smoky Hill and Republican Union*, January 10, 1863.

¹⁸ On the ideological motivation of Civil War soldiers, see: Joseph T. Glatthaar, *The March to the Sea and Beyond: Sherman's Troops in the Savannah and Carolinas Campaigns* (New York: New York University Press, 1985); Hess, *Liberty, Virtue, and Progress*; Hess, *Union Soldier in Battle*, esp. p. 98; and James M. McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*. On their political knowledge and sophistication, see: Glatthaar, *March to the Sea and Beyond*, 46-47; and Grimsley, *Hard Hand of War*, 224-225.

¹⁹ "Mud-Sills," *New York Tribune*, reprinted in (Findlay, OH) *Hancock Jeffersonian*, June 14, 1861. A shorter version was clipped in "Mud-Sills," (Clearfield, PA) *Raftsmen's Journal*, June 12, 1861. See also "What Are We Fighting For," *Cedar Falls (IA) Gazette*, September [?], 1861, quoted in Kenneth L. Lyftogt, *Iowa's Forgotten General: Matthew Mark Trumbull and the Civil War* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2005), 35-36.

²⁰ *New York Daily Tribune*, September 8, 1861.

²¹ "Northmen, Come Out!" *Vanity Fair* 3 (May 4, 1861), 215. Newspapers picked up the song and reprinted it; see, for instance, the *Urbana (OH) Union*, August 20, 1862. For the next several years the song was reprinted; see: Orville J. Victor, ed., *Incidents and Anecdotes of the War: Together with Life Sketches of Eminent Leaders, and Narratives of the Most Memorable Battles for the Union* (New York: James D. Torrey, 1862), 54; Loyal Publication

Society: *Soldiers' and Sailors' Patriotic Songs* (New York: Loyal Publication Society, 1864), 4; Frank Moore, ed., *Lyrics of Loyalty* (New York: George P. Putnam, 1864), 90-92. Victor attributed the song to Charles G. Leland, a Princeton-educated Philadelphia journalist and folklorist who was actively engaged in prowar publishing, including as an editor of the *Continental Monthly*. Leland himself enlisted and saw action at Gettysburg. For other musical appeals to "mudsill" recruits, see: Caroline Moseley, "Irrepressible Conflict: Differences Between Northern and Southern Songs of the Civil War," *Journal of Popular Culture* 25, no. 2 (Fall 1991), 50; J. Ives Pease, "Paying the Shot," *Continental Monthly* 2, no. 2 (August 1862): 249-250; "Song of the Volunteers," in Seymour Altwood Butterfield, *Amusement of Idle Hours: The Poems of S. Attwood Butterfield* (Indianapolis: C.S. Butterfield, 1887), 168-170; Lieut. H.Y. Rush, "Keifer Leads the Van," in Ira S. Owens, *Greene County Soldiers in the Late War* (Dayton, OH: Christian Publishing House Print, 1884), 153; Philip H. Goode, diary entry for March 16, 1862, in Edward W. Vollertsen, "'A Pretty Hard Business': The Civil War Diary of Philip H. Goode," *Palimpsest* 72, no. 2 (Summer 1991), 52.

²² [G.P. Stevens] "The March of the Mud-Sills," *Harvard Magazine* 8, no. 68 (October 1861): 59-61. It was reprinted within another article in 1863: "Are We Loyal?" *Harvard Magazine* 9, no. 82 (April 1863): 268-272.

²³ Charles Harvey Brewster to [?], ca. July 4, 1862, in Charles H. Brewster, *When This Cruel War Is Over: The Civil War Letters of Charles Harvey Brewster*, ed. David W. Blight (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992), 339.

²⁴ "What 'Mudsills' Undertake," (Clearfield, PA) *Raftsmen's Journal*, December 25, 1861. See also: J. Harrison Mills, *Chronicles of the Twenty-First Regiment New York State Volunteers* (Buffalo: Gies & Co., Printers, 1887), 309; Charles Chapman, diary entry for October 30-31, 1862, in Roderick Gainer and Allison Stryker, "Got Up the Teams: The Civil War Diary of Charles Chapman, Quartermaster, 131st Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry," *Journal of America's Military Past* 35, no. 3 (Fall 2010), 27; "Mudsills," *Scientific American*, n.d., reprinted in *Cleveland Morning Leader*, March 30, 1864; "The 'Mudsills' in the South," *Belmont (Ohio) Chronicle*, August 4, 1864; and Theodore C. Tracie, *Annals of the Nineteenth Ohio Battery Volunteer Artillery* (Cleveland: J.B. Savage, 1878), 388-389.

²⁵ Daniel O. Root, *War Time Stories: An Illinois Soldier's Civil War Experiences*, ed. Richard A. Chrisman (n.p.: Trafford Publishing, 2011), 33-34. For another representative example of wartime uses of the insult in occupied territory, see William S. Connery, *Civil War Northern Virginia 1861* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2011), 58.

²⁶ John G. Barrett, *Sherman's March Through the Carolinas* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1956), 119-120, 139-140; Glatthaar, *March to the Sea and Beyond*, 79-80, 140-141, 146; Grimsley, *Hard Hand of War*, esp. pp. 2, 4, 171, 200-203.

²⁷ Quoted in Judkin Browning, "'I Am Not So Patriotic as I Was Once': The Effects of Military Occupation on the Occupying Union Soldiers during the Civil War," *Civil War History* 55, no. 2 (June 2009), 240.

²⁸ The occupation of rebel territory, and especially elite households, was itself a deeply satisfying and politically significant act. In May 1863, soldiers from the 55th Illinois entered a wealthy Louisiana region in which some of them had worked itinerantly before the war. One mechanic recalled abandoning his tools and back wages when he fled home after Fort Sumter. He returned with a musket in his hands and vengeance in his heart, and reportedly "now took payment in the satisfaction" of seeing outbuildings he had constructed "reduced to ashes." His comrades delighted in occupying elite domestic spaces with their working-class bodies. The "lords of these manors" having fled, Union conquerors displayed their "customary lack of respect" for empty mansions. "[A]t our noon halts groups of tired, dust-covered 'mud-sills' were to be seen seated on satin-upholstered chairs amid roses...and eating their bacon and hard-tack from marble-covered tables." The juxtaposition of plebeian fare and plantation grandeur showed that the occupied South was a world turned upside down. Along with slaves now in charge of the plantations, Federal invaders overthrew old hierarchies and shattered slaveholders' visions of order; the proximity of rough Yankees threatened everything elite Confederates fought for. A Committee of the Regiment, *The Story of the Fifty-Fifth Regiment Illinois Volunteer Infantry in the Civil War, 1861-1865* (Clinton, MA: W.J. Coulter, 1887), 230-231.

²⁹ Edmund Evarts to My Dear Parents, September 9, 1863, in *Soldiers' Letters from Camp, Battle-Field and Prison*, ed. Lydia Minturn Post (New York: Bunce & Huntington, 1865), 191-192. The chronic racism of Union soldiers did not prevent them from relishing moments when the revolutionary implications of emancipation shattered the pretensions of slaveholders. Indeed, a low view of African Americans tended to accentuate the degradation of secessionist masters. Union soldiers, moreover, knew that the Constitution's infamous 3/5 clause directly connected mastery of blacks with political domination over white northern workers. For this reason, victories for northern and southern working people went hand in hand. A New York veteran recalled that it was "a source of infinite satisfaction to us, 'Northern mud-sills,' to see the 'chivalry,' the lords of broad acres, obliged to exhibit their

‘passes’ to the dark skinned sentinels,” who in some cases were “formerly their ‘chattels.’” True, the former soldier referred to the black picket as “Sambo” and chuckled at his illiteracy. But the story reflected solidarity. The revolution embedded in the black soldier’s demand to see a rich white man’s pass pleased “mudsills” who read it as evidence of the slave power’s demise. He might not accept “Sambo” as an equal, but he clearly saw the “dark skinned sentinels” as allies against a common enemy. Elias P. Pellet, *History of the 114th Regiment, New York State Volunteers* (Norwich, NY: Telegraph & Chronicle Power Press, 1866), 47.

³⁰ One of the best pieces of evidence for the early impulse toward hard warfare – and its calibration to strike with special ferocity against planters, and against Palmetto State planters most severely of all – comes from Union soldiers’ actions along the South Carolina coast in the fall of 1861. When Sherman’s avengers slashed through the state in 1865, they were not the first Federals to tread its soil. Green recruits who disembarked near Beaufort and Port Royal in November 1861 similarly hoped to destroy the planter class and achieve total victory. The Federals quickly seized rich Lowcountry plantations and foraged for food, livestock, “and about everything they could lay their hands on,” defining the seizure of rebel property as confiscation rather than theft. Abraham John Palmer, *History of the Forty-Eighth Regiment New York State Volunteers in the War for the Union 1861-1865* (New York: Charles T. Dillingham, 1885), 20-21. What the raw recruits could not use, they demolished. As one put it, “victors are apt to be ruthless in destroying the property of conquered enemies.” William Thompson Lusk to My dear Mother, November 13, 1861, in William Thompson Lusk, *War Letters of William Thompson Lusk, Captain, Assistant Adjutant-General, United States Volunteers 1861-1863* (New York: Privately Printed, 1911), 100. Back home, civilians relished this opportunity to wreak havoc on “the guiltiest of all the rebel States.” With memories of 1858 and 1860 fresh in their minds, northerners anticipated the destruction of the Palmetto State planter class through military defeat, property loss, and the “humiliation of spirit.” South Carolinians, an Indianan observed, “have been brought up to the notion of their superiority of blood and condition,” and had nurtured “sovereign contempt for the ‘mudsills’ and ‘greasy mechanics’ of the North.” Now, with Federal armies rampaging at will along their coast, the arrogant “chivalry” were about to be humbled. “The Reckoning with South Carolina,” *Marshall County (IN) Republican*, November 28, 1861.

³¹ See in particular: Royster, *Destructive War*, esp. p. xii; Lee B. Kennett, *Marching Through Georgia: The Story of Soldiers and Civilians During Sherman’s Campaign* (New York: HarperCollins, 1995), esp. p. 277; Grimsley, *Hard Hand of War*, 39-46; and George C. Bradley and Richard L. Dahlen, *From Conciliation to Conquest: The Sack of Athens and the Court-Martial of Colonel John B. Turchin* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2006).

³² John Cheney to My dear Wife, July 1, 1862, in *Illinois Artillery Officer’s Civil War: The Diary and Letters of John Cheney*, ed. Gordon Armstrong (College Station, TX: Virtualbookworm.com, 2005), 67-68.

³³ As Union soldiers penetrated the cotton kingdom, opportunities to strike at cotton multiplied. A Connecticut captain in Sherman’s command estimated that on November 20, 1864 alone, he destroyed at least \$150,000 of Georgia cotton. Despite official restrictions on burning, many officers and men during the March to the Sea felt entitled to ignite cotton and cotton gins. “Every house containing cotton is burned,” reported an infantryman. And when they did so, they remembered the boasts of the elite class that controlled it, shouting “here goes for King Cotton.” Lee B. Kennett, *Marching Through Georgia: The Story of Soldiers and Civilians During Sherman’s Campaign* (New York: HarperCollins, 1995), 274.

³⁴ “B” to Dear Harper, November 12, 1863, in *Gallipolis (OH) Journal*, November 26, 1863.

³⁵ Some Union commentators, including both soldiers and civilians, took the still more revolutionary step of demanding that planters’ property be seized and distributed among Union veterans after the war. This would deprive the southern oligarchy of its landed wealth (much as emancipation involved the confiscation of their slave property), compensate Union soldiers for their service and sacrifice, and build an economic foundation for a more prosperous and loyal southern future. An infusion of northern ‘mudsills’ would help to build a free labor society and economy in the South, while the wider distribution of property would undermine the aristocracy that had sparked the war. An early statement of the basic plan came in an August 1862 article entitled “Rewarding the Army,” published in the *Continental Monthly*, a Boston journal founded to promote emancipation. Now that antislavery policy seemed to be on target, the author argued, it was time to enact other measures to ensure that battlefield sacrifices were not in vain. To demolish “slaveholding planterdom,” it was necessary to strip the South’s elite class of its land as well as its human chattels; not only were southern plantations better suited to “free labor” and smallholdings, but anything less than full confiscation would allow the “criminals” responsible for the war to be “reinstated...in their privileges and possessions.” Union soldiers had earned the land by defending northern liberty. But confiscation and redistribution would also ensure that a reunited Union would not be controlled by the South. “Henceforth the North must rule.” Embedded within this battle for sectional supremacy was a struggle against the South’s ruling class, one to be waged by demolition of the plantation system and its replacement by free, dignified labor:

The farm must encroach on the plantation, the rural nobility give place to the higher nobility of intelligence; social culture based on mudsills must make way for the mudsills themselves – for lo! the sills which they buried are not dead timber, neither do they sleep or rot – they were fresh saplings, and / with the reviving breath of spring and at the gleam of the sun of freedom, they will shoot up into brave, strong life.

See: “Rewarding the Army,” *Continental Monthly* 2, no. 2 (August 1862): 161-165. Soldiers who saw planters’ rich lands in person similarly hoped that confiscation would benefit loyal and industrious working-class warriors. See especially: Entry dated March 1864 in Pellet, *History of the 114th Regiment*, 180-181; and Daniel M. Holt to My dear Wife, February 7, 1864, in *A Surgeon’s Civil War: The Letters and Diary of Daniel M. Holt, M.D.*, eds. James M. Greiner, Janet L. Coryell, and James R. Smithier (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1994), 171-172.

³⁶ John Richard Dennett, *The South as It Is, 1865-1866*, ed. Caroline E. Janney ([1965] Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2010), 348-349; J. Chandler Gregg, *Life in the Army, in the Departments of Virginia, and the Gulf, Including Observations in New Orleans, with an Account of the Author’s Life and Experience in the Ministry*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Perkinpine & Higgins, 1868), 143; “Education in Virginia,” *The Republic* 8, no. 3 (March 1877), 190.

³⁷ Lucius W. Barber, *Army Memoirs of Lucius W. Barber, Company “D,” 15th Illinois Volunteer Infantry. May 24, 1861, to Sept. 30, 1865* (Chicago: J.M.W. Jones Stationery and Printing Co., 1894), 82; Abraham John Palmer, *History of the Forty-Eighth Regiment New York State Volunteers in the War for the Union 1861-1865* (New York: Charles T. Dillingham, 1885), 3-4; Alexander Johnston, *Connecticut: A Study of a Commonwealth-Democracy* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1887), 374-375; Charles C. Briant, *History of the Sixth Regiment Indiana Volunteer Infantry, of Both the Three Months’ and Three Years’ Services* (Indianapolis: Wm. B. Burford, 1891), 61-63; and *Pennsylvania at Antietam. Report of the Antietam Battlefield Memorial Commission of Pennsylvania and Ceremonies of the Dedication of the Monuments Erected by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to Mark the Position of Thirteen of the Pennsylvania Commands Engaged in the Battle* (Harrisburg: Harrisburg Publishing Company, 1906), 157, 159; Charles A. Phelps, *Life and Public Services of Ulysses S. Grant, from His Birth to the Present Time, and a Biographical Sketch of Hon. Henry Wilson* (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1872), 70-71; Albion W. Tourgée, *The Story of a Thousand. Being a History of the Service of the 105th Ohio Volunteer Infantry, in the War for the Union from August 21, 1862 to June 6, 1865* (Buffalo: S. McGerald & Son, 1896), 276; *Report of the Proceedings of the Society of the Army of the Tennessee, at the Twenty-First Meeting. Held at Toledo, Ohio. September 5th and 6th, 1888* (Cincinnati: Published by the Society, 1893), 143; Willard W. Glazier, *The Capture, the Prison Pen, and the Escape, Giving a Complete History of Prison Life in the South* (Hartford: H.E. Goodwin, 1867), 39-40; William P. Derby, *Bearing Arms in the Twenty-Seventh Massachusetts Regiment of Volunteer Infantry during the Civil War, 1861-1865* (Boston: Wright & Potter Printing Company, 1883), 417-418; George A. Hitchcock diary entry, June 16, 1864, in Charles F. Walcott, *History of the Twenty-First Regiment Massachusetts Volunteers in the War for the Preservation of the Union 1861-1865 with Statistics of the War and of Rebel Prisons* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1882), 402; G.E. Sabre, *Nineteen Months a Prisoner of War. Narrative of Lieutenant G.E. Sabre, Second Rhode Island Cavalry, of His Experience in the War Prisons and Stockades of Morton, Mobile, Atlanta, Libby, Belle Island, Andersonville, Macon, Charleston, and Columbia, and His Escape to the Union Lines* (New York: The American News Company, 1865), 77-78; Edward D. Jervey, “Prison Life Among the Rebels: Recollections of a Union Chaplain,” *Civil War History* 34, no. 1 (March 1988), 43; and Robert H. Kellogg, *Life and Death in Rebel Prisons: Giving a Complete History of the Inhuman and Barbarous Treatment of our Brave Soldiers by Rebel Authorities, Inflicting Terrible Suffering and Frightful Mortality, Principally at Andersonville, Ga., and Florence, S.C., Describing Plans of Escape, Arrival of Prisoners, with Numerous and Varied Incidents and Anecdotes of Prison Life* (Hartford: L. Stebbins, 1865), 65.

³⁸ *Report of the Proceedings of the Society of the Army of the Tennessee, at the Seventh Meeting, Held at Lake Minnetonka, Minnesota. Hotel Lafayette. August 13th and 14th, 1884* (Cincinnati: Society of the Army of the Tennessee, 1893), 124.