



Witness to Reconstruction: Constance Fenimore Woolson and the Postbellum South, 1873-1894

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In the wake of the Civil War, Constance Fenimore Woolson became one of the first northern observers to linger in the defeated states from Virginia to Florida. Born in New Hampshire in 1840 and raised in Ohio, she was the grandniece of James Fenimore Cooper and was gaining success as a writer when she departed in 1873 for St. Augustine. During the next six years, she made her way across the South and reported what she saw, first in illustrated travel accounts and then in the poetry, stories, and serialized novels that brought unsettled social relations to the pages of *Harper's Monthly*, the *Atlantic*, *Scribner's Monthly*, *Appletons' Journal*, and the *Galaxy*. In the midst of Reconstruction and in print for years to come, Woolson revealed the sharp edges of loss, the sharper summons of opportunity, and the entanglements of northern misperceptions a decade before the waves of well-heeled tourists arrived during the 1880s.

This volume's sixteen essays are intent on illuminating, through her example, the neglected world of Reconstruction's backwaters in literary developments that were politically charged and genuinely unpredictable. Drawing upon the postcolonial and transnational perspectives of New Southern Studies, as well as the cultural history, intellectual genealogy, and feminist priorities that lend urgency to the portraits of the global South, this collection investigates the mysterious, ravaged territory of a defeated nation as curious northern readers first saw it.

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