



# **The Political Work of Northern Women Writers and the Civil War, 1850-1872 (Civil War America)**

*Lyde Cullen Sizer*

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## **The Political Work of Northern Women Writers and the Civil War, 1850-1872 (Civil War America)**

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This volume explores the lives and works of nine Northern women who wrote during the Civil War period, examining the ways in which, through their writing, they engaged in the national debates of the time. Lyde Sizer shows that from the 1850 publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* through Reconstruction, these women, as well as a larger mosaic of lesser-known writers, used their mainstream writings publicly to make sense of war, womanhood, Union, slavery, republicanism, heroism, and death.

Among the authors discussed are Lydia Maria Child, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Sara Willis Parton (Fanny Fern), Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth, Mary Abigail Dodge (Gail Hamilton), Louisa May Alcott, Rebecca Harding Davis, and Elizabeth Stuart Phelps. Although direct political or partisan power was denied to women, these writers actively participated in discussions of national issues through their sentimental novels, short stories, essays, poetry, and letters to the editor.

Sizer pays close attention to how these mostly middle-class women attempted to create a "rhetoric of unity," giving common purpose to women despite differences in class, race, and politics. This theme of unity was ultimately deployed to establish a white middle-class standard of womanhood, meant to exclude as well as include.

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