



## **Our Common Affairs: Texts from Women in the Old South**

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We know little about the lives and thoughts of white women in the antebellum South, and for many years students of the period have waited for a broadly based sampling of their writings. In *Our Common Affairs*, supplying this need, Joan E. Cashin has assembled 125 documents that explore the lives of these women in their own words. Cashin has selected excerpts from letters, diaries, wills, recipe books, and advice literature most never before published and drawn from sources in every Southern state. Her subjects include the wives of planters, merchants, professionals, artisans, and yeoman farmers.

Organized into six topical chapters—family life, friendship, work, race relations, and the secession crisis—these writings illuminate the experience of white Southern women as never before. In an introductory essay that critically reviews the historiography of the last thirty years, Cashin argues that white women in the slave South created their own distinctive culture, a "culture of resignation" that, unlike that of their Northern counterparts, accepted inequity and refrained from political activity.

*Our Common Affairs* examines the strong ties women developed among female kinfolk and friends; their troubled relations with slaves, especially female slaves; their frequent distaste for politics; and their mixed but largely fearful reaction to secession. The documents emphasize the pressing daily responsibilities these women faced and reveal their authors as flawed, complex, and wholly different from the stereotypes of Southern women that persist in the popular imagination.

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