

## **“Northern Brethren” and “Southern Sister States”: Family Metaphors in the Civil War Era**

**Abstract:** This essay examines the predominance of familial metaphors to describe political relationships in the Civil War era. Drawing on a transatlantic tradition, Americans in the post-Revolutionary period used the language of family to describe their relationships to the polity. During the Civil War era, this imagery and practice permeated public and private life, as people on both sides of the conflict prescribed solutions to the growing sectional conflict. People who identified with the United States described the political situation in terms used since the nation’s beginning: the country was a family, bound together by bonds of affection. For Confederates, while the reality of secession and civil war necessitated a shift from a primary identification as a national American, they continued to use the same familial metaphors that had shaped their lives in the decades since the Revolution.