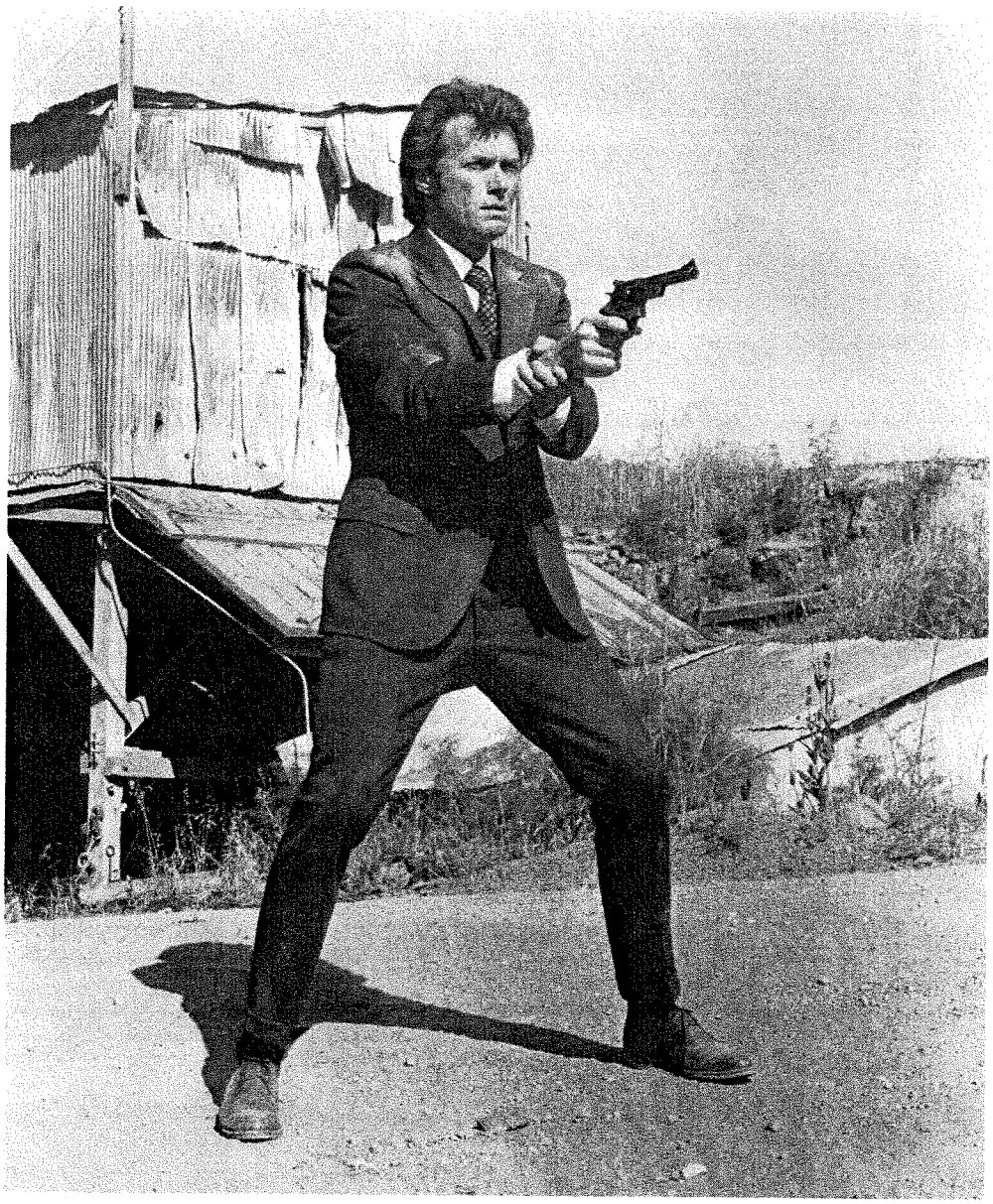
ESSAY

The Contradictory South

by Sheldon Hackney



The tension between the organization *and* the rugged individual *has long been a theme of the American experience. It is a tension exemplified by a cultural argument of sorts between Bill Gates and this man, famous for doing things his own way. Clint Eastwood as* Dirty Harry, *courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art Film Stills Archive. © by Warner Brothers, Incorporated, 1971. All Rights Reserved.*

Not long after the reelection of President Clinton in 1996, while the sore losers were picking through the rubble trying to figure out how such a flawed character could win, and when the press was feasting on the story about the hazing of four women cadets who had rushed through the breach blasted in the walls of the Citadel by Shannon Faulkner the year before, a car going very fast passed me while I was driving on the Interstate from Washington, D.C., to Charlottesville, Virginia.[1] This would have been unremarkable had I not noticed as the other car pulled away from me that it sported two stickers on its rear bumper. One read, "Don't blame me, I voted Libertarian." The other simply announced its loyalty to "The Citadel."

My mind was occupied the rest of the way to Charlottesville with the puzzle of how the same person could harbor such contrasting sentiments, the one envisioning a life minimally constrained by externally imposed rules, and the other symbolizing submission to the most rigorous military discipline. There is, of course, the time-honored idea that some heroes must give up their individual freedom in order to protect the freedom enjoyed by the whole society. I suspect, however, that the occupant of this particular automobile was expressing a different and less altruistic notion. He was adopting an oppositional stance, embracing two unfashionable and contradictory loyalties in defiance of mainstream opinion, choosing an identity that set himself proudly apart from the herd-like majority.

It recalled to my mind an image of right-wing militias in camouflage uniforms holding training maneuvers in the woods while professing opposition to the authoritarian federal government, another instance of submitting to authority in order to oppose authority. The militias are attractive to a certain kind of person because membership allows one to be patriotically loyal and bravely subversive at the same time. Such mirror-image identities, like opposing strands of DNA in the double helix, are satisfying solutions to the tensions of seemingly incompatible psychic needs.

In a similar fashion, southerners, both black and white, maintain an identity that is fully American, though for different reasons, yet is at the same time a dissent from America.[2] I mean to suggest here something more than the obvious fact that southerners are also Americans. Just as each of us has many different aspects to our separate identities, being a southerner and an American presents no problem until the meanings of those two concepts clash. They have been frequently at odds in the past, and their interaction remains frequent and problematic. Over time, the result has been a double or bipolar identity, analogous perhaps to the duality of a love-hate relationship, approach-avoidance mechanisms, or other deeply conflicted orientations.

One of the traditional puzzles in the historiography of the South is whether the South is quintessentially American with a few "peculiar institutions" that it

chose to defend, or whether it is a society whose structure, values, and ideals of behavior are fundamentally different from the rest of America. One could field a football team of distinguished historians on each side of this question.[3]

The problem is made more complex by the fact that the American identity itself is paradoxical. As historian Michael Kammen brilliantly argues, following an insight of psychologist Erik Erikson, the American identity is to be found in the conversation between linked pairs of polar opposites, which Kammen calls "biformities," such as idealism and materialism, liberty and equality, or individualism and community.[4] Those particular bipolar dialogues occur with a southern accent as well. In addition, there is the conversation, sometimes the argument, between an individual's notion of being southern and his idea of being American.

That the South is *both* American and alternative American is obvious at a superficial level.[5] Beyond that, how are the deeply conflicted ambivalences of being, say, a white southerner/American resolved or held in dynamic suspension by stances that can straddle cultural contradictions? Black southerners arrive at similar ambivalences by a path that mirrors that of their white counterparts. The dual identity of southerners grows out of the South's double history (as both American and an exception to America), and it functions comfortably within a culture shaped by biracialism and by a world view whose model is Protestant Christianity's paradoxes of religious faith.

A year after Shannon Faulkner enrolled at the Citadel, in the midst of a media feast on the story of the hazing of four new woman cadets, this essay's author was passed on the highway by a car sporting two bumper stickers: "Don't blame me, I voted Libertarian" *and, simply,* "The Citadel." *Regimental executive officer and staff, photographed by Russell K. Pace, The Citadel.*

Consider this illustration. In a series of seductive essays in the 1950s and 1960s, C. Vann Woodward contrasted a southern identity rooted in the un-American experiences of defeat, poverty, and guilt stemming from slavery and racial injustice with a national identity springing from a history of success, affluence, and innocence. Woodward here was engaging in the old literary tactic of using the South as a counterpoint to the North.[6] His subject was actually the complacent American mood of the postwar era and the dangerous arrogance flowing from the myths of American invincibility and purity of motive. The experience of the South, being much more akin to the human experience of the rest of the world, should serve as an antidote to the delusion that America was a chosen people, exempt from the consequences of hubris. Had America listened and learned from the "irony" of southern history, we might have been spared the tragedy of the war in Vietnam.

As it happened, the nation did not listen. The United States was led by a southern president, a southern secretary of state, and a southern commanding general into a war that could not be won, over matters that were not central to U.S. national interest. This foreign involvement generated increasingly strong opposition at home, leaving scars that have not yet fully healed. Ironically, the most hawkish section of the country was the South, the same South whose white inhabitants were simultaneously conducting a campaign of resistance to the federal government's authority in the area of civil rights and justice for African Americans, women, and members of other groups that suffered from discrimination. Here the South appeared in its dichotomous unity as the land of super patriotism and the locus of dissent.[7]

The South's multiple personality is obviously causally connected to its being both a part of the national story and at various times an impediment to that story. White southerners and black southerners share the double history of the region even though they may experience their relationship to it in ways that are inverse to each other. The self-consciousness of the South as a single, distinct region of the country with common interests was created during the debates over the Missouri Compromise in 1820, solidified in the defense of slavery against the abolitionist crusade, martyred in the Civil War and Reconstruction, extended by the rise and reign of Jim Crow, fed by perceptions of exploitation at the hand of Pittsburgh or Wall Street or Washington, and then reactivated by the struggle to resist the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. Through all of this it is clear that the identity was called into being originally by white apologists for slavery to oppose perceived threats to the "peculiar institution" from the outside. An oppositional mentality is one of the legacies of the white South's insistence for so long on some form of racial subordination as the defining feature of the social structure.

Conversely, being black in the hostile environment of the South has involved

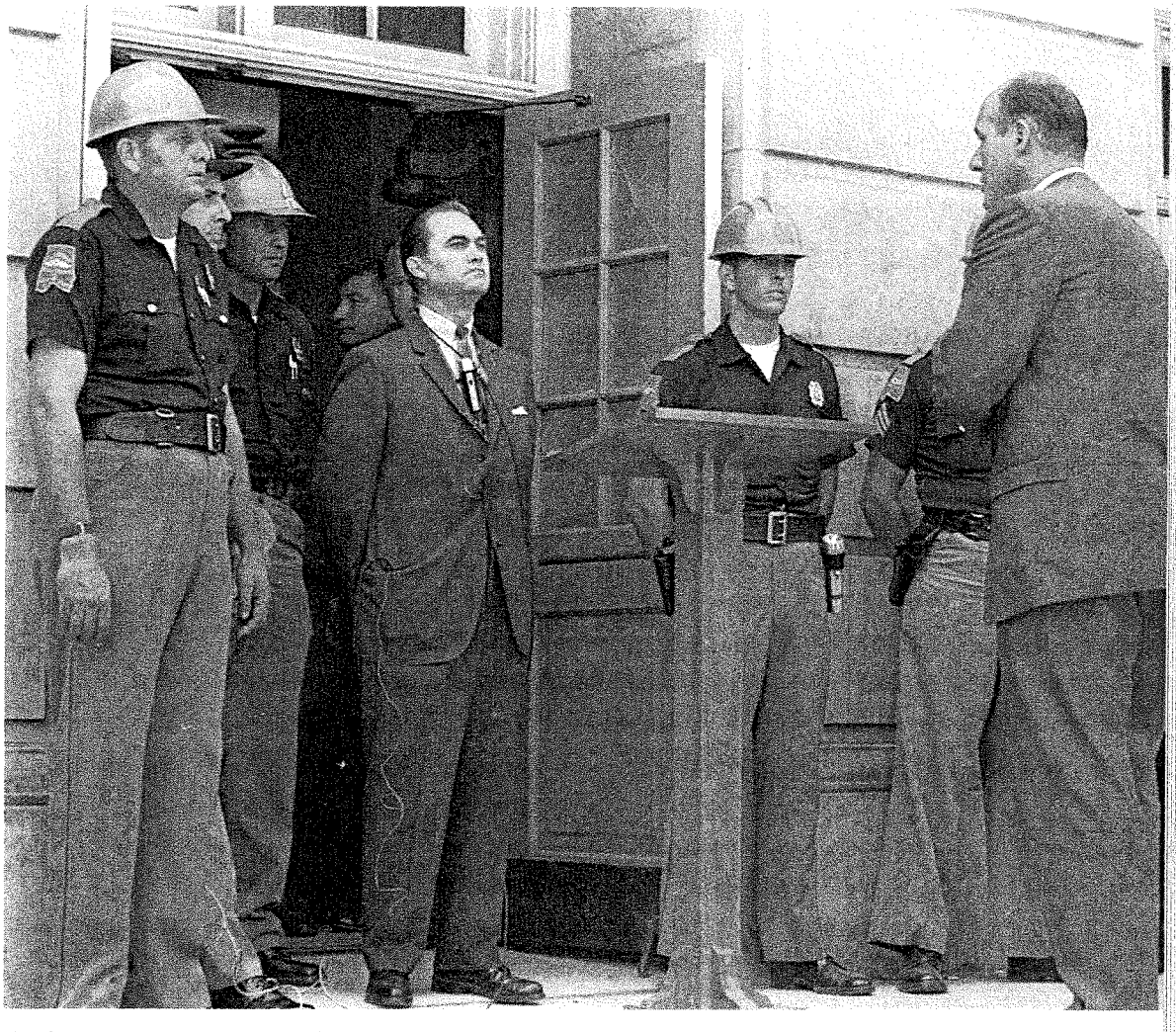
complex strategies of allegiance and opposition. Southern blacks and whites have been locked in a mutually modifying embrace, shaping and being shaped by each other and by a society whose core element is its biracial nature.[8] Whether or not biracialism finds institutional expression in slavery, in segregation, in some more fluid and complex public and private relationships, or in complete equality, there is still a twoness about living in the South. Yes, there are Cuban Americans in south Florida, Mexican Americans in south Texas, Cajuns in south Louisiana, Chinese in Mississippi, and triracial communities in Virginia and North Carolina, and a lot of fluidity and fuzziness at the margins of racial identities, but those and other complications don't yet challenge the formative power of biracialism in southern culture. Marginality is interesting and important, but it should illuminate and not obscure what is going on at the center of the culture.

In addition to complications of racial identities, there also exists great variety along other dimensions of southernness. Flatlanders differ from hillbillies, city folks from their country cousins, poor whites from gentry, and residents of the upper South from those who live in the Deep South. Despite the real variety, there is a shared identity, a sense of belonging to the same cultural tradition.

It has been widely accepted that the idea of the South—the social construction of the South as an American "other"—has been created and used by both southerners and northerners for political, ideological, and psychological purposes. There are so many possible intellective Souths, and so many different understandings of the American nation against which the South is being measured, that sociologist Larry J. Griffin warns us to ask with each invocation of the South, or of the American non-South, what the author is up to. What purpose is being served by this particular formulation of the southern or the national identity?[9] That is a fair point. Since the socially constructed South must bear some relationship, however imperfect, to a verifiable, real-world South, we must also probe every evocation for its basis in the evidence.

To believe that there is a South and that it is based in some way on the formative power of biracialism is not to argue that all white southerners believe in white supremacy or that every African American in the South is an incipient Nat Turner. It is to maintain, however, that every white or black southerner must decide where he or she stands with regard to the tradition of black subordination. One can be a white liberal, a racial equalitarian, an unreconstructed segregationist, a leave-me-alone moderate, a black accommodationist, a black militant, or many other shades of racial consciousness. What one cannot be is nonracial. A large part of one's public identity as a white or a black southerner is one's chosen relationship to the biracial nature of southern society.

The South, of course, is not the only part of the United States with a regional consciousness and a special history. We all have stereotypical images of New England, Texas, the West, and California, for instance. Those images, however, are



Southerners maintain an identity that is both fully American and a dissent from America. The struggle to resist the Civil Rights movement reactivated the century-and-a-half-old idea of the South as a distinct region of the country. Governor George Wallace—here flanked by state troopers and attempting to obstruct the National Guard's efforts in June 1963 to integrate the University of Alabama—typified this resistance. Courtesy of the Birmingham News, © by The Birmingham News Company, 2001.

rooted in time past, in certain events (like the Battle of the Alamo), or particular periods (like the transplantation of town-meeting Protestantism to New England in the Colonial period, or the settling of the Great Plains in the nineteenth century by Europeans). The South, however, has a collective identity that was forged in conflict with the rest of the nation, was fixed by the grim realities of the Civil War, and has been renewed not only by continuing defensiveness but by the filtering of common developments and experiences through an awareness of regional difference.

During two periods of our relatively brief national history, the South has been

the site of the central domestic political conflict: from the Missouri Compromise of 1820 through the Civil War and Reconstruction when the abolition of slavery dominated politics, and from the *Brown* decision in 1954 through the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968, when the Civil Rights movement was ignited in the South and then spread geographically to the rest of the country and demographically to other oppressed groups.

The realignment of American politics that came as a result of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and as a reaction to the social justice and counter-cultural movements of the 1960s still defines the American political scene. A hugely disproportionate number of the leaders of both national parties now speak with southern accents. Analysis of the controversial presidential election of 2000 confirms the fact that the South is now the most Republican region in the country. Even though the South is characterized by factors that predict Democratic votes (a large black population and lower levels of income and educational achievement), 55 percent of southern voters supported the Republican presidential nominee, who nonetheless failed to gain a majority of votes in the nation as a whole. Among southern whites, 66 percent voted Republican.[10]

In short, unlike other regions, the South has played a major and continuing role in American politics, just as it has played a larger-than-life role in the American imagination. In the nonpolitical realm, the South has provided the nation with a scapegoat on some occasions, with compensatory "Song of the South" nostalgia that was meant to ease the tensions of industrialization and legitimize an unjust racial order, with dueling images of Tobacco Road versus Tara, with a convenient "Other" who could bear guilt or carry utopian dreams as the psychic needs of the nation required.[11]

As critic Louis Rubin points out, there are enduring and emblematic literary traits of southern writers, whether black or white, male or female: "They are usually said to be a distinctive awareness of the Past, a firm identification with a Place, a preoccupation with one's membership in a community, a storytelling bent (as compared with a concern for Problems), a strong sense of family and an unusually vivid consciousness of caste and class, especially involving race." Rubin also points out that though the factors that have commonly been used to explain southern "difference" have disappeared, contemporary southern writers continue to exhibit these hallmarks of southern literature.[12]

Despite its powerful and persistent presence, the South has been vanishing since Henry Grady began peddling his New South snake oil to the New England Society in New York in 1886; it is one of the longest and most theatrical exits on record. Just like Frederick Jackson Turner, who waxed eloquent in 1893 in his presidential address to the American Historical Association about the power of the frontier in shaping American culture just three years after the director of the census declared that the frontier no longer existed, observers seem to notice the

In addition to racial identities, there also exists great variety along other dimensions of southernness. Flatlanders differ from hillbillies, city folks from their country cousins, residents of the upper South from deep South, and poor whites from gentry. Courtesy of the Odum Photo Study in the Southern Historical Collection, the Library of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

formative power of one southern characteristic or another only as they disappear.[13] Poverty, ignorance, rurality, isolation, ethnic homogeneity, and other supposed formative characteristics of the South have declined, but miraculously the South itself persists.

In his presidential address to the Southern Historical Association in November 1999, Jim Cobb wryly and wonderfully tweaked the noses of those who have pronounced premature epitaphs for Dixie over the preceding century and a quarter. He went on to argue that it is the North that has disappeared, dissolved by the discovery in the 1960s and 1970s that the stereotypical sins of the South were shared by the nation. That, of course, threatens the South because the South has existed as the foil of the North.[14] Left undecided is whether the South can exist without a utopian North and, if so, what will be the identity of the post-North South?

One should not infer from this, however, that just because the North has been exposed as harboring racial prejudice every bit as horrific as that found in the South, there is no real distinction between North and South. Anti-black feelings were rampant in the North during the antebellum period as well, but that did not make slavery less "peculiar" or less evil, nor did it prevent the Civil War. There is a fundamental difference between a society that contains racial prejudice and a

society that is fundamentally shaped by biracial consciousness, whatever the current balance of power or mode of race relations happens to be. In the South, biracialism has guided residential patterns, business practices, civic activities, leisure pursuits, political arrangements, and almost every thread in the warp and woof of society. It is a substratum of the South's being.

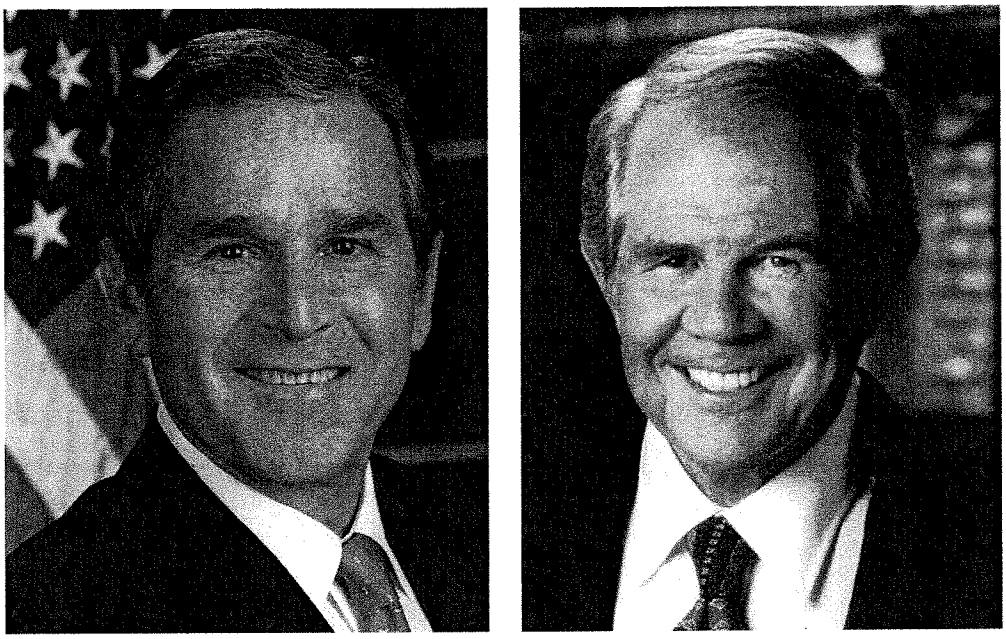
Whatever the disappearance of the North portends, scholars and journalists are sure to continue their debate about whether the South still exists. One cannot deny that various indices of southern distinctiveness continue to converge with the American non-South so that it is increasingly difficult to distinguish the region statistically.[15] Median family income in the South is closing the gap with the national average, and the responses to survey questions about time-honored litmus tests of southernness are revealing less regional variation.

For instance, when a national sample of adults in 1993 was asked how often they ate an evening meal together as a family while they were growing up, there was no difference between southern and nonsouthern respondents. In the same survey, there was no significant regional difference in church going, or in saying grace before meals, or in entertaining a person of a different race in one's home, or in attitudes toward women working and the influence of that on the family, or in attitudes toward pornography, or in geographical closeness to relatives, or in preference for family over friends for leisure-time companions, or in attitudes toward military service as a qualification for elective office, or even in attending a stock car race.[16]

A 1992 poll asking whether the respondent favored racial integration, segregation, or something in-between found 55 percent of southerners and 58 percent of nonsoutherners in favor of integration and about 30 percent of both favoring something in-between. Only when the question was about interracial dating and marriage did southerners show more resistance to racial mingling, and that difference is still present in a 1999 survey. On the other hand, a survey in 1996 found similar responses from southerners and nonsoutherners to a question about the desirability of hate-crime legislation, and similar percentages in 1999 claimed that the racial composition of their neighborhood made no difference to them. Could it be that it is finally time to play taps for the southern mystique?

Don't blow that bugle yet! The South lives. The reason for the interminable disappearing act is that the South actually *is* constantly disappearing, only to be replaced by another South, also distinct but distinct in a different way. I think of this as the "molting South," always in the process of shedding a skin only to reveal another skin of original design covering the same beast.

Now, it is true that some of the persistent southern identity is simply in the minds of Americans, North and South. For instance, in the same 1993 survey that found indistinguishable answers between southerners and nonsoutherners on questions about family behavior, there was this question as well: "In general, do



The South is now the most Republican region in America with 55% of its voters supporting George W. Bush. Its transformation from a Democratic stronghold likely had something to do with the Religious Right, whose numbers include those cultural forces harnessed by Pat Robertson, and which is centered in the region. Photographs courtesy of the White House and the Christian Broadcasting Network.

you think southerners are more loyal to family or less loyal to family than people in other areas of the country?" A majority of both southerners (68 percent) and nonsoutherners (56 percent) thought that southerners were more loyal to family. Similarly, although there are now only small differences between South and non-South in church-going, large majorities of both southerners (72 percent) and nonsoutherners (68 percent) in a 1993 poll thought southerners were more religious. Perceptions of southern distinctiveness persist, even though it is difficult to capture some of those differences in objective measurement.

A representative sample of adults was asked in the summer of 1999 whether or not their community was in the South. Of the eleven ex-Confederate states, only Texas (84 percent) and Virginia (82 percent) fell below the 90 percent level in respondents who believed their community was in the South. The suburbs of Washington and the Texas borderland are nibbling at the edges of southern self-consciousness. Kentucky (79 percent) and Oklahoma (69 percent) remained as pretenders to southernness, while other states that are sometimes referred to as "southern" contained only minorities who thought of themselves as living in the South: West Virginia (45 percent), Maryland (40 percent), Missouri (23 percent), Delaware (14 percent), and the District of Columbia (7 percent). The idea of the South is alive in the minds of ordinary people.

It is also true that the South still exists in the world of measurable differences and real human actions. The South maintains its position as the most violent and the least schooled part of the country. It is still the poorest and the most enamored of gun ownership and capital punishment.[17]

The Federal Center for Disease Control and Prevention recently issued a report warning the public that obesity is a public health problem in the United States. The nation is fat and getting fatter, and the South is leading the way. Traditional southern cooking might be part of the problem, the report concluded, but the "more likely reason for the greater increase below the Mason-Dixon line is a lack of exercise. Southerners are less likely to hike, ride a bike, walk, or join a health club than people in the rest of the nation."[18]

Another recent government study reported that the state of literacy in the country was not good, and it found the South particularly illiterate. Of the eleven ex-Confederate states, only Virginia had fewer than 20 percent of its population in Level One literacy (the worst category). All the rest had 21 percent or more of the population in Level One literacy. Of the nonsouthern states, only California, New Jersey, New York, and the District of Columbia, all places with large numbers of immigrants and high levels of poverty, had 21 percent or more of their populations in Level One literacy.

So, the sedentary South and the ignorant South join the cavalier South, the lazy South, the militant South, the violent South, the demagogic South, the benighted South, the sunny South, and other exotic Souths on the shelf of national curiosity. Tempting as it is to define the South as that part of the United States that is fat, dumb, poor, and violent, to do so would be to confuse transitory symptoms with lasting identity.[19]

The recent controversy about the Confederate flag flying over the South Carolina state capitol reminds us that the siege mentality, while no longer claiming a majority of white South Carolinians, is still aggressively alive. That was confirmed for me not long ago when I spotted a Confederate-flag bumper sticker on a shabby pickup truck in Alabama whose text read, "If At First You Don't Secede."

Tony Horwitz found enough Confederates in the attic to give one pause. For a certain part of the southern white population, within the vibrant subculture of Civil War reenactments and the popular market for Civil War symbols and memorabilia, he detects a continuing sense of grievance and of loss. Theirs is a struggle to save a world that is slipping away, in which big government serves as the proxy for an unseen enemy and the Confederate battle flag is a talisman against modernity.[20]

Even though pollsters have difficulty asking questions about racial attitudes that differentiate southerners from nonsoutherners, practicing politicians in the South know that racial attitudes still motivate a significant portion of the electorate in a way that is not true outside the South. Cynthia McKinney, a black

The South has provided America with dueling images of Tobacco Road (below) and Tara (above). Courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art Film Stills Archive, Tobacco Road © *by Twentieth-Century Fox and* Gone with the Wind © *by Selznick International. All Rights Reserved.*

woman running for reelection in 1998 to the U.S. House of Representatives in a redrawn white-majority district, played the "reverse race card," appealing to the progressive whites in the neighborhoods around Emory University to demonstrate to the country that Atlanta was beyond racism. It worked. She was reelected.

Obversely, Zell Miller, former Democratic governor of Georgia, told an audience of southern historians in November 1999 that it had been a political mistake for him to try to purge the Confederate symbol from the Georgia state flag in 1992–94, not because he had changed his mind about the morality of the situation but because he had rebalanced the political equation. It was an error, he concluded, to have expended huge amounts of political time, energy, and credibility on an issue that was merely symbolic but about which a majority of the white voters felt very strongly. It distracted attention from "real" issues.[21]

Miller's advice for white Democrats was to avoid the buzz-saw symbolic issues and talk about things government can do to improve the lives of ordinary folks, black as well as white. The formula for success is well known to white Democrats, he said. They must get 90 percent of the black vote and 40 percent of the white vote. The implication is clear. Any issue tinged by race will chase enough white voters away to allow the Republicans to win. Sure enough, the Georgia legislature's recent removal of the battle flag motif from the state flag is proving to be unpopular. Symbolism has a reality of its own.

Another way to think of the continuing presence of race in the thinking of the southern electorate is to ask the question, "Why is the South the most Republican section of the country in presidential elections?" It is certainly not because the South contains a disproportionate share of the educational and economic elite who find Republican policies appealing, though it is true that a certain kind of elite is involved. When the federal government first began to cater to the needs of people at the local level during the New Deal, it was intruding into the province of local elites in the South. The economic order was threatened as well as the racial order. The flip-flop to the Solid Republican South after 1968 occurred because the Republican Party came to represent resistance to the federal government's threat to the intertwined racial and economic arrangements of southern society. The Republican Party also represented a brand of self-reliance that struck a responsive chord in a region not far removed from its agricultural past and thoroughly imbued with its Protestant present.

Just as W. J. Cash made much of the simultaneous presence of hedonism and pietism in the ordinary southerner, the GOP is harvesting the fruit of a hybrid formed by the union of traditionalism and free-market capitalism. Traditionalism honors the authority of patriarchy, community, and older ways of doing things. The market is devoted to material values, innovation, and self-interested individualism. Nothing is more corrosive of tradition than the market. It is a case of the

contradictory loyalties of the Republican Party matching the contradictory psychic needs of the white South.

While it is difficult to disentangle cause and effect, it is still clear that the transformation of the Democratic South into the Republican South had something to do with the fact that the Religious Right is centered in the South. The Religious Right is dedicated to resisting the drift of our culture toward secularism, hedonism, and materialism. One of the large ironies of the present day is that the Religious Right has identified the Democratic Party as the sponsor of modernist cultural values. Thus it has allied itself with the Republican Party, the party that claims to be both the preserver of family values and the champion of free-market capitalism and technological progress, the very forces that inevitably undermine those values that the Religious Right seeks to preserve. It is not unusual to find that a major trend in American culture has generated its own negation; it *is* unusual to find both the thesis and the antithesis in the same political party. As modern life has gotten more self-serving and pleasure-seeking, the opposition to it has become more southern, even though southerners participate enthusiastically in the materialism of modernity. This is another instance of double consciousness.

The function of religion in southern life, however, is probably more subtle and

American individualism as embodied by such cultural luminaries as Henry David Thoreau and Clint Eastwood occurs in the South with a regional flavor—and is a part of the cultural exchange between "just American" and "southern American." Eastwood in Two Mules for Sara, *courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art Film Stills Archive, © by Universal Pictures. All Rights Reserved. Thoreau, from the frontispiece portrait in* Walden, *published by Houghton-Mifflin in Boston, 1893.*

more powerful than is suggested by the political activism of the black church or of Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition. Protestant Christianity provides the unconscious cultural model for southerners who seek to understand the world and their place in it. The overwhelming Protestantism of the South subtly shapes a culture in which people find their identities in the paradoxes of theological assumptions, in the conversation between conflicting cultural commandments, in the dialogue between the opposing poles of the dichotomous choices they face in daily living.

Christians know Jesus as both Lord and servant. They simultaneously view Him as both human and divine. These are overarching contradictions that believers embrace with no trouble. The example of Christ embodies the Christian paradox that you cannot save your life except by giving it away, and it is held aloft as the ideal for emulation by Christians. The Christian promise that "the last shall be first" helps shape a worldview that is constructed on important contradictions.

The evangelical dilemma, then, is that people are all absolutely responsible for their sins and for the state of their souls, but they are powerless without the help of God to save themselves. Men and women are at the same time radically independent and abjectly dependent. The evangelical Christian struggles to understand and to live a godly, righteous, and sober life, yet salvation comes through grace, a free gift from God.

The secular analogy is that we are all expected by society to be responsible for our own well-being, but we are incapable by ourselves of sustaining ourselves. We are not only social animals, but we live in a modern society composed of intricate arrangements that make each of us dependent in some ways on each other—for a job, for police protection, for a market in which to sell the products of our hands and head, for a government that will educate our neighbors so they can also contribute to society rather than prey on us, for laws that will guarantee our ownership of all kinds of property against the rapacious designs of predatory individuals and organizations, for the provision of common goods like clean air and water, roads and bridges.

The resulting tension between individualism and organization is a central theme of American history, a running argument between Henry David Thoreau and John D. Rockefeller, or perhaps between Clint Eastwood and Bill Gates. It occurs in the South with a regional flavor, refracted by the biracialism that has shaped southern identity, an identity that is to be found in the cultural exchange between black and white, and between "just American" and "southern American." Just as Christians embrace the dilemmas of faith, southerners accept the paradoxes of their southern identity.

The South is full of exemplary Americans and of alternative Americans at the same time. The American identity is multifaceted, and it changes over time, but whatever it is at any one time, the South is both American and its opposite,

both endorser and critic. In short, southerners, both black and white, live with paradox.

To be southern is to have a public identity formed in a biracial world, a biracial world in which the interplay between blacks and whites has left each group profoundly influenced by the other, a biracial world that has created a hybrid culture shared by both groups. To be southern is to be formed by a religious culture of contradictions, contradictions that are resolved by transcendent belief. To be southern is also to be created in the conversation between the American identity and dissenting critiques of the American identity. To be southern, either black or white, is to be profoundly contradictory.

NOTES

This essay was first presented at The Citadel Conference on the South, April 6–8, 2000.

1. Catherine S. Manegold, *In Glory's Shadow: Shannon Faulkner, the Citadel and a Changing America* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2000).

2. For an interesting rendering of the "Oppositional South" theme, see Larry Griffin, "Why Was the South a Problem?" in *The South as an American Problem*, ed. Larry J. Griffin and Don H. Doyle, (University of Georgia Press, 1995), 10–32.

3. See, for instance, Carl N. Degler, *Place Over Time: The Continuity of Southern Distinctiveness* (Louisiana State University Press, 1977), 2–7, and Charles Grier Sellers Jr., ed., *The Southerner as American* (University of North Carolina Press, 1960; E. P. Dutton and Co., 1966).

4. Michael Kammen, *People of Paradox: An Inquiry Concerning the Origins of American Civilization* (1972; Cornell University Press, 1990).

5. See David L. Carlton, "How American is the American South?" in *The South as an American Problem*, ed. Griffin and Doyle, 33–56. Carlton's explanation from economic history is only a partial solution because it does not account for the contemporary doubleness of southern identity.

6. C. Vann Woodward, *The Burden of Southern History*, revised and enlarged edition (1960; Louisiana State University Press, 1968), and C. Vann Woodward, *American Counterpoint: Slavery and Racism in the North-South Dialogue* (Little, Brown and Company, 1971).

7. See Randall Wood, "Dixie's Dove: J. William Fulbright, the Vietnam War, and the American South," *Journal of Southern History*, 60(1994): 533–52.

8. For an interesting exploration of southern blacks' sense of rootedness or community, see James C. Cobb, "Searching for Southernness: Community and Identity in the Contemporary South," in *Redefining Southern Culture: Mind and Identity in the Modern South* (University of Georgia Press, 1999), 125–49.

9. Larry J. Griffin, "Southern Distinctiveness, Yet Again, or, Why America Still Needs the South," *Southern Cultures*, 6(2000): 47–72.

10. For exit poll results, see the *New York Times*, 12 November 2000. Nationwide, 90 percent of blacks voted Democratic, as did 79 percent of Jews, while 63 percent of white Protestants and only 47 percent of Catholics voted Republican.

11. The classic statement of a mythic South created to counterbalance certain motifs of national character is William R. Taylor, *Cavalier and Yankee: The Old South and American National Character* (1961; Doubleday Anchor Book, 1963). For a more recent examination of the same general theme, see Carl Degler's presidential address to the Southern Historical Association in 1987,

"Thesis, Antithesis, Synthesis: The South, the North, and the Nation," *Journal of Southern History*, 53(1987): 3–18.

12. Louis Rubin, "Changing, Enduring, Forever Still the South," in *The Prevailing South: Life and Politics in a Changing Culture*, ed. Dudley Clendinen (Longstreet Press, Inc., 1988), 226.

13. John Boles, ed., *Dixie Dateline: A Journalistic Portrait of the Contemporary South* (Rice University Studies, 1983). See especially Boles's introduction.

14. James C. Cobb, "An Epitaph for the North: Reflections on the Politics of Regional and National Identity at the Millennium," *Journal of Southern History*, 66(2000): 3–24, and George B. Tindall's "Beyond the Mainstream: The Ethnic Southerners," in *The Ethnic Southerners* (Louisiana State University Press, 1976), 1–21. The first full treatment of southern whites as an ethnic group is to be found in Lewis Killian's *White Southerners* (Random House, 1970). Some superficial confirmation of this interesting observation is provided by the National Collegiate Athletic Association. The four regions into which the men's national basketball championship tournament is divided are: South, East, West, and Mid-West. There is no North. In the women's tournament, conforming to Cobb's prediction, there is not only no North but no South either, just East and West and their "Mid" twins.

15. See Benjamin Schwarz, "The Idea of the South," *Atlantic Monthly*, December 1997, 117–26. My favorite empirical tracing of the existence of the South is John Shelton Reed's *The Enduring South* (University of North Carolina Press, 1974). See also John Egerton, *The Americanization of Dixie: The Southernization of America* (Harpers Magazine Press, 1974); Peter Applebome, *Dixie Rising* (Harcourt, Brace/Harvest Books, 1996); and Edwin M. Yoder, "Thoughts on the Dixiefication of Dixie," in *Dateline Dixie*, ed. Boles, 159–66.

16. All survey results cited here are from the Southern Focus Poll conducted by the Howard Odum Institute for Research in Social Science at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, available on the web at www.irss.unc.edu/data-archive/Pollsearch.html.

17. See Andrew K. Frank, "The End of the South?" in *Routledge Historical Atlas of the American South* (Routledge, 1999), 128–31.

18. *New York Times*, 27 October 1999.

19. *The State of Literacy in America*, a publication of the National Institute for Literacy available online at http://www.nifl.gov/reders/reder.htm.

20. Tony Horwitz, *Confederates in the Attic: Dispatches from the Unfinished Civil War* (Pantheon Books, 1998).

21. Richard Hyatt, *Zell: The Governor Who Gave Georgia Hope* (Mercer University Press, 1997), chapter 17.

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