

# ESSENTIAL CIVIL WAR CURRICULUM

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## Sectionalism

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### Introduction

Sectionalism is not only an essential topic for the study of the nineteenth century, it is also vital to understanding the origins of the United States from its founding. At its most basic, sectionalism is the idea that individual communities of people, sharing a set of cultural, economic and geographic realities, create individuated sections and loyalties within a larger polity. To be more specific, as James McCardell explains in the Introduction to *The Idea of a Southern Nation*, “Sectionalism results when the inhabitants of a geographical entity possess or perceive a common interest in a specific issue or set of issues... as in New England’s dissatisfaction with the War of 1812, the plains states’ advocacy of free silver in the 1890’s, or the ‘solid South’s’ Democratic voting pattern.”<sup>1</sup> McCardell’s definition illuminates not only the idea that sectionalism is firmly based on a shared location and set of common values, but that it existed long before and continued long after the Civil War. Traditionally, many discussions of sectionalism have cast too broad a net over an expansive geographical region, presuming that all people contained within that boundary are the same. Of course, this is a gross oversimplification. Anyone who has travelled to “the South,” for example, can readily identify the differences between Virginia, the Carolinas and Alabama. These regions all fall under the general aegis of “the South” and yet are best described as the different Souths of the Upper, mid-Atlantic, and Deep varieties. And still this would be too general.

Some contemporary scholars have tried to create more nuanced interpretations of sectional trends by focusing on localized and micro-histories. J. William Harris’ *Deep Souths* considers three disparate topographical regions of the state of Georgia, the Delta, Piedmont, and the Sea Islands, as a means to interpret the ways in which differing landscapes and their component socio-economic and racial constituents affected various responses to the age of segregation.<sup>2</sup> Despite the fact that Harris’ case studies fall geographically within the boundaries of Georgia, his work also can be used to understand similar responses in similar landscapes throughout “the South” more

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<sup>1</sup> John McCardell, *The Idea of a Southern Nation: Southern Nationalists and Southern Nationalism, 1830-1860* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1979), 5.

<sup>2</sup> J. William Harris, *Deep Souths: Delta, Piedmont, and Sea Island Society in the Age of Segregation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press), 2003. For similar treatments of local history as a lens to understand the broader South see also: Jason Sokol, *There Goes My Everything: White Southerners in the Age of Civil Rights, 1945-1975* (New York: Vintage Books, 2007); Victoria E. Bynum, *The Free State of Jones: Mississippi’s Longest Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016); Robert Tracy McKenzie, *Lincolmites and Rebels: A Divided Town in the American Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

broadly. Similarly, historian Jason Sokol examines different local examples of racism and the persistent advocacy for civil rights in the twentieth century to illustrate a broader interpretation of the New England racial norms and attitudes in his book *All Eyes are Upon Us*.<sup>3</sup>

More general discussions of sectionalism also tend to focus on the competing interests and differences of the individual states and sections. Historian Donald Davidson even advocated the idea that an interpretation of the United States as a nation "...must allow a place for enormous and highly self-conscious areas of differentiation."<sup>4</sup> Historian Frederick Jackson Turner took this idea of competing interests one step further writing "Our sections constitute the American analogue of European nations." Such analyses tend to use to the most obvious example of sectionalism in the U.S.—the contest between the North and the South in the American Civil War—as their case study. This is understandable, as sectionalism is clearest when two opposed sections literally oppose each other through bloody conflict.

However, restricting the discussion of sectionalism primarily to the Civil War years can sacrifice the broader point that sectionalism is as much a part of the founding of the nation as the subjective concepts of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Turner explains the problem of a temporally limited analysis of sectionalism this way, "Sectionalism in American history has been so commonly conceived of by historians as the struggle between North and South over slavery that the much more complicated sectionalism, involving all the various geographic provinces of the United States and the regions within them, and exhibiting itself in economic, political, and cultural fields, has been neglected."<sup>5</sup> Sectionalism, therefore, has a much longer and broader history than is typically considered by historians of the United States. In considering this longer and broader history, it must be asked: have these United States ever actually been united or has this always been a nation in which sectional and regional allegiances have overridden a fidelity to the nation?

### **Sectionalism and the Early Republican Period**

In the post-revolutionary era, sectionalism was an obvious obstacle to creating a more united nation. At first the country coalesced around the Articles of Confederation that offered very little if any federal oversight of the many states and no ability to function economically within the sphere of other national powers. The Federalists pushed for a new organizing document that would privilege the whole of the nation over the sum of its parts. In moving from the articles government to the constitutional government greater unity amongst the states was a top priority. After all, a confederation is only a collection of confederates, or neighboring states in this example, each retaining their sovereign right to govern themselves. Conversely, a constitution implies that the individual states become constituents of a larger government. However, sectional disagreements

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<sup>3</sup> Jason Sokol, *All Eyes are Upon Us* (New York: Basic Books, 2014).

<sup>4</sup> Donald Davidson, "Where Regionalism and Sectionalism Meet," in *Social Forces* 13, no. 1 (1934): 23-31, 23.

<sup>5</sup> Frederick Jackson Turner, "Geographic Sectionalism in American History," in *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 16, no. 2 (1926): 85-93, 85.

and compromises were written into the new constitution leaving in doubt whether national unity could ever be an achievable goal.

In 1987, renowned historians Forrest McDonald and Eugene Genovese published a debate over the interpretation of sectionalism in *The Organization of American Historians Magazine of History*. Genovese's argument not only made concrete the categories of sectional difference but asserted the need to include discussion of national unity in the early years in any analysis of American sectionalism. He wrote that since "the first days of the republic, if not well before, American society encompassed an assortment of geographically grounded differences that nonetheless pointed toward a national unity: settled, older regions against newer ones; cities against the countryside; capital-lending areas against debtor regions; manufacturing districts against agricultural."<sup>6</sup> Essentially, Genovese argued that what united the country as a whole was this inherent sense of opposition—of sectionalism.

However, the problematic nature of a sectionally divided union was clear to some of the nation's founding fathers even at the birth of the Republic. The Federalists warned about the dangers of caving to sectional interests at the expense of national unity. In his *Federalist Paper no. 2* John Jay writes:

It has until lately been a received and uncontradicted opinion that the prosperity of the people of America depended on their continuing firmly united, and the wishes, prayers, and efforts of our best and wisest citizens have constantly been directed to that object. But politicians now appear, who insist that this opinion is erroneous, and that instead of looking for safety and happiness in union, we ought to seek it in a division of the States into distinct confederacies or sovereignties.<sup>7</sup>

Despite such warnings, the competing interests of sectionalized representatives at the Constitutional Convention left their mark on the final document. Many of these still echo through contemporary debates pitting federalism against state sovereignty. Hamilton, the Federalists, and the northern banking interests envisioned a unified nation bound together economically, legislatively, and diplomatically by a powerful central government. Jefferson, though not actually present at the Constitutional Convention, is still an important representative of the southern planter class of citizens who were used to conducting themselves within the structures of local and regional autonomy, rejected this idea. He worried that such a consolidation of power would be used as a mechanism for the bankers and the capitalists of the North to rule the southern agricultural economy.

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<sup>6</sup> Forrest McDonald and Eugene D. Genovese, "Debate: Nationalism or Sectionalism?," in *OAH Magazine of History* 2, no. 4 (1987): 2-3, 3.

<sup>7</sup> John Jay, "The Avalon Project : The Federalist Papers No. 2," in *The Avalon Project* (New Haven, CT: Yale Law School Lillian Goldman Library, 2008), [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/fed02.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/fed02.asp), accessed September 7, 2020.

The power and wealth of the southern slave states were already undeniable and differentiated from the economic systems of New England by the time of the Constitutional Convention. Consequently, any constitutional language that either endorsed or rejected the system of slavery, was hotly contested by the representatives of these opposing sections. Historian John Craig Hammond contends that the "drafters of the Constitution responded to these conflicting concerns by creating a complex constitution that sought to satisfy the demands of very different groups of people in an enormous and diverse continental republic."<sup>8</sup> However, many of the compromise 'complications' in the document remained intentionally vague. They thus perpetuated debate over the same issues.

Additionally, because political representation at the Federal level was essential for either section to preserve its own economic and social systems, both sides worried about being apportioned an equal number of legislators in congress. The Constitution, being the compromise document that it is, attempted to assuage both sides by apportioning an equal number of Senators from every state. This fear of equal representation was not only along the north/south divide, but a point of contention between big states and small states in the north as well. However, some northern interests objected to this system arguing that this attempt at equal representation actually resulted in the concentration of a disproportionate amount of power in the hands of the relatively few elite in the South. This power disparity, they argued, stemmed from the fact that there was a significantly smaller free, therefore voting, population in the South with access to the same number of Senators as the northern states where the free population was much larger.

To resolve this issue, a bicameral congress was created including both the Senate, with two senators from every state, and the House of Representatives that apportioned the number of Representatives from each state based on population. However, even this compromise would not entirely solve the divisive issue between North and South. The 3/5ths clause had to be adopted, counting each slave in the South as 3/5ths of an individual to increase the population totals of the southern states and therefore their number of representatives in the House.

It is worth considering the sectional lines are fungible and change over time as laws and interests change. For example some of the wealthiest and most successful in the southern planter class were Federalists, while the northeast was also home to a significant population of anti-federalists. This means that creating a bright line in which either side was exclusive to the north or south would be in error. Additionally, assigning sectional definition based on slave or free state status is difficult at this point because both north and south still had slaveholders in 1787.

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<sup>8</sup> John Craig Hammond, "Slavery, Sectionalism, and the Constitution of 1787," in *Common-Place: the journal of early American life*," 16, no. 4 (Summer 2016).

## Transportation, Territorialism, and Economic factors in defining Nineteenth-century Sectionalism

Throughout the nineteenth century, many more conflicts arose that would test the careful balance the Constitution tried to strike. Perhaps the most obvious of these took place in the decades preceding the Civil War. However, roughly fifty years prior to that conflict, the War of 1812 became a complicated issue in many parts of the country. It was so unpopular in the New England states that people in that section considered taking several drastic measures. As historian Alan Taylor writes, many in the New England states considered "defection" from the war altogether and considered making their own peace with the British.<sup>9</sup> A Federalist convention held in Hartford led many to fear that sectionalism would spell the end of the American Republic because the "convention's secret proceedings encouraged speculation that the delegates would secede from the union and ally with the British, which would provoke civil war within the union."<sup>10</sup>

At the conclusion of the war, the nation experienced a large stimulus to its economy and saw dramatic increases in technological innovation as well as territorial expansion. In describing the prosperity of the 1820's, Forrest McDonald outlines the different ways in which the growth shaped the economies of the northern and southern regions. He writes, "The transportation revolution... drastically reduced shipping costs for farmers in the interior and redirected the attention of merchants and producers on the Northeastern seaboard away from Europe and toward the hinterland. The South alone would continue to be dependent upon European markets."<sup>11</sup> This diverging reliance on European markets would ultimately lead to the Nullification Crisis of 1832-1833 considered by many historians as a dress rehearsal for southern secession and the Civil War.

This is not to say that the North was entirely devoid of any connection to slavery. Multiple scholars have looked at how the northern economy was intertwined with that of the South. For example, textiles were dependent on cotton from the South and the northern banking industry profited from lending to southern planters.<sup>12</sup> Still the economy of the north and New England especially was more diversified than that of the South, therefore more resilient in the face of changing markets.

### The West

Westward expansion was likewise a significant factor in creating the country's most profound sectional crisis. Since Jefferson completed the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, the United States had focused much of its attention on the idea of Manifest Destiny and of opening up the West. In the mid-nineteenth century, the limits of the expansion would be tested in the bloody

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<sup>9</sup> Alan Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812: American Citizens, British Subjects, Irish Rebels, & Indian Allies* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011), 415.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> McDonald and Genovese, "Debate", 2.

<sup>12</sup> For more on this subject see: Jessica M. Lepler, *The Many Panics of 1837: People, Politics, and the Creation of a Transatlantic Financial Crisis* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013) and Edward E Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books, 2016).

form of the Mexican American War. In general, the slave states welcomed an opportunity to expand slavery into new territory, while the free states worried about a growing power divide that would occur if the slave states expanded farther westward. During his 1860 travels through the South, Frederick Law Olmsted observed: "Most of the citizens of the Slave States appear to believe that the continuance of slavery depends upon the continual and rapid territorial dispersion of the slave-holding community."<sup>13</sup>

In the North, by contrast, opponents of the war were not hard to find. Perhaps the most famous of the New England opponents to the war was Henry David Thoreau who wrote his essay "On Civil Disobedience" about his experiences after refusing to pay a poll tax which he feared would be used to support the war effort.

One of the most influential and controversial analyses of these emerging sections came from Turner's "Frontier Thesis." The thesis first appeared in his essay "The Significance of the Frontier in American History." In a succeeding essay Turner argued "... the West, almost from the beginning, wherever it lay at the time, thought of itself as an entity, a substantial and separate section in the Union, and as destined to rule the nation in the future."<sup>14</sup> Turner conceived of the West as a process of democratization of the new territory rather than a geographically bound section- a moving target on the periphery of settled American lands.

Successive historians have thoroughly rejected many aspects of this thesis. For example, in the introduction to his book, *Comanche Empire*, Pekka Hämäläinen explains that contemporary historians have dismissed it as "an ethnocentric and narcissistic rendition of the European takeover of North America."<sup>15</sup> However, for several generations Turner's assertions about the West were adopted and embraced by multiple scholars. Regardless of the problematic ideas espoused by Turner, he succeeded in defining and codifying the idea of the West as a distinct, if evolving section of the U.S.

## Slavery and Sectionalism

While it is true that the institution of slavery was a part of the American experience both North and South, the ways in which that system was situated within those cultures were exceptionally different. During the colonial and early republic periods, these differences became points of sectional division as well as points of sectional definition. As Ira Berlin describes it in his book *Many Thousands Gone*, the North, was a society with slaves and the South was a slave society.<sup>16</sup> This analysis is based on the degree to which the system of slavery transcended the economic realm and infused itself into the cultural and social fabric of society itself. In the North slavery remained a system of labor and economic function primarily. However, in the southern slave states, it was so deeply woven into the cultural norms and traditions as well as the economics

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<sup>13</sup> Frederick Law Olmsted, *A Journey in the Back Country* (New York: Knickerbocker Press, 1907), 47-48.

<sup>14</sup> Turner, "Geographic Sectionalism", 87.

<sup>15</sup> Pekka K. Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 7.

<sup>16</sup> Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998).

of that section that, to many, the abolition of slavery in the South seemed unfathomable. Olmsted also observed this difference writing, “When speaking of the slavery of our Slave States, then, I mean not slavery simply, but all those habits, customs, and laws, which at present invariably accompany, and are peculiarly connected with the slave system as it at present exists in our own country.”<sup>17</sup>

## Compromises

The nineteenth century could well be described as the century of sectional compromises: Missouri Compromise (1820); Compromise of 1850; Kansas-Nebraska Act (1854); Crittenden Compromise (1860)<sup>18</sup>. This series of compromises, and others, some more or less directly, attempted to preserve the Congressional balance of power between the slave and free states. However, even though the legislative acts were meant to assuage the opposing sections and preserve the integrity of the union, more often than not “rather than solidifying support, [they] unified opposition.”<sup>19</sup>

In the first half of the nineteenth century Henry Clay, a Whig from Kentucky, used all his powers of persuasion to try and repair the sectional crisis that would eventually lead to the Civil War. In an 1850 speech made on the floor of the Senate, Henry Clay tried for the last time to create some semblance of equilibrium between the opposing southern and northern factions. His speech acknowledged the existing sectional attitudes concerning the territory acquired from Mexico and Spain at the conclusion of the Mexican-American War while simultaneously stressing the national benefits of adopting his proposed compromises. Clay, “the Great Compromiser,” then tried to bridge the gap saying his proposed compromise was “neither Southern nor Northern. It is equal; it is fair; it is a compromise.”<sup>20</sup> A week later his proposal was defeated. Even though a Compromise of 1850 was ultimately reached, it bore little resemblance to the ameliorative version Clay had envisioned. As a result, the battle lines of the impending war were drawn dividing North from South right along sectional lines.

## The Civil War

Any of the foundational texts on the nineteenth century, the Civil War, and Reconstruction treat divergent economic and social components, particularly between New England and the South, as fundamental reasons for the inevitability of the Civil War.<sup>21</sup> While the reasons for the conflict

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<sup>17</sup> Olmsted, *Journey*, 48.

<sup>18</sup> Important to note that the Crittenden Compromise of 1860 is the only one of these three not enacted.

<sup>19</sup> Senate Historical Office, “Clay’s Last Compromise,” in *Senate Stories 1801-1850*, Washington D.C.: U.S. Senate, n.d., [https://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/minute/Clays\\_Last\\_Compromise.htm](https://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/minute/Clays_Last_Compromise.htm), accessed September 7, 2020

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> See: Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper Perennial), 2014; Shelby Foote, *The Civil War: A Narrative* (London, UK: Pimlico), 1991; Malcolm Rutherford, Marianne Johnson, and William J. Barber, *The Emergence of a National Economy: The United States from Independence to*

could accurately be reduced to a disagreement over slavery, the way both sides expressed their positions relied on a more textured, nuanced set of arguments. In 1860, South Carolina Senator James Chesnut summed it up saying “There is... a conflict- a conflict of ideas irreconcilable.”<sup>22</sup> A southern newspaper took this idea even further, proclaiming, “In this country have arisen two races [i.e., northerners and southerners] which, although claiming a common parentage, have been so entirely separated by climate, by morals, by religion, and by estimates so totally opposite to all that constitutes honor, truth, and manliness, that they cannot longer exist under the same government.”<sup>23</sup> While the two factions couched their objections in different terms, with the South declaring it was defending its way of life and the North dedicating itself, at least initially, to preserving the Union, both sides understood that, at its heart, the real point of contention was a fundamental disagreement over slavery.

And yet, by the early twentieth century, purveyors of the "Lost Cause Myth" that the war was not about slavery but states' rights were abundant. After all, they contended, the greater part of the South was not comprised of slaveholders but of a majority population that owned few or no slaves at all. These assertions belie the fact that the South's sectional identity was inherently tied to the system of slavery. As Genovese explains, even “the non-slaveholding majority of whites were caught in the web of the larger social system of slavery.”<sup>24</sup>

After the firing on Fort Sumter, marking the commencement of hostilities, the North and the South were no closer to one another on the question of slavery, but did find some common ground in their experience of suffering during the war. Civil War historian Edward L. Ayers explains “While every American and Confederate county experienced the war in its unique way, they all knew the same faiths, fury, anxiety, regret, self- righteousness, and uncertainty.”<sup>25</sup> Both sides suffered the profound personal losses engendered by the war, but the economic suffering of the South was largely one-sided.

Ultimately, the North and, more importantly, the Union prevailed. Historians, since the surrender at Appomattox, have attempted to explain why. Certainly, a component of the South's defeat can be explained by economic factors. The differences in the economic structures of the two sections led to a boom for the North and a collapse of the southern economic system. In his essay “Jefferson Davis and the Confederate Defeat,” southern historian David M. Potter argues that “... the Confederacy suffered from the fact that it had the kind of economy that is prostrated by war, in contrast to the Union which had the kind of economy that flourishes under wartime activity...

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*the Civil War: Sectionalism: 1820 to the Civil War*, (London, UK: Pickering & Chatto), 2004; C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (New York: Oxford University Press), 2006.

<sup>22</sup> McCardell, *Idea of a Southern Nation*, 3.

<sup>23</sup> James M. McPherson. "Antebellum Southern Exceptionalism: A New Look at an Old Question," in *Civil War History* 29, no. 3 (1983): 230-44, 233.

<sup>24</sup> McDonald and Genovese, “Debate”, 3.

<sup>25</sup> Edward L. Ayers, *In the Presence of Mine Enemies: War in the Heart of America, 1859-1863* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2003), 417.



namely industrial production.”<sup>26</sup> Indeed, while the economy of the South largely imploded, the manufacturing and industrial economy of the north boomed both during the war and in the war’s aftermath as it became the nation’s leading supplier of the materials of physical reconstruction. Seeing this, the South ushered in the New South era in which they tried to emulate and recreate the manufacturing prowess of the North.

What was the war’s ultimate impact on this idea of sectionalism? While some, including newspaper editorialists, of the time saw the north/ south divide as a division between “two races” of people, perhaps it was the result of the war and the hardships of Reconstruction which actually cemented the sectional differences.<sup>27</sup> Other historians, such as Frederick Jackson Turner saw the sectionalism which both generated the war and was reflexively created by it as a distraction from the more relevant east/ west sectionalism and the division between the established nation and the frontier. Additionally, many recent monographs including Victoria Bynum’s *The Free State of Jones*, and William Freehling’s *The South Versus the South*, to name but two explode the idea of monolithic north/ south allegiances by highlighting the dissent present particularly in the Confederate States by those still swearing allegiance to and fighting for the Union.

### **Southern Identity and Persistent Historical Legacies**

During the post-WWI industrialization of the nation, southerners feared a loss of their sectional distinctiveness. As a result, writes C. Vann Woodward in *The Burden of Southern History*, “Toward the end of the twenties two distinctive attempts were made by Southerners to dig in and define a perimeter of defense against further encroachment.”<sup>28</sup> The South and perhaps the rest of the nation had seen itself as exceptional, at least before the Civil War.<sup>29</sup>

With the destruction of the system of slavery, much of what made the South exceptional vanished with the last of the plantation system. This sent southern traditionalists scurrying to try to find a way to reassert the uniqueness of the region. Building upon Reconstruction-era racially based violence and oppression of the newly emancipated slave population, twentieth century neo-confederates and southern traditionalists, like the United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Sons of Confederate Veterans for example, promoted the “Myth of the Lost Cause” which championed the morality of the southern cause, and disputed the idea that the Civil War was fought over slavery. This myth and the statues and other mnemonic structures created during the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries helped inspire racial violence and the re-subjugation of African-Americans living in the South, and the brutality and homicides of the lynching era in the United States. Woodward explains it this way: “Historic memories of resistance and cherished

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<sup>26</sup> David M. Potter, “Jefferson Davis and Confederate Defeat,” in Current, Richard Nelson., and David Herbert Donald, *Why the North Won the Civil War: Essays by Richard N. Current* (New York: Collier Books, 1962), 92.

<sup>27</sup> James M. McPherson. “Antebellum Southern Exceptionalism: A New Look at an Old Question,” in *Civil War History* 29, no. 3 (1983): 230-44, 233.

<sup>28</sup> C. Vann Woodward, *The Burden of Southern History* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1960), 8

<sup>29</sup> McPherson, “Antebellum Southern Exceptionalism”, 230.

constitutional principles could be invoked. Racial prejudices, aggressions, and jealousies could be stirred to rally massive popular support. And with this dearly bought unity... the frustrated traditionalist might take a last stand for the defense of all the defiled, traduced, and neglected values of the traditional order."<sup>30</sup>

Without these prejudices and aggressions, the southern traditionalist might have had to admit the South was defined by tenuous thoughts and memories too challenging to communicate to anyone from outside the region. In his novel *Absolom Absolom!*, William Faulkner dramatizes the intangible quality of what defines the southern section of the U.S.

What is it? something (*sic*) you live and breathe in like air? a (*sic*) kind of vacuum filled with wraithlike and indomitable anger and pride and glory at and in happenings that occurred and ceased fifty years ago? a (*sic*) kind of entailed birthright father and son and father and son of never forgiving General Sherman, so that forever more as long as your children produce children you won't be anything but a descendant of a long line of colonels killed in Pickett's charge at Manassas?"

"Gettysburg," Quentin said. "You can't understand it. You would have to be born there."<sup>31</sup>

Today the sectional differences between North and South appear to many, but not to all, somewhat vestigial, or of another age. This perception has led multiple scholars, including C Vann Woodward, to ask questions such as 'Did the South ever exist?' 'If it did, has it disappeared?' In his masterwork, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, Woodward argued that the region's distinctiveness eroded with the rise of urban centers in the South as well as with the industrialization of a once agricultural region.<sup>32</sup> However, southern traditionalists still exist and exercise power in that section. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, this can be seen most clearly in some southerners' urgent attempts to preserve what they perceive as southern heritage and difference. Their need to preserve distinctiveness has taken the form of violent conflicts over the removal of various Confederate monuments which some consider heritage and others perceive as monuments to a legacy of hate. Regardless of interpretation, such monuments are unified in one aspect. They stand as representations of a time in the U.S. when extreme sectionalism led to a tragic and bloody conflict in which not only the North pitted itself against the South, but Americans killed other Americans over profound sectional differences.

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<sup>30</sup> Woodward, "Burden of Southern History", 11.

<sup>31</sup> William Faulkner, *Absolom, Absolom!* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1969), 289. Quoted in James M. McPherson, "Antebellum Southern Exceptionalism: A New Look at an Old Question," in *Civil War History* 29, no. 3 (1983): 230-44, 230.

<sup>32</sup> C. Vann Woodward, *Jim Crow*.