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Book Notes:
Reading in the Time of Coronavirus

By Jefferson Scholar-in-Residence
Dr. Andrew Roth

So, How Did the South Win the Civil War?

What light does the **Big Ten** and **Pac-12's** decision ***not*** to play versus the **Southeastern Conference (SEC), the Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC),** and **the Big 12's** decision ***to play*** college football this year shed on the question, "Who won the Civil War?"

Sounds absurd, doesn't it?

It's not.

While it is the most trivial of the four, the map of college football and three other maps reveal the roots of our cultural discontents, the roots of the culture wars that Pat Buchanan declared at the 1992 Republican National Convention; the roots of the culture wars that Newt Gingrich brought to Congress paralyzing its members ability to manage their disagreements, the soul of democratic politics, and to find common ground; the roots of the culture wars threatening to shred the soul of America.

The first map is the simplest. It is the map of the *Confederate States of America*, *the Union* and *the Border States*. Note that, obviously, Alaska and Hawaii were not part of the issue in 1861 and that Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma and much of the mountain west were federal territories not yet admitted to the Union, although several were hastily added during the war and just after to consolidate Union power.

Remember that **red** pattern.

The second map illustrates the 2016 Presidential Election Electoral College results

With the exception of Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan and Wisconsin, while no longer loyal to the Democratic Party, it reflects both the continuing "solidity" of the "Solid South" and those regions to which southern cultural and political values spread *after* the Civil War. Two things: 1) the map vividly illustrates why the 2020 Presidential Election hinges on the outcome in four northern states and 2) the perceptivity of Heather Cox Richardson, about which more later.

The third map depicts the spread of the coronavirus during 2020's late spring and early summer when resistance to social distancing and wearing masks became politicized as infringements on personal liberty. A grotesque masquerading of *states' rights* , in which apparently the "states' right " in question in each state was the right of its citizens to infect each other, to get sick , and to die.

The last map takes us back to college football.

Apologizing in advance for my abysmal drawing skills, the area crudely colored in **red** is the home of the SEC, the ACC and the Big 12.

Do you discern, do you recognize a pattern?

If not, you should.

Heather Cox Richardson's brilliant book, ***How the South Won the Civil War,*** and her earlier ***West from Appomattox*** will enhance your pattern recognition. It is not, as she writes on the very first page of ***West from Appomattox***, "that today's voters (are) still fighting the same issues over which they went to war in 1861." [1] No, she continues, "The story is all about reconstruction." [2]

She's right, but I am going to disagree with her just a bit. While no one is advocating for the reinstitution of slavery, there is a lingering states' rights, anti-national government ethos pervading 21st century politics. Where it came from, how it got from John C. Calhoun's 1830s South Carolina to Scott Walker's 2010s Wisconsin is the thesis of Richardson's story.

And she tells it brilliantly.

SPOILER ALERT: For those Civil War military buffs reading these ***Book Notes***, Richardson does not argue that the South won the "war" war. No, Grant still won at Vicksburg and Sherman still marched to the sea. Richardson's argument is that the South won the "war" after the war. The South won the Reconstruction *"War"*. In the South of the Old Confederacy, particularly the Deep South of Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas, while guerrilla in nature, terroristic in execution, it was war. Think of the Memphis Massacre (1866), the Colfax Massacre (1873), the Coushutta Massacre (1874), the Battle of Liberty Place (1874), the White Citizens League, and the rise of the Ku Klux Klan.

Beyond the borders of the old confederacy in the near west, think Missouri and western Kansas, then a bit farther west into Oklahoma and then the desert southwest and northward into the mountain West, the South won America's "hearts and minds," or at least many Americans' "hearts and minds."

In short, the South won the peace. That ideological victory defines America down to today.

How that happened is the story Richardson tells.

So, hey, we'll give her the catchy title – ***How the South Won the Civil War***. You have to admit, it grabbed your attention.

A professor of history at Boston College, Richardson has written a number of books. Somewhat mimicking John Dickinson's ***Letters from a Pennsylvania Farmer*** (1767-68), Richardson also writes a daily newsletter placing contemporary events in a nominal historical perspective. It's called *"Letters from an American"* and can be found here.

In ***How the South Won the Civil War***, Richardson's thesis has four major points. All four are critical, but the first is foundational. It is the ongoing American struggle between oligarchy and equality, which predates the Confederacy going back to the nation's founding. Richardson analyzes the seemingly eternal American struggle

between oligarchy and equality. If there is such a thing as an elite revolution, then the American revolution was a revolution of elites, particularly in the southern colonies.

In the north, by which in revolutionary era terms one means Massachusetts, the revolution was more middle-class, if one can use that descriptor to describe Samuel and John Adams, James Otis, and his sister Mercy Otis Warren, Dr. Joseph Warren, and the tradesman Paul Revere. In addition, there were revolutionary *mechanics,* the 18th century term for working men, who joined the Sons of Liberty protests of illicit power. Some protests were non-violent, others quite violent – think the Boston Tea Party and the Boston Massacre (1770), in which the nascent revolution's first victim was a free man of African-American and Native American ancestry – the stevedore Crispus Attucks. [3]

But to the southward, as they would have said in the 18th century, it was a revolution of elites. George Washington, George Mason, the Randolphs, Thomas Jefferson, the Lees, as in Richard Henry Lee (whose cousin Light –Horse Harry Lee, a revolutionary war general, was the father of Robert E. Lee), James Madison, the Pinckneys – Charles and Thomas, John Rutledge, and Pierce Butler were neither from the middle class nor mechanics.

They were aristocrats. It was as aristocrats that they understood their place in the world.

This odd couple of northern, not egalitarians by any stretch, but nascent northern republicans, who, steeped in their town meeting culture, became joined at the hip, or should we say at the Chesapeake, with southern aristocrats, who, tempered by an innate sense of *noblesse oblige*, but who were nonetheless men who also thought it their birth right to govern. They too believed in representative government – Washington bought voters drinks campaigning for the House of Burgesses – but they believed it their right to govern and others' duty to be governed by them. As David Hackett Fischer has described in ***Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America***, the New Englanders and their sense of *ordered liberty*, which freed you to serve the community's needs, wedded the southern aristocrats and their sense of *hegemonic liberty*, which freed them to govern others and obligating others to be governed by them. [4]

In the woods of North America, it was the descendants of the combatants in the 17th century English Civil War uniting in an awkward embrace, which awkwardness defines American politics down to today.

Having awkwardly and reluctantly embraced, then in the political furnace and sweltering weather of Philadelphia in the summer of 1776 at the Continental

Congress, they moved toward declaring independence from Great Britain. They appointed a committee to draft a declaration. Four were northerners, Thomas Jefferson the only southerner. At first, they wanted John Adams to write it, but Adams, the crafty politician that he could be, thought Jefferson the better choice. Thinking, as he did the year before when he nominated George Washington to be General of the Continental Army, Adams thought it would bind the southern colonies to the northern colonies, making freedom's cause not Massachusetts' or the northern colonies', but a continental cause.

As Pauline Maier examined in her ***American Scripture***, Jefferson took as his model other earlier declarations, in particular George Mason's ***Virginia Declaration of Rights***. [5] But he went a step further, writing what is arguably one of the most famous lines in the English language:

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

Those words are in the Declaration's second paragraph, sometimes called the "American Creed." In declaring such, Jefferson, his fellow committeemen, and the Continental Congress set in motion the 244 year and counting America struggle between its egalitarian ideals and those who would be oligarchs attempting to refute them and, failing that, to suppress and to restrict them.

Restrict them? Well, just who were these "men" who were created equal? And "equal" in what way? Politically? Economically? Socially? Certainly, they were not equal in talent – some were smart, some were strong, some were agile, some were shrewd, but many were none of these things. So, what did equality mean?

It included only "free white" people, according the Naturalization Act of 1790, effectively eliminating white men and women who were indentured. Actually, it did not include women of any color. It excluded African Americans and had an extremely ambiguous attitude towards Native Americans.

Richardson does a marvelous job tracing the 244-year trail of oscillations between equality and oligarchy, from the ratification of the U.S. Constitution in 1787-1789, which attempted to put the democratic genie back in the bottle creating a representative republic, including that most anti-democratic feature, the Electoral College, down the centuries to the 21st century Republican Party's and President Trump's attempts to suppress the vote. In between she makes stops at Andrew Jackson's 1828 popular ascendancy championing the common man, the pre-Civil War struggles to suppress dissent, the Reconstruction Era's attempts to broaden American

democracy via the 13tth, 14th, and 15th Amendments (sometimes called the Second American Revolution) and the late 19th century's successful suppression of that progress.

The back and forth between equality and oligarchy continued into the 20th century as progressive President Theodore Roosevelt attempted to broaden equality as he "busted trusts" and Gilded Age economic oligarchs only to be turned back by Warren G. Harding's "Return to Normalcy." That itself ran aground in the Great Depression of the 1930s giving rise to FDR's "New Deal" and the post-World War II liberal consensus culminating in the great civil rights acts of the 1960s – the apotheosis of equality in American political history.

That in turn spawned Movement Conservatism; the ascendance of Ronald Reagan running against the very idea of government itself; Newt Gingrich and the 2016 election in which a billionaire masquerading as a populist won the presidency securing tax breaks for the rich, governmental deregulation, and precious little for the common folk to whom he promised equality by making America great again.

It is a big story; it is an old story. In many ways the story of America is the story of the struggle to be included (to be considered equal) of all those originally excluded from that sterling declaration of unalienable rights and those who would exclude them.

The excluded based their quest for inclusion by appealing to America's foundational ideals. From the women's rights activists at Seneca Falls, N.Y. in 1848's *"Declaration of Rights and Sentiments"* to Martin Luther King Jr.'s "the greatness of America is the right to protest for rights," America's excluded fought for inclusion by exhorting America "to just be true to what you said on paper." [6]

Those who would deny them inclusion did so by denying those ideals, perhaps most notoriously in Alexander Stephens' *"Cornerstone Speech's"* explicit rejection of Jefferson's declaration of equality. Stephens, vice president of the Confederate States of America, said "Our new government is founded upon exactly the opposite ideas." [7] And so it has gone ever since – the excluded appealing to American ideals; those who would exclude rejecting those ideals.

If Richardson's conception of the struggle between equality and oligarchy is foundational to understanding American history, her three other major points bring it out of the South and into the 21st century. Richardson details how defeated southerners moved west out of the militarily occupied former Confederacy to settle the near West, the upper Midwest, and the mountain West. In doing so, they borrowed Jefferson's vision of the yeoman farmer answerable to no one but himself: toiling in his own fields, caring for his family, and asking for no one's help. In the

process, Richardson's third point, they created the mythic West – that Marlboro Man version of American history of the lone individual opposed to the national, read Union, government's intervention, creating a new society by stint of his own labor.

It is central to the myth that the individual was a *he,* a *white he*, to be precise. In the process, women, African –Americans, and Native Americans were either written out of the story or typecast as *Mom* – keeper of the domestic hearth; typecast as *Sambo* – servile and irrelevant; or as *savages* – barbarians to be eliminated.

Also central to the Marlboro Man myth is a massive act of collective amnesia, not the least of which is that approximately a quarter of all cowboys were African Americans. More generally, however, is the (willful?) forgetting that the settlers were not alone. There was the U.S. Cavalry clearing the land of its indigenous occupants so that settlers could farm it and others mine its minerals.

While the freedmen of the South never got their "40 acres and a mule," other Americans benefited from the ***Homestead Act of 1862***, which "encouraged Western migration by providing settlers 160 acres of public land. In exchange, homesteaders paid a small filing fee and were required to complete five years of continuous residence before receiving ownership of the land." [8]

Of course, there is the question of how did the settlers get to the West. Some walked, some rode in wagons, but there was also the *Transcontinental Railroad*, known originally as the *Pacific Railroad* built between 1863 and 1869. It was built by three private companies on public lands provided by U.S. land grants with construction financed by company-issued mortgage bonds and by state and federal subsidy bonds. [9] Henry Clay would have loved it; today we would call it a public-private partnership.

Beyond railroads, there are the questions of law enforcement, water rights, road building, and creating the infrastructure of a new society, all of which were built with governmental assistance and all of which have been, if not erased, consigned to the margins of the West's popular history.

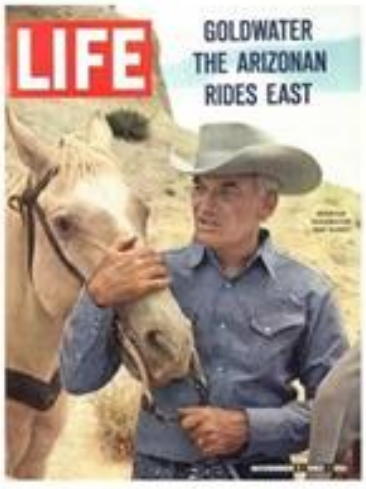
But perhaps not law enforcement, the image of the sheriff, of the U.S. Marshall, is an enduring Western icon. Think Matt Dillon in *Gunsmoke*, think Gary Cooper in ***High Noon***, think Henry Fonda as Wyatt Earp in ***My Darling Clementine*** (a film which combines all the Western tropes into one cinematic *tour –de force*). It is interesting that of all the Western archetypal lawmen, only Wyatt Earp really existed. His story, as you might suspect, is far more complex than that old ABC television series.

Although the myth of the western lawman might provide a window into the tangled politics of 21st century policing, Richardson keenly and insightfully analyzes the popular culture images surrounding the mythic West's pervasive influence on American culture. Whether deconstructing the latent racism and sexism in Laura Ingalls Wilder's ***Little House on the Prairie***, the naivete of Frank Capra's ***Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*** or that most pervasive of Western icons, *the Cowboy*, Richardson's serious examination of popular culture provides a valuable service.

American culture is *popular culture*. While Jacque Barzun's famous dictum 'to know America you need to know baseball' is no longer true, it remains true that to know America you need to know American popular culture. Yes, there is an American *high culture*, but if all you know about American music is what you hear at the Philharmonic, if all you know about American literature is David Foster Wallace and Thomas Pynchon, if all you all you know about American film is what you see at art museum film groups, if all you know about American TV is PBS, then you will miss America.

For if America is democratic, then it is revealed, for better or worse, in its popular arts. ***The Apprentice***, it turns out, would have been a better primer for the 2010's politics than ***Downton Abbey***.

Richardson's examination of cowboy culture illustrates America's love of pop images over reality as she traces cowboy imagery from Buffalo Bill Cody to Barry Goldwater and Ronald Reagan's love of cosplay – that bizarre but common phenomenon, born in the 20th and living into the 21st, of people dressing up like their favorite action hero or movie star. Goldwater and Reagan, neither of whom was a real cowboy, loved to play cowboy with boots, a checkered shirt and a wide-brimmed cowboy hat. Sometimes they were even shown hugging a horse.



[10] One, of course, was the scion of Phoenix retail merchants, and the other a B-Grade actor most famous for promoting General Electric products on television.

In my ***The American Tapestry Project,*** I have a section on "Mediated America." It explores Americans succumbing to what Daniel Boorstin called ***The Image*** and Neil Postman called ***Amusing Ourselves to Death*** the American love of unreality. Next week in ***Book Notes*** we'll explore that at length in discussing Kurt Andersen's ***Fantasyland: How America Went Haywire: A 500-Year History.***

For now, we'll look at how popular culture cowboys illustrate Richardson's point. First, the story of the American cowboy as the totemic emblem of the yeoman farmer gone west who, alone in the saddle, caring for his family, eschewing government support, tamed the West is a myth. Now, like all myths, it has a seed of truth, but that truth has been exaggerated at the expense of the rest of the story to create a myth of white men taming the Wild West to make it safe for their women and children (see John Ford's ***The Searchers*** for the most thoughtful exposition of that myth in all its nuances).

Lost is that cowboys came in a multiplicity of hues, were culturally descended from the conquered Mexican *vaqueros,* from whom most of the West was won in the Mexican War, who themselves constituted about 33 percent of western cowboys, while another 20 to 25 percent were African American freedmen drawn to the cowboy life because it offered more freedom than available to them elsewhere. In short, about half of all cowboys were minorities, the other half former Union and Confederate soldiers and restless white men seeking their fortune. Of the three groups, former Confederate soldiers dominated in the near west of Missouri, Kansas, Iowa up into Minnesota and, of course, Texas. [11]

That polyglot grouping, however, gets whitewashed in the popular culture of Buffalo Bill Cody's Wild West Show, the dime novels of Bat Masterson and Ned Buntline, and gets completely bleached out in the nickelodeon movies of the early 20th century from Bronco Billy Anderson in ***The Great Train Robbery***, Tom Mix, the native Pennsylvanian on the white horse, down through all the great westerns of the 1920s, 1930s, culminating in 1939's John Ford's ***Stagecoach,*** starring John Wayne. As Richardson explicates, it contains all the stock images: the schoolmarm coming west, the drunk, the hooker, the sheriff, and the lone strongman who will redeem them all.

John Wayne became the archetype of the cowboy. So much so that in the *National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum* there is an entire section devoted to him. [12] Now, John Wayne may or may not be a great actor, but he was no cowboy. He

was born Marion Morrison in Winterset, Iowa and grew up in Glendale, California; his father was a pharmacist. He earned a football scholarship to Southern Cal, injured his back in a surfing accident, went across town to Hollywood in search of spending money as an extra, and the rest, as they say, is history. He could act a bit and became the iconic image of the cowboy.
And that image resonates down to the present. It was that image that Barry Goldwater and Ronald Reagan used as they mounted their campaigns against the federal government. Remember, it was Reagan who said, "The nine most terrifying words in the English language are: 'I'm from the government and I'm here to help.'" [13] Richardson expertly analyzes how the mythic West coalesced around the oligarchy versus equality struggle to create the image of the iconic individual who built America and would build it again if only freed from government restraint (read freed from others seeking equality).

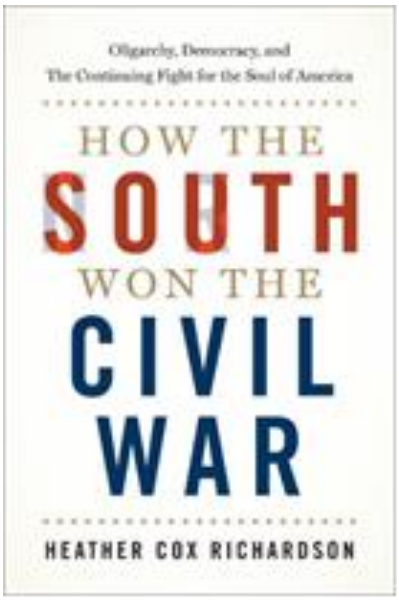
All of this combined in the late 1950s and early 1960s to give birth to Barry Goldwater and Movement Conservatism, which at the time was considered so not in the mainstream as to be inexplicable. But later in the 1960s and 1970s, it would co-opt the counterculture's "Do Your Own Thing" and morph into the dominant political philosophy of the late 20th and early 21st centuries. As we detailed in several previous ***Book Notes***, this resulted in the Baby Boomer generation becoming the most conservative generation in American history as they road the wave of anti-government rhetoric: Contract for America, Drain the Swamp, and the aforementioned Reagan's "Nine Most Terrifying Words."

This does not explain the irony that these anti-government politicos want so very badly to be the nation's president.

You need a sense of humor.

Still, Heather Cox Richardson's superb analysis of how the South's states' rights, hyper-individualistic anti-federal government philosophy went west, then national, brilliantly explains how the four maps from this article's beginning shine a clarifying light on our current politics, even something so comparatively trivial as big-time college football. The story of America is the unfolding conundrum of providing equality for all, providing for the ever-increasing inclusiveness in the expression, "We the People," while at the same time recognizing the reality that some will lead and some will follow, while at the same time preventing those who lead from dominating and excluding those who follow.

It can make your head spin or go haywire.



For more information about Heather Cox Richardson the author of, *How the South Won the Civil War,* can be found on her Facebook page (https://www.facebook.com/heathercoxrichardson), or on her twitter (@HC_Richardson).

Next week in Book Notes, Kurt Andersen's ***How America Went Haywire***.

-- Andrew Roth, Ph.D.
Scholar-in-Residence
The Jefferson Educational Society
roth@jeserie.org

End Notes

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11.*"Cowboy", in* **Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia** available at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cowboy#:~:text=A%20cowboy%20is%20an%20animal,of%20other%20ranch%2Drelated%20tasks. accessed August 23, 2020.

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13.Reagan, Ronald. *"Nine Most Terrifying Words",* **You Tube**, *available at* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xhYJS80MgYA accessed August 23, 2020.
Photos:
Map 1: //www.deviantart.com/thesmithsart/art/Confederate-Union-and-Border-States-668471090
Map 2: https://www.ft.com/content/3685bf9e-a4cc-11e6-8b69-02899e8bd9d1
Map 3: https://www.clickondetroit.com/news/michigan/2020/07/08/michigan-now-at-high-risk-for-coronavirus-outbreak-research-shows/
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