1973


James Paisley Hendrix Jr

Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_disstheses

Recommended Citation

https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_disstheses/2543

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at LSU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in LSU Historical Dissertations and Theses by an authorized administrator of LSU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact gradetd@lsu.edu.
INFORMATION TO USERS

This material was produced from a microfilm copy of the original document. While the most advanced technological means to photograph and reproduce this document have been used, the quality is heavily dependent upon the quality of the original submitted.

The following explanation of techniques is provided to help you understand markings or patterns which may appear on this reproduction.

1. The sign or “target” for pages apparently lacking from the document photographed is “Missing Page(s)”. If it was possible to obtain the missing page(s) or section, they are spliced into the film along with adjacent pages. This may have necessitated cutting thru an image and duplicating adjacent pages to insure you complete continuity.

2. When an image on the film is obliterated with a large round black mark, it is an indication that the photographer suspected that the copy may have moved during exposure and thus cause a blurred image. You will find a good image of the page in the adjacent frame.

3. When a map, drawing or chart, etc., was part of the material being photographed the photographer followed a definite method in “sectioning” the material. It is customary to begin photoing at the upper left hand corner of a large sheet and to continue photoing from left to right in equal sections with a small overlap. If necessary, sectioning is continued again — beginning below the first row and continuing on until complete.

4. The majority of users indicate that the textual content is of greatest value, however, a somewhat higher quality reproduction could be made from “photographs” if essential to the understanding of the dissertation. Silver prints of “photographs” may be ordered at additional charge by writing the Order Department, giving the catalog number, title, author and specific pages you wish reproduced.

5. PLEASE NOTE: Some pages may have indistinct print. Filmed as received.

Xerox University Microfilms
300 North Zebe Road
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106
HENDRIX, James Paisley, Jr., 1941-
The Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, Ph.D., 1973
History, modern

University Microfilms, A XEROX Company, Ann Arbor, Michigan

C 1974

JAMES PAISLEY HENDRIX, JR.

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

THIS DISSERTATION HAS BEEN MICROFILMED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED.
THE IMAGE OF THE BENIGHTED SOUTH: ITS ORIGINS
AND IMPACT, 1919-1936

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of History

by

James Paisley Hendrix, Jr.
A. B., Davidson College, 1963
M. A., Louisiana State University, 1968
December, 1973
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author would like to express his gratitude to Professor Burl Noggle for suggesting and directing this dissertation. He would also like to thank the members of his committee for their helpful suggestions, and the History Department and Graduate School of Louisiana State University for financial assistance during his Graduate study.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acknowledgments</th>
<th>ii</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. Images, Myths, and History</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. The Patterns of Renaissance</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. The Dynamics of Cultural Creativity</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Turmoil over Mills and Monkeys</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. Producing a Benighted Image: Baltimore and Beyond</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. Reacting to the Benighted Image: Chapel Hill and Beyond</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. Reacting to the Benighted Image: Nashville and Beyond</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII. Agrarians in a Changing World: A Search for Order</td>
<td>275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix</td>
<td>313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vita</td>
<td>328</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

iii
This study is an attempt to examine certain aspects of the Southern intellectual renaissance from 1919 to 1936. It particularly attempts to examine the intellectual climate of those years in order to suggest why high creativity occurred at this point in Southern history. To this end, some attention is given to other periods of concentrated intellectual creativity (the Elizabethan renaissance and the American renaissance of the 1850's, for example) in search of possible causative keys to such remarkable intellectual production. The common ground that emerges from this analysis is the phenomenon of massive changes in these periods that generated a sense of dislocation, of tension, that reflected itself in the intellectual life of the times. Thus 1919 is chosen as a beginning point because of the enormous changes World War I brought to the American South.

Accelerating consciousness of a South massively and irrevocably changed was what George B. Tindall has called "The Image of the Benighted South." This view of a darkened, backward, uncivilized South, presented both flippantly and with utmost seriousness by a variety of observers from all sections of the country, received its most classic expression in H. L. Mencken's 1917 essay "The Sahara of the
Bozart."

This nationwide attack on the South, concentrating on Southern ills such as the Klan, lynching, Fundamentalism and anti-evolution, illiteracy and malnutrition, working conditions in Southern textile mills and the violent strikes that grew out of them, forced Southern intellectuals to reexamine themselves and their region. This reexamination, in turn, served as an important catalyst for a rapid intellectual awakening in the South during the 1920's and 1930's.

Two major focal points for this awakening were the University of North Carolina and Vanderbilt University. Thus this study gives considerable attention to these two institutions.

The background for this concentration is first, a comment on the use of images and myths in historical analysis and especially in the study of the American South since World War II; then a survey which attempts to demonstrate the magnitude of the intellectual activity of the South in the Twenties and Thirties; some general comments on "The Dynamics of Cultural Creativity"; and a delineation of the enormous changes World War I brought to the South. Attention is then given to the variety of benighted images that were directed at the South because of Fundamentalism, anti-evolution, the Scopes trial, and the violent textile strikes of 1929; and to the role of H. L. Mencken, Gerald W. Johnson, W. J. Cash, *Time*, *Current History*, *The New York
Times, and other individuals and publications in spreading these images. Then an attempt is made to correlate these widespread images with the intellectual productivity (basically non-literary) that came out of Chapel Hill and the University of North Carolina, with special attention being given to the role of Howard W. Odum. In similar fashion, a direct relationship is suggested between the benighted image of the South and the Southern literary renaissance, concentrating on the evolution of various Southern "Little Magazines," especially The Fugitive (strongly influenced by poets associated with Vanderbilt). The role of the attacks on the South over the Scopes trial and the Southern textile strikes of 1929 are deemed to be especially important in causing a transition from the essentially non-sectional Fugitive effort to the conscious manifesto of Southern agrarianism I'll Take My Stand (1930), and the more nationally oriented Who Owns America? (1936). The study concludes with some thoughts on the meaning of the agrarian message for the very un-agrarian, depersonalized society of the United States in the 1970's.
CHAPTER I

 IMAGES, MYTHS, AND HISTORY

In Charleston, South Carolina, sixty years ago, William A. Dunning delivered his Presidential address to the American Historical Association. Speaking on "Truth In History" to a young and dynamic profession which was in the midst of researching, revising, and rewriting with almost missionary zeal, Dunning cautioned that revisionism might have perils of its own. He admonished the assembled scholars that "they must find in the beliefs of men a most powerful factor in the chain of causation," and continued with the heart of his thesis:

---


3Dunning, "Truth In History," 229. Dunning was particularly critical of approaches to the past such as the economic interpretation which he felt "discard the human influences entirely." Ibid.
Nor does it matter at all whether a belief is true or false . . . the beliefs are important whether true or false; for out of them is formed the subject-matter of history . . . He [the historian] must remember, in short, that for very, very much history there is more importance in the ancient error than in the new-found truth.  

For many historians (notably Charles Beard), Dunning's advice to analyze the myths of the past went unheeded. Yet others were already giving attention to the role of ideas in history, and the next half-century would witness phenomenal growth in the discipline of intellectual history. But Dunning was certainly not the only or even the principal catalyst behind this trend. A variety of factors were involved, and they have been perceptively analyzed by a number of scholars in recent years.  

John Higham, although quick to recognize exceptional pathfinding historians who transcended their contemporaries,  

\[4\] Ibid.  
sees the writing of American history as developing in rather
distinct stages. Essentially sharing Carl Becker's well
known insight that each age writes its own history, Higham
views the evolution of American historical scholarship in
the context of the changing national intellectual climate.6
For Higham, not only has this been true for American his­
toriography in general, but also specifically applies to the
evolution of intellectual history in the United States. In
this context, he sees eighteenth and early nineteenth
century writers implicitly accepting the impact of ideas in
history and thus feeling no need for a conscious examination
of them. With this passion for "objectivity," the
"scientific school" of the late nineteenth century left the
history of ideas in a dormant state.7 But, Higham asserts,
the awakening stimulants to the study of ideas came in the
form of "the critical examination of American traditions
inaugurated in the Progressive Era" and with the widespread
disillusionment that followed World War I.8

6Higham, History, 3-232.
7Higham, "Study of American Intellectual History,"
43.
8Ibid., 56. For an interesting recent view of Pro­
gressive ideology, see David W. Noble, The Progressive Mind,
1890-1917 (Chicago, 1970), passim. With reference to post­
war disillusionment, Henry F. May has pointed out pre-war
antecedents of this syndrome in The End Of American Inno­
cence: A Study Of The First Years Of Our Own Time, 1912-
1917 (New York, 1959), but the post-war period certainly
must have witnessed it in a much more acute and widespread
form. This question will receive more detailed discussion
in Chapter III.
A fundamental ambivalence in American culture between the World Wars acted as both stimulus and divider for students of intellectual history. According to Higham, this period was "a time of hard-boiled materialism on the one hand, [while] it was also an age committed to bring reason and idealism to bear on the course of history. The study of intellectual history flourished as a way of asking how far that was possible."^\textsuperscript{9}

Hiroshima and Nagasaki created a crisis. Theories of progress became strained in a Nuclear Age, and anxieties were accelerated still further by the Cold War. Higham feels that this climate led scholars to the "need for an ideological foundation, a moral anchor," and was a stimulus for the American Studies movement.^\textsuperscript{10}

This new approach drew heavily from American literary scholarship and in so doing has paid particular attention to the role of myths. The circle, therefore, has been completed and has returned in the last quarter century to analysis of the type William Dunning called for in 1913. Henry Nash Smith provides one of the earliest and best examples. The subtitle of his Virgin Land: The American

^\textsuperscript{9}Higham, "Study of American Intellectual History," 64.

^\textsuperscript{10}Ibid., 67-68; quote from p. 68. Higham applies a similar analysis to the rise of "consensus history" after World War II in "The Cult of the 'American Consensus': Homogenizing Our History," Commentary, XXVII (February, 1959), 93-100. On the ante-bellum background of the idea of progress see Arthur A. Ekrich, The Idea of Progress in America, 1815-1860 (New York, 1944).
West as Symbol and Myth (Cambridge, 1950), reveals his basic approach to American culture. Smith was certainly not the first American scholar to examine symbols and myths, but Virgin Land did provide a magnificent methodological framework for any who might choose to follow.\(^1\)

Follow they did, as analysis of American mythology soon produced a number of impressive volumes. John William Ward presented an interesting analysis of Andrew Jackson and his times which took issue with Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.'s Pulitzer Prize winning biography of Jackson by concluding: "The age was not his [Jackson's]. He was the age's."\(^2\)

Going beyond Smith, who used American literature (especially the popular novel) as a major source, Ward utilizes popular songs, cartoons, eulogies, and even the mastheads of ships to shed light on Jackson as a "symbol for an age."\(^3\)

The same year as Ward's effort, R. W. B. Lewis joined the procession with The American Adam: Innocence, 1910.

\(^1\)On Smith's attention to myths, see Barry Marks, "The Concept of Myth in Virgin Land," American Quarterly, V (Spring, 1953), 71-76. For a more general discussion of the literary artists' use of myths and symbols, see David Daiches, "Myth, Metaphor, and Poetry," in Daiches, More Literary Essays (Chicago, 1968), 1-18.


\(^3\)The precedent of Smith, of course, enabled Ward to broaden his perspective and he is quick to acknowledge his debt to Virgin Land and its author. Ward, Symbol for an Age, vii-viii.
Tragedy, and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century (Chicago, 1955), an analysis of what he feels to be the dominant image of the American mind in the nineteenth century—that of the innocence and purity of the "American Adam." Concentrating on the period from 1820 to 1860, Lewis does not range as deeply into popular culture as do Smith and Ward, but rather concentrates on "articulate thinkers and conscious artists." For Lewis, there is no American Aeneid, and the American myth has thus "remained a collective affair; it must be pieced together out of an assortment of essays, orations, poems, stories, histories, and sermons."^15

Smith focuses on the American West; Ward has no particular sectional orientation; and Lewis concentrates on New England and the Atlantic Seaboard states. But the South has by no means been ignored. Indeed, attempts to identify and analyze the reasons which make the South a unique region have led to a multitude of works. Some, such as

^14 Lewis, The American Adam, 1.

^15 Ibid., 4.

^16 Many have played the game of "is the South really different," but it will be a basic assumption of this study that the South was somehow markedly different from other sections of the country during the period under analysis. Indeed, the acceleration of a sense of difference and the outright championing of it are vital to my thesis and I could not disagree more with an opinion than I do with George Mowry's attempt to downplay such differences in his 1971 Walter Lynwood Fleming lectures, Another Look At The Twentieth Century South (Baton Rouge, 1972), passim. For another recent work relevant to the question, this one stressing the pervasiveness of Southern differences, see John Shelton Reed, The Enduring South: Subcultural Persistence in Mass Society (Lexington, Mass., 1973), passim.
Ulrich Bonnell Phillips's well-known essay, "The Central Theme of Southern History," only indirectly concern images and myths of the South. But beginning with W. J. Cash's landmark study, *The Mind of the South* (New York, 1941), and receiving a major boost from the American studies movement and the general resurgence of interest in intellectual history which gave birth to it, scholars in the last two decades have paid a great deal of attention to the role of images and myths in Southern history. Notable among recent works which approach the ante-bellum period from this perspective are William R. Taylor's examination of the evolution and meaning of the concept of a divided (North-South) American culture, and Earl E. Thorpe's study of the psyche of the Old South. Prominent examples concentrating on the post-bellum South include work by James McBride Dabbs, in what amounts to a sequel to Cash; Robert Little's and Paul Gaston's analyses of the New South creed; and F. Garvin Davenport, Jr.'s study of historical consciousness in twentieth-century Southern literature.  

---


For these and other recent scholars, the more traditional factors such as climate, the desire for white supremacy, one-party politics, the impact of the Negro, an agrarian economy, the historical experience, and others are not irrelevant, but to them the ultimate answer to the South's uniqueness seems to lie in more intangible realms. George Brown Tindall has been particularly persuasive in this vein. Observing the complex regional mythology that the American South has bred, Tindall calls for an analysis of the South in the tradition of *Virgin Land's* treatment of the West. He feels that "any effort to delineate the unique character of a people must take into account its mythology."\(^{19}\) Citing James Garfield Randall's opinion that "poets have done better in expressing this oneness of the South than historians in explaining it,"\(^{20}\) Tindall questions:

---

Garvin Davenport, Jr., *The Myth of Southern History: Historical Consciousness in Twentieth Century Southern Literature* (Nashville, 1970). These scholars, using much of the methodology pioneered by Smith and his early disciples, join their predecessors in following the Dunning axiom of essentially disregarding the truth or falsity of the myths and images under scrutiny.

For a recent synthesis of these approaches to the study of the history of the South, designed for use in college survey courses, see Nicholas Cords and Patrick Gerster (eds.), *Myth and the American Experience*, I (Beverly Hills, Calif., 1973), 262-313.


\(^{20}\) Ibid., 15, citing James Garfield Randall, *The Civil War And Reconstruction* (Boston, 1937), 3-4.
Can it be that the historians have been looking in the wrong places, that they have failed to seek the key to the enigma where the poets have so readily found it—in the mythology that has had much to do with shaping character, unifying society, developing a sense of community, of common ideals and shared goals, making the region conscious of its distinctiveness?  

This study is an attempt to examine the intellectual activity of the South from 1919 to 1936 by means of the perspective of the myths and images of the section, historically valid or not (per Dunning), present during this time frame. Most of the writing on the intellectual history of the post-Reconstruction South has, for the most part, focused internally on the region, often slighting views and concepts of and about the South held by those living outside the area. I hope to avoid this limited horizon, to show the significance of the myths and images of the South put forth by writers from all sections of the country during the Twenties and Thirties. The principal thesis will hold that these visions of the South, although heavily negative, were a major catalyst for the massive explosion of intellectual activity that leaps out of the period under study. Thus what amounts to a predominantly benighted image of the South, in most Northern eyes and even some Southern ones, served

21 Tindall, "Mythology," 15. For another view of essentially the same point see C. Vann Woodward, American Counterpoint: Slavery and Racism in the North-South Dialogue (Boston, 1971), 7.

22 Principal emphasis will be placed on the Twenties, for reasons that, I trust, will become apparent.
a very positive function.\footnote{23}

Images of the benighted South have been present in varying degrees of intensity, from Colonial times to the present, but were particularly prevalent in the 1920's and 1930's. This view of a darkened, backward, uncivilized South is epitomized by H. L. Mencken's 1917 essay "The Sahara of the Bozart" (see Appendix A). But these and other efforts of Mencken were only one form of the image. There is often an inherent ambiguity in the presentation of the image and in the Southern reaction to it. Some maliciously sought to create it; others inadvertently supported it by conscientiously reporting obvious Southern ills. In similar fashion many Southerners lashed out blindly against the image, but others were stimulated by it into producing significant work. In the final analysis, however, whatever the motivation of the numerous writers, from all sections of the country and even a number of foreign lands, the end result in the period under study was a firmly established image of the benighted South and an equally solid reaction to it.

\footnote{23}John Higham views the American studies movement, the study of intellectual history generally, and especially the analysis of the role of myths in history, as declining in the 1960's with "a highly critical view of myth as the conservative, stabilizing element in culture" asserting itself. Higham, "Study of American Intellectual History," 71. My study does not share this view, at least as it concerns the South in the 1920's, in holding that the benighted images touched off an intellectual explosion rather than acting as a "stabilizing element."
Since the benighted image and the Southern reaction it generated were both contrived and spontaneous, the essential task is to explore the social and intellectual climate that produced them. As Jay Hubbell has pointed out, a number of scholars have identified the presence of myths and images in the past, but few have attempted to explain the factors which led to their genesis. An effort to examine the climate of opinion that produced the benighted image and the reaction to it is thus the very heart of this study.

Of necessity, one must begin with individual sources but with constant awareness that it is not the isolated image or reaction that is ultimately significant. Rather, it is the collective image, the overall state of mind, that is most important. To try to define this essentially intangible conception, one must examine the extremes of intellectual expression that Higham aptly describes as "Little Orphan Annie as well as Adam Smith." Perhaps the principal peril of intellectual history is the intrinsic elusiveness of the human mind. Men seldom

24 For an excellent statement of this type of approach, see Taylor, Cavalier and Yankee, 3.


know why they think and write as they do, and this obviously compounds the difficulties of attempting to explain why a particular image or myth arises at a particular time. But ideas seldom occur in a vacuum, and it is a basic assumption of intellectual history that a direct relationship exists between ideas and the historical environment in which they are created.

In sum, this study will attempt to demonstrate a relationship between a readily identifiable benighted image of the South in the 1920's and the massive intellectual Renaissance which swept the region in that decade. But first, an attempt will be made to place this Southern Renaissance within the context of earlier periods of intellectual ferment in the United States.

27Ibid., 343, makes this point well in saying that "with the aid of publishers' records we can trace the circulation of books, but we can never with the same precision trace the circulation of ideas." See also Abraham Edel, "Levels of Meaning and the History of Ideas," Journal of the History of Ideas, VII (June, 1946), 355-60.
CHAPTER II

THE PATTERNS OF RENAISSANCE

It is a phenomenon many have observed but few explained. That certain periods of man's past clearly leap out at the historical observer with tangible evidence of intellectual activity far beyond the level of preceding or subsequent years. From the writings of Virgil, Horace, and Livy in the Golden Age of Roman Literature to the genius of William Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe, and others of the Elizabethan period, the remarkably creative periods are clearly there. Recognition is virtually automatic, but to explain such phenomena is another matter. Indeed, for C. Hugh Holman, "the occurrence of genius, even of high talent, is always finally inexplicable."¹ But, drawing from Matthew Arnold, Holman does suggest that "the proper cultural and intellectual climate must exist if genius is to flourish and

¹C. Hugh Holman, "The View from the Regency-Hyatt: Southern Social Issues And The Outer World," in George Core (ed.), Southern Fiction Today: Renascence and Beyond (Athens, 1969), 16-32, quote from p. 18. One would suspect that Professor Holman would express even greater despair at trying to explain the occurrence of multiple genius in a relatively concentrated time period.
truly realize itself in significant art."^{2}

In the literary history of the United States there have been at least three distinct periods when the cup of cultural creativity ran over with prime vintage. The Edinburgh Review declared the emergence of true American literature upon the publication of Washington Irving's *The Sketchbook* in 1819, and the work of Cooper, Bryant, Poe, and others quickly justified this prophecy. The efforts of these early American authors clearly possess merit but as a whole can not compare with the quality and quantity of American literature that appeared in the 1850's.

"American Renaissance," Francis Otto Matthiessen called it, and a remarkable decade it was. Concentrating on the even shorter time frame of 1850-1855 to support his claim of renaissance, Matthiessen points to the publication of seven major works of American literature in that five-year period. Ralph Waldo Emerson led the parade with *Representative Men* in 1850, followed by Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* the same year and *The House of Seven Gables* in 1851. Also in 1851, Herman Melville published his classic, *Moby Dick*, and followed the next year with *Pierre*. After a one-year interlude, Henry David Thoreau joined the procession with *Walden* in 1854. This five-year

---

burst culminated with Walt Whitman's epic, *Leaves of Grass*, in 1855.3

Matthiessen sees this "extraordinarily concentrated moment of expression" as having a great deal of unity. The appearance of the seven works of five major authors in such a short period is far from coincidental to him. Shared aims and preconceptions by the five led to unifying themes and styles—in sum, it was a "Renaissance of considerable cohesion."4

The last decade of the nineteenth century provided a comparable explosion, an outburst that laid the foundations for the best of the twentieth century American literature. Thus the "watershed" nature of the 1890's is apparent not only in politics, social reform, foreign policy, and economics,5 but also in American culture. This is the decade that marked the flowering of social awareness in

---


4Ibid., passim, quote from p. vii. An analysis of possible causative factors for this renaissance will be attempted in Chapter III.

5For a survey of this pivotal decade, see Harold U. Faulkner, *Politics, Reform and Expansion, 1890-1900* (New York, 1959), passim. The greatest exponent of the "watershed" thesis is Henry Steele Commager. See, for example, *The American Mind* (New Haven, 1950), passim.
William Dean Howells, leading to his 1894 Utopian novel, A Traveler From Altruria. Henry James published at least seven novels and collections between 1896 and 1901. Mark Twain, having released his greatest single work in 1884, was still quite active in the Nineties, and Hamlin Garland contributed his influential Main-Travelled Roads in 1891. Precedent-setting "little magazines" also emerged in the decade, leading to a revolution in American poetry, and increasingly sophisticated advances in journalism occurred almost simultaneously.

The important motif of naturalism emerged fully in the 1890's with Stephen Crane's Maggie in 1893, followed two years later by The Red Badge of Courage. The less well known, but important, literary figure of Harold Frederic was also active in the decade with The Damnation of Theron Ware.

---


7Ibid., 60-61.

8Ibid., 68-71.

9Ibid., 93-101.

perhaps his best work, appearing in 1896.\textsuperscript{11} Frank Norris closed out the Nineties with his powerful naturalistic novel McTeague (1899).\textsuperscript{12}

For Larzer Ziff, the label that Gertrude Stein supposedly attached to the young writers, mostly American, in Paris during the 1920's also applies to the authors of the 1890's. They, too, were a "lost generation," laying the foundations of modern American literature (only to be neglected from 1900 to 1915). But their precedents were finally appreciated and greeted by writers, critics, and readers with enthusiasm after World War I.

Ernest Hemingway, T. S. Eliot, F. Scott Fitzgerald—these are only three of the many names one associates with the literary outpouring that American writers generated in the 1920's. But the heart of this decade's production came from the Southern Renaissance. It is conventional to speak of the Southern \textit{literary} Renaissance, but it is important first to realize that the intellectual resurgence of the South in the Twenties went far beyond the confines of literature.

To use the term "renaissance" with reference to Southern literature in the 1920's initially seems appropriate, for Southern writers certainly were not dormant from

\textsuperscript{11}Ziff, \textit{American 1890's}, 185-88; 209.  
\textsuperscript{12}McTeague was completed in 1895 but not published until 1899. \textit{Ibid.}, 260.
1607 to 1919. Indeed, Jay B. Hubbell needs almost 1,000 pages to survey Southern writing from 1607 to 1900. But on balance, the Southern writers who begin to produce after World War I clearly tower above their predecessors.

There is hardly the need for such debate in other realms of Southern intellectual activity in the Twenties--the phrase "initial birth" is clearly more appropriate than "renaissance." And it was a coming to life of massive proportions.

In education, for example, Southern primary and secondary schools were making progress, but it was at the college and university levels that the most dramatic changes were taking place. Two master entrepreneurs of the transportation world had already generously endowed Tulane and Vanderbilt, and these two Southern universities continued to demonstrate impressive growth in the Twenties.

---

13Jay B. Hubbell, The South In American Literature, 1607-1900 (Durham, 1954), passim. The Hubbell classic encompasses 987 pages. See also Hubbell's Southern Life In Fiction (Athens, 1960), passim, but especially p. 30.


16George B. Tindall, The Emergence of the New South, 1913-1945 (Baton Rouge, 1967), 264-65; H. Clarence Nixon, "Colleges And Universities," in Couch (ed.), Culture In the South, 240. The activities at Vanderbilt will be treated in Chapter VII.
A fortune acquired in the soft drink business rejuvenated Emory University in 1919, while tobacco and electricity money transformed Trinity College into Duke University, a massive Gothic monument to the philanthropy of James B. "Buck" Duke. Meanwhile, the oilwells of West Texas maintained that State's university as the best endowed institution of higher learning in the South.  

If the sweeping changes in Southern colleges and universities in the Twenties had a focal point, it was probably Chapel Hill. In 1919 the Board of Trustees of the University of North Carolina had selected Harry Woodburn Chase of Massachusetts to serve as the institution's president. Chase retained this office until 1930, leading the University through a period of remarkable growth, scholarly achievement, and social contribution.

Of the many major contributions President Chase made

---


to UNC, perhaps the greatest was in persuading twenty-six year old Howard Washington Odum to leave Emory University in 1920 and come to the Chapel Hill university as head of the recently created Department of Sociology and director of the new School of Public Welfare.\textsuperscript{19} Odum, who was at the pulse of Southern intellectual life for the next thirty-four years, began by serving as one of Chase's most valued assistants and advisors at UNC during the Twenties.\textsuperscript{20}

The study of sociology in the South had ante-bellum roots, but it really did not begin to bud meaningfully until Odum took the lead.\textsuperscript{21} Southern history, on the other hand, was much further along, and reached high levels of

\textsuperscript{19}Howard W. Odum to Harry Woodburn Chase, March 17, 1920, in Howard Washington Odum Papers (Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill), records Odum's formal acceptance of Chase's offer of March 15, 1920, for the position of Kenan Professor of Sociology and Director of the School of Public Welfare beginning September 1, 1920, at a salary of $4,500 per annum.

\textsuperscript{20}For an analysis of Odum, see Chapter VI. For an impression of his early impact on UNC, the circumstances of his arrival there, and his relationship with President Chase, see George B. Tindall, "The Significance of Howard W. Odum to Southern History: A Preliminary Estimate," \textit{Journal of Southern History}, XXIV (August, 1958), 285-307; Grantham, "The Regional Imagination," 14-16; Wilson, \textit{University of North Carolina}, 447-50; and Nixon, "Colleges and Universities," 236.

Chase commented in an August 28, 1928, letter to Odum (in Odum Papers): "Every time I get despondent about things I remember that I did at least one day's work for the University when I got you to come here."

\textsuperscript{21}Grantham, "The Regional Imagination," 4-6, 14-16.
sophistication in the 1920's and 1930's. Three pivotal developments were vital to this evolution.

The collection and preservation of sources, the raw material from which the history would be written, was obviously a major step. Ulrich B. Phillips and other early Southern historians had worked under incredible handicaps, having to travel thousands of miles (with rather primitive transportation means) to visit the hundreds of locations

---

including many private homes) containing the needed sources. This makes their productions all the more impressive, but the quality and quantity of Southern history that has come forth in the past fifty years would not have been possible without the development of archival collections catering to the needs of Southern historians.

Joseph Gregoire de Roulhac Hamilton, Professor of History and Government at the University of North Carolina, began championing just such a collection in the mid-Twenties. He was working fertile ground, because the Kenan Fund for Southern History had been established at UNC in 1906-1907. Hamilton began a massive campaign to augment materials already collected under the auspices of this fund. While speaking to the North Carolina Society of Baltimore in December, 1927, he formally announced his plans.

Tangible results came not only in the form of documents being donated, but also in the form of much needed funds. The Laura Spelman Rockefeller Fund appropriated

\[ equation \]


24 Wilson, University of North Carolina, 477; Gay Garrington Moore, "The Southern Historical Collection In the Louis Round Wilson Library Of The University of North Carolina, From the Beginning of the Collection Through 1948" (M.S. thesis, The University of North Carolina, 1954), 1-8, 16-17. Hamilton's plea was printed in pamphlet form as A National Southern Collection at the University of North Carolina (Chapel Hill, 1927).
$2,000 in 1927 to assist the effort, but the big bonanza occurred two years later when Mrs. Graham Kenan of Wilmington, N. C., created a $25,000 endowment, the income from which was to be used to develop the collection. The trustees of UNC formally approved the establishment of the Southern Historical Collection, with Professor Hamilton as director, in 1930.25

This rich storehouse of Southern material profited from several New Deal programs in the 1930's. Federal Emergency Relief Administration funds, for example, were used to hire National Youth Administration workers who helped arrange and file the growing collection in 1935. Their efforts were continued by Works Progress Administration workers. In addition, the Historical Records Survey Commission prepared a guide to the documents. This Federal assistance enabled the collection to prosper in spite of the hard times of the depression, and solvency was further assured by a $15,000 grant from the Carnegie Corporation in 1935.26

It has been estimated that Professor Hamilton traveled over 500,000 miles seeking acquisitions for the Southern Historical Collection,27 developing what is

25Moore, "Southern Historical Collection," 8, 19-20, 23; Wilson, University of North Carolina, 477-78.
26Moore, "Southern Historical Collection," 29-33; 36.
27Ibid., 54.
certainly one of the premier depositories for students of Southern history. But his ultimate contributions were not limited to UNC and Chapel Hill, for, as Thomas D. Clark has observed, Hamilton's efforts were a major factor in causing other Southern states to "wake up" to the need of preserving their records.28

Almost simultaneously with Hamilton's labors, another major collection of Southern historical materials was being gathered at the University of Texas. Major George W. Littlefield, a Confederate veteran, responding to the persuasions of Texas historian Eugene C. Barker, in 1914 had donated $25,000 to the Austin university, establishing The Littlefield Fund for Southern History. At irregular intervals Major Littlefield supplemented his initial grant with a total of $30,000 more in gifts up to the time of his death in 1920, and finally willed $100,000 to the endowment. Charles W. Ramsdell, Professor of History at Texas, was associated with the collection from the time of its birth and contributed to the Littlefield project the same type of skillful direction Professor Hamilton was giving at the Southern Historical Collection.29


Two more major steps in the evolution of Southern historical scholarship were taken in the Thirties. The study of Southern history had made such giant strides in the immediately preceding years that the two events were now almost inevitable. The first marked the formal organization of scholars of Southern history, with the establishment of a quarterly journal for the field. The second involved the undertaking of an ambitious, multi-volume series on the history of the South.

Wendell Holmes Stephenson, then Professor of American history at Louisiana State University, was a principal figure in founding the Southern Historical Association and in establishing *The Journal of Southern History*. Four other historians of the South, each from different Southern schools, had invited a number of scholars "to assemble in Atlanta on November 2, 1934, to form a society devoted to the encouragement of teaching and research in the South." 30 Stephenson and seventeen other pioneers answered the call, and the association was formally founded November 3, 1934, a constitution and by-laws adopted, and officers elected for

---

30 The four were Charles M. Knapp, University of Kentucky; Philip M. Hamer, University of Tennessee; Thomas P. Abernethy, University of Virginia; and Benjamin B. Kendrick, Woman's College of the University of North Carolina. See anon., "Historical News and Notices," *Journal of Southern History*, I (February, 1935), 107. See also Stephenson, *South Lives in History*, 22. An excellent appraisal of Stephenson's many contributions to the development of Southern history is Thomas D. Clark, "Wendell Holmes Stephenson, 1899-1970: Master Editor and Teacher," *Journal of Southern History*, XXXVI (August, 1970), 335-49.
1934-1935.  

Stephenson recognized that a medium of publication was essential to the success of the organization. Therefore, before leaving for Atlanta, he approached the administration of Louisiana State University on the possibility of its sponsoring a quarterly journal devoted to Southern history. When the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences supported the idea, Stephenson next took his case to President James Monroe Smith. The president asked what amount of subsidy would be required, and Stephenson was trying to decide between the "conservative" request of a thousand dollars" and the unrealistic sum of fifteen hundred" when Smith volunteered: "Would five thousand dollars be enough?"  

Armed with this financial windfall, the November, 1934, Atlanta meeting laid plans for The Southern Historical Review, but a name change preceded publication of the first


32 Stephenson, South Lives In History, 23; Stephenson to William C. Binkley, March 1, 1943, in Stephenson Papers, William C. Binkley File, reveals that the annual subsidy was appropriated from LSU Press funds.
issue of *The Journal of Southern History* in February, 1935. An impressive physical format and quality articles and reviews in the journal, combined with strenuous recruiting, soon raised membership in the Southern Historical Association to a thousand. In addition, Stephenson's fiscal responsibility, along with the generous LSU subsidy, enabled the association to accumulate a surplus of $9,000 by the time the journal moved to Vanderbilt at the end of 1942.

But the greatest impact in the early years of the new organization of Southern historians and its journal came through its provision of a high-level outlet for the productions of these scholars. Stephenson and his co-editor, Fred Cole, set rigid standards, and the resulting publications are a strong index of the intellectual ferment among


34 The membership figure is mentioned in the "Editors' Preface" to Wesley Frank Craven, *The Southern Colonies in the Seventeenth Century, 1607-1689* (Baton Rouge, 1949), xi; see also Tindall (ed.), *The Pursuit of Southern History*, xiii. For an example of the approach to new members taken in 1935 see the Robert H. Woody File, Stephenson Papers. Woody coordinated the drive in North Carolina and succeeded in obtaining a total of thirteen members in that state (there were 341 as of 1971). On the $9,000 surplus and the physical format of the journal, see Stephenson, *South Lives In History*, 23; and Clark, "Wendell Holmes Stephenson," 338-39. William C. Binkley to Stephenson, November 20, 1940, and December 9, 1940, in Stephenson Papers, Binkley File, reveal Vanderbilt's initial efforts to persuade *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* to move to her campus. Failing in this quest, Vanderbilt began to seek *The Journal of Southern History* in 1942. See the Stephenson Papers, Binkley File, for 1942.
students of Southern history at the time.\textsuperscript{35}

Stephenson was also instrumental in initiating a multi-volume history of the South, one of such generally high quality that one scholar describes it as follows: "If no other books had been published about the South since 1938, this collaborative work alone would justify the claim that there had been a regional historical renascence."\textsuperscript{36}

Stephenson soon discovered, however, that he was not the only Southern historian considering such a project. Initiating his plans in 1936, he envisioned a ten-volume work to be published by the Louisiana State University Press (which was already bringing out a \textit{Southern Biography Series} under the direction of Stephenson). To this end, in November, 1937, he sent invitations to some of the scholars he hoped to enlist for the project.\textsuperscript{37} In letters of

\textsuperscript{35}Clark, "Wendell Holmes Stephenson," 339-40. See also Stephenson, \textit{Southern History in the Making}, 25. A vivid example of the meticulous editorial standards is revealed in a series of letters between Cole and Stephenson in Baton Rouge, and Lewis E. Atherton at the University of Missouri, from March 7, 1938, to January 1, 1941, concerning an article Atherton had submitted. Stephenson Papers, Lewis E. Atherton File.


\textsuperscript{36}Clark, "Wendell Holmes Stephenson," 344.

\textsuperscript{37}"Editors' Preface" to Craven, \textit{Southern Colonies}, ix; Wendell Holmes Stephenson to E. M. Coulter, November 4, 1937, in Stephenson Papers, E. M. Coulter File, is an example of the initial solicitation. Coulter was asked to write Volume VIII (the Reconstruction period) which, of
November 4 and November 6, he sought the opinion of Charles W. Ramsdell on the overall project and also invited Ramsdell to write the volume on the Confederacy. Ramsdell replied on November 11, confirming that the news of the Stephenson project "gave me a little jolt because, by an interesting coincidence, we have been planning here [at the University of Texas] a similar undertaking." Ramsdell explained that the Texas project had grown out of the Littlefield Fund, and that the administrators of that bequest were adamant about continuing the project. We must assume that this information, in turn, gave Stephenson a "jolt." Fortunately, the Southern Historical Association was scheduled to meet in Durham later in the month, and the two resolved to talk over their obvious dilemma at that time.

It was fitting that the meeting between Stephenson and Ramsdell, which laid the groundwork for the combination of the two projects, was held in the Durham home of another great historian of the South, Charles Sackett Sydnor.

course, he eventually did.

The LSU Press was already bringing out a Southern Biography Series under the direction of Stephenson. See Stephenson to M. M. Wilkerson (Director of LSU Press), September 5, 1938, and April 4, 1940, in Stephenson Papers, LSU Press file.

38 Stephenson to Ramsdell, November 4 and 6, 1937, in Stephenson Papers, Ramsdell File, Folder II.

39 Ramsdell to Stephenson, November 11, 1937, in Stephenson Papers, Ramsdell File, Folder II.

40 Ibid.
Formal discussions were begun after Ramsdell and Stephenson returned to their respective universities. After several months of cordial exchanges via letters, Stephenson and Marcus Wilkerson, the Director of the LSU Press, journeyed to Austin, March 14, 1938, to arrange an agreement for the Littlefield Fund and the LSU Press to co-sponsor the history, with Ramsdell and Stephenson serving as co-editors. During the next two years, the two men selected potential contributors, established editorial guidelines, and made other arrangements for getting the project underway. The project received a serious blow when Ramsdell died in 1942, but E. M. Coulter, historian at the University of Georgia, soon succeeded him as co-editor, and also assumed responsibility for the volume on the

41 Stephenson to Ramsdell, November 23, December 15, 1937; Ramsdell to Stephenson, December 3, December 12, December 22, 1937, in Stephenson Papers, Ramsdell File, Folder II.

42 Ramsdell to Stephenson, December 12, 1937, March 2 and 8, 1938; Stephenson to Ramsdell, March 11, 1938, in Stephenson Papers, Ramsdell File, Folder II. "Editors' Preface" to Craven, Southern Colonies, ix; Stephenson, Southern History in the Making, 192; Clark, "Wendell Holmes Stephenson," 344; Stephenson to Coulter, December 17, 1937, in Stephenson Papers, Coulter File, reveals the negotiations between Texas and LSU.

43 There is a wealth of information on the formative years of the project in the Stephenson Papers, Ramsdell File, Folders I and II. For a copy of the initial "Editorial Suggestions and Directions" (written by Stephenson), see the Stephenson Papers, "History of the South Series" File.
Confederacy. To date, nine of the originally planned ten volumes have been published, and an eleventh has been commissioned to cover the South since 1945.

To have played a major role in the founding of the Southern Historical Association, The Journal of Southern History, and the History of the South Series would be a monumental contribution for anyone. But Stephenson did even more in his personal drive to establish Southern history as a highly sophisticated field. In July, 1936, he announced the formation of a "Graduate Division of Southern History" at LSU, an ambitious and well funded program which would require, among other things, seminars to be held in

44E. M. Coulter, The Confederate States of America, 1861-1865 (Baton Rouge, 1950), vii, x.

45Initial contracts called for approximately 125,000 words per volume, with payment of "approximately" $1,250. Stephenson hoped that each volume would be completed in two to four years. See, for example, Wendell Holmes Stephenson to Wesley Frank Craven, October 28, 1938, in Stephenson Papers, W. F. Craven File; and Stephenson to Ramsdell, December 8, 1938, in Stephenson Papers, Ramsdell File, Folder II.

Only half of those men originally commissioned actually completed their volumes. Stephenson to Craven, November 8, 1938, Stephenson Papers, Craven File, reveals the initial selections, as follows (I have added the actual author and the date of publication in applicable cases):

Vol. I 1607-1689 Wesley Frank Craven (1949)
Vol. II 1689-1763 Philip Davidson (Clarence Ver Steeg--to be completed)
Vol. III 1763-1789 Philip M. Hamer (John R. Alden, 1957)
Vol. IV 1789-1819 Thomas P. Abernethy (1961)
Vol. V 1819-1848 Charles S. Sydnor (1948)
Vol. VI 1848-1861 Avery O. Craven (1953)
Vol. VIII 1865-1877 E. M. Coulter (1947)
Vol. IX 1877-1913 Benjamin B. Kendrick (C. Vann Woodward, 1951)
Vol. X 1913-1945 Rupert P. Vance (George B. Tindall, 1967)
alternate years in Washington, D. C., and New Orleans (to facilitate primary research in the rich archival holdings in those two cities). 46

Also in 1936, Stephenson persuaded the administration of LSU to sponsor an annual series of three lectures in Southern history. A $500 honorarium was to be provided, as well as publication of the lectures by the LSU Press. Charles W. Ramsdell was invited to give the first of the Walter Lynwood Fleming Lectures in Southern History (for 1937), an annual event that has produced some of the best scholarship on the South in the past thirty-five years. 47

Southern academia was active in areas besides history during the Twenties and Thirties. The Southwestern Political Science Quarterly was established in 1920, and the Southern Political Science Association in 1929. Howard Odum initiated the Journal of Social Forces in 1922, and the Southern Sociological Society was founded in 1935. In addition, Southern economists had banded together in the Southern Economic Association in 1928, and the South Atlantic Modern Language Association was also founded in the late

46 Stephenson to James M. Smith (President of LSU), April 11, 1936, in Stephenson Papers, Folder on LSU School of Southern History, outlines the proposed program. Copies of the brochure formally announcing the school, and a number of replies reacting enthusiastically to the news are in the same folder of the Stephenson Papers.

47 Stephenson to Ramsdell, July 23, 1936; Ramsdell to Stephenson, April 11, 1937, in Stephenson Papers, Ramsdell File, Folder I.
In spite of these impressive advances, and a variety of others revolving around the University of North Carolina which will be discussed separately in a later chapter, one finds that in the intellectual life of the South in the Twenties, the most striking changes took place in the realm of Southern letters.

These developments in Southern literature, however, did not follow the traditional pattern of American letters where newspapers have served as proving grounds for writers (Twain and Hemingway, for example). Although this was not the case with most Southern authors in the Twenties and Thirties, Southern journalism did produce a quality product during that period. In the Twenties, for example, a number of Southern newspapers gained positive national recognition when, between 1923 and 1929, they won five Pulitzer prizes. Gerald W. Johnson, commenting on these "Southern Image Breakers" in a 1928 article, asserted his belief that they arose from the same impulses that were

---


simultaneously producing the "sudden flowering" of literary artists.\(^5\)

Even though the rural weekly press made significant gains between 1880 and 1910, the steady trend of urbanization in the South was the key to the progress of Southern newspapers.\(^5\) As Southern cities grew, so did the number and quality of the dailies.

The initial blossom of the "sudden flowering" was a group of "little magazines." Between 1919 and 1936, at least twenty-nine such publications were begun in the South.\(^5\) Few of these lasted more than a couple of years and some were of marginal merit. But all give evidence of the enormous surge of Southern letters during the period, and several provided the medium for the apprenticeships of the major writers of the Southern Renaissance.

The Renaissance began shortly after World War I. Within two years of the peace, three prominent "little" Southern magazines and one influential poetry society emerged. Three men, one an aspiring Southern Babbit, one a


high school teacher, and the third a struggling writer, began the process in 1920. Living in Charleston, South Carolina, Dubose Heyward (an insurance salesman), Hervey Allen (the teacher), and writer John Bennett resolved to found The Poetry Society of South Carolina. They began by culling names from the Charleston phone book in search of two hundred prospective members. From these rather inauspicious beginnings they soon developed a prestigious organization that brought in speakers such as Carl Sandburg, Robert Frost, Vachel Lindsay, and Harriet Monroe. The society issued annual yearbooks from 1921 to 1933 and sponsored also prize contests that produced some of the first works of emerging Southern writers. In addition, the South Carolina organization served as a model which spawned at least a dozen similar groups throughout the South in the Twenties.\(^{53}\)

January, 1921, ushered in not only a new year but also a new little magazine which proclaimed itself "A National Magazine for the South."\(^{54}\) *The Double Dealer*,


headquartered on the fringe of the New Orleans French Quarter, expired in May, 1926, after only forty-three issues, but it used that brief period to compile a roster of contributors which amounted to a "Who Will Be Who" in Southern, indeed American, letters. Ernest Hemingway published his first story in the magazine; Sherwood Anderson tutored a diminutive young veteran of the Royal Canadian Air Force, and was rewarded when William Faulkner published Soldier's Pay in 1926. Hamilton Basso contributed to his home town publication while attending Tulane. Allen Tate, Donald Davidson, John Crowe Ransom, and Robert Penn Warren published some of their earliest poems in the magazine. Still others who found their way into one or more of the forty-three issues include Thornton Wilder, Sherwood Anderson, Hart Crane, Ezra Pound, Malcolm Cowley, William Alexander Percy, Edmund Wilson, Matthew Josephson, Roark Bradford, Oliver La Farge, James K. Feibleman, Lyle Saxon, Jean Toomer, Carl Van Vechten, John Gould Fletcher, and more.\textsuperscript{55}

\textit{The Double Dealer} was the first major "little

\textsuperscript{55}Ibid., 174-76; Tindall, Emergence of New South, 293-95; 661; Hoffman, et al., The Little Magazine, 262, The Fugitive. A Journal of Poetry, II (August-September, 1923), 128, lists many of the contributors in an advertisement placed by The Double Dealer. James K. Feibleman (as indicated above, a contributor to The Double Dealer), gives a colorful recollection of the early days of the publication, as well as some interesting anecdotes on the young Faulkner, in Feibleman, "Literary New Orleans Between World Wars," The Southern Review (N.S.), I (Summer, 1965), 704-706, 213-14.
magazine" the South produced in the Twenties, but it did not have to wait long for worthy company. Only six weeks after the first issue of the New Orleans publication appeared, another old Southern city heralded the initial copy of The Reviewer. With a staff of four editors headed by Emily Clark, the Richmond group's publication fell short of The Double Dealer's life span by only a year. Ambitious initial plans called for twenty-four issues annually, but by 1925 this had been reduced to four, because the editors lacked the amount of time which the "Experiment in Southern Letters" demanded, The Reviewer moved that same year to Chapel Hill, where it acquired a new editor, Paul Green. Even there the magazine was short lived, its last number appearing in October, 1925, after which it merged with The Southwest Review, published in Dallas at Southern Methodist University. Before its assimilation by the Texas publication, The Reviewer published poetry, stories, and essays from a variety of contributors, some well known, others struggling to gain a reputation in the world of letters. Among others, H. L. Mencken, Joseph Hergesheimer, Elinor Wylie, James Branch Cabell, Frances Newman, Julia Peterkin, 

Ellen Glasgow, and Gerald W. Johnson were involved.  

But the giant of the three "little" Southern magazines of the Twenties, the one that achieved an international circulation and reputation, came from Nashville, Tennessee. The Fugitive, A Magazine Of Poetry, brought out its first issue in April, 1922. The initial issue was the product of seven young poets, who were joined by nine others during the time the remaining eighteen numbers appeared. The last copy was published in December, 1925, when The Fugitive terminated largely because its editors had become involved in too many other time-consuming endeavors. Thus ended the publication that "announced the existence of the most


The Fugitive movement will be the focal point of Chapter VII.

59The original seven were: John Crowe Ransom, Donald Davidson, Allen Tate, Alec B. Stevenson, Walter Clyde Curry, Stanley Johnson, and Sidney Morton Hirsch. Robert Penn Warren, Merrill Moore, Laura Riding, Jesse Wills James Frank, William Yandell Elliott, William Frierson, Ridley Wills, and Alfred Starr all joined at later intervals. See Donald Davidson's introduction to a reprinting of The Fugitive (Gloucester, Mass., 1967), iii-iv, for the order in which the additions occurred. See also Cowan, The Fugitive Group, xvi.

influential group in American letters since the New England Transcendentalists." The Fugitive poets, in fact, attained "a corporate achievement that rivals any in American literary history . . . the most durable school in modern American letters." The talent unleashed by the poetry societies and the little magazines found still another outlet with the establishment or revitilization of several scholarly journals which catered to literary productions. The Texas Review, although founded in 1915 at the University of Texas (with Stark Young as editor), became much more "Southern" in outlook in the summer of 1924 upon moving to a new home at Southern Methodist University, and upon receiving a new name (The Southwest Review), and a new editor (Jay Hubbell).

A year after The Texas Review underwent its transformation in Dallas, another quarterly was founded at the other end of the South. The Virginia Quarterly Review was launched under an endowment plan at the University of Virginia in 1925 and received outstanding editorial guidance in its early years first from James Southall Wilson and then

---

61 Tindall, Emergence of New South, 296.


63 Hubbell, "Southern Magazines," 172-74; Davidson, "Trend of Literature," 189. See also Hubbell, South and Southwest: Literary Essays and Reminiscences (Durham, 1965), 3-21, on the formative period of The Southwest Review.
from Stringfellow Barr. 64

The Southwest Review and The Virginia Quarterly Review thus joined two older Southern quarterlies, The South Atlantic Quarterly (founded in 1902 at Trinity College), and The Sewanee Review (established at the University of the South in 1892, therefore qualifying as the oldest continuing quarterly in the United States), to give evidence of the rapidly accelerating Southern Renaissance.

The most graphic evidence of that acceleration, however, is seen in Southern fiction and poetry. Southern production was so prolific in these areas during the Twenties and Thirties that it is difficult to categorize, but at a minimum it deserves the epithet Renaissance.

To be sure, Jay Hubbell and others have stressed the presence of a viable Southern literature prior to the 1920's (the work of John Esten Cooke, A. B. Longstreet, Poe, William Gilmore Simms, Sidney Lanier, Thomas Nelson Page, George Washington Cable, and others). 65 At the dawn of the Twenties, however, there were only three Southern writers actively producing. James Branch Cabell (1879-1958) had eleven novels and collections of stories to his credit;

---

64 Hubbell, "Southern Magazines," 181; Davidson, "Trend of Literature," 189. Both Hubbell and Davidson lament that The Virginia Quarterly Review was not more consciously Southern (as of 1934). A third predominantly literary quarterly was established in 1929--American Literature, at Duke University. See Hubbell, "Southern Magazines," 170.

Ellen Glasgow (1874-1945) had produced one book of poems and eleven novels; and the less well known John Gould Fletcher (1886-1950) had published nine volumes of verse by 1919. Respectable though this record of publication was, it could not compare with the volume of literature which appeared in the South after World War I.

When, in the 1970's, one speaks of the Southern Renaissance, the first name to come to mind is normally that of William Faulkner. Virtually unknown in the Twenties and for much of the Thirties, his fame began to grow with the publication in 1939 of two critical essays about his work—one by George Marion O'Donnell and the other by Conrad Aiken. Thereafter the Faulkner cult grew steadily but with such slowness that in 1946 all of his work was out of print, with the exception of the intentionally sensationalized *Sanctuary* (1931). But in that year Malcolm Cowley edited *The Portable Faulkner*, including in it a significant introduction that accelerated the growth of Faulkner's

---

66 For the titles and publication dates of these works, see the checklist by James B. Meriwether in Louis D. Rubin, Jr., and Robert D. Jacobs (ed.), *South: Modern Southern Literature In Its Cultural Setting* (New York, 1961), 397-98 (Cabell); 401-10 (Glasgow); 406-407 (Fletcher).

reputation enormously. The Cowley preface was instrumental in bringing Faulkner the Nobel Prize for literature in 1950, and in making his name synonymous with the phrase "Southern Renaissance."

Interest in Faulkner has continued in recent years. In 1969, the Louisiana State University Press published A Bibliographical Guide To The Study of Southern Literature, listing in the section on Faulkner eighteen book-length studies published between 1960 and 1968, and fifty-three articles or essays during the same period.

Faulkner began his literary activity in the Twenties, during his association with The Double Dealer, publishing his first work, a book of verse, The Marble Faun, in 1924. He followed this in 1926 with a reaction in novel form to his World War I experiences, Soldiers' Pay. A novel drawing from his New Orleans' days Mosquitoes, appeared the following year. He ended his work in the decade with two of his major novels, Sartoris and The Sound and the Fury (both in 1929). His production continued in the Thirties, as did the

---

68 A multitude of literary critics have detailed the literary resurrection of Faulkner, but none more meaningfully and succinctly than does a historian, George Tindall. See Emergence of New South, 669-71.


70 See above, p. 36. Faulkner's choice of title for his first published work reveals his great admiration for Nathaniel Hawthorne, whose last published work (1860), was also entitled The Marble Faun.
renaisance in general, with *As I Lay Dying* (1930); *Sanctuary* and a collection of stories, *These Thirteen* (1931); *Light in August* (1932); a book of poems, *A Green Bough* (1933); *Doctor Martino and Other Stories* (1934); *Pylon* (1935); and *Absalom, Absalom* (1936).

In view of his prolific career, it would be futile to deny William Faulkner a major place in the Southern literary renaissance. But to identify him alone as the vital essence of the movement would be equally in error. As George Core has observed:

> The Southern literary renascence is the most powerful 'rebirth' in letters in the twentieth century, excepting the Irish renaissance, which got well underway in the nineteenth. This would still be true had William Faulkner never written a word, much in the same way the English renaissance would be the most significant period in English literary history without the towering presence of Shakespeare. Both periods would be considerably diminished, of course, without these abiding presences, and without Faulkner Southern literature might still be largely unrecognized outside its region. But the fact remains that the enduring importance of modern Southern literature does not simply rest upon the greatness of William Faulkner.

To mention only two other writers, James Branch Cabell and Ellen Glasgow continued their prolific writing. Cabell published at least twenty-four novels, collections of stories, and essays between 1919 and 1936. In the same time

period Glasgow brought forth seven novels and one collection of stories. 72

Most of the renaissance writers, however, like Faulkner himself, published for the first time in the Twenties. Beginning with John Crowe Ransom's Poems About God in 1919, William Alexander Percy, John Peale Bishop, Hervey Allen, Du Bose Heyward, Elizabeth Madox Roberts, T. S. Stribling, Allen Tate, Robert Penn Warren, John Donald Wade, Donald Davidson, Stark Young, Julia Peterkin, Thomas Wolfe, James Branch Cabell, Merrill Moore, Erskine Caldwell, and Hamilton Basso had all brought out at least one title by 1930. By 1936 they had been joined by Katherine Anne Porter, Andrew Lytle, Caroline Gordon, Marjorie Kinan Rawlings, Olive Tilford Dargan, Grace Lumpkin, Caroline Miller, Lillian Hellman, and Cleanth Brooks. 73

It is clear that the Renaissance began very quickly after World War I. A terminal date is more difficult to find, and a few critics have asserted that the Renaissance is still underway. 74 But its greatest vitality was certainly

72 See the Meriwether checklist in Rubin and Jacobs (eds.), South: Modern Southern Literature, 398-99, 410.

73 See Appendix B for a partial chronological listing of Southern writings from 1919 to 1936.

74 Louis D. Rubin, Jr., "Second Thoughts on the Old Gray Mare: The Continuing Relevance of Southern Literary Issues," in Core (ed.), Southern Fiction Today, 42-43, 48-50, makes this claim. It should also be mentioned that a few critics downplay the significance of the Renaissance. Richard E. Langford and William E. Taylor (eds.), The Twenties: Poetry and
in the Twenties and Thirties.

To attempt to explain the causative factors behind this remarkable outburst is hazardous business. But it may be instructive first to examine other such "renaissance" periods in search of possible common characteristics. To this end it is necessary to return to a closer examination of the bursts of cultural creativity described in this chapter.

Prose, 20 Critical Essays (Deland, Fla., 1966), passim, devotes only one of twenty essays exclusively to a Southern author (Ransom). Faulkner is treated in an essay on Faulkner and Hemingway.
CHAPTER III

THE DYNAMICS OF CULTURAL CREATIVITY

The Golden Age of Roman letters occurred at an acutely critical stage of Roman history. Virgil (70-19 B.C.), Horace (65-8 B.C.), and Livy (59 B.D.-A.D. 17), among others, lived and wrote during the Augustan Age, a transitional period between the old Roman Republic and the rapidly evolving Roman Empire.1

The genius of Caesar Augustus (63 B.C.-A.D.14) is reflected in the peace and prosperity he was ultimately able to establish in a country which had been seriously wounded by political, social, and economic turmoil. Augustus restored stability to Rome and was a major patron of the arts, both directly and indirectly, but the leading thinkers of the land still had some misgivings. Trading a degree of the individual freedom which had been enjoyed under the Republic for the order of the Augustan Principate, these intellectuals of the Golden Age were often ambivalent in

1 The basic purpose of this chapter is to search for certain possible traits which are shared by various periods of concentrated cultural creativity in the history of Western civilization. Apologies are hereby offered for the gross oversimplifications involved in the following brief discussions of exceedingly complex periods.
their reaction to the changes.  

These mixed reactions among individual Roman intellectuals, combined with the continuing interaction of Greek and Roman culture, created a productive tension in the intellectual atmosphere. A standard authority on the Golden Age, J. Wight Duff, dates it from 70 B.C. to A.D. 14. Since Julius Caesar was not assassinated until 44 B.C., and Augustus did not obtain solid control until 27 B.C., the turbulence (and accompanying tensions) of these early stages should be obvious. Duff divides the Golden Age into two periods, the first, the "Ciceronian," stretches from 70 to 43 B.C. and witnesses Lucretius, Catullus, Caesar, and Cicero at their greatest creative heights.  

The second stage, following the assassination of Caesar and reaching to the death of Augustus in A.D. 14, brought forth Virgil, Horace, Livy, Tibullus, Propertius, and Ovid. Roman letters certainly were not dormant before or after the Golden Age, but this brief period clearly does stand out with the quality and quantity of its production.

---


4Ibid.
The Silver Age, for example, which Duff delineates as extending from 14 to A.D. 138, produced Juvenal, Martial, the two Plinys, and Suetonius, but their productions are often lacking in substance. Style rather than content received the most attention in this period, as classical culture was now reaching its limits and consequently beginning to stagnate. More viable production would have to await the rejuvenating force of Christian culture.

Jumping forward a millennium, one witnesses another "literary epoch of concentration" (Matthew Arnold's term) in Elizabethan England (1558-1603). William Shakespeare is to this English Renaissance what Faulkner is to the Southern literary Renaissance. Indeed, Shakespeare, a literary genius without peer for all time, is even more. But, as has been mentioned, neither the Southern nor the English Renaissance is totally dependent on these two leading figures. In addition to Shakespeare, the English movement also produced Edmund Spenser (1552-99), Sir Walter Raleigh (1552-1618), Ben Jonson (1572-1637), Christopher Marlowe (1564-93), and others.

This burst of creativity was generated by a turbulent


6Charles Norris Cochrane, Christianity and Classical Culture: A Study Of Thought And Action From Augustus To Augustine (New York, 1957), passim.
intellectual climate not unlike that of the Roman Golden Age. Sixteenth-century England was still in the throes of transformation from feudalism to a nation state, with continuing labor pains of internal social, political, and religious reform accompanying the birth of the nation. Mercantilism and international rivalries, accented by the pivotal victory over the Spanish Armada in 1588, culminated in early attempts at the colonization of the New World. Philosophy, astronomy and other sciences, and even conceptions of the very nature of man—these too were being rapidly transformed. Thus a strong sense of change, with its inherent tension, permeated England in the Elizabethan period and provided a stimulating intellectual climate. 7

The decades immediately before and after the turn of the twentieth century witnessed the emergence of still

---

7 For an in-depth analysis of some of the writers and the intellectual climate they wrote in, see Hippolyte A. Taine, *History Of English Literature* (New York, 1965), I, 259-433; II, 1-124, 148-221. Taine's search for causation in racial peculiarities, environment, and epoch had a profound impact on Vernon Louis Parrington and his determination to examine the "Main Currents In American Thought." See the essay on Parrington by E. H. Eby in *The Beginnings of Critical Realism In America, 1860-1920* (New York, 1930), vii.


See also C. S. Lewis, *English Literature In The Sixteenth Century, Excluding Drama* (Oxford, 1954), passim, but especially the discussion on "New Learning and New Ignorance," pp. 1-65.
another concentrated outburst of creativity—the Irish Renaissance. James Joyce, William Butler Yeats, John M. Synge, and Sean O'Casey, among others, wrote in an era of Irish history marked by the continuing Celtic Revival and the accompanying surge of nationalism that soon manifested itself in the Easter Rebellion and in the Civil War which followed. The correlation between a tension-filled atmosphere and high creativity is again suggested.

The American Renaissance of the 1850's and another fertile period in the 1890's have already been briefly described in Chapter II. But the question of causation in these periods remains. It is hard to conceive of a more turbulent, changing decade than the one F. O. Matthiessen sees as producing an "American Renaissance." It began with a "prologue to conflict," the Compromise of 1850, and quickly moved towards the "Disruption of American

---

8 To quote the best-known writer of the Irish Renaissance, William Butler Yeats: "The modern literature of Ireland, and indeed all that stir of thought which prepared for the Anglo-Irish war, began when Parnell fell from power in 1891. A disillusioned and embittered Ireland turned from parliamentary politics; an event was conceived; and the race began, as I think, to be troubled by that event's long gestation." William Butler Yeats, The Autobiography of William Butler Yeats, Consisting of Reveries over Childhood and Youth. The Trembling of the Veil And Dramatic Personae (New York, Collier Books ed., 1965), passim but especially pp. 378-87. Quote from p. 378.

Democracy, "Bleeding Kansas," the rise of the Republican Party, the Dred Scott Case, John Brown's raid, and other such mileposts marking the way. Secession and Civil War, of course, are the ultimate proofs of the profound tensions of the 1850's.

There were other deep changes that permeated all aspects of American life in the 1850's. Accelerating industrialization, the beginnings of the "new" immigration, increasing urbanization, transportation and communication developments, a major financial panic (and depression), and the Third Great Awakening all combine to give further testimony of the hyperactive climate of the 1850's. Above all there was the intrusion, to use Leo Marx's phrase, of the machine into the garden. Thus Thoreau's idyllic setting in Walden is shattered by the harsh sounds of a railroad. "Progress" was already levying its toll on the Jeffersonian pastoral ideal.  

The culmination of what Stanley Elkins calls the "Dynamics of Unopposed Capitalism" led Hawthorne to lament

---


Democracy," with the Kansas-Nebraska Act, "Bleeding Kansas," the rise of the Republican Party, the Dred Scott Case, John Brown's raid, and other such mileposts marking the way. Secession and Civil War, of course, are the ultimate proofs of the profound tensions of the 1850's.

There were other deep changes that permeated all aspects of American life in the 1850's. Accelerating industrialization, the beginnings of the "new" immigration, increasing urbanization, transportation and communication developments, a major financial panic (and depression), and the Third Great Awakening all combine to give further testimony of the hyperactive climate of the 1850's. Above all there was the intrusion, to use Leo Marx's phrase, of the machine into the garden. Thus Thoreau's idyllic setting in Walden is shattered by the harsh sounds of a railroad. "Progress" was already levying its toll on the Jeffersonian pastoral ideal.¹¹

The culmination of what Stanley Elkins calls the "Dynamics of Unopposed Capitalism,"¹² led Hawthorne to lament


in his preface to *The Marble Faun* (1860) "the difficulty of writing a romance about a country where there is no shadow, no antiquity, no mystery, no picturesque and gloomy wrong, nor anything but a commonplace prosperity. . . ." But there were plenty of "shadows" and "gloomy wrongs" in the 1850's, and the tensions they generated found expression in the five-year burst of literary activity by Emerson, Melville, Thoreau, Whitman, and Hawthorne which was described earlier. Melville, sensing these relationships, marked in his personal copy that portion of Matthew Arnold's analysis in "The Function of Criticism" of what causes great literary epochs: "Two powers must concur, the power of man and the power of the moment, and the man is not enough without the moment." 

Massive change and the inherent tension that accompanies it--in sum, "The power of the moment," reached another crest in America during the 1890's. For Henry Steele Commager, the Nineties are "the watershed of American history":

---

13 Quoted in *ibid.*, 33.


On the one side lies an America predominantly agricultural; concerned with domestic problems; conforming, intellectually at least, to the political, economic and moral principles inherited from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—an America still in the making, physically and socially; an America on the whole self-confident, self-contained, self-reliant, and conscious of its unique character and of a unique destiny. On the other side lies the modern America, predominantly urban and industrial; inextricably involved in world economy and politics; troubled with the problems that had long been thought peculiar to the Old World; experiencing profound changes in population, social institutions, economy and technology; and trying to accommodate its traditional institutions and habits of thought to conditions new and in part alien.16

The Panic of 1893 and the severe depression that followed it provided a dramatic juxtaposition to the Chicago World's Fair. The election of 1896 is truly one of the most symbolic in American political history. And the decisions which led to the Spanish-American War and the annexation of the Philippines, of course, still ring with ominous repercussions.

Twain, Howells, James, Garland, Crane, Frederic, and Norris were all writing actively during this pivotal decade.17 And in Chicago, a renaissance was being generated by creative forces present in that mid-west city "common to

---


17See above, Chapter II, 15-17.
the nation at that time. An "uncertainty" was in the intellectual air of Chicago, a tension-filled atmosphere which writers, not only in Chicago but throughout the nation, sensed and to which they reacted. Mark Twain exemplified the intellectual's ambivalent response to the times. Already befuddled by his diverse experiences during his formative period as a writer, he was both the master of "personal incoherence to provide the dramatic tension of creation," and its slave in his topsy-turvy personal life.

Historians, too, felt the strains of the period. As Henry Nash Smith has pointed out, Frederick Jackson Turner's famous 1893 address was decidedly ambivalent in its view of the frontier. In a sense returning to James Fenimore Cooper's view of the frontier as both noble and hostile (and


22 Justin Kaplan, Mr. Clemens and Mark Twain, A Biography (New York, 1966), passim.

23 Smith, Virgin Land, 291-305.
anticipating a similar view by William Faulkner in *The Bear*), Turner saw the advance of civilization into the frontier as a sign of both progress and as marking the closing of "the first period of American history."24 A sense of doom is created by Cooper and others who equated the inevitable passing of "old virtue" and "the good life" with the passing of the frontier.

To return to C. Hugh Holman's previously quoted observation, one must admit that "the occurrence of genius, even of high talent, is always finally inexplicable." But Hippolyte Taine, Matthew Arnold, Theodore Spencer, and others have suggested convincingly that a "literary epoch of concentration" (Arnold's term) results from something more than pure genetic accident. "The power of the moment," Arnold called it, something about the intellectual climate of a given period, catalyzes high-level cultural creativity.

A cursory survey, then, of the Golden Age of Roman literature, the flowering of Elizabethan England, the Irish Renaissance, the American Renaissance of the 1850's, and the outburst of the 1890's indicates a strong, common characteristic. Each of these periods was marked by deep and profound changes of a social, political, economic, and intellectual

nature. This rapidly changing climate, furthermore, generated an air of tension\(^{25}\)--a tension that was at the heart of the creations of the many geniuses involved.\(^{26}\)

This observation is not to be construed as an attempt at oversimplification. Obviously there are many criteria that separate "good" from "bad" in literature and poetry, not the least of which is the ultimate distinction of individual taste. But most professional critics (and probably a majority of the literate public) would find less merit in the tension-free "I think that I shall never see A Poem lovely as a tree"\(^{27}\) than in:

I have measured out my life with coffee spoons
I have seen the moment of my greatness flicker,
And I have seen the eternal Footman hold my coat,
and snicker,
And in short, I was afraid.
I grow old . . . I grow old . . .
I grow old . . . I grow old . . .

\(^{25}\)Tension is obviously an open-ended term. I am using the word in a very general sense to describe a state of mind resulting from rapid and profound changes in given periods of history which cause marked disruptions of traditional patterns of life. Other examples that follow essentially the same approach are Elkins, Slavery, 165-66; and David W. Noble, The Progressive Mind, 1890-1917 (Chicago, 1970), 1-22.

\(^{26}\)This strong emphasis on the potentially positive manifestations of a rapidly changing environment (and the tensions thereby generated) makes for interesting contrast with Alvin Toffler's best seller Future Shock (New York, 1970). For Toffler, of course, the ramifications of change are extremely negative.

I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each. I do not think that they will sing to me.²⁸

Indeed, for Allen Tate, tension is one of the most vital prerequisites for good poetry.²⁹ And the beneficent qualities of this element are not limited to poetry—all areas of literature draw strength from it, as is shown by the meaningful ambivalencies the reader experiences from Shakespeare's plays to Hawthorne's tales to Faulkner's novels.

But questions remain. If tension is indeed the principal catalyst for cultural creativity, one must explain the phenomenon of certain tension-filled periods of man's past that are relatively devoid of any worthwhile cultural expression. It is particularly necessary to analyze the antecedents of the Southern renaissance period, the antebellum South.

If ever a society was gorged with change and tension, so was the South from 1800 to 1860. Although slavery was to the Old South as the sun is to the solar system, with everything in the South revolving around it, only one of every four white men in the South owned slaves.³⁰ It was far from

---


a stagnant society. The pro-slavery argument had to be constructed, there was talk of building Southern railroads and shipping lines, Southern factories were being built, and new political parties were being formed. Thus change was in the air, but the albatross of slavery still hung around the Southern neck.

A changing South, a South under increasing moral and political attack—it is obvious that a region in this state was filled with guilt feelings about the institution of slavery, fear of slave insurrection, and many other disquieting thoughts. If an atmosphere of tension breeds

31 On the pro-slavery argument see William Sumner Jenkins, Pro-Slavery Thought In The Old South (Chapel Hill, 1935), passim, and the convenient collection edited by Eric L. McKitrick, Slavery Defended: The Views of The Old South (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1963), passim. On commercial planning see Robert R. Russel, Economic Aspects of Southern Sectionalism, 1840-1861 (Urbana, 1924), passim; John G. Van Deusen, The Ante-Bellum Southern Commercial Conventions, 1837-1859 (Historical Papers Published by the Trinity College Historical Society, Series 16, Durham, 1926), 1-111; and Herbert Wender, Southern Commercial Conventions, 1837-1859 (Johns Hopkins University Studies in History and Political Science, XLVIII, Baltimore, 1930), 1-240. On ante-bellum Southern industry see Robert S. Starobin, Industrial Slavery in the Old South (New York, 1970), 3-34.

good literature one would expect a massive outpouring to have come from the ante-bellum South. Of course, this was not the case. With the exception of Poe (who really was not very Southern in his choice of subject matter, and other such criteria), the South from approximately 1800 to 1860 had no first-rate writers, when compared to the North. Cultural sterility was such that the 1850 Nashville convention supposedly passed resolutions to the effect that "Resolved: that there be established a Southern Literature. Resolved: that the Honorable William Gilmore Simms be requested to write it."\textsuperscript{33} W. J. Cash echoes this thought in citing a query supposedly made of another ante-bellum Southern writer, Philip Pendleton Cooke, to the effect: "'Why do you waste your time on a damned thing like poetry?"

\textsuperscript{33}Louis D. Rubin, Jr., "Second Thoughts on the Old Gray Mare: The Continuing Relevance of Southern Literary Issues," in George Core (ed.), Southern Fiction Today: Renascence And Beyond (Athens, 1969), 34. In a later study, Rubin places this anecdote at the 1856 Savannah Convention. See his The Writer In The South: Studies in a Literary Community (Athens, 1972), 12. At least Simms would have been a logical choice. For several recent essays calling attention to his merits, see The Southern Literary Journal, V (Fall, 1972), 3-107.

According to Richard Hofstadter, John C. Calhoun (even with one of the leading minds of the ante-bellum South) especially suffered from this cultural sterility. Describing Calhoun, Hofstadter says that "there is no record that he ever read or tried to write poetry, although there is a traditional gibe to the effect that he once began a poem with 'Whereas,' and stopped." Hofstadter, The American Political Tradition And The Men Who Made It (New York, 1948), 73.
A man of your position could be a useful man.\textsuperscript{34}

Slavery, the prime generator of Southern tensions, was also the principal deterrent to any potential intellectual renaissance in the ante-bellum South. The reservoir of creativity was most certainly tapped, but it flowed in the wrong direction. Southern thought was devoted to the pro-slavery argument, to political and constitutional theorizing, and to the construction of what Clement Eaton has called an "intellectual blockade."\textsuperscript{35} Perhaps the most dramatic statement of this oppressive intellectual climate was the bitter suggestion of Francis Lieber, a leading ante-bellum Southern educator, that his epitaph should read: "There lies a man who died of the South."\textsuperscript{36} In sum, a potentially fertile climate for cultural creativity was stifled by an obsession with the defense of slavery.\textsuperscript{37}

\textsuperscript{34} Wilbur J. Cash, The Mind of the South (New York, Vintage ed., orig. 1941), 99-100. See also, ibid., 94-102.

\textsuperscript{35} Elkins, Slavery, 206-22; Eaton, Freedom-of-Thought Struggle, passim, but especially pp. 335-52; and Eugene D. Genovese, The World the Slaveholders Made. Two Essays In Interpretation (New York, Vintage books, 1971), 118-244.

\textsuperscript{36} Eaton, Freedom-Of-Thought Struggle, 58. In somewhat similar fashion Elkins makes a distinction between a state of tension that leads to creativity and the "heavy and cramping tensions" that retarded intellectual creativity in the ante-bellum South. See Elkins, Slavery, 218.

\textsuperscript{37} For an elaboration of this thought see Rubin, The Writer In The South, 1-33; William P. Trent, William Gilmore Simms (Boston and New York, 1892), passim; and William Sumner Jenkins, Pro-Slavery Thought In The Old South (Chapel Hill, 1935), vii. See also Louis D. Rubin, Jr., "The Image of an Army: The Civil War In Southern Fiction," in R. C. Simonini, Jr., Southern Writers: Appraisals in Our Time
This makes for vivid contrast with what happened in the South in the 1920's. A sense of change and inherent tensions were again very much present, but on this occasion they were a major factor behind a Southern literary renaissance.

The magnitude of the changes which came to the South as a result of World War I is almost beyond comprehension. No aspect of Southern life has ever been completely stagnant, but a comparison of the rate and extent of change in Southern society during and after the World War I period with any earlier time frame dramatizes the intense activity of the later period.

The titles of the appropriate volumes in the prestigious Louisiana State University Press "History of the South" series are instructive. C. Vann Woodward, lamenting the continual misuse of the term "New South" as a description of the Southern region from 1877 to 1913, entitled his


study of that period *Origins of The New South, 1877-1913.*
For Woodward, there were changes present in the period but
there was also a great deal of continuity. Not until the
stimulus of World War I would the New South, in George
Tindall's words, begin to mark its "emergence."39

Indeed, the most remarkable thing about the South on
the eve of World War I is not the presence of New South
characteristics but rather the striking similarities with
the South before Appomatox. Paul Gaston has ably demon­
strated the mythological nature of the New South creed, and
an analysis of certain fundamental aspects of Southern life
confirms that any claim of "newness" prior to World War I
is, in fact, mostly myth.40 A meaningful approach to such

38 C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of The New South, 1877-
1913* (Baton Rouge, 1951), passim.

39 George Brown Tindall, *The Emergence of the New
South, 1913-1945* (Baton Rouge, 1967), passim.

40 Paul M. Gaston, *The New South Creed, A Study in
Southern Mythmaking* (New York, 1970), passim, and the work
from which Gaston draws heavily, Robert Darden Little, "The
Ideology of The New South: A Study in the Development of
Ideas, 1865-1910" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Dept. of
History, University of Chicago, 1950), passim.

Woodward normally stresses continuity more than
change but deviates from this pattern in Chapter I of *Origins
of The New South,* 1-22, where he makes a sharp distinction
between "Bourbons" and "Redeemers." This characterization
of politics in the post-Reconstruction period has received
sharp criticism from several scholars. See, for example,
William J. Cooper, Jr., *The Conservative Regime: South
Carolina, 1877-1890* (Baltimore, 1968), passim, but especially
pp. 13-20; and William Ivy Hair, *Bourbonism and Agrarian
Protest. Louisiana Politics, 1877-1900* (Baton Rouge, 1969),
passim. Woodward, however, stresses the relative impotency
of Reconstruction in his essay "From the First Reconstruction
to the Second," in Willie Morris (ed.), *The South Today.*
an analysis is a brief examination of the fate of the Reconstruction amendments.

At first glance the Thirteenth Amendment would seem immune to subterfuge from even the most devious of Southern minds. Men are either slaves or they are free, and the South of 1900 was one devoid of plantation slavery. But was it truly? Tenantry and sharecropping had steadily increased to the point that these forms of labor operated a majority of the farms in eight of thirteen Southern states


The basic question at issue, of course, is one of relativity. The debate over the "when's" and "if's" of a "New South" has raged for a long time and will certainly continue in the future. Although the trend (especially among sociologists) in recent years has been to downplay Southern uniqueness, and to claim the "Americanisation" or "Northernisation" of the South with a concurrent loss of regional identity, John Shelton Reed's recent monograph, *The Enduring South, Subcultural Persistence in Mass Society* (Lexington, Massachusetts, 1972), passim, takes an opposite position, as his title indicates. Strong evidence in support of Reed's emphasis on the pervasiveness of "Southernism" well into the twentieth century is in Neil R. McMillen, *The Citizens' Council: Organized Resistance to the Second Reconstruction, 1954-64* (Urbana, 1971), passim, but especially pp. 5-11. It is not the purpose of this chapter to enter this debate, but rather to assert that there is little fundamentally "new" about the South prior to World War I but that after that conflict the changes came rapidly indeed.
by 1910. Thus poor whites found themselves economically side by side with the supposedly emancipated slaves, locked into the vicious cycle of the crop-lien system and often having their mobility restricted by state debtor laws. Whether such a life was appreciably better than that enjoyed by many ante-bellum slaves is debatable.

Tenantry and sharecropping led to a pattern of life which tended to nullify the Thirteenth Amendment. Peonage was even more retrogressive. In spite of the 1857 Federal statute outlawing this "species of slavery," peonage was common in the South well into the 1940's. In Bailey vs. Alabama (1911), the U. S. Supreme Court overturned Alabama laws which had been used to support peonage, but the institution continued to flourish in covert violation of

---

41Woodward, Origins of the New South, 178-79, 407. The thirteen consist of the eleven former Confederate states, plus Kentucky and Oklahoma. For more complete data on tenantry and sharecropping, see Helen H. Edwards (ed.), A List of References For The History Of Agriculture In the Southern United States, 1865-1900 (Davis, Calif., 1971), passim, but especially pp. 29-30. See also the selected list of references by the Bureau of Agricultural Economy, Farm Tenancy in the United States, 1918-1936, U. S. Dept. Agriculture, Agricultural Economic Bibliography No. 70 (June, 1937); and the symposium on tenancy in Law And Contemporary Problems, IV (October, 1937), 423-572.

42Charles S. Mangum, Jr., The Legal Status of the Tenant Farmer in the Southeast (Chapel Hill, 1952), passim.

the Thirteenth Amendment. 44

The Fourteenth Amendment suffered a similar fate. Segregation codes appeared in some parts of the South almost before the ink had dried at Appomatox. The end of Reconstruction, the failure of the Lodge "Force" Bill, and a "WASPish" national climate of opinion combined with other factors to accelerate this pattern. The ominous decision in Plessy vs. Ferguson (1896) saw the U. S. Supreme Court make mockery of the Fourteenth Amendment and insure the dominance of Jim Crow for the next half-century. 45

The last of the so-called Reconstruction amendments, the Fifteenth, began to fall in the 1890's. The same racist atmosphere that enabled Jim Crow to grow so rapidly in that decade was also instrumental in the drive by Southern whites to disfranchise the black vote (along with some "undesirable" poor whites). Mississippi heralded the failure of the Lodge Bill in 1890 by passing disfranchisement laws before the year had ended. South Carolina followed in 1895, and Louisiana in 1898. The same year of the initial Louisiana law, the U. S. Supreme Court upheld the earlier Mississippi

44 Ibid., 654-70. See also, "'We Are Going to Do Away With These Boys . . .'," American Heritage, XXIII (April, 1972), 42-47, 100-101, for an account of a gruesome 1921 peonage case in Georgia involving the murder of eleven blacks.

statute in Williams vs. Mississippi (1898). The gate was now wide open and other Southern states acted quickly, and all enacted disfranchisement laws by 1908.46

Thus the South approached the guns of August, 1914, with a plantation system modified but still very much intact, little deviance from the one-crop system, a one-party politics, the Negro firmly "in his place," and even a Southern-born Democrat in the White House, the first since ante-bellum days. In sum, there was less "new" than "old" about the South on the eve of World War I.

The war, with its enormous impact on virtually all aspects of Southern life, marks the emergence of a New South. This transition, in turn, is the key to an understanding of the Southern intellectual renaissance of the Twenties and Thirties.

It would be incorrect to infer that the war's impact was restricted to the South. As John Higham has said, the war experience "deeply . . . shook the confidence of sensitive people in the stability and humaneness of their civilization. The submarine and poison gas, especially, gave a shocking demonstration of how science could be put to immoral ends if its advances were not somehow matched by a deliberate cultivation of values."47 This sense of


disillusionment, of course, found eloquent expression in the works of many American writers outside the South. Ezra Pound's 1920 characterization of the war as one in which the best of men died "for an old bitch gone in the teeth, for a botched civilization"; the themes of sterility and emptiness in Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922), F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925), Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* (1926); and the strong anti-war sentiment in John Dos Passos's *Manhattan Transfer* (1925)—all are notable examples of intellectual responses to the war.  

This theme of disillusionment also manifested itself among Southern intellectuals in the Twenties, as will be seen in Chapter VII, but in the South this sentiment was mixed with other emotions. Probably more deeply felt was a sense of the change which astute Southerners quickly detected as a major legacy of the war experience. Few aspects of Southern life escaped this impact of World War I. George Tindall's thorough study of the South from 1914 to 1945 continually stresses the changes of these years, changes of such magnitude that they mark, for Tindall, the completion of the region's metamorphosis and thus the

---

48 The impact of World War I on American writers in the Twenties is virtually a cornerstone of the conventional wisdom. A good, general treatment of this theme and some of the decade's major writers is in Frederick J. Hoffman, *The Twenties. American Writing in the Postwar Decade* (rev. ed.; Free Press paperback, 1965), *passim*. The quote from Pound's *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* is in *ibid.*, 60.
"emergence" of the New South. Tindall particularly stresses the impact of World War I. The midas touch of the war, for example, led to great economic growth in the South. Southern congressional strength, combining with a salubrious Southern climate, led to the establishment of numerous military training centers in the Southern states, with accompanying boosts to the economies of areas surrounding these bases. This bonanza for merchants and landlords was increased by a huge influx of shipbuilding firms, with Norfolk, Virginia, more than doubling her population in the space of a few months, and a string of shipyards dotting the Southern coastline from Virginia to Texas.

Munitions plants and other factories producing the materiel of war also began to emerge across the South with a rich harvest of jobs and payrolls. In similar fashion the Southern textile industry, which had come of age around the turn of the century when Northern mills moved South in


50 Ibid., 54-55. Tindall points out that the subsequent demand for timber to construct barracks, ships, and other war-related items sent the Southern lumber business spiraling up. See ibid., 55-56. For an analysis of the political maneuverings that brought such an abundance of war industries South, see David Potter, The South and the Concurrent Majority (Baton Rouge, 1972), passim.
search of water power and cheap and non-unionized labor, turned out a massive supply of uniforms for the AEF. Some mills doubled their pre-war annual profits in these flush times.

Even the perennially distraught Southern farmer had four good years. Cotton farmers, after an initial scare at the outbreak of the war in Europe, produced for textile mills and artillery uses and thereby recovered quickly to continue the steady improvement the cotton economy had begun in the first decade of the century. By 1919, when prices reached an all-time high (thirty-five cents per pound), cotton was so profitable that observers were speaking of the restoration of the ante-bellum economic "King." Tobacco farmers reaped record profits from a nervous world now denied Turkish smokes by the war. In addition, per capita cigarette consumption in the United States had almost tripled between 1914 and 1919.

All of this production generated prosperity of

51E. T. H. Shaffer, "Southern Mill People," The Yale Review, XIX (December, 1929), 326, particularly stresses the labor point. Labor, and other aspects of the changing Southern textile industry will be discussed at greater length in Chapter IV.

52Tindall, Emergence of New South, 56-57, 59.

53Ibid., 33-37, 60.

54Ibid., 58-59. For a survey of the rapid growth of the tobacco industry during this period, see Joseph C. Robert, The Story of Tobacco in America (New York, 1949), 229-36.
unprecedented proportions in the South. Even the traditional mudsills of the Southern economic ladder shared some of the profits. A boom in Kentucky coal fields, for example, continued into 1920, and by that year some diggers were earning $50 a day. Similarly, tenant farmers reaped profits from the prosperous cotton and tobacco crops. Throughout the South, per capita savings rose from $18.45 in 1914 to $26.73 in 1918. These samplings of the good life were not forgotten, and the rapid fall down the economic scale which many of these individuals experienced when the war boom ended in the South in 1920 prompted a strong sense of dissatisfaction and disillusionment.

In general, the greatest impact of the war on the South was probably in the more intangible realms of broadened horizons brought on by war experiences, and a parallel

55Tindall, Emergence of New South, 58.
56Ibid., 60-61.
57This is admittedly a difficult phenomenon to quantify, but it seems obvious to make such a claim for thousands of Southerners who ventured beyond the home county line for the first time to serve in the war. Even those with sophisticated educational backgrounds were strongly affected. Donald Davidson, for example, in spite of a quite eclectic education, was awed by his first trip to Paris, calling it the "city of all cites." Philosophizing on his initial year in the Army, Davidson went on to add: "In a year, how all changes." Donald Davidson to his father (W. B. Davidson), February 8, 1919, in Donald Davidson Papers, Box 1 (Special Collections Division, Joint University Libraries, Nashville, Tenn.) On Davidson's educational background, see Louise S. Cowan, The Fugitive Group: A Literary History (Baton Rouge, 1959), 10-12.
sense of a South irrevocably changed by the war. Close to one million Southerners served in the armed forces and, figuratively or literally, saw "gay Paree" and then had to return to the fields of the Delta, the ghettos of Atlanta, and the mills of the Carolina's. Some doughboys probably wanted to return to the same South they had left when they marched off to war, but they found it altered beyond recall. Others, now possessed with a vision of another (and to their view better world, wanted to change dramatically the land to which they returned. Many therefore initiated social reforms, but they often found traditional ways still deeply embedded and serving to retard their visions of progress.

A sense of change was central to both the traditional and the reform-minded groups. The emergence of a New South and the recognition of it by Southern writers gave

58Ibid., 53.  
59Ibid., 62-63.

60 Again, a qualification must be pleaded. Change neither began nor ended in the South with World War I. Indeed, Lawrence J. Friedman's fascinating (but perhaps overstated) The White Savage: Racial Fantasies in the Postbellum South (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1970), passim, postulates the emergence of "deferential segregation" in pre-World War I days as a psychological response to the sense of dislocation brought on by the supposedly changing "New South" of Henry Grady, Henry Watterson, and others. In similar fashion Jack Temple Kirby's Darkness at the Dawning: Race and Reform In the Progressive South (Philadelphia, N. Y. and Toronto, 1972), passim, stresses changes in the pre-World War I South. On the other hand, Robert M. Crunden's From Self to Society, 1919-1941 (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1972), passim, finds the cultural and intellectual climate of the South, and the United States as a whole, undergoing dramatic changes after World War I.
them a meaningful dual perspective, one which juxtaposed a pre-war South which was closer to ante-bellum days than to the Twentieth century with a region which had been dramatically changed by World War I. This dual vision would become a factor of great significance in the emerging Southern literary Renaissance.\footnote{Louis D. Rubin, Jr., "Southern Literature: The Historical Image," in Rubin and Robert D. Jacobs (eds.), South: Modern Southern Literature in its Cultural Setting (Garden City, 1961), 34-36; Allen Tate, "The Fugitive: A Personal Recollection Twenty Years After," Princeton University Library Chronicle, III (1942), 83; and C. Hugh Holman, "A Cycle of Change in Southern Literature," in John C. McKinney and Edgar T. Thompson (eds.), The South in Continuity and Change (Durham, 1965), 384-97. 

This same point will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter VII.}

Above all, these multiple and deep-seated changes follow the pattern we have already suggested with reference to Ancient Rome, Elizabethan England, Ireland at the turn of the century, and nineteenth-century America.\footnote{See above, pp. 46-61.} In these earlier cases, the changes produced a profound sense of dislocation, of uncertainty—a vertigo-like sensation—in sum, a climate filled with tension.\footnote{David Potter describes this situation well: "The South was torn between responsiveness to the new order and reaction to its own responsiveness." See Potter, "The Emergence of the New South," 421.} Dramatic proof of these tensions and the accompanying frustrations is found in a number of violent outbreaks in the South in the decade following World War I. This violence, and the problems it
grew out of, in turn, brought the South to the greatest national attention the section had received since the days of slavery. Scholars, journalists, novelists and other writers, from all sections of the United States, once again found much to criticize in the South.

Such criticism would serve two major functions in crystallizing the Southern Renaissance. First, it significantly intensified the Southern sense of unease. Secondly, it gave many of the future participants in the Renaissance a strong regional self-consciousness for the first time.64

64 This last point is deemed to be especially important for the literary participants on the assumption that a consciousness of the South is a necessary prerequisite for the production of viable Southern literature. See also Chapter VII.
A series of strikes in the Southern textile industry in the Twenties focused widespread national attention on the region from the newspaper media and a variety of other sources. Many of the strikes were violent, and often the writers covering these bloody outbreaks would indulge in perpetrating a clearly benighted image of the South. Marion, North Carolina, Elizabethton, Tennessee, Gastonia, North Carolina, and other Southern mill towns that experienced strikes, thus became familiar terms of opprobrium for many of these reporters.

The strikes, and the negative images which came out of them, were directly related to the massive changes World War I brought to the South. "Gay Paree," and other horizon-broadening experiences, exercised a heavy influence on the formerly "cheap and contented labor"¹ of the Southern textile industry. When the mills had been established late in the

¹The phrase is Sinclair Lewis's. See Lewis, Cheap and Contented Labor. The Picture of a Southern Mill Town in 1929 (New York, 1929).
nineteenth century, they had been manned in large part by mountaineers fleeing the poverty of the hills. These yeomen, even with the long hours and low wages they encountered in the mills, were probably content to be receiving "cash money" for the first time and likely had experienced a noticeable rise in their standard of living. In addition, there seems to have been a very real personal relationship between these first generation workers and the owners and managers of the mills. Indeed, many of the mills were founded out of various mixtures of civic pride and boosterism, noblesse oblige, and paternalism. All of these factors served to prevent strikes.

This relatively stable situation faded rapidly in

---

2There has been some debate over the chronology of the evolution of the Southern textile industry. There were, of course, ante-bellum precedents such as William Gregg's South Carolina mills. C. Vann Woodward stresses the growth of the industry in the South between 1860 and 1880, while Broadus Mitchell feels that significant growth did not occur until the 1880's. Both Woodward and Mitchell agree, however, that Southern cotton mill expansion accelerated at an enormous rate in the late nineteenth century. See Woodward, Origins Of The New South, 1877-1913 (Baton Rouge, 1951), 131-33; and Mitchell, The Rise of Cotton Mills in the South (Johns Hopkins University Studies in History and Political Science, XXXIX, No. 2, Baltimore, 1921), passim.


the 1920's. A second and a third generation of workers, raised in the mill towns, did not have the coarse mountain backgrounds which would make them "appreciative" of life in a mill village. In addition, the social benevolence of the owners, although never as great as management liked to assert, did appreciably raise the level of education of these later generations. This, combined with service in World War I, awakened many workers to the fact that there was another (and better) world beyond the mill villages of the South. Even the old personal ties between employer and employee had been greatly weakened by the more impersonal conditions of the larger mills, the importation of Northern managers, and the increasing hostility of the younger workers.

Another source of discontent was the psychological impact of mill work, especially on the younger generations. Both the social isolation of the mill villages and the highly repetitive nature of the work affected these workers' outlook in a manner which would ultimately prove troublesome

---


On the social programs in mill villages, their impact and the discrepancies between their magnitude and the owners claims of same, see George B. Tindall, The Emergence of the New South, 1913-1945 (Baton Rouge, 1967), 325-29; and Harriet L. Herring, Welfare Work In Mill Villages. The Story of Extra-Mill Activities in North Carolina (Chapel Hill, 1929), passim.
All of these factors, mostly related to the major transformation that World War I worked upon the South, made many textile workers eager to join a growing labor movement. The first manifestation of this changing climate in the textile industry was seen in 1921. The prosperity of the mills during and immediately after the war led to workers' demands that profits be more fully shared. Consequently, the United Textile Workers Union (an American Federation of Labor affiliate) successfully organized many Southern mills during 1919 and 1920. But the relative affluence of the mills was short lived, for the depression

---


7. The discontent was by no means limited to the textile industry. The textile strikes, however, will be concentrated upon because of the wealth of benighted images that came out of them. Similar material can be found in accounts of mine, tobacco, lumber, and a number of other industrial strikes in the South of the Twenties. For a broad survey of labor difficulties in textiles and other industries, see Irving Bernstein, The Lean Years: A History of the American Worker, 1920-1933 (Baltimore, Penguin Books, 1966); and F. Ray Marshall, Labor in the South (Cambridge, Mass., 1967), both passim.
began to come ten years early in Southern textiles, with serious ramifications for labor-management relations.\(^8\)

Changing fashions in the Twenties pushed the industry into a further state of decline. As skirts shortened and silk and synthetic fibers became the vogue in ladies' fashions, the demand for cotton products declined. This, joined with the general recession which began in Southern textiles in late 1920, created serious economic problems for the mills.\(^9\)

Owners initially attempted to meet this crisis by lowering wages and cutting back production. This, and other such "solutions," combined with already existing long hours and poor working conditions, proved to be the thread that jammed the looms in numerous Southern textile mills.

The strikes of 1921 are a clear example. Faced with declining profits, mill owners in both the North and the South cut wages, but proportionally to a much greater degree in the South (averaging 40 per cent cuts to 22 per cent in Northern mills). Under these conditions approximately 9,000 Southern members of the UTW walked out of mills in Charlotte, Huntersville, Concord, and Kannapolis, North Carolina on June 1, 1921. By late August these strikes had been broken, 


the wage cuts remained, and the union was viewed as a failure in the eyes of many workers. Thus Southern mill laborers were left, in effect, at the mercy of management, and the owners generally showed little compassion. Male loom fixer wages (a high paying position), for example, declined from $32.88 per week in 1920 to $21.42 in 1922, and were up to only $22.20 by 1928. This meant that workers would remain frustrated and discontented throughout the decade, maintaining a climate conducive to further strikes and violence.

Workers added a new grievance to their list in the mid-Twenties when owners tried to combat the profit margin decline by introducing "efficiency" experts. These individuals produced studies which resulted in the initiation of the "stretch-out" system, a revision of production schedules calling for increasing productivity from the already overworked employees, with no accompanying increase in wages.10


11 A variety of sources discuss the significance of the "stretch-out" system as a major cause of the strikes. See, for example, Sherwood Anderson, "Loom Dance," The New Republic, LXII (April 30, 1930), 292-94; Paul Blanshard, "One-Hundred Per Cent Americans on Strike," The Nation, CXXVIII (May 8, 1929), 554-55; Mitchell, "Taking a Stand in Dixie," 127; Shaffer, "Southern Mill People," 329-30; "The
The "stretch-out" quickly became the focal point for a variety of labor ills. A widely circulated story, probably apocryphal, described the system well:

A man went to the plant and asked for a job. The boss said, "All right! but before we give you a job I will give you a test." . . . The boss gave him a hand brush and said: "You throw that hand brush as far as you can." The fellow had been a baseball player, and he flung the brush down to the other side of the weave shop. The boss said: "All right! the job is yours. You run all these looms." 12

Tindall relates another story which makes the same point in describing Gastonia, North Carolina, Loray mill workers who were demonstrating against the stretch-out:

. . . Loray workers paraded a coffin down Gastonia's main street. At intervals an effigy of the superintendent rose up to ask, "How many men are carrying this thing?" The group shouted "Eight." "Lay off two," the effigy responded: "six can do the work." 13

As Tindall points out: "The comedy masked a growing tension." 14

This tension led to another strike in 1927. On August 4, several hundred unorganized employees of a mill in Henderson, North Carolina, walked out spontaneously demanding the restoration of a wage cut imposed three years earlier. Two companies of the National Guard, one commanded by a


12Quoted in Bernstein, The Lean Years, 4.

13Tindall, Emergence of New South, 344.

14Ibid.
relative of the owners of the mill being struck, were sent to the scene on August 10 to restore order. The total absence of violence, however, forced their withdrawal two days later. The strike collapsed on August 30 but left a legacy of some five to six hundred new members of the UTW who had been signed up by Alfred Hoffman, a brilliant young organizer from the Brookwood Labor College. But this strike and the earlier ones of 1921 were only a prologue of things to come.

The year 1929 was the high water mark of labor activism in the Southern textile industry. Over 350 mills in three Southern states were closed by strikes in that year, and there were three major strikes. The first, at Elizabethton, Tennessee, began in March; the Gastonia, North Carolina, strike started the following month; and the Marion, N. C., strife flared up in July.

Presidential candidate Herbert Hoover made his only Southern campaign speech at Elizabethton, Tennessee, in

15 Bernstein, The Lean Years, 13; Mitchell, Textile Unionism and the South, 61-64.


October, 1928. The "Great Engineer" was duly impressed by the sparkling new German-owned American Bemberg (1926) and American Glantzstoff (1928) rayon plants and expressed his belief that the plants served to confirm the South's march into the future. Unfortunately the march apparently was to exclude the workers in these plants, approximately forty percent of whom were women. Many of these employees worked fifty-six hour weeks at salaries from $8.64 to $10.08 per week.\(^{18}\)

Although the rayon manufactured at the two Elizabethton plants returned profits somewhat better than cotton during the recession of the Twenties, the traditional "economy" measures still were in force at these mills. The "stretch-out" and low wages were thus the underlying causes of the Elizabethton strikes, but the walkout was touched off by the demotion of a young woman who had asked for an increase in her weekly salary to $8.96.\(^{19}\) Over 500 women

\(^{18}\)James A. Hodges, "Challenge of the New South: The Great Textile Strike in Elizabethton, Tennessee, 1929," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly*, XXIII (December, 1964), 345. This detailing of worker salaries and conditions drew the comment from the editors of the *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* that the wages "were comparable with those prevailing in Tennessee and adjoining states." See ibid., 345, note 12. This type of sensitivity to inferred criticism of the South is precisely the sort of reaction that the benighted images associated with the strikes in 1929 produced.

\(^{19}\)Hodges, "Strike in Elizabethton," 345. For other summaries of the strike, its causes, and ramifications, see Bernstein, *The Lean Years*, 12-30; Marshall, *Labor in the South*, 105-107; and Tindall, *Emergence of New South*, 342-43. On the background of the strike see also Tippett, *When Southern Labor stirs*, 54.
walked out of the Glantzstoff plant on March 12 demanding higher wages and the restoration of their fellow worker's position. Demonstrations and rock throwing occurred the next day at the mill, leading the president of the two Elizabethton plants, Dr. Arthur Mothwurf, to announce that the Glantzstoff mill was closed. Mothwurf further announced that he would not even discuss the workers' demands until they returned to work.20

There was no union in the mills when the initial walkout occurred, but a UTW local was quickly organized to fill this void and had over a thousand members by March 16. Mothwurf responded to this development by announcing that he would have nothing to do with the union. His attempt to reopen the Glantzstoff mill on Monday, March 18 failed; however, striking workers refused to allow scabs to enter the plant. The employees of the Bemberg plant also would not report for work.

After violence occurred, a company of the Tennessee National Guard appeared on the scene, but the workers were not dissuaded. Encouraged by the arrival of the President of the Tennessee Federation of Labor and of UTW representative Alfred Hoffman on March 18, the workers scorned Mothwurf's offer of a two cents per hour raise, and only 150 workers (of some 5,000) returned to work when the mills attempted to reopen on March 20.

This type of pressure, combined with the presence of a U. S. Department of Labor negotiator, finally brought Mothwurf to the conference table early in the morning of March 22. A settlement provided for wage increases and no discrimination against union members. These terms led the workers to vote to return, but Mothwurf reneged when the terms were announced on March 23.

In this unstable atmosphere workers began to return to work, but discrimination against union members led President William Green of the American Federation of Labor to send his prime trouble-shooter, Edward F. McGrady, to Elizabethton. Tensions grew in the community as labor strength increased. A group of night riders abducted McGrady and Alfred Hoffman the night of April 3-4. The two union figures were transported to Bristol, Virginia, and Asheville, North Carolina, respectively, and threatened with their lives if they returned to Elizabethton. Return they did, guarded by a small army of strikers, but the charges against six residents for the kidnappings were dropped by a pro-management judge.

The escalating conflict brought William Green to Elizabethton on April 7. When his visit was followed by the dismissal of two Bemberg union workers on April 13-14, a second strike broke out on Monday, April 15. Violence reached a peak with the dynamiting of the city water main May 16, and with the state militia brandishing machine guns
from factory roofs.\(^{21}\)

It all ended May 25 in total defeat for the strikers. UTW members were blacklisted, the union was not recognized, and the wages remained as before.\(^{22}\) Yet, as Tom Tippett wrote, the Elizabethton strikes "inflamed the Piedmont section until North and South Carolina were embroiled in Textile strikes."\(^{23}\)

Another major strike began at Gastonia, North Carolina, even before the Elizabethton difficulties had been resolved. The turmoil in this Piedmont city stretched from Spring to Fall of 1929 and was constantly punctuated by violence and a series of bizarre occurrences.\(^{24}\)

The Gastonia strike centered on the Loray Mill, a cord-tire fabric division of a Rhode Island company, and the largest mill in Gaston County. Troubles began with the arrival in 1927 of a new superintendent, G. W. Johnstone, who introduced wage cuts, reduced the work force, and implemented the hated "stretch-out." A brief walk-out in March, 1928, led to Johnstone's removal, but his objectionable modifications remained.\(^{25}\)

\(^{21}\text{Ibid.}, 347-55.\)

\(^{22}\text{Ibid.}, 355-57.\)

\(^{23}\text{Tippett, When Southern Labor Stirs, 71.}\)

\(^{24}\text{The best brief account of the Gastonia situation is in Tindall, Emergence of New South, 343-47. A useful chronology is in an ACLU pamphlet, Justice North Carolina Style (New York, 1930), 1-11. A more comprehensive account is in Bernstein, The Lean Years, 20-28.}\)

\(^{25}\text{Bernstein, The Lean Years, 20.}\)
The Communist-controlled National Textile Workers Union had been looking for an opening in the South and saw the Loray mill as a prime opportunity. As one Communist spokesman commented: "North Carolina is the key to the South, Gaston County is the key to North Carolina, and the Loray Mill is the key to Gaston County." With this in mind, the NTWU dispatched Fred Beal, a New England WWI veteran, to the Tarheel State on January 1, 1929.\textsuperscript{26}

Beal began organizing workers at the Loray mill in mid-March and met with rapid success. The implications of joining a Communist union did not deter workers "compelled to work twelve hours a day for a few cents an hour [and who] had not enough time or energy to analyze complicated problems of political economy." In addition, AFL activity had been absent since 1921 so the mill employees "joined the only union that offered them an application blank."\textsuperscript{27}

The firing of five union members on March 25 led to a walk-out by both shifts on April 1. The Communist Party, convinced of the potential of the situation for world-wide publicity, rushed agents to the scene to "prepare the workers for the coming revolution." This onslaught led to a counter blitz by the establishment, as civic leaders in Gastonia mobilized against the strike, Governor Max Gardner

\textsuperscript{26}Ibid., 20-21.

\textsuperscript{27}Tippett, \textit{When Southern Labor Stirs}, 84.
sent in the National Guard, and the AFL denounced the walk-out. 28

The Communist-dominated union was long on rhetoric and short on funds. Words would not satiate appetites, and workers accustomed to a weekly check began to return to the mill on April 10. The strike effectively ended on April 15, when remaining pickets were unable to prevent scabs from going to work. 29

The situation then deteriorated into a series of violent outbreaks. On the night of April 18, a vigilante group demolished the union headquarters and burned the furnishings and food the NTWU had stored while the National Guard troops "slept" through the holocaust 500 feet away. The soldiers did "wake up" and arrive on the scene in time to arrest a group of strikers for destroying their own property. These stellar guard activities were followed by their removal on April 20 and replacement by local deputies. 30

More acute violence began on June 7. That evening, deputies broke up a union parade. Later that night, Police

28 Bernstein, The Lean Years, 22-23, quote from p. 23. The Gastonia Gazette ran a cartoon depicting an American flag with a snake strangling the staff and a caption which read: "A Viper That Must Be Smashed: Communism In The South, Kill It!" The cartoon is reproduced in Tippett, When Southern Labor Stirs, 334.

29 Bernstein, ibid., 23.

Chief O. F. Aderholt, three of his officers, and a former
deputy in answer to a hysterical phone call for protection,
proceeded to a tent colony that some fifty families of
evicted strikers had set up. The police entered the grounds
without a warrant. Shouting and then shooting resulted at
the union hall, adjacent to the tent city. Fifteen to twenty
shots left one striker and four officers wounded, Chief
Aderholt mortally. The tragic night ended with a group of
local citizens raiding and destroying the tent colony.31

Sixteen union members were arrested and charged with
conspiracy leading to murder. The resulting trial, a
judicial circus from the start, opened in Charlotte on
August 26 (after a change of venue). The prosecution
reached new levels of sensationalism on September 9.
Bringing in and unveiling in dramatic fashion a life-sized,
bloodstained dummy of Chief Aderholt, to the accompaniment
of weeping by the dead man's family, the prosecutor called
for the death penalty. The judge ordered the effigy removed
but not in time to prevent one juror from going mad. This
development caused the judge to rule a mistrial the same
day.32

31Ibid., 24.

32Ibid., 25-26. Marshall, Labor in the South, 113-
14. For a detailed account of the trial, the violence that
led up to it, the participants in it, and the legal ramifica-
tions of the case, see State v. Fred Erwin Beal, W. M.
McGinnis, Louis McLaughlin, George Carter, Joseph Harrison,
K. Y. Hendricks, And Clarence Miller, North Carolina (Supreme
Court) Reports, 199 (Spring Term, 1930), 378-305.
The declaration of a mistrial led to still further violence. Mobs, denied their taste of blood by the judge, roamed the Gastonia area terrorizing unionists and destroying their property. The union countered with a call for a mass meeting on September 14. A truckload of unionists en route to this meeting encountered a vigilante blockade which fired indiscriminately into the truck, killing twenty-nine year old Ella May Wiggins, a mountain-style balladeer who had recorded the workers' toils and trials in her haunting songs.33

Ella May gave the Communist cause a new martyr, but her death was an omen for the NTUW. By the end of September the union had called off its strike and abandoned the tent colony. The second trial of those accused of the Aderholt murder began on September 30 and resulted in convictions of second-degree murder against seven defendants. Bizarre to the end, the Gastonia strike story ended with the convicted seven jumping bail and fleeing to the Soviet Union.34

A wealth of benighted images of the South emerged from all of these strikes, but especially from the Elizabethon and Gastonia affairs. The Nation, the New Republic, The

33The five individuals charged with the crime were acquitted. Bernstein, The Lean Years, 26-27; Margaret Larkin, "Ella May's Songs," Nation, CXXIX (October 9, 1929), 382-83.

34Bernstein, The Lean Years, 27-28. Five remained in Russia permanently, while two eventually returned to the U. S. to serve their sentences. Ibid., 28.
Survey and The American Mercury, for example, found much to criticize about the Tennessee crisis. In similar fashion, the Gastonia debacle drew negative attention from The North American Review, Time, The American Mercury, Harper's, the American Civil Liberties Union, and even some North Carolina newspapers.

The benighted images resulting from these two strikes are somewhat distorted. The American Bemberg and American Glantzstoff mills at Elizabethton, as has been pointed out, were German-owned. The anti-German sentiment involved in those strikes makes it difficult to isolate the benighted South material from remnants of George Creel's World War I German hate committee. The usefulness of the Gastonia

---


37 Hodges, "Strikes in Elizabethton," 355, makes this point well. See also Bernstein, The Lean Years, 18.
disturbances for an analysis of the image of the benighted South is similarly distorted by the involvement of the Communist National Textile Workers Union.\textsuperscript{38}

The Marion, North Carolina, strikes shared none of these idiosyncrasies. This makes the last of the three major strikes of 1929 by far the most suitable for an analysis of the benighted South image, and for weighing the possible impact of this image on the intellectual Renaissance of the region.

The "standard" causes—long hours, low wages, poor working condition, the "stretch-out"—led to the strikes in Marion. Three Marion mill workers resolved to form a union in April, 1929. One of the three journeyed to Elizabethton (where that strike was in full force) and met with Alfred Hoffman, the representative of the Union Textile Workers of America. Hoffman promised to help and the Marion worker

\textsuperscript{38}"Fighting Communism With Anarchy," The Literary Digest, CII (September 28, 1929), 12, is a good example of how debate centered over the Communist involvement, completely overshadowing the plight of the mill workers. Further evidence of the distorting role of the Communist factor is seen in The New York Times. The October 1 issue of the Times, p. 30, describes the Gastonia strikers as an "unreasonable employer class which is concerned only with getting as much work and as large profits as possible at the lowest cost." It is interesting to contrast this sentiment with several other articles, which appeared within a week of the Gastonia essay, and which were quite sympathetic toward the Marion (N.C.) strikers (where the Communists were not involved). See, for example, the Times, October 3, I, 24; October 4, 1; October 5, 1; October 6, 1; and October 7, 1. The Marion strikes will be the subject of the next section of this chapter.
returned to his two friends to begin laying the groundwork for unionization. In June, when they held a public meeting before an overflow audience, one of the mills fired twenty-two employees who were union members.

On July 10, Hoffman arrived in Marion. The following day a local committee of the organized workers met with R. W. Baldwin, a Baltimore native who was president of the Marion Manufacturing Company (popularly called the "Baldwin Mill"), to submit a list of grievances. The heart of their requests was a reduction in hours from twelve to ten without a cut in wages, reinstatement of the twenty-two workers fired for supposed union activity, and agreement to meet with an employee committee on further grievances. Baldwin summarily rejected all of the demands.

Against the advice of Hoffman, who knew funds were not available from the national union at that time, the workers left the Baldwin mill the same day their requests were denied. Baldwin immediately closed the mill. The union's financial woes were further complicated when, on July 27, the neighboring Clinchfield mills also declared a lockout. Union members charged that this was a move to prevent a strike. Mabry Hart, the president of the Clinchfield mills, countered with the claim that it was due to poor business conditions. On August 19, the Clinchfield plants reopened on a day shift basis only, under a heavy guard by the State militia.

In September, L. L. Jenkins, an Asheville, North
Carolina, banker and textile manufacturer, arrived in Marion to offer his services in trying to settle the strike. His efforts led to a September 10 conference between management and union representatives, held in the presence of Judge N. A. Townsend, the personal representative of North Carolina's governor Max Gardner. An agreement was reached to lower the work week from sixty to fifty-five hours, but at the same wage scale, and to rehire the strikers without discrimination (with the exception of fourteen individuals). No formal record of the settlement was made, it being treated as a "gentleman's agreement."

The workers returned to their jobs the next day but were soon charging the owners with bad faith. The workers received a five per cent pay raise on September 23, but continued to accuse the management of discriminating against union members. Jenkins returned from Asheville and un successfully attempted to see Baldwin on September 27.

Tension had been steadily increasing since the initial strike. Dynamitings and shootings occurred, violent resistance was offered to attempts to evict families from mill villages, and numerous arrests were made. On the morning of October 2, a peak was reached. The night shift went on a spontaneous walkout, and congregated in front of the mill. Marion Sheriff Oscar Adkins and eleven deputies appeared, called in by the mill owners, and a struggle which involved both tear gas and then firearms broke out around 7:30 A.M. In the ensuing melee three strikers were killed,
three more received fatal wounds, and twenty-five others incurred wounds of varying degrees of seriousness. Except for legal proceedings which followed the shooting incident, this effectively ended the Marion strike.  

Copious material of benighted content exists for each stage of the strikes. Sinclair Lewis provides a classic example in his analysis of the causes which led up to the troubles. He placed the average wage level at $13 a week, an amount so low that "every one in the family over fourteen . . . has to work in the mill, from dark till dark." With the entire "adult" portion of the family working twelve or more hours, this left the household chores to the children under fourteen. Lewis describes their baby sitting as attempts to "amuse the still younger slaves all day long." Not only were wages low and hours long, but the working conditions were abominable, as Lewis relates:

In the Baldwin mill, the floors are not very clean, the toilets rather unpleasant. For the young girls, and all such women workers as do not chew snuff, there is a fair degree of sickeningness in the fact that the

39The above attempt at an objective description of the Marion strike is derived from three accounts, each of which is far from "objective." I have tried to derive the facts of the matter by a comparative synthesis of the three: Bernstein, The Lean Years, 29-32; Nell Battle Lewis, "North Carolina at the Cross Road," Virginia Quarterly Review, VI (January, 1930), 40-44; and Benjamin Stolberg, "Madness in Marion," The Nation, CXXIX (October 23, 1929), 462-64.

40Lewis, Cheap and Contented Labor, 17-18. Lewis, of course, was the author of Main Street, Babbitt, and other best sellers of the 1920's.
snuff-chewers spit voluminously into the drinking fountains and the linty space back of the looms. 41

Lewis returns a bitter indictment of the mill-owned housing and the generally poor living conditions of the workers. He describes the houses as "of the cheapest and flimsiest construction," papered with newspaper, grossly overcrowded, and complemented with landscapes of "rich Carolina mud." According to Lewis, food was of the cheapest variety, and conditions generally were worse than those which the workers had formerly known in their mountain homes. 42

Clever writer that he was, Lewis made his polemic more effective by contrasting the plight of the workers to "women in New York frocks . . . a world riding in motor cars costing from $50 to $5,000 while they [the workers] walk in the alternate mud and dust of the mill-village." 43

Other observers were equally critical of the South. 44

41 Ibid., 18.

42 Ibid., 18-21. Lewis details most of these claims in an attempt to discredit the frequent assertions of the owners that salaries were actually supplemented by "fringe benefits" such as cheap housing. Richard M. Ketchum, "Applachia: 1914," American Heritage, XX (February, 1969), 27-41, 85 presents a grim picture of conditions in Appalachia which would tend to support the contentions of the owners and counter the claims of Lewis.

43 Ibid., 22.

44 In discussing mill conditions, wages, hours, and other such causative factors, I will use some accounts describing other Southern mills. Marion was only one of hundreds of mills which shared similar characteristics.
Writing about Marion in The Christian Century, William B. Spofford told of a fourteen-year-old girl who worked from 5:40 in the morning until 6:00 at night, with thirty minutes for lunch. Her wages were $5.00 a week. Numerous new workers were paid nothing during the period they learned their jobs. One lady was forced out of her Methodist Sunday school because she joined the union. An official of the United Textile Workers complained of generally poor housing conditions, long hours, and low wages in Southern mills.

The Nation was also a leader in the benighted crusade. An account covering the Marion mills told of twelve-hour twenty-minute work days, of people spitting on floors, of overflowing toilets, of hot, poorly ventilated and lighted work areas, and other such unfavorable characteristics. Another article told in dramatized fashion of a mill where the average wage was $12.65 per week. The author calculated that it would take the recipient of this wage fifty-six years to make the same amount the president of the mill made in one ($37,000). The article was consequently entitled


46 James Starr, "Deplorable Conditions Among Textile Workers," American Labor Legislative Review, XVIII (March, 1928), 42. Starr was Secretary-Treasurer of the U.T.W.

47 Marion Bonner, "Behind the Southern Textile Strikes," The Nation, CXXIX (October 2, 1929), 352.
"Fifty-six to One."48

Margaret Larkin wrote of a diet which sounds similar to that of an ante-bellum slave. Pellagra was quite common among Southern mill workers because of their lack of fresh fruit and vegetables. She told of one lady who had worked in the mills for twenty years, after which she still was paid only $12.90 per week, with which she attempted to support nine people.49 Business Week went into a detailed comparison of wages in Northern and Southern mills with findings which reflected very unfavorably on the latter.50 Broadus Mitchell similarly pointed out that Southern mills paid less and required longer hours.51

Several articles were particularly critical of the "stretch-out" system. One said that mill workers were being equated to "Coolies" by the work acceleration.52 Sherwood Anderson told of the intense humiliation the female laborers felt when the efficiency experts stood outside the laboratory with their stop watches running.53

48 "Fifty-six to One," ibid., CXXVIII (June 12, 1929), 690.


53 Anderson, "Loom Dance," 292-94. See also Shaffer, "Southern Mill People," 328-30. Shaffer, ibid., 336, concluded that because of the "stretch-out" system and other
An essay in *The Nation* by Benjamin Stolberg claimed that the wages of the Baldwin plant were even below the already low North Carolina textile industry average ("a little less than $11 a week" versus $12.23). His account told of women earning as little as $5 a week. The average workday, except Saturday, was said to be twelve hours and twenty minutes, with no time off for meals. Stolberg summed up the physical conditions of the worker's lives as "morally and humanly, almost indescribably degrading." He even indulged in personal attacks, describing the Marion Sheriff as "the typical fat boy," and implied that Baldwin, the company president, was ignorant and stupid.54

But the most lengthy and biting criticism of conditions in the textile industry, both in Marion and the entire South, was provided by Tom Tippett. Long hours, low wages, night work, employment of underage children, and the "stretch-out" system all were indicted by him.55 He described conditions in the Clinchfield mills by quoting the nauseatingly powerful account of one of the workers. This informant told of constant spitting on the floor in an area where numerous tuberculosis victims worked. The mills were such factors, "conditions in textile mills of the South are comparable only to the mills of India and China."

54 Stolberg, "Madness in Marion," 462-63.

55 Tippett, *When Southern Labor Stirs*, 122. Tippett was on the staff of Brookwood Labor College and was strongly pro-labor.
swept while all were working, ["filling] our breath with lint and dust full of . . . germs." The toilets were "filthy and ill-smelling." Drinking water was obtained from a pail placed in the toilet room with a community dipper, leading the worker to explain "that is why many of the workers wait until after they go home at six o'clock to drink water." No time was allowed for a lunch break.56

The account also tells of conditions in the mill villages. The houses were "very open and cold in the winter time . . . haven't been painted inside in ten years; are smoked and dirty . . . roofs leak badly." Toilets in the village were of the earthpit variety. New pits had to be dug by the mill workers when the old ones filled up and ran into the streets.

Tippett further adds to the desired effect by quoting (or perhaps adding) two concluding sentences: "I hope there is some information here that you do not have. I am very sorry I haven't education enough to write as I wish."57

56Ibid., 113-14.

57Ibid., 115. There is some question as to who authored the account. It was originally published as a letter to The New Republic in 1929 and was signed by Mary Frances Gentry. Tippett attested to the authenticity of it in a note added to the letter: "The above was written by a woman worker in the strike zone there. I can vouch for the truth of all she has said." See, "Down at the Mill," The New Republic, LX (September 18, 1929), 126-27. But Tippett attributes the exact same letter to one Lucy Sparks in his 1931 book. See, When Southern Labor Stirs, 113. It is possible that Tippett and the author thought it advisable for her to use an alias in 1929, when the strike was still in progress.
The actual strike and especially the violence resulting from it quickly became a focus for accounts underscoring the repressiveness of a benighted Southern government. W. J. Cash and *Time* magazine both criticized the travesties of justice which occurred in the early stages of the strike. The eviction of workers from their homes and the arrest of scores on trumped up charges such as "riot, insurrection and rebellion against the constituted authority of the state of North Carolina" particularly angered them. But it was the spontaneous walkout of October 2 at Marion and the violence which followed that most stirred the pens of propagators of the benighted image.

William B. Spofford blamed the walkout and violence on President Baldwin's breach of the September 10 settlement. Spofford claimed that Baldwin bragged about his circumvention of the understanding, and quoted him as follows:

> I was sharp enough to put the little word *simply* in that agreement. And we haven't kept anybody out of his job *simply* because he belongs to the union. But if a fellow is sassy to the boss, we don't want him.  

Spofford cryptically concludes: "Draw your own conclusions." Sinclair Lewis and Tom Tippett also blamed

---

58Cash, "The War in the South," 165; "'They Act Alike,'" *Time*, XIV (September 9, 1929, 15.


60Ibid.
Baldwin for the walkout and violence. 61

According to the labor sympathizers, the walkout took place when a young male employee was reprimanded by the foreman for staying too long in the wash room. The foreman supposedly taunted the boy and other workers that they dare not strike, because management was prepared to "shoot" the "next time." These threats resulted in the spontaneous walkout around 1:30 A.M. October 2. 62

Sheriff Adkins and eleven deputies had been called to the mill earlier that night. Sustaining the benighted image, William Spofford wrote of the deputies as "notorious plug-uglies," many of whom had criminal records. Benjamin Stolberg claimed that the sheriff and his deputies were armed heavily, and drank large quantities of liquor throughout the night. 63 The sheriff was accused of "loosing his temper" around 7:30 A.M., and subsequently firing tear gas into the crowd. Blind because of the gas and rage, George Jonas, "a lame man of sixty-seven," struck the sheriff with his cane and was immediately beaten and shot. The workers, panicked by the gas and violence, broke and ran. The sheriff and his deputies released a fusilade of sixty to

61 Lewis, Cheap and Contented Labor, 12; Tippett, When Southern Labor Stirs, 132.

62 Lewis, Cheap and Contented Labor, 8; Spofford, "Marion, North Carolina," 1502; Stolberg, "Madness in Marion," 464.

seventy-five rounds, thirty to thirty-five finding their mark. Six died as a result of the shooting.64

Stolberg wrote that "all the people killed and hurt were shot in the back. Only one of the attackers was wounded. None of the workers was armed."65 Spofford told of deputies who "pumped steel bullets into the line of pickets."66 Tippett described the workers being "shot in their backs, like rats, as they tried to escape from the burning gas."67 A correspondent for the Asheville (N.C.) Citizen described the scene as a "nightmare." "Here these poor devils were running for their lives and the officers were shooting them down like dogs."68

Sinclair Lewis used all his skills to produce as grisly a description of Jonas's death as possible. He told how Adkins wrestled with Jonas and how one of the deputies clubbed the old man to the ground:

He was in that position when he was shot . . . a lame man, sixty-eight, on his hands and knees, in the


65Stolbert, "Madness in Marion," 464.

66Spofford, "Marion, North Carolina," 1503. Note the emphasis on steel bullets, typical of the benighted South appeal to the readers' emotions.

67Tippett, When Southern Labor Stirs, 138. Again, the metaphor "shot . . . like rats" is classic benighted South imagery.

68N. B. Lewis, "N. C. at the Cross Road," 44. Here "shooting them . . . like dogs" gives the desired effect.
After the riot, Jonas, wounded fatally, was taken to the hospital with handcuffs on, was placed on the operating-table, with handcuffs still on, and straightway he died on that table . . . with his handcuffs on.69

Tippett suggested that Baldwin's flippant attitude after the massacre was an indication of insanity. He quoted a comment on the incident by the president of the mills:

I understand there were 60 to 75 shots fired in Wednesday's fight. If this is true there are 30 or 35 of the bullets accounted for (having found human targets). I think the officers are damn good marks­men. If I ever organize an army they can have jobs with me.70

Mary Heaton Vorse, writing in The New Republic, gave an emotional account of the tragedy. It is as pure an example of writing in a benighted vein as can be found. Her story begins the night before the funeral:

Lights shine in the mill village of East Marion. Folks are "waitin' with the Dead." . . . A steady trickle of visitors are going visiting--to the Bryson's, to the Vickers; to the Jonas's, to young Randolph Hall's.

Death is giving a reception tonight in Marion. Three men lie dead with gaping wounds in their backs. Some were shot so close that doctors have testified that their clothing was burnt and their skin blackened.71

She tells of visiting the Bryson home:

69 Lewis, Cheap and Contented Labor, 10.

70 Tippett, When Southern Labor Stirs, 146-47.

71 Mary Heaton Vorse, "'Waitin' With the Dead,'" The New Republic, LX (October 30, 1929), 287. Miss Vorse's "Gastonia," 700-10, is a treatment of the Gastonia strike similar in tone to the New Republic article on Marion.
People come in quietly and go out. Little is said. There are women sitting with their heads in their hands near the fire. The visitors pass quietly before the coffin. They are talking in low tones in another room. This is no ordinary funeral. This is no ordinary mourning. This is murder--mass murder in cold blood of many people. Their only fault was that they had gone on strike when an agreement entered into had been broken. For this they are laying dead, and the mill village is visiting.  

Tippett also told of the "visiting," and of his discovery that some of the families were out of food. In the Jonas home "there was not an ounce of anything to eat. His family said that for twenty hours before the shooting he had not eaten." His widow had to be given shoes to walk to the funeral.

Of course the funeral provided a wealth of material for more emotional pieces. The description of a New York Times correspondent is typical:

Their gray coffins of painted pine rested in a row under the shade of the oak trees tinged with autumnal hues and were blanketed with heaps of dahlias and red mountain sage, peonies, lillies and carnations. . . .

Only the men, inured to patient toil and, like the mountaineer stock from which they spring, not given to tears and lamentation, remained imperturbable. Their eyes were fixed on four girls, mill workers as they stood in front of the platform singing:

We are building a strong union.
We are building a strong union.
We are building a strong union.
Workers in the mill.

72 Vorse, "'Waitin' With the Dead," 287.
73 Tippett, When Southern Labor Stirs, 145.
74 The New York Times, October 5, 1929, 1:2, 8:2. For other "strong" treatments of the funeral see, for example, "Fresh Blood," Time, XIV (October 14, 1929), 15; and Vorse, "'Waitin' With the Dead,'" 288.
The Times reporter described the speech made by Cicero Queens, "an old, wiry little man, with short iron gray beard," a mountain preacher who had come sixty miles over his mountain domain to be at the funeral. The correspondent described Queens, "his hands flying in all directions, his eyes on fire with emotion and his voice cutting the air like a sharp whip," as he spoke:

Here are four men in their caskets I've never seen. ... I trust, O God, these friends will go to a better place than Marion or any other place in North Carolina and the United States. ... Oh, what would Jesus do today if he passed through Marion? He'd weep over this scene.75

Queens, in good Fundamentalist fashion, blamed everything on the devil and cleverly associated mill management with Satan. William Ross, a union organizer, followed this lead in saying: "The devil is in the cotton mills of the South, in the law of the South, and we won't rest until we cast him out."76

Francis J. Gorman, vice-president of the UTW, was probably more prophetic than he knew in his funeral oration:

The Marion Massacre means the beginning of the end of industrial slavery in the South. We will now have the eyes of the nation centered on the degraded conditions in this part of the country.77

William Ross added that in the future the Marion branch of the union would be known as "martyrs' local, No. 1659."78

75 The New York Times, October 5, 1929, 8:2.
76 Ibid.
77 Ibid. My italics.
78 Ibid.
Even after the strikes had ended, Northern journalists continued to discuss events in North Carolina, and the hearings and trial which followed seemed to them to confirm their unfavorable opinions of Southern social and legal justice. The New York Times told of Sheriff Adkins dozing off at one of the hearings.\(^7\) In what Sinclair Lewis called "a Christmas present of final exoneration," the Sheriff and his deputies were acquitted on December 21.\(^8\) Holland Thompson branded this action "incredible," and Tippett sarcastically remarked: "All the deputies were freed, 'so they could go home for Christmas.'"\(^9\)

And so, by virtue of selection and presentation, word choice, omission of the "other side," and even plain, straightforward polemical writing, a benighted image of the Marion, North Carolina textile strikes was set forth.

The Marion strike and the others which preceded it, and the benighted images which came out of them, resulted from a variety of factors. Above all, they were directly related to the rapidly changing South of the Twenties.

\(^7\)Ibid., October 6, 1929, 24:1.
\(^8\)Lewis, Cheap and Contented Labor, 10.
\(^9\)Thompson, "Southern Textile Situation," 121; Tippett, When Southern Labor Stirs, 148. For other treatments of the hearings and trial see, for example, Jones, "Southern Labor and the Law," 14-16; Louis Stark, "The Trial at Marion, N. C.," American Federationist, XXXVII (January, 1930), 41-43; and Van Osdell, "Cotton Mills And The Southern Mind," 167-86.
Industrialization, the economic slump following the boom times of World War I, broadened horizons of the workers and their families, unionization—these are some of the fundamental changes that were at the heart of the strikes. These developments, with the resultant internal unrest and external criticism of the South, all contributed to the air of tension permeating the entire section.

Additional evidence of this unstable atmosphere appeared in dramatic fashion in a small Tennessee town in 1925. It was here that the ambivalent nature of the Southern mind in the Twenties, and the acute sense of tension resulting from it, were most vividly experienced.

It is surely one of the major ironies of Southern history that at the very time higher education was undergoing an active renaissance in the South, Fundamentalism was simultaneously reaching peak levels. This latter crusade was intrinsically related to the massive sense of dislocation most Southerners began to feel in the Twenties. The challenges to Southern social stability during World War I—such as industrialization, migration, and disruption of established family life—led many Southerners to search for some source of permanence in a confusing time. Many found this haven in their "old time religion."

The "duel to the death,"82 as William Jennings Bryan was to dub the struggle between the Fundamentalists and

---

Modernists, was not limited to Tennessee, the South, or even to the United States, nor was it restricted to 1925. Yet the Fundamentalist crusade seems to have been most zealous in the South of the Twenties, and the focal point for national and international publicity was certainly Dayton, Tennessee, midway through the decade.

The Fundamentalist effort is popularly associated with anti-evolution, but the movement directed its attacks at more than the Darwinian theory alone. Many Fundamentalists linked the volatile scientific thesis with "atheism, secularistic trends, immorality, disintegration of the family, 'godless education,' Bolshevism, and German militarism." In the vocabulary of these citizens, "evolution was a catchall word meaning modern evils in general."

---

including threats to white supremacy. In addition, the anti-evolution aspects of the Fundamentalist crusade generally represent the urban-rural dichotomy which seems to be at the core of many of the major issues of the 1920's. As one leading scholar of the movement views it:

This desperate plunge backward took the form of an offensive, often fanatical in intensity, to fortify the orthodox, traditional order of rural, small town America against the encroachments of the emerging urban-industrial society.

Thus anti-evolution was a symbol for a more broadly based crusade, which helps explain the magnitude of the movement in the Twenties.

South Carolina, the traditional seedbed of Southern radicalism, considered an anti-evolution bill in 1921 but quickly defeated it. More serious consideration was given to a similar measure in Kentucky the next year. The bill, designed to prevent teaching of evolutionary science in the State's public schools, was also defeated, but only after a long and very heated statewide controversy. Activity in South Carolina and Kentucky touched off a flurry of anti-

---

84 Gatewood, *Preachers, Pedagogues and Politicians*, 230. Although Professor Gatewood is dealing with North Carolina, his conclusions are relevant to the entire Southern movement. See also Gray, "Anti-Evolution," 352, 365-66.


evolution activity in Southern state legislatures in the Twenties, with only Virginia resisting the public pressure put on state politicians. One observer described the politician's quandary:

To gain my next election
I know the bill must pass
So I guess I'll ape the monkey
By voting like an ass. 88

Tangible legislative results finally came in Tennessee. 89 The Volunteer State had failed to pass an antievolution bill in 1923, but the Fundamentalists kept up the pressure and were not to be denied in 1925. Their efforts were given a great boost by an address entitled "Is the Bible True?" which William Jennings Bryan gave to a huge Fundamentalist rally in Nashville early in 1924. Exponents of the crusade deemed Bryan's message to be so effective that they reproduced copies of it and distributed them to members of the State legislature when the body convened early in 1925.

These investments in time and effort began to return dividends on January 20, 1925, when State Senator John A. Shelton introduced a bill "to prohibit the teaching of evolution in public schools," and to classify as felons

88 Ibid., 78. On the action taken in the various legislatures, see ibid., 78-87.

89 The following account of the enactment of the Tennessee anti-evolution statute is taken from Bailey, Southern White Protestantism, 83-84; and the same author's more detailed "The Enactment of Tennessee's Antievolution Law," Journal of Southern History, XVI (November, 1950), 472-90.
those who chose to defy the law. The following day, the Tennessee lower house received a similar bill, the one that would eventually become law. Introduced by Representative John Washington Butler, it would prohibit any Tennessee public school teacher from teaching "any theory that denies the story of the Divine Creation of man as taught in the Bible," and from teaching instead "that man has descended from a lower order of animals." The bill also provided for fines ranging from $100 to $500.\footnote{The complete text of the bill as passed into law is in Jerry R. Tompkins (ed.), D-Days At Dayton: Reflections on the Scopes Trial (Baton Rouge, 1965), 3.}

The House acted quickly on the Butler Bill. The Committee on Education, to which it was initially referred, required only two days to recommend passage (on January 23). Four days later, on the 27th, the House passed the measure by the overwhelming majority of seventy-one to five, with five abstentions.

In the Senate the judiciary committee had recommended rejection of the Shelton bill on January 29, but now the upper house was forced to act on the Butler proposal. On February 4, the committee also rejected this House measure.

The anti-evolution forces reacted quickly. The speaker of the Senate made a passionate appeal for enactment of the measure on February 5, and his plea had a considerable impact. A judiciary committee member responded by
moving that final action be postponed for five days, and the Senate approved this request.

This five-day period witnessed a flurry of activity, both for and against the anti-evolution measure. Supporters of the bill successfully delayed action on it (they feared a negative vote and felt time and public pressure were on their side), and the legislature adjourned for a four-week break on February 14.

On March 10, a day after the Assembly reconvened, the Senate Judiciary Committee reversed its earlier decision and by a vote of seven to four recommended passage of the Butler Bill. A heated three-hour debate three days later resulted in passage of the act by a margin of twenty-four to six with one abstention.

The fate of the proposed statute now rested with Governor Austin Peay. After receiving the tens of thousands of letters pleading both for and against the measure, and following visits by a number of lobbying groups, the Governor signed the Butler Bill into law on March 23, 1925.\textsuperscript{91}

A series of bizarre circumstances had elevated this proposal--written by a rural legislator with only four years of education, from a county next to last in literacy rates in the State--to the status of State law. Butler had been moved to present his bill upon hearing that school children

\textsuperscript{91}Ibid., asserts the bill was signed into law on March 21. Bailey is correct in claiming March 23.
Members of the House, many of whom were up for reelection, were hesitant to oppose the bill for fear of alienating their constituents, both urban and rural. Passage was the easiest alternative, especially since it was assumed that the Senate would block such a measure. But public pressure levied its toll on the upper house, and it was aided by the active support which the Speaker of the Senate gave the proposal. Newspapers were generally silent, probably fearing loss of advertising and subscription revenue, although the Nashville and Memphis papers did voice some opposition. Harcourt A. Morgan, President of the University of Tennessee, a teacher of science who presented evolution theories to his classes, and the individual most opponents of the bill expected to mobilize the opposition, avoided taking a stand on the bill. He apparently feared that opposition would alienate the legislature and endanger future funding of the university.

Governor Peay's reluctance to sign the measure is indicated by his unusual actions regarding it. He found it advisable to attach a message to the bill explaining his

---


approval when he returned it to the legislature with his signature. Having succumbed to public pressure, and to the need to keep the legislature appeased in order to maintain support for his legislative program, Peay explained his reasons for signing in detail. After attempting to "prove" the law's constitutionality, he justified the law as follows:

There is a deep and widespread belief that something is shaking the fundamentals of the country, both in religion and morals. It is the opinion of many that an abandonment of the old fashion faith and belief in the Bible is our trouble in large degree. It is my own belief.

Peay also stated, however, that the law "probably" would never be applied.

Governor Peay's prophecy might have come true had it not been for an enterprising individual in Dayton, Tennessee, named George W. Rappelyea. Intoxicated with the very spirit of boosterism that the anti-evolution law was partially reacting against, he persuaded a young science teacher and football coach at Dayton high school named John Thomas Scopes to be the guinea pig in a test case of the Butler Bill which Rappelyea hoped would "put Dayton on the map."

---

Ginger, Six Days or Forever, 7.

95 Bailey, "Tennessee's Antievolution Law," 484.

96 Ibid., 483.

97 Ginger, Six Days or Forever, 19-20.
This ambitious plan resulted in the arrest of Scopes on May 7, 1925, and a preliminary hearing on his case three days later. At this point the American Civil Liberties Union announced that it would defend Scopes to whatever level of appeal became necessary, and the ACLU followed this revelation with the appointment of a defense staff, which included Clarence Darrow. On May 13 the "Great Commoner," who had been so instrumental in stimulating support for an anti-evolution bill in Tennessee, announced that he would join the prosecution team. A special Grand Jury then indicted Scopes on May 25 for violating the Butler Act. A trial date was set for July 10.98

The jury was selected on the opening day of the trial, Friday, and then a recess was called until Monday. Presiding Judge John T. Raulston made an extremely important legal ruling on July 17 that scientific testimony could not be introduced by the defense. The legal proceedings then moved quickly to a peak on July 20 when Bryan took the stand as an "expert witness" on the Bible. There he underwent the assaults of Darrow on the Jonah story, the specific date of creation, and other such literalist interpretations. Judge

Raulston ordered Bryan's testimony expunged from the record the next day, and then called for a verdict. Scopes was found guilty, and Raulston ordered him to pay the minimum fine of $100 and costs (estimated by The New York Times at $300). The trial ended, fittingly, with a benediction. 99

George Rappelyea had expressed a desire to "put Dayton on the map." Judge Raulston, in similar fashion, had been delighted at the suggestion that the trial be broadcast. "My gavel," he dreamed, "will be heard around the world." 100 Neither of these men could possibly have imagined just how dramatically the trial would be "heard around the world," and how it would emblazon Dayton on the map. The average daily press file from the town during the trial was 165,000 words, with a total of two million words by telegraph alone. 101 Many of these accounts were unfavorable, affecting views about the South all over the world.

Discontent with the trial, and the legislative action which led up to it, occurred at virtually every

99 The New York Times provides a full account of the proceedings. See ibid., July 11, 1925, 1; July 14, 1; July 16, 1; July 17, 1-3; July 18, 1-2; July 21, 1-2; and July 22, 1-2. The Times coverage was a day behind the events of the trial. See also Ginger, Six Days or Forever, 95-189, although one must be wary of numerous careless errors in this loosely documented work. Tindall, Emergence of New South, 205-206, as usual, provides a solid synthesis. For a full transcript of the trial, see Leslie H. Allen (ed.), Bryan and Darrow At Dayton: The Record and Documents Of The "Bible-Evolution Trial" (New York, 1967), passim.

100 Ginger, Six Days or Forever, 103.

101 Ibid., 191.
imaginable level from Tennessee to Europe. The Nashville Banner, although hesitant to take an overt stance against the Butler Bill, offered the caustic comment that the two-hour House session that passed the proposal "covered a wide range of territory, from a local measure to prohibit suck-egg dogs from running at large . . . to a general measure prohibiting the teaching of evolution." This legislative action was also greeted with contempt by a Methodist minister in Columbia, Tennessee, who commented in a sermon to his congregation (which included a member of the House) that the state legislators "were making monkeys of themselves at the rate of 71 to 5" and that he did not "believe a state legislature could possibly devise a more asinine performance."

University of Tennessee students, more active than the President of their institution in opposing the Butler Bill, sarcastically suggested "in all seriousness and earnestness" to the legislature that they enact a few more measures "for the welfare of the citizens and their children of Tennessee." The suggestions were:

First--That the law of gravity be amended. Just what the amendment should be is not definitely known, but we think it should be amended.

---


103 Bailey, "Tennessee's Antievolution Law," 477. The "71 to 5," of course, refers to the final vote in the House. The minister was rewarded for these clever comments with a formal House resolution that branded his remarks "unfair, unchristianlike and unpatriotic." Ibid., 478.
Second—That something be done about the excessive speed of light.

Third—That it be made illegal to bring Fords into Tennessee.

Fourth—That pi be changed from 3.1416 to an even three.

Fifth—That it be made illegal to teach that the world is round. The Book of Revelation refers to the four corners of the earth; incontestable proof of its flatness.

Sixth—That it be made unlawful for alcohol and nicotine to harm the body.

Seventh—That flappers be eliminated.

Eighth—That morphine be ruled nutritious.  

But the brunt of the criticism, and the benighted images of the South that the critics raised, came from outside the South. Time magazine, for example, had a field day describing Daytonians, Tennesseans, Southerners, and Fundamentalists in general. The magazine reported on a meeting in Atlanta, called to bring "the people back to the honesty, simplicity and religion of our fathers." The Time writer reported that this anti-evolution group was calling for two major institutions for the organization: an educational center at Indianapolis "where . . . 12 cinema films would be made, portraying the life of Jesus Christ for distribution throughout the world"; and a recreational center at Jacksonville, Florida, "where . . . homes would be built for anti-evolutionists grown aged and infirm in the onslaught." Another Time article told of a rural


105 Time, VII (February 1, 1926), 19.

106 Ibid., 19-20.
Tennessean's reply upon being asked what evolution meant:
"I do not know and I do not want to know but I do know that I do not want my children to know anything about it, either." Still another account used sight dialect to "quote" from a speech by a member of the Georgia House of Representatives from Jefferson Davis County:

Ah don't want any smart Alec tryin' to teach mah child that man descended from a tadpole or a monkey. . . . When a man gets so smart that he cain't believe the Bible, he's just too smart to know that he's a fool.

The New York Times gave the Butler Bill front page coverage. The Scopes trial, in turn, dominated the front page of the paper from the July 7 issue until July 23, 1925. Some of these accounts were reasonably objective, but others communicate a recognizable benighted tone. The general temper ranges from outward contempt and sneering to playfulness. One account told of apes being brought to Dayton, and used this story to dramatize the circus-like atmosphere surrounding the trial, while another described

---

107 Ibid., XI (January 2, 1928), 24.
108 Ibid., VI (August 10, 1925), 20. For other comments in a benighted vein on evolution, see ibid., VI (July 20, 1925), 17, 28; VI (August 24, 1925), 15-16; VIII (July 26, 1926), 17.
110 Ibid., July 7 to July 23, 1925. The July 17 issue, for example, devotes four of eight front-page columns to the first day of Bryan's testimony, and trial developments. The July 16 issue uses three front-page columns, as does the July 18 printing. Bryan's death in Dayton on July 26, 1925 (fittingly on a Sunday) dominated the July 27 issue.
a rift in the Dayton community over the resignation under pressure of the one minister in town who supported evolution.111

The Times seemed delighted to report the weekly meeting of an Orange, New Jersey, Rotary Club which held a mock evolution trial on July 16. According to the newspaper account, the trial was called to order with a monkey wrench serving as a gavel, but "broke up in disorder when S. Fred Wright, Chief Boy Scout Executive of the Oranges, appeared dressed as an ape and leaped from table to table."112

The New York newspaper also reported the international impact of the trial, for example, the repeated English and French ridicule of Bryan and the legal proceedings.113 The July 26 issue gave front-page coverage to a London limerick contest on the trial which drew thousands of entries. The Times reproduced the winning entry, submitted by an Englishman from Southampton:

If we take the Daytonian mind
As an average of men's I'm inclined
To ask, not if man
With a monkey began
But did monkey's descend from mankind.114

The Nation also joined in the onslaught. An edi-

111 Ibid., July 15, 1925, 1; July 13, 1925, 1.
112 Ibid., July 17, 1925, 3.
113 See, for example, ibid., July 22, 1925, 2.
114 Ibid., July 26, 1925, 1.
torial on "Tennessee vs. Truth" blasted the South as a whole, in addition to the Volunteer State.\textsuperscript{115} Joseph Wood Krutch, a native of Tennessee and a graduate of the state university, contributed two salvos in the same magazine, especially attacking the disinclination of President Morgan of the University of Tennessee to oppose the Butler Bill.\textsuperscript{116}

Perhaps the most devastating images of the benighted South relative to Dayton came from the iconoclast of Baltimore, Henry Louis Mencken. Writing for a variety of publications, he handled his biggest challenge to date, what he called "the greatest trial since that before Pilate,"\textsuperscript{117} in typically irreverent fashion. His detailed indictments will be covered in the following chapter.

And so the turmoil over mills and monkeys led to a flood of images of the benighted South. Some were propagated by Southerners, but more by those living outside the South, and even abroad. The cumulative result was a South indicted in the eyes of the world in a way not witnessed since the ante-bellum abolitionist crusade. Much attention will be given to possible reasons for this onslaught on the

\begin{footnotes}

\textsuperscript{115}"Tennessee vs. Truth," \textit{Nation}, CXXI (July 8, 1925), 58.


\textsuperscript{117}H. L. Mencken to Howard W. Odum, ca. June 26, 1925, in Howard Washington Odum Papers (Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill).

\end{footnotes}
South in the Twenties in the next chapter, but some preliminary comments seem in order here. The simplest interpretation is that a lot of the criticism was valid. There is no denying that hours were long and wages low in the Marion mills, but, as Donald Davidson pointed out in another context, people "prefer a simple myth to a complicated truth." Thus, in the 1860's "the Abolitionists did not find it hard to convince people that Southern gentlemen habitually flogged a Negro or two before breakfast." In World War I "it was equally simple to persuade Americans that Germans were baby eaters." Therefore, it was easy for critics to blast the long hours and poor wages, while at the same time they ignored the generally depressed condition of the Southern textile industry in the Twenties which contributed to these matters. Moreover, few of the critics bothered to consider such complicated factors as the "generation gap," which were so significant in the Marion labor struggle.

Some critics used a benighted image of the strikes in an attempt to achieve social and economic reforms. Nell Battle Lewis recognized that the Marion troubles had helped solidify the Southern labor movement. Tippett shared a similar view, and admonished: "A labor movement ought not

118Donald Davidson, "First Fruits of Dayton," Forum, LXXIX (June, 1928), 896-97. Edwin Mims, The Advancing South: Stories of Progress and Reaction (Garden City, 1926), xi-xii, makes essentially the same point.

119Lewis, "N. C. at the Cross Roads," 47.
to be ashamed of its martyrs." Mary Heaton Vorse and William B. Spofford also felt that proper publicizing of Marion could aid unionization attempts in the South. The Outlook and Independent was hopeful that Southern labor troubles would lead to a Federal investigation.

As a result, many writers dogmatically ignored the complexity of the South's social and economic problems and attributed them solely to what the authors conceived as an antiquated and corrupt system of exploitation. Sinclair Lewis's thirty-two page polemic, Cheap and Contented Labor, is a perfect example. Sherwood Anderson protested against the oversimplified, emotional analysis made by Lewis:

The situation is infinitely complex. As we all know the coming of the machine and the constant improvement of the machine has everywhere intensified the problem of American life. I am protesting against an unbalanced view of modern industrial life. I protest against the point of view that sees nothing in the small town but Rotarians and boosters, that sees nothing in industry but devils and martyrs, that does not see people as

120 Tippett, When Southern Labor Stirs, 276-78, quote from p. 278.

121 Spofford, "Marion, North Carolina," 1503; Vorse, "'Waitin With the Dead,'" 288.

122 "Federal Probe Needed," Outlook and Independent, CLII (June 5, 1929), 218. The Senate had for several months been debating a proposal by Senator Burton K. Wheeler of Montana to investigate "Working Conditions in The Textile Industry in North Carolina, South Carolina, And Tennessee." See Cong. Rec., 71st Cong., 1st Sess., 700-701; 1379-96; 1704-1707; 4221-26; and Senate Report No. 28, Parts 1 and 2, Calendar No. 34, 71st Cong., 1st Sess. Of course, the very fact that the investigation was limited to Southern states has benighted implications.
people, realizing that we are all caught in a strange new kind of life.123

The "unbalanced view" continued over Dayton. Fundamentalism, the Butler Bill, the Scopes trial, and other such actions were merely the tip of an iceberg constructed of Southern fears and anxieties that the negative images did not take into consideration.

But the strikes of 1929 and the fight over evolution were only two areas of Southern life in the Twenties that drew attention of the benighted variety.

123Anderson, "Cotton Mill," 9-10. Anderson, in literary terminology, was a leading exponent of Naturalism. See, for example, his Winesburg, Ohio, which is philosophically quite similar to this "Cotton Mill" essay. Anderson never calls Lewis by name in the article (Scribner's did not want to give Lewis the publicity), but it is clear that he is talking about him, and especially Main Street. The definitive biography of Lewis Mark Schorer's Sinclair Lewis. An American Life (New York, 1961), 281, claims Anderson "had been laying" for Lewis ever since the latter wrote Main Street, because Anderson was jealous of Lewis's success. See also Schorer, 279-82, 522-23.
CHAPTER V

PRODUCING A BENIGHTED IMAGE: BALTIMORE AND BEYOND

Travelers, historians, journalists, and other writers have described many Souths: Colonial, Ante-bellum, and "New" is, for example, the standard chronological pattern. Yet, in describing these (and other) Souths, contemporary observers of each period have always found much to criticize.

William Byrd, nestled amid the comforts of aristocratic life in Colonial Virginia, recorded condescending remarks in observation of his inferiors across the boundary to his South. According to Byrd, writing in 1728, there was "no place in the World where the Inhabitants live with less Labour than in N Carolina." North Carolinians "loiter away their lives, like Solomon's Sluggard, with their arms across, and at the Winding up of the Year Scarcely have Bread to Eat."¹

The Continental Congress of 1774-76, the Confederation government of 1781-89, and the Convention of 1787 all

produced their share of anti-Southern rhetoric. Even greater heights of invective were reached during the abolitionist crusade, while "waving the bloody shirt" continued the onslaught in prime fashion during Reconstruction.

The image of the benighted South has endured throughout the twentieth century as race relations, violence, poverty, politics, and Southern life and society in general continue to receive attacks. Even Hollywood and Madison

---


Avenue have added to the unfavorable stereotype recently, and several political analysts have suggested that both foreign and domestic affairs in recent years have been adversely affected by occupants with a Southern heritage in the White House.  

The 1920's, however, saw "South-baiting" assume the proportions of a national pastime. Some of the attention given to mill strikes and the evolution controversy has been mentioned, but these two matters were by no means the only grounds for criticism. Portrayals of the South as a benighted region abounded in the work of numerous writers, some of them native Southerners.

For example, Gerald W. Johnson wielded a critical pen in his native state for the Greensboro (N.C.) Daily News and the Chapel Hill-based Journal of Social Forces. The son of a country newspaperman, Johnson established his own paper in Thomasville, N.C., at the age of twenty. In 1912 he joined the staff of the Daily News as a music critic but was soon writing penetrating articles and editorials that were

---

5The award-winning 1967 film In The Heat of the Night, for example, led to a series of advertisements by the Chrysler Corporation portraying a beefy, bumbling, obviously Southern rural sheriff.

not at all sparing in their criticism of his home state and region. An early contributor to Howard Odum's *Journal of Social Forces*, Johnson satirized the failures of the citizens of North Carolina to recognize the need for social programs:

> Take Mr. George F. Babbitt, of Greensboro, or Durham, or Charlotte, and ask him what are the social forces of his town; and if he doesn't begin to call the roll of the most prominent bridge club, he will devoutly return thanks that the socialists have never gained foothold enough in this state to have any discernible forces.7

Johnson exposed Southern bigotry, intolerance, superstition, and prejudice in another article for *Social Forces* in 1924. In that piece he noted the increasing national attention the South of the Twenties was receiving: "It is difficult now to find on the news stands a serious magazine without an article on some phase of life below the Potomac, or a discussion of one idea or another that has come out of the South."8

In 1924 Johnson moved to Chapel Hill for a year's stint as Professor of Journalism at the University of North Carolina, where he helped edit *The Reviewer*, which was transferred to the University in that year. This "little

---


8 Gerald W. Johnson, "Critical Attitudes North and South," *ibid.*, II (May, 1924), 575-79, quote from p. 575.
magazine" offered a ready outlet for his comments on Southern
life. Writing in a pure strain of Menckenese in the first
issue of The Reviewer to appear after its move, Johnson held
that former Southernisms, such as Ku Kluxism, Fundamentalism,
and white supremacy, were now becoming national traits. But
the South was in no danger of losing its distinctiveness;
these characteristics were like onion salt, "readily absorbed,
but rarely lost." Thus James B. Duke, although following the
national pattern of educational philanthropy that Carnegie,
the Rockefellers, and others had established, gave his
endowment to Duke University a distinctly Southern flavor.
According to Johnson, "Mr. Duke's purpose is not simply to
civilize, or even to Christianize, the Carolinas. He intends
to Methodize them." 9

In 1926, in George Tindall's words, Johnson "ascended
unto the right hand of Mencken on the Baltimore Sun." 10

---

9 Gerald W. Johnson, "Onion Salt," The Reviewer, V
(January, 1925), 60-61. Johnson was brought to UNC by
President Harry Woodburn Chase in a conscious effort to
place someone in the strategic position of head of the
Journalism department who would help Chase in his fight
against the growing antievolution movement in the state
legislature. Interview with Johnson, June 22, 1923. The
Reviewer, V (January, 1925), 116, reveals that Johnson would
assist Paul Green in the direction of the publication now
that it was in Chapel Hill.

10 George B. Tindall, The Emergence Of The New South,
1913-1945 (Baton Rouge, 1967), 214. The circumstances behind
Johnson's move to Baltimore are interesting. In response to
the formation of the S. C. Poetry Society (see above, Chapter
II, pp.34-35)the editor of the student newspaper at UNC, The
Daily Tarheel, sent out a questionnaire to various North
Carolinians "Should North Carolina Have a Poetry Society?"
Johnson responded with the remark, among others, that it
There he continued the assault on the South in the *Sun* and especially in the Mencken-edited *American Mercury*, and soon assumed the status of "the second ranking sage of Baltimore" (behind Mencken).  

A North Carolinian of the opposite sex also joined in the formulation of the benighted image. Nell Battle Lewis was born in Raleigh, North Carolina, in 1893, the daughter of a pioneer North Carolina physician and a descendant of one of the oldest families in the State. This deep Tarheel heritage did not, however, serve to retard in coming days her criticism of her home state. After graduation from

would be a good idea only if the society had "a butcher cleaver to take care of current poetry in North Carolina." This comment was published in the *Daily Tarheel*, and read there by Mencken (who subscribed to a number of campus newspapers). Mencken quickly wrote Johnson (late in 1924) to offer his congratulations and to express his full agreement with Johnson's remarks. This began the correspondence between the two men that led to Johnson being invited to Baltimore as a guest editorialist for the *Sun* in the summer of 1925. Mencken and Hamilton Owen (the latter being the editor of the *Sun*) tried to persuade President Chase to allow Johnson to stay on permanently in Baltimore, but Chase refused to release him from his UNC contract until the evolution bill had been defeated in the North Carolina legislature. Finally, in 1926, Johnson made his "ascension" to Baltimore permanent.

11 Kunitz (ed.), *Twentieth Century Authors*, 495. Johnson's role as a leading disciple of Mencken will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter. For other examples of Johnson's benighted South style writings see Johnson, "Greensboro, or What You Will," *The Reviewer*, IV (1923-24), 169-75; "Fourteen Equestrian Statues of Colonel Simmons," ibid., IV (October, 1923), 20-26; "Issachar Is A Strong Ass," *Journal of Social Forces*, II (November, 1923), 5-9; and "A Tilt With Southern Windmills," *Virginia Quarterly Review*, I (July, 1925), 184-92. For an updating of the last essay see Johnson's "After Forty Years - Dixie," *Virginia Quarterly Review*, XXXXI (Spring, 1965), 192-201.
St. Mary's College in Raleigh and Smith College in Massachusetts, she served in the YMCA with the AEF in France in 1918 and 1919. She then returned to her home town to study law and begin work with the Raleigh News and Observer in 1921. Except for two brief interludes of less than a year's duration, Miss Lewis worked for the paper over the next thirty-five years as society reporter, general reporter, society editor, feature writer, and columnist.  

Active in the social reform movement that was beginning to gain strength in North Carolina during the Twenties, Miss Lewis used the News and Observer, The Reviewer, and The American Mercury to level blasts at a variety of Southern ills, including foot-dragging over woman's suffrage, the Scopes trial, Fundamentalism, and the general need for social reform in North Carolina.  

Penal reform and improving working conditions in industry, especially for women, were two of her leading interests. She was an active supporter of the Southern Summer School for Women Workers in Industry (held in Arden,  

---

12This biographical information is derived from a fifty-three page description of the Lewis collection, Nell Battle Lewis Papers (Division of Archives and Manuscripts, State Department of Archives and History, Raleigh, N. C.), Box P. C. 255.44. Her "Raleigh, Capital of a Neighborhood," The Reviewer, V (July, 1925), 63-70, is quite similar to Johnson's "Greensboro, or What You Will," cited in Note 11.  

13Edwin Mims, The Advancing South: Stories of Progress and Reaction (Garden City, 1927), 239-50, provides a good summary of her various writings critical of the South. For a more detailed sampling see the folder on "The South, 1923-53" in Lewis Papers, Box P. C. 255.26.
N. C.) and often wrote editorials in support of labor reform. In 1931 she used her legal talents to defend juvenile girls accused of arson at the Samarcand, N. C., reform institution. Her case for the young women was based on the abhorrent conditions in the institution, and her expose of these conditions subsequently led to reform.\(^{14}\)

A Professor of English at Vanderbilt University added his voice to the rising chorus of criticism in an 1926 manifesto, *The Advancing South*. According to Edwin Mims, Georgia was "a laggard in the matter of intellectual and social progress."\(^{15}\) Even more, the South as a whole was a disappointment:

\[\ldots\] There is a resurgence of the old reactionary spirit, policies, and ideas. And in some respects the South looks worse to other sections of the country and to its own intelligent minority than it has looked at any time within the last decade or more. A section that is still solid in politics, however issues or candidates may change, that is a fertile ground for all sorts of intolerant ideas, that still gives little evidence that institutions of higher learning, fostered by state and private benevolence, have any appreciable influence on public opinion--surely such a section must

---

\(^{14}\) On The Southern Summer School for Women Workers in Industry, see the flyer advertising same, "A Message to Women in Industry of the South" (n.d., n.p.), and Louise Leonard McLaren to Nell Battle Lewis, November 20, 1930, both in Lewis Papers, Box P. C. 255.1. On the Samarcand case and its ramifications see *ibid.*, Folder for 1931, Box P. C. 255.2.

\(^{15}\) Mims, *The Advancing South*, 9. Mims distinguished his criticism from those "outside critics who take an unseemly pleasure in rubbing old sores" and placed it with "those who are genuinely interested in the South, and who have a right to be because it is a part of the nation." *Ibid.*, xiii. Well motivated or not, Mims' criticism still is often of the benighted variety. For a good sampling see *ibid.*, 8-22.
seem a disappointment to the country as a whole.\textsuperscript{16}

Another Southern liberal, this one now removed to New York, preceded Mims by three years with an even more devastating attack on the South. William Henry Skaggs, a former Alabama Populist, published \textit{The Southern Oligarchy: An Appeal in Behalf of the Silent Masses of Our Country Against the Despotic Rule of the Few} in 1924. Skaggs laid down a blanket of indictments against a multitude of Southern ills. Labor conditions, corrupt politics, poor public education and illiteracy, despicable penal conditions and peonage, race relations and lynching—these were merely a few of his targets.\textsuperscript{17}

Additional criticism came from the \textit{Journal of Social Forces}. The benighted style contributions of Gerald W. Johnson to that periodical have been mentioned, but he was not, of course, the only contributor to find fault with the region. In the \textit{Journal}'s first year, a series of three articles was published which exposed the deplorable plight of poor whites in the South (most of the examples were taken from North Carolina). The first article revealed a high degree of illiteracy among white females in North Carolina;

\textsuperscript{16}Ibid., 9.

\textsuperscript{17}William H. Skaggs, \textit{The Southern Oligarchy: An Appeal in Behalf of the Silent Masses of our Country Against the Despotic Rule of the Few} (New York, 1924), passim. See also the comments on Skaggs by George Tindall in \textit{Emergence of New South}, 211, and in "The Benighted South: Origins Of A Modern Image," \textit{Virginia Quarterly Review}, XXXX (Spring, 1964), 286-87.
the second article showed that white share croppers earned less than their Negro counterparts (also in North Carolina); and a third presented a grim detailing of poor housing, lack of needed medical attention, high infant mortality rates, and inadequate schooling among white tenants.  

Another critic in Social Forces surveyed Bradley County, Arkansas, and found 440 defects among 314 children (for example, ninety-two cases of malnutrition). Still other writers joined in the attack on conditions in mill villages of the Upper South. One contributor held that the conditions led to the "destruction of genuine family life and feeling, increased incapacity for judgment and control, discount of personality, unstable behavior, and paucity of leaders." An unsigned editorial asserted that the South was

\[\text{18The three articles, in the order cited, were E. C. Branson, "A Rural State's Unlettered White Women," Journal of Social Forces, I (November, 1922), 43-45; Branson, "Farm Tenancy in the Cotton Belt: How Farm Tenants Live," ibid., I (March, 1923), 213-21 (he distinguished between "renting" tenants and "cropper" tenants); Branson, "Farm Tenancy in the Cotton Belt: The Social Estate of White Farm Tenants," ibid., I (May, 1923), 450-57. Branson's 1923 accounts bring to mind James Agee's descriptions of Southern tenants in the 1930's.}

An implicit assumption of the three articles is that Negroes under similar socio-economic conditions were forced to endure even more deplorable conditions. Yet one of Branson's purposes in writing was to enlighten the public that Negroes had no monopoly on the problems he was describing—many whites shared their plight. Again, an inference would be that public opinion might be aroused when whites were involved, but not over Negro social problems.

\[\text{19Frances Sage Bradley, "A Survey of Conditions Affecting Children of Bradley County Arkansas," ibid., 296-99.}\]
not "learning enough, reading enough, writing enough, working enough, leading [or] following enough, and [was] too proud of its non-progressive fundamentalisms..."

Another analysis of 591 children in a mill village found thirty-four per cent (201) of them "at or below border-line intelligence" (versus the national average of 7.5 per cent), and suggested that environmental conditions might be responsible.

Thus many Southern writers in the Twenties detailed various forms of a benighted image of the region. But criticism was even more prevalent, and virulent, among writers outside the South.

Current History, an organ of The New York Times, published a number of critiques. Lynching was one of the magazine's favorite objects of criticism. Although the editors admitted that this form of violence was a national problem, the burden of their attack was directed at the Southern states. One author created a three-pronged benighted image by attempting to establish a correlation

---

20Jeannette Paddock Nichols, "Does the Mill Village Foster Any Social Types?" *ibid.*, II (March, 1924), 350-57; Editorial, *ibid.*, II (September, 1924), 730.

21L. A. Williams, "The Intellectual Status of Children In Cotton Mill Villages," *ibid.*, IV (September, 1925), 183-86. The Williams article is the last one published in Social Forces in the 1920's which can be directly applied to a benighted South image. Articles in the remaining years of the decade are much more technical, concerned with subjects such as the mechanics of social work. Possibilities for this dramatic change of direction after 1925 will be explored in the next chapter.
between illiteracy, murder rates, and lynchings. Most of
this author's attention, however, was given to discounting
the traditional Southern "justification" of lynching as
"necessary" for the protection of Southern womanhood. In
the period 1913-1918, he pointed out, 264 Negroes were
lynched, but only twenty-eight of them for allegedly raping
white women, and fifty-three for "insults to whites." In
Rayville, Louisiana, two Negroes were hanged and one shot
for stealing three hogs, leading the chronicler to calculate:
"This would establish the value of a negro's life in
Louisiana at one hog." The situation was no better in
Georgia, where two Negroes were lynched for stealing a mule,
"which established a valuation of half a mule per negro."\(^{22}\)
Another *Current History* article on lynching quoted Governor
Hugh M. Dorsey of Georgia, and showed his recognition of a
spreading image of the South as a land of violence and
injustice. Speaking of his State, the Governor remarked:
"It seems that we stand indicted as a people before the
world."\(^{23}\)

\(^{22}\)Charles Frederick Carter, "The Lynching Infamy,"
*Current History*, XV (March, 1922), 900-901. Tindall,
*Emergence of New South*, 170-73, also dismisses the myth of
the "honorable purpose" of Southern lynchings.

\(^{23}\)James Weldon Johnson, "Lynching--America's National
Disgrace," *Current History*, XIX (January, 1924), 597.
Dorsey's statement was made April 22, 1921.

The insanity of lynching generated at least two
monographs in the late Twenties and early Thirties, each of
which is filled with benighted style accounts. See Walter F.
White, *Rope and Faggot: A Biography of Judge Lynch* (New
York and London, 1929); and Arthur F. Raper, *The Tragedy of
Lynching* (Chapel Hill, 1932).
Current History did not limit its critical articles to lynchings. Illiteracy, the Scopes trial and anti-evolution, the Ku Klux Klan, conditions among textile workers—all of these subjects were discussed in terms unfavorable to the South. The magazine hit the Klan especially hard. One contributor connected Governor Bilbo Graves of Alabama to the Klan in that Southern State and claimed that the organization stepped up its activities after Graves took office. The account goes on to describe some "typical" Klan deeds:

A lad whipped with branches until his back was ribboned flesh; a negress beaten and left helpless, to contract pneumonia from exposure and die; a white girl, divorcée, beaten into unconsciousness in her own home; a naturalized foreigner flogged until his back was a pulp because he married an American woman; a negro lashed until he sold his land to a white man for a fraction of its value... The revived Klan, unlike its Reconstruction predecessor, was not limited to the South. Indeed its greatest legislative successes came in Indiana and Oregon.


But it is instructive for analysis of the benighted images to recognize that the South seemed to bear the brunt of the attack on "The Invisible Empire."\(^{26}\)

The murder of two whites in Mer Rouge, Louisiana, who allegedly had been active opponents of the Klan generated a flood of benighted images against the South and the Klan. The *Literary Digest* began an article on the incident with a typically broad condemnation: "Louisiana stands ashamed today, her escutcheon stained with the deep, red stain of a crime, not only against two men, a community, or county, but against the greatest security of our civilization--law and order."\(^{27}\) The article quoted the reaction of *The New York Times*, *Omaha Bee*, *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, *New York Herald*, and *New York World* to the Mer Rouge incident.\(^{28}\) Indeed, newspaper correspondents from

---

\(^{26}\) The best treatment of the Klan in the Twenties is Robert Moats Miller, "The Ku Klux Klan," a fine short essay in John Braeman, et al. (eds.), *Change and Continuity in Twentieth-Century America: The 1920's* (Columbus, Ohio, 1968), 215-55. See also Tindall, *Emergence of New South*, 186-96; Charles C. Alexander, *The Ku Klux Klan in the Southwest* (Lexington, 1965); David M. Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism: The History of the Ku Klux Klan* (New York, 1965); and Kenneth T. Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan In The City, 1915-1930* (New York, 1967). All of these studies are sprinkled with various quotes from benighted-type views of the Klan. Miller's assessment that to the Klan "there was only one great enemy: change!" rings especially true for the South of the rapidly changing Twenties. See Miller, "Ku Klux Klan," 217.

\(^{27}\) "The Murders Of Mer Rouge," *The Literary Digest*, LXXVI (January 13, 1923), 102.

\(^{28}\) Ibid., 10-12.
over the nation poured into the neighboring Bastrop, Louisiana, to cover the story. 29 Leonard L. Cline summed up the prevalent tone of the outgoing dispatches which worked the Bastrop telegraph operator around the clock. The title of Cline's account in the Nation was fittingly entitled "In Darkest Louisiana." 30

The Literary Digest published other articles critical of the South. One exposed Orange County, North Carolina, as "the banner county of the United States in the production of moonshine whiskey," adding that North Carolina topped the list of illicit production on the state level. 31 Two more articles hit at Dayton and the Scopes trial, while a third detailed the horrors of North Carolina's chain-gang system. 32

Time magazine contributed a wealth of material on the benighted South, much of it distorted by sensational reporting. Grisly descriptions of lynchings of both whites and Negroes were a favorite topic. One such account described the lynching of a black in Picayune, Mississippi.

29 Alexander, Klan in the Southwest, 71-72.

30 Leonard L. Cline, "In Darkest Louisiana," Nation, CXVI (March 15, 1923), 292-93. For a series of benighted accounts of the entire Mer Rouge incident, see Alexander, Klan in the Southwest, 68-75.

31 "Moonshining In North Carolina And In Other Dixie Lands," The Literary Digest, LXV (June 26, 1920), 53.

32 "No Monkeying With Evolution In Tennessee," ibid., LXXXV (April 18, 1925), 30-31; "Dayton Blighted By Its Famous Evolution Trial," LXXXX (July 24, 1926), 49-50; "North Carolina Chain Gang System on Trial" (August 14, 1926), 14.
A young lady had been assaulted; "the girl said it was a Negro who attacked her, and Albert Blazes was a Negro." Several articles were devoted to coverage of the lynching of three Negroes (one a female) in Aiken, South Carolina. *Time* joined the New York *World* and Baltimore *Sun* in pushing for an investigation of the violence, and attempted to stir up national opinion by quoting the South Carolina lawyer defending those charged with the crime:

> I reckon the New York *World* would like to see a Negro Governor of South Carolina, and a mulatto presiding over the Governor's mansion, but thank God, the people of South Carolina are still white, with red blood in their veins, chivalry and manhood in their hearts, and expect to keep our country clean and pure notwithstanding the ravings and rantings of a Negro-loving Northern press, when an occasional black brute is summarily dealt with. . . .

Another report gave a gruesome account of a lynching of a Negro in Mississippi (he was buried alive). Yet these are only a small sampling of the benighted accounts dealing with lynching published in *Time* during the Twenties.

*Time* also told of a group of Mississippi whites who sold a Negro family from that State into a state of slavery.

---

33 *Time*, VII (June 7, 1926), 8-9.

34 Ibid., VIII (December 20, 1926), 10. On the Aiken case see also ibid., VIII (October 18, 1926, 9-10; and ibid., VIII (November 29, 1926), 11.

35 Ibid., XIII (January 14, 1929), 11.

36 See, for example, ibid., VII (May 3, 1926), 8-9; VIII (August 23, 1926), 9; XI (June 11, 1928), 13; and XIV (December 2, 1929), 14-15.
in Louisiana.\textsuperscript{37} Child labor and illiteracy in the South were also exposed, as the magazine took delight in pointing out that the four states with the lowest literacy rates in the country were (in order) Louisiana, South Carolina, Mississippi, and Alabama.\textsuperscript{38}

Southern politicians were open game for the New York-centered magazine year round. \textit{Time} described Percy Quinn of Mississippi as placing "his quid of chewing gum on the speaker's table" when he rose to speak in the national House of Representatives, and as bringing his "lunch pail" to the Congressional floor.\textsuperscript{39} Cole Blease came under fire on three different occasions. One article viewed his nomination for governor of South Carolina as part of a pattern in which that State went "stark, staring, raving crazy about every thirty years."\textsuperscript{40} Huey Long was called "Louisiana's Kaiser," and criticized for both his personal and public life.\textsuperscript{41}

A variety of other sources contributed to the image.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{37}Ibid., IX (February 14, 1927), 11.
\item \textsuperscript{38}Ibid., IV (July 14, 1924), 7; XI (January 30, 1928), 10.
\item \textsuperscript{39}Ibid., III (April 7, 1924), 6.
\item \textsuperscript{40}Ibid., IV (September 22, 1924), 5-6. For other benighted views of Blease see ibid., VII (January 25, 1926), 7-8; VIII (September 13, 1926), 6; and VIII (November 29, 1926), 11.
\item \textsuperscript{41}Ibid., XIII (March 18, 1929), 14; XIII (April 8, 1929), 12; XIII (April 15, 1929), 13.
\end{itemize}
T. S. Stribling, a novelist born in Clinton, Tennessee, and educated in his home state and Alabama, between 1926 and 1933 produced a series of novels highly critical of the South. Frank Tannenbaum, an economist and criminologist at Columbia University, suggested an image of the benighted South in the very title of his 1924 study, Darker Phases of the South. Tannenbaum provided copious descriptions of the Klan, mill village and factory conditions, penal systems, the farm problem (especially tenancy and the one-crop economy), and the race issue. Combining insight with stereotype, Tannenbaum said the Klan wanted to "reestablish the past by nullifying through terror the influences of the present." He restricted the Klan to the South, where its "very existence" was "proof of emotional infancy."43

The image of a backward South has already been alluded to in discussion of literacy rates, the Southern

42See, for example, Teeftallow (Garden City, 1926), passim, an unfavorable treatment of the Tennessee "hill people." For a reaction to Stribling by a Southerner contemporary to the publication of the novel, see John Tyree Fain (ed.), The Spyglass: Views and Reviews, 1924-1930, by Donald Davidson (Nashville, 1963), 12-15. For further examples of Stribling's benighted imagery see his trilogy: The Forge (1931); The Store (1932); and Unfinished Cathedral (1934).

43Tannenbaum, Darker Phases of the South (New York and London, 1924), passim, quotes from pp. 20, 27. It is interesting to note that Tannenbaum preceded Stanley Elkins by some forty years in talking of the infantilization process occurring in mill villages. See pp. 39-42, 56.

The Tannenbaum volume was a collection of articles which had been commissioned by various magazines carrying on the muckraking tradition, this time relative to the South.
economy, and other data. The publications of the Twenties frequently charged that the region was depressed and unprogressive. Even accounts of travels in the South made this point repeatedly. As Thomas D. Clark comments in speaking of travelers through the South in the 1930's: "Any zealot with a cause could find nourishment if not support for it in the South of this period." Clark points to the widespread occurrence of the theme of a "backward South" in this same time frame, an image made all the more acute by the "pronounced preconceptions" many of the visitors brought with them.

Race relations also received a great deal of attention in the travel accounts, from both English-speaking and foreign-tongued observers. One Danish traveler was particularly appalled to find a neatly printed sign outside a Texas community reading: "Nigger, don't let the sun set on you here!" The foreign accounts, perhaps even more prone to stereotyping than those by the English observers, constantly harped on the Klan, Southern demagogues, lynching,


45 Ibid., x-xi.

Clark makes an interesting suggestion about these oversimplified accounts:

It may have been true that Europeans . . . gained an entirely erroneous impression of Americans because of this faulty reporting. No one can know how much this kind of literature led Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini to make major mis-calculations about the moral determination of the American people.\(^{48}\)

Others found much to criticize in the region Larry L. King refers to as "the wrong side of the George Washington Bridge."\(^{49}\) Howard Mumford Jones observed in a 1929 essay that hundreds of Northern citizens in the 1920's believed that "anywhere south of Mason and Dixon's line, every negro, as soon as he wakes up, begins the daily business of trembling for his life." These people viewed the South as a "land of ignorance, superstition, and hookworm. . . . Its average mentality is measured by the absurdities of the Dayton trial."\(^{50}\)

Two legal cases in the first half of the 1930's continued the benighted image. Angelo Herndon, a nineteen-year-old former coal miner from Cincinnati, Ohio, came to Georgia as a Communist organizer in September, 1931. Herndon

---

\(^{47}\)Ibid., 113-19.

\(^{48}\)Ibid., x. See also Clark, "The South in Cultural," in Allan P. Sindler (ed.), Change in the Contemporary South (Durham, 1963), 8-15.

\(^{49}\)Larry L. King, . . . And Other Dirty Stories (New York, 1968), 113.

\(^{50}\)Howard Mumford Jones, "The Southern Legend," Scribner's, LXXXV (May, 1929), 539-40.
was arrested in July, 1932, and accused of attempting to overthrow the Georgia state government. A Georgia jury returned a verdict of guilty in January, 1933, and sentenced Herndon to fifteen years on the chain gang. This decision was rendered in spite of the fact that the defendant had been in jail (on other charge) on July 16, 1932, the day he was alleged to have perpetrated the revolutionary crime.51

The New York Times gave front-page coverage to Herndon's conviction in its January 19, 1933, issue. The New York paper especially criticized what it called the "carpetbagger law" under which Herndon was prosecuted.52 Further Times coverage voiced sympathy with the defenses' pleas that "you can't kill a man because of the books he reads," and questioned the ruling of the court that two Emory University economics professors could not testify for the defense because communism was not an economic question.53

Public furor over the Herndon conviction reached such a peak that guards armed with side arms and automatic rifles had to take up positions in defense of Governor Talmadge's mansion. The threats, according to the Times,


52 New York Times, January 19, p. 1; June 14, p. 6, 1933.

53 Ibid., August 27, IV, p. 6, 1933.
"came from many sections of the country." 54

Alabama provided an even more sensational judicial circus, one which deepened the conviction of many that the South was benighted. The arrest and multiple trials and appeals of the "Scottsboro Boys" stands as one of the most bizarre and tragic incidents in the history of the South. 55

The whole affair, according to its closest student, was a cause celebre of the 1930's and became for American liberals of that decade "a tragic symbol of the sickness which prevailed the South's regional culture." 56

In sum, it was a major focal point for attacks on the benighted South in the Thirties.

The case began in March of 1931. The deprivations of the depression had already sent thousands of Americans on the road, hoboing about the country. It was with such a group on a train from Chattanooga to Memphis on March 25, 1931, that the complex affair was initiated. As the train

54Ibid., June 14, p. 6, 1933. The Herndon case was eventually appealed to the Supreme Court where he finally won his freedom in 1937. See Tindall, Emergence of the New South, 378. On the appeal process see, for example, The New York Times, May 25, p. 5; August 5, II, p. 2; and August 21, p. 4, 1934.

55A superb account of the "Scottsboro boys" and the multiple ramifications of their cases is Dan T. Carter's Scottsboro: A Tragedy of the American South (Baton Rouge, 1969), passim. A useful chronology is in Haywood Patterson (one of the "Scottsboro boys") and Earl Conrad, Scottsboro Boy (New York, Collier Books ed., 1969), 313-20. The following account, however, as the notes will indicate, is taken largely from Carter.

56Carter, Scottsboro, vii.
dipped down into Alabama on its way West, an inter-racial fight broke out among a group of hoboes, with the whites having the worst of the affair. Leaving the train in North Alabama, one of the white hoboes decided to press charges and was accommodated by the Jackson County (Alabama) sheriff, who phoned down the line and ordered that every Negro on the train be arrested and brought back to the county seat at Scottsboro.57

What started out as an investigation of a fight between Negroes and whites quickly took on a new and much more awesome character. The search of the train turned up not only nine Negro males, aged thirteen to twenty, and one white boy, but also two young white women. When one of these women, Ruby Bates, asserted to a deputy that she and her friend (Victoria Price) had been raped by the Negro youths, the fate of the "Scottsboro Boys" was effectively sealed. Within a few hours white residents of Scottsboro were reacting in typical Southern fashion to the penultimate fear of the Southern mind and asserting that "black brutes" had "chewed off one of the breasts" of one of the girls. Lynching was barely averted by the sending of National Guard troops to the scene and the subsequent transfer of the nine Negroes to a stronger jail in nearby Etowah.58

57Ibid., 3-5.

58Ibid., 6-7, 9-10, 13, 17. Quote from p. 7. Testimony later established that both Ruby Bates and Victoria Price were prostitutes and had had sexual relations with white males the two nights preceding the train ride.
Any Negro charged with raping a white woman in Alabama in the 1930's was as good as guilty from the time of the charge. In spite of overwhelming evidence of their innocence, the nine were indicted, tried, convicted, and sentenced to death (save the thirteen-year old, who was given life imprisonment) by April 11, 1931, seventeen days after their arrest. An only half-hearted defense was put up by two incompetent lawyers, and the trials were permeated with a circus-like atmosphere that saw the gallery and a crowd of over a thousand outside the courtroom cheer news of the convictions and sentences.\textsuperscript{59} The harsh sentences, combined with the rapidity of the trials and the age and number of the youths involved, brought such a wave of protest that "the name 'Scottsboro' became synonomous with Southern racism, repression, and injustice."\textsuperscript{60}

The appeals process was long, tortuous, and largely unsuccessful. The Communist-oriented International Labor Defense won a battle with the NAACP, the ACLU, and other organizations seeking to defend the boys. Although the ILD won legal points in two appeals to the U. S. Supreme Court, the nine were still incarcerated when the ILD allowed a coalition Scottsboro defense committee to take over in 1935. Beginning in 1937, the first of the youths was released but the last of the nine was not freed until 1950, nineteen

\textsuperscript{59}Ibid., 31-50. \textsuperscript{60}Ibid., 50.
years and two months after the fateful train-ride of March 25, 1931.  

In spite of the possible distortion because of Communist involvement, the Scottsboro affair remains one of the prime examples for the study of the growth of the image of the benighted South in the Thirties. Alabamians were reportedly shocked to learn that outsiders felt an injustice had occurred with the convictions. (The average Alabama citizen apparently felt that the fact the blacks had escaped lynching was "evidence" of moderation.) Letters and telegrams protesting the verdict bombarded the governor, the presiding judge at the initial trials, and other state officials. One New York college student asked the judge in a letter: "What kind of mindless savage are you?" According to Dan Carter, "during the summer of 1931, for many Americans, the Scottsboro Case became . . . a symbol of the daily injustice Southern whites inflicted upon the Negroes of the region."  

Demonstrations on behalf of the defendants were mounted both in the North and abroad. On June 27, 1931, Harlem protestors against the state of Alabama carried so many placards that two city dump trucks were required to carry off the residue. Dresden, Berlin, Leipzig, and Havana all witnessed demonstrations in the summer of 1931.

---

61 Ibid., 51-413.  
62 Ibid., 106.  
63 Ibid., 135.
protesting the convictions. The attorney general of Alabama became so perturbed by the onslaught of insults that he refused to accept further telegraphs and ordered Western Union to stop sending them. Theodore Drieser, Lincoln Steffens, Upton Sinclair, John Dos Passos, Clifton Fadiman, Leopold Stokowski, Albert Einstein, Thomas Mann, Sherwood Anderson, and H. G. Wells were some of the more notable protestors.\textsuperscript{64}

The first series of trials had gone virtually unnoticed in the national press until the speedy verdicts were returned. But when new trials ordered by the appeals court began in March, 1933, reporters from \textit{The New York Times} were in the courtroom. Mary Heaton Vorse, representing the New York \textit{World Telegram}, also filed many scathing accounts of the 1933 trials, just as she had done four years earlier in covering the Gastonia textile strikes. This increased attention, and the negative images of the South that grew out of them, constituted a bitter pill for the Scottsboro area to swallow: "The pride of Jackson County citizens was hurt by the widespread newspaper accounts picturing them as ignorant, barefooted, mule-riding, tobacco-chewing illiterates."\textsuperscript{65}

\textsuperscript{64}Ibid., 142, 145-46. Other notable demonstrations saw 150,000 German workers assemble in Berlin in July, 1932, to hear the mother of one of the boys plea for her son's life, and 200,000 whites and blacks march on Washington demanding freedom of the boys on May 5, 1933. See Patterson and Conrad, \textit{Scottsboro Boys}, 314, 316.

Even Southern journalists attacked the convictions. Douglas Southall Freeman, editor of the Richmond (Va.) News Leader, concluded that the men were "sentenced to death primarily because they are black." "Outrageous," was the reaction of the Raleigh News and Observer's Josephus Daniels. Residents of Virginia and North Carolina such as Freeman and Daniels could criticize the handling of the case and receive only verbal repercussions. But when critics of the convictions surfaced in Alabama, the reactions were more ominous. Rabbi Benjamin Goldstein from Montgomery, for example, was forced to move to New York City after taking a stand for the Scottsboro boys. After settling in his Northern exile, the Rabbi concluded that anyone "who tries to take an impartial attitude towards the conduct of the Scottsboro case is immediately branded a communist and a nigger-lover."66

Apparent support for Goldstein's contention appeared in April, 1935. The Decatur (Ala.) Daily finally reached its saturation point of Northern criticism when William Allen White, Jr., issued a blanket indictment of the Southern jury system in an issue of the Emporia (Kan.) Gazette. The Decatur paper suggested that White "take a flying leap to Hell—or else remain in Kansas, which amounts to practically the same." The Daily then went a step further and characterized the statements of all the Northern critics as

66 Ibid., 253, 258-59. Freeman and Daniels quoted on p. 253; Rabbi Goldstein quoted on p. 259.
being "as revolting as those issued by Samuel Leibowitz [the leading defense lawyer in the Scottsboro case], the political belled buzzard of Harlem, in his nobler moments."\textsuperscript{67}

The Nation, the New York Post, and the ever critical New York Times kept up the attack concerning new trials in 1936, and over the shooting of one of the defendants being transported from the courtroom back to jail. Journalist Carleton Beals seriously questioned the impartiality of the trial judge, while the Post suggested that the entire proceedings had caused many Americans to distrust Alabama state officials. The Times noted the anathema that was waiting for outsiders in the State and cryptically added: "It would now seem that among the outside intrusions which Alabama would repel from her borders are the laws of probability and common sense."\textsuperscript{68}

By 1939, the Scottsboro case had begun to fade before the public eye. But the tragic affair had generated a flood of images of the benighted South in the 1930's, negative images that touched sensitive nerves in the Southern psyche.

Still other slighting remarks were directed towards the South in the 1920's and 1930's, but perhaps the crowning blow "came from the top" in 1938. President Roosevelt, addressing a conference he had commissioned to study the

\textsuperscript{67} Decatur (Ala.) Daily, April 19, 1935, quoted in Carter, Scottsboro, 327.

\textsuperscript{68} Carter, Scottsboro, 346, 351. Quote from p. 351.
economic conditions of the South, asserted his "conviction that the South presents right now the Nation's No. 1 economic problem." This presidential indictment of the Southern economy, and the benighted inferences it carried, touched off a flurry of indignant reactions from the South. Senators from North Carolina to Arkansas registered protests, and the Manufacturers' Record claimed that the South actually represented "the nation's greatest opportunity for industrial development."

Mill conditions, strikes, fundamentalism, Ku Kluxery, lynchings and other forms of racial injustice, general backwardness, corrupt politics, economic deprivation—these are some of the many aspects of Southern life during the Twenties and Thirties that drew benighted comments from a multitude of observers. But the champion of all the "South-Baiters" during those two decades was the "Bad Boy of Baltimore," Henry Louis Mencken.

Born in the Maryland metropolis in 1880, Mencken was the first son of a German-American cigarmaker. After early schooling at Friedrich Knapp's Institute in Baltimore and at various denominational schools, Mencken was enrolled in the United States National Emergency Council, Report on Economic Conditions Of The South (Da Capo Press ed., 1972), 1.

Tindall, Emergence of the New South, 599.

"The South--Its Abundant Resources for Development and National Defense," Manufacturers' Record, CIX (September, 1940), 36, quoted in Tindall, Emergence of the New South, 599.
Baltimore Polytechnic Institute at the age of fourteen. After his graduation in 1897, his father drafted him into the family tobacco business, an occupation Mencken detested and handled dismally. But then his father died unexpectedly in 1899, leaving the young Mencken free to pursue his true interest. Four days after his father's death, the eighteen-year-old Mencken took a job as a cub reporter with the Baltimore Morning Herald. By 1906 he had become editor, but the paper folded in that year and Mencken moved on to the Baltimore Sun. An early contributor to the magazine, Smart Set, he became co-editor (with George Jean Nathan) in 1914. In 1924 Mencken and Nathan moved on to help found a magazine, The American Mercury, but after a year of co-editorship, Nathan stepped down to contributing editor, leaving Mencken in control until 1934. During the years with the Smart Set and The American Mercury, Mencken maintained his relationship with the Baltimore Sun; and he continued to write for this paper until ill health forced his retirement in the late 1940's.72

72Mencken's bibliography is a field in itself. For a general guide see Betty Adler and Jane Wilhelm, H. L. M: The Mencken Bibliography (Baltimore, 1961). Many of Mencken's papers are still closed, and this has helped prevent the production of a definitive biography. Three of the better known attempts, Edgar Kemler, The Irreverent Mr. Mencken (Boston, 1950); William Manchester, Disturber of the Peace: The Life of H. L. Mencken (New York, 1950); and Douglas C. Stenerson, H. L. Mencken: Iconoclast From Baltimore (Chicago, 1971), were written under varying degrees of supervision by Mencken (especially the Kemler and Manchester volumes). Carl Bode's Mencken (Carbondale and Edwardsville, Illinois, 1969), although supposedly the study commissioned by
Being iconoclastic was Mencken's business. Virtually nothing was sacred for his pen. After several glasses of beer he would traditionally remark that he was still "thirsty as a bishop." He signed many letters "Yours in Christ," stole Gideon Bibles and mailed them to friends inscribed "with the compliments of the author," and brought a pebble back from a Mediterranean cruise to give to a slightly more devout friend as a "souvenir . . . a gallstone passed by Abraham back in the year 1700 B.C." But Mencken seemed to hold special fondness for attacking the Southern variety of what he classified as _homo boobiens._

The well from which Mencken dipped bucketful after bucketful of diatribes about the South and its people never seemed to run dry. The South, a land of "fundamentalism, Ku Kluxry, revivals, lynchings, hog wallow politics . . . an empire almost as large as western Europe, and as rich as the Byzantium of the Isaurians, is snoring through the cultural

---

Mencken's surviving brother, is disappointing. The best available biography of Mencken is reportedly a 1967 Sorbonne dissertation by Guy Jean Forgue, "H. L. Mencken: L'Homme, L'Oeuvre, L'Influence," but I did not consult this study.

For criticism of Bode and other Mencken biographies, see the essay review by Carl R. Dolmetsch, "The Baltimore Sage in a Silly Century," _Saturday Review_, LII (September 13, 1969), 27-29.


---

73Kemler, _Irreverent Mr. Mencken_, 8, 141, 150, 254-55.
night of Albania or Guatemala." The South "was a Bible Belt, ruled by morons and cowards, manacled by clergymen and politicians, void of intellectual or cultural contributions—in fact, an uncivilized region where the combat proceeds on an anthropoid level with a gang of fourth-rate Babbitts, on the one side, and a horde of morons, on the other." His two supreme efforts, however, were an essay published in first form in 1917, and his coverage of the Scopes trial. The lead paragraph of the 1917 "Sahara of the Bozart" is a fitting summary of the message it conveyed:

'Alas, for the South! Her books have grown fewer—She never was much given to literature.'

In the lamented J. Gordon Coogler, author of these elegiac lines, there was the insight of a true poet. He was the last bard of Dixie, at least in the legitimate line. Down there a poet is now almost as rare as an oboe-player, a dry-point etcher or a metaphysician. It is, indeed, amazing to contemplate so vast a vacuity. One thinks of the interstellar spaces, of the colossal reaches of the now mythical ether. Nearly the whole of Europe could be lost in that stupendous region of worn-out farms, shoddy cities and paralyzed cerebrums: one could throw in France, Germany and Italy, and still have room for the British Isles. And yet, for all its size and all its wealth and all the "progress" it babbles of, it is almost as sterile, artistically, intellectually, culturally, as the Sahara Desert. There are single acres in Europe that house more first-rate men than all the states south of the Potomac; there are probably single square miles in America. If the whole of the late Confederacy were to be engulfed by a tidal wave

---


tomorrow, the effect upon the civilized minority of men in the world would be but little greater than that of a flood on the Yang-tse-kiang. It would be impossible in all history to match so complete a drying-up of a civilization.76

This "drying-up" was all the more pronounced to Mencken when contrasted with what he viewed as the high civilization of the Old South, "perhaps the best that the Western Hemisphere had ever seen." But the Civil War stamped out this brilliance, he claimed, and left a land reminiscent "of Asia Minor, resigned to Armenians, Greeks, and wild swine, of Poland abandoned to the Poles." Other than James Branch Cabell, he saw no prose writers worth mentioning in the South, no art galleries, no "critics, musical composers, painters, sculptors, architects . . . nor a historian, philosopher, theologian, scientist." Virginia, the pinnacle of Mencken's romanticized Old South civilization, had now sunk to such depths that "a Washington or a Jefferson, dumped there by some act of God, would be denounced as a scoundrel and jailed overnight. . . . One could no more imagine a Lee or a Washington in the Virginia of today than one could imagine a Huxley in Nicaragua."77


77Mencken, "The Sahara of the Bozart," 185-86. The essay obviously betrays a strong strain of racism and ethnocentricism in Mencken.
The Dayton affair, what Mencken delighted in calling "The greatest trial since that before Pilate," was a challenge to which he rose successfully. As for the legal chances of the defendant Scopes, Mencken assured his readers that the court would protect Scopes to the degree that "no one will be permitted to pull his nose, to pray publicly for his condemnation or even to make a face at him. . . . [T]he jury will be that great, fair, unimpassioned body of enlightened men which has already decided that a horse hair put into a bottle will turn into a snake." The fundamentalist temper of the town was such, per Mencken, that "to call a man a doubter in these parts is equal to accusing him of cannibalism. . . . [O]ne accused of heresy [in Dayton] is like one accused of boiling his grandmother to make soap in Maryland." Minds were so closed that he felt the net effect of one major speech by defense attorney Darrow was "precisely the same as if he had bawled it up a rainspout in the interior of Afghanistan." Darrow's legal adversary Bryan was "a tinpot pope in the coca-cola belt and a brother to the forlorn pastors who belabor half-wits in galvanized iron tabernacles behind the railroad yards." 79

78See above, Chapter IV, p. 121.

79This account of Mencken's coverage of the trial is taken from the condensation of his dispatches to the Baltimore Sun from July 9-18, 1925, in Jerry R. Tompkins (ed.), D-Days At Dayton: Reflections on the Scopes Trial (Baton Rouge, 1965), 35-51. The intentionally benighted nature of these accounts is apparent when contrasted to the very objective
Mencken classified Daytonians as "loud primates, yokels, morons, anthropoids, hillbillies, half wits . . . and anthropoid rabble." He expended particular zeal in describing a fundamentalist camp meeting he attended in a small town close to Dayton. There a tall and lanky mountaineer was preaching and leading prayers when "suddenly he [the preacher] rose to his feet, threw back his head and began to speak in the tongues -blub-blub-blub, gurgle-gurgle-gurgle." Then several women began to be convulsed by the spirit, one of the women undergoing "an extraordinary violent attack . . . bounding all over the place, like a chicken with its head cut off."

Needless to say, Mencken's humor was lost on many Daytonians, and other Southerners. The New York Times headlined: "Mencken Epithets Rouse Dayton's Ire." According to the story, "Dayton, which is becoming more and more wrought up over the Scopes trial and what is being said about it in the newspapers, doesn't like H. L. Mencken." The "dislike" was so intense, the Times reporter continued, that some inhabitants were considering asking the Baltimore native to "leave town" and others proposed that "he be taken 'into an essay by Mencken published in The Nation in July, 1925. See Mencken, "In Tennessee," Nation, CXXI (July 1, 1925), 21-22.

80 Quoted in L. Sprague de Camp, The Great Monkey Trial (Garden City, 1968), 274, 344.

81 "The Hills of Zion," in Mencken, A Mencken Chrestomathy, 396.
alley." According to Mencken, his coverage of the Scopes trial led the Tennessee press to denounce him "as a bolshevik, an atheist, and a scoundrel" and one editor supposedly dared him "to come down to Nashville (or was it Knoxville?) and meet twenty or thirty brave Tennesseans in fair combat."83

Other Southerners expressed similar chagrin over the Sahara essay. A former governor of Arkansas reacted to Mencken's charges of intellectual sterility in that State by sending the journalist a "two volume deluxe illustrated set of 'The Folklore of Arkansas,'" thereby unknowingly supplying the sage with even more anti-South material. A writer in the Jackson (Miss.) Daily News assessed Mencken's cerebral capabilities as follows: "By cutting through six inches of fat and drilling through four inches of bone, one might possibly find Mencken's brain cavity--but he would not find any grey matter there." An Arkansas writer was more sophisticated in his castigations of Mencken: "This modern Attila! This brachycephalous Caliban! The Black Knight of Slander! An intellectual Houyhnhnm!"84 Another response came from Arkansas in 1921 after Mencken had described the State in

---

82 The New York Times, July 17, 1925, p. 3.


84 Quoted in Tindall, "The Benighted South," 286. See also Tindall, Emergence of the New South, 210. The impact of the benighted image set forth by Mencken and a variety of others on a wide range of Southern writers and intellectuals will receive a great deal of attention in the next two chapters.
the Smart Set as a land of "miasmic jungles, dead brains, and idiotic patriots." The Arkansas Advancement Association demanded that he be deported but demurred upon learning that Mencken was a U. S. citizen (and therefore not subject to deportation as an "undesirable").

Such reactions as these merely encouraged Mencken to seek higher levels of benighted imagery. In one concise sentence he matched the best he had been able to do in the "Sahara" essay. The South, he concluded, was the "bunghole of the United States, a cesspool of Baptists, a miasma of Methodism, snake-charmers, phoney real-estate operators, and syphilitic evangelists." Mencken was not only the leading author of the benighted South image; he also served as something of a high priest for the "South-Baiter's" cult. Gerald W. Johnson's ascendancy from North Carolina "unto the right hand of Mencken" and the Baltimore Sun has been mentioned. There Johnson quickly assumed the status of Mencken's closest and most valued assistant. Politically more liberal than his mentor, Johnson followed more closely in Mencken's steps in

85Manchester, Disturber of the Peace, 122-23.

86Quoted in Charles Angoff, H. L. Mencken: A Portrait from Memory (New York, 1956), 126. Cited by Tindall, Emergence of the New South, 210. For other examples of the multitude of benighted South images generated by Mencken see The Smart Set, LXVIII (July, 1922), 47; ibid., LXIX (October, 1922), 45; ibid., LXXII (September, 1923), 55-56; and The American Mercury, VI (October, 1925), 158-60).

87See above, pp. 129-30.
continuing the benighted South image in the Sun and the American Mercury. Johnson's strong denial that he had become part of a Mencken "school" probably suggests that he in fact had. But there was a method to Johnson's madness. As early as 1924 he stated that "if the work of building the new South is to go forward to best advantage, the South must develop its own critics." He had already suggested a year earlier that Southern literature was on the verge of a major creative explosion.

Nell Battle Lewis, another North Carolinian, was also a leading disciple of Mencken's, and her role in spreading the image of a benighted South has been discussed. A better-known Southerner who was heavily

---


89 Singleton, H. L. Mencken, 62.

90 Johnson, "Critical Attitudes North and South," 578.

91 Johnson, "The Congo, Mr. Mencken," The Reviewer, III (July, 1923), 887-93.

92 See above, pp. 130-32. Miss Lewis gave a Mencken-esque interpretation of her state in "North Carolina," American Mercury, VIII (May, 1926), 36-43. She also contributed three benighted South articles to The Nation. The first, "The University of North Carolina Gets Its Orders," Nation, CXXII (February 3, 1926), 114-15, concerned attempts by the North Carolina textile manufacturers to block investigations of the industry by scholars at the University. The other two, "Tar Heel Justice," ibid., CXXIX (September 11, 1929), 272-73; and "Anarchy vs. Communism in Gastonia," ibid.,
influenced by Mencken, began to write for the sage in the late 1920's. Called "Sleepy" because of his peculiar facial expression when he laughed, and because he usually looked half-asleep, W. J. Cash was later to write one of the most significant interpretations of the American South ever to appear. Son of a Southern mill-owner, Cash spent one year at Wofford College (Spartanburg, S. C.) before transferring to Wake Forest College in North Carolina. There he became associate editor of the campus newspaper and a contributor to the campus literary magazine. This early journalistic stint combined with a rapidly emerging iconoclastic attitude to make Cash a confirmed disciple of Mencken. After a brief stint in law school, and two more teaching English, he settled into a career in journalism with the Charlotte News. Encouraged by Mencken and others to pursue writing full-time, he left the News in 1928 for a brief job as editor of the weekly Cleveland Press (Shelby, N. C.). In 1929 he returned to his home in Boiling Springs, N. C., to write his opus, eking out his subsistence through much of the depression by selling articles to Mencken and the American Mercury. He returned to the Charlotte News as an editorial writer in 1937, and remained there until 1941. Receiving a Guggenheim grant to subsidize a novel shortly after The Mind of the South was published in February, 1941, Cash left the News

_CXXIX (September 25, 1929), 321-22 concerned the violence accompanying the Gastonia textile strikes of 1929._
for a planned writing stint in Mexico, but began suffering acute delusions shortly after his arrival and committed suicide in Mexico City on July 1, 1941.93

Mencken had an early and potent influence on Cash's writing career. One of the most prolific contributors to the Mercury, Cash published eight articles in that journal between July, 1929, and May, 1935. He had begun to imitate Mencken during his first stint with the Charlotte News. A column in the March 4, 1928, issue of the News attacked Dayton, Tennessee, and "Kluxers" in classic Mencken fashion. Another Charlotte piece by Cash referred to the "neolithic Blease." He brought Blease under further attack in the Shelby paper, blasting the South Carolina Senator for his monolithic political style of race baiting.94 Cash's brief term with the Shelby weekly came in the midst of the 1928


Presidential campaign. There he followed his future mentor in Baltimore by attacking anti-Catholic sentiment in North Carolina and the South in general, and was especially critical of North Carolina's Democratic Senator Furnifold Simmons for deserting the national ticket. 

Cash's attack on Simmons continued as the subject of his initial *American Mercury* contribution. "Jehovah of the Tarheels" was published in the July, 1929, issue of the *Mercury*, the title itself distinctly recalling the style of Mencken. In the article itself Cash emulated his model by characterizing Simmons' political career as "a devastating expose of the essential sottishness of democracy." 

Mencken, besides accepting Cash's first offering to the *Mercury*, also encouraged the young writer to submit other efforts. Cash responded with an exegesis on some ideas he had been coping with since his undergraduate days at Wake Forest. Writing on "The Mind of the South" for the October, 1929, *Mercury*, Cash used true Menckenian style to reach a conclusion that must have delighted the *Mercury* editor—the South was essentially mindless.

---


97 This essay, of course, was a forerunner of Cash's brilliant 1941 book *The Mind of the South*. He would literally agonize over the production of the volume for the
Gastonia was only twenty-nine miles from Cash's home, and it was almost inevitable that he would write about the turbulent strikes of 1929 that hit that city. In the February, 1930, issue of the *Mercury*, he summarized the recent violence in Gastonia and Marion in an essay aptly entitled "The War In The South." Even though he was then living with his mill-owning parents, Cash gave a characteristically critical account of the multiple travesties of justice that had taken place at Gastonia and Marion. The Gastonia defendants, according to Cash, "were convicted before the hearing began."98

No doubt to the delight of Mencken, Cash returned to politics and combined this topic with prohibition in his next contribution to the *Mercury*. "Paladin of the Drys" was as ungenerous to ex-governor (now Senator and prohibitionist) Cameron Morrison as had been Cash's earlier treatment of Furnifold Simmons.99 Having characterized Morrison as a sanctimonious bore, Cash waited two years and then took on Charlotte, N. C., in "Close View of a Calvinist Lhasa," which appeared in the April, 1933, *Mercury*. He judged his next twelve years. See Morrison, "Obsessive 'Mind' of W. J. Cash," 265-86. The "mindless" conclusion endured in the book-length treatment. On this point see Woodward, "Elusive Mind," 265.


former residence to be a "citadel of bigotry and obscurantism."\textsuperscript{100}

The last prime benighted South piece Cash published in the \textit{Mercury} came in the September, 1933, issue. Following Mencken in casting a skeptical eye at philanthropy, the sources of which were often obtained by less than honorable means, Cash examined "Buck Duke's University" and blasted its benefactor. According to Cash, James Buchanan Duke "remained to the end essentially what he was at seventeen, a red-haired, shambling Methodist jake out of Orange County, North Carolina--which is to say, a sort of peasant out of the Eleventh Century, incredibly ignorant, incredibly obtuse, incredibly grasping and picayune."\textsuperscript{101}

After a disappointing piece published almost simultaneously with Mencken's departure from the \textit{Mercury}, Cash closed out his association with the magazine (now edited by Paul Palmer) in May, 1935, with "Genesis of the Southern Cracker." This essay laid much of the groundwork for \textit{The Mind of the South}, but it is rather straightforward, a clear indication of the absence of Mencken as his guiding light.\textsuperscript{102}

\textsuperscript{100} Cash, "Close View of a Calvinist Lhasa," \textit{ibid.}, XXVIII (April, 1933), 443-51.

\textsuperscript{101} Cash, "Buck Duke's University," \textit{ibid.}, XXX (September, 1933), 102-10. Cash did recognize that, in spite of Buck Duke, the university named for him was rapidly becoming one of the most prestigious in the South.

Mencken drew still other benighted South stylists to the *Mercury*. Two 1929 issues "exposed" the horrible working conditions in Southern cotton mills and the general "poverty cycle" of the South. It is interesting to note that both of these supposedly "first-hand" accounts by "mill workers" are suspiciously articulate, and that both were the lead articles in the respective issues of the *Mercury*. This seems to indicate a continuing desire on Mencken's part to indict the South whenever possible.¹⁰³

Thus there is abundant evidence of the prevalence of a widespread image of the benighted South in the 1920's and 1930's. Before considering the far reaching impacts of these images, we must be give more attention to the perennial historical question of "Why?" Why such a concentrated outburst of these neo-abolitionist images at this time? Why such widespread acceptance of the many falsehoods inherent in the oversimplified picture of Southern life? Why, especially, the dramatic emergence of the hostile view of the South after a period of relative tranquility in North-South relations--a period that Donald Davidson suggested be called *Pax Teddy Rooseveltiana* or "The Peace of Henry Grady."¹⁰⁴


¹⁰⁴Donald Davidson, *Southern Writers in the Modern World* (Athens, Ga., 1958), 31-33. The period to which Davidson refers extends from the "Wormley House Bargain" of
The most obvious answer, as suggested in the analysis of the benighted images related to the textile strikes of the Twenties, is that a lot of the criticism was valid. Cole Blease and other Southern politicians were, indeed, race baiters, the Ku Klux Klan did in fact exist in the South, Southern states did have high illiteracy rates, penal reform was desperately needed,peonage and lynchings did occur, malnutrition was widespread, and a multitude of other ills were undeniably present in the South during the 1920's and 1930's. But even when verdicts were just, perspectives among readers were often lost. The South had no monopoly on racism, for example. The Klan showed great strength outside the South, and virtually all the other social, political, and intellectual ills which were the prime subject matter of the benighted imagery were present in other sections of the country. All Southerners were not like Cole Blease any more than all in the South today are disciples of J. W. Stoner, the virulent racist who defended James Earl Ray, the convicted assassin of Martin Luther King.

Yet people tended to associate these evils—the Klan for example—only with the South. In addition, the general benighted image of the South so pervasive at the time made

1877 to World War I. One must be cautious, however, in accepting this interpretation, and especially that concerning the "Wormley House Bargain." Davidson relied heavily on works such as Paul Buck's Road to Reunion, which have been the target of much "revisionist" history. See, for example, C. Vann Woodward, Origins of the New South: 1877-1913 (Baton Rouge, 1951), 44-45.
it easy for people to misinterpret the scholarly articles of The Journal of Social Forces, while they even more readily accepted as dogma the denunciations of more "popular" periodicals and of the Mencken clan. Possible reasons for these phenomena are intriguing.

Donald Davidson produced the most improbable explanation. He felt that the criticism came from "liberals" who "became the Trojan Horse of a creeping collectivist revolution during the nineteen-twenties."¹⁰⁵ Gerald Johnson gave an early and more plausible analysis. Writing in 1924, he suggested that "phenomena traceable to the influence of the South have attracted the attention of every publicist in the country." Johnson pointed to "two contributions" which the South had recently made to "current American problems." One was the Negro migration to the North, the other the rise of the Ku Klux Klan. Thus he found it not surprising that the rest of the country had suddenly taken an interest in the South, and concluded:

A section whose societal organization has affected the nation hardly at all for half a century suddenly injects two appallingly different social complications into a situation already highly complicated. . . . Criticism of the South therefore is not only inevitable, but certain to continue and to increase.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵Davidson, Southern Writers, 137.

¹⁰⁶Johnson, "Critical Attitudes North and South," 576. Again, it should be stressed that the Klan, in reality, was not restricted to the South. In the benighted imagery, however, it was generally treated as an isolated Southern phenomenon.
George Tindall has offered several interesting theories concerning the origins of the image in the Twenties. He feels that the reform urge of Southern Progressivism often contributed to the image by "turning over rocks" and "bringing . . . social ills out into the glare of daylight." As Tindall points out, even Mencken was associated with the Southern "uplift" campaign. Tindall also sees a relationship between "the irreverent levity of the jazz age," and the jibes at the South. In addition, he feels that the urban versus rural dichotomy of the Twenties sometimes manifested itself in criticism of the South.

A purely practical assessment of the question suggests that, intentionally or not, producing a benighted image of the South was an avenue to success for many writers. Cash, Gerald Johnson, N. B. Lewis,--even Mencken--these writers and many more like them enhanced their reputations by propagating the benighted image. Southern journalism in this vein, for example, brought five Pulitzer Prizes in the Twenties. Robert Lathan of the Charleston News and Courier won the prize in 1925 for an editorial on the decline of Southern statemanship. A similar award for editorial

---


108 Ibid. Tindall seems to be inferring that the more urban and "liberal" North almost naturally attacked the predominantly rural South.
excellence in 1929 went to Louis I. Jaffe of the Norfolk Virginian-Pilot for his battle against lynching. Three prizes were awarded for attacks on the Klan: to C. P. J. Mooney's Memphis Commercial Appeal in 1923; to the Columbus (Ga.) Enquirer Sun in 1923 under Julian and Julia Harris; and to Grover C. Hall of the Montgomery Advertiser in 1928.109

Another general causative factor has been suggested by David Potter. Commenting on American historical writing in the 1920's, Potter asserts that a new spirit of investigation emerged in that decade, and that "it was a spirit eminently conducive to self-criticism."110 It may well be valid to extend this "new spirit" beyond the confines of history writers and to suggest that it was a salient part of the national climate of opinion that created the image of the benighted South.

It is in the new realm of "psycho-history"111 that

109Tindall, Emergence of the New South, 215. In addition, see Gerald W. Johnson's assessment of the Harris's, Hall, and other prominent Southern journalists as of 1928 in Johnson, "Southern Image-Breakers." Virginia Quarterly Review, IV (October, 1928), 508-19. See also a similar essay by Johnson, "Journalism below the Potomac," American Mercury IX (September, 1926), 77-82.

110David Potter, The South and The Sectional Conflict (Baton Rouge, 1968), 170.

the ultimate analysis of the origins of the benighted South image may rest. George Tindall makes the provocative suggestion that the benighted imagery may have served a function of national catharsis. He asks: "Has it not created a convenient scapegoat upon which the sins of all may be symbolically laid and thereby expiated—a most convenient escape from problem solving?" There is much evidence to support Tindall's insight. Murray B. Levin has noted a strain of instability in American history which often has led to periodic "political hysteria." The "Red Scare" of 1919 and McCarthyism in the 1950's are two prime examples of "unstable" periods (the one resulting from the state of flux brought on by World War I; the other by the fears accompanying the coming of the Nuclear Age), leading to highly irrational political activity. In similar fashion, benighted South attacks may well have been simply another form of this cyclical quest for psychological and emotional outlets in times of dislocation and change.

David Potter also supports this train of thought. Reviewing Tindall's *The Emergence of the New South*, Potter commented:

---


The prevalence of the 'savage ideal' . . . in the South gave credibility to the Northern image of the South as a land of grotesque decadence and sadism; while the psychological needs of the North made this image functionally so essential to Northern liberal self-esteem that it would have had to be invented if it had not existed in reality.\textsuperscript{114}

C. Vann Woodward has expressed essentially the same idea in several essays. In analyzing the rapid acceleration of interest in Afro-American history in the 1960's, he suggests they may have resulted in large part because "the white historian often writes in a mood of contrition and remorse as if in expiation of racial guilt or flagellation of the guilty."\textsuperscript{115} In another essay, he suggests that the South has traditionally served the nation's need for a scapegoat.\textsuperscript{116}

This cathartic role of the South appears to be deeply rooted in United States history. William Irwin Thompson provides the following fascinating account of modern psychiatric care at a major Northern university:

The psychiatric clinic at M.I.T. is one of the largest and most advanced of its kind in any American university. One evening one of the resident psychiatrists gave a talk to the humanities faculty in which he explained to us how he handled the problem


of the student who was losing his way through the gray corridors of M.I.T. When a student became dissatisfied with what he was doing, he would suggest to him that he leave school for a while to work for VISTA or some civil rights program in the South. Having rediscovered a sense of purpose in an environment in which the issues of civilization were etched in deep relief, then, it was hoped, the student would be able to carry his ideals back with him to continue his education.

The psychiatrist's talk was a perfect exposure of the Eastern liberal: evil was something that existed down in the South, where those hideous rednecks who did not revere the professional class were holding down an oppressed but noble and inspiring people. Armies have been known to import whores . . . but here was an even more imaginative form of moral harlotry: one inserted one's conscience into the South, did a few things, finished off, and withdrew to one's former life relieved. And just as once the lower-class whore stopped the young aristocrat from discovering that women of his own station had female bodies, so now the mythopoetic descent of the engineer into the South stops him from seeing that evil exists at M.I.T.117

Some scholarly interpretations of the ante-bellum abolitionists have additionally suggested that many of these men may have been crusading to appease their own consciences, or fill some other inner need.118

And so, from ante-bellum times to the present, the image of the benighted South has been remarkably pervasive. Whatever its causes may have been, the conception has had far-reaching impacts. In ante-bellum days it led first to myth-making, as Southerners responded to abolitionist


118 For a survey of some of this literature see Martin Duberman, "The Abolitionists And Psychology," Journal of Negro History, XLVII (July, 1962), 183-91.
attacks, and perhaps also allayed their own guilt feelings. Craven especially stresses the Southern reaction to the Northern reaction. For example, he asserts that Southern concern over the proposed Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854 was insignificant compared to Southern indignation over passionate Northern attacks upon the South relevant to the bill. Craven claims that a similar situation occurred with the South's response to the Northern reaction to the Sumner-Brooks affair of 1856.

The South was perhaps even more sensitive to criticisms after the Civil War. The experiences of widespread poverty, invasion and occupation by a "foreign army," defeat in war--the amalgam of historical experience Woodward describes so well as "The Burden of Southern History"--tended to make the South even less tolerant of the oversimplified indictments which came in the 1920's and 1930's. Once again in those decades the South would react to the

---

119 On these points see Cash, The Mind of the South, 63-64, 70, and 86. Cash, in perhaps the most intriguing suggestion of them all, sees ante-bellum Southerners reacting to the abolitionist attack by generating a vision of the benighted North.


North, but this time on a higher plane. On the one hand there was a direct response, the kind of reaction Donald Davidson would suggest with his question: "Was it possible that no one knew how to reply to as vulgar a rhetorician as H. L. Mencken?"122

Even more important, perhaps, was the impact of the image of the benighted South on the climate of opinion in the South in the 1920's. It played a critical role in accelerating and aggravating the multiple tensions that afflicted the mind of the South in that decade. The images also contributed to the sense of change that Southerners were becoming increasingly aware of in the Twenties and Thirties. These two things, in turn, increased the Southerner's regional selfconsciousness and thereby played a major role in the emergence of the Southern literary renaissance, and other intellectual outputs of that time.

In short, the image of the benighted South was to exercise a major influence upon the Southern intellectual renaissance of the Twenties. The benighted image helped to provide the classic elements for high intellectual creativity—a sense of change, and the tension which accompanies that change. In addition, it served as the catalyst which touched off the intellectual explosion.123

122Davidson, Southern Writers, 37.

123On these points see George B. Tindall (ed.), The Pursuit of Southern History: Presidential Addresses Of the Southern Historical Association, 1935-1963 (Baton Rouge,
Chapel Hill and the University of North Carolina provide strong evidence of these occurrences.

CHAPTER VI

REACTING TO THE BENIGHTED IMAGE:

CHAPEL HILL AND BEYOND

Chapel Hill, North Carolina, home of the rapidly growing state university, was the center of a whirlwind of intellectual activity in the 1920's. It provided the leadership for the non-literary aspects of the Southern renaissance which were initially described in Chapter II and it served as a major producer itself. This intellectual production is not only noteworthy for its quality and quantity, but also for the diversity—indeed ambiguity—of its content. The Journal of Social Forces, for example, served as both propagator of the image of the benighted South and as a defender of the region.

The stimulus behind Social Forces, like that behind many other Chapel Hill contributions to the intellectual renaissance, came from Howard Washington Odum. Born in rural Georgia in 1884, Odum received his A.B. from Emory University in 1904. For the next two years he simultaneously taught school in the rural Mississippi town of Toccopola and

\[1\] See Chapter V, pp. 133-35.
attended the University of Mississippi, commuting to Oxford on muleback. After obtaining a M.A. in classics in 1906, Odum moved on to Clark University, where he was granted a Ph.D. in psychology in 1909. Already demonstrating the enormous energy and productivity that was to characterize his life, he followed with another Ph.D. in 1910, this one in sociology from Columbia University.

Also in 1910, Odum took a position as a research expert with the Philadelphia Bureau of Municipal Research (concentrating on the study of Negroes in the public schools of that city). Remaining in Philadelphia until 1912, he then moved to the University of Georgia, teaching there until 1919 and rising to the ranks of professor of educational psychology and director of the summer school. From 1919 to 1920, he was professor of sociology and dean of the School of Liberal Arts at Emory University, and Director of the Bureau of Home Service Camps and Camp Cities for the Southern Division of the American Red Cross. In 1920 he moved to the University of North Carolina.

Odum was recruited from his native state by a contemporary from his Clark University days. Harry Woodburn Chase had been serving as President of the University of North Carolina for less than a year when he persuaded the Board of Trustees to authorize a School of Public Welfare and to hire his friend Odum as its Director, as well as Kenan Professor of Sociology. Odum assumed these duties in September of 1920, and remained at UNC until his death.
thirty-four years later.  

By the end of the Twenties, inadvertently or not, Odum and his many scholarly enterprises had brought widespread positive attention to Chapel Hill and to UNC. The same dynamic energy that brought him two Ph.D.'s in three years, and which made his personal papers such a goldmine of information, enabled him plan new programs at UNC and express visions of a progressive South within days after he accepted the new position.

---


On the circumstances of Odum's move to UNC see Chapter II, p. 20, especially notes 19 and 20.


4 It was not at all uncommon for him to write fifteen or twenty letters in a day. This verbosity led to the present collection of Odum papers in the Southern Historical Collection of thirty-three boxes containing literally thousands of letters.

5 Odum to President Chase, March 17, 1920 (two letters), in Odum Papers, formally accepts the position and then immediately launches into a request that President Chase invite the then internationally popular Herbert Hoover to address the coming summer session of the new School of Public Welfare. Odum stated to Chase that "there is not a
After moving to Chapel Hill in July of 1920, Odum plowed into his various projects with even greater vigor. He was very active in promoting the development of the Commission on Inter-Racial Cooperation, which had been established in Atlanta in 1919. At the same time he traveled extensively across the state promoting the School of Public Welfare. The new program progressed so well that he was able to report to President Chase in December that in his first six months on the job he had held three conferences with community workers throughout the state to coordinate county welfare work; he had also delivered six lectures or talks in different areas of North Carolina, and published shadow of a doubt that North Carolina is pioneering and . . . there is no doubt as to what such an address would mean to Southern education if given as the 'opening gun' in the school of Public Welfare."

Odum to Chase, March 17, 1920 (the third of five separate letters he wrote to Chase on this date), May 3, and May 17, 1920, all in Odum Papers, outline plans for a summer institute for social and welfare workers (especially Red Cross personnel), a trip "North" to raise funds for the School of Public Welfare, and research projects on Negroes in North Carolina, and on mill villages in the South. Odum's Red Cross contacts brought a three-year, $20,000 grant from the organization to the School of Public Welfare in 1920. See undated report in Odum Papers, Box 1, folder 7.

6See, for example, Commission on Interracial Co-operation to Odum, August 5; Odum to Mr. King (of the Commission), August 13; Will W. Alexander to Odum, September 1; and Odum to Alexander, September 14, 1920; all in Odum Papers. By the end of 1920 the Commission had organized branches in 712 counties and enrolled 7,500 members. See T. J. Woofter, Jr. to Odum, December 29, 1920, in ibid.
six articles, bulletins, and reviews. Odum continued in the same directions in 1921, maintaining his close interest in the touchy race relations which characterized the immediate post-World War I period, as well as constantly expanding the activities of the School of Public Welfare.

Then, in 1923, he began to branch out into activities which would ultimately make him a giant in the intellectual Renaissance of the South in the 1920's. The first indication of his future efforts is revealed in a February 20, 1922, letter to E. C. Lindeman, a professor at the North Carolina College for Women in Greensboro. Odum asked Lindeman to join the staff of a new journal he was establishing, a publication he described to another correspondent as one which would "range between The American Journal of Sociology and The Survey. . . . We have found remarkable unanimity on the part of those in the South and outside with reference to the very real need and opportunity for such a Journal." Thus emerged The Journal of Social

7 Memorandum on Activities of School of Public Welfare in 1920 from Odum to Chase, December 1, 1920, in Odum Papers.

8 On Odum's actions relative to these interests in 1921 see the Odum Papers, Box 1, folders 8-11. On the early days of the School of Public Welfare see Wilson, University of North Carolina, 449-50.

9 Odum to Lindeman, February 20, 1922, in Odum Papers. The description is in Odum to Gerald W. Johnson, February 28, 1922, in ibid.
Forces, the first issue appearing in November, 1922. The publication experienced immediate success, and all copies of the first number (including an intended reserve of one hundred copies) were sold within a month of its appearance.  

The year 1923 brought more and more prolific production by Odum, the journal, and his other scholarly enterprises. Praise for the journal poured in, and Odum added to the publication's prestige by persuading Harry Elmer Barnes to do a regular book review section for it. Odum was deservedly proud of the national scope of the journal, and of the praise it received from all areas of the country, but he always maintained a special interest in Southern scholars. On one occasion in 1923, for example, he

---

10 The journal's name was the suggestion of Prof. Franklin H. Giddings of Columbia University, Odum's former major professor at that school. See W. W. Alexander to Dr. M. Ashby Jones, March 14, 1922, in Odum Papers. The title was shortened to Social Forces in 1925. See also Odum's editorial comments on the objectives of the journal in the Journal of Social Forces, I (November, 1922), 56-61.

11 Odum to W. W. Alexander, December 6, December 16, 1922, in Odum Papers.

12 On the arrangements with Barnes see Odum to G. W. Johnson, October 24, 1923, in ibid.

13 For examples of the plaudits for the journal, see Odum to Giddings, January 20; Giddings to Odum, February 2; Odum to President Chase, August 6; G. W. Johnson to Odum, September 18; and Frank Graham to Odum, November 14, 1923; all in Odum Papers.
solicited John Donald Wade at the University of Georgia for a contribution to the journal with the lament: "We are lonesome for our Southern writers. . . ."14

In 1924 Odum took another giant step in his march to awaken the South. He now had so many diverse projects in motion that some type of coordinating organization was desperately needed. Early in the year Odum had met by chance in Charlotte, N. C., with Dr. Beardsley Ruml, Director of the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial, headquartered in New York City. When Ruml expressed interest in the work of Odum and his associates, Odum at once began a crusade to obtain funds from the well endowed Memorial. He persuaded Ruml to visit Chapel Hill early in May, and then bombarded him with a series of letters to support his request for a grant.15

President Chase joined with Odum in courting the Memorial. Chase made formal application for a grant in late May, 1924, stressing the need for scholarly attention to the great variety of social and economic problems that faced the rapidly changing South. He expressed the hope that such

---

14 Odum to Wade, November 21, 1923, in ibid. See also Odum to Giddings, January 3, 1924, in ibid., wherein Odum cites recent articles by Gerald W. Johnson and N. W. Bond in the Journal of Social Forces as examples "of the younger Southern writers whom we are trying to help develop and present."

15 See, for example, the Odum Papers for May, 1924. See also Jocher, et al. (eds.), Folk, Region, and Society, viii.
study would help provide meaningful guidance to the expenditures of public funds earmarked to cope with these difficulties.\textsuperscript{16}

The efforts of Odum and Chase were rewarded in August, 1924, when Ruml announced that the Board of the Memorial fund had voted to appropriate $32,500 annually for three years.\textsuperscript{17} As a result, on September 15, 1924, on authority of the University's Board of Trustees, The Institute for Research in Social Science was founded, with Odum as an initial member and Secretary of its Board and, after 1926, its Director. Upon termination of the initial grant in 1927, the University received a second and more generous stipend from the Memorial Fund to sustain the Institute, the first program of its type in the nation. The second grant allocated $240,000 over a five-year period with $60,000 annually for the first two years; $50,000 for the third; and $40,000 and $30,000 for the fourth and fifth.\textsuperscript{18}

In many ways the Institute became the key to Chapel Hill's contributions to the Renaissance in Southern intellectual life. The distribution of the initial Rockefeller

\textsuperscript{16}Wilson, \textit{University of North Carolina}, 463-64.

\textsuperscript{17}Ruml to Odum, August 16, 1924, in Odum Papers; and undated report outlining the grant in Box 3, folder 47 of \textit{ibid}.

\textsuperscript{18}Wilson, \textit{University of North Carolina}, 462, 466, 468.
grant is instructive.\textsuperscript{19} 

Twelve thousand dollars of the annual $32,500 appropriated was designated for research assistants. This sum financed the appointment of eight individuals, who received a yearly stipend of $1,500, plus field expenses, as authorized by the Board of the Institute. These positions were given to individuals who would undertake specific research projects on their own, rather than merely "assist" the faculty. The research project was to be the paramount interest, although minimal teaching and some graduate work were permitted if they complemented the research effort.\textsuperscript{20}

Thus eight scholars were recruited for the new institute, each to work on different aspects of Southern social and economic life. For example, William Bloom began a study of "the status and history of labor unions in North Carolina in relation to industrial development," and Jennings J. Rhyne one on "the social studies in the mill village school."\textsuperscript{21} These research assistants, combined with the regular faculty and higher level research associates, gave scholarship in North Carolina and the South an enormous boost. Within the first six years of the Institute's

\textsuperscript{19}The breakdown is given in Wilson, \textit{University of North Carolina}, 463, Note 4.

\textsuperscript{20}\textit{Ibid.}, 466.

\textsuperscript{21}Minutes of meeting of Institute for Research in Social Science, November 4, 1924; and memorandum for Institute meeting of December 17, 1924, in Odum Papers.
existence, it published thirty-three books and monographs, as well as innumerable articles in the *Journal of Social Forces*. Odum played an active role in many of these projects. The case of Harriet L. Herring is a good example. Miss Herring was a personnel agent specializing in social work for the Marshall Field textile mills in Spray, North Carolina, when Gerald W. Johnson called her to Odum’s attention in October, 1922, as a potential subscriber to the new *Journal of Social Forces*. Johnson pointed out that she had compiled a great deal of data on mill villages and the workers, and suggested that Odum get in touch with her, regardless of her decision about a subscription. Odum followed this suggestion with a letter on October 24, the first of what turned out to be a series of letters and meetings which saw Odum try to persuade Miss Herring to use some of her data to write an article for the *Journal of Social Forces*. Then, when the Rockefeller grant became a possibility, Odum broached the idea to Herring of her coming to UNC on a three-year research project in order to pursue

---

22Wilson, *University of North Carolina*, 466-67. For a complete listing of the books and monographs published by the Institute up to 1945, see *Social Forces*, XXIII (March, 1945), 209-28. For a list of articles "dealing with Southern regional subjects" in *Social Forces*, see ibid., 303-307.

23Johnson to Odum, October 21, 1922, in Odum Papers.

24Odum to Herring, October 24, 1922, September 19, 1923, and September 29, 1923; Herring to Odum, September 28, 1923; all in Odum Papers.
her mill village investigations. This possibility became a reality in December, 1924, when the Board of the now operative Institute approved Odum's recommendation of Herring for a three-year appointment. The ultimate result was the publication by Miss Herring in the late Twenties of one of the more notable works to come out of the institute, *Welfare Work in Mill Villages: The Story of Extra-Mill Activities in North Carolina* (Chapel Hill, 1929).

A central theme of the Herring volume is that textile owners were not quite as benevolent towards their workers as they liked the public to believe. Thus implicit criticism of a leading industry in North Carolina and the South came out of this institute monograph. Indeed it was inevitable that the concentrated attention Odum and his group were giving to the various aspects of Southern life in the Twenties through the School of Public Welfare, the Institute for Research in Social Sciences, the *Journal of Social Forces*, and other such activities, would uncover a number of Southern skeletons, thereby strengthening the image of the benighted South of that decade. Penal reform, race relations, farm tenancy, child labor, the Ku Klux Klan, lynching, poverty, public education, labor unions—all of these Southern problems received attention in the *Journal of*

25 Odum to Herring, June 5, 1924; minutes of Institute meeting of December 17, 1924; both in *ibid.*
Social Forces during the periodical's first three years.26

In addition to Miss Herring's study of welfare work in mill villages, many other monographs coming out of the Institute for Research in Social Science had benighted South tones. For example, during the first decade of the Institute's existence, Jesse F. Steiner and Roy M. Brown wrote on the North Carolina chain gang system; Clarence Herr on income and wages in the South; Claudius T. Murchinson on the ills of the cotton economy; Jennings J. Rhyne on Southern cotton mill workers and their villages; George S. Mitchell on textile unionism and the South; and James Harmon Chadbourn on lynchings.27

Again, Odum played a major role in the genesis of many of these articles and monographs such as in his encouragement of Harriet Herring's study of welfare work in mill villages. Another example is the significant influence he had on the development of one of the leading Southern

---

26 See the listing of articles "dealing with Southern regional subjects" in Social Forces, XXIII (March, 1945), 202-205. Most of these problems, of course, were national in scope, but the Journal articles, in most cases, were limited to the South. For previously cited examples of articles in the Journal with benighted South contents, see above, Chapter V, pp. 133-35.

27 Jesse F. Steiner and Roy M. Brown, The North Carolina Chain Gang (Chapel Hill, 1927); Clarence Herr, Income and Wages in the South (Chapel Hill, 1930); Claudius T. Murchinson, King Cotton Is Sick (Chapel Hill, 1920); Jennings J. Rhyne, Some Cotton Mill Workers and Their Villages (Chapel Hill, 1930); George S. Mitchell, Textile Unionism and the South (Chapel Hill, 1931); James Harmon Chadbourn, Lynching and the Law (Chapel Hill, 1933).
propagators of the image of the benighted South, Gerald W. Johnson.  

Johnson is one of the principal correspondents in the Odum papers. It is clear that a close relationship developed between the two men shortly after Odum's arrival at Chapel Hill (Johnson was then associate editor of the Greensboro, N. C. Daily News) and that Odum had considerable influence over Johnson's development as a writer. 

Johnson was one of the first individuals Odum contacted when planning the Journal of Social Forces. He not only asked the Greensboro newspaperman to contribute articles, but also requested that Johnson accept a position on the editorial board. Johnson accepted both offers, and he and Odum were soon corresponding about the possibility of an article on the relative strengths and weaknesses of periodicals and newspapers in the South, as well as one on the paucity of strong leadership in the region. 

28 Several of Johnson's works in a benighted vein are discussed in Chapter V, pp. 127-28. Johnson, after moving to Baltimore in 1926, observed to Odum that it was the critical, latently benighted South publications of the Institute that generated the most attention in the North. See Johnson to Odum, April 26, 1928, in Odum Papers.


30 Odum to Johnson, February 28, May 24, September 11, October 13, November 28, 1922; February 15, and February 20, April 10, 1923; and April 4, 1924; Johnson to Odum, March 1, May 18, December 29, 1922, February 17, April 9, December 29, 1923, in Odum Papers.
soon produced two articles for the *Journal* on these subjects. Odum also encouraged Johnson to write an article on the failure of the South to recognize the need for social programs, and this effort appeared in the March, 1923 issue.

The two men developed an even closer relationship in 1924 when, as has been discussed, Johnson moved to Chapel Hill as Professor of Journalism. And they remained frequent correspondents after 1926, the year Johnson moved on to Baltimore to write for the *Sun* papers and the sage of Baltimore, H. L. Mencken.

Mencken's influence on Johnson and Odum, as well as on all the Chapel Hill elements in the Southern Renaissance, is a matter for speculation. A close reading of the Odum papers and parallel sources gives one the strong suspicion that the shadow of the Sage loomed large over many of those who were revitalizing the intellectual life of the South. There is no doubt that Odum, Johnson, President Chase, and many other faculty and staff at Chapel Hill were acutely conscious of Mencken's criticisms and the image of the

31 Journalists and periodical writers are discussed by Johnson in his "Critical Attitudes North and South," *Journal of Social Forces*, II (May, 1924), 579-99; and the leadership problem in "Issachar Is A Strong Ass," *ibid.*, II (November, 1923), 5-9.

32 Johnson, "Mr. Babbitt Arrives At Erzerum," *Journal of Social Forces*, I (March, 1923), 206-209. On the genesis of the article see Odum to Johnson, February 24, 1923; and Johnson to Odum, February 28, 1923, in Odum Papers.
benighted South that he evoked. Odum sent Mencken a copy of the first issue of the *Journal of Social Forces* in November, 1922, and asked his opinion of it. Mencken finally replied on September 10, 1923, after several issues of the *Journal* had appeared and almost a year had passed. Odum was obviously pleased to read Mencken's comment that he had "read the Journal . . . from cover to cover--perhaps a sufficient tribute to its interest from a man who shares the common journalistic prejudice against the uplift in all its form," and his admonishment to publish more "sound and useful information, intelligently presented," and his judgment of "what a chance the South offers for field work!" Indeed, Odum was almost childish in his reaction to this mild praise, initiating a practice he maintained with all future Mencken correspondence of having several typescript copies made, often sending them on to colleagues and acquaintances. President Chase was a regular recipient of these

---


34 Mencken to Odum, September 10, 1923, in Odum Papers.

35 Virtually all of the Mencken letters to Odum, beginning with the September 10, 1923, one, are filed in the Odum Papers with typescript copies. Examples of Odum's dissemination of these copies will be discussed below. A further example of Odum hanging on Mencken's every word derives from the fact that he never allowed over two days to pass before replying to Mencken's letters.
copies; apparently he had expressed an interest to Odum about his relationship (and that of the University) with Mencken.36

Mencken's request that Odum contribute something to the new *American Mercury* brought an enthusiastic response from Odum, as well as tentative agreement with one of the Sage's pet explanations for the "backwardness" of the South -- the dominance of ecclesiastical leadership, especially the fundamentalist variety. By now Odum was so taken with Mencken that he invited him to UNC to speak in the winter of 1923, an invitation Mencken declined on the grounds that he had "sworn a bloody oath on the Evangels of Jahveh to refrain from all public speaking."37

To be aware of H. L. Mencken was to be aware of the image of the benighted South. Beyond doubt, Odum was quite cognizant of the benighted South writings of the Baltimore native, and those of others. His consciousness of this

36 Odum to Chase, September 20, 1923, in Odum Papers, discusses some other matters but concludes: "I enclose another letter from Mencken, recalling your expressed interest in his opinions." One would not want to carry the chain of assumption too far but it seems obvious that Chase was extremely conscious of what Mencken's opinion of the *Journal of Social Forces* and of UNC would be, perhaps because of Chase's knowledge of Mencken's notorious reputation as a "South-baiter."

37 Odum to Mencken, September 20, 25, 28, October 7, 1923; Mencken to Odum, September 22, 26, 1923; in Odum Papers. Quote from Mencken to Odum, September 26, 1923. Gerald W. Johnson had already developed an acquaintance with Mencken and Odum tried to enlist his help in persuading Mencken to visit UNC. See Johnson to Odum, September 27, 1923; and Odum to Johnson, September 29, 1923.
criticism seems to have reinforced his determination to produce a scholarly program at UNC of such high merit that it would be immune to such debunking. Indeed, Odum seems to have been extremely sensitive to his own image and that of his program, both in and especially out of the South. Howard Washington Odum was, in fact, abnormally sensitive to criticism. Time and again, he wrote long whining letters in response to what was often mild, probably unintended, criticism.  

Odum was also determined to make UNC a guiding force in the Southern intellectual Renaissance and received support for this aim in a 1922 letter from William E. Dodd. Commenting on a recent North Carolina municipal affairs conference in which Odum had played a leading role, Dodd expressed his hope that UNC would continue to sponsor this sort of thing and predicted that if it did, North Carolina

38 Odum, of course, was not the only Southerner aware of and sensitive to Mencken's criticisms of the South. See, for example, W. C. Jackson, "Culture and the New Era in North Carolina," North Carolina Historical Review, II (January, 1925), 3-18, an attempted rebuttal of Mencken's "Sahara of the Bozart" essay (at least as it applied to North Carolina). Jackson was President of the N. C. Conference for Social Science.

For an example of Odum's hypersensitivity to any form of criticism see the exchange of letters between Odum and Gerald W. Johnson over the latter's innocent relaying of Harriet Herring's apparently equally innocent remark that she would like to see more space devoted to industrial social work in the Journal of Social Forces. Johnson to Odum, November 19, 1922, in Odum Papers, goes on and on to reassure Odum that Miss Herring was not bestowing "scornful criticism" upon him.
"may become a model for the whole country." 39

Odum did not want to whitewash Southern problems. 

Reading with interest a series of critical editorials by Gerald W. Johnson in the Greensboro Daily News, he suggested on two occasions that Johnson reshape them into essays for Social Forces. 40 Johnson's reply reveals in stark clarity his consciousness of the South's benighted image:

If I understand what you want, I will do it with real pleasure. My idea is to plead not for sympathetic, but for informed criticism. It seems to me that heretofore the bitterest criticism has been launched at the south [sic] not when she was right, nor when she was wrong, but when she was helpless. On the other hand, we are only slowly working out of the habit of resenting all criticism, whether justified or not. 41

Odum displayed his regional self-consciousness again in February, 1924, in a letter to Harry Elmer Barnes. Discussing the future of the Journal of Social Forces, he asserted that "we haven't done any thinking in the South for a long time and we are about ready to begin. Many of the provincial New Yorkers have been a long way from thinking lately too!" Then, in a later letter to Barnes concerning a public exchange of letters Odum was trying to persuade

39 Dodd to Odum, March 3, 1922, in Odum Papers.

40 Odum to Johnson, October 24, 1923, January 14, 1924, in ibid.

41 Johnson to Odum, January 14, 1924; and Odum to Johnson, January 19, 1924. Johnson's letter, dated the same as Odum's second one to him, seems to be correctly dated. Mail services were apparently quite efficient in the Twenties. The result of this correspondence, of course, was Johnson's essay "Critical Attitudes North And South."
Barnes to do with him, Odum pointed out that "the South today [is] a relatively popular subject for commercial writing." Odum revealed his defensive attitude towards the South on at least two other occasions. One concerned the dismissal of a faculty member from the University of Tennessee, ostensibly for having had his students read James Harvey Robinson's *The Mind in the Making*. Frank Graham wrote to Odum attacking what he held to be an injustice, and he asked Odum to help the dismissed teacher find a new position. Odum responded that there might be another side to the story and added his opinion "that some of the friends in the larger universities who criticized Tennessee so severely might find him a position if they are sincere and if he is as good as they say he is." Odum's defensiveness appeared also in a letter he wrote in March, 1924, to Colonel Edward M. House, former aide to Woodrow Wilson. After asking House to help set up a prize in Wilson's name

---

42 Odum to Barnes, February 4, 1924, in Odum Papers. Barnes, incidentally, agreed with Odum's comment on provincialism in New York, and added New England for good measure. See Barnes to Odum, February 7, 1924, in *ibid*. See also Odum to Barnes, February 9, 1924, in *ibid*.

43 Frank Porter Graham, a life-long civil libertarian, was professor of history at UNC at this time, on leave in Washington, D. C. He was later to succeed Chase as President of UNC in 1930.

44 Graham to Odum, April 14, 1924; Odum to Graham, April 18, 1924, both in Odum Papers. By "larger universities" Odum almost certainly meant "Northern universities."
to be given by the *Journal of Social Forces*, Odum apparently felt the need to deny provincialism in the effort and then added: "You will see from the nature of this journal that it is not a Southern publication but one of national distribution." 45

Odum sought to counter the prevalent view of Southern intellectual stagnation by setting extremely high standards for his various scholarly enterprises at UNC. He also encouraged Southerners outside the realm of sociology to produce high quality work. Thus he sent a copy of the *Journal of Social Forces* to Charleston playwright Du Bose Heyward with a note of encouragement: "We can recognize as much as anyone the great contributions which you are making to Southern life and literature." 46 After making a more overt attempt to cultivate John Donald Wade, then professor of English at the University of Georgia, Odum ran into difficulties. In a series of letters, Odum persuaded Wade to give the *Journal* an article assessing the current social state (sociologically speaking) in Georgia, using Gerald W. Johnson's somewhat critical treatment of North Carolina as a model. 47 After the proofs of the article were in and it was

45 Odum to Colonel Edward M. House, March 20, 1924, in *ibid.*

46 Odum to House, January 21, 1924, in *ibid.* See also House to Odum, January 24, 1924, in *ibid.*

47 Odum to Wade, September 13, November 21, 1923, in *ibid.* Wade published an excellent biography of Augustus Baldwin Longstreet in 1924, and was later a contributor to *I'll Take My Stand.*
on the verge of going to press, Wade, in a panic, telegraphed Odum to hold up his contribution "at all costs." Apparently Wade feared repercussions from the University of Georgia. Odum commented on the affair to Gerald Johnson that he had been "reasonably sure that Georgia would never let Wade publish his article without having to answer for it."^®

Two classic benighted South pieces, Frank Tannenbaum's *Darker Phases of the South* and William Henry Skaggs' *The Southern Oligarchy*, stirred up a great deal of interest within the Chapel Hill group in 1924. Harriet Herring reported to Odum that her boss at the Marshall Field textile mills was very upset over Tannenbaum's view of Southern mill conditions. President Chase sent Odum a reminder that the sociologist had promised to lend him the Tannenbaum volume (Odum sent it on the next day). And Gerald Johnson, with Odum's encouragement, began planning an essay review for *Social Forces* on Tannenbaum, Skaggs, and other recently published volumes dealing with the South, all of which Odum labeled the "new movement in Southern criticism."^49 In the midst of the appearance of these volumes, Odum wrote to Johnson that he feared he was "even getting to be almost an

^®Wade's telegram did not survive in the Odum Papers, but Odum describes the affair in a letter to Johnson dated April 30, 1924, in ibid. See also Wade's amplifications in Wade to Odum, April 30, 1924, in ibid.

^49Herring to Odum, June 23, Chase to Odum, August 14, Odum to Chase, August 15, Johnson to Odum, November 5, Odum to Johnson, October 17; all 1924, all in ibid. Quote from Odum to Johnson, October 17, 1924.
old time Southerner when I see so many provincial outside attempts to study superficially our problems and to make all sorts of unwarranted assumptions." 50

Odum was disturbed by the criticisms, but Johnson saw an opportunity in the syndrome. After his debunking article "Mr. Babbitt Arrives at Erzerum" had appeared in Social Forces Johnson wrote Odum as follows:

If you can get some publicity for 'Mr. Babbitt' I shall be more than pleased--I shall be grateful. You see, I am quite frankly on the make right now; I am trying to sell some stuff, and everything and anything that will bring my name to the attention of editors will give me a better chance of selling. 51

And then after his article, "Issachar Is a Strong Ass," was published in the same journal, Johnson jokingly wrote Odum that he was surprised there were only two "yelps" in the North Carolina papers against it. 52

Of course Johnson was not the only Southern journalist to prosper from criticizing the region. As has been mentioned, five Pulitzer Prizes were awarded to Southern newspapers and editors in the Twenties for exposing the ills in their society. 53 The Columbus (Ga.) Enquirer Sun, under the joint editorship of Julian and Julia Harris, for example, was the recipient in 1923 for attacks on the

---

50 Odum to Johnson, July 5, 1924, in ibid.
51 Johnson to Odum, February 28, 1923, in ibid.
52 Johnson to Odum, January 10, 1924, in ibid.
53 See above, Chapter V, pp. 171-72.
Klan. The Harris's and Odum, fellow Georgians, were close correspondents and had mixed reactions to criticism of the South. Mrs. Harris, in response to a request by Odum for comments on a forthcoming editorial of his in Social Forces, wrote an intriguing four-page letter suggesting a number of possible correctives for Southern problems. She especially advocated more variety in Southern life, exposure to "outsiders," and perhaps even "exchange professorships between Southern and Eastern or North-western universities."54 Even though the Harris's supplied plenty of criticism of the South, they were quick to react when non-Southerners took the same line.55

In the midst of all these developments Odum and Mencken maintained their correspondence. Odum continued to forward to him copies of the Journal of Social Forces, calling attention to an editorial of his in one, and an article by Johnson in another. Mencken replied that he had read the efforts and marvelled "that you are not in jail, along with Gerald Johnson, I hear that Rotary has him marked."56 And Mencken persisted in his encouragement of Odum, Johnson, and

54 Mrs. Julia Collier Harris to Odum, March 9, 1924; Odum to Mrs. Harris, March 13, 1924, in Odum Papers. Mr. Harris was the son of Joel Chandler Harris.

55 See, for example, the letter from Mr. Harris to the August 25, 1925, edition of the Baltimore Evening Sun contrasting Odum's criticism of the South with Mencken's.

56 Odum to Mencken, December 11, 1923, October 1, 1924; Mencken to Odum, October 4, 1924, all in Odum Papers.
other Southern writers and scholars. At one point the encouragement became particularly direct. Commenting on Odum's plans to organize a "baker's dozen" of Southern social scientists to get their suggestions for the Institute for Research in Social Science and the Journal of Social Forces, Mencken expressed his hope that this group would contribute to the American Mercury and explained: "I was very eager to get more stuff from the South."

A multitude of factors obviously were at work in determining Chapel Hill's role in the Southern intellectual awakening. But the image of the benighted South, especially as formulated by Henry Louis Mencken, was a major catalyst. Odum, looking back on the Renaissance from the perspective of the 1950's, commented that Mencken "was both symbol and reality of outside goading and encouragement of Southern writers."

Mencken also recognized a strong correlation between the negative sides of Southern life and the positive productions of scholars like Odum. Praising Odum, Johnson, and

---

57 Johnson to Odum, November 22; Odum to Johnson, November 24, 1924, in ibid.

58 Odum to Mencken, December 11, Mencken to Odum, December 13, 1924, in ibid.

59 Odum, "On Southern Literature and Southern Culture," in Louis D. Rubin, Jr. and Robert B. Jacobs (eds.), Southern Renascence: The Literature of the Modern South (Baltimore, 1953), 99-100, quote from p. 99. Odum here talks primarily about literature, but his comments are also relevant to the non-literary aspects of the Renaissance (generated by essentially the same forces).
others in his Baltimore Sun column, Mencken viewed them as representative of a broader phenomenon: "Other Odums hatch out day by day all over the late Confederacy. The very heat of the fundamentalist and Ku Klux fury is hurrying them out of the egg." And one has only to look at the articles in early editions of the Journal of Social Forces, or at the problems studied by the researchers of the Institute for Research in Social Science and the monographs which came out of these studies, to find verification of Mencken's claim. All of this, of course, was representative of the deeply integrated manifestations of a rapidly changing South in turn generating recognition of and attention to Southern problems, which in turn brought these problems to the notice of the nation. All of this served to accelerate a developing sense of regional self-consciousness.

Odum, as has been pointed out, played a major role in the genesis of the image of the benighted South by focusing so much attention on various Southern problems. Initially his apparent obsession with making a favorable impression on Mencken made him tolerant of the abuses of the South by his Baltimore friend. Writing to Gerald Johnson in

60 Mencken, "The Late Confederacy Is Once More Up In Rebellion," clipping copyrighted 1924 in Odum Papers.

61 See, for example, the flurry of articles and monographs that were generated by the problems in the Southern textile industry in the Twenties. See Chapter V, pp. 134-35, especially the citations.
1923, Odum expressed the view that Mencken "appears to me to be openminded and fair in so far as matters are brought to his attention."62

But by 1925 Odum's ability to absorb the images of the benighted South was reaching its saturation point. A number of factors lay behind this metamorphosis. For one thing Odum, the Institute for Research in Social Science, and the Journal of Social Forces were receiving a great deal of local pressure which probably made him a little sensitive. The investigations into various aspects of the Southern textile industry proved particularly dangerous.

Late in 1923, David Clark, editor of the Southern Textile Bulletin in Charlotte, N. C., pointed out that among the contributors to the Journal of Social Forces in 1923 were Homer Folks and Owen R. Lovejoy, "parasites who have for years been professional agitators," Miss Grace Abbott, "well known as a tricky and underhand manipulator of statistics," and Frank Tannenbaum, "an ex-convict and confessed Red." Clark concluded that the state university "was never intended as a breeding place for socialism and communism."63 When a prominent UNC alumnus from Charlotte, John J. Parker, wrote to President Chase about these charges and inferences, and Chase in turn queried Odum, one can sense

62 Odum to Johnson, September 20, 1923, in Odum Papers.

the intense anguish in the replies of the sociologist to both Chase and Parker.\(^{64}\) South Carolina textile manufacturers also reacted against Odum, expressing distrust of the motives behind a tour of their mills Odum was trying to organize.\(^{65}\)

Then, early in 1925, Odum was inadvertently drawn into the middle of the Fundamentalist controversy. Publication of two articles in the January, 1925, issue of \textit{Social Forces}, by Harry Elmer Barnes and L. L. Bernard, brought on accusations by religious groups all over North Carolina that Biblical Christianity had been brought into question.\(^{66}\) One irate citizen complained to the Raleigh (N. C.) \textit{Times} that "there is no place for [Odum], his paper or any man who endorses him as a teacher in North Carolina at State expense."\(^{67}\)

\(^{64}\)John J. Parker to Chase, January 4; Odum to Chase, January 7 (two letters, one to be forwarded to Parker); and Chase to Parker, January 9, 1924, all in Odum Papers. For another protest over the articles see the telegram from Albert Milmow, a prominent Charlotte businessman, to Chase, February 20, 1925, copy in \textit{ibid}.

\(^{65}\)A. M. Trawick to Odum, March 14; Odum to Trawick, March 17; J. A. Tillinghast to Odum, March 17, 1924, all in Odum Papers. This type of criticism occurred again in 1926. See Tindall, "Significance of Howard W. Odum to Southern History," 291. See also Nell Battle Lewis, "The University of North Carolina Gets Its Orders," \textit{Nation}, CXXII (February 3, 1926), 114-15.

\(^{66}\)Tindall, "Significance of Howard W. Odum to Southern History," 290-91.

\(^{67}\)J. O. Gutherie to Raleigh \textit{Times}, March 4, 1925; typed copy in Odum Papers. Odum offered Chase his resignation during the midst of these changes, but Chase refused to accept it. Interview with Gerald W. Johnson, June 22, 1973.
The proverbial straw that snapped things for Odum appears to have been the stack of benighted South images that came out of the Scopes trial and the anti-evolution crusade that preceded it. From January, 1925, to August of that year, the Odum papers are almost totally dominated by these subjects. There are at least fifty letters from North Carolina and beyond asking for copies of the January, 1925, issue of the Journal of Social Forces, which contained the controversial articles by Barnes and Bernard (the supply ran out in late March, 1925). There are forty-four letters dealing with the Fundamentalist attacks on Social Forces, as well as with the anti-evolution crusade in North Carolina and beyond.68

In the midst of all this turmoil, Mencken invited Odum and Gerald Johnson to attend the Scopes trial with him. Mencken and Odum planned to meet there, and did so, but the Odum papers contain no direct evidence of his reaction to the trial.69 One is able, however, to get a good indication of this reaction in a long editorial he wrote for the

---

68 See the Odum Papers, Box 4, folders 54-72. On the fundamentalist crusade in North Carolina see Willard B. Gatewood, Jr., Preachers, Pedagogues and Politicians: The Evolution Controversy in North Carolina, 1920-1927 (Chapel Hill, 1966), passim.

69 Mencken to Odum, May 31, June 9, June 28; Odum to Mencken, June 3, June 19, June 23, 1925, all in Odum Papers. Odum to Charles E. Merrian, July 20, 1925, in ibid. mentions: "I am just back from Dayton, and really found it a very profitable trip."
September, 1925, issue of the *Journal of Social Forces*. Odum found the Dayton affair to have been "more pathos than joke . . . more tragedy than comedy" and sadly observed that "satire, ridicule and jest thrown back by critics across the hills seem . . . only to rebound to mock a great host of scientists and students of the environmental basis of society who are honestly surprised, discouraged and disgusted with the present situation." He was well aware of the potential dangers to science, religion, public education, and free speech revealed by the trial, but he feared most of all the oversimplified reactions of the public. His sensitivity to the accounts pouring out about Dayton is painfully evident in the following:

> Pounding away on varied types of interpretation and description of the present situation have been some 2310 daily newspapers in this country, some 13,267 weeklies, about 3613 monthlies, no less than 392 quarterlies, with perhaps another five hundred including bi-monthlies and semi-monthlies, tri-weeklies and odd types. It profits little to deplore the over-emphasis or the exaggerated reports and the sensational methods. The fact remains that the newspapers alone have printed, on a fair estimate made from actual counts of typical samples, words in the aggregate amounting to three thousand volumes of three hundred ordinary pages each. . . . And the circulation of these papers have been enormous. . . . Added to this have been scores of articles and editorials in the learned journals. I have found no periodicals of any sort, agricultural or trade as well, which has [sic] ignored this subject.

---

70 Odum, "The Duel To The Death," *Journal of Social Forces*, IV (September, 1925), 189-94.


In conclusion, Odum felt it all added up to "startlingly inaccurate statements and reports."73 Nevertheless, Odum and Mencken apparently got along well at Dayton, their first personal meeting, because Mencken on July 24, 1925, after his return to New York, invited Odum to "come up this way during the summer to try some of the superb stimulants the bootleggers are now bringing in."74 But Odum had been scarred by the hectic half year, and his relationship with Mencken had suffered as a result. Thus he was no longer as receptive to such invitations as he might have been in pre-Dayton days. The deterioration of his relationship with Mencken was probably related to his growing fear that the various attacks on the Journal of Social Forces in 1925 might somehow affect future Rockefeller Fund support.75

By October Odum was even more concerned about a possible loss of funds. He pointed out to Harry Elmer Barnes that President Chase, the trustees of UNC, and others had been very liberal in allowing the staff of the Journal to do almost anything they wanted, and he cautioned Barnes that he did not want to jeopardize this freedom by sneering at the

73Ibid., 192. For a stimulating interpretation of the causes and impact of the anti-evolution movement on the South, see Wilbur J. Cash, The Mind of the South (New York, 1941), 346-50.

74Odum to Mencken, July 24, 1925, in Odum Papers.

75Odum to Beardsley Ruml, February 18 & 23; Odum to Harry Elmer Barnes, February 23, 1925, all in ibid.
"common folk" through the *Journal*. Such action, Odum feared, might be picked up and used by Mencken and his group. Odum then went on to caution: "If therefore brother Mencken or any of our other friends take this bulletin and feature it up as ridiculing the South it simply makes our problem all the more difficult."\footnote{Odum to H. E. Barnes and F. H. Hankins, October 5, 1925, in *ibid.*}

That Odum was clearly intimidated by these developments is indicated by the dramatic change that took place in the content of the *Journal of Social Forces* after 1925. As was pointed out in the previous chapter,\footnote{See Chapter V, p. 135, especially note 21.} the September, 1925, issue was the last one in the 1920's to contain articles which directly relate to the benighted South image. The rather bland and "scientific" articles for the remainder of the decade make for sharp contrast with those of the first three years.\footnote{See *Social Forces*, XXIII (March, 1945), 303-307, for a listing of "contributions Dealing With Southern Regional Subjects," from 1922 to 1936. Gerald W. Johnson was especially upset by the Journal's change of direction. He waited several years, but by 1929 had reached his tolerance limit and wrote Odum a letter blasting what he felt to be an over-abundance of "technical articles." Odum's reply reveals his usual sensitivity to such criticism. See Johnson to Odum, June 13, 1929; and Odum to Johnson, June 18, 1929, in Odum Papers.}

The oversimplifications of the benighted accounts were still on Odum's mind in 1930. In a book he published that year, Odum told of a Northern lady who discreetly
queried a visitor from the South: "Is it true that little children are worked day and night in the factories. . . . Is it true that nearly all the people down there can not read and write. . . . Are Paul Green and Howard Odum really Negroes?" Odum found similar attitudes to be prevalent among Northern college students in the late Twenties.

Odum, of course, maintained an active career after 1925 and even continued his correspondence with Mencken. But things would never be the same for him after the tumultuous experiences of that critical year. Odum and Mencken remained on fairly amicable terms, as is indicated by a visit the Sage made to the Chapel Hill campus in October, 1926. Mencken was only there for a day, but Odum had planned carefully and provided Mencken with a very full schedule. The visit was a great success, and Mencken wrote Odum from New Orleans to say so and to add that the University "was even better than I expected, and that was a


80 Ibid., 76-77.

81 In 1926, for example, Odum was extremely active in editing the American Social Science Series for the publishing house of Henry Holt & Co. See the multitude of correspondence on this series in Boxes 5 and 6 of the Odum Papers.

82 Odum to Mencken, August 17, 20, 26, September 24; Mencken to Odum, August 15, 18, 24, September 25; all 1926, all in ibid. See also Odum to Gerald W. Johnson, September 21, 25, 30, October 5, 1926, in ibid., and Morrison, "Mencken and Odum," 606-11.
great deal."83

Other such positive occurrences mitigated Odum's mild unhappiness. George W. Oakes, editor of Current History, wrote Odum to ask his advice on a series of articles the magazine's staff intended doing "on the Southern states." Oakes added that they wished "to begin the series with North Carolina, which we believe is developing the most substantial progress . . . of any of the states in the Union at the present time."84 In July, 1926, Odum was notified that his name was under consideration for the Presidency of Louisiana State University.85 His growing reputation had even assumed international proportions by 1926, as the Austro-American Institute of Education in Vienna wrote to Odum inviting him, his staff, and students to visit their city.86

These kudos, however, did not diminish Odum's increasing concern over the growing image of the benighted South. A letter to Harry Elmer Barnes reveals some of this,87 but the most telling correspondence is a series of

83Mencken to Odum, October 25, 1926, in Odum Papers. Mencken added that he was leaving New Orleans for California the next day, and his "debut in the movies. Valentino will be forgotten."

84Oakes to Odum, June 3, 1926, in Odum Papers.

85R. O. Young to Odum, July 12, 1926, in *ibid.* Odum to Young, July 16, 1926, in *ibid.*, withdraws his name from consideration because of his many projects underway at UNC.

86Austro-American Institute to Odum, December 14, 1926, in *ibid.*

87Odum to Barnes, May 3, 1926, in *ibid.*
letters in 1926 and 1927 between Odum, Paul Blanshard, and others concerning a proposed study by Blanshard of labor in Southern textile mills. Odum reacted quickly to a September, 1926, letter from Worth M. Tippy, Executive Secretary of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, which announced to him that "Mr. Paul Blanshard of the League for Industrial Democracy is coming south [sic] under the auspices of the American Fund to look into the mill village and the textile industry." Perhaps it was the alien intrusions Odum did not like, but whatever the reason he replied to Tippy with a telegram on September 10: "Believe any new investigation of textile industry in addition to the ten or twelve now under way can only do harm. Letter follows." Odum retreated a little in his letter and pleaded that his reactions to the proposed study resulted purely from a desire to avoid duplication, but his telegram had already betrayed his hypersensitivity.

In spite of Odum's objections, Blanshard came South, and the study was made. It was not published, however, without strenuous objections from Odum, objections that led to some rather heated correspondence between Odum and Blanshard. Blanshard forwarded a rough draft of his

---

88 Tippy to Odum, September 8, 1926, in ibid.

89 Telegram, Odum to Tippy, September 10, 1926, typed copy in ibid. See also Tippy to Odum, September 15, 1926, in ibid.

90 Odum to Tippy, September 20, 1926, in ibid.
manuscript to Odum on April 18, 1927, requesting his comments and permission to quote from several studies underway by the Institute for Research in Social Science. Odum replied on April 22, saying "we shall have to ask you not to quote from any of the University of North Carolina studies," because, among other reasons, "of the inaccuracy of your quotations." Odum further accused Blanshard of "misleading" inferences and then asked "whether after all this type of publication is necessary." As if this were not enough, Odum three days later sent Blanshard a series of criticisms, prefaced with the statements: "What I am aiming at is to see in which form your publication can do the most good. And it may be that I might add the least harm." Blanshard responded to Odum's critique in a four-page, single-spaced letter. He thanked Odum for helping to "correct a manuscript whose general value you so obviously doubt" and then proceeded to deal step by step with Odum's objections. He agreed to drop some polemical language, to modify his charges of long hours and child labor in the mills, to verify the accuracy of stories of violence against Northern workers in Southern mills, and to make other such corrections. It is perfectly obvious, and extremely significant for an

91 Blanshard to Odum, April 18, 1927, in ibid.
92 Odum to Blanshard, April 22, 1927, in ibid.
93 Odum to Blanshard, April 25, 1927, in ibid. My italics.
analysis of the impact of the image of the benighted South on Southern intellectuals, that Odum's objections were almost exclusively to the distortions in Blanshard's work. Odum returned the manuscript on April 30 with further corrections by Gerald Johnson, who cautioned that Blanshard "is handling dynamite." If Blanshard had not sensed Odum's attitude by this time, he had things further clarified for him in early December when Odum and his assistants refused to attend a conference on labor conditions in Southern cotton mills that Blanshard had organized in Greensboro (only fifty miles from Chapel Hill).

The Blanshard affair set off an instructive exchange of letters between Odum and Julia Collier Harris. Mrs. Harris, noting an attack on Blanshard's short book in the January 19, 1928, issue of the Southern Textile Bulletin, wrote to Odum asking his impression of Blanshard "and his mission." In reply, Odum admitted that Blanshard had some "good points," but then Odum revealed his growing distaste for polemics against the South:

---

94 Blanshard to Odum, April 27, 1927, in *ibid*. The MS was published late in 1927, still maintaining a strong benighted South tone, as *Labor in Southern Cotton Mills* (n.p., 1927).

95 Johnson to Odum, April 27; Odum to Blanshard, April 30, in Odum Papers.

96 Blanshard to Odum, November 23; Odum to Blanshard, December 22, 1927, in *ibid*.

97 Harris to Odum, January 28, 1928, in *ibid*. Mrs. Harris also conveyed her opinion that Blanshard's "story about the situation in the South [was] eminently fair."
The North's attitude toward the South and its wild opinions and judgments about us do sometimes provoke me, and I can sympathize with those who feel that propaganda on the South is one of the chief indoor sports of unstable folk in other climes.98

Odum had plenty of other examples of this rapidly growing "sport," some from the South. In 1927 one of the books of his good friend Gerald W. Johnson was removed from display in the lobby of the Greensboro public library by "a committee of indignant ladies."99 The same year brought a letter from temporarily expatriated John Donald Wade (in Oxford, England) explaining why Wade had decided to leave the University of Georgia. Wade's detailing of an oppressive intellectual atmosphere that stifled freedom of expression and creative thought must have been doubly depressing for Odum the scholar, and Odum the Georgian.100

In the same month of the Wade letter, Odum received a further setback when two of his best people in the Sociology department, Jesse Steiner and T. J. Woolfer, resigned. Both departures were related to the various attacks on Odum's

98Odum to Harris, January 31, 1928, in ibid. See also Harris to Odum, February 2, 1928, in ibid.

99Johnson to Odum, March 21, 1927, in ibid. The work in question was Johnson's The Undefeated (New York, 1927), a history of the Stone Mountain Memorial, in which Johnson criticizes the South for its treatment of sculptor Gutzon Borglum.

100Wade to Odum, June 5, 1927, in Odum Papers. It will be recalled that Wade had been earlier intimidated by the situation in Georgia and had withdrawn an article scheduled to appear in Social Forces. See above pp. 198-99. On Wade's decision to leave the University of Georgia, see also Julia Harris to Odum, June 25, 1927, in Odum Papers.
David Clark, Odum's old antagonist as editor of the Southern Textile Bulletin, once again attacked UNC in 1928. In an editorial in the February 2 issue of that year, Clark labeled as "filthy textbooks" works by President Chase and by F. H. Allport, Assistant Professor of Psychology at UNC. Clark skillfully damned the two works by innuendo, stating that he would quote from the volumes except that "the matter is so obscene and so intensely vulgar that we prefer not to inflict it upon our readers, in fact, it might prevent this issue passing through the mails." This was too much for Odum, who pleaded with Chase to take legal action, claiming that he could cite for the President "more than 200 libels against the University by Clark."

Odum resented Northern attacks on him and especially on the South; he also resented attacks by Southerners on him, Social Forces, the Institute for Research in Social Science, UNC, and the South as a whole. But his overall reaction was somewhat ambivalent. On the one hand he recognized the positive catalytic impact of some of the

---

101Odum to Jesse Steiner, June 14, 15, 20, 1927, in ibid.
102See above, 204-205.
104Odum to Chase, February 6, 1928, in ibid. See also Odum to Julia Harris, February 6, 1928, in ibid.
criticism, but he also expressed some bitterness over those who attacked programs that had brought over $500,000 to UNC. Indeed, Odum was feeling the cumulative burden to such a degree that by late 1927 he proposed titling one of his Negro folklore volumes "Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen."  

The fact that Odum was able to maintain his sense of humor did not deter President Chase and others from voicing a great deal of concern over his health. Odum's driving work schedule was obviously one cause for such concern, but another seems to have been his depression and anger over the attacks on the South which had developed through the mid-Twenties. President Chase wrote to Odum in the summer of 1927, mixing glowing praise (as if to reassure Odum) with pleas for him to slow down and be more cautious with his health. Chase suggested that Odum consider taking a year's leave. This advice Odum heeded early in 1928 when he applied for a leave in 1929. Chase quickly approved this request.  

105 Odum to Gerald W. Johnson, September 14, May 9, 1927; Odum to D. L. Chambers, October 31, 1927, in ibid. Quote from Odum to Chambers, October 31, 1927. Chambers was one of Odum's publishers at Bobbs-Merrill.  

106 Chase to Odum, June 10, July 21 [?], 1927, February 20, August 28, 1928; Odum to Chase, July 22, 1927, January 13, 1928; all in ibid. For details of Odum's plans for his leave, see Odum to D. L. Chambers, February 20, 1928 and Odum to Dr. Beardsley Ruml, March 27, 1928. For further indications of the concern of others over Odum's health, see Odum to Jesse Steiner, June 24, 1928, in Odum Papers.
While Odum was on leave from August, 1928 to September, 1929, he still encountered new challenges for him and his UNC operations. Although most areas of the Southern economy had been in a state of depression since the early 1920's, the spreading of the economic crisis at the end of the decade to the national level made the Southern situation even more critical. The multiple economic and social ramifications of the depression were to have a major impact on the intellectual activities of Odum and all Southerners. As C. Vann Woodward observes:

The hard-bitten thirties were a time of reckoning, the moment of truth for pretenses of all sorts. Myths went into bankruptcy as often as banks. . . . In the harsh depression climate of the thirties, the sub-region of plain folks and small-town industries came belatedly to flower. . . . Chapel Hill was headquarters of the renaissance. . . . 107

Odum had laid the groundwork for his role in this depression era renaissance months before the infamous stock market collapse of October, 1929. Much of this early work involved a prestigious U. S. government project. In April of 1929 French Strother, a high-ranking aide to President Hoover, wrote to Odum asking for his assistance on a presidential project. Strother informed Odum that President Hoover desired "concrete suggestions of practical ways in which the prestige of the Presidency can appropriately be used to

further desirable social movements." Clear evidence of Odum's solidly established national reputation appears in Strother's statement to Odum: "I realize this is a tall order, but I am paying you the compliment (obviously deserved) of writing to you 'as a tall man.'" After a series of conferences, White House luncheons, and a mass of correspondence with Odum and other scholars, Hoover formulated finally a Research Committee on Social Trends. Odum, as Assistant Director of the project, devoted a large portion of his efforts from late 1929 to 1931 to helping to prepare the Committee's study, which was published in 1933 as *Recent Social Trends In The United States.*

The depression-related textile strikes of 1929, especially those at Marion and Gastonia, North Carolina, had a dual impact on Odum's UNC programs. On the one hand a flood of criticism had to be endured, as a number of observers of the mill strikes and the accompanying violence inferred that the tragedies might have been avoided if UNC

108 French Strother to Odum, April 10, 1929, in Odum Papers. It will be recalled that Odum was a long time admirer of Hoover. See above, p. 181, especially note 5.

109 Report of the President's Research Committee on Social Trends, *Recent Social Trends In the United States* (New York and London, 1933). On the genesis and development of the project see Strother to Odum, April 18, June 11, September 5, 19, October 4, November 20, 1929; and Odum to Strother, June 21, July 13, September 13, 1939. See also Strother to Odum, February 18, 1930. All are in Odum Papers.
had been more active in attacking and resolving the ills of the North Carolina textile industry. Odum again displayed his intolerance of the most passionate critics, such as Sinclair Lewis, but he recognized the potential benefits of the widespread publicity being given to the social problems which were at the root of the strikes and the violence. He was quick to point out studies of the textile industry that the Institute for Research in Social Science had either published or had under way. Stressing the practical value of such projects, Odum expressed his hope to several correspondents that the excitement over the textile trouble would eventually lead to a comprehensive research project on the industry and its multiple social problems.

The depression years saw this prophecy fulfilled.

---

110 See above, Chapter IV, pp. 94-95. On Odum's reaction to Lewis's attacks, see Odum to W. F. Ogburn, October 28, 1929, in ibid.

111 For a sampling of the mass of correspondence in the Odum Papers concerning the textile strikes of 1929, see James Myers (Industrial Secretary of the Federal Council of Churches) to Odum, August 19; Gerald W. Johnson to Odum, October 26, 1929; Odum to Myers, September 2, Odum to Worth M. Tippy, October 24, 30; Odum to Gerald W. Johnson, October 24, Odum to W. T. Ogburn, October 29, 1929, all in ibid. In a more general comment, Odum wrote to Franklin H. Giddings "that when the southern region is in hardest circumstances that is the time of greatest opportunity [for Odum's group]." See Odum to Giddings, December 19, 1929, in ibid.

112 The aforementioned monographs on the textile industry by Jennings J. Rhyne and Harriet Herring of Odum's institute are two tangible examples of this positive impact. Indeed, Odum wrote his old mentor (Giddings) early in 1930 and reflected on all the benighted style attacks as having been "oil instead of poison--we are set here for a good, long, steady, continuous piece of work." See Odum to Giddings, January 2, 1930, in Odum Papers.
Sensing that recent national attention to the problems at Gastonia and Marion, as well as other Southern ills, made the time ripe, Odum began to seek funding and support for a Southern regional study. Working with the Southern Regional Committee of the Social Science Research Council, Odum was successful in securing funding in 1921 for a two-year study. The program was placed under the general direction of Odum, and was intended to investigate "the South's Capacity and Needs for Educational and Social Development." This project consumed most of Odum's time for the next three years, and ultimately resulted in what is perhaps his

---

113 Odum to Sydnor Walker (of the Rockefeller Foundation), February 17; Odum to Chancellor J. H. Kirkland (of Vanderbilt University), March 25; Robert S. Lynd (of the Social Sciences Research Council) to Odum, February 20, 1930. "Report Of The Meeting Of The Southern Regional Committee Of The Social Science Research Council Held At The Jung Hotel, New Orleans, March 28-29, 1930"; Edwin R. Embree (of Julius Rosenwald Fund) to Benjamin Kendrick (Professor of History at the Women's College of the University of North Carolina in Greensboro, N. C.), January 3, 1931; Odum to Mencken, December 19, 1931; Odum to Frank Porter Graham, December 23, 1931; all in Odum Papers. The principal funding was by the General Education Board in Richmond, Virginia. See Jackson Davis (Asst. Director of Education of the Board) to Odum, December 23, 1931, and March 15, 1932, in ibid.

114 Odum to Frank Porter Graham (the new president of UNC, Chase having left for a similar position at the University of Illinois in 1930), December 23, 1931, in ibid., announces the grant to him and requests a leave of absence to conduct the study.

In a similar vein, Governor O. Max Gardner of UNC had asked Odum's help in studying the impact of the depression on the social services of North Carolina. See Graham to Odum, August 31; and Odum to Graham, September 3, 1932, in ibid.
greatest scholarly production, the massive Southern Regions Of The United States.\textsuperscript{115}

Before beginning the Southern regional study, however, Odum had to cope with other projects already under way. He and his associates gave much attention to the ongoing problem of lynching,\textsuperscript{116} but most of 1931 Odum devoted to planning the Social Science exhibit he had been asked to design for the Chicago Century of Progress World's Fair scheduled for 1933.\textsuperscript{117}

In spite of this continuing hyperactivity,\textsuperscript{118}

\textsuperscript{115}Howard W. Odum, Southern Regions Of The United States (Chapel Hill, 1936). The original two-year study was later extended to three years with supplementary funding from the University of North Carolina, and other sources. For further information on the origins and development of the study, see ibid., ix-xi, 621-28.

For Odum's role relative to the Tennessee Valley Authority (another example of the practical applications of his work) see Odum to Sydnor Walker, February 20, 1933, and "Work Memorandum As To The Tennessee Valley Study," June 21, 1933, both in the Odum Papers.

\textsuperscript{116}Minutes of Meeting of "The Commission on the Study of Lynching" of the Commission on Interracial Cooperation, September 5, 1930; R. B. Eleazer (of the Comm. on Lynching) to Odum, June 23, 1930, forwarding a copy of his report on "The Lynching of Allen Green, Walhalla, S. C., April 24, 1930"; copy of press release from Commission on Interracial Cooperation, September 20, 1930, all in Odum Papers.

\textsuperscript{117}Odum to Edmund Day of Rockefeller Foundation, June 18, 1931, in ibid.; Odum to Frank Porter Graham, November 27, 1930. The Social Sciences exhibit was eventually a casualty of the depression and was such a disappointment that Odum later listed it one of his "major defeats." See Jocher, et al. (eds.), Folk, Region, and Society, viii. A further reason for his disappointment was probably financial. Odum was paid $1,000 per month for his work on the fair. At the time he was making only $5,000 per year at UNC.
counsciousness of the image of the benighted South was never far from Odum's mind. Indeed, in 1930, he found himself in the somewhat uncomfortable position of publishing a book that did much to reinforce that image. Odum's concern over possible negative reactions from the South to this criticism is apparent in his correspondence. He was probably reassuring himself when he wrote to Franklin Giddings that he was "confident that the South will stand by the criticism" and similarly told Mencken that a sub-thesis of the book was "that the South is getting more provincial ... and needs to look at itself with a little more criticism." But Odum cautioned his publisher that in marketing the volume they should prevent "the impression that it is just another book on the South glorifying it, or [conversely] that it is just another supercritical attack."  

---

118 Odum, An American Epoch, passim.

119 Odum to Giddings, May 13, 1930; Odum to Mencken, May 13, 1930, both in Odum Papers. Mencken liked the work but warned "it will probably be denounced in most of the more idiotic Southern papers." See Mencken to Odum, May 27, 1930, in ibid. Odum attempted to "cover" himself at the highest levels by sending a copy of American Epoch to Governor Max Gardner with the comment: "If this seems a little critical of the South, I hope you will bear with me in that we are all seeking after one thing only, namely, the fuller and richer development of the southern region and the nation, and that it is a part of our patriotic task to study how best this may be brought about." Odum to Gardner, October 9, 1930, in ibid.

120 Odum to Herschel Brickell (at Henry Holt & Co.), June 23, 1930; Brickell to Odum, July 2, 1930, in ibid. Odum, with the typical lack of modesty and with the entrepreneurial spirit that characterizes many of his letters, made a number of suggestions to Brickell about what might be said in
Much was occurring to disturb Odum besides the possible repercussions from the publication of *An American Epoch*. The departure of President Chase from UNC, followed by the resignation of the President of Wake Forest College, led Odum to suggest to Gerald Johnson that North Carolina was "slipping." Then the depression crisis led the North Carolina legislature to reduce appropriations to UNC. Odum's salary was cut, as were funds for his programs, with the charge being leveled by some legislators that Odum was not doing enough for North Carolina. In the midst of these setbacks, Odum was stung by one of the few unfavorable reviews advertising the book, including: "You could say if you wanted to . . . that *An American Epoch* does for a region what *Middletown* did for a city." Odum to Brickell, July 29, 1930. See also Odum to Brickell, August 9, 1930, all in *ibid*. Odum's marketing desires reached the heights of poor taste, when, with the country in the very depths of the depression, he wrote Richard H. Thornton (at Henry Holt): "I do not suppose this new interest in the South and the Tennessee Valley would help you see a few copies of *An American Epoch*, would it?" Odum to Thornton, June 14, 1933, in *ibid*.

121 Odum to Johnson, February 24, 1930, in *ibid*. Odum to T. H. Jack (at Emory University), March 17, 1930, in *ibid*. Odum saw Odum comment: "My family and I . . . are pretty sure that there is a sort of crisis in the South."

122 Odum was extremely bitter about this. See Gerald W. Johnson to Odum, July 16, 1931 and Odum to Johnson, July 18, 23, 1931, in *ibid*. He was also fearful that the reduction of support by the state might lead to non-renewal of the Rockefeller Funds grant to the Institute for Research in Social Science. See Odum to Graham, February 16, 1932, in *ibid*. These fears, however, proved to be unjustified. The Rockefeller Foundation renewed the funding in 1932 at $30,000 annually for three years. See telegram from Sydnor Walker to Odum, April 13, 1932, copy in *ibid*.
his publications ever received. This one hurt all the more because it appeared in the *American Journal of Sociology*.\footnote{Review by Herbert Blumer of Howard Odum and Katherine Jocher, *An Introduction to Social Research* (New York, 1929) in *American Journal of Sociology*, XXXV (May, 1930), 1109-11. Odum's extreme sensitivity to criticism is apparent in a series of letters he wrote complaining about the review. See, for example, Odum to William F. Ogburn, May 20; Odum to Ernest W. Burgess, May 21, 26, 1930; all in Odum Papers.}

Then another target presented itself to critics of the South when Governor Theodore Bilbo of Mississippi conducted a political purge of those he deemed to be his enemies at the University of Mississippi and at other institutions of higher learning in that state. Some two hundred faculty members were dismissed over a two-year period.\footnote{Odum to H. L. Mencken, July 15; Odum to Frank Porter Graham, July 16, 1930; N. B. Bond (Dean of the Graduate School at the University of Mississippi) to Odum, July 24, July 31; Odum to Bond, July 27, 1932; all in *ibid.*}

By 1933 the crisis was passing for Odum. President Chase had left UNC but had been replaced by the very able Frank Porter Graham. Although State funding of UNC had been cut, the Rockefeller grant had been renewed. Criticism of Odum and his programs continued, but so did widespread praise. The World's Fair project had been canceled, but the Southern Regional Study was proceeding actively. On balance, the future seemed bright enough to Odum for him to turn down five offers from other institutions between 1929 and 1933, with salaries ranging from nine to twelve thousand (as
opposed to the five thousand per year he made at UNC).\textsuperscript{125}

The ambivalence of the situation at UNC and in the South intrigued and stimulated him. This is apparent in a letter he wrote to Mencken: "I still believe that we have a great conflict situation here that might still be the best environment to work in."\textsuperscript{126} He even seemed to be developing something approaching a sense of mission. Early in 1932 he hinted at such a thought in a letter to Edmund Day of the Rockefeller foundation:

"Stay in the midst of it" he did, as Odum continued to play a vital role in stimulating other areas of the surging intellectual awakening in the South. The initial grant of 1924 by the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial Fund that created the Institute for Research in Social Science also allocated $6,000 of the $32,500 annual appropriation for "Library and publication."\textsuperscript{127} This reflects two of

\begin{itemize}
  \item Odum to Graham, January 18, 1933, in \textit{ibid}. One of the offers came from Chase at the University of Illinois, who tried to persuade Odum to come there to head the Sociology department. Chase bombarded Odum with a series of letters on this. See, for example, Chase to Odum, September 15, 1931, in \textit{ibid}.
  \item Odum to Mencken, May 13, 1930, \textit{ibid}.
  \item Odum to Edmund Day, January 20, 1932, in \textit{ibid}.
  \item Wilson, \textit{The University of North Carolina}, 463.
\end{itemize}
Odum's earliest interests, these being to help establish a university press and to build up a superior library at UNC. Odum recognized the need for a non-commercial press to stimulate and publish scholarly works that commercial publishers might not be interested in. Thus he was a leading figure in the incorporation of the University of North Carolina Press on March 13, 1922, and he served as one of the original thirteen members of the Board of Governors of the new press. In addition, he beat the academic bushes trying to drum up prestigious contributors for this new venture. The result of these efforts was the publication of eighteen books by the press by 1925 and 500 by 1945. A substantial number of these were products of Odum and his fellow workers. The UNC press was a pace setter in the

129 For a good example of Odum's strong belief in the need for and value he placed in University presses, see his comments in the minutes of a "Discussion of the Southern Regional Committee on Research in the Social Sciences, New Orleans, March 29, 1930," pp. 16-18. On the early days of the press see Wilson, The University of North Carolina, 484-500. For an example of Odum's work seeking manuscripts for the press, see Odum to Franklin H. Giddings, October 28, 1922, in Odum Papers. It should be noted that the Press and the Journal of Social Forces were founded almost simultaneously, a good index of the electric intellectual atmosphere permeating UNC in the Twenties.

130 Wilson, The University of North Carolina, 490-98. For a survey of the first twenty years of the press, its financing, notable publications, and views on its general contributions, see W. T. Couch, "Twenty Years of Southern Publishing," Virginia Quarterly Review, XXVI (Spring, 1950), 171-85. Couch was editor of the press from 1932 to 1945. See also Couch, "The University Press," in Edgar W. Knight and Agatha Boyd Adams (eds.), The Graduate School: Research and Publications (Chapel Hill, 1946), 175-86. For a complete listing of the publishing efforts of the first fifty
establishment of university presses in the South, as well as in the publication of regionally oriented material. The original charter of the press was cosmopolitan in its stated aim "to promote generally, by publishing deserving works, the advancement of the arts and sciences and the development of literature." But it was only natural, especially with the growing regional emphasis that Odum and others at UNC were creating, for the press to become somewhat provincial as the years passed.  

The work of Odum, Louis Round Wilson, and others in establishing a university press at the University of North Carolina proved to be the spark needed to touch off an explosion of similar establishments throughout the South. By the early 1930's university presses were flourishing at Duke, Louisiana State University, the universities of...
Georgia, Oklahoma, and Tennessee. By the mid-Fifties additional ones were operating at the universities of South Carolina, Florida, Texas, Virginia, and Alabama.\footnote{132}

Odum also worked closely with Wilson in building up the library at UNC. For example, he secured what he described as "the large and private library of Professor Franklin H. Giddings, Dean of American Sociologists" for the holdings.\footnote{133} Odum also assisted greatly in attempts to acquire supplemental funding for the library from private foundations.\footnote{134}

Odum influenced other aspects of the Southern renaissance. Southern historical scholarship, as has been discussed, received what proved to be an enduring boost in the Twenties with the establishment of archival collections of historical material, especially that relating to the South.\footnote{135} Once again the leadership in this process came from Chapel Hill. Although J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton was the principal figure behind the creation of the monumental Southern Historical Collection at UNC, Odum was continually active in


\footnote{133}{Odum to Gerald W. Johnson, July 23, 1931, in Odum Papers.}

\footnote{134}{See, for example, Odum to L. R. Wilson, January 28, 1931, in \textit{ibid}.}

\footnote{135}{See above, Chapter II, pp. 21-24.}
publicizing the collection and helping to raise funds and obtain materials for it.\textsuperscript{136} These efforts, as was the case with the UNC press, served as a stimulus for the development of other such collections throughout the South.\textsuperscript{137}

Much of the success of these and other activities obviously depended upon financing. It was in this realm that Odum, Chase, Wilson, Graham, and others of the Chapel Hill group demonstrated particular expertise. The success of these individuals in maintaining state appropriations, in spite of the legislative bodies' displeasure over the universities' stand on evolution, mill conditions, and other such volatile issues, was noteworthy and absolutely essential to the success of the Chapel Hill aspects of the Renaissance. Perhaps even more remarkable—and what probably made UNC the great pacesetter it became in the Twenties—was the additional support obtained from private foundations. The Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial Fund, the General Education Board, and the Carnegie Foundation, to name three major contributors, were persuaded by Odum and his fellow educational entrepreneurs to give several million dollars to various projects and programs at UNC in the

\textsuperscript{136}Odum to Beardsley Ruml, May 22; Odum to Gerald W. Johnson, May 24; Odum to J. G. Hamilton, July 2, 1928; Hamilton to Odum, May 27, and July 22, 1928; all in Odum Papers.

\textsuperscript{137}An example of the positive impact of the University of North Carolina in this area is seen in a letter from Charles W. Pipkin (Prof. of Government at LSU) to Odum, May 16, 1928, in \textit{ibid}. See also above, Chapter II, p. 24.
Twenties and Thirties. The significance of this philanthropy, however, went far beyond UNC. Dewey Grantham, in an analysis of what he calls "The Regional Imagination" in the South, has stressed the importance of a growing interest in, and subsequent funding of, fundamental research by the large foundations in the 1920's and 1930's. It seems fair to assert that much of the credit for this awakening, which was so important to the intellectual resurgence of the entire South, should go to Howard Odum and other active fund raisers at UNC.

Odum was also quite interested in other aspects of the emerging intellectual activity in the South. One of his most basic aims seems to have been to encourage those who were producing high quality work to continue to do so, and at the same time to use their efforts to elevate the national image of the South. Odum realized that UNC was

---

138 For examples of the feverish fund raising activities of Odum, et al. see Odum to Chase, June 4; Odum to Edmund Day, June 14; Odum to Sydnor Walker, November 26, 1930; Odum to Frank Porter Graham, March 17, 1931; all in Odum Papers. These letters form only a miniscule sampling of the abundance of correspondence relative to fund raising in the Odum Papers.


140 See, for example, Odum to Gerald W. Johnson, March 6, 1924, in Odum Papers, seeking publicity for John Donald Wade's new biography of Augustus Baldwin Longstreet. On Odum trying to promote Wade, see also Odum to Edmund Day, April 4, 1931. See also Odum to Mencken, March 4, 1932, re: Odum's efforts to promote Harriet Herring. Of course he always promoted himself. For example, he was quick to point
rapidly achieving national recognition in the Twenties, and he viewed this as a great opportunity for the university to serve as a leader in the South. He felt the opportunities were great for such a role, and succinctly summed up his views in a letter to Julian Harris: "If there is any one field in which I am most interested, it is the study and the development of the South."\textsuperscript{141}

Because of this general interest, Odum especially tried to encourage the writing of an effective history of the South. He felt that such a work was necessary to clear the air of the many myths and misconceptions that he thought were retarding his social programs. To this end he had long conversations with journalist-historian Douglas Southall Freeman and with the eminent Southern historian U. B. Phillips in 1926.\textsuperscript{142} Odum was particularly disturbed by

\begin{itemize}
  \item Odum even tried to get President Hoover to deliver the commencement address at UNC in June of 1930. See Odum to French Strother, January 1, 1930. "Hoover hogs," "Hoover-villes," and other such descriptions had apparently not yet become widespread.

\textsuperscript{141} Odum to Harris, April 18, 1928, in \textit{ibid}. For an example of his optimism of tangible, positive results, see Odum to Sydnor Walker, July 24, 1929, in \textit{ibid}.

\textsuperscript{142} Odum to Freeman, January 13; Odum to Henry Holt & Co., April 17; Odum to Beardsley Ruml, May 5, 1926; all in \textit{ibid}.
\end{itemize}
what he felt to be the distortions of William Joseph Robertson's *The Changing South* (New York, 1927), and engaged in a benevolent conspiracy with his publisher at Bobbs-Merrill to try to persuade Gerald W. Johnson to do a general history of the South. The publisher was enthusiastic, writing to Odum about Johnson and the plan that, "there's certainly nobody who could do the job more beautifully. . . . He writes like an angel." But Johnson could not be recruited, in spite of Odum's statement to him of the twofold reasons for the project:

> One is that the publishers want it, and that there is a considerable demand for something of this sort. My second thought is that the impressions of the South by the North, East, and West are so preposterous we ought to have an epic of the Old South written analogous to your epic of Jackson.

Odum's *An American Epoch* (1930) was a partial attempt to fill the void he felt existed in available literature on the South. But the type of treatment he wanted was not to come until eleven years later, when W. J. Cash published *The Mind of the South*. It should be pointed out, however, that

---

143 Odum to Johnson, January 13, 19, 30; Johnson to Odum, January 17, 27, 30; Odum to D. L. Chambers (at Bobbs-Merrill), January 14, 19; Chambers to Odum; January 16, 1928; all in ibid. Chambers to Odum, January 16, 1928, in ibid.

144 Odum to Johnson, January 19, 1928, in ibid. This letter vividly demonstrates Odum's consciousness of increased national attention to the South and his sensitivity to the growing benighted imagery. The "epic of Jackson" refers to Johnson's best selling *Andrew Jackson: An Epic In Homespun* (New York, 1927).
Odum had considerable influence on the evolution of Cash's monumental work. Odum knew that Alfred A. Knopf had contracted with Cash to do a book on the Southern mind, and apparently wrote the Boiling Springs, N. C., resident to ask what he was contemplating.\textsuperscript{145} Cash responded with a six-page, single-spaced letter detailing his plans. An exchange of letters followed in which Odum offered suggestions and encouragement, and these seem to have had a considerable impact on Cash.\textsuperscript{146}

Cash's epic on the mind of the South did much to satiate Odum's desire for better Southern history, but other developments in this field in the Twenties and Thirties went even further towards fulfilling his vision of high level historical scholarship in the South. By these decades the flag-waving, nostalgic historical organizations which were sprinkled over the South for a half-century after the Civil War were giving way to more scholarly state historical societies. These bodies contributed to the collection and preservation of documents and began to publish work of

\textsuperscript{145}Odum to Herschel Brickell (at Henry Holt & Co.), October 30, 1929; Joseph L. Morrison, "The Obsessive 'Mind' of W. J. Cash," \textit{Virginia Quarterly Review}, XXXXI (Spring, 1965), 271, 275, 277. Once again, Mencken's role as a behind-the-scenes catalyst for various aspects of the Southern renaissance is seen. It was Mencken who persuaded Knopf to contract with Cash to publish the latter's book. See Morrison, "Obsessive 'Mind,'" 271.

\textsuperscript{146}Cash to Odum, November 13; Odum to Cash, November 20; Cash to Odum, November 22; Odum to Cash, November 27, 1929. See also Morrison, "Obsessive 'Mind,'" 277. See also, Chapter V, pp. 162-67.
emerging scholars\textsuperscript{147} through their historical journals. These activities, in turn, laid the groundwork for the matura-
tion of Southern historical scholarship in the 1930's.

The founding of the Southern Historical Association in 1934, the establishment of the \textit{Journal of Southern History} in 1935, and the initiation of the History of the South series in 1938 were the high points of this emergence. These occurrences have been given considerable attention in an earlier chapter,\textsuperscript{148} but no attempt has been made to relate them to the image of the benighted South. Wendell Holmes Stephenson, Charles W. Ramsdell, and other historians instrumental in these various developments were basically scholars committed to elevating the status of Southern history. But these men were also subject to the same forces that stimulated the productions of Howard Odum and other

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[\textsuperscript{147}] On the stifling impact of provincial historical groups in the South continuing to fight the Civil War on paper, and the breaking of this pattern early in the Twentieth century, see E. Merton Coulter, "What the South Has Done About Its History," in George Brown Tindall (ed.), \textit{The Pursuit of Southern History: Presidential Addresses Of The Southern Historical Association, 1935-1963} (Baton Rouge, 1964), 3-22. On the collection of materials and establishment of historical societies, see Hamilton, "History in the South," 176-80. See also above, Chapter II, pp. 21-22.
\item[\textsuperscript{148}] See above, Chapter II, pp. 25-31.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
participants in the Chapel Hill aspects of the Southern renaissance.

There is little direct evidence that these scholars were acutely perturbed by the growing images of a benighted South, but there are sufficient suggestions to indicate a relationship between their activities and the attacks on the South. The Southern Historical Association was founded, in part, because of a feeling by the organizers that Southern historians were receiving inadequate exposure in existing journals published in Northern states. The title of the journal of the new association was originally to be The Southern Historical Review, perhaps as a direct response to the American Historical Review.¹⁴⁹ Part of Stephenson's meticulous work as the original managing editor of the journal seems to have derived from his strong consciousness of potential "outside" criticism.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹There is no documentation in the Stephenson Papers as to why the title was changed. The original title is revealed in Wendell Holmes Stephenson to The Associated Publishers, Inc., November 20, 1934, in Wendell Holmes Stephenson Papers, Assoc, Pub. file (Manuscripts Dept., William R. Perkins Library, Duke University). Charles W. Ramsdell to Stephenson, August 25, 1937, in Stephenson Papers, Ramsdell File, expresses satisfaction with an article in a recent issue of the Journal of Southern History that helped "to clarify a development that has been much misunderstood by nearly all northern writers. . . ."

¹⁵⁰Stephenson to William C. Binkley, July 26, 1943, in Stephenson Papers, Binkley file, expresses his opposition to the inclusion of illustrations in the Journal of Southern History and explains: "Perhaps I am just prejudiced against the inclusion of such things in historical quarterlies. This may result from [Dwight] Dumond's prediction back in 1934 that Huey P. Long's picture would undoubtedly appear as a
Dissatisfaction with current historical treatments of the South and a desire to illuminate what Thomas Clark called "the many dark spots in the [then available] history of the South" were major factors behind the genesis of the History of the South series.\(^{151}\) And it is instructive to recognize that Ramsdell and Stephenson, the original co-editors of the project, were agreed that the authors selected should either be from the South or have lived there in order to understand "Southern people and problems."\(^{152}\) Furthermore, Stephenson, as was pointed out in an earlier chapter, did not stop with these activities, but rather went on to establish a Southern Biography series at the LSU Press, a "Graduate Division of Southern History" at LSU, and the Walter Lynwood Fleming Lectures in Southern History at the same University.

---

frontpiece in the first issue." Dumond, a leading scholar of the anti-slavery movement, was a historian at the University of Michigan.


\(^{152}\) Ramsdell to Stephenson, November 11, 1937, in Stephenson Papers, Ramsdell file, indicates that one purpose of the Littlefield Fund, a co-sponsor of the series, was to have "written and published a history which would adequately set forth the part played by the South in the larger history of the United States."

Stephenson to Ramsdell, May 20, 1938, in Stephenson Papers, Ramsdell file. See also, Ramsdell to Stephenson, May 25, 1938, in ibid.
The flame that Odum and others kindled at Chapel Hill early in the Twenties raged across the South by the mid-1930's, bringing an intellectual resurgence in a variety of fields unparalleled in the intellectual history of the region. Once more, the plaguing historical question of "why" presents itself.

To understand this renaissance (and in many cases what is more appropriately referred to as an initial birth), one must turn to the intellectual climate of the period. The single most important element in this mixture seems to have been the strong sense of a rapidly changing South, and the tensions inherent in consciousness of these changes.153

A number of factors made Southern intellectuals increasingly aware of this state of transition. Not the least of these was the depression and the problems related to it, but the most important stimulus, as has been suggested earlier, was probably the mass of benighted South accounts. Whether over the Klan, fundamentalism and the Scopes trial, illiteracy, textile strikes and the accompanying violence, or other Southern ills, these attacks made Southern intellectuals become more regionally self-conscious. Were Southern social problems really as bad as the

153 Howard W. Odum to Walter White (at NAACP Headquarters in New York City), September 10, 1930, in Odum Papers, assessed the state of the rural South as follows: "There is tension everywhere."
critics suggested? Howard Odum's stable of scholars set out to find some answers. Was Southern history that perverted? Stephenson, Ramsdell, Hamilton, the Southern Historical Association, the *Journal of Southern History*, the History of the South and Southern Biography Series—these and other such activities formed the response. Was the South truly intellectually dead? *The Journal of Social Forces*, the *Virginia Quarterly Review*, and other journals sought to answer in the negative. Where were Southern publishers? New presses at the University of North Carolina, Duke, and LSU, among others, responded. Were there no decent universities in the South? UNC, the University of Virginia, the University of Texas, LSU, Duke, Tulane, Vanderbilt, and others provided an affirmative answer.

This is all obviously oversimplified, but there does seem to be an unmistakable correlation between the image of the benighted South which was so prevalent in the Twenties, an increasing sense of regional self-consciousness on the part of Southern intellectuals, and the massive intellectual renaissance which sprang out of the decade. Even the participants were aware of this relationship. When President Hoover's assistant, French Strother, suggested in a letter to Howard Odum that Mencken had been unfair to the South with his polemics, and that his criticism had no "salutary influence," Odum annotated the margin of this particular paragraph as follows: "I disagree--I think Mencken has
helped a good deal by wounding our pride.\textsuperscript{154}

All of these forces, so successful in crystallizing the intellectual resurgence in scholarly pursuits, had an even more profound impact on the Southern literary world.

\textsuperscript{154}French Strother to Odum, March 26, 1930, in \textit{ibid}. See also Strother to Odum, March 28, 1930, in \textit{ibid}. 
CHAPTER VII

REACTING TO THE BENIGHTED IMAGE:

NASHVILLE AND BEYOND*

In 1819, 212 years after the first English settlement in the New World, the Edinburgh Review recognized Washington Irving's The Sketchbook as the first true example of American literature. The development of such a literature was dependent upon the emergence of a sense of nationalism --Americanism--if you will. This national sense formed only slowly, but there could be no such thing as "American" literature until writers began to think of, examine, and write about the characteristics which they felt made them "Americans." In similar fashion, a sense of "Southernism" was a necessary prerequisite to the emergence of a viable Southern literature.¹

---

*This chapter will attempt to expound on the literary aspects of the Southern Renaissance which were initially described in Chapter II.

Southerners have, by tradition, been regionally self-conscious. In ante-bellum times, however, the potential incentive for literary creativity was stifled by an obsession with the pro-slavery argument. In the immediate post-Civil War decade of Reconstruction, the Cavalier Myth and the Southern attempt at vindication of its "cause" dominated the literary scene. But in the 1920's, the prevailing nationwide image of a benighted South evoked a particularly acute sense of regional self-consciousness. This strong sense of Southernism, intensified by the attack on things Southern, in turn played a major role in crystallizing the Southern literary awakening. This is most evident in a number of literary and journalistic efforts emanating from the South in the Twenties.

Although journalism, the traditional proving ground for American writers, made impressive gains in the South in the 1920's, the Southern literary Renaissance benefited much more from the emergence of a number of "little magazines" and state poetry societies across the South. These magazines (there were at least twenty-nine formed between 1919 and 1936), by publishing a wide variety of essays, short stories, and poems, were the initial outlet for (and formative editorial influence on) virtually every major

---

2 Much of the resurgence in Southern journalism, as has been pointed out, was related to the image of the benighted South. See above, Chapter V, pp. 127-28, 162-65; Chapter VI, 196, 200-201.
participant in the literary awakening of the South. 3

The impact of the emerging image of the benighted South on the establishment of these "little magazines" and poetry societies is apparent. H. L. Mencken's "Sahara of the Bozart" essay was especially influential. This is evident from an analysis of the circumstances surrounding the founding of the first of these organizations in the post-World War I period, The Poetry Society of South Carolina. Frank Durham, the leading student of the origins of the Society and biographer of one of its three founders (Du Bose Heyward), asserts that the characterizations by Mencken and others of the South as an intellectually barren region was the single most important factor behind the organization of the group in October, 1920. The Society "wished to prove to the world that the South could produce a worthy literature." Furthermore, Durham claims, the "early spirits of the Poetry Society engaged in an almost feverish campaign of awakening the South and calling the attention of the rest of the country to the literary prowess of the region." 4

3 For a brief survey of the emergence of some of these magazines, and the most important of the Poetry Societies, see Chapter II, pp. 34-40, especially notes 52-64.

4 Frank Durham, Du Bose Heyward: The Man Who Wrote Porgy (Columbia, S. C., 1954), 25; Durham, "South Carolina's Poetry Society," South Atlantic Quarterly, LII (April, 1953), 279. It should be pointed out that Howard Odum, ever the booster of all aspects of the Southern renaissance, encouraged Heyward to keep up his literary production. See
Strong supporting evidence for Durham's claim is found in the Society's first annual "Yearbook," published in October, 1921. In the foreword to this publication, the editors comment that the Society was founded, aside from the obvious aesthetic intentions, "because we were utterly weary of the reiterated pronouncements from commercial publishing centers in the North and West that America is vocal only in that territory."

An even more direct indication of strong regional self-consciousness over Mencken's attacks is an article in the same issue, "The Worm Turns: Being In Some Sort A Reply to Mr. H. L. Mencken." Intentionally playing upon the metaphors of Mencken's "Sahara" essay, the members of the Society held that Mencken had "recently been beating his great journalistic war drum in the little Philistia of Manhattan, that oasis [sic] in the literary Wilderness of Gobi which stretches its desolate waste northward from Mason and Dixon's line to the ice-bergs of Boston." After further characterizing Mencken as "a sort of literary General Sherman," the author's launch an attack upon him, the Smart Set, and Northern industrialism, and warn that 'South Baiting' from now on is going to be more of a dangerous

---

Odum to Heyward, January 21, 1924, in Howard Washington Odum Papers (Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, N.C.).

5 Anon., "Foreword," The Year Book Of "The Poetry Society of South Carolina" (Charleston, 1921), 5.

sport than formerly." They then translated Mencken's phoneticism and renamed the South "A Sahara of the Beaux Arts."8

The members of the Poetry Society sensed that something was stirring in the intellectual air of the South. They viewed their function as not only one of replying to critics of the South such as Mencken, but also as one of leadership. Again, instructive comments are in the first yearbook:

"From isolated little poetry groups in this and neighboring states have come eager inquiries which have convinced us that we have at our backs a force that needs only to be directed and coordinated in order to stimulate a genuine south-wide poetic renaissance."9

The founding of the first of the Southern "little magazines" in January, 1921, was one cause for the Poetry Society's prophecy of renaissance. The Double Dealer, published in the South's other major port city, New Orleans, also demonstrates the importance of Northern criticism in

---

7Ibid., 14-16.

8Ibid., 14. Perhaps the most clever reply to the "Sahara" essay came in 1927 with the founding of a bi-monthly poetry review in Atlanta, edited by Ernest Hartsock. The magazine was entitled the Bozart, and fittingly ran a "Bozart Satire Contest." See Frederick J. Hoffman, et al., The Little Magazine: A History and Bibliography (Princeton, 1946), 283. See also the copy of the Bozart, II (Jan.-Feb., 1929), in the Donald Davidson Papers (Special Collections Department, the Joint University Libraries, Nashville, Tenn.). Hartsock clearly was affected by Mencken. See also Hartsock, "Roses in the Desert: A View of Contemporary Southern Verse," Sewanee Review, XXXVII (July, 1929), 328-35.

stimulating the Southern literary Renaissance. This short-lived (the last issue was in 1926) but very significant publication called itself "A National Magazine for the South." It also directly betrayed awareness of Mencken's criticisms in its first and second issues.¹⁰

Mencken's role was even greater in the establishment and evolution of another "little magazine" in the South in 1921. Emily Clark, brooding in Richmond, Virginia, over the deficiencies of Southern literature that had been exposed by Mencken in the "Sahara" essay, sent to the Baltimore sage a prospectus for a literary magazine that she and three other Richmond literary buffs were planning. Mencken's encouragement of the project, his recruitment of prestigious contributors for it, and constant advice to the editors¹¹ made The Reviewer something of a Fifth Column movement in the Southern Renaissance. Indeed, the first issue of the magazine (in February, 1921), contained an appreciative review of Mencken's Prejudices: Second Series, including admissions of "guilty as charged" on the "Sahara" essay

¹⁰The Double Dealer, I (January, 1921), 35; I (February, 1921), 37. See also, above, Chapter on the significance of The Double Dealer for the development of Southern and American letters.

The magazine had been founded because Miss Clark and the other originators sensed that "this moment is the time and Richmond is the place." Intending "to develop young Southern writers," but unwilling to deal with politics, the publication went through its first year receiving press notices "in the North, West and South from varied and unexpected sources," as well as being "paid the subtle compliment of being called unconventional in the South."\(^1\)

The second volume of the magazine was begun with a determination "to build *The Reviewer* with Southern material."\(^2\) Yet this same issue published a lead essay by a man, who although born in a marginally Southern city, was one who would cringe at the thought of being identified with the South. Mencken's "Morning Song in C Major" predictably continued the lambasting of the South the "Sahara" essay had begun. Carrying on his pet theme of the decline of the ante-bellum South's aristocracy and their replacement by "the degraded and uneducable poor whites,"\(^3\) Mencken characterized

\(^1\) *The Reviewer*, I (February, 1921), 25-27. Mencken was so pleased with the development of the magazine that he wrote an editorial praising it in 1922. See "Violets In The Sahara," *Baltimore Evening Sun*, May 15, 1922.

\(^2\) Emily Clark, "Beginning the Second Volume," *The Reviewer*, II (October, 1921), 37-39.

\(^3\) Ibid., 40.

\(^4\) H. L. Mencken, "Morning Song in C Major," *The Reviewer*, II (October, 1921), 2.
this new order as follows:

There are eighth-rate men wearing the stolen coats of dead first-rate men, and their congenital stupidity is not mitigated in the slightest by the fact that they now own cotton-mills, and sit on the boards of banks, and belong to the Elks, and have themselves elected to Congress.\textsuperscript{16}

But Mencken went on to issue a challenge to the "civilized minority" that he felt still existed in the South. They constituted "the germs of a renaissance" and "must come forth boldly and issue a plain challenge to the bawling proletarians who now claim and pollute its heritage."\textsuperscript{17}

Among those who came "forth boldly" in \textit{The Reviewer} in response to Mencken's challenge was Gerald W. Johnson. But the Greensboro newspaperman dared to disagree with the Baltimore guru on certain points. The South, according to Johnson, was "not the Sahara, but the Congo of the Bozart. Its pulses beat to the rhythm of the tom-tom, and it likes any color if it's red." And just as these conditions had produced "rare and exquisite" literary "orchids" such as Edgar Allan Poe, Sidney Lanier, and James Branch Cabell,\textsuperscript{18} so too would they continue to produce, as Johnson's 1923 essay offered a remarkable prophecy:

\begin{quote}
He who has the vision to see Southern literature at all—and I profess to have it—needs must see it stepping high. . . . It could not be otherwise. It has the pulse of the tom-toms in its veins, the scents of the jungle are in its nostrils and the flaming
\end{quote}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{16}Ibid., 3. \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{17}Ibid., 4. \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{18}Gerald W. Johnson, "The Congo, Mr. Mencken," \textit{The Reviewer}, III (July, 1923), 891-92.
\end{flushright}
colors of the jungle in its eyes. It will be colorful beyond belief, instead of a discreet magnolia it will come wearing smears of paint. . . . It may be outlandish, but it will not be monotonous. It may be gorgeously barbaric, but it will not be monotonous. For all I know, it may be in some manifestations tremendously evil—it may wallow in filth, but it will not dabble in dirt. 19

The Reviewer did not lose its regional self-consciousness upon its move to Chapel Hill in late 1924. 20 Paul Green, the new editor, issued "A Plain Statement About Southern Literature" in the first number to appear under his guidance. Damning the appearance of Volume XVII of the stilted and artificial "Library of Southern Literature," Green called for "enlightened sincerity" in a re-vitalized Southern literature. Southern writers should not imitate anyone—even Mencken—for "that Bull of Baltimore has his own rich and abundant method of bellowing, and an imitation of him is as bad as any other." Green saw "emerging in literature a New South whose possibilities are such as to startle even the American Mercury." It would be a literature that drew upon "a dynamism of emotion terrible enough in

19Ibid., 892-93. Years later, Johnson was to recall that although there were sprinklings of evidence that Southern literature was about to explode, his prophecy was largely "whistling in the dark." Interview with Gerald W. Johnson, June 22, 1973.

20The move was greeted with considerable enthusiasm by Howard Odum, further evidence of his awareness of all aspects of the emerging Southern Renaissance. See Odum to Mencken, December 11, 1924, in Odum Papers. Mencken replied that he had "strongly advised Miss Clark to make the transfer, and so keep it [The Reviewer] out of the hands of the Virginia Poetry Society." See Mencken to Odum, December 13, 1924, in ibid.
its intensity for the greatest art," an emotion derived from a rapidly changing South that was "becoming conscious that the world is more intricate than we had known, that there is sin in it and men struggling with undeserved and unaccountable misery and suffering."

After a year in Chapel Hill, The Reviewer was absorbed by The Southwest Review in Dallas, Texas. But in its five-year history, The Reviewer had provided clear evidence of the impact of the image of the benighted South on the genesis of Southern "little magazines," and on the Southern literary Renaissance.

The Reviewer, The Double Dealer, and other Southern "little magazines" all received well-deserved national attention. But the king of this medium in the South in the Twenties was clearly a Nashville, Tennessee, publication, The Fugitive: A Journal of Poetry.

In the summer of 1915, a group of friends with great literary rapport (most of them associated with Vanderbilt University) began to meet informally at the home of Sidney Mttron Hirsch in Nashville for discussion and debate with their esoteric host. In 1916 they began to discuss their own attempts at poetry, and, after an interruption for World War I, the meetings were resumed in earnest. In March, 1922, Hirsch suggested that the group publish a magazine of their

21 Paul Green, "A Plain Statement About Southern Literature," The Reviewer, V (January, 1925), 71-76.
poetry, and in April of that year the first number of The Fugitive was issued.\textsuperscript{22}

On the surface, the small collections of poetry that appeared in the nineteen issues before the project was terminated in December of 1925 was void of the pro-Southern attitudes that characterize the South Carolina Poetry Society and, to a lesser extent, The Double Dealer. The Fugitives were primarily interested in "art for art's sake," the mechanics of poetry, critical theory, the use of

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{22}The original title of the magazine was simply The Fugitive. The subtitle, A Journal of Poetry, was added beginning with Volume II.}

For the origins of the Fugitive group, see John L. Stewart, The Burden of Time: The Fugitives and Agrarians (Princeton, 1965), 1-31; and Louise Cowan, The Fugitive Group: A Literary History (Baton Rouge, 1959), 3-44. The Stewart volume is superb, and is the far more valuable of the two as a comprehensive treatment of the group. The Cowan work was initiated as a thesis at Vanderbilt University. Although not written under Donald Davidson's direction, it did receive a great deal of assistance from him; therefore, although Mrs. Cowan has authored an excellent study of the Fugitives, one suspects she is something of a literary "Court" historian. She and Davidson shared very similar social and political views. See, for example, Cowan to Davidson, July 28; August 25, 1953, in Davidson Papers.

Davidson was a staunch segregationist (of the forty boxes in the Davidson Papers at the Joint University Libraries in Nashville, four are on "segregation") whose objectivity seems to have been clouded by the Supreme Court's 1954 school decision. He understandably preferred the more favorable Cowan treatment of the Fugitives. In his introduction to a reprinting of The Fugitive (Gloucester, Mass., 1967), iv, he describes Professor Cowan's work "as the one authoritative and reliable history of the magazine and the group up to the year 1928," while dismissing Stewart as "confused and inaccurate."

For comments on the origins of the group by another "founder," see Allen Tate, "The Fugitive, 1922-1925: A Personal Recollection Twenty Years After," Princeton University Library Chronicle, III (1942), 75-84.
language, and other such purely aesthetic pursuits. As Ransom expressed it in his unsigned foreword to the first issue explaining the title of the publication: "The Fugitive flees from nothing faster than from the high caste Brahmins of the Old South."24

But if one looks deeper, regional self-consciousness is evident in the Fugitive poets. Although they viewed themselves as members of the international community of letters, they were all Southerners with similar Southern backgrounds.25 Donald Davidson, at a reunion of the

23 Cowan, The Fugitive Group, xvi; Cowan, The Southern Critics: An Introduction to the Criticism of John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, Donald Davidson, Robert Penn Warren, Cleanth Brooks, and Andrew Lytle (Irving, Texas, 1971), 1-66; Charles Allen, "The Fugitive," South Atlantic Quarterly, XLIII (October, 1944), 386, says: "There is absolutely no evidence that the periodical was agrarian or self-consciously regional." On the strong interest in criticism and the techniques of poetry, see the series of letters between Davidson and Tate in 1922 filed in Box 4 of the Davidson Papers.

It should be pointed out that the Fugitive's made significant contributions to the development of modern poetry, serving as a needed balance to the less disciplined "Imagist" school. See William C. Pratt (ed.), The Fugitive Poets (New York, 1965), 13-16.

24 The Fugitive, I (April, 1922), 2. Cowan, The Fugitive Group, 44, credits Ransom with the foreword. On the significance of the title, see also Albert Murray, South to a Very Old Place (New York, 1971), 29-31.

25 John M. Bradbury, The Fugitives: A Critical Account (Chapel Hill, 1958), 39; Cowan, The Fugitive Group, 7-17. See also Donald Davidson, Southern Writers in the Modern World (Athens, Ga., 1958), 29-30. Allen Tate, in his article "American Poetry Since 1920," The Bookman, LXVIII (January, 1929), 504, states that the Fugitive poetry reflected the writer's sectional background "in that it was supported by prejudices, feelings, values, into which the poets were born," but "quite unconsciously."
Fugitives held at Vanderbilt in 1956, commented that poetry inevitably had a political context. William Elliott, another Fugitive attending the reunion, added that "the poet is a part of his times."26

Thus the Fugitive poets do seem to have what might be called latent regional self-consciousness. John Bradbury has an excellent summary of this thought:

Even the advertising copy of the early magazine, with its quoting of Mencken, betrays regional self-consciousness. The magazine hastened to repudiate editorially 'the high-caste Brahmins of the Old South,' and Ransom's introductory poem proclaims him 'an alien' from the dogmas and 'tall steeples' of the area. Tate himself appended a note to his first contribution to The Double Dealer: 'Allen Tate writes that he is 21 and lives in Nashville, Tenn., of which the latter fact is the more damning.' Such protestations, aimed as they were at two highly unpalatable aspects of the region, its cultural provincialism and its fast-growing materialism, are in their backhanded way indicative of a 'sectional spirit' that would manifest itself positively only after 1925.27

Indeed, when Harriet Monroe praised Du Bose Heyward's and Hervey Allen's Carolina Chansons for its handling of the "soft, silken reminiscent life of the Old South,"28 after an earlier editorial in Poetry that seemed to call for nostalgic Southern poetry,29 the Fugitives responded so strongly that they seemed to betray the very regional self-consciousness

27Bradbury, The Fugitives, 7. See also Stewart, The Burden of Time, 50, 96.
29Poetry, XX (April, 1922), 31.
they were attempting to deny. Donald Davidson wrote an editorial in the June-July, 1923, issue of *The Fugitive* protesting Miss Monroe's encouragement of such provincialism, and Allen Tate wrote the acting editor of *Poetry* (Miss Monroe was in Europe) with another Fugitive protest:

> We do not disagree with Miss Monroe when she emphasizes the artistic possibilities latent in the traditions of the Old South; nor do we feel called upon to object if she feels—as she evidently does not—that this tradition is the only genuine source for Southern poets to draw upon. . . . But we fear very much to have the slightest stress laid upon Southern traditions in literature; we who are Southerners know the fatality of such an attitude—the old atavism and sentimentality are always imminent.

The Fugitives were rebelling against the genteel tradition of Southern letters in much the same way the "lost generation" of expatriates were reacting against what they felt to be a stifling tradition in American letters. Yet

---


32 C. Hugh Holman, *The Roots of Southern Writing: Essays on the Literature of the American South* (Athens, Ga., 1972), 189. See also Pratt, *The Fugitive Poets*, 22-28. Pratt supports the analogy with the "lost generation." He suggests that Sidney Merton Hirsch performed essentially the same function for the Fugitive group as did Gertrude Stein for the Paris writers.
their Southern heritage was too strong to escape and led to a latent glorification of the "Southern way" in many of their poems. A strong dose of classical education in their formative years led to a rich seasoning of classical references in their poetry. Virtually every number reflects this attraction to classical imagery. In addition, the Southern "sense of place" that is at the heart of the best Southern literature is certainly present in the Fugitive poems. A closeness to the land, an acute awareness of the elements—these traits go far beyond the earlier sentimental tradition in Southern letters. John Crowe Ransom's "Conrad in Twilight" is an often cited example:

```plaintext
Autumn days in our section
Are the most used-up thing on earth,
(Or in the waters under the earth),
Having no more color nor predilection
Than cornstalks too wet for the fire,
```

33 On the classical background of many of the Fugitive's see Cowan, The Fugitive Group, 3-22; and Stewart, The Burden of Time, 3-31. For an interesting view of the strong emphasis on the classical tradition so prevalent in Southern education see Edwin A. Miles, "The Old South and the Classical World," North Carolina Historical Review, XLVIII (July, 1971), 258-75.

34 See, for example, Tate, "Farewell to Anactoria," The Fugitive, I (June, 1922), 39; Tate, "Horatian Epoch To The Duchess of Malfi," ibid., I (October, 1922), 76; Hirsch, Nebrismus," ibid., I (December, 1922), 120-22; Ransom, "Philomela," ibid., II (February-March, 1923), 8-9; James Frank, "The Helmeted Minerva," ibid., II (April-May, 1923), 42-43; Ransom, "Lichas To Polydor," ibid., II (August-September, 1923), 118; Ransom, "Prometheus in Straits," ibid., III (February, 1924), 21; Davidson, "Palingenesis," ibid., III (June, 1924), 81.
A ribbon rotting on the byre,
A man's face as weathered as straw
By the summer's flare and the winter's flaw.35

The historical sense, made more acute by life in a rapidly changing South, also injected a strong strain of Southernism into much of the Fugitive poetry.36

The Fugitives were certainly aware of criticism of the South prior to 1925, but that year, as John Bradbury suggests, was the pivotal one in the emergence of a strong "sectional spirit" with some of the poets. The flurry of criticism that was bestowed upon the South, and especially Tennessee, over Fundamentalism, anti-evolution, and particularly the Scopes trial, did much to further the growing image of the benighted South.37 This acceleration of criticism was the exact catalyst needed to transform several of the Fugitives from a state of latent regional self-consciousness to one of conscious defenders of their native South, the latter position receiving its most eloquent expression in 1930 in the Agrarian manifesto I'll Take My Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition.38


36Pratt, The Fugitive Poets, 36.

37See above, Chapter IV, pp. 107-21.

38Although the Fugitive poets clearly were aware of themselves as Southerners, one must be cautious, tempting as the suggestion is, about establishing a simple and direct continuity between the Fugitive's and I'll Take My Stand. A
The significance of the Scopes case with reference to the origins of the Agrarians is well documented. At a reunion of the Fugitives held in Nashville in May, 1956, Donald Davidson specifically commented on the origins of the Agrarian movement: "If you had to pick a date, I think you'd pick 1925, when the Dayton trial set everything aflame. . . . [T]he Dayton trial . . . started a boiling controversy, and started a reconsideration." Davidson

number of scholars have used the term Fugitive-Agrarian, and although this is not without some validity, it is also misleading, for at least two reasons. First of all, of the sixteen Fugitives, only five were represented in the agrarian manifesto, I'll Take My Stand (Ransom, Warren, Tate, Davidson and Andrew Lytle, and Lytle appeared in only one number of The Fugitive, Vol. IV, March, 1925, p. 17). Second, The Fugitive was predominantly literary and had no central thesis, while I'll Take My Stand was only indirectly literary, being much more concerned with social issues and manifesting a definite philosophy. Furthermore, the Fugitives should not be thought of as a group past late 1925, when the magazine ceased to exist.

For examples of the over-simplified connections that are made between the two groups, see C. Hugh Holman, "Literature and Culture: The Fugitive-Agrarians," in Holman, Roots of Southern Writing, 187-93; and The Mississippi Quarterly, XIII (Spring, 1960), 53-98, which prints a series of papers presented at a joint session of the Southeastern American Studies Association and the South Atlantic Modern Language Association (Atlanta, November 7, 1959), entitled: "The Fugitive Agrarian Movement: A Symposium."

Virginia Jean Rock's superlative Ph.D dissertation, which George Tindall aptly describes in the bibliography to his The Emergence of the New South: 1913-1945 (Baton Rouge, 1967), 767, as "a definitive work if ever there were one," recognizes the common points in the two groups but concludes that they "were essentially different." See Rock, "The Making and Meaning of I'll Take My Stand: A Study in Utopian-Conservatism, 1925-1939" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, 1961), 28-37, quote from p. 32.

39 Purdy, Fugitive's Reunion, 199. The Davidson Papers, unfortunately, have no outgoing correspondence for 1925.
expanded this view in his 1957 Lamar Lectures at Mercer University. There he observed that "the Dayton . . . trial . . ., with its jeering accompaniment of large-scale mockery directed against Tennessee and the South, broke in upon our [the Fugitive's] literary concerns like a midnight alarm." For both Davidson and John Crowe Ransom the trial dramatized "how difficult it was to be a Southerner in the twentieth century, and how much more difficult to be a Southerner and also a writer."41

Louise Cowan deals in some depth with the significance of the Dayton trial in directing some of the Fugitives to more politically-oriented subjects. The continued cries of "benighted South" over Dayton were a major factor. For Ransom, Davidson, Tate, and Warren, she states: "As in all cultural crises, the turmoil issuing from the trial brought into the foreground ideas and attitudes that, taken for granted in the past, were no longer generally accepted."42

The leading student of the Agrarian group, Virginia

40Davidson, Southern Writers, 30.

41Ibid., 40-42, quote from p. 40. Davidson's immediate reaction was seen in very "un-Fugitive" poems such as Fire on Belmont Street," an indictment of the evils of industrialism and the machine age. See also Davidson's "First Fruits of Dayton," Forum, LXXIX (June, 1928), 896-907; and Davidson to E. C. Aswell (ed. of Forum), October 2, 1927, for comments on the genesis of this article.

42Cowan, The Fugitive Group, 208. Tate was probably the most reluctant of the four to join the agrarian movement. The Scopes trial was the ultimate cause of his conversion. See ibid., 243-45.
Rock, also feels that the Scopes trial (and the diatribes it provoked) was the principal catalyst for the emergence of the agrarians. Pointing to the attacks of Mencken, Joseph Wood Krutch, The Nation, and others, she states:

It was this 'campaign' of villification that aroused some of the Fugitives to concerns more consciously Southern, less obviously literary and aesthetic. . . . What happened in 1925 in Dayton forged a chain of episodes which (in the opinion of the aroused Vanderbilt men of letters) threatened to fasten on the South the superficial, debilitating, and dehumanizing expectations of a 'scientific' civilization while it destroyed the spiritual, the unique character of their heritage.

Other scholars concur with this emphasis on the Scopes trial. John M. Bradbury and John L. Stewart both feel this was the dominant factor in the conversion of Agrarianism, and Alexander Karanikas agrees. Randall Stewart advances a similar thesis, as does George Tindall. But perhaps the most telling statement is obtained by returning to Donald Davidson. With reference to the goads

43See above, Chapter IV, pp. 118-21.

44Rock, "Making and Meaning Of I'll Take My Stand," 206, 209. See also ibid., Appendix C (on the Scopes Trial), 577-78.


emanating from Baltimore, he asked: "We rubbed our eyes and
looked around in astonishment and apprehension. Was it
possible that nobody in the South knew how to reply to a
vulgar rhetorician like H. L. Mencken?" 47

The Dayton trial, however, although certainly the
most important aspect of the assault on the benighted South
that galvanized the agrarian counter-attack, was obviously
not the only factor. Indeed, Donald Davidson felt that
something akin to a "cold Civil War" had been going on since
the end of World War I, with journalists and a variety of
other writers constantly hammering away at the South, thus
breaking what Davidson called the "Peace of Henry Grady." 48

The growing national sport of "South-baiting," and especially
the charges of intellectual backwardness such as were made
in Mencken's "Sahara of the Bozart" essay, were too much for
these Southern men of letters to let go unchallenged. 49

The furor over the textile strikes in North Carolina in the fall
of 1929 was a major factor in their decision to go ahead with
the preparation of a formal agrarian manifesto. These
strikes, and the violence that accompanied them, had a dual
impact on the emerging agrarians. On the one hand, the one-
sided coverage of the events caused them to react in much

47 Davidson, Southern Writers, 37.

48 Ibid., 34.

the same way they did to the reporting of the Scopes trial. At the same time, the "fact that chaos had erupted in the South as a result of industrial injustices offered more ammunition for their [agrarian] attack."50

After 1925, and the bombardment of the South over the Scopes trial and related issues, the writings of Davidson, Tate, Ransom, and Warren began to take on an increasingly strong tone of regional self-consciousness. In 1926, Tate, for example, began to show evidence of the transition. In that year he wrote the first version of his poem "Ode to the Confederate Dead" as part of a personal quest he had undertaken to find his relation to Southern history. He also began to collect material for a planned essay on fundamentalism, obviously under the impact of the Scopes trial.51 Most significantly, he wrote Ransom of his conviction that they "must do something about Southern history and the culture of the South." As it happened, the forces that had brought Tate to this determination had also been affecting Ransom, and he had written a similar letter to Tate on the very same day. The letters crossed and the agrarians commitment had been made.52

Donald Davidson similarly began to show signs of the

51Cowan, The Fugitive Group, 242-43.
52Tate, "The Fugitive, 1922-25," 84. See also Rock, "Making and Meaning of I'll Take My Stand," 222-23.
transition in 1926. In March of that year he wrote John Gould Fletcher that "Tate, Ransom, myself and maybe others ... have maybe found a cause of sort ... to 'do something for the South.'"\textsuperscript{53} Several months later Davidson broached the possibility of an anthology of Fugitive poems to a publisher and suggested that such a collection might sell well. Davidson went on to explain: "Interest in things Southern would help us. Perhaps even the fact that a collection of poetry should come out of 'darkest Tennessee' would be enough of a contradiction to excite curiosity."\textsuperscript{54}

This trend continued in 1927. Having begun a program of independent study in Southern history, Davidson also began to write a series of poems with a strong Southern orientation. These were published as \textit{The Tall Men} in

\textsuperscript{53}Donald Davidson to John Gould Fletcher, March 21, 1926, in Davidson Papers. Virginia Rock asserts that Davidson's "The Artist As Southerner," \textit{Saturday Review of Literature}, II (May 15, 1926), 781-83, "started Davidson toward a conscious and explicit affirmation of the Southern heritage as legitimate material for the artist." See Rock, "Making and Meaning of \textit{I'll Take My Stand}," 46, Note 2.

\textsuperscript{54}Davidson to Ferris Greenslet (of Houghton-Mifflin), August 17, 1926, in Davidson Papers. This letter, of course, is evidence of the enormous impact the attacks on Tennessee over the Scopes trial had on Davidson and other Fugitives. On this subject see also Davidson on John Gould Fletcher, June 13, 1927, in \textit{ibid}. The volume was published, but by Harcourt, Brace, and Co., on January 9, 1928, as \textit{Fugitives: An Anthology of Verse} (New York, 1928). Only forty-nine of the ninety-four poems included had originally appeared in \textit{The Fugitive}, and the additions gave a decidedly more sectional tone to the volume than the magazine had possessed.
1927.\textsuperscript{55} Davidson explained to his publisher that the seven poems were "intended as a sort of emotionalized definition of the modern Southerner" and that he had undertaken this quest because: "The South, I believe, has arrived at a crisis. It has always possessed great individuality which under modern influences it runs great risk of losing."\textsuperscript{56}

Other future agrarians were similarly giving a great deal of attention to the Southern past. Tate followed his "Ode to the Confederate Dead" (1926) with a biography of Stonewall Jackson in 1928, and one of Jefferson Davis the following year. Robert Penn Warren betrayed the same consciousness of the Southern experiences with a biography of John Brown in 1929.\textsuperscript{57}

\textsuperscript{55}\textsuperscript{55}Donald Davidson, The Tall Men (Boston & New York, 1927). On the impact of historical awareness on Davidson and the other future agrarians, see F. Garvin Davenport, Jr., The Myth of Southern History: Historical Consciousness in Twentieth-Century Southern Literature (Nashville, 1970), 47-48.


A series of attacks on the benighted South were a major factor in generating this attention to the Southern past. Also of considerable importance was the "physical, intellectual, or spiritual absence from the South" that many of the future agrarians experienced. Whether by service overseas in World War I (Frank Lawrence Owsley, H. C. Nixon, Tate, and Davidson), study abroad (Ransom and Warren--both as Rhodes scholars), expatriation (John Gould Fletcher), or study or residence outside the South (John Donald Wade studying at Harvard Graduate School, Stark Young teaching at Amherst, Andrew Lytle as a student at the Yale Drama School), virtually all of the future "Twelve Southerners" spent time outside their native region which helped start them thinking about their identity as Southerners.58

By the second half of 1927 Davidson was becoming even more firmly committed to some type of formal defense of the South and its "ways." A long letter to John Gould Fletcher in mid-June is particularly revealing. Referring to himself, Tate, and Ransom, Davidson told Fletcher that they "were all trying to formulate . . . some kind of modus operandi for Southern Americans." Explaining why, Davidson continued:

I can hardly read many of the observations about Southern affairs now appearing here and there in New York magazines without getting sick at heart. As my friend Tate has observed, we are in these days fallen

a prey to the mercies of a new act of 'scalawags' and 'carpetbaggers.'

The project continued to coalesce in 1928 and by early 1929 things were well formed. Formal plans were begun in July of that year, and the textile strikes in North Carolina in the fall removed any latent doubts that remained about going ahead. Davidson, Tate, and Ransom (basically in that order) were the prime movers behind the project, and feverish activities over format, contributors, and even the title led to resolution of these problems and the publication by "Twelve Southerners" of *I'll Take My Stand; The South and the Agrarian Tradition* on November 12, 1930.

59 Davidson to Fletcher, June 13, 1927, in Davidson Papers.

60 The story of the final stages (July, 1929, to publication) of the evolution of the volume has been told, and told well, by Rock's "Making and Meaning of *I'll Take My Stand,*" passim, but especially pp. 222-67, and in Donald Davidson's "*I'll Take My Stand:* A History," *The American Review,* V (Summer, 1935), 301-21. There is no point in duplicating their work here. My purpose has been to correlate the origins of the volume with the image of the benighted South that was so prevalent in its formative stages. On this topic, see Davidson to Ransom, July 5, 1929; Davidson to Fletcher, March 17, 1930; Davidson to Warren, March 17, 1930; Davidson to Stringfellow Barr (later dropped as a contributor), March 17, 1930, all in Davidson Papers; Davidson to Tate, February 5, July 29, October 26, December 29, 1929, September 5, 1929, all reprinted in John Tyree Fain and Thomas Daniel Young (eds.), "The Agrarian Symposium: Letters of Allen Tate and Donald Davidson, 1928-1930," *The Southern Review,* VIII (N.S., October, 1972), 849-81; and Tate to Davidson, February 18, August 10, November 9, December 11, December 12, 1929, September 3, September 7, 1930, in ibid., 853-82.

It should be pointed out that Andrew Lytle, although only a Fugitive for one of the last issues of the magazine, was sympathetic to the ultimate agrarian position as early as 1929. See Lytle to Davidson, May 24, and July 2, 1926, in Davidson Papers.
The debate over the title is interesting. H. C. Nixon suggested "The Promise of Southern Life" as a Southern answer to Herbert Croly's well known The Promise of American Life (1909). Tate and Warren preferred "Tracts Against Communism: The South and the Agrarian Tradition." In spite of these suggestions, the excerpt from the minstrel tune "Dixie" survived.

Another noteworthy occurrence during the final stages of the manifesto's preparation was the development of a rift between the Vanderbilt-centered group and Howard Mumford Jones, W. T. Couch, Odum, and others at the University of North Carolina. In July, 1929, Jones, then in the history department at UNC, wrote Davidson to request his participation in a volume the University of North Carolina Press was planning on "Civilization Below The Potomac." Davidson wrote Tate about the prospect, expressing considerable contempt for Jones, Odum, and other Chapel Hill

61 H. C. Nixon to Davidson, March 22, 1930, in Davidson Papers.

62 Tate to E. P. Saxton (of Harper and Row), September 3, 1930; Tate to Davidson, September 3, September 7, 1930; Warren to Davidson, June 25, 1920; all in Davidson Papers.

63 H. M. Jones to Davidson, July 25, 1929, in Davidson Papers. The volume was to be "on the general lines" of Harold Stearns' (ed.), Civilization In The United States: An Inquiry by Thirty Americans (New York, 1922). See also W. T. Couch to Donald Davidson, February 16, 1931, and May 6, 1932 (two letters), in Davidson Papers.
"Progressives." Yet he eventually contributed an essay, "The Trend of Literature," to the volume, which appeared under the editorship of W. T. Couch (Jones left UNC in 1930) as *Culture In The South* in 1935. Ironically, the preface to the UNC effort (written by Couch) strongly attacked, and somewhat misinterpreted, *I'll Take My Stand*, and posed *Culture In The South* as being a more realistic treatment.  

The publication of *I'll Take My Stand*, in spite of the differences Couch saw between it and *Culture In The South*, represents growth out of the same intellectual climate as the Chapel Hill volume. Just as the renaissance at the University of North Carolina was in part crystallized, 

64 Davidson to Tate, July 29, 1929, in Davidson Papers. See also Davidson to Tate, December 29, 1929, and H. C. Nixon to Davidson, May 25, 1930, in ibid. 

65 W. T. Couch (ed.), *Culture In The South* (Chapel Hill, 1935), vii-xii; and Couch, "The Agrarian Romance," *South Atlantic Quarterly*, XXXVI (October, 1937), 419-30. Howard Odum, ever stirring up new potions of the Chapel Hill-based aspects of the Southern renaissance (see above, Chapter VI), played a significant role in the conception and promotion of *Culture In The South*. See Odum to E. M. Williams, January 3, 1933; Odum to Herschel Brickell (of Henry Holt & Co.), October 30, 1929, both in Odum Papers. Odum was less than enthusiastic about *I'll Take My Stand*. See, for example, Odum to Mencken, November 3, 1930, in ibid. Odum did, however, later ask Davidson to contribute an article to *Social Forces*. See Odum to Davidson, March 15, April 4, and May 11, 1934, in Davidson Papers. 

Mencken, as one might expect, missed the point of the volume (*I'll Take My Stand*) and dismissed it as absurd. See Mencken to Odum, November 8, 1930, in Odum Papers. See also Mencken's "The South Astir," *Virginia Quarterly Review*, XI (January, 1935), 47-60, for a more complete indictment of the agrarians; and Mencken to Davidson, March 25, 1931, in Davidson Papers.
and certainly accelerated, by the growing images of the benighted South in the Twenties, so were these forces instrumental in transforming certain Vanderbilt scholars from latent regional self-consciousness to the strong sectional position expressed in their 1930 publication:

All the articles [in *I'll Take My Stand*] . . . tend to support a Southern way of life against what may be called the American or prevailing way; and all as much as agree that the best terms in which to represent the distinction are contained in the phrase, *Agrarian versus Industrial*. . . . The younger Southerners, who are being converted frequently to the industrial gospel, must come back to the support of the Southern tradition . . . Southerners have a filial duty to discharge to their own section.66

In the realm of fiction there is also strong evidence of the impact of the image of the benighted South. The Gastonia textile strikes and the violence associated with them, for example, touched off a series of novels dealing in whole or in part with this tragedy.67 Even William Faulkner was affected by the image, although in a rather unusual way. Faulkner received high critical acclaim but small sales for *The Sound and the Fury* and *Sartoris* (both

---

66Twelve Southerners, "Introduction: A Statement of Principles," in *I'll Take My Stand*, ix-xi. Although all twelve contributed to this introduction, it was largely written by Ransom.

The "message" of the agrarians will be more fully discussed in the next chapter.

67See, for example, Fielding Burke [Olive Tilford Dargan], *Call Home The Heart* (London & New York, 1932); Grace Lumpkin, *To Make My Bread* (New York, 1932); and Dorothy Myra Page, *Gathering Storm: A Story of the Black Belt* (New York, 1932).
published in 1929). Sensing the public appetite for more
critical depictions of the South, he deliberately sensation-
ized Sanctuary (1932) in order to make money\(^6^8\) and
experienced a financial success due to his correct assess-
ment of the national temper.

All of the major writers of Southern fiction in the
Twenties and Thirties were affected by the prevailing
intellectual climate of opinion they operated in. The image
of the benighted South, especially as advanced by H. L.
Mencken and his disciples, was a prime force in forming this
climate. Jay Hubbell states that Mencken's "Sahara" essay
served as a challenge to the 'Young Intellectuals' of the
Southern states."\(^6^9\) Frances Newman, in a 1925 article, held
"that the publication of Cabell's 'Jurgen' in 1919, and Mr.
Mencken's 'Sahara of the Bozart' in 1920, was the beginning
of a literary activity that extends from Dallas to Rich-
mond."\(^7^0\) Oscar Cargill claims that "like Aaron's rod

---

\(^6^8\) William Faulkner, Sanctuary (Modern Library ed.,
New York, 1932), v. See also Gerald W. Johnson's "The
Horrible South," Virginia Quarterly Review, XI (April,
1935), 201-17, a typically insightful article by Johnson
suggesting that "the horrible South" had supplied the
material for much of the best Southern writing up to that
date.

\(^6^9\) Jay B. Hubbell, The South In American Literature:
1607-1900 (Durham, 1954), 847.

\(^7^0\) Quoted in Edwin Mims, The Advancing South:
Stories of Progress and Reaction (Garden City, 1926), 252.
Mencken's goad had proved itself a symbol of fertility."\textsuperscript{71}
And even the champion of the "South-Baiters" suggested a correlation between his insults and the renaissance. In an introduction to a reprinting of "The Sahara of the Bozart," he commented on its significance: "There is reason to believe that my attack had something to do with the revival of Southern letters which followed in the middle 1920's."\textsuperscript{72}

Critics of the benighted South, especially Mencken, made at least three specific contributions to the emergence of the Southern literary Renaissance. First, the attacks on the South helped break up the stifling genteel tradition that was retarding the development of high-level Southern literary activity. Mencken "was indeed not a so-called 'constructive' critic, but an artist in destruction," according to Louis Rubin.\textsuperscript{73} Gerald Johnson has observed that intellectual ferment had been going on in the South for some time prior to Mencken's attack, but the genteel

\textsuperscript{71}Oscar Cargill, "Mencken and the South," \textit{Georgia Review}, VI (1952), 375. Howard Odum, in Louis D. Rubin, Jr. and Robert D. Jacobs (eds.), \textit{Southern Renascence: The Literature of the Modern South} (Baltimore, 1953), 99, says that Mencken "was both symbol and reality of outside goading and encouragement of Southern writers."

\textsuperscript{72}H. L. Mencken, \textit{A Mencken Chrestomathy} (New York, 1956), 184. See also anon. \textit{The Literary Digest}, LXXXV (May 2, 1925), 31-32; and Mencken, "The Late Confederacy Is Once More Up In Rebellion," \textit{Chicago Tribune}, December 7, 1924. See also Virginius Dabney to Donald Davidson, March 1, 1929, in Davidson Papers.

tradition had formed a "crust" that locked in this fermentation. The "Sahara" essay, in Johnson's opinion, was "an atomic bomb" that "broke the crust holding everything down" and unleashed the Southern Renaissance. And once this crust was broken, the ferment bubbled over with "little magazines" which provided both stimulus and outlet for the poetry and prose that came forth with such quality and quantity in the Twenties and Thirties. And once this "new spirit" in Southern letters had been unleashed, it would nurture upon itself in chain-reaction fashion.

A second major effect of the attacks of Mencken and others was, quite simply, to make some Southern intellectuals angry. Many of them probably shared the reaction of Donald Davidson, cited previously, of "looking around in astonishment" and asking if it was possible that no one in the South "knew how to reply to a vulgar rhetorician like H. L. Mencken."

Most importantly, the charges of Southern backwardness served to accelerate the strong sense of regional

---

74 Interview with Gerald W. Johnson, June 22, 1973. Johnson to author, July 7, 1970, emphasizes, however, that Mencken was simply a catalyst. "The stuff was already there, merely held in suspension. But I must say that as a catalyst he was superb."

75 Nell Battle Lewis, "A New Spirit," Raleigh (N.C.) News and Observer, October 18, 1925. For an example of the snowballing impact of "little magazines" assisting each other, see Du Bose Heyward to Davidson, January 14, 1924, in Davidson Papers.

76 See above, pp. 259-60.
self-consciousness that was emerging in many Southern intellectuals. It is absolutely impossible to understand this phenomenon without viewing it in the perspective of what was happening to the South in the 1920's. As has been asserted, this decade brought unprecedented changes to the region, and these changes, in turn, so upset all aspects of the Southern order that enormous tension was generated. With World War I, change suddenly became the dominant factor in Southern life. Allen Tate holds that with the war, "the South re-entered the world--but gave a backward glance as it stepped over the border: that backward glance gave us the Southern renascence, a literature conscious of the past in the present." Fundamentalism, anti-evolution, prohibition, and the Ku Klux Klan all represent attempts by the South to cope with these changes. The Southern literary Renaissance and the agrarian movement were simply more positive manifestations emanating from essentially the same

---


forces as the aforementioned more notorious movements.

William Faulkner, clearly the giant of Southern writers, provides a classic example of the impact of the changing South (and world) on the production of great literature. After service with the Royal Air Force in Canada (he was too short to qualify for the American Armed Forces), Faulkner spent most of the Twenties in vagabond fashion, working for awhile in New York, traveling briefly in Europe, touring the Gulf Coast of the United States, living in New Orleans, and generally wandering about. These travels and experiences, taking place in the midst of a rapidly changing South, finally affected Faulkner in much the same way it did many other participants in the Southern Renaissance. The tensions and instability led to a re-evaluation of one's identity and heritage. In Faulkner's case, in the late 1920's this led to the creation of his great fictional device of Yoknapatawpha County, and he spent the rest of his brilliant career exploring through this vehicle the rich subtleties of his Mississippi heritage.

And so the familiar pattern that led to high level cultural creativity in the Golden and Silver Ages of Roman literature, in the Elizabethan Renaissance, in the American Renaissance of the 1850's, and in the surge in American letters in the 1890's, is witnessed again in the South of the Twenties. A period of turbulent change led to acute anxiety and tension among Southern intellectuals, and this electric atmosphere generated one of the most remarkable outbursts of intellectual activity in the history of the Western World.
CHAPTER VIII

AGRARIANS IN A CHANGING WORLD: A SEARCH FOR ORDER

The reception afforded the publication of I'll Take My Stand: The South And The Agrarian Tradition in 1930 indicates the depths of misunderstanding that many of its readers fell to. Charges of naivete, romanticism, idealism --even fascism--were leveled against the twelve authors.\(^1\) Initially, the Agrarians mounted a strong counterattack, including formal debates against their opponents,\(^2\) political activism,\(^3\) and active publishing in a variety of

---

\(^1\) For a sampling of the many reviews, see Virginia J. Rock, "The Making and Meaning of I'll Take My Stand: A Study in Utopian-Conservatism, 1925-1939" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, 1961), 33-45. On the charges of fascism, see ibid., 401-12.

\(^2\) At least five debates were held: November 14, 1930, John Crowe Ransom vs. Stringfellow Barr, at the Richmond (Va.) Civic Auditorium for over two hours before an audience of approximately 3,500; Dec. 15, 1930, Ransom vs. W. S. Knickerbocker (ed. of the Sewanee Review), in New Orleans; Jan. 9, 1931, Ransom vs. Barr again, at the Univ. of Chattanooga; Feb. 12, 1931, Ransom vs. William D. Anderson (a Macon, Ga. industrialist), at Emory Univ.; and May 21, 1931, Donald Davidson vs. Knickerbocker, at Columbia, Tennessee. On the debates see Rock, "Making And Meaning Of I'll Take My Stand," 349-60. See also Donald Davidson to John Gould Fletcher, January 18, 1931, in the Donald Davidson Papers (Special Collections Department, the Joint University Libraries, Nashville, Tenn.).

\(^3\) On the political activities of the Agrarians, see the letter from "The Committee for the Alliance of Agrarians
mediums. The high point of this attempted defense was reached in 1936 when eight of the original twelve joined with others sympathetic to the cause to publish a second symposium, *Who Owns America?* Although this symposium was not the last effort of the Agrarians, they found themselves increasingly on the defensive in the late Thirties, and essentially forgotten by the end of World War II. Then, in 1962, Harper and Row resurrected *I'll Take My Stand* (long out of print) with a paperback edition of the volume, and a

and Distributist Groups" to "Members of the Nashville Conference," August 31, 1936, in Davidson Papers; and "Minutes of Convention Held by The Committee For the Alliance of Agrarian And Distributist Groups" (Nashville, Tennessee, June 4-5, 1936), in Andrew Nelson Lytle Papers (Special Collections Department, the Joint University Libraries, Nashville, Tenn.). See also Lytle to Davidson, November 2, 1932, in Lytle Papers; and Rock, "Making and Meaning of *I'll Take My Stand*," 360-68.

4 See Rock, "Making And Meaning of *I’ll Take My Stand*," 579-87 (Appendix D) for "A List of Reviews, Articles, And Books By The Agrarians Relevant To Agrarianism And The South 1931-39." The principal outlets were two publications edited by Herbert Agar, *The American Review* and *Free America* (the latter was not established until January, 1937). For correspondence relevant to these publishing efforts, see Herbert Agar to Davidson, May 17, 1939, in Davidson Papers. See also William Watts Ball to Davidson, May 2, 1935; and Davidson to Ball, May 10, 1935, and January 10, 1937, in William Watts Ball Papers (Manuscripts Dept., William R. Perkins Library, Duke University, Durham, N. C.).

5 Herbert Agar and Allen Tate (eds.), *Who Owns America? A New Declaration of Independence* (Boston and New York, 1936). On the evolution of this second symposium see Agar to Davidson, September 16, 1935, and January 12, 1936, in Davidson Papers; and Rock, "Making and Meaning Of *I'll Take My Stand*," 387-98. The eight of the original *I’ll Take My Stand* group who participated in *Who Owns America?* were: Davidson, Lyle Lanier, Tate, Lytle, F. L. Owsley, Ransom, J. D. Wade, and Warren.
new generation of readers, more receptive to the true meaning of the highly sophisticated agrarian message, discovered the Agrarian manifesto.

The 1920's and 1930's, as William Leuchtenburg has pointed out, contained the "perils of prosperity," and these "perils" had been a major catalyst for the Agrarian writers. But the 1960's and 1970's would produce "perils" of even greater magnitude. The crunch of urbanization, the depersonalization of industrialization, mechanization, and computerization, the ecological and pollution crises that threaten survival, and the general chaos of the contemporary world had led to renewed interest in the message of the Agrarians.  

Frederick Jackson Turner was moved to write his


7It is interesting to note the extreme tension resulting from rapid change (especially the rural to urban transition and the subsequent sense of dislocation), evident in both the South of the Twenties and that of the Sixties. Larry McMurtry, In A Narrow Grave: Essays on Texas (Austin, 1968), 127, commenting on the abnormally high homicide rate in Houston in the 1960's, observes that "a great many Houstonians are still in the process of transition from country ways to city ways. They are not yet urban, but they are no longer quite country, either. Many of them are poor, and the unaccustomed urban pressures frustrate them severely." These frustrations, according to McMurtry, often lead to violence.

The pervasiveness of this sense of dislocation is evident in another Southern writer, William Styron, who has a leading character of one of his novels (Peyton Loftis), in speaking of her father to a friend, comment: "Those people in the Lost Generation. . . . They weren't lost. What they were doing was losing us." Styron, Lie Down in Darkness (Signet paperback ed., N. Y., 1952), 224.
famous 1893 essay on "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" by reading the report of the Superintendent of the Census of 1890 stating that the American frontier was closed. Another major demographic step was marked by the census of 1920, which determined that by that year over fifty per cent of the American people lived in cities. Suburbs afforded some measure of psychological relief from urban tensions for the next half-century, but then the census of 1970 noted that more people now live in suburbs than in cities in the United States. To paraphrase Turner, the "suburb has passed by," and with its passing has gone the last psychological "safety-valve" available to a people now seemingly doomed to life in megalopolis.

The Agrarians had attempted to cope with problems in the Twenties and Thirties that, relatively speaking, were just as acute as were those for the generation of the 1960's and 1970's suffering from what Alvin Toffler calls Future Shock. The common heritage the Agrarians shared, combined with their strikingly uniform education and experiences, served to give them a "sense of belonging" which enabled them to cope with the alienation and despair that T. S. Eliot, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, and others

---


were recording so brilliantly in the Twenties. Wary of the progress of "science, industrialization, and urbanization," and the "New South" generally, they called for a maintenance of "Southern values." But these "values" were not held to be, as many critics of the Agrarians charged, of the "moonlight and magnolia" variety. In their most fundamental fashion, the "Southern values" the Agrarians championed derived from a way of life dependent upon nature, and therefore possessing the order of nature. This was in vivid contrast to their vision of an artificial existence molded by science and machines. And the saving virtues of those "values" were not restricted to the South, they pointed out, in a conscious appeal that they be heeded both in the South and beyond its borders.

---


11 In essence, they shared the distinction that Marvin Meyers claims the Jacksonian's made between the "real people" (basically those who earned their livelihood by working with their hands) and the "un-real people." See Meyers, The Jacksonian Persuasion: Politics And Belief (Stanford, Calif., 1957). In sum, their agrarianism encompassed more than farming.

12 Twelve Southerners, I'll Take My Stand, x-xi.
Aesthetic, religious, and humanistic values were held most dear in *I'll Take My Stand*. The religious aspect, in the broadest sense of the term, is most apparent. In many ways the Agrarians were presenting, and glorifying, what Lewis Simpson has called the "Southern spiritual nation." According to Simpson, the potential quest for this redemptive image was present in the ante-bellum South, but was stifled by the obsessive pro-slavery argument. The Civil War and emancipation removed this barrier, and then the experience of World War I fully opened the gates of creativity by making Southern intellectuals aware that the South was "a part of the apocalypse of modern civilization: the revelation of the horror of a scientific-industrial-technological machine." This enlightening impact of World War I gave these Southern intellectuals a new perspective on the Civil War, the South's defeat in it, and the Southern past in general. The Agrarians particularly, searching for order in the midst of the "general apocalyptic mood" that swept the Western World after the First World War, "expanded

---

13For detailed exegesis of the various essays see Rock, "Making and Meaning Of *I'll Take My Stand,*" 268-329, 437-55.


15See above, Chapter III, pp. 59-60.

and intensified the meaning of the Southern past." In so doing, again according to Lewis Simpson:

They discovered (whether literally or metaphorically or somehow in both ways) the true meaning of the defeat of the South in the Civil War: it was a defeat of the traditional humanistic-Christian community of the West, a part of the general defeat of this community in modern history. This was an exciting discovery; it made the Southern past seem immensely important, and it moved the Agrarians toward transforming the metaphysics of rememberance into a metaphysical basis for restoring order.

Thus the Agrarians came to view the key issue of modern culture as Agrarianism versus Industrialism (in the very broadest sense of those terms), and they therefore directed I'll Take My Stand at this issue. This manifesto implied "at once the Southern discovery of the crisis of the literary order [due to the continuing encroachments of technology], the image of the modern writer as the estranged heroic Prophet-Priest-Artist, and the necessity of restoring the Third Realm—the literary order—as a redemptive force in Western civilization." The stakes in this restoration effort are extremely high. Faced with a burgeoning

---


18 Ibid. Simpson points out that the same impulse profoundly affected Marcel Proust and T. S. Eliot. See ibid., xxv-xxvi.

technology that threatens the very survival of the Republic of Letters, and all it stands for in the history of Western civilization, with a new "language" of the computer and the sciences, the seemingly simplistic dichotomy established by the Agrarians takes on new meanings. As Simpson profoundly admonishes:

If in its final triumph, a purely scientific-technological society has no use for words and letters, they will cease to be used. The resources of literary alienation will have been exhausted. The crisis of the literary order will disappear. You cannot renew what is not needed. . . .

The Agrarians were deeply concerned by the lack of appreciation in a new generation of Southerners (and Americans in general), who were growing up in an increasingly non-agrarian society of the meaning of the agrarian tradition. A desire to educate these people was a major factor in the genesis of *I'll Take My Stand*. But the Agrarians were never able to escape a fundamental dilemma: how to restore the agrarian tradition without the assistance of a huge

---

federal bureaucracy whose very existence would be antithetical to the agrarian vision.21

Today the agrarian tradition seems to be on its way to extinction.22 The yeoman has been replaced by the agribusinessman, and the apparition of the monster tractor John Steinbeck detailed in his vignette on that mechanical device in The Grapes of Wrath23 has grown a thousand fold. The potential manifestations of the loss of this tradition are ominous. As Jay Hubbell asked rhetorically in 1935 in contrasting the South to what he viewed as the sterility of

21Rock, "Making And Meaning Of I'll Take My Stand," 412. The ambivalent reaction of the Agrarians to the Tennessee Valley Authority and its programs is a classic example of this dilemma operating on them. On this subject see Edward Shapiro, "The Southern Agrarians and the Tennessee Valley Authority," American Quarterly, XXII (Winter, 1970), 791-806. Robert Penn Warren's novel Flood (New York, 1963), 112-28, but especially pp. 112-13, questions the "progress" involved in the TVA-style project the novel deals with.

22This question was discussed in a symposium held at Western Carolina University, Cullowhee, N. C., on November 15, 1972. See The Sylva (N. C.) Herald and Ruralite, November 23, 1972. For a stimulating essay relating this decline to contemporary Presidential politics see Tom Wicker, "The Hunters in the Woods," The New York Times, November 26, 1972, Section E. p. 9.

another region: "Is not one Middle West enough?" 24

24 Jay Broadus Hubbell, "Southern Magazines," in W. T. Couch (ed.), Culture in the South (Chapel Hill, 1935), 181. This inferred criticism of the Middle West, as it contrasts to the traditions and values of the South, is particularly intriguing when one considers the "revolt from the village" motif that native authors of the Middle West such as Sinclair Lewis and Sherwood Anderson have created. See Hilfer, The Revolt From The Village, passim. See also Michael Lesy, Wisconsin Death Trip (New York, 1973), passim, for an imaginative treatment of the problems that led to the revolt."
BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES

Manuscript Collections


Donald Davidson Papers. Special Collections Department, the Joint University Libraries, Nashville, Tennessee.

Nell Battle Lewis Papers. Division of Archives and Manuscripts, State Department of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina.

Andrew Nelson Lytle Papers. Special Collections Department, the Joint University Libraries, Nashville, Tennessee.

Howard Washington Odum Papers. Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.


Newspapers

The New York Times (New York City), 1920-1933.

The Baltimore Sun, 1925, 1929-1930.

The Greensboro Daily News (Greensboro, North Carolina), 1925, 1929.

The Raleigh News and Observer (Raleigh, North Carolina), 1925, 1929.
Periodicals

The American Mercury, 1924-1935.

The American Review, 1933-1937.

Current History, 1919-1930.

The Double Dealer, 1921-1926.

Free America, 1937.

The Fugitive, 1922-1925.

The Literary Digest, 1919-1930.

The Reviewer, 1921-1925.

The Smart Set, 1919-1929.


Time, 1923-1936.

Books and Pamphlets


Couch, William Terry (ed.). *Culture In The South.* Chapel Hill, 1935.


________. *Still Rebels, Still Yankees And Other Essays.* Baton Rouge, 1972.

________. *The Tall Men.* Boston and New York, 1927.


**Fugitives: An Anthology of Verse.** New York, 1928.


Herr, Clarence. *Income and Wages in the South.* Chapel Hill, 1930.


________. *The Bathtub Hoax and Other Blasts and Bravos from the Chicago Tribune.* New York, 1930.


Murchinson, Claudius T. *King Cotton Is Sick.* Chapel Hill, 1930.


Herr, Clarence. *Income and Wages in the South*. Chapel Hill, 1930.


_______. *The Bathtub Hoax and Other Blasts and Bravos from the Chicago Tribune*. New York, 1930.

A Message to Women in Industry of the South. n.p., n.d.


Murchinson, Claudius T. *King Cotton Is Sick*. Chapel Hill, 1930.

_____. *Southern Regions Of The United States*. Chapel Hill, 1936.


Rhyne, Jennings J. *Some Cotton Mill Workers and Their Villages*. Chapel Hill, 1930.


The State University And The New South. Being the Proceedings Of The Inauguration Of Harry Woodburn Chase As President Of The University Of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, April 28, 1920. n.p., n.d.


Steiner, Jesse F., and Brown, Roy M. *The North Carolina Chain Gang*. Chapel Hill, 1927.

Strihling, T. S. *Teeftallow*. Garden City, 1926.


*The Year Book Of "The Poetry Society of South Carolina."* Charleston, 1921.

**Articles**


Bonner, Marion. "Behind the Southern Textile Strikes," *The Nation,* CXXIX (October 2, 1929), 351-52.


Clark, Emily. "Postscript," The Reviewer, IV (October, 1924), 405-408.

Cline, Leonard L. "In Darkest Louisiana," The Nation, CXVI (March 15, 1923), 292-93.


"Dayton Blighted By Its Famous Evolution Trial," The Literary Digest, LXXX (July 24, 1926), 49-50.

"Down at the Mill," The New Republic, LX (September 18, 1929), 126-27.


"Federal Probe Needed," Outlook and Independent, CLII (June 5, 1929), 218.

"Fighting Communism With Anarchy," The Literary Digest, CII (September 28, 1929), 12.


"Illiteracy in the United States," Current History, XV (December, 1921), 483.


________. "The Congo, Mr. Mencken," The Reviewer, III (July, 1923), 887-93.

________. "Critical Attitudes North and South," The Journal of Social Forces, II (May, 1924), 575-79.


________. "Greensboro, or What You Will," The Reviewer, IV (1923-24), 169-75.


________. "Journalism Below the Potomac," The American Mercury, IX (September, 1926), 77-82.


________. "Mr. Babbitt Arrives At Erzerum," The Journal of Social Forces, I (March, 1923), 207-209.

________. "Onion Salt," The Reviewer, V (January, 1925), 60-63.

________. "Service in the Cotton Mills," The American Mercury, V (June, 1925), 219-23.


Larkin, Margaret. "Ella May's Songs," *The Nation*, CXXIX (October 9, 1929), 382-83.


________. "Morning Song in C Major," The Reviewer, II (October, 1921), 1-5.


"Moonshining In North Carolina And In Other Dixie Lands," The Literary Digest, LXV (June 26, 1920), 53-56.


"No Monkeying With Evolution In Tennessee," The Literary Digest, LXXXV (April 18, 1925), 30-31.


"Sinclair Lewis on North Carolina's Labor War," The Literary Digest, CIII (November 9, 1929), 41-48.


"Southern Strikes—What They Mean," The Business Week, No. 2 (September 14, 1921), 48.


______. "The Fugitive: A Personal Recollection Twenty Years After," Princeton University Library Chronicle, III (1942), 75-84.


Vorse, Mary Heaton. "'Waitin With The Dead,'" The New Republic, LX (October 30, 1929), 287-88.


Government Documents and Publications

Congressional Record, 71st Congress. 1st Session, 700-701; 1379-96; 1704-1707; 4221-26.

Report of the President’s Research Committee on Social Trends. Recent Social Trends In The United States. New York and London, 1933.

Senate Report No. 28. Parts 1 and 2, Calendar No. 34, 71st Congress, 1st Sess.


Interviews and Related Correspondence


Jay Broadus Hubbell to author, November 14, 1970.

SECONDARY SOURCES

Books and Pamphlets


______. *The South In American Literature, 1607-1900*. Durham, 1954.

______. *Southern Life In Fiction*. Athens, Ga., 1960.


Jenkins, William Sumner. *Pro-Slavery Thought In The Old South*. Chapel Hill, 1935.


_________. *Slavery Defended: The Views Of The Old South.* Englewood Cliffs, 1963.


Sindler, Allan P. (ed.). *Change in the Contemporary South.* Durham, 1963.


**Articles**


________. "The Cult of the 'American Consensus': Homogenizing Our History," Commentary, XXVII (February, 1959), 93-100.


"'We Are Going to Do Away With These Boys . . . .'", American Heritage, XXIII (April, 1972). 42-47, 100-101.


UNPUBLISHED MATERIAL


APPENDIX A

THE SAHARA OF THE BOZART

Alas, for the South! Her books have grown fewer--
She never was much given to literature.

In the lamented J. Gordon Coogler, author of these elegiac lines, there was the insight of a true poet. He was the last bard of Dixie, at least in the legitimate line. Down there a poet is now almost as rare as an oboe-player, a dry-point etcher or a metaphysician. It is, indeed, amazing to contemplate so vast a vacuity. One thinks of the interstellar spaces, of the colossal reaches of the now mythical ether. Nearly the whole of Europe could be lost in that stupendous region of worn-out farms, shoddy cities and paralyzed cerebrums: one could throw in France, Germany and Italy, and still have room for the British Isles. And yet, for all its size and all its wealth and all the "progress" it babbles of, it is almost as sterile, artistically, intellectually, culturally, as the Sahara Desert. There are single acres in Europe that house more first-rate men than all the states south of the Potomac; there are probably single square miles in America. If the whole of the late Confederacy were to be engulfed by a tidal wave tomorrow, the effect upon the civilized minority of men in the world would be but little greater than that of a flood on the Yang-tse-kiang. It would be impossible in all history to match so complete a drying-up of a civilization.

I say a civilization because that is what, in the old days, the South had, despite the Baptist and Methodist barbarism that reigns down there now. More, it was a civilization of manifold excellences--perhaps the best that the Western Hemisphere had ever seen--undoubtedly the best that These States have ever seen. Down to the middle of the last century, and even beyond, the main hatchery of ideas on this side of the water was across the Potomac bridges. The New England shopkeepers and theologians never really developed a civilization; all they ever developed was a government. They were, at their best, tawdry and tacky fellows, oafish

313
in manner and devoid of imagination; one searches the books in vain for mention of a salient Yankee gentleman; as well look for a Welsh gentleman. But in the South there were men of delicate fancy, urbane instinct and aristocratic manner—in brief, superior men—in brief, gentry. To politics, their chief diversion, they brought active and original minds. It was there that nearly all the political theories we still cherish and suffer under came to birth. It was there that the crude dogmatism of New England was refined and humanized. It was there, above all, that some attention was given to the art of living—that life got beyond and above the state of a mere infliction and became an exhilarating experience. A certain notable spaciousness was in the ancient Southern scheme of things. The Ur-Confederate had leisure. He liked to toy with ideas. He was hospitable and tolerant. He had the vague thing that we call culture.

But consider the condition of his late empire today. The picture gives one the creeps. It is as if the Civil War stamped out every last bearer of the torch, and left only a mob of peasants on the field. One thinks of Asia Minor, resigned to Armenians, Greeks and wild swine, of Poland abandoned to the Poles. In all that gargantuan paradise of the fourth-rate there is not a single picture gallery worth going into, or a single orchestra capable of playing the nine symphonies of Beethoven, or a single opera-house, or a single theater devoted to decent plays, or a single public monument that is worth looking at, or a single workshop devoted to the making of beautiful things. Once you have counted James Branch Cabell (a lingering survivor of the ancien régime: a scarlet dragon-fly imbedded in opaque amber) you will not find a single Southern prose writer who can actually write. And once you have—but when you come to critics, musical composers, painters, sculptors, architects and the like, you will have to give it up, for there is not even a bad one between the Potomac mud-flats and the Gulf. Nor a historian. Nor a philosopher. Nor a theologian. Nor a scientist. In all these fields the South is an awe-inspiring blank—a brother to Portugal, Serbia and Albania.

Consider, for example, the present estate and dignity of Virginia—in the great days indubitably the premier American state, the mother of Presidents and statesmen, the home of the first American university worthy of the name, the arbiter elegantiarum of the Western World. Well, observe Virginia today. It is years since a first-rate man, save only Cabell, has come out of it; it is years since an idea has come out of it. The old aristocracy went down the red gullet of war; the poor white trash are now in the saddle. Politics in Virginia are cheap, ignorant, parochial, idiotic; there is scarcely a man in office above the rank of a professional job-seeker; the political doctrine that
prevails is made up of hand-me-downs from the bumpkinry of the Middle West—Bryanism, Prohibition, all that sort of filthy claptrap; the administration of the law is turned over to professors of Puritanism and espionage; a Washington or a Jefferson, dumped there by some act of God, would be denounced as a scoundrel and jailed overnight.

Elegance, esprit, culture? Virginia has no art, no literature, no philosophy, no mind or aspiration of her own. Her education has sunk to the Baptist seminary level; not a single contribution to human knowledge has come out of her colleges in twenty-five years; she spends less than half upon her common schools, per capita, than any Northern state spends. In brief, an intellectual Gobi or Lapland.

Urbanity, politesse, chivalry? Go to! It was in Virginia that they invented the device of searching for contraband whiskey in women's underwear. . . . There remains, at the top, a ghost of the old aristocracy, a bit wistful and infinitely charming. But it has lost all its old leadership to fabulous monsters from the lower depths; it is submerged in an industrial plutocracy that is ignorant and ignominious. The mind of the state, as it is revealed to the nation, is pathetically naïve and inconsequential. It no longer reacts with energy and elasticity to great problems. It has fallen to the bombastic trivialities of the camp-meeting and the stump. One could no more imagine a Lee or a Washington in the Virginia of today, than one could imagine a Huxley in Nicaragua.

I choose the Old Dominion, not because I disdain it, but precisely because I esteem it. It is, by long odds, the most civilized of the Southern states, now as always. It has sent a host of creditable sons northward; the stream kept running into our own time. Virginians, even the worst of them, show the effects of a great tradition. They hold themselves above other Southerners, and with sound pretension. If one turns to such a commonwealth as Georgia the picture becomes far darker. There the liberated lower orders of whites have borrowed the worst commercial bounderism of the Yankee and superimposed it upon a culture that, at bottom, is but little removed from savagery. Georgia is at once the home of the cotton-mill sweater, of the Methodist parson turned Savonarola and of the lynching bee. A self-respecting European, going there to live, would not only find intellectual stimulation utterly lacking; he would actually feel a certain insecurity, as if the scene were the Balkans or the China Coast. There is a state with more than half the area of Italy and more population than either Denmark or Norway, and yet in thirty years it has not produced a single idea. Once upon a time a Georgian printed a couple of books that attracted notice, but immediately it turned out that he was little more than an amanuensis for the local blacks—that his works were really the products, not of white
Georgia, but of black Georgia. Writing afterward as a white man, he swiftly subsided into the fifth rank. And he is not only the glory of the literature of Georgia; he is, almost literally, the whole of the literature of Georgia—nay, of the entire art of Georgia.¹

Virginia is the best of the South today, and Georgia is perhaps the worst. The one is simple senile; the other is crass, gross, vulgar and obnoxious. Between lies a vast plain of mediocrity, stupidity, lethargy, almost of dead silence. In the North, of course, there is also grossness, crassness, vulgarity. The North, in its way, is also stupid and obnoxious. But nowhere in the North is there such complete sterility, so depressing a lack of all civilized gesture and aspiration. One would find it difficult to unearth a second-rate city between the Ohio and the Pacific that isn't struggling to establish an orchestra, or setting up a little theater, or going in for an art gallery, or making some other effort to get into touch with civilization. These efforts often fail, and sometimes they succeed rather absurdly, but under them there is at least an impulse that deserves respect, and that is the impulse to seek beauty and to experiment with ideas, and so to give the life of every day a certain dignity and purpose. You will find no such impulse in the South. There are no committees down there cadging subscriptions for orchestras; if a string quartet is ever heard there, the news of it has never come out; an opera troupe, when it roves the land, is a nine days' wonder. The little theater movement has swept the whole country, enormously augmenting the public interest in sound plays, giving new dramatists their chance, forcing reforms upon the commercial theater. Everywhere else the wave rolls high—but along the line of the Potomac it breaks upon a rock-bound shore. There is no little theater beyond. There is no gallery of pictures. No artist ever gives exhibitions. No one talks of such things. No one seems to be interested in such things.

As for the cause of this unanimous torpor and doltishness, this curious and almost pathological estrangement from everything that makes for a civilized culture, I have hinted at it already, and now state it again. The South has simply been drained of all its best blood. The vast hemorrhage of the Civil War half exterminated and wholly paralyzed the old aristocracy, and so left the land to the harsh mercies of the poor white trash, now its masters. The war, of course, was not a complete massacre. It spared a decent number of

¹The reference here, of course, was to Joel Chandler Harris.
first-rate Southerners—perhaps even some of the very best. Moreover, other countries, notably France and Germany, have survived far more staggering butcheries, and even showed marked progress thereafter. But the war not only cost a great many valuable lives; it also brought bankruptcy, demoralization and despair in its train—and so the majority of the first-rate Southerners that were left, broken in spirit and unable to live under the new dispensation, cleared out. A few went to South America, to Egypt, to the Far East. Most came north. They were fecund; their progeny is widely dispersed, to the great benefit of the North. A Southerner of good blood almost always does well in the North. He finds, even in the big cities, surroundings fit for a man of condition. His peculiar qualities have a high social value, and are esteemed. He is welcomed by the codfish aristocracy as one palpably superior. But in the South he throws up his hands. It is impossible for him to stoop to the common level. He cannot brawl in politics with the grandsons of his grandfather's tenants. He is unable to share their fierce jealousy of the emerging black— the cornerstone of all their public thinking. He is anesthetic to their theological and political enthusiasms. He finds himself an alien at their feast of soul. And so he withdraws into his tower, and is heard of no more. Cabell is almost a perfect example. His eyes, for years, were turned toward the past; he became a professor of the grotesque genealogizing that decaying aristocracies affect; it was only by a sort of accident that he discovered himself to be an artist. The South is unaware of the fact to this day; it regards Woodrow Wilson and John Temple Graves as much finer stylists, and Frank L. Stanton as an infinitely greater poet. If it has heard, which I doubt, that Cabell has been hoofed by the Comstocks, it unquestionably views that assault as a deserved rebuke to a fellow who indulges a lewd passion for fancy writing, and is a covert enemy to the Only True Christianity.

What is needed down there, before the vexatious public problems of the region may be intelligently approached, is a survey of the population by competent ethnologists and anthropologists. The immigrants of the North have been studied at great length, and anyone who is interested may now apply to the Bureau of Ethnology for elaborate data as to their racial strains, their stature and cranial indices, their relative capacity for education, and the changes that they undergo under American Kultur. But the older stocks of the South, and particularly the emancipated and dominant poor white trash, have never been investigated scientifically, and most of the current generalizations about them are probably wrong. For example, the generalization that they are purely Anglo-Saxon in blood. This I doubt very seriously. The chief strain down there, I believe, is Celtic rather than Saxon, particularly in the hill country.
French blood, too, shows itself here and there, and so does Spanish, and so does German. The last-named entered from the northward, by way of the limestone belt just east of the Alleghenies. Again, it is very likely that in some parts of the South a good many of the plebeian whites have more than a trace of Negro blood. Interbreeding under concubinage produced some very light half-breeds at an early day, and no doubt appreciable numbers of them went over into the white race by the simple process of changing their abode. Not long ago I read a curious article by an intelligent Negro, in which he stated that it is easy for a very light Negro to pass as white in the South on account of the fact that large numbers of Southerners accepted as white have distinctly negroid features. Thus it becomes a delicate and dangerous matter for a train conductor or a hotel-keeper to challenge a suspect. But the Celtic strain is far more obvious than any of these others. It not only makes itself visible in physical stigmata—e.g., leanness and dark coloring—but also in mental traits. For example, the religious thought of the South is almost precisely identical with the religious thought of Wales. There is the same naïve belief in an anthropomorphitic Creator but little removed, in manner and desire, from an evangelical bishop; there is the same submission to an ignorant and impudent sacerdotal tyranny, and there is the same sharp contrast between doctrinal orthodoxy and private ethics. Read Caradoc Evans's ironical picture of the Welsh Wesleyans in his preface to "My Neighbors," and you will be instantly reminded of the Georgia and Carolina Methodists. The most booming sort of piety, in the South is not incompatible with the theory that lynching is a benign institution. Two generations ago it was not incompatible with an ardent belief in slavery.

It is highly probable that some of the worst blood of western Europe flows in the veins of the Southern poor whites, now poor no longer. The original strains, according to every honest historian, were extremely corrupt. Philip Alexander Bruce (a Virginian of the old gentry) says in his "Industrial History of Virginia in the Seventeenth Century" that the first native-born generation was largely illegitimate. "One of the most common offenses against morality committed in the lower ranks of life in Virginia during the Seventeenth Century," he says, "was bastardy." The mothers of these bastards, he continues, were chiefly indentured servants, and "had belonged to the lowest class in their native country." Fanny Kemble Butler, writing of the Georgia poor whites of a century later, described them as "the most degraded race of human beings claiming an Anglo-Saxon origin that can be found on the face of the earth—filthy, lazy, ignorant, brutal, proud, penniless savages." The Sunday-school and the chautauqua, of course, have
appreciably mellowed the descendants of these "savages," and their economic progress and rise to political power have done perhaps even more, but the marks of their origin are still unpleasantly plentiful. Every now and then they produce a political leader who puts their secret notions of the true, the good and the beautiful into plain words, to the amazement and scandal of the rest of the country. That amazement is turned into downright incredulity when news comes that his platform has got him high office, and that he is trying to execute it.

In the great days of the South the line between the gentry and the poor whites was very sharply drawn. There was absolutely no intermarriage. So far as I know there is not a single instance in history of a Southerner of the upper class marrying one of the bondwomen described by Mr. Bruce. In other societies characterized by class distinctions of that sort it is common for the lower class to be improved by extra-legal crosses. That is to say, the men of the upper class take women of the lower class as mistresses, and out of such unions spring the extraordinary plebeians who rise sharply from the common level, and so propagate the delusion that all other plebeians would do the same thing if they had the chance—in brief, the delusion that class distinctions are merely economic and conventional, and not congenital and genuine. But in the South the men of the upper classes sought their mistresses among the blacks, and after a few generations there was so much white blood in the black women that they were considerably more attractive than the unhealthy and bedraggled women of the poor whites. This preference continued into our own time. A Southerner of good family once told me in all seriousness that he had reached his majority before it ever occurred to him that a white woman might make quite as agreeable a mistress as the octaroons of his jejune fancy. If the thing has changed of late, it is not the fault of the Southern white man, but of the Southern mulatto women. The more sightly yellow girls of the region, with improving economic opportunities, have gained self-respect, and so they are no longer as willing to enter into concubinage as their grand-dams were.

As a result of this preference of the Southern gentry for mulatto mistresses there was created a series of mixed strains containing the best white blood of the South, and perhaps of the whole country. As another result the poor whites went unfertilized from above, and so missed the improvement that so constantly shows itself in the peasant stocks of other countries. It is a commonplace that nearly all Negroes who rise above the general are of mixed blood, usually with the white predominating. I know a great many Negroes, and it would be hard for me to think of an exception. What is too often forgotten is that this white blood
is not the blood of the poor whites but that of the old
gentry. The mulatto girls of the early days despised the
poor whites as creatures distinctly inferior to Negroes, and
it was thus almost unheard of for such a girl to enter into
relations with a man of that submerged class. This aversion
was based upon a sound instinct. The Southern mulatto of
today is a proof of it. Like all other half-breeds he is an
unhappy man, with disquieting tendencies toward anti-social
habits of thought, but he is intrinsically a better animal
than the pure-blooded descendant of the old poor whites, and
he not infrequently demonstrates it. It is not by accident
that the Negroes of the South are making faster progress,
culturally, than the masses of the whites. It is not by
accident that the only visible esthetic activity in the
South is in their hands. No Southern composer has ever
written music so good as that of half a dozen white-black
composers who might be named. Even in politics, the Negro
reveals a curious superiority. Despite the fact that the
race question has been the main political concern of the
Southern whites for two generations, to the practical
exclusion of everything else, they have contributed nothing
to its discussion that has impressed the rest of the world
so deeply and so favorably as three or four books by Southern
Negroes.

Entering upon such themes, of course, one must resign
one's self to a vast misunderstanding and abuse. The South
has not only lost its old capacity for producing ideas; it
has also taken on the worst intolerance of ignorance and
stupidity. Its prevailing mental attitude for several
decades past has been that of its own hedge ecclesiastics.
All who dissent from its orthodox doctrines are scoundrels.
All who presume to discuss its ways realistically are damned.
I have had, in my day, several experiences in point. Once,
after I had published an article on some phase of the eternal
race question,2 a leading Southern newspaper replied by
printing a column of denunciation of my father, then dead
nearly twenty years—a philippic placarding him as an
ignorant foreigner of dubious origin, inhabiting "the
Baltimore ghetto" and speaking a dialect recalling that of
Weber & Fields—two thousand words of incandescent nonsense,
utterly false and beside the point, but exactly meeting the
latter-day Southern notion of effective controversy.
Another time, I published a short discourse on lynching,
arguing that the sport was popular in the South because the
backward culture of the region denied the populace more
seemly recreations. Among such recreations I mentioned
those afforded by brass bands, symphony orchestras, boxing

2Si Mutare Potest Acthiops Pellum Suam, Smart Set,
Sept., 1917, pp. 138-42.
matches, amateur athletic contests, horse races, and so on. In reply another great Southern journal denounced me as a man "of wineshop temperament, brass-jewelry tastes and pornographic predilections." In other words, brass bands, in the South, are classed with brass jewelry, and both are snares of the devil! To advocate setting up symphony orchestras is pornography! . . . Alas, when the touchy Southerner attempts a greater urbanity, the result is often even worse. Some time ago a colleague of mine printed an article deploiring the arrested cultural development of Georgia. In reply he received a number of protests from patriotic Georgians, and all of them solemnly listed the glories of the state. I indulge in a few specimens:

Who has not heard of Asa G. Candler, whose name is synonymous with Coca-Cola, a Georgia product?

The first Sunday-school in the world was opened in Savannah.

Who does not recall with pleasure the writings of . . . Frank L. Stanton, Georgia's brilliant poet?

Georgia was the first state to organize a Boys' Corn Club in the South--Newton county, 1904.

The first to suggest a common United Daughters of the Confederacy badge was Mrs. Raynes, of Georgia.

The first to suggest a state historian of the United Daughters of the Confederacy was Mrs. C. Helen Plane (Macon convention, 1896).

The first to suggest putting to music Heber's "From Greenland's Icy Mountains" was Mrs. F. R. Goulding, of Savannah.

And so on, and so on. These proud boasts came, remember, not from obscure private persons, but from "leading Georgians"--in one case, the state historian. Curious side-lights upon the ex-Confederate mind! Another comes from a stray copy of a Negro paper. It describes an ordinance passed by the city council of Douglas, Ga., forbidding any trousers presser, on penalty of forfeiting a $500 bond, to engage in "pressing for both white and colored." This in a town, says the Negro paper, where practically all of the white inhabitants have "their food prepared by colored hands," "their babies cared for by colored hands," and "the clothes which they wear right next to their skins washed in houses where Negroes live"--houses in which the said clothes "remain for as long as a week at a time." But if you marvel at the absurdity, keep it dark! A casual word, and the united press of the South will be upon your trail, denouncing
you bitterly as a scoundrelly damnyankee, a Bolshevik Jew.

Obviously, it is impossible for intelligence to flourish in such an atmosphere. Free inquiry is blocked by the idiotic certainties of ignorant men. The arts, save in the lower reaches of the gospel hymn, the phonograph and the political harangue, are all held in suspicion. The tone of public opinion is set by an upstart class but lately emerged from industrial slavery into commercial enterprise—the class of "bustling" business men, of "live wires," of commercial club luminaries, of "drive" managers, of forward‐lookers and right‐thinkers—in brief, of third‐rate Southerners inoculated with all the worst traits of the Yankee sharper. One observes the curious effects of an old tradition of truculence upon a population now merely pushful and impudent, of an old tradition of chivalry upon a population now quite without imagination. The old repose is gone. The old romanticism is gone. The philistinism of the new type of town‐boomer Southerner is not only indifferent to the ideals of the Old South; it is positively antagonistic to them. That philistinism regards human life, not as an agreeable adventure, but as a mere trial of rectitude and efficiency. It is overwhelmingly utilitarian and moral. It is inconceivably hollow and obnoxious. What remains of the ancient tradition is simply a certain charming civility in private intercourse—often broken down, alas, by the hot rages of Puritanism, but still generally visible. The Southerner, at his worst, is never quite the surly cad that the Yankee is. His sensitiveness may betray him into occasional bad manners, but in the main he is a pleasant fellow—hospitable, polite, good‐humored, even jovial. . . . But a bit absurd. . . . A bit pathetic.
APPENDIX B

A CHRONOLOGY OF THE SOUTHERN LITERARY RENAISSANCE, AND RELATED EVENTS, 1919-1936

1919

John Crowe Ransom. Poems about God.
Ellen Glasgow. The Builders.

1920

T. S. Eliot. The Sacred Wood.
Ezra Pound. Hugh Selwyn Mauberley.
W. A. Percy. In April Once.

1921

The Double Dealer. First issue.
The Reviewer. First issue.
The Poetry Society of South Carolina issues a yearbook of poetry (and continues to do so annually until 1933).

1922

The Fugitive. First issue.
John Peale Bishop. The Undertaker's Garland.
Ellen Glasgow. One Man in His Time.
Hervey Allen and Du Bose Heyward. Carolina Chansons.
E. M. Roberts. Under the Tree.

323
1923

Ellen Glasgow. The Shadowy Third and Other Stories.
T. S. Stribling. Fombombo.
Allen Tate. The Golden Mean and Other Poems.
Time. First issue.

1924

The American Mercury. First issue (Mencken editor until 1934).
The Saturday Review of Literature. First issue.
John Crowe Ransom. Chills and Fever.
________. Grace after Meat.
John Donald Wade. Augustus Baldwin Longstreet: A Study in the Development of Culture in the South.
William Faulkner. The Marble Faun.
Donald Davidson. An Outland Piper.
Du Bose Heyward. Skylines and Horizons.
W. A. Percy. Enzio's Kingdom and Other Poems.

1925

Du Bose Heyward. Porgy.
Virginia Quarterly Review. First issue.
Scopes Trial.

1926

Allen Tate. "Ode to the Confederate Dead."
T. S. Stribling. Teeftallow.
E. M. Roberts. The Time of Man.
Du Bose Heyward. Angel.
Ellen Glasgow. The Romantic Comedians.
Stark Young. Heaven Trees.
William Faulkner. Soldiers' Pay

1927

John Crowe Ransom. Two Gentlemen in Bonds.
Donald Davidson. The Tall Men.
E. M. Roberts. My Heart and My Flesh.
1928

Allen Tate. Mr. Pope and Other Poems.
Stonewall Jackson: The Good Soldier.

Stark Young. The Torches Flare.

Julia Peterkin. Scarlet Sister Mary (awarded Pulitzer Prize).

John Gould Fletcher. John Smith--Also Pocahontas.

E. M. Roberts. Jjingling in the Wind.

T. S. Stribling. Bright Metal.

1929

William Faulkner. Sartoris; The Sound and the Fury.

Thomas Wolfe. Look Homeward Angel.


Ellen Glasgow. They Stooped to Folly.

Du Bose Heyward. Mamba's Daughters.

Merrill Moore. The Noise That Times Makes.

Allen Tate. Jefferson Davis, His Rise and Fall: A Biographical Narrative.


Erskine Caldwell. The Bastard.

Stark Young. River House.

Hamilton Basso. Relics and Angels.

T. S. Stribling. Clues of the Caribees.

Strange Moon.

Textile strikes in Elizabethton, Tennessee; Marion and Gastonia, North Carolina.

1930

William Faulkner. As I Lay Dying.

Katherine Ann Porter. Flowering Judas.


I'll Take My Stand.

Erskine Caldwell. Poor Fool.

W. A. Percy. Selected Poems.

E. M. Roberts. The Great Meadow.


1931

William Faulkner. Sanctuary: These Thirteen.

T. S. Stribling. The Forge.

Andrew Lytle. Bedford Forrest and His Critter Company.

Caroline Gordon. Penhally.

M. K. Rawlings. "Jacob's Ladder."

John Peale Bishop. Many Thousands Gone.

Erskine Caldwell. American Earth
Du Bose Heyward. *Jasbo Brown and Selected Poems; Brass Ankle.*
E. M. Roberts. *A Buried Treasure.*

1932

William Faulkner. *Light in August.*
Erskine Caldwell. *Tobacco Road.*
Fielding Burke [Olive Tilford Dargan]. *Call Home the Heart.*
Grace Lumpkin. *To Make My Bread.*
Du Bose Heyward. *Peter Ashley.*
E. M. Roberts. *The Haunted Mirror.*

1933

Erskine Caldwell. *God's Little Acre.*
John Peale Bishop. *Now with His Love.*

1934

Hamilton Basso. *Cinnamon Seed.*
Caroline Gordon. *Aleck Maury, Sportsman.*
Stark Young. *So Red The Rose.*
Caroline Miller. *Lamb in His Bosom.*
William Faulkner. *Doctor Martino and Other Stories.*
Lillian Hellman. *The Children's Hour.*
Southern Historical Association founded.

1935

Thomas Wolfe. *Of Time and the River; From Death to Morning.*
Hamilton Basso. *In Their Own Image.*
Erskine Caldwell. *Journeyman; Kneel To The Rising Sun; Some American People; Tenant Farmer.*
Ellen Glasgow. *Vein of Iron.*
Merrill Moore. *Six Sides to a Man.*
E. M. Roberts. *He Sent Forth a Raven.*
The Journal of Southern History. First issue.

1936

William Faulkner. Absalom, Absalom!  
Herbert Agar (ed.). Who Owns America?  
Allen Tate. Reactionary Essays on Poetry and Ideas.  
Andrew Lytle. The Long Night.  
Margaret Mitchell. Gone With The Wind.  
Hamilton Basso. Court-House Square.  
Lillian Hellman. Days to Come.  
Du Bose Heyward. Lost Morning.  
Merrill Moore. Poems From the Fugitive.
VITA

James Paisley Hendrix, Jr. was born in Durham, North Carolina, August 5, 1941. He graduated from Durham High School in 1959. In June, 1963, he received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Davidson College, Davidson, North Carolina. He entered the United States Army in March, 1964, and served as a Lieutenant in the Intelligence and Security branch until his discharge in August, 1966. He began graduate study at Louisiana State University in September, 1966, received a Master of Arts degree in May, 1968, and is a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in December, 1973. He was an Assistant Professor of History at Western Carolina University, Cullowhee, North Carolina, from June, 1971, to June, 1973, and is presently Head of the Department of History, the Greenhill School, Dallas, Texas.
EXAMINATION AND THESIS REPORT

Candidate: James Paisley Hendrix, Jr.

Major Field: History


Approved:

Major Professor and Chairman

Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

Date of Examination:

November 16, 1973