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W. Scott Poole. *Never Surrender: Confederate Memory and Conservatism in the South Carolina Upcountry.* Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004. x + 263 pp. $49.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8203-2507-1; $19.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8203-2508-8.

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The Struggle Over the Lost Cause: Southern Conservatism Reexamined

In *Never Surrender*, W. Scott Poole provides us with an original, provocative, and very carefully researched analysis of the origins and evolution of southern conservatism in the nineteenth century. He argues that prior to the Civil War, southern conservatives voiced a conflicted ideology, one that embraced individualism and acquisitiveness while simultaneously rejecting many of the social and cultural manifestations of modernity in antebellum America. The war itself magnified these contradictions as the Confederate States of America "modernized" to sustain the war effort. For Poole, Confederate defeat was absolutely essential in crystallizing southern conservatism as an ideological and cultural force: proponents of the Lost Cause could argue that the defeated South was a victim not of its own failings, but of broader forces of modernization that they must continue to resist. Politicians from Wade Hampton to Ben Tillman used Confederate memory to shape a conservative aesthetic that wrapped class, gender, race, and religion into a distinctive–though evolving–southern world view that continues to influence the region today.

Never Surrender is an ambitious undertaking, tracing the history of southern conservative ideas from the 1830s to the 1910s in the South Carolina upcountry. A digestion of Poole's work will not do his attention to detail or his nuanced analysis justice, but it is necessary to lay out in broad strokes the key elements of his argument in order to assess his contribution to the literature. Above all, he sets out to examine the "aesthetic of the Lost Cause" or "the effort of white conservatives to create a narrative out of defeat, a tale of rupture and redemption." Poole considers this project to be similar to that of European conservatives who "looked to the classical and medieval past as a guide for a society that drew its *raison d'etre* from tradition and custom" (p. 4). The New South transformed itself into an organic society, not one founded on natural rights. Poole considers this approach more fruitful than Charles Reagan Wilson's notion of the Lost Cause as "civil religion" that acted in opposition to modernizing forces, or Gaines M. Foster's suggestion that it functioned to mask and justify the New South's materialism.[1] Rather, he argues, the aesthetic of the Lost Cause informed nearly all of South Carolina's political, social, and economic debates in the late nineteenth century–it was, in short, a living and deeply contested cultural and ideological force that contending groups accepted as a *prima facie* element of southern-ness.

This approach enables Poole to track the origins and career of southern conservatism with great subtlety. For the author, the Lost Cause drew force from such statements as that of Confederate general M.W. Gary, who at Appomattox admonished his troops that "South Carolinians never surrender" (p. 18). This denial of defeat of an ideal, however conflicted it might have been before the war, provided the ground on which conservatives planted the seeds of romantic anti-modernism. Wade Hampton, an unrepentant upcountry planter and Civil War general, proved particularly adept at articulating the linkages between Confederate service and an idealized organic society in which a patriotic, beneficent propertied class would protect the interests of all southerners–white and black, male and female–against the atomizing, amoral influences of modernity. Poole portrays Hampton and his allies as the authentic purveyors of the Lost Cause, those who truly revered the sacrifices made by southern soldiers and civilians during the war. The contrast between Hampton and Ben Tillman, for Poole, is stark. Tillman, Poole points out, was more complex than previous scholars have recognized. Not simply an agrarian firebrand, the "Pitchfork Ben Tillman" image he cultivated, he had close links to bourgeois entrepreneurs and eagerly promoted their notion of rationalism and progress. Though Tillman invoked the image of the Lost Cause, he did so in an effort to modernize the South eco-

nomically, while maintaining class, racial, and gender hierarchies–not to mention inequalities that grew worse with the industrialization he embraced. Tillman's version of the Lost Cause comes across here as utilitarian–devotion to it in the state was so thorough, in essence, that politicians had to pay homage to it. He wrapped his reform agenda (middle-class as it was) into a language of southern distinctiveness centered on race and patriotism. It is this Tillmanist version of the Lost Cause that Poole believes persists in new forms today.

Because of Poole's careful reconstruction of the career of the Lost Cause, *Never Surrender* is well worth reading and provides a rich, refreshing reexamination of the New South and its conservative values. For all the book's strengths, however, his handling of antebellum southern conservatism and secession raises as many questions as it answers. Poole contends that the South was at once intensely commercialized–made of men on the make in both the lowcountry and upcountry–and anxious about commercialism's corrosive effects on the sanctity of slave property, male authority within the household, and religious values. He considers it "conservative â?¦ only if we use the term in the sense that Braudel saw the *longue duree* as conservative–an agrarian unwillingness to demand change, because property and independence rest on stability and recurrence" (p. 24). Within this limited ideological space, he asserts, conservative spokesmen knitted together a romantic republican tradition that identified slavery with masculinity, property, order, and Christian duty to agitate for southern independence in the 1850s. To Poole, secession thus unified entrepreneurial and romantically conservative southerners in a culturally determined political event, one rooted neither in economic antagonism with the North, nor in a desperate effort by pre-modern aristocrats to preserve a society doomed to eclipse. Romantic conservatism rose to dominance only in defeat, as a demonstration of defiance against the modernist North through which all southerners, even the more entrepreneurial among them, could find rebirth.

But if secession itself was not a definitively conservative act, then what was it? After all, other scholars have found that elections for delegates to secession conventions were not "democratic" so much as votes by acclamation, which gave "great" men substantially more influence than common ones. And in several states, including South Carolina, secession conventions usurped some of the duties of democratically elected legislatures, evidence that turning back the tide of natural rights, liberal individualism, and participatory democracy was part of a general commitment among Confederates to create the very kind of organic society that Poole argues only emerged after Appomattox. Slavery, too, was specifically protected in the Confederate constitution. All of this begs several questions. First, what would have happened if the North had allowed the South to secede peacefully? Without a defeat to mark its birth, would southern conservatism ever have flowered? Without the strains of war, would the social divisions that eroded Confederate unity ever have appeared and, if so, would they have been of sufficient strength to destroy the new nation? Or, given some of the limits on democracy encoded in southern constitutions, would poorer whites have had the means to combat planter ambitions if they chose? History provides examples of landed elites successfully maintaining unfree labor systems for long periods of time or resisting the emergence of "modern" political economies. Should we assume that the South's entrepreneurialism was so strong as to overcome the conservative tendencies within Confederate nationalism?- But if southern commitment to individualism were that strong, why would southerners stage a revolution in the first place? All of this is not to say that Poole is incorrect; rather, he does not effectively neutralize such counterarguments. And to credit him for a job well done, he at very least demonstrates that a *particular* form of southern conservatism was born in Confederate defeat and that it was this specific variant that shaped the history of the state for the rest of the century.

Despite these reservations, Poole has produced a splendid study of southern conservatism. His willingness to take bold interpretive stances, his deft integration of theory and evidence, and his excellent writing style (not to mention his sense of urgency in bringing the aesthetic of the Lost Cause in upcountry South Carolina to life) make the book a formidable contribution to the historiography of the Civil War and Reconstruction.

[1]. Charles Reagan Wilson, *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause, 1865-1920* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1980), pp. 79-99; and Gaines M. Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 8.

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