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Lorri Glover. *Southern Sons: Becoming Men in the New Nation.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007. x + 250 pp. $50.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8018-8498-6.

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Manhood and the Coming of the American Civil War

Long ago, Drew Gilpin Faust showed how rebel soldiers' wives and mothers–no longer receiving their end of the gender bargain–pulled the plug on the confederate war. More recently, we have seen how the twin ideals of romantic love and ambition, along with southern yeomen's belief that slavery ratified their own household powers over wife and children, hooked millions of white southern men to the confederate cause. The constructed roles of women and men helped launch the Civil War and then silenced its cannons.[1] But, as Lorri Glover's recent work suggests, it is the trudging, volatile, intergenerational formation of manhood that helps explain the coming of the war. Gender foments, prolongs, shapes, and ends wars. Glover attempts to demonstrate that it is the *making* of manhood in the postrevolutionary South–not a stable manhood casually inherited by the Civil War generation–that is the story that needs telling.

Southern Sons explores the interior lives of elite white southern boys who came of age between the 1790s and the 1820s. These soon-to-be patriarchs were too young to sacrifice limb and life for the Revolution; yet they would be too old to lug a musket for Jeff Davis. They could never live up to the military fame of their fathers. Yet, it was the manner in which they became men while standing in the shadows of their fathers that would lead them to drag the region into a war that would require the blood of their sons. Thanks to the rich scholarship on southern honor, we have a clearer image of the inner lives of white men in the Old South. When we read about John Brown's raid, Charles Sumner's verbal lashing of Preston Brooks, or the election of a president who vowed to contain slavery, we can picture how this distinctive worldview helped compound the regional crisis.[2] But, writes Glover, because the honor framework "emphasizes a set of values that persists over time and throughout the South," it lacks "chronological specificity" that a close look at gender formation can provide (p. 2). While Glover leaves the reader wondering why conceptions of honor would be any more static than manhood or how the two were interwoven, her book illustrates various ways in which southern manhood, or at least the making of men within a specific time among a particular cohort, was fraught with danger and negotiation.

We have seen this cohort before, but never so closely. There are striking parallels between *Southern Sons* and George Forgie's *Patricide in the House Divided: A Psychological Interpretation of Lincoln and His Age* (1979) and Joyce Appleby's *Inheriting the Revolution: The First Generation of Americans* (2000).[3] These works follow roughly the same generation of Americans who wrestled with paradoxes inherited from their revolutionary predecessors. Like Forgie's "post-heroic" subjects who had no safe release for their ambitions in a freshly revolutionized society, Glover's young men struggled with the behavioral and ideological acrobatics required of them. They somehow had to pull off the trick of acting like masters in a world subdued by their fathers. And to a significant degree for both Forgie and Glover, the Civil War was the final, terrible trick. While Forgie's (frequently northern) subjects were instructed to imitate revolutionary heroes, like George Washington, while embracing their role as mere curators, Glover's cohort was taught by parents and kin to become dutiful, public-minded patriarchs consumed by obligation to kin. Such "manly independence" required them to be simultaneously "deferential to societal expectations and assertively autonomous" (p. 23). If they were to inherit unbounded powers, they were to shoulder commensurate burdens of duty.

Because *Southern Sons* investigates the interior lives of only a particular set of this postrevolutionary generation, it complements (by tempering) Appleby's depiction of a nation of go-ahead speculators–flitting about an antebellum hothouse overgrown with money-mad lib-

eralism, print, innovation, and new occupations. While Appleby unveils a republic of sons aiming to outstrip their fathers, Glover shows how her particular cohort remained bound to a more conservative form of success–obtained not through outdoing one's father, but consciously and openly using familial networks and wealth to attain the time honored attributes of the southern patriarch. Still, Glover points out, these scions were not immune to the mounting attack on inherited status. They were expected to inherit their fathers' station as master and patriarch. But for this birthright they would have to prove themselves deserving. "While family and class still played important roles in social standing," writes Glover, "they no longer guaranteed a man's position.... Future leadership still required the right gender and race (and, in the South, lineage) but individual initiative, of the sort that formally educated men manifested, also became ever more important" (pp. 4, 10, 39).

And so, like their northern "self-made" contemporaries, Old South scions filtered through boarding schools and universities, the proverbial grist mills of American meritocracy. But, instead of cultivating merit from all levels of society, or intensifying allegiance to the young Republic (as the Founding Fathers hoped), southern education magnified regional consciousness while solidifying elite power. About one-third of *Southern Sons* deals with the formal education of these future masters, and here Glover's work shines as she demonstrates how, for these southern boys, becoming men was intertwined with a growing awareness of their regional identity and the centrality of slavery to their manhood. In particular, those sent to northern universities in the early Republic came to view themselves as fundamentally different from their New England counterparts. It was one thing for a planter to lament the evils of slavery (which was not uncommon in previous generations), and quite another for his son to endure pointed criticisms of slavery in a Harvard classroom. As Glover points out, southern patriarchs had always feared the malignant effect intimate exposure to slavery would have on their sons. Power would corrupt the delicate mind; passions would abound. This is partially why planter parents sent their boys off to boarding schools and colleges, often at a much younger age than northern students. What these parents did not bargain for, though, was that sheltering sons from slavery would subject them to humiliating moralizing about the evils of slavery as measured by its insidious effects on slave owners' (that is, their father's, uncle's, older brother's) character and work ethic.

State pride and growing sectional defensiveness led to the concerted creation of state universities throughout the South. Seven of America's first ten state universities cropped up in southern states. Here, young men found a pedagogy that defended slavery and prioritized public status over individual merit. Compared to comparable northern institutions, submits Glover, the fees for these southern schools made it all but certain that only the most privileged would attend. Thus, instead of providing upward mobility for the disadvantaged, or "democratizing manly power" as happened more in the North, southern boarding schools and colleges perpetuated familial privilege. "Middle-class self-made manhood, predicated on individual initiative and improvement, predominated in the North," Glover writes. But "Southerners modified this emphasis, touting individual preparation and education but retaining a tight elite monopoly over higher learning" (p. 41). For these southerners, status was not what one obtained through distinction in school and business acumen; education and profession were mere steppingstones along a path already prepared, leading from the cradle to the patriarch's seat at the table. Taking a swipe at what many gentlemen saw as a market-crazed, meritocratic education in the North, one gentleman from North Carolina fumed, "Let the Yankees manufacture woolen clothing, let us manufacture men" (p. 51). *Southern Sons* suggests that education–the supposed binding force of America–actually magnified distinctive visions of manhood, planting the seeds of secession.

With vivid, at times humorous, examples, Glover shows how these students flouted authority, threatened deans and teachers, gambled, copulated sans commitment, swilled, brawled, lived beyond their means, and only occasionally cracked their books. Kin sometimes served as accomplices. Doting uncles sometimes kept the funds coming. And in letters from family, these future planters were regularly rebuked for sloppy penmanship, regardless of the content. Their senior kin encouraged them to seek only general familiarity with ennobling literature, and competency in writing and accounting instead of rigorous scholarship or specific vocational training. College needed to prepare them for public life and the "relentless performance" of elite southern manhood (p. 65). With kid gloves on, parents relied on guilt trips and permissiveness; they rarely coerced. No boy could learn to be a masterful man by cowering or submitting to his father. This pickle of trying to persuade boys to behave like good masters was compounded by the fact that they were absentee sons who left for boarding schools as early as the age of ten. Added to this, they inherited (from their fathers more than mothers) religious indifference,

if not contempt, for the "feminizing" evangelicalism that swept up shopkeepers and merchants throughout Yankeedom. What Glover has begun to flesh out–at times not fully enough–is a fraternity of impulsive, embryonic masters, forming "emotionally resonant bonds" (p. 65). For them, this rite of passage into manhood melded together the hallmarks of the confederacy: slavery, public performance, allegiance to kin, violence, and fierce independence.

In the final third of the book, Glover attempts to show how these unruly students returned to their communities ready to assume the patriarchal mantle. They did this by pursuing such professions as law, medicine, and business–not as a means of exhibiting their skills, but as a way to widen their spheres of influence, enter public service, and ultimately become married planters with households of dependents. More than any single profession, avers Glover, being a planter offered "independence, mastery over others, and honor in gentry circles" (p. 152). A weakness of *Southern Sons* is that it so convincingly depicts the dissipated days of college one hardly knows just why it was that these erstwhile devil-may-care bachelors seemed to naturally assume the role of southern patriarchs. Did they simply grow up? Glover is right in depicting these young men as indifferent to religion; but after demonstrating how this generation of youth spent little time thinking about Jesus, her book adopts its subjects' religious indifference for its own. That is, Glover glosses over the profound imprint that evangelical Christianity–though gutted of its most radical possibilities–made on these rowdies turned masters some decades later.[4]

Glover examines the sobering influence that potential brides had on this cohort; they demanded that their beaux display the symbols of respectability. Because of the great difficulty of obtaining a divorce from a never-do-well husband, and the way that a woman's identity was absorbed into her husband's, these future plantation mistresses demanded that their suitors pony up with proof that they would provide status. Glover writes that marriage itself "typically marked the beginning of the independent mastery of slaves" (p. 133). Grooms often became masters over field slaves at the same time that they claimed dominion over their wives. But if coverture provided this cohort legal and symbolic mastery, Glover's work also suggests that these brides molded these young men into masters during their negotiations toward marriage. Here again, one wonders how southern female piety fostered this transformation, welding their youthful self-will to the marrow-deep commitment to kin, obligation, and a world ordered by gender and race.

This is an important book for anyone interested in gender, family history, or education in antebellum America. It is also a refreshing way to frame the origins of the American Civil War. Glover might have expounded a bit on some of her most intriguing claims. She is too careful of a historian to write a causal history where gender alone plunges the nation into war; but a little more connective tissue might have helped fit her cultural analysis to the political crises between 1830 and 1860. Still, the reader finishes with a richer understanding of a generation of men immersed in public service and private devotions (publicly ratified) to family. It is not quite clear how this cohort transferred its truculence from run-ins with pedantic lecturers to, say, Abraham Lincoln. The bravado and petulance is somehow sublimated within a system of brutal slavery and familial love. But *Southern Sons* sets free labor manhood of the North in high relief. In fact, Glover's work suggests important studies that can be done on how familial strategies, gender, and education created the kind of men who populated the Republican Party–like those we find in Eric Foner's work on free labor, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War* (1995).[5] This tidy book forces us to rethink the regional and political divisions stewing in the 1830s–to look before and beyond them into the softer processes of gender construction and intergenerational tensions after the Revolution. *Southern Sons* moves us beyond the overdrawn chestnut that this was a war between brothers–though certainly it partly was. Glover reminds us that "brothers" who fought the war had fathers who brought the war. By examining the latter's manhood, we widen the scope of Civil War studies–challenging conventional periodization, and hauling in more than just the usual suspects: from grandparents, mentoring uncles and aunts, to mothers, college presidents, and desperate fathers trying to cultivate strong-willed, independent masters, committed to give all of themselves to the cause of family, tradition, and order.

Notes

[1]. Drew Gilpin Faust, "Altars of Sacrifice: Confederate Women and the Narratives of War," *The Journal of American History* 76, no. 4 (1990): 1200-1228; Stephen Berry II, *All That Makes a Man: Love and Ambition in the Civil War South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations, and the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); and

LeeAnn Whites, *The Civil War as a Crisis in Gender: Augusta, Georgia, 1860-1890* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995).

[2]. Bertram Wyatt Brown's work has become the standard on this topic. See, for example, Bertram Wyatt Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982); and Bertram Wyatt Brown, *The Shaping of Southern Culture: Honor, Grace, and War, 1760s-1880s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001). Also see, Kenneth S. Greenberg, *Honor & Slavery* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

[3]. Only Appleby provides a significant discussion examining women.

[4]. Glover borrows from Christine Leigh Heyrman's work about the pre-evangelical South but strangely ignores the second half of Heyrman's argument about how evangelical Christianity made deep inroads into southern culture by recalibrating its message to southern gentry. See Christine Leigh Heyrman, *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt* (New York: Knopf, 1997).

[5]. Outside of Forgie's work, we know little about how educational strategies and manhood (or the making of gender) in the antebellum North deepened cultural divisions, paving the way for the war.

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