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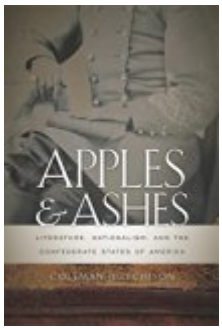
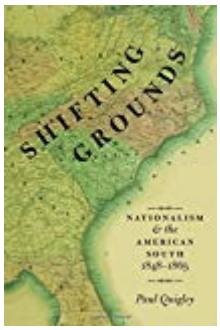


Coleman Hutchison. *Apples and Ashes: Literature, Nationalism, and the Confederate States of America.* Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012. 277 pp. $24.95, paper, ISBN 978-0-8203-4244-3.



Paul Quigley. *Shifting Grounds: Nationalism and the American South, 1848-1865.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. xi + 325 pp. $34.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-19-973548-8.

Reviewed by Adrian Brettle

Published on H-CivWar (September, 2013)

Commissioned by Bonnie Laughlin-Schultz (Eastern Illinois University)

Both Coleman Hutchison and Paul Quigley are self-consciously "new" historians of Confederate nationalism. Hutchison argues that historians have only begun to "take seriously" the "sinewy and multifarious phenomenon" that is Confederate nationalism (p. 3). Meanwhile, Quigley declines to intervene "in the old debate about how strong or weak Confederate nationalism was" (p. 173). Historians, as David Potter warned many years ago, have been habitually reluctant to give Confederate nationalism the attention it deserves, not only because the Confederacy lost the war but also because to do so would sanction slavery.[1] As a result, for some years, historians concentrated on either the contradictions that undermined the Confederate cause or the depth of internal opposition to the Confederate nation. More recently, as Quigley suggests, other historians have opened a debate by laying stress on what tended to unite the Confederacy and hence gave legitimacy to its claims to be a nation.[2]

Although Hutchison and Quigley tackle the larger topic of Southern nationalism from the antebellum era to Reconstruction, they focus on the experience of the Civil War and Confederate nationalism and argue that such nationalism preceded the formation of the Confederacy. Quigley shows the emergence of Southern nationalism "as

a variant" and "fringe" of American nationalism. But, by evolving into a mainstream belief, he notes, it was transformed into Confederate nationalism as it struggled to reconcile its two inherent contradictions: first, a slavery based creed needing to appeal to non-slaveholders; and second, a "nationalism that derived its legitimacy from the ostensibly anti-national principle of State rights" (p. 13). Hutchison, by way of using the Confederacy as a case study, seeks to contribute to a wider investigation of the role of various genres of literature in the emerging of political communities. At the same time, Hutchison also wishes to prove his case that literary nationalists helped produce the Confederacy and created a "literary nationalism that was not only internationally minded, but also more durable than its state apparatus" (p. 4).

Despite their agreement on Confederate nationalism being larger than the nation, there is an important difference in emphasis between the two writers which merits them both being studied. Some of the contrast is because Hutchison is not a historian, but a professor of English offering a "literary historical [work] rather than intellectual history or cultural history" (p. 14). But by examining his work in conjunction with that of Quigley, the newly appointed James I. Robertson Jr. Professor in Civil War Studies at Virginia Tech, the reader can readily see how it can be of immense value to the historian. For Quigley agrees that, "like their European contemporaries, mid-nineteenth-century Americans were coming to envision nationalism in cultural and spiritual as well as political ways," so Quigley's much broader work speaks to Hutchison's narrower study of literature (p. 41).

Hutchison and Quigley complement each other in another respect. Quigley's focus on the Confederates' struggle to overcome the fundamental problems associated with their nationalism means that he reveals much about both the present-day anxieties of the Confederates and their preoccupation with their past. Hutchison, in contrast, shows that in their literature, Confederates looked to the future when such problems were behind them and they could reveal the full scope of their "culture in the making" (p. 8). By juxtaposing their suffering with expectations of future promise, the historian can understand better why Confederates fought so hard for so long.

In his study of Southerners as preoccupied with their current problems, Quigley stresses the importance of the past to them, because Southerners "retained much of the content of their American nationalism" (pp. 8-9). Even as Southerners grew more hostile to the North, they continued to view American nationalism with "pained ambivalence." This is not surprising, as throughout the antebellum era, "white southerners were active participants in American nationalism" (p. 16). As secession neared, would-be Confederates had to use American nationalism by "following a common pattern; they defined their own identity in part by contrasting themselves with another group" (p. 145). Even after independence, Confederates attempted to "reconcile secession" with an appropriation of "American heroes and history" (pp. 33-35).

Even when looking overseas, Southerners conceived themselves as Americans with "the celebration of the international significance of American ideals"; they vowed to only support revolutions overseas "that ought to imitate the Americans' own revolution" (pp. 24-25). Antebellum Southerners were fully engaged with being "missionaries of [American] nationalism and democratic citizenship." Quigley sees the resilience of American nationalism from overseas influence due to the centrality of civic nationalism, which stressed the importance of the individual as citizen and his allegiance to the unique federal institutions of the United States. Consequently all Americans "frequently positioned their exceptional nation at the forefront of human progress" (p. 30).

Hutchison, by contrast, argues that Confederate nationalism aspired to be "new" and hence Confederates did not seek to differentiate themselves from the Union by selective appropriation, but rather by "repulsion" (pp. 7, 12). When these Confederate literary nationalists did draw on the past, it was for only the indigenous Southern products of history. It was the "Jeffersonian understanding of the relationship between agrarian industry and literary culture" and not the common symbols of American nationalism that would matter in the future Confederacy (p. 72). And even so these "agro-literary appeals" did not carry as much "ideological weight" as the novel imports of a "global purview" of the their present and above all the future (p. 13).

Rather than what he terms the "romantic dreams" of the future, Quigley argues that a series of current "pinches" forced white Southerners to reassess the value of continued national unity (p. 125). Above all, it was the experience of war and the growth of the government, "the institutional expression of the idea of a separate nation," that both stimulated and hardened Confederate national identity (p. 174). Therefore Confederate nationalism was contingent; for example, "secessionists ultimately recognized" that the establishment of a confederacy "was more expedient, pragmatic and likely to succeed than" a "fragmentary collection of small independent states" (p. 67).

Moreover, Confederates adopted some characteristics of their nationalism reluctantly due to the persistent attraction of past American nationalism. During the war, Confederates confronted the problem of "continuity versus novelty"; they did not solve it, but "stepped around the problem" by embracing victimhood as a means to "simultaneously protect their region's peculiar institution and themselves as individuals" (pp. 181, 56). Victimhood became the defining characteristic of Confederate nationalism due to the pressure of war and the need to protect slavery.

In tackling the main issue of the day, slavery, Quigley argues that "southern nationalists knew that by itself slavery was a weak basis for securing unity within the South or securing legitimacy as a genuine nation on the world stage" and it complicated parallels with European nationalists (p. 74). However the North's hostility to slavery threatened the South's economy and prosperity and around that core "had sprung up a constellation of anxiety and resentments" (p. 126). So slavery remained central albeit covertly, as "sooner or later, though, everything came back to the sine qua non of Confederate national identity: racial slavery" (p. 143). Some Confederates, such as Alexander Stephens, emphasized this fact; others, such as Jefferson Davis, minimized it, "presumably because to do so otherwise would have been so problematic for nonslaveholders at home, and for the predominantly antislavery western world." But, Quigley adds, "the difference between the two groups was one of emphasis more than substance" (p. 143).

Both historians are keen to place their studies of Southern nationalism within an international context. However, Quigley stresses that although Southerners did reach outward to their understandings of nationalism throughout the nineteenth-century transatlantic world, they did so in order to address present-day problems at home. Hence Southerners used "exports of European romantic nationalism [that] were transferable to America" (p. 30). There were also limits on such importation, for "American racial nationalism was still more open to a range of white ethnicities than were most European nationalisms of the day" (p. 32).

The difficulties that Confederates encountered at the time determined how they interpreted comparative struggles for independence. For example, the uncertainty of borders "represented a serious challenge to the legitimacy of the Confederacy, which like all nation-states claimed supreme authority over the resources and indi-

viduals within its territory; then too, there was the problem of slavery" (pp. 130-131). Therefore Confederates noted separatist, as well as nation-building, examples from overseas, and again invoked the rhetoric of victimhood. Quigley argues that Confederates understood international precedent in their own terms, as meaning that "the hardships of war" were the "true test of nationality" and the establishment of "national independence frequently entailed suffering through the hardship of war" (pp. 211-212).

According to Quigley, Confederates expected European governments to consider the question of recognizing Confederate independence solely in terms of their priorities. From the beginning, Confederates believed that European "self interest would determine responses to Confederate diplomacy more than anti-slavery" (p. 136). So in their appeal to the Europeans, "nationalists in the early Confederacy were simply doing what nationalists everywhere do best: glossing over disagreements and weaknesses to assert a strong, unified national identity." However, as the war intensified, Confederates increasingly adopted a humanitarian argument, consistent with their sense of national victimhood, composed of a series of allegations of Northern barbarities, "the atrocity story," in making a case for recognition. Hence the conflict "became not just a war between nations, but a war between barbarity and civilization itself" (pp. 184-187).

Hutchison illuminates what the Confederates meant by "civilization" and how they tried to solve these ongoing problems of citizenship and nationalism, which, for Quigley, "demanded unprecedented quantities of creative energy" (p. 53, 170). In their literature, Confederates looked for answers overseas, as they "sought to embrace rather than eschew European models and traditions," which resulted in a "dialectic of cultural separatism and cosmopolitanism" and meant that this "national differentiation" from the Union was "played out on an international stage" (pp. 11, 195-196).

Hutchison demonstrates both how Confederates recognized current problems with their nationality and how they expected to solve them in the future. In the *Southern Illustrated News* founded in the fall of 1862 as the "only self-consciously national newspaper" in the Confederacy, Hutchison notes, while there was plenty of poetry that revealed a "forthright engagement with the horrors of war," there was also nation-building future-looking verse, such as the "Southern Lyre" whose theme is that "national perfection is yet to come" (pp. 127, 129, 133). The poem is representative of the paper's urgent ambition to bring "Confederate and European literature into close conversation," also evident in Confederate publishers' wartime emphasis on "cultural reprinting" of British literature. To Hutchison, this is proof, not of a derivative culture, but of one that was "distinguished by its increasingly transatlantic interests" (pp. 69, 127). Confederates saw themselves not only as participants in this wider world, but also as its natural leaders.

Augusta Evans's 1864 *Macaria*--the Confederate national novel, according to Hutchison--was meant to be an antidote to provincial localism, by targeting the entire Anglophone world as readers. Within this larger context, slavery became the hidden cornerstone of Confederate nationalism. With an eye on this cosmopolitan market, Evans deftly handled the issue of antislavery by committing an "act of dissociation." Although she had "ambivalent feelings" about slavery, Evans had a firm belief in the inferiority of blacks. In the novel, she looked vaguely toward a harmonious future and performed "a quiet celebration of [current] Confederate race relations" (p. 84). Her main purpose was to perform a "strident defense of the Confederacy, at nearly every turn promulgating the profoundly conservative social policies" (p. 98).

In turning to music, Hutchison suggests that the wartime conflict between the Union and the Confederacy over *Dixie* was one over "transnational property" and a metaphor for the Civil War as a war between two nations rather than a provincial brothers' war (p. 171). To Hutchison, the 1876 memoir *Women in Battle* also offers "unexpected contexts" (p. 175). By traveling in Canada, Latin America, and the Caribbean, the author Loreta Velasquez revealed another wider dimension to the Civil War and therefore "we must acknowledge that at any number of moments the American Civil War threatened to become an international conflict" (p. 200).

Turning to the future, Quigley asserts that for "southern nationalists, one thing was certain: an independent future would be a magnificent one" (p. 84). But because Quigley argues that Confederate cultural nationalism and, in particular, "a southern intellectual system were hardly flourishing, even at the eve of the Civil War," he does not then say what that future would be (p. 72). Hutchison agrees with Quigley that Confederate writers had to write to "a complex and conflicted present," about which period Quigley writes brilliantly; but they also wrote in hope about "an uncertain and inscrutable future" on which Hutchison focuses (pp. 61-62). In this future, the Union would not be so dominant, rather the literature sought to provide a fictive Confederate ethnicity, but it was not without its weaknesses as the "fervency of Confederate literary nationalism [was also juxtaposed] with the provisional nature of a Confederacy made up of seceding states" (p. 16). Hutchison's future, like Quigley's present, was not without its contradictions, for it was both derivative and distinct from the Union. Although it celebrated "profoundly conservative social policies, Confederate nationalism succeeded in being both retrograde and progressive, because with slavery, the Confederacy had its "ideology of national exceptionalism"; this slavery-based nation would be commercially and territorially expansive as it "undergirded the Confederacy's existing imperial designs" (pp. 10, 109)

Hutchison's final chapter is aptly titled "In Dreamland" and sets out a vision of this possible Confederate empire. In the postwar memoir *Women in Battle*, the protagonist's "restless" wandering during and after the war remind the reader that the Civil War "involved the destinies of several continents" and revealed the possibility of "an independent and eventually cosmopolitan Confederacy against constructions of the South as a provincial backwater" (pp. 186, 182). Wartime productions, such as Henry Holze's *Index*, also revealed both Confederate ambitions to be a future player in the world economy and its latent potential as a devoted offspring and scion of British literature "yet in its infancy" (p. 195).

With Quigley's account, there is the danger of a sense of a trajectory from the victimhood felt by Confederate nationalists leading ineluctably to a Lost Cause postwar, but this needs to be balanced by the contingencies offered by Hutchison's "history of the future" (p. 19). Confederates believed in a different outcome of the Civil War and this also influenced the development of Confederate nationalism. Hence the importance of Hutchison's book to the historian, for Confederates not only thought a great deal about the future, but by planning for it, it also affected their current actions.

Notes

[1]. David Potter, "The Historian's Use of Nationalism and Vice Versa," *The American Historical Review* 67, no. 4 (1962): 924-950.

[2]. For the Confederate nation, see Gary Gallagher, *The Confederate War: How Popular Will, Nationalism, and Military Strategy Could Not Stave Off Defeat* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997). For a response, see William Freehling, *The South versus the South: How Anti-Confederate Southerners Shaped the Course of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

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Citation: Adrian Brettle. Review of Hutchison, Coleman. *Apples and Ashes: Literature, Nationalism, and the Confederate States of America.* ; Quigley, Paul. *Shifting Grounds: Nationalism and the American South, 1848-1865.* H-CivWar, H-Net Reviews. September, 2013.

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