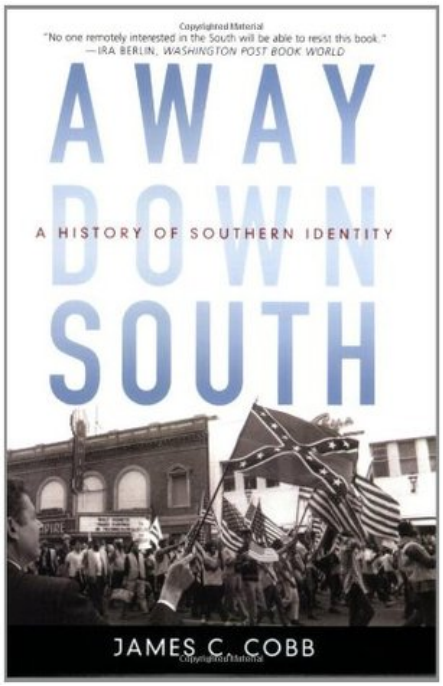

Away Down South: A History of Southern Identity

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From the seventeenth century Cavaliers and *Uncle Tom's Cabin* to Civil Rights museums and today's conflicts over the Confederate flag, here is a brilliant portrait of southern identity, served in an engaging blend of history, literature, and popular culture. In this insightful book, written with dry wit and sharp insight, James C. Cobb explains how the South first came to be seen--and then came to see itself--as a region apart from the rest of America.

As Cobb demonstrates, the legend of the aristocratic Cavalier origins of southern planter society was nurtured by both northern and southern writers, only to be challenged by abolitionist critics, black and white. After the Civil War, defeated and embittered southern whites incorporated the Cavalier myth into the cult of the "Lost Cause," which supplied the emotional energy for their determined crusade to rejoin the Union on their own terms. After World War I, white writers like Ellen Glasgow, William Faulkner and other key figures of "Southern Renaissance" as well as their African American counterparts in the "Harlem Renaissance"--Cobb is the first to show the strong links between the two movements--challenged the New South creed by asking how the grandiose vision of the South's past could be reconciled with the dismal reality of its present. The Southern self-image underwent another sea change in the wake of the Civil Rights movement, when the end of white supremacy shook the old definition of the "Southern way of life"--but at the same time, African Americans began to examine their southern roots more openly and embrace their regional, as well as racial, identity. As the millennium turned, the South confronted a new identity crisis brought on by global homogenization: if Southern culture is everywhere, has the New South become the No South?

Here then is a major work by one of America's finest Southern historians, a magisterial synthesis that combines rich scholarship with provocative new insights into what the South means to southerners and to America as well.

Away Down South: A History of Southern Identity Details

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From Reader Review Away Down South: A History of Southern Identity for online ebook

Dan says

Insightful I guess, but why did I read this?? When you get out of college no one is forcing you anymore...

Robin Friedman says

A Study Of Southern Identity

In considering the American South, most people tend to view it as distinctive and different from the remainder of the United States. The South is thought to have an "identity" of its own -- and historians frequently view their task as determining the nature of the uniquely Southern identity. In his book "Away Down South: A Study of Southern Identity" (2005), Professor James C. Cobb studies Southern history, the nature of Southern identity over time, and the concept of identity itself. Cobb his written a challenging book. Cobb is Distinguished Professor of History at the University of Georgia. He has written extensively on Southern history.

Cobb examines Southern history and the distinctiveness of the South. He begins in the colonial period and continues through the "Old South" of the pre-Civil War Era. Cobb discusses the perceived "distinctiveness" of the South. Southern distinctiveness was generally seen as based upon plantation slavery. The South was frequently viewed as backward and barbaric with its "peculiar institution", but its defenders saw the South romantically as a land of cavaliers. After the Civil War and Reconstruction, a "New South" developed based upon Jim Crow, and upon an attempt to build an industrial base upon small textile mills, keeping many people, white and black, impoverished. Cobb shows how the development of the "New South" was based upon the "Lost Cause" view that many Southerners developed to explain the loss of the Civil War and upon a romantic and highly exaggerated picture of the virtues of the Old South.

But Cobb's book gains in depth when he turns from a consideration of early Southern history to the manner in which that history was reflected in Southern history and literature. Cobb writes insightfully about white authors such as William Faulkner and Ellen Glasgow as they struggled with understanding the South as well as about African American authors, such as Zora Neal Hurston and Sterling Brown as they approached Southern history from an African American standpoint. Cobb's study focuses on a famous book by historian W.J. Cash, "The Mind of the South" (1941) which becomes, in Cobb's account, emblematic of the deeply ambivalent attitude Southerners adopted towards their region and towards its history.

Cobb discusses whether the contemporary South remains a region set apart and distinctive from the rest of the United States. I found that Cobb had perceptive things to say about Southern identity and of the way in which "identity" should be used in approaching history -- and one's own life. Late in his book, Cobb argues that while identity has most often been viewed in terms of "distinctiveness" -- what makes the South "different" from everywhere else -- that may not be the only or the most useful way to think about the nature of identity. "Identity" can change over time. Furthermore, Cobb points out, identity can be considered not as focusing on "how the South is different" from some other region or from the United States as a whole, but rather on "what the South is" for itself. In other words, Cobb suggests focusing on what the South is, and on how people view what it may be at its best, without juxtaposing it or considering it in opposition to another

region or to the rest of the United States. He suggests, and well so, how this approach to thinking about the identity or uniqueness of a region might be used to consider painful questions of regional, national, and religious identity that plague much of the world today. Cobb also suggests, that individuals, in trying to understand themselves, might well consider their identities as changing rather than static. They might consider their personalities and attributes valuable for what they are without envy of or criticism of others -- that is, irrespective of comparing their identity with the identity of some other person or group. People tend to have a multitude of identities, not just one. Cobb approvingly quotes Faulkner's observation that "it is himself that every Southerner writes about."

I think Cobb has done several things in this book. First he has given an overview of Southern history. Second. he has offered an excellent discussion of literature and history written about the South. There is much worthwhile material to explore here, and Cobb's book may serve as a guide to it. Third, and most importantly, Cobb has written eloquently on Southern identity. He offers wise suggestions on how the concept of identity may be modified in considering both the history of a region and the life of an individual.

Robin Friedman

Claudia says

It's very informative and well-written although its very dense and it takes some time and dedication to finish. Its not strictly chronological, so you can pick and choose chapters if you like. The chapter for Southern Literature mentions other great books I'll add to my reading list!

Reza Amiri Praramadhan says

The American South is always my favourite region of US. It is the most distinctive region among others, I think. The memories and identities of the South are strong enough to invoke sentimentality among its believers, for they identified themselves to the defeats, frustrations and anxiousness of the South, just like I do. From its immediate destruction after the Confederates' loss in Civil War, the landed gentry and former slaveholders, propagated the myth of the lost cause and their cavalier inclinations which set them against the negative north. Armed with those creeds however, the South tried its best to attract economic investments from the North, believing that it can achieve economic prosperity without sacrificing its values. This was called the New South Creed, which ironically northernize the South. The South's longtime obsession with its peculiar institution, the slavery, and its modern form, the Jim Crow is also discussed, with numerous writers and their works discussing the nature of it (which made the boring part of this book). The most interesting thing happened after the Civil Rights era, with blacks finding out that racial segregation is the thing that kept the black community strong, and integration erode it. Faced with this reality, many black people and writers went soul-searching for their place in Southern Identity. Going to the 21st century, other issues that mostly unique to the South are discussed, like the usage of Confederate Flags, the Confederate Statues and NASCAR Racing and Country music propagation all around America. Despite the boring part about the writers trying to form the exact Southern Identity, for me, this is a very interesting book.

J.M. Hushour says

This is a refreshing overview of the evolution of the notion of "being Southern" through all its vagaries. There's a steady trajectory taking in the colonial and antebellum views of what the South was, the development of the Confederate cause and its various definitions, and the Reconstruction era and beyond, whence evolved the idea of the Lost Cause, the New South, and, eventually, the Agrarian movement that saw the south as distinct and in no need of mimicking the North.

There's definitely a thick amount of stuff covered here. The focus moves from academia to culture, with much attention given to writers like Faulkner (definitely covered in much greater detail than the previous review suggests) and others.

The biggest takeaway, as with any discussion of identity politics, is that it's not so worthwhile positing a view of someone else as an 'other' because it's often self-reflection. In fact, as Cobb points out, during the 1970s, the idea of a North imbued with all the positive attributes of progressivism, tolerance, and capitalistic success was severely dented and people began to realize that the North wasn't so different or, at the very least, was guilty of the very same deficiencies as the South.

So, it's a lot more fuzzier than current tropes might suggest. More so, the most fascinating parts of this book is the black southern return to the South, physically and otherwise. As a distinct region, it's certainly a part of many people's worldviews, black or white, and there's a very pleasing ambiguity to this unracial view of the South, one which everyone accepts, loves, and wishes to nurture.

The best bits are the ones on the contemporary south, with the region being blamed for the dumbing-down of American politics and culture, but, as Cobb shows, this is as much a Northern affair (if one can even use the word Northern) as not. Religious blacks in the South are just as likely to support conservative agendas as not and there is certainly no dearth of racism outside the South.

Overall, good, the work leans a little heavy on the cultural elites. As with any historical survey of this type, one must ask, what did the average person think? We get smidgens of that here and there, especially towards the end, but this is a flaw in any work covering identity politics, typically elite-defined.

And in response to the previous review, some corrections: Faulkner is covered in great detail in this book. Wolfe and Warren are discussed also. I can't account for the omission of Harper Lee, but one can't cover everything. In fact, I find the previous review rather striking in its portrayal of this book as portraying the South negatively since essentially every page is dedicated to acting as a corrective to this idea, at least showing how the North is no different, in the end.

Jonathan Hedgpeth says

This is a well written, contemporary examination of Southern Historiography. Cobb closely examines the varying temporal constructions of southern identity, and comes up with some very interesting conclusions.

Stephen says

What does it mean to be southern, beyond a fondness for turnip greens and cornbread? The answer is an evolving one, as the South’s distinctiveness has changed its expression throughout the United States’ history. Away Down South follows national and southern attitudes about southern-ness from settlement days to the present. The Civil War, the South's stand against the rest of the nation, sets the stage for most of the book, including reconstruction and the continuing problem of race relations. The work looks at the southern mind and heart, exploring not only intellectually-steeped expressions of the South like I'll Take my Stand and The

Mind of the South, but delves deeply into southern literature, black and white. The South as a concept remains negative throughout. Not that the South is without its virtues, but from the country's beginnings James C. Cobb maintains that the south has been seen both by itself and the rest as a country as a place apart; first a wild frontier infested by poisonous snakes and Indians, a no-man's-land fit only for criminals, and later as the cesspool of American culture; the hiding place of aristocracy, slavery, ignorance, and all things foul. Having no France across the Channel, or a Germany across the border, the South is the "other" which the rest of the country, with progressive, industrial New England as its model, can hold itself superior. The south's wild gave way to plantations and then Jim Crow, but regardless of changes the taint of 'other' remained. This is a view not preached by Cobb, a man of the south himself, but the attitude haunts the imagination of the southern intellectuals and artists who later claim the story. What makes Away Down South stand out for me is the space given to black southerners, who left the fields for the northern cities only to return in part to the southland. Despite its tragic history, its story is one they share; the southern scene is the one fixed in their memories of home. That coming-to-terms with the past can't help but hold a fascination for a southern student of history such as myself.

Brent says

Dawggonned if this wasn't among the most interesting books I've read of late.
Cobb usefully recounts ideas of Southern identity that actually changed in different periods. His quotations are apt, and his readings of black literature add real depth. To the much-discussed book Mind of the South, this book adds historical dialogue, perspective, and background. Cobb generously weaves in and out of the warp and woof of Southern cultures.
Highly recommended.

Timothy says

A very interesting look at the southern psyche.

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tysephine says

This is a fascinating study of how both the North and South have viewed southern identity since the colonial era. Cobb presents a well-rounded and well-researched investigation into the politics surrounding the making of southern identity and the perception of southerners both in the North and globally. Highly recommended for anyone interested in southern history or politics.

Lawyer says

Away Down South: A History of Southern Identity, James C. Cobb's Muddled Look at The South

I was born and raised in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. I know little of my father's genealogy as he decided he was too young to be a father and split when I was a week old. However, my mother's family was from Limestone County, Alabama. My only known relative to participate in the American Civil War was my great great

grandfather, Samuel McConnell, a Presbyterian minister, who served as a chaplain. The only family known to me never owned another human being or wanted to. They were poor for the most part. From the time my great great grandfather lived, I was the first of that family line to attend college. My grand parents and my mother were very proud of me. I was taught from a young age to say "Sir" and "Ma'am" to all people no matter the color of their skin.

Never think that I believe the South bears no burden of a history indelibly chained to the ignominy of slavery. I do not own a Confederate flag, nor have I ever waved one.

At the risk of appearing an unrepentant unreconstructed Rebel, I must say I very much disliked this book. Authored by University of Georgia B. Phinizy Spalding Distinguished Professor in the History of the American South James C. Cobb, a native of rural Hart County, Georgia, I expected Dr. Cobb to be a cogent, story telling Southerner. What I got was dry, repetitive, incomplete, and a jumble of facts flying fast and furiously.

Cobb's jacket photo in "Away Down South" pictures him Bubbacized in a ball cap, driving a pickup truck. Will the real Dr. Cobb stand up?

Cobb also wrote as though what he could discern as basic information might be over the lay reader's head. I lost count of the times Cobb referred to Jim Crow, referencing the segregation laws put into place in numerous states, not just in the South. However, Cobb never identified Jim Crow or the origin of the term.

Just as "Dixie" was written by a white man from the North, an Ohioan, Jim Crow was created by Thomas Dartmouth "Daddy" Rice. Rice was known by his skits in New York City theaters. Rice was the first white man to appear on stage in black face makeup, portraying a stereotypical Black, called Jim Crow in 1828. His Jim Crow dance routine was a hit North of the Mason Dixon Line. His act led to the Minstrel shows that became so popular up North and spread to the South. But that information, I suppose, was not relevant for Dr. Cobb's text.

Jim Crow in New York, 1828

Cobb's section on Southern writers is a travesty, based on limited references. He dismissed Faulkner in two pages. Thomas Wolfe and Robert Penn Warren were given equally short shrift. In Cobb's literary South, there is no mention of Carson McCullers, Harper Lee, and very little recognition of Eudora Welty, just to name a few.

Especially annoying was Cobb's conjecture that had he been alive, William Faulkner would not have been standing at the side of James Meredith upon his admission to the University of Mississippi. Rather, Cobb mused that Faulkner aspired to be a Southern Cavalier as he had taken up fox hunting while living in Virginia, referring to Faulkner's portrait in a "pink" fox hunting uniform. Such conjecture seems outside the realm of legitimate scholarship. Cobb had me wanting to pitch his book across the room on several occasions. Faulkner's coat is red, by the way.

William Faulkner, pretty in pink

Cobb essentially divides the South into three eras: The Old South; The New South; and The No South. In

short, there was the antebellum South; the South following the American Civil War; and the current South whose identity has become murky as a result of a homogenized population across America.

But what do I know? After all, I'm from Alabama, the state Cobb pointed out as being last in every nameable virtue following George Wallace's campaign for President of the United States. Cobb seemed a bit stunned at the degree of support Wallace found North of the Mason Dixon Line. Of course, racism has not been limited to the South. Or, am I wrong about that?

Cobb's "dry" sense of humor is revealed in his revelation of the rise of Southern Living Magazine. Although it originated from the publishers of "Progressive Farmer," a Northern publishing company has been educating Southerners on how to live Southern since 1985.

Bottom line, Cobb presents little that is positive about the South. The fate of the Ku Klux Klan? You won't find it here. That the KKK was bankrupted by an Alabama lawyer, Morris Dees, who founded the Southern Poverty Law Center in Montgomery, Alabama, is not of relevance to, or a part of Cobb's supposed history of Southern identity.

The Civil Rights Memorial fronting the Southern Poverty Law Center

In closing, I offer homage to an old Mother Goose rhyme, revised, of course. After all,
Away Down South: A History of Southern Identity is a revisionist's perception of what it means to be a Southerner.

I do not like thee, Doctor Cobb,
The reasons why - I have a glob;
Your musings are just so macabre,
These pages make my temples throb.
While with fellow scholars,you may hobnob,
I don't like thee, Doctor Cobb.

Sean Chick says

After you read Cash and Woodward, go to Cobb. He offers a compelling synthesis of the two.

Larry Bassett says

Eric Bates of *Southern Exposure* magazine said, “The fascination with things southern is the biggest craze since miniature golf.” As a northerner who lives in Virginia I saw myself in the book *Away Down South* . If you live in the South or consider yourself fairly learned about the South, your main criticism may be about what is left out of the book. This may be one of the problems with any history textbook. However, I found references to many, many books (literature and text) in *Away Down South* that I will be adding to my bookshelf and reading in the future. The author, James C. Cobb, has stimulated my interest in finding out about the South, the region where I live.

There is talk about the homogenization of the South as it is slowly drawn into the melting pot that is the United States. There is talk of the lore and legend that makes up part of the pseudo-history of the South. This book, of course, has a point of view and it is that of the author. I am not sure if he is more embarrassed or entertained by what he has discovered in his academic research. I believe that there is no history book that is outside of and free from politics. You really have to know something about the author these days to have a fighting chance at understanding her or his book. Here are a few links to pages about and by Mr. Cobb:

http://www.georgiacenterforthebook.or...

http://history.uga.edu/people/people....

And here is a 2010 article by Mr. Cobb in the NY Times with over 140 comments:
http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/...

And, just for fun, here is a blog by the same Mr. Cobb:
http://cobbloviate.com/

If you haven't had enough yet, here is a scholarly article by Mr. Cobb:
http://www.neh.gov/humanities/2011/ju...

If you want more, you will have to Google "James C. Cobb" yourself!

Many pages of *Away Down South*are devoted to how slavery, race and racism have worked to help mold the southern identity. Cobb would put these topics at the top of his list. While you probably won't be shocked by that conclusion, you might benefit from reading the pros and cons on the topic found throughout the book. Although he does not always succeed, I think Cobb does try to show both sides. I think he might say that he is not so much taking his own position but illuminating the positions of others. I love how so many of the observations about the attitudes of the day are traced through the southern literature at that time.

I am a Southerner by residence only. I lived the first thirty years of my life in Michigan. Then I moved to Virginia, New York, Massachusetts, Maryland and Virginia again. I have lived in Virginia for ten years and am still trying to understand what it means to me to be in the South. I live in Lynchburg, Virginia, a town with a distressing name if you don't know that a Mr. Lynch founded the town. Rather than accept integration in the 1960s, Lynchburg filled in the public swimming pool with dirt rather than integrate it. And you still hear some blacks mourn the loss of the "separate but equal" school system since the black schools were, they recall, a source of pride and community.

I have conjured up a slower pace of life in Virginia although it may be a stereotype that I have fallen for. The most obvious distinction is a comparison with New York where the people even talk fast when compared with Virginia. I identify the South by its racial and racist history. But it is true, as I have been told many times, that racism is not limited to the South. I think there is a greater difference between country people and urban people than between Northerners and Southerners. As I read Away Down South I thought about my experience living in a country where there is still a Dixie and there is a strong belief that the South is different from the rest of the country. The South still bears the albatross of racial division and while it is true that racism is still rampant throughout the country, the South is still branded with that mark more than anyplace else.

This is a textbook so it is crammed with information and footnotes ascribing its accuracy. It also implicitly acknowledges that this book is one version of reality and that we have been misled by history books in the

past. I suggest that you read the chapters that sound interesting to you as an introduction to the book. I mostly read it in the order in which it was printed. For me that meant it started out slow and then built up interest and excitement. If I had dipped into the book in different places, I may have been more receptive to the initial chapters once I got back to them.

The author begins with the premise that the identity of The South is based as much as what it is NOT as what it is. And that oppositional view has most typically boiled down to a discussion of the differences between The North and The South. Simply put, there would not be a South without a North.

> . . . the reader who picks up this book looking for a definitive pronouncement as to whether "the South" still exists as a distinctive region is destined to put it down disappointed. . . . I hasten to point out that what I am offering here is a history rather than the history of southern identity. I make no claim that what I have done is totally inclusive or definitive. On the other hand, I do believe this book offers a useful chronologically comprehensive historical framework for understanding the origins and evolution of an ongoing effort, now into its third century, to come to terms with the South's role as both a real and imagined cultural entity separate and distinct from the rest of the country. Because southern distinctiveness has so often been defined in opposition to our larger national self-image, this enduring struggle with southern identity has actually become not only a sustaining component of southern identity itself, but as we shall see, of American identity as well.

A southern identity is probably most vividly established by the years when slavery was permitted in some states and not in others. The presence of legally sanctioned permanent ownership and control of one person by another predominated in what we call the southern states.
It is also advanced that settlers of the South and North were of different heritages:

> In the 1830s writers eager to explain why the inhabitants of the northern states and those of the southern states appeared to be so different in values and temperament had begun to seize on the idea that the people of the two regions were simply heirs to the dramatically different class, religious, cultural, and political traditions delineated by the English Civil War. The northern states were populated, so many believed, by the descendants of the middle-class Puritan "Roundheads" who had routed the defenders of the monarchy, the aristocratic Cavaliers, supposedly of Norman descent, who had then settled in the southern states.

Cobb has included copious notes (50 pages) to indicate his sources that substantiate his conclusions or elucidate the conclusions of others. There is a good deal of material that is presented as factual based on these footnotes. There are many unique sources of data. This is impressive on its face but I was limited in my ability to utilize this information as it required significant referencing and recollection from page to page. One must assume that the footnotes accurately reflect the sources since the casual reader will not validate the information personally. There is clearly the appearance of academic rigor in the material. The value of significant but selected detail will have to be determined by the individual reader.
A GR reader who is a native southerner and has displayed significant knowledge and experience related to the South, Mike Sullivan, has shared his dislike for this book in his review.

> I expected Dr. Cobb to be a cogent, story telling Southerner. What I got was dry, repetitive, incomplete, and a jumble of facts flying fast and furiously.
> . . .

> Bottom line, Cobb presents little that is positive about the South.

I think it would be fair to say that Mr. Sullivan was unimpressed by what purports to be a scholarly effort. I point this out because of my respect for him as a skilled reader. His opinion of the book runs contrary to other ratings. However, there are no other substantial reviews so I wanted to direct your attention to his thoughts. My own negative feelings about the book are due, in most part, to the fact that it shares many of the negative characteristics many textbooks: it is not always easy to read and understand. Mr. Sullivan felt that Mr. Cobb was talking down to him. I can understand that given Mr. Sullivan's significant knowledge. As a less knowledgeable person, I did not experience that feeling. Mr. Sullivan was possibly more distressed by what was left out of the book than by what was included. You can go and read his review yourself and I recommend that you do: http://www.goodreads.com/review/show/... . As with most good reviews, there are a number of good comments that follow it.

This book is not well read within the GR community. At this time it is the monthly read of a GR group with over three hundred members. Approximately a half dozen GR people in the group are currently reading it. This is 2% of the group. Not impressive to me. People are mostly passing on this book. A past GR review humorously reads: "Insightful I guess, but why did I read this?? When you get out of college no one is forcing you anymore..."

In Chapter 2, "The South Becomes a Cause," Cobb says that Reconstruction after the Civil War did more to unify the South than the war.

> After four years of common struggle against the North, they not only responded to the term "Southern" with an emotion once reserved for Virginia or Carolina or Georgia, but they were much more acutely conscious "of the line that divided what was Southern from what was not."
> . . .
> …"the South was born for a great many white Southerners not in Montgomery or even in Charleston harbor, but, as Robert Penn Warren observed, "only at the moment when Lee handed Grant his sword" at Appomattox, and it was only thereafter that the "conception of Southern identity truly bloomed."

The post-war subjugation of the South by the Yankees worked to unite against a common enemy who would yet be defeated. They saw the rising of the South out of the ashes of the Civil War and Reconstruction. No matter, Cobb says, that much of the "history" of that period is not accurate and would be better referred to as myths.
Cobb observes that the New South reconstructed the history of the Old South to a time of happy slaves who willingly protected their owners and well disciplined soldiers who were defending their homeland. This has to be a standard, almost expected debate among historians: what really happened?

> In its southern translation, as first popularized in Edward A. Pollard's 1866 book The Lost Cause , the "Lost Cause" ethos not only defended succession and glorified the society that white southerners had gone to war to preserve, but actually transformed their tragic military defeat in a tremendous moral triumph. As Emory M. Thomas explained, "The Lost Cause mythology held that the southern cause was not only undefiled by defeat but that the bloodbath of war actually sanctified the values and mores of the Old South." Proponents of the Lost Cause quickly pieced together a remarkably seamless historical justification of the actions of southern whites before and during the war. Though foisted on the South by the British with the assistance of northern slavetraders, in the hands of southern planters, slavery had actually been

> a benign, civilizing institution. Furthermore, the South's antebellum planter aristocrats had supported succession not to preserve slavery but to secure nothing more than the individual and state rights granted by the Constitution. (62)

This is exactly the historical debate that I remember from my school days many years ago and that still goes on today: the South went to war to defend state rights and not slavery. True or False? Cobb refers to the audacity of the revisionism.

> One of the most enduring myths to emerge from the era of Abraham Lincoln is the notion that the South fought the Civil War not to defend slavery, but to uphold the rights of states against a tyrannical central government. This myth was extremely important to the white South's resistance to post-war Reconstruction, particular the effort by northern Republicans to secure basic civil rights and liberties for newly freed slaves. This states' rights doctrine took concrete form during Reconstruction in the enactment of black codes by Southern states that sharply limited the freedom of African Americans.
> Source: http://www.britannica.com/blogs/2011/...

Cobb considers the views of southern authors, black and white, as they advance their views about the south in their novels and other writings and especially about race relations. A variety of views about the Jim Crow south are put forward. There is a white objection to segregation being overturned by force by the federal government. The common view the white authors discussed was that southerners should be permitted to bring about integration without outside interference and on their own terms.

Richard Wright's Black Boy published in 1945 is one example of a black southern author:

> In *Black Boy* Wright had forced white readers "to consider the South from the black point of view." Not surprisingly, many of them rejected what they saw. Mississippi's race-baiting congressmen Theodore G. Bilbo and John Rankin denounced *Black Boy* as "a damnable lie from beginning to end" and the "dirtiest, filthiest, lousiest, most obscene piece of writing that I have ever seen in print," pointing out that "it comes from a Negro and you cannot expect any better from a person of this type." Some white liberals and a great many black leaders were also displeased with Wright's unflinching portrayal of the intellectual and emotional barrenness of black life in the South and his suggestion that there was little reason to think things were getting better.

Zora Neale Hurston was another well-known black southern author. She was considered too conservative by some of her peers:

> The irreverent novelist and folklorist Zora Neale Hurston had drawn consistent criticism from other black intellectuals for refusing to use her writings as a weapon in the struggle against racism and Jim Crow. Yet, in the original manuscript for her autobiographical Dust Tracks on a Road, she pointed out that "President Roosevelt could extend his four freedoms to some people right here in America. . . . I am not bitter, but I see what I see. . . . I will fight for my country, but I will not lie for her." Like several others, this passage was subsequently excised after Hurston's white editor deemed it "irrelevant." Elsewhere, Hurston notes Roosevelt's reference to the United States as "the arsenal of democracy" and wondered if she had heard him

> correctly. Perhaps he meant “arse-in-all” of democracy, she thought, since the United States was supporting the French in their effort to resubjugate the Indo-Chinese, suggesting that the “ass-and-all of democracy has shouldered the load of subjugating the dark world completely.” Hurston also announced that she was “crazy for this democracy” and would “pitch headlong into the thing” if it were not for the numerous Jim Crow laws that confronted her at every turn.

Cobb highlights two books written by influential white southerners that shined a not so positive light on the south:

> From its investigation of the Southern class system to its pioneering assessments of the region's legacies of racism, religiosity, and romanticism, W. J. Cash's The Mind of the South defined the way in which millions of readers -- on both sides of the Mason-Dixon line -- would see the South for decades to come.

The South and the Southerner was published in 1963:

> A wide-ranging blend of autobiography and history, The South and the Southerner is one prominent newspaperman's statement on his region, its heritage, its future, and his own place within it. Ralph McGill (1898-1969), the longtime editor and later publisher of the Atlanta Constitution, was one of a handful of progressive voices heard in southern journalism during the civil rights era. From the podium of his front-page columns, he delivered stinging criticisms of ingrained southern bigotry and the forces marshaled against change; yet he retained throughout his career--and his writing--a deep affection for all southerners, even those who declared themselves his enemies.

In the chapter titled “The South of Guilt and Shame” Cobb summarizes the efforts of some white southern historians to overcome the commonly accepted southern myth of the Old South in which slavery was seen as a civilizing experience for the slaves. Newly scrutinized, the commonly accepted myths about the severe damage done to the south by the reconstruction period after the Civil War are debunked. He makes reference to the book Reconstruction after the Civil War that shattered the accepted history of the south.
In the same chapter, the southern literary stars are briefly examined including Flannery O’Connor, Eudora Welty, William Alexander Percy, Elizabeth Spencer and Robert Penn Warren.

> Where Spencer, Welty, and Percy had simply moved from tacit acceptance to public criticism of segregation, in 1930 at age twenty-four, Robert Penn Warren had actually gone on record in its defense.

Warren later wrote Segregation: The Inner Conflict in the South in which he “chronicled the traumatic and bitter ‘inner conflict’ raging among white southerners as a group and within them as individuals.” In 1942, Warren left the South and did not return.

CONTINUED IN COMMENTS SECTION I've never seen this happen!

Alissa says

Sheds light on a region that is often mysterious and vastly misunderstood by people such as myself, who have never been there. An extremely thorough history of the south, from pre-Civil War to the current day, including politics, military, and popular culture.
