

# ***Texts as Flags: The League of the South and the development of a nationalist intelligentsia in the United States 1975-2001\****

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**ABSTRACT:** *This paper examines the role of a group of intellectuals as the emergent leadership of a neo-Confederate nationalist organization called the League of the South (LS) that was formed in Tuscaloosa, Alabama in 1994. I argue that these intellectuals, primarily professional, accredited and recognized academics, comprise a nascent nationalist intelligentsia who developed a series of theories and historical interpretations that both connected with understandings about the past position of the Confederate States of America (CSA) and led them to propose its future revival. Tracing the academic production of and debate over these ideas, from their presentation in scholarly venues in the 1970s and 1980s to their role in supporting an outspokenly neo-Confederate nationalist politics in the 1990s, I claim that the nationalist sentiments of the individuals that produced them have shifted from 'banal' to 'hot.' Over time, analyses forwarded by Grady McWhiney (b.1928), Michael Hill (b.1951) and Donald Livingston (b.1938) have solidified as a neo-Confederate nationalist ideology. In its promotion by the LS, within which these individuals have been leaders since its formation, this ideology currently underpins a wider neo-Confederate movement that is reaching out to established Confederate heritage groups such as the Sons of Confederate Veterans (SCV).*

## **Introduction**

Between 1975 and 1993, three scholars teaching at respected US academic institutions, Michael Hill (b. 1951), Grady McWhiney (b. 1928) and Donald W. Livingston (b. 1938) became recognized experts in their disciplines. McWhiney, for most of the 1980s, published in academic venues and was

prominent in conservative academic circles, being on the editorial board of the Intercollegiate Studies Institute journal *Continuity*.<sup>1</sup> His major 'Celtic thesis' proposition reached a popular audience when recounted in 1981 in the mass-circulation current affairs magazine *Newsweek*<sup>2</sup> but within five years had been severely challenged in an academic context, in particular by Rowland Berthoff and Donald Akenson, and retained little credibility amongst scholars.<sup>3</sup> Yet McWhiney's Celtic thesis remained central to the work of one of his Ph.D. students, Michael Hill, who used the thesis as the basis for his dissertation and subsequent book.<sup>4</sup> In turn, Donald W. Livingston's assessments of Scottish philosopher David Hume (1711-1776) met with a range of comments, some peers arguing that his analyses were groundbreaking and others suggesting they comprised Livingston's own political philosophy rather than that of Hume.

As McWhiney and Livingston taught at Alabama and Northern Illinois Universities, respectively, and Michael Hill developed his doctoral work under McWhiney's guidance, fifteen academics with evident Southern nationalist sentiments collaborated to publish a study of the US South as a distinctive region, titled *Why the South Will Survive*, a collection located within the

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- 1 This publication also included contributions by Clyde N. Wilson (e.g. 'American historians and their history', *Continuity*, 6, 1983, 1-16) who would later become a founding director of the League of the South. The Intercollegiate Studies Institute continues to support the publication of scholarly work by League members, for example Mark G. Malvasi, professor of History at Randolph-Macon College in Ashland, Virginia, who recently contributed 'At century's end: A historical meditation', *The Intercollegiate Review*, vol. 36, 1-2, 2000-2001, pp. 3-13.
  - 2 Jerry Adler and Holly Morris, 'Celts vs. Anglo-Saxons'. *Newsweek*, 10 August 1981, p. 70.
  - 3 See Rowland Berthoff, 'Communications' regarding "The ethnic origins of the American people, 1790", *William and Mary Quarterly (Third Series)* 37, 4, 1980, pp. 701-702; 'AHR Forum: Comparative history in theory and Practice: A discussion.' *American Historical Review* 87, 1, 1982, pp. 123-143; 'Celtic mist over the South.' *Journal of Southern History*, 52, 4, 1986, pp. 523-546; 'A rejoinder' to Forrest McDonald and Grady McWhiney "'A response' to "Celtic mist over the South"" *Journal of Southern History*, 52, 4, 1986, pp. 548-550; Donald Harman Akenson, 'Why the accepted estimates of the ethnicity of the American people, 1790, are unacceptable.' *William and Mary Quarterly (Third Series)*, 41, 1, 1984, pp. 102-119; 'Commentary.' *William and Mary Quarterly (Third Series)*, 41, 1, 1984, pp. 125-129; 'Communications' regarding "The ethnicorigins of the American people, 1790." *William and Mary Quarterly (Third Series)*, 41, 4, 1984, pp. 681-682; *Being Had: Historians, evidence, and the Irish in North America* (Port Credit Ontario, P. D. Meany Publishers, 1985).
  - 4 James Michael Hill, *Continuity in Celtic Warfare: Strategy, tactics, and logistics of the Highland Scots and Irish, 1595-1763* (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Alabama, 1985); *Celtic Warfare 1595-1763* (Edinburgh, Donald, 1986).

reactionary Southern Agrarian tradition.<sup>5</sup> Over a decade later, two contributors to *Why the South Will Survive*, Clyde N. Wilson and Thomas Fleming, became founding directors of the League of the South (LS) alongside Michael Hill and Grady McWhiney. Donald W. Livingston became chairman of the League of the South's Education Committee and the inaugural author of the LS Papers Series.<sup>6</sup> These like-minded individuals therefore consolidated themselves as a group and subsequently formalised this association with the establishment of the LS in 1994.

In this paper, I suggest that these individuals comprise a nascent nationalist intelligentsia and argue that since 1994 they have been actively engaged in nationalist politics proposing a restored Confederate States of America (CSA) at the turn of the 21st century. Although Clyde N. Wilson, Thomas Fleming and others have been equally instrumental in establishing and operating the League of the South, for reasons of space I focus my assessment on three prominent LS members – Michael Hill, the organization's president, Grady McWhiney, a founding director, and Donald W. Livingston, co-ordinator of the League's Institute for the Study of Southern Culture and History (LSI). Through an analysis of the scholarly writings of Hill, McWhiney and Livingston, I examine how their assessments of US and European history and philosophy emerged from academic venues and developed into Confederate nationalist politics between 1975 and 2001. As leaders of current neo-Confederate nationalist politics in the United States, the intellectual research of these scholars has solidified into a nationalist ideology. To conduct this assessment I investigate the peer-reviewed articles, book chapters, contributions to periodical debates, scholarly books (many published by reputable university presses) and book reviews by and about Hill, McWhiney and Livingston. Through an analysis of

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5 Fifteen Southerners, *Why the South Will Survive* (Athens, University of Georgia Press, 1981); Twelve Southerners, *I'll Take My Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition* (New York: Harper and Row, Torchbook edition, 1962).

6 Donald W. Livingston, 'Secession and the Modern State' The League of the South Papers, no. 1 (Monroe, LA: League of the South, 1998). Available HTTP: <http://members.tripod.com/~rebmaster/SECEDE.HTM> and <http://www.lrainc.com/swtaboo/taboo/dwlviv01.html>. I have seen dates between 1996 and 1998 for the appearance of this paper on the internet. It is currently available as a printed essay from The League of the South, Post Office Box 14184, Monroe, Louisiana 71207; *Philosophical Melancholy and Delirium: Hume's pathology of philosophy* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1998); Thomas Naylor, 'Philosophy of Secession... Review of *Philosophical Melancholy and Delirium: Hume's pathology of philosophy* by Donald W. Livingston', Southern Patriot, vol. 5, 3, 1998, pp. 3-4. Naylor is a member of the League of the South and Professor Emeritus of Economics at Duke University.

these sources I show the connections between the individuals, ideas and institutions – both historical and existing – that have resulted in a 21st century political organization that proposes the establishment of a CSA, a nation-state that will, according to these LS leaders, oppose equality and favour hierarchy as its social and structural order.<sup>7</sup>

### **Theoretical Proposals – a Nationalist Intelligentsia and a Culture of Critical Discourse**

To understand current League of the South praxis it is useful to invoke the theoretical proposals forwarded by Antonio Gramsci that outline how a nationalist movement develops.<sup>8</sup> Theorists of nationalism and nationalist politics have regularly drawn on Gramsci to argue that intellectuals are essential to the production of nationalism. Anthony Smith, for example, argues that intellectuals, often professional historians within academia, produce nationalist politics both by promoting public awareness of nationality and by comprising the nascent leadership of nationalist organizations.<sup>9</sup> Concurring, Nairn argues that nationalism is historically contextual and “associated with certain social strata, at a certain characteristic period in their development. Amongst these, none... [is] more important than the intelligentsia.”<sup>10</sup> As Nairn implies, and Gramsci argues, the production of a nationalist politics is not a consequence of abstract intellectual endeavour. Rather, it develops within the context of the

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7 The ‘social hierarchy’ envisioned by the League of the South corresponds with forwarded that in the 19th century to justify slavery. Biblical passages and theological interpretation are held to explain societal inequalities as ‘natural’ phenomena and a result of ‘God’s will.’ See Edward H. Sebesta and Euan Hague, “The U.S. Civil War as a Theological War: Confederate Christian Nationalism and the League of the South,” *Canadian Review of American Studies* (forthcoming), for assessment of League of the South theology.

8 Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (New York, International Publishers, 1999).

9 See, *inter alia*, Anthony D. Smith, *Theories of Nationalism* (London: Duckworth, 1971); *The Ethnic Revival in the Modern World* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1981); ‘Nationalism and the historians’ in Anthony D. Smith, ed. *Ethnicity and Nationalism* (Leiden, The Netherlands, E. J. Brill, 1992) pp. 58-80; *National Identity* (London, Penguin, 1991); Tom Nairn, *The Break-up of Britain* (London, New Left Books, 1977); A. W. Gouldner, *The Future of Intellectuals and the Rise of the New Class: A frame of reference, theses, conjectures, arguments, and an historical perspective on the role of intellectuals and intelligentsia in the international class context of the modern era* (New York, Seabury Press, 1979); A. W. Gouldner, *Against Fragmentation: The origins of Marxism and the sociology of intellectuals* (New York and Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1985).

10 Nairn, *The Break-up of Britain*, p.153-154.

existing state of affairs. McWhiney, Hill and Livingston are producing their putative CSA within the current United States, through its academic institutions, publication venues and the revitalization of a long and at times dormant tradition of sympathy for the Confederate 'Lost Cause.'

This nationalist politics is also being produced by these individuals acting within a particular historic economic, social and cultural context, that of a wholesale restructuring of the relationships between an individual and society that have followed the demise of the post-WW2 Fordist political economy. To date, the political right has arguably been most actively stimulated by this changing state of affairs as patriot, militia and mainstream 'Christian right' groups, alongside Republican Party venues and spokesmen like Pat Buchanan, Pat Robertson and David Duke are reprising and rephrasing nativist and racist ideologies.<sup>11</sup> Debate about the future cultural and political structures of the United States has, as a result, been led by "the reactionary nationalism of the populist right" rather than more progressive elements within US society.<sup>12</sup> Within this state of affairs, therefore, interpretations of history, ideas and current social and political institutions are generating the conditions within which a nationalist group advocating secession such as the LS can flourish.

A second, associated context is that of ongoing 'culture wars' in the United States. Such struggles are, argues Mitchell, "rooted in ideology, religion, class difference, the social construction of racial, ethnic and gender difference, and so on."<sup>13</sup> These battles centre on issues such as school curricula and political contest over what is morally acceptable behaviour. One key site of such conflict in the US South is that of public commemoration and the meaning of the region's past. Since the late 1980s, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) has campaigned to remove Confederate 'stars and bars' battle flags from public places and buildings. Debates over the location and meaning of this emblem have been particularly virulent in Alabama, Georgia and South Carolina. In turn, recent changes of street and school names from honouring 19th century Confederate leaders to

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11 See Mark Rupert, *Ideologies of Globalization: Contending Visions of a New World Order* (New York and London, Routledge, 2000); Michael Barkun, *Religion and the Racist Right* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1997, Revised edition); David H. Bennett, *The Party of Fear: The American Far Right from Nativism to the Militia Movement* (New York, Vintage, 1995, Revised and updated edition).

12 Rupert, *Ideologies of Globalization*, p. 118.

13 Don Mitchell, *Cultural Geography: a Critical Introduction* (Oxford, Blackwell, 2000). p. 4. See also Michael Bérubé, *Public Access: Literary Theory and American Cultural Politics* (London, Verso, 1994).

20th century civil rights activists have divided communities across the South.<sup>14</sup> Leaders of the League of the South have participated in these debates, many of which originated prior to the formation of the organization. For example, in 1995, after a young white man who flew a Confederate battle flag from his vehicle was killed by African-American youths while driving between Kentucky and Tennessee, LS leader James Michael Hill spoke at his memorial, opportunistically depicting the deceased as a Confederate martyr engaged in a struggle to save Southern culture and heritage from suppression by Federal authorities.<sup>15</sup>

Within this context of a 'culture war' over the meaning of the 'South' and the Confederacy's legacy, and aided by the dissemination over the Internet of their assessments of such contests, conservative groups gained rapid support and membership in the 1990s. Surprisingly however, few analysts have noted the development of the League of the South's political nationalism over the past decade.<sup>16</sup> This may be because those investigating the political right typically

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- 14 See, *inter alia*, Derek H. Alderman, 'A Street fit for a King: Naming Places and Commemoration in the American South', *Professional Geographer* 52, 4, 2000, 672-684; 'New Memorial Landscapes in the American South: An Introduction', *Professional Geographer* 52, 4, 2000, 658-660; 'Creating a New Geography of Memory in the South: The (Re) Naming of Streets in Honor of Martin Luther King, Jr.', *Southeastern Geographer* 36, 1, 1996, 51-69. Derek H. Alderman and Robert M. Beavers, 'Heart of Dixie Revisited: An Update on the Geography of Naming in the American South', *Southeastern Geographer* 39, 2, 1999, 190-205. Jonathan I. Leib, 'Heritage versus Hate: A Geographical Analysis of Georgia's Confederate Battle Flag Debate', *Southeastern Geographer* 35, 1995, 37-57; 'Teaching Controversial Topics: Iconography and the Confederate Battle Flag in the South', *Journal of Geography* 97, 1998, 229-240. Jonathan I. Leib, Gerald R. Webster and Roberta H. Webster 'Rebel with a Cause?', *GeoJournal*, 52, 2000, 303-310. Gerald R. Webster, 'Religion and politics in the American South', *The Pennsylvania Geographer* 35, 1997, 151-172; Gerald R. Webster and Jonathan I. Leib, 'Whose South is it anyway? Race and the Confederate battle flag in South Carolina', *Political Geography* 20, 2001, 271-299; 'Political culture, religion and the Confederate battle flag debate in Alabama', *Journal of Cultural Geography*, forthcoming.
- 15 See Horowitz, *Confederates in the Attic*, Chapter 5 for a review of these events and their aftermath.
- 16 For example, writing at the historical moment when the LS was founded, Michael Billig erroneously notes that other than the *Ka Lahui Hawai'i* movement in Hawaii, "the United States is free from separatist movements" (*Banal Nationalism*, London, Sage, 1995, p. 143). Other nationalist secessionist movements, however, do operate (see Gerald R. Webster and Timothy Kidd, 'Globalization and the Balkanization of States: The myth of American exceptionalism,' *Journal of Geography*, 101, 2, 73-80). There has been some assessment of the League of the South, such as that by Michael Kreyling, *Inventing Southern Literature*

focus on small-scale white supremacist or patriot groups or have centred on well-publicized political campaigns by people such as Buchanan and Duke. Further, Southern political organizations are typically portrayed as 'regional' movements, rather than nationalists advocating political and territorial secession, and thus are overlooked by scholars of nationalism. The LS, however, describe themselves as nationalists and advocate Southern secession. Thus, invoking Gramsci's schema, it may be possible to assess the LS, and the neo-Confederate movement more generally, as a nascent 'historical bloc' engaged in the reconfiguration of elements of 'common sense' to support their nationalist political project and attempt to produce a new political order by agitation for Confederate secession.<sup>17</sup>

Led by Michael Hill since its inauguration, the League of the South promotes a neo-Confederate position that demands that fifteen states secede from the USA and form a new Confederate States of America (Map 1).<sup>18</sup> The

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(Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1998); Edward H. Sebesta, 'The confederate memorial tartan – officially approved by the Scottish Tartan Authority', *Scottish Affairs*, no. 31, 2000, pp. 55-84; Tara McPherson. "I'll take my stand in Dixienet – White guys, the South and cyberspace", in *Race in Cyberspace*. Ed. Beth E. Kolko, Lisa Nakamura and Gilbert B. Rodman. (Routledge, New York and London, 2000) pp. 117-131; Euan Hague "The Scottish diaspora: Tartan Day and the appropriation of Scottish identities in the United States" in David C. Harvey, Rhys Jones, Neil McInroy and Christine Milligan (eds) *Celtic Geographies: Old Culture, New Times* (Routledge, London and New York, 2002) pp. 139-156; Sebesta and Hague "The U.S. Civil War", *op. cit.*

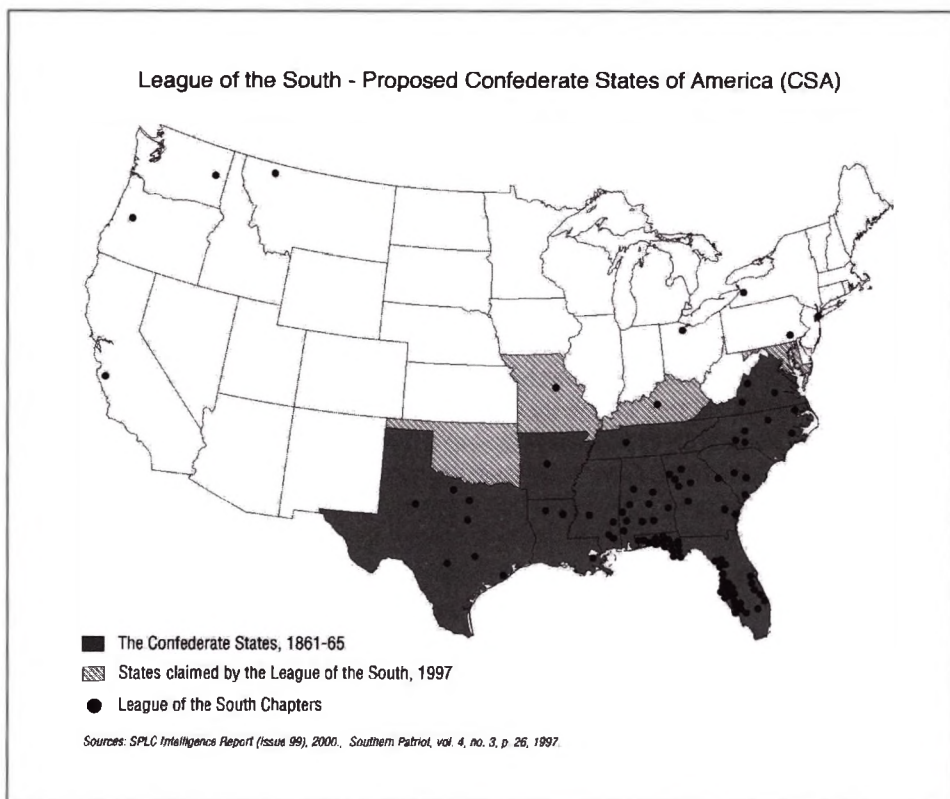
17 See Gramsci, *op. cit.* For utilization of Gramsci's concepts to assess the US South, see T. J. Jackson-Lears, 'The concept of cultural hegemony: Problems and possibilities', *American Historical Review* 90, 3, 1985, 567-593.

18 The League of the South's claim to fifteen US states is outlined in their newsletter (see Southern Patriot 'President's note.' 4.3, 1997, p. 26). The organization was initially called the Southern League but changed its name to the League of the South in 1997 following a threat of legal action by a sporting organization that was already using the name. LS President James Michael Hill explained to members: 'your dues are better spent on a cause with a less-than-perfect name, rather than on litigation that would rob us of our cause while trying to defend an indefensible name' – 'It's in the air', *Southern Patriot*, 4, 5, 1997, pp. 33-34. For reviews of the growth and development of the League of the South, see Sebesta, 'The confederate memorial tartan'; Diane Roberts 'Real lives: Ghosts of the gallant South', *The Guardian* (G2 section), 22 July 1996, p. 14; 'A league of their own', *Southern Exposure*, 25, 1&2, 1997, pp. 18-23; 'The new Dixie manifesto', *Utne Reader*, 85, 1998, pp. 66-69, 101-103. SPLC (Southern Poverty Law Center) *Rebels With a Cause, Intelligence Report no. 99*, 2000. Available from Southern Poverty Law Center, P.O. Box 548, Montgomery, AL 36104-0548.

Map 1. League of The South - Proposed Confederate States of America

Sources: SPLC Intelligence Report (issue 99), 2000.

Southern Patriot, vol.4, no.3, p.26, 1997.



organization has approximately ten thousand members,<sup>19</sup> branches in twenty states, including New York, Ohio and Washington, and has run candidates for public office under the auspices of the affiliated organization, the Southern Party. As the map shows, recruitment has been most successful in Florida, Alabama, Georgia and the Carolinas – areas where disputes over the Confederate battle flag and similar issues have been amongst the most intense – raising questions about what the LS and Hill are saying that attracts supporters. An associated analysis, therefore, is to address what Gouldner, drawing on Gramsci, identifies as the *culture of critical discourse* (CCD) produced by the League's nationalist intellectuals.

Expressing a CCD is "a political act" that aims to transform a state of affairs that was taken for granted into problems in need of solution – a solution that is then proposed by the intelligentsia that expresses the CCD.<sup>20</sup> The League of the South identifies the current social, political, economic and cultural structures of the United States as problems and proposes Confederate nationalism, and thereafter secession, as a solution. Consequently, Michael Hill articulates a CCD when claiming that today's "Southern Celts ... [are] the last of a dying breed of *men*" standing in opposition to "the New World Order of Perfect Gender Equity", a "feminist vision" that advocates "no males, no violence, no spouse and child abuse, no rape, no war."<sup>21</sup> Hill further asserts that "the present-day South is the remnant of a nation built on the realities of place and kin that we must revitalise to the best of our abilities. At its core is a European population, especially Anglo-Celts that must be preserved as the dominant majority."<sup>22</sup> Despite such assertions of Celtic male dominance, Hill and the League of the South regularly utilise leftist discourse to argue that recognition of a Celtic population in the South is part of the USA's growing awareness of multiculturalism and diversity, a state of affairs they claim to support provided that it "does not mean ... that white Southerners should give control over their

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19 I could not obtain exact membership numbers and demographic constituency. However, LS director Clyde N. Wilson (personal communication) informed me that "membership numbers [are] certainly in five figures. Hardly a day has gone by without growth, though the membership dues are substantial. More important than numbers is the dedication and talent of the members. They include novelists, poets, painters, sculptors, song writers and singers, clergy from a dozen sodenominations, highly respected scholars, organic farmers, entrepreneurs and a lot of young people."

20 Gouldner, *Against Fragmentation*, p. 30.

21 Michael Hill, 'Honor, violence, and civilization', *Chronicles: A magazine of American culture* 21, 8, 1997, pp. 17-19. Quote is from p.18 (emphasis added).

22 Michael Hill, 'Kith and kin', *Southern Patriot* 3, 5, 1996, pp. 33-34. Quote is on p. 34. Note that 'Anglo-Celtic' refers to 'English-speaking' Celts – see Barry Reid McCain 'The Anglo-Celts', *Southern Patriot*, III, 5, 1996, pp. 35-37 for the LS definition of 'Anglo-Celtic.'

civilisation and its institutions to another race, whether it be native blacks or Hispanic immigrants.”<sup>23</sup>

To examine the emergence of a neo-Confederate nationalist intelligentsia, the formation of the League of the South and its development of a culture of critical discourse as articulated by Hill above, I utilize Michael Billig’s suggestion that analyses of academic writings by scholars can reveal their latent nationalist sympathies. Contending that an academic’s nationalist sentiments are often referred to throughout a scholarly text, Billig claims that “[I]t has become customary for cultural analysts to treat objects, such as flags, as if they were texts. The process can be reversed, so that the text appears as a flag.” Although Billig maintains that this is initially banal and not as threatening as “the religious fundamentalists or the ethnic cleansers ... if the text is a flag, then its patterns must be read.”<sup>24</sup> Billig does not pursue this assessment beyond the academic sphere, but as many analysts have recognised, intellectuals have long been at the forefront of nationalist movements. Assessment of the League of the South, therefore, comprises an excellent case study of the production of a nationalist movement and its transition from a banal flagging of a nationalist cause in academic texts to the solidification of these ideas as the ideological core of a ‘hot’, or politically active nationalist organization that is led by the nationalist scholars themselves.

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23 The quotation is from Michael Hill ‘The issue of race in the Southern independence debate.’ League of the South position paper. Available from <http://www.dixienet.org/positions/race.htm> [Downloaded 25 April 2000]. The League’s leaders claim to eschew racism, but this does not mean their natio23 Gouldner, *Against Fragmentation*, p. 30.

nalist group is isolated from white supremacists. Internet links connect to the League of the South from groups such as World Church of the Creator, Whitestorm and South Side White Pride. Although these Internet connections are unrequited, they indicate what white supremacists think about the League of the South and its ideologies. Tara McPherson argues that the LS are engaged in “a very serious battle over the demands of place, race, and identity” in which “the neo-Dixie of cyberspace [is] a place which is nothing if not white.” See McPherson, ‘I’ll take my stand in Dixienet,’ p. 119. Along similar lines, when assessing the political transformation of David Duke from white supremacist to “mainstream” politician in the 1990s, Jeffrey Goldfarb explains: “When David Duke, the former Nazi and Ku Klux Klan leader, ran as the Republican candidate for Governor of the State of Louisiana, he campaigned in codes. He did not propagate explicit anti-black or anti-semitic ideas, but instead celebrated our Christian heritage and our right to sustain it, and defended the equal civil right of whites ... This man used the language of civil liberties and tolerance to convey his xenophobic message.” See Jeffery Goldfarb, *Civility and Subversion: the Intellectual in Democratic Society* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 146.

24 Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, p. 173.

## The League of the South Leadership – from Banal Nationalists to Hot Nationalism

In his influential study, Michael Billig contends that “banal nationalism” is an endemic condition, part of everyday life, familiar, and with “a low key, understated tone.”<sup>25</sup> This neither means that banal nationalisms or nationalists are silent or benign, nor that they are vague or inexplicit in their opinions. Rather, ‘banal’ nationalism forms the everyday backdrop for myriad activities, amongst them academic scholarship, yet it typically goes unnoticed, in contrast with outspoken and politically ‘hot’ nationalisms and nationalists, such as that represented by Jean-Marie Le Pen and his National Front Party in France. Arguing that although ‘banal’ nationalism may initially seem trite, Billig asserts it builds the basis for exclusionary politics. Constant reference to a nation as ‘we’ or ‘our’ in newspaper articles, identifying things as ‘national’ such as a National Football League, hanging flags on public buildings and having national heroes on stamps and money are all banal material processes of nationalism which can, when necessary, be drawn upon for mobilizing the nation (i.e. in wartime, crisis, etc.). One aspect that Billig argues is key, is the role of scholars referring to ‘society’ but actually meaning the place where they live. He further suggests that scholars often lay the foundations for nationalist politics through their writing and research – sources that can subsequently be drawn upon by nationalist activists to validate causes. Much academic writing of this type, therefore, will sit banally in libraries until it becomes needed as resources to underpin ‘hot’ nationalist activism. Consequently, Billig’s distinction between ‘banal’ and ‘hot’ recognises both how nationalists and nationalisms operate *and* how people encounter and react to them.

Constant banal nationalist production, be it in writings, on television or other media, therefore, lays foundations upon which hot nationalism and political activism can prosper. With the establishment of the League of the South and its campaign for a revived Confederate States of America, Michael Hill, Grady McWhiney and Donald W. Livingston can be said to have transformed the banal nationalism of their scholarship into the hot nationalist activism of the League of the South. They have moved from producing academic texts outlining their major theses to appearing in local, regional and national media, the latter including an interview with Michael Hill, the group’s president, on National Public Radio’s *Weekend Edition* in 1996.<sup>26</sup> In turn, rather than being

25 Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, p. 154.

26 Diane Roberts and Michael Hill ‘Interview: The Southern League – Hoping the South will rise again.’ *Weekend Edition*, 5 May 1996, National Public Radio (USA). Transcript available from NPR, Burrelle’s Transcripts, P.O. Box 7, Livingston, NJ 07039-0077, USA.

housed in relatively inaccessible university libraries, their works now appear on the Internet and in bookstore magazines such as *Southern Partisan*.

The ideological position that underpins the LS initially developed in prominent academic journals, including *American Historical Review* and *William and Mary Quarterly*, and other scholarly venues. In these publications, the people who would become leaders of the League of the South forwarded two central ideas over a period of twenty years that would, upon its formation in Tuscaloosa, Alabama in 1994, form the central ideological structures of the nascent political organization. The first, devised by McWhiney and extended by Hill, is the Celtic thesis that identifies the Southern US states as ethnically distinct.<sup>27</sup> The second, most fully realized in this context by Livingston, is that people have the right to secede from a centralised state just as, the LS contend, the CSA legitimately did in the 19th century before being militarily coerced back into the United States. In combination with a belief in 'orthodox Christianity,' these theses have become the ideological foundation of the League of the South.<sup>28</sup>

Taken together, these theses 'prove' that in the mid-19th century the Confederate States of America was a distinctive Celtic nation that had a lawful right to secede. This enables the League to contend that the former Confederate states were ethnically and culturally distinct from the Union states and thus deserving of self-determination and autonomy. This subsequently facilitates LS alignment with two larger ideological movements. Firstly, they can bring themselves into line with the long-established tradition of those advocating the Confederate 'Lost Cause' and the belief that the Civil War was an illegal, unconstitutional invasion of the South,<sup>29</sup> a position that has been particularly successful as the League has built strong connections to groups like the Sons of

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27 The proposal that Southern whites comprise a distinct ethnic group has also been forwarded by John Shelton Reed, *One South: an Ethnic Approach to Regional Culture* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 1982). Using data from 1961 to assess group identification from both members and non-members, Reed maintains that the political views of 'white Southerners' and their attachments to other people do not exhibit class, sex or age distinction, rather ethnicity is the most significant determinant of these and thus comprises the primary identity of white people in the US South. Reed did not, however, identify this ethnicity as 'Celtic.'

28 For an assessment of the LS understanding of Christianity, see Sebesta and Hague, 'The U.S. Civil War,' *op. cit.*

29 Edward Alfred Pollard, *The Lost Cause: A new Southern history of the war of the Confederates* (New York: E.B. Treat & Co., 1867); Rollin Osterweis, *Romanticism and Nationalism in the Old South* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1949). Rollin Osterweis, *The Myth of the Lost Cause, 1865-1900* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1973).

Confederate Veterans (SCV) and United Daughters of the Confederacy.<sup>30</sup> Secondly, by asserting that the Confederate states represent an aggrieved 'Celtic' nation, the League has looked to Europe for support from other 'Celtic' nationalist political parties, such as Plaid Cymru (Wales), the Scottish National Party and Ireland's Sinn Fein. These advances remain unrequited, although some collaboration has been established with the Italian *Lega Nord* nationalists.<sup>31</sup>

### 1975-1993 – The production of banal nationalism within academia

Since its inauguration, the League of the South has been staffed and run by a core of academic, professional educators, amongst them a prestigious scholar of the writings of David Hume, Donald W. Livingston, leading Civil War historian Grady McWhiney, and an expert on 16th to 18th century British military history, Michael Hill. After gaining Doctorates, these individuals taught at a range of North American universities, published scholarly articles in peer-reviewed journals, wrote academic monographs, served on editorial boards and contributed book reviews to leading periodicals in their fields. In short, at first glance there was little to suggest that by the mid-1990s these three men would become leaders of the USA's fastest growing neo-Confederate separatist organization. However, assessing their publication records in greater detail reveals both the banal nationalism of their work and the increasing questioning of their ideas by peers within US academia.

Beginning with the oldest of the three, Grady McWhiney is a highly influential historian who was a director of the LS from 1994-2001. In the mid-1970s, McWhiney was a widely known historian of the American South and Civil War who had been affiliated with institutions such as the University of British Columbia, the University of Alabama and Texas Christian University. His prominence in the field resulted in his contributing the foreword to the new edition of Owsley's seminal analysis *Plain Folk of the Old South* and his appearance in the television documentary series *The Divided Union*.<sup>32</sup>

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30 SLPC, *Rebels With a Cause*.

31 Benito Giordano, Euan Hague and Edward H. Sebesta, 'The cultural (re)construction of "Celtic" nationalisms – the case of the *Lega Nord* and the League of the South', unpublished article.

32 Grady McWhiney, 'Introduction', to Frank Lawrence Owsley, *Plain Folk of the Old South* (Baton Rouge and London, Louisiana State University Press, 1982, pp. vii-xvii; *The Divided Union: The story of the American Civil War 1861-1865*, written and directed by Peter Batty (Peter Batty Productions and Channel Four Television, 1987).

An eminent figure in US history who had been publishing peer-reviewed articles since the 1950s, Allan Bogue notes that McWhiney was a pioneer of quantitative methods within US historical research.<sup>33</sup> Subsequently editing collections of primary source documents and reprising his Columbia University Doctoral dissertation<sup>34</sup> into a well-received examination of Confederate General Braxton Bragg, McWhiney's research primarily focused on Southern distinctiveness and Confederate military history.<sup>35</sup> In this research, McWhiney's

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33 Grady McWhiney, 'Louisiana Socialists in the early Twentieth Century: A Study of Rustic Radicalism', *Journal of Southern History*, vol. 20, 3, 1954, pp. 315-336; 'Were the Whigs a class party in Alabama?' *Journal of Southern History*, vol. 23, 4, 1957, pp. 510-522; Allan G. Bogue, 'Numerical and formal analysis in United States history', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, vol. 12, 1, 1981, pp. 137-175.

34 Grady McWhiney, *The Ordeal of Command. Bragg before Chickamauga* (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1960). McWhiney was an undergraduate at Centenary College, Shreveport, Louisiana and completed his Masters degree, under the tutelage of Francis B. Simkins, at Louisiana State University.

35 A recent collection, containing and compiling McWhiney's essays on numerous topics, including the 'Celtic thesis', is *Confederate Crackers and Cavaliers* (Abilene, McWhiney Foundation Press, 2002). Elsewhere, for McWhiney's work on the Civil War and specific Confederate personnel, including edited collections about the Civil War era, see *inter alia*, Grady McWhiney, ed. *Reconstruction and the Freedmen* (Chicago, Rand McNally, 1963); ed. *Grant, Lee, Lincoln and the Radicals: Essays on Civil War leadership* (Evanston, Illinois, Northwestern University Press, 1964); *Braxton Bragg and Confederate Defeat – vol. 1 Field Command* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1969); *Southerners and Other Americans* (New York, Basic Books, 1973); 'The Confederacy's first shot' and 'Who whipped whom? Confederate defeat reexamined,' in John T. Hubbell, ed. *Battles Lost and Won: Essays from Civil War History* (Westport, Connecticut, Greenwood Press, 1975) pp. 73-82 and 261-282; 'Conservatism and the military', *Continuity*, 4-5, 1982, pp. 93-126; 'General Beauregard's "complete victory" at Shiloh: An interpretation', *Journal of Southern History*, 49, 3, 1983, pp. 421-434; 'Historians as Southerners', *Continuity*, 9, 1984, pp. 1-31; *Jefferson Davis, the Unforgiven* (Biloxi, Beauvoir Press, 1989); *Battle in the Wilderness: Grant meets Lee*, (Abilene, Texas, Ryan Place Publishers, 1995).

McWhiney's role as a collator of historic documents is also extensive, see, *inter alia*, Douglas Southall Freeman and Grady McWhiney, eds. *Lee's Dispatches: letters of General Robert E. Lee, C.S.A. to Jefferson Davis and the War Department of the Confederate States of America 1862-1865*, (New York, G.P. Putnam's, 1957); Grady McWhiney and Robert Weibe, eds *Historical Vistas: Readings in United States history – volume 1, 1607-1877* (Boston, Allyn and Bacon, 1963); Robert Weibe and Grady McWhiney, ed. *Historical Vistas: Readings in United States history – volume 2, 1865 to the Present* (Boston, Allyn and Bacon, 1964); Grady McWhiney and Sue McWhiney, ed. *To Mexico with Taylor and Scott 1845-1847*, (Waltham, MA, Blaisdell Publishing, 1969); Norman Brown, Grady McWhiney and Harold Simpson *Lee's Lieutenants: Proceedings of*

banal flying of the Confederate battle flag is evident if one reads between the lines. His early work, collected into a book entitled *Southerners and Other Americans*, constructs the South as 'other Americans', simultaneously within the USA and outside it. He argues that although "Southernness does not necessarily mean separateness", it does mean that "the South is different," contrasting with the northern US states in terms of the courteousness of its population, its climatic and environmental conditions, its pace of life and "hearty breakfast[s]."<sup>36</sup> The South, for McWhiney, may at first sight be politically and economically similar to the rest of the USA in terms of support for capitalism and electoral democracy, but it is *culturally* distinctive.

Recognizing the American South's cultural distinctiveness led McWhiney to investigate why this was the case. Subsequently, an article he co-wrote with Forrest McDonald, a renowned expert on Thomas Jefferson and the American Revolution,<sup>37</sup> initiated debate about what became known as the Celtic thesis.<sup>38</sup>

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*the 1987 Confederate History Symposium* (Hillsboro, Texas, Hill College, 1987); Grady McWhiney, Warner O. Moore Jr., Robert F. Pace, eds *Fear God and Walk Humbly: The agricultural journal of James Mallory, 1843- 1877*, (Tuscaloosa, University of Alabama Press, 1997).

For the 'Celtic thesis' see, *inter alia*, 'The revolution in nineteenth century Alabama agriculture', *Alabama Review*, 31, 1, 1978, pp. 3-32; 'Saving the best from the past', *Alabama Review*, 32, 4, 1979, pp. 243-272; 'Continuity in Celtic warfare', *Continuity*, 2, 1, 1981, pp. 1-18; 'Education in the old South: A re-examination', in Walter J. Fraser Jr. and Winfred B. Moore Jr. ed. *The Southern Enigma: Essays on race, class and folk culture* (Westport, Connecticut, Greenwood Press, 1983) pp. 169-188; 'Ethnic roots of Southern violence', in William J. Cooper Jr.; Michael F. Holt and John McCardell, ed. *A Master's Due: Essays in honor of David Herbert Donald* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 1985) pp. 112-137; 'Antebellum Piney Woods culture: Continuity over time and place', in Noel Polk, ed. *Mississippi's Piney Woods: A human perspective* (Jackson, University of Mississippi Press, 1986); *Cracker Culture: Celtic Ways in the Old South* (Tuscaloosa, University of Alabama Press, 1988); 'Celtic roots in an "English" nation: Cultural patterns for the genealogist.' Paper presented at the National Genealogical Society 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference, Biloxi, MS, 1988; Grady McWhiney and Perry Jamieson, *Attack and Die: Civil war military tactics and the Southern heritage* (Tuscaloosa, University of Alabama Press, 1982); Grady McWhiney and Forrest McDonald, 'Celtic names in the Antebellum Southern United States', *Names: Journal of the American Name Society*, 31, 2, 1983, pp. 89-102; 'Celtic origins of Southern herding practices', *Journal of Southern History*, 51, 2, 1985, pp. 165-182; Grady McWhiney and Gary B. Mills, 'Jimmie Davis and his music: An interpretation', *Journal of American Culture*, 6, 1983, pp. 54-57.

36 McWhiney, *Southerners*, p. viii.

37 See, for example, Forrest McDonald *Presidency of Thomas Jefferson* (Lawrence, University Press of Kansas, 1976).

McWhiney and McDonald claimed that the antebellum American South was ethnically and culturally distinctive from the American North on the basis that the South was Celtic and the North Anglo-Saxon or English. Developing this position over a series of subsequent articles examining housing styles, farming practices, musical styles, diet and so forth, the Celtic thesis was founded upon the central tenet of 'cultural inertia' or 'cultural conservatism'.<sup>39</sup> Drawing on a host of sources, including the work of cultural geographers such as Terry Jordan,<sup>40</sup> McDonald, McWhiney and their colleagues pursued the Celtic thesis

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- 38 The first article explicitly forwarding the Celtic thesis was Forrest McDonald and Grady McWhiney 'The antebellum southern herdsman: A reinterpretation,' *Journal of Southern History*, 41, 2, 1975, pp. 147-166, and is why I take 1975 as the starting date for the development of League of the South neo-Confederate ideology. Thereafter McDonald and McWhiney collaborated regularly, see 'In search of Southern roots,' *Reviews in American History*, 5, 1977, pp. 453-457; 'The Celtic south', *History Today*, 30, July 1980, pp. 11-15; 'The south from self-sufficiency to peonage: An interpretation', *American Historical Review*, 85, 5, 1980, pp. 1095-1118; 'Communication' regarding "The south from self-sufficiency to peonage: An interpretation," *American Historical Review*, 86, 1, 1981, pp. 243-244; 'AHR Forum: Comparative history in theory and Practice: A discussion.' *American Historical Review*, 87, 1, 1982, pp. 123-143; 'A response' to Rowland Berthoff "Celtic mist over the South." *Journal of Southern History*, 52, 4, 1986pp. 547-548; 'Celtic South', in Charles Reagan Wilson and William Ferris, eds. *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press 1989) pp. 1131-1132.
- 39 Forrest McDonald also produced self-authored explanations of the Celtic thesis. See 'The ethnic factor in Alabama history: A neglected dimension.' *Alabama Review*, 31, 4, 1978, pp. 256-265; 'Prologue' in Grady McWhiney *Cracker Culture: Celtic ways in the Old South* (Tuscaloosa, University of Alabama Press, 1988), pp. xxi-xliii. McDonald also collaborated with Ellen Shapiro McDonald to develop the Celtic thesis, most significantly, 'The ethnic origins of the American people, 1790', *William and Mary Quarterly (Third Series)*, 37, 2, 1980, pp. 179-199; 'Communications' regarding "The ethnic origins of the American people, 1790." *William and Mary Quarterly (Third Series)*, 37, 4, 1980, pp. 702-703; 'Commentary' regarding "The ethnic origins of the American people, 1790." *William and Mary Quarterly (Third Series)*, 41, 1, 1984, pp. 129-135; 'Communications' regarding "The ethnic origins of the American people, 1790." *William and Mary Quarterly (Third Series)*, 41, 4, 1984, pp. 682-683.
- 40 For example, McWhiney and McDonald refer to Terry G. Jordan, *Trails to Texas: Southern Roots of Western Cattle Ranching* (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1981) as "invaluable," "superb" for the way it "devastates" Frederick Jackson Turner's Frontier thesis and the "Hispanic-American" explanation of cattle-ranching in the South. Jordan's description of "Anglo-American cattle herding" is welcomed with the proviso that the activities that Jordan describes are neither English nor American, rather "Celtic traditions, practiced by the Irish, Scottish, and Welsh herdsman of the British Isles for many centuries

until the end of the 1980s, continually reiterating their argument that Celtic culture diffused from Central Europe to Northern Europe and from there to the southern part of North America. Further, the Celtic thesis claimed that Celtic culture was transported, without changing, over four thousand miles and two thousand years and was evident in the behavior of those McDonald and McWhiney observed in their daily lives:

[T]he sociological/geographical accounts of Celtic peoples by the Greeks Strabo and Diodorus [are] for all the world like a caricature of our rural neighbours in modern Alabama. In other words, except for variations in technology and dress, description of Celtic social norms spanning two thousand years and more are entirely interchangeable.<sup>41</sup>

Having initially assessed agricultural practices to establish his claim that the American South was a bastion of Celtic culture and thus distinct from the American North, McWhiney now pushed his argument one step further to assert that Confederate military strategies in the Civil War were similarly unchanged from practices of Celtic warfare in Roman times:

Not only have people of Celtic culture exhibited an abiding love of combat; they have fought much the same way for more than two thousand years. Consider, for example, the similarities of three climactic battles in Celtic history: Telamon [225BC, Italy], Culloden [1746, Scotland] and Gettysburg [1863, Pennsylvania]. In each of these battles Celtic forces used the same tactics with the same results.<sup>42</sup>

Conflating the Confederate States of America and the Celtic, McWhiney concludes that the US Civil War was precipitated not by slavery or economic disputes between Union and Confederate states but by a “cultural dichotomy ... between Celts and Englishmen.”<sup>43</sup>

McWhiney’s controversial advocacy that ethnic distinction between Confederate and Union states caused the Civil War provoked a great deal of academic debate. Despite gaining some favourable reviews, such as Wilson’s endorsement of McWhiney’s *Cracker Culture* as “[e]ngrossing [and] highly

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before they appeared in colonial America.” See Grady McWhiney and Forrest McDonald, Review of *Trails to Texas: Southern Roots of Western Cattle Ranching* by Terry G. Jordan, *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, 87, 2, 1983, pp. 218-219. McWhiney also acknowledges Jordan in *Cracker Culture*.

41 McDonald and McWhiney, ‘In search,’ p. 456.

42 McWhiney, ‘Continuity in Celtic’, p. 1; McWhiney and Jamieson, *Attack*.

43 McWhiney, ‘Continuity in Celtic’, p. 6.

readable,” many found that the Celtic thesis could not be proven.<sup>44</sup> Others were less charitable and claimed that the Celtic thesis was erroneous and based on ill-founded reasoning and assumption.<sup>45</sup> Beringer *et al.*, Akenson and Berthoff presented the lengthiest denunciations; the latter arguing that the definition of ‘Celtic’ utilized by McWhiney was idiosyncratic to the point of being unique within academic scholarship. In turn, while Winberry was “highly critical” of McWhiney’s “disputable” Celtic thesis, Gorn dismissed it as “ow[ing] much more to early nineteenth century romanticism than to modern anthropology.”<sup>46</sup> The most severe challenges accused the proponents of the Celtic thesis of racism. Historian Ned Landsman argued that the understanding of culture

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- 44 Major L. Wilson, Review of *Cracker Culture: Celtic ways in the Old South*, by Grady McWhiney, *Civil War History*, 34, 4, 1988, pp. 351-352. The quote is on p. 351. See also, *inter alia*, Herman Hattaway, Review of *Attack and Die: Civil war military tactics and the Southern heritage* by Grady McWhiney and Perry D. Jamieson, *The Journal of American History*, 70, 1, 1983, p. 153; Charles P. Roland, Review of *Attack and Die: Civil war military tactics and the Southern heritage* by Grady McWhiney and Perry D. Jamieson, *American Historical Review*, 88, 2, 1983, pp. 475-476; Dickson D. Bruce Jr., Review of *Cracker Culture: Celtic ways in the Old South*, by Grady McWhiney, *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, 93, 3, 1990, pp. 420-421.
- 45 See Berthoff, *Op. cit.*; Akenson, *Op. cit.*; Francis Jennings, ‘Communications’ regarding “The ethnic origins of the American people, 1790” *William and Mary Quarterly (Third Series)*, 37, 4, 1980, pp. 700-701; David Molkte-Hansen, Contribution to ‘AHR Forum: Comparative history in theory and Practice: A discussion.’ *American Historical Review*, 87, 1, 1982, pp. 123-143; Russell F. Weigley, Review of *Attack and Die: Civil war military tactics and the Southern heritage* by Grady McWhiney and Perry D. Jamieson, *Civil War History*, 28, 3, 1982, pp. 274-276; James I. Robertson, Jr., Review of *Attack and Die: Civil war military tactics and the Southern heritage* by Grady McWhiney and Perry D. Jamieson, *Journal of Southern History*, 49, 1, 1983, pp. 128-129; Ned Landsman, ‘Communications’ regarding “The ethnic origins of the American people, 1790.” *William and Mary Quarterly (Third Series)*, 41, 4, 1984, 680-681; Richard E. Beringer, Herman Hattaway, Archer Jones and William N. Still, Jr., *Why the South Lost the Civil War* (Athens, University of Georgia Press, 1986) pp. 458-481; Michael P. Johnson, Review of *Cracker Culture: Celtic ways in the Old South*, by Grady McWhiney, *Journal of Southern History*, 55, 3, 1989, pp. 488-490; Elizabeth A. John, Review of *Cracker Culture: Celtic ways in the Old South*, by Grady McWhiney, *The Western Historical Quarterly*, 20, 1989, pp. 206-207; John J. Winberry, Review of *Cracker Culture: Celtic ways in the Old South*, by Grady McWhiney, *Geographical Review*, 79, 3, 1989, pp. 376-378.
- 46 Elliott J. Gorn, Review of *Cracker Culture: Celtic ways in the Old South*, by Grady McWhiney, *Journal of American History*, 75, 4, 1989, 1290-1291. The quote is from p. 1290; Winberry, Review of *Cracker Culture*, p. 377.

underpinning the Celtic thesis, “differ[s] little from racial type,” and Johnson attacked the “rigidly genealogical concept of southern culture” asserting that McWhiney “makes clear that real southern Crackers were white men; the two-thirds of the southern population who were women and blacks inhabiting some dim cultural penumbra.”<sup>47</sup> By the end of the 1980s, therefore, the credibility of the Celtic thesis within academic venues had been severely compromised, yet it had proven inspirational to Michael Hill, a doctoral student at the University of Alabama who, in the late 1990s, came to “define the ideological core of the neo-Confederate movement.”<sup>48</sup>

President of the League of the South since its foundation, and an analyst of Celtic history and internecine disputes in Scotland and Ireland in the 16th and 17th centuries, Michael Hill has taught at the University of Alabama and Stillman College (Tuscaloosa, Alabama), before resigning from the latter in 1999 to run the LS full time.<sup>49</sup> A recognised expert on warfare in medieval Scotland and Ireland, Hill has written about and reviewed many scholarly texts on this topic.<sup>50</sup> Throughout his academic career, Hill sought to identify the unique military strategies of Celts and the Celtic genealogy and culture of the 19th century CSA primarily by building the Celtic thesis in reverse. Whereas McWhiney started with an assessment of the US South and looked back in time to find historical precedents for local farming practices and Confederate military strategies, Hill begins by examining Irish and Scottish military history

47 Landsman, ‘Communications’, p. 680; Johnson, Review of *Cracker Culture*, p. 490.

48 SLPC, *Rebels With a Cause*, p. 15.

49 Hill was not a tenure-track faculty member at the University of Alabama. Rather he was a ‘contract instructor’ paid per course taught. Thanks to Jerry Webster for this clarification.

50 James Michael Hill, Review of *Domination and Conquest: The Experience of Ireland, Scotland and Wales, 1100-1300* by R. R. Davies, *The Journal of Military History*, 55, 1, 1991, pp. 101-102; ‘Shane O’Neill’s campaign against the MacDonnells of Antrim, 1564-65’, *Irish Sword*, 18, 71, 1991, pp. 129-138; ‘The distinctiveness of Gaelic warfare, 1400-1750’ *European History Quarterly*, 22, 1992, pp. 323-346; Review of *A Battle Lost: Romans and Caledonians at Mons Graupius* by Gordon Maxwell; *Scotland and War AD79-1918* edited by Norman Macdougall and *An Uncounselled King: Charles I and the Scottish Troubles, 1637-1641* by Peter Donald, *Journal of Military History*, 56, 4, 1992, pp. 689-691; Review of *A Military Revolution? Military Change and European Society, 1550-1800* by Jeremy Black, *The Journal of Military History*, 56, 1, 1991, pp. 126-127; ‘The Scottish plantations in Ulster to 1625: A reinterpretation’, *Journal of British Studies*, 32, 1993, pp. 24-43; ‘The rift with Clan Ian Mor: The Antrim and Dunyveg MacDonnells, 1590-1603’, *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 24, 4, 1993, pp. 865-879; *Fire and Sword: Sorley Boy MacDonnell and the Rise of Clan Ian Mor 1538-90* (Fort Worth: Aegis Press, 1993); Review of *The Irish Military Community in Spanish Flanders, 1586-1621* by Grainne Henry, *American Historical Review*, 99, 2, 1994, pp. 572-573.

and farming practices, constructing a teleology that culminates in the CSA and the US Civil War. Hill's scholarly work centres primarily on the history of northern Ireland, in particular the period immediately preceding and during the Ulster Plantation in the early 17th century. This is significant as it is from this area that the future 'Scots-Irish' population of the United States migrated. Revisiting the concept of cultural conservatism, Hill repeatedly asserts that Celtic Scots and Irish had consistent styles of house-building, community organisation, farming practices and military strategies, again supporting McWhiney's arguments for Celtic practices in the American South, something that peer-reviewers were quick to note.<sup>51</sup>

The banal Confederate nationalism of Hill's academic writing is evident on the numerous occasions in which he distinguishes an ethnic disparity between a Celtic South and the rest of the United States. Maintaining that the Confederate states at the time of the Civil War were overwhelmingly Celtic and "retained many of their traditional, old country ways," Hill explains that in contrast to those residing in Union states, Southerners eschewed trade, commerce and economic development and were "emotional, wasteful, extravagant, hospitable, and leisure-oriented."<sup>52</sup> Consistently interchanging the terms 'Celts,' 'Southerners' and 'Celtic Southerners', for Hill, as for McWhiney, the ethnic differences between US southern and northern states endure:

Ties of extended kinship *were (and remain)* much stronger in the South than in the North... Celtic Southerners not only esteemed their ancestors but their military heroes as well. *Even today*, the most isolated and uneducated backwoods Southerner knows something of the heroic exploits of Robert E. Lee and Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson.<sup>53</sup>

Hill's implication throughout is that Celtic practices have remained unchanged for centuries and are currently evident in the US South, making it socially, culturally and politically different from the rest of the United States. This persistent ethnic and cultural distinction between north and south enables Hill, albeit implicitly, to suggest that secession of the Southern states today would be a modern revival of the Celtic tradition of resisting centralized authority. Arguing that throughout history Celts have opposed central governments and

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51 See, for example, Ronald G. Haycock, Review of *Celtic Warfare 1595-1763* by James Michael Hill, *Military Affairs*, 51, 4, 1987, p. 209; M. R. Powicke, Review of *Celtic Warfare 1595-1763* by James Michael Hill, *American Historical Review*, 92, 5, 1987, pp. 1180-1181; Anthony J. Sheenan, Review of *Celtic Warfare 1595-1763* by James Michael Hill, *Irish Historical Studies*, 27, 205, 1990, pp. 92-93.

52 Hill, *Celtic Warfare*, p. 173.

53 *Ibid.* p. 173-174 (emphasis added).

other centralized institutions, Hill maintains that Celts “jealously guarded their local independence and status [and] refused to abandon local government” before proceeding to note that by the mid-19th century, “most people south of the Mason-Dixon line had grown accustomed to self-government... [and] the constitutional doctrine of ‘States Rights’ came to be associated with the South [and] Southerners [who] distrusted the power and intentions of central governing bodies.”<sup>54</sup>

The themes of Celtic distinction, strong family ties, military resistance against central authority and ideas of honour and heroism are most strongly featured in Hill’s lengthy assessment of Clan Ian Mor, a militarized kin group that held authority over northeastern Ireland and western Scotland in the 16th century.<sup>55</sup> Hill’s banal nationalism is again evident as the experiences of Clan Ian Mor parallel his and the LS’s subsequent interpretation of the CSA. Hill argues that his historical study of Clan Ian Mor illustrates the struggle between the “Leviathan” of “public society” and practices of “private association” and their “ideas of community.”<sup>56</sup> The history of Clan Ian Mor is “that of a family, the most fundamental, private, and enduring of human institutions, struggling with limited resources against a growing English-dominated state that threatened to overspread the entire British Isles.” The eventual defeat of Clan Ian Mor by British forces at the turn of the 17th century “emasculated” this Irish family.<sup>57</sup>

Throughout his analysis, Hill implies that familial authority over a local area is a legitimate form of political organization. He contends that this system was eroded by the centralization of state power that developed with the Enlightenment, resulting in the emasculation of the men that ruled over fiefdoms. Making direct connections between 16th century Ireland and the late 20th century in his preface, Hill states that the struggle of families and local regions against centralized state power is again occurring:

The story of Sorley Boy MacDonnell and Clan Ian Mor in the sixteenth century is ultimately one of a private association – a prominent Gaelic clan – against a centralized, quasi-modern Tudor state. In our own day, the break-up of the Soviet empire, the unresolved difficulties surrounding European unity, the various ethnic and nationalistic crises in eastern Europe, and the general devolution of political power into smaller units suggest a trend away from the impersonal, centralized, bureaucratic, technocratic state and toward a more personal, regional, or local type government... Though four centuries past,

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54 *Ibid.* p. 177. Similar arguments resurface in the work of Donald W. Livingston (see below).

55 Hill, ‘The rift’; *Fire and Sword*.

56 Hill, *Fire and Sword*, pp. xii-xiii.

57 *Ibid.* p. 3.

Sorley Boy MacDonnell's struggle *reflected the same desire for local self-rule that we increasingly see in today's world*. It was firmly grounded in the concept of private community – a tribal unity based on kinship (both blood and fictive), hierarchy, honor, and land. The MacDonnell family's primary nemesis was the Tudor state, the modern, formal, bureaucratic, and imperialistic nature of which was rooted in the contrary concept of public society.<sup>58</sup>

The implication throughout is that opposing state power will reverse these processes of centralization and emasculation and reinstitute local rule over families and fiefdoms by strong male leaders. It is such a role that Hill, as president of the LS, would take upon himself a year after the publication of *Fire and Sword*, his last major academic work.

Much like McWhiney, peer reviews of Hill's academic work were divided. *Celtic Warfare*, for example, was applauded by Haycock as "well-written and researched ... exciting and provocative" and by Snyder as "compelling" without being "romantic and partisan," but others took exception to Hill's scholarship, arguing that he fails to substantiate his claims, interprets his data erroneously and simplifies events in a manner that is purposely misleading and distorting.<sup>59</sup> As with McWhiney, the charge of racism is levelled at Hill, whose work "smacks strongly of pseudo-scientific Victorian notions of 'races' and 'racial

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58 *Ibid.* p. xii, (emphasis added).

59 Haycock, Review of *Celtic Warfare*, p. 209; Henry L. Snyder, Review of *Celtic Warfare, 1595-1763*, by James Michael Hill, *Eighteenth Century Studies*, 23, 1, 1989, pp. 114-118. The quote is from p. 117. For other reviews of Hill's work, see, *inter alia*, John Childs, Review of *Celtic Warfare, 1595-1763*, by James Michael Hill, *British Journal for Eighteenth Century Studies*, 10, 1, 1987, p. 79; John R. Young, Review of *Celtic Warfare, 1595-1763*, by James Michael Hill, *Scottish Historical Review*, 75, 200, 1996, pp. 255-260; Paul V. Walsh, Review of *Fire and Sword: Sorley Boy MacDonnell and the Rise of Clan Ian Mor, 1538-1590*, by J. Michael Hill, *Journal of Military History*, 59, 1, 1995, pp. 143-145; F. W. Harris, Review of *Fire and Sword: Sorley Boy MacDonnell and the Rise of Clan Ian Mor, 1538-1590*, by J. Michael Hill, *American Historical Review*, 100, 4, 1995, p. 1244; Samantha A. Meigs, Review of *Fire and Sword: Sorley Boy MacDonnell and the Rise of Clan Ian Mor, 1538-1590*, by J. Michael Hill, *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 25, 4, 1994, pp. 1015-1016; Jenny Wormald, Review of *Fire and Sword: Sorley Boy MacDonnell and the Rise of Clan Ian Mor, 1538-1590*, by J. Michael Hill, *English Historical Review*, 111, 441, 1996, pp. 454-455; Edward M. Furgol, Review of *Celtic Warfare, 1595-1763*, by James Michael Hill, *International History Review*, 8, 4, 1986, pp. 656-658.

characteristics’,” and ultimately, suggests John R. Young, “tells us more about the author” than about anything else.<sup>60</sup>

Echoing the receptions of both McWhiney and Hill, Donald W. Livingston’s work on Hume also met with mixed reviews from peers. His early editing of a collection of essays was praised as a significant contribution by a group of feisty young academics and his examination of Hume’s philosophy was described as a “challenging study” for which scholars “will be grateful.”<sup>61</sup> Yet, other peers questioned Livingston’s arguments as “partial and indiscriminate,” erroneous, “implausible and contrived.”<sup>62</sup> “Long before reaching the end of this book,” maintained Deigh of Livingston’s assessment of *Hume’s Philosophy of Common Life*, “it becomes clear that it is about the author’s philosophical views and not Hume’s.”<sup>63</sup>

Despite such admonishment, Livingston is recognized by some within academic philosophy as the “most significant Hume scholar of the twentieth century” for his publications since the early 1970s.<sup>64</sup> He has contributed numerous scholarly book reviews evaluating works on Hume and published articles about other philosophical debates and Scottish literature.<sup>65</sup> Gaining his

60 The first quote is from Sheenan, Review of *Celtic Warfare*, p. 93; the second is from Young, Review of *Celtic Warfare*, p. 256.

61 Richard Popkin, Review of *Hume: A re-evaluation*, edited by Donald W. Livingston and James T. King, *Eighteenth Century Studies*, 12, 3 1979, pp. 443-448; Richard B. Sher, Review of *Hume’s Philosophy of Common Life* by Donald W. Livingston, *American Historical Review*, 91, 2, 1986, pp. 386-387 – the quote is from p. 387; David R. Raynor Review of *Hume’s Philosophy of Common Life*, by Donald W. Livingston, *Eighteenth Century Studies*, 20, 3, 1987, pp. 389-392. It is worth noting that Raynor highlights Livingston’s contention that Hume was an originator of conservative political ideology.

62 First quote is from Nicholas Everitt, Review of *Hume’s Philosophy of Common Life* by Donald W. Livingston, *Times Higher Education Supplement*, 22 February 1985, p. 24; The second quote is on p. 960 of John Deigh, Review of *Hume’s Philosophy of Common Life* by Donald W. Livingston, *Ethics*, vol. 95, 4, 1985, pp. 959-960.

63 Deigh, Review of *Hume’s Philosophy*, p. 960.

64 Nicholas Capaldi, McFarlin Professor of Philosophy, University of Tulsa, quoted on back cover of Donald W. Livingston, *Philosophical Melancholy and Delirium: Hume’s pathology of philosophy* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1998).

65 Donald W. Livingston, ‘Hume on ultimate causation’, *American Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 8, 1971, pp. 63-70; ‘Burke, Marcuse, and the historical justification for revolution’, *Studies in Burke and His Time*, vol. 14, 2, 1972-1973, pp. 119-131; ‘Hume on the problem of historical and scientific explanation’, *The New Scholasticism*, vol. 47, 1, 1973, pp. 38-67; Review of *Probability and Hume’s Inductive Scepticism*, by D. C. Stove, *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, vol. 13, 3, 1973, pp. 413-415; ‘Anscombe, Hume and Julius Caesar’, *Analysis*, vol. 35, 1, 1974, pp. 13-19; ‘Introduction’, in Donald W. Livingston and James T.

Ph.D. from Washington University, and thereafter teaching at Northern Illinois and Emory Universities, Livingston has been on the editorial board of *Hume Studies*, a Fellow at the University of Edinburgh and was a National Endowment for the Humanities Fellow in 1978-79.<sup>66</sup>

Between 1975 and 1993 McWhiney, Hill and Livingston published numerous scholarly analyses, opinions about which varied considerably. By the late 1980s, although Livingston remained a reputed Hume scholar, the Celtic thesis had lost credibility within academia. It was at this time that the Celtic thesis found a new audience, that of right wing political think-tanks and conservative activists in the United States.<sup>67</sup>

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King, ed. *Hume: A Re-evaluation* (New York, Fordham University Press, 1976) pp. 1-19; 'Hume's historical theory of meaning', in Donald W. Livingston James T. King, ed. *Hume: A Re-evaluation* (New York, Fordham University Press, 1976) pp. 213-238; 'The deductive requirement and the problem of explicating historical explanation', *Modern Schoolman*, vol. 53, 1976, pp. 265-276; Review of *Hume's Philosophical Politics*, by Duncan Forbes, *Eighteenth Century Studies*, vol. 11, 2, 1977-78, pp. 257-260; 'Time and value in Hume's social and political philosophy', in David Fate Norton, Nicholas Capaldi and Wade L. Robinson, eds, *McGill Hume Studies* (San Diego, Austin Hill Press, 1979) pp. 181-201; *Hume's Philosophy of Common Life* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1984); 'Theism and the rationale of Hume's scepticism about causation', *Idealistic Studies*, vol. 15, 2, 1985, pp. 151-164; 'A poem by Philocalos celebrating Hume's return to Edinburgh', *Studies in Scottish Literature*, vol. 24, 1989, pp. 108-115; 'Hume on the origin and evolution of religious and philosophical consciousness', *Reason Papers*, vol. 15, 1990, pp. 3-23; 'Hume, English barbarism and American independence,' in Richard B. Sher and Jeffrey R. Smitten (eds) *Scotland and America in the Age of Enlightenment*, (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1990) pp. 133-147; 'A Sellarsian Hume?' *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, vol. 29, 2, 1991, pp. 281-290; 'Hayek as Humean' *Critical Review*, vol. 5, 2, 1991, pp. 159-177; 'Introduction' in Donald Livingston and Marie Martin (eds) *Hume as Philosopher of Society, Politics, and History*, (Rochester, University of Rochester Press, 1991) pp. ix-xix; Review of *Human Nature and Historical Knowledge: Hume, Hegel, and Vico* by Leon Pompa, *American Historical Review*, vol. 96, 5, 1991, p. 1497; 'Good and bad shadow history of philosophy', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, vol. 31, 1, 1993, pp. 111-113; 'On Hume's Conservatism,' *Hume Studies*, vol. 21, 2, 1995, pp. 151-164; Donald W. Livingston and James T. King, eds. *Hume: A Re-evaluation* (New York, Fordham University Press, 1976);

Nicholas Capaldi, James King and Donald Livingston, 'The Hume Literature of the 1970s' *Philosophical Topics*, vol. 12, 3, 1981, pp. 167-192.

66 Donald W. Livingston, *A Study of the Idea of History in Hume's Metaphysics* (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Washington University, 1968).

67 In their analysis of US conservatism, *The Conservative Movement* (Boston, Twayne Publishers, 1988), Paul Gottfried and future LS director Thomas Fleming argue that by the 1980s the only prominent conservative scholars publishing academically were Forrest

### 1994-2001 – Hot Nationalism and the League of the South

In 1988, *Why the South Will Survive* coordinator and conservative historian Clyde N. Wilson applauded McWhiney's Celtic thesis in *Chronicles*, the Rockford Institute's magazine. *Chronicles* subsequently published an article by McWhiney that repackaged his contention that the American South was, and implicitly is, Celtic and thus ethnically different from the rest of the United States.<sup>68</sup> Beyond academic circles, therefore, the Celtic thesis began to gain new adherents. Hill, McWhiney and Livingston began to write for *Chronicles* and other Confederate heritage publications such as *Southern Partisan*. Coming together to comprise the inaugural Board of Directors of the League of the South in 1994 with Clyde N. Wilson and Thomas Fleming, the latter being the former editor of *Southern Partisan* and current editor of *Chronicles*, Hill and McWhiney began to turn their 'banal' Confederate nationalism into an activist politics. Livingston, a member of the Ludwig von Mises Institute conservative think-tank, coordinated the League of the South Institute for the Study of Southern Culture and History. The academic texts of the LS leadership that had been Confederate flags for the past twenty years, have now solidified into a neo-Confederate ideology and the 'hot' nationalist politics of the League of the South.

As the League of the South developed, the scholarly activities of these three leaders of the group changed. McWhiney continued to research the antebellum South, compiling primary source documents pertaining to agricultural practices in the mid-19th century South and examining the Civil War.<sup>69</sup> He also established the McWhiney Foundation at McMurry University in Abilene, Texas, to publish a series of books about Confederate military history.<sup>70</sup>

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McDonald, Grady McWhiney and Clyde N. Wilson. Others, they remark, had retreated from the academic mainstream and were using conservative magazines as their outlets. By the mid-1990s, McWhiney and Wilson, both directors of the LS, had also made this transition.

68 Clyde N. Wilson, 'Crackers and Roundheads', *Chronicles: A magazine of American culture*, 12, 10, 1988, pp. 22-25; Grady McWhiney, 'The Celtic heritage of the Old South,' *Chronicles: A magazine of American culture*, 13, 3, 1989, pp. 12-15. The Celtic thesis, however unsustainable, received further credibility when McDonald and McWhiney contributed the definition of 'Celtic South' to the *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture* (*op. cit.*). Here, alongside their own output, McDonald and McWhiney gregariously list their most ardent critic, Rowland Berthoff, as a 'further reading' reference following their definition.

69 For example, McWhiney, *Battle in the Wilderness*; McWhiney *et al.*, *Fear God*.

70 To date, the McWhiney Foundation has published the following works: Anne J. Bailey, *Texans in the Confederate Cavalry* (Abilene, Ryan Place Publishers, 1995); Jeff Kinard, *The Battle of the Crater* (Abilene, Ryan Place Publishers, 1995); Thomas D. May, *The Saltville*

Although no longer a director of the LS, McWhiney is still a member of the organization and his Celtic thesis remains fundamental to neo-Confederate ideology, being regularly reiterated by supporters in the *Southern Patriot* newsletter, on the League's Dixienet website and at events such as the League's *Southern Celtic Conference* held in April 1996 in Biloxi, Mississippi.<sup>71</sup> McWhiney continues to take the Celtic thesis to new audiences, speaking to an appreciative gathering at the Texas Scottish Highland Games in June 2001.<sup>72</sup>

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*Massacre*, (Abilene, Ryan Place Publishers, 1995); John C. Waugh, *Sam Bell Maxey and the Confederate Indians* (Abilene, Ryan Place Publishers, 1995); Richard Lowe, *The Texas Overland Expedition* (Abilene, Ryan Place Publishers, 1996); William L. Shea, *War in the West: Pea Ridge and Prairie Grove* (Abilene, Ryan Place Publishers, 1996); Gene A. Smith, *Iron and Heavy Guns: Duel between the Monitor and Merrimac* (Abilene, Ryan Place Publishers, 1996); Daniel E. Sutherland, *The Emergence of Total War* (Abilene, Ryan Place Publishers, 1996); Spencer C. Tucker, *Raphael Semmes and the Alabama* (Abilene, Ryan Place Publishers, 1996); *Unconditional Surrender: Capture of Forts Henry and Donelson*, (Abilene, McWhiney Foundation Press, 2001); Steven E. Woodworth, *A Deep, Steady Thunder: The battle of Chickamauga* (Abilene, Ryan Place Publishers, 1996); Steven E. Woodworth, *The Grand Spectacle: The battle of Chattanooga* (Abilene, McWhiney Foundation Press, 1999); David Coffey, *John Bell Hood and the Struggle for Atlanta* (Abilene, McWhiney Foundation Press, 1998); Donald S. Frazier, *Cottonclads: The battle of Galveston and the Defense of the Texas Coast* (Abilene, McWhiney Foundation Press, 1998); Judith Lee Hallock, *General James Longstreet in the West: A monumental Failure* (Abilene, McWhiney Foundation Press, 1998); Clyde N. Wilson, *The Most Promising Young Man of the South: James Johnston Pettigrew and his Men at Gettysburg* (Abilene, McWhiney Foundation Press, 1998); Ari Hoogenboom, *Rutherford B. Hayes: 'One of the good colonels'* (Abilene, McWhiney Foundation Press, 1999); Perry D. Jamieson, *Death in September: The Antietam Campaign* (Abilene, McWhiney Foundation Press, 1999); Terrence J. Winschel, *Vicksburg: Fall of the Confederate Gibraltar* (Abilene, McWhiney Foundation Press, 1999); Lawrence Clayton and John Halford Farmer, eds, *Tracks Along the Clear Fork: Stories from Shackelford and Throckmorton Counties* (Abilene, McWhiney Foundation Press, 2000); Charles Pierce Roland, *Jefferson Davis's Greatest General: Albert Sidney Johnston* (Abilene, McWhiney Foundation Press, 2000); Thomas D. Mays, ed. *Let Us Meet in Heaven: The Civil War Letters of James Michael Barr, 5th South Carolina Cavalry* (Abilene, McWhiney Foundation Press, 2001); David Williams, *Johnny Reb's War: Battlefield and Homefront* (Abilene, McWhiney Foundation Press, 2001).

71 See, for example, Michael W. Masters, 'We are a people', *Southern Patriot*, II, 4, 1995, pp. 27-28; McCain, 'The Anglo-Celts' *op. cit.*; Roger Busbice, 'The Confederate nation and our Celtic cousins', *Southern Events*, IV, 3, 1999, pp. 1, 19-20.

72 Grady McWhiney, 'Cracker Culture: The Celtic South', and 'The Violent South: Celtic Influence' presented at the Texas Scottish Festival and Highland Games Scottish Family History Symposium, LaQuinita Conference Center, Arlington, Texas and Grady McWhiney

Hill, by contrast, has become the full-time leader of the LS and is engaged in numerous conferences, speaker series and media appearances on behalf of the organization. Alongside Donald W. Livingston, Hill recently appeared in a series of SCV videos detailing political struggles over the Confederate flag in states such as South Carolina.<sup>73</sup> Within academic circles, therefore, it is Livingston who has most thoroughly merged his political activism with his scholarship, authoring a series of monographs explicitly articulating the right of secession.<sup>74</sup>

Identified by peers as simultaneously path breaking and frustrating, the most developed version of Livingston's recent work is the second half of *Philosophical Melancholy and Delirium*. Here, Livingston reviews Hume's support for the secession of the American colonies from the United Kingdom in the 18th century, and extends this Humean position to argue that, "growing secessionist and devolution movements in Europe and elsewhere in the world, raise the question of whether the modern unitary state still has the legitimacy it once had."<sup>75</sup> Peers have found Livingston's extension of Hume's thought to analyse current politics to be highly problematic.<sup>76</sup> Indeed, much like Deigh's

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'The Celtic South' Genealogy Seminar, 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Texas Scottish Festival and Highland Games. I was present at this event. The audience for McWhiney's lectures was approximately one hundred people. All were white and the majority comprised couples over fifty years old. This could be a strategic move by McWhiney to gain adherents to his 'Celtic thesis' as there are currently over two hundred Scottish Highland Games in the United States – see Euan Hague, 'Haggis and Heritage – Representing Scotland in the United States' in John Horne (ed.), *Culture, Consumption and Commodification*, (Eastbourne, University of Brighton, Leisure Studies Association, 2001) pp. 107-130.

73 See, for example, *Southern Heritage Celebration 2000: January 8, 2000 Rally*, Sons of Confederate Veterans, available from SCV, PO Box 11719, Columbia, SC 29211. This video includes comments from three prominent academics active in the League of the South – Michael Hill, Donald W. Livingston and Clyde N. Wilson; see also Gerald R. Webster and Jonathan I. Leib, 'Whose South is it anyway? Race and the Confederate battle flag in South Carolina', *Political Geography* 20, 2001, pp. 271-299.

74 Donald W. Livingston, 'Secession and the modern state'; *Philosophical Melancholy*; 'The secession tradition in America', in David Gordon ed., *Secession, State and Liberty* (New Brunswick, Transaction Publishers, 1998) pp. 1-33; 'The Founding and the Enlightenment: Two theories of sovereignty', in Gary L. Gregg II ed., *Vital Remnants: America's Founding and the Western tradition* (Wilmington, ISI Books, 1999) pp. 243-274. Livingston has continued his other assessments of Hume, for example, 'On Hume's Conservatism', *Hume Studies*, 12, 2, 1995, pp. 151-164.

75 Livingston, *Philosophical Melancholy*, p. xv.

76 Mark E. Yellin, 'Reasoning based in life: Review of *Philosophical Melancholy and*

challenge to Livingston's earlier scholarship, Peter S. Fosl, who studied under Livingston at Emory, asks whether "Livingston has not strayed too much from Hume's own projects, for a great deal of the book reads like a jeremiad ... his political commitments have driven his reading of Hume."<sup>77</sup>

Throughout Livingston's erudite assessment of Hume there run arguments that are currently made by the League of the South. These include the assertions that secession is politically justified, that the post-1865 US state is immoral, destructive, oppressive and has ignored the Constitution, that slavery was of little significance in the dispute between Union and Confederate states, and that Lincoln acted illegally and immorally, invading a peaceable South. In turn, the right of small groups of people to resist centralized state power is applauded and continuously reasserted by reference to a debate between Hume and his contemporaries that discussed whether the British Empire should prevent American secession in 1776. Livingston argues that Hume outlined when secession was a valid political practice and that despite opposing all imperialism, Hume preferred an absolutist monarchical empire to a republican parliamentary empire. According to Livingston, Hume's ideal political order "was of independent states connected by free trade and a policy of the balance of power." "Commercial empires," Livingston's analysis of Hume's stance continues, "mean constant war and, under modern conditions, a constant increase in public debt and a massive transfer of the nation's resources to the central government ... from the provinces."<sup>78</sup> For Hume, argues Livingston, the American colonies had every right to secede from the centralized authority of the British Empire, and because military action to conquer the pro-secessionist colonies would destroy "their social and political institutions and their republican way of life," it was "morally and politically unjustifiable."<sup>79</sup>

Hume's arguments against war with the American colonies and in favour of allowing secession merge with Livingston's understanding of the US Civil War. Quoting the work of fellow League of the South member Marshall DeRosa to

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*Delirium: Hume's Pathology of Philosophy* by Donald W. Livingston', *The Review of Politics*, vol. 61, 1, 1999, pp. 156-158; A. E. Piston, Review of *Philosophical Melancholy and Delirium: Hume's Pathology of Philosophy* by Donald W. Livingston, *Ethics*, vol. 109, 4, 1999, p. 952; Anthony Flew, Review of *Philosophical Melancholy and Delirium: Hume's Pathology of Philosophy* by Donald W. Livingston, *International Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 35, 3, (issue 155), 1999, pp. 359-360. Quote is p.360.

77 Deigh, Review of *Hume's Philosophy*; Peter S. Fosl, 'Donald Livingston's *Philosophical Melancholy and Delirium: Hume's Pathology of Philosophy*', *Hume Studies*, vol. 24, 2, 1998, pp. 355-366. Quote is p.356.

78 Livingston, *Philosophical Melancholy*, p. 291-292.

79 *Ibid.* p. 295, 298.

support his position,<sup>80</sup> Livingston asserts that the US Civil War was about taxation and the separation of authority between state and federal governments, not the abolition of slavery. Consequently, Livingston argues, “[w]hen the moral issue of slavery as part of the war effort is subtracted from the equation, we are left with the question of whether Lincoln’s war of coercion to suppress secession was morally justified.”<sup>81</sup>

To assess this ‘moral’ question, Livingston again extrapolates from Hume, declaring that the Enlightenment philosopher would have opposed the idea of equal rights as enshrined in the US Declaration of Independence, interpreting Hume’s reading of the Roman Empire to argue that political authority accrues as one moves up a spatial hierarchy, from family through kin to locale, district, county and region to nation, each level having more power, but this power being fully dependent on the lower levels of the progression. A nation-state taking this form, argues Livingston, operates on a specific spatial scale, covering an area and population approximately the size of Holland, and certainly no bigger than France, and necessarily exhibits “a fairly homogeneous culture and even a national religion.”<sup>82</sup> For Livingston, the nearest approximation to Hume’s ideal of a hierarchical political order in North America was antebellum Virginia.

Invoking Hume once more, Livingston maintains a state should be a decentralized amalgamation of independent commonwealths like antebellum Virginia, and the defeat of the Confederacy marked both the imposition of an ideology of an absolute, centralized, unitary nation-state, and the defeat of the Humean principle of voluntary association between independent political units into a republican federation. Becoming explicit, Livingston asserts that “[T]here was no American Civil War, but a war to coerce eleven contiguous American states into a union only seventy years old in which secession had been considered by prominent leaders in every section as an option available to an American state.”<sup>83</sup> Identifying the US Civil War as coercive, illegitimate, immoral, and a destruction of an ideal hierarchical system of government, Livingston proclaims that the United States is no longer operating within its Constitution and in the postbellum period has become a republican parliamentary empire. This brings Livingston’s assessment of Hume full circle and back to the right of a people to secede from an oppressive imperial regime,

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80 At the time of writing, DeRosa teaches Political Science at Florida Atlantic University.

81 Livingston, *Philosophical Melancholy*, p. 420. The Celtic thesis also elides the issue of slavery. Indeed, both Hill and McWhiney’s studies of the antebellum South largely ignore slavery.

82 Livingston, *Philosophical Melancholy*, p. 324.

83 *Ibid.* p. 365.

as the Americans did in 1776. If the USA is an oppressive, centralized, republican parliamentary empire, then, Livingston argues, people have a right to resist its power and to secede and establish their own political order and state structure:

The central feature of the modern state, whether legitimated by an ideology of liberalism, Marxism, fascism, or democracy, is its destruction or suppression of independent and traditional forms of corporate existence ... The idea of the modern state is that of a central authority acting directly on individuals ... The modern unitary state is government of the people and for the people, but it has difficulty tolerating government by the people, at least if the people are incorporated into substantial moral communities with strong regional, national, and religious identities.<sup>84</sup>

Although Livingston does not explicitly state that he supports the LS or advocates secession for the Confederate states once again, his banal nationalism throughout his analysis makes this position evident, and peer reviewers have noted Livingston's "partisan defense of the Confederate cause."<sup>85</sup>

Contending that Livingston's dense and detailed argument in favour of secession and the Confederacy is "politically driven," Fosl proceeds to explain that if one reads Livingston carefully, then his support for "aristocracy, patriarchy, monarchy ... the antebellum U.S., and the Confederate States of America" are evident, as are his condemnations of "the post-bellum U.S., imperialism ... feminists, libertarians, centralized government, the notion that the U.S. Civil War was about slavery, the Enlightenment ... natural rights ... [and] egalitarianism."<sup>86</sup> Appearing initially as a League of the South position paper before being published by the University of Chicago Press, Fosl notes that Livingston's invocation of Hume to justify Confederate secession has "circulated for years among traditional conservatives and is the primary reason why publications such as [LS newsletter] *The Southern Patriot* have endorsed *Philosophical Melancholy and Delirium*."<sup>87</sup> Indeed, conservative supporters such as the Ludwig von Mises Institute, who include Livingston amongst their members, have praised the Emory University professor's "masterly [and] outstanding" scholarship.<sup>88</sup> Perhaps more surprisingly, and somewhat more

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84 *Ibid.* p. 342-343.

85 Yellin, 'Reasoning', p. 158.

86 Fosl, 'Donald Livingston's', p. 363.

87 *Ibid.* p. 359. This section of Livingston's *Philosophical Melancholy* first appeared as the League of the South paper, 'Secession and the modern state'.

88 David Gordon 'The politics of custom - Review of *Philosophical Melancholy and Delirium: Hume's Pathology of Philosophy* by Donald W. Livingston', *The Mises Review* (Internet

worryingly, Livingston's detailed and erudite argument supporting secession and the Confederate cause and opposing the modern centralized nation-state have been approvingly quoted in white supremacist venues such as the *I Love White Folks* website.<sup>89</sup> In the current landscape of US right wing politics, therefore, the nationalist politics of the League of the South and its intellectual leaders requires further analysis.

## Conclusions

In this paper I have assessed the historical production of a series of academic analyses by a group of individuals, which consolidated as a nationalist ideology and currently underpins the neo-Confederate nationalist organization the League of the South. I have contended that Grady McWhiney, Michael Hill and Donald W. Livingston can be said to be members of a nascent nationalist intelligentsia engaged in generating a culture of critical discourse. Further, utilizing the work of Michael Billig, I have demonstrated that the academic texts authored by these individuals were 'banal' nationalist flags that implicitly and explicitly supported Southern distinction and the CSA. Over time, this banal nationalism became 'hot' as these and other academics were engaged in processes of reasserting and reinforcing their ideas, moving them from academic venues to conservative think-tanks, Confederate heritage groups and, thereafter, to a position where they comprise the ideology of neo-Confederate nationalist politics in the USA at the turn of the 21st century. At the forefront of the production of these ideas, Hill, McWhiney and Livingston became leaders in the LS and forwarded its nationalist, secessionist and separatist politics. Together, the Celtic thesis and a belief in the right of a people to secede from a centralised state propose a set of social relations and a system for understanding political history and philosophy that could yet formalise into a popular campaign for an independent CSA and lead to the break-up of the United States.

This scenario may not be as far-fetched as it seems.<sup>90</sup> The League is an organisation that could transition from the margins to the centre of US political

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edition) 1998. [Downloaded 21 August 2001]. Available from: [http://www.mises.org/misesreview\\_detail.asp?control=85&sortorder=authorlast](http://www.mises.org/misesreview_detail.asp?control=85&sortorder=authorlast)

89 I Love White Folks, 'Red Storm,' October 1999. Available

<http://www.ilovewhitefolks.com/redstorm.html> [Downloaded 11 November 2001].

90 Deadlock in the 2000 US Presidential election invigorated the League, and Hill suggested that "Out of all this confusion one salient fact shines through: the American Empire can no longer manage its affairs in an orderly manner. For that reason, it should be dismantled as soon as possible." See Michael Hill 'Election 2000: Time for a Divorce Between Madonna

debate, particularly in Southern states, as LS leaders spread their understandings about US history and society to like-minded individuals in Confederate heritage groups such as the SCV, proponents of 'orthodox Christianity' such as the Chalcedon Foundation and associations that identify themselves as supporting Celtic ethnicity. Furthermore, academic careers make Hill, McWhiney, Livingston and others like Clyde N. Wilson appear as plausible leaders of a nation and have given these individuals, as publishers, debaters and educators, the skills to disseminate neo-Confederate ideology. In turn, the LS message gains credibility because the academic credentials of its leadership confer legitimacy on their beliefs and, therefore, those of the League of the South.

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