Confederates in the Attic: Dispatches from the Unfinished Civil War Study Guide

Confederates in the Attic: Dispatches from the Unfinished Civil War by Tony Horwitz

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Plot Summary

Confederates in the Attic is Tony Horwtiz's personal exploration of the modern fascination with the Confederacy in the American South. Horwitz, who as a child in Maryland had his own fascination with the war, later rekindled his interest as an adult after meeting a group of Confederate reenactors who spent their weekends pretending to be Confederate soldiers. Horwitz plotted out a series of trips to the sites of battles and other historic events in Civil War history where he interviewed local people as well as other "pilgrims" such as himself.

The book is divided into fifteen chapters, organized by state. In North and South Carolina he found people who still recognized the Confederate political flag at meetings and spoke of the day the Confederacy would form again. In Kentucky he followed the trial of a black teenager accused of murdering a white man for waving a rebel flag from his truck and explored how the murdered man was turned into a martyr and celebrity by various southern groups including the Ku Klux Klan. Horwitz also traveled to Tennessee to visit with the novelist and Civil War expert Shelby Foote, then on to the Shiloh battlefield at Foote's suggestion. In Georgia and Alabama, he explored the sometimes similar ways in which the Civil War and the civil rights movements are recognized. In between trips, Horwitz becomes involved with a reenacting group led by the "hardcore" reenactor Rob Hodge, who supplies him with authentic period clothes and leads him on a whirlwind week-long tour of Civil War sites.

Horwitz discovers that the war is a symbol of pride for many Amercans, but for many different reasons. Some, like Hodge, create their own personal identity around the war. Others use it as a source of pride over their own ancestry. The Confederacy and its symbols, such as the rebel flag, represent for many a modern struggle against political and economic oppression. Horwitz finds that race is tightly wound into Confederate symbolism, and he explores alternate viewpoints on the meaning of the war for blacks and whites.

Horwitz examines his own fascination with the war. He is a liberal northerner from a Jewish family whose ancestors had come to America after the war was over. Nevertheless, he was drawn to its story as a young boy, a fascination he shared with his father as a child and then rekindled as an adult after his father retired. A simple explanation, he suggests, is that he wished to get closer to his father, but the war seems to have an even greater pull than would be explained by this. It was a definitive American event and identifying with it is a definitively American phenomenon, perhaps even a unifying force.

Chapter 1 Confederates in the Attic

Chapter 1 Confederates in the Attic Summary and Analysis

In the opening chapter, the author tells about his boyhood fascination with the Civil War. He traces it back to his great-grandfather, who was a Jewish Russian immigrant who came to America in the 1880s but who was himself fascinated with the war. He had a large book he had obtained shortly after arriving in the country that contained sketches from the war, and he shared it with his children and grandchildren.

As an older child, Horwitz himself became fascinated with the war. He painted the walls of his attic bedroom with an historical mural depicting famous battles. His parents read to him from history books on the war.

As an adult, Horwitz became a journalist and war correspondent and left the country for several years. After marrying a woman from Australia, he returned to the US, settling in a rural location in Virginia.

One morning he is awakened by the sounds of gunfire outside his house. He looked out to see a band of men dressed as Confederate soldiers firing muskets in the road near his house. He discovered they were participating in a documentary film about the Civil War, and he eagerly went out during a break in shooting to speak with them.

He met a man named Robert Lee Hodge who explained that the group were "hardcore" Civil War reenactors. These were men who tried to make every element of their experience as authentic as possible. He took a business card from Hodge, who invited him to call if he was interested in learning more.

Horwitz returned to the house and took out his great-grandfather's book. He had let go of his childhood fascination with the Civil War but found himself drawn back in and asking what it was that still fascinated so many people about it.

Horwitz called Hodge and was invited out to march and drill with his group. He was told to bring nothing modern and to arrive early to be checked out.

The march was on the farm of a man named Robert Young. Young looked at Horwitz's outfit of long-johns, jeans and a cotton shirt and rejected it. None of the items would have been available to a man in the 1860s. The shiny apples he had packed were also discarded. Young gave him some dirty, woollen clothes and replaced his modern plastic-framed glasses with some wire-rimmed ones.

Horwitz watched the group as they drilled and marched. That evening the men sat around a fire and talked, and he learned more about them. They worked at widely different jobs and had various backgrounds, but were drawn together by their hardcore

devotion to authentic recreation of the Civil War experience. Horwitz learned the term "farb", which was a derogatory way they referred to reenactors who were not completely authentic in their costumes or behavior. These men even strove to look like emaciated Confederates by losing as much weight as possible.

After a cold night sleeping in a group on the ground, Horwitz returned home and began to think about the obsession some people still had for the Civil War. He began to plan a "campaign" of his own.

Chapter 2 North Carolina: Confederate Cats

Chapter 2 North Carolina: Confederate Cats Summary and Analysis

Horwitz decided he would travel through the South, going to the same places where the Civil War was fought, and investigate how the war still resonated with people. He decided to begin in Charleston, North Carolina, where the war was traditionally thought to have started with the firing on Fort Sumter in 1861.

On his drive to Charleston, Horwitz stopped in the town of Salisbury and visited the site of a prisoner camp and cemetery. From the caretaker of the cemetery he learned about a woman named Sue Curtis, who headed a local chapter of the group called the United Daughters of the Confederacy. He contacted Sue Curtis, and she invited him to attend a meeting of the Sons of Confederate Veterans that evening.

Horwitz attended the meeting, which was being held in celebration of the birthdays of Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson, two famous Civil War generals. The meeting opened by honoring the Confederate flags, which was followed by talks about the war. Afterwards the men split into two groups for a trivia quiz on Civil War history.

The following day, Horwitz visited Mike Hawkins, one of the men he had met at the birthday celebration. Hawkins lived in a small trailer decorated with Confederate flags. He had lived a troubled life and was in a custody battle with an estranged first wife. The Sons of Confederate Veterans had shown him acceptance and allowed him to find some pride in himself through his pride in his great-great-grandfather who had lost a leg in the war but had survived.

Horwitz stayed in Salisbury longer than he had planned in order to meet with Ed and Sue Curtis, who invited him to their home. The couple had bonded over their mutual obsession with the Confederacy. They spent their vacations visiting battlefield sites and collected memorabilia and souvenirs that cluttered their home. Their obsession had taken over their social lives to the point they had stopped going to church. Having no children of their own to join in their organizations, Sue had started one called Cats of the Confederacy where cat owners dressed their cats in Confederate costume.

Sue Curtis had also revived a local chapter of the Children of the Confederacy, a group that taught children about the war from the southern viewpoint which highlighted the perceived treachery of the North. Horwitz spoke to a girl of twelve named Beth, who was a member of the group. Beth was slightly embarrassed by her involvement, but was fascinated with her own genealogy. She had found an ancestor named Frank and wondered excitedly if she might be related to Anne Frank.

Horwitz concludes his stay in Salisbury attending a Martin Luther King Jr. celebration. There he met a young black preacher named Michael King who was upset that people are still celebrating the Confederacy, which he equated with celebrating slavery and racism. He pointed to the Confederate monument in the center of a busy intersection that showed an angel carrying a dead rebel soldier to heaven. He called it un-Christian because it suggest that God supported slavery. He had expressed his opposition to the statue, he told Horwitz, and had received hate mail.

Chapter 3 South Carolina: The Better Half of the World

Chapter 3 South Carolina: The Better Half of the World Summary and Analysis

Chapter 3 opens as Horwitz approached Fort Sumter by boat. The fort, now a national park, was three miles off the shore of Charleston North Carolina. Fort Sumter was a Union stronghold that was attacked by Confederate gun batteries on the shore in April 1861. Unions soldiers fired back, but the fort caught fire and they surrendered. No soldiers were killed in the battle.

On the boat to the fort, Horwtiz met a man named Joel Dorfman, an unemployed truck driver from New York. Dorfman himself was on a tour of Civil War sites, but had chosen to do them in reverse order as Horwitz, beginning at the site of Lee's surrender. He was about to finish his tour at the beginning of the war. He told Horwitz he was visiting in that order because "If we could travel back in time, wouldn't we hit the end of the war first?" (p. 46).

At the park, Horwitz spoke with a ranger, who told him that many of the tourists who visit are unsure of the historical significance of the site. They confuse it with the raid at Harper's Ferry, or with Fort McHenry, where the "Star-Spangled Banner" was composed. Horwitz noted that the ranger, named Joe McGill, was black and asked him if he felt awkward guiding people at the fort, the site of a Confederate victory. McGill responded by pointing out a site across the water where a group of black Union troops had attacked a Confederate battery. He also told Horwitz about a black harbor pilot who hijacked a Confederate ship and later became a congressman. He tried to include this information when talking to visitors, he said.

Back in Charleston, Horwitz realized that the city's history was much deeper than its place in Civil War lore. Charleston had been settled in the seventeenth century and had become a gentile society of wealthy plantation families. Many of the grand houses of that era still stood, but harder economic times meant that many were run down.

In a market area, next to a souvenir shop that sold Confederate items and rebel flags, Horwitz spoke to a black woman who made grass baskets for sale to tourists. She recited for him a short verse about Abraham Lincoln she had learned as a girl and told him about growing up hearing about the war and being warned about white people by her father. Horwitz asked her how she felt about the neighboring shop that sold rebel items. "They can remember that war all they want," she replied. "So long's they remember they lost" (p. 52).

Horwitz interviewed several other residents of Charleston who held differing viewpoints on the past. A seventy-year-old woman who looked over a local history museum

showed him several artifacts from the war, including a rare Confederate uniform. She told Horwitz that the war had actually empowered southern white woman who previously were expected not to do any work. During and after the war they organized and cared for soldiers, leading to their wider role in society in Charleston.

Horwitz met a colorful man named Jamie Westendorf, a man with many jobs including preparing large feasts for parties. Westendorf gave Horwitz a tour of the "real" Charleston, pointing out where the brothels and underground liquor stores were once located.

Horwitz concluded his visit with an interview of a man named Manning Williams, a college professor and painter who held some extreme political views and considered that the war was still raging against the South, although it was mostly economic and social. He pointed out to Horwitz that it had become wrong to stereotype most cultures in popular media except for Southern rednecks. Horwitz was inclined to dismiss Williams' ranting as thinly-veiled racism; however, Williams invited him to examine his own prejudices.

Chapter 4 South Carolina: Shades of Gray

Chapter 4 South Carolina: Shades of Gray Summary and Analysis

Horwitz moved on next to Columbia, South Carolina. On his way he stopped in Kingstree, where he had read a news story about a local Confederate monument that supposedly had a statue of a Union soldier on it. A woman named Francis Ward, who ran the local historical society, took him to the thirty-foot high monument, and he peered at the statue atop it through binoculars. It did indeed appear to be a soldier dressed in a Union uniform. The statue had come from a foundry that made monuments for both North and South, but whether it was a mix-up or deliberate was never determined. The Union soldier had been known about for years, but nothing had been done about it.

Horwitz continued on to Columbia, the capitol city, where he met with a group of men calling themselves the Council of Concerned Citizens, or CCC. The CCC met over breakfast before staging a protest over plans to remove the rebel battle flag from the capitol. Although the rebel flag flown at the capitol was actually just a battle standard and had never actually flown over any Confederate capitol, the men saw its removal as an affront to their identity as Southerners. Horwitz noted, however, that many of the men in the group were actually from the north, but they shared conservative ideals they felt were represented by the rebel flag such as state rights and limited government.

Horwitz met later with one of the men from the CCC, a man named Walt. Walt had been a former protestor of the Viet Nam war, but his political views had shifted over the years. In his home he kept files on various conspiracies he believed were intended to ruin the white race. At the top of this conspiracy was Israel and the Jews, he told Horwitz. Horwitz asked him if he had ever met a Jew, and when Walt replied that he had met one once, Horwitz replied that he had just met his second. Walt was surprised to learn Horwitz was Jewish, and backpedaled by saying that just because a race is bad it does not mean every person of that race is bad. Despite his racist views, Horwitz found himself admiring Walt's iconoclasm.

Horwitz identified an apparent contradiction in what he heard in the South and what he saw in the country as a whole. The contradiction is that at the time he was writing, Bill Clinton, a Southerner, is president and Al Gore, also a Southerner, is vice president. The South was booming economically compared to other parts of the country. Yet the central theme he heard from Southerners he speaks with was that the South had been oppressed politically and economically by the North.

Horwitz asked a professor of History named A.V. Huff his opinion on this apparent contradiction. Huff's view was that Southerners felt secretly guilty for having "sold out" to

the North and that they cling to the rebel flag and the lost cause of the Confederacy to alleviate that guilt.

Chapter 5 Kentucky: Dying for Dixie

Chapter 5 Kentucky: Dying for Dixie Summary and Analysis

Chapter 5 opens at Redbone's Saloon, a biker bar on the Tennessee side of Guthrie, a town that straddles the Tennessee-Kentucky border. Horwitz sat at the bar, drinking a beer and writing in his reporter's notebook about the racist slogans displayed on the walls and the tough crowd. Discussion in the bar was partly about the death of a young man named Michael Westerman, who had been shot by a group of black young men supposedly over his display of the Confederate battle flag on his pickup. Horwitz's note-taking drew the attention of the bar patrons, one of whom threatened to beat him up. He escaped with a torn jacket and made his way to the Kentucky side of town.

Michael Westerman had been out with his wife, Hannah, in his red pickup that had a large Confederate flag mounted on a pole in the bed. He stopped at a gas station where his truck was seen by a small group of young black men, who took offense at the flag. They followed Westerman and began harassing him on the road. When Westerman sped up to escape, they came up alongside him in the oncoming lane. A young man named Freddie Morrow shot from the window of the car into the driver side door of Westerman's truck, striking Westerman and killing him.

The case was widely talked about. Tensions between white and black students at the local high school had been escalating recently over the issues of white students displaying the Confederate flag and black students wearing caps with an X on them, celebrating Malcolm X. Westerman's story was adopted and adapted by several groups, including the Ku Klux Klan. He was described as a martyr for the noble Southern cause. When Horwitz interviewed people who actually knew Westerman, however, he was described mostly as a trouble-making bully.

The identification with the Confederacy was striking to Horwitz, as Todd County Kentucky had never been part of the Confederacy. Nevertheless, there were annual celebrations of the flag and the election of a "Miss Confederacy." The sympathy for the Confederate cause seemed based more on ideology than history.

Horwitz attended the trial of Freddie Morrow and the two other men who were in the car. Freddie had grown up in a tough neighborhood in Chicago and ironically had been sent to Guthrie by his mother to avoid trouble. He was found guilty of murder and sentenced to life in prison. The driver of the car also received a life sentence.

Chapter 6 Virginia: A Farb of the Heart

Chapter 6 Virginia: A Farb of the Heart Summary and Analysis

In Chapter 6, Horwitz was invited by Rob Hodge, the leader of the Southern Guard re-enactment group, to attend a weekend battle re-enactment of the Battle of the Wilderness which had take place in Virginia. The day before the battle, Horwitz borrowed some authentic Confederate clothing from Hodge and planned to meet the rest of the Southern Guard at the site.

When Horwitz arrived at the re-enactment, he could not find the Southern Guard so he joined up with another group, called Company H of the 32nd Virginia. The men of Company H were what Hodge called "farbs," not completely accurate in their garb or behavior. One of the men explained to Horwitz "We try to be authentic, but no one wants to eat rancid bacon and lie in the mud all night. This is a hobby, not a religion" (p. 130). Without a musket to fire, Horwitz found little to do in the first day of battle. He took a "hit" early and lied on the battlefield chatting with other "casualties" while they waited for the battle the finish.

The next day Horwitz found the Southern Guard. Rob Hodge, and they told Horwitz, had spent the night sleeping in the rain in a nearby field. Horwitz found Hodge, and the two of them watched the day's battle dressed as medics, which allowed them to roam the battlefield without being shot at. As they watched, Hodge kept up a running commentary on the inauthenticities of the dress of most of the soldiers. He saw one young man, however, who was dressed in an authentic shirt. When the man pretended to die, Hodge and Horwitz ran to tend to his imaginary wounds and Hodge told him about the Southern Guard.

Horwitz enjoyed his weekend, but on reflection he felt wrong fighting as a Confederate. He was a "farb of the heart" for not truly believing in his cause. He decided that the next time he put on civil war costume, it would be for the Union.

Chapter 7 Tennessee: At the Foote of the Master

Chapter 7 Tennessee: At the Foote of the Master Summary and Analysis

In Chapter 7, Horwitz visited Shelby Foote, a novelist and historical writer who had become well-known for his appearance in a documentary on the Civil War produced by Ken Burns. Horwitz wrote to Foote, arranging to meet with him at his home in Memphis. He spent several hours speaking with Foote about the Civil War and the South's fascination with it. He was surprised to hear Foote defend some of the actions of the Southerners after the war, including the original founders of the Ku Klux Klan, which had originally formed after the Civil War then had died out and re-emerged in the early twentieth century.

Foote told Horwitz about his frequent visits to the battlefield at Shiloh on the anniversary of the battle. Foote would arrive early in the day, then walk the battlefield following the events of the day at the time they actually happened. Horwitz planned to make a similar trip to the site himself.

Chapter 8 Tennessee: Ghost Marks at Shiloh

Chapter 8 Tennessee: Ghost Marks at Shiloh Summary and Analysis

In Chapter 8, Horwitz visits the Shiloh battlefield along the Tennessee River in Tennessee. Since boyhood he had been fascinated with the battle as it seemed to conjure up all the glorious images of the Civil War. He arrived early in the morning on the anniversary of the battle, planning to follow the historic events of the day at the same time they occurred as Shelby Foote had recommended. By coincidence, he met another man who had a similar plan, a man named Bryson Powers, whose great-great-grandfather had been on duty with Union troops the morning of the battle. Powers, a bus driver from Minneapolis, had come to retrace his ancestor's steps. They met up with two other men who were similarly tracing their Confederate ancestors' movements. The four of them stopped and shared the stories of their ancestors.

Afterward, Horwitz went on alone, following the movement of the Union troops. He followed a park map that showed the position of the Union and Confederate troops to a place called the Hornet's Nest, where a group of Union soldiers withstood a dozen Confederate charges before finally surrendering, giving General Grant enough time to put reinforcements in place.

As he walked the battlefield, Horwitz encountered several other amateurs who were also there investigating various aspects of the battle as they followed the action over the course of the day. These were "pilgrims," as they were known by the park ranger Paul Hawke, who explained to Horwitz that Shiloh received many such visitors, especially on the anniversary of the battle. The park is not in a highly-populated area, he explained, so the people who visited tended to be there for a certain purpose.

Horwitz returned to the battlefield led by a researcher named Stacy Allen, who was trained as a physical anthropologist and who had questioned many of the commonly held truths about the battle. For example, it was assumed that the confused fighting in the forests was caused by the thick spring vegetation. Allen had discovered that spring was late in April, 1862, when the battle took place, and so the forests were probably very winter-like with little underbrush and no leaves. He also questioned the story of the Hornet's Nest based on the fact that the dead at Shiloh were mostly buried in trenches near where they fell, yet there were no burial trenches at the Hornet's Nest site.

Before leaving the site, Horwitz came across a man dressed in Union garb. He stopped and told the man he was writing a book on memory of the Civil War and wondered if he could ask him some questions. As it happened, Horwitz and the man, named Wolfgang Hochbruck, were already acquainted by e-mail but had lost contact. Hochbruck was from Germany, but became fascinated with the Civil War and Shiloh after reading

Shelby Foote's novel about the battle. Horwitz spent the remainder of the day with him, visiting the national cemetery at the site.

Chapter 9 Mississippi: The Minié Ball Pregnancy

Chapter 9 Mississippi: The Minié Ball Pregnancy Summary and Analysis

In Chapter 9 Horwitz visited Vicksburg, Mississippi, the site of a major Civil War siege. Vicksburg had been a small town on the Mississippi River at the time of the war, but in the intervening years the river had shifted so the town was several miles away. A canal had been built along the city's former waterfront and the town had seen an economic resurgence from riverboat casinos that floated on the canal.

Horwitz met a local pharmacist who had turned part of his business into a museum to display several items from his collection of Civil War artifacts. The pharmacist invited him to his home, where he looked at several more items and learned that the pharmacist and his wife were Jewish. There had been a significant Jewish population in Vicksburg, he learned, although there were barely enough now to make up the minimum number needed to hold services.

At the city's museum in the courthouse building, Horwitz read about the "Minié Ball Pregnancy." This was a supposed case where a soldier was shot through the testicle with a minié ball, which passed through his body and lodged in the abdomen of a young woman who was standing nearby. The woman became pregnant, and later married the soldier, having two more children with him. The story was fictional, Horwitz knew, written up by a Civil War physician as a joke. The prank had cost the physician his career, but the story had been passed on as fact for generations.

Also interesting to Horwitz was the story of Albert Cashire, a soldier who survived some forty battles and became an active veteran after the war. When Cashire was in his sixties, in 1911, he was hit by a car and treated for a broken leg. At the time it was discovered that Cashire was actually a woman. She had been born Jenny Hodges.

Horwitz was in Vicksburg on the Memorial Day weekend and attended services held in observance of Memorial Day. He was surprised to see that almost all the participants in the ceremony were black. He discovered that the community was still divided racially in many ways and that the white veterans in town did not observe Memorial Day but held ceremonies for Veteran's Day instead. This was true of many things, he was told. He realized that there were really two parallel histories to the Civil War, one black and one white, and that he should go looking for the story of its remembrance on both sides.

Chapter 10 Virginia and Beyond: The Civil Wargasm

Chapter 10 Virginia and Beyond: The Civil Wargasm Summary and Analysis

Upon returning from Mississippi, Horwitz received a call from Rob Hodge inviting him to accompany him on his annual "Civil Wargasm," a whirlwind week-long tour of as many Civil War sites as possible. The account of the trip makes up Chapter 10, and is a one of the longer portions of the book.

They make the trip dressed in period Civil War garb. Horwitz told Hodge he wanted to travel as a Federal soldier, and on the day before they planned to leave he went to Hodge's apartment to pick up the clothes Hodge would lend him. At Hodge's apartment he met his girlfriend, Caroline, who had met Hodge at the restaurant where he worked. She was not a Civil War buff, but she told Horwitz she thought Hodge probably preferred that she not be, since the rest of his life was consumed with it.

Dressed as a Yank and a Reb, the two men departed on a June morning for their first major destination, the national park at Manassas, Virginia, where two major battles had taken place. The first, called by the South First Manassas and by the North the Battle of Bull Run, was a Confederate victory and was the first major battle of the war. As the two men walked quickly through the park, they attracted a following of boys interested in their clothing. The boys asked them several questions, which Rob answered authoritatively.

They moved along their route quickly in Horwitz's car, with Hodge making notes of the sites they had visited, planning to camp at whatever battlefield they were near at dark. On the first night, they became lost in the dark looking for a spot on the battlefield at Sharpsburg, finally bedding down in the cold in their damp, sweaty clothes.

Horwitz was disturbed to find that most of the battlefields and memorial markers were surrounded by ugly suburban sprawl and housing developments. As they got farther away from the cities, however, they found a more rural setting. Near Petersburg, Virginia, they visited the "store" of an eccentric man named Jimmy Olgers whose family had lived in the area for generations. Another highlight of the trip was a visit to the recreated house of Wilmer McLean, near Appomattox, where Robert E. Lee had formally surrendered to General Ulysses S. Grant.

After five days sleeping outdoors and being bitten by bugs, Horwitz was eager to get home to his wife and a hot shower. The day after returning, he joined Hodge at the battlefield at Gettsyburg with a group of other reenactors. The men were planning to recreate Pickett's Charge, a famous part of the battle. As they began walking across the battlefield, however, they were soon mobbed by tourists walking alongside them and

taking photographs. In a humorous passage, Hodge began to shout out orders to his men to take action to avoid the tourists, as if they were enemy troops.

Chapter 11 Georgia: Gone With the Window

Chapter 11 Georgia: Gone With the Window Summary and Analysis

Chapter 11 is called "Gone with the Window," a humorous pun on the famous novel by Margaret Mitchell "Gone with the Wind," which was made into a very popular movie in the 1930s. In this chapter, Horwitz describes his visit to Atlanta and the countryside of Georgia where the novel takes place.

Horwitz found Atlanta's commemoration of the Civil War to be unusual. He had assumed that the relatively modern city had been a result of its destruction at the hands of Sherman's army in the war, but learned that Atlanta, which had been a fairly new city at the time of the war, had a tradition of moving forward rapidly. Horwitz did attend a memorial ceremony at a park called Stone Mountain where large images of Generals Lee and Jackson and Confederate President Jefferson Davis were carved into a huge granite face. During the ceremony, the sculpture was used as a backdrop for a bland patriotic laser light show that had very little to do with the Confederacy.

Looking for Civil War sites, Horwitz visited a tourism office where he was given a small brochure. The woman at the office, named Mary Ann, told Horwitz that most people who came into the office wanted to know where to find Tara, the grand house from "Gone With the Wind." Japanese tourists were especially fanatical about the movie, she told Horwitz, and came asking for "Gone with the Window."

Gone with the Wind was a commercial force in itself, he discovered. He met a woman named Melly Meadows who had won a Scarlett O'Hara look-alike contest and appeared at events and tours dressed as the main character from the movie. She had a strong following among Japanese fans and had even learned Japanese.

Horwitz aso met the colorful Betty Talmadge, the former first lady of Georgia who had been married to Governor Herman Talmadge. Talmadge lived in a grand old house that she claimed was the inspiration for the house called Twelve Oaks in Mitchell's novel. Mitchell had grown up in Georgia and had often visited relatives there. Although Mitchell herself claimed that all of the locations in the novel were completely fictional and not based on any real places, Horwitz found that many people believed they knew the actual places described in the book.

Chapter 12 Georgia:Still Prisoners of War

Chapter 12 Georgia:Still Prisoners of War Summary and Analysis

In Chapter 12, Horwitz left Atlanta and traveled further into Georgia. In the town of Conyers, he attended a Sons of Confederate Veterans meeting and met a woman named Mauriel Johnson, who studied Civil War diaries and letters of Confederate prisoners who often corresponded with northern women. It was common for northern women to write to Confederate prisoners, Johnson explained, and the letters they wrote were often flirtatious or even frank. Johnson had written a book about the treatment of rebel prisoners by the North and she provided Horwitz with a signed copy.

Horwitz read the book and found it was mainly intended to balance the so-called "myths" about Andersonville, a notorious Confederate prison where thousands of prisoners had died from starvation and dysentery. The commander of the prison, Henry Wirz, was the only Confederate tried as a war criminal and executed after the war. He had become a hero to a group of Southerners who saw him as a martyr to the cause.

The camp had been a terrible place with hundreds of men crammed into a small stockade with no shelter and very little food. The filthy conditions led to widespread dysentery, which was the cause of death of many of the men, who were buried in trench graves. Even in the present day, the prison was a source of controversy.

Horwitz left Andersonville and traveled to the town of Fitzgerald, Georgia which had an unusual history. It had been founded in the 1890s by Philander Fitzgerald, a Union veteran who wanted to start a farm community for other northern veterans to live in the warmer climate of the South. After the first year, the settlers from the North observed their first harvest by inviting nearby Southern farmers to celebrate with them. Two parades were planned, one for Confederate veterans and one for Union veterans, but spontaneously the two groups joined into one parade. As the town grew, streets were named for generals from both sides and families, The spirit of reconciliation had diminished over the generations, but the mere existence of the town indicated that another patch of reconciliation had been possible, although it was not widely know about.

Chapter 13 Alabama: Only Living Confederate Widow Tells Some

Chapter 13 Alabama: Only Living Confederate Widow Tells Some Summary and Analysis

Chapter 13 describes Horwitz's meeting with Alberta Martin, who was believed to be the only living widow of a Confederate soldier. Hortwitz first heard about Martin while interviewing someone in Alabama, who mentioned that the woman lived in a small town in the southern part of the state called Opp.

Horwitz was skeptical. It was the 1990s, 130 years after the end of the war. It did not seem possible that anyone with a direct connection could still be alive. After researching on the internet, however, he discovered that another woman who was believed to be the last Confederate widow had died just a few years before. This suggested that it might actually be possible for another to be living somewhere. Horwitz called a member of the Daughters of the Confederacy named Dorothy Raybon who lived near Opp and she confirmed that Alberta Martin was indeed still alive and that she had been married to a man named William Jasper Martin, who had been a private in the 4th Alabama army. Horwitz asked why nobody seemed to know about Martin, and Raybon replied that it had not been made a big issue because Alberta had married William Martin when he was eighty-five and she was only in her teens. When William died, Alberta married one of his grandsons just eight weeks later.

Horwitz learned from Raybon that Martin lived in Elba, a town near Opp, with her son. He contacted her son, who invited him to visit, but told him his mother was in the hospital with stomach pains. Horwitz rushed to see her and found her alert and talkative. Martin had been raised in a very poor family of eleven children in the country nearby. She left school at eleven and began working in the fields with her father, sharecropping. At fifteen she became pregnant and had a child, but the father died. Looking for help in raising her son, she accepted when the elderly William Martin asked her to marry him. He had a veterans' pension of $50 a month, which was more than a sharecropper made in a year. She had a son with Martin, William, Jr., the son with whom she lived. When Martin died after five years of marriage she remarried to his grandson, Charlie, to whom she was married for over fifty years. Martin had never talked much about his military career, Alberta told Horwitz. She seemed somewhat amused that she should receive so much attention for something that happened so long ago.

Willie Martin, Alberta's son, showed Horwitz around the countryside where Alberta had lived all her life. He looked at William Martin's grave, which had been a blank stone until the Daughters of the Confederacy had learned about Alberta and traced his service record. They had put up a marker with his name and unit on it. Neither Willie nor Alberta's other son, Harold, knew anything specific about Martin's service. Once Alberta

had drawn the attention of some Confederate groups, dramatic stories had been written about his record claiming he was wounded in battle. Horwitz looked through the available records and found that Martin had been vague about his service when applying for his pension. He discovered why. Martin had indeed been drafted into the army, but was almost immediately hospitalized for rubella. He was released on a sixty-day furlough, but never returned to service. Like many other soldiers of the day, he had deserted.

Chapter 14 Alabama: I Had a Dream

Chapter 14 Alabama: I Had a Dream Summary and Analysis

Chapter 14 examines the remembrance of the Civil War in the cities of Alabama where the civil rights movement first gained momentum. Horwitz visited Montgomery, Alabama, where he saw a welcome sign reading "We're History! Visit the Civil Rights Memorial, The First Confederate Capitol." He was struck by the placement of both attractions on the same sign. Throughout Montgomery he found that there was a civic pride in both parts of Montgomery's history.

Horwitz toured the old Confederate capitol building where Jefferson Davis had been sworn in as president of the Confederacy. He followed a tour group of white home-schooled children who were led by a tour guide named Sandy, a young black woman. Sandy pointed out the portraits of the white Southerners who had served in the Confederate congress and explained the history of the building and the people who had governed there. Afterward, Horwitz asked Sandy how she felt as a black person explaining the history of the Confederacy. She replied that she was proud that the day had come when a black person could work in her position. She took some satisfaction knowing that the white men in the portraits would be very upset if they knew she was the one explaining their history.

Horwitz moved on to Selma, another town that figured prominently in the civil rights protests of the 1960s. He visited a civil rights museumand was struck at the similarities in the stories of civil rights marchers and Confederate soldiers about marching all day and sleeping in fields at night.

Horwitz visited a high school in Selma and sat in on history classes to see how the Civil War was being taught and discussed in Alabama schools. He was surprised to learn that the Civil War was not part of the official state history curriculum, which started high school state history in 1871, after the end of the war. Nevertheless, teachers still brought their own materials to class and discussed the war. The teacher whose class he visited was named Rose Sanders. She and her husband were well-known and controversial local activists. She invited Hortwitz to talk to her students about his research and writing.

Sanders was an opinionated teacher who felt strongly that there should be no monuments to the Confederacy, which stood for the criminal treatment of black people. After the class, Horwitz engaged in an argument with Sanders over her strong opinions. He felt that she used the same racist rhetoric in condemning white Southerners and Jews that was used against black people.

Horwitz visited another classroom where the students were quizzed about slavery and the Civil War. None of them had a firm grasp of what had happened or the years when it

happened. Horwitz wondered if this ignorance of the war was not perhaps a good thing. Maybe forgetting all about it was the best way to move forward, he speculated.

Chapter 15 Strike the Tent

Chapter 15 Strike the Tent Summary and Analysis

In the final chapter, Horwitz summarized his conclusions after his many forays into the former Confederacy. The chapter is presented in two parallel narratives in alternating passages. In one narrative, Horwitz described his last time participating in a re-enactment with Rob Hodge, at the Gettysburg battlefield, In the second narrative, Horwitz described his father's rediscovery of the Civil War after his retirement.

It had been three summers since Horwitz had first rekindled his interest in the Civil War, sparked by Rob Hodge and his group of followers who passed by his front door during a documentary film shooting. As he marched with Hodge and his ever-growing group of "hardcore" re-enactors toward Gettysburg three summers later, he realized his Civil War "campaign" was through. Reflecting on what he had learned, Horwitz realized there were many different attitudes in the South toward the Confederacy and the Civil War. Some still revered Civil War heroes like gods, but he had come to learn more about their humanity. Some seemed to cling to the stories of the Confederacy as a symbol of pride for the traditional southern way of life without subscribing to the same political and racial opinions of the old Confederacy. Some, like the school children in Alabama, were mostly ignorant of the events of the war and he wondered if that was perhaps preferable to them being indoctrinated with one side or the other.

Horwitz's father had recently retired as a neurosurgeon and his own interest in the Civil War had resurfaced. As a child, Horwitz had spent much of the scarce time with his busy father looking through the set of photographic history books. Now, his father had taken a special interest in medicine and the treatment of head injuries during the Civil War. Together, Horwitz and his father went to conferences and attended museums specializing in the subject.

In the end, Horwitz concludes that it might look as though his interest in the Civil War stemmed from a childhood need to get closer to his father. This would not explain the excitement bordering on obsession that he felt for the subject, however, that Rob Hodge described as the "period rush." He wonders if the Civil War is still a defining American experience and if that is what drew him to it as a child even though he had no family connection to the war. It may have been what drew his great-grandfather to treasure his book on the war as a new immigrant to the US less than twenty years after the end of the war.

Horwitz completed the march with Hodge's group, then returned home to his wife and infant son, and looks forward to the day that his own son might find himself drawn to this defining American event.

Characters

Tony Horwitz

Tony Horwitz is the author of the book and a central figure throughout. He grew up in a Jewish family in Maryland, near Washington D.C., and developed a fascination with the Civil War as a child during the 1960s. His interest in the war was supported by his father, who read to him from a photographic history of the war a a child, and by his mother, who allowed him to paint the walls of his attic bedroom with a mural showing scenes from famous battles. After college, Horwitz became a journalist working mainly overseas. Upon returning to the United States, he moved to Virginia where his interest in the Civil War was rekindled after meeting a group of Confederate re-enactors led by a man named Rob Hodge.

For the next two years, Horwitz explored the fascination he and others had for the war and the ways in which it served as a symbol for various groups. He became active in re-enacting groups and toured several battlefields, interviewing a wide variety of people throughout the South on their views and opinions about the war.

Rob Hodge

Rob Hodge was a young man who considered himself a "hardcore" Civil War re-enactor who sought to be authentic in his dress and behavior while in costume. He worked as a waiter but also made money on the side posing for portraits in his costumes and acting as an extra in Civil War documentaries.

It is while he is performing in one of these documentaries that Hodge meets Tony Horwitz, the author. He introduces Horwitz into his group of hardcore re-enactors and invites him along on their marches. One of Hodge's regular activities is what he calls the "Civil Wargasm," where he takes a whirlwind tour of as many historic sites as possible while dressed in his Confederate clothing. Horwitz accompanies him on one of these trips.

Over the years of their acquaintance, Hodge develops a larger and larger following of people who strive for "hardcore" authenticity. He becomes a popular role model for his group. Horwitz uses a photographic portrait of Hodge in his garb as an illustration for the cover of the book.

Shelby Foote

Shelby Foote was a novelist and amateur historian whose novel about the battle of Shiloh was a best seller. He was widely recognized as a Civil War expert although he was not a trained historian. He became well-known after appearing in the television series on the Civil War produced by Ken Burns. Foote grew up in the South and lived in

Memphis, Tennessee, where Horwitz visited him to talk about the ways southerners remembered the war.

Ed and Sue Curtis

Ed and Sue Curtis were married Civil War fans who were active in the Sons of Confederate Veterans, Daughters of the Confederacy and Children of the Confederacy groups in North Carolina. Horwitz spent time interviewing them and attending the meetings of their organizations.

Nathan Bedford Forrest

Forrest was the founder of the original Ku Klux Klan, which he formed shortly after the end of the war. For many Southerners he remains an inspirational hero.

Michael Westerman

A young Kentucky man who was shot by some black teenagers who chased him in his pickup that displayed a rebel battle flag. Westerman's story and the murder trial that followed are the subject of Chapter 5

Freddie Morrow

The young black man convicted of murdering Michael Westerman. Morrow was sentenced to life in prison for his crime.

Henry Wirz

The Swiss-born Confederate commander of the Andersonville prison camp. After the war, Wirz was the only Confederate tried for war crimes. he was convicted and hanged.

Martin Luther King, Jr,

An Alabama pastor who was influential in the civil rights movement and who was later assassinated.

Stonewall Jackson

A well known Confederate general who supposedly earned his nickname for his steadfastness in battle.

Robert E. Lee

The leader of the Confederate armies. Lee negotiated the final surrender to the North with General Grant

Ulysses S. Grant

The commander of the Union forces. Grant negotiated the final surrender with Robert E. Lee. He was later elected president of the United States.

Abraham Lincoln

The President of the United States during the Civil War. Lincoln was a figure of derision among Southerners and a Christ-like figure to many blacks.

Jefferson Davis

The President of the Confederacy. Davis was sworn into office in the Confederate capitol Montgomery, Alabama, a site that Horwitz visits in Chapter 14.

Alberta Martin

The only surviving widow of a Confederate veteran. Martin had married an elderly veteran when she was a young woman, then married his grandson after he died.

Civil War Reenacters

People who dress in period garb and recreate battles from the Civil War according to descriptions of what actually happened. "Hardcore" reenacters strive to be completely authentic in their dress, speech and behavior.

Objects/Places

The Civil War

A war between northern and southern states that began after several southern states formally seceded from the Union. The war began in 1861 and was largely fought in the South. The Confederate troops eventually surrendered at Appomattox, Virginia.

Todd County, Kentucky

A region of Kentucky that was not part of the Confederacy but where Horwitz found a strong tradition of identity with the South. It was the site of the killing of Michael Westerman described in Chapter 5.

Shiloh

A battlefield park in Tennessee where Horwitz visits on the anniversary of the major battle that was fought there. He encounters several other "pilgrims" who had taken similar trips to the park.

Gone With the Wind

A novel by Margaret Mitchell about a wealthy southern family in Georgia during the Civil War. The novel was made into a popular movie in the 1930s. Although the book was entirely fictional and the movie shot completely in California, Horwitz found that tourists flock to Georgia to look for the original sites of the scenes in the book and film.

Andersonville Prison

A terrible prison camp where northern prisoners of war and southern deserters were kept in filthy and crowded conditions. The camp was an outdoor stockade with no shelter. Prisoners were given little food and often died of dysentery. In modern times, the site was made into a memorial to prisoners of all wars.

Montgomery, Alabama

The original Confederate capitol as well as the site of early civil rights protests in the 1960s that sparked the larger civil rights movement.

Gettysburg

The site of a famous Civil War battle in southern Pennsylvania. Horwitz visited the battlefield along with other Confederate reenacters to the delight of many tourists.

Kingstree, South Carolina

A town in South Carolina where the statue atop the Confederate memorial looked more like a Union soldier. The town had realized the probably mix-up early on, but had never done anything to change the statue.

Redbone's Saloon

A rough bar in Guthrie, Tennessee, where Horwitz is nearly assaulted.

Memphis, Tennessee

The town where Shelby Foote, noted Civil War expert, lives. Horwitz travels to Memphis to interview Foote.

Themes

The Civil War as a symbol of pride

Many of the southern people interviewed by Horwitz who maintained a connection to the Civil War saw the struggle as a symbol of personal pride that connected them to others in their society. Mike Hawkins, for example, who was a blue-collar worker with family and financial problems was proud to belong to the Sons of Civil War Veterans, where he socialized with professionals and people of other backgrounds. His family connection to the Civil War gave him a sense of pride.

A different kind of symbolism explored by Horwitz is the Civil War's central role in a more general southern pride that is defined by rebelliousness stemming from a feeling of oppression. In Todd County, Kentucky, for example, he found that the Confederacy and the Confederate battle flag had become a popular symbol even though that region of the country had never belonged to the Confederacy. The connection these people had was not necessarily familial, or even connected to the land where they lived. Instead, they used the war as a symbol of the general oppression by the northern states they felt and the perceived threat they felt for a distinctly white southern culture.

The war was also a symbol of pride for northerners like Rob Hodge, who identified with the Confederacy without subscribing to all of the racial and political symbolism that it held for others. For Hodge, the Civil War became a large part of his own personal identity.

The Civil War as a Unifying Experience

Although the Civil War was a division in the country, Horwitz speculates that it may actually have been a unifying force for many Americans. He gives the example of his great grandfather who immigrated from Russia in the late nineteenth century and became fascinated with a book of sketches from the war. Horwitz speculates that for his grandfather and other immigrants from that time, the Civil War was recognized as a distinctly American experience that had consumed the nation. Learning more about it and identifying with it was a way for some people to assimilate into their newly adopted culture. Neither Horwitz nor his father had any family ties to the Civil War, yet they bonded with one another over their mutual fascination with it when Horwitz was a child as well as when he was an adult and his father's interest in the war rekindled.

Horwitz also examines the connections between the Civil War and the civil rights movement that started in Montgomery, Alabama, a town that celebrates its connections to both major events. Monuments to both the Confederacy and the civil rights struggle dot the city, and although interest in the events split largely along racial lines, he sees a kind of shared connection in the memory of them that is encouraging.

Civil Rights and the Civil War

In Alabama, Horwitz is surprised to see the Civil War and the civil rights movement commemorated alongside one another. Towns like Montgomery and Selma were the sites of early protests by blacks agains the oppressive voting laws and segregation found in the south. The protests grew under the leadership of people like Martin Luther King, Jr., leading to national voting reform and the end of official segregation. On the other hand, the Civil War is often portrayed as a fight by the South to defend the institution of slavery. Placing the two historic events together seems an odd connection to make, but it illustrates the complicated past of the south, one that is still playing out, Horwitz explains. Although public schools are no longer officially segregated by race, in fact, many white families send their children to private schools and the public schools are mostly black. Within the schools that are integrated, white and black students segregate themselves into separate groups.

The issue of civil rights is also examined in issue of displaying the rebel flag. The flag is a common symbol of the Confederate south and has come to represent a general rebelliousness among those who feel oppressed by the northern states or who wish to express pride in their southern heritage. In the chapter dedicated to the story of Michael Westerman, the display of the flag is central to the trial of the young back men who chased and then killed him. Westerman had displayed a large rebel flag on the back of his truck, which supposedly led to the decision by a group of black youths to chase after him. In addition to murder, the defendants in the trial were also charged with "civil rights intimidation." The event was portrayed by some as a white person making a protected statement by flying the flag and being intimidated for his free speech by people of a different race. Ironically, what is a symbol to many of the oppression of the civil rights of black people became a central part of the civil rights trial of a black person.

Style

Perspective

Horwitz is an active participant in the events he describes in Confederates in the Attic and he writes from his own personal perspective. Horwitz is a Jewish man whose ancestors were immigrants to America in the late nineteenth century and has no family ties to the Confederacy or the South of the Civil War era. Nevertheless, as a boy during the centennial remembrance of the war in the 1960s, he became fascinated with the war. He put aside his boyhood fascination for a time, but this early fascination gives him an enthusiastic perspective as he sets out to explore the modern opinions about the war through the part of the country where it was mostly fought.

Horwitz is trained as a journalist, but he does not use the journalistic techniques of removing himself from the description of events or trying to present an objective viewpoint. He describes his own actions and reactions as he interacts with people whose viewpoints differ widely from his own. He sometimes even argues with the people he is interviewing, a fact that he includes in his reporting.

Horwitz's perspective changes somewhat over the course of his "campaign" as he becomes more involved with Rob Hodge and his group of re-enactors. He is an outsider at first, but eventually embarks on a whirlwind tour of Civil war sites with Hodge dressed in authentic period Union gear, essentially becoming one of the people he is writing about.

Tone

Horwitz's "campaign" is partly a personal journey and while he does not always maintain an objective viewpoint, he remains mostly respectful of the people he interviews. Even when he is confronted with prejudicial views he does not agree with, he presents his subject's opinions on their own, usually sparing comment. Horwitz's respectful tone sometimes cracks, however, and he actually confronts people. When talking to Walt, the white supremacist who believes Jews are behind a conspiracy to ruin America, Horwitz cannot resist telling Walt that he himself is a Jew. Later, when interviewing the outspoken Alabama teacher Rose Sanders, he disagrees sharply with her characterization of whites and Jews and he describes the argument that ensues.

Horwitz is respectful, but he also notes the absurdity and irony of some of the situations he encounters and sometimes employs simple understatement to create a lightly humorous tone. He reports in a straightforward manner the formation of the "Cats of the Confederacy" club by one of his subjects who has no children to enroll in the Children of the Confederacy group she oversees.

He uses the name of this club for the title of the chapter that describes it. The other chapter titles are also slightly ironic or humorous. "Dying for Dixie," for example,

describes the death of Michael Westerman who was shot while displaying a rebel battle flag. He lived in a county that had never been part of the Confederacy, however, and reportedly just liked the flag because it was red and matched his truck. Other titles are taken from humorous quotations or are puns on popular sayings or titles. Like Horwitz's prose, these titles create a lightly humorous tone throughout the book.

Structure

Confederates in the Attic is a non-fiction book divided into fifteen chapters which are presented in a general chronological order. The book contains some map illustrations with the places visited by Horwitz indicated.

The opening chapter, which shares the title of the book, refers partly to the authors boyhood fascination with the Civil War that led to his decorating the walls of his attic bedroom with a painted mural of the history of the war. The chapter outlines his boyhood and describes his first meeting with Rob Hodge, the re-enactor who helps introduce him to a wider community of Civil War buffs.

Chapters 2 through 14 encompass the author's "campaign" to travel through the South, visiting Civil War sites and interviewing people who were still connected to the war in some way. He divides the campaign by state, and each chapter is named for the state in which the events take place. In addition to the state, Horwitz also adds a title that makes an often humorous reference to the content of the chapter.

The final chapter is called "Strike the Tent." This chapter summarizes the author's conclusions from his "campaign" and describes his reconnection with his father, whose own interest in the Civil War has been rekindled after his retirement.

Quotes

"One hardcore took this method acting to a bizarre extreme. His name was Robert Lee Hodge and the soldiers pointed him out as he ambled toward us. Hodge looked as though he'd stepped from a Civil War tintype: tall, rail thin, with a long pointed beard and a butternut uniform so frayed and filthy that it clung to his lank frame like rages to a scarecrow."
Chap. 1, p. 7

"Historians are fond of saying that the Civil War occurred in 10,00 places. Poke a pin in a map of the South and you're likely to prod loose some battle or skirmish or other tuft of Civil War history."
Chap. 2, p. 18

"As a Civil War bore, I'd arrived in Charleston naively expecting to confront the 1860s at every turn. But climbing off the Beauregard, I quickly saw that the Confederacy represented only a four-year blip in Charleston's long history."
Chap. 3, p. 49

"For the Sons of the Confederate Veterans I'd met in North Carolina, it meant the heritage of their ancestors' valor and sacrifice. For Bud Sharpe, it was the heritage of segregation and its dismantling over the past forty years. Was it possible to honor one heritage without upholding the other?"
Chap. 4, p. 80

"But the Flag Day speeches weren't really about the South, and Michael Westerman had metamorphosed once again from a fallen Confederate patriot to a front-line soldier in a contemporary war, one that pitted decent God-fearing folk against what Michael Hill called 'an out-of-control government and its lawless underclass.'"
Chap. 5, p. 113

"The day before the Wilderness battle, Rob dropped by to lend me some gear: foul-smelling socks that might once have been white but were now splotched amber, a butternut 'trans-Mississippi officer's shell jacket,' gray 'JT Moore' trousers, a 'smooth-side 1858 model' canteen, and a 'tarred federal haversack.' None of this meant anything to me, but I was given to understand that I'd resemble a walking museum piece."
Chap. 6, p. 127

"Foote lit his pipe. I lobbed another one: Why did the South in particular cling to the remembrance of the War? 'It was fought in our own backyard,' he immediately replied, 'or front yard if you will, and you're not apt to forget something that happened on your own property. I was raised in a rough-and-tumble society. I was in a lot of fistfights, maybe fifty in my life. The ones I remember with startling clarity are the ones I lost."
Chap. 7, p. 146

"Spotting a sign for the battlefield, I became suddenly giddy. Like Shelby Foote, I'd always felt drawn to Shiloh, though for me the tug came from childhood fantasy rather than family ties or firsthand visits."
Chap. 8, p. 159

"Backwoods Mississippi, a myth-encrusted badlands for so many Americans, was for me the most familiar ground in the South. As a union organizer in the early 1980s, I'd trolled thousands of miles of Mississippi byways in search of new members."
Chap. 9, p. 190

"Rob donned his customary Confederate rags. We made a strange pair: Johnny Reb and Billy Yank, stuffed into the front seat of my cramped sedan as we pulled into rush-hour traffic on the beltway. Glancing at the commuters in adjoining lanes, with their ties and jackets and stuporous expressions of Monday morning malaise, I felt suddenly giddy and burst out laughing."
Chap. 10, p. 212

"Reaching Atlanta was far easier now than in Sherman's day. Feuled by Georgia's 97-cents-a-gallon gas and unenforced speed limits, I bombed down an interstate that spilled straight into Peachtree Street, the city's main drag. Unlike Sherman, I approached Atlanta with trepidation."
Chap. 11, p. 283

"Heading east from Atlanta, I shadowed Sherman's route as he rampaged toward the sea: reducing homes to charred chimneys known as 'Sherman's sentinels,' twisting railroad track into 'Sherman's neckties,' and sending parties of foragers, called 'bummers,' to pillage the countryside."
Chap. 12, p. 312

"At first glance, driving into Montgomery at dusk, I wondered if the 'We're History' sign was meant to read literally. The downtown office blocks had emptied for the day, leaving Montgomery a virtual ghost town."
Chap. 14, p. 353

"But while my travels had brought me to some understanding of others' obsession, I still felt strangely unable to explain my own."
Chap. 15, p. 386

Topics for Discussion

The Civil War was a divisive event in American history. In what ways does Horwitz think it might also be a unifying event?

Does Horwitz always present an objective viewpoint? Does it matter if he does or not?

Where do civil rights such as freedom of speech clash with remembrance of the Civil War? How does Horwitz treat this subject?

What do you think motivates people like Rob Hodge and Horwitz to become Civil War reenacters? How does Horwitz describe his own involvement?

In what ways are the effects of the Civil War still visible in the South as Horwitz encounters it?

The subtitle to Horwitz's book is "Dispatches from the unfinished civil war." In what ways is the war unfinished?

How does the rebel flag figure into the remembrance of the Civil War? What does it represent to different people?