

Bonds of Union: Religion, Race, and Politics in a Civil War Borderland/ The Rivers Ran Backward: The Civil War and the Remaking of the American Middle Border

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ISSN 0003-4827

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Recommended Citation

Etcheson, Nicole. "Bonds of Union: Religion, Race, and Politics in a Civil War Borderland/The Rivers Ran Backward: The Civil War and the Remaking of the American Middle Border." *The Annals of Iowa* 76 (2017), 121-124.

Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0003-4827.12356>

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A brief concluding chapter nicely recaps the correspondents' stories beyond 1863 and summarizes the importance of the letters in documenting how one set of women "transformed themselves from immigrants to Americans" and how "they progressed from rural poverty to ownership of homes and farms" (167)—a perspective that can sometimes be hard to document.

Bonds of Union: Religion, Race, and Politics in a Civil War Borderland, by Bridget Ford. Civil War America Series. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016. xxiii, 398 pp. Map, notes, bibliography, index. \$45.00 hardcover.

The Rivers Ran Backward: The Civil War and the Remaking of the American Middle Border, by Christopher Phillips. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016. xviii, 460 pp. Notes, bibliography, index. \$34.95 hardcover.

Reviewer Nicole Etcheson is the Alexander M. Bracken Professor of History at Ball State University. She is the author of *A Generation at War: The Civil War Era in a Northern Community* (2011); *Bleeding Kansas: Contested Liberty in the Civil War Era* (2004); and *The Emerging Midwest: Upland Southerners and the Political Culture of the Old Northwest, 1787–1861* (1996).

Does a river divide or unite? In the postrevolutionary period, Congress created territories northwest and southwest of the Ohio River. The Northwest Ordinance forbade slavery, but the peculiar institution flourished south of the river. So it would seem that the river was a border dividing the middle of the country. But migrants from south of the Ohio traveled down the river and settled on its northern banks. Residents on both sides of the river shared many values, including racism. And there was no clear division during the Civil War between Union and Confederate. In the free states, proslavery Copperheads protested the federal government's prosecution of the war while, south of the river, many slaveowners opposed secession, and men from Union slave states fought to suppress the rebellion.

Bridget Ford and Christopher Phillips grapple with these complexities in their respective books. Ford examines Cincinnati and Louisville to understand the Ohio-Kentucky border. Phillips's "Middle Border" includes not just the Ohio River states of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Kentucky but also Kansas and Missouri. Both authors complicate our understanding of the sectional, cultural, and political bonds and divisions in the region.

Ford uses Abraham Lincoln's reference to the "bonds of Union," a phrase with religious as well as political overtones in the mid-1800s, as a springboard to understand the communities north and south of the

Ohio River. Lincoln saw slavery as promoting discord, but Ford emphasizes that residents in the region worked to preserve ties between free and slave states and thus hold the Union together.

In Ford's borderland, religion is as much a divisive issue as slavery. She opens with the "collision" between "supercharged Protestantism" and "Catholic fervor" (3). Among those Protestants were black congregants who formed their own Methodist and Baptist churches. All of these religious groups battled, sometimes literally, for the soul of the west. Anti-Catholic riots took place in both cities. Such conflict is well known, but Ford also details how Protestants and Catholics drew closer. Catholics adopted evangelical oratorical techniques while Protestants, white and black, sought to build architecturally and aesthetically impressive church buildings akin to those that housed Catholic worship. Both Protestants and Catholics valued "novel forms of pious expression" (64) that emphasized personal connections to the divine.

The Ohio River was an imperfect division between slavery and freedom in the antebellum period. Blacks found employment on the river but faced the danger of kidnapping into slavery. Race riots as well as nativist violence convulsed Cincinnati while blacks in Louisville experienced the everyday brutality of slavery along with a spectacular lynching of slaves accused of murder. Despite these realities, African Americans in the region built community, resisted the push for colonization, and protested Ohio's black laws and the federal fugitive slave law. Ohio African Americans even got public funding for schools for black children while Louisville made its public schools tuition free. Blacks used their ties to whites to advance a black agenda. Many blacks worked in personal service as dressmakers, barbers, and hairdressers to white clients who then might attest to black respectability and worthiness to remain in the United States. Outbreaks of violence, such as the 1857 lynching, might encourage emigration, but most free blacks condemned efforts to send them to Liberia and fought the colonization movement that was popular among whites north and south of the river.

Despite Ford's efforts to find links across the river, she concedes that "alienation" surfaced in the Methodist and Baptist schisms of the 1840s (203). These divisions also involved breaks between black and white churches. Ohio became wedded to free soil politics at the same time that Kentucky strengthened its protections for slavery. The Civil War, however, which should represent the highpoint of division, caused Unionists in Cincinnati and Louisville to forge bonds. Protestants and Catholics, blacks and whites, all worked to support the troops. Louisville Unionists even came to accept that emancipation was necessary to preserve the government.

Ford reaches the Civil War only in the final chapters of her book; Christopher Phillips reverses the emphasis, spending only the first few chapters on the antebellum period and the bulk of his book on the Civil War itself. Phillips also acknowledges the many commonalities between the two regions, arguing that they formed a more cohesive whole than postwar memory allowed, but he focuses much more on the internal conflicts within the region.

Phillips shows that the North-South “binary” (9) is a creation of the postwar period. In the antebellum period, midwesterners demonstrated differing varieties of antislavery and proslavery sentiment. To be antislavery was not necessarily to be nonracist or an abolitionist and to be proslavery did not necessarily mean support for secession. The postwar period erased such distinctions in favor of a narrative in which the Loyal North included all the free states, obscuring antiwar and anti-emancipationist sentiment in the Lower North, and the Lost Cause myth of an idyllic plantation society and support for secession took hold even in Unionist slave states such as Kentucky.

Before the war, midwesterners, even those in free states, accommodated slavery through their shared racism, but the crisis decade of the 1850s increased sectionalism. For the war years, Phillips describes the futile efforts at neutrality by the border slave states, the wartime contests for civilian loyalty, the crucial role of emancipation in destroying the prewar accommodation on slavery and race, the guerrilla war and homefront dissent, and the postwar struggle to secure or overturn the results of the war. Throughout this narrative, Phillips pays due attention to the experiences of African Americans and women.

Phillips demonstrates an often masterful combination of synthesis of existing scholarship and extensive primary research. Each chapter begins with a microhistorical piece that examines the experience of a person or place and establishes themes to be pursued in the larger chapter that follows. Some of these smaller set pieces are quite gripping, including the accounts of slaves making salt in Illinois and Kentucky Shakers struggling to deal with first Confederate and then Union occupations.

In covering such a vast amount of material, mistakes are inevitable. Phillips says that the Indiana and Illinois legislatures provided in their state constitutions for allowing unfree labor in those states in violation of the Northwest Ordinance. Both constitutions were written by conventions. Illinois’s 1818 constitution provided for future indentures; Indiana’s 1816 constitution did not. Phillips then says that Indiana’s Supreme Court did not address “involuntary servitude” in its rulings through the 1820s (30, 32). In fact, the Indiana Supreme Court ruled against indentured servitude in the case of *Mary Bateman Clark* in 1821.

(This review is based on an uncorrected advance copy provided by the publisher which also contained a number of infelicitous phrasings that one hopes will be corrected in the final book.)

Phillips overstates when he says that “most historians hold that the Ohio River was a clearly defined and static demographic and political boundary between North and South and, by its distinctive cultures, an extension of the Mason-Dixon Line” (7). There has been too much recent work challenging the Ohio River as a boundary by scholars such as Kim Gruenwald, Stanley Harrold, and others to present that as the consensus of current historians. Their theses require both Ford and Phillips to downplay antebellum conflict. In her introduction, Ford acknowledges Elizabeth R. Varon’s *Disunion: The Coming of the American Civil War, 1789–1859* (2008). Varon analyzed the rhetoric of disunion and its eventually destructive effect. In addition, Stanley Harrold’s recent *Border War: Fighting over Slavery before the Civil War* (2010) illuminates the violent struggle over slavery that often occurred in the same region Ford and Phillips cover. Ford—and Phillips in his early chapters—are more interested in how the Union held together in a border region where freedom and slavery were in constant contact, but Ford’s in-depth analysis nonetheless reveals formidable conflict within each city and between the states on the opposite sides of the river. Both are valuable works. Phillips’s book will clearly be a seminal study of the Midwest during the Civil War and a work that scholars will be turning to—either for enlightenment or to challenge—for a long time.

Following Father Chiniquy: Immigration, Religious Schism, and Social Change in Nineteenth-Century Illinois, by Caroline Brettell. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2015. xvi, 312 pp. Illustrations, tables, notes, bibliography, index. \$40.00 paperback and e-book.

Reviewer Franklin Yoder recently retired as an academic adviser at the University of Iowa. His Ph.D. dissertation (University of Chicago, 1999) was “A Rural Kaleidoscope: Property, Mobility, and Ethnic Diversity in the Middle West.”

In a research field dominated by studies of German, Irish, and other northern European immigrant groups, Caroline Brettell’s examination of a French Canadian settlement in northern Illinois offers a new perspective on nineteenth-century ethnicity and immigration in the Midwest. By bringing the analytical tools of an anthropologist to this work, Brettell adds a layer of complexity that provides a rich and detailed look at this small French immigrant settlement.

Studies of immigration and ethnicity generally focus on groups and pay little attention to specific individuals within those societies. This