

## Rebels on the Border: Civil War, Emancipation, and the Reconstruction of Kentucky and Missouri & The Loyal West: Civil War and Reunion in Middle America

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antislavery with national values, expansion, and promise made a compelling ideology in the Free States that transformed the United States into an antislavery nation in 1860.

Peck's analysis could have been strengthened by explaining more fully his use of the terms *slavery* and *freedom*. The way Peck juxtaposes these terms implies a twenty-first-century meaning that seems to discount the nineteenth-century proslavery view that white slaveowners' political, social, and economic freedom depended on the enslavement of African Americans. Closely related to this issue is Peck's insistence that slavery had been a central political issue for the nation since 1787. It's doubtful that a majority of the people living in the antebellum United States saw it that way. Even Lincoln didn't become motivated by slavery as a political issue until the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854. Lastly, Peck could have benefited from better use of electoral data. His aggregated voting results broken down by geographic region add little to the analysis, a problem that could have been easily addressed by using already existing township- and county-level voting data.

Regardless of these reservations, Peck has provided a useful and interesting framework for understanding antislavery politics in Illinois and in the nation. His argument that Lincoln and the Republicans fused a view of the past with the issues of the present and a vision for the future into a powerful nationalistic antislavery ideology is compelling and insightful. Scholars and students of the Midwest and of the Sectional Crisis will find this book an important addition to the literature on antislavery politics.

*Rebels on the Border: Civil War, Emancipation, and the Reconstruction of Kentucky and Missouri*, by Aaron Astor. *Conflicting Worlds: New Dimensions of the American Civil War*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2012, 2017. viii, 332 pp. Illustrations, maps, tables, notes, bibliography, index. \$35.00 paperback.

*The Loyal West: Civil War and Reunion in Middle America*, by Matthew E. Stanley. Urbana, Champaign, and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2017. xi, 268 pp. Illustrations, maps, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. \$95.00 hardcover, \$24.95 paperback.

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The American Civil War was a many-faceted conflict, but one common thread runs through the various strands of the era's conflict: in an es-

sential way, the Civil War was a clash of identities; it was a struggle to determine exactly what identity the American Republic would assume as it approached its century mark. Would the United States be a republic that was ostensibly dedicated to liberty and equality but also one that sanctioned the brutal institution of chattel slavery? Or would the nation remove the stain of its “original sin” and fully enact the ideals of the Declaration of Independence and Constitution without regard to racial categories? Was the United States a pastoral, ordered, agricultural society? Or should it follow the path already trod by European industrializing powers, even if that meant the eclipse of farming and the rise of commercial values? Complicating such dichotomies was the mix of local and regional identities swirling within nineteenth-century American political culture: Northern, Southern, and – by the 1840s – western.

Some of the most interesting recent scholarship on the Civil War era—including the two volumes under review here—focuses on this newer but still vigorously asserted “western” identity. Primarily encompassing the region that we now call the Midwest, westerners of the Civil War era cultivated an identity that blended Northern and Southern folkways but also sought to transcend that older cultural dichotomy. The northern tiers of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and even Iowa were settled by migrants from the New England/upstate New York cultural hearth, but the southern portions of these newer states drew their white populations from the upper South—primarily Virginia, Tennessee, and Kentucky. These dual migratory strands, as Matthew Stanley argues for the Ohio valley, were the root of “an accommodationist western identity—one rooted in political moderation, cultural centrism, and racial apartheid” (Stanley, 36). Aaron Astor asserts that a similar dynamic prevailed in Kentucky and Missouri, although they were also categorized as “Southern” and were slaveholding states; they had a “political culture . . . [that] embraced pragmatism over ideological inflexibility, tradition over revolutionary cant, and social diversity over plantation monoculture” (Astor, 244).

But the center could not hold. By the 1850s, the region was a microcosm of the larger clash of identities and allegiances that was tearing the American Union apart by the end of the decade. During the war years (1861–1865), southern Ohio and Indiana and northern Kentucky and Missouri were regions of complicated and competing loyalties. Allegiances to the Union and Confederacy, respectively, were not so clear-cut in this middle ground. The particularities of western identity persisted into the postwar years, too, as westerners sought to shape the memory and narrative of their home’s role in the conflict and its aftermath. Where both of these volumes excel is in providing an anal-

ysis that doesn't stop at 1865, as do so many treatments of identity and political culture in the Civil War era, but rather extends into the latter decades of the century. Both books draw revealing conclusions that add to our understanding of the Civil War and Reconstruction years in all their complexity.

Aaron Astor's *Rebels on the Border* is an intensive study of selected counties in Kentucky and Missouri. His methodological discussion and evidence support his contention that those areas were both representative and trendsetting for those states as a whole. Astor sees this region as one neglected by much of the historiography for this period, which he contends often oversimplifies the sectional crisis as the industrial North versus the plantation South. The border region Astor examines, though, is a remarkably diverse and complex society: slaveholders with strong economic ties to the free-labor North across the Ohio River; the predominance of small farmers rather than landed gentry; and diversified agricultural output as opposed to the monoculture of the Cotton South. This kaleidoscopic character meant that the region's citizens eschewed what they saw as the dangerous extremes of both abolitionism and fire-eating secessionism. But, as Astor notes, it wasn't just the allegiances and worldviews of whites that mattered here; enslaved people who then became freedmen and freedwomen were important political agents as well. Following Stephen Hahn's work (particularly *A Nation Under Our Feet*), Astor looks at politics as a set of interlocking processes that occur in both formal (elections, legislative votes) and informal (collective struggles over power and claims to civil rights) ways. The political agency of the region's African American population was latent but still feared by the region's whites during the prewar years; being adjacent to the Free Soil North meant that the slaves of Kentucky and Missouri were automatically suspected of insurrectionary—even revolutionary—leanings. That anxiety over control, Astor argues, manifested itself during the Civil War as whites struggled to come to terms with blacks' pro-Unionism. It was also at the root of the white-supremacist revanchism embraced by the region's white population during Reconstruction. Even those who had been Unionists before the war (a fair number, according to Astor's study) saw emancipation and black military service as the destruction of their (particularly conceived) Union and thus moved quickly into the ranks of the Lost Cause rejection of the Union victory and what it was supposed to have meant in the immediate aftermath of the war. Conflict before and during the war in Kentucky and Missouri did not pit the advocates of free labor and slavery against one another but rather two subsets of proslavery Americans; the assurance of white supremacy via the subjugation of

blacks was never an open question for them. Astor's conclusion here is an important one, as we see that even such potent forces as reconciliation and nationalism could not overcome the deep-seated racialized—and racist—ideologies of the border's white population.

Matthew Stanley's examination of the West north of the Ohio River complements Astor's analysis and, in significant ways, affirms its conclusions. The creation of a "Loyal Western" identity by whites in "middle America" was also predicated on the region's self-conscious antipathy towards "extremism" of both the far Northern and deep Southern varieties. During the war, Unionism in this area was "loyal" in only the conditional sense; it was a deeply conservative stripe and vehemently anti-emancipation in its nature. While the Ohio River was in one sense "the boundary between contending nations," it was also the area "where treason and loyalty overlap" (32, 56). The dissenting Copperhead movement drew its main strength from the southern tier of the "loyal West," underscoring just how contingent the conservative Unionism of the West was. No factor was more decisive in creating that contingent character than race. Stanley expertly demonstrates how emancipation and the postwar struggles over the precise meanings of freedom and equality ultimately made white political culture in "middle America" as anti-Reconstruction and pro-segregation as one might have found in the South. The war, this ideology stipulated, had been fought only to preserve the Union, not to advance a radical agenda of black equality. Emancipation unleashed forces with which western whites did not want to engage. "The Union as it was" became the rallying cry of a renascent conservatism after war's end, a phenomenon that Stanley rightly argues lay under much of the North's eventual retreat from Reconstruction. It is in this process, as it unfolded across the late 1800s, that we find Union veterans' strongly worded disavowals of fighting for anything that smacked of racial equality, military reunions that explicitly barred African American veterans, and an overweening emphasis on sectional reconciliation—which was only possible through an implicit agreement among whites to deny emancipation and black civil rights their rightful place in American society (164-71).

Aaron Astor and Matthew Stanley have each given us well-researched, richly nuanced books that challenge us to reexamine our conceptions not just of the Civil War but of such larger historical themes as liberty, Union, and the nature of U.S. citizenship. Readers of this journal will appreciate the authors' well-supported contention that the Middle West, in all its complexity, is an essential part of our understanding of this complicated and crucial epoch of U.S. history.