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Review of *The Loyal West: Civil War and Reunion in Middle America* by Matthew E. Stanley

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## BOOK FORUM

By M. Keith Harris, Anne E. Marshall, James Marten,  
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Matthew E. Stanley, *The Loyal West: Civil War and  
Reunion in Middle America*

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Interest in Civil War memory and post–Civil War sectional reconciliation has expanded greatly in recent years, as two 2016 historiographical essays attest.<sup>1</sup> Matthew E. Stanley’s new book, *The Loyal West: Civil War and Reunion in Middle America* is thus well timed to make an important contribution to our evolving understanding of the process of sectional reconciliation in the decades following the Civil War. With his focus on Kentucky’s northern neighbors in the lower portions of Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio, the editorial staff of the *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* believe Stanley’s book will help historians better understand the role Kentucky played in the events of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, which saw a white supremacist version of Civil War memory eclipse an emancipationist version nationally.

We have asked four nineteenth-century historians to consider Stanley’s book from varying perspectives. M. Keith Harris teaches history at a private high school in Los Angeles, California. He is the author of *Across the Bloody Chasm: The Culture of Commemoration among Civil War Veterans* (2014) and is currently writing a book on D. W. Griffith’s controversial 1915 silent film, *The Birth of a Nation*. Anne E. Marshall is an associate professor of history at Mississippi State University and the author of *Creating a Confederate Kentucky: The Lost Cause and Civil War Memory in a Border State* (2012). James

<sup>1</sup> Nina Silber, “Reunion and Reconciliation, Reviewed and Reconsidered,” *Journal of American History* 103 (June 2016): 59–83; Robert Cook, “The Quarrel Forgotten?: Toward a Clearer Understanding of Sectional Reconciliation,” *Journal of the Civil War Era* 6 (Sept. 2016): 413–36.

Marten is professor and chair of the history department at Marquette University. His most recent books are *Sing Not War: The Lives of Union and Confederate Veterans in Gilded Age America* (2011) and *America's Corporal: James Tanner in War and Peace* (2014). Kristopher Maulden is a visiting assistant professor of history at Columbia College in Missouri. He is completing a book manuscript on the influence of Federalist politics and federal policy in the Ohio River Valley, and he is engaged in a study of nineteenth-century Ohio newspaper editor Charles Hammond. Finally, the author of *The Loyal West*, Matthew E. Stanley, assistant professor of history at Albany State University, will respond to the reviews.

### **M. Keith Harris**

In *The Loyal West*, historian Matthew E. Stanley invites his readers to consider sectionalism in Civil War–era Middle America beyond conventional North-South binaries. In so doing, Stanley recalls the words of an Indiana man, who recognized the region as existing “between two fires.” The Hoosier in question described a section where conflict was both *among* regions and *within* sections: between northern and southern interests, between Yankee and Tidewater lineages, and between abolitionist and secessionist politics. The narrative of the so-called Loyal West was both anti-rebel and anti-eastern and, as Stanley suggests, proved a means of “reconciling antebellum regionalism with postwar sectionalism, balancing the revolutionary aspects of emancipation and the Union Cause with the political and cultural conservatism of the white rural Middle West” (p. 6).

Identity studies, be they regional or otherwise, should be steeped in nuance. As such this book is a successful effort—not as an endeavor to “complicate” an unsophisticated Blue-Gray story but rather to acknowledge and understand the people of a particular loyal region on their own terms, as a people who identified outside of that story. Stanley suggests that observations concerning Civil War sectionalism tend to travel down familiar paths, with emphasis on the East. Most recently he notes that scholarship on postwar memory, and especially on veterans’ commemorative efforts, leans heavily on sectional conten-

tions concerning the “northern” or “Unionist” emancipationist cause. My own work on Union and Confederate veterans at least partially follows suit. Guilty as charged.

And so I read this book with particular interest, finding it a valuable corrective to a body of scholarship that began to emerge several years ago in response to David W. Blight’s influential but flawed *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (2001). Several of us took Blight to task for defining Civil War memory as an agreement between white supremacists and reconciliationists to write the emancipationist cause out of the memory of the war. As Blight argued, they conceived of a Civil War memory “on southern terms” (Blight, p. 2). Speaking for myself alone, I got so involved in pointing out what Blight (and his band of devotees) missed, that I crafted a somewhat flawed study of my own: northerners, puffed up with a spirit of moralizing self-righteousness, embraced emancipation as a cause worth celebrating in the wake of war.

Contrasting this idea is where Stanley’s work shines most brightly. He does not suggest that legions of veterans in the northern United States ignored the emancipationist cause. Nor does he argue that celebration of emancipation was not as significant a component of postwar commemorative efforts. Rather, he makes clear distinctions between Union veterans, so as not to distill them into a singular northern (read: Yankee) identity. Stanley’s middle westerners were loyal Unionists to be sure, but these were no garden-variety Yankees by any stretch of the imagination. On the contrary, middle westerners derisively associated northern or northeastern Yankees with radical abolitionism.

This makes a world of sense in Stanley’s story. Migrants to the area during the early national period had ancestral ties to the slaveholding South. They built the foundation for white supremacy in the tradition of Jacksonian democracy, which disdained the elitism of northern racial radicalism as well as the southern planter elite, the two extremes that had torn the nation asunder. But westerners were not all cut from the same cloth. Those who would impose a Yankee antislavery vision in border states such as Kentucky, “Confederatized” by conservative

Unionists, would shatter regional loyalties, thus separating the West along the lines of the Ohio River.

Conservatism flourished in the lower Middle West among Unionists who worked diligently to contain the racial radicalism that had channeled the war into an antislavery crusade. And it is this persistent opposition to emancipation that scholars of the region have all but overlooked. Copperheads, vehement anti-emancipation and antiwar conservative Democrats, further destabilized regional identity. Though their presence eroded late in the war, their rhetoric translated well into postwar conflicts over liberal racial policies, Reconstruction, and a persistent populist disdain for monied elitism. Most saliently, lower middle westerners remained committed to illiberal ideologies of race. They enforced a “new white supremacy” to oppose black migration and any semblance of civil rights.

In the postwar lower Middle West, veterans “remained adamant that restoration of the Union was their primary war aim and defined themselves against both former Confederates and their Yankee counterparts” (p. 9). Veterans were certainly happy with victory, provided that celebrations of said victory eschewed the emancipationist cause. They seldom acknowledged black participation in the war and likewise rarely included emancipation in Union commemoration. Further, and not surprisingly, as racial equality was not part of their postwar society, the lower Middle West veterans generally endorsed reunification with their former enemies.

Though they were the first to reconcile, owing to the bonds shared between lower middle westerners and southerners, the “Loyal Western ethos” did not reunite the nation alone. Rather, a “national détente campaign” in the East, which culminated in the 1913 Blue-Gray reunion at Gettysburg, undercut the provincial western story (p. 9). There were, of course, closely related themes between western commemoration and that particular 1913 Blue-Gray reunion in the East. Namely, that the fight to end slavery did not figure centrally in the Civil War narrative as described by the reunion speakers. At Gettysburg, speakers largely ignored the issue, and in the Ohio Valley,

veterans would likely point out that the fight was for Union alone, thus implicitly dismissing slavery as a cause. By Stanley's estimation, the Loyal West narrative was more conducive to sectional reconciliation. Lower middle westerners shared western identity with former Confederates in Kentucky. While the lower Middle West was the last region to break along section lines (the Ohio River) so it was the first to seek to bridge the divide. In essence, they were all "westerners" again.

Stanley paints a very convincing portrait of the Middle West. Using vast testimony from printed sources and first-hand accounts, Stanley describes a region tense with discord and contention, but at the same time holding true to a western ethos with bonds beyond Civil War-era sectionalism. The Loyal West, as Stanley describes, was a region where sectional reconciliation and sectional discord existed simultaneously.

My nit to pick is minor in the scheme of this particular work. However, since Stanley's observations of postwar commemoration in the East run alongside the western story, and indeed make the occasional appearance, I would have found more than a "national détente campaign" that hit home at Gettysburg useful. Much like in the West that Stanley so engagingly depicts, the East was fraught with contention . . . even as they waged a "national" effort to reconcile. But I will just leave that as food for thought. There are few things more irritating in this line of work than a reviewer prattling on endlessly about something beyond the realm of an author's central topic. All said and done, Stanley offers a compelling and valuable study.

### **Anne E. Marshall**

Matthew Stanley's *The Loyal West: Civil War and Reunion in Middle America* successfully undermines traditional notions of geographical and sectional identity and loyalty in America's heartland during the Civil War era. Historians, textbooks, and classroom maps typically paint wartime loyalties in three literal and metaphorical hues: one for the northern states, one for the Confederate states, and another for the border states of Missouri, Kentucky, Maryland, and Delaware.

Stanley's work, however, joins that of Christopher Phillips, Bridget Ford, and others in showing that these color-coded delineations fail to reflect the sentiments and loyalties of people in the Middle West during the Civil War era accurately or completely. He argues, moreover, that these sectional definitions were largely postwar constructions of Americans, including middle westerners (the inhabitants of the southern halves of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois) who created a narrative of a solidly loyal United States above the Ohio River and a disloyal one below it. At the same time, middle westerners carved out a particular Civil War memory and identity for themselves as "loyal westerners," distinct from eastern Unionists by virtue of their conservative politics, racial attitudes, and a stubborn adherence to a Jeffersonian yeoman vision of America.

While scholars such as Aaron Astor, Luke Harlow, and I have attempted to explain how slaveholding border states like Kentucky and Missouri seemed to defy a Union/Confederate binary with their latter-day embrace of the Lost Cause, Stanley very effectively challenges the idea of the binary itself. He argues that from the time of its antebellum settlement, the Middle West was sectionalized between the Ohio Valley and the Great Lakes regions. The former tended to be populated by southerners who brought with them their conservative racial and political culture, while the latter was a destination for migrants from the Northeast who were more likely to be pro-Whig and antislavery.

White inhabitants of the lower Middle West shared both a regional and racial identity with inhabitants of the Upper South. While few wished to live within a slave economy themselves, they were tolerant of southern slavery and recognized that the end of the peculiar institution would threaten the whiteness of their own region. At the outbreak of the war, argues Stanley, many middle westerners had trouble seeing themselves as compatriots of northerners and imagined for themselves instead a breakaway Confederacy of sorts, comprised of conservative Unionist Kentuckians and lower middle westerners. This imagined alliance began to dissipate over the course of the war, how-

ever, as middle westerners were repulsed by their exposure to both the southern slave system and the degraded social and economic world it created. They also deeply resented the increasingly treasonous and disloyal attitudes displayed by white border southerners, particularly the Kentuckians to whom they had been tied by affinity and kinship.

Middle westerners were by no means quick to embrace the challenge to slavery that became key to the Union war effort. Most were vehemently opposed to emancipation and black enlistment, and these measures even caused some to desert the army. Stanley also ably surveys the variety of wartime sympathies middle westerners held. His discussion of the extent and limits of the Butternut ethos and Copperheadism is particularly insightful. He argues, however, that most middle westerners' eventual acceptance of black emancipation and enlistment as a necessity for military victory helped create a "flexible Conservative Unionism in the Middle West" (p. 77). Most white Kentuckians did not come to accept these measures and became increasingly hostile to the Federal cause, a divergence that led to a reconfiguration of geographical ties in the Ohio Valley. A more thorough discussion of the material reasons which also underlay this ideological split between residents of free and non-free states would have been helpful here, but Stanley's argument is convincing. "Formerly a symbol of regional unity and national promise," he contends, "the Ohio River was in the process of becoming a metaphorical partition not simply between North and South. Sectionalism trumped western bonds as the war and its policies drove a figurative wedge between Kentucky and the Middle West, and a true border war emerged only after the connection between slavery, treason, and social stagnation gained widespread currency, rendering the enemy a cultural anti-being" (p. 53).

In the book's second half, Stanley marshals an impressive array of evidence to demonstrate how middle westerners hewed to their racist prerogatives and eschewed reconstruction policies that promoted racial equality or integration. The region became the epicenter of Liberal Republicanism in the early 1870s, a movement that

embodied their political views of opposition to black equality and federal Reconstruction. But it was through their memorial culture, Stanley argues, that middle westerners truly distinguished themselves. Rather than adopting a broadly nationalistic Unionist memory, they constructed a third category, the “Loyal Westerner,” by which they asserted their political and cultural distinctiveness. This narrative “touted conservative war aims and racial exclusion and emphasized differences between eastern and western soldiers,” existing in stark contrast to the latter-day Confederate memory that white Kentuckians developed (p. 132). This particular brand of conservative Union memory, Stanley contends, allowed for middle western veterans to reconcile with those in the former slaveholding states earlier than northeastern veterans and civilians. By the late nineteenth century, the Ohio River was less a dividing line and once more the “cultural connector” it had been before the war. The culture that was being connected was based on the same values people in the Middle West had shared with the border South before the war: a commitment to white supremacy and conservative politics (p. 167).

Even with the great proliferation of national and state studies of historical memory in recent years, *The Loyal West* makes a number of new and fresh contributions. In particular, Stanley’s nuanced and sophisticated understanding of the difference between regionalism and sectionalism, and the shifts in both over the course of the Civil War and Reconstruction, is revelatory. Also spot on is his insistence that current historiographical debates over the degree to which northerners and southerners reconciled or reunited with one another inadequately treat regional differences within sections, and in doing so, miss the full range of messages, motivations, and political utility of postwar memory.

At a time when many Americans are examining with fresh urgency why the construction of Civil War memory matters today, these differences matter. As Stanley states, “one cannot comprehend the postwar creation of the Midwest, its racial legacies, its class structures, or its political trends—the petit bourgeois tendency toward racialized

populism running from Stephen Douglas to Donald Trump—without first understanding the conservative Unionism of the war era and the ‘third way’ of memory it generated” (p. 10). His excellent book helps readers do just that.

### **James Marten**

Matthew E. Stanley effectively captures nineteenth-century mid-westerners’ sense of being outside the American mainstream, forcefully arguing that this “otherness” contributed to a unique political perspective that shaped the region’s response to the Civil War and its aftermath. Residents of this border region resisted sectionalism until the very end, when secession suddenly created a bright line between loyalty and treason that immediately divided the border West into the loyal (southern Indiana, Ohio, and Illinois) and the disloyal (Kentucky).

Once the war started, men north of the Ohio River continued to perceive differences between themselves and their fellow northerners. Soldiers insisted during and after the war that while eastern armies showed more spit and polish and discipline, westerners displayed greater independence and fighting spirit. Indeed, western veterans would insist that they had, under the command of western-born generals, basically won the war by conquering the Mississippi Valley in 1863 and the Confederate heartland in 1864 and 1865. As soldiers and as veterans, they also emphasized loyalty to the Union rather than opposition to slavery as their primary motivation for fighting and commemorating their victory. Emancipation was something they came to tolerate without approving of it.

Veterans and politicians in the Loyal West pioneered the reunion of the North and South, but less out of a sense of shared valor and hardship (the standard narrative) and more out of a reimagined sectional identity. It seems that it was easier for border Union veterans in this area to reconcile with Confederate veterans than it was to reconcile themselves with the many changes the war had wrought. Reconstruction—especially the racial policies that led to the Fourteenth and

Fifteenth Amendments—almost immediately threw western veterans on both sides together. The reconciliationist impulse may have been stronger in the Loyal West than in other parts of the North because there was more at stake and because the men who had fought for and against the Union actually shared the same cultural vantage points. Moreover, the economic, cultural, and political changes that occurred throughout the Gilded Age jeopardized those old values. “Fear of abolitionist and fire-eating zealotry,” which unified pre-war loyal westerners, had by the 1880s and 1890s “metamorphosed into fear of racial, economic, and foreign radicalism,” giving the old soldiers even more in common with one another (p. 168).

Although many other people are included in the narrative besides veterans, the fact that Stanley takes a longitudinal look at the values and politics of the region—stretching from the pre-war era into the early twentieth century—provides one of the best efforts to date of identifying the motivations of Union soldiers before, during, and after the war. This is also an extraordinarily useful analysis of the purpose and underlying politics of Blue-Gray reunions, which were pioneered in the West and, probably more than in any other part of the Union, truly reflected deep-seated political, social, and economic realities.

Much has been said in writing and at conferences about the “dark turn” in veterans’ studies: the notion that a significant portion of Union veterans came out of the war disaffected, damaged, and demoralized. Stanley ignores that possibility; the veterans in this book are active, engaged, and almost seemed to be relieved to be able to go back to their former identities. The dark turn, if there is one, is created by our own perceptions of the dynamic racism that provided the continuity in their lives and in the politics and culture of the Loyal West.

I have one quibble with the author’s arguments. Although Stanley suggests that the veterans in the Loyal West were somehow different from veterans elsewhere, it seems to me that they resided solidly on the spectrum of political opinions of veterans throughout the North. Individual veterans, and a few chapters of the Grand Army

of the Republic (GAR) and other veterans' organizations, may have celebrated emancipation as *the* notable result of the war, but veterans overwhelmingly commemorated restoration of the Union as their paramount accomplishment. Veterans in the East formed local, state, and service-specific organizations, too, and many eastern GAR and United Confederate Veteran (UCV) posts (or their predecessors) extended olive branches in the form of joint reunions and returned battle flags. The veterans in the Loyal West simply seem to be exaggerated versions of Union veterans as a whole, most of whom—at least through their GAR representatives—expressed by the end of the century the “ultraconservative patriotism” Stanley finds in the West (p. 159).

Although it risks asking the author to have written a different book, I do have a short list of questions and topics that might have improved what is already a very good book. I would have liked to have seen something about the many Union veterans from the East who migrated to the West, and about westerners who served in the Army of the Potomac. It would also have been fascinating to explore how the pension issue played out in this corner of the Union. Nationally, pensions became highly politicized, with the Democratic Party, especially after the 1880s, taking every opportunity to criticize not only the expensive pension system and the allegedly corrupt Pension Bureau, but also the veterans who seemed to be constantly lobbying for pension increases. With so many veterans in the Loyal West voting Democratic, I would have liked to have seen how the local party leaders and veterans reconciled themselves to that potentially divisive issue. I also wonder whether East-West differences emerged at national GAR encampments, or in discussions about the pension, history textbooks, and other prominent GAR issues. I am not aware of any—although it seems to me that the competing narratives of which theater was most important in winning the war could have inspired a lively debate over coverage in schoolbooks—but then I have never looked. Finally, there could have been much more on Confederate veterans, especially the UCV, which was entering its

heyday in the late 1890s. The latter chapters of the book provide a perfect set-up for such a discussion, and a more complete look at the “gray” side of the Blue-Gray reunions would have strengthened the book’s larger argument.

In the “Loyal West” and throughout the country, Civil War veterans remained rooted in the past—at least politically—while the rest of the country moved on. In capturing the separateness of this region from the rest of the North, Stanley has also integrated veterans imaginatively and thoroughly into their political and cultural milieus.

### **Kristopher Maulden**

In *The Loyal West*, Matthew Stanley of Albany State University seeks to reassert a discrete western identity as a balance and complement to the standard North-South binary often attached to the sectional crisis and Civil War. Relying on newspapers, speeches, organization records, and a wealth of secondary sources, Stanley focuses on the lower Middle West, broadly defined as the southern geographic half of Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio. As a “nominally free expanse dominated by upland Southern political culture,” it was a counterbalance to the influence of foreigners and New Englanders filling the northern halves of these states by the mid-1800s (p. 4). The region was also home to what he terms conservative Unionism, which embraced at various turns popular sovereignty, preserving the Union and republic (but not advancing African American rights), and finally reconciliation with the border South to forge a new midwestern identity. These conservative Unionists ultimately preferred a “social conservatism and racialized populism” that centered upon antipathy to government authority and economic elites, individualism and local autonomy, and support for white supremacy (p. 10).

Stanley presents his case through seven chapters that organize roughly into three sections. Chapters one and two focus on the lower Middle West before the outbreak of the Civil War, with chapter one concerned with white settlement in the region and the culture that these settlers brought with them and chapter two a meditation on the

election of 1860 and outbreak of the Civil War in the lower Middle West. Here, he argues the sectional crisis arrived late but with great fury in many communities along the Ohio River in 1860–1861 and sympathies for the Confederacy intensified closer to the Ohio River. The second section, chapters three through five, discusses the Civil War and Reconstruction. While chapter three argues that emancipation and liberalizing measures for African Americans provoked resistance among conservative Unionists and led to mass desertions from the Union army in 1863, chapter four notes that dissent against the Union cause became less acceptable by 1864 and “Western identity was altered and repressed” in the face of the nationalizing and radicalizing influences of the war (p. 97). Conservative Unionists went on to lead the charge against Radical Reconstruction in favor of racial conservatism, sectional reunion measures, and opposition to big business interests. In the final section, chapters six and seven, Stanley focused on collective memory of the war and its participants, especially the Grand Army of the Republic and its support of the Loyal West narrative, which focused exclusively on national union and support for the Constitution. Downplaying emancipation helped to express new anxieties over black advancement, industrialization and urbanization, immigration, political radicalism, and others, and these issues also created a greater affinity for the border South by the end of the nineteenth century. Finally, these common concerns formed the basis for a midwestern identity built upon antebellum western identities that the war had torn asunder.

In *The Loyal West*, Stanley has offered an ambitious argument that seeks to redefine western identity, imaginations of political and cultural space in the nineteenth-century Midwest, and the dynamics of sectionalism. In the first part of the book, he lays the foundation for his argument on an interpretation of the lower Middle West during the white-settlement and antebellum periods in the Old Northwest that serves his purposes well. Since this period is not the focus of his argument, he leans much more heavily on secondary sources here than he does later. His reading is sound, too, with his arguments

showing an insightful understanding of the current historiography about the lower Middle West.

Stanley also does well to strike a balance between local and national issues. Especially in his writing about the sectional crisis and the election of 1860, he maintains local nuance in a period when national politics tend to receive much more attention. In the lower Middle West, voters largely preferred a moderate approach to slavery and chose Stephen Douglas or John Bell in large numbers, but Stanley also discusses the election in regional terms. The lower Middle West was “ensnared between the proslavery Border South and the reformist Middle West,” and they saw the election as neither “a sectional mandate” nor an “assurance of war” (p. 42). As often can be the case in any election, too, locals sometimes voted for president based on local interests. Rebukes or approval for local party operations or candidates could come via presidential ballots, while others voted on issues other than slavery and sectional strife. Keeping that local orientation in his arguments is commendable, and it attests to the great care taken in researching and writing *The Loyal West*.

That said, Stanley’s claim that the upland southerners who populated the lower Middle West largely imported southern culture begs many questions. His argument, reminiscent of “germ theory” claims made by David Hackett Fischer in *Albion’s Seed* (1989), overlooks many concerns with such an approach. Germ-theory arguments tend to obscure contributions and perspectives of other residents, and migration patterns into the region complicate a germ-theory approach to the lower Middle West. In southeastern Ohio, for example, New England Federalists led the way in white settlement, and migrants from New Jersey oversaw settlement of Cincinnati and Dayton. Further, numerous other factors that have clear consequences for societies receive little-to-no attention. Environment is one such factor, as in Illinois especially and Indiana to a lesser extent, the lower Middle West identified by Stanley roughly coincides with a geographic shift. With richer soil and flat prairies to the north, the lower Middle West contained more hills and less-rewarding farmland. When examining

land usage or settlement patterns, these sorts of environmental differences doubtlessly had an effect in the lower Middle West, but no such discussion appears here.

Also, relying on secondary sources in the first part of *The Loyal West* weakens the argument somewhat, as broader claims in the early chapters could be improved by primary sources. Stanley's arguments about the centrality of white supremacy in the early nineteenth century reflect well the observations made by an English immigrant to southeastern Illinois, Morris Birkbeck, who noted that racial attitudes shifted not only in "the states alone where slavery is established by law . . . the bitter inheritance of former injustice exists in all" and left "the free people of colour, degraded in public opinion."<sup>2</sup> Using Birkbeck or similar sources would have made a stronger case. In addition, claims about lower middle westerners preferring southern political attitudes could have been backed up more effectively with state and congressional voting records. How representatives from southern Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio compared in their votes on issues like internal improvements and central banks could reveal (or militate against) claims about lower middle westerners being more hostile to commercialism than residents farther north. Legislative records could also aid arguments about racial attitudes, as numerous resolutions about slavery and African American rights appeared before the Illinois General Assembly in the 1830s and 1840s. Quantifying these votes by region—something that would have been well in keeping with other parts of the book—would be revelatory, but no such evidence is presented here. These concerns may be a call for further research by Stanley or others, but the lack of such evidence weakens the arguments made early in this book.

Despite these concerns, Matthew Stanley makes an ambitious and largely successful argument about the importance of white supremacy to the lower Middle West's identity and politics, and it speaks to an essential truth of the region's history. From the racial attitudes noted by Birkbeck through the virulent opposition to emancipation in

<sup>2</sup> Morris Birkbeck, *Letters from Illinois* (London, 1818), 71.

the region during the Civil War and on to sundown towns and race riots in the early twentieth century, Stanley correctly observes a clear continuity in this region's history that deserved coverage. *The Loyal West* is also an excellent example of studying political and cultural space in regional history, and he argues effectively for including the western voice in the sectional crisis and the remembrance of the Civil War. As a result, *The Loyal West* deserves to be required reading for scholars of midwestern history, nineteenth-century politics, and collective memory.

**Author's Response: Matthew E. Stanley**

First of all, I would like to thank both the *Register* and the panel of reviewers for this opportunity. *The Loyal West* would not have been possible without the interrelated works by these and other scholars (far too many to name here). I am honored to be a part of the vital and ongoing conversation about the meaning of the Civil War and the social dynamics of its memory, especially in the Ohio River Valley—a region as fascinating and complicated as America itself.

I set out with this research project to explore the relationship between the collective memory of the Civil War and political change and social policy in the Ohio River Valley during Reconstruction and the Gilded Age. It turns out that such an exploration requires a thorough understanding of antebellum social dynamics and their impact on identity, or what James Marten refers to in his review as a “longitudinal look at the values and politics of the region.” Working backward, I learned that said memory was rooted in how the West, a nebulous but imaginatively unified antebellum region, underwent a political fracture during the sectional conflict. That division—which centered on slavery, secession, and, perhaps most importantly, responses to emancipation and the enlistment of black soldiers—profoundly shaped the region's collective memory and identity: the “Confederatization” of Kentucky and what would become the “loyal” Midwest. As M. Keith Harris recognizes, this western understanding of sectionalization and popular memory served as a slight

corrective to not only David Blight's thesis but also his model. Yet, just as many antebellum middle westerners felt pinched between the Slave Power in the South and the Money Power in the North, many middle western veterans after the war continued to feel marginalized between the nascent Lost Cause and "Yankee" war narratives centered more on emancipation, the Army of the Potomac, and the Eastern Theater. Many felt they were in danger of being written out of the war, and they expressed their discontent and marginalization in not only hyper-racialized ways but also in regional ones.

In other words, the Civil War was indeed an outgrowth of sectionalism, as the traditional North-South narratives argue. But, as the works of Christopher Phillips, Anne Marshall, and other border scholars have demonstrated, for many Americans, especially those living in what Edward Conrad Smith originally called the "borderland," the war also *created* sectionalism, and sectional identities were imposed or adopted during and after the fact. That creation and adoption of sectionalism, along with the retention and residue of regionalism, shaped the lower Middle West in singular ways, combining new conceptions of nation and region with long-standing attitudes regarding "whites only" space in a society of racial capitalism. This mix of ethnic nationalism and racial separation materialized in everything from bourgeois civic culture and veterans' reunions to electioneering and how elites strategized against political opposition or labor organization. But it was most evident and most pernicious in the hierarchies created by the production of whiteness and in the region's enduring efforts to re-encode formal, state-sanctioned racial aversion through local expulsions, pogroms, lynchings, sundown towns, and residential segregation patterns. Sectional-regional tension also informed the identity and idealization of the developing Midwest as a new region that, unlike the South, was modern and loyal and intrinsic to the nation-state, and, unlike the East, was also unburdened by outmoded gentility and spatial and social limitations.

As Marshall points out, I do indeed think this process of collective memory and regional self-definition has contemporary implications

in the realms of racial identity, class, and politics. Debates over Confederate monument removal have stirred Louisville and Lexington in Kentucky, which was not even a Confederate state. And, as evidenced by the recent presidential election, we continue to see patterns of how elites create and wield racist discourses for material and political gain; how racism feeds off of (both perceived and real) cultural marginalization and economic insecurity; and how racialized populism and the grievance politics of white, petit bourgeois “forgotten Americans” in the Midwest still hold sway.

But my effort in communicating this story was not without shortcomings in both evidence and analysis. In fact, there seems to be general agreement among the reviewers that my survey of the Jacksonian period and its succeeding years in southern Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois is the book’s weakest component. This criticism is, I think, entirely fair. Most removed chronologically from my initial interest of veterans, reunion, and memory, the book’s first chapter relies heavily on secondary literature and the narrative is quite historiographic—perhaps too much so. And though I argue that collective memory is material in the sense that it is rooted in social conditions generated by labor, production, wealth, and power, my analysis of materiality as it applies to the antebellum period also perhaps falls short, as Marshall observes. I also fully expected to draw criticism for the book’s paucity of environmental analysis and how land usage related to different patterns of settlement, wealth, and politics within the Middle West. Kristopher Maulden is correct in highlighting my neglect of this crucial point. Just as problematically, the book’s early section does indeed neglect the role of cities (and eastern settlers within them) as regional spearheads, as Maulden rightly identifies. Indeed, the majority of my story speaks to the small town and rural lower Middle West, with upland southerners and their lineages at the center.

That said, I do not wish to overstate my assertions about cultural retention. Upland southerners *were* in many ways vessels of southern culture, to be sure. But they *were not* southerners, nor were their po-

litical predilections immutable. Lower middle western conceptions of whiteness were formed by distinct experiences of settler colonialism and racial exclusion, the removal of and separation from both Native American and black antitheticals. Similarly, lower middle western class and racial statuses and regional identities were shaped by discrete social conditions including land, labor, and, most important, proximity to slavery's border. This is to say that most antebellum people on the north bank of the Ohio River felt they had a vested interest in maintaining the South's racial-labor structure. There was a cross-class fear, for instance, that the introduction of African American people into the lower Middle West would "degrade white labor" and denigrate the social and cultural conditions of the region. White identities as "not slaves" and "not black" were shaped less by slave state-style racial domination than by free state-style racial aversion. For elites, racism facilitated political hegemony and the control of labor. Meanwhile, non-elite lower middle westerners benefited from whiteness in ways that their socioeconomic equivalents in slave states did not. Though speculation was rampant in the Old Northwest, yeomen farmers did not have to compete with planters for land acquisition, and poor and laboring people—many of whom equally despised the North's financial elite *and* the South's plantocracy—did not have to compete with slave labor that would invariably drive down wages, increase unemployment, and limit the possibilities of property ownership. This fear of interracial labor competition was exacerbated by proletarianization in the Middle West's emerging cities.

I agree with James Marten's contention that, on some level, loyal western veterans weren't all that unique. As he asserts, veterans' organizations throughout the North "may have celebrated emancipation as *the* notable result of the war, but veterans overwhelmingly commemorated restoration of the Union as their paramount accomplishment." Marten suggests that, in a sense, loyal westerners and their ultraconservative patriotism were "exaggerated versions of Union veterans as a whole," and I tend to agree. Perhaps the region's race relations are also an exaggerated version of northern racial aversion and

segregation. I likewise second his recommendation that future soldier studies follow their subjects across an extended chronology, through the antebellum, wartime, and postwar periods. That protracted social and cultural account is something I strived to do in *The Loyal West*.

To that end, all of the reviewers propose or hint at worthwhile designs for future dissertations and book projects. Marten posits several useful questions and captivating possibilities for hoped-for studies and lines of inquiry: the battles over pensions among western veterans, Union veterans from the East who came west after the war, and East-West differences within the national GAR. Moreover, Maulden's suggestion of quantifying legislative voting records to determine regional attitudes regarding race would also be an interesting and useful endeavor. Harris, too, both reiterates the importance of commemorative contention among eastern veterans and implies that forthcoming studies might also practically examine distinctions—regional or otherwise—*between* Union or Confederate soldiers, veterans, and their various forms of collective memory.

Overall, the thoughtful critiques and evocative proposals of these reviewers offer rich fodder for prospective scholarship, and I sincerely hope to see the field as a whole move in some of these directions. Like all history, the story of the Ohio River Valley is part of an unfinished, ongoing chronicle to which historians merely respond with an ever-changing dialogue. As recently evidenced in Louisville, New Orleans, Charlottesville, and elsewhere, the collective memory and public use of the Civil War is still fiercely contested, and the war's social legacies—regional, racial, and material—remain palpable. The role of the American historian, both professional and public, has never been more indispensable, and I once again thank the field of reviewers and the *Register* for allowing me and my scholarship to be a part of that vital and abiding conversation.