

ties to recognize the political rights of rootless individuals who had only tenuous connections with a particular place.

EMIL POCKOCK, Eastern Connecticut State University, Willimantic, is completing a study of the decline of republican political and community values in early Ohio.

A House Divided: Sectionalism and Civil War, 1848–1865. By Richard H. Sewell. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988. Pp. xii, 223. Maps, bibliographical essay, index. Cloth-bound, \$29.50; paperbound, \$9.95.)

Richard H. Sewell, biographer of the Free Soiler–Radical Republican John P. Hale and author of *Ballots for Freedom: Antislavery Politics in the United States, 1837–1860* (1976), moves in this book from political historical specialist to synthesist. He has made the transition with spectacular success. In refocusing “attention on slavery as the taproot of sectional discord and civil war,” Sewell offers a “modest challenge to those historians who see slavery as a largely artificial or symbolic issue and who emphasize instead the role of such ‘ethnocultural’ concerns as temperance and nativism in shaping public events . . .” (p. xi). Happily, the challenge is very modest, never disputatious, and indeed hardly discernible. He avoids the error that is too prevalent among Civil War historians of reading back into the minds of past generations the knowledge and values of the late twentieth century. He brings to his work the sagacity of the late David Potter and the provocative insights of Bertram Wyatt-Brown.

In contrast with some historical interpretations, Sewell’s argument is that a kind of southern nationalism did exist prior to the Civil War, a nationalism that derived “more from shared fears and resentments than from a common, unique cultural identity. . . . rightly or wrongly, many southerners had come to believe that theirs was a distinctive way of life” (p. 79). Also relevant was a mid-nineteenth century concept of “honor” that is foreign to the late twentieth century American mind. It follows that southern secession, no matter how ill-advised scholars now know it to have been, was the expected rather than the unexpected southern reaction to Abraham Lincoln’s election, for the Republican victory in 1860, following a decade of sectional controversy, “represented an assault on the honor and well-being of the South” (p. 78). Thus, while the words “tragic” and “tragedy” hardly ever appear in his book, Sewell is sensitive to the pervasive tragic theme in the history of the Civil War era.

A chapter entitled “The War at Home” is a masterly account of the impact of war on civilians of all classes and stations, North and South. In a chapter called “The Destruction of Slavery” Sewell recounts how emancipation began early in the war, escalated grad-

ually to 1865, and culminated in the establishment of the Freedmen's Bureau and the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment. Paralleling wartime emancipation was wartime reconstruction, which began at least as early as 1863 and probably earlier.

The book is free of serious flaws. Although Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas are given prominent roles in the political history of the 1850s, there is no narrative or analysis, *per se*, of the Lincoln-Douglas debates of 1858. Sewell's account of the former slave as soldier, pupil, and wage earner may be somewhat roseate, but the general excellence of the book overshadows these problems. Sewell's prose is always lucid and sometimes sparkling. His knowledge of the primary and secondary sources enables him to illustrate the narrative with apt quotations and lends to the book an aura of authenticity. This sophisticated, but never recondite, book will be widely read and enjoyed. If there is a better book of its genre on the period 1845–1865, this reviewer does not know what it is.

PATRICK W. RIDDLEBERGER, history professor emeritus, Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville, is author of *George Washington Julian, Radical Republican* (1966) and *1866: The Critical Year Revisited* (1979). He is currently working on a general history of Reconstruction.

Melting Pot Soldiers: The Union's Ethnic Regiments. By William L. Burton. (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1988. Pp. x, 282. Illustrations, notes, selected bibliography, index. \$26.95.)

William L. Burton's *Melting Pot Soldiers* is a far more ambitious book than its title suggests. In addition to dealing with the formation, problems, and performance of immigrant units from Illinois, Indiana, Massachusetts, Missouri, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin, the author places their story in a wider context of comparative ethnic history. Despite his choice of subject, however, Burton surprisingly downplays ethnic conflict and even argues that nativism was not a particularly powerful force in American politics by the eve of the Civil War. Indeed he is so successful in showing how ethnic regiments were similar in both attitudes and behavior to other Civil War regiments that some readers may finish the book wondering if there is any justification for studying ethnic regiments in their own right. If these generalizations were not controversial enough, Burton also sharply criticizes the filiopietism of older works in ethnic history and scathingly indicts those historians who have celebrated the "contributions" of various ethnic groups without subjecting them to the same kind of critical analysis that is routinely applied to the native born.

In fact, some of the best chapters in the book deal with the often shady politics of recruiting ethnic regiments. Burton neatly describes the labyrinthine maneuvering involved in the selection