

a larger narrative, consciously exploiting its own tragedy as an archetype of the modern struggle against adversity" (p. 2). Though the chapters fashion a useful account of the *history* of Chicago literature and architecture, they also become disconnected set pieces of critical invention rather than convincing statements of discovery. In *American Apocalypse* Miller commits the mistake—too common in myth study—of participating in the creative process rather than convincingly describing it.

DAVID J. NORDLOH is professor of English and director of American Studies, Indiana University, Bloomington. He is also general editor of "A Selected Edition of W. D. Howells" and coeditor of the review annual *American Literary Scholarship*.

*Yankee Merchants and the Making of the Urban West: The Rise and Fall of Antebellum St. Louis.* By Jeffrey S. Adler. (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1991. Pp. vii, 274. Tables, notes, bibliography, index. \$42.50.)

In the highly mobile American society with its rapid residential turnover it is the people who do not yet live in your neighborhood who will determine its character ten years hence. Jeffrey S. Adler applies this same principle to his analysis of the shifting fortunes of antebellum St. Louis. The city's future, he argues, was determined less by the attitudes and initiative of its long-term residents than by the decisions of outsiders to migrate to, invest in, or do business in St. Louis. In particular he attributes the rapid growth of St. Louis in the late 1840s and early 1850s to its sudden popularity among New York and New England businessmen. Its mid-1850s slump and loss of primacy to Chicago he ascribes to the equally sudden withdrawal of that popularity.

Many students of urban rivalry in the nineteenth-century United States have looked within each city to find the causes of its rapid or slow growth. The best known analysis of antebellum St. Louis, published by Wyatt W. Belcher in 1947, did just that, blaming the city's relative decline on its lack of enterprise and its indifference to railroad building. Adler strongly disagrees, finding the explanation for the erratic career of St. Louis in external forces. Antebellum St. Louis faced serious obstacles to the mobilization of capital because of antibanking measures supported by rural Missourians. Indeed, the hostility of downstaters to the city's mercantile functions was a persistent problem from the 1820s to the 1850s. Capital-poor St. Louis therefore found itself dependent on fickle "Yankee" dollars to finance its mercantile sector. The crisis came when the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Bill in 1854 reopened the question of slavery in the territories. Rural Missourians, with their strong southern roots, supported the extension of slavery into Kansas. Antislavery Yankees such as New York editor William Cullen Bryant responded by attacking St. Louis mer-

chants for failing to restrain their state. More cautious northern investors simply steered away from the chaos of the Kansas question and sent their money to Chicago.

Adler's thesis is stimulating and developed with much more detail and precision than is possible to capture in a quick summary. It offers a convincing explanation that ties urban growth to changes in national opinion as well as to measurable economic factors such as railroad building or tonnage of grain shipments. At the same time, the drama of St. Louis's "rise and fall" seems overstated. The list of obstacles that early St. Louis had to overcome—floods, sandbars, anticorporate Democrats, frail banks, cholera—were scarcely unique to that one city. The growth of a major city at the site of St. Louis was neither more nor less astounding than the growth of Louisville, Cincinnati, Memphis, or Indianapolis. Its "fall," moreover, was only relative, not absolute. As late as 1980 it was still the thirteenth-largest of the nation's 300-odd metropolitan areas. As Adler very interestingly describes, St. Louis between 1855 and 1867 reconstituted its economy and defined itself as the economic capital of the central South, a role which it pursued with vigor into the twentieth century.

Although published in a series of *Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Modern History*, the book borrows neither theory nor method from other disciplines (contrasting, for example, with William Cronon's recent study of Chicago in *Nature's Metropolis* [1991]). Instead, Adler has written traditional history based on a thorough and intelligent reading of published sources and manuscript collections and has constructed a plausible narrative of St. Louis's antebellum development.

CARL ABBOTT is professor of urban studies and planning, Portland State University, Portland, Oregon. He has written extensively about urban development in the Old Northwest and is currently completing a book on urbanization in the American West in the twentieth century.

*An American Iliad: The Story of the Civil War.* By Charles P. Roland. (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1991. Pp. xii, 289. Maps, illustrations, sources, index. \$30.00.)

Charles P. Roland's area of expertise, before his retirement from the University of Kentucky, was not the Civil War at all, but southern history. His interest in military history derives from experience as a combat infantry captain and association with the United States Army Military History Institute as well as teaching stints at the War College and at West Point. That he was reared thirty miles from the battlefield at Shiloh and was graduate assistant to Professor Bell I. Wiley at Louisiana State University drew him under the spell of the Civil War. Roland's *The Confederacy*, written thirty years ago, is still widely used in Civil War courses.