

Book Reviews

Andrew Jackson, Southerner. By Mark R. Cheatham (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2013. Pp. 1, 306. \$24.05, 978-0-8071-6231-6).

Mark R. Cheatham in *Andrew Jackson, Southerner* reassess the life and character of the famous American figure, Andrew Jackson, by reinterpreting Jackson's identity. Cheatham argues strongly and pointedly that Old Hickory viewed himself as a southern gentleman rather than a frontiersman on the western edges of the United States. Cheatham points to Jackson's emphasis on white, male honor, republican virtue, patriarchal order and family, and plantation and land development as proof of Jackson's identity as a southerner built from "the region's values" (p. 204). By leading the reader through Jackson's childhood, his numerous confrontations with other southern gentleman, his campaigns against Native American groups, and his political ascension, Cheatham uses Jackson's well-known life to highlight Jackson's gentlemanly status and identity. Standing as a biography, Cheatham's work attempts to add fresh insight into the famous and often criticized Andrew Jackson who caused controversy in his own time as well as in today's. As such, *Andrew Jackson, Southerner* provokes further inquiry into Southern U.S. studies and history, as well as the region's uniqueness, through thorough, original research and an approachable style of writing.

Mark R. Cheatham wrote *Andrew Jackson, Southerner* as a professor at his undergraduate alma mater Cumberland University, where he serves as department chair today. Having earned his doctoral degree from Mississippi State University in history, Cheatham focuses his research largely on Jacksonian America and the Old South as he has written other works, such as *Andrew Jackson and the Rise of the Democrats* and *Old Hickory's Nephew: The Political and Private Struggles of Andrew Jackson Donelson*. Currently, Cheatham is working on historical research concerning the presidential elections of 1840 and 1844 as well as editing works related to Andrew Jackson and Jacksonian America.

While historians have traced the life of Andrew Jackson since the mid-19th century, Cheatham's work diverges from the historiography by identifying Jackson as a part of the southern gentry rather than as a part of the western frontier. Cheatham states that while the western frontier did influence his character, "the core of his identity had already been formed by the time" he arrived in Tennessee in 1788 (p. 2). Historians and biographers, such as John Spencer Bassett, Richard B. Latner, and Lorman Ratner, fail to explain Jackson's character development before looking to the west as well as provide sufficient explanation of his quest to

be a southern gentleman, according to Cheatham. While Cheatham focuses on Jackson's gentry status, he points to Jackson's desire to create family and demands for loyalty from its members as patriarch, for example, as proof of his southern identity. Cheatham also explains how these views bled over into Jackson's political views of republicanism as disinterest and independence remained vital characteristics to Jackson's concept of a southern gentleman. As Cheatham highlights several facets that lend themselves to the claim of Jackson's southern gentleman identity, his analysis of Jackson's patriarchal demands and actions remain key to this claim.

While Cheatham does provide a strong case for Jackson's southerner status, he does so mostly by pointing to Jackson's life in Tennessee rather than his early life in the Waxhaw region of South Carolina where his character developed. As such, Cheatham's argument for Jackson's southern identity really finds footing once Jackson reached Tennessee. Cheatham does explain how Jackson developed a desire to be a southern gentleman and understanding of what it took to enter into the southern gentry class from his experiences in his youth in the Waxhaw region. By focusing more on Jackson's backcountry upbringing and lack of immediate entry into the gentry class, more could be explained about Jackson's contradictory identity and nature as both a southern gentleman with frontier-like qualities.

Andrew Jackson, Southerner also provides a personal and intimate look into Jackson's life through Cheatham's use of sources. Personal letters, papers, and correspondences provide the clearest view of Jackson's own thoughts and feelings concerning his own gentlemanly status and create validity for Cheatham's argument. Cheatham also employs government documents and newspapers from the period to provide more information concerning Jackson's military and political life as well as the southern culture that surrounded him. However, most of Cheatham's primary sources come from personal accounts from Jackson or those around him thus lending greatly to Cheatham's interpretation of Jackson. As such, Cheatham's analysis of Jackson does not rely upon psychoanalysis to view his identity as a southern gentleman. Cheatham also employs many secondary sources to provide details concerning the overall narrative as well as people Jackson worked with and against which letters did not depict in detail.

Andrew Jackson, Southerner also gives more depth into the history of the Jackson Purchase area as Jackson's identity as a southern gentleman influenced and encouraged the expansion of the southern frontier westward. Cheatham describes Jackson's southern gentry motivations and aspirations to expand southern plantation economics and slavery as a key element in not just his politics but in defining what it meant to be a true southerner. As such, while Jackson emulated southern gentlemanly behavior and considered himself a member of the gentry, his actions influenced what it meant to be a southern gentleman politically, socially, and economically. Cheatham explains this ever-evolving concept of gentlemanliness by looking at Jackson's duels of honor, land speculation ventures, political policies, and familial relationships; all the while the American South expanded west with slavery and increased tensions within the nation. While the Jackson Purchase area does not remain a key part of Cheatham's work, it existed within Jackson's world and was influenced by conceptions of gentlemanliness in all its facets.

Andrew Jackson, Southerner provides a clear understanding of Jackson as a true member of the southern gentry and not just a frontiersman. By exploring Jackson's emphasis on honor, slave holding, politics, family relationships, and business dealings, Cheatham paints a picture of Jackson that differs from most accounts of a man wild and full of rage fighting on the fringes of American civilization. However, Cheatham's account of Jackson also seems to place Jackson as straddling both frontier and plantation as he existed in both realms as a part of the frontier and a member of the planting gentry. Perhaps this is why Jackson remains a figure of contradictions as Cheatham explains. Regardless, Cheatham's work proves to be an excellent piece of scholarship over not just Andrew Jackson but the Old South as well.

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The Rivers Ran Backward: The Civil War and the Remaking of the American Middle Border. By Christopher Phillips (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016. Pp. xi, 505. \$34.95, 978-0-1951-8723-6).

In late October 1859, Thomas Corwin, a moderate Republican congressman from Ohio, addressed the United States House of Representatives regarding the growing sectionalism in the country. "I know we have but two points of compass now in our political geography—North and South," quipped Corwin; yet he wanted his colleagues "to remember that there is in our country about nine millions of people who reside in the West; that they have an identity of language, manners, and social systems . . . [and] do not mean to be held responsible to the North or to the South" (p.104). However, unbeknownst to Corwin, within two years of his address, residents of the West would be drawn into a civil war that pivoted on a North-South binary. Ultimately, the conflict forced residents of the region to abandon their western identity for one more suitable to the contexts of the Civil War and Reconstruction—either northerner or southerner, Unionist or Confederate.

In *The Rivers Ran Backward: The Civil War and the Remaking of the American Middle Border*, Christopher Phillips, Professor of History at the University of Cincinnati, charts the rise and fall of an antebellum western identity, showing how the Civil War and emancipation, as well as the memories of those events, transformed "a traditional western political culture . . . into the cultural politics of region" (p.9). Phillips demonstrates how this process "changed what was once a lived border of confluence into an imagined and antagonistic border of separation defined as North and South and, more complicatedly, Middle West and Midwest" (p.9). Overall, *The Rivers Ran Backward*, a product of nearly two decades of research and writing, sheds light on a third narrative of the Civil War, one told from the vantage point of the West where the "war's meaning was most contingent" and the conflict truly constituted a civil war (p.8).