

together nationally without alienating any of their sectional constituencies. What made this feat possible, of course, was localists' willingness to subordinate their demands to the higher goal of party unity. From another perspective, we observe the national government's inability to formulate and implement any genuine policies, for reasons at which Feller hints, but does not explore adequately.

Daniel Feller has done for the land issue what other scholars have done in recent years for the tariff and the bank: he has related it admirably to the swirling politics of the Jacksonian Era. His work is based on prodigious research in national and state sources, and it stands as the authoritative treatment of the subject.

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY

RICHARD P. MCCORMICK

*The Triumph of Sectionalism: The Transformation of Ohio Politics, 1844-1856*, by Stephen E. Maizlish. Kent: Kent State University Press, 1983. xiv, 310 pp. Notes, bibliography, index. \$25.00 cloth.

Stephen Maizlish correctly believes that the interaction between national political trends and events in a single state helps illuminate the full range and complexity of the American past. In *The Triumph of Sectionalism: The Transformation of Ohio Politics, 1844-1856*, he microscopically examines the antebellum political transformation in Ohio as the Jacksonian party system gave way to North-South confrontation. His argument is direct and unambiguous. In Ohio, the issues that defined Jacksonian politics—largely economic (with banking policy as the most prominent)—lost their relevance in the mid-1840s. In consequence, political warfare became arid, the parties' meaning faded, bitter factionalism grew, and political chaos resulted. Sectional tensions became strong enough to reshape and refocus politics along a new fault line. It was a linear procession beginning with conflict over Texas expansion. "By November, 1844, the pattern of change was unmistakable" (27). By 1849, sectionalism had "come to dominate" Ohio politics (70). In 1854-1855, the Kansas-Nebraska controversy capped what had been a decade-long sectionalizing process.

In his examination of Ohio's particular response to these forces, Maizlish has mounted a powerful historiographic counterrevolution: the return to historical center of the traditional perspective about the dominance of sectionalism and the coming of the Civil War.<sup>1</sup> Clearly,

1. See Joel H. Silbey, "The Civil War Synthesis in American Political History" in Silbey, *The Partisan Imperative: The Dynamics of American Politics Before The Civil War* (New York, 1985), 3-12.

this is not confined to Ohio. "This study reasserts the importance of the slavery issue in the politics of the antebellum North" (xii). Historians, particularly the new political historians (including some members of the "Iowa School"), have challenged that once-dominant argument in the last two decades with their quantitative methods and conclusions which stress a different kind of social cleavage and political causation.<sup>2</sup> Close analysis of northern voting behavior in many separate states has suggested the power of ethnic and religious, not sectional and slavery-related, issues in disrupting the Jacksonian party system—and then not before the mid-1850s, rather than a decade earlier. Until then, the parties had coped with intense but intermittent sectional outbursts. Maizlish knows of this research and the complexities introduced, but remains unconvinced by it. Ethnocultural forces were minor keys readily overcome by the sectional overtones at work. "We must be careful," Maizlish writes, "that in acknowledging the complexities of the prewar era we do not fall into a new revisionism that rejects the primacy of sectional concerns" (xiii).

In making his case, Maizlish also reaffirms his commitment to long-standing historical methods and emphases. He has read widely in, and extensively quotes, the surviving manuscripts of Ohio's party leaders, the state's partisan newspapers, and the extant historiography. He presents a wealth of detail, and pays primary attention to the extraordinarily convoluted maneuvering for political advantage among party leaders who tried to maintain their positions among the challenges of new political forces. While the electorate appears as the object of all of this activity, Maizlish does not closely examine its behavior and reactions. This is politics as seen and acted out at the top of the state's political hierarchy.

All of which is clear enough. But how persuasive is Maizlish's reaffirmation of this argument in this way? While a fresh look at a major state's experience is welcome, and while he has cogently raised some issues and illuminated some dark corners to our benefit, Maizlish has not overturned the alternate vision that he dismisses, nor has he constructed a possible synthesis of the different perspectives. His strong declarative statements cannot stand alone supported as they are. He never effectively establishes a concrete foundation on which to base his selection of quotations or his ordering of the evidence. He has certainly shown that severe sectional tensions existed in Ohio

2. Allan G. Bogue, "Inside the 'Iowa School,'" in Bogue, *Clio and the Bitch Goddess: Quantification in American Political History* (Beverly Hills, 1983), 19-50.

### Book Reviews

politics from 1844 on, but no one has ever denied this. Assessing the significance, staying power, and cause-and-effect consequences of sectionalism; the balance among sectional and non-sectional matters; and the timing of political changes, has been the issue. Maizlish has not given these matters the attention necessary to support his case. He relies too much on his particular reading of somewhat slippery and certainly ambiguous evidence, rather than first anchoring all of that in close attention to observed behavior. His occasional introduction of quantitative evidence is perfunctory and half-hearted. At the same time, his focus on political leadership usefully reveals part of the story but can distort understanding of the rest of a complex, multitiered, interactive, political system.

Without close examination of all parts of the political world, and without a weighing of proportions and significance, the case remains dangling and unpersuasive. It is not that quantitative methods and a measured consideration of the mass electorate usefully address every historical problem, but when the political structure and the nature of electoral cleavages are under consideration, they certainly do firm up matters. Simply, it would be possible to go over the same ground and give the argument a much different cast—one more grounded in other evidence that seems more persuasive than what Maizlish presents. Too much of that evidence suggests that neither a loss of faith in the parties, nor sectionalism alone, affected the mass of each party's supporters, or the political structure as a whole, as strongly as Maizlish argues. It is, therefore, difficult to believe that historians have as yet fully comprehended either Ohio's, or the North's, antebellum political experience.

CORNELL UNIVERSITY

JOEL H. SILBEY

*Edward F. Beale & the American West*, by Gerald Thompson. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1983. xvi, 306 pp. Notes, illustrations, maps, bibliography, index. \$24.95 cloth.

Gerald Thompson has rescued Edward Fitzgerald Beale from the obscurity to which an inadequate biography published over seventy years ago assigned him. Beale was a remarkable figure in the history of the American West. He was a genuine hero of the Mexican War who served as a young naval officer under Commodore Robert F. Stockton and later as a leader of the land forces of General Stephen Watts Kearny. After the war, Beale carried news and samples of the gold discovery to the East, thus helping to arouse a powerful interest in California. In 1852 Beale was appointed the first Superintendent

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