The Limits of Loyalty: Ordinary People in Civil War Mississippi. By Jarret Ruminski. (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2017). Pp. 288. Hardcover, $65.00.

The historiography on Confederate nationalism and wartime loyalty has been dominated by two dichotomous frameworks that gauge the existence of a Confederate nationalism either by its strength or its weakness, attributing Confederate failures and successes solely to this degree of nationalism. In *The Limits of Loyalty: Ordinary People in Civil War Mississippi*, Jarret Ruminski provides a new framework that explores the varying and multi-layered loyalties of Mississippians in order to better understand "why the Confederacy can seem both united and divided, why some historians think it should have lasted longer, and why others marvel that it lasted so long against such steep odds" (6). Ruminski uses Mississippi as a case study because it is a state that "should have been rabidly pro-Confederate" given its heavy reliance on enslaved labor and early exit from the Union, and also because it faced Union occupation early in the war (3). This military occupation, Ruminski argues, makes wartime Mississippi a useful case study to explore changing allegiances among Confederate citizens. Working from sociological scholarship, Ruminski highlights the importance of both micro and macro loyalties. Within this framework individuals can be loyal to larger structures, such as political institutions, regions, or nations, but also can hold stronger loyalties to their own self-interests, that of their families, or that of their localized community. These layers of loyalty act as a dynamic model, allowing Ruminski to move past the dichotomous nature of Confederate historiography which narrowly views Confederates as either loyal or disloyal and Confederate nationalism as either weak or strong. With the example of Mississippi, Ruminski finds an effective way to show how wartime circumstances thwarted attempts by the Confederate state to enforce an all-encompassing national loyalty. Occupation highlights the localized and personal loyalties that often overcame national loyalties, helping to illustrate that Confederate nationalism, and perhaps nineteenth-century nationalism at large fell short of that which was required to establish a new nation state.

In each chapter, Ruminski highlights different contingent events, acts of resistance, and personal relationships that reveal how these different layers of loyalty prevented the emergence of a strict loyalty to Confederate nationalism. These include unionist and nationalist sentiment during the secession crisis, Union occupation of Mississippi, the contraband trade with Union forces, desertion, absenteeism, wartime plundering, and the master-slave relationship. Initially the prospect of independence and war led Mississippians "to embrace, temporarily, a new national loyalty above other allegiances, especially before the real hardships of war hit Mississippi soil" (15). Ruminski finds evidence of widespread unionism during the secession crisis, but mob violence and intimidation worked to silence dissent and create a sense of urgency for the establishment of an independent nation. After secession, a sense of Confederate nationalism began to take over and Mississippians, initially, were enthusiastic in their defense of the imagined Confederate state. Early in the war, however, circumstances tested allegiance to Confederate nationalism. According to Ruminski, "Confederate forces needed to distinguish friend from foe," therefore, they needed to enforce a strict and total loyalty by policing relations between Confederates and non-Confederates (40). This regulation created internal tensions as most Mississippians viewed their social and economic relationships through multiple loyalties and interests. Ruminski uses oaths enforced by occupying Union forces, and the reasons

ordinary Mississippians chose to make them or not, to illustrate the complexity inherent to loyalty. Some wrestled with the dilemmas of loyalty to the Confederacy, while others saw no violation in taking the oath as "they swore the oath out of allegiances altogether distinct from nationalism" (42). Loyalties to self-interest and to family often rendered nationalist loyalties moot in the face of Union occupation.

Confederate nationalist ideology considered trade across Union lines to be treasonous, but the practice was widespread in occupied Mississippi. For Ruminski, contraband trade constituted a mechanism by which self-interest overtook nationalist loyalties in Civil War Mississippi. Trade with Union forces is particularly illustrative of the competing layers of loyalty as traders felt they could simultaneously trade with the enemy and support the Confederate war effort by supplying goods to Mississippians. Debates raged within the Confederacy about whether this trade constituted traitorous behavior, but many otherwise loyal Confederates justified these actions as necessary to preserve life in occupied Mississippi. Additionally, policing of contraband trade is shown to have been tepid at best as officials weighed the advantages of trade in these areas. This aspect of wartime Mississippi helps to show why southern nationalism could not survive a war that stressed other, more localized loyalties. It also offers a more intricate understanding of Confederate nationalism than the strong/weak dichotomy that has dominated the historiography. Different allegiances overlapped and "micro loyalties to self or family fulfilled traders' needs and assumed precedence over, but did not necessarily dispel macro devotion to, the Confederacy" (75). Similarly, Ruminski uses draft dodging, desertion, and war time plundering to show that localized group loyalties often overcame loyalty to the Confederate cause. Desertion was driven by a desire to protect property at home, including slaves and farms, and plundering was a common practice of many average Mississippians. While Ruminski is hesitant to argue that micro loyalties ultimately overcame the macro loyalties of Confederate nationalism, his evidence suggests that occupation led Mississippians to revert to raw self-interest.

The final chapter contains a revealing discussion of loyalty layers among enslaved Mississippians. Ruminski highlights the exacerbation of long-standing tensions in the master-slave relationship that came about as a result of the war. During the war "many Mississippi slaveholders tried to mask slaves' obvious disloyalty to their masters by attributing flight to the deluded beliefs of the enslaved that the Federals genuinely cared for their wellbeing" (144). For Ruminski, it is important to explore not only enslaved black southerners' conceptions of loyalty but also white expectations of black loyalty. Resistance from enslaved individuals, unlike that of white Mississippians, was not viewed as a political act of disloyalty. Instead, slave owners viewed acts of resistance as personal affronts. Examining ways that ideas of loyalty differed between these two groups offers deeper analysis on the solidification of a white identity in Confederate nation building. "Losing sight of the ways white Southerners strove to maintain the racial hierarchy during, and after, the war," Ruminski explains, "severs the Confederacy from its historical moorings and thereby under emphasizes the threads of continuity that connected it to the antebellum and the postwar South" (146). The Confederate government and slave owners viewed slaves in a different light regarding their loyalty; one as disloyalty to the state and the other as disloyalty to the "master." In contrast, enslaved southerners sought loyalties before

emancipation that provided comfort within the context of the slave labor system. This included familial and community loyalties, as well as loyalties to whites which could mitigate the harshness of slavery. After emancipation, they sought to establish connections to allow them to escape white racial dominance. This included localized black resistance among kin groups and households and threats of escape which were given new power by wartime emancipation, as well as resistance through allegiance to the Union army.

This contest over black loyalty and servitude to whites in Mississippi, Ruminski argues, constituted a continual process that extended well past the fall of the Confederacy. Because of these attempts at control, the enslaved viewed freedom as a means to act on their own micro loyalties to themselves, their families, and to the broader black community. Here, Ruminski details the motivations of black resistance, arguing that these ideals of freedom were complicated by the concerns that microloyalties posed to Mississippi Freedmen. Furthermore, this framework allows Ruminski to extend the importance of both black and white understandings of multiple loyalties to the post-war period as "racial loyalties, in the form of whites' desire to uphold black servility and blacks' desire to reject that servility and assert their rights to act on multiple allegiances free from white control, continued to shape sociopolitical conflicts in the state" (187). This insight allows for a more nuanced understanding of the post-war process by which black and white Mississippians renegotiated labor relations and civil and political freedoms.

Ruminski presents a compelling new way of viewing Confederate nationalism, both before and after the war, reframing developments as a continuum of loyalties based in localized self-interests. This framework follows Gary Gallagher's call to move past the stale and dichotomous historiography on Confederate loyalty and challenges historians such as Gallagher, William Blair, and Aaron-Sheehan-Dean who argue that white southerners were united by a racial nationalism and a civic nationalism that rallied around the Confederate military, as well as cultural historians like Ian Binnington, Anne Rubin, and Drew Gilpin Faust who locate a confederate cultural nationalism that united the South in wartime. Instead, Ruminski finds a weak confederate nationalism amongst white Mississippians facing the struggles of wartime occupation. Though, by showing the continued perseverance of some forms of national loyalty, Ruminski's book also complicates the viewpoints of historians who emphasize social and political division in the South such as William Freehling, Mark Weitz, and David Williams. While its scope may be limited to occupied Mississippi, Ruminski's book enlivens the historiography of both Confederate loyalty and the nature of American nationalism.

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