Emotional and Sectional Conflict in the Antebellum United States

The sectional conflict over slavery in the United States was not only a clash between labor systems and political ideologies but also a viscerally felt part of the lives of antebellum Americans. This book contributes to the growing field of emotions history by exploring how specific emotions shaped Americans’ perceptions of, and responses to, the sectional conflict in order to explain why it culminated in disunion and war. Emotions from indignation to jealousy were inextricably embedded in antebellum understandings of morality, citizenship, and political affiliation. Their arousal in the context of political debates encouraged Northerners and Southerners alike to identify with antagonistic sectional communities and to view the conflicts between them as worth fighting over. Michael E. Woods synthesizes two schools of thought on Civil War causation: the fundamentalist, which foregrounds deep-rooted economic, cultural, and political conflict, and the revisionist, which stresses contingency, individual agency, and collective passion.

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For Beth, Darlene, Jennifer, and Rick
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Abbreviations

ADAH  Alabama Department of Archives and History
CHS   Connecticut Historical Society
CL    William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan
HL    Houghton Library, Harvard University
HRBML Hargrett Rare Books and Manuscripts Library, University of Georgia
LC    Library of Congress (Manuscript Division)
MARBL Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University
MHS   Massachusetts Historical Society
NHHS  New Hampshire Historical Society
OHS   Ohio Historical Society
RL    Rubenstein Library, Duke University
SCHS  South Carolina Historical Society
SCL   South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina
SCRC  Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago
SHC   Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina
VHS   Virginia Historical Society
VTHS  Vermont Historical Society