Book Reviews

Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body. Edited by Rosemarie Garland Thompson. Reviewed by John Ibson. 185
Picturing an Exhibit: The Family of Man and 1950s America. By Eric J. Sandeen. Reviewed by Catherine L. Preston. 187
Reading the West: New Essays on the Literature of the American West. Edited by Michael Kowalewski. Reviewed by Forrest G. Robinson. 189
Many Wests: Places, Culture, & Regional Identity. By David M. Wroebel and Michael C. Steiner. Reviewed by Frieda Knobloch. 190
Them Dark Days: Slavery in the American Rice Swamps. By William Dusinberre. Reviewed by Roderick A. McDonald. 191
Stolen Childhood: Slave Youth in Nineteenth-Century America. By Wilma King. Reviewed by Roderick A. McDonald. 191
Life in Black and White: Family and Community in the Slave South. By Brenda E. Stevenson. Reviewed by Roderick A. McDonald. 191
The Salem Witchcraft Trials: A Legal History. By Peter Charles Hoffer. Reviewed by Bryan Le Beau. 193
Damned Women: Sinners and Witches in Puritan New England. By Elizabeth Reis. Reviewed by Bryan Le Beau. 193
Domesticity with a Difference: The Nonfiction of Catharine Beecher, Sarah J. Hale, Fanny Fern, and Margaret Fuller. By Nicole Tonkovich. Reviewed by Nancy A. Walker. 194
Mothers and Daughters in Nineteenth-Century America: The Biosocial Construction of Femininity. By Nancy Theriot. Reviewed by Marilyn Dell Brady. 195
Charles Ives: A Life with Music. By Jan Swafford. Reviewed by J. Bunker Clark 196
The Music of Charles Ives. By Philip Lambert. Reviewed by J. Bunker Clark. 196
Frontiers of Historical Imagination: Narrating the European Conquest of Native America: 1890-1990. By Kerwin Lee Klein. Reviewed by Ann Schofield. 197

Perry Mason: The Authorship and Reproduction of a Popular Hero.
By J. Dennis Bounds. Reviewed by Robin W. Winks. 199
The Culture of Spontaneity: Improvisation and the Arts in Postwar America. By Daniel Belgrad. Reviewed by Karal Ann Marling. 200
For the Hell of It: The Life and Times of Abbie Hoffman.
By Jonah Raskin. Reviewed by Mary Ann Wynkoop. 201

Editorial note: Book reviews are edited for typographical errors, and otherwise are printed as received.

Reviews

FREAKERY: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body. Edited by Rosemarie Garland Thompson. New York: New York University Press. 1996.

A century ago Emile Durkheim pointed to the utility, if not outright necessity, of deviance. Those branded peculiar, he argued, promote a common identity among those doing the branding. Closer to our own time, in *Wayward Puritans*, Kai Erikson invoked Durkheim's notion of the useful deviant to explain why antinomians, Quakers, and alleged witches fared so badly in seventeenth-century Massachusetts. One might better comprehend the yearnings of Puritans who were conventional, according to Erikson, by observing how some of their neighbors were stigmatized. The less certain one's own sense of self, runs this logic, the greater the need for the negative example of some deviant. Much of today's discussion of "the other" in fiction and real life essentially adopts the earlier approach of Durkheim and Erikson: studying differentiation to highlight the needs of purported conformists. The "freak" is the ultimate "other," assume *Freakery*'s many authors, and in several provocative ways their book illuminates the conceits, anxieties, and aspirations of those who have marveled, gawked, and jeered at persons with bodies considered odd. This book tells us little new about freaks themselves, but has much that is original to say about the process of "enfreakment," their construction for an audience.

Leslie Fielder and Robert Bogdan, each the author of a valuable previous book on freaks, are joined by twenty-seven other contributors in this hefty volume that is smartly introduced and instructively arranged by Rosemarie Garland Thompson. Though social scientists appear, most contributors are, like Thompson, literary scholars. Subjects, attitudes, and methods range widely—dazzlingly so—from individuals to institutions, from narrow readings of texts to sweeping surveys of contexts, from elite literature to popular culture, from dispassionate analysis to expressions of outrage.

Fiedler's foreward is but window dressing, an essay remarkable mostly for its self-absorption. Thompson's introduction, however, is a subtle and compelling assertion that the book shows "the freak of nature to be a freak of culture." The book's unifying theme, she suggests, is no less than the relationship between modernization and the human body. This remarkably coherent book has a seamless development that is rare enough in works by a single author, let alone an anthology with twenty-six chapters.

With pieces by Bogdan, David Gerber, and Elizabeth Grosz, the book's first section directly considers cultural construction. Gerber's chapter is a valuable reminder of the significance of social structure, the importance of unequal social relations to the designation of freaks. "Practices of enfreakment" is the subject of section two. Paul Semonin examines the role of the human "monster" in the English folk tradition. Edward L. Schwarzschild sees Charles Willson Peale's death-obsessed museum in the nineteenth century as an early freak show. Eric Fretz links P. T. Barnum's own manufactured self to the subjects he displayed. Ellen Hickey Grayson cleverly interprets the popularity of laughing gas demonstrations (a temporary enfreakment) as an affirmation of "the dominant values of bourgeois respectability." Ronald E. Ostman uses FSA photographs to take us to a circus sideshow.

In chapters rich in cultural significance, the third and fourth sections take up various means by which people with bodies that were thought to be strange were actually exhibited to the public. Maintaining that the man's race was no coincidence, James W. Cook, Jr., considers the 60-year career of a black person whom Barnum dubbed "What Is It?" Nigel Rothfels analyzes the nineteenth-century response by the German scientific community to "Aztec children," Central American microcephalics, persuasively linking that response to a larger discourse about evolution and race. Similarly, Allison Pingree sees the reaction to the conjoined Hilton sisters in the 1920s and 1930s as part of a much wider discussion of domesticity, female autonomy, and heterosexuality. Such rigorous attention to a larger context does not distinguish Lori Merish's nonetheless suggestive look at the common "cuteness" of Tom Thumb and Shirley Temple. Bernth Lindfors's study of "Ethnological show business" is one of the book's more powerful demonstrations of racism's revealingly frequent role in enfreakment. Focusing in particular on "ogling Igorots," Christopher A. Vaughn convincingly demonstrates "the fluid symbiosis between the cultural project of anthropology and the freakmaking machinery of exhibitionary commerce." Though the title of his chapter might suggest that he will narrowly deal with tattooing in Melville's *Typee,* Leonard Cassuto's piece is one of the book's broader efforts, pushing off from Melville to a discussion of how the freak show often "refracted [race] through the prism of physical anomaly." Linda Frost adds gender directly to the discussion in her subtle interpretation of Barnum's display of exotic women allegedly spirited away from Turkish harems.

Most entries in the fifth section, on freaks in texts, adhere too closely to those texts to be of much wider significance, though there are insightful readings of Tod Browning's *Freaks* by Joan Hawkins, of Katherine Dunn's *Geek Love* by Rachel Adams, and of feminist fiction with some physically unconventional characters by Shirley Peterson.

The book's final section, on "relocation" of the freak show today, interprets various contemporary phenomena as essentially some old wine in a new bottle. Thus does Andrea Stulman Dennett characterize the talk show, Jeffrey A. Weinstock see the role of space aliens in fiction and film, David L. Clark and Catherine Myser analyze medical documentaries, Cecile Lindsay view bodybuilders, and David D. Yuan explain Michael Jackson. This section, like the book itself, sometimes overreaches, trying to explain so much that it sacrifices analytical depth and conceptual precision. There is no shortage of ambition here.

One of the book's more appealing chapters appears in the section on texts, yet it is singular enough to appear alone, broad enough to have perhaps been better placed last as a coda. In it Brian Rosenberg, an English professor, recalls the course entitled "Freaks" that he taught to Allegheny College sophomores, with "a mix of materials that came out

somewhere between the extremes of the Harvard Classics and head comics." Questions raised in this class, insists Rosenberg, are the very ones commonly encountered in more conventional contemporary classes on race and gender, but without the defensiveness that often accompanies these discussions. He wisely realizes that this situation might well have been different had he had a student with an obvious and significant physical difference. The candor and insight that distinguished the class were no doubt due as much to Rosenberg and his students as to the topic itself, but he nevertheless makes a persuasive case for the centrality of freakery in today's considerations of differentness. The study of freakery may not by itself open quite as many doors as Rosenberg and other contributors appear to suggest, but one does leave this book—as Rosenberg's students must have left his course—with an altogether fresh understanding of identity and intolerance in the modern world.

California State University, Fullerton John Ibson

PICTURING AN EXHIBITION: *The Family of Man* and 1950s America. By Eric J. Sandeen. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press. 1995.

The *Family of Man* exhibit, one of the most popular photographic exhibits ever mounted, opened at the Museum of Modern Art in mid-January 1955. During its 103-day run at MoMA it was visited by a quarter-million people. Following this, five editions of the exhibit were made and circulated around the United States and the world. Internationally it traveled to eighty-eight sites in thirty-seven countries and was visited by over eight million people until 1965 when it was archived in Luxeumbourg, curator Edward Steichen's birthplace. Sandeen's book is, in parts, an in-depth exploration of the cultural, institutional, and political environment within which the *Family of Man* developed from idea to international traveling exhibit. He attempts to study the material operation of the institutional ideologies which contributed to and utilized this exhibit through their specific corresponding practices. Thus, he begins with a history of photojournalism during and after World War II, discusses the construction of the exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art, the United States Information Agency's use of the exhibit as an international cultural emissary, and finally, its cultural displacement by a competing modernist aesthetic in ascendancy in the early 1960s. This study is commendable first, in terms of the wide net cast in search of information pertinent to the exhibit, and second, in light of the fact that access to the practices of the Museum of Modern Art can be very difficult. However, Sandeen is pulled in two directions throughout the book. He is both concerned to tell the story of the exhibit and also invested in retrieving the exhibit from its relegation by cultural critics to the bad-culture bin of history. It is this last agenda that ends up compromising the larger scholarly project.

Each chapter in the story of *The Family of Man* offers an aspect of the context within which the exhibit was conceived and actualized. Some of these are tied more successfully to the exhibit than others. The chapters on the construction of the exhibit, and the changing of the "aesthetic" guard in the late 1950s from a Steichen-defined modernism to that evoked by Robert Frank are excellent examples of the effort to locate cultural production in the broader political and economic context. In other chapters the exhibit gets lost in a larger story about a history of photojournalism during and after World War II and the minutia of the political origins of the United States Information Agency.

But throughout the book interspersed with the larger story Sandeen argues with critics for greater cultural value to be attributed to the exhibit than has been given in recent years.

This agenda muddies Sandeen's analysis. For example, he discusses how popular the exhibit was, that it was "enthusiastically attended," and states that the "power of the exhibition can be measured through the reception it received at the United States Information Agency" (4). Aside from his begging the question of how "popular" equals "power" and what kind of power it might be, is an issue he should have dealt with. Five editions were made of the exhibit which traveled nationally and, through USIA, internationally. He never discusses whether these reproduced the original layout of the MoMA exhibit, whether they included the same photographs, or if they were different, or to what extent the USIA may have tailored each edition to the various countries to which it traveled. This discussion would certainly qualify his ability to measure the "power" (i.e., popularity) of the exhibition by the reception it received at USIA, but beyond that, it would have told us more about the inner workings of that agency in relation to the exhibit than his history of its bureaucratic make-up.

Sandeen's mission is to construct a revisionist approach to the exhibit but he does this in a traditional manner. He transparently accepts Steichen's rationale for the exhibit, his activities, and his choices rather than subjecting them to the same analysis he does the practices of photojournalists of World War II or the bureaucrats at USIA. This is due in part to Sandeen's almost exclusive reliance on interviews with exhibit assistant Wayne Miller, for information on Steichen's thinking about the exhibit. He states in the introduction that he is not defending the exhibit but striving to explain it. But beyond this, he wants "to give resonance to the voice of an exhibition that has been reduced from cultural pronouncement to simple statement" (9). This requires Sandeen to take the point-of-view of that "voice" and so his explanations to recent commentators who would criticize Steichen' humanistic vision as simplistic in a world threatened by nuclear war too often takes a defensive tone.

Similarly traditional is Sandeen's 1950s America which is inhabited almost entirely by well-known men. Sandeen fails to discuss the role Dorothea Lange played in the creation of the exhibit. Lange organized photographers on the West coast to contribute photographs to the show, and wrote the statement of the idea of the exhibition which the Museum required, and which Steichen was, for some unknown reason, unable to produce a year and a half into the planning stage.

Sandeen ends the book restating that scholars do not consider the collection to be vital; that it "merely retains its celebrity as the one photographic collection that many Americans can name" (180). The exhibit may have become critically suspect early in the 1960s, and may have "passed from wall to coffee table," but the fact that the photographs remain in circulation makes them a cultural force whether or not the critics choose to acknowledge it. Early in the book, Sandeen states he will not deal with the exhibit as published in book form. This is unfortunate because had he done so he would have understood the real power of the exhibit's celebrity, no longer subject to the whims of cultural criticism. The photographs entered into the institutional construction of nationalism in book form as they continued to circulate in the 1960s and early 1970s, and to be studied as a visual primer in elementary and secondary schools across the country. They continued to have a particular pedagogical currency in the American educational system thanks to the often free distribution of the book. The exhibit/book celebrates American culture, now in the context of the American educational system as it did internationally during the 1950s. It is no mere feat that it is one of the photographic collections that many Americans can name; that is the mark of the collection's iconic status. It has become a kind of "visual technology" and entered into our collective memory of 1950s American culture, not because cultural critics liked or disliked it then or now, but because it was fixed in a form more permanent than an exhibit and circulated in that most overdetermined and

overdetermining discursive formation, the educational institution. Had Sandeen inquired why people might be interested in his study about a photographic collection of supposedly diminished cultural value, he might not have missed this important aspect of their continued popularity.

University of Kansas — Catherine L. Preston

READING THE WEST: New Essays on the Literature of the American West. Edited by Michael Kowalewski. New York: Cambridge University Press. 1996.

Reading the West is uniformly of good quality, but a rather mixed bag in terms of subject matter and approach. Individual readers, following their own special interests, will naturally be drawn to some essays more than others; but few will fail to take something of value from what they read. Newcomers to the western novel, for example, will find reliable guidance in James D. Houston's "'The Circle Almost Circled': Some Notes on California's Fiction"; those with an interest in theater will surely read Misha Berson's "Fighting the Religion of the Present: Western Motifs in the First Wave of Asian American Plays"; students of poetry will appreciate Linda Hamalian's useful discussion of leading figures—Rexroth, Duncan, Everson, Ginsberg, Snyder—in the "San Francisco Renaissance"; readers of U.S. Hispanic literature will doubtless turn first to the fine chapter by Margaret García Davidson; while those with an interest in American Indian writing will consult Philip Burnham's "The Return of the Native." These, like virtually all the essays in *Reading the West*, are learned, thoughtful, and well written. Editor Michael Kowalewski is to be commended for assembling such varied and talented writers, and for bringing their work together in this handsomely produced contribution to the prestigious Cambridge Studies in American Literature and Culture. The volume is a real boost for an often undervalued and neglected field of study.

In his introduction, Kowalewski aligns the work with the other "new, revisionist visions of the West" that feature race, class, gender, and the environment. He is especially concerned to highlight the last category, and to define it for literary purposes in terms of "region or a 'sense of place.'" It follows of course to inquire whether the claims to originality and to an enlightened literary regionalism are indeed borne out by the chapters that follow. In simple fact, they are not.

Originality is almost invariably associated in recent Western regional scholarship with often important but by now virtually obligatory discussions of race, class, gender, and the environment. The "new," ironically, has become well-worn and predictable. Thus Susan J. Rosowski's analysis of Stafford's *The Mountain Lion* is forceful and frequently persuasive, but perfectly routine in its focus on gender. Indeed, it is a second and kindred irony that the closest approaches to novelty in this volume occur at those occasional moments when the by now familiar axioms of the "new" in Western studies are open to question. I refer her to Thomas J. Lyon's refreshing reminder that many classic Western writers "did not make one-dimensional heroes of explorers, trappers, cowboys, [and] gunfighters . . . and did not share the arrogance of Manifest Destiny." I am thinking as well of Margaret García Davidson's bold dissent from the current rage for dissensus. "The re-visioning of the West as continual cultural conflict," she writes, is "often no less narrow than the persistent vision of the West as a wild, untamed expanse of unlimited opportunity."

True, some of the essays in *Reading the West* advance rather novel materials or perspectives. For example, Shannon Applegate reports at length on letters and diaries that

she has unearthed in remote regions of the West. Applegate's encounters with donors make interesting reading; but notwithstanding the insistence that hers is "a unique medium in which to examine new historical conceptions of the American West," the assembled research yields little save the familiar litany of misery, violence, restlessness, and greed that currently passes for the truth about the region. "One does not find what one does not look for," Applegate quite rightly observes.

Lee Mitchell's juxtaposition of "Bierstadt's Settings, Harte's Plots" is quite striking, as is his notion that "their postbellum American audience craved the fantastic images they offered, and—soon embarrassed by that craving—repressed its expression as quickly as it could." So far, so good. But Mitchell's novel perspective opens up little that is critically new about either artist, and leads to the implausible suggestion that Harte's nature writing might have been composed with Bierstadt's painting in mind. Nor does the postbellum frame of the discussion serve as a window on the social and cultural significance of his texts. Why the Civil War prompted a craving for artistic excess, and why that craving in turn required repression, are good questions with potentially quite original answers. Unfortunately, Mitchell does not pursue them.

Kowalewski's emphasis on the importance of "place" in *Reading the West* is as imperfectly grounded as his insistence on novelty. To be sure, all of the essays turn centrally on Western subjects, but in few of them is the notion of "place" developed at length. This should not surprise us. To invoke "region" and "place" is one thing, but to define their cultural significance is quite another, as Kowalewski's rather strained references to "richly textured understandings of human interaction with the land" and "complex interconnections between societal beliefs and biophysical processes" well illustrate. One suspects that William W. Bevis' "Region, Power, Place" is the featured first essay in the collection precisely because it alone takes a firm grip on this elusive topic. Bevis argues that the erasure of place brought about by postmodern capitalism is itself resisted by regional ecology and tribalism. Place fosters tradition, local values, the group, and forms the antithesis to the Enlightenment virtues of individualism, reason, and personal freedom. Some will object that his rigidly binary scheme obstructs any approach to the middle ground, and that his generalizations about American Indians are much too sweeping. But despite such reservations, most readers will be profitably stimulated by Bevis' bold reflections.

University of California, Santa Cruz — Forrest G. Robinson

MANY WESTS: Place, Culture & Regional Identity. Edited by David M. Wroebel and Michael C. Steiner. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas. 1997.

Many Wests is informed by three premises: regionalism—as lived experience and as academic subject—is not dead; approaches to regional identity are most valuable when most varied; and with respect to the West, there are in fact many Wests, and not simply as subsections on a map. Experiences differ even among relatively close geographic areas. John Findlay's study of the Pacific Northwest uses the shifting cultural and economic value of salmon to sketch a relatively new, if seemingly "natural" association of the Northwest with salmon. Peter Boag's essay on the Snake River Plain in Idaho, on the other hand, focuses on a single landscape, but as a historical crossroads of many different people where no single regional consciousness has emerged. Familiar links between regional identity and physical environment are here the agricultural survivors of Southern Plains

dust, wind, and work, for example, in Brett Wallach's essay. But some essays defy the environmental imperative. "Montana consciousness" is not, for Mary Murphy, a useful consciousness of place for its own sake. The three women writers she studies, borrowing from Stegner, each search for an "angle of repose," a condition, if not a region, where they can live with purpose and meaning in Montana.

The tension between environmental and cultural explanations for regional identity runs throughout the collection, reflected in the book's organization around environment and economy, aesthetic Wests, race and ethnicity in the West, and the "extended West" of places and experiences not usually examined as Western. A reader seeking a last word on either the significance of regionalism or the definition of the West will be disappointed, but the strength of the collection is the risks it takes in style and conclusion. Glenna Matthews, for example, describes a long-standing tradition of cosmopolitan tolerance and cultural exchange in San Francisco and Northern California, though she admits she risks downplaying an history of social injustice there as well. But importantly, Matthews seems to start where many of these essays do: I know there is something special about this place—what is it?

The collection allows this and other questions to remain open. The editors' introduction presents the notorious difficulty of defining the West, and the contributors sketch a dozen ways to write about regionalism—historically, autobiographically, geographically, anecdotally, literarily, environmentally—using any feature or place of the West most compelling to them. Wroebel and Steiner apparently encouraged writers to use the first person voice, a gesture aching to happen from the beginning of the book, and appropriate where it appears.

Many Wests is an open-ended (if sometimes tentative) inquiry that demonstrates the liveliness of regional feeling and the scholarship that seeks to understand it. The collection also suggests another question; after "new western history," the refraction of the West into many Wests, and the honest recourse to the first person voice, what is it, finally, that scholars themselves want and need from *this* region?

University of Wyoming | Frieda Knobloch

THEM DARK DAYS: Slavery in the American Rice Swamps. By William Dusinberre. New York: Oxford University Press. 1996.

STOLEN CHILDHOOD: Slave Youth in Nineteenth-Century America. By Wilma King. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 1995.

LIFE IN BLACK AND WHITE: Family and Community in the Slave South. By Brenda E. Stevenson. New York: Oxford University Press. 1996.

William Dusinberre's explicitly revisionist study of slavery on the rice plantations of the Georgia and South Carolina lowcountry challenges two powerful themes in slavery historiography by denying paternalism's influence in shaping relations between slaves and slaveowners, and by arguing that the horrors of slavery overwhelmed the slaves' capacity for resistance. Using extraordinarily rich records from three major rice plantation operations—the Manigaults and the Butlers of Georgia and the Allstons of South Carolina—Dusinberre presents an unremittingly grim portrayal of slavery where profit-maximizing planters callously drove their slave workers to the limits of human endurance and beyond.

Dusinberre does not draw his controversial and provocative conclusions from an examination of new documentary sources, but rather from a sweeping reinterpretation of records already familiar to historians of slavery. He levels what might best be characterized as a radical neo-abolitionist critique (with which will he also proposes to frame the two subsequent volumes of his projected trilogy on antebellum slavery) against recent historiographical emphases on the strength and vitality of slaves and their community as they struggled against and transcended the oppression of their bondage. But while Dusinberre accurately details the appalling horrors of plantation slavery in the rice swamps, his insistence that these "charnel houses," as he characterizes them, deprived slaves of their will and capacity to resist, fails to acknowledge the world the slaves made through their extraordinary efforts and determination, and ignores the clear complementarily of his emphasis on the banefulness of slavery, with recent work on slave family and community relations, religious, artistic and musical pursuits, and independent economic activities. Thus he characterizes slaves over-simplistically as being overwhelmed and profoundly damaged by the brutality of their enslavement.

Similarly, his starkly-drawn portrayal of planters as avaricious and aggressive capitalists indifferent to the suffering of their slave workers effectively demolishes the benign self-image they cultivated and challenges recent depictions of slaveholders as paternalists, but at the expense of nuance. For example, planters' regional and national political allegiances, interactions within the planter class, and some aspects of slave-planter relations, fit uneasily within Dusinberre's dichotomous paternalist/capitalist model, and suggest he needs more subtle and less dogmatic interpretation.

Brenda Stevenson confines her study of the antebellum slave South to the single Virginia county of Loudon, but has crafted a thorough examination of family and community life there from the perspective of its racial, class, ethnic, religious, and gender relations. Race, she argues, is the key defining category and hence she divides her study, for the most part effectively, into two complementary, though not comparative, sections on the black and white communities.

Stevenson's discussion of slavery buttresses Dusinberre's anti-paternalistic depiction of planters as aggressive capitalists who valued their slaves only as laborers or saleable commodities, but by demonstrating how slaves coped with adversity by, for example, adopting alternative family structures, she calls into question the "damage" thesis so prominent in *Them Dark Days*. These findings also suggest greater complexity in slave family organization than previous studies have found.

Stevenson describes how racism encumbered Loudon's black population even when free, limiting their property-holding and employment prospects, while shaping family and community relations that closely aligned them with their enslaved fellow-African Americans. She cements her compelling argument for the centrality of race as a determinant, by tracing the profoundly different family and community patterns of Loudon's white inhabitants.

Framing this discussion within the rubric of "Marriage, Family, and the Loudon White Community" (the African American section is slightly differently styled "Black Life, Family and Community"), Stevenson centers on gender conventions especially as formally expressed in courtship, marriage, parenting, and divorce. She depicts most effectively and sensitively the powerlessness of women, particularly those marginalized by poverty or widowhood, within communities regulated by the principles of patriarchy that the county's elite planter families espoused.

The conclusions drawn by Wilma King in her study of slave childhood throughout the antebellum South contradict Dusinberre and Stevenson in important ways. She differs

with Dusinberre, for example, by acknowledging the ability of slave parents to create sufficiently stable family environments for raising their children, while her emphasis on the affection and love slave parents bestowed on their off-spring counters Stevenson's assertion of the prevalence of child abuse and neglect.

Through separate considerations of birth and parenting, work, leisure, education and religion, and tragedy and punishment, King provides a poignant portrait of young slaves robbed of their childhood by slavery's grim conditions. Brutal treatment, overwork, material deprivation, and family disruption burdened these youngsters, all the more disproportionately considering their age and vulnerability, and by obliterating the joys and optimism of youth, made them old before their time. Slave families and communities nevertheless retained the resilience to adapt to dire circumstances, and King analyzes the countless strategic and structural adjustments slaves made in the interests of their children. Young slaves also inherited their parents' aspirations for liberty, while the centrality of family to the slaves' conception and construction of freedom after the Civil War testifies eloquently to its enduring strength and resilience.

In her pioneering work, King takes a regional perspective that obscures some of the detail Stevenson and Dusinberre could derive from their more narrowly-focused studies, while the nineteenth-century concentration somewhat limits her ability to gauge change over time. Nevertheless, her cogent general picture offers a valuable entrée into the topic, and provides a sound frame of reference for the temporally or spacially more specific research that her study should generate. Like King, Dusinberre, and Stevenson have succeeded not only in enriching the historiography of slavery with their fine work but also in opening avenues for future scholarship that hold tremendous promise.

Rider University Roderick A. McDonald

THE SALEM WITCHCRAFT TRIALS: A Legal History. By Peter Charles Hoffer. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas. 1997.

DAMNED WOMEN: Sinners and Witches in Puritan New England. By Elizabeth Reis. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. 1997.

Hoffer, author of *Law and People in Colonial America* (1992), has focused his work in legal history on the Salem witch trials. In *The Salem Witchcraft Trials*, he provides a step by step analysis of decisions made (or not) and actions taken (or not) during the trials, from a legal perspective. What results is a notable contribution to the literature in the field, written expressly, and well, for students and general readers, but that nonetheless suffers from lack of documentation—except for a brief bibliographical essay.

The major theme of Hoffer's work is that people and decisions count. Putting aside though not necessarily discounting, the usual explanations for what happened—the people of Salem were superstitious, or what happened was the result of Puritanism run amuck or seventeenth-century misogyny, etc.—Hoffer recovers the element of human choice, of human agency. Hoffer emphasizes the fatally flawed decisions made by individuals within the legal system, that drove the trials toward their tragic end. As Hoffer persuasively argues, here and elsewhere [see his *The Devil's Disciples: Makers of the Salem Witch Trials* (1996)], it was not inevitable. There were over 100 witch trials in seventeenth-century New England before the Salem episode, and none developed into the large-scale hunt that occurred in 1692. New England's largest witch hunt by far, he argues, resulted

from the failure of responsible figures, who were in turn part of a system that was overwhelmed by the tidal wave of accusations. Hoffer writes: "The key elements of Massachusetts's criminal procedure—speed, inexpensiveness, and social control—simply were unsuited to unmasking falsity on such a scale" (68).

Elizabeth Reis, editor of the recently published *Spellbound: Women and Witchcraft in America* (1998), returns us to gender as an explanation for what happened in seventeenth-century New England, and in the process offers a fine contribution to our understanding of the cultural construction of women in early America. Reis argues that Puritan theology postulated that women and men were equal in the sight of God, and that salvation and damnation were foreordained by God, not chosen by individuals, female or male. Lived religion, however, posed the contradictory suspicion that womanhood and evil were inextricably linked. At this level, Reis shows, Puritans believed that whereas their particular sins led men to their damnation, women's vile natures brought them to the devil. Because men tended to focus on what they did, women on what they were, men were more likely to repent for their particular sins, women to think of themselves as utterly depraved, as "rebellious wretches against God," as "unredeemable slaves of Satan"—as "damned women."

Reis argues that the witchcraft episodes of seventeenth-century New England clearly display this sense of women's inherent wickedness. It was women, by and large, whom the devil tortured, hoping to recruit them into his service as witches. It was women, who confessed to witchcraft, and, Reis argues, were so assured of their essential sinfulness that they became convinced they had actually covenanted with Satan.

Creighton University | Bryan F. Le Beau

DOMESTICITY WITH A DIFFERENCE: The Nonfiction of Catharine Beecher, Sarah J. Hale, Fanny Fern, and Margaret Fuller. By Nicole Tonkovich. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi. 1997.

Nicole Tonkovich's study examines the somewhat paradoxical position of four of nineteenth-century America's most outspoken and prolific commentators on the roles and responsibilities of white, middle-class women. While they--most notably author and educator Beecher and editor Hale--instructed women on the proper discharge of domestic responsibilities, they led active professional lives that effectively removed them from such roles. Further, each of the four women sought to alter common conceptions of domesticity in order to give women greater autonomy and status; they endorsed enlarged educational opportunities and recognized that the "domestic" had to be sufficiently elastic to include the communities with which women necessarily interacted. Part of Tonkovich's project, then, is to enter into the ongoing debate about and redefinition of nineteenth-century concepts of the domestic sphere.

Another, equally important, part of this book is the close engagement with the range of these writers' nonfiction work, including autobiographical writings. Thus, while Margaret Fuller is best known as the author of *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, Tonkovich demonstrates that apart from this polemical call for women's greater equality, Fuller expressed ambivalence about her own ambiguously-gendered upbringing. Throughout the study Tonkovich is careful to call into question the "truth" of these women's autobiographical statements; she is aware not only of the nature of the autobiography as a construct, but also of the ways in which these prominent women knew it to be in their best

interest to present themselves as properly feminine even while they called into question rigid gender definitions. Thus, for example, she points out that Sarah Hale's recollection of enthusiasm for Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho*--as a Gothic novel, unseemly reading for a woman--is tempered by her expressed desire to support the work of a woman writer, which could be seen as consonant with her lifelong advocacy of women.

Implicit in *Domesticity with a Difference*--and it could have been more explicit--is the fact that these four women addressed American women from positions of considerable privilege, not merely professionally, but, by their mature years, in terms of social standing, so that class bias is inevitably woven into their advice and observations. The ideal woman they collectively envision is not of recent immigrant stock, is more likely to live in the urban Northeast than the rural South, and probably has servants. Although Tonkovich does acknowledge this elitist bias as several points, she curiously seems to emphasize it most frequently with regard to Fanny Fern, who, of the four, had known poverty the most intimately, and whose novel *Ruth Hall* (which Tonkovich underutilizes as an autobiographical text despite its clear origins in the author's own experience) demonstrates considerable sympathy for lower-class women and a corresponding contempt for those who lack such sympathy. In short, it seems important to foreground the fact that these influential women were "different" from most American women not only in their professional lives but also in their fairly narrow assumptions about who was qualified to benefit from their advice.

The most valuable chapters of *Domesticity with a Difference*--in the sense that they contribute new insights into the construction of nineteenth-century domesticity--are the fourth, "Domestic Masquerade," and the eighth, "Domesticating Pedagogy." In the former, Tonkovich explores these four authors' relationship to women's fashions, arguing convincingly that all of them were aware of clothing as costume embodying certain social and gender codes, as evidenced by their personal dress and their critiques of extreme and unhealthy fashion trends. The latter chapter demonstrates how deeply interested Hale, Fuller, and Fern--as well, of course, as Beecher--were in the educational process in an era in which the education of children was not only becoming more professionalized, but also was increasingly the province of women--and thus an extension of the "domestic." Most importantly, perhaps, the establishment of the female as mentor and authority figure had implications for the familial power structure.

While *Domesticity with a Difference* will not reconfigure the study of gender in the nineteenth century, it is a valuable addition to scholarship on that subject, drawing our attention to the complex thinking of four women who played a large part in influencing public opinion.

Vanderbilt University Nancy A. Walker

MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICA: The Biosocial Construction of Femininity. By Nancy Theriot. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky. 1996.

In 1988, Nancy Theriot wrote an interesting book about mothers and daughters using a theoretical model adapted from social psychology and phenomenology. Now she has returned to the same material with her own insight enriched by a theoretical and critical vocabulary that has emerged in the intervening years. In the process, she has created a much more significant volume which validates the usefulness, for historians, of literary

criticism and poststructuralist theory used in conjunction with the material realities of economics and bodily experience. The result makes the second edition of her book noteworthy.

In her opening chapter, Theriot lays out the theoretical foundation of her book. Here she is grappling with the traditional historical question of the relationship between what happened, what people in the past say, and what we can know. She seeks both to value the words of historical figures—in her case, middle-class American women—while also respecting the material realities of their lives. For her, the process of naming and understanding an event or happening is significantly different from the event itself, and perspectives are shaped and distilled as women shared their named experiences. Theriot's theoretical material is clear and readable, suitable for upper-class and graduate students and colleagues who are resistant to poststructuralism.

Theriot takes very seriously the writings of mothers and daughters of the nineteenth century as simultaneously reflecting and shaping their own experiences. Starting with the first half of the 1800s, Theriot provides a well-done synthesis of how economic conditions redefined the gender roles inherited from colonial America. She describes how "imperial mothers" were seen as in control of domestic spaces. Then, more innovatively, Theriot asserts that the bodily experiences of childbirth and sexuality lead these mothers to define weakness and suffering as essential pieces of womanhood. According to Theriot, the daughters of this generation inherited their mothers' definitions, but their own physical experiences of womanly strength and the ability to control the pain of childbirth led them to affirm a more powerful and public image of womanhood.

Although Theriot's book does present a useful description of the changing patterns of womanhood among the middle-class, her method has its limits as well as strengths. When she writes about events, such as childbirth, which women seldom described themselves, she moves away from the reality of those events. Her assumptions that what women said in the prescriptive and autobiographic literature can be taken as their basic understanding of their lives is also questionable. The reader comes away wondering if women understood their own private, individual experiences in ways that differed from the ideology that emerged in public expression. Even more basically, Theriot explains away the need to deal seriously with the diversity of women, even within the white middle-class. Although she carefully establishes that she is not looking at women from other class and racial backgrounds, her study leaves nagging questions about whether or not the gender roles she describes were as universal as they seem in her book. What was the impact of these ideas on those women outside the secure circle on which Theriot has focused?

Nonetheless, the new edition of *Mothers and Daughters* is a significant contribution to our understanding of white middle-class women in the 1800s. In addition, Theriot offers us insight, gained since her book was first published, into the difficult process of being true both to the texts of individual women and the material realities of their lives.

Virginia Wesleyan College — Marilyn Dell Brady

CHARLES IVES: A Life with Music. By Jan Swafford. New York: Norton. 1996.

THE MUSIC OF CHARLES IVES. By Philip Lambert. New Haven: Yale University Press. 1997.

Swafford's is a thorough biographical study of Ives, including his relation to his family, his upbringing and roots in Danbury, Conn., the importance of his father, George,

who had musical training from German immigrants, who reputedly had the best Union band during the Civil War, and who established his own Danbury Band in the 1870s. The importance of the band repertory cannot be overestimated for Charles's contribution to American music—bands played both classical and popular repertories, and George's influence was immense (it was a deep blow when he died, age 49, when Charlie was a freshman at Yale). Ives, of course, is most famous for incorporating popular secular and hymn tunes in his music, along with experiments initiated by his father in quarter-tone tuning ("cracks between the piano keys") and other unconventional sounds such as tone clusters on the piano imitating drums. Charlie, of course, had the inner conflict sometimes encountered even today: devoting much time to music, regarded as a feminine activity by many, yet also wanting to participate in manly activities such as baseball and football (of which he was team captain in Danbury, and later played at Yale). His professor of music at Yale, Horatio Parker, who arrived on campus at the same time, instilled important training in classical—if conventional—composition, and this is an important aspect of Ives's style. It was George who had advised his son not to pursue a career in music; therefore Charlie kept it an evening, weekend, and summer activity while he built his career in the insurance business. After his heart attack of 1918, and resulting gradual disconnection with his insurance firm, Ives spent much of his time revising scores and promoting performances and publications of his music. He also supported other composers by anonymously furnishing a third of the funds for Cowell's *New Music Quarterly* (where two movements of his important Fourth Symphony were first published).

Swafford, both composer and writer on music, has created a book that should be of great use to general Americanists, even those with not much musical background since jargon is kept to a minimum and otherwise carefully explained. Contributions by prior writers on Ives, beginning with the 1955 biography by Henry and Sidney Cowell (published the years after Ives's death), and more recently Frank Rossiter, Stuart Feder, and Peter Burkholder, are carefully considered. In 1987 article by Maynard Solomon proposed that Ives backdated his works, to claim priority in inventing various avant-garde techniques; Swafford and others largely refute the theory. For Ives and his music, this is the best place to start.

The book by Philip Lambert, on the other hand, is not for the generalist. (The one common element, besides the subject, is the dustcover photograph, one reversed from the other.) Lambert's premise is that Ives's experimental music has not been seriously studied as well as the better-known, more performed ones such as *Three Places in New England* and the Third Symphony. Chapters describing compositional techniques are intermixed with others of analysis. As explained in the preface, "I assume in the analyses that the reader has a thorough background in the concepts and language of current post-tonal theory." If you have this book, give it to a theorist or composer, as I will do with my copy.

University of Kansas — J. Bunker Clark

FRONTIERS OF HISTORICAL IMAGINATION: Narrating the European Conquest of Native America, 1890-1990. By Kerwin Lee Klein. Berkeley: University of California Press. 1997.

Kerwin Klein plays matchmaker between western history and post-modernism in *Frontiers of Historical Imagination*. The match makes for a felicitous coupling. Klein, frustrated in his search for a useful book to chart "changes in historical discourse in

twentieth century American philosophy, anthropology, and literary criticism" instead has written that book. He provides his survey of discourse with a subject—the writing of the history of the American West during the century following the initial enunciation of the Turner thesis in 1893. Klein convincingly argues that conceptualizing the encounter between Euro-Americans and the indigenous people they displaced as they relentlessly pressed across the continent fulfills Hegel's notion of history as the "collision between people with and without history." Embracing the post-modern critique of grand and inclusive narrative will, Klein promises, free us from the limits of this Hegelian dialectic and will bring Native Americans into history.

Frederick Jackson Turner transformed American historiography with his address to the American Historical Association in 1893 claiming that "The existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession, and the advance of American settlement westward explain American development." Turner attributed the strength of American democracy to the colonization of lands west of the Mississippi—as individualism promoted development so did it also promote democracy. Turner spawned a legion of devotees and critics occupied with proving and disproving aspects of the "Turner thesis."

What are the critical markers on the map between 1890 and 1990 in American historiography and what is the nature of the narrative journey? Has Turner's triumphalist tale of the meaning of the frontier for American democracy given way to a fragmented narrative of comparative immiseration—"my hero is more subaltern than yours"? Or has the "new western history" (and by extension "scientific history" in general) disclosed historical truths obscured by the poetic language and metanarratives of the earlier generations of historians? Klein happily concludes that both approaches have merit and do not mutually exclude each other. He comes to his conclusion through a highly detailed development of the language, plots, and narratives of western history during the past century, beginning with the Turner thesis itself.

Klein's concern is not the "truth" of Turner's hypothesis but rather "broader questions about historical practice"—causality, evidence and, most importantly, "the tradition and theoretical framework in which the historian works." Citing the literary critic Kenneth Burke that "all humans understood history through some form of literary genre" Klein names Turner "the American Dante," author of not a divine but a frontier comedy. Over the course of the twentieth century, however, that tradition moved from a poetic and idealistic framework to social or structural history whose influence was felt as early as the 1950s. History was no longer peopled by the free and rational agents of classical liberalism. Once history became social science, social forces determined the behavior of historical subjects. Nonetheless, the agents of that history still remained the settlers and colonizers who displaced the "people without history." The language, stories, the very subjectivity of indigenous people fit within neither the humanistic nor the social science frame.

Klein proposes that in the 1920s, anthropologists, particularly the pioneering Ruth Benedict, offer a way out of the historian's narrative conundrum. Most especially, the anthropological understanding of culture showed frontier history to be "an agonistic struggle between radically different cultural systems. American democracy . . . was born not of material or spiritual discovery but genocide." (128) With his political cards finally on the table Klein can now develop frontier history as the tragedy he believes it is.

American Studies, not surprisingly, is the intellectual space where Klein plays out his conclusion. After an elegant, meticulous, and sometimes tortured analysis of disciplinary boundaries and limitations what more appropriate place to end up than the one committed to breaking down boundaries? And what heavier gauntlet to throw down than the contested

statement that post modernism has, within the past twenty years, "fairly transformed what counts as American Studies?"

To support his case, Klein reads the classic texts of American Studies, especially *The Virgin Land* and *The Machine in the Garden.* He finds that, despite their differences, they are in agreement about the frontier as the "... preeminent creative force in the making of an American consciousness." Unlike Turner, though, their authors admit to the "double plot" of frontier history—triumph for one civilization, "a prolonged act of genocide" for another. The last figures to step onto Klein's busily populated stage are Gloria Anzaldua and James Clifford. Anzaldua's mixed genre *Borderlands/La Frontera* is where Klein has been heading since Turner established the frontier as the crux of America's meaning. Klein restates the conundrum posed by frontier narratives—all, from Turner to Webb to Anzaldua and many others between—share a common heroic type—the subaltern hero (middle-class westerner, lesbian mestiza, to give two examples). Oppressed by a dominant culture, they eventually triumph only to be challenged by emerging subalterns. Intellectually this leaves us where we are today—a Gordian knot of competing narratives, multiculturalism, and the Hegelian paradigm.

James Clifford's brilliant essay "Identity in Mashpee" goes to the heart of the problems posed by the seemingly irreconcilable juxtaposition of "history" and "culture." The Mashpee story, briefly, is this: a small tribe of New England Indians must establish their tribal identity in court to lay claim to a valuable piece of land in Massachusetts. The group's identity, shaped by personal contacts and oral narratives, cannot meet the textual evidentiary demands of the court. Culture vs History yet again. History won, the Mashpee lost and Klein establishes the material costs of this persistent dichotomy.

Despite its erudition, elegance, political as well as intellectual merit, the tale Klein tells holds some of the same frustrations as the tales he describes. He undoubtedly demonstrates the insights offered by post modernism yet by the end of this long book, one is left with a sense rather like the modernist *Waiting for Godot*—a closure that never comes. There is something odd about finding oneself at the end of this careful and elaborate analysis of texts approving of the notion of "history's narrative enslavement of 'others'." To Klein's credit he acknowledges that he has written only a "prolegomenon" yet one is disappointed that nowhere does he mention feminist theory which criticizes scientific knowledge and demands acknowledgment of subjectivity.

Klein rewards the "people without history" with a serious evaluation of their historical situation. Eschewing either victimization motifs of demeaning sentimentality he offers a convincing method of understanding the "people without history" indeed the history of those people. That perhaps is *Frontiers of Historical Imagination's* most important contribution—in its closing call to "continue to revisit" that imagination, we may refigure indigenous people into America's past.

University of Kansas — Ann Schofield

PERRY MASON: The Authorship and Reproduction of a Popular Hero. By J. Dennis Bounds. Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press. 1996.

Earle Stanley Gardner became wealthy and famous by creating the formula for the standard trial-scene mystery and detective story, and then for turning himself into a writing machine, frequently producing a new short novel in three days. Only the Belgian Georges Simenon and the Englishman John Creasey rivaled Gardner in productivity, and the latter

did not come close in wealth. Gardner's principal creation, the trial lawyer who, with an established retinue of assistants, also acted as a detective. Perry Mason was transmuted into the radio, television, made-for-television film, dragging as it were the formula for one medium across others so effectively as to become a national icon.

J. Dennis Bounds, who teaches television and film writing, and the history and theory of film, at Regent University in Virginia, examines this formula in the context of popular culture theory. His writing is happily free of the higher flights of fancy post-modernist theory that has been foisted on scholarship. His argument is almost always clear, and his findings—despite the *frisson* even a reader friendly to serious efforts to examine the role of Raymond Burr in fixing Perry Mason in the nation's cultural inventory experiences when the Preface acknowledges help from the National Association for the Advancement of Perry Mason—are both interesting and, in the main, significant. Though I would still begin any study of Gardner with J. Kenneth Van Dover's intelligent and un-elaborated *Murder in the Millions*, which has the virtue of placing Gardner in a context inhabited by Mickey Spillane and Ian Fleming as well (1984), Bounds's book has many virtues. Some are mechanical and archival: an appendix that lists every Perry Mason appearance in fiction, film, radio, television, comic strip, comic book, game, or stage play. Some are systematically useful to any study of the mystery genre, as when Bounds examines the conditions of production of pulp writing. Some are helpful to anyone interested in composition, as when Bounds examines the way in which Gardner hewed to his intent in his first Mason novel, *The Case of the Velvet Claws* (1933), despite a title change from *Reasonable Doubt* to its ultimately far less didactic title. There are common sense observations about what made Perry Mason so accessible to post-World War II audiences and, somewhat obliquely, on how formulaic writers cannot be permitted to grow stylistically because of their entrapment by audience expectation.

In his opening chapter Bounds tells us that he will ask "how generic conventions are manipulated by narrative through formula and variation" (p. 26). He poses several additional questions, some of which he answers more satisfactorily than others and some of which are, to a historian of crime fiction, more important than others. He is most successful in examining, again in his words, "how disparate media with their own conventions should come out with a successful fictional narrative based on the same story," though he finesses somewhat the powerful intent of both *should* and *successful* in his query. He does not, I think, answer a question he need not have asked, "is the television series featuring Burr as Mason the consummate Perry Mason?" Nonetheless, this is an intelligent book, well worth reading, and it enriches our understanding of the mechanics of popular culture.

Yale University — Robin W. Winks

THE CULTURE OF SPONTANEITY: Improvisation and the Arts in Postwar America. By Daniel Belgrad. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998.

At first blush, the announced topic of this book seems like a terrific idea—just the kind of thing a multi- and inter-disciplinary student of American Studies ought to be doing! What ties the culture of the 1940s and 50s together, anyway? What overarching principle could possibly carry the historical imagination from the start of the baby boom to the emergence of the flower children? TV, perhaps? Changes in the structure and meaning of the family? The Cold War? Rock and roll? Giddy consumerism? All recent scholarly

hypotheses. And all plausible but partial answers to larger, weightier cultural questions: this was, after all, the era of Abstract Expressionism, existentialism, and Bebop jazz. Daniel Belgrad's all-purpose solution is spontaneity, improvisation as a programmatic approach to art and life. You've got to love it—straightforward, direct, and a gutsy way of uniting gestural painting with dance, pottery-making, Beat poetry, gestalt psychology, and the philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead. And TV, the family, rock music?

A part-time art historian, I was particularly cheered by the prospect of a book that promised to put the visual arts back in the thick of things, to integrate postwar painting into the broader national culture, as Belgrad's title seemed to promise. From the moment that Harold Rosenberg and Clement Greenberg seized control of the mechanisms for interpreting the art of the 1950s—and the popular press, goaded into retaliation by their inflated pomposities, dubbed Pollock "Jack the Dripper"—Abstract Expressionism has been effectively exiled from sober discussions of the culture of its own era. Most art historians, for example, seem bent on separating the movement further from the arena of public discourse, making it appear harder, more arcane, more cabalistic, and adopting the obtuse language of the theorist to assist in the endeavor. The notion of restoring the self-evident process that created the art—spontaneity—to a position of centrality in the culture that produced it is liberating in its simplicity.

This is not a simple book, however. Despite the invocation of the arts in the title, *The Culture of Spontaneity* is exclusively about the arts of the avant-garde. The text is dense, full of scholarly jargon, and never, for a moment, a pleasure to read. It is, as a cultural artifact, as far removed from any working definition of spontaneity as could be imagined. Specialists in modern art will, no doubt, find much to admire here. They will not admire the illustrations, most of which reproduce paintings and all of which do great violence to the originals by being printed as murky black-and-white plates or as garish color ones: in neither case are the images used as much more than decoration. By narrowing its definition of culture, however, *The Culture of Spontaneity* insists that art remains outside the pale, detached and still largely irrelevant to the concerns of the wider world with which it merely coexists. There's a great book to be written on improvisation, spontaneity, and postwar culture, but it's not this one.

University of Minnesota — Karal Ann Marling

FOR THE HELL OF IT: The Life and Times of Abbie Hoffman. By Jonah Raskin. Berkeley: University of California Press. 1996.

If Abbie Hoffman were alive today he would be in his early 60s—a fact that seems startling to those of us who remember him as the founder of the Youth International Party, the head Yippie, who threw dollar bills on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange, who chanted to levitate the Pentagon, and who believed that "generational rather than class conflict was crucial for historical change. . . ." (p. xxii) For all the aging boomers who were warned not to trust anyone over thirty, the irony of aging is increasingly real.

Jonah Raskin, formerly Yippie Minister of Education and now Professor and Chair of Communication Studies at Sonoma State University, has written a moving and eloquent biography, not just of Abbie Hoffman but also of the 1960s cultural revolution of which he was so much a part. Since Hoffman's suicide in 1989 at the age of 52, we know that he suffered from manic depression. Even his illness, in its own way, reflected the Sixties. Many young Americans suffered a collective sense of depression about the war in Vietnam and racial segregation. At the same time, they celebrated the elation of joining together to

create a better America. Sixties activists understood the highs, but especially the lows, that Abbie Hoffman eventually succumbed to.

For the Hell of It refers to Abbie Hoffman's own book, *Revolution for the Hell of It* (1968), his analysis of the Sixties. Other books about Hoffman and his times include Marty Jezer's *Abbie Hoffman: American Rebel* (1992), a critical appraisal of Hoffman's role as a countercultural icon, and *Run, Run, Run; The Lives of Abbie Hoffman* (1994) by Jack Hoffman (Abbie's brother) and Daniel Simon, which is more reliable as an account of the effects of Abbie's life on his family. While Jezer had the advantage of having the cooperation of Johanna Lawrenson, Hoffman's wife, in writing his book (Raskin admits that she has never forgiven him for abandoning her with Hoffman during a violent manic episode in a Las Vegas hotel), Raskin's research is impressive: over 250 interviews along with extensive use of primary and secondary sources. The main distinction between the two biographies is Raskin's sensitivity to and sympathy for Hoffman as "the first American cultural revolutionary in the age of television" and as "a walking, talking postmodernist." (p. xvii)

Raskin is not, however, uncritical of his subject. Even though he admires Hoffman's creativity, his sense of humor, and his ability to command public attention, Raskin does not ignore his chauvinism, egotism, and his frequent inability to distinguish myth from truth. In the end, though, this treatment of Hoffman's life, from his boyhood in Worcester, Massachusetts, through the protests against the war in Vietnam climaxed by the trial of the Chicago Seven in 1969, to his last days spent in a converted turkey coop in Solebury, Pennsylvania, is one that attempts, as he puts it, "to allow the reader to hear his uniquely American voice." (p. 261)

Raskin concludes that Abbie Hoffman was a revolutionary who couldn't adjust to nonrevolutionary times. But unlike so many others—especially Yippie co-founder Jerry Rubin, who disavowed the revolution—Hoffman remained committed to the cause. At a speech at Vanderbilt University shortly before his death, Abbie Hoffman told students: "We were young, we were reckless, arrogant, silly, headstrong—and we were right. . . . I regret nothing. We ended legal segregation. . . . We ended the idea that you can send a million soldiers ten thousand miles away to fight in a war that people do not support. We ended the idea that women are second-class citizens. The big battles that were won in that period of civil war and strife you cannot reverse." (p. 252) Rest in peace, Abbie.

University of Missouri-Kansas City Mary Ann Wynkoop