Book Reviews

Reviews

PRAIRIE PATRIMONY: Family, Farming, and Community in the Midwest. By Sonya Salamon. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992.

Prairie Patrimony consolidates, refines, advances and grounds recent scholarship that challenges familiar platitudes about family farming and rural life in the United States. From the early twentieth century until about fifteen years ago, people interested in such matters had formulaic options. American Studies generally addressed the Heartland through abstracted themes, airy commonalities in intellectual and literary or artistic history, an approach that can eviscerate and defoliate its subject. Agricultural historians emphasized technological advance and the Whiggish interpretation it counsels. Help that might have come from the social sciences fixated on macro-economic and social structural variables that engage less the quality of life for anyone in particular than the way variables behave in a system whose quality is theoretically pre-ordained. More recent works have responded to such shortcomings by identifying earlier scholarship that bucked the trends and by crafting more integrative studies of relations among ideas, technology, economy and social structure on the ground, most often the ground of gender contest, class and community. *Prairie Patrimony* is a welcome contribution to such interdisciplinary revision.

Not surprisingly, however, the divide between social science and humanities traditions and between macro- and micro-level analysis has survived in the rhetoric that dominates recent interpretations. Their common puzzle, not surprisingly, is rural decline: how are we to understand The Last Picture Show on the Plains? One set of scholars, perhaps the more numerous, claim that humble yet worthy rural ideals have fallen victim to monopoly agri-capitalism. The best we can do is to challenge an omnivorous political economy so as to revive an intimate culture of yore. Their opponents argue that those ideals are part of a corrupt fantasy that, thank goodness, is yielding, as it must, to economic reality. Good riddance. Where they differ, then, is in their assessment of the value of challenging one variable over the other—ideational culture versus material society—rather than the presumption of an essential distinction between the two.

One of the greatest values of Salamon's work is in demonstrating that the distinction does not hold. Cultures, in this case those of family farm communities in the Midwest, reproduce social relations and vice versa. With an awesome array of evidence—community histories and folklore, plat books, probate and tax records, censuses, inter-

views and town plans, from the mid-1980s back to the period of Euro-American settlement—she traces specific, intricate connections ranging from the mundane details of everyday existence in seven Illinois towns to the long-term characteristics of trans-Atlantic rural life in general: "The window I use is land. How land is handled reflects what farm families want for themselves and value about the future or the past. By concentrating on the micro-dimension of family actions concerning land, looking through this window over time..., we gain insight into the production of trends in rural society and agriculture—precisely those macrostructures which in turn influence the persistence of family farms and rural communities" (4). With Salamon's help, for example, readers learn precisely how markets (e.g., the auction price of a widow's field) and the conditions for and substance of church-supper gossip can implicate each other.

Although these implications are orderly and persist, they are far from unitary. At every level of analysis Salamon identifies great variations surrounding gender, family-type, generation, ethnicity, prestige, religion, class, period, and farm soil-type. Such variations are interpreted in light of a pair of polar ideal types—the yeoman vs. the entrepreneur—which roughly corresponds to the dominant ethnic opposition within the rural Midwest, German- vs. Anglo-American. In fact, her sample communities were largely chosen to reveal the difference that ethnicity makes, and it is great, indeed. This method makes her work a much-improved version of Walter Goldschmidt's classic, *As You Sow*. One of the great strengths of *Prairie Patrimony* is the much larger range of phenomena that are clearly parsed and vividly illustrated.

While rural communities have much in common (e.g., declining population, male-dominance, farm consolidation), they differ substantially in the ways they participate in and interpret those trends. In making sense of the past and anticipating the future, Salamon demonstrates, those differences have important implications for the kinds of farms that will survive, the kinds of people who will run them, and the look and "personality" of the families and communities they maintain. In particular, despite the privileges enjoyed by more individualistic, expansive, future- and capital-oriented (generally Anglo-) entrepreneurs, there is good reason to believe that more communal, tradition- and kin-oriented (generally German-) yeomen will maintain or proportionately increase their mark on rural, Midwestern ways.

Given the high price ($45) and cool, dry prose style of the book, it will probably be more accessible to researchers or teachers of courses specifically on rural issues than to undergraduates in general education courses. That is too bad, for its lessons could help refocus the old standbys (e.g., Berry, Garlan, Lopez, Marx and Smith) and ground the most timely topics in American cultural criticism in general.

Fortunately, *Prairie Patrimony* is also powerful enough to be worth contesting at its conceptual foundation. For example, history in the book is for the most part prized for its continuities rather than ruptures. Much of the interpretation only makes sense if a reader presumes that ethnicity is a stable, preconditioning identity, a happy combination of inherited and elected tradition, and that local memories fix a stage in slow-moving evolution. Alternative conceptions of ethnicity (e.g., here potentially gaining force in opposition to African-Americans encountered through mass media) and more circumstantial treatments of memory (e.g., here in the context of one of the most radical boom-and-bust cycles in the century) deserve more consideration. I also think that Salamon slights the importance of institutions (particularly the USDA and its associates) in defining the substance and relative priority of recent rural agendas.

But the most troublesome aspect of the book is its thoroughgoing functionalism. For example, despite avowed debts to more recent anthropological theory, the repeated

tabulations of connecting cultural levels is more reminiscent of Parsonian rural sociology and Malinowski's ethnology. Each "system" (the family, tenantry, gender relations, land transfer, etc.) is so organically connected to every other, that most particulars seem to defy explanation, except as manifestations of a norm. Each "system" just is and does, as with minor variations it always has, and would-be agents resemble nameless role-players. The result can be a variety of nominalism (e.g., fathers prize land transfers to sons because they comprise a "stronger father-son dyad"). As respectable as this strategy may be in mainstream social science, it has logical and aesthetic costs.

Potentially more disturbing, however, is its implicitly conservative ethic. At times, of course, that conservatism is beyond reproach. For example, in "rating" the vitality of rural communities, surely persistence of reliable, loving bonds among its members is worth noting and celebrating. Change that includes callous disregard for a neighbor in need is, indeed, worth charting as a loss of system "integration." But other indicators that Salamon employs (and in the end defends) are not so easily identified as healthy: the dominance of a single church as a social rather than religious congregation, the fear and intolerance of outsiders, the ability of gossip to terrorize non-conformists and of like-mindedness to make non-conformity unimaginable. It seems to me no coincidence that these criteria, which make her "German yeomen" seem so attractive, are much like those that Northern European theorists inscribed in Euro-American social science at the very time those yeomen and women were establishing their presence on the Plains.

If these challenges have merit, Salamon is not uniquely at fault. Her work engages powerful controversies well beyond the avowed scope of the book. Whatever its faults, *Prairie Patrimony* covers an awesome terrain. It is the sort of book that could only be written by a mature scholar benefitting from meticulous research and the support of substantial grants and the contributions of dedicated research assistants for many years. Although readers may challenge the concepts and stylistics of her integration, no one should doubt the great contribution that Salamon has made to our understanding of American rural life.

University of Iowa *Richard P. Horwitz*

TOUCHING THE WORLD: Reference in Autobiography. By Paul John Eakin. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 1992.

In this sequel to his *Fictions in Autobiography* (1985), John Eakin proposes to amend that work's emphasis upon literary life histories' negotiations of self-invention as artfully [re]imagined experience. The inevitable fictionality of all autobiography is there argued through textual examples of Mary McCarthy, Henry James, Jean-Paul Sartre and others. Now in *Touching the World: Reference in Autobiography*, Eakin confesses "that I did not give adequate weight to the force of culture in the playing out of the autobiographical act, perhaps because I was drawn to the illusion of autonomy that looms so large in the genre's history." In this more wide-ranging and ambitious study he now promises not to "steer clear of a posture of absolutely autonomous individualism only to embrace an equally absolute version of cultural determinism" (71). Countering still-fashionable arguments of post-structuralists that autobiographies, like all texts, are linguistic constructs that cannot refer beyond themselves, Eakin asserts the paradoxical yet more persuasive proposition: "autobiography is nothing if not a referential act; it is also and always a kind of fiction" (31).

Developing the implications of such an inclusive definition means, first, taking the autobiographical act as considerably more than creating and reading a text. It embraces

not only authorial intentions and audience expectations but also historical, social, psychological, linguistic and even economic pressures and processes in the worlds an autobiography comes to inhabit. "Reference," therefore, links private and collective pasts, literature as a social system, ethno-linguistic sources of metaphor and story-telling, and other cultural resources available for the crucial job living a life and making an autobiography both share: sustaining an identity. What results is a sophisticated analysis that should delight and instruct anyone doing American Studies. I know of no clearer, more concise, or more suggestively cultural examination of autobiography than *Touching the World.*

Reference, however, in Eakin's hands, still refers to form and structure as well as content. The construction of a first-person *voice*, speaking of and out of a *body*, tracing *developmental stages* in *self-awareness* and recording *experiences* of the world, registering through *chronology, change* and *continuity* the self's awareness of movement toward *death*, and the contrary *impulse to undo selfhood* by a return to *childhood* and the *maternal matrix*—these common features of life histories in the West are artful and idiosyncratic as well as culturally generated. Language choices positing the self, a story, significant spaces, the ticking clock of mortality, the mother, clothes, names, leaving and returning home, privacy, intimacy, crisis, and ideology are never direct reflections of historical fact or social experience; they are creative, imaginative expressions." Narrative in autobiography is always a retrospective imposition on remembered experience, but the choice of narrative is justified by its roots in that experience" (197).

In tracing transactions among author, language, and culture, Eakin discusses extreme instances and typical treatments of a common dilemma and psychological challenge: "we are what we were" but "we cannot *be* what we were" (229). Though not wide-ranging in its selection of texts as Richard Coe's *When the Grass Was Taller: Autobiography and the Experience of Childhood, Touching the World* demonstrates the necessity of linking theory and practice by reference to an impressive variety of works and writers. Beginning with the extreme instance of Roland Barthes, he makes shrewd (and sometimes extensive) comments on Nathalie Sarraute, William Maxwell, Henry James, Ronald Fraser, Richard Rodriguez, Henry Adams, Alfred Kazin, Michael Arlen, Patricia Hampl, Oliver Sacks, John Updike, James McConkey, Lillian Hellman and David Maloof. Though briefer allusions to Maxine Hong Kingston and Malcolm X also occur, it's evident from this list that Eakin's predilection is for white, male autobiographers (and theoreticians) from the United States, France, England and Australia. Race and gender, important desiderata of American experience, do not figure centrally in this cultural critique. But the resources of the social sciences are imaginatively tapped, principally from history and historiography (Karl Weintraub, Hayden White, Philippe Lejeune, Wilhelm Dilthey), psychology (M. Brewster Smith, Jerome Bruner, Erik Erikson), and anthropology (Clifford Geertz). Ordinary readers and convention-hugging historians might also relish at least one illustrative discussion of history, biography and autobiography as mutually supportive (and differing) perspectives on a common event, movement or institution. One possibility, explored autobiographically but only glancingly in other generic perspective, is the American Civil War. I for one would welcome a cross-disciplinary discussion of a history of the War, Henry James, Leon Edel's biography, with side comments on Whitman and Matthew Brady. This approach, not to my knowledge fully enacted by a critic of Eakin's stature, might displace attention from self and text to history as event, ideology, image. Eakin's temperament leads him into different, doubtless trickier, thickets of cultural discourse. The payoff this time in *Touching the World* is extraordinarily rich in conceptual

syntheses, psychological insights, and literary judgments. It is a model of literary and/as cultural criticism.

University of Iowa *Albert E. Stone*

HEAVY TRAFFIC AND HIGH CULTURE: New American Library as Literary Gatekeeper in the Paperback Revolution. By Thomas Bonn. Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press. 1989.

THE MAKING OF MIDDLE BROW CULTURE. By Joan Shelley Rubin. Capel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press. 1992.

In *The Making of Middlebrow Culture* Joan Shelley Rubin sets out to "redress both the disregard and the oversimplification of middlebrow culture in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s by illuminating the values and attitudes that shaped some of its major expressions" (xv-xvi). Stuart Pratt Sherman, John Erskine, the Selection Committee of the Book-of-the-Month Club and Will Durant, among others, are all motivated by a conviction to maintain standards and a countervailing, but equally earnest, desire to put more books into the hands of more people. Rubin views the Genteel Tradition as needing reassessment (or resuscitation). Whereas the Genteel critics could be stuffy or bloodless, they also worked against the most powerful institutions of the period—religious, educational and literary—by speaking directly to a large audience, who, they assumed, could be trained to appreciate books.

Several interesting arguments run throughout this book. One has to do with the life of the mind as it is portrayed in public. This transcends Russell Jacoby's concern for public intellectuals by concentrating on the criticisms and promotions that convened the informed conversations that books clubs were assumed to foster. Another traces the emergence of consumer values in the book trade: how a broad conception of Arnoldian culture is overwhelmed by a desire for information, how knowledge becomes a commodity through the longing to be *au courant*. Still a third is the position of the author in regard to her subject. Rubin feels her own middleness. She faults middlebrow critics for surrendering their aesthetic standards to marketability, but she sees in the book enterprise a legitimate effort of a large population to know more and to exercise imagination and taste. A mass audience "sought stability, insight, and pleasure in the books to which they were directed. Although many social historians have often overlooked them, these hopes were as legitimate, as poignant, and as human as any of the fantasies played out at Coney Island or the movies" (27).

The best chapter discusses the Book-of-the-Month Club. Here was the epitome of a middlebrow institution. It was marketed to the therapeutic personality of the post-World War I period. It held before potential subscribers information to make up for deficiencies in their knowledge and assured them of making a good impression by being in fashion. Rubin portrays BOMC as "a new *kind* of cultural commodity" (103) because it sold "an opportunity to acquire books not yet published" rather than the books themselves (105). The authority of experts was balanced by the democratic right to accept the selection. Memberships were sold with the same techniques used to hawk soap, but BOMC presented itself as a service for people who knew what they were after (108). The Club sought volume sales (a constructive pun) but portrayed itself as a congenial group, akin to the reading circles of the previous century (109). BOMC depicted "the cultured person as the au courant, performing self" (123). Rubin portrays both critic and subscriber as subject to the contradictory forces of a middle realm between edification and commerce.

The heart of the Book-of-the-Month Club chapter reveals the strength of Rubin's analysis—her ability to reveal cultural forces and critical standards as they are evidenced in individual lives. Her analysis of the five members of the Selection Committee—Henry Seidel Canby, Dorothy Canfield Fisher, Christopher Morley, Heywood Broun and William Allen White—is first rate. The balance of the book is thoroughly researched and informative, but not, to my mind, as original and suggestive as her reading of the Book-of-the-Month Club. This book is exhaustively researched (fine notes give what must be the definitive reading list on the middlebrow in the twentieth century), manifestly interdisciplinary, and forthrightly personal.

Thomas Bonn's book shows great attention to detail in examining the editorial policies of the New American Library. Paperback books, particularly the "midlist" offerings that were neither pulp nor classics, inundate American culture after World War II. Bonn traces the selection of books for NAL for the "gatekeeping" decisions made by the publishers: how the editors anticipated a market and how the paperback was designed to appeal to that readership. This book reveals in great detail the mechanics of the making of middlebrow artifacts. However, the author's own tastes—which Rubin had so carefully recognized—go unacknowledged. Thus, terms such as "genuine literary merit" (43) are used without being examined and MacKinlay Kantor is elevated to "the ranks of the major American writers" (98). Bonn treats the paperback as an artifact, but he misses the opportunity to provide vital, visual evidence through his selection of illustrations. The suggestive paperback covers that are reproduced are balanced by a laconic array of personalities, lined up for ceremonial group shots. Both books show the richness of studying middlebrow culture. Bonn's is informative, but Rubin's shows one way to conduct further exploration of this territory.

University of Wyoming *Eric J. Sandeen*

WRITING REALISM: Howells, James, and Norris in the Mass Market. By Daniel H. Borus. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press. 1989.

In response to Michel Foucault's admonitions, a large number of scholars have attempted to reevaluate the author and authority in a new light. For New Historicists, in their most evangelical moments, the author becomes trapped within discourse, often a mere cipher where authorial criticisms of the social world are translated into examples of tacit support for the unrelenting logic of capitalist hegemony. If the author still exists, then, it is only as a prisoner of the discourse of authority, language and power.

Although Daniel Borus acknowledges many of these Foucauldian and New Historicist insights, he is too careful an historian to ignore historical context as shifting and rarely absolute. And he is less given to loud pronouncements about the nature of writing or to drawing odd connections between text and event. Indeed, his criticisms of New Historicism are mannered and valuable, especially since he borrows many of its ideas on the author as producer of texts embedded within a system of social relations. Thus, Borus no longer seeks to comprehend the texts of writers such as William Dean Howells, Henry James and Frank Norris as simply aesthetic events. Instead, he places them firmly within the context of the historical development of the mass market for fiction, indicating in the process how all these writers (as well as Stephen Crane and Edith Warton, for example), practiced their craft and molded their creations according to conditions that were often not of their own choosing. This contextual examination leads to his essential thesis: "Realism came to prominence in an era in which the written word was also a commodity, bought and sold like other articles of commerce (24). Yet, unlike the New Historicists, Borus

recognizes that the demands of the market while compelling, were not necessarily determinate at all levels.

Borus has collected an immense amount of valuable information on the history of publishing in this volume, succinctly and intelligently tracing the development of the literary market place and the implications that it would ultimately have for the writing of realism. Borus makes a strong case, as well, against drawing firm lines between the genteel drawing room realism of Howells and the gritty naturalism of Norris. Whatever their differences in content, each author was tied to the umbilical chord of the literary marketplace. This connection helps to explain the link between such writers and their audiences as well as the demise of realism and naturalism when the style and substance of literary modernism emerged with the production of new elite audiences and publications.

Many traditionalists will find this work deficient for its failure to appreciate literature on an aesthetic level, while certain postmodernists may condemn the sober tone of this work and its consistently careful recourse to historical context and reconstruction. Both criticisms seem to this reviewer testament to the strength and importance of Borus's volume rather than a guide to its presumed deficiencies.

Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo *George Cotkin*

MODELS OF MISREPRESENTATION: On the Fiction of E. L. Doctorow. By Christopher D. Morris. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi. 1991.

E. L. DOCTOROW. By John G. Parks. New York: Continuum. 1991.

The stunning success of *Ragtime* in 1975 created in one blow three reputations for E. L. Doctorow: as a best-selling author whose novels were sought after for paperback deals and movie rights; as a politically engaged novelist lauded by the literary left and attacked by the right; and as a daring narrative innovator whose works have become the subjects of dozens of academic analyses.

Christopher Morris' *Models of Misrepresentation*, one of two new books on Doctorow, is a brilliant but perverse attempt to strip the political content from Doctorow's work and to portray him as a post-modernist whose sole subject is the problem of textual representation. There is much to admire in Morris' book. His approach is rigorous and sophisticated, based on the work of Nietzsche, Heidegger, de Man, Derrida and J. Hillis Miller. For a writer who views all previous criticism of Doctorow as misguided—while other critics have attempted to establish the meaning of Doctorow's works, Morris argues that his texts are actually about the impossibility of interpretation—Morris' tone is surprisingly measured and noncombative, and his prose is clear and relatively jargon-free. In addition, his deconstructive analysis yields fresh insights into complex, self-referential novels like *Welcome to Hard Times* and *Loon Lake*. Yet Morris' inflexible methodology seems like a case of critical overkill when applied to a more straightforward narrative like *World's Fair*. And his denial of referentiality in a book as engaged with history and politics as *The Book of Daniel* results in peculiarly distorted readings.

Confronted with contradictions in the critical response to Doctorow's work—He's a political novelist! No, he's a formalist experimenter!—Morris argues that the work is about the refusal of meaning. John G. Parks takes a different approach. Doctorow's "work is rich and varied," he writes in the opening paragraph of *E. L. Doctorow*, "not easily falling into the common classifications applied by critics of contemporary American fiction. He is neither a postmodern experimentalist nor a traditional social realist, but his work has

features of both" (11). Parks maintains this balanced both/and rather than either/or approach throughout his brief study.

Parks' book is part of Continuum's "Literature and Life: American Writers" series, but it is a more sophisticated and distinguished analysis than one might expect to find in this series of biographical-critical introductions. Parks takes care of Doctorow's biography in a page and a half and devotes the rest of his study to book-by-book analyses of the fiction. His critical methodology is as varied and flexible as Doctorow's own narrative techniques, but he most frequently relies on insights from Mikhail Bakhtin, whose theories of polyphonic narrative fit well with the work of the many-voiced Doctorow.

Parks' work, unlike Morris', acknowledges the importance of history and politics to Doctorow's fiction. Yet both books are fundamentally formalist literary criticism, and they ignore Doctorow's role as a best-selling author enmeshed in a complex system of literary marketing. It is this last of Doctorow's multiple roles that might prove of greatest interest to American Studies specialists. In recent years, American Studies scholars have produced an impressive body of work that analyzes nineteenth- and early twentieth-century literature within the context of the literary marketplace. Yet except for one article that traces the marketing history of *Ragtime*, [Kathy Piehl, "E. L. Doctorow and Random House: The Ragtime of Cash." *Journal of Popular Culture* 13 (1979)] nothing similar has been done for Doctorow. No one has considered the effects that best-seller lists, the Book-of-the-Month Club, the sale of paperback and movie rights, or literary publicity and advertising might have had on Doctorow's work and how his career in turn might have affected contemporary literature. Thanks to recent American Studies work, it is now clear that the novels of Melville and James, for example, must be seen not just as products of individual genius but also as responses to material conditions of the publishing industry. The studies that will offer us the same insight into E. L. Doctorow and his contemporary peers remain to be written.

Lafayette College *Michael Robertson*

THE SMART MAGAZINES: 50 Years of Literary Revelry and High Jinks at *Vanity Fair*, *The New Yorker*, *Life*, *Esquire*, & *The Smart Set*. By George H. Douglas. New York: Archon Books. 1991.

George H. Douglas provides a brisk survey of what he terms the "smart magazine," by arguing for their generic significance in having "opened up the floodgates to new forms of writing and variant forms of creativity," which made them "a considerable force in American cultural history" (21). In the relatively brief chapters that cover the four principal magazines in the study, Douglas rehearses the story of each magazine's birth (the *New Yorker* was a "blue baby" [130]; *Esquire* "was born under a lucky star" [175]) and publishing fortunes. But the primary focus is on the anecdotal minibiographies of famous editors, writers and artists. His sources range from the files of the magazines themselves to the shelves of biographies, autobiographies, memoirs and reminiscences by or about the publishers, editors, advertising men, artists and writers who created them.

No book about this *type* of magazine can do more than skim these rich and ready-to-hand sources. One anticipates, therefore, that they will be placed in an historical-cultural framework, to analyze their particular significance for a particular American audience in the first half of the twentieth century. *The Smart Magazines*, however, provides no such analysis. In the Introduction, a passage that struggles with the paradox between the alleged egalitarianism of American culture and the avowed elitism of the smart magazines concludes, "Surely these magazines were at least partially the result of historical accident"

(2). Even when historical accident gives way to historical cause, as in the chapter on *Vanity Fair*, Douglas remains tentative: "Maybe [its] charm was related to the time of the magazine's reign..." (94). And he goes on to recast history as nostalgia. This was "a time when things were what they were supposed to be, a time when high-varnish trains like the 'Twentieth Century Limited' ran on time—to the minute" (94).

Nostalgia, finally, seems the guiding force behind this study. Douglas contrasts the "smart" magazines of the past with the "slick" magazines of the present, beautiful to look at but marked by "writing [that] is unmemorable" (3). All that may be true, but this book fails to tell us why.

Trinity College-Hartford *Jan Cohn*

DECLARATIONS OF INDEPENDENCE: Women and Political Power in Nineteenth Century American Fiction. By Barbara Bardes and Suzanne Gossett. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press. 1990.

19th CENTURY AMERICAN WOMEN'S NOVELS: Interpretive Strategies. By Susan K. Harris. New York: Cambridge University Press. 1990.

SISTER'S CHOICE: Tradition and Change in American Women's Writing. By Elaine Showalter. New York: Oxford University Press. 1991.

There can be no doubt that feminist scholarship is redefining American literary and cultural history, and these three books, despite their different emphases, contribute important parts of that process. Each author is concerned with drawing illuminating new maps of the relationship between fiction and the cultural matrix that helped to shape it and which was in turn affected by it. Elaine Showalter's *Sister's Choice*, though the shortest of the three, is the most sweeping in both its historical range and its theoretical reach; Showalter deals with women writers from Margaret Fuller to Joyce Carol Oates, emphasizing the multiplicity of experiences this literature reflects and rejecting essentialist readings of a monolithic "American" or "women's" literary tradition. Susan K. Harris' *19th-Century American Women's Novels* and Bardes and Gossett's *Declarations of Independence* work well as companion volumes. Both focus on nineteenth-century fiction, and deal with some of the same works, though from quite different methodological perspectives; Harris examines the readership for women's novels of the period, showing how authors encoded in their narratives subversive messages that would have been clear to their readers, and Bardes and Gossett—professors of political science and literature, respectively—explore the relationship between fiction by male and female writers and controversies regarding women's political rights, arguing that novels were a significant part of the public debate on these issues.

The title of Showalter's book is the name of a quilt pattern, and quilts are the dominant metaphor of her study, representing the piecing together of American women's literature against the ironies of a Declaration of Independence that excluded them. The quilt stands for a women's "culture" that, though routinely devalued as "art," also signified a sisterly enterprise of mutual creation. Central to *Sister's Choice* are chapters devoted to Alcott's *Little Women*, which Showalter views as an investigation of the dilemma of the female artist, Chopin's *The Awakening*, which rejected upon publication by shocked reviewers, missed its opportunity to influence the course of twentieth-century women's writing, and Wharton's *The House of Mirth*, in which the death of Lily Bart signifies the fate of the female artist whose creativity is proscribed by her culture. Although chronological in its

general organization, *Sister's Choice* reads as a series of discrete considerations of works or traditions—e.g., the "female gothic"—which is due in part to the book's origin as a series of lectures at Oxford University in 1989.

In contrast to Showalter's impressionistic, suggestive method, Susan K. Harris, in *19th-Century American Women's Novels*, takes on the very specific project of teaching twentieth-century readers how to read novels by Susannah Rowson, Susan Warner, Fanny Fern, Louisa May Alcott and other widely-read authors whose works have been variously understood and, Harris believes, misunderstood. Using letters, diaries and other primary sources from the period, Harris focuses on the contemporary readers of the texts as well as the texts themselves to suggest that they convey complex, multilayered messages about women's lives and potential that helped to shape the way women readers thought about love, marriage, work and aspiration. The book is well-researched, and the readings of individual novels are lucid and compelling.

Barbara Bardes and Suzanne Gossett share with Harris a belief in the novel as a social document with the capacity to influence as well as reflect ideologies, and in *Declarations of Independence* they investigate the role of the nineteenth-century novel in the evolving debate about women's political rights and powers. The phrase "political power" in the book's subtitle is a bit misleading, in that it suggests a restriction in focus to direct participation in the political process—e.g., the right to vote. In reality, the authors concern themselves more broadly with women's *relation to* issues of law and politics, including the controversy over married women's property rights and women's role within a capitalistic society that rewards "real" work with wages. Such inclusiveness—plus the book's consideration of the period from the 1820s to the early twentieth century, when the issue of female suffrage was finally resolved—allows *Declarations of Independence* to serve as a history of such debates as well as an exploration of the function of fiction within them.

For the student of American culture, *Declarations of Independence*, with its interdisciplinary methodology and clear sense of history, may be the most valuable of these three recent books, but Showalter's and Harris' volumes, though more specifically concerned with literary culture, are laudably free of specialist jargon and firmly situated in historical contexts.

Vanderbilt University *Nancy A. Walker*

FICTION OF THE HOME PLACE: Jewett, Cather, Glasgow, Porter, Welty, and Naylor. By Helen Fiddyment Levy. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi. 1992.

Gardens, quilts, kitchens, meals—much more than women's work, these are among the domestic elements of the "home place," the center that Helen Fiddyment Levy identifies as primary to women's writing and lives. While contrasting women's domestic community to men's frontier independence is not new, this study illustrates the manner in which each author considered moves from adapting the hierarchical male story of independent success to creating the quilted narrative of women's communal experience. As she emphasizes the didactic nature of this fiction, Levy illustrates these authors' images of a purer society motivated by communal, maternal ideals rather than by existing competitive, paternal patterns of social behavior. More than pseudo-utopian visions, the environments explored are creations drawn from the authors' memories and experience. Thus Levy illustrates how each author ultimately creates a woman's vision of a home place in her mature work, after working through male narrative patterns, discarding them, and releasing herself into her memories of female domestic patterns. The value of Levy's

work, as a study and to women's lives, is the lesson within each authors' career and works: recognition of the "home place" as the spiritual and moral center informing women's experience. Levy has explicated a pattern in these authors' works effectively, though one might wish for more depth and further connections at various points. However, the study does justice to each author and to the overall topic, and it makes one think about one's own "home place."

University of Kansas — *M. J. McLendon*

EXPERIMENTAL LIVES: Women & Literature 1900-1945. By Mary Loeffelholz. New York: Twayne Publishers. 1992.

Loeffelholz's survey of several dozen American and British women writers during the modernist period is part of the recently-launched and promising Women and Literature Series of Twayne Publishers, and it has both the virtues and the limitations of a book in such a series. It does, as the series promises, place women writers in an historical and cultural context, demonstrating what we now know to be the constraints and prejudices and partial triumphs that characterize their careers as writers. The introductory chapter deftly recapitulates the cultural matrix (both British and American) in which women wrote during the first decades of the century, and Loeffelholz is admirably in command of the scholarship on the "New Woman," modernism, and socio-cultural forces that marked the period as one of dramatic possibilities for the female authorial voice.

As one settles into the text, however, the experience becomes similar to reading a literary encyclopedia, as author after author is introduced, discussed, and then abandoned for the next, almost as though a list were being ticked off. Perhaps this is what the book is to provide in its capacity as a survey, but it is disconcerting to leave off Jean Rhys after a page and a half to bump into Rebecca West, just when the discussion of Rhys seems to have been well started. Nor is it quite clear how authors have been selected for inclusion or why varying amounts of space have been devoted to them. Strongly canonical authors, such as Virgina Woolf, are given prominence; authors less well known, such as Rosamund Lehman and Mary Austin, who need substantial treatment in a cultural and literary context, are granted small space.

These concerns aside, *Experimental Lives* provides a valuable resource for students and scholars of modernism and of women's literature in its cultural context. Particularly welcome is the author's inclusion of chapters on women's contributions to popular forms such as the short story and detective fiction, the frequently-neglected field of modern drama, and the Harlem Renaissance, which, Loeffelholz argues, occupies a position as central to modernist culture as does the Paris literary scene of the same period. As usual, Loeffelholz writes clearly and persuasively, and her command of scholarship is sound and convincing.

Vanderbilt University — *Nancy A. Walker*

CHANGING OUR OWN WORDS, Essays on Criticism, Theory, and Writing by Black Women. Edited by Cheryl A. Wall. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press. 1989.

The title of this book, "changing our own words," ascribes agency to black women, an agency long denied them as voices with a message and an ability to engage in dialogue. Prior to the 1970s, black women, as credible voices, existed largely in a world of silence. This collection of nine impressive essays by women, with an introduction by the editor,

all of whom are educators/scholars, purports to continue and to amplify on the overtures of speaking out recognizably as begun by black women writers in the 1970s. Among some of the trailblazers of that era acknowledged in the present volume are writers such as Toni Cade Bambara, Gwendolyn Brooks, Paule Marshall, Maya Angelou and Alice Walker. Carrying on the tradition of speaking for themselves started by these predecessors, the contributors to *Changing Our Own Words* call to question the "false universalism" that has surrounded and marginalized black women's voices and their ability to formulate tenets of feminist criticism that speak to their unique situation, one compounded by race, gender, class and ideology. However, in searching for appropriate paradigms to study the conjecture of theory, criticism and writings by black women, the essayists in this volume do not seeks to replace the Eurocentric feminist paradigms that have governed the study of black women's writings. Rather, these essayists seek to privilege additional epistemologies, recognizing that black women write and speak from a multiplicity of discourses and dialectics.

The complexity of black women's voices is driven home to the reader in a powerful essay by Mae Gwendolyn Henderson titled "Speaking in Tongues," which launches the volume. For readers who are familiar with the holiness tradition of worship, speaking in tongues is symbolic of one of the complex and multiple voices with which black women speak. The irony of the symbolic voice of speaking in tongues is that its non-discursive, linguistically nonmediative features place it out of the realm of interpretation for others who would seek to understand it, making this "voice" a challenge for theory and literary criticism. The other essays in the volume also show challenges for theory and criticism of works by black women, while generally (though not unanimously) acknowledging the limitations of deconstructivist criticism, commonly employed in academia. Because the writings of black women acknowledge and incorporate the "other," both within and outside oneself, the contributors to this volume imply that the necessary approach to criticisms should be one of inclusion or expansion of paradigms, rather than one of exclusion and reductionism. Inclusion, from this perspective, would bring together not only equal voices of consensus, but also voices of opposition, reflecting true dialogue, dialectic, and non-hegemony, often revising the traditional inscriptions of male-female roles, familial-public discourse divisions, and the separation between the scholarly and the personal. This value on inclusiveness is not unrelated to the principle of diunitality found in traditional African philosophy wherein opposites are brought together into synchronized rhythm and harmony, "talking back" to one another. Any reader who is familiar with the concept of diunitality can see its logical implications among the essayists in this volume.

In addition to Henderson, the other essayists in this volume are Valerie Smith, "Black Feminist Theory and the Representation of the 'Other'"; Barbara Christian, "But What Do We Think We're Doing Anyway: The State of Black Feminist Criticism(s) or My Version of a Little Bit of History"; Deborah E. McDowell, "Reading Family Matters"; Claudia Tate, "Allegories of Black Female Desire, or Rereading Nineteenth-Century Sentimental Narratives of Black Female Authority"; Hortense J. Spillers, "'The Permanent Obliquity of an In(pha) lliby Straight': In the Time of the Daughters and the Fathers"; Gloria T. Hull, "Living on the Line: Audre Lorde and Our Dead Behind Us"; Susan Willis, "I Shop Therefore I Am: Is there a Place for Afro-American Culture in Commodity Culture?"; and Abena P. A. Busia, "What Is Your Nature?: Reconnecting Africa and Her Diaspora through Paule Marshall's Praisesong for the Widow".

Common themes among the essays are (1) black women's consciousness of and interlocution with the "other," (2) the need to have the conjoining inscriptions of race,

gender, class and ideology read and understood in modes of cultural expression that show the dynamic interaction among these variables in the identity(ies) and voices of black women, and (3) black women's marginality in the American society, a marginality that carries over to academia. The last of these is an issue that begs its own investigation on par with literary issues surrounding the writing of black women.

While the style of the essays in this volume adheres to principles of sound scholarship, forcefulness and clarity also characterize the writing. As a text, this volume is suited for classes in African-American studies, women's studies, literary criticism and American literature.

University of Kansas *Dorthy L. Pennington*

FROM SIN TO SALVATION: Stories of Women's Conversions, 1800 to the Present. By Virginia Lieson Brereton. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 1991.

Brereton analyzes nineteenth- and twentieth-century white American Protestant women's conversion narratives from the perspective of two disciplines, rhetoric and American religious history. In so doing, Brereton sets out to accomplish three goals: to define the conversion narrative as a general literary type; to describe women's uses of that genre; and to enhance understanding of American religious culture. Brereton succeeds in accomplishing her goals, and in so doing a number of important insights emerge from her study.

Brereton demonstrates that American conversion narratives of the nineteenth century followed a formula: first there was reference to the person's life before conversion; then a description of the person's experience of an acute sense of sinfulness, i.e., their "conviction"; followed by description of the conversion itself; and then descriptions of the "fruits of conversion," the ways that conversion empowered the individual to act, as well as reference to episodes of backsliding and renewal. In addition to showing the historical models for these conversion narratives, Brereton attempts to trace the history of the stock language often found in conversion narratives, and provides a helpful discussion of the uses to which that language was and is put, and the reasons that today this stock language can either attract or repel potential converts. In her comparison with twentieth-century conversion narratives, Brereton sees considerable continuity with the nineteenth-century narratives, but there are also significant theological changes. Additionally, late twentieth-century narratives are influenced by shifts in the dominant American religious culture and by access to the electronic media.

Brereton focuses primarily on women's narratives, since although the genre was shaped by men, she finds that it was a particularly congenial vehicle for the expression of women's experiences. She finds that although women's narratives reinforce women's traditional gender role, they also contain a subtext that is critical of patriarchy, and that women are enabled by their conversion to move beyond their circumscribed gender role into worldly activity.

Particularly intriguing is Brereton's comparison of women's conversion narratives with men's, in which they seek to avoid being perceived as a "sissy," and also to contemporary secular conversion narratives, such as those of feminists, of participants in the Alcoholics Anonymous and Weight Watchers programs, and of lesbians. Brereton concludes the books by raising important questions for the further exploration of conversion narratives, especially highlighting the need to make a comparison with black

American women's conversion narratives. Brereton's initial survey of what American women's conversion narratives sheds light on an important aspect of American religiosity.
Loyola University, New Orleans *Catherine Wessinger*

IN FULL FLOWER: Aging Women, Power, and Sexuality. By Lois W. Banner. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1992.

Historically, what has it meant to grow old if one is a woman? In *In Full Flower*, her lengthy "historical meditation," Lois Banner answers that aging has radically varied meanings in different times and in different cultures. But, whether her concern is ancient Greece, seventeenth-century France or contemporary California, Banner contends that patriarchal efforts to maintain "masculine hegemony and gender hierarchy" shape the cultural definition of the aging woman and her social worth as well as such related issues as menopause and sexual relationships. Banner's theme is not the unrelenting domination of women by men, however. She is equally concerned with the lived experience of aging women in Western history.

Banner's text weaves its way chronologically through Western culture and relies on a vast array of sources—elite texts, demography, material culture—to tell a tale of aging women valorized or demeaned, sexual or spiritual. It cuts sharply across disciplines, incorporating art history, religious studies, anthropology, social history and literary analysis and provides multi-variant readings of such aging "models" as Sappho, Penelope, the Wife of Bath and Norma Desmond of *Sunset Boulevard*. Throughout, Banner acknowledges a profound debt to the "cultural approach" of American Studies.

Not surprisingly, Banner, a United States historian, writes most convincingly about the modern period. She gives particularly subtle readings of the often two-sided nature of ideology and of "competing cultural discourses, operating within a dominant historical narrative." Banner links the devaluation of aging women in our own time to the emergence of a commercial culture in the United States.

As is often true of works of this scope, the reader may long for a deeper or more coherent analysis that would, of necessity, come at the expense of empirical material. But for the reader interested in questions of gender (as regards both women and men), sexuality, and the construction of culture, *In Full Flower* is a treasure and a delight.
University of Kansas *Ann Schofield*

THE WOMEN OUTSIDE: Meanings and Myths of Homelessness. By Stephanie Golden. Berkeley: University of California Press. 1992.

In her moving book, Stephanie Golden makes a persuasive argument about why she has focused on women as a separate group, rather than the homeless in general. A homeless woman disturbs society in a way that a homeless man does not: women are so defined by their belonging to home and family that unattached women arouse fears about female sexuality and secret power.

Golden successfully exposes the cultural sources of our attitudes toward homeless women in the hope that this knowledge will enable us to end the "us versus them" syndrome that prevents such women from receiving the kind of help they need. The heart of her book comes from her experience as a volunteer at a shelter, the Dwelling Place. Golden puts a face on the anonymous women who live in the streets by describing the fragments of their lives that they are willing to share. Although approximately half the women have been institutionalized in psychiatric hospitals, Golden diminishes our sense of them as the

"other" by pointing out that many of them lived "normal," dependent lives as females until the death of or divorce from their loved ones catapulted them out of society and onto the streets. Golden enriches our understanding of the individual stories she tells by placing them in a social context through her sections on the history of women as homeless and on the myths that surround them. The important contribution of Golden's book is that it assures that no one who reads it can fail to see both the humanity of homeless women and their pain.

University of Arizona *Myra Dinnerstein*

NEITHER BALLOTS NOR BULLETS: Women Abolitionists and the Civil War. By Wendy Hamand Venet. Charlottesville. University Press of Virginia. 1991.

Solidly researched and well written, *Neither Ballots Nor Bullets* presents an engaging discussion of the formative background and the many important contributions of leading male abolitionists to the antislavery cause, the sectional crisis, and the Civil War itself. The title of the book, *Neither Ballots Nor Bullets*, presents its basic thesis. Although denied formal political power, as well as the right to fight in the war, northern women nonetheless participated actively in the antebellum antislavery movement, as well as in the war effort itself. They did so, according to Venet, by using what public and political rights they did have: the right to the petition, to the platform and to the pen. Readers will find the new information presented concerning the Loyal League's petition drives during the war, as well as the discussion of the individual efforts of prominent female orators and writers, such as Harriet Beecher Stowe's efforts to persuade the British to take the Union side, to be particularly noteworthy.

If the work has its shortcoming, it is the author's single minded focus on the ways in which female abolitionists managed to make contributions to the white male political arena despite their obvious gendered disabilities. Here Venet appears to assume that politics consist entirely in the formally institutionalized political position of white men. While this underlying assumption might be serviceable in some other, less revolutionary era, in analyzing a period in which both major political parties split and the nation descended into Civil War, it would appear to be inadequate. After all, when William Lloyd Garrison eschewed his rights as a white male to both the ballot and the bullet and adopted instead the position of the largely ballotless and bulletless African-American community, he indicated where he found the center of political gravity to reside. In failing to consider the politics of gender and race more seriously in their own right, Venet has missed an opportunity to go beyond compensatory women's history and to advance our understanding of the ways in which changes in northern gender and racial identities and social relations themselves served as a critical center for social and political change.

University of Missouri-Columbia *LeeAnn Whites*

THE RETURN OF NAT TURNER: History, Literature, and Cultural Politics in Sixties America. By Albert Stone.

The publication of William Styron's novel *The Confessions of Nat Turner* in 1967 produced a storm of controversy about the relationship between history and fiction. Many Black intellectuals and leaders angrily criticized Styron's portrayal of the leader of one of the largest North American slave revolts. They argued that Styron, a Southern white, mangled historical evidence by emphasizing Turner's sexual obsession with a white woman and his conflicted passivity, this perpetuating divisive white stereotypes and

myths. Styron belligerently defended the historical veracity of his novel calling it a "meditation on history" that seldom departs from the scanty "*known* facts."

Stone's study picks up where these Black writers and leaders left off, raising doubts about Styron's historicism and ideological motivations. Stone suggests that a closer examination of historical sources, including court records, African-American literature and song, oral histories of Southampton County Virginia residents, and newspaper accounts reveals a historical Nat Turner motivated more by an angry and unified Black culture, and not at all by white-directed neuroses.

In analyzing the cultural work of literature and its reception among different groups of readers and in charting literary and historical depictions of the rebellious slave from the nineteenth century to the present, Stone's study is careful, thoroughly researched and convincing. He is fascinating and engaging when he uses the Styron controversy as a springboard to discuss inadequate shifts in white racial perception since the late 1960s.

The literary significance of Stone's study, however, is limited. As other literary critics have pointed out, the kind of heroic and historically accurate portrayal of Nat Turner that Styron's detractors seem to call for is in many ways negated as a possibility by the Faulkner-inspired gothic conventions out of which Styron writes his novel. The Southern gothic form, with all its ideological implications, encourages deeply conflicted characters whose violent actions are motivated by sexual and half-realized obsessions. Stone has missed the opportunity to explore the historical and racial origins of these conventions in the Southern setting.

Also, the conclusions of such a study, which analyzes the social uses and cultural work of history and historical literature, are ambiguous. After finishing this book, we are still left with the question, "What obligation do novelists (or any artists) have to be historically and historiographically accurate?" A more extensive initial theoretical treatment of interactions between fiction and history wold have allowed Stone to draw more profound conclusions about interdisciplinary commerce.

Alverno College *Jonathan Little*

SENDING MY HEART BACK ACROSS THE YEARS: Tradition and Innovation in Native Autobiography. By Hertha Dawn Wong. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press. 1992.

In this book, Hertha Dawn Wong attempts to extend the definition of autobiography from the usual notion of biography as "the story of one's self written by oneself" (12). She insists that indigenous people had various ways to relate personal narratives and that these were not always written; many times these texts were oral or pictographic. To illustrate her point, she examines three historical periods: the pre-Columbian, the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century "transition" period, and the contemporary.

In her introductory remarks on the pre-Columbian era, Wong says that many of her ideas are "speculative" (13). Some of her speculation involves a discussion of Kiowa pictographic tipis, such as that of Turtle, who decorated his with conventional water power symbols, viz., a turtle/thunderbird figure, two beavers, and rainbows. From examining these tipi decorations, Wong says, we can "read about" Turtle's spiritual life, what he aspires to in this regard and what he has already achieved. She does not explain how this reading is done. Similarly, in a section in which she insists that the series of names given to some Plains Indian males constitutes autobiography, she offers the reader little to substantiate this story other than the obvious idea that each name refers to a significant episode in that person's life.

These two examples, I think, illustrate what is wrong with the basic premise of the book. While it is true that buffalo robe decorations and coup tales among Plains Indians contain autobiographical elements, it does not follow that they constitute full-blown autobiographies. This objection extends to the later sections of the book as well. When the Cheyenne Making Medicine painted a scene depicting members of his tribe "On the War Path," he was not recording his life's story; nor are contemporary fiction writers doing so when they use material from their own lives.

The author does provide us with some provocative ideas here, and in the chapters on the literary boundary cultures and collaborative biography, she identifies some important problems with methods of recording another's life story.

University of Arkansas at Little Rock *James W. Parins*

YOUNG, WHITE, AND MISERABLE: Growing Up Female in the Fifties. By Wini Breines. Boston: Beacon Press. 1992.

Early in *Young, White, and Miserable: Growing Up Female in the Fifties*, Wini Breines asks a linked set of questions: "How . . . did feminism develop out of the experiences of growing up white, female, and middle-class in the 1950s? How did I become a feminist?" This work is avowedly personal; Breines calls it a "sociological memoir." She is not concerned with the origins of a feminist movement, but with feminist lives: she investigates the legacy of a decade she sees as more complex than our images of "happier times" or of absolute repression allow.

Breines argues, in brief, that the feminist consciousness she and many women of her generation developed in the 1960s and 70s was not separated from repressive Fifties girlhoods by some break akin to a "geologic fault," but instead had roots in the "paradoxes" and "ambiguities" and "internal tensions" that riddled the culture of postwar America. Girls came of age in a society that seemed to offer greater opportunities to women, but which also embraced highly restrictive gender roles. They tried to negotiate a sexual culture that was both "punitive and permissive." They tried to make sense of implicit and explicit lessons from their own families, which often conflicted with lessons learned from the crucially important teenage popular culture. Breines searches the "environment" of white, middle-class Fifties girlhood for "signs of cultural discontent and resistance," and finds that "young women retrieved opportunities and images useful for their own emancipation in spite of the more obvious meanings or 'intended' use."

Breines presents her argument obliquely, through thematic chapters. Her work on "bad girls" is fascinating, as are her observations on generational differences between Fifties mothers and daughters. "The Experts' Fifties" seems to ignore the experts most important to her case, and the concluding chapter on Anne Parsons, while moving and deftly handled, does not further her argument.

This work is methodologically adventurous, and that is appealing. Breines' voice throughout is frank and engaging, and her memories of 50s girlhood are powerful illustrations of the possible co-existence of accommodation and rebellion. Sometimes the sociology does not mesh well with the memoir, and I occasionally questioned the ways she used retrospective autobiographies and 1980s fiction about the 1950s as evidence (especially on the topic of race), but the form she chose makes room for insights born of experience, and they enliven this book.

The 1950s are a difficult decade for the baby boom bulge of activist scholars, who often define themselves as the "Sixties Generation." Wini Breines has confronted some

of those difficulties directly, and offers us a thoughtful, intelligent and highly ambivalent portrait of a complex time.

Barnard College *Beth Bailey*

DELIBERATE SPEED: The Origins of a Cultural Style in the American 1950s. By W. T. Lhamon, Jr. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press. 1990.

In *Deliberate Speed: The Origins of a Cultural Style in the American Fifties*, W. T. Lhamon combats the perception that the fifties "lacked serious culture" by presenting sympathetic and individually persuasive readings of not only Kerouac's *On the Road*, Ellison's *Invisible Man*, Pynchon's *V*, Frank's *The Americans*, and Wittgensteins' *Philosophical Investigations*, but also Jackson Pollack's drip paintings, Jasper Johns's iconic use of the flag, Robert Rauschenberg's combines, Chuck Berry's "Maybelline" and "Brown-Eyed Handsome Man," Little Richard's "Tutti Frutti," and, crucially, Ornette Coleman's "Congeniality." Lhamon's sweep is impressive; his inclusion of examples from both sides of the high/low art divide is highly commendable. Unfortunately, *Deliberate Speed* suffers from this breadth; it reaches too far in an attempt to explain too much.

Lhamon uses the phrase "deliberate speed" (drawn from the 1954 *Brown vs. Topeka Board of Education* Supreme Court decision) to evoke "all of America's attempts to transform itself from an industrial to a postindustrial society" (33). After 1955, Lhamon argues, "the culture became demonstrably speedier in style, delivery and cycles, because it was inevitably starting to represent the megapolitan, geographic and demographic development of the postwar period" (7). In response to material changes, a new "mainstream" middle class had risen in post-war America, demanding to see itself and its needs reflected in the nation's cultural production, resulting in the creation of "poplore." According to Lhaman, poplore behaves like folklore insofar as it enacts a serious, organized and artful expression of this mainstream middle class, but it differs from folklore to the extent that it is produced by known individuals and is mechanically or electronically reproduced and commercially distributed. The creation of poplore at this moment in the fifties was only possible because of the independent, natural operations of another (potentially valuable) theoretical construct, the "lore cycle." For Lhamon, a lore cycle is a "natural" process that mediates between the material differences that characterize a historical period and the specific transformations that take place in each art form. According to this theory, popular culture and high culture are not widely separated at the beginning of a lore cycle. Rather, they are "congenial." This notion of "congeniality" is the dominant characteristic of poplore, and the element that links all of Lhamon's examples into representatives of a single aesthetic impulse.

Here the cracks begin to appear in Lhamon's majestic myth and symbol edifice. If the rise of this class corresponds to the rise in a lore cycle, which results in the development of a congenial poplore that unites the culture of the fifties, then all of the examples Lhamon uses have to display "congeniality." A reader might expect Lhamon to demonstrate this congeniality, to produce some evidence that the innovations of Ornette Coleman, Jackson Pollack and Robert Rauschenberg were received as congenially by his "mainstream" middle-class public as were *On the Road*, "Maybelline" and "Tutti Frutti." Instead we are merely given Lhamon's own expressive and sensitive interpretations. Without the support of any actual evidence for the congeniality of these expressions (which would be difficult to produce under the historical circumstances), Lhamon's broad synthesis collapses.

The difficulty of applying the key term of "congeniality" across the entire range of cultural expression in the fifties is only one consequence of the true conceptual problem of this book. Lhamon reaches too far in his attempt to analyze and unify *the* culture of the American fifties. Chuck Berry, Little Richard and Ornette Coleman (let alone Ludwig Wittgenstein and Jackson Pollack) were creating out of different cultural traditions and were producing for very different publics. While the concepts of deliberate speeding culture, congeniality, poplore and lore cycles may prove to be of significant use to cultural historians, they will need to be more carefully worked out in more precisely configured cultural studies.

University of Kansas *Barry Shank*

SMALL WORLDS: Children & Adolescents in America, 1850-1950. Edited by Elliott West and Paula Petrik. Lawrence: University of Kansas Press. 1992.

Those who teach courses in the History of American Childhood, or wish to incorporate the historical experiences of children into other courses in American history and culture can spend considerable time searching for suitable materials. Whereas children have been the object of much debate over parenting methods, religious instruction, state policy, education, and social services, little attention has been devoted to children as historical actors who both experience and create American culture in unique ways.

Editors Elliott West and Paula Petrik have collected a provocative, varied and highly usable assortment of thirteen essays devoted to coaxing children's voices out of a wide variety of historical settings. The essays in *Small Worlds* are organized around the themes of regional diversity, play and leisure, family relationships, and the reconstruction of childhood in adult memoirs. All essays are greatly enhanced by illustrative photographs. In addition N. Ray Hiner's brief discourse on the potential of photographs for understanding the experiences of those who are "seen but not heard," and the dozens of photos in his essay, reflect the class, ethnic and family diversity of several generations of youngsters.

While all of the authors attempt to present American life from a child's perspective, some do not provide much new information. For example, Selma Berrol's "Immigrant Children at School," adds little that is new about the manipulation of these youngsters by the educational system or the tensions that grew between that generations as children became "Americanized." And Lester Alson's very speculative analysis of the socialization of slave children, "Children as Chattel" is much less convincing than earlier work by John Blassingame in *The Slave Community*.

On the other hand, Paula Petrik's "The Novelty Toy Printing Press" reveals the untold story of how young people took a popular toy of the 1880s and used it not only as a means of creative self-expression, but also to create a national organization of child editors and printers. The letters of these young journalists reveal heated debates over the place of blacks and women in their association, thus raising two of the most volatile issues of their day. David Nasaw, in "Children and Commercial Culture" continues to illustrate (as he did in *Children of the City*) how children "won for themselves a place to socialize" (25) despite the best efforts of the reformers who condemned nickelodeons and penny arcades.

In "The Only Thing I Wanted Was Freedom," Ruth Alexander uses records and interviews from the New York State Reformatory for Women during the first quarter of the twentieth-century to illustrate the divergence of cultural and moral norms that separated "wayward girls" from their parent(s) and from the state. The women, who saw

their behavior as simply assertions against the confines of class and ethnicity were judged as potentially dangerous by parents and juvenile authorities.

It is to the authors' credit that this collection can be enjoyed by lay person and scholar alike. Taken as a whole, these original essays remind us that adults can possess myopic vision when viewing "small worlds," but when children speak for themselves, the panorama of American culture and social history is indeed enlarged.

Rhodes College *Gail S. Murray*

THE VOICE OF THE CHILD IN AMERICAN LITERATURE; Linguistic Approaches to Fictional Child Language. By Mary Jane Hurst. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky. 1990.

It is refreshing to find a work with an accurate and fully descriptive title. The project undertaken in *The Voice of the Child* is to determine if the language attributed to children in selected works of American fiction is itself the same language as that spoken by real children. Hurst, using a variety of linguistic concepts, including basic structures in child speech, case grammar, the functions of child speech, parent-child discourse, and children's narratives, concludes that "most American writers who have elected to portray children have done so in a lifelike way, giving child characters appropriate manners of talking" (148).

Hurst proceeds in a straightforward manner, uses a variety of analytic techniques, and presents her findings in a series of clear and helpful tables. *The Voice of the Child* is easy to follow for a non-specialist and quite convincing. Never again will it be necessary for anyone to ask if the children in American fiction speak in a plausible way. But many other questions about the use of child characters in fiction await the work of future scholars. For instance if these children speak as real children do, are they otherwise similar to real children? Or what does the use of children in fiction tell us about the lives of real children in American society? I trust that this is only the beginning of Hurst's work with the children of American fiction and not her final effort.

Memphis State University *Joseph Hawes*

APPALACHIAN FRONTIERS: Settlement, Society, and Development in the Preindustrial Era. Edited by Robert D. Mitchell. Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky. 1991.

This volume grew out of the May 1985 Conference on the Appalachian Frontier sponsored by the Shenandoah Historical Institute and the American Frontier Culture Foundation. It represents an ambitious attempt to comprehend the nature of a region through a cross-disciplinary perspective, though the essays focus primarily on historical geography and social, economic and political history. The book brings together fifteen essays, including a synthetic introduction by the editor that seeks to draw out several unifying themes from the volume. This is a widely diverse collection, and to the extent that its introduction succeeds it does so largely by the force of its author's imagination and will. In subject matter, method and quality the essays vary widely, but taken as a whole the work merits careful consideration by anyone interested in the Appalachians as a region, in the late eighteenth-and early nineteenth-century backcountry, and in the ethnic, class and economic composition of the area.

The most interesting essays address questions of economy and ethnicity in Appalachia. Beginning with Thomas Hatley's discussion of shifting patterns of agriculture and their implications for gender and social power among Cherokees in the eighteenth century,

a number of essays link processes of regional economic development with their social effects. Warren Hofstra finds the origin of class formation in the eastern section of the lower Shenandoah Valley in the large proprietary grants that originally determined patterns of land-ownership there, in contrast to the more egalitarian social structure of the western half of the valley. Richard MacMaster contributes a fine essay on the growth of a commercial cattle trade in western Virginia. He argues that this trade was neither a fleeting frontier phenomenon nor the preserve of any single ethnic group with herding traditions; instead, it long remained a predominant feature of the region's economy and exerted a profound influence on the commercialization of livestock agriculture in the Ohio Valley. Andrew Cayton contributes a characteristically insightful essay contrasting the localist economic orientation of the frontier population of Marietta, Ohio, with the grand commercial visions of its Ohio Company founders. Among the several essays that discuss class formation in Appalachia, Mary Beth Pudup's is particularly worthy of notice. She traces the emergence of the region's middle class to its preindustrial origins and argues that it acted much like community boosters elsewhere: it actively campaigned for outside capital to aid in economic development, and eagerly provided a wide range of services to assist in the development process.

Two essays that focus on ethnicity merit attention. Kenneth Keller asks what, if anything, made the Scotch-Irish a distinctive ethnic group, and offers a balanced treatment that avoids the worst excesses of some scholarship on the subject. He credits the Scotch-Irish with several distinctive traits, especially their commitment to flax and linen production and their Presbyterianism, but argues that in most ways the Scotch-Irish were similar to English emigrants to begin with, and many of their customs and institutions were quickly transformed by American conditions. The familiar stereotypes of Scotch-Irish distinctiveness can be attributed largely, in Keller's view, to the nativist backlash against poor Irish Catholics in the last half of the nineteenth century. Elizabeth Kessel considers the influence of a disproportionate concentration of German settlers on the development of Frederick County, Maryland, and concludes that, among other things, the county's ethnic composition may help to explain its resistance to tobacco cultivation and slave labor.

It is unfortunate that this volume appears so long after the conference that generated it, particularly since a number of its contributors have published works in the meantime that reduce that impact of their essays here. Nevertheless, scholars of Appalachia, of preindustrial economic development, and of ethnicity in the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-centuries will find much of value here.

University of Utah *Eric Hinderaker*

LEWIS MUMFORD, PUBLIC INTELLECTUAL. Edited by Thomas and Agatha Hughes. New York: Oxford University Press. 1990.

"Unless we can weave a new pattern for our lives," Lewis Mumford wrote in his first book *The Story of Utopias* (1922), "the outlook for our civilization is almost as dismal as Herr Spengler finds it in *The Decline of the West*." For the next six decades, Mumford critiqued American culture with an unnerving mix of prophecy and scholarly poise. Donald Miller's biography has chronicled Mumford's life, now *Lewis Mumford: Public Intellectual* offers a companion piece that delves further into his work and thought.

Mumford's belief "that progress will follow from technological change only if humans purposefully direct new technology toward desirable social goals and psychological goals" (13) is the theme by which editors Thomas and Agatha Hughes organized

sixteen essays. Mumford's criticism intensified over the years as his hopes for ecologically planned regional development was lost to the dictates of society that worshipped the machine (namely the auto and the bomb) rather than life. Despite a growing pessimism, he "nourished a tragic sense of life, but never abandoned the hope that miracles might happen (13). With the demise of the Cold War, Mumford's work offers a wealth of possibilities for solving our social and ecological ills. The editors' commendable job is marred by one "Bushian" flaw: they ascribe the dropping of the first atomic bomb to "that fateful day in August 1946" (9).

Rosalind Williams places Mumford's historical writings within the constructs of "a primal, ever-repeating moral drama of Life's balance, breakdown, and renewal" (45). For Mumford, history represented a battle between those seeking an organic balance between individual wants and communal needs and mechanistic societies where people are "no longer creators of machines, but creatures of a machine system," (Molesworth, 246) devoted only to power and expansion. In the 1920s, Mumford bonded with fellow regionalist Benton MacKaye in promoting the "Yankee communism" of the antebellum New England village as the antidote to America's disastrous pattern of mechanistic urban development. Before their vision of regional planning could proceed, a cultural renewal needed to take place. The nation needed to establish "contact once more with that cultural totality lost in the moment when the American forest became 'an enemy to be conquered' and 'obliteration of the natural landscape became a great national sport'" (Thomas, 83). Americans could recapture *The Golden Day* (1926) of Thoreau and Emerson and build liveable communities if they cultivated their aesthetic heritage and embraced experience—"the point of convergence between human consciousness and the environment and the fertile ground of real personal growth" (Blake, 287).

Early on, Mumford's critics recognized that his thoughtful analysis could degenerate into "a mysterious animism" (Williams, 61). Leo Marx also finds fault with "his tendency to impute historical agency to disembodied abstractions—especially the controlling organic and machine metaphors" (174). By the end of his career, Mumford's critics chided him for rehashing well-worn arguments. Actually Mumford's scholarship remained bright and innovative, it was the problem that remained the same. In a world with limited resources, there were still no limits to modern society's demands for continual growth and development.

Mumford's genius remains timeless because he tied human salvation to the mystery of life. While he floated many thoughtful abstractions, his basic theorem never extended too far from reality. In a world devoted to technological achievement and growth, Mumford advocated limiting development to maintain environmental health and to initiate a cultural renewal. By ordering society around the constructs of Nature, humans confront a complexity and balance that they can neither replicate nor fully comprehend. Ultimately, Mumford's Myth of Life represents our choice between "nothing," he wrote seven decades ago, "or rather nothingness."

Rollins College *R. Bruce Stephenson*

GEORGE BELLOWS AND URBAN AMERICA. By Marianne Doezema. New Haven: Yale University Press. 1992.

George Bellows—too young to have been one of The Eight, eclipsed by the arrival of Modernism in the wake of the Armory Show, and having died (in 1925) before the resurgence of interest in social realism in the thirties—has been a peripheral figure in the history of twentieth-century American art. Now Marianne Doezema attempts to place

Bellows, not just at the center of the movement toward a modern style of painting, but at the center of the transformations and innovations occurring in American society between 1900 and 1913.

Bellows arrived in New York confident and ambitious from Columbus, Ohio, in 1904 and, under the tutelage of the charismatic Robert Henri, quickly rose to prominence as a proponent of the "new American art" then causing such a stir in the metropolis. Doezema argues that Bellows' "consistent success" during these years derived from his canny ability to "chart a delicate course between resistance and accommodation" (3), to appeal to middle-class critics' and gallery-goers' desires for both a new kind of art and the maintenance of traditional cultural values during a period of rapid and confusing change.

This dynamic is expressed in the paintings of each of the three subjects on which Bellows concentrated, according to the author. Beginning somewhat ploddingly, she strains to convince us that the dark, brooding and, as she notes, "enigmatic" depictions of the Pennsylvania Station excavation celebrate the forces of urbanization and industrialization. The archeological quality of these works, however, as well as Bellows' parodic play on the conventions of nineteenth-century landscape painting give a critical edge to these somber records of the cycle of construction-destruction-construction that created the modern American city.

Doezema hits her stride when she takes up the boxing subjects. Creating a rich context out of the early history of boxing and the imaging of the sporting underworld in the popular press, she unfolds the cultural tensions in such paintings as *Stag at Sharkey's* and *Both Members of This Club* (both 1909) between their "radical" content and style and their ultimately reassuring message that condemned this seedy and violent pastime and reaffirmed the code of propriety and respectability. A similar mix of titillation and condemnation informed the pictures of tenement life on the Lower East Side. Addressing these works to an art public at once attracted to the "real life" of the underclass and repelled by the dirt and crowding of the slums, Bellows adopted an iconography and compositional strategies that allowed for a bit of "slumming" while carefully distancing the viewer from this alien world.

A hazard of Doezema's interpretive scheme is that the artist tends to evaporate into the general "culture", to become too much the transparent eyeball of the bourgeoisie. The tendency is exacerbated in this case by a "paucity of surviving documentation," reflecting Bellows' apparent reticence in commenting on his aims and methods. The author finesses this situation by grounding her interpretation in a rigorous compositional analysis, and by concentrating exclusively on those aspects of the history of the period that directly relate to the subjects and themes of the paintings. Enhanced by a lively style, extensive notes and a helpful bibliography, *George Bellows and Urban America* documents the revitalization efforts of mainstream artists in the opening decade of this century. These painters, responding to Henri's call for an art closer to the realities of urban life and a style more vigorous and "virile" than that of the Academics, found an audience receptive to action and innovation. But this audience also insisted that the artistic insurgency be conducted within the prescribed limits of the dominant belief system. George Bellows was, in Doezema's view, the most successful of the lot, at least in fashioning a mode of expression that was "boldly defiant but somehow reassuringly familiar" (65).

Temple University Japan *William Clark*

THE BOTANIZERS: Amateur Scientists in Nineteenth-Century America. By Elizabeth B. Kenney. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press. 1992.

Elizabeth B. Keeney, in *The Botanizers: Amateur Scientists in Nineteenth-Century America*, sets out to examine a neglected topic in the history of science: the changing role of the amateur scientist during the period of professionalization. Focusing on Botany, Keeney demonstrates the gradual separation of amateurs' and professionals' goals in pursuing botanical study in the nineteenth century. While both groups worked together and had overlapping goals in the early part of the century, by the closing decades professional botanists had defined the discipline in a narrow, laboratory-centered way that could not accommodate amateurs' interest in self-improvement and religious expression. Instead of eliminating amateur "botanizers," however, professionalization separated the field into botany (for professionals) and nature study (for amateurs).

Although Keeney is interested in professionalization, her primary concern is to tell the amateur botanizers' story within the framework of nineteenth-century culture. She explains that botanizers viewed botany as an occasion for self-improvement (purposeful exercise, discipline) as well as for religious contemplation. Botanizers included women as well as men, children as well as adults. Botany was included in many schools' curricula, and there were numerous societies devoted to botanical study. Keeney is at her best when she writes of the widespread appeal of botany to nineteenth-century lovers of science.

I would like to have seen more critical analysis of the production of the amateur/professional difference. Keeney rightly points out that professionalization and discipline formation are not identical processes and that we cannot discuss categories of knowledge as mere side effects of growing professional authority. However, Keeney seems to make the opposite mistake of seeing the development of professional botanists as a side effect of a naturally unfolding "true" botanical knowledge. The amateur botanizers were left out, and chose a different path, because botanical science (knowledge) no longer served their extra-scientific goals. Although Keeney sketches the possibility of seeing the production of knowledge as a question of power, she short circuits her analysis and settles for amateurs and professionals making different choices. In spite of this shortcoming, *The Botanizers* is an interesting, well-written study of science in nineteenth-century American culture.

University of Louisville *Nancy M. Theriot*

THEATRE ENOUGH: American Culture and the Metaphor of the World Stage, 1607-1789. By Jeffrey H. Richards. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press. 1991.

This book explores the use and influence of metaphors drawn from theater in early America. After presenting some classical and Renaissance uses of "theatrum mundi," Richards develops the "reoriented discourse" brought on by and shaping "the peculiarities of experience" in the new world (xi). Richards centers on the words first of John Smith, then John Winthrop and Cotton Mather, and finally John and Abigail Adams and Mercy and James Warren as exemplars of the use of the trope in differing places and periods.

The book is thoughtful and wide-ranging, interesting in the material collected and analyzed, if elusive and problematic in its broad argument. The central problem is the extreme overlap of terms in theatrical and social discourse. Acts, actors, directors, managers, scene, scenery, setting, props, stage, performance, part, role, character, hero(ine), audience, script, drama, comedy, tragedy are all words planted in life as much as theater. Richards points out how even the word theater has given "a formal connection" to war and stage. Such deep linguistic integration is, of course, telling, but the double usages render

questionable much theatrical implication in, say, John Smith's insistence that he was "a real Actor" in the "scenes" he describes (87-88). Certainly being "a city on a hill" implies a large audience, but does that make it "a theater on a hill" (101)?

Richards' major theme (And here do I invoke music?) is that basic differences develop in use of theatrical metaphor between societies that know institutional theater and those where the trope exists cut off from the stage. By the eighteenth century, the British see life as play-acting within "the boundaries of the beau morde," while New Englanders convert "the world into stage and the actors into world-players," differing usages that "ultimately reflect the political and ideological rifts that lead to revolution" (185, 201, 179). Along with the revolution, the antinomian crisis, revival preaching, and various mobs became theater-substitutes. Richards neglects that the English entertained themselves with mobs, revivals and compelling social dramas like beheading one king and driving another from their boards. Nor does Richards explore North-South revolutionary differences, although the South had some "real" theater and Richards establishes a dichotomy between Puritan trope use and theater as remembered or learned reality for "the cavaliers of the southern colonies" or "the performative world of Virginia" (38, 179).

Richards is a stronger literary than historical analyst, though both areas suffer at times from exaggeration or reification of his metaphor. Formal drama is also slighted; Mercy Warren's plays are neglected, for example, for her history. In the only American play handled, *The Contrast*, Richards so pursues his metaphors that he neglects that the soliloquy he dissects is in fact a plea for the newly-written Constitution and he argues wrongly that the play "imitates Restoration comedy" and that its hero has come to New York "after fighting Shays' rebels" (276, 296).

This book deserves its place with several other studies that explore the rhetoric of common tropes: military, commercial, familial, natural, mechanical, Biblical or journeying. If these metaphors' precise meaning and influence remains slippery, given the multiplicity of their use and of competing tropes, they help convey how language directs and limits what society lets people think and thus do.

University of Maryland *David Grimsted*

SOUL LIBERTY: The Baptists' Struggle in New England, 1630-1833. By William G. McLoughlin. Hanover, New Hampshire: University Press of New England. 1991.

This volume brings together essays published during a ten year period in a number of prominent academic journals. Reasons of access cannot account for the reprinting of the essays here; rather, the essays are selected and structured in such a way that they present a fascinating narrative, telling the story of how the Baptists of New England came to transform themselves from a peripheral dissenting sect to the religious establishment of an America where the churches were only recently separated from the state. The story of American disestablishment forms the subtext that gives this book its coherence and much of its interest. William McLoughlin begins with a short introduction to the larger story of relations between Baptist and Congregationalist churches. Like the rest of the volume, this introduction is written in a clear and incisive style, drawing the reader into the story, and communicating in a real sense the author's enthusiasm for his subject. Each of the essays that follow is prefaced by a short contextualizing paragraph which, rather than providing an abstract of the argument to follow, sets the piece within the unfolding drama of the Baptists' quest for "soul liberty" or freedom of religious worship. The essays then present us with a vignette, a close-up, of one aspect of this struggle, which was sustained through all manner of political and historical change for two hundred years.

The book begins by making a series of useful distinctions, discriminating between Baptists in the New World and those in the Old, and between Baptists and Puritans. McLoughlin explains the pejorative use of the term in the seventeenth century, when Baptists themselves were confused about what they stood for. Anglicans called New England Puritans Baptists, and Puritans called Quakers the same. Attitudes towards baptism were seen as symptomatic of heresy in general, and all heretics were seen as fanatics. The real debate among these groups concerned who was to continue the Reformation and what shape a truly reformed Christian commonwealth would take: a corporately governed state or a state of individuals guided by their own consciences? Shifts in this debate within Baptist thought are chronicled here, like the relations between Armenian and Calvinistic Baptists, the founding of the first Baptist college in 1764, Baptist opposition to slavery in the late eighteenth century and, during the same period, the use of civil disobedience by Baptists to register their opposition to ecclesiastical taxes. Several essays deal with the issue of patriotic allegiance among Baptists, pointing out that many Baptists believed that freedom of worship was among the natural rights for which the revolutionaries were fighting. But popular prejudice, which saw the Baptists as opposed to the patriotic cause, gave rise to general antipathy and sometimes mob violence directed against Baptists, particularly during very public baptismal ceremonies.

McLoughlin also offers insights into the lives of individuals caught up in these and other historical trends, like the case of Ebenezer Ward, who gave permission for his daughter Molly to live with Solomon Finney, the man represented as her spiritual soul mate, after Molly had apparently been abandoned by her husband Joseph Bennet, who had taken to sea. When Bennet reappeared many months later, he accused Ward of alienating his daughter's affections and sued for divorce. Just as the case was about to come to trial, Molly revealed that she was pregnant, undermining the pious arguments of her father in support of her living arrangements. Ward and Finney were fined; Bennet got his divorce; Molly's side of the story remains mysterious in the absence of any statement from her. This case exemplifies the complications created by the practice of "spiritual wifery," which spread rapidly during the period of the Great Awakening and called for a legislative as well as a religious response. Of course this case is symptomatic also of that brand of dissent where individuals claim that conscience is a legislator superior to the state, and proclaim themselves to be above the law.

Soul Liberty usefully provides access to historical documents that illuminate these historical developments. One such is the transcript of the Baptist-Puritan debate of April 14-15, 1668, completed by Martha Whiting Davidson in 1964 after Thomas Danforth's incomplete short-hand account had remained in the Massachusetts Historical Society archive for nearly three hundred years. This debate, though ineffectual for those involved, has considerable interest because it sets out the arguments in favour of antipedobaptism and the Congregationalist refutation of them. The full significance of the debate within its historical context is set out in McLoughlin's commentary. McLoughlin goes on to create a more balanced and realistic historical picture be balancing the clarity of the Baptist position, represented by the debate, against the Baptists' lack of consistency in practice, especially as regards the commitment to toleration. Chapter three juxtaposes with the transcription of the Baptist-Puritan debate a petition presented by the Baptists of Swansea, Massachusetts, (formerly part of Plymouth Colony) for the continuing right to levy religious taxes to support their church in a town where Baptists were in the majority. McLoughlin also presents two previously unpublished imaginative works: Ebenezer Smith's "A Brief Hint of the Mischief of Envy", which McLoughlin presents as "a poetic plea for religious toleration"; and Jabez Cottle's 1822 spiritual autobiography in verse.

This study combines great eloquence, for William McLoughlin is a highly articulate writer, with a great deal of scholarly information, to tell a story that is of interest for what it tells us about the real state of dissent in colonial and early republican New England and for the gestures it makes towards the issue of toleration in contemporary American culture.

University of Leicester, England *Deborah L. Madsen*

HAWTHORNE'S AMERICAN TRAVEL SKETCHES. By Alfred Weber, Beth L. Lueck and Dennis Berthold. Hanover: University Press of New England. 1989.

This work addresses itself to a wide range of interests within American Studies, to art historians, students of travel writing, as well as to Hawthorne specialists. The volume comprises the first complete edition of the sketches based on Hawthorne's 1832 tour through New England and Upstate New York. It includes a generous collection of scenes from the Northern Tour in paintings and engravings by Hawthorne's contemporaries, a fine bibliography of the guidebooks and travel accounts of the region that were available to Hawthorne, and a series of interpretive essays about the sketches. These latter deal with the itinerary and material circumstances of Hawthorne's tour, with the conventions of landscape iconography that the writer inherited and modified, the role of nationalist sentiment in the sketches, and with Hawthorne's formation of an ironic travel persona. *Hawthorne's American Travel Sketches* will have more value as a resource to researchers than as a work of interpretation and criticism. The materials it brings together—the illustrations, bibliography, and the text of the sketches themselves—suggest any number of useful applications. The essays dealing with Hawthorne's sketches are often disappointing because they contain more summary and paraphrase than analysis.

Lake Forest College *Benjamin Goluboff*

VIRTUE'S HERO: Emerson, Antislavery, and Reform. By Len Gougeon. Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1990.

Emerson has become a peculiar kind of icon in that he functions as a kind of blank surface on which commentators with differing political concerns attempt to make him into their versions of the Representative American, usually either the conservative Emerson of "Self-Reliance" or the radical Emerson of "The Poet." Gougeon shows with great lucidity how shortly after Emerson's death biographers were already competing to make him into the model of self-reliant individualism or of radical reform. Oliver Wendell Holmes tried to establish Emerson as a model conservative who avoided reform movements, while others like Moncure Conway and Elizabeth Peabody testified to his deep commitment to abolition and social justice. Gougeon also points out that three of the most influential modern studies of Emerson (Rusk, Whicher, Allen) continue the tradition of the "two Emersons."

Gougeon uses ten years of study of more than a thousand documents to establish once and for all Emerson's heartfelt and public commitment to abolitionism and the principle of social justice. Initially distrusting the abolitionists, prone to racial prejudice, plagued by despair over American materialism, he had to battle constantly the temptation to withdraw back into private life. But persevere he did, making important public speeches for abolition, frequently raising money for the cause, and enduring hecklers and the threat of mob violence. The Emerson that emerges in Gougeon's study, consequently, is a warmer, much more politically activist man than the detached Concord Sage of numerous other studies.

University of Northern Iowa *Theodore R. Hovet*

JOKES AND THEIR RELATIONS. By Elliott Oring. Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky. 1992.

In this book, a collection of essays previously published but recast and refocused with two new pieces added, Elliott Oring has strikingly challenged social scientists engaged in the study of humor. The writing here is intense, the analysis wholly persuasive, and the overall thesis provocative. Oring's contention will no doubt be disputed, thereby producing a spirited and much needed debate within the field.

Two major theories of humor have vied for acceptability. Clearly the one most admired is the psychoanalytic concept framed by Sigmund Freud in *Wit and its Relation to the Unconscious* (1905) that posits humor as deriving from a set of aggressive or sexual motives, though primarily the former because the sexual itself can be subsumed within the aggressive. Unconvinced, Oring couches his argument with the proposition that "humor is crafted ambiguity and ambiguities do not easily yield certainties" (ix). Thus, it is another major theory, formulated by the eighteenth-century poet and essayist James Beattie, who based his ideas on "incongruous assemblages" and "appropriate incongruity"—since then reformulated as "bisociation" and "compatibly opposed scripts"—that directs Oring's approach. Beattie maintained that "Laughter arises from the view of two or more inconsistent, unsuitable, or incongruous parts or circumstances, considered as united in one complex object or assemblage" (2). Consequently, for Oring, "the perception of humor depends upon the perception of an *appropriate incongruity*" (2). To decipher a joke, tale or humorous song, he insists, it is first necessary to locate its incongruity and, once pinpointed, to seek its context in the social, cultural and psychological spaces of society.

Oring incisively applies his theory to a welter of humor forms, including elephant, disaster and Jewish jokes, and Israeli ("chizabet") tales; he also analyzes the "dyadic tradition," a form of personal, private communication that instructs humours impulses. He wryly surmises that "those who would reduce humor to disguised expressions of hostility and aggression might well ponder whether humor might serve to mask expressions of love and tenderness as well" (144).

Boston University *Joseph Boskin*

AMERICA DISCOVERS COLUMBUS: How an Italian Explorer Became an American Hero. By Claudia L. Bushman. Hanover, New Hampshire: University Press of New England. 1992.

Claudia Bushman presents a history of the idea of Columbus in the American imagination. She discusses the mechanisms of popular mythologizing, employed by each generation of Americans to reinvent Columbus for its own purposes. She reminds us that "the manifestations of homage to an historical event" are more powerful than the event itself, and that those manifestations reflect what we think of ourselves. Understandably, given the brevity of the text (it contains fewer than 200 pages but 52 excellent illustrations), Bushman focuses on the 300th and 400th anniversaries of the Columbian encounter.

America discovered Columbus in 1792. After being ignored for three centuries, Americans recreated Columbus in their own idealized image and adopted him into their pantheon of gods. Bushman shows how, at that critical period in history, the Italian explorer who sailed for Spain and never set foot on the soil from which would rise the United States, became a symbol of the newly independent nation. Appropriately, in a scene from the nation's first monument to the admiral, Columbus was hailed by the "Genius of

Liberty," who crushed the emblems of despotism and superstition beneath her feet, while an eagle soared above both clutching in its talons the phrase "The Rights of Man."

Nowhere is the gap between scholarly histories and popular perceptions of Columbus more evident than during the celebrations of 1892. The historian Justin Winsor wrote that although Colombus had been presented with the opportunity to be forever honored, his behavior had merited his being recalled as a "despoiler" whose legacy was "devastation and crime." In the streets, however, especially at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, Bushman points out, Columbus' name became synonymous with that "sublime faith" by which he, much as the nation, had followed "the guiding star of .. reason [to] the Promised Land for the oppressed of all nations." Moreover, she points out, he became the symbol of what America had achieved through "the inspiration of the artist, the skill of the sculptor, [and] the genius of the architect, [all] joined with the cunning hand of intelligent labor."

In response to the reception Columbus received during the Quincentenary, some have predicted that Columbus soon will be forgotten, perhaps intentionally. Bushman concludes, however, that he will remain with us. As an "all purpose symbol" of all we praise and blame, he is "too useful to lose."

Creighton University *Bryan F. Le Beau*

THE AMERICAN FLAG, 1777-1924: Cultural Shifts from Creation to Codification. By Scot M. Guenter. Cranbury, New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press. 1990.

The volume at hand is the best study to date of the role of the national flag in American life and how its social and symbolic power has grown and evolved from the time of an obscure, legend-encrusted origin to the year of definitive sanctification when an official code of flag etiquette came into being. Scot Guenter has ably culled a wide range of documentary sources as well as reviewing folk and commercial artifacts and the mundane facts of flag manufacture in creating this detailed chronicle of perhaps the most central element in our civil religion.

During its early decades, an ensign of variable design and largely naval and military usage gained only gradually in public favor, along with *The Star-Spangled Banner*. The events of 1861-65 were crucial in accelerating the process. "[T]he Civil War... was clearly a watershed in the developing role of the American flag" (87). Subsequently, through the work of veterans and patriotic organizations, the zeal of a few dedicated enthusiasts and such periodicals as *The Youth's Companion* and the universal adoption of the Pledge of Allegiance by public schools, the flag became the object of intense veneration it remains today.

Richly informative and valuable though this contribution may be, we still await the truly comprehensive treatment of this most important topic. Such a consummation cannot be realized before some additional spadework, as, for example, in the "representation and usage of the American flag among the various denominations and religions of the United States" (86). It would also explore recent changes in attitudes toward, and political, literary and artistic exploitation of, the flag, for there have been notable developments since 1924. There would also be an instructive analysis of how the American flag fetish compares with practices in other lands. But, above all, the author of any such exemplary effort would avoid the one notable inadequacy in the Guenter study: a failure to account fully for American flag idolatry by situating it more firmly in, and charting more explicitly the interconnections with, the deep structural transformation of the national economy, society and psyche.

Pennsylvania State University *Wilbur Zelinsky*