

## Book Reviews

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

## Reviews

VISIONS OF PARADISE: Glimpses of Our Landscape's Legacy. By John Warfield Simpson. Berkeley: University of California Press. 1999.

Simpson's book does important work connecting three well-established and growing fields of environmental inquiry about the U.S.: the history of ideas about nature and environment, regional environmental history (here the West and Midwest, especially Ohio), and the emergence and character of suburban landscapes. One of Simpson's main concerns is that the large number of people who live in suburban settings, especially new ones, have few resources immediately at hand to fully see the history and cultural significance of the places they inhabit. But ultimately, it is more than "vision" at stake in Simpson's work; he offers a model for reading through palimpsests overlaid on any suburban landscape for the purpose of reconnecting suburban people to the real places they live, in a way that land can perhaps become more than property, and people's environmental behavior can be shaped by deeper historical understanding of where their environmental values have come from.

Simpson's book uses a wide range of information to build a comprehensive environmental history, from archival material documenting two contrasting Ohio settlers in the early-nineteenth century, to changing ideas about and attitudes towards nature and land (including the work of American Studies mainstays Perry Miller, Leo Marx, Henry Nash Smith, Roderick Nash, Donald Worster, and Annette Kolodny), to the work of widely-recognized American environmental thinkers (including Henry David Thoreau, John Muir, Gifford Pinchot, George Perkins Marsh, John Wesley Powell, Frederick Law Olmstead, and Aldo Leopold). Simpson includes as well the development of federal land and environmental policies. Simpson's historical scope is especially evident in the fact that he addresses the emergence of suburban domestic ideals, not just in the geographical layout of single-family-home suburbs, but in the domestic values which suburban homes themselves embodied, and which profoundly affected the last hundred years of urban development as well. Overall, Simpson argues, American land use and landscapes still reflect the original attitudes toward the land European settlers claimed: understood as both paradise and property, shaped with economic function and a pastoral aesthetic in hand,

contemporary landscapes reveal how pervasive these original attitudes remain, at the expense of other environmental values, land uses, and community structures.

As Simpson acknowledges, much of the historical survey material of his book is available elsewhere, but he does not simply rehearse this history; it is the background against which particular landscapes and experience must be assessed. Simpson's contribution is emphatically personalist: he includes his own insight and observation of landscape and memory in informal, inviting prose, and highlights wherever possible the role of lived experience in any one of his sources' contributions to environmental thought, policy, or action. He returns frequently to the landscape and history of Ohio, where he himself lives. This personalist emphasis invites readers to engage the material, spiritual, aesthetic, and political past of their own neighborhoods and regions, ultimately linking the particulars of any place with the larger history of American environmental ideas and land use policy.

Suburban sprawl can inspire intense criticism written and spoken in the sharpest jeremiads. Readers expecting Simpson to lambaste the suburbs and the people who live there may be disappointed. The book's strength lies in part in Simpson's restraint; he addresses his audience, presumably including many suburbanites, gently and with patience, unfolding layers of ideological, economic, and aesthetic history which located them where they are, inviting them to take historical responsibility for the places they live, in a voice to which they might actually respond with sympathy and understanding. It is a democratic gesture. Simpson's engaging, personal style, even when addressing historical issues, may reach an audience that more overtly critical writing cannot.

University of Wyoming

Frieda Knobloch

OVER THE EDGE: Remapping the American West. Edited by Valerie Matsumoto and Blake Allmendinger. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press. 1999.

It is by no means an indictment to admit, as I think we must these days, that the "new" Western history has itself become a bit long in the tooth. The indisputably worthy project of disassembling the received wisdom of the old, Turnerian historiography is far from exhausted, but it is not difficult by now to discern the general patterns of analysis and critique that have coalesced to create what can fairly be called a shared approach. The theme of "crossing borders" evoked in the title of this collection of twenty essays, for example, is now a familiar trope. And the fine-grained particularism of the essays themselves enacts the ongoing, collective rejection of the grand narratives that for so long constrained the thinking of historians of the American West.

With regard to these matters of general method and principles of inquiry, *Over the Edge: Remapping the American West* doesn't hold many surprises. However, it demonstrates very effectively how a remarkable range of topics has been opened up under the "new" dispensation of historical inquiry. From Mae West's subversive moves as female trickster in *Klondike Annie*, to the gender and ethnic border crossings in the domestic sphere of southern California mining camps; and from minority scapegoating during a 1924 outbreak of plague in Los Angeles, to ecocidal weapons testing in the "national sacrifice zones" of the Great Basin—this volume covers lots of ground. This is both its value and its dilemma.

Conference volumes such as this one, in this case developed out of a 1993-94 program series at UCLA, are inherently difficult to organize coherently. The editors of *Over the Edge* have done a reasonably good job of sorting the essays into three sections. The first

of these focuses on imaginative, especially literary, forms and representations; another, the longest, highlights literal and metaphorical boundary crossing; and the third emphasizes cultural identity and community formation, especially as these play out under the pressures of cultural differences and conflicts. Since matters of race/ethnicity, gender, and the distribution of power inform virtually all of the essays, any attempt at meaningful grouping will of course be highly arbitrary.

Perhaps a better subtitle for this volume would be “Unmapping the American West,” if we take a map to be some sort of comprehensive representation of a terrain according to uniform conventions. This volume contributes to the ongoing project of unfixing the boundaries and conventions of Western historical study, even calling into question at various points the legitimacy of region itself as the object of inquiry. See, for example, Virginia Scharff’s consideration of women’s mobility in and through the West, with civil rights activist Jo Ann Gibson Robinson as her case in point, and Douglas Flamming’s look at the trans-regional formation of identity as reflected in the experience of Harlem Renaissance writer Arna Bontemps. *Over the Edge* offers one set of such highly particularized narratives and local cases, thereby pointing to the virtually infinite research options before us now that we are free from the received maps and grand sagas that channeled the thinking of Western historians in the past. The price paid, and well worth it, is the loss of the easy orientation to what had once seemed like fixed points on the scholarly compass.

In sum, then, this volume accurately reflects the general conditions and procedures of a history that, while perhaps no longer so novel, is certainly current and productive of new domains of knowledge. One of the book’s failings, it seems to me, is that many of the essays are so brief as to seem like mere introductions to their closely focused subjects. For every essay that fleshes out its topic, such as Mike Davis’s characteristically compelling combination of scholarship and politically engaged journalism in an examination of the effects of weapons testing in Nevada and Utah, there are two other pieces that conclude just as they start to get rolling.

On balance I can recommend *Over the Edge* as a representative sampler of work in the progressive mode of Western historical studies. One might quibble that it slights certain subregions (e.g., central and northern Rockies and the Plains), but the models it provides are not tied to particular landscapes and climates. It is the general emphasis on the fluidity of identities and the effects of hierarchies of power that make this volume an effective reflection of a now rather well established scholarly enterprise.

University of Wyoming

John Dorst

AMERICAN CULTURE IN EUROPE: Interdisciplinary Perspectives. Edited by Mike-Frank G. Eptropoulos and Victor Roudometof. Westport, Connecticut & London: Preger. 1998.

There was considerable discussion at the American Studies Association meeting in Montreal last October of the meaning of “America” in the contexts of globalization. So much of the discourse was abstract and ideological that one participant was moved to call for empirical studies of the ways in which American culture is transmitted and absorbed or rejected in other cultures. This book, the product of a 1993 project of the Sociology Department of Wellesley College, is a partial answer to that appeal. The editors began their work in 1996, dropping some papers and adding others. The result is a book of eight disparate essays held together by an introduction and a strong concluding essay by Victor

Roudometof, assisting professor of political sociology at the American College of Thessaloniki, and Roland Robertson, professor of sociology and religious studies at the University of Pittsburgh.

In their introduction Roudometof and Mike-Frank Epitropoulos, then a doctoral student at the University of Pittsburgh, situate their work in the context of recent studies of the effects of American culture in European countries. Citing the work of Jean Baudrillard, Ulf Hannerz, Rob Kroes, Phil Melling, Reinhold Wagenleitner, and others, the editors make clear that the essays in their book provide evidence that Americanization is not equivalent to modernization. They also show that all the countries studied have selected elements of American culture and transformed them, and that in considering the question of what is America, scholars are forced to ask, what is Europe.

Using the *Science Citation Index, 1975-79* Thomas Schott of the University of Pittsburgh and his co-authors examine the extent of American influence in world science, concluding that while the U.S. is still the center of the important networks, scientific achievement in Western Europe and Japan are growing. While scientists claim membership in a world community, national interests and the institutions supported by governments place limits on their freedom to pursue their individual interests. Scientists around the world seek recognition from their American colleagues, despite that fact that science in the U.S. is rather indifferent to work done in other countries, especially in Eastern Europe and Latin America.

One of the best essays is Peter Bergmann's brief historical overview of German attitudes toward the U.S. Bergmann discusses the changes in opinion from the 1840s to the present, arguing that the America to which Germans were responding was often a place of their own imagination. David Lempert, a lawyer and anthropologist, offers a detailed, if somewhat opinionated, piece on the ways in which contacts between American lawyers and businessmen tended to consolidate power among the Russian elite after *perestroika*. While I disagree with Lempert that U.S. government money is better spent sending Americans to teach law and business in Russia than bringing Russians to the U.S., his observations on the effects of American popular culture on Russians are insightful.

Chapters on the effects of American media and of tourism on Greek youth, the use of African American images in German advertising, and the intellectual exchange between Richard Wright and the French existentialists round out the volume. In their concluding chapter, Roudometof and Robertson attempt "to theorize the process of globalization in connection with the problematic of time-space relations" (182). Americanization, they argue, is a question that involves both time (growing homogenization) and space (local resistance and syncretism). Lived space, the authors note, often extends beyond the boundaries of the nation state. Tourism, immigration, media, international human rights organizations, and other institutions all must be factored into any assessment of Americanization.

George Washington University

Bernard Mergen

TO CONSERVE A LEGACY: American Art from Historically Black Colleges and Universities. By Richard Powell and Jock Reynolds. Boston: MIT Press. 1999.

This unique publication is substantially more and somewhat less than one might reasonably expect in an exhibition catalogue on American art from historically Black colleges and universities. It is somewhat less in that artworks from only six of the institutions are included, and the exhibition checklist contains artist biographical entries

that are uneven with regard to the information and insight provided. It is substantially more in that this publication documents a pioneering and exceedingly important collaborative project organized by the Addison Gallery of American Art and The Studio Museum in Harlem. The project involved the development of a traveling exhibition, conservation evaluations and treatments for artworks from the collections of the participating institutions, and museum training of African American student interns.

The strengths of the publication are numerous. From cover to cover, *To Conserve a Legacy* is a visual feast. The volume features beautiful color plates, many of exceptional artworks rarely seen or published. Exhibition curators Richard J. Powell and Jock Reynolds selected an impressive body of work that represents a wide variety of art within the collections of Clark Atlanta, Fisk, Hampton, Howard, North Carolina Central, and Tuskegee universities. These and their peers among the historically Black colleges and universities generally amassed the bulk of their works by African American artists while other institutions disregarded their contributions. The selection of art documented in the publication demonstrates the relative inclusiveness of the collections developed by the participating institutions. They acquired works by other American and foreign artists to document styles, trends, and periods, and to compare and contrast with the work of African American artists. In addition to the work of both well known and less widely recognized African American artists, the exhibition and the publication include art by Native American and other American artists of European descent.

The introduction by Kenshasha Holman Conwill and subsequent essays on each of the participating institutions clearly enunciate the “irreplaceable legacy of historically black colleges and universities in the narrative of American art.” Jock Reynolds’ essay detailing the development of the multi-faceted project reveals its complexity and the commitment required of its many participants. This instructive behind-the-scenes look includes photographic images of planning sessions, conservation treatments in progress, and student interns interacting with artists and staff conservators at the Williamstown Art Conservation Center. The discussion of various treatments and surprising discoveries made in the process is enlightening, as are several additional short essays highlighting challenges encountered with the exhibition of specific materials. It is a special pleasure to see interspersed within these essays, photographs of artists creating their work, the art prior to and during conservation, and the final glorious result of this difficult but essential endeavor. Richard Powell’s wide-ranging essay explores both the uniqueness of art expressed through an African American sensibility, and its universality. His analysis of particular works within the context of the African American experience, and their relationship to contemporaneous art movements is as thought provoking as it is insightful.

Readers exclusively interested in the work of African American artists may be disappointed by the attention given to other American artists. Considering the dearth of publications devoted to African American artists and their work, this is to be expected. It may be, however, that by providing a broader context, the approach taken will foster a greater understanding of African American art and its place within the pantheon of American art. Concluding his essay, Richard Powell writes, “One hopes that after experiencing *To Conserve a Legacy: American Art from Historically Black Colleges and Universities* audiences will recognize the inherent universality in these art collections and, furthermore, will realize that this visual legacy is a cultural bequest not just for African Americans, but for everyone.” Amen.

National Afro-American Museum and Cultural Center

Floyd Thomas

**BUILDING LIVES: Constructing Rites and Passages.** By Neil Harris. New Haven: Yale University Press. 1999.

Growing out of a series of lectures delivered at the Buell Center for the History of Architecture at Columbia University, Neil Harris's *Building Lives* is a provocation to consider buildings in a new way. Abandoning the familiar didacticism of architectural history, Harris treats structures as persons rather than as objects. Employing a carefully constructed naturalizing metaphor, he describes buildings as passing through the familiar stages of human life; they are born, they mature, and they die. Harris admits that his concern for the life cycle of buildings is a carefully chosen conceit, but one that he is quick to claim as useful because it focuses attention on "why we value some structures above others and how we may indicate our continuing interest by adjusting to their needs and modifying our images of their personalities (5)." Harris is interested here in the ways that public comes to understand and embraces a structure. His book thus turns away from the processes of design and construction to examine issues of reception, that is, how a building might become embedded in a given social fabric.

A rather brief book consisting of only three chapters, the strength of the volume is found in its copious illustrations; 180 images are offered across only 166 pages of commentary. These pictures document various celebrative events like the laying of corner stones, elaborate schemes for efficient building maintenance, and the rescuing of selected decorative building elements after demolition. The reader feels Harris lecturing. The illustrations seem like slides flashed on a screen coupled with an informative commentary. It soon becomes clear the human analogy that Harris proposes is quite sound. Buildings, like people, have beginnings and endings and over the course of their existence they may have moments of glory and obscurity. While it is not news that the man-made world, like humans who create it, is both fragile and transitory, Harris nonetheless offers a useful insight. He suggests that the symbolic linkages that we construct between our built environs and ourselves derive largely from our tendency to assign to structures the status of human surrogate. First they seem like our children, then like our colleagues, and finally they become old familiar friends. Because we regularly confer on buildings the qualities of persons, we come to care deeply about them and thus their fates can become, by turns, inspirational or sadly depressing.

Most histories of architecture eschew the emotional territory that Harris seeks to open. He suggests that preservationists and scholars need to have clearer understandings of why communities develop strong feelings for particular buildings. Such an approach, Harris suggests, would help to unmask the hegemonies that lurk behind the various rhetorics of reform, improvement, and progress. Although he nowhere invokes his name, Harris arrives finally at a position consistent with that of anthropologist Robert Plant Armstrong who argued that at the core of a work of art was the power that he called "the affecting presence." This presence, said Armstrong, transformed a thing into a subject and thus enabled it to inspire the human qualities of feeling and sentiment. In *Building Lives* Harris explains why the buildings that populate our experience have the power to matter so much.

George Washington University

John Michael Vlach

THE WAY OF THE HUMAN BEING. By Calvin L. Martin. New Haven: Yale University Press. 1999.

Calvin L. Martin, former professor of history at Rutgers and author of *Keepers of the Game: Indian-Animal Relationships and the Fur Trade* (1978) and *In the Spirit of the Earth: Rethinking History and Time* (1992), has written a fascinating account. Leaving academia, Martin spent time listening to Native Americans in the Southwest and in Southwestern Alaska on the tundra near the Bering Sea where he lived for two years and taught for no salary at a prison filled with Yup'ik Eskimos. The "way of the human being" is the way of the world of indigenous peoples of the Americas "who beheld the first Europeans ashore five hundred years ago and yet who did not regard time or reality or even words themselves in the way those newcomers did then or we do now, and who have struggled mightily with this strange new western philosophy ever since" (3).

While taking part in the activities of Eskimo fish-camps of the Alaska tundra, Martin began to realize that to truly understand Native America was a challenge since there were separate realities at work. To Martin, the hunter-gatherers of the pre-Neolithic age, much like his associates in the fish-camps, were not enslaved to the clock and that non-pastoral, small-band societies had a far different relationship to plants and animals; however, their attitudes were vastly changed by the agricultural revolution which brought the installation of a new conceptual regime, organized religion which "was invented to legitimate the presumption of the cultivated field and barnyard and shepherd's flock—for did anyone think to ask the permission of these creatures to be domesticated" (9). Hence, Martin suggests that the Neolithic revolution in agriculture changed man's attitudes from reciprocity to enslavement of the natural world of plants and animals! Martin adds that this Neolithic revolution also opened up a Pandora's box of environmental woe.

However romantic and Rousseauian, Martin's point is that the modern environmental movement will not work, that we are heading to disaster since our relationship to the earth has long been shattered. Instead of seeing ourselves in the way traditional Navajos do, namely as cosmic artists attempting to maintain hozho or as Yup'ik people who view themselves as descended from a long line of puffins in a kinship relationship, we are incapable of doing so and therefore cannot restore that reciprocal connection with nature to preserve the planet.

Martin's analysis will lead historians to re-read the earliest European observations of Native Americans. Often these observers did not listen carefully enough, didn't comprehend what was being said, or had cultural myopia towards the Native Americans. To Martin, historians have largely told the wrong story about Indian-white relations. Instead of "discovery", conquest and greed, they should have focused more on the nature of the two universes interacting with each other. Unlike Europeans, Native Americans and animals occupied "the same skin - the skin of shared personhood" (56). Columbus could not see beyond "cosmetics." Historian Francis Parkman interpreted the powerful dreams of Mene Seelu, a Lakota shaman, who told his guests of beavers, as being trivial. Others such as the Moravian missionary John Heckwelder got it right. He was told by an Indian that "the rattlesnake is grandfather to the Indians," warning human beings of impending danger. If an Indian killed one, the "whole race of rattlesnakes would rise up and bite us" (53).

Thus, to the Indian there was a kinship between man and animal. In hunting a bear, an Indian must carry out a certain etiquette and give the animal respect since the animal spirit accompanies the carcass and watches over the entire proceedings.

Martin, who intersperses history, oral literature, and personal experience, has written an impressive book. As with Martin's earlier writings, it is bound to have its critics. In that regard, he should be lauded for creating discourse, raising issues that need to be considered as we enter the millennium.

SUNY New Paltz

Laurence M. Hauptman

A FEVER IN SALEM: A New Interpretation of the New England Witch Trials. By Laurie Winn Carlson. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee. 1999.

This is a book from which scholars will learn very little, but with which they ought to be familiar. They are likely to hear about it from their students or friends, who continue to be fascinated by the Salem witch trials. Laurie Winn Carlson offers a very attractive interpretation of the event—an interpretation that is appealing in its simplicity, if tortured in its reasoning.

In 1976, Linda Caporeal ["Ergotism: The Satan Loosed in Salem?" *Science*, April 2, 1976, pp. 21-26] attributed the afflictions of the tormented souls of Salem to hallucinogenic poisoning from the ingestion of ergot, a fungus that grows on rye during periods of abnormally high precipitation. Carlson summarizes the case made against Caporeal's thesis and weighs in with her own medical explanation—encephalitis lethargica. She draws her information almost entirely from studies of a worldwide outbreak of the disease from 1916 to 1930, that claimed more than five million victims.

Carlson argues that by comparing the symptoms reported by the afflicted of seventeenth-century Salem to those of the victims of the encephalitis epidemic of the early-twentieth century, a pattern emerges "that supports the hypothesis that the witch-hunts of New England were a response to unexplained physical and neurological behaviors resulting from an epidemic of encephalitis. In fact," she writes, "it is difficult to find anything in the record at Salem that *doesn't* [the italics are Carlson's] support" that hypothesis (xvi). Carlson goes on to attribute the other witchcraft cases of seventeenth-century New England and, even, those of the Great European Witch-Hunt, which lasted some three centuries, to the same cause.

Carlson readily admits that viral encephalitis is bred in the tropics and generally spread by mosquitoes. She explains its presence in Europe as the result of its having been transported by migratory birds from western Africa. Once in Europe, it was extracted from the birds' blood by mosquitoes, which then passed it on to the peasants. Similarly, she notes, it was brought from Africa to the West Indies and then to New England by slave ships, in whose water kegs mosquitoes bred and flourished. "By the time a ship made it to Boston or Salem," she conjectures, "mosquitoes could have infected all the passengers and their livestock" (138). That it spread more quickly in Salem village, than Boston or Salem Town, she attributes to the village's closer proximity to mosquito infested forests. That the outbreak ended abruptly in the fall of 1692, she argues, is because the air and water grew too cold for mosquitoes to survive (142).

Carlson rejects all psychological, social, or cultural explanation for what happened in Salem—Carol Karlsen [*The Devil in the Shape of a Woman* (1987)], John Demos [*Entertaining Satan* (1982)], and Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum [*Salem Possessed* (1974)], for example—as missing the point, namely that the symptoms they interpreted as a cultural construction were so *obviously physical* (the italics are Carlson's, 122).

Creighton University

Bryan F. Le Beau

PROVIDENCE TALES AND THE BIRTH OF AMERICAN LITERATURE. By James D. Hartman. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press. 1999.

This hard-working book has a thesis, and the author works the thesis very hard. What are “providence tales”? Hartman provides a highly capacious definition:

Providence tales are stories that relate the activities of God on earth. Accounts of miracles, of answered prayers, and of judgments—often in the form of natural catastrophes executed upon the high and mighty—can all be construed as providence tales. Stories of any remarkable, “unnatural” events not explainable by natural law can also be read as providence tales. Such wonders go back at least as far as Pliny the Elder’s *Natural History* and the Bible—and as far forward, in some instances, as the *National Inquirer*; whenever God’s agency is factored into a tale of the bizarre, a case study in natural history or philosophy, or a popular Legend, it also becomes a providence tale. (1)

If Hartman does not believe he has found the Master Narrative for All Previous Thought, this definition suggests that he thinks he has come mighty close to it. Most of his book concentrates, however, on the Protestant version of the providence tale as it developed in Britain and British America during and after the Reformation. Here, as his title asserts, he locates the genesis of American literature. In Britain, he contends, the Protestant providence tale emerged as a weapon in the Reformers’ ideological battle on two fronts: against Catholicism and against “the ever-increasing ranks of atheists and skeptics influenced by the rediscovery of classical writers and by the discoveries of Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler, and other scientists” (18). The anti-Catholic tales refuted “papist claims to supernatural power”; the anti-atheist/scientist tales refuted the trope of an absentee Creator of a mechanical universe, showing instead “that God’s moral order existed, and that he would destroy anyone who upset it” (18). Later, such “scientific theologians” as the Cambridge Platonists borrowed the empirical, Baconian methods of the scientists themselves to defend Providence and demonstrate the existence of a supernatural world. Similarly, Hartman argues, in British America ministers wrote providence tales chiefly to rebut rationalist scoffers; here the tale took two distinctive forms: witchcraft narratives and Indian captivity narratives, neither of which is truly indigenous because each owes its themes and rhetorical conventions to prior witchcraft narratives popular in England. For Hartman, the Indian captivity narrative is not only a providence tale—it shows the agency of God—but also a form of the witchcraft narrative, because, as Cotton Mather indicated in *Wonders of the Invisible World*, “possession . . . is a form of captivity” (122). Presumably, then, by extension captivity is a form of diabolical possession and the captivity narrative a modified witchcraft relation replacing the specters of the apparition tale with flesh-and-blood demon-Indians (38, 99).

There’s more: not only do British providence tales produce American witchcraft and captivity narratives, they also produce the novel. “During the course of my studies,” Hartman confides, “I began to feel that the basic providence tale model I kept finding in every tale I read, British or American, constituted a viable paradigm for the then just emerging novel. I came to construe the unique combination in these tales of supernatural, gothic, and sensationalistic elements with the concrete, empirical spirit of the new science

as a near-mathematical formula, through which a writer could present a supernatural or unseen, in other words *imaginary* world, using concrete evidence, resulting in a prototypical novel, that is to say a vivid, concrete, believable depiction of a fictional world. The key to this discourse lay in its adding the layer of scientific evidence to the supernatural, gothic world being invoked in its pages" (x).

A position as audacious and sweeping as Hartman's is fascinating, but naturally it raises some questions. For example, references to divine action can appear in quite different kinds of texts: sermons, theological discourses, personal narratives, and histories, to name a few. The fact that many of the ministers who wrote tales about providence in action considered themselves historians writing history when they did so—and knew the traditional rules governing the historian—gets downplayed. Regardless of what role they assigned themselves, the thesis of the book demands their being construed essentially as theologians manipulating rhetoric against the enemy Hartman assigns them. For example, the aim of Cotton Mather, who called himself "the Lord's remembrancer," to write the *Magnalia* as a historian fully aware of various competing theories of history, is waved away as mere posturing (134). Distinctions among the hortatory, speculative, and historical modes collapse. Mather must play the role Hartman's thesis needs him to play. Moreover, the premise that all the narratives are the versions of the same narrative in different costumes requires us to dismiss other genuine distinctions. The different experiences of captives—escaped, rescued, ransomed, adopted, for instance—are almost inconsequential: what counts for Hartman is the presence in their narratives of common devices he can trace back to the *Malleus Maleficarum*. The histories of Hanna Dustan, Mary Rowlandson, and John Williams become mere constructs looking back to witchcraft and ahead to the Gothic novel.

It is true that Hartman finds the providence tale model in every tale that he reads. That habit simultaneously gives his book its strength and its greatest weakness.

University of Minnesota

Edward M. Griffin

INVENTING THE "GREAT AWAKENING." By Frank Lambert. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 1999.

Revivals were regular events at many towns and churches in British North America by the early-eighteenth century, and the series that took place between 1735 and 1745 would hardly have been noteworthy were it not for a unique set of occurrences, some fortuitous and others carefully devised. Among the former were the expansion of literacy, the proliferation of printing facilities, and the altered demography of several locations after large numbers of immigrants arrived from areas in Europe where enthusiastic forms of worship were common. Within this context, a cadre of clever and articulate clerics was able to combine an assortment of revivals in several colonies with similar scattered outbursts in Britain and elsewhere to contrive an international phenomenon. According to their periodicals, tracts, and the many letters they exchanged across the Atlantic, these men characterized the events as a colossal manifestation of God's work. It was, they explained, comparable in intensity and scope to the day of Pentecost described in the Acts of the Apostles or to the Protestant Reformation. In the 1840s, evangelical minister and historian Joseph Tracy characterized the revivals as a "Great Awakening," and the name took hold. Since that time scholars have written of it as a single and far-ranging occurrence, perhaps the most significant episode in the history of the continent before the American Revolution.

In this study, author Frank Lambert not only examines the question of whether the awakening was actually great, but he offers an insightful depiction of the struggle between its adherents and detractors. He explains that the divisions between revivalist and non-revivalist clergy were disputes on elemental issues, not merely disagreements over the style and conduct of religious exercises. Solomon Stodard and his fellow evangelicals excoriated Enlightenment influences on churchmen, claiming attempts from the pulpit to explain Christianity by way of reason rather than biblical revelation led only to Deism, a denial of predestined salvation, and the lulling of sinners into an unwarranted sense of security. Opponents of the evangelicals easily matched their foes in zeal, and eventually gained the upper hand. They brought many to their point of view with the oft-repeated claim that the grand movement described by the clerical publicists was no more than a figment of their own over-heated imaginations. This line of persuasion, and their continuous references to the excesses of George Whitefield and several demented members of the evangelical fringe, gradually undermined support for the revivalists.

Any study limited to clerical polemics provides abundant evidence that the Great Awakening was nothing less than a culture war raging throughout the American colonies, over the Atlantic, and on to Britain. The intensity of the partisans suggests that neither side would be satisfied by less than complete victory, but the chasm between the two, in fact, was far narrower than the literature indicates. Many straddled the line between the warring camps, and others moved back and forth between them, apparently with little difficulty or anguish. The viciousness of the arguments, Lambert believes, obscures a much more complex continuum of thought and opinion than is apparent from the writings of the disputants.

This is a meticulously crafted monograph that deals narrowly with the Great Awakening. It is not intended as a cautionary tale. Still, anyone reading it as a tract for the present age will profit from the knowledge that the creation and expansion of media events is a venerable American tradition. Clerical publicists of three hundred years ago, it seems, were at least as adept at making much more from much less as the modern-day creators of "All Day, All Night, All Monica" television news.

Arizona State University

B. R. Burg

SECRET JOURNEYS: The Trope of Women's Travel in American Literature. By Marilyn Wesley. Albany: State University of New York Press. 1999.

Wesley's *Secret Journeys* is an eclectic and wide-ranging study of the figure of the peripatetic woman in a variety of nineteenth- and twentieth-century American texts. Wesley offers this study as an augmentation and extension of feminist perspectives on the literature of these periods: "Feminist literary studies have provided valuable strategies for reading literature centering on the feminine domestic experience; *Secret Journeys* strategizes the effects of feminine adventure outside the home as a radical trope that can change the world." Wesley pursues this trope through such texts as Whittier's *SnowBound*, Mary Rowlandson's *Narrative*, Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, Edith Wharton's 1917 novel, *Summer*, Willa Cather's *The Professor's House*, Marilynne Robinson's 1984 novel, *Housekeeping*, the poetry of Elizabeth Bishop, and elsewhere.

Wesley's study omits what she calls "generic travel works" by women, accounts of real travel in real landscapes, in favor of texts offering fictive female journeys. The omission, Wesley claims, enables a concentration "on the invention of alternatives in a variety of situations through a range of formal commitments and textual innovations." The

“world-changing” alternatives revealed in *Secret Journeys* involve a series of explorations and inversions of the traditional narrative of travel in which the male subject journeys outward from a domestic center of stasis gendered female. Wesley’s study offers something of value in bringing these alternatives to light; perhaps a more valuable project would have discovered this in the works of historical female travelers like Stowe, Fuller, or Caroline Kirkland.

There are a number of striking moments in Wesley’s analysis. Among these is her assertion that the spatial organization of Rowlandson’s captivity story enables the articulation of a subversive version of the female Puritan subject: “the active initiative of the woman traveler of *The Captivity* contrasts the representation of woman as a type of passivity in the drama of conversion as defined by male clergy.” Also striking is Wesley’s reading of *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* as organized around the contrast between Harriet Jacobs’s journeys and her periods of captivity, both of which figure as “expressions of her growing personal and political assertion of African American dignity.” Wesley’s arguments are also notable for the resourcefulness and clarity with which they bring literary theory to bear on these texts of women’s travel. As she deploys Pierre Machery’s theory of narrative displacement upon “the gendered divergences of plot and theme in *The Professor’s House*,” or finds Lacan’s Freudian revisions prefigured in Wharton’s *Summer*, Wesley brings theorist and primary text into a mutually illuminating relation.

*Secret Journeys* has its limitations, of course, and they are to be found in the combination of the highly specialized nature of the book’s concerns with the broadly eclectic range of materials in which it pursues those concerns. To follow women’s travel, especially women’s travel as trope, through a series of texts that span the major genres and cross nearly three hundred years of American history, is to court a highly generalized and thinly spread understanding of that trope.

Lake Forest College

Benjamin Goluboff

THE ERRANT ART OF MOBY-DICK: The Canon, the Cold War, and the Struggle for American Studies. By William V. Spanos. Durham: Duke University Press. 1995.

In his new book, *The Errant Art of Moby-Dick*, William V. Spanos interrogates the discourse of canon formation that has determined the content and form of American literary studies. Tracing the genealogical history of the evaluation of *Moby-Dick*—from its dismissal by early critics as errant and exorbitant, through the Melville “revival” which “apotheosized” *Moby-Dick* as an American masterpiece, and finally to the “New Americanist” project to “demonumentalize” *Moby-Dick* by uncovering the ways “Old Americanist” critics such as F. O. Matthiessen and Lionel Trilling lent their “liberal” discourse to the ideological struggle for world hegemony in the Cold War against the Soviet Union—this theoretically complex and deeply compelling new work is a significant contribution to Melville studies and to American cultural history, and gives memorable expression to Ishmael’s claim that, “there are some enterprises in which a *careful disorderliness* is the true method,” (Spanos’s emphasis, 112).

Bringing together Heideggerian ontology with a Foucaultian sociopolitical perspective, building with lengthy and repeated quotation, and positioning his argument strongly with or against other critics, Spanos’s rigorous investigation of the relationship between the discourses of truth and sociopolitical power in the reception of Melville’s masterpiece is often slow and difficult going. Spanos constructs his book around an opposition: Father Mapple’s postenlightenment spatialization of human experience—“the orderly and controlled process informed by the commanding gaze of the self-present author” (112)—and

Ishmael's errancy, or errant narrative art. Recovering temporality and rejecting the traditional humanism typically associated with disinterested inquiry and truths claiming universality, Ishmael chooses instead a position full of care, or careful in its disorderly method: "Melville's destruction of the anthropologos prepares the ground for the 'negative capability' of the 'loose and baggy' company of postmodern American writers, whose open-ended or, rather, opening (doubling) texts are informed by an ontological understanding of being intended to destroy the metaphysics—the monumentalizing perception of physis from the end or above—that determines the representation of being in the American canonical tradition" (161).

Tracing the various manifestations of the powerful, often brutal—indeed, monomaniacal—American cultural imaginary whose origins lie in the Puritan theological "errand in the wilderness," Spanos demonstrates how this imaginary was first secularized and transformed into cultural myths of "manifest destiny" and then legitimated philosophically (however unintentionally) by the empowering principle of new-world "self-reliance," only to be finally institutionalized by the American culture industry (both the information media and the institutions of learning); Spanos uses his reading of Melville's book to formulate a form of "posthumanist" praxis that retrieves a sense of temporality and to work towards "an oppositional discourse" that Spanos likens to "the gorilla strategy of Vietnamese other vis-a-vis that polyvalent mono-oriented discourse and practice of the American Command" (266). This oppositional discourse, Spanos argues, is not only fully capable of "resisting dominations and colonization by always already fracturing and disarticulating the relay of (disciplinary) centers of the dominant culture," it also envisions a community project grounded in the principle that "difference is the condition for possibility of identity and not the other way around" (266).

Not an errand in the wilderness seeking to build a city on the hill that is authorized by the mythos of manifest destiny and figured forth by self-reliant and rugged individuals, not this cultural imaginary, in the name of which America has "perennially justified its essentially imperial, racist, and patriarchal historical project" (3), but errancy, Spanos argues, is the route to positive praxis. Melville's errant art in *Moby-Dick* shows the way.

Fudan University

Kenneth J. Speirs

**NAT TURNER BEFORE THE BAR OF JUDGMENT: Fictional Treatments of the Southampton Slave Insurrection.** By Mary Kemp Davis. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press. 1999.

Nat Turner first appeared in national consciousness in the guise of Thomas R. Gray's *The Confessions of Nat Turner* (1831). Ever since, he and his event have loomed in someone's imagination. But as Mary Kemp Davis emphasizes in *Nat Turner Before the Bar of Judgment*, the man and the slave revolt have been particularly remembered in the years just before the Civil War, during the era of Jim Crow, and again the 1960s. She chooses six novels to epitomize this history, with a seventh fiction of 1986 as coda and contrast. Since several of these works are today widely unknown or forgotten, her book is a welcome addition to American literary history.

Nevertheless, this is not centrally a study of our common history of race and violence." My study does not foreground a cultural model. My primary purpose is to show how each novel contrives to extract a 'verdict' from its plot. The formal relations change over time, partly in response to cultural dynamics. Still, it is the description of the formal relations themselves rather than their cultural rationale that is the central interest" (6). Form more than content or context is, then, of prime importance.

The following description does, however, follow chronology. After an opening section that examines the rhetoric of contemporary texts, especially Gray's pseudo-autobiography, successive Parts treat four nineteenth-century novels (all largely unfamiliar), two modern works, and concludes with a brief look at a seventh novel which plays off against the Nat Turner story. The five little-remembered novels are G.P.R. James' *The Old Dominion* (1856); Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Dred* (also 1856); Mary Spear Tiernan's *Homoselle* (1881); Pauline Bouvé's *Their Shadows Before* (1899); and Daniel Panger's *Ol' Prophet Nat* (1967). William Styron's *The Confessions of Nat Turner* (1967) is much the most famous or notorious novel in her grouping, although Sherley Anne Williams' *Dessa Rose* (1986) enjoyed a brief success, in part because this writer (significantly, the only black author among the novels selected by this black scholar) treats Styron's Nat Turner obliquely and ironically.

Because Davis stresses formal aesthetic structures over political content, her book creates two sets of opposing categories. Roughly speaking, this pits the text, fictional imagination, structuralism and allied theory, psychoanalysis and certain forms of philosophy against history; sociology; cultures; reading formations; biography and autobiography; religion; gender; even race. The first set defines deep aspects of the subject text. The commoner categories in the second set point to more surface and public experience. Davis summarizes her approach in the following generalization near the close of her 279-page discussion. Speaking of Styron's "meditation on history" she writes,

The hero archetype I have explicated in this chapter is the archetype "of" the text rather than the archetype "in" the text. . . . According to [René] Girard, the scapegoat in the text refers to "the clearly visible theme," while the hero archetype refers to the structural "mechanism or principle that we must disengage from the text for ourselves." A "hidden structural principle" such as the scapegoat, for instance, might "never [be] mentioned as such" or "appear in the text," yet it "controls all its themes." It may even contradict the sense intended by the author. Likewise, Styron did not set out to create a "classical hero" or a "black hero" such as the one defined by Ossie Davis, a man who believed that "liberty . . . [is] worthy of all sacrifice." Nevertheless, in making Nat Turner an atypical slave in an Elkinsian world, the humanist within Styron allowed another paradigm, Neumann's hero archetype, to force its way past the "censor." (169)

This statement asserts a privileged interpretation of the Nat Turner phenomenon as exposed by these "censors" and "unconscious wills" of six or seven novelists. Some readers will welcome the originality and suggestiveness of this deep analysis. Others, though, may recall the warnings of certain contemporary critics (like perhaps Elizabeth Fox Genovese) that formalist/structuralist/psychoanalytic criticism empowers, in the upper world of actual people and events, the self-interests and status anxieties of primarily white Euro-American males. In this light, Davis' reliance upon Erich Neumann, Robert W. White, Mikhail Bakhtin, Roland Barthes, René Girard, and Victor Turner, among others, is both impressive and partial. Within the history of Nat Turner over the years, there are other names that come to mind: Frederick Douglass, W.E.B. Du Bois, Herbert Aptheker, Arna Bontemps, Vincent Harding, Toni Morrison, Mike Thelwell. But these are—I think unfortunately—sidelined, even though they have all been listed in this assiduous scholar's

bibliography. A cultural theory and praxis, though discarded here, might have led to a richer, more open interplay between methodology and the Nat Turner history.

Davis' unusual study leads me to offer some tentative conclusions. First, Nat Turner is the occasion but not the subject of this study. Foregrounding the text draws attention to hidden dynamics—especially structures of language and psychic forces—and usefully unites works by authors of greatly differing talents and reputations. These distinctions are frequently unperceived by readers *and* writers. However, racial divisions in American history and cultures are themselves deep phenomena. There are, in fact, two kinds of deep here. Another conclusion is at least implicit: fears of violence also run very deep. Indeed, the Nat Turner subject suggests that fear of violence runs deeper in white minds than in black ones, for righteous violence is often perceived by many black as liberating. Freedom may, in this light, be less widely shared by Americans than many piously assume. Finally, the belief, shared by Davis, Styron and others in this study, that Nat Turner himself was and remains an impenetrable “mystery,” may be so, but is also a convenient cover-up. For “mystery” serves to close as well as conclude discussion. To be sure, “violence”—even “righteous violence”—is also a cover-up term for some. It, too, serves particular interests and masks deep fears. An ideal methodology would, I believe, combine analysis of Nat Turner texts and contexts, surfaces and depths, mystery and violence in all their intriguing manifestations and interconnections.

University of Iowa

Albert E. Stone

**CAUSE FOR ALARM: The Volunteer Fire Department in the Nineteenth-Century City.**  
By Amy S. Greenberg. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 1998.

One of the constants of boyhood is the desire, at one point or another, to be a fireman. Firemen—for they were historically, although no longer, all men—have held an enviable position of esteem in our society. Generally unscathed by criticisms that have beset police and other city workers, firemen have seemed to embody public service in its highest form. But the roots of the modern firefighter lie in the volunteer fire companies of the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries that fought the rampant blazes that plagued American cities.

These volunteer fire companies have played an important role in historians' development of a new understanding of antebellum America over the last twenty years. For historians such as Sean Wilentz and Bruce Laurie, firemen revealed the growing divisions within a developing industrial market economy. Their boisterous, and violent, escapades in pursuit of fire offered clear windows into the changing social divisions of a city where republican mutuality was being replaced with the more ordered, and divisive, mores of an organized market and society.

Amy S. Greenberg has written the first book-length study of the firemen of the first half of the nineteenth century, one that looks not at frequently-studied Philadelphia and New York, but at Baltimore, St. Louis, and San Francisco. Through this deeply-researched examination of the rise and decline of volunteer fire companies, their membership and activities, and the changing public reaction to their exploits, Greenberg challenges common misunderstandings that have been perpetuated by the focus on just a few large eastern cities. She shows that fire departments were not clubs for a nascent working class. Instead, she proves that even at the time of their demise, volunteer fire departments remained relatively equally divided between lower-class and middle-class members. More important than class was gender. Greenberg argues that fire departments offered a male space separate from the female-dominated home, where the “masculine ideal” (43)

could be expressed. In clear prose and with extensive evidence, Greenberg quickly wipes away simplistic understandings about volunteer firemen.

There are times, nonetheless, when one wishes that Greenberg would have dispensed more quickly with the faulty interpretations of other historians and instead focused on her compelling story of how volunteer fire companies fell so rapidly from their vaunted perch in the antebellum city to universal elimination by the 1860s in favor of paid fire departments. In essence, she argues that although fire departments changed little—in terms of their class makeup, the violence of their members, the “tribute” they demanded of their community—the society around them changed enormously. “Republican liberalism fell to a Christian capitalist order” (16) that required the protection of property, the bureaucratic organization of public functions, and the pacifying of popular uses of the street by unregulated organizations. Volunteer fire departments, embodying the values of one age, were deemed anachronisms by another.

On this point, Greenberg could have pushed even further. She convincingly shows that volunteer departments were still quite popular through the 1840s, only to be eliminated over the next two decades. If the demise of volunteer fire departments revealed a fundamental shift in the nature of urban life, and in common understandings of what citizens owed one another, then how could this change have happened so suddenly? The values of the republican city were apparently not so firmly entrenched in the first decades of the nineteenth century, nor were they so suddenly or completely lost in the latter decades. Indeed, the persistently positive image of the firefighter today indicates that the antebellum attitudes toward firemen have managed to survive, if in altered forms.

Historians seem to have decided all too quickly that firemen were tough and violent working class icons. It didn’t take more than a historiographical minute to turn volunteer firemen into a cliché. Amy S. Greenberg has gone a long way toward undermining that cliché and giving us new insights into the values that once dominated the nineteenth-century city.

Yale University

Max Page

PROVINCIAL LIVES: Middle-Class Experience in the Antebellum Middle West. By Timothy R. Mahoney. New York: Cambridge University Press. 1999.

Timothy Mahoney’s first book, *River Towns in the Great West: The Structure of Provincial Urbanization in the American Midwest, 1820-1870* (Cambridge University Press, 1990), utilized the methods of historical geography to delineate the transformation of the upper Mississippi River Valley from an unsettled frontier into a regional urban system. *Provincial Lives* covers literally the same ground, but for the very different purpose of understanding the social history of the local elites who spearheaded that process of urban and economic development. In the larger sweep of national history, these middling people have not been well studied or well understood: they were neither fabulously wealthy nor members of the working class; they represented a mixture of Yankees and Southerners; they were the denizens of modest-sized cities rather than the urban behemoths that increasingly dominated American life; and, most importantly from Mahoney’s perspective, they mediated between the local concerns of their towns and larger regional and national circles, increasingly becoming oriented towards the latter at the expense of the former.

Mahoney interprets this history as a successive series of social systems, befitting his social scientific training and orientation. Although this sometimes makes for dense

reading, especially in the introduction, each of these social systems is illustrated by a detailed case study that is based on a rich body of sources and provides a more narrative embodiment of the theory. Thus, the story of the Hempsteads from Connecticut, exemplifies the operation of family networks during the early years of the region's development. By intermarrying with the established French elite, the Hempsteads and their in-laws, the Gratiots, created a web of mutual assistance and influence that extended from southern Wisconsin to St. Louis, and was particularly important in the formation of Galena, Illinois. By the end of Mahoney's study, however, "good" society in the region was determined less by such family connections, and more by the workings of translocal and relatively impersonal professional networks such as the bar and the circuit courts.

The two intervening chapters afford the study's most novel and rewarding analyses. By using a remarkable group of nineteenth-century autobiographies from Keokuk, Iowa, Mahoney is able to reconstruct the world of the young and ambitious professionals and businessmen who migrated to town to make their fortunes during the 1840s without the benefit of the family networks that were so important during the earlier settlement period. He analyzes the decision-making processes that caused these men to move to Keokuk, and then delves into the vigilante activities as well as the quasi-fraternal socializing, nicknaming, and practical joking that shaped their culture. After the 1840s, however, that free-wheeling fraternal male subculture was replaced by a new code of gentility, which was more circumspect and restrictive. Mahoney focuses on the social lives of three individuals to explore the creation of new, genteel houses for entertaining, the etiquette of letters of introduction, and patterns of socializing, such as New Year's Day calling, which helped to institute and define these new social boundaries.

In the end, the coming of the railroad dramatically challenged the economic bases of elite power in the upper Mississippi River Valley, and forced a reorientation from the local to the metropolitan. Although Mahoney offers some interesting speculations about this transformation, he could have developed them more fully than he does. One other quibble: this reader wishes that Cambridge University Press had chosen to use a larger type font. Fifteen years ago, I would not have registered such a complaint, but my own middle-age (and the greying of the professoriate more generally) necessitates it. These caveats aside, Professor Mahoney has written a valuable and challenging book; its type face may be small, but its ideas are anything but.

Harvey Mudd College and the Claremont Graduate University

Hal S. Barron

*A FAMILY OF WOMEN: The Carolina Petigru in Peace and War.* By Jane H. Pease and William H. Pease. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press. 1999.

*A Family of Women* exemplifies the value of a thoughtful, detailed description of the "world" that Southern women made before, during, and after the Civil War. Conveying a wealth of information, carefully nuanced in personal observations drawn from the Petigru family's extensive correspondence, the Peases provide a compelling portrait of the lives of white southern women in one extended family over several generations. Rather than dismiss or defend the portrait of the Southern "belle," captured so powerfully in fiction and film, such as *Gone with the Wind*, the authors demonstrate the hollowness of stereotypes of elite white southern women. Neither spoiled beauties of the balls, nor pampered plantation mistresses, southern women faced difficult marriages and economic trials before the Civil War.

The Petigru family centered around the activities of James Petigru, the "fratriarch," known as "Brother." He established a successful law practice in Charleston, South

Carolina, and introduced his female clan into “society.” All but one of his sisters married, and marriage served as one of the most important paths for elevating the family’s class position. While several sisters married quite well, selecting wealthy planters or promising lawyers, they all soon discovered the “reality” of married life: an endless series of pregnancies, health problems, children dying at early ages, and having to live with extremely difficult husbands, who were either domineering, alcoholic, cruel, or financially inept. Divorce was not a legal option in South Carolina. Even death (particularly the unexpected passing of a husband) created serious economic problems. One sister, Jane North, had to salvage her family from the debts incurred by her husband and then support herself and three children by returning to Badwell, the original plantation of James Petigru’s father. Despite these ongoing conflicts, it was just as clear that family members supported each other in trying times, and the bonds of the extended family proved an invaluable system of support.

Yet the Peases do not romanticize this family, nor do they ignore the internal tensions, even open hostility, that divided its members. Two sisters, the children of James and Jane Amelia (Postell) Petigru, pushed the boundaries of propriety and brought scandal upon the family. Susan Dupont King, the youngest daughter of James, became a recognized author, writing novels and stories that attacked the institution of marriage and mocked the social conventions of southern society. Her sister, Jane Caroline Carson, found her marriage so intolerable that she moved North, and later angered family members when she convinced her son William not to fight for the Confederacy. Not only was she courted by the Yankee Edward Everett before his wife died, but she spent much of her postbellum years living in Rome as an artist. The youngest Sue’s infamous behavior only increased as she aged: she gained the reputation for openly flirting with younger men, a reputation she used to political advantage in Washington, D.C., but one that eventually led to her ostracism from Charleston society. Her most unforgivable act was to marry a Radical Republican Congressman, Christopher Columbus Bowen, whose sordid past landed him in court—twice for bigamy and then for murder.

The Petigru offer readers an intriguing portrait of the instability of class power balanced by the bedrock of family connections, and this book is a must for all scholars interested in understanding planter society and southern culture. It is a balanced narrative that notably succeeds in explaining historic context. Of particular value, the Peases reveal the centrality of gender and marriage to the world of the white ruling elite. Rather than represent minor characters in the history of the antebellum South, white women of powerful families played a truly major part in shaping the southern way of life before and after the Civil War.

University of Northern Iowa

Nancy Isenberg

**MIDWESTERN WOMEN: Work, Community, and Leadership at the Crossroads.** Edited by Lucy Eldersveld Murphy and Wendy Hamand Venet. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 1997.

As someone who has lived most of her life in the American Midwest, and also used it as fertile ground for historical research, I was intrigued and respectful of the task that editors Lucy Eldersveld Murphy and Wendy Hamand Venet set before themselves in creating this anthology. Murphy and Venet, historians at DePaul University and Georgia Tech respectively, took on the task of exploring and possibly defining a distinctive midwestern women’s experience. The editors asked their authors “to consider carefully the question of midwestern distinctiveness.” With multicultural inclusivity as a goal, Murphy

and Venet hoped to “reveal the diversity of midwestern women’s experiences,” covering four centuries and multiple aspects that encompassed the lives and roles of Native American, Mexican American, African American, and European American women (6-7).

Bolstered by primary sources including letters, diaries, newspapers, censuses, artifacts, and oral history, the book’s twelve chapters highlighted a wide variety of midwestern women representing urban, rural, and frontier experiences from twelve states stretching from Nebraska and the Dakotas to Ohio. In chapters one through four, the authors explore facets of midwestern women’s history by examining the lives of individual women and attempting to create a broader context for analysis. In the remaining eight chapters, “collective topics” are explored within the context of women’s community, leadership, and work roles. Topics include Native American women’s role in building community, issues involving kinship and gender in early Ohio, German-immigrant women in Chicago, black women’s philanthropy in Indianapolis, rural women’s work in the nineteenth-century Midwest and in twentieth-century Iowa, gendered debates related to unionization during World War II in Indiana, and more recent struggles involving *Mexicana* workers in Illinois.

Based on the compilation of chapter portraits and case studies the editors found “three generalizations” that begin to move historians closer to more conclusive judgments about midwestern “distinctiveness.” First, the Midwest has been the destination of a continuous migration of racial and ethnic peoples drawn to its abundant natural resources and economic opportunities. For women, kinship networks have been “a major force in female migration patterns.” Second, over centuries of development, the Midwest has been a global “crossroads of trade,” representing a “mixture of traits from East and West,” creating a distinctiveness through the amalgamation of regional attributes—“even the name ‘Midwest’ suggests its transitional nature.” Third, as a result of this “crossroads of trade,” women have been both the givers and recipients of cultural assimilation and accommodation, struggling with “barriers of acceptance . . . based on ethnic, racial, religious and cultural discrimination” (10).

I certainly agree with the authors that this anthology has contributed toward greater understanding of an often misunderstood region, greatly underrepresented in historical scholarship. Without a doubt midwestern women have played a major role in the creation and development of this most eclectic and hard-to-define region and this anthology adds important pieces to both midwestern history and the larger narratives in American women’s history and social history. However, I would also like to suggest that the book’s more important value may lie in what it suggests about the way we view midwestern history. In her “foreword,” historian Glenda Riley hints at what an elusive task attempting to define the Midwest may be when she refers to the “heartland” metaphor often used to describe the region. She writes, “[A heart is] solid, sturdy, and basically obscure. But a heart also supplies crucial services; it keeps the extremities of New York and California alive.” I would add that a heart survives and keep beating only by adapting and changing over time and here indeed may lie not its distinctiveness but its strength.

Avila College

Carol K. Coburn

FOR GOD & MAMMON: Evangelicals and Entrepreneurs, Masters and Slaves in Territorial Kansas, 1854-1860. By Gunja Sengupta. Athens: The University of Georgia Press. 1996.

In comparison to some of the recent literature on “Bleeding Kansas,” Gunja Sengupta’s *For God & Mammon* is like a breath of fresh air in a fetid room. Sengupta has

given one of the best, balanced views of this turbulent period in a troubled land called Kansas Territory. Sengupta's work is in the academic tradition calling for a reassessment of political violence over the extension of slavery into Kansas Territory. While acceding the existence of political violence over the issue, Sengupta calls into question whether slavery solely fueled the turbulence or whether other issues played significant roles as well. In fact, Sengupta asks whether or not pro-slave and anti-slave forces actually agreed upon more political and economic questions than they disagreed.

Sengupta's work follows on the heels of significant revisions by previous scholars. For example, Robert Richmond suggested some time ago that "bleeding" Kansas was not all that bleeding. Later, William Unrau and Craig Miner vividly illustrated how the dispossession of Indian lands wreaked more social havoc and human suffering than did the dispute over slavery. The late Bill Cecil-Fronsmann's work depicted pro-slave advocates voicing a political adherence to republicanism more so than to the expansion of slavery into Kansas Territory. And Dale E. Watts showed quantitatively what Richmond had alluded: Kansas Territory was not an especially violent place given the times, and many more deaths occurred over other questions than slavery. So, if Kansas was not so violent as once thought, and if other issues besides the extension of slavery exercised the populace, then what was going on in the territory?

Sengupta's work answers this question with a two-part thesis. First, Bleeding Kansas was more a public relations battle than it was a violent political struggle. The public perception of the violence was more important than the reality, and this understanding bolstered the ideology behind a fledgling, national Republican Party. The party line took shape not only in its opposition to slavery, but also to "rum and Romanism" with an embrace of "free" labor, schools, industries, and towns. Sengupta is quick to point out how this ideology stumbled on the sharp rocks of racism, materialism, "political anarchy, and the settlers' ready resort to whiskey, profanity, and Sabbath desecration (156)." Nonetheless, "Bleeding Kansas" provided symbol and form for what became the Republican North.

In a second thesis, Sengupta argues that clashing interests over the slave issue could, and did, join hands in many other ventures. For example, coalitions of pro-slave and anti-slave advocates joined together to create competing railroad ventures. These amalgamated companies fought to see which would gain control of such important lands as those in the Delaware Trust. In short, powerful capitalists and politicians of varying stripes joined together to promote their self-interests, and often at the expense of republican-minded, small farmers, free laborers, and African Americans. In many ways, by the late 1850s, Territorial Kansas as the precursor of the post-Reconstruction South depicted by C. Van Woodward.

Sengupta's research is first rate. The author is well versed in the literature of the field besides primary material such as the archival collections of the American Missionary Association, the American Home Missionary Society, and census data. Sengupta strengthens her interpretations with important illustrative evidence drawn from a careful use of these materials.

Sengupta reminds us that idealism in the not so "bleeding" Kansas, whether in the form of free labor, Southern republicanism, abolition, or social equality, tended to give way to expansive capitalistic ventures and the emerging engines of corporate America. Political violence and idealism did color Kansas Territory, but mammon fed it.

Kansas State University

James E. Sherow

THE CONTESTED PLAINS: Indians, Goldseekers, and the Rush to Colorado. By Elliott West. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas. 1998.

Elliott West's *The Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers, and the Rush to Colorado* helps one understand why Americans remain fascinated by the history of the West. When regional ingredients—environments of stunning beauty and relentless hardship, populations of mixed cultures and conflicting values, sagas of inspiring accomplishments and disastrous missteps—are shaped by a scholar as perceptive, thoughtful, and witty as West, the results draw an audience from many quarters and promise to keep western history before the collective mind of America.

West begins with an ambitious concept, one that embraces the natural history of the region, coupled with its human narratives, but shaded by the elusive forces of perception and imagination. West argues that flourishing plains Indians and questing emigrant whites could not occupy the same environment, in part because the mental constructs and future designs of each group excluded the other. Thus, he outlines a fresh approach to topics—the lives of plains natives and the Colorado Gold Rush—thought to be already well documented within western literature.

The first segment examines the Great Plains that spread before the Front Range of the Rocky Mountains and the native peoples that lived and moved through that space. West sets his locale with a discussion of the area's pre-recorded history and then brings the plains community forward to the mid-nineteenth century. In doing this, he depicts the merging of environmental change and human experience, especially made complex when outcomes are narrowed by parallel but competing pressures.

The second section shifts the focus and chronicles the personal and commercial upheaval of the agronomists after the 1858 discovery of gold in Colorado. Again, the environment plays a key role in West's account, as miners attacked the hard land, forcing it to yield space for towns and gold for wealth. While West notes that most folks were ill-prepared for what awaited them in the gold fields, these chapters point to the explosion of all forms of communication during this period. No telephones or computers here, but the use of steam vessels, handcars, and wagons, as well as the impact of oral accounts, letters, legends, songs, diaries, guidebooks, and newspapers give impressive witness to the many ways by which Americans successfully conveyed information across great distances.

The third part tackles the difficult task of assessing the transformations that came to all people and all land, within the context of new power alliances. As expected, those shifts brought fresh dilemmas for native people, as leaders within various groups failed to agree on diplomatic strategies for dealing with an opposing culture that ground forward with social and economic domination. Yet, West, rather than closing with expected end to the tale, draws on his conceptual component of human imagination and returns to the book's beginnings. One is left to ponder his assertion that the plains could only accommodate one vision of the future, but that might not have been the historical denouement if two cultures could have explored the potential of mutual shared imagination.

No brief review does justice to the full-bodied textures of *The Contested Plains*. Elliott West is a masterful writer, a raconteur who crafts each sentence with exquisite language and the right dash of compassion and humor. He draws from an enormous array of primary and secondary sources and complements his text with useful maps and informative illustrations. Overall, West makes us think about the place and process, the dark and light of western history. *The Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers, and the*

*Rush to Colorado* is more than deserving of the awards it has received and rightfully assumes its place as a classic in the literature of the American West.

Utah State University

Anne M. Butler

BOSTON'S "CHANGEFUL TIMES": Origins of Preservation & Planning in America. By Michael Holleran. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press. 1998.

Over the first 250 years of its history, Boston was the most organic of America's major cities. Laid out on an improbable neck of often soggy land formed by the confluence of two rivers that flowed into a harbor, the city made and remade itself in a knot of twisting, narrow streets according to the short-term needs of its citizens and their enterprises. Change was frequent and expected, however unpredictable and uncomfortable. Residential areas were the most unstable sectors of the city. They followed an apparently inevitable real estate cycle of development, deterioration, and conversion into business districts, leaving rich and poor citizens alike to speculate when and where to move next in order to take advantage of the cycle and to avoid its downsides. During the 1870s, these downsides' loss of important buildings and landscapes, rampant speculation, and disorientation engendered an increasing resistance to unwanted change that coalesced around a number of battles to maintain the city's physical and visual past, gave birth to some of America's earliest preservation and planning policies, and eventually produced a psychology of permanence unlike the organic whimsy of earlier days.

Michael Holleran's book richly details this development that occurred in Boston between 1860 and 1930, beginning in 1863 with *Parker v. Nightingale*, which permitted deed restrictions on the use of property. This case gave important advantages to those who sought more permanency. Any property owner whose deed was similarly restricted could demand enforcement, and the courts could require correction. Moreover, restrictions were related to property rather than owners and therefore became everlasting. This decision broke the cycle of inevitable destruction, giving neighborhoods relative stability, providing both buyers and sellers confidence in the future of their property, and changing the pitches of developers who began to sell permanency. About the same time Bostonians became concerned with the loss of three historic buildings: the John Hancock house, Brattle Square Church, and Trinity Church. These causes *célèbres*, in conjunction with the incipient national parks movement and later the City Beautiful Movement, fed the battle cries that saved Old South Meetinghouse and the Old State House, stopped encroachments on the Boston Common, prevented the removal of the King's Chapel burial grounds and steadfastly refused demolitions of the Bulfinch statehouse, the Park Street Church and the Boston Athenaeum. These successes emboldened Bostonians even further in the 1890s, when they pressed for the use of police power to restrict the heights of buildings on Copley Square and Beacon Hill near the statehouse in order to preserve the visual quality of historic sectors of the city.

What happened in Boston had great influence throughout America and into the present day. Several bell-weather court decisions after *Parker v. Nightingale* established a broader legal framework for controlling change. For example, the legal bases for zoning and historic districts developed in Boston, were expanded in other eastern cities and then widely adopted to restrict the use of significant landscapes and buildings out of the past. Leading Boston preservationists such as William Sumner Appleton, Jr. were extraordinarily well-heeled, persuasive, and successful. Appleton's work engendered much of the philosophy and developed many of the preservation policies that have become the core of

contemporary historic preservation in the United States. The battles in Boston showed preservationists elsewhere the necessity of flexibility, the vital role of government in the preservation process, and the need to manage historic properties on a long-term basis.

Holleran's book provides lively and thorough case studies of Boston's most important early preservation causes, embedding these cases in the context of a dynamic city, developing the theoretical, philosophical, and legal bases that underlay these causes, showing the essential relationships between preservation, planning, landscape conservation, and environmentalism, detailing the creation of pivotal private preservation organizations such as the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, and analyzing the emerging partnership between the private and public sectors in their on-again, off-again quest to save the built environment for the benefit of future generations. His discussion of Appleton's role is especially compelling. For students and teachers of historic preservation this history of the origins of preservation and planning is essential, not only because it situates Boston at the heart of America's desire to maintain a continuity with the past. It also admirably demonstrates how important it is for contemporary preservationists to persist in a culture that blithely throws away its heritage for short-term gains.

The University of Kentucky

Dennis Domer

THE LEISURE ETHIC: Work and Play in American Literature, 1840-1940. By William A. Gleason. Stanford: Stanford University Press. 1999.

The title of this sophisticated and ambitious book is somewhat misleading, for William A. Gleason surveys neither recreational practices nor leisure ethics in the full range of American literature over a century of industrialization. Rather, he takes the turn-of-the-century, Progressive-inspired, formal (if somewhat empty-headed) discourse of "play theory" as an expression of industrial rationalization and measures it against the much richer and often critical vision of the relationship of work and play embedded in key literary texts; not surprisingly, in Gleason's view, the former falls short of the latter. But this is no simple argument for the perspicacity of the "best" writers, for Gleason considers their range and limitations by keenly pairing their texts: Thoreau's draft and finished *Walden*, Mark Twain's *Roughing It* and his *Life on the Mississippi*, Abraham Cahan's *The Rise of David Levinsky* and Ole Rølvaag's *Giants in the Earth*, Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland* and Edna Ferber's *Emma McChesney & Co.*, James Weldon Johnson's *Autobiography of an Ex-Coloured Man* and F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, Theodore Dreiser's *An American Tragedy* and Richard Wright's *Native Son*, and William Faulkner's *Sanctuary* and Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Gleason deflects the obvious criticism that most of these texts are not principally about the emerging leisure ethic, by tracing their "multiple points of crossing" with the texts of play theorists (viii). Yet he does not stop there, but corrals evidence from such disparate quarters as advertisements and pageantry, editorial cartoons and socially-conscious photography, Fourth of July speeches and domestic advice books. Porpoise-like, he breathtakingly dives and rises, twists and turns, through this textual ocean, as he swims through generalization, then stops with an insightful and detailed discursive endnote, before moving on once again to the open interpretive seas.

Were that his approach was as playful as porpoises, but his point, after all, is "to take the study of play in American culture as seriously as we do the study of work" (viii). The road to seriousness here, however, is strewn with misbegotten words like "ludification"

(185) and “dedruidgification” (164)—that could parody the bombastic play theorists who were wont to coin such pseudo-scientific terms as they themselves sought to take play seriously. And the goal of seriousness requires more precise use of terms like “play,” “leisure,” “recreation,” “consumption,” or even “sports.” We can see the effect in his discussion of Thoreau (33-44), when he occasionally uses “play” in a manner similar to Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi’s “flow,” that is, to mean optimal experience, while most other times play is merely a synonym for leisure. Such imprecision might be excused by the researcher-goes-native argument (that historically these terms were conflated), but still it raises serious questions about exactly what is in play and not here. For example, if the topic is leisure, as conventionally defined, why does Gleason not treat one of the most universal late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century leisure activities, namely, reading? After all, many of the writers Gleason considers are consciously working at writing for readers who are usually reading in leisure moments; that what they are reading is implicated in the discourse on work and leisure, as Gleason so convincingly establishes, creates yet further rich interpretive possibilities for understanding the relationships among leisure, literature, and life. Still, for future investigators wishing to explore these broader definitions of leisure, Gleason’s book will point the way, for, by giving depth instead of breadth, he places scholarly consideration of leisure in the industrial United States upon a new level.

Georgia State University Ronald J. Zboray

*SPIRITED LIVES: How Nuns Shaped Catholic Culture and American Life, 1836-1920.* By Carol K. Coburn and Martha Smith. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999.

The rewarding and necessary task of retrieving the history of women has been enriched by the inclusion of women religious in that history. In this book Coburn and Smith trace in some detail one religious community, the Congregation of St. Joseph (CSJ), from its foundation in post-Tridentine France to its emigration to the trans-Mississippi of North America. From the small group of French women, the congregation spread throughout what was later to become the many states of the United States. The story of this one congregation could be repeated, as the authors rightly contend, by the many groups of women religious whose history shows a remarkable similarity in the early-19th and 20th centuries.

Using the categories of gender, race, religion, and class, the authors describe many dimensions of the struggle the sisters found themselves engaged in. The contrast between the stereotype of the passive, submissive sister and the creative, inventive, and strong woman who adapted to the situations she encountered in the new world should completely destroy that stereotype. The history that Coburn and Smith trace through one century is simply remarkable and underlines the importance of nuns in the religious, cultural, and political development of the nation being birthed after the revolutionary period.

The many institutions of the Roman Catholic Church in the United States, schools, especially the parochial school, hospitals, and social service institutions, were all begun by women religious with little support, sometimes no support, from the bishops, clergy, and even lay members of their church. The ingenuity of the sisters in initiating and funding their work enabled them to experience situations unheard of in France: extended trips to reach underserved parts of the country, like the Southwest, in the company of the military; demands to nurse the wounded in their institutions during the Civil and Spanish-American Wars; the necessity of actual begging trips to secure necessary funds; encounters with anti-Catholic groups, a totally new experience for immigrant French Catholic women

religious; and many more unexpected and unpredictable situations to which they responded with enormous personal and collective resources.

Within the CSJ religious congregation itself there were struggles as well which finally resulted in their identifying themselves as autonomous women religious of a new country. The original convent at Carondelet overlooking the Mississippi river near St. Louis, Missouri, became the gateway for the multiple communities that emerged from it. Efforts to centralize the various houses across the country reads like any other political struggle by which the leadership tries to maintain control over its membership. The dimensions of that struggle included the ability to live as vowed women whose first loyalty lay to their own congregation and not to the hierarchy. The demands and requests of clergy and bishops for the various services of the sisters challenged the strength of the congregation's leadership to both respond to those needs and maintain their authority for the benefit of the sisters.

The story of these women religious in shaping new possibilities for young women, Catholic and Protestant, is compelling, especially as their educators. The authors compare the efforts of groups of Protestant women with those of the sisters and note how similar their struggles were. Because of the collective strength of the sisters, however, through their vowed life and through their support within the congregation, their achievements are unique in the history of the young Catholic Church in this country.

In the epilogue to the book Coburn and Smith explain why they choose the 1920s as the terminus of their investigation. The first Code of Canon Law of the Roman Catholic Church (1917) imposed on all "active" women religious a uniformity that was hitherto unknown to them and caused an unfortunate cessation of the adaptability they had shown in the first century of their work in this country. The "mission territory" status of the American Catholic Church changed also and caused a restructuring in the power of the hierarchy over the church and in its relations to the Vatican.

This book draws upon the fine historical work already done by women on women's history and on the history of this particular congregation. The endnotes are an enjoyable and enlightening addition to its reading, not an annoying interruption of its story. Nor is the book either a pious or a naive presentation of the life of "nuns". Rather it portrays the lives of real women whose goal was to save souls and serve the needy in a new country as a collective body shaped by the traditional vows of women religious.

Saint Louis University

Joan Range

HOBBIES. *Leisure and the Culture of Work in America*. By Steven M. Gelber. New York: Columbia University Press. 1999.

LADIES OF LABOR, GIRLS OF LEISURE. By Nan Enstad. New York: Columbia University Press. 1999.

These two studies, to the uninitiated, would seem to complement each other. They both promise to explore aspects of American social history, and that popular culture which infuses quotidian life and reproduces the dominant complex of ideology. Popular culture, as conventional wisdom has it, is the lived experiences of a people sedimented in institutions, practices, daily habits. By that definition only one of the above meets these expectations. Steven Gelber's work barely touches upon the larger social history. It focuses narrowly on two categories of hobbies, collecting and crafts, and the changes they have undergone over time. In the course of it, he makes some illuminating observations: e.g., hobbies functioned to restrict the dominant ideology; to isolate the home from workplace values; foster a personal sense of accomplishment; embody the Protestant work

ethic in contrast to the traditionally impugned idleness, a.k.a., leisure. Professor Gelber surveys the collector's world of antiques, of stamps which is male-dominated, of chromos which is female-centered, as well as that of craft hobbies and manual training, likewise gender separated: tools and woodwork for boys, and needlecraft and decorative arts for girls.

The restrictive character of Gelber's book is evident in its discussion of the larger sex-segregated culture and how it was inculcated and transmitted. Rather it indulges in the facile assertion that "women developed a distinctly female culture that gave them preeminence in home-oriented activities such as child-rearing, running the household," an assertion neglecting the male role, indeed society's, in shaping this "distinctly female culture," and ignoring as well female activities in the public sphere of labor. A further problem emerges with the narrative line itself. The story is carried down into the 1950s, exploring the differences between the Victorian middle-class family and that of post-war America. But some chapters take the reader at times on a dizzying roller-coaster ride across time, swinging within a few pages from the post-Civil War back to the eighteenth century and then into the early-nineteenth or the twentieth. This skewed chronology contributes to numbingly repetitious passages. Gelber, to be sure, commendably observes that the dominant culture is internalized rather than imposed, that individuals are not passive recipients, that mass culture responds to popular disaffection in ways that defuse it. But there is no mention of possible differences between the hobbies of immigrant and native-born workers, or between a skilled machinist and unskilled railway laborer or coal miner; no plumbing of the wider culture implications is ventured; no serious exploration of popular culture as one important domain through which the terms of dominance are negotiated and affirmed.

Nan Enstad has written an analytically innovative study that seeks to make the socio-cultural sphere of life essential to the culture of working women. Though centering on New York City's 1909 strike of 20,000 shirtwaist workers, her inquest is a thoroughly informed commentary on more spacious matters. Not only does her monograph fully explore police and magistrate court reports, and offer chilling accounts drawn from newspaper columns of the day but also it transcends the subject of a walkout by offering a larger interpretative overview, namely, the shaping influence of both consumerism and of popular culture—especially fashions, fiction, and films—on the lives of working women.

Unlike Gelber, then, Professor Enstad recognizes that the notion of cultural hegemony is a powerful analytical tool, that it joins coercion from above to consent from below, that the dominant cultural institutions and ideology impress their norms upon all although, she would contend, not exclusively so. There is the plebian culture, that of the "lady" striker in this instance. She weaves this awareness of her actors into a lucid and balanced strike study and its social-cultural dynamics, giving us the latter before turning to the walkout itself. Introducing a wide range of popular cultural materials, she demonstrates how working women wove them into their sense of themselves as "ladies" and political actors (i.e., strikers). In the course of it, Enstad describes the negative reactions of middle-class women, their organizations, ostensibly strike defenders, when their "sisters" appropriated French heels, hats, public behavior. Recorded as well is the equally hostile response of press and trade union leadership when the strikers rejected a settlement that did not provide for union recognition. Enstad sapiently observes that working women's passion for products was not evidence of trivial consumerism, but was laded with cultural values. Movies, for example, were hardly a meaningless excursion into entertainment, something devoid of meaning. Their ideological messages were internalized by working women,

spliced into their own social context. So, too, with dime fiction as well as fashion, for all were part of “a weave of meanings.” Commodities and commodification are never without signification. Equally shrewd insights on ideological hegemony litter the text. Enstad, for example, recognizes that fashion had “moral value,” that it functioned to separate the Victorian middle class woman from those “below,” but the “democratization of fashion” made it difficult to maintain class distinctions in a consumer society holding to dominant, partially cross-class cultural values. Inherent in the “practice of working ladyhood,” she rightly observes, was multiplicity, a shining identity that included a range of cultural contradictions. All of which is compatible with her assertion that working women’s culture was a “semi-autonomous subculture,” one “formed it in relation to the larger society” as well (82); that is, multiple forces determine culture and its twin of consciousness. Or as Antonio Gramsci once stated, bourgeois culture itself is a “moving equilibrium” and, in Tony Bennett’s contention, subcultural identities intersect with mediating institutions of the dominant culture and are “articulated to bourgeois culture and ideology.”

Admittedly serious reservations accompany some of Enstad’s assertions and conclusions. Middle-class women, she rightly affirms, believed dime novels to be “cheap,” but such fiction often replicated middle-class themes and ideology; and so the obvious conclusion, one Enstad is reluctant to make, affirms that plebian fiction and its readers shared in some measure the cultural hegemony of the times. Hence it becomes arguable to conclude that middle-class notions of taste served solely to maintain middle-class distinctions. And while this claim relates to fashion, the same judgment holds for film and fiction. All these cultural practices have similar cross-class applicability, an observation that Enstad appears to both admit and deny. Just as working women wore their finery to work and their fashion became central to workplace culture, part of their “collective dream world,” so their collective tastes in clothing mirrored those of the dominant ideology. And so, too, with film, with its inter-class audience patronizing the new movie palaces after ca. 1910. Likewise with fiction; both classes were responsive to the familiar formulaic plot of villains and heroes and heroines. All audiences internalized some of the same cultural messages. It is equally difficult to sell the claim that adopting rich-sounding fictional names reflected resistance to depersonalization at work. Or to assert that when fictional “heroines fend off villains,” they “demonstrate their own worth as workers,” or that readers, or movie goers, recognized as much, consciously or intuitively. And relating to these observations, there is the complementary question of whether movies, in their fantasy, much like dime fiction, “imaginatively combine women’s workplace struggles with their rewarding consumer culture experience.” There are further shards prompting serious questions, but in context of a work that earns great scholarly respect they would sound like nit-picking. What should be affirmed is that Enstad has adumbrated a whole sequence of change in the spatial and material organization of working women’s personal lives in a study marked by thoroughness of research, meticulous vetting, clarity of expression, and soundness of judgment. It is an impressive achievement.

University of Massachusetts

Milton Cantor

**SOCIAL SCIENCE IN THE CRUCIBLE: The American Debate over Objectivity and Purpose, 1918-1941.** By Mark C. Smith. Durham and London: Duke University Press. 1994.

Examining conflicting views among professional social scientists on the proper uses of social science in American politics and culture, Smith extends the tension between

advocacy and objectivity down from the Progressive Era through the interwar period. His study contains valuable insights into the often bitterly acrimonious controversy between the “objectivists” or “service intellectuals,” represented here by Wesley Mitchell and Charles Merriam, and the “purposivists,” Robert Lynd, Charles Beard, and Harold Lasswell. In this typology, objectivists believed that social scientists should set aside their own moral agendas, sticking to value-neutral, technically-competent work aimed at making clean, authoritative data available to policy makers. Although the purposivists had trouble stating precisely what values social science research could validate, they insisted that it should have some “preconceived” values; they castigated the objectivists’ craven neutrality, their obsession with quantification, and their devotion to mastering mere technique, unrelated to the selection of ethical goals for society. The theory and promise of pragmatism was a major factor in this debate, with both sides claiming warrant in the writings of John Dewey for their conflicting conceptions of the relations between science and value.

Though the selection of case studies excludes the important dimensions of race and gender, it is nevertheless a strategic and revealing one, in light of the many levels of connection between these figures. Within a well established analytical framework, Smith is good at probing personal, intellectual, and institutional factors that shaped the attitudes and actions of his people. Thus, we see the shaping influence on Mitchell and Merriam of government service in a World War I mobilization critically hampered by lack of knowledge, their ingenious collaboration (in both senses!) in forging institutions such as the National Bureau of Economic Research and the Social Science Research Council that channeled major foundation money into safe areas of social science research, and the way they converted expertise to influence, functioning with ease in Hoover’s associative structure, which sought to depoliticize policy thinking by out-sourcing it in foundation-backed studies. The counterpoint to Lynd’s assault (in *Knowledge for What*, 1939) on Mitchell’s quantitative work as normless empiricism was Merriam’s insistence, over arch-objectivist W. F. Ogburn’s objection, on publication of Lynd’s controversial chapter on consumption in *Recent Social Trends*. A progressive Republican, Merriam became a New Deal planner who promoted FDR’s design for overcoming the problems of federalism and divided government through executive reorganization. The battle between Beard and Merriam for the soul of political science was bitterly personal; yet it addressed a fundamental disagreement over the separation of politics and management that defined and limited the field of public administration, and the very different meanings these two scholars assigned to planning. Beard’s withdrawal from academe and emergence as a major public intellectual revealed a segmentation of intellectual lives and roles underway since the rise of the university.

The inclusion of Lasswell (perhaps the freshest of the individual studies) broadens the scope of the book to include social psychology, its application to management theory, and the impact of Freudian and Marxian debates on American social science. Although for Beard and Lynd the critical tradition in social science was aimed at fostering participatory democracy, purposive social science proves elastic enough to encompass Lasswell’s fascination with the possibilities of a highly manipulative “preventive psychology” of individual and mass “adjustment” through official propaganda. By leaving the Chicago-school’s disorganization, assimilation, and deviancy theories largely out of sight, Smith has obscured what was probably a more fundamental division in social science during those years than the one he makes pivotal here, involving the theories of individual agency and social structure that social scientists took to be salient. For liberal statist like Beard and Lyrd, the bedrock social realities were conflict between classes derived from

the structure of capitalist ownership and production, the inequity in distribution of income and political voice that anchored people in those opposing classes, and the obstacles in governmental structure and policy to realization of what Beard referred to as “collectivist democracy,” which both Beard and Lynd agreed would require massive public intervention in an economy that was being modeled, incorrectly, as a natural system. For Mitchell, Merriam and Lasswell, individual psychology and the patterned, quantifiable results of (often irrational) human preferences became the central focus, propelling them toward the essentially instrumentalist conclusion that better information in the hands of elite decision makers, a better knowledge base for microeconomic decisions, and more effective socialization might adjust explosive social differences and stabilize the economy. Depression, the rise of fascism, and total war underlined the political and epistemological dangers of relativism, as Edward Purcell has shown, but they also exposed the instability of voluntarism.

This otherwise useful account is wrapped in dubious assumptions about its place in the theory and historiography of its subject that can potentially mislead the reader. Smith claims that till now most history of the American social sciences has been Whiggish, “judging past works of social science by whether they represented positive or negative steps toward a social science that reproduced models of the natural and social sciences.” This alleged fallacy has “derived largely from the tendency of writers [unidentified, but the citations date from 1965 and 1970!] to construct purely internalist studies of the social science disciplines,” according to Smith. Perhaps in the days of Luther Lee Bernard! But since the 1970s, new historical work has reframed the meanings of social science professionalization and disciplinary formation, located the construction of social knowledge in institutional contexts and political discourses, and probed its developing connections with philanthropy, reform, gender and racial identity, the state, social movements, and public philosophy. Smith is simply wrong to argue that “the first generation of professional social scientists . . . continued to insist on the normative nature of social science and its goal of turning ‘ethics into action’.” They were deeply divided on the relationship of social science to ethics; Smith should have stuck with his own admonition that no generation of social scientists has ever accepted a single paradigm. It is also misleading to argue that the “commonly accepted interpretation” of the social sciences from 1918-1941 has been Whiggish. There is still plenty of room for disagreement about when, how, and for that matter even whether scientism became the dominant paradigm in the social sciences, either in the 1920s or, as Mark Smith now argues, after 1945. Finally, in this present era of heightened subjectivities, he should have been more careful about distinguishing Beard’s and Lynd’s highly vulnerable insistence on privileging “preconceived values” rooted in an individual frame of reference from Dewey’s pragmatic faith in testing *all* preconceived notions of “the good” within the discursive processes and against the critical moral judgment of a genuinely democratic community.

University of California-Santa Barbara

Mary O. Furner

PRE-CODE HOLLYWOOD: Sex, Immorality, and Insurrection in American Cinema, 1930-1934. By Thomas Doherty. New York: Columbia University Press. 1999.

In the four-year period between 1930 and 1934, the Hollywood film industry produced some of the most sexually explicit, graphically violent and politically charged films to ever hit American screens. The heroes and heroines of the screen were gangsters, heart-of-gold hookers, shyster lawyers and corrupt politicians who climbed America’s ladder of success by murder.

Thomas Doherty, in his book on pre-Code films, argues that these characters emerged on the Hollywood screen when the industry converted to sound. The dialogue was snappy and some “of the cracks were not just wise but seditious, the talk not just naughty but downright dangerous” (17). The moral content of the movies during this brief period before the establishment of the Production Code Administration and the appointment of censor Joseph Breen and the Catholic Legion of Decency was, Doherty claims, “so off-kilter they seem imported from a parallel universe” (2).

Doherty is referring to movies like Mae West’s *She Done Him Wrong*, Cecil B. DeMille’s *The Sign of the Cross* and other vice films such as *Baby Face*, *The Story of Temple Drake* and politically charged movies as *Gabriel Over the White House* and *Heroes for Sale*, which he believes represented a broad “assault on traditional values” (103).

While admitting that the movies of the early-1930s certainly upset moral guardians, church leaders and would be censors everywhere, one has to wonder if the movies of this period were really as immoral and seditious as Doherty claims. This was Hollywood, after all—an industry infamous for its aversion to “message” films. Before the iron fist of Breen and the Catholic Legion crippled the wit of Mae West, she was the most popular star in Hollywood. Her films were considered family fare and topped Hollywood box office charts in 1932-1933.

Certainly, the more explicitly sexual films like *Baby Face* and *Temple Drake* did in fact offend a wider segment of the American public, and they also flopped miserably at the box office, as did *Gabriel Over the White House*.

In my view, one of the most interesting sections of the book is Doherty’s analysis of newsreels, expeditionary films and films dealing with racial tensions. For example, newsreels were very popular during the 1930s—so popular that there were theaters scattered across America that played nothing but newsreels. Sports, beauty contests and the latest fashion fads were covered—what was missing Doherty writes was the hunger, the political ferment and anger, the frustration and the disillusionment of the Great Depression. All the familiar footage of bread lines, Hoovervilles, violent labor strikes that have dominated post-depression documentary films went largely unseen during the 1930s.

According to Doherty, the immorality stopped when the Catholic church led a national boycott of films and the industry appointed a Catholic censor, Joseph Breen, to enforce the Production Code. The censorship under Breen was, Doherty admits, the “most severe and narrow-minded censorship ever inflicted upon American cinema” (345). Yet, he also argues that during this period of repressive censorship, Hollywood produced some of the best movies in the history of the industry.

While I disagree with many of Doherty’s conclusions on the impact of censorship on Hollywood films, the book is well-researched and well-written. Often witty and humorous, Doherty’s reading of this strange period in Hollywood film making deserves a serious reading by anyone interested in the issues surrounding censorship of popular culture.

University of Missouri-Kansas City

Gregory D. Black

WALKER EVANS. By James R. Mellow. New York: Basic Books. 1999.

Walker Evans (1903-1975) played a large role in the development of American visual imagery during the twentieth century. Although the work of other photographers who participated in various New Deal programs also was extremely important, Evans’s photos of people and places elevated the victims and destroyed landscape of the Great Depression to an iconographic level equivalent to what Mathew Brady had done during the Civil War. Mellow’s death in 1997 made it impossible for him to carry this biography past the

mid-1950s, when Evans was still middle aged. The book includes some material that might have been edited out had the author lived to see this project to publication. What appears here, while not a perfect biography, is detailed within its limitations.

Unlike Belinda Rathbone, author of *Walker Evans: A Biography* (1995), Mellow received complete access to his subject's papers resulting in a flood of particulars. Mellow approached his subject from a biographical rather than a historical perspective, making little effort to distinguish among relevant and insignificant events at some points in the book, particularly in his coverage of Evans's early years. Instead of extensive analysis, *Walker Evans* tends to move off onto tangents of detail. Taken on their own, such large doses of information help describe parts of a life that intersected many of the artistic and cultural trends of his century. But unfortunately, they fail to convey the overall significance of Evans's life for the meaning of the arts in these years.

Nonetheless, Mellow offers fascinating material that reveals countless ways in which this illusive photographer's life was integrated with the literary and artistic world with which he came in contact. Those interested in the lives and careers of the critic Lincoln Kirstein or the writer James Agee would do well to examine what can be found here about their personal interaction with Evans. But other figures—painters, writers, photographers, intellectuals of many sorts, even the publisher Henry Luce—appear in these pages, sometimes in the biographer's digressions, others in revealing extended anecdotes. Regretfully, Mellow sometimes relies on strained sexual explanations when straightforward ones do not suit his purposes. As with many other writers who study artists and photographers, Mellow frequently hedges on his interpretations, speculating on what Evans might have meant or intended. Knowing that his subject was extraordinarily enigmatic, we can finish this work knowing that much still remains to be learned about this fascinating cultural figure.

Minnesota State University, Mankato

Charles K. Piehl

HENRY STEEL COMMAGER: *Midcentury Liberalism and the History of the Present*. By Neil Jumonville. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press. 1999.

In his engaging biography of Henry Steel Commager, Neil Jumonville defines three themes that he wishes to address. First, he uses Commager as a vehicle for examining the cultural wars between the late-century generation of historians and the mid-century generation of intellectual historians and American studies founders. Second, he uses Commager's career to "chart the course of twentieth-century liberalism with all its ironies, contradictions, and good intentions." Buffeted by attacks from the right and left, Commager's kind of liberalism has, for Jumonville, the "beneficial principles of intellectual freedom, pragmatism, democratic toleration, and cultural diversity." Finally, Jumonville uses Commager's life to address the question of whether "the intellectual life is compatible with the scholarly life," whether the "partisan generalist" can "operate as a scholar (who is a 'neutral' archival academic who writes for his or her professional peers)."

In addressing the last of these themes, Jumonville believes that Commager's scholarship did suffer because of his civic involvement and his desire to write for an audience beyond the academy. The latter led not only to frequent essays in *The New Times Magazine*, but also for a number of years to a regular column in the 1940s in *Scholastic Publications* for high school and middle school students. Commager himself was aware that he never did the scholarly work on Joseph Story that he ostensibly wished to do, he was never willing to give up his public role and civic commitments which, in the end, gave

him greater satisfaction. On this level, Jumonville's answer would appear to be "no." Nevertheless, Jumonville, while never uncritical of Commager's kind of narrative/general history, defends Commager's engaged history and political and civic commitments against his "professional" detractors. Without endorsing all of Jumonville's particular judgments of Commager's work, I believe that he is surely right when he says that "peer reactions to one's scholarship are not everything." If Commager's scholarship suffered, for example, when his activities countering McCarthyism in the 1950s took up so much of his time, we are better off because of those activities.

This leads to Jumonville's second theme of using Commager to explore the course of mid-century liberalism. Jumonville places Commager's political views within the context of on-going liberal debates over civil liberties and McCarthyism, the war in Vietnam, and student protest. Most of Jumonville's discussion is insightful in terms of Commager's political evolution (which ran counter to the left to right direction of many of his fellow liberal and left intellectuals) and in terms of the contradictions and continuities in Commager's ideas as he confronted differing threats to the values he cherished. In a few cases, he makes mistakes about individuals; Irving Howe and *Dissent* were not to the political right of Commager in the 1950s, as Jumonville claims. Writing from the socialist left in 1954, Howe asked why it was that old-fashioned liberals like Dewey and Meiklejohn (and he could have listed Commager) stood up better to McCarthyism's threat to civil liberals than the ex-radical, New York intellectuals. In a few cases, I think Jumonville is too balanced in his assessment. He distinguishes between Hook's desire to preserve "the system of democratic freedom" and Commager's desire to preserve "dissent." But if Hook was so concerned with the system of democratic freedom why did he side with the cowardly group in the Committee of Cultural Freedom in refusing to name Joseph McCarthy as a threat to that system?

Jumonville is at his best in his spirited defense of the mid-century American studies and intellectual historians (e.g., Commager, Henry Nash Smith, Leo Marx, F. O. Matthiessen, John William Ward, Daniel Aaron) against the younger generation's charge that they were supporters of cold war, liberal anticommunism, the consensus politics of the 1950s, and a variety of elitist concepts. The work of these people is open to a variety of criticisms. There were deficiencies in terms of conceptual frameworks that allowed them to speak of national characteristics too easily and with too little attention to the diversity of the American experience. Certainly Commager was not free from these faults. Too often he remained on the surface of ideas and adopted overarching concepts too uncritically. However, by detailing the political views of Commager and the American studies historians, Jumonville demonstrates that most of them were liberal/left critics of the conservative political climate of the 1950s. As he persuasively argues, to write off Commager and the American studies mid-century historians as consensus cold warriors distorts their politics and leaves "their work and legacy . . . misunderstood."

Queens College, City University of New York

Frank A. Warren

**BLACKS AND JEWS IN LITERARY CONVERSATION.** By Emily Miller Budick. New York: Cambridge University Press. 1998.

With *Blacks and Jews in Literary Conversation*, Emily Miller Budick joins the important revisionary work on Black-Jewish relations that has changed the face of the field in the last decade or so, but until now has focused largely on politics and popular culture. Without ever announcing that she means to take her place beside these labor historians, film scholars, and psychoanalytic critics, Budick makes it clear that her intention is to

move beyond the pious hand wringing which defined an earlier generation of writing on the subject. Along with recent works by Sander Gilman, Michael Rogin, Robert Phillipson (forthcoming), and a number of the essays in the Boyarins' *Jews and Other Differences* (especially those by Ann Pellegrini and Daniel Itzkovitz), Budick suggests new directions for Black-Jewish studies: most significantly, she helps us see that the familiar narrative of a linear rise-and-fall relationship of African Americans and Jews barely touches on the complexity which has structured this American story. For a book deeply concerned with (and, one imagines, inspired by) deep religious beliefs, *Blacks and Jews in Literary Conversation* is nicely agnostic: Budick rarely accepts the received wisdom that passes as insight and analysis in many books on the subject.

Budick's book is organized around a set of close readings of "conversations": some of these are actual debates as with that noble old warhorse, the meeting of Ralph Ellison and Irving Howe (here on its last legs)—while others are imagined discussions Budick constructs out of a variety of literary, historical, theoretical, and polemical texts. Her readings are subtle and persuasive; only occasionally, as with her fierce deconstruction of Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon*, are they too abstruse for readers not already very familiar with the texts in question. The larger problem in *Blacks and Jews in Literary Conversation* is that a few too many of the conversations seem tired: any one with a passing interest in the field has already read too much about Malamud's decidedly second-rate book *The Tenants*; likewise, one need only see that a section is entitled "Norman Podhoretz and Harold Cruse" to be able to predict pretty well where it is headed.

What is well worthy of attention here is Budick's frequent elaboration of her central thesis that much of what we call Black-Jewish relations is really about "Jewish self-conceptions and . . . the place of the African American in these self-conceptions" (12). In readings of Leslie Fiedler, Stanley Elkins, Hannah Arendt, and others, Budick is able to articulate this thesis in fascinating ways. She also takes a few opportunities to try to position herself, as an American-Jewish Israeli within this dynamic. These admirable acts of self-disclosure do not, however, ultimately mitigate a strong sense of defensiveness that comes through in her book; she actually calls Harold Cruse's pro-Palestinian position "gratuitous" at one point (98). Budick also spends a good deal of space towards the end of her book on a concept she calls "supersessionism"—which turns out to be not much more than African American writers using "Jewish" materials for their own specialized purposes and can't resist comparing the relative oppression of European Jews and African Americans (196). Also troubling is her rather glib dismissal of Philip Roth: she blames him not only for a misreading of one of his short stories by Palestinian school children (a group she then unwittingly compares to Joseph Goebbels) but also for having an "uncommitted and rather childish Jewish identity"; everybody knows that Philip Roth's Jewish identity is committed and childish. The whole above-it-all dismissal of Roth strikes a false note in the middle of a book that is very much about contests over the definition of Jewish identity. Even so, Budick's book is a worthy addition to the quickly growing list of texts redefining the study of Black-Jewish relations.

Babson College

Jeffrey Melnick

THE VIETNAM WAR: Its History, Literature and Music. Edited by Kenton J. Clymer. El Paso: Texas Western Press. 1998.

Almost thirty years after the Paris Peace Agreement was signed, the Vietnam War continues to play an important role in American culture. If time has begun to reduce some

of our popular culture preoccupation with Vietnam—in movies and television, for example—many signs of Vietnam’s continuing hold on America’s consciousness remain. It is still an issue in presidential elections and primaries. Classes on the war remain popular in universities across the country. Major books stay in print year after year, while hundreds of new additions to the already gargantuan bibliography of the war appear annually. Vietnam’s staying power as a topic of importance and fascination—occasionally I think morbid fascination—in American culture seems rivaled only by the great cataclysm of the Civil War. A partial explanation, and perhaps the greatest legacy of Vietnam for the United States, is that the current generation of young Americans is the first of the twentieth century, and one of the few in all of our history, to have grown to adulthood absent the experience of a significant war.

An eclectic compilation of approaches to the huge topic that “Vietnam” has become, *The Vietnam War*, developed from a 1996 symposium, is less comprehensive than its title and subtitle might suggest. There is a little something for everybody here, but not a great deal on anything in particular. By including poetry and prose, literary criticism, historical and contemporary issues, all in a relatively slender volume, editor Kenton Clymer favored breadth and variety over depth and detail.

*The Vietnam War* has selections of both poetry and prose by W. D. Ehrhart and John Balaban, two of the most acclaimed poets of the war, and a general assessment of the legacies of the war by James Fallows, one of its premier journalists. A paired set of articles by Sandra Taylor deal with the role of women in both the United States and the Vietcong/North Vietnamese war efforts. George Herring offers an excellent overview of the historiography of the Vietnam War, and William Duiker presents an especially original study of the lessons of the war from the Vietnamese perspective, managing in the process to provide a superb capsule summary of the recent history of Vietnam. Ngo Thanh Nhan, a resident of the United States who has returned regularly to Vietnam in the past two decades, adds additional information on contemporary Vietnam. Several features of the book are aimed specifically at teachers. There is a good overview of a difficult theme, American popular music related to the war, by Ray Pratt. And Philip Beidler takes on the unenviable task of sorting through, in ten pages, the enormous literature of the war, including a brief bibliography of the “indispensable” literary works.

*The Vietnam War* will likely get a mixed reception as a classroom text. Other books, including H. Bruce Franklin’s *The Vietnam War* (1996), Stewart Onan’s massive *The Vietnam Reader* (1998), Donald Anderson’s *Aftermath* (1995), and Ehrhart’s *Carrying the Darkness* (1985), provide more comprehensive collections of literature. Similarly, Rowe and Berg (eds.), *The Vietnam War and American Culture* (1991) offers a wider range of cultural criticism related to Vietnam. Finally, the lack of anything on movies or television is a significant shortcoming. Nonetheless, no other single volume that I know of covers the range of material and approaches of this book. And there are essays here that even the most knowledgeable students of the Vietnam war should find valuable. *The Vietnam War* may not make a very short “indispensable” list of books on Vietnam, but it is a useful and worthwhile addition to one of the most important topics in recent American culture.

Wayne State College

Kent Blaser

**BACKYARD VISIONARIES: Grassroots Art in the Midwest.** Edited by Barbara Brackman and Cathy Dwigans. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas. 1999.

This handsomely illustrated book describes the work of the Kansas Grassroots Art Association. Founded in 1973 with a membership of eight, the KGAA began with the

modest goal of raising \$500 to buy a “bottle house,” a strange construction of concrete inset with transparent glass bottles. The organization soon sprouted bylaws, bank accounts, and secretary’s minutes: today the KGAA documents, preserves, researches, and restores a series of (mainly) outdoor artistic oddities sited throughout the Midwest. The KGAA calls these bottle houses, grottoes, homemade museums, and assemblages of scavenged junk “grassroots art” in an effort to be nonjudgmental about issues of aesthetic quality and about the sometimes strained relationship between the creators—local eccentrics, or worse—and the communities upon which they visited their three-dimensional dreams.

Despite several introductory essays about the proper positioning of bottle houses on an artistic spectrum that runs from Warhol’s Campbell Soup cans to the folk tradition of dyeing Ukranian Easter eggs, this is not the book to consult for deciding how a given roadside anomaly should be described or categorized. In the end, the stunning strangeness of the art itself defeats any effort to categorize it. The strength of the book lies instead in the essayists’ willingness to allow the monuments to speak for themselves in the temporal and geographic contexts from which they fitfully arose, like so many roses abloom in a concrete flowerbed.

The most famous works chronicled here are probably the Garden of Eden, in Lucas, Kansas, and Father Paul Dobberstein’s Grotto of the Redemption in West Bend, Iowa. The latter, built between 1912 and 1954 by a Bavarian-born priest, and still maintained today as a major Iowa tourist attraction, hints at the force of obsession: Dobberstein devoted his life to constructing caves and columnar aedicules of concrete, studded with seashells and exotic mineral specimens, presumably aids to religious faith. Tenuously connected, perhaps, to the seashells worn by the roaming pilgrims of *The Canterbury Tales*, these structures find themselves stranded now on the oceanless prairies of Iowa and Wisconsin (which also caught grotto fever thanks to the enterprising priest, who eventually prefabricated his shrines for easy installation elsewhere).

The Garden of Eden, completed in 1928 by S. P. Dinsmoor, is a maze of concrete trees and statues that surrounds his “Cabin Home,” a log cabin made of cast concrete logs. A mixture of Bible scenes and Populist imagery, the artificial forest of outdoor statuary overshadows the cabin (and the self-designed tomb of its owner) and keeps the viewer at bay. Even in death, Dinsmoor’s sculptural rhetoric—a visual noise not unlike the shouts of a madman—warns Lucas, Kansas, against coming too close to the fires of true inspiration.

Fervor and concrete seem to go together, somehow. A new material when Dinsmoor began using it in 1907, concrete lies at the heart of most of the grassroots art described here. Easy to use, infinitely malleable, receptive to insertions and additions, and, above all, permanent, it proved the perfect medium for those bent on making do-it-yourself public monuments of a scale and a presence that could not be ignored. One only wishes that this excellent account of art and eccentricity in the heartland had been issued in a giant concrete edition, to be set up here and there along the backroads that meander their way from bottle house, to grotto, to earthly paradise, somewhere between Kansas and the farthest reaches of the human imagination.

University of Minnesota

Karal Ann Marling

THE GREAT LOBSTER WAR. By Ron Formisano. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press. 1997.

In *The Great Lobster War*, Ron Formisano recounts the 1950s struggle of Maine lobstermen to form the Maine Lobstermen’s association, and more immediately, he recalls

their courtroom battle to defend themselves against federal charges brought against them for violating the Sherman Anti-Trust Act.

Formisano is perhaps most interested in the mythological individualism of the Maine lobstermen, which he feels masks the “deeper complexity consisting of webs of dependency to one another” (8). Unfortunately, the author does not examine those “webs of dependency” in enough detail. The history becomes a colorful recounting of craggy, quixotic Maine lobster catchers and their fights with federal lawyers. The economic context of the case will be familiar to most: rising demand spurs increased production, which results in declining prices for the product. The Maine Lobstermen’s Association was founded to combat what lobstermen saw as price fixing by lobster dealers. Although its success at retaining a “tie-up”—a coordinated refusal to catch lobsters in demand of higher prices—was only partial, it somehow brought on a federal prosecution for violation of the Sherman Anti-Trust Act in 1958. How the case came to the attention of federal authorities is something Formisano himself wonders, but apparently he does not feel it worth investigating.

The book consists mostly of an account of the tie-up and the trial, heavily peppered with descriptions of the (many) major characters and a sampling of witness testimony at the trial. The author seems to want to portray a taut courtroom drama, but in fact whatever drama there was is lost in the reams of detailed testimony and trial trivia he recounts for us. “The day before, summer had been in the air, with the year’s warmest day at a high of seventy-six degrees; but while fair skies prevailed, the temperature had now fallen into the fifties with a high of sixty. Defense counsel had filed a motion for acquittal. . . .” (128).

There are other problems. At a time when other lobster fishermen in Maine had formed legal co-ops under the Fisheries Cooperatives Act, why did the MLA refuse to take this safer route? Formisano insists on portraying lobster catchers as of one class, slighting the complaints of the less wealthy that a tie-up early in the season meant ceding all the lobsters to the deep water powerboat owners, who could always make up the losses later in the season by moving further out to sea.

The biggest shortcoming in the book is its lack of explanatory power where the events of the trial are concerned. Although the author tells us that the defense was soon “in trouble,” we never find out why. In the end, it hardly seems to matter. In a final twist that seems to suck whatever tension remains right out of the story, the defendants cozy up to the prosecution after losing the case, and in the end, nobody goes to jail, and everybody goes home happy.

The author concludes that “The Great Lobster War of 1957-58 was a turning point for the lobster fishermen of Maine” (140). It is hard to see how, since, as Formisano ends the book, he tells us “the relationship of most Maine lobstercatchers to the dealers and to the market had not changed at all” (141).

Those hoping to find an opening into the larger scholarly issues of lobsters and fishing will have to look elsewhere. Formisano does not establish a scholarly context for the work: there is no mention of the works of Bonnie McCay, James Acheson, Arthur McEvoy, or the other fine scholars who have studied lobster fishermen or fisheries in general. The brief essay on sources at the end of the book is helpful, but the book’s utility is unfortunately limited by the absence of footnotes or endnotes.

University of California, Davis

Louis S. Warren

THE NUDE IN AMERICAN PAINTING, 1950-1980. By David McCarthy. New York: Cambridge University Press. 1998.

David McCarthy offers in *The Nude in American Painting, 1950-1980* an analysis and interpretation of figurative painting in America in the years following the emergence—and subsequent domination of—Abstract Expressionism. This, according to the author, is a story that “we do not know sufficiently well,” (1) due primarily to widely-accepted scholarly accounts of the post-World War II period in which figure painting has been overshadowed by advances in abstraction, performance, environmental, and multi-media art. Breaking consciously and definitively with established histories of the “avant-garde,” McCarthy uncovers what he calls a “sub-history within late-modern American painting” (18).

This “sub-history” involves images by Larry Rivers, Philip Pearlstein, Tom Wesselmann, Neil Welliver, Alfred Leslie, Sylvia Sleigh, and Joan Semmel. McCarthy analyzes the work of these artists in five monographic chapters wherein he reconstructs crucial cultural discourses in which, he argues, these painters participated as they depicted the human figure. Drawing equally from the inter-related disciplines of American art, social history, and politics, McCarthy turns repeatedly to Willem de Kooning’s infamous *Woman* series (first exhibited in 1953), Alfred Kinsey’s controversial studies on human sexual behavior (released in 1948 and 1953), and Kenneth Clark’s influential study, *The Nude: A Study in Ideal Form* (1956) as important cultural touchstones. Other recurring topics of discussion include the commercialization of sex in the 1950s (evinced by the popularity of *Playboy* magazine, which began circulation in 1953) and subsequent high court decisions concerning pornography and censorship, as well as the influence of the so-called “Freudian Left” (consisting of Wilhelm Reich, Norman O. Brown, and Herbert Marcuse) in the 1960s and the feminist writings of Betty Friedan and Simone de Beauvoir in the 1970s.

To the extent that McCarthy’s text offers a provocative historical framework for a reconsideration of the work of these painters, his book is useful and engaging. His chapter on Wesselmann’s *Great American Nude* series is particularly strong as he addresses the artist’s anonymous, bedroom-bound bombshells—which simultaneously recall Henri Matisse’s odalisques and Hugh Hefner’s Playmates—in light of contemporaneous debates concerning the relationship between “high” and “low” culture, the struggles to define and regulate obscene art and literature, as well as Wesselmann’s own heterosexuality. Less successful is McCarthy’s chapter on Larry Rivers, in which the author interprets Rivers’ figure paintings from the 1950s as a collective assault on bourgeois masculine identity rooted in the cultural and gender politics of the Beat Generation. Seemingly unable to establish clearly the relationship between Rivers’ bisexuality and his imagery, the author offers a series of dubious critical interpretations that surpass by far the artist’s own sexual activities in stunning unpredictability.

More generally, the study is marred by the conspicuous absence of any mention of painters associated with the Bay Area School, such as Elmer Bischoff and David Park, who were among the first and most influential artists to contend with the figure in the face of the hegemonic abstraction. (In McCarthy’s defense on this point, he has dealt with Bay Area figuration in another context—in an article published in the *Archives of American Art Journal* (1998) on William Theo Brown and Wynn Chamberlain.) One wishes, moreover, that the author would have adhered less rigorously in certain instances to his monographic approach and explored with greater frequency larger themes and issues that concerned not

only those painters falling within his immediate focus, but also other artists who worked concurrently in other media. These reservations aside, McCarthy's book is a welcome and absorbing addition to the scholarship on 20th-century American art, as it sheds some much-needed light on painters who are still frequently overlooked and the cultural milieu to which they responded by retaining and exploring the figure in their work.

The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art

Randall Griffey