

to the detriment of the community, Richards eloquently defends the system. Implicitly taking issue with those who would rewrite the American constitutional tradition to recognize group rights, he argues that the individual members of the group are only asking that their identification with others not be used as a basis for denying them their rights. Unity in the American nation comes not through conformity but rather through an ongoing progressive recognition of the liberty of all individuals within its territorial boundaries. To stigmatize and stereotype persons and thus deprive them of their individuality fundamentally challenges a constitutional tradition not only that has defined us culturally but also has endured our survival as a nation of very diverse beings.

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PETER G. FILENE. *In the Arms of Others: A Cultural History of the Right-To-Die in America*. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee. 1998. Pp. xvii, 282. \$27.00.

Research into the history of death in America is in a state of growth and diversification. Monographs on a range of topics, such as cremation, war memorials, and disasters are available or forthcoming: a recent National Endowment for the Humanities summer institute entitled "The History of Death" included scholars studying death in the Civil War, African-American funeral homes, and representations of dead women in American literature; and undergraduate and graduate courses in the humanities and social sciences are incorporating historical views on death and dying in the United States. Peter G. Filene's book not only makes a significant contribution to the field, but it also serves as a model for future investigations.

What is most refreshing about the book is the way it begins: Filene immediately discloses that "at heart" the book is about his mother's death. Although this kind of self-reflection disappears from much of the cultural history, it returns periodically to remind the reader that the author is not some detached, emotionless entity narrating "the story." Read Filene's short description of his own reaction to learning about the suicide of Joe Cruzan, who fought to have a hospital remove the feeding tubes for his daughter Nancy (p. 183).

Additionally, Filene's history carefully weaves together the legal, ethical, political, and medical perspectives on the right-to-die movement with the personal stories of individuals who must confront disturbing questions about death, and life. Besides the Cruzan story, Filene deftly and respectfully deals with others who figure prominently in this movement, including "infant doe" (born with Down's syndrome and esophageal atresia), who died within six days after the parents decided against surgery and intravenous feeding; Claire Conroy, an eighty-two-year-old woman whose case proceeded through the legal system even

after her death; and, most significantly, Karen Ann Quinlan, whose popular story haunts the pages of Filene's book. Indeed, Quinlan's tragic case is the watershed event in this cultural history. Filene demonstrates how all the key people related to the case—parents, doctors, lawyers, judges—struggled with fundamental questions that have driven the movement since then, such as what ultimately constitutes personal identity, who controls the destiny of patients unable to speak for themselves, and how society determines the meaning and definition of death.

Another element of the book that makes it a first-rate investigation, and a model for others, is the way Filene contextualizes all the technical, legal, and ethical issues in a larger cultural frame. Quinlan, for example, is not depicted solely as a complicated medical case with profound legal implications; Filene demonstrates how she became a highly contentious symbol in American society, given various meanings by individuals in the press, religious organizations, and legislative bodies. In other words, the book links long-standing and newly forming cultural attitudes, related to such controversial issues as abortion, suicide, and AIDS, to the public debates surrounding the right-to-die movement.

The book also includes a historical perspective, situating the right-to-die movement, and death and dying in general, in a longer historical trajectory. By doing this, Filene draws the reader's attention to the historical and social circumstances determining changing cultural assumptions about death. For example, on the notion of a "good death," Filene writes: "In the nineteenth century a 'good death' meant one in which the person endured suffering or even welcomed it as a test of fitness for heaven. In twentieth-century consumer culture capitalism it meant painlessness or gratification, a quick fix" (p. 67).

Finally, the most innovative aspect of the book is its conclusion, "Cultures of Dying," which shifts from history to cross-cultural reflection. Filene understands the value of thinking beyond U.S. society and turns to brief discussions of community, illness, and death in Bali and the Netherlands. The normative reasoning behind these discussions, "to set 'right-to-die' within an ethic—a tapestry—of relatedness" (p. 201), does not detract from the solid historical narrative. Instead, these comparative cases shed valuable light on the limits of the American imagination and the social and cultural forces and values that shape American attitudes toward death.

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ALBERT BOIME. *The Unveiling of the National Icons: A Plea for Patriotic Iconoclasm in a Nationalist Era*. (Cambridge Studies in American Visual Culture.) New York: Cambridge University Press. 1998. Pp. xvii, 427. \$59.95.

In the past decade, art historians and literary critics have made important contributions to historians' understanding of American nationalism through the analysis of public art and monuments. The best of these works include Kirk Savage's *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War and Monument in Nineteenth Century America* (1997), James E. Young's *Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (1993), John Gillis's anthology *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (1994), Karal Ann Marling and John Wetenhall's *Iwo Jima: Monuments, Memories, and the American Hero* (1991), and Michele H. Bogart's *Public Sculpture and the Civic Ideal in New York City, 1890–1930* (1989). Such studies pay close attention to the shifting relationships between artists, patrons, and publics; to the way that powerful symbols built for all time change meaning in different historical and social contexts; and to the connections between the prevailing political culture of a period and its forms of representation. Albert Boime adds his voice to this discussion by examining the nation's most durable national icons, as he terms them, images widely popular, easily reproduced, and subject to manipulation. Five chapters trace the history of the flag, the Statue of Liberty, Mount Rushmore, the Marine Corps Memorial, and the Lincoln Memorial, with an epilogue analyzing the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

Boime seeks to historicize and demystify these revered national symbols, demonstrating how each has been manipulated by the power elite. "The history of each icon reveals that privileged members of the American hierarchy, bent on maintaining their economic and social class advantages, attempted to appropriate the symbols of America almost from their inception and use them to stimulate an illusion of inclusivity" (p. 8). By unveiling the undemocratic origins of these national symbols, Boime hopes to wrest their exclusive use away from the political right and make them more accessible and usable for the democratic movements that he favors. His model of how this might happen is the Lincoln Memorial, dedicated as a neoclassical symbol of the conservative social order of the 1920s but transformed into a symbol of racial emancipation by Martin Luther King, Jr.'s March on Washington in 1963.

Although the book offers some interesting details about the making of some of America's best-known monuments, by and large it fails to accomplish what it sets out to do. Its largest flaw is conceptual; there is no discussion of nationalism, or patriotism, or the differences between the two. A passing reference in the introduction to Russian religious icons is the sole attempt to place the American story in comparative perspective. Nor does the book help its readers to gain a better understanding, through art, of the ebb and flow of American nationalism. A powerful nation-state and popular feelings for it seem to have developed together in the aftermath of the Civil War, reached high tide in the decades between World War I and the

Vietnam War, then waned in what some scholars have called a post-national era. Did changes in the prevailing national iconography follow this pattern? Perhaps most frustrating, the book contains no discussion of how ordinary Americans incorporated these national symbols into their lives or of the particular meanings that they gave to them. Why were the symbols so popular in the larger culture, and what enabled the elite to hijack them for their own repressive purposes?

The audience for this book is unclear. It has little original to say to scholars of nationalism or to those interested in political iconography, who would be better off reading the books mentioned in the first paragraph of this review. Nor is the book written in a style that engages the general reader. It is badly in need of an editor. The five main chapters (averaging sixty pages each), thirty-page epilogue, and three appendixes are stuffed with off-the-cuff political pronouncements only tenuously related to the material at hand. After describing how the Marine Corps Memorial at Arlington National Cemetery "serves the cause of domestic hierarchy and global dominance while appearing in the guise of an emblem of popular democracy" (p. 208), Boime goes on to lecture his readers about how the U.S. in the years since the memorial's dedication in 1954 continues "to intervene in the affairs of other countries in an effort to organize them into a system of post Colonial global imperialism" (p. 216). Like Mount Rushmore, Boime's prose is often gargantuan and grotesque. If "unveiling" implies a delicate process, a nuanced, subtle effort to see behind appearances, then this is a jackhammer of a book, with Boime giving rough shape to a mountain of unpolished words and half-formed ideas. The volume appears under the auspices of a new series, Cambridge Studies in American Visual Culture. Let us hope that the series advisory board—which includes Boime—and the editors at Cambridge University Press will take more care with the manuscripts they publish in the future.

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JULIA S. ARDERY. *The Temptation: Edgar Tolson and the Genesis of Twentieth-Century Folk Art*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press. 1998. Pp. x, 353. Cloth \$45.00, paper \$19.95.

This book contributes significantly to the growing literature on the intricate social and economic relationships between artists and their collectors and dealers. It also introduces Edgar Tolson, a colorful figure in the development of a new genre, twentieth-century folk art. Julia S. Ardery's diligent research illuminates how the 1960s war on poverty attracted well-meaning volunteers and professionals to backward corners of Appalachia and how they discovered and came to value art made by poor, uneducated folk.

Ardery conducted many lengthy interviews with