

logical and urbanistic history of Cincinnati," Condit numbs the reader with nearly three-hundred pages of details on locomotive power, freight weights, and station design. The book's central idea—that "primitive" economic, legal, and municipal institutions frustrated the railroads' technological advance—emerges on page 187 in the midst of a rambling discourse on plans for terminal consolidation. The idea's relevance to the history of Cincinnati remains uncertain. *The Railroad and the City* contains an enormous amount of technical information, and for this reason will be of interest to specialists, but Condit never identifies the railroads' impact on Cincinnati and on the lives of its citizens. This is a book about trains and depots; the city serves as a backdrop for discussion of the transportation companies that interest the author.

Is Condit's title completely inappropriate? Perhaps not, considering a subtle theme that runs throughout the book. Condit is no friend of the automobile, "the most costly, inefficient, and destructive form of transportation" (page 273), whose highways have disrupted the country's urban landscape for decades. Condit argues that the railroads' capacity for freight and passenger carriage has never been tested and suggests that the resuscitation of rail transport may be the key to the revival of the American city. The problem is administrative, he writes, not technological. Preoccupied with the problems attendant to the sudden appearance of passenger cars and commercial trucks on the urban scene during the 1920s, government officials and city planners abandoned what for Condit remains the most sensible method of transport in an industrial society faced with depleted energy resources. In a sense, *The Railroad and the City* is a preservationist's plea for environmental sensitivity cast in the guise of urban history. The book's scholarly pretensions obscure a plausible idea that deserves more explicit treatment.

—William Silag  
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*Adlai Stevenson of Illinois*, by John Bartlow Martin. Garden City, New York: Anchor Books/Doubleday, 1977, pp. ix, 828. \$6.95.

Professors and journalists think nothing of writing on a subject they are familiar with only through the documents. Their books, ponderous with evidence, fail to distinguish between the relevant and irrelevant details. John Bartlow Martin, currently professor of journalism at Northwestern knows politics as it is practiced, and he recognizes the relevant. He has served as ambassador to the Dominican Republic (1962-64). In 1952, at the beginning of Adlai Stevenson's first campaign for the presidency, Martin fell under the Stevensonian spell. During the campaign, young Martin became a member of the "Elks Club," Stevenson's speech-writing and research team. Their association continued through the years as Martin moved back and forth from academics to journalism to politics.

Martin knew Stevenson, and knew him very well. Five months after

Stevenson died, Martin—with the full cooperation of Stevenson's children—began to write Stevenson's biography. Martin began with the greatest of all scholarly treasures: uncatalogued personal and political papers. Stevenson saved everything. His papers contain drafts of his speeches and major political correspondence. They contain thorough financial records. Less predictably, they contain intensely personal material—memoranda and jottings concerning his divorce and various love letters. Martin uses it all, supplementing that material with interviews with Stevenson's friends, relatives, associates, and rivals.

Another biographer might discount Stevenson's early years in Illinois before he was a national figure. Martin discusses these years in great detail—his one long volume only covers Stevenson's life up to 1952. Martin claims "it was Illinois that shaped [Stevenson] and prepared him to try to shape the world." Martin masterfully handles the Byzantine complexities of Illinois politics following World War II. Even if his book were not a biography of Stevenson, it would repay a reading for its study of Illinois politics alone.

But it is Stevenson's biography, and it is beautifully balanced and judicious. At times Martin depicts Stevenson as shallow, but the fault is not Martin's—it is Stevenson's. In the shadow of his parents' sad marriage and his own unhappy divorce, Stevenson finally became his own man. He found the freedom a bit dismaying. He liked to have people around him, though he constantly complained that he was unable to find time to think. Never a heavy or persistent reader, he—like Franklin Roosevelt—learned most from his friends and advisers.

Stevenson won a landslide victory in the Illinois governor's race of 1948, but his presidential race in 1952 ended in a landslide defeat. The wistful note in Martin's analysis does not prevent him from concurring with the standard judgment that Stevenson had little chance of winning in 1952. Too many things went wrong—or failed to go right. The electorate was weary of Democrats. More importantly, the people wanted a rest after two decades of continuous challenge, and Stevenson simply offered more challenge than Eisenhower. Certainly Stevenson attracted disciples, but disciples do not win elections. "I just haven't got that something—impress them, yes, but not excite them," Stevenson mused early in his career.

Martin writes fine prose—clear, concise, occasionally memorable. One problem with *Adlai Stevenson of Illionis* is that its length will discourage the casual reader. Martin ends the volume with Stevenson's defeat in his first presidential race, just as Stevenson was beginning the national and international career shaped in part by his Illinois years. It is precisely the abundant detail of *Adlai Stevenson of Illinois* that makes it valuable.

Martin's biography of Stevenson is a distinguished creation, brilliantly executed. It is the definitive work on Stevenson's early career, and a model biography.

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