

they retained a commitment to violence. McKivigan defines the word *followers* loosely to mean not the men who actually followed Brown to Harpers Ferry, nor even the Secret Six who funded the venture, but a wider circle of abolitionists. One can quarrel with whether Frederick Douglass, Governor John A. Andrew of Massachusetts, or James Montgomery, the Kansas guerilla leader, were in any sense "followers" of Brown, rather than men who came to the same conclusions by independent paths.

As the essays are discrete units with little reference to one another, some repetition is inevitable. The Christiana revolt, not the focus of any one essay, is mentioned in several. Joshua Giddings plays a supporting role in the Padgett article as well as being the subject of Stewart's essay. Some topics that one might expect in a collection of this sort, such as a fresh examination of Nat Turner's rebellion, are missing. The first section contains more narrative accounts; the second is more thesis-driven. Although readers may not always agree with the conclusions reached, all of the essays are interesting, well written, thoroughly researched, and thought provoking.

*Life with Father: Parenthood and Masculinity in the Nineteenth-Century American North*, by Stephen M. Frank. Gender Relations in the American Experience Series. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1998. xii, 240 pp. Illustrations, tables, notes, index. \$36.00 cloth.

REVIEWED BY JAMES MARTEN, MARQUETTE UNIVERSITY

The short title of Stephen M. Frank's *Life with Father* only hints at this book's breadth. The subtitle, which invokes "parenthood and masculinity," comes closer to capturing the richness of Frank's accomplishment, but most readers will also learn things they did not know about nineteenth-century work, American holidays, antebellum reform, westward expansion, women's experiences, childbirth, and even naming practices. Along the way, Frank explodes a number of myths about fathers—many of them corollaries of the useful but perhaps too generalized concept of the "cult of domesticity"—and places his argument securely in its moral, scientific, economic, and social contexts. Explode may be too dramatic a term, but Frank is generally quite successful in adding complexity to our images of how northern middle-class families functioned, showing us "the considerable cultural work undertaken" in the nineteenth century "to reconcile men to paternal responsibility" (25). One has only to read Frank's section on the transition of fathers from stern enforcers to playmates and companions to see the

limitations of the old notion of Victorian fathers as aloof, stuffy, and no fun to be around.

There are many strengths in this notable book. One is the balance the author achieves between two very different kinds of sources: the advice books that prescribed and proscribed a wide range of fatherly behavior and the diaries and memoirs (produced by fathers and children alike) that provide the best available record of real-life parenting. Another strength is Frank's attention to the subtle and not-so-subtle differences between the ways fathers treated their sons and the ways they treated their daughters. For instance, after children grew into early adolescence, fathers and sons entered a nearly contractual relationship, when their not necessarily mutual hopes and fears about the future (expressed in economic planning, educational goals, and other quite tangible steps through which a young man had to be prodded) could lead to tension between them. On the other hand, as daughters became young women, their relationships with fathers often grew quite cozy, to the extent that they became, in Frank's words, "quasi-wives" (which no doubt says as much about the relationship between Victorian husbands and wives as it does about the relationships between fathers and children). Frank is equally adept at differentiating between regional variations of fathering. Although the emphasis throughout the book—at least partly because of available sources—is on the northeastern and middle Atlantic states, Frank does manage to show how living on the frontier or on farms affected fatherhood. The work rural fathers expected of their children was different from that expected by urban fathers, of course: shaped by the seasons and the weather, working on a farm may also have provided more contact hours between fathers and children than city labor allowed. Indeed, in the autobiographies of farm children, work was more often recollected than play. Living on the frontier also tended to mean that fathers would move their families more often—and greater distances—than urban fathers, while the pressures of carving farms out of the wilderness put a premium on time and resources that caused fathers to choose work over education for their children.

Although Frank's argument is eminently plausible and his prose is straightforward and effective, the book is, nevertheless, vulnerable to a couple of modest caveats. Although Frank acknowledges that the Civil War years saw powerful demonstrations of fatherly roles—ranging from the metaphorical "Father Abraham" to the familial images used to describe military life to the thoughts about fatherhood inspired by soldiers' separation from their families—he devotes only a brief closing chapter to the war itself. The war jarred Americans into

deep reflections about the importance of family; they wrote about it constantly, and an expanded analysis of those letters would have strengthened Frank's already convincing position. In addition, while one of the strengths of Frank's approach is his willingness to embrace the complexity of the roles of fathers, that inclusiveness can, at times, weaken the force of his argument. Because there are no hard and fast transitions from one style of parenting to another, because there are all kinds of blurry overlaps between active and passive and stern and companionable fathers, at times it seems as though Frank is undermining his own thesis by saying that, while some fathers did this, others did that, and some did neither. Although the fluidity that characterizes the reality of fathering may make it hard to nail down exactly when certain trends rose to prominence, this non-linear analysis of the development of parenting is an extremely useful portrayal of nineteenth-century men, women, and children coming to grips with their worlds.

*Provincial Lives: Middle-Class Experience in the Antebellum Middle West*, by Timothy R. Mahoney. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999. x, 334 pp. Illustrations, maps, tables, notes, appendixes, bibliography, index. \$54.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY SUSAN S. RUGH, BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

A sequel to *River Towns in the Great West* (1990), which explained the making of the regional urban economy, *Provincial Lives* tells the story of the construction of regional urban society in the Upper Mississippi River Valley between 1800 and 1860. Like its predecessor, *Provincial Lives* sets local developments within a regional context, probing the connections between the two to explain the dynamics of middle-class urban society. Mahoney does not abandon the structuralist approach that made *River Towns* so successful, but he employs case studies of people and groups to enliven and explain larger historical trends. Thus his "analytic narrative" advances the development of social history, weaving structural analysis together with the particularities of human experience. Not simply a social history of one community, the book's regional scope allows broader applicability than a narrow study.

Mahoney argues that the construction of a regional social system took place in a series of stages, each of which is explained in chapters that unfold chronologically. Initial settlement of the valley by French, mixed blood, and eastern families involved with the fur trade gave way to family-based enclaves that laid the foundations of genteel society. In

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