

*My Likeness Taken: Daguerreian Portraits in America, 1840–1860*, by Joan L. Severa. Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2005. xix, 303 pp. Photographs, notes, glossary, bibliography, index. \$65.00 cloth.

Reviewer Shirley Teresa Wajda is a research fellow at the Center for the Humanities, Wesleyan University. Her dissertation was "Social Currency: A Domestic History of the Portrait Photograph in the United States, 1839–1889" (University of Pennsylvania, 1992).

Portraiture and fashionable dress are intricately linked. Colonial painters such as John Singleton Copley "took" likenesses of sitters but also gave those sitters' likenesses stylish costumes the sitters themselves may not have owned or worn. The introduction of daguerreotypy in 1839 challenged the portraitist's power to confirm social status on canvas. The seemingly unerring camera lens democratized visual representation at the same time that mechanized production of cloth and print facilitated fashionableness for more Americans. Daguerreotypists, notably Boston's Southworth and Hawes, offered potential patrons advice on dress and demeanor in the pages of gift books. But they were more the exception rather than rule: the portrait boom historians of photography now term the Daguerreian Era (1840–1860) was fueled by entrepreneurs who received little or no training in art. Americans who would not have thought to have their portraits painted had their likenesses taken by daguerreotypists who had set up cameras in portable "saloons" or in rented rooms in the nation's towns and cities.

As in her first study of nineteenth-century costume through American portrait photographs, *Dressed for the Photographer* (1995), Joan L. Severa again applies her considerable knowledge of costume in this nicely designed volume of 277 daguerreotypes. Each image (reproduced in color) carries a caption discussing hairstyles and headwear, costume, and jewelry for men, women, and children in the two decades before the Civil War. A glossary instructs the reader in costume terminology. Useful to collectors, the additional knowledge of historic costume aids in dating daguerreotypic portraits; indeed, it appears that this volume was created with collectors in mind. Severa dedicates the book to the Daguerreian Society of America. One of its members, Matthew R. Isenberg, offers a brief preface on historic daguerreotypic practice. Specimens from his collection and from other private collections are reproduced here, many for the first time.

Several necessary practices of historical inquiry are absent in this study. Most important is the question of provenance of the many anonymous daguerreotypes. Although some examples carry evidence of makers, sitters, or owners, many do not, and the assumption that these were indeed made in the United States and depict persons resi-

dent in the country between 1840 and 1860 goes unquestioned. On the other hand, the biographies of sitters who are identified by name are rarely pursued to confirm Severa's interpretation. The practice of tinting daguerreotypic portraits did not always mirror the actual colors of a sitter's dress; certain colors show well in the relief of the black-and-white daguerreotype's mirrored surface. (Some colorists never saw the sitter and his or her raiment.) Portraiture itself is a historical practice that seeks to convey character through likeness, yet the author has a tendency to read into the portraits psychological attributes that historically would not have been recognized. She offers scenarios and relationships that cannot be proved. Troubling also are the captions of the few portraits of persons of color, in which Severa conjectures that the sitters are likely slaves and, due to their finery, house servants. The reader does not learn on what bases such assumptions are made, and resort to the brief bibliography uncovers only one applicable source—South Carolinian Mary Chesnut's war diary—leading this reader to question such reasoning.

The slippage between what appears at first as a study of daguerreotypy and historic portrait practices and a leading scholar's costume analysis through evidence provided by daguerreotypic images is evinced in the misleading title. *My Likeness Taken: Daguerreian Portraits in America, 1840–1860* is a richly satisfying visual experience. Nevertheless, the study is poorer for a lack of attention to historical portrait practices and American social and cultural history that cannot but challenge aspects of the author's interpretation.

*Young America: Land, Labor, and the Republican Community*, by Mark A. Lause. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2005. vii, 240 pp. Illustrations, appendixes, notes, index. \$42.00 cloth, \$20.00 paper.

Reviewer Nellie W. Kremenak received her Ph.D. from the University of Iowa in 1996. She is working on a monograph on working-class Iowans in the nineteenth century.

In *Young America*, Mark A. Lause examines the history of the National Reform Association (NRA), a working-class organization founded by three New York City printers in the winter of 1843–44 to seek reform in the opportunities for land ownership in the United States. Members of the NRA, located primarily in New York State and New England, argued that the republican principles on which the nation had been founded required that opportunities for land ownership be made widely available and that such availability could never occur as long as favorably positioned individuals and interests were allowed to ac-