

*The Education of Jane Addams*, by Victoria Bissell Brown. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004. viii, 421 pp. Notes, bibliography, index. \$39.95 cloth.

Reviewer Maureen A. Flanagan is professor of history at Michigan State University. She is the author of *Seeing with Their Hearts: Chicago Women and the Vision of the Good City, 1871–1933* (2002).

Jane Addams has never lacked for attention. This quintessential Progressive Era reformer, founder of one of the country's first social settlements, prolific lecturer and writer, leading pacifist during World War I, prominent figure in the women's international peace movement, and recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize, captured the attention of both her contemporaries and historians. For her work and prominence in so many public activities during her lifetime she has been both mythologized and castigated. She has been cast as the beloved "Saint Jane" by some, denounced as a Communist sympathizer by others, while still others have depicted her as something in between: a noble, but flawed figure whose focus on Americanizing immigrants and failure to launch a direct attack on racism betrayed a white, middle-class bias. Yet, until this intellectual biography of Addams's early life, no one has succeeded in capturing the complex interplay of Addams's ideas, work, and personality.

In *The Education of Jane Addams*, Victoria Bissell Brown takes the reader on an intimate journey through Addams's upbringing, education, and early years at Hull House. To do this, Brown has undertaken deep and meticulous research into archival materials of personal papers and correspondence, and correlates these with Addams's many original writings. Brown's purpose is to explore the arc of Addams's "emotional and philosophical development" (8) to understand how Addams's lived experiences shaped and then transformed the ideas that motivated all her work.

Brown begins her book with a discussion of her early family life, when her father instilled in young "Jennie" Addams two important principles: that government had a duty "to foster a fair and honest climate for economic opportunity" and that those people who already benefited from such a climate had "to act as community stewards for the rest" (50). But, as Brown so skillfully reveals in her examination of Addams's life and writings, these were guiding principles. Addams spent her school years at Rockford Female Seminary and several years afterwards trying to find the best way to put the principles into practice. Those years of schooling, travel, and living in a poor immigrant community shaped her principles in new and significant ways.

Examining Addams's school years, Brown finds that her first ideas, adapted from her father and from reading the Scottish writer Thomas Carlyle, were based on the idea of benevolent heroic gentlemen. One essay written while at Rockford indicated that she originally felt comfortable with the notion that "poor people needed the inspiration of truth and nobility more than they needed material goods" (105). After Addams left Rockford, she had to deal with the disappointment of not being allowed to continue her education. Searching for a meaningful way to put into practice ideas that had been moving away from the male-centered idea of "arrogant heroics," Addams traveled through Europe, where she spent time at Toynbee Hall in London. There, Brown demonstrates, Addams finally divorced herself from the idea of heroism and embraced instead an ideal that valued "the caring and intimacy fostered by female culture." Addams, according to Brown, was experiencing the injustice of the industrial world she was now seeing all around her and "directed her eye away from the hero on stage and toward the individual on the street." She came to believe that "heroism was not a romantic flight of the disembodied will but a daily decision to show up and hold on" (205). This realization led to her founding of Hull House and underlay all her work from that point onward.

Brown's use of Addams's writings as a vehicle for understanding her principles is also at the heart of this book. She superbly demonstrates the intersection of Addams's writings with the experiences she was undergoing at the time. Addams's early writings at school through the writing of her first autobiographical account, *Twenty Years at Hull House* (1910), all reflect a constant reappraisal of the philosophical underpinnings of her social theory based on her lived experiences. Brown shines in showing us that the autobiography is meant to be allegorical as much as truth. She provides a cautionary tale here both for historians who would overly depend on autobiography and for ever accepting an autobiography at face value.

One additional essential revelation in Brown's book is her evidence that Addams, unlike many of her contemporaries, including Hull House cofounder Ellen Gates Starr, did not predicate her social theory on religion. Addams considered religion as a source of ethics that could be used for "the active creation of a civil society that dignified labor, culture, and religious diversity" (205). Such thinking accounts for Hull House, for Addams never being affiliated with any specific religious sect, and for her ability to work with individuals of all religious and political beliefs.

Brown has given us an important and original study of one of the best-known figures in U.S. history. It reveals to readers Jane Addams the human being rather than the myth. Her flaws, her strengths, as well as her capacity for change, adaptation, and acceptance of others who were not exactly like her are exposed in a way that will enable us to view her as a product of her environment, but also as a historical figure who believed first and foremost in a democracy based on social justice for all people. Brown ends her book on this last point, arguing that it is essential to understand all of Addams's actions, finally, as a result of her ideal that all of society's problems could only be solved through mutual understanding. Addams spent her life attempting to be the honest broker, the person who brought people together, "rising above dogma and self-interest and embracing flexible solutions out of mutual concern for a common good" (295). Such a conclusion may not satisfy anyone who wants to argue that Addams should have been more radical in her approach to resolving the mammoth problems of the Progressive era. Yet, as Brown so convincingly portrays, Jane Addams believed that lived experiences and not necessarily an inflexible political ideology had to guide one's actions in order to achieve reform.

*Citizen: Jane Addams and the Struggle for Democracy*, by Louise W. Knight. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005. xvi, 582 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$35.00 cloth.

Reviewer Judith Ann Trolander is professor of history at the University of Minnesota Duluth. She is the author of *Professionalism and Social Change: From the Settlement House Movement to Neighborhood Centers, 1886 to the Present* (1987) and "Hull-House and the Settlement House Movement: A Centennial Reassessment" (*Journal of Urban History*, 1991).

Jane Addams was the most famous settlement house leader in the world, a multi-issue reformer, and a winner of the Nobel Peace Prize. Louise Knight's carefully researched, insightful, and beautifully written biography takes Addams's story up to 1899. By that time, Addams had established Hull House, attracted some other leading reformers to it as residents, launched a successful speaking career, published some articles, and become nationally known. Her books, including the classic *Twenty Years at Hull House* (1910), would not appear until the twentieth century, and her prominence as a reformer would continue to grow. What Knight does in covering the first half of Addams's life is to detail Addams's transition from living in an upper-class family in a small midwestern town to her life at Hull House in a poor, immigrant neighborhood in late nineteenth-century Chicago.