

perfect American combination of the sacred and the profane.

Nash writes the history of the Liberty Bell in five chronologically arranged chapters. As a bell, it proved something of a dud. Cast in England, damaged almost immediately after its arrival in Philadelphia, and then recast in Philadelphia, it finally and famously cracked by the early nineteenth century. By that time, however, the Bell was well on its way from utilitarian instrument to national icon.

While the Bell no longer rang, the inscription around its top has proved to have enduring resonance: "Proclaim Liberty throughout all the Land unto all the Inhabitants thereof." With the Bell's clapper stilled, those words became the focus of the Bell's significance and the means through which all kinds of Americans linked their own causes and concerns with it.

In the antebellum period, abolitionists found the Bell a powerful symbol for their crusade to end slavery. At virtually the same moment, journalist George Lippard invented the story that the Bell rang out on July 4, 1776. And for many Americans, I suspect, that story still hasn't died.

After the Civil War, the Bell was used at the 1876 Centennial Exposition as a symbol of national unity and as a device for healing a fractured nation. During the great age of American industrial expansion, the Bell went on the road to be a featured attraction at several of the enormous world's fairs that celebrated that growth. During both world wars, the Bell was pressed into service to sell bonds. Philadelphia's mayor tapped out a Morse-code "Liberty," which was played to the first wave of soldiers before they hit the beaches of Normandy. With fascism defeated, the Bell got little rest before it was used as an anticommunist symbol during the cold war. Nash closes with a discussion of the most recent fights over how the Bell will be used in its new interpretive center to acknowledge the centrality of slavery at the founding of the nation.

In short, it has been a busy bell indeed. In this fine and readable book, Nash not only gives us a terrific biography of this one-ton piece of metal, but he reminds us that, perhaps more than anything else in American life, the Liberty Bell has served as a touchstone for us to contemplate the complicated and contested meaning of the very notion of liberty.

Ohio State University

STEVEN CONN

The Historicism of Charles Brockden Brown: Radical History and the Early Republic. By MARK L. KAMRATH. (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2010. 352 pp., Illustrations, notes, index. \$65.)

Mark L. Kamrath's new book, *The Historicism of Charles Brockden Brown: Radical History and the Early Republic*, confirms what I have long believed:

Charles Brockden Brown was uniquely attuned to his era, absorbing and critically examining every contemporary event and philosophy. Whereas most previous studies focus almost exclusively on Brown's novels, Kamrath widens the scope to include periodical publications, pamphlets, and histories. Through the lens of Brown's historical writings, Kamrath concludes that, contrary to earlier assessments, Brown did not retreat into middle-class conservatism but rather retained his political radicalism throughout his lifetime. Moreover, the author contends that Brown demonstrated a quite modern concern with historical objectivity long before late twentieth-century historians addressed the issue. Such focal points should make Kamrath's book of great interest to literary critics and historians alike.

The first of the book's three sections, titled "Remembering the Past," presents a review of European and colonial American traditions of history writing. It then analyzes Brown's novels and their concern with "Domestic History," which focused on individuals (particularly women) and social history rather than political events and figures. Kamrath importantly shows that Brown's novels were really forms of historical writings and that the author's aesthetic method remained consistent throughout his novelistic career. Since Brown was most famous for his works of fiction, those interested in him might be tempted to cease reading at the end of the first section; they would be unwise to do so, however.

In the second and third parts, "Historiography and the 'Art of the Historian'" and "The Politics of History," Kamrath turns to a number of Brown's texts that have remained mostly unexamined or misunderstood. Brown edited periodicals, composed historical sketches, and compiled the "Annals of Europe and America," to which he appended numerous footnotes. Here Kamrath shows how Brown's concerns remained consistent regardless of genre, that he endorsed a more secular and skeptical approach to writing history, and that he radically challenged the belief in American exceptionalism and measured the costs as well as the benefits of the empire for liberty.

Kamrath's book is very well researched, and it brings much needed attention to a significantly underappreciated aspect of Brown's intellect while also scrutinizing texts from Brown's late career that deserve more serious study than they have hitherto received. One great disappointment lies in the study's failure to discuss Brown's shorter fiction. While Brown did not write many short stories, most of them appeared in the periodicals Kamrath considers, and they often dealt with the exact issues found in the novels. "A Lesson on Concealment," for example, has much to do with "Domestic History," while stories like "Thessalonica" and "Death of Cicero" are historical pieces. "The Trials of Arden," furthermore, draws upon a sensational contemporary court case as source material. Each of these would seem to fall within Kamrath's scope, yet he leaves them unexamined. Readers might also be disappointed that the book does not interrogate texts from

Brown's pre-novel-writing career.

These shortcomings should not, however, detract from the numerous virtues of this new study. The issues Kamrath raises will almost certainly spur scholars of both literature and history to rethink their assumptions about Brown and his era.

Western Michigan University

SCOTT SLAWINSKI

The Trial of Frederick Eberle: Language, Patriotism, and Citizenship in Philadelphia's German Community, 1790 to 1830. By FRIEDERIKE BAER. (New York: New York University Press, 2008. viii, 272 pp. Illustrations, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. \$48.)

The trial of Frederick Eberle involved over fifty men, all of whom were indicted and ultimately convicted for conspiracy and rioting in Philadelphia in 1816. They were constituents of the German Lutheran Church St. Michael's and Zion and had fought with other members of the church over whether they should include English-language services and education in their ministry. Almost a decade earlier, a group of pro-English-language Lutherans had left the church over a similar controversy, and as Baer explains in this excellent micro-history of the church community, these fights over church governance and religious practice were significant in early republican Philadelphia.

The trial of Eberle and others became a debate over the place of ethnicity and language in the American republic. As such, it reflected crucial themes, such as the problem of citizenship in a new country. It also touched upon the cultural problems of heterogeneity, as well as individual rights and privileges in the face of majority rule and state power.

Although the conflict between these various church factions was complicated, Baer's close analysis reveals certain trends. The pro-English group tended to be more politically engaged and more involved with the larger English-speaking community, both in Philadelphia and the state. The pro-German group was comprised of more recent immigrants, many of whom were small artisans and petty retailers who served the German-speaking populations of Philadelphia; they lived in the Northern Liberties and Southwark, the city's suburbs.

In some ways the book reflects the ambivalent open-endedness of the theme itself. Conflicts over immigrants' language, nationality, ethnicity, and citizenship have been ongoing in different local communities throughout the United States, and the debates within the German community would continue, change shape, and shift in the decades after this crisis. Although the court chastised these particular pro-German-language Lutherans and penalized them with substantial fines and court costs, they would actually pay little and would win their battle