and the review of coffee table books, are periods prior to the Depression evoked. The contemporary history-broader perspective relationship deserves more attention.

Other topics, sensibly treated to a point, are simply not fully explored. Frisch is fascinated by the nature of public memory, but in these essays he does not probe potential social-psychological angles. An intriguing essay on what college students remember about American heroes, though based on very limited data, ventures some plausible conclusions about the importance of general cultural pressures in creating a surprisingly uniform and rather boring viewpoint. Questions about the nature of the public audience for history in the United States, and the kinds of expectations it brings to public history, are more often evoked than systematically probed.

At the same time, the book has two major strengths. First, several of the individual essays are very good. The account of the author's clash with the New York Times over how to present oral history testifies about unemployment in Buffalo is both interesting and revealing. Evaluation of audience reaction (both American and Chinese) to a documentary on a Chinatown is useful. The three final essays, on urban museums, the Philadelphia centenary celebration and the Ellis Island museum project use the case study approach to excellent effect; here are practical and useful issues to grapple with in thinking about public presentation of history.

The book's second strength comes from the author's characteristic good sense in basic judgment which shines through, even in some essays of modest scope. Frisch wants a balance between use of oral history that is overwhelmed by scholarly interpretation and the nonsense idea that oral history evidence "speaks for itself." Scholarly categories of analysis and oral evidence must interwine. He wants public history presentations that challenge audiences, rather than confirming stereotypic expectations, and while he recognizes the abstruseness of much social history scholarship, he wants some of the leading issues to inform general exhibits — so that viewers ask questions about their own sense of the past. He attacks conservative impulses in manipulating history, including the common temptation in documentaries to have ordinary people convey only limited reactions while elite participants offer more general perspectives — as if only the latter group could really think in ways anyone else would wish to know about. (This was the core of the dispute with the Times.) At the same time he reminds radical historians that the public, and oral history interviewees, are often also conservative because of the power of conventional historical culture and a desire to make the past safe.

Judgments of this sort, often eloquently presented and applied to specific kinds of historical work, offer humane and useful guidance. Rarely definitive, and in some ways not as reflective as the author seems to imagine, this book offers much to readers interested in some newer methods of doing and presenting contemporary history.

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Cracker Culture: Celtic Ways in the Old South
By Grady McWhiney

This book proceeds by an old principle in ethnic conversation: only Jews may be anti-Semitic, only blacks may use the "n" word. These pages offer up every facet, every detail, every angle of the traditional stereotype of the American South; only what Yankees said to disparage, Grady McWhiney means to understand — in fact, to praise. As the Lyndon Baines Johnson professor of history at Texas Christian University and possessor of the right sort of surname for this kind of book, someone like McWhiney can march forth intrepidly where others would demur.

To parody Crevecoeur, what was this odd beast, this Southerner? Lazy, improvident, reckless and careless; loose of morals and low in ambition. A lover of idleness, of the sensory, sensual and sensational. Hostile to work and trade, to fences, roads and bridges, to government, towns and education. Zealous for whiskey, gambling, tobacco, racing and racy women. Fond of dancing, banjo-playing, fiddling, dueling, eating, hospitality and above all, talking — the more exaggerated, inventive and dramatic, the better. The Southerner was, in short, the Cracker.

But before or beneath that, he was the Celt. McWhiney's intent in this book is not simply to reverse valuations, but to attribute the distinctiveness of the old South to ethnicity rather than to economics (the slave labor system) or geography (the frontier). Southerners in this account came largely from the fringes of the British Isles: Ireland, Scotland, Wales, and the north edge of England. Yankees descended mostly from the English heartland. Thus the colonial and early national periods perpetuated — and by the Civil War accentuated — an ancient Old World contest of cultures. Contrary to traditional wisdom, immigration and the frontier did not reduce diversity to a common "American" type; rather they allowed the retention, simplification and intensification of old ways of life that were becoming untenable in the land of origin.
McWhiney thus explains Southern exceptionalism by cutting the South into the main conduit of American history: sociocultural transplantation. His sense of this process comports well with much recent immigration scholar-

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ship. Equally valuable is his anatomy of the Celtic-Crackers's socio-economic base. Old World and New, these were tribal, pastoral people, living by open-range herding and along kinship lines. These two fundamentals had two correlates. First, these subjects simply did not have to work hard to get by, so they lived by and for a leisure ethic. Second, as their identity inhered not in doing but in being, maintenance of status required defense of honor and the cultivation of combative abilities. Within this matrix, every item on the above list of "Southern traits" has a place, makes sense.

The reader should be forewarned, however, that the preceding paragraph packs more analytical punch than do McWhiney's 300 pages in toto. His approach is term-paper traditional: give a topic sentence, assemble a bevy of supportive quotations, repeat indefinitely until the reader presumably surrenders to the sheer mass of prose. As I said, his thesis comports well with recent immigration scholarship, but McWhiney shows no acquaintance with it; amazingly, he also interacts minimally with previous scholarship on "Southern character," which is only one of the hoariest topics in American historiography. Bertram Wyatt-Brown's Southern Honor gets mentioned in a footnote, but the works of William R. Taylor, Cavalier and Yankee, C. Vann Woodward, The Burden of Southern History, Edmund Morgan, American Slavery, American Freedom, Eugene Genovese and Donald G. Mathews, Religion in the Old South, and George Tindall, The Ethnic Southerners, pass unnoticed there, much less in the text. Perhaps McWhiney is reserving such disputes for a later volume; he could at least inform us of that here.

His methodology falters only a little less. Being an oral folk, Crackers did not write much, so the author has taken recourse to contemporary travelers' accounts. Fair enough. But while noting aforesaid the possibilities of bias in such sources, he proceeds innocently thereafter. We do not know the background (besides "Yankee" or "a foreigner") of many of his travelers, nor the purpose of their tours, the agenda for their observations nor even, too often, the date of their journey, since the book is organized topically rather than chronologically. Would not "Yankee" travelogues be slightly more partisan in, say, 1857 than in 1817? Not from their treatment in this book. For the same reason we do not get any sense of changes over time. In some ways Cracker culture might have been static; but it surely was not so in religion, for instance. From 1750 to 1850, the South changed from the least to the most churched section of the country, and at the hands of evangelical denominations that championed an ascetic discipline at odds with much of McWhiney's profile. The author does not address that challenge, does not even notice the change. A lacuna of this magnitude makes me wonder how well his thesis holds up with readers in other specialties.

Finally, as a comparative treatment the book falls over the edge of simplicity into crudity. Crackers are aligned with Celts, Yankees with Englishmen, and that's it, except for an occasional German. Every similarity within each pair is noted, but the possibility of disparities is not even countenanced, nor are possible pairings of Southerners and Northerners as Americans vis-à-vis Celts and Englishmen as Britishers. The author does not ask about ethnic differences among his "Northerns," nor about class differences, North or South. The one hint of flexibility enters with consideration of modernization. McWhiney offers, but does not pursue, the possibility that much of what was supposedly "Celtic" constituted a particular type of pre-modern, rural culture that gave way to Anglo commercialization, first in Britain, then in the United States.

McWhiney's preference for tradition over "progress" is legitimate; his revaluation, interesting; his general thesis, plausible. Maybe his book will provoke others to demonstrate the theory more rigorously. Problem is, by this book's lights, while Crackers have always been provocative, rigor belongs to the Yankees. For the thesis to stand, it has to become outmoded.

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Private Matters: American Attitudes Toward Childbearing and Infant Nurture in the Urban North 1800-1860

By Sylvia D. Hoffert
Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1989. $24.95

The discovery that the parameters of history extend beyond the traditional con-