start with zero and move to one, you have improved 100 percent . . ." (p. 115). Extensive documentation raises additional questions. If the book was aimed at scholarly readers, the writers should not have relied on survey textbooks in world history for authority; if it was intended for popular consumption, quotations should have been translated into English.

Those who presented this series are to be commended for what must have been a very worthwhile local bicentennial event. It is doubtful, however, that publication of these lectures, which offer little that is new, was needed.

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Pathway to the National Character, 1830-1861. By Robert Lemelin. (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1974. Pp. 154. Bibliography, index. $8.50.)

This little book, published early in 1975, promises a great deal more than it delivers. Using as his sources travel accounts and works of descriptive writers during the three decades before the Civil War, Lemelin sets out to demonstrate that one of the most important themes in these multifaceted accounts is an American culture struggling for the first time to define its identity. A sense of cultural identity did in fact begin to emerge in that period, Lemelin further contends, and it has a validity for Americans even now.

Any book that deals with that will-o'-the-wisp, "national character," is likely to be the subject of criticism, but Lemelin's failures are only partly attributable to the profound and inherent difficulty of the general subject with which he deals. In large part the problems in the present study are the result of the very questionable assumptions with which Lemelin begins. In the first place, many students of early American culture would seriously doubt that "the culture began consciously to wrestle with defining the national character" (p. 3) only in the years from 1831 to 1860. Actually that quest for national identity began much, much earlier. Moreover, one has to wonder if travel and descriptive literature is a better place to go for clues about national character formation than sermons, orations, eulogies, newspapers, and popular fiction. There were certainly other sources closer

to grass roots opinion than were travel and descriptive accounts.

Lemelin's book largely turns out to be an account, at times somewhat tedious, of the great variety of things with which the travel and descriptive writers themselves dealt. "One finds tall tales and other types of American humor in travel literature" (p. 76). "Accounts of legends dealing with heroism in the French and Indian and Revolutionary wars were popular with travel writers" (p. 77). "Local color material was consciously gathered" (p. 78). "Western social refinements were cried up by writers, and discussion of the rough edges was often avoided" (p. 85). "Travel writers advised immigrants, after securing their survival, to acquire cultural institutions as rapidly as possible" (p. 88). "It is not surprising then to find writers telling readers to grow corn, not dig for gold, to buy a farm and get away from the crowded city" (p. 95). Although Lemelin does at times stop long enough to provide a pithy and useful commentary on what is being revealed by this emphasis or that, such insights are not frequent enough. Certainly he has not woven his raw material in such a way as to reveal that "Unified Cultural Self" which is the subject of his next to the last chapter.

In short, written both without footnotes and without that kind of tight overall conceptual framework that might have given the necessary unity to such multifaceted material, this work contributes little to the knowledge of the difficult subject of American national character formation. "It is the purpose of this book," Lemelin states, "to remove the veils and to get at essential cultural design as valid for understanding ourselves today as they were during the antebellum period" (p. 4). Unfortunately, most of the veils still remain.

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Abraham Lincoln and American Political Religion. By Glen E. Thurow. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1976. Pp. xiii, 133. Notes, selected bibliography, index. $10.00.)

This slender study is based primarily on four Lincoln speeches, two of which—the Gettysburg Address and the Second Inaugural Address—are very short and very well