

the pain in the killer's leg as he desperately flees from one hiding place to another. Twelve days after the event at Ford's Theater the perpetrator is shot and killed in Garrett's burning barn in northern Virginia.

Steers dismisses some of the erroneous theories that have surrounded the assassination over the years. One such conjecture is that Lincoln's secretary of war, Edwin Stanton, bore responsibility for the murder. Another fallacious theory, at one time given great credence, is that Booth escaped the burning barn and lived on for several years, to die eventually by his own hand. Someone else, this theory goes, was killed at Garrett's farm. Steers effectively demonstrates that such theories bear no basis in fact.

Relying heavily upon the trial records, Steers tells the story of what happened at that famous military tribunal. The book closes with a moving account of the 1,664-mile journey of Lincoln's body to Springfield.

Steers has written a good book. Lincoln buffs, as well as general readers, will appreciate his attention to the details and evidence of a well-known story.

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Carry A. Nation: Retelling the Life. By Fran Grace. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001. Pp. xiv, 374. Illustrations, notes, selected bibliography, index. \$35.00.)

More even than other female reformers, Carry Nation has suffered considerable indignities in the historical record. Wildly wielding her hatchet and Bible, she was a ready caricature, and the newspaper illustrations have become standard fare in history textbooks. Her biographers were not kind; they did not sympathize with her cause or endorse her methods. She has been portrayed, with a few exceptions, as a well-meaning crank, perhaps a little crazy, more than a little ridiculous. She has been an easy target for male critics who dislike uppity women and for those who like a drink now and then.

Nation's fame, or notoriety, did not come to her until nearly the last decade of her life. Before her first saloon "hatchetation," she had lost her first husband to drink and had moved throughout the Midwest with her second, often barely escaping poverty. She was both active and contentious in local religious and reform circles and by 1900 was president of the Kiowa, Kansas, Woman's Christian Temperance Union. She was fifty-three when she began smashing saloons in Kansas and was soon accepting invitations to visit a town, speak, and destroy property. Saloonkeepers did not always oppose

her. There was a certain complicity as each side played the other for publicity. Nation preached from pulpits, lobbied from legislative podiums, reenacted her raids on vaudeville stages, and even performed in "Ten Nights in a Barroom." She forced Kansas to enforce its constitutional prohibition against alcohol sales and production, helped to dry up Oklahoma, and browbeat politicians in Colorado, Florida, and Washington, D.C. She also claimed to be pursued by demons, alienated her closest allies, caused rancor in the Kansas WCTU, and threatened to make temperance reform a melodramatic farce. Her legacy is complicated.

In *Carry A. Nation: Retelling the Life*, Fran Grace rescues Nation from her detractors. Tracking down scattered manuscript sources, closely—if uncritically—reading Nation's autobiography, and following the news accounts of Nation's activities, Grace portrays a radical reformer, street performer, and modern feminist who was devout, sincere, and smart enough to exploit her own celebrity for the cause. Grace is not always a fluent writer. There are too many quotations, and it is often unclear whether someone is being quoted or whether the author simply is using quotation marks to reemphasize a point. When she is retelling the life, however, Grace writes the best biography of Nation we have.

Unfortunately, biography is only half of the book. Her attempts at "biography/cultural history" are not as successful, although there are valuable insights. Grace's analysis of the contrasting regional ideals of "true womanhood" and "good womanhood" works well to illuminate the various responses around the country to Nation. But at every turn Grace interrupts her story to find a parallel in Nation's experience with other women, somewhere, anywhere. Nation's mention of a female friend in Texas inspires a riff on nineteenth-century female relationships and speculation about speculation about their sexuality. Similarly, Nation's claim that she heard God's voice prompts Grace to comment on the theme of God speaking to women found in the long-running "autogynography" (women's autobiography) literature. This digression is in turn interrupted for a mocking aside on President William McKinley's prayers to God for guidance on the Philippines. At times the text reads like a labyrinth of special-pleading footnotes from which the reader cannot escape. Gender is a useful analytical category; it should not be a bludgeon.

There are other weaknesses. Nation's adversaries appear not just as disagreeable, but consistently as evil, stupid, or misogynistic. Nation understood better than Grace why the barkeepers, the politicians, and the judges opposed her. In *Carry A. Nation: Retelling the Life* there is too much heated argument. The book is better where it casts light.

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