

Mexico, and the Caribbean are presented throughout the series as organically involved with American national space.

Overall, the author has again succeeded brilliantly in writing a lively narrative interspersed with innovative maps (a great atlas could be created by collating the maps from the four volumes) and historical and contemporary photographs of cultural landscapes and symbolic sights. One can quibble with his regionalization: I was disappointed to see the Northeast coast presented simply as Megalopolis (see Wilbur Zelinsky's *The Cultural Geography of the United States* [1992] for an alternative regionaliza-

tion), but I must admit that Gottman's concept fits perfectly the final volume's overall theme of mobility. The author rightfully claims that his is the first attempt by a historical geographer to capture the 500-year history of Europeanized North America in complex detail. I hope that historians and general readers of American history will read these wonderful books.

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*The Changing Face of Public History*  
*The Chicago Historical Society and the Transformation of an American Museum*

By Catherine M. Lewis

(DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2005. Pp. xi, 172. Illustrations, notes, works cited, index. Paperbound, \$22.00.)

As one of the few monographs to examine critically the institutional changes taking place in a major museum, Catherine Lewis's history of the Chicago Historical Society (CHS) represents a major contribution to the museum field. In contrast to most celebratory volumes commissioned for significant anniversaries, Lewis, associate professor of history and women's studies at Kennesaw State University and also special projects coordinator at the Atlanta History Center, presents a dispassionate but critical analysis of an organization in transition.

Through deep mining of the archives, and with extensive interviews of former and present CHS staff as well as other museum professionals, Lewis has assembled an intimate and eminently readable portrait of change in one of the country's most prominent urban historical institutions. She explores in depth the factors behind the CHS's transformation from an elitist institution celebrating the refinement of the city to a dynamic public forum welcoming diverse voices and engaging the community in meaningful dialogues. As CHS

Board Chairman Richard Needham noted in the 1992 annual report, "We had evolved from simply being a collector of history or 'Chicago's attic,' to an institution on a journey to reach out to the city's diverse groups" (p. 80). Lewis connects that journey to broader currents of professional and social change.

The book's enduring contribution, however, lies in Lewis's ability to go beyond the simplistic dualities that sometimes characterize the "reinvented museum" and to probe the subtle and complex nature of institutional change over time, particularly in the last half of the twentieth century. Rather than focus on the ephemeral impact of innovative exhibits or programs, Lewis looks at the sustained efforts of a series of museum leaders to effect transformative, long-term change—as defined by institution-wide impact, sustained financial and intellectual support, and challenge to the museum's interpretive authority. This final condition forms the core theme of the book as Lewis explores the tensions between the museum's traditional role as commemorative site and purveyor of civic pride on the one hand, and its new commitment, on the other, to tackle deep-seated issues of identity and social inequity in partnership with the community. The impact of such changes on the staff in particular makes the book compelling reading for museum leaders seeking to instill similar institutional change in their own institutions. While few individ-

uals other than the CHS presidents and curators are named, the challenges for staff trying to effect the transformation of the society's mission are apparent. In particular, the shift from a tradition of curators as sole custodians of collections and primary authors of the exhibitions to a newer model of collaborative, team-based projects emerges as a signal change in the fundamental relationships between museums and their audiences. As Lewis notes, "Once passive recipients of expert knowledge, contemporary museum constituencies are now more likely to challenge interpretations with which they disagree" (p. 34). Other broader museum and social trends are woven into the institutional history—the rise of multiculturalism, the erosion of expert authority, culture wars, and the tensions of balancing academic representation of the past with popular and entertaining visitor experiences.

If there is a weaknesses in the book, it may be the inverse of its strength. Lewis crafts a tightly scripted narrative (only 137 pages of text) that clearly follows the core themes of transformation and interpretive authority, but the human stories within the institution are muted. Perhaps the interviewees were only as forthcoming as they appear to have been on condition of anonymity, but the author's insight into staff perspectives would have been made more compelling with more quotes and first person accounts. Instead, CHS's presidents and its principal exhibitions

(including “We the People”, the “Neighborhoods” project, and “A House Divided”) become Lewis’s main characters. The “real-life” constraints of institutional change are homogenized and generalized. Greater attention to personal accounts would have revealed more of the contests and conflicts typical of any institution in transition and like-

ly would have been more instructive for those who want to learn from the CHS’s example.

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### *Peoples Temple and Black Religion in America*

Edited by Rebecca Moore, Anthony B. Pinn, and Mary R. Sawyer

(Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004. Pp. xvii, 204. Notes, charts, tables, index. \$49.95.)

More than a quarter century after its tragic demise in the jungles of British Guyana, the Peoples Temple and its charismatic leader, the Reverend Jim Jones, continue to fascinate scholars. This collection of essays attempts to understand Jones’s messianic movement and its implications for the sociology, politics, and history of African American religion.

According to the editors, while previous scholarship about the Peoples Temple and Jonestown acknowledges the heavy participation of African Americans, it fails “to explore in a substantive way the implications of these demographics,” especially the numerous ways that the predominantly white leadership of the Peoples Temple “emulated Black Church culture in style and form, and to some extent, in substance” (p. xiii).

The book comprises ten chapters, each of which can be read as a stand alone article, though they vary in purpose as well as quality. Some of the

most insightful and provocative among them, such as those authored by Anthony B. Pinn, Mary R. Sawyer, and Milmon Harrison, appear to have been written specifically for this volume. Others chapters, written by J. Alfred Smith and Muhammed Kenyatta, were written shortly after the Jonestown tragedy. Additional contributions, one by the late C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence Mamiya, another by Archie Smith, Jr., represent two early examples of scholars’ attempts to understand the implications of the Peoples Temple for the study of the black American religious experience. Tanya Hollis and co-authors Duchess Harris and Adam Waterman examine the political and social activism that characterized the Temple during its halcyon days in the Mendocino Valley and San Francisco Bay area.

Of particular note is Rebecca Moore’s attempt to create a collective biography of the movement’s membership. Her demographic evidence