

*An American Tune: A Novel*

By Barbara Shoup

(Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012. Pp. 328. Paperbound, \$19.00.)

Barbara Shoup's seventh novel considers a generation responding to the impending Iraq War even as it is haunted by Vietnam. In the summer of 2002, Nora Quillen sits in People's Park in Bloomington, remembering her undergraduate days at Indiana University. Now, against her wishes, her only daughter is enrolling at the school. As she walks out of the park, Nora hears a man call her name: "Jane! Hey, Jane!" The reader understands instantaneously that Nora is hiding a large secret.

*An American Tune* quickly travels back to the 1960s, as a young Jane Barth, daughter of a working-class family, arrives on the IU campus. The first third of the novel takes place from 1965 to 1974, that time when many first-generation students arrived at large public universities with a conflicted sense of identity and a fierce desire to soak up the zeitgeist. Shoup evokes the era with frighteningly accurate details, such as a catalog of the brand-name clothes a young woman was expected to wear if she wanted to fit in—and, as those brand-name clothes are cast aside in favor of denim, the smells of patchouli and pot. The titles of '60s and '70s songs lend their names to each chapter, an evocative thread even when it feels a little schematic.

The action moves briskly as Jane is befriended by a vivid, self-confident dorm-mate, Bridget, and the two pair

up with a couple of fraternity brothers. Jane, an utterly conventional woman of her day, commences a conventional love affair with her boyfriend, Tom, but as the war escalates and campuses riot, the two are drawn inexorably into politics. Jane and Tom make a sympathetic Everywoman and Everyman, disturbed by their consciences, willing to protest but still focused on mainstream futures: Jane as an elementary teacher, Tom as a lawyer. Bridget and her boyfriend, however, are drawn to radical, violent response, and the intensity of Jane's friendship with Bridget places her close to the action. Bridget's activism culminates in the fictional firebombing of a ROTC building on the IU campus, reminiscent of actual bombings of the period. Bridget is killed, Jane abducted by her friend's political and romantic partner.

Jane eventually escapes but is consumed by guilt that is in turn apt and excessive (although she had no intention of taking part in the bombing, she intuited what Bridget was up to, lied to Tom, and followed Bridget into the night). In novelistic terms, Jane's torment and hidden past stand in for the regrets of an entire generation guilty about acting too little or too stupidly in the face of an unjust war. What distinguishes this book from other novels about violent radicalism—like Susan Choi's *American Woman* (2003) or Philip Roth's *American*

*Pastoral* (1997)—is Shoup's parallel emphasis on a frustrated generation's sense of powerlessness about a more contemporary war.

Shoup's recounting of real historical events in stark journalistic fashion is most unsettling in the novel's contemporary sections, where both narrative and reader share the sting of total recall. Her portrayal of an Indiana native swept up by an era's activism is brisk and compelling; her exploration of complex present-day characters takes a more contemplative tone and pace. If the resolution

is contrived (Jane's reuniting with Tom in Bloomington depends on convenient timing and coincidence), the story of one woman's journey past what's expected of her as a female and a daughter of the working class is nonetheless moving and hopeful. The girl gets her guy, the guilt is assuaged, and Indiana reclaims a citizen with a conscience.

VALERIE SAYERS, chair of the Department of English at the University of Notre Dame, is the author of six novels, including *The Powers* (2013).



### *From Peace to Freedom*

*Quaker Rhetoric and the Birth of American Antislavery, 1657-1761*

By Brycchan Carey

(New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2012. Pp.xi, 257. Notes, bibliography, index. \$35.00.)

Social and political historians often take the rhetorical form of political arguments for granted, even at times degrading that rhetoric as a veneer hiding deeper realities. Brycchan Carey, an expert in British literature and society, makes a significant contribution to our understanding of slavery's end in the British and American empires by doing nearly the opposite. For Carey, published words on a particular subject constitute a collective and extended performance that develops over time and deserves analysis and appreciation. He argues that antislavery discourse was a major achievement that took some one hundred years to develop—first among

the early Quakers, especially George Fox and his objections to African slavery in the West Indies, and eventually with the words of John Woolman and the Pennsylvania Friends, who adopted and disseminated the stance that slaveholders were unacceptable in a truly Christian society. Carey persuasively argues that the collective development of these words, rhetorical strategies, and public conversations and debates led to the development of an antislavery discourse that set the Quakers above other religious groups of the time in their response to one of Western society's greatest horrors.

Carey insightfully and exhaustively studies every Quaker publica-