

over monetary standards and would do so for twenty turbulent years. The country was in a depression, and in some places unemployed men had used the gun and the club to intimidate their betters. Professor Nugent cites one surprising cause of social disturbance: people moved a lot more than now. About one half of all Americans changed their place of living each year in the 1870s. Moreover, a large part of that moving population was poor and not going anywhere but down. The problems of the modern world had begun. Depression, corruption, and violence afflicted the country. The discredited administration of Ulysses S. Grant presided over the republic. Despite this somewhat sordid picture Nugent throws no stones at the leaders of the Gilded Age.

The last contributor to this volume, H. Wayne Morgan, professor of history at the University of Oklahoma, takes an equally kindly view of the period. His assessment of the lasting cultural effects of the great Exposition may fill his readers with chagrin. The false starts and futile fumbblings of the Bicentennial Commission for 1976 do not indicate that Americans have lost the ability to organize a colossal show but do suggest that they no longer know what they have to celebrate or what they need to learn. Americans of 1876 were pretty sure about both. The Corliss Steam Engine, the telephone, the typewriter, and the electric light bulb on display at Philadelphia would clearly make life more comfortable, but leaders of thought wanted Americans to go after the higher things of life. The simple words with which President Grant opened the fair are enough to make one weep with envy: "Whilst proud of what we have done, we regret that we have not done more" (p. 48). Humility in the White House! The glory of it!

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The Unbounded Frame: Freedom and Community in Nineteenth Century American Utopianism. By Michael Fellman. *Contributions in American History*, Number 26. (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, Inc., 1973. Pp. xx, 203. Notes, selective bibliographical essay, index. \$10.00.)

In the first half of the nineteenth century America was brimming with people searching for utopia. Communitarians

like Josiah Warren and John Humphrey Noyes built small communities where they and their followers could experience utopia firsthand. Social reformers like Horace Mann believed that if one key institution, as for example the educational system, could be perfected, all of America would become utopia.

In *The Unbounded Frame* Michael Fellman attempts to explore these diverse beliefs. Through a series of nine biographical essays he tries to show why utopianism flourished in America, how it developed, and why it waned. "I have tried to enter the world of the utopianists," Fellman writes, "both to exemplify their efforts to mold antebellum America and to explore the general nature of the thought of the era" (p. xvii). This task is a large and complex one. For Fellman, utopianism is a process concerned with correction of evil. He theorizes that the actions of the utopianists grew out of their desire to apply some meaning to a chaotic world. Such a definition, however, is applicable to a number of reform movements.

Fellman maintains that one of the primary sources of utopian thought and action was "that deeply held, if sometimes buried, desire to frame a just American democratic life" (p. xx). Fellman sees social reform and communitarianism as points on the same spectrum. "Utopian communitarians," he writes, "were only further articulators of commonly held intellectual positions in that era of what to many seemed limitless democratic potentiality" (p. 62). This statement needs to be seriously questioned. Were the communitarians and the social reformers really coming at the question of utopia from the same direction? Were the communitarians interested in the "limitless democratic potentiality" of American society? Communal groups of religious origins, such as the Shakers and the Rappites, were interested primarily in their own salvation. They believed that that salvation could be attained through the perfectibility of their lives. Their social organization was not democratic; instead it relied upon obedience to authority. Certainly the religious communitarians were thankful for the atmosphere of American freedom, but they were not particularly interested in guaranteeing its spread.

It is evident that Fellman's biographical sketches are well researched. His treatment of Isaac Hecker, founder of

the Paulists, is particularly good because it connects Hecker's individual history and psychological makeup with his subsequent beliefs, theories, and actions. Unfortunately, Fellman's repeated attempts to prove his thesis detract from his scholarship. In a comparison of Albert Brisbane, the chief American disciple of Charles Fourier, and Josiah Warren, the founder of individual anarchism in this country, Fellman writes: "Both men assumed that a pattern of close personal relations would be at the root of self-fulfillment" (p. 11). Warren's philosophy, however, revolved around the belief that all interests between individuals had to be disconnected if society were to run smoothly. No doubt Warren would have been quite annoyed at the notion that he advocated "close personal relations."

The Unbounded Frame is a good source for understanding some of the more interesting minds of the nineteenth century. However, the common thread of utopianism quickly becomes tangled, and Fellman's thesis, perhaps because it was not valid to begin with, gets lost in that tangle.

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Mr. Polk's War: American Opposition and Dissent, 1846-1848. By John H. Schroeder. (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1973. Pp. xvi, 184. Notes, illustrations, essay on sources, index. \$12.50.)

One suspects that some who pick up this book, seeing just *Mr. Polk's War* on its spine, will have no idea whatsoever of its contents. They must look to the subtitle, *American Opposition and Dissent, 1846-1848*, for enlightenment. The volume is a scholarly examination of the protest movement(s) against the Mexican War, or, as it is known below the Rio Grande, the North American Invasion. Its structure is basically chronological, cued particularly to the wartime sessions of Congress, with coverage of dissent in the different sections of the nation as it developed from political, religious, racial, economic, philosophical, and other causes as well as chiefly from admixtures of varying, even contradictory, motives. The book's main title, however, is appropriate to the outcome of the story: opposition and dissent had almost no perceptible effect on the campaigns and results of America's first "foreign" war as conducted by President James K. Polk.