

and women enjoyed themselves 'til the wee hours of the morning, dancing "the turkey trot, Texas Tommy, bunny hug, monkey hug, lame duck, foxtrot, and tango."

THERE WERE, OF COURSE, ENORMOUS DIFFERENCES between the dance halls and cabarets. As Peiss notes, correctly I think, the "tough dancing" in the dance halls was far more blatantly sexual than the dancing in the nightclubs. The nightclubs also, by seating customers at tables and excluding unescorted women, regulated the "promiscuous" and "intimate" contact between men and women that took place in the dance halls. Nonetheless, the similarities far outweigh the differences.

When we turn from amusement parks and dance halls to vaudeville, movies and "fashion," we see the same congruence in cultural styles and values. The types of vaudeville acts and films that appeared in the neighborhood theaters and nickel dumps were the same as those shown in the lavish "palaces" in the downtown entertainment districts. Working- and middle-class women also wore the same types of clothes when they went "out." Though the quality of the shirtwaists, willow plume hats, and jewelry worn by the working women was no doubt inferior, the "style" was the same as that of more prosperous women.

Twentieth-century cultural historians are indeed caught in a bind. To adopt the adjective "mass" in referring to the new culture gets us nowhere, for the term is usually a pejorative one, used by those who feared (and fear) that the middle classes are being infected by lower-class habits. On the other hand, it is evident that the old class distinctions fall apart in twentieth-century culture.

What we see developing is a new "public" culture. And this public culture rapidly displaces the older, established class-bound institutions that preceded it. The home, the quintessential "private" domain, becomes less and less important as a center of entertainment, amusement, and social life. "Going out"—defined as leaving home—becomes synonymous with leisure-time activities. Immigrant social clubs and elite men's clubs, church and church-sponsored associations, union halls, fraternal orders, women's clubs and sewing circles are all displaced by the theaters, movies, ballparks, and amusement parks. Even the saloon—which, as Roy Rosenzweig demonstrates in *Eight Hours For What We Will*, was in its heyday a workingman's club tied to the workplace (and, I would argue, only quasi-public)—is dethroned by the coming of the movie theater.

It is much easier to chronicle the emergence of

this new public culture than it is to understand its role in twentieth-century social life. What part did it play in the assimilation of the immigrant working class? What role did it play in the ascendance of a new American patriotism, defined by a celebration of capitalism and its wonders?

As we enter what is perhaps a new "transitional period" in cultural history, with rock concerts, Broadway theater, movies, and opera being piped into our homes and the "public" culture in full retreat before the new home entertainment technologies, it may be the perfect time for reflection on our recent past—and its larger meanings. The two books under review provide an excellent starting point. □

David J. Garrow

A Sharp Critique of Jesse Jackson

THE JESSE JACKSON PHENOMENON: THE CRISIS OF PURPOSE IN AFRO-AMERICAN POLITICS, by Adolph L. Reed, Jr. New Haven and London: Yale University Press. 170 pp. Cloth, \$17.50. Paper, \$5.95

Jesse Jackson is an important figure in American politics and a 1984 presidential candidate who stands ready to repeat that race in 1988. Nonetheless, Jackson is not a credible, legitimate, or desirable leader for black America, argues black Yale political scientist Adolph Reed in this short but immensely stimulating book.

Reed's critique of Jackson's role, unlike many other attacks, is almost completely theoretical and political, not personal. The core of Reed's argument is that in the post-Voting Rights Act era, black elected officials—politicians responsible at the ballot box to an identifiable constituency—are vastly preferable, especially in terms of democratic theory, to black "leaders" such as Jackson, whose representational status is not grounded in any direct, formal linkage to an electoral base.

Reed makes extensive and good use of a distinction between what he terms the "protest elite"—nonpublic officials holding church or organizational roles that used to earn the designation "civil

rights leaders"—and a newer electoral elite composed of black elected officials. He argues that in an era when black Americans participate freely in the electoral process, and have won the mayoralties of many major cities as well as significant positions in Congress, the continued presence of a protest elite, symbolized most visibly by Jackson, is superfluous.

That "protest" leaders, and Jackson in particular, are not directly accountable to any formal constituency is only one of Reed's points. He contends that the ministerial leadership tradition out of which Jackson comes is undemocratic, even inherently authoritarian. It is undemocratic because it largely lacks mechanisms by which its followers can control or rebuke the apparent spokespersons. Political initiative is exercised in a purely "top down" fashion. It is authoritarian, Reed argues, because it operates with the presumption that positions articulated by the leader are necessarily identical to the interests of the apparent constituents. That assumption of a perfect identity results in "an authoritarian demand for unity that suppresses the right to disagree within the race."

THE "PROTEST" LEADER, Reed contends, is far more dependent on external, nonconstituency sources of support than are elected officials. Rather than drawing their authority from the ballot box, or any other form of accountable community endorsement, protest spokespersons "derive their authority indirectly through recognition by public officials, private elites, and public opinion media." Jackson's public career, especially in the last few years, is a classic example of this phenomenon, in which the American news media played the largest role. "Unable to distinguish between a social movement and a group of people shouting in a church," reporters unquestioningly accepted Jackson as the spokesman for all of black America. "The fundamental and most dubious claim" that Jackson made, "that he was the individual repository of the racial voice, went unchallenged" in the public forum. Whites' ready acceptance of Jackson's self-declared role, Reed observes, is yet one more manifestation of the longtime assumption that all black people think alike, that black America can and should be spoken for by a single leader, and "that standard principles of political representation do not apply among Afro-Americans."

In addition to the news media, Reed sees the white left as a second political element that accepted Jackson's supposed status far too readily and uncritically. Giving no heed to the complaints of some that white progressives supported Jack-

son's 1984 campaign far less actively than they would have an ideologically similar white candidate, Reed criticizes "the patronizing orientations that define the place of blacks in the purview of liberals and the left" and the "presuppositions" that "reduce to a premise that the black community is peripheral" and hence amount "to a form of racial condescension." In Jackson's case as well as in less-heralded ones, these condescending white attitudes are reflected in "a troublesome tendency to accept superficially articulate black individuals who will associate with the left as generic racial spokespersons."

Beyond his general argument concerning Jackson's fundamentally nonlegitimate political status, Reed also offers a more precisely drawn critique of Jackson's 1984 campaign. First, in what is by far the least persuasive and most poorly handled portion of his book, Reed attempts to argue that Jackson's campaign provided little stimulus for black voter registration and turnout, even in the South, and that Jackson's candidacy also gave little if any "coattail effect" to black contenders in congressional or local races at those same times. If Reed's attempt to support those claims is unpersuasive, he offers a somewhat stronger case for his second criticism, that the Jackson campaign failed "to generate a coherent political program or a discrete policy agenda." Reed emphasizes the campaign's lack of a programmatic agenda more than the potentially sharper critique that the Jackson candidacy never propounded a clear or coherent political strategy. Jackson knew that he could not be nominated; what then was the purpose of concentrating upon the acquiring of convention delegates? To make a protest? Reed shows the problem with this explanation: "Jackson's initiative had little authenticity as a protest candidacy because it never clearly specified the nature of the protest."

Reed expands upon his second, programmatic complaint to reach what is the third overarching theme of the book. "Jackson," he writes, "may be limited in his capacity for programmatic vision by his idiosyncratic opportunism, inconstancy, and self-aggrandizement," but "his lack of critical direction resonates with a much more general state of affairs in the black community. That situation, Reed says, concerns "the Afro-American elite's general failure of political vision" over the past twenty years. That failure has manifested itself in two interrelated ways.

REED ARGUES THAT BOTH BLACK PROTEST and electoral leaders have emphasized political issues that speak more to the interests of the economically

better-off segment of black America than to the needs of the growing black underclass. Affirmative action, high-level job appointments, and minority set-aside programs, he says, are concerns that are more attuned to those who are already well off or on their way up than to those with economically bleak or desperate futures. "The entrenched elites," Reed writes, "have been able with impunity to identify collective racial interest with an exceedingly narrow class agenda. The main focus for practical political activity within the black community in this context must be breaking down the illusion of a single racial opinion."

Second, a major reason for the elites' limited policy agenda is their "century-long pattern of uncritical acceptance of fundamental power relations in the general society and reliance on external sources of legitimation." In other words, except for a few idiosyncratic instances like Martin Luther King, Jr., in the 1965-1968 period, America's black leadership has never been seriously interested in propounding or supporting economically redistributive policies. As a result, "the successful incorporation of black leadership into regular channels of policy negotiation" over the past two decades has been a "mixed blessing." The "price of 'effective' participation" for America's current-day black elite has been "the inability to advance the concrete interests of a substantial element of the black constituency." Anyone doubting the general accuracy of Reed's argument on this point need only study or ponder the ideological evolutions—or devolutions—apparent in the political careers of major black mayors such as Andrew Young and Marion Barry, among others.

Reed's book should be recognized as an insightful left critique of a phenomenon that many progressives of all colors readily criticize in private but rarely if ever in public. Reed is calling for a fundamental transformation of Afro-American politics, and for a transformation that will feature the creation of an explicitly redistributive policy agenda aimed at serving the pressing needs of the black underclass. A necessary part of that transformation will be the gradual but increasing replacement of nonelected spokespersons by elected officials who arguably will be somewhat more attuned to working-class and poverty issues than generally has been the case in recent Afro-American political history.

The political scientist in Reed leads him towards a somewhat excessively optimistic view of the potential of these elected officials. In many instances they too, at least as much as Jackson, have displayed little more than a pro forma interest in the

underclass and no inclination towards redistributive policies. Nonetheless, this caveat does not undercut the strength of Reed's argument concerning both the superiority of electorally responsive leaders and the need for a redistributively-oriented political agenda among black American leaders.

Reed firmly and explicitly calls for a fundamentally more open and fundamentally more honest debate among progressive Afro-American political activists, a debate that will brush aside the demand that blacks refrain from airing disagreements outside "the family." Along with a new conception of leadership, and a new programmatic agenda, there is also a need to "cultivate a spirit of civic liberalism in Afro-American politics. Dissent must be dissociated from the stigma of race treason." □

Oliver Conant

A Critic's Authority

LIONEL TRILLING AND THE FATE OF CULTURAL CRITICISM, by Mark Krupnick. Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press. 207 pp. \$21.95 (cloth); \$10.95 (paper).

Lionel Trilling wrote with a remarkable assurance. Too much assumption of authority can make a critic seem remote or bullying, but Trilling's essays were never so. His attitude towards his reader was always a *genial* one, to use a word with little currency today. He ranged widely, but never seemed loose or eclectic. It is true that Trilling occasionally liked to escape into abstractions, where the air is thinner than is comfortable to breathe. Now and then one can catch him yielding to an impulse to be provocative for its own sake and the famous style could become overly elaborate and indirect.

It is unfair to blame a man for what is done with his work by others, but it may be true to say that Trilling did not quite realize his power of suggestion over those intent on turning his insights into dogma. He would, I feel sure, have been horrified by the way a phrase of his, like "the adversary culture," has been taken up by the ideologues of