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Review: 'Religion And the Public Schools in 19th-Century America: The Contribution of Orestes A. Brownson'

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twined "interlocutor." Most important, this book makes it difficult to presume a simple connection among evangelicalism, antebellum reform, the rise of a market society, and the development of the middle class, subjects that will need to be rethought in the light of Lazerow's arguments.

As Lazerow himself suggests, this volume starts rather than finishes an argument. Other areas await study, particularly New York and Philadelphia, hotbeds of both heterodoxy and labor reform. The cultural world of the early labor movement also requires more sophisticated analysis. Lazerow's explorations of workingmen's ideas are narrowly focused, tending to be content with discovering religious references rather than examining the complexities of discourses and traditions. Still, the author is too modest when he says that his work has merely "opened a door that cannot be safely closed" (p. xvi) without further investigation. It might be better said that he has blazed a trail into a territory that few had previously thought existed.

STEVEN C. BULLOCK, *Worcester Polytechnic Institute*.

POWER, EDWARD J. *Religion and the Public Schools in 19th Century America: The Contribution of Orestes A. Brownson*. Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1996. v+182 pp. \$13.95 (paper).

Edward J. Power, professor of education at Boston College, examines Orestes A. Brownson's views on education based on the nineteenth-century controversialist's extensive collection of periodical publications. The first two chapters, approximately a third of the book, provide introductory matter: an overview of education's role in the colonial and national periods of U.S. history and a biographical essay featuring Brownson's religious conversions and journalist career. Power divides the remainder into three chapters on Brownson's general views on education within a democratic republic; his convictions concerning authority and responsibility for the moral, scholastic, and practical instruction of a child; and his assessment of Catholic schools.

Power draws from articles that span Brownson's literary career. The author demonstrates the controversialist's support of special (practical) and general (liberal) educations for men and women for the sake of the republic. According to Power's fourth chapter, Brownson assigns varying and not entirely consistent degrees of responsibility and authority to the state, church, and family in the education of children. The fifth chapter reports Brownson's mixture of praise and severe criticism for Catholic schooling. The brief "Afterword" (pp. 153-58) suggests that Orestes Brownson may rightfully be viewed as "America's [John Henry] Newman" (p. 157). Though not as influential, Brownson, a nineteenth-century intellectual who converted to Catholicism, attempted to shape public opinions on topics, including education, that parallel Newman's interest.

Power has isolated key articles as well as important correspondence that help in piecing together Brownson's views of the nature, purpose, and practice of education. Anyone familiar with the journalist's extensive collection of articles knows the challenge of sifting through volumes of writings to identify his point of view on a single topic. The material gathered from these various sources is shaped into a readable narrative, though at times it lacks the chronological and contextual precision demanded by Brownson's occasional writings. In several instances, the author quotes from two different articles in the same paragraph to demonstrate a point without indicating the divergent sources. The endnotes in many of these

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cases omit dates or other commentary that would provide pertinent information on the contexts or specific purposes of his articles.

Lack of detail detracts from the book's usefulness in other ways as well. The first chapter's overview of education, for example, reads as a series of idealized impressions on the democratizing of education in the nineteenth century. The actual state of the common schools in various regions of this country or the number of children involved goes unmentioned. Perhaps this reflects the author's unwarrantedly negative view of social history and his desire to focus on intellectual history. In his afterword, Power writes, "Brownson's views and attitudes on schools and education can be a legitimate subject of discourse without allowing them to evaporate in a dense mist of general social history" (p. 154). I would have preferred the data that the social historian provides to gain a clearer view of "Religion and the Public Schools in 19th Century America," as promised in the title.

Power's presentation of "Brownson's views and attitudes on schools and education" also lacks a certain depth of analysis beyond the chronological and contextual omissions already noted. Two examples will suffice. Brownson's complex dialectical thought, including his "doctrine of life by communion," deserves more attention than the judgment that his "grasp of philosophy" was "chaotic" and "insecure" (p. 60). Power also infers that Brownson's lack of interest in scholasticism contributed to his philosophical quandaries, completely ignoring the fact that Brownson died three years prior to Leo XIII's *Aeterni Patris* (1879), the encyclical generally acknowledged as pivotal in generating the neoscholastic revival among late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Catholic scholars.

The second example concerns Power's conclusion that "clearly, Brownson was on the side of equality for women" despite a quote that includes his assertion that "the woman is for the man, not the man for the women [*sic*]" (pp. 100-101). Power makes no mention of the extensively analyzed "Cult of True Womanhood" that clearly influenced Brownson. The bibliography includes no recent critical history assessing nineteenth-century views of women's education.

This book ultimately fails to explain Brownson's contribution to the nineteenth-century American public school debates because of its serious lack of attention to the contexts in which Brownson developed his ideas. It therefore has limited usefulness to those interested in Brownson or U.S. Catholic intellectual history. Libraries with exhaustive collections on education in the United States, U.S. Catholicism, or Orestes A. Brownson still may want to add this book to their collections.

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FAULKNER, QUENTIN. *Wiser than Despair: The Evolution of Ideas in the Relationship of Music and the Christian Church*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1996. xix+251 pp. \$59.95 (cloth).

Many musicians and liturgical leaders, looking for a simple, straightforward book to help them negotiate the often treacherous shoals of church music in the late twentieth century, will, unfortunately, pass this book by. They ought to think again. For Quentin Faulkner, professor of music at the University of Nebraska, has not written a "how-to" book about church music, but rather a "how-to-think-about-church-music" book that is simultaneously challenging and provocative, sometimes dense and obtuse, that occasionally explores byways not always seem-