

remain the bodies of white women (and men—try selling pornography without a significant number of white people in it to anyone of any race, and see how far you get). Moreover, Hoberman does not deal with the curious fact that black men are far more eroticized than black women, especially among athletes.

More trenchant is Hoberman's discussion of the meaning of black athletic achievement within the black community. Beyond the clichéd search for heroes, he finds a troubling core of anti-intellectualism, which he links to the terrible restrictions historically imposed upon black intellectual aspirations. A complete and honest understanding of black anti-intellectualism—how it differs from its white counterpart, and what its impact has been on blacks and race relations—is badly needed. By suggesting that black athletic achievement is something that black (and white) Americans should scrutinize instead of regard with unabashed pride, Hoberman has taken a good first step.

—Gerald Early

#### **ASSIMILATION, AMERICAN STYLE.**

By Peter D. Salins. Basic Books.  
272 pp. \$26

"Three cheers for ethnicity, but no concessions to ethnocentricity or ethnic federalism." With this unwieldy slogan, Salins, a professor of urban affairs at Hunter College, seeks a middle way between radical multiculturalism and resurgent nativism. That middle way is the "immigration contract" that has long existed between American society and its newcomers. Its terms are a commitment to English as the national language, an acceptance of American values and ideals, and a dedication to the Protestant work ethic. Immigrants who accept these terms are welcomed and allowed to maintain certain elements of their culture, such as food, dress, and holidays. This arrangement, Salins argues, promotes a vibrant ethnicity while protecting against balkanizing ethnocentrism.

The trouble with America today, Salins claims, is that the contract is being broken. The trouble with this book is that it fails to prove the case. On one hand, Salins sounds the alarm about "opinion elites" who, lacking confidence in traditional American values, encourage ethnocentric education and

divisive group-based politics. On the other, he offers evidence that these elites are not having much impact: immigrants continue to have a stronger work ethic than natives, demands for English as a Second Language (ESL) courses are replacing calls for bilingual education, and radical multiculturalism has already proven vulnerable to a backlash.

Nonetheless, Salins proposes strengthening the immigration contract. Here he recalls sociologist Milton Gordon's useful distinction between assimilation, which results in devotion to American values, and acculturation, or mere participation in cultural trends (such as rollerblading to rock music on the way to the mall). Salins warns that acculturated individuals have not necessarily internalized the sense of national unity that protects America from ethnic conflict. Assimilation is a more demanding and complex process.

Unfortunately, Salins ignores this complexity when he suggests that immigrants and natives have avoided conflict in the past. This seriously underestimates the public tensions and political dilemmas that accompanied the last great wave of immigration. Indeed, harsh nativism and violent episodes had much to do with the termination of large-scale immigration in the 1920s.

Salins's view of the immigrant experience is similarly rosy. To meet the terms of the contract, immigrants must often subvert deeply held beliefs. Yet in a telling passage comparing assimilation to religious conversion, Salins oversimplifies the process: "Converts do not have to change their behavior in any respects other than those that relate to the new religion. They are expected only to believe in its theological principles, observe its rituals and holidays, and live by its moral precepts." By implying that one's "theological principles" and "moral precepts" are as easily changed as one's brand of after-shave, Salins sidesteps the deeper challenge of promoting Americanism while respecting ethnicity.

—Stephen J. Rockwell

#### **WOMEN AND THE COMMON LIFE:**

*Love, Marriage, and Feminism.*

By Christopher Lasch. Edited by  
Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn. Norton.  
223 pp. \$23

When American historian Christopher