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

Lasch died in 1994, America lost one of its true iconoclasts. The author of such provocative works as *The Culture of Narcissism* (1978) and *The Revolt of the Elites* (1994), he could always be counted on to challenge conventional wisdom. This collection of essays, edited and introduced by Lasch's daughter, is no exception.

Written between 1974 and 1993 and organized topically rather than chronologically, the essays are only loosely connected. Still, there are common threads. One is Lasch's preoccupation with the rise and fall of "bourgeois domesticity," and along with it a change in attitudes about marriage. Until the 1700s, marriages were more a matter of business than love. Lasch cites one notable exception in "The Suppression of Clandestine Marriage in England: The Marriage Act of 1753." He relates how Parliament outlawed the medieval practice of "clandestine marriage," whereby a couple's verbal agreement to marry was, if consummated, as binding as an official marriage ceremony. In ruling against the custom, Parliament helped to suppress the emerging idea of marriage as a relationship between equals, entered into freely.

Bourgeois domesticity blossomed in the late 18th century, Lasch argues, when middle-class women began to imitate the leisurely lives of their upper-class counterparts. A greater focus on the comforts of the home and the challenge of childrearing fostered a "cult of domesticity" in which women were glorified as the "guardians of the moral order." As women gained respect in this realm, marriage began to be seen as an arrangement based on mutual affection. This ideal was extended into civic life, and throughout the first half of the 20th century women became increasingly involved in the community, only to see that involvement diminish with the rise of the suburbs. When middle-class families left the cities, women became isolated in the home—the source, Lasch believes, of the dissatisfaction that in the early 1970s gave rise to contemporary feminism.

Underlying these historical essays is Lasch's evident belief that there is more to women's history than a long dark night of patriarchal oppression—that, to the contrary, women have actively shaped their own social roles. Lasch also rejects the notion, articulated by the psychologist Carol Gilligan, that women are more nurturing, and less egoistic, than men. In a scathing essay titled "Gilligan's Island," he calls this idea "insidious." The sexes are alike, he insists, in needing to test themselves against adversity. Whether achieved through work or through caring for others, the ideal of human life is selflessness. Hence Lasch's long-standing conviction (stated in the final essay, "Life in the Therapeutic State") that as doctors and other specialists become the fount of wisdom on family life, women are the losers. Instead of gaining self-respect by tackling some of life's hardest problems, they become passive consumers of "expert" advice.

—Robyn Gearey

History

THE MILITARY AND THE MEDIA, 1968–1973.

By William M. Hammond. Army Center for Military History, Government Printing Office. 659 pp. $43 cloth, $33 paper

"Our worst enemy is the press!" exclaimed Richard Nixon during the controversial U.S.-backed incursion into Laos in 1971. Such sentiments came easily to the beleaguered president who inherited the bloody stalemate in Vietnam from Lyndon Johnson. But were his sentiments justified? Did the news media contribute significantly to America's defeat in Vietnam?

Not according to this unusual official history commissioned by the U.S. Army. In the present volume (his second), civilian histori-