

century self-help volumes. (Perhaps anticipating the arguments sure to result from his choices, Parini includes a helpful appendix, "One Hundred More Books That Changed America.")

He proceeds chronologically, and each book receives the same treatment: a short introduction and author biography, a close reading, and analysis of the work's legacy. The approach is by nature formulaic, but it is also effective, and Parini's erudition allows him to deftly maneuver among these classic works to highlight major themes of American life: immigration and assimilation; the struggle for religious and civic freedom; the capacity for self-transformation and personal betterment; the desire to "light out for the Territory," as Huck Finn put it so well."

Certain works also cluster together in their similarities. *Of Plymouth Plantation* (published in 1856), William Bradford's chronicle of colonial life and possibly "America's first immigration narrative," is echoed in the Old Country/New Country dichotomies of Jewish émigré Mary Antin's memoir *Promised Land* (1912). The tradition of nature and travel writing initiated by Meriwether Lewis and William Clark in their *Journals* (1814) comes to bear on the meticulous detailing of wilderness living in Henry David Thoreau's *Walden* (1854), as well as the acute observations of Mark Twain's legendary narrator in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885). The latter two works certainly had some effect on the unabashed celebration of freedom that is Jack Kerouac's propulsive novel *On the Road* (1957).

A concern with freedom, in nearly every sense of the word, is the hallmark of all the authors Parini examines: Benjamin Franklin, whose emphasis on self-reliance in his *Autobiography* (1793) reflected a desire for autonomy and personal independence; Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay, who in *The Federalist* (1787–88) sought to defend and explain the Constitution, the very embodiment of free democracy; and Harriet Beecher Stowe, creator of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), and W. E. B. Du Bois, the revolutionary author of *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), who both wrote of the struggle to win freedom from slavery

and racism; Twain and Jack Kerouac, endlessly curious explorers on the road toward adventure; or Betty Friedan, author of *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) and ambassador for second-wave feminism's struggle to get women out of the house.

Though two of Parini's picks—Dale Carnegie's *How to Win Friends and Influence People* (1936) and Benjamin Spock's *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care* (1946)—may not excite students of literature, their practical, quotidian nature is not out of keeping with the other texts, all of which illuminate "a climate of opinion, consolidating a tradition or marking a fresh turn in a long and winding road."

Parini's professorial tendencies show only in the occasional passage of academic-speak. He describes *The Federalist*, for example, as "clear and crisp, yet highly nuanced, with extraordinary flexibility and a mature sense of subordination—a far cry from the monosyllabic, flat style (with a fear of subordinate clauses) so popular today, post-Hemingway." Such circumlocutions may deter some readers, but *Promised Land* reminds us of the diversity and potency of American literature and its profound connection to the country's history.

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Image Conscious

Reviewed by Grant Alden

IF YOU OWN A COMPUTER, YOU are—by default—a graphic designer. At your fingertips is software that makes it possible to design newsletters and invoices and bake sale posters, no formal training or special gifts required. Just as the do-it-yourself ethos of punk music taught many of us who keep a guitar in the closet that we *could* be in bands, it also revealed the importance of actually having something to say, and the skill to say it in a compelling fashion. The democratization of com-

GRAPHIC! DESIGN HISTORY.

By Johanna Drucker and Emily McVarish.
Pearson/Prentice Hall.
386 pp. \$135



George Lois's famous mid-1960s cover for *Esquire* magazine featured Italian actress Virna Lisi playing around with gender roles.

puter-assisted design has illuminated a similar schism, evident whenever we walk past a wall of amateur wheat-pasted posters. Only a very small number of designers become superstars and change, however briefly, the shared language of our culture.

That shared visual language is one reason design matters, and why the study of its history is relevant beyond Madison Avenue. Johanna Drucker, a professor of media studies and English at the University of Virginia, and Emily McVarish, an assistant professor of graphic design at California College of the Arts, have written and curated a history of commercial visual discourse that runs from 35,000 BC, when people drew on cave walls, to the present. Or almost to the present—the authors hardly mention Web design.

Graphic design has long been pulled between two impulses: purely decorative (it looks pretty and pleases the client) and context driven (it looks pretty, pleases the client, and echoes some relevant visual from the past to convey its message). Unlike most design books, this volume focuses not on large, pretty pictures (which designers page

through looking for solutions to problems), but on the history and context of those images, addressing the social and artistic implications of changing technologies and the major design schools and movements that grew around them. (Design is typically viewed as the bastard child of fine art, as something an artist does to eat. That design is even being taught in the academy is progress.)

Though *Graphic! Design History* is fundamentally and structurally a textbook, it omits footnotes and includes only a modest bibliography. Most of the printed pieces that are highlighted are reproduced as thumbnails, too small to be of great use to designers or to justify displaying the book on one's coffee table. The authors' 20th-century examples will seem fairly obvious to those in the field, particularly when compared to the striking ephemera assembled from earlier periods—the handmade grandeur of a 13th-century illuminated manuscript, the formal elegance of a 17th-century sailing notice. Veteran designers will recognize, for example, the Stenberg brothers' influential 1928 constructivist poster in which a collage is worked into a worker's eyeglasses, George Lois's 1965 *Esquire* cover, or Jamie Reid's ransom-note typography on the cover of the Sex Pistols' 1977 album *Never Mind the Bollocks*.

Graphic! Design History is not a critical consideration of the field; there is simply too much ground to cover to do much more than name names. Drucker and McVarish's selections suggest an underlying interest in creating or reinforcing a canon that focuses on the best and the best known. This is, after all, an introduction. What is left out, though, is sometimes curious. With the exception of the Russian constructivists, this history is limited, once we reach the 19th century, to Western European and U.S. traditions, leaving out the influential designs of Asia, except as they were interpreted in the West, and presuming that nothing of interest happened in Africa or South America, or even Australia or Mexico. Another glaring omission is the ordinary work of ordinary designers (the cover bands of advertising, if you will); there is no discussion of signage or sign painting, and hardly a mention of billboards.

All that said, textbooks offer entry points to broader and deeper discussions. Generations of guitarists heard first the Beatles or the Rolling Stones, then worked backward to Muddy Waters and Robert Johnson, discovering the sources of what they initially admired. Today we are overwhelmed with carefully crafted visuals, on PDAs and computer screens and newsstands. This volume helps us to understand what they mean and where they came from.

GRANT ALDEN was the founding coeditor and the art director of *No Depression* magazine. He lives in Morehead, Kentucky.

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

Broomsticks and Politics

Reviewed by A. J. Loftin

IF WITCHES EXISTED, JOHN Demos would have found them.

He has been hunting them for the better part of five decades, first as a graduate student at the University of California, Berkeley, and at Harvard in the 1960s, then as a professor of early American history at Yale. In 1982 Demos published a long scholarly book, *Entertaining Satan: Witchcraft and the Culture of Early New England*, intended to be his last word on the subject. Yet he could hardly refuse the talk-show invitations that came every Halloween, nor those 3 AM calls from people fearing demonic possession. So when editors at Viking asked him to write another book on witch-hunting, this time aimed at a general readership, Demos took the bait.

The result is a text of admirable if breakneck concision, slowed only by the gratuitous insertion of italics in certain sections (as if to warn: *scholarly analysis ahead*) and clunky headings such as “*Mentality*.” How did witchcraft reflect, and contribute to, the prevailing worldview of its time? Demos briefly considers the early Christian martyrs, tortured and killed by their countrymen, then races through the next 1,500 years of witch-hunting in Europe, only slowing down when he revisits his

THE ENEMY WITHIN:
2,000 Years of
Witch-Hunting in
the Western World.
By John Demos. Viking.
318 pp. \$25.95

area of expertise, colonial America. He reviews the last three decades of Salem witch trials scholarship, which has tried to explain the bizarre behaviors of accused and accuser by looking to science and medicine: Poisoning by ergot (a fungus hosted by cereal grains) could have caused hallucinations in the accused; epidemic encephalitis might have caused convulsions and other symptoms in the “victims.” But mostly such theories have failed the test of time, Demos says. He speculates instead that economic and religious challenges to the Puritan way of life, combined with the constant threat of Indian warfare, created “an overwhelming and highly toxic climate of fear.”

At last Demos ventures somewhat timidly into more recent centuries, to discuss the Chicago union-organized Haymarket riots of 1886, the “Red Scare”—era of Joseph McCarthy in the 1950s, and the daycare “abuse” cases of the last 30 years. He zooms in on the sensational Fells Acres Day School case of the mid-1980s, in which child-care providers in Malden, Massachusetts, were accused and ultimately convicted of sexually abusing their young charges, though many believed they were innocent. “Malden to Salem is barely a dozen miles,” Demos observes, as he considers the characteristics common to both witch hunts: “A panic atmosphere builds. . . . A sense of the demonic . . . serves as the animating core. The judicial system is immediately and fully engaged. . . . Intense, prolonged interrogation assumes central importance. . . . Legal and moral precedents are tossed aside. . . . Children are centrally positioned [to] play a role that has, in effect, been assigned them by their elders.” He concludes: “And now I believe that I truly *have* said my last word on witchcraft history.”

Certainly Demos is entitled to stop writing about witchcraft. But this book, far from putting the matter to rest, simply invites more speculation. In treating modern instances, Demos repeatedly asks, “Was it a witch-hunt?” bringing the intellectual scruples and caution of a scholar to bear on his answer. But a general reader doesn’t need to be convinced. Hell, yeah—close enough. What we want to know is why we are still hunting for witches, whether at daycare centers or union meet-