

# Shaker Studies and Folklore: An Overview

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Patterson and Diane Gasson. For a group that is so rich in controversy, belief systems, intercultural matrices, folkloric genres, and even in the primary documents in which to find these things, the Shakers have been disregarded by the very analysts who could provide meaningful cultural analysis—folklorists.<sup>1</sup> What Barry wrote more than half a century ago concerning Shakers and folk song scholars applies to Shaker topics and folklorists today as well:

The fascinating study of folk-song origins leads ever to new fields of research: mountaineers, woodsmen, cowboys, negroes, soldiers in the A.E.F., and lately, hoboes. All the while, the communalists have neglected the Shakers.[sic] the one people whose communities have most perfectly realized the ideal of the *homogeneous folk*. (1930:5-6)

Overlooked as they have been by folklorists, the Shakers have received in the past decade increasing academic notice from other fields. In this article, I will survey publications of the 1980s significant to folkloristic inquiry, prefacing the survey with an intensive literary history of works about the Shakers and the stages in which these works emerged. My hope is that such an introduction to the literature might inspire future research that inevitably would benefit folklorists and Shaker studies scholars alike. But first, a short introduction to the Shakers.

Breaking off from the enthusiastic religious group in England called the Wardley Society, eight Shakers came to the United States in 1774 under the leadership of Mother Ann Lee. Their official name was the United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing, and they believed that Ann Lee reincarnated the Christ spirit in the female form. By 1780 they earned their first American converts at Niskeyuna,

New York (outside Albany). After the death of Ann Lee (1784) and other British Shaker leaders by 1787, American converts led the Shakers and began to form the Shaker communal idea, establishing eleven major Shaker villages in New England and upstate New York from 1787 to 1826, and eight in Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana, and western New York from about 1810-1826. Often persecuted in their early years, the various villages eventually gained a measure of respect for their cleanliness, sobriety, piety, honesty, craftsmanship, and wealth, although their religious practices, consisting of dancing, singing, preaching, and (in certain periods) barking, whirling, speaking in tongues (glossolalia), falling into trances, receiving visions, and other forms of enthusiastic religion, were consistently ridiculed or, at best, marveled at. Perhaps the Shaker policy that demanded the most attention through the years was their insistence on celibacy, based on their fundamental theological premise that the original sin of sexuality lay at the root of human depravity. Nonetheless, their demands for confession of sins provoked strongly factious accusations of papism, and their policy of enforcing a community of goods among the covenanted members incited neighbors and relatives of members to claim that the Shaker leaders were simply charlatans out for personal wealth. Often the Shakers were accused of breaking up families. Today, two communities still exist (Canterbury, New Hampshire and Sabbathday Lake, Maine), although not in harmony with each other. In 1965, the lead ministry, whose last leader (Bertha Lindsay) died in October, 1990, at Canterbury, closed all Shaker rolls to new members and turned Canterbury over to a private trusteeship in exchange for the care of its village's surviving members, of whom only one survives today. Sabbathday Lake still functions as a traditional Shaker village, still accepting members, still holding meetings, still conducting business. Since this article will concern itself mostly with books dealing with historical Shaker topics, the past tense will be utilized in deference to the historical frame and with no disrespect meant to the living Shakers.

### Literary History

What I am terming *Shaker studies* entails a history dating back to the late eighteenth century and encompasses a vast array of literary approaches, forms, styles, and perceptions, including both popular and academic works. Nonetheless, Shaker studies is at best at an incipient stage of scholarly research, needing to confront and dismantle a history of prolific inaccuracies of fact and opinion.

Simply for the purposes of analysis, I would divide the world of secondary literature that deals with the Shakers into three historical frames: the nineteenth century, the twentieth century up to 1979, and 1979 to the present. Each of these historical categories encompasses several subsets, some serving as bridges to a prior or later one.

In the nineteenth century, people were generally less interested in studying the Shakers as in having descriptions of them. The descriptions may have been to use the Shakers as examples for proscription (as family-breaking, orgiastic fanatics), for amusement (as comical eccentrics), or for enlightenment (as exemplars of social or communist reform). The nineteenth century, therefore, I would label the descriptive age of Shaker studies. The "studies" were for the most part entwined within published memoirs, travel books, journal or newspaper articles, or "fine" literature such as short stories and novels. Within this descriptive period, Shakers were less studied and more noticed. The journalist Charles Nordhoff wrote one of the best pieces on them, incorporating them in a book comparing various communistic societies of the United States. Dover still publishes his book (1875[1966]).

Within the nineteenth century, the Shakers themselves understood the intensity of the drift of their decline: although only one of their nineteen villages had closed by 1870 (Busro, or West Union, Indiana in 1826), Tyringham closed in 1873, followed by North Union (1889), Groveland (1892), Watervliet, Ohio (1900), and four more by 1910. Efforts to expand in Georgia and Florida in the 1890s failed after only a few years. By 1922, only six of the nineteen major villages were left. Not only were villages closing, but new members simply were not appearing, causing the Shakers to foresee the tremendous diminishment that was to come. As a result, around the turn of this century, some Shaker leaders—such as Elder Alonzo Hollister (Mount Lebanon, New York), Elder Otis Sawyer (Sabbathday Lake), and Eldress M. Catherine Allen (Mount Lebanon)—began systematically to save significant published and unpublished works by the Shakers, sometimes compiling them into Shaker libraries for their own communities, but more often donating them to public archives or libraries, or handing them over to middlemen (especially John Patterson MacLean and Wallace Hugh Cathcart, both of Ohio), who would sell them to institutions interested in preserving the Shaker heritage. Although the Shaker villages may have been closing, such leaders did not want the Shaker history, or heritage, or message, to close as well. This outpouring of Shaker documents, manuscripts, and publications into the wider world effected a new historical interest in

the Shakers. Public collections of Shaker documents are widely held, the most prominent at the Western Reserve Historical Society, the Library of Congress, and the Winterthur Museum (cf. Gilreath 1973; Richmond I:xx-xxviii).<sup>2</sup>

### "Andrewsian" Phase

John MacLean, although primarily a bookseller, read many if not all of the Shaker documents that went through his hands, and then published analytical articles based on those readings. Publishing mostly in the *Ohio Archaeological and Historical Quarterly*, MacLean established Shaker history and culture as a feasible study topic. Whereas most outside writings about the Shakers prior to MacLean had formed into novels, newspaper articles, journalistic books, or expository essays or books, MacLean's work indicated the fissure with the past writing tradition by publishing source-based, analytical writings. MacLean's *Shaker Bibliography* (1905), with only 523 items,<sup>3</sup> remained the standard bibliography until Mary Richmond published hers in 1979, with well over 4,000 entries. Many of MacLean's articles can be found in his bound collection, *Shakers of Ohio* (1907).

Although MacLean should be credited for beginning an era of scholarly writing about the Shakers, the tone of much of the new writing was still informed by the descriptive and projective works of earlier years. A major work of this era, Clara Endicott Sears' *Gleanings From Old Shaker Journals* (1916), for example, is a compilation of excerpts from original Shaker sources, revealing a selection of Shaker writings in order to devise a romantic-nostalgic view—a pastoral romance of sorts—of the Shakers. The couple who came to epitomize this collector-writer phase of Shaker studies was Edward Deming Andrews and Faith Andrews. They discovered the Shakers in the early 1920s, marking both a lifelong career for them and a redefining of the Shaker studies paradigm that has persisted up to the present. Between them—with most of the publications bearing his name alone—they published seven books, twenty-four articles, five parts of books, and four pamphlets or pamphlet series, not to mention several reprints, untold talks and lectures, and numerous exhibits and exhibition catalogs, all of which promoted their view of the Shaker world.<sup>4</sup> Like MacLean and Sears and others in this period, the Andrewses had three goals: (1) to collect Shaker items, be they manuscripts, books, furniture, art, buildings, or whatever; (2) to preserve the Shaker heritage; and (3) to present the Shaker heritage in a positive light. The three goals were powerfully interrelated because as the Andrewses collected literally houses full of Shaker

artifacts, they felt they were preserving Shaker culture, and they were using the collected items as the basis for their publications and presentations on the Shakers. Much like MacLean, Sears, and others, the Andrewses used the original source material to promote their personal view of the Shakers. The Andrewses, however, collected more, wrote more, published more widely, exhibited more, and generally were more aggressive in framing the Shakers in a particular image than anyone before or since. The cap to their effectiveness, moreover, was the thoroughness of Edward Demings Andrews' research into his materials, which, perhaps, his audience tended to accept as *irreproachable data* because he held a Ph.D. from Yale (1932). He often was referred to as Dr. Andrews, in a field where doctorates were rare.

His influence within Shaker studies was so dominant in his lifetime, and has remained so strong after his death (1964), that his style of approach and of perception actually constitutes what I would call a distinct approach to Shaker studies, subsuming even the earlier works of MacLean and Sears.<sup>5</sup> What I would characterize as Andrewsian traits are: (1) the adoption of the thesis that Shaker religion has effectively shaped Shaker culture, folkways, and artifacts; (2) a preferred focus—in terms of space—on the eastern Shakers, with the highest preference for the Hancock, Massachusetts and New Lebanon, New York Shakers; (3) a preferred focus—in terms of time—on the 1774 to 1850 period, with the highest preference for the 1837-ca. 1850 revitalization period known as "Mother Ann's Work" (this is often called the "golden age" of Shakerism); (4) a preferred focus—in terms of topic—on the material culture of the Shakers, with the assertion that their works and products were infused with their religious zeal; (5) a tendency to research and cite primary Shaker sources; and (6) a subjective approach that lends itself to a friendly, even admiring appraisal of Shaker culture, topics, and personalities. An unfortunate twist to his influence is that his voice was so authoritative that his preferences and topical interests came to be regarded as absolutes. What he described for New Lebanon in 1840, e.g., has been generalized as true for all Shakers of all levels at all villages in all times. So, from Andrews' first writing in 1928 to his current heirs, this second phase of secondary Shaker literature has jelled into the paradigm I refer to as the static materialist phase: static because it does not allow for deviance from the harmonious worldview it predetermined was the Shaker norm, and materialist because it centers its analysis on the physical world of the Shakers.

The Andrewsian effect has been overwhelming. His initial audiences were art historians, antique collectors, and the public, and these have remained the primary and largest audience of Shaker literature. That his audience guided his research directions and molded his presentational style is revealed through his topical concerns, his tendencies toward comforting generalizations, and even his titling. The extreme focus on and veneration for material objects in his works would appeal formalistically to art historians, structurally and stylistically to collectors, and in its visual affability and simplicity to the public. His academic research would appease basic scholarly interests, being sufficient to excuse his occasional omission of citations or his more frequent aversion to the reconciliation of data that disrupt his model of Shaker harmony, stability, and uniformity. His titles, such as *Religion in Wood* (1966) or *The Gift to Be Simple* (1940), could appeal broadly to the public, while others, such as *The Community Industries of the Shakers* (1933) or "Communal Architecture of the Shakers" (1937) might attract both art historians and collectors (many of whom wore both hats). Andrews unquestionably kept Shaker studies from becoming a purely popular concern by investing in his studies and his publications an academically respectable research process. In so doing, he created an odd monster, one with the sleek, imperturbable skin of the authoritative scholar but with the heart of the sentimental popularizer, and the hard, assessing eye of the antiquer.

The Andrewsian paradigm has been so powerful mainly because it has appealed so broadly but also because it has appealed to people with power, both financial and institutional. The influence has reached into the popular, the mass, and the élite realms, seducing alike the materially, the professionally, and the academically élite. The popular presses have churned out literally hundreds of books, pamphlets, booklets, sheets, coloring books, and exhibit catalogs in the Andrewsian mode; dozens of art shows have been staged featuring the Shaker material world with a range of sponsors from local museums to internationally prominent ones, such as the Whitney in New York; some museums have permanent Shaker rooms; art historians have been publishing on the Shakers, following Andrews' vision, since the early 1930s; and master and doctoral theses have been written on the Shakers since at least the 1940s. In 1989, five of the seven Andrewses' books were still in print, and many of his disciples are both publishing profitably and are in control of much of the original Shaker material, either as officials of museums or as members of boards of such museums or as influential donors to such institutions. The

Andrewsian legacy is thoroughly entrenched in the industry of promoting Shakerism.

### Academic Phase

Inroads, however, are occurring. The year 1979 would mark a logical watershed for a fresh approach to understanding the Shakers. In that year, Daniel Watkins Patterson published *The Shaker Spiritual*, establishing the precedent and standard for analytical publications relying on public primary materials. Patterson began a tradition of writing characterized by: (1) primary usage of primary sources; (2) research based on public repositories of Shaker material; and (perhaps most significantly) (3) analysis based on assumptions of cultural change, dynamics of Shaker tradition, and cultural correlations between Shakers and the outside world. In short, Patterson began applying rigorous academic standards to Shaker studies. Indeed, although his 1979 work specifically deals with Shaker spirituals, it still remains the best cultural analysis of the Shakers to date, mainly because of its demanding, objective focus and its careful research.

That Patterson published the first academically sound book on the Shakers is telling for the field of folklore. For aficionados of the *old* school of folklore, the Shakers represent a perfect example of the isolated, fairly homogeneous, agrarian, simple population that tends to be their focus.<sup>6</sup> They were famous for their songs, dances, crafts, and agricultural products. They simply radiated qualities of the *folk*. For folklorists perceiving themselves in some sort of *new* school, the Shakers left literally thousands of linear feet of diaries, hymnals, journals, daybooks, account books, letters, receipts, legal documents, and spirit communications to engage folklorists in, for example, ethnography, linguistics, folk religion, semiotics, literary studies, women's studies, sociology, interdisciplinary studies, popular culture, and occupational/organizational folklore. Further, the Shakers may be best known for their rich material culture legacy, of which they have left thousands of pieces for the folklife scholar to study, along with the logs and letters of diverse Shaker workers. The Shakers are, from whatever school's perspective, a legitimate group (or actually, a set of different groups, based on time period, region, ethnicity, socioeconomic background, and age) for folkloristic study.

Other academics began appreciating the need for more exacting research into the rich Shaker culture in the 1970s, an infusion of interest which generated the third phase of secondary Shaker literature. Scholars in the 1970s and 1980s, producing important intellectual advancements in understanding the Shakers, wrote in the fields of reli-

gious studies, psychology, history, folklore, women's studies, English, and sociology. These academicians have achieved little popular notice and are only slowly making inroads into the pastoralist paradigm that still dominates Shaker literature. Nonetheless, these scholars comprise the avant-garde in the secondary literature because of the wealth of understanding they are contributing to the field by delineating the complexities of the individuals, the villages, the narratives, the sociocultural systems, the intercultural transactions—that is, by presenting the rich complexity of Shaker lives and cultures.

The remainder of this article will be devoted to an assessment of books in this 1979-to-present period. The selection of the books is based on their potential usefulness or interest to folklorists or other sociocultural historians. However, I need to note some disclaimers and some exceptions. The historical frames break down, being simply analytical categories. Andrewsian "romances" still are published and usually have the most popular success. Also, some viable academic work did appear prior to 1979.<sup>7</sup> Further, some works in the Andrewsian mode are far better than others, being stronger in their research and analytical orientations than in their romanticisms and subjectivity, while some overtly academic works exhibit poor scholarship. When appropriate, I will note these exceptions in the following discussions.

### General Studies

Priscilla Brewer breaks down the literature about the Shakers into four categories based on type of focus: generalized, comparative, material culture, and specialized. She includes in this typology only works written in the twentieth century, most of them since 1941. Although her categorization is useful, her bibliographic exclusivity and her lack of understanding in some of the fields (such as material culture), as well as her resistance to defining subcategories, make her categories only initially useful. That she includes it only as a part of the introduction to her book, and then only to validate her own work, indicates that the intent of the categorization was more integral to the argument of her book and less useful in understanding Shaker studies literary history (Brewer 1986:ix-xi).<sup>8</sup>

Brewer's study is largely historical, her conclusions relying heavily on demographic statistics. Therefore, her understanding of the literature along historical lines seems logical; further, much of the dominant literature still reflects the Andrewsian historical model. Nonetheless, most studies likewise follow disciplinary lines, with much loose interdisciplinary interplay, typical of a topic entering academic considera-



tion. As logical, then, would be an assessment of the literature noting the disciplinary and interdisciplinary orientations, as Brewer only begins to do. I shall, then, refine and expand her model to accommodate the interdisciplinary nature of the literature.

Although Brewer does not specify the following distinction, two dominant strains of generalization exist within Shaker studies, the generalizing tone and the overview. Both derive from Andrewsian models. First, works exhibiting a generalizing tone embrace the Andrewsian point of view that a Shaker *fact*—be it a cultural trend, an historical era, an artifactual characteristic—either explicitly or implicitly need apply to the entirety of the two-hundred-year history of the nineteen major villages and about twenty thousand people who were ever Shakers. That is, some authors generalize for all of Shakerdom on the basis of limited data. To speculate on the basis of researched data and thoughtful analysis is a perfectly legitimate academic exercise. However, to assume that one's data or analytical constructs constitute objective absolutes is to impose an authority on a topic that is not supported. The other trend is to provide a general picture of Shaker history, based on a synthesis of documentation and noting to some degree relative deviations. For folklorists this latter trend is the more admirable, and for all readers it is the more reliable.

The generalizing tone pervades much of the writing about the Shakers. In most of the overviews as well, this pernicious trait dominates, almost always (in the twentieth century) with a benign aspect. Melcher (1975 [1941]), although pioneering in writing the first overview of the Shakers, evinces this effect. Rourke (1942) extrapolated from the Shaker example the conclusion that Shakers were an all-American traditional folk group, exhibiting the best virtues and values of traditional American life. Andrews (1953) exudes familiarity with, admiration of, and respect for the Shakers as people, persons, institution, and repositories of American values on almost every page. Nonetheless, his book today is the most reliable overview of the Shakers, for he likewise based his writing on extensive primary research (most of which he cites). Thus, the reader can mine his observations for a general historical thread, especially if the reader mediates his rosy biases toward the Shakers. Flo Morse (1980) wrote a book of excerpts that is easy to read but is completely innocent of the concept of contextualization and is imbued with the feeling of familiarity. In terms of a theological overview, Whitson (1983) selectively excerpts Shaker primary documents to promote the view that Shakerism has always been an ecumenical movement, a blatant misrepresentation of a people who in the beginning vehemently

opposed the validity of other religions and whose official doctrines through the years have both evolved and been internally contested. Many studies of Shaker material culture fit in well with the generalizing overview (especially Sprigg and Larkin [1987] and Burns [1987]), but since their focus is more narrowly on the aspect of Shaker material culture, I will include them below in a discussion of material culture studies.

Since all of the overviews above should be avoided as works that tend to promote and entrench popular misunderstandings about the Shakers, the time is ripe for a newly-written, scholarly overview of Shaker history and life. The time has actually been ripe for decades, but the Andrewsian "canon" intimidated most authors from challenging his predominant 1953 work; moreover, academics in the 1970s and 1980s shied away from generalistic works in favor of specific, narrowly focused ones. Nonetheless, Stephen Stein is currently working from manuscript and other primary material on a historical overview of Shakerism that promises to be scholarly, thoughtful, analytical, and provocative. It likewise promises to create a stir in the field.

Comparative studies within the Shaker field have tended toward the generalistic overview, even when the focus has been temporally or spatially narrow. In a sense, the Shakers have been used as a case in comparative studies for the length of its existence. Writers have habitually cited them for specific characteristics and then compared them either to other normal (i.e., mainstream Protestant) religious groups or to marginal ones. Nordhoff's book presents such a format, shadowing the Shakers against the utopian communalists at Oneida, Amana, Zoar, Bethel, Icaria, Aurora, and Economy. Usually in the nineteenth-century literature, authors perceived the Shakers' temporal traits favorably (cleanliness, orderliness, wealth, propriety, sobriety, honesty) while viewing their religious enthusiastic traits with reactions ranging from horror to ridicule.

By the 1950s, sociologists began to take an interest in using the Shakers in comparative religious studies. Although his focus is on the Owenites and sectarian origins of communitarian socialism, Bestor (1950; 1970) is the best in placing the Shakers in the historical context of the nineteenth-century communitarian movement and is recommended for a quick sociological introduction to the Shakers in their communitarian context. Kanter (1972) provides summary overviews of American communes from the 1700s to 1960, and includes the Shakers as one of the more successful societies. Her approach is statistical and quantitative, which demands a prior knowledge of Shaker or other communitarian history. While widely hailed as establishing individual

commitment as a major principle in determining communal success, her book could likewise be faulted for reducing to statistical simplicity the complex humanistic problems of motivation and commitment. Kephart (1976; 1982; 1987), through his various editions, surveys seven of the following eight subcultures: the Amish, the Oneidans, the Father Divine Movement, the Gypsies, the Shakers, the Mormons, the Hutterites, and modern communes. Written for a popular audience, all of Kephart's editions should be avoided for their simplistic generalizations, limited theoretical orientation, and factual errors. As stated above, Bestor's first three chapters (in which the Shakers are discussed) should be read for an analytical and readable sociological introduction to the Shakers.

By the 1980s, much more detailed comparative studies of the Shakers had appeared.<sup>9</sup> Probably much to the consternation of both of the authors, two works with the same topic were published in 1981: Lawrence Foster's *Religion and Sexuality* and Louis Kern's *An Ordered Love*. Both deal with a comparative analysis of the Shakers, the Oneidans, and the Mormons; both invoke primarily sociological but also psychological theoretical positions; and both focus on the concept of the role of sexuality in the three communes. The books are different, though. Kern's thesis is that, in the face of the nineteenth-century trend toward dichotomization of sex roles (public/male, private/female), the three societies instituted basic American fears about women and wrested most (in the case of the Shakers) if not all (in the case of the other two) of the power from the women. Evincing extensive primary research, Kern ably discusses the overt equality but covert suppression of women within Shaker society, contemporary American notions of the concept of the self and of the "true woman," and ambiguities inherent in American values. Unfortunately, he bases his psychological analysis on Freudian theory, which, being inherently misogynist, makes a tautology of his anti-female utopian motivational premises. Further, spatially he relies on documents of only the parent ministry of New Lebanon, and temporally he researches only the 1779-1890 period, which would be fine if he were to limit his conclusions to those parameters; however, he invokes the Andrewsian generalizing tone and asserts for all nineteen villages and all two hundred years of Shakerism the applicability of his findings. Kern, then, disregards basic folkloristic concerns of cultural dynamics, variations, and contexts. He should be referred to for his able discussions mentioned above but always with an eye out for his generalizing tendencies.

Foster likewise conducts a sociologically comparative study of the same three groups as Kern, but he approaches the idea of Shaker religion and sexuality along much more humanistic lines than does Kern. That is, he attempts to deal primarily with the people's responses to social ideas, bringing in anthropological concepts (such as Turner's liminality), psychological motivation theories, and sociological exegeses. He limits his research to the Second Family at New Lebanon and to Sodus Bay, New York, but notes that his conclusions are only preliminary to a fuller analysis of New York Shakers. A sounder work than Kern's in terms of intent, focus, and speculation, Foster's book could be profitably read by folklorists wishing theoretically sound and well-researched sociological analysis of a portion of Shaker society seen in light of other dominant nineteenth-century utopian communities.

Marini (1982) uses the comparative approach to analyze three radical religious sects of revolutionary era New England, the Shakers, the Freewill Baptists, and the Universalists. Writing a historical study sensitive to sociocultural, theological, and sectarian contexts, Marini argues very convincingly that these three groups are bound together by traditions of radical evangelicalism, rugged frontier experience, and strong messianic/organizational leadership, which combined to form different religio-social expressions of a similar heritage. The writing and the research are excellent. However, he does err by writing as if it were fact the debated position that the early Shakers believed that the Second Coming had already come through the "manifestation of the 'Christ spirit' in [all of] their souls" (77), not just in Ann Lee's, but this error is atypical in a work exhibiting fine scholarship. He even uses folkloric data to explicate Shaker religion, devoting a whole chapter to Shaker song texts as culturally rich documents (156-171). Since he deals with the antecedents to and the origins of Shakers up to about 1800, Marini cannot be faulted for omitting the western Shakers, insofar as they had not begun to form until 1805. This work provides folklorists and other cultural historians a fine overview of the sociocultural conditions of marginal religions in the ferment of revolutionary New England.

### Specific Studies

Shaker studies, both in the Andrewsian line and in the newer, interdisciplinary line, have tended in recent years to diverge from the generalizing overview-type of approach to Shaker topics that Andrews mastered in *The People Called Shakers* (1953). The current trend is to focus more particularistically—on a village, a person, a furniture type,

an art type, a theoretical concern. Andrews himself applied his research not only to general histories of the Shakers but also to specific Shaker topics, such as studies of Shaker industries, furniture, or gift drawing,<sup>10</sup> the trend of writers following his lead over the last half century has been to continue these two trends, although, until about 1979, rarely as thoroughly or as academically conscientiously as Andrews. First, some Andrewsian-type writers write sweeping histories of the Shakers (such as Morse [1980]). Others write more specific studies but use the focus simply as a vehicle for the writers' *a priori* notions concerning a Shaker pastoral ideal (such as Sprigg's very recent and very successful exhibit and catalog, *Shaker Design* [1986], in which the artifacts float on the page, devoid of any visual context and accompanied by commentary indicating research that has tended to be favorably slanted). Nonetheless, writers have produced several credible works since 1979 utilizing the specific focus and incorporating Andrews' positive traits of extensive original research, scholarly writing, and creative perception of topics; however, to be credible, these works have likewise, with varying successes, attempted to shed the detrimental Andrewsian traits of benign subjectivity toward the Shaker topics, distortion through "proving" preconceived postulates, and imposing on all Shaker topics conclusions derived only from a limited study. The following discussion will highlight the strengths and weaknesses of both the good and the bad works written with a specific focus.

### Non-Material Cultural

One work that temporally specifies her topic—focusing on the 1774-1820s period—is Priscilla Brewer's *Shaker Communities, Shaker Lives* (1986). Using impressive statistical, historical, and cultural research, Brewer challenges the general assumption that Shaker decline began between 1840 and 1860 (a typical Andrewsian stance), insisting rather that decline began much earlier, perhaps in the 1820-1840 period. This work is commendable for its recognition of the need for a social historical study of the Shakers, for its attempt to combine demographic tabulations with documentary evidence as mutually supporting data, and for its attempt to reexamine standard scholarly positions on the Shakers. Unfortunately, Brewer's work is significantly flawed by the inclusion only of data from the eastern Shaker societies, thereby totally ignoring the seven western societies of Kentucky, Indiana, and Ohio. She likewise seems to have fallen prey to that Andrewsian scholarly fallacy that the eastern societies are (1) the only significant ones, (2) truly representative of all Shaker culture, and (3)

the critical molders of all Shaker life. Because of her disregard for regional, personal, occupational, and other kinds of basic cultural formative processes, such conclusions must be acknowledged at best as relevant only to the specific societies studied. Nonetheless, her work is fairly well researched and very convincingly written. Another recent work with a generalizing tone is Gerard Wertkin's (1986) with its idealization of the contemporary Sabbathday Lake Shaker life, important for its portrayal of the last remaining Shaker community in its day-to-day traditional life through all the seasons of the year, but too intimate to provide an objective portrayal.

Earlier than Wertkin, Horgan (1982) focuses explicitly and less subjectively on a specific community. He provides a descriptive history of the bishopric of Harvard and Shirley, Massachusetts, presenting a fairly full history focusing on the founders, community development, ministry, religious revival, and eventual decline. His work fails on the important score of analysis, of which he provides none. Being the only full treatment of any Shaker village, however, his work does provide a helpful start to further community studies of the Shakers.<sup>11</sup>

Stein (1985) provides almost as full a community portrait as he does an individual Shaker's portrait in his important book. Drawing on selected correspondence between a nonranking Shaker member of a western society and his father, a prominent judge in Ohio, Stein focuses on the conversion experience of the young Shaker, and, in the process, opens a window into the routines, feelings, and details of life within this particular Kentucky Shaker village—Pleasant Hill—of the 1820s. Another work that treats an individual life within Shakerism is Huméz (1981), who analyzes the spiritual autobiography of a black Shaker "eldress," who formed an outfamily in Philadelphia of mostly black members. Huméz rigorously presents the original manuscript and its redactions in order to reward the reader with an extraordinary account of the visionary internal life of a devout religious woman. Huméz' focus and interest are in feminist, Afro-American, and African Methodist Episcopal concerns, which are fully compatible with folklorists'. Actually, the literary folklorist Diane Sasson (1983) included part of Jackson's autobiography in her work analyzing seven distinctly different Shakers' spiritual autobiographies, testimonies, or redactions. Although Sasson could have profited from a more thorough investigation into the cultural roots outside of Shakerism of these Shaker writers, her work highlights the potential for analysis of the various subgenres of Shaker narratives. Well-written and extensively researched, Sasson's work demonstrates, along with that of

her mentor Daniel Patterson, that folklorists can both benefit and be benefited by the study of Shakers.

A particularistic theological focus engages Procter-Smith (1985), who analyzes Shaker theology and society in order to understand the role, status, and sphere of Shaker women. Discovering positive societal rewards for early nineteenth-century women in Shaker villages, she likewise considers the Shaker theological system a case study of the impossibility of female equality in any Western-based (i.e., patriarchal) system, since the sociocultural foundations are predeterminately anti-feminist. Her analysis of Shaker society and culture (limited to about 1774-1850) is generally objective and non-judgmental, although her last chapter, in which she espouses exclusively female-generated liturgies, theology, and goddesses, becomes animated, distorted, and misandrous. Nonetheless, with coverage of Shaker music, art, sex roles, religion, and organization, her book would appeal to folklorists in material culture and folklife, feminism, social history, ethnography, and organizational studies.

A focus on Shaker intellectual religious history resulted in the publication of two quite different books published more than thirty years apart. In 1955, Henri Desroche published in France a book printed in English in 1971, dealing with the intellectual history of the Shakers along social philosophical lines. Perceiving the Shakers as heirs to the ideas within such religious societies as primitive Christians, Manichaeans, Buddhists and the French Prophets of the Cevenoles, Desroche advances the idea that they embodied a missing link between the traditional religious societies and the modern socialist state, insofar as they were enlightened in their material communalism but restrained by their traditional religiosity. Desroche's work has been noted by Shaker studies authors as creative in its efforts but flawed by an overzealous socialistic attribution to the Shakers, a criticism that is warranted. By basing his conclusions on data derived from universal examples, Desroche denigrates the uniqueness of Shaker society in general and of individual Shaker communities, families, people, ideas, and cultural tendencies specifically. Nonetheless, that the Shakers did incorporate this material/spiritual ambiguity within their system does lend the ring of truth to Desroche's basic position. An impressive scholarly and objective work, Clarke Garrett's book (1987) likewise explores the religious historic permutations of the principles and practices of enthusiastic religions that eventually emerge in Shakerism. More a history of the roots of Shaker ideas and behaviors than it is a full-length study of Shakerism per se, Garrett's book evinces full command of complex patterns, the thoughtful use of pertinent primary

material, an important application of dramatic performance theory to the phenomenon of religious enthusiasm, and an ability and authority to question current historical conventions concerning the Shakers (such as proposing that the apostates' horror tales of early Shakerism are just as valid as the accepted Shaker position) or to clarify current ambiguities (such as whether the Shakers derived from Quakers, or French Prophets, or itinerant Methodists). I would recommend Garrett's work as an authoritative voice.

### Material Cultural

Brewer was undoubtedly correct (in a sense) when she wrote that material culture studies constitute one of the major fields of Shaker studies literature. She was right insofar as Andrews himself delineated and featured the field by his extensive writing, collecting, exhibiting, and general promotion of Shaker artifacts. She was also right insofar as much of the interest in the Shakers—both popular and scholarly—is in their material culture. However, folklorists would recognize little in most of the "material culture" publications concerning the Shakers, since most rely on formal analysis, depend on Andrewsian norms for what constitutes the good, the bad, and the ugly, and fairly rigorously ignore cultural influences. In other words, advances in folklife studies have had little impact on Shaker material culture studies. Nonetheless, some acceptable to good books do exist.

Two good focused material culture studies—although both require critical readings—are John Kassay's *The Book of Shaker Furniture* (1980) and Charles R. Muller's and Timothy D. Rieman's *The Shaker Chair* (1984). When published, Kassay's work shone. It provides clear visual and verbal documentation of Shaker furniture types and subtypes, 66 meticulously measured drawings, and captions beside each picture indicating its provenance, its date, a detailed physical description, the collection to which it belongs, its construction details, its function, the specific wood or other materials used, and/or its basic dimensions. An exacting visual typology, the book nonetheless lacks in its historical analysis, tending to focus on the pre-1875 eastern Shaker furniture (thus reinforcing the Andrewsian biases) and to ignore cultural influences external to the Shaker communities. Despite this analytical failing, Kassay's work remains unsurpassed as a visual overview of general Shaker furniture types, perhaps especially useful to cabinetmakers, museum curators, and antique collectors. Muller and Rieman (1984) focus more discretely on a furniture type, the Shaker chair. They exhibit command of original documentary research, indicate the chair measurements, categorize the forms according to



village provenance—while noting individual chairmakers when known—and even suggest that Shaker village styles correlate to regional styles outside the villages, thus implicating intercultural transactions. A collaboration between a chairmaker (Rieman) and an antique writer (Muller), *The Shaker Chair* provides reliable information on Shaker chairs based on the authors' research and experiential knowledge.<sup>12</sup>

A quasi-museological catalog recently published in the Andrewsian mode (Flint 1987) continues the Andrewsian traditional emphasis on Shaker material items and its assertion of the preeminence of the eastern—and especially Mount Lebanon—Shakers. Considering its function of recording material items from the village in which the museum-publisher operates, this focus is perhaps easily justified. However, considering the poor and uninformative commentary—for some items, Flint provides absolutely no comments; for most, he gives only a minimum of information—the catalog seems to have been subsumed under a coffeetable mission, although the lack of color plates would arbitrate against even that. The only feature of this catalog that could be of service to material culture specialists is the availability of images of the Mount Lebanon Shaker community to compare them to similar items both outside and inside Shaker society, especially since most of the Mt. Lebanon pieces have been inaccessible to the public since about 1930. In contrast to either Kassay or Muller and Rieman, the Flint catalog is representative of the field of superficial publications on Shaker furniture, focusing mostly on form, provenance, collections, and measurements. The reason of course is that the major audience for such works is still the antique collectors and the museum curators, who need to know such details but do not need to know confusing and confuting background history of the items.<sup>13</sup>

Gordon (1980) is the only publication dealing exclusively with Shaker textiles. Shaker textiles have not received greater scholarly attention perhaps because textile work was mostly a Shaker woman's work, suggesting that the conventional emphases on Shaker furniture, architecture, and history indicate a male-orientation not only within Shaker culture, but among researchers as well. Nonetheless, Shaker textiles constituted a significant portion of any Shaker village income, and Gordon's work successfully describes the historical, aesthetic, and technical details of Shaker textile work. She likewise demonstrates a knowledge of correlative textile arts of the non-Shaker world, to which she draws parallels in Shaker works. Although a wonderfully descriptive account of the artifacts and of the production processes, the book contains practically no analysis. Nonetheless, Gordon provides an excellent reference for researchers not only in Shaker material

culture but also in the study of American textiles in general and in women's studies.<sup>14</sup>

Many particularistic works by non-Andrewsian researchers incorporate insights dependent on the material itself rather than on any ideas imposed upon the data. Daniel Patterson's *Gift Drawings and Gift Songs* (1983), focusing on the religious art of the Shakers in the 1837-1860 period, is among the best, for he utilizes thorough investigative primary research into the diverse repositories and several private collections, and he institutes analysis not only of the pieces themselves but also of the artists, of parallel folk and regional traditions, and of relevant contemporary cultural patterns. As in his earlier work, *The Shaker Spiritual* (1979), Patterson demonstrates research and analytical skills sensitive to the interrelationships of cultural parts. However, even Patterson's superb scholarship is applied in this instance to that "golden age" of Shaker revitalization so popularized and beloved by Andrews and his followers, and this focus only helps to support and promote the impression that the only "good" Shaker art, artifact, lifestyle, or cultural pattern existed in this age and, by extension, in the northeast Shaker villages wherein much of this work survived. Nonetheless, Patterson's scholarship within this focus serves the positive function of stripping the pastoralist veneer that has conventionally covered this era.

Robert Emlen's *Shaker Village Views* concentrates on the subgenre of Shaker art of village maps and village views, limiting his study to such works done by Shakers and created mostly between 1806-ca.1880. His intention, although never stated explicitly, is to conduct an art historical analysis of Shaker village maps throughout the eastern and western villages. Although he relies largely on internal evidence—especially stylistic features—for his deductions, Emlen does occasionally consult primary documents, concurrent developments outside of the Shaker villages, and relevant contextual data to assist in his interpretations. In conducting the analysis, he is most interested in tracking the development both of mapmaking among the Shakers throughout the various villages (assuming a unilinear pattern of development) and of mapmaking among particular identifiable Shaker mapmakers. As well done as this book is, and as appealing as the pictures and layout are, its needless problems hinder it from full usefulness. The basic problem of the work lies in the assumptions imported into the analysis from Emlen's art historical training. First, Emlen assumes that the cartography and pictures aspire toward elite art standards, an assumption apparent in his typical art historical terminology for the folk artists, such as *näive*, *amateurish*, *self-taught*,

etc. He doesn't consider that folk culture might engender its own aesthetic standards, nor that differing folk cultures would engender standards that would deviate one from the other. (Actually, art historians could take a significant leap forward by recognizing in Shakerism a model for folk cultural aesthetic development, rather than imposing on Shaker folk culture a high culture validation.) Secondly, Emlen assumes that Shaker mapmakers and artists were concerned with artistic and stylistic development. In terms of traditional Western culture, this might be a satisfactory assumption, considering the dominance of linearity and future-orientation in Western worldview. But again, he is applying high art aesthetic standards in a context where they may be irrelevant. Especially in the early years, as Emlen notes, the Shakers were interested in mapmaking essentially as a practical exercise, using them as records of their villages' growth. Why they would try to apply high aesthetic stylistic development to such pragmatic works, Emlen does not address. Later works may indeed warrant the aesthetic analysis of artistic development (but again, this should only be in folk cultural terms, not high cultural); however, applying an analysis based on a belief in the self-conscious development of artistic development of the early mapmakers, and likely of many of the middle mapmakers of Shakerdom, appears inappropriate. A further problem with Emlen's work is the favorable bias toward the eastern Shaker societies, thereby maligning the culture of the western societies. Despite the book's problems, I consider it important for folklorists. He has identified a genre of Shaker folk drawings, assembled in a very orderly format the known pieces, and provided formalistic and stylistic interpretation bolstered by some contextual data external to the pieces. Folklorists can use his material comparatively for cultural patterns and forms contemporary to these nineteenth-century Shakers, while keeping in mind the book's limitations.

Most other publications on Shaker art and craft should be avoided for any scholarly consideration. Undoubtedly the author most responsible for the perpetuation of the romanticist strain in the Andrewsian heritage is June Sprigg, currently curator at a very successful Shaker outdoor museum, Hancock Shaker Village, Inc. Generally speaking, books, articles, introductions, and pamphlets written by Sprigg all have the same message—Shaker artifacts express Shaker goodness and religiosity, and thus Shaker villages were filled with a uniformly contented and religious population. Sprigg's work, based on her study of the Shakers for about twenty years, has improved only in becoming increasingly amenable to a popular

audience. Recently, Sprigg teamed up with coffee-table book publisher David Larkin (1987) to produce a work replete with richly colored, glossy pictures, romanticized vistas, and fictionalized text (informed by Sprigg's curatorial knowledge of the Shakers) that tend toward gross generalization. The authors apparently intended simply to promote a warm, nostalgic sense of a Shaker (and, by transference, an American) past that really was little like what is being presented: a past in which people lived in communities in harmony, order, stability, and universal pious serenity. The usefulness of this work (or any of Sprigg's works) is limited to the use of pictures for material culture workers, although the frames, arrangements, and perspectives are clearly distorted and thereby confusing. While her highly successful *Shaker Design* (1986) along with the exhibit it catalogued were financially lucrative and sleekly packaged, the catalog likewise is simply a book of pretty pictures that brings no new understanding of Shaker art, crafts, or industries but does bring slightly more prestige to Shaker material culture for having been exhibited at the Whitney and the Corcoran. Sprigg's works should be avoided for scholarly consideration. Similar to Sprigg and Larkin, although slightly more thoughtful, is Burns (1987), which is intended to accompany her prior film (made with her husband Ken Burns) on the Shakers (*The Shakers: Hands to Work, Hearts to God* [1984]). Both Sprigg and Larkin as well as Burns are popular works not intended for the scholarly audience.

The only viable book on Shaker architecture published to date is Hayden (1976). Although her work is comparative, covering the specific communities of the Shakers, the Mormons, the Fourierists, the Oneidans, the Amanans, the community at Greeley, Colorado, and that of the Llano del Rio in California, and thus not focused on the Shakers, she does devote all of Chapter 4 to the Hancock, Massachusetts, Shakers. Her study of the Hancock architectural types is excellent, with informative illustrations and insightful architectural analyses. Had she covered more of the buildings at Hancock rather than determine that the few she did study are representative as Shaker building types, and had she not committed the error of asserting that Shaker buildings in all the communities were remarkably similar, she may not have made the mistake of assuming that general similarity is equivalent to exact duplication. If the reader acknowledges those misconceptions within the book, Hayden's work can be a useful introduction to Shaker architecture. Other books on Shaker architecture are frankly not worth considering.

## References

I will cover this final category briefly, for the works themselves should speak for themselves. Nonetheless, in order to expedite further research, the following references should be mentioned. In terms of Shaker research, the important comprehensive and annotated bibliography of Shaker primary and secondary published works is the two-volume 1977 *Shaker Literature* by Mary Richmond, the first volume being devoted to works published by Shakers, the second to works published about the Shakers. Her work superseded John MacLean's 1905 *Shaker Bibliography*, a standard reference based on his own collecting and selling of Shaker material, and one that had been noticeably outdated for years by the time of Richmond's publication. Due to the explosion of new Shaker studies and of subsequent finds of original Shaker material, Richmond's work itself is now outdated; further, her reference would be more useful were it to include a topical index as well as the title index it does have. Nonetheless, it still remains an important reference for works published prior to 1974.

The premier guide to Shaker manuscript material is Pike (1974). Although it has its faults—occasional errors of attribution and cursory content listing being two of the more apparent ones—this guide is golden for the manuscript researcher. It covers the entire collection at the Western Reserve Historical Society, a collection 122 feet in length (or 123 reels of microfilm), by far the largest manuscript collection of Shaker material. Most of the contents of this collection have yet to be scrutinized by scholars. The guide divides the manuscripts into fourteen categories according to document type (legal documents, financial records, correspondence, music, inspired writings, scrapbooks, and so on), and then subdivides each of those categories into the two subcategories of loose items and bound volumes. Further, under each subcategory, the manuscripts are divided according to community of provenance. It is a very simple and effective system for finding material within the collection. A microfilm guide based on the Pike guide was published by Microfilming Corporation of America ([anonymous], *The Shaker Collection . . .*, 1977) to expedite usage of the microfilm copies of this collection.

A guide to another collection, McKinstry (1987) inventories the (mostly) documentary archive that Andrews and his family donated to Winterthur Museum, University of Delaware, one of the largest collections of Shaker documents. McKinstry's (mostly) annotated catalog of the Andrews archive at Winterthur is important. In his categorization of the material, McKinstry quite logically followed Richmond's division of "By the Shakers" and "About the Shakers" for the section

covering published material; and for the manuscript section, he followed Pike's fourteen-part typology (which he expands into sixteen parts), thereby working toward a standardization of reference material.

Considering first the importance of Andrews and his wife to the burgeoning of interest and publications in Shaker topics, and second their importance as exhaustive collectors and preservationists of Shaker cultural remains, this catalog of their archive is invaluable. The general researcher in Shaker studies can now access the extensive Andrews material easily, and the historiographer of the subfield can access the Andrewses' scholarly route through their material. Furthermore, McKinstry carries on a publishing tradition of guides to major Shaker collections, although most such guides are mere pamphlets or Xerox sheets. Pike's *Guide* is more important than McKinstry's insofar as the Western Reserve collection is the largest collection of Shaker primary material in the world, incorporating an extent of material that is more representative of the breadth of Shaker villages, topics, and individuals than any other collection. The accessibility through microfilm of the Western Reserve documents likewise makes both the collection and its *Guide* significant. The importance of the Pike *Guide* and its collection, however, should not minimize either McKinstry's guide or the Andrews collection for researchers.

The Shaker collections themselves are important as preserves of manuscript, published, artifactual, and photographic material of a small group within American society whose continued existence has been meaningful in a variety of ways as a subcultural society that: (1) has existed as an American social unit generally paralleling the existence of the United States (1774 to date); (2) has preserved American cultural configurations in isolated microcosms through its communes of American religious converts; (3) has created and preserved vast quantities of financial records, letters, diaries, legal forms, religious tracts, production records, artifacts (both manufactured and handmade), photographs, graphic works, and so on, continuously from 1774 to the present, thereby documenting not only temporal variations but also regional variations throughout the nineteen major villages; (4) has offered records that provide a comparative and contrastive model for other post-1774 American groups; and (5) has generated folkloric images and narratives that have informed and interacted with American popular culture, reaching in recent years to elite culture.

## Conclusion

Considered initially odd and fanatic, then treasonous, then socially dangerous, eventually merely quirky, at most times honest and pious, ultimately quaint, until today they are esteemed—consciously or otherwise—as repositories of the pure frontier values we ascribe in our nostalgia for the past, the Shakers have historically fascinated Americans. Outsiders have written about the Shakers from their beginnings, from newspaper articles or notices in the eighteenth century to published diatribes by apostates in the early nineteenth century, to amused and bemused accounts by both foreign and American travelers throughout the nineteenth century. The twentieth century saw the nascent study of the Shakers as a special social group. Perhaps by chance, but also happily in the midst of the social historical consciousness of the Progressive age, this intellectual interest in them coincided with the closing of most of their villages, fifteen of the nineteen having closed by 1945, only two remaining by 1961. Interest in things Shaker likewise coincided with the first stirrings of interest in *nāive* or folk art among art historians and fine artists. These coincidences heavily influenced the almost monolithic direction Shaker studies would take from the 1920s through the 1970s. Constructed, perceived, and directed through the amazing energy, enthusiasm, influence, and insights of Edward Deming Andrews, himself a knowledgeable art historian and antique collector/dealer, the Shaker past became a symbol of a pastoral American past.

The Shakers, now dying, could be tamed, could be assimilated as an icon of Americanness by Americans who would shape them in their own ideal image, much as a child might shape some Play-doh to resemble some perceived image of a form—a dog or cat or person. The results usually do not approach verisimilitude, but the shapers are pleased with the creations because they project meaning onto their product, endowing it with present significance. Just so the Shakers have been sentimentalized into grotesque statuettes, representing for present-day re-creators of the past what early frontier Americans should be, imbuing and exuding pure honest American values and feeling little but hope, virtue, harmony, piety, love of hard work, and a sense of perfect communitas.

Andrews himself, being the pioneer in this construction, should be recognized for his scholarship and passion in trying to come to an understanding of the Shakers. He had little scholarly dialogue to help him along. His followers, who have exacerbated the original Andrewsian impulse into a sticky sweet romance starring specific Shaker heroes and heroines, are to be excoriated. Many of the books focused upon

in this essay need be censured to some degree for the maudlin subjectivity they perpetuate. June Sprigg, having published such books for years, either should know better by now or else is truly convinced that this invented image of the Shakers is absolute truth. Even many of the finest works published in the last fifteen or so years have been subject to pernicious Andrewsian influences. Insofar as some of the best material culture works have appeared in this time period, they have nonetheless perpetuated the legacy of the assumed superiority of Shaker "religion in wood" that Andrews suggested. The very best, Patterson's works on Shaker spirituals and gift drawings, integrating the products with folk cultural and extra-cultural processes and forms, focus on the Shaker revival period of 1837-ca.1860. This is a vital period of Shaker religious expression and certainly a valid period to study, a fact Andrews himself recognized immediately. But scholars need to recognize other vital, valid, and critical cultural loci of Shakerism in order to balance the overall perspective. Patterson's works do provide necessary balance to Andrews' viewpoint on this revival period, but the mere fact of his focus likewise reaffirms the implied centrality of the period to Shaker history, culture, and society. Likewise the undue attention given to the material culture of the Shakers, by both responsible and irresponsible authors, quite simply sustains and shelters the cherished assertion that Shaker products and possessions are religiously infused, almost sanctified. The harsher truth is that Shaker-made products tended to be normative examples of regional material culture, with similar shapes, decorations, technical processes, types, material, and even flaws as could be found in the products made in the farms and towns around them. Shaker culture assuredly did influence the finishing and even the stylistic control, especially of certain types of furniture and architecture, but to credit Shaker religiosity with establishing guidelines for material perfectibility, resulting in uniformly angelic products, is plainly romantic.

Shaker society as a religious folk group offers the folklorist and other cultural researchers plenty of room to research. They left for our benefit literally hundreds of linear feet of manuscript material to sort through, hundreds of published books, tracts, pamphlets, articles, journals, and broadsides, and tons of artifacts. Much research has been conducted on them. Andrews provided both important initial forays into their material and a host of chauvinistic followers who follow his lead blindly, often publishing works that develop his worst tendencies rather than his best. Thus a whole Andrewsian literature of romanticized, almost legendary accounts of the Shakers exist, establishing a canon of misconceptions that the responsible researcher



must first master and second correct. McKinstry allows us to reach out to original source material, providing us with the means not only to conduct our own research but also to try to understand through reconstruction Andrews' basis for his construction of Shaker reality. Although much of this review has focused on the negative side of the literature, it has done so as a necessary corrective to the extreme imbalance of Andrewsian-type misconceptions about the Shakers. That Shaker topics are so appealing is evident from the excitement apparent in their popularity; that they are likely even more exciting in the realities that will emerge from Shaker documents, devoid of any superimposition of present-day values, is recognizable in works such as Stein, Huméz, Foster, Patterson, Sasson, and Marini. Such scholars as these are revealing Shaker life as suggested by their own records and presentations. Folklorists should discern—as Patterson and Sasson have done already—the value of folkloristic inquiry into this misrepresented group, while realizing the significance of in-depth cultural studies of a long-lived, highly self-documented folk group such as the Shakers.

### Notes

- 1 Of course, I have to indicate the exceptions to this generalization: minor notes and articles by other folklorists over the years have appeared; or folklore journals have occasionally published work by nonfolklorists; and nonfolklorists have valorized the Shakers as a "folk community." By and large, however, these infrequent folkloristic flirtations with Shaker topics have not generated significant scholarly notice, either by folklorists or by serious Shaker studies scholars. See Barry, Barry and Henry, Eaton, Péladeau, Rourke, Thomason, Wilgus, and Yoder.
- 2 According to Pike (1974: p. vii), the Western Reserve Historical Society holds 90 percent of extant Shaker manuscript material, all of which is now available on microfilm.
- 3 Actually, 523 items are *numbered*. MacLean likewise lists 21 articles concerning the Shakers that he does not number but rather places in an addendum.
- 4 See their published works cited in Richmond (1977).
- 5 The major exception to this assertion would be that, while the Andrewses, Sears, and later adherents of the approach tended to favor the eastern societies, MacLean favored the Shakers of Ohio as his representative group. While some others have written on the western Shakers of Ohio, Kentucky and Indiana (most notably Stein [1985]), the vast majority of writers on the Shakers still ignore the western societies.
- 6 Cf. Barry's quote at the beginning of this article. He further states that Shakers should be documented because they are about to "die out," revealing an antiquarian tendency on his part.

7 Some of the best work, actually, rests unseen in unpublished doctoral dissertations and masters' theses, written both before and after 1979. However, the scope of this article encompasses only published books, so it cannot incorporate even the best of such works, such as Ham (1962) or Youngerman (1983).

8 Brewer concludes the bibliographic categorization by noting that "None of these varied works is wholly satisfying" (1986:xi).

9 Although Hayden (1976) is comparative and thus could be discussed at this point, I will include her later under works in art and architecture, since her focus is strictly architectural; cf. p. 20.

10 The term "gift drawing" is not the Andrewses' but Patterson's (1983), who makes a logical case for such a denotation over the previously used "spirit drawings," since the Shakers perceived them as gifts from angels and not as drawings induced by spirits. In respect for the properly reasoned term, I use Patterson's here rather than the Andrewses' "spirit drawings."

11 While Wertkin focuses on the single community of Sabbathday Lake, his is not a full study but rather an "intimate portrait." Others have published booklets on specific villages, but the intended audiences for these works are the tourist, the historical buff, or some other element of the popular audience—all of which leaves Horgan as the only author of a Shaker community study. For a fuller review of Horgan's work, see my review in *Folklore Forum* 1983 16:(1)97-103, in which I cover both his work and Beverly Gordon's book on Shaker textiles.

12 After I wrote this article, Jerry V. Grant and Douglas R. Allen (1989) published a good book on Shaker furniture makers. They utilize extensive manuscript source material, consultation with Shaker experts, and their own material culture expertise in assessing the particular craftsmanship of the pieces. The importance of this publication is its focus on the actual people who crafted Shaker furniture, thus providing a deeper humanistic context to Shaker material culture.

13 An important exception to this observation is Mary Lyn Ray's 1973 article on Shaker furniture, in which she correlates Shaker style and forms to those of the outside world. Impressive also is that she published this article in a prominent art history publication. Unfortunately, her thesis did not seem to make a noticeable impact on art historical studies of Shaker material culture, since the Andrewsian literature has been unaffected by her assertions of cultural interchange between the Shakers and the world. One problem within her article is that she does maintain the art historical assumptions of folk art as "naïve" and implicitly inferior to "fine" art. Still, her article may be the best work on Shaker furniture available.

14 For a more detailed discussion of Gordon, see *Folklore Forum* 1983 16(1):97-103, in which I review both Gordon and Horgan (1982).

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