

Joel Pfister and Nancy Schnog (eds), *Inventing the Psychological: Toward a Cultural History of Emotional Life in America* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997), 304 pp. 24 illus., ISBN: 0-300-06809-3, cloth, \$42.00; 0-300-07006-3, paper, \$19.00.

'What does it mean to invent the psychological,' asks Nancy Schnog in the first line of her introduction. Obviously, to see 'the psychological' as 'invented' problematizes the ways Americans have regarded identity and interiority throughout the twentieth century. As Joel Pfister explains in his introduction, entitled 'On Conceptualizing the Cultural History of Emotional and Psychological Life in America,' the two editors seek to analyze 'the psychological' not as a 'definitely knowable truth' but as a changing and changeable cultural category. The quotation marks around the term, used consistently throughout the volume, thus aim to defamiliarize and destabilize our assumptions about mental landscapes. In Pfister's formulation, 'we wanted to extend the possibilities of a history that would investigate emotions not as timeless givens which sprout from the soil of an eternal "inner" self, but as culturally structured experiences, interpretations, and performances of the self.' Why is it, then, that labels and concepts such as 'the unconscious,' 'Electra complex,' 'neurosis,' 'nerves,' and 'superego' gain or lose 'cultural authority' at given historical moments? *Inventing the Psychological* addresses this issue through a valuable, interdisciplinary collection of essays on 'the formation of psychological belief and inner experience in nineteenth- and twentieth-century America.' Together, the editors and contributors to the volume attempt to uncover the significant public and private resources that have helped construct primarily middle-class notions about 'the psychological' as the most private, individual and 'deepest' part of our identities. As a result, they hope to complicate our ways of conceptualizing 'the psychological' and to assist us in envisioning alternative modes of self-(non)definition. In Pfister's words, 'I contend that the history of psychological and emotional life in America demands that we think in more sophisticated and creative ways about the formation and exercise of cultural power draped in "psychological" authority – power that has assumed shapes that are sometimes fairly obvious, sometimes revealingly subtle.'

The four sections following the editors' introductions accordingly map the construction of 'the psychological' in the States from a kaleidoscope of perspectives. Part II, 'Family, Literature and the Nineteenth-Century Emotional Revolution,' opens with John Demos' essay 'Oedipus and America' (1978), which, though generally ignored, inspired the editors to situate 'the psychological' historically and ideologically – especially Demos' notion of the nineteenth-century 'hothouse family,' which would prepare the ground for the enthusiastic reception of psychoanalysis in North America. In the same section, Nancy Schnog's intriguing 'Changing Emotions: Moods and the Nineteenth-Century American Woman Writer' charts in the works of Louisa May Alcott, Elizabeth Stuart Phelps and Kate Chopin a shift in the 'scripting' of feminine emotions from insistently elevating domestic cheerfulness to allowing, or encouraging, feminine moodiness, based on a masculine romantic equation of moods with individuality and 'depth.'

Equally interesting is David M. Luben's essay in Part III on the later paintings of Thomas Eakins, which depicted an 'elusive interiority' through body posture and facial expression. Middle-class Americans thus found their self-conceived complexity and depth

given a moral stature, significantly, Lubin concludes, drained of any political content. His discussion of Eakins' bourgeois subjects connects itself to the posings of Charcot's hysterical patients and to Edward Curtis' photographs in *The North American Indian* (1907-30), thus opening up a variety of possibilities for theoretical and pedagogical (dis)connections. Joel Pfister's second contribution to the volume, 'Glamorizing the Psychological: The Politics of the Performances of Modern Psychological Identities,' in the same section on 'The Rise of Psychological Culture,' includes a related analysis of the bourgeois concept of 'the primitive within,' especially popular among Greenwich Village radicals in the late 1910s and 1920s. The inner cavemen and -women cultivated through the mass-marketing in popular culture of sexuality as a sexy and true expression of 'individuality' rechanneled potentially subversive radicalism to the private sphere, thus serving the interests of what decades later would be designated 'the Establishment.' Other articles in Pfister and Schnog's thought-provoking book discuss, for example, academic textbooks and the psychology industry in the 1890-1940 period, and the brainwashing of Korean War prisoners.

In the final section on 'Race, Gender and the Psychological in Twentieth-Century Mass Culture,' Robert Walser analyzes in a fairly technical manner the concept of 'Deep Jazz,' while Franny Nudelman offers a reading of *The Oprah Winfrey Show* that, instead of seeing it as promoting a specifically feminine discourse in the vein of French feminist criticism, reads the conflation of the private and the public in this inconclusive talk show as a way of curtailing women's public power, in that the injured woman becomes a generic representative of her sex, 'deprived of a listening audience.' Possibly less analytically sophisticated than the essays in earlier sections, Nudelman's concluding analysis of a popular subject nonetheless allows the reader, somewhat fatigued from the high academic discourse of the majority of contributions to *Inventing the Psychological*, a well-deserved rest.

Pfister and Schnog's contributions to the mapping of the cultural history of emotions in North America nonetheless prove to be well worth our journey. Their volume stimulates the readership to enter new paths of research and teaching, its interdisciplinary and innovative essays pointing towards professional and private re-visions.