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Book Review of 'Sound and Fury: The Making of the Punditocracy,' by Eric Alterman

Michael A. Genovese

Loyola Marymount University, mgenovese@lmu.edu

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proach to the historical record, physical evidence, the justice system, and commentators both contemporary and more recent, adding his own insights into the never-ending public mania for celebrity and controversy. More photographic evidence could have been used to bolster his arguments, and the grammar could have been more carefully edited. Occasionally, Fisher is a little too quick to dismiss other theorists as cranks without justifying his opinion. In addition, his earlier title and Susan Hertog's *Anne Morrow Lindbergh: Her Life* (LJ 10/15/99) note an experimental reconstruction by police of the kidnapper's ladder that is not mentioned here. Given the passage of time, the gaps in the evidence, and new forensic techniques, it's not likely that anyone will ever have the final word in a case like this, but Fisher's book provides straightforward coverage of a perennially interesting subject. For all collections.—*Barbara Ann Hutcheson, Greater Victoria P.L., BC*

Langrock, Peter. Beyond the Courthouse: Tales of Lawyers and Lawyering.

Eriksson, dist. by Independent Pubs. Group. 1999. c.192p. illus. index. ISBN 0-8397-1034-8. \$21.95. LAW

Vermont attorney Langrock, who represents the good and the not-so-good citizens of his state, has written a witty recollection of his favorite cases. Typical of these cases is one he sees as the most significant accomplishment of his career. Under a federal program, the author helped hire Jamaican workers for the Shoreham Co-operative Apple Growers Association in Vermont's Champlain Valley. But the U.S. Department of Labor threw obstacles in the workers' way as they were being transported to Vermont. Langrock details his efforts on behalf of the apple growers, also describing the proper way to pick McIntosh apples, his trip to Jamaica, and Vermont's agricultural history. In an easy-going style, Langrock comments on the stuffed shirts and self-important people he comes across and speaks affectionately about his clients and his career. Recommended for readers with a love of either the law or Vermont.—*Harry Charles, Attorney at Law, St. Louis*

Parapsychology

Grafton, Anthony. Cardano's Cosmos: The Worlds and Works of a Renaissance Astrologer.

Harvard Common, dist. by National Bk. Network. Jan. 2000. c.279p. bibliog. ISBN 0-674-09555-3. \$35. PARAPSYCH

Featuring the life of Girolamo Cardano, a Renaissance Italian mathematician, physician, and astrologer, this book is an in-depth history of Western astrology by way

of biography. By detailing the social and political circles in which Cardano traveled, Grafton (history, Princeton Univ.; *The Footnote*) investigates astrology's influence on 16th-century medical and political thought. As a prominent physician, Cardano often treated patients with a mix of medicine and astrology, insisting he could read a given patient's future and infer the nature of his condition based on physical observation and astrological charts. This makes for fascinating reading. Well researched and scholarly (an extensive bibliography is included), this work will be an excellent addition to academic libraries.—*Marija Sanderling, Rochester P.L., NH*

Political Science

Alterman, Eric. Sound and Fury: The Making of the Punditocracy.

Cornell Univ. Jan. 2000. c.336p. index. ISBN 0-8014-8639-4. \$17.95. POLITICS

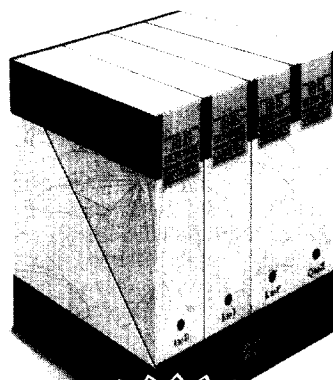
This is a revised and expanded version of a 1993 book in which *Nation* columnist Alterman lamented the decline of political discourse in America and blamed its sorry state on the rise of political pundits—those talking heads and self-proclaimed experts who appear on television so frequently. We

now live in a Punditocracy, Alterman wrote; our very democracy is "imperiled by the decrepit state of our national public discourse." This edition has been revised to reflect the changes in that discourse over the past six years—especially the Clinton era explosion of punditry and the rise of cable television wonks. Alterman still tends toward hyperbole and overstatement, but he nonetheless astutely points a finger at the superficial, vitriolic state of American political discussion and seeks to revive enlightened discussion in public discourse. Recommended for public and academic libraries.—*Michael A. Genovese, Loyola Marymount Univ., Los Angeles*

The Betrayal of Liberalism: How the Disciples of Freedom and Equality Helped Foster the Illiberal Politics of Coercion and Control.

Ivan R. Dee. 1999. 250p. ed. by Hilton Kramer & Roger Kimball. index. ISBN 1-56663-257-9. \$28.95; pap. ISBN 1-56663-258-7. \$14.95. POL. SCI

Originally published in the neo-conservative journal the *New Centurion*, the ten essays in this provocative anthology persistently attack present-day liberals for "betraying" their time-honored heritage of freedom and equality. The editors' introductory essay, which bears the book's title,



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