

"immense reserve of knowledge and . . . astonishing memory" (138), as well as her gift for allusion. Several essays engage the Christian element in Cather's work, such as Terence Martin's historical study of the seventeenth-century women mystics alluded to in *Shadows On The Rock* and John J. Murphy's painstaking examination of Christian charity in *My Mortal Enemy*. Other essays focus on visual imagery, narrative technique and structure in *My Antonia* and *The Professor's House*; the collection also contains pieces by Cynthia Griffin Wolff and Sharon Hoover offering feminist, postmodern critiques of *Sapphira And The Slave Girl*.

*Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, And Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, And Power In Colonial Virginia*, by Kathleen M. Brown (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

Patriarchy, according to Kathleen Brown, "the historically specific authority of the father over his household, rooted in his control over labor . . . property, . . . sexual access . . . and his right to punish family members and laborers" (4–5), was an all-pervasive influence in the genesis of the Virginia colonies. Brown's examination of the effect of patriarchy on masculine and feminine gender identities within the racial milieu of Colonial Virginia is thoroughly engaging. Beginning with the political and social climate of Elizabethan England, Brown traces the construction of social categories of gender and race through the early settlement of Virginia and Bacon's Rebellion and into the rise of the gentry culture in the eighteenth century. Her deft analysis of period literature and discourse, political pamphlets, court records, census information, and other historical documents provides readers a window into the daily lives of these early Virginians; it also offers ample evidence for the link Brown proposes between the origins of slavery in British North America, gender inequities, and the strengthening of patriarchal authority in the New World.

*Our Common Affairs: Texts From Women In The Old South*, edited by Joan E. Cashin (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

This splendid collection of 128 historical documents (including letters, journal entries, recipes and short literary texts) by women from property-holding families of the antebellum South is

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