

legacy he helped to initiate—so well documented by Walter Hayes—lived on.

Nathaniel Philbrick is *Director of the Egan Institute of Maritime Studies on Nantucket and is the author of AWAY OFF SHORE: NANTUCKET ISLAND AND ITS PEOPLE, 1620–1890 and, most recently, of ABRAM'S EYES: THE NATIVE AMERICAN LEGACY OF NANTUCKET ISLAND.*

Robert Kennedy: Brother Protector. By James W. Hilty. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press. 1997. Pp. xii, 642. \$34.95.)

Some years ago, a reporter interviewed the formidable black liberal congresswoman Barbara Jordan of Texas. Greatly respectful of the integrity of his subject, he found nonetheless—or therefore—that the interview did not get very far. The reason was not any reticence on Jordan's part. It was simply that there seemed to be no ambiguity, no friction between her public persona and her private self. She breathed, thought, and lived the impeccable liberalism for which she worked: read a speech or a piece of legislation of hers and you would know who she was.

That, of course, could be no more than a fraction of the whole truth. To be a nationally prominent black politician not many years into the Civil Rights era would have required struggle, introspection, a progressive discovery of the relevance of ideas and political actions to personal experience. But once Barbara Jordan's life had crystallized into her politics, it appears, no further revelation of herself was necessary to her or accessible to her questioner.

It is impossible to write in that way of the Kennedy brothers John and Robert (Edward may be another matter). JFK was so enigmatically withdrawn, distant even from his own political ambitions, as to invite curiosity. Or perhaps the manner of withdrawn understatement *was* at once his personality and his politics, an invalid's lifelong effort at achieving in himself the coolness and restraint he later sought in foreign policy. And as for Robert, angrily and self-righteously assured in each of the politics he would thereupon abandon to take an opposite position with equally assured anger: a historian's interest in his public advocacies will inevitably feed an interest in how he got to them. The two brothers, then, provide studies in the interplay of up-bringing, personality, circumstance, and accident in their bearing on

politics. James W. Hilty has provided that study of RFK, from birth through the assassination of his brother, also supplying insights into Jack.

Hilty's interpretation of the Kennedys is based in the assumption that they were above all a tribe, presided over by the chieftain father Joe Kennedy and committed to their collective success and power. To himself RFK assigned the role of brother protector, ready as attorney general and before to be bad cop to his elder sibling's good cop, taking the visible responsibility and consequently the flak for actions that were ultimately the work of Jack or in his behalf. Quick rage and an arrogant manner of command, the product of a shy younger child's effort to become as tough and virile as his brothers, fitted Robert for the task and, added to a Catholic moralism absent in Jack, became on their own a source of his inconsistent politics.

Hatred of communism made of this later questioner of Cold War premises a midcentury McCarthyite. Moralism and a determination to win drove him to a relentless struggle with Jimmy Hoffa, a man his equal in male combativeness. Protective of Jack's political fortunes during the campaign of 1960 and the early days of the Kennedy presidency, RFK would dress down an associate who pressed the civil rights issue too fast; then a growing and genuine sympathy toward black Americans elicited a tongue-lashing for whoever pressed the issue too slowly. In the first days of his brother's administration, Robert's anticommunism reinforced by machismo made him contemptuous of anyone who hesitated to use military force abroad; during the Cuban Missile Crisis a recoil from the possibility of Cuban civilian casualties made him a force for moderation. All this Hilty tells with a fine dramatic sense, depicting Robert's progress into a maturity and concern for suffering that culminated in his outwardly composed, grief-strickenly gracious conduct at the time of the president's assassination.

In the course of the telling, Hilty gives careful attention to many incidents in Robert Kennedy's political life that have intrigued historians. Among these are his place—antagonistic—in the selection of Lyndon Johnson as JFK's running mate, the character of his dealings with J. Edgar Hoover, and the cause and extent of his illegal surveillance of Martin Luther King, Jr. Concentrating on the developing politics of the two Kennedy brothers, Hilty's work needs the supplement of studies into the public ideology of Cold War liberalism. In its combat with the right wing of American politics, liberalism had arrived even during the 1950s at a coherence that the opportunistic shiftings

of the Kennedy brothers obscure. *Robert Kennedy: Brother Protector* (Hilty promises a sequel covering Robert's last years) will be indispensable to scholars of the Kennedy era. More broadly it contributes to a perception of the ways that fallible, contradictory human beings come to ideologies having some internal consistency.

David Burner is a Professor of History at the State University of New York, Stony Brook; his most recent book is the controversial *MAKING PEACE WITH THE 60s* (1995).

Archibald Cox: Conscience of a Nation. By Ken Gormley. (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley. 1997. Pp. xxii, 585. \$30.00.)

Ken Gormley's biography tells a gripping story about the public career of Archibald Cox and tells it well. A major reason to write and to read a biography of Cox is to appreciate, especially in these cynical days, his principled attitude toward lawyering and the law. If Gormley had tried to write much more than he did about Cox's personal life, if he had tried to present the inner man, he surely would have been defeated. Despite all the help that Gormley received from Archie Cox and members of his family, the very private nature of the man, which Gormley himself highlights, is evident. Unless there is significant unused material in the taped interviews, it is apparent that Cox and his family were careful to keep most of the details and the essential nature of Archie's personal and family lives to themselves. Phyllis Cox gave the author a few letters that Archie wrote her when his Washington service kept them apart, and they supply a human dimension that would otherwise be lacking.

The book moves swiftly through the highlights of Cox's life without getting bogged down in the less interesting (to most readers) details. Gormley gives a snapshot of relevant family history at the outset, especially the careers of two notable lawyers, Cox's great-grandfather William Maxwell Evarts and Cox's father, Archibald Cox, Sr. Evarts had a distinguished public career, capped by service as defender of President Andrew Johnson at his impeachment trial, attorney general of the United States, and secretary of state. Archibald Cox, Sr., was unknown to the world at large but had a distinguished private career as a patent lawyer before dying early at the age of fifty-six.

Gormley tells us something about the young Cox, especially the influence of his boarding school education at the St. Paul's School, bas-