

## REVIEWS

MARK TWAIN AND HUCK FINN. By Walter Blair. Berkeley and Los Angeles: The University of California Press. 1960. \$7.50.

MARK TWAIN--HOWELLS LETTERS: The Correspondence of Samuel L. Clemens and William Dean Howells, 1872-1910. Edited by Henry Nash Smith and William M. Gibson with the assistance of Frederick Anderson. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. 1960. \$20.

Mark Twain's anniversary has stimulated sufficient scholarly activity to suggest, combined with the statistics of publication in Professor Blair's Mark Twain and Huck Finn, that 1960 marks the crest of a wave of scholarly enthusiasm which has been growing since the biographies of Ferguson and Wagenknecht and De Voto's Mark Twain's America were published. Since then, and especially since the publication of De Voto's Mark Twain at Work in 1942, we have had a series of remarkable monographs, editions and articles which reaches a magnificent climax in Mr. Blair's "biography" of Huckleberry Finn and in the publication of the Twain-Howells correspondence by Professors Smith and Arms. One should not, however, necessarily assume that American scholarship was purblind until 1942, for the flood of publications may well have been caused by the adoption by the Estate of a more liberal policy than that which was followed during Paine's long executorship. De Voto broke the ice in more than one way.

Be that as it may, scholarship and criticism have been doing Twain proud, but, without denying the merits of the work of Mrs. Bellamy, Mr. Branch, Mr. Andrews, and the lamented Dixon Wecter, one may say that Mark Twain and Huck Finn is the best work of scholarly criticism on Twain yet to appear. One may go even a bit further and say that it is not likely to be surpassed in the near future.

One of the most striking characteristics of Mr. Blair's book is its breadth. It covers Twain's career only from 1876 to 1884, but Mr. Blair's thesis, that Huckleberry Finn is the focus of almost everything that Mark Twain had thought, read and done to 1884, and his careful examination of Twain's experience, reading and writing before Huckleberry Finn and between 1876 and 1884 make the book an indispensable guide to all of Twain's work.

De Voto, for example, had remarked the symbolic value of the village in Twain's work from The Gilded Age to The Mysterious Stranger. Mr. Blair has now shown how, in his earliest descriptions of valley villages, Twain was developing devices that he used for the village scenes of Huckleberry Finn. Mr. Blair shows how Twain's reading of Lecky and Darwin in the early '70's began to move him towards the position he adopted in What Is Man?

Perhaps the most interesting of Mr. Blair's discoveries result from his examination of Twain's career while Huckleberry Finn lay unfinished. Twain's travels, his reading of European history, his participation in Republican Bloody Shirt politics, his editing of the Library of Humor, his conviction that everyone with whom he dealt was cheating him, even his fits of rage, all are brought into relation to the progress of his work.

In addition to this rich plenty, the ghost of Brooksonian "Ordealism" is laid. Mark Twain was certainly self-consciously a "striver" for gentility, but, as De Voto came to realize, it was the eastern experience--Howells, Livy, and copious reading--that made Twain an artist. The Ordeal of Mark Twain is now hardly more than an unsubstantial, if glittering, memory.

If Mr. Blair's book stands at the top of recent expository works on Twain, the Mark Twain-Howells Letters caps the recent series of letters. This correspondence does not strike the reader so forcefully with its freshness as Mark Twain and Huck Finn, partly because Mr. Blair's book was published a little prior to it, partly because many of the letters had been known, at least in part, from Paine's two volumes of letters and from Mildred Howells' Life in Letters. Still, neither earlier publication was complete. Something less than half of the total number of letters had been published, and those were not always complete. The reviewer has not undertaken a systematic collation of Paine, but Mr. Anderson's calendar reveals the statistical extent of his omissions. A casual check reveals that although there are elisions in the body of a letter occasionally indicated, Paine apparently felt no compunctions about silently dropping a postscript. Letter 536 (Twain to Howells, Vienna, May 12-13, 1899) is a particularly awful example of what a dilettante editor could do. Paine omitted eleven paragraphs, which include a delightful account of how Livy Clemens recognized herself as a typical American woman of her class after reading Their Silver Wedding Journey. The beginning of the eleventh paragraph is tacked on to the twelfth to form a smooth opening and, towards the end, one of Twain's most uproarious anecdotes is omitted. Paine was, of course, hampered by the limits imposed by his task of selection from the entire Twain correspondence and by the fact that many of the recipients were still alive. Howells, for example, has confessed his own prudish reactions and in 1910 refused to repeat in print Twain's reaction to his review of The Innocents Abroad.

But, even granting the broadest exceptions, Paine's editorial standards were "literary" rather than scientific.

There can be only praise for the work of Mr. Smith and Mr. Arms. Editing is, in a way, a mechanical task, but it is not one that is either easy or merely laborious. The presentation of the text and the editorial apparatus here are models. We are fortunate that one of the leading Twain scholars and one of the leading Howells scholars were able to collaborate.

The letters are a mine of information about the relations between the two authors, and in the case of such men one wants the whole evidence. The subtlest nuances are informative. For example, these letters make clear the relations between Twain and his wife. Perhaps we would not care to have our wives read all our correspondence with our best friends, but Twain and Howells felt no objections. Indeed, their running jests about the shrewishness of their wives were the jests of men who loved to tease their wives. Livy Clemens as domestic dragon no longer exists, for Twain was more like Howells than one might expect. The evidence bearing on Howells' "censorship" of Twain has been known for some time. Again it is a Brooksonian bogeyman, as these letters reaffirm. It is clear that, as the editors point out, the evidence of Howells' contribution to Twain's artistic maturity is indirect. Would that we had transcripts of those long talks at night over the Scotches. But it is also clear that Twain benefitted enormously from the friendship of a man who understood and loved him and who knew from the inside the artistic and professional problems of literature.

Although Twain is the star of the show, Howells is no mere straightman. Any ten pages of one of his novels reveal his mastery of a polished prose, as firmly based on the vernacular as Twain's more brilliant and colloquial style, his wit, and his irony. His letters, now read in conditions of the most severe competition, heighten one's appreciation of his qualities. One also finds in these the same world-weariness and bitterness, though far less vehemently expressed, that one finds in Twain. Indeed, in 1899 Twain noticed in reading Their Silver Wedding Journey "furtive and fleeting glimpses of what I take to be the weariness and indolence of age . . . the secret sigh behind the public smile, the private what-in-hell-did-I-come-for!"

Remarks of this sort suggest the character of these letters. Their great value is not as documents for the scholar, but as literary works in themselves. They do what great letters ought to do: reveal character and personality. Neither man was a profound thinker and their letters are not "philosophical"; they are the regular give and take of old and intimate friends, and what they lack in profundity they make up in intimacy and in self-revelation.

In a letter to Twitchell (August 29, 1880) Twain reflected how trivial the topics of his correspondence would seem to readers in 1960. He was wrong, of course. In whatever wingless and harpless mansion of Heaven Mark Twain now resides, he must in fact be happy. As Mr. Blair points

out, he wanted to be accepted by the literary and scholarly gentry of his day. If he is not satisfied now, he never will be.

EFG

LITERARY PUBLISHING IN AMERICA, 1790-1850.

By William Charvat. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. 1959. \$4.50.

Mr. Charvat has succeeded in adding a useful volume to the almost non-existent literature on book publishing in America during the six decades of his title. He has not written a history of book publishing; instead he has drawn together a good many facts relating to one central problem, the shaping influence on the literature of the methods and conditions of book publishing during the period. The volume is thus of interest primarily to the student of our literature. The limited scope of the study makes for unity and achieves the singular virtue of being a report of the author's conclusions rather than of his scholarship. It is nonetheless respectably and convincingly documented and is based, in large measure, on primary source materials.

Mr. Charvat concludes that (1) during these six decades literary publishing was centered in Philadelphia and New York (Boston was of limited significance), causing the literary tastes of the South and West to influence, often adversely, most of our writers (except for the New Englanders); (2) the peculiar relations between author and publisher early made for much independence of the former (e. g. Irving and Cooper), but the changing relationship late in the period created unfortunate pressures on authors, forcing, for example, Hawthorne to produce novels when his talents lay in short story writing; and (3) the character of the physical volumes reveals the social esteem with which literary genres were regarded, by which test fiction and drama achieves the lowest status, and the essay, history, biography, and poetry the highest, a fact of paramount importance in the shaping of our literature.

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Milton Bruce Byrd

THE PRESIDENTS OF THE UNITED STATES:

A New Appraisal. By Maxim E. Armbruster.  
New York: Horizon Press. 1960. \$4.95.

Preceded by full-page photographs of each of the Presidents from Washington to Eisenhower, this volume consists of brief sketches of the thirty-three men who have held the highest office in the land. Seven pages of bibliography provide some indication of the author's learning though the book

is likely to be viewed as a labor of love rather than of scholarship. It should, however, be both useful and instructive for young people.

Mr. Armbruster has collected a good deal of information and presents it in good literary form. He has some opinions of his own (e.g. "'We have nothing to fear but Fear itself' . . . 'The statement is a snare.'") but these are neither sufficiently novel nor comprehensive to warrant the subtitle "a new appraisal."

University of Kansas

Francis H. Heller

THE HASKELL MEMOIRS. By John Cheves Haskell.  
 Edited by Gilbert E. Govan and James W. Livingood.  
 New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1960. \$3.95.

John Cheves Haskell, of South Carolina, was nineteen years old when he volunteered for service in the Confederate Army in April, 1861. Four years later, Haskell, then a colonel, led the artillery of the Army of Northern Virginia to its surrender at Appomattox Court House. Meanwhile, he had served on the staffs of Generals Joseph E. Johnston and Gustavus W. Smith, had lost his right arm at Mechanicsville, and, as commander of the artillery in Longstreet's corps, had fought in the major battles from Gettysburg to Appomattox. His descriptions of the fighting at Gettysburg and of the Battle of the Crater at Petersburg are especially graphic, his critical comments on the quality of Confederate generalship especially illuminating. These memoirs, in which Haskell "tried to give part of what I saw and lived through," were written down almost four decades after that fateful day in April, 1865, and are here published for the first time. By making them available in this richly-documented edition, editors Govan and Livingood, both of the University of Chattanooga, have made a noteworthy contribution to the growing literature on the "Confederate War."

University of Illinois

Robert W. Johannsen

QUAKERS AND THE ATLANTIC CULTURE.  
 By Frederick B. Tolles. New York: Macmillan. 1960. \$3.95.

Those familiar with Tolles' work on the Quakers will find little new here. Each chapter of this book was separately and previously published in one form or another. The accumulation of material herein, however, allows Tolles to discuss under one cover the differing and varying Quaker attitudes towards culture, defined broadly and loosely to include everything from religion and art to politics, over a three hundred year span. The author also suggests some ways that Quaker thought might reflect upon the world's modern problems. Tolles' familiar theses appear throughout: the origins for the Quaker movement were English and puritan; the Quaker religious experi-

ence was corporate; primitive Quakerism was an enthusiastic and prophetic religion. Although the term Atlantic culture, used as a synthesizing thread, may not indicate as unified a concept as is implied, this book remains a generally excellent compilation of authoritative historical essays on the Society of Friends.

University of Wisconsin

Norton Mezvinsky

THE MORMON CONFLICT, 1850-1859.

By Norman F. Furniss. New Haven:  
Yale University Press. 1960. \$5.00.

From the Yale Historical Publications studies comes this painstakingly thorough monograph, written by the Chairman of the Department of History and Government at Colorado State University. Here Professor Furniss presents for the first time a fascinating and objective account of the Mormons' struggle to live politically and religiously as they desired and of the Government's retaliatory efforts to enforce the federal laws.

After momentarily glancing at the Saints' early troubles, the author notes the shadows lengthen because of alleged Mormon reluctance to obey legislation which they deemed inequitable. Also seen as factors leading to the 1857 conflict were ignorance, misinformation and the Saints' practice of polygamy. Furniss concludes that the vital question of whether the ultimate authority in Utah was the Federal Government or the Mormon Church remained unanswered at the end of hostilities. "Anti-Mormons still felt that the Church was trying to exercise political and judicial power for insidious, perhaps treasonable, purposes; the Saints truculently awaited another wave of persecution." Unquestionably, this monograph fills, with scholarly perception, a neglected gap in the historical studies of the decade preceding the Civil War.

Wauke, Iowa

Martin L. Greer

COMMUNIST CHINA AND ASIA: Challenge to American Policy. By A. Doak Barnett. New York: Harper & Brothers, for the Council on Foreign Relations. 1960. \$6.75.

This is a singularly comprehensive, thorough and provocative book. Beginning with an account of the domestic situation in Red China, the author analyses its relations with other countries in Asia and evaluates the alternatives facing the United States in its policy toward this new and unpredictable force in world affairs. Burnett is no apologist for Mao's China, but he does enumerate the remarkable accomplishments of the Communist government and the effective universality of its control. Policy toward neighboring nations has varied from friendship to aggression, with the future appearing

to promise more of the latter. At his most persuasive in evaluating the pros and cons of America's attitude, Burnett concludes that the interests of the United States and the world would best be served by the diplomatic recognition of Communist China and her admission to the United Nations. But one need not share the author's conclusions to profit immeasurably from this learned and carefully documented work. The problems posed are of great urgency, and the alternatives presented should be weighed by every thoughtful citizen.

University of Kansas

Raymond G. O'Connor

THE HOWARD FAST READER: A Collection of Stories and Novels. By Howard Fast. New York: Crown Publishers, Inc. 1960. \$4.95.

Howard Fast has written several fictional studies of men and moments in our past, and until recently his writings were enormously popular in the Soviet Union. These facts give his work some interest for students of American culture. They will find this collection of little value. On the three novels (one new) and nineteen stories here collected, Mr. Fast makes no comment, says nothing of how he now regards some of his earlier work or of its success and popularity in this country or in the Soviet. One wonders why he chose to include Freedom Road, one of his weakest historical novels, rather than Conceived in Liberty or The Last Frontier, both among his best and both out of print; and why he did not tell us which of his novels and stories have helped to shape the Russian image of America. These inclusions would have made an interesting, if not important, collection.

Southern Illinois University

Howard Webb

HUMAN VALUES IN THE POETRY OF ROBERT FROST. By George W. Nitchie. Durham: Duke University Press. 1960. \$5.00.

It would be hard to quarrel very hard with Nitchie's book; his meticulous disclaimers, stated in the preface and at strategic places elsewhere, disarm in advance any quibbles about his failure to treat Frost's work aesthetically, or technically, or psychologically, or biographically, or patriotically, and so on. Speaking broadly, he is concerned with the problem that has concerned so many critics about so many American writers: why they weren't better, or why they quit so soon. (Obviously Frost has never quit, but, Nitchie believes, he has been in a significant course of deterioration ever since North of Boston.) The question is why, though Frost is a good and important poet, he is not a still better poet; Nitchie approaches it in terms of the ethical and philosophical convictions implicit or explicit in Frost's work. Analysis leads him to the conclusion that Frost views nature

as an impersonal "other"; that his tripartite universe is almost, though not quite, discontinuous; that he has an anti-intellectual bias; that he emphasizes "getting by" or making one's own patterns of meaning; that he tends to shy away from the major area of broadly social values; and that he refuses to commit himself to explicit statements of theory. Not surprisingly, therefore, Frost has failed either to make or to adopt an organization of ideas or attitudes or beliefs that would give him wholly satisfactory access to reality. (He suffers by comparison with Yeats, Eliot, *etc.*) On the whole, he emerges as a poet who, after the brilliant North of Boston, deteriorates to a thing of bright shreds and patches--that is, of isolated insights--with many dull areas between.

I am not convinced that, even in his own terms, Nitchie gets full value from such poems as "Directive," or even the ubiquitously reprinted "Two Tramps in Mud Time"; and I am mildly puzzled by his failure to discuss certain other poems. The possible underreading does not invalidate Nitchie's conclusions--merely suggests that certain of the Frostian bright patches are even brighter than he seems to feel that they are. The conclusions seem adequately supported. To charge that Nitchie makes too much of them--to refuse his whole critical position, that is--would require arguing something to the effect that because Frost is a good American culture hero, or a good Freudian unawares, or a good technician, or a good what you please, his ethical and philosophical indefiniteness, his lack of a coherent structure of ideas or beliefs, do not matter: an argument I should not care to undertake.

Kansas State University

W. R. Moses

NEW IMAGES OF MAN: With Statements by the Artists. By Peter Selz. New York: Museum of Modern Art. 1960. \$5.00; Paper, \$2.50. Illustrations.

Anyone studying the psyche of contemporary America would do well to spend at least as much time with her painting and sculpture as with her literature. This is a sensible interpretation of the work of the twenty-three painters and sculptors chosen for the important and controversial exhibition held at the Museum of Modern Art in the fall of 1959. Twelve of the artists are American. The crowds that saw the show seemed calm enough, but some are still writing about it as a celebration of nihilism. Others saw the turning of advanced artists from abstraction to the human image as an affirmation of spirit.

KJLaB

ORIGINS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION:  
1759-1766. By Bernhard Knollenberg. New  
York: The Macmillan Company. 1960. \$8.50.

If you have ever looked for a concise explanation of why the American colonists were provoked to revolution in the mid-seventeen hundreds, this book is your answer. Doctor Knollenberg delineates the English background of the period, with enlightening, but intricate, commentaries on the many Parliamentary shifts which occurred at the time. He sets forth in detail the circumstances surrounding the legislation of each of those fateful Acts which haunt the pages of colonial American history. As Parliament acts, the colonists react, each royal order followed by protest. Doctor Knollenberg discusses his subject with authority and perhaps a slight but forgivable bias in favor of the colonists. As an appendix, he includes a convincing discussion of the improbability of George III's madness at this early date.

The numerous and extensive notes and references in this volume are confined to the latter half. Therefore, the interested layman can read this work without inconvenience, while the scholar will find it a solid source of explicit reference.

Saint Louis University

Jane F. Rinker

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