

masa bulletin

WITH THIS ISSUE we welcome to the editorial board two new members, Robert W. Schneider, Northern Illinois University, and Norman R. Yetman, the University of Kansas. Hoary old readers of the *Journal* will remember two distinguished articles which Professor Schneider provided us early in our publishing career, "Stephen Crane and the Drama of Transition: A Study in Historical Continuity" (II, 1) and "Frank Norris: The Naturalist as Victorian" (III, 1). Professor Schneider replaces Richard Kirkendall as reader in history. Professor Kirkendall, with the added crush of responsibility of a department chairmanship on his back, had asked to be relieved of his duties as soon as a suitable successor could be found. We have worked Dick hard; his judgments have always seemed to us sound and his responses prompt. He has offered to continue to serve informally when an extra hand is needed, an offer we gratefully accept. Professor Yetman's appointment does not represent the replacement of one of our four readers; rather, it represents an expansion of the editorial board. It may be that in the future we will want to modify the arbitrary scheme of editorial categories we have heretofore used—history, social sciences, literature, other arts—and make increased use, instead, of people whose prime field is American Studies itself. Professor Yetman's duties will be a trifle more general than those of the other readers; we are considering redesigning our book review section, and he is to have a major part in that process and in whatever new policy we decide upon. His title will be Associate Editor, and his term of office indefinite.

SPEAKING OF REVIEWS: It would be good to know how readers feel. We have tried, in our first ten years, to do two things in our review section. On the one hand, we have provided a large number of brief reviews of specialized books of various sorts. There has been no attempt to determine whether these were really "American Studies books" in the sense

that they were interdisciplinary, focused on the culture concept or anything of the sort. Our intention was simply to provide an account of new works in the various disciplines which deal with the American experience in order to brief our readers on what's going on. Behind this policy is the idea that one of the functions of the *Journal* and of American Studies in general is to provide a place in which the live generalizations of men in a number of different fields can be pooled, so that a man working in any area of U.S. culture has access, once he leaves the area of his own most intense competence, to ideas more recent than those which were summarized for him in his days in graduate school. We tell the authors of these brief reviews simply to indicate the major hypotheses of the books under review and to make an evaluation of the quality of the scholarship.

A second kind of review, larger in scope, has similar intentions. We have used essay reviews when it has become obvious to us that a major amount of work has been done in a given area, and that an over-all summary and critique of developments would be useful to specialists in other fields and to culturalists in general. Examples of this type of review appeared most recently in the Fall 1968 issue (IX, 2), with Douglas Y. Thorson's "Keynes and Current Economics," and Robert Detweiler's "Religion and Literature in Recent American Scholarship."

We have generally been praised for our book review policies, but a number of factors lead us to reconsider them. For one thing, there is an increasing number of works produced by American Studies scholars, by people, that is, whose prime commitment is to American Studies as a field, and not to a traditional discipline. Perhaps most of our attention should go to their works, and we should leave books in history, political science, literature and so forth to journals in those fields. Certainly we cannot hope to cover all or

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hostile to the arts. But there is a deeper level beneath this which we can get to through the value assumptions of the author and through our own reactions. Our hostility to Fisk's motives and intentions and our feeling that Brougham should have been treated differently show that we and the author both believe in something which might loosely be labeled as "fair play." Also present is the same value we already noticed in our examination of the *Dial* controversy and the article on the censorship of a novel, namely that the fine arts are something it is good to have, that a meritorious attitude to hold is that the arts ought to be prosperous, free and plentiful. This, again, seems so essentially "true" to us that we may be quite certain that it is a cultural and not merely a rational attitude.

Robert Ward's article, "Europe in American Historical Romance, 1890-1910," examines the manner in which given European countries were taken to be characteristic of given psychological traits. It is useful, first, in its own terms, as an illustration of the way in which the scholar can discover how people visualize the world and their relationship to it. But the author provides a speculative hypothesis which goes even further. He would have us consider "the possibility that the popularity of these romances with foreign settings reflects a shift of

vision in the United States"; he feels that we moved from "an aggressively hostile chauvinism" to an active interest in the rest of the world, and relates this to such phenomenon as the resolution in 1899 by the committee of seven of the American Historical Association to encourage far more teaching of European history in the schools, and Bessie L. Pierce's observation that there was "an appreciable broadening of outlook in this country" after 1890.

We have been terribly unfair to these articles in these brief statements about what can be done with them in the classroom, but we would hope that this brief discussion is sufficiently intriguing to encourage others to try their hand at exposing students directly to good recent American Studies scholarship. It is hard to conceive of an American Studies course which does not deal with some of these approaches; if the articles did no more than provide students with models of how to define a problem, organize one's investigation of it, and produce a meaningful term paper, they would be worth using. But in point of fact they do much more than that, and besides, as we said when we first made the suggestion that not only special issues of the *Journal*, but our general issues as well, would work well in the classroom, the *Journal* very badly needs the income which these classroom adoptions provide. —SGL

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