

## reviews

Readers always seemed to like our book review section in the early days of the journal; perhaps some will be pleased to know that we're returning to a modified version of our old policy: there will, once again, be slews of reviews: long ones, essay reviews, short ones, exceedingly short ones. But in retooling for the new models, we find ourselves with the oddly-assorted bunch below—far too many, for our taste, by members of our staff. That's just because of what might be called, to pick up a not-very-original image, subcontracting delays. Wait till we get the line really rolling again!

For a somewhat fuller explanation of what we're up to, see XII, 2, page 4.  
SGL

## architectural populism

LEARNING FROM LAS VEGAS. By Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown and Steven Izenour. Cambridge, Massachusetts. MIT Press. 1972. \$25.

I hope we all know by now that José Ortega y Gasset was wrong. His fear that the rise of a mass audience would pollute what had been essentially elite aristocratic arts by dragging them down to the mass level bears little relationship to the realities of the history of the arts.

Indeed, the characteristic pattern has been quite the opposite: "standard," vernacular or even commercial forms, far from being merely vulgar popularizations of elite forms, have often been the real source of those forms. Typically a genius has come to an already established folk, popular or commercial form and used its clichés, procedures or even its technology to make of it "high art." Cinema and jazz are the best examples in our own day, but are by no means isolated. The modern short story grew out of the subliterate world of the nineteenth-century standard magazine when men like Poe and Hawthorne discovered the real potential of "magazinism." By the same token, Elizabethan theatre clearly operated on the level of popular entertainment; to it came Shakespeare.

The typical critical stance in American architecture involves elite architects lamenting the lack of planning and the inefficiency of controls in the immense world of American building. We have known for some time that the commercial and popular forms which have arisen amount to what can probably be called a vernacular style. I've been struck by this in looking at the very hokey pseudo-styles one has found all through this century in subdivisions. They are not architecture to the elite architect-

ture critic, but everyone's wife knows how to read them. They speak, they say something, the language is understood; its symbols are readily recognizable.

Still, knowing all this, what Mr. Venturi and his associates set out to do in this not-altogether-satisfactory volume does shake one up a bit. We are preconditioned to loathe the architecture of the commercial strip, which they feel is epitomized in the great strip in Las Vegas; they nominate it as an important vernacular style from which, they feel, contemporary architects should learn. And following a visually frustrating and intellectually fuzzy analysis of what that strip represents and how it operates, they turn to projects from their own firm in which they try to apply the lessons they have learned. Deliberate conventionality and the stress on the ordinary produce buildings which are almost deliberately klutzy, and prose which should upset aesthetically-oriented architectural thinkers.

Where this little building [a fire station] looks ordinary, it symbolizes its practical function and standard program. . . .

Part of the sign [identifying a cemetery] is a false facade, because the administrative and sales offices behind the sign are very small. . . .

For the sake of the program and the schedule, our design [for a warehouse to handle big spindles of newsprint] was for a shed, chosen rather than created—a pre-engineered system . . . rectangular in plan, steel-framed, gable-roofed, and sheathed in enameled aluminum with big-scale corrugations and other elegant standardized details. The canopied loading docks . . . and the mezzanine windows . . . were the only exceptions to the “boring” image of the shed.

*Learning from Las Vegas* suffers problems of format. Though lavishly illustrated, it often attempts to do things which can best be done in film, and the result is sometimes more irritating than enlightening: sequences of tiny frames which fail to give the desired panorama. But the book is significant, even if one thinks of it as only a reaction from the architects to the comically self-conscious discovery made by others in the sixties that there is something worthy in the commercial productions around us. The authors may have selected the wrong productions; they may fail in their self-conscious efforts to learn from the vernacular. Indeed, it's hard to decide whether this is all splendidly democratic or whether they're going slumming, with all the condescension that implies.

SGL

FREEDOM AND THE COURT: Civil Rights and Liberties in the United States. By Henry J. Abraham. New York: Oxford University Press. 1972. \$12.50.

As an introduction to the subject this book is readable and scholarly; it focuses on the problem of balancing individual rights against the interests of the community. Professor Abraham's unexceptionable thesis is that the Judiciary in general and the Supreme Court in particular play a key role in defining and interpreting the fundamental freedoms of the individual in a constitutional regime. This second edition analyzes the last five years of Supreme Court decisions in the area of First Amendment freedoms, due process of law for persons accused of crimes, equality before the law, and tentatively appraises the character of the “Burger Court.” Abraham's study combines historical background, theoretical exploration, and critical legal analysis in an exceptionally able manner.

Southwest Missouri State University

D. E. Pilant

ESSAYS ON RADICALISM IN CONTEMPORARY AMERICA. Edited by Leon Borden Blair. Austin: University of Texas Press. 1972. \$5.00.

This volume includes four papers presented as the Walter Prescott Webb Memorial Lectures at the University of Texas at Arlington in April, 1971. The brief introduction by Lyndon Johnson is sound and sober, and the editing has reduced much of the unevenness that is inevitable in this kind of book. Because of their quality, and their interdisciplinary approach to important but generally neglected subjects, these essays

should be rewarding to American Studies scholars, especially the first, Jerome Rodnitzky's "Popular Music as a Radical Influence, 1945-1970." John Garraty's "Radicalism in the Great Depression" places American reactions in world perspective, and the remaining two, "Harry S. Truman and His Critics: the 1948 Progressives and the Origins of the Cold War," by Frank Ross Peterson, and "John Collier and the American Indian, 1920-1945," by Kenneth Philp, are contributions on topics of current concern. These varied writings, including LBJ's introduction, suggest not only that "radicalism" is a relative term, but that "radical" activities may be a prerequisite to a healthy society.

MJS

CONTOUR IN TIME: The Plays of Eugene O'Neill. By Travis Bogard. New York: Oxford University Press. 1972. \$15.00.

Although the author professes to be writing primarily biography, this is a distinguished critical study and the most comprehensive ever written on Eugene O'Neill, embracing all the unproduced and even unpublished early plays that are extant. Of particular interest is his discussion of the experimental plays written between 1921 and 1926, which include *The Hairy Ape*, *Desire Under the Elms*, *The Great God Brown* and *Strange Interlude*. In 1929 O'Neill renounced the Art Theater principles which prompted such experimentation and, as Bogard effectively demonstrates, moved steadily toward his last and greatest plays, *The Iceman Cometh* and *Long Day's Journey Into Night*.

University of Oklahoma

Bruce Granger

MERCHANT CONGRESSMAN IN THE YOUNG REPUBLIC: Samuel Smith of Maryland, 1752-1839. By Frank A. Cassell. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press. 1971. \$15.00.

Cassell's thoroughly researched biography of Samuel Smith, Baltimore merchant prince, Revolutionary War hero, and maverick Jeffersonian who during his forty consecutive years in Congress championed mercantile interests, military preparedness, a national bank and federally financed internal improvements underlines the shortcomings of simplistic approaches—such as the Beardian agrarian versus commercial dichotomy—to early American political alignments.

JB

THE PROGRESSIVE ERA IN MINNESOTA, 1899-1918. By Carl H. Chrislock. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society. 1971.

The thesis of this highly competent study is that "Minnesota progressivism was no more successful than its national counterpart in overcoming inner tensions or developing a sure sense of direction." (viii)

RWS

ARTICLES IN AMERICAN STUDIES, 1954-1968: A Cumulation of the Annual Bibliographies from *American Quarterly*. Edited by Hennig Cohen. Ann Arbor: The Pierian Press. 1972. 2 vols., \$24.00.

No two people in our field seem to agree about the worth of the *American Quarterly* bibliographies. Some dislike the categories ("American Studies is supposed to break through categories, not reinforce them"; "How can we inventory *all* the disciplines which deal with the United States?"); some bemoan the omissions and exclusions (this often means, "They missed three out of four of my articles"). Perhaps it's fair to say that *AQ*'s lists have their limitations, but that, given the structural peculiarities of our field, *AQ*'s "principal editorial criterion for listing" would have to be something as arbitrary as "the extent to which . . . [an article] manifests a relationship between two or more aspects of American Civilization." That's the old interdisciplinary test, ambiguous, unsatisfactory and tough to apply with fairness. Moreover, the really interdisciplinary article *is* hard to categorize, and often eludes the *American Quarterly* cross reference listings. The individual bibliographers, working under Donald Koster, obviously influenced the selection according to their interests and their conceptions of American Studies; that's neither a virtue nor a failing. My impulse is to repeat the judgments of friends, some of whom, coming to this resource for guidance, praise it and lament its decreased scope (starting next year, *AQ* will cut the brief comments which accompany the items), while others grouse about its perhaps inevitable limitations. The collected edition has indices, which should be useful.

SGL

CHAMPION OF SOUTHERN FEDERALISM: Robert Goodloe Harper of South Carolina. By Joseph W. Cox. Kennikat Press. 1972. \$12.50.

While Cox's argument that Harper shifted from a relatively moderate and non-

doctrinaire position to become an archreactionary extremist because of his fear of "a French inspired insurrection of the slaves" in the aftermath of the XYZ affair is not wholly convincing, this biography of the influential South Carolina Federalist congressman from 1795 to 1801 sheds new light upon the still neglected topic of Southern Federalism.

JB

FROM SELF TO SOCIETY, 1919-1941. By Robert M. Crunden. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall. 1972.

In the preface to this slender volume the author states twice that his purpose is to analyze the culture of the period "as a whole." In fact, however, he uses the term "culture" to refer almost exclusively to the work of intellectuals and he constructs his arguments around brief analyses of intellectuals whom he considers to be representative of dominant schools of thought. His unifying theme is the relationship between the individual and society and his conclusion is that three identifiable schools emerge in this period. These schools, corresponding to the Progressive Era, the 1920's and the 1930's, depict the transition from "the self in society, to the self apart from society, to the self submerged in society." (x)

RWS

AMERICAN PRESIDENTS AND THE PRESIDENCY. By Marcus Cunliffe. New York: American Heritage Press. 1972. \$9.95.

An updating of the author's *American Heritage History of the Presidency* (1968) in a format (and at a price) that should make it attractive to a wider readership. Useful reference notes have been added and the bibliography enlarged by annotations.

University of Kansas

Francis H. Heller

PRESIDENTS, BUREAUCRATS, AND FOREIGN POLICY. By I. M. Destler. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 1972. \$10.00.

This excellent book is of interest primarily to political scientists and organization theorists, but it contains insights valuable to others. Destler provides a background for recent reforms that were to improve foreign policy function. He is perceptive and careful in his definitions, and he writes with a good historical sense; his treatment of the role of language in politics and bureaucracy is splendid. The Nixon effort to concentrate foreign policy coordination in a personal assistant, he concludes, is unsound; he suggests reforms to make the State Department more responsive and to permit the Secretary again to assume the leading role.

MJS

RACE AND THE AMERICAN ROMANTICS. Edited by Vincent Freimarck and Bernard Rosenthal. New York: Schocken Books. 1972. \$12.50.

I recall, as a student, making the sad discovery that romantic authors I loved carried racist ideas about Jews. Here now is an anthology of unusual quality and sensitivity to document racism directed at blacks.

SGL

CONTRADICTION AND DILEMMA: Orestes Brownson and the American Idea. By Leonard Gilhooley. New York: Fordham University Press. 1972. \$10.00.

After delineating its four main components (Progress, optimism, the perfectibility of man and the social importance of democracy and Christianity), the author describes the role of the American Idea in the thought of Orestes Brownson from 1838 to 1860. In doing so he relies primarily upon Brownson's writings in his *Boston Quarterly Review* and *Brownson's Quarterly Review*. The thesis of the book is that Brownson's commitment to the American Idea, although altered significantly over the span of the years studied, was never abandoned. The conservative bent of his later thought is not to be interpreted exclusively in terms of his conversion to Catholicism. This is a nicely focused, carefully wrought book which contributes to a fuller understanding of the mind of Orestes Brownson. It will be of value to students of American intellectual and religious history.

Bradley University

Dennis Q. McInerny

THE AMERICAN HERITAGE HISTORY OF AMERICAN BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY. By Alex Groner and the Editors of *American Heritage*. New York: American Heritage Publishing Company. 1972. \$20.00.

Popularized, illustrated, slick.

**POLITICS WITHOUT PARTIES: Massachusetts, 1780-1791.** By Van Beck Hall. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press. 1972. \$14.95.

A sophisticated but not wholly convincing restatement of the view emphasizing the primacy of socio-economic conflicts in early American politics, this study utilizes the quantitative approach to argue that the basic line of cleavage in Massachusetts politics during these years was the struggle over management of state finances between the "commercial-cosmopolitan" towns of the coast "that controlled the commercial activities of the state and had the greatest number of institutional, intellectual, and social contacts with other towns" and the more isolated, largely subsistence farming towns of the interior.

JB

**"SALUTARY NEGLECT": Colonial Administration Under the Duke of Newcastle.** By James A. Henretta. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 1972. \$14.50.

Influenced by the work of Sir Lewis Namier and his disciples in eighteenth-century British politics, Henretta ascribes the "salutary neglect" experienced by the British North American colonies during the twenty-four years (1724-1748) the Duke of Newcastle served as Secretary of State for the southern district responsible for colonial matters—with its consequent irreversible weakening of British authority over the colonies—in part to the "ambiguous legal position of the colonies" given "the shift from the supremacy of the monarch to the hegemony of parliament" underway during the first half of the eighteenth century, and in part to "the shortsighted and selfish patronage policies pursued by politicians such as Newcastle" who subordinated larger imperial considerations to the exigencies of domestic politics.

JB

**PENNSYLVANIA POLITICS, 1746-1770: The Movement for Royal Government and Its Consequences.** By James H. Hutson. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 1972. \$8.50.

A member of the "neo-Whig" school of historians who emphasize the crucial role of constitutional issues in bringing on the American Revolution, Hutson finds that the struggle against proprietary rule showed the existence even among the "meek and long suffering" Quakers of Pennsylvania of that "passion for autonomy" and "abhorrence of outside interference" which would lead the colonies generally to revolt against British efforts after 1764 to reassert "external control."

JB

**CRUSADE AGAINST RADICALISM: New York During The Red Scare, 1914-1924.** By Julian F. Jaffe. Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press. 1972. \$12.50.

This is a study of the hysterical events that took place in the decade that included the First World War. Jaffe centers his attention upon the State of New York, and compares developments there to those in the nation. He identifies not only the expected liberal-conservative antagonism, but also a decided rural-urban confrontation, as factors that intensified the situation in the state. He notes that one major contributing cause of the Red Scare was a tendency to define loyalty as "conformity . . . to the mandated policies of the government," a fact that should cause misgivings among civil libertarians today. The writing is clear, if somewhat unexciting, and Jaffe presents his material adequately. Generally, the book is a good history of an important subject, but it is flawed by a frequent failure to provide citations.

MJS

**POPULAR ARTS OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR.** By Barbara Jones and Bill Howell. New York: McGraw-Hill. 1972. \$14.95.

Though its format and "quaint" appeal make it look like one of the innumerable trade-book industry picture books, and though its subject is largely English and not American, this volume is worth noticing as a model of how such things should be done. Too much pop culture stuff is pat, cute or condescending; too many essays in material culture simply confirm for us what we already know. Because of the steady intelligence of its text, superb selection of visual materials and a degree of historical sophistication, this volume does much more; without ever arguing, it argues a coherent view of the human condition.

SGL

**ROLVAAG: His Life and Art.** By Paul Reigstad. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press. 1972. \$8.50.

Anyone interested in the settlement of the American grasslands and the Americanization of the immigrant peoples who paid the cost of that settlement, must finally

come to the fiction of O. E. Rølvaag and especially to his *Giants in the Earth*. And anyone coming to Rølvaag must go to Reigstad who has here, in clear and unpretentious prose, used important new autobiographical material to trace the genesis of Rølvaag's fictional world.

University of Kansas

Roy E. Gridley

AMERICA IN THE FIFTIES AND SIXTIES: Julián Marías on the United States. Edited and with an Introduction by Michael Aaron Rockland. University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press. 1972. \$12.50.

Another reason for indebtedness to Mike Rockland, who knows the value of the foreign view, and gives us another alternative to Tocqueville in the sympathetic contemporary Spanish philosopher Julián Marías.

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