

reviews

Note: In this section, three asterisks between reviews indicate that the review above is by the same reviewer as the review below. Reviews by the members of the editorial board are signed with initials.

modern america

HOMeward BOUND: American Families in the Cold War Era. By Elaine Tyler May. New York: Basic Books. 1988. \$20.95.

Homeward Bound is a welcome rejoinder to the tired and, I think, inaccurate vision of the postwar world in *The Best Years* (Joseph C. Goulden), "The Best Years of Our Lives" (a 1946 film), or an *American High* (the title of William L. O'Neill's recent book on the period from 1945 to 1960). Elaine Tyler May's study of postwar families establishes a very different context: a "world of uncertainties" in which America feared the bomb, the return of the Great Depression, and above all, the Communists and the cold war. Valuing security more than anything else, Americans looked to the home as a "secure private nest removed from the dangers of the outside world" and to the family as a "psychological fortress" within which the other potential hazards of the age—sexuality, consumerism, class, technology, women's liberation and simple discontent—would be subject to "containment." In what may be the book's most important achievement, May relocates the source of the postwar family ideology from peace and prosperity to a powerful anxiety that permeated social relations. This emphasis on anxiety comports with my own research on the 1940s; I have some doubt that it applies as well to the pre-Sputnik fifties.

Another of May's feats is to raise "containment" to prominence as a way of understanding the anxiety of postwar Americans. May not only argues that the cold war *caused* anxiety; she also contends that Americans responded to that anxiety with a method—containment—modeled on our relationship to the Soviets. "Sexual containment," for example, used family, marriage and elaborate courtship rituals to "contain" (that is, to restrain, hold in) sexual impulses that seemed, like the Soviets, on the verge of running over their proper boundaries. The problem

with this argument is a subtle but important one: while marriage and the Marshall Plan both restrain, and while both might be described by the same term, "containment," the verb "to contain," as well as the idea of containing, clearly existed and do now exist independent of the cold war struggle with the Soviets. Thus, while I applaud and value May's effort to frame the cult of domesticity with politics, the connection deserves more elaborate and precise treatment than it receives here. The failure to provide it results in May's tendency to push her argument too far, to attribute public motives to essentially private actions. "Domesticity," she writes, "was not so much a retreat from public affairs as an expression of one's citizenship. Postwar men and women were endorsing and affirming, through their families, the goals expressed by major political leaders and experts."

May also argues that the family-centered and role-conscious domesticity of the postwar years might somehow have been avoided ("It might have been otherwise," May writes. "Nothing on the surface of postwar America explains the rush of young Americans into marriage, parenthood, and traditional gender roles.") One wonders what such an argument is intended to do, except, perhaps, function as a mode of emphasis, helping the reader to see the forces that do, finally, make for the triumph of the "domestic ideology." On this level the argument works, for May demonstrates that the impulse to domesticity emerged in World War II, when "the possibilities for employed women were much more limited than they seemed."

Homeward Bound is a major contribution to our understanding of postwar America. May has successfully shed the peace-and-prosperity approach for something more accurate and revealing; she has also generated a new metaphor for understanding the postwar era—one that involves spilling over and containing, rather than the image of "equilibrium" that has been dominant for so many years. The stories of marriage, consumerism, child-rearing and other facets of postwar domesticity that May has culled from the Kelly Longitudinal Study—a survey of 600 white, middle-class men and women that produced its most elaborate results in 1955—lends the text an engaging intimacy that makes the book accessible to the general reader. I'm planning to buy a copy for my mother, who lived the "homeward bound" life and now, like many women of her generation, wants to know why. This is the place to find out.

WG

CHICAGO '68. By David Farber. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1988. \$19.95.

In August 1968, during the Democratic National Convention held in Chicago, thousands of political radicals and countercultural Yippies demonstrated against the Vietnam War. Police responded violently, and while most Americans, viewing the mayhem on television, favored the police, the turmoil discredited the Democrats. In Chicago Hubert Humphrey won the presidential nomination—and lost the election. This story is told as a carefully researched, detailed narrative in David Farber's first seven chapters.

The book ends with three analytical chapters, the best of which ably and convincingly dissects sixties radicalism. To Farber, the most deficient aspect of the New Left was the absence of ideology. Smugly avoiding the errors of the thirties, radicals discovered that, without ideology, their political quest had no meaning.

Instead, they turned to action in the streets to gain a sense of self-identity. This preference for a self-defined morality over the bargaining of politics meant that the New Left, as a political movement, contained the seeds of its own destruction. By defining themselves as outside the social order, radicals lost the capacity to generate political change. Thus, the New Left failed, Farber shows, because it neither articulated a theory nor practiced politics.

Most of the numerous recent books on the sixties have been activists' memoirs, although some have been summarizing syntheses. The former accounts have tended to nostalgia, while the latter, often ignoring manuscripts and amid a dearth of scholarly monographs, have been vague or glib. Farber, born in 1956 and a diligent archival researcher, refreshingly breaks this pattern. This book joins a short but growing list of significant monographs, such as those by David Garrow, Todd Gitlin, Maurice Iserman, Greil Marcus, and Steven Tipton. If present trends continue, it will soon be possible to write a convincing synthesis of the sixties.

University of Washington

W. J. Rorabaugh

HOW THE WAR WAS REMEMBERED: Hollywood and Vietnam. By Albert Auster and Leonard Quart. New York: Praeger Publishers. 1988. \$14.95.

In examining Auster and Quart's overview of the filmic treatments of our devisive conflict in Southeast Asia, the reader gets the sense that if the Academy Awards are any barometer of national consciousness, 1979 was the year when America began to remember Vietnam. Close on the heels of the fall of Saigon, Jane Fonda won Best Actress and John Voight Best Actor for Hal Ashby's *Coming Home*, and Michael Cimino won Best Director for the Best Picture, *The Deer Hunter*. The authors point out that although these films proved box office potential in Vietnam subject matter, both were problematic: *Coming Home* because of its focus upon personal transformation and romantic attachment rather than organized resistance, and Cimino's "invidious and politically dangerous treatment of the Vietnamese" as a savage Other who destroys the innocence of the working class protagonists from steeltown Pennsylvania.

Unfortunately, the book offers few such in-depth analyses, settling instead for sketchy political history alternating with generalized cultural critiques. The authors set out capsule aesthetic evaluations based upon their personal responses fused to a selective reading of secondary literature and journalistic pieces. The narrative history moves smoothly through the years from Sam Fuller's 1957 *China Gate* to John Irvin's 1987 *Hamburger Hill*. So heavy a reliance upon chronology as the main structuring device often leaves it up to readers to make their own thematic linkages between disparate films.

The authors emphasize the scenario to such an extent that investigations into how and why any movie gets made, or even other filmic elements like cinematography, get little attention. Thus they attack *Apocalypse Now* for "overly spectacular imagery" without considering that its surplus of spectacle is the key to Coppola's 1979 critique of America's superpower response to fighting a localized guerilla war.

Embedded in the book is an important idea—not totally developed despite an interesting chapter on the Hollywood war film—that archetypal fictional images, derived from the action movies and westerns, of brutal enemies, American supermen and hunter/heros constantly intrude on films about Vietnam to blunt their critical

discourse. Films about a guerilla war in the jungle only *look* different from previous generations of war films because the overhead crane shot of battlefields, familiar from WW II epics like *The Longest Day* (1962), has been mostly supplanted by the endlessly shifting "grunts' eye view" as in *Platoon* (1986), made possible by the proliferation of the free roving Steadicam. The authors put us on guard regarding new stock types one can expect to see again: the survivor vet, the self-righteous protestor, and the callous bureaucrat who conspires with the media to stab the nation in the back.

Fredonia College

Marvin Lunenfeld

EVERYTHING IS CHANGING: Contemporary U.S. Movements in Historical Perspective. By David De Leon. New York: Praeger Publishers. 1988. \$47.95.

"Everything is Changing," states the title. But not fast enough, says the text. In this very readable survey of most major contemporary American Social movements and the problems that animate them, De Leon combines, in a way many academics will find frustrating, advocacy with historical accounts. "Each chapter could be considered a preface to action," he states.

De Leon gives a chapter each to conservation, nuclear power, Indians, Blacks, Hispanics, women, gay men and lesbians, the Catholic left and the elderly. Conservative social movements are not mentioned. Though not exclusively, radical activists rather than reformers are emphasized: e.g., in his chapter on the elderly, much is made of the Gray Panthers and almost nothing of the far more influential American Association of Retired People. De Leon is not particularly interested in explaining how social change movements function or develop in America.

De Leon does want to give readers a powerful sense of the gross injustices that have long reigned in the United States. And he wants to give readers the sense that such injustices have been and can be fought. Here, he succeeds. While scholars will find little new, and much to debate, students are likely to find this book very accessible and almost certainly eye opening.

Barnard College

David Farber

CODENAME GREENKIL: The 1979 Greensboro Killings. By Elizabeth Wheaton. Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press. 1987. \$24.95.

This work addresses directly the myths that often distort the realities of social conflict in American society. "In Greensboro," writes Elizabeth Wheaton, "the classic right-left-civil triangle degenerated into a circle of hate-filled intolerance. Klan, Communists, cops—they saw each other only by their labels, labels which represented threatening entities rather than human beings." Wheaton has provided a stunning recreation of the events that culminated in the November 3, 1979, Klu Klux Klan killing of 5 Communist Worker Party members at a public rally in Greensboro, North Carolina. She documents the isolating impact that group solidarity and radical ideology had on both the Klan and Communists. Fearful of attack from each other, mutually suspicious of the police, and internally divided over questions of procedures and goals, the two groups held widely exaggerated notions of each other. Wheaton leads the reader on a day by day, eventually second by second, making of an American tragedy. Her use of primary sources,

including police files, television footage, and eye-witness accounts, is expertly done. Her narrative is compelling, at times gripping, in its effect. This is a book that deserves a reading by all who wish to understand the radical mind acting in cultural isolation.

Georgetown University

Ronald M. Johnson

THE YEAR AMERICA DISCOVERED TEXAS: Centennial '36. By Kenneth B. Ragsdale. College Station: Texas A & M University Press. 1987. \$18.95.

In 1936, the state of Texas celebrated its centennial of independence from Mexico by staging a world's fair in Dallas. According to Kenneth Ragsdale, the \$25 million Texas Centennial Central Exposition, the first air-conditioned world's fair, introduced modern Texas to the rest of America. Proclaiming a dual theme of "patriotism and commercialism," the fair's organizers used the historic occasion to create "a nationwide campaign to merchandise" Texas. By the fair's end, their ambitions had largely been achieved. Over 6,300,000 people visited the exposition, contributing significantly to the depression-era economy of Texas. Other related events, including a series of local celebrations and projects throughout Texas and a smaller fair in Fort Worth, reinforced the exposition's impact. So too did Nieman-Marcus' production of a fashion show that garnered international attention. The end result of the centennial activities was impressive. Indeed, a Dallas businessman perhaps best expressed the fair's legacy when he stated that it made Dallas "a kind of 'can do' town," nurturing a sense of urban boosterism.

Ragsdale's thoughtful analysis of the Texas Centennial Central Exposition earns a rightful place among a growing number of books and essays devoted to the theme of world fairs, continuing the spirited work of Robert Rydell and others. It offers much more than a narrative of the planning and implementation of a world's fair; it is also a study of the impact of advertising on middle-class America. As such, it examines a crucial period in the history of the growth of mass advertising, and adds significantly to the work of such scholars as Richard Wightman Fox, T. J. Jackson Lears and Warren Susman, in examining the development of America's "consumer culture." Ragsdale's attention to this important aspect of the Dallas exposition proves engaging. The fair's organizers orchestrated a successful advertising campaign that both highlighted the event and merchandised the state of Texas. Janice Jarratt, a blonde-haired Texas native and then America's most-photographed woman, was recruited for the cause, dressed in cowboy attire, and named "Sweetheart of the Texas Centennial." Utilization of gratuitous newspaper and radio coverage, coupled with attention-grabbing advertising ploys like the Texas Centennial Press Train, completed the commercial picture.

As Ragsdale intimates, a new era of consumerism was quickly overtaking an older world. And in the growing consumer culture of the 1930s, there was simply no room for the architects of a more idealistic vision, who maintained, inaccurately, that "the day of the world's fair" had passed, and that the "'hoochy-koochy and Midway Plaisance' of former expositions" were "passé." Indeed, Ragsdale's lively account portrays a world's fair as complex as those which preceded it—an exposition which catered, simultaneously, to a diversity of interests ranging from bawdy to cultivated.

Thomas More College

Paul A. Tenkotte

popular literature

HANDBOOK OF AMERICAN POPULAR LITERATURE. Edited by M. Thomas Inge. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood. 1988. \$55.00.

Five new essays are added to updates of ten originally published in the editor's 1978-81 *Handbook of American Popular Culture*. A bibliography follows each discussion; the resulting wide-ranging and useful survey of major scholarship should have been titled *Handbook of Scholarship on American Popular Literature*. The essays look mainly at work on formula fiction (westerns, gothics, romances, detective stories); but some popular types are approached through audience (young adult fiction, children's literature), content (history, biography), packaging strategies (dime and pulp novels, "Big Little Books," comic books) and even historical accident (best sellers). The diversity of classifying schemes suggests uncertainty about how to constitute the popular. The editor thinks that the emergence of works like *In Cold Blood* will likely make it "increasingly difficult to distinguish between popular and so-called serious literature."

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AMERICAN AUTHORS AND THE LITERARY MARKETPLACE SINCE 1900. By James L. West III. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. 1988. \$24.95.

Starting from the sensible observation that works of literary art cannot be fully apprehended unless we "understand the commercial factors that influenced the composition and publication of these works," this informative book reminds us of the presence of such factors in all literary careers. Well-researched chapters on authorship, publishing, distribution, the editor, the agent, the magazine market, subsidiary rights and blockbusters discuss Theodore Dreiser, Robinson Jeffers, Edith Wharton, F. Scott Fitzgerald, E. E. Cummings, John P. Marquand, Booth Tarkington and Edna Ferber among others. Although West sometimes implies that the author of a literary work is only one of many producers, his general approach is much more traditional, seeing authorial genius ultimately as a triumph over commerce rather than a partner with it.

NB

WESTERN AND HARD-BOILED DETECTIVE FICTION IN AMERICA / FROM HIGH NOON TO MIDNIGHT. By Cynthia S. Hamilton. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1987. \$21.00.

Cynthia Hamilton's monograph traces, with considerable skill, the line of development from cowboy fiction (innocent, optimistic, idealistic) to the urban nightmares treated by writers of "private eye" novels. She began her work out of partial dissatisfaction with John G. Cawelti's theoretical framework, though she learned much from him as well as from Richard Bridgman, Philip Durham, John Paterson, Robert Edenbaum and Steven Marcus. She treats formula literature in terms of its historical background, notes how mixing mystery plots and American

adventure stories ("the layering of contexts") makes for richer recipes, and takes into full account the gritty requirements of pulp markets. The second half of her study examines specific writers: only four, namely Zane Grey, Frederick Faust, Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler. Grey and Faust held conservative, small-town values; both believed in, and helped to create, myths about the Old West; but Faust can be used, as here, to illustrate a transition to a more questioning attitude toward ways of acquiring wealth in a lawless society. Hammett and Chandler turn out to be, unsurprisingly, more sophisticated in their awareness of evil; they have a wider background of experience, and they have read more; and their urban landscape is darker, gloomier and more corrupt than anything known (or even suspected) in Faust's stories. This is not a long book, but it is continually sensible in its discussion of themes and techniques, and some of the sentences are very neatly turned. I missed a concluding chapter (Chandler was not the end of the line, after all), some consideration of writers who do not clearly illustrate her major line of argument, and a brief treatment of the influence of Hollywood films (oaters and *film noir*) on how these writers perceived their own subject-matter. Over-all, a brisk and solid discussion of two major elements in the American imagination.

University of Kansas

Harold Orel

JAMES THURBER. By Robert Emmet Long. New York: Continuum Publishing Corporation. 1988. \$18.95.

The Frederick Ungar Literature and Life Series, of which this volume is a member, is apparently an updating and formularization of the idea of the old Twayne's United States Authors Series. Long's *James Thurber* thus calls for comparison with Robert E. Morsberger's *James Thurber* in the TUSAS series, 1964. Long has access to materials in Helen Thurber's possession and to the Thurber-White correspondence at the Cornell University Library. He also has the advantage of the seven books on Thurber that have appeared since 1964, as well as commentaries in articles and other books. Most importantly he relies on Burton Bernstein's *Thurber: A Biography* (1975), Scott Elledge's *E. B. White: A Biography* (1984), and Helen Thurber and Edward Weeks's edition of *Selected Letters of James Thurber* (1981). The formula of the book consists of a Chronology, a chapter of biography, six chapters of analyses of the works, a chapter of Conclusion, the Notes, a Bibliography and an Index. The Chronology and the 22-page biographical chapter are a handy condensation of Bernstein. The chapters that I have called "analyses" for want of a better term are plot summaries and abstracts of Thurber's writings and drawings from 1927 to 1966, with a few repetitious and gratuitous comments relating the works to the biography with superficial Freudian interpretations. The conclusion is largely comparisons of Thurber with his contemporaries—E. B. White, Harold Ross, Robert Benchley, T. S. Eliot, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, John O'Hara, Nathanael West and others—with the usual acknowledgments to his predecessors Mark Twain and Henry James. Long pictures Thurber as a psychopathic pessimist whose writings express his despair. The truth is that Thurber's writings—beyond those of his contemporaries—defy the horrors, the pettinesses and the ideological pressures of his times through the vitality of his humor and the sublimation of his technique. Any "analysis" that

neglects this truth is, at best, lopsided. Long's Notes are good for locating specific Thurber works. The Bibliography is good for materials published since 1964. Long's *James Thurber* then is a ready supplement to Morsberger's sound analysis and introduction.

Southern Illinois University—Edwardsville

James C. Austin

FROM FACT TO FICTION: Journalism and Imaginative Writing in America. By Shelley Fisher Fishkin. New York: Oxford University Press. 1985. \$9.95, paper.

The persuasive point of this finely researched and even-handed volume is that we have dismissed too readily (and perhaps even disdainfully) the important apprenticeship in journalism of an inordinate number of American writers. Fishkin focuses on the journalistic careers of Walt Whitman (twenty-five years); Mark Twain (twenty years); Theodore Dreiser (twenty years); Ernest Hemingway (a lifetime); and John Dos Passos (fourteen years), arguing that these writers succeeded as poets and fiction writers only when they returned, in new and creative ways, to subjects, themes and strategies they first encountered as "documenters of fact."

Fishkin helpfully directs readers to important early texts: nineteen "city walk" pieces Whitman wrote for the *New York Aurora*; Dreiser's meditations on city life as "The Prophet" in the 10-cent magazine *Ev'ry Month*; and Dos Passos' important rehearsals for *U.S.A.* in *Rosinante on the Road Again* and "Facing the Chair." She further reminds us that each writer "was lucky enough to seek his first job as a writer at a time of expansion and opportunity in American journalism": the penny press for Whitman; the Western press for Twain; the expanded Sunday supplements and 10-cent mass circulation magazines of the 1890s for Dreiser; the *Kansas City Star's* expanded production schedule of thirteen papers a week for Hemingway; and the profusely multiplying serious journals of the 1920s for Dos Passos.

Only in her brief (and perhaps hastily added) "Epilogue" does Fishkin seem to contradict her previous appreciation of the rich and complex *interrelation* between factual and fictive writing with too simplistic line-drawing between the two.

Barbara Lounsberry

AN AMERICAN ICON: Brother Jonathan and American Identity. By Winifred Morgan. Newark: University of Delaware Press. 1988. \$29.50.

Winifred Morgan carefully traces the career of Brother Jonathan, surveying the various guises of this comic figure of American popular culture in terms of genres, beginning with his first significant appearance in Royall Tyler's play, *The Contrast* (1787). Jonathan's stage guise was part country bumpkin, part new democratic man as viewed by established elites in the early Republic. Offered as an oafish country boy, he nevertheless possessed a certain native dignity, expressed in his sly Yankee humor. He appeared as someone who knew more than he let on, someone who could best his betters. By the beginning of the Civil War, however, Jonathan no longer occupied a quasi-oppositional role in American popular culture. Appropriated by both critics and celebrants of American society and politics, he became less and less distinct. Finally, he lost his rough edges and was subsumed in Uncle Sam, a figure representing the United States government rather than the potentially unruly American populace. Morgan's genre approach is comprehensive, treating

plays, cartoons, almanac anecdotes, novels and verse, but she slights some suggestive meanings by allowing every genre equal time. For instance, Jonathan's stage appearances—his most decided testing of democratic feeling—warrant an extended consideration. Morgan's survey has given us Jonathan's many guises and has opened avenues for further exploration.

Institute for the Medical Humanities, University of Texas Rodney D. Olsen

literature

AMERICAN WORLDS SINCE EMERSON. By David Marr. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press. 1988. \$22.50.

This closely argued, analytical treatise is motivated by a belief that we are in danger from the legacy of Emerson's "idealized privatism" ('the infinitude of the private man'). A long introductory chapter on "Emerson and After" presents Emerson's views of nature, culture and politics, with the thesis that Emerson's "privatism, moralism, and anti-politicism" has led to "the eclipse of the political in the modern age," a fact said to be overlooked by historians of American letters. Agreeing with Stanley Cavell that Emerson made philosophy in America possible, Marr holds that Emersonianism is no longer the exclusive preserve of American literature, and that the breakdown of familiar boundaries infuses political content into Emerson studies. Man Thinking is seen as tracing a line between transcendental being and remedial political action, both on the level of experiential realization. Despite this recognition of Emerson's pragmatism, Marr interprets Emerson's "Build, therefore, your own world" as the social ideal that dissolves politics into "a vision of a politically sanitized world."

Of the five chapters that follow, chapter One further develops Emerson's ideas of nature, culture and politics in both an historical and intellectual context. Here Marr underscores Emerson's "strategic irony" in *Nature* and his identifying the five ways in which "culture" reinforced the subject-object dualism of Idealism [Idealism], thus betraying "nature." Emerson found a solution in the interactionism of self and nature; to Marr he "gambled" on nature suppressing his own awareness of social realities. In "Politics" (1841-43) he launched an ideological attack on politics and the political, even as he increasingly realized the need for a new way of thinking about the 'calamity' of mass immigration from Europe. Political freedom he internalized as an idealization of American public life and the fact of America itself, and in the later essays a new idea of culture displaced politics as a solution to what Emerson called 'a wild democracy, a riot of mediocrities.' Politics would, he thought, sublimate into mind and culture. In short, according to Marr, Emerson's view cannot be epitomized into essences—at least not "the twisting inner logic by which doctrines of self-culture evolve into public philosophy for the anti-political conduct of life." Lacking an answer to the riddle of democracy, Emerson reinstated culture as nature's ally.

The chapters that follow present selective examples of Emerson's legacy: Whitman's understanding (in *Democratic Vistas*) of the democratic idea as, in Marr's words, "a wild fantasy of the democratic man of letters"; William James's philosophy of pluralism, based on his critique of absolutism and 'vicious intellec-

tualism'; Jeffers' pseudo-philosophical escape from early solipsism to late neo-romantic 'Inhumanism'; Blackmur's 'bourgeois humanism' as an extension and critique of idealized privatism, in the end to Marr "just another privatized world"; and finally, a chapter devoted to Heller's *Catch-22* as an ironic drama of the bureaucratic destruction of meaning (language) and hence politics, and to Ralph Ellison's autobiographical essays, with their insistence that art assume a public political role and Afro-Americans, taken either as invisible or as a group, be seen as a problem of American politics in all the complex interplay of being both American and black within the still unfulfilled promises of American democracy and pluralism. In his epilogue Marr relates these American "worlds" to the "Emersonian habit of picturing without historicizing." Was Emerson not historicizing in "History," "Historic Notes," "New England Reformers," "American Civilization," "Boston One," and "The Fortune of the Republic" (all ignored by Marr)? One may well ask.

University of Connecticut

Eric W. Carlson

SECOND STORIES: The Politics of Language, Form and Gender in Early American Fiction. By Cynthia S. Jordan. Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press. 1989. \$27.50.

This book applies a synthesis of recent developments in American literary studies to various important fictions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It combines feminist analysis, the Americanist version of New Historicism and language-centered criticism. The first part of the book considers Franklin's *Autobiography*, Brackenridge's *Modern Chivalry* and Brown's *Wieland*; the second looks at Cooper, Poe, Hawthorne and Melville. The subject of all the works considered is said to be the patriarchal politics of language, with the nineteenth-century works revising a tradition already established in the eighteenth century. The tradition uses language overtly to maintain patriarchal—that is, monovocal—systems, but couples this project with a covert criticism (on or in the second story of the title) of the monovocality it tries to uphold.

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JAMES FENIMORE COOPER, UPDATED EDITION. By Donald Ringe. Boston: Twayne Publishers. 1988. \$17.95.

In revising his standard introduction to Cooper's life and work, Donald Ringe incorporates much new biographical knowledge and adopts particulars from many of the good readings that have appeared in the quarter-century since his first version appeared. But Ringe rejects the basis of much of the current interest in Cooper, arguing that the author is less a historical or political novelist than a "moraliste whose work is the coherent expression of his fundamentally religious vision of life." The thematic interpretations that rise from this understanding present Cooper's novels as inquiries into human nature and the Divine plan. Ringe's end-note comment that the question of Cooper's idealization of the Indians "is by no means central to the interpretation of the novels" is circular, since he has

already dismissed political topicality and historical immediacy as aspects of Cooper's enterprise.

NB

WILLIAM FAULKNER: American Writer. By Frederick R. Karl. New York: Weidenfeld & Nicolson. 1989. \$37.50.

Given the wealth of published and unpublished biographical materials available, it is not surprising that Frederick R. Karl does not provide startling new revelations about William Faulkner's life and work. Karl establishes, however, different emphases from those of earlier biographers. Clearly locating Faulkner in the modernist tradition with his technical innovations, he downplays the Southern themes in Faulkner's fiction. Like other biographies, the stress is on the relationships between Faulkner's fiction and his life. In fact, Karl reads the fiction and too neatly finds biographical analogues for themes and events in many of the short stories and novels. Karl explores Faulkner's troubled childhood and his tense relations to a distant aloof father and a domineering, yet supportive mother. In addition, Karl focuses on the author's complex love-hate relationship with Estelle Oldham Franklin; despite his hostility and ambivalence toward Estelle, this woman became a source of artistic inspiration; indeed, Karl sees a great deal of Temple Drake in Estelle. Karl stresses the darker side of Faulkner's character, the reckless adventures with planes and horses and the suicidal drinking binges. The biography also explores the Hollywood years and the negative impact of screenwriting on Faulkner's style and his moralizing in the later fiction. Lastly, Karl is overly critical of Faulkner's less than systematic public statements regarding racial issues in the 1950s.

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THE CROSSINGS OF THE WAYS: William Faulkner, the South and the Modern World. Karl F. Zender. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press. 1989. \$27.00.

Contrary to his suggestive title, Zender does not fully explore Faulkner's attitudes toward the premodern and modern South. Zender's interest is literary and aesthetic rather than sociological and historical; he searches for images and characterizations of alienation toward the modern South in Faulkner's fiction and public letters. Certainly some of Zender's insights are well founded; he finds nostalgic images of the traditional South in *Flags in the Dust* and positive images of modernity in *Pylon* and in *The Wild Palms*. In the fiction produced after 1935, however, Zender finds negative characterizations of the modern South. Zender identifies Faulkner's alienating images as based on a personal fear of a decline in his creative powers and the demise of a regional Southern culture. Zender sees parallels between Roth Edmonds in the "Go Down, Moses" section of *Go Down, Moses* and Faulkner and their mutual attempts to preserve a traditional patriarchal social order in the face of overwhelming social and economic difficulties. Zender identifies Gavin Stevens as Faulkner's voice in several novels, *Intruder in the Dust*, and *The Town*, and *The Mansion*; surprisingly, Zender also perceives the jail in

Requiem for a Nun as Faulkner's authorial surrogate. While Zender discusses Faulkner's contradictory attitudes and actions in his private life, he fails to fully explore the inconsistencies and contradictions in the author's fictional presentation of the modern South.

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WILLIAM FAULKNER: *Letters & Fictions*. By James G. Watson. Austin: University of Texas Press. 1987. \$9.95, paper.

Watson's illuminating study explores the subgenre of letters in Faulkner's fiction and in his private and public letters. Watson persuasively argues that Faulkner learned to write by writing letters. In the 1920s Faulkner's private letters had become consciously literary; he used letters as a way of establishing and perpetuating different personae and creating an artistic self-identity. In the 1940s and 1950s Faulkner's public letters allowed him to speak out on moral issues and at the same time maintain his treasured privacy. Two hand lettered and illustrated gift books of love poems to Helen Baird and Estelle Franklin became Faulkner's artistic substitutes for the desired relationships. Beginning with *Soldier's Pay*, letters were used extensively in novels and short stories as literary conventions, narrative devices and ways to reveal character and develop plot lines. Quentin Compson's refusal to accept life and sexuality in *The Sound and the Fury* is evident in his refusal to read certain letters or to write a final communication to his family. In *Absalom, Absalom!* Shreve McCannon, Quentin Compson, and Jason Compson try to decipher the history of the Sutpen family through fragments of letters. Aunt Louisa Hawk tries to preserve a lost, irrelevant world in her letters appealing for the restoration of family honor in *The Unvanquished*. The McCaslin ledgers in *Go Down, Moses* can be seen as letters designed to conceal rather than to reveal information about Carruthers McCaslin. Lastly, Watson adds new interpretations to Faulkner's fiction by carefully culling through Faulkner's private letters and relating details from the author's life to the creation of specific characters and features of the fiction. Horace Benbow's tormented thoughts about Temple Drake and little Belle in *Sanctuary* are related to Faulkner's ambivalence toward his coming marriage to Estelle Franklin. Likewise the introduction of Temple Drake's tempestuous love letters in the plot of *Requiem for a Nun* is related to Faulkner's own secret love letters to Meta Carpentar and Joan Williams during the writing of this novel.

Michigan State University

Jean Mullin Yonke

N. SCOTT MOMADAY: *The Cultural and Literary Background*. By Matthias Schubnell. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press. 1985. \$21.95.

This is a useful book. Schubnell, having had access to Momaday's private papers, provides some new information on Momaday's literary practice. He also treats virtually the entire body of Momaday's published work and some of the unpublished work as well. His chapters include a biographical sketch, a fine chapter on "Momaday's Theory of Language and the Imagination," a less successful one on Momaday's attitude toward and treatment of the landscape, individual

chapters on *House Made of Dawn*, *The Way to Rainy Mountain* and *The Names: A Memoir*, and a long chapter on the poetry. There is also a relatively thorough bibliography.

This is also a frustrating, disappointing book. Schubnell's stated purpose is to attack the view that "American Indian literature is something unique, . . . something distinctive from American literature written by non-Indian authors." He does this by attempting to demonstrate the pervasive influence on Momaday's work of non-Indian writers such as Yvor Winters, Faulkner, Emily Dickinson, Wallace Stevens, Isak Dineson and others. That Momaday knew and was influenced by the work of these writers is doubtlessly true, and Schubnell performs a service in exploring it as thoroughly as he does. But by downplaying the significance of the Kiowa, Navajo and Jemez elements of Momaday's work, he is at least as misleading as he believes "Indianist" critics to be.

One way he misleads, for instance, is to place an idea central to American Indian thought, say, that of a "spirit of place," in a largely non-Indian context by devoting the bulk of his consideration to non-Indian proponents of the concept. The claim implicit in Schubnell's treatment of the idea is that Momaday's expression of it derives largely from or is in the tradition of these proponents. The "dissenting Anglo-American tradition to which his own work belongs" is given credit for Momaday's land ethic; and in the chapter on *The Names: A Memoir*, one of Momaday's "fundamental beliefs," "that the spirit of his ancestors surround him, indeed that they are part of his being," is said to owe more to Dineson's *Shadows on the Grass* than to Pohd-lohk, the Kiowa medicine man who "gave Momaday his Indian name."

There is a tendency in western culture to resist the idea that "aboriginal" cultures contain much to enrich our own intellectual and spiritual lives. Schubnell's book, I fear, is an expression of that tendency.

University of Kansas

Bernard A. Hirsch

place

A PLACE OF SENSE: Essays in Search of the Midwest. Edited by Michael Martone. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press. 1988. \$17.50 cloth, \$8.50 paper.

This remarkably even and well-crafted set of essays explores facets of the Midwest's value system. Three papers, plus an inserted collection of photographs by David Plowden, examine specific events of the regional experience: the nature of suburban life circa 1960 (Michael Rosen), parallel treatments for the small town (David Hamilton, Plowden), and a truly excellent analysis of the cultural impact of the farm crisis of the 1980's (Douglas Bauer). The other five essays probe more abstract ideas. Michael Martone reflects on flat terrain (is skin an appropriate metaphor?), while both Gary Comstock and the team of Mary Swander and Jane Straw stress the centrality of story-telling to rural life. Louise Erdrich and Janet Kauffman each began from a Midwestern base but range beyond, Erdrich on the need for writers to know specific places and Kauffman on the need for us all to reconceive our compulsion to use the land rather than to inhabit it.

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THE SHAPING OF AMERICA: A Geographical Perspective on 500 Years of History. Volume 1: ATLANTIC AMERICA, 1492-1800. By D. W. Meinig. New Haven: Yale University Press. 1986. \$35.00 cloth, \$19.95 paper.

In this first of a projected three volumes, Meinig has produced a lucid refocusing of standard historical materials around the process of place creation along the North American Atlantic shore. He details the implantation of twelve distinctive culture areas by European and African peoples, their subsequent consolidation into six regions (St. Lawrence Valley, Greater New England, Hudson Valley, Greater Pennsylvania, Greater Virginia and Greater South Carolina), and their changing functional relationships with each other and with England. This is a masterful synthesis of geography and history, rich in original maps and diagrams, and an excellent guide to the patterns and processes that operated during the 300 years of American colonization.

University of Kansas

James R. Shortridge

The following scholars, not members of our editorial board, read manuscripts for *American Studies*: Henry Adams, Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City; Barbara Allen, University of Notre Dame; William Andrews, University of Kansas; Joseph Boskin, Boston University; John Bracey, Amhurst College; John Braeman, University of Nebraska; Donald Costello, University of Notre Dame; Larry Engelmann, San Jose State University; Mary Furner, Northern Illinois University; Tony Genova, University of Kansas; James Gilbert, College Park--Maryland; Thomas Gridley, University of Kansas; Susan Lorsch, Hofstra University; Barbara Janssen, Smithsonian Institution; Michael Maher, University of Kansas; Peter Mancall, University of Kansas; Larry May, University of Minnesota; Lillian Miller, Smithsonian Institution; Robert Schofield, Iowa State University; Amritjit Singh, Rhode Island College; Robert Sklar, New York University; Haskell Springer, University of Kansas; Paul A. Tencotte, Thomas Moore College.