

## obnafrucepbopitroas

"Obnafrucepbopitroas" covers books which, under current editorial policy, are not appropriate for review in our book review section, but which we feel are of potential use to scholars in American Studies: unusual textbooks, collections of essays in newly-developing fields, reference works and editions of the writings of major figures, for instance. It also discusses museum exhibitions of special interest to Americanists, especially those which have been created by American Studies professionals. Items in "Obna" are by the correspondents named in the items. Unattributed items are by the editor.

Alfred Runte's NATIONAL PARKS: The American Experience, was controversial in its first edition and remains so, says James R. Shortridge. We sent Jim the Second Edition, revised. (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1987, \$23.95 cloth, \$9.95 paper), and he reports, Commonly held idealistic perceptions of the American National Park system are rigorously challenged here. Runte argues convincingly that, from Yosemite and Yellowstone until the 1960s, parks were created only where land could be deemed worthless for mining and logging. Ecological concerns and the preservation of other than monumental landscapes are recent ideas and, as the Alaska parks debates indicate, not yet fully accepted. The book is written from a preservationist perspective and deals with negative aspects of park history. Runte has left the historical chapters intact, but recast the second half to document the rise of ecological thinking, new types of parks and decisions in Alaska.

Arvarh E. Strickland tells about a revision of Lewis M. Killiam's WHITE SOUTHERNERS (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1985, \$25.00): This volume is a return to print of the authors' "pioneering sociological analysis of white southerners as a quasi-minority and an ethnic group" first published in 1970. The first six chapters and the charts and tables remain unchanged. These analyze the legends, stereotypes, myths and historical and sociological forces which have caused white southerners to perceive themselves a minority group and which cause them to take on the characteristics of a minority when they migrate to other sections. In a new chapter, the author explores the changes brought by the growing prosperity of the Sun Belt and by the phenomenon of a southerner, Jimmy Carter, becoming President. This book is

still a valuable interpretive synthesis of the southern mystique.

We sent Al Stone a book by a roomful of biographers, and here is what he says: Edited by Stephen B. Oates, the popular and accomplished biographer of John Brown, Nat Turner, Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King, Jr., BIOGRAPHY AS HIGH ADVENTURE: Life-Writers Speak on Their Art (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1986, \$20.00) is a lively, anecdotal assembly of reflections on biography, the last frontier (as several here argue) of modern literary criticism. Renowned biographers contributing include André Maurois, Leon Edel, Paul Murray Kendall, Frank Vandiver, Catherine Drinker Bowen, Justin Kaplan, Mark Schorer, Barbara Tuchman (a historian essentially, she barely qualifies), Paul Mariani and Oates himself. No new theoretical ground is broken and a number of contributors summarize their own work more than reflecting broadly on the genre or mode of prose life-history. Except for Edel, they give scant shrift to psychoanalysis, and the work of Alexander and Juliette George, for instance, goes unmentioned. Kaplan's capsule definition is representative: "We say of a successful biography that it is dramatically and psychologically coherent—it makes sense, it is believable, it is a good story. The writer starts off with a number of givens—birth and death, education, ambition, conflict, milieu, work, relationship, accident. He shapes them into a work that has the autonomous vitality of any work of the imagination and at the same time is 'true to life' and true to history."

Another piece of evidence of the growth of both American Studies and Women's Studies in European universities is the publication of WOMEN'S STUDIES AND LITERATURE (Erlanger

Studien, Band 73, 1987), a collection of essays on American women writers by faculty members from the Department of American Studies at the University of Erlanger-Neurnberg. Margaret Fuller is treated here along with Lisa Alther and Katherine Ann Porter, and there is a particularly fine essay on Margaret Atwood as a regional writer (i.e., Canadian). Those whose German is as rusty as Nancy Walker's will be pleased to know that all but two of the essays are in English.

Nancy also reports that the Western Writers Series sponsored by the Department of English at Boise State University in Boise, Idaho, is up to its 81st small volume, each of which is an introductory pamphlet about the life and work of an author who can claim some connection to the American West. Some of the writers included in the series, such as Robinson Jeffers and William Stafford, would hardly seem to need "introduction" at this point, but the series is a valuable source of information on lesser-known but significant authors such as Helen Hunt Jackson and Simon Ortiz.

Nancy notes further that the Mark Twain industry cranks right along, a recent contribution being *ON MARK TWAIN: The Best from American Literature* (Duke University Press, 1987, \$33.50, eds. E. H. Cady and L. J. Budd), a chronological sampler of Twain essays from that journal published between 1937 and 1985 and including our friend Al Stone's "Mark Twain's *Joan of Arc: The Child as Goddess.*"

One note, on two books, also from Nancy Walker: Given Willa Cather's ambivalent attitude toward publicity, the publication of *WILLA CATHER IN PERSON: Interviews, Speeches, and Letters* (University of Nebraska Press, 1987, \$17.95) might have disturbed her were it not for the fact that all of the pieces in this volume—including the letters—were published during her lifetime. The volume represents, then, not a revelation of a heretofore secret Cather, but an opportunity to observe Cather's relationship with her public during her life, and editor L. Brent Bohlke provides a comprehensive, balanced context for each selection. Cather is also the subject of one of the essays in Vera Norwood and Janice Monk's *THE DESERT IS NO LADY: Southwestern Landscapes in Women's Writing and Art* (Yale University Press, 1987, \$29.95), a book that is intended to investigate female artistic response to an area of the country traditionally assumed to have appealed primarily or even exclusively to male explorers and settlers. The essays and illustrations in this volume establish that women's relation to the southwestern landscape has been profound, and profoundly influenced by gender. The most valuable contribution of this collection to the growing number of landscape studies is its cross-cultural emphasis: in addition to Anglo women such as Cather and photographer Nancy Newhall, the essays explore the work of Hispanic, Chicana and Native American women whose ancestors antedated European settlement by many years.