

obnafrucepbopitroas

Raven McDavid does *not* like Walter M. Brasch, **BLACK ENGLISH AND THE MASS MEDIA** (Amherst, Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 1981. \$25.00), and has this to say about it: Space precludes the ninety-nine distinct damnations wished on Brother Lawrence by Browning's Spanish monk. A longer review would provide more attention than the book deserves.

Brasch, a journalist rather than a linguist, has mined the Black English lode before—Ila W. Brasch and Walter M. Brasch in *A Comprehensive Annotated Bibliography of American Black English* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1974)—useful, but flawed. This work has not needed the criticism of John Algeo (“A Black English Bibliography,” *American Speech*, 1974, pp. 142-146). It abounds in errors, fuzzy generalizations, slanted interpretations (over-emphasizing the African contribution to the speech of American blacks) and inadequate explanations of the terms Brasch uses. Two close readings did not turn up a clear definition of “Black English” or “mass media”; Brasch casually takes from one Ralph C. Lowenstein the self-contradictory statement “in the beginning of a nation's history its mass media are elitist”—a statement bound to confuse reputable sociologists.

Although Brasch calls me a “distinguished dialectologist” (pp. 26, 278), he elsewhere uses me as a straw man, even resorting to innuendo (pp. 264, 278). He mislabels and misinterprets the American regional linguistic atlases (p. 316); he does not see that Lorenzo Turner's study of Gullah (*Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949) was in the tradition of linguistic geography and sponsored by Hans Kurath, and has been highly praised by dialectologists (v. Kurath, *Studies in Area Linguistics*, Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1972). The peculiar nature of Gullah and the predominance of personal names among its African survivals are freely conceded by Turner.

The bibliography has many errata, e.g., including a nonexistent 1926 edition of Mencken's *The American Language* and omitting the 1936 and

1963 versions (third edition, New York: Knopf; and one-volume abridged edition: the fourth edition and two supplements, abridged, annotations and new material by Raven I. McDavid, Jr., with the assistance of David W. Maurer, New York: Knopf). Omitted altogether are such scholars as Bagby Atwood, Walter Blair, Frederic Cassidy (himself a Jamaican), Sarah D'Eloia (see her “Issues in the Analysis of Nonstandard Negro English: A Review of J. L. Dillard's *Black English*,” *Journal of English Linguistics*, 1973, pp. 87-106, which Cassidy calls the definitive review of the Dillard book, published in 1972 by Random House), C. W. Foster, Kurath, Lee Pederson and Juanita Williamson—black, teaching in a black college in a city (Memphis) where it is easy to make casual comparison of black and white usage.

However commendable Brasch's purpose, and however interesting some of the observations that appear in the book, he has overreached himself. An adequate treatment would demand encyclopedic knowledge of language variation as well as detailed familiarity with whatever the “mass media” may be.

James W. Simpson, editor, **THE EDITOR'S STUDY: A Comprehensive Edition of W. D. Howells' Column**. Troy, New York: The Whitston Publishing Company, 1983. We complained in these columns years ago about the lack of imagination on the part of publishers bringing out photocopied editions of previously published and long out-of-print texts. One which we reviewed contained a preface which explained what was wrong with the text which followed, but did nothing to rectify the problems, though doing so would have been simple. With photocopying, one can inexpensively tack on comments, or even, since these are limited editions for scholars, and, presumably, “we are among friends,” type in or even handwrite in comments, additions, corrections, deletions or whatever in the margins. So there's really no excuse not to respond creatively to the potential of the medium. This big edition of Howells' column in *Harper's* for the six and a half years

beginning in 1885 does the job which should be done. There is a thoughtful and sophisticated preface; at the end of each of Howells' columns are notes which seem simply to have been typed on the page, and which, to my eye, look just fine; there are little brackets marked in the text to show which portions Howells selected for his book *Criticism and Fiction* (1891), and, best of all, there is an index which works. It is true that the photocopied text is sometimes more gray than black, but my copy was least legible throughout, and, besides, what do you want for \$38.50? Readers who are not specialists in any of the issues enriched by this useful reference tool should at least open it to Howells' reaction to the first publication of Emily Dickinson's poems. His response is sensible, sensitive and forceful. He knows immediately that he's dealing with a major voice, and describes Dickinson's characteristics in terms which need remarkably little modification even after a century of scholarship and criticism.

We wouldn't *think* of suppressing the writing of Grace Anne Hovet, who has this to say of Joanna Russ: HOW TO SUPPRESS WOMEN'S WRITING. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1983. Cloth: \$14.95; paper: \$7.95: Russ' catalogue of techniques used to suppress women's writings adds yet another update to Woolf's "A Room of One's Own" and Tillie Olsen's "Silences: When Women Don't Write." Women writers, Russ illustrates, have systematically been prohibited from writing, "excused" for writing, and accused of not writing what they *have* written. With characteristic aplomb, Russ prefaces her informal, well documented discussion with some ferment about "frument," an activity highly valued by "Glotolggi," creatures who condemn the efforts of all but themselves to contribute to civilization.

She reports favorably also on Milton Meltzer, Patricia Hoolan and Francine Krasno, eds. LYDIA MARIA CHILD: SELECTED LETTERS, 1817-1880. Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1983. \$35.00. Book-bound Lydia Maria Child scholars take note: this hard-bound edition of 400 letters taken from the Lydia Maria Child microform collection of 2604 letters (Kraus Microform, 1980) illuminates the writer and reveals her world. The letters range through Child's public and private lives, her persuasive enthusiasms, and her specific regrets. Whether formal or private, the letters show the range of her interests—abolition, women's rights, marriage, labor, to name a few—and the strength of her determination to speak her own mind, whether or not in consort with such noteworthies as William Lloyd Garrison, Lucy Stone and Ralph Waldo Emerson. The editors bind Child's letters together with urbane commentary that discreetly informs us of their thorough and illuminating research.

An "excellent collection," says Loring Silet of AMERICAN REALISM: New Essays. Edited by Eric J. Sundquist. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982. Cloth: \$25.00; paper: \$7.95. Most, he goes on,

are "published here for the first time." American Realism "incorporates and extends recent developments in critical thinking toward a new interpretation of the period of 'realism' in American literature. Unhindered by a theoretical program, these papers range widely over the standard texts with a renewed interest in the interpenetrations of the ideological and the fictional which 'embody and predict concerns more visibly realized in the literature of American modernism.'"

A Kansan in Florida, Eldon Turner keeps his eye upon New England before independence for us. He reports on OLD LIGHT ON SEPARATE WAYS: The Narragansett Diary of Joseph Fish, 1765-1776. By William S. Simmons and Cheryl L. Simmons. Hanover, New Hampshire: University Press of New England, 1983. \$16.00: Simmons and Simmons have done an excellent job in this edition of Joseph Fish's diary. They add sufficient material to place Fish's entries in the context of Rhode Island's social and religious history. In addition their notations make clear the links between New England's late colonial Indian missions and the Narragansett's eclectic interior vision.

Geoff Steere has warm praise for another of the volumes in that strange but fascinating Kentucky series which has published shoe-box material about fighter pilots and tattoo artists: GENERATIONS: An American Family. By John Egerton. Lexington, Kentucky: The University of Press of Kentucky, 1983. \$19.50. *Generations* grew from a friendship begun in 1978 between John Egerton, who sought to write a family biography that would stand as "a social history of our national experience...a metaphor of America," and a couple from the Kentucky mountains, Addie and Burnam Ledford, aged 93 and 101 respectively, examples of "a remnant of elderly Americans who have seen and heard every generation of citizens in the history of this nation."

Generations is not a scholarly book and does not add notably to our knowledge of social history, family historiography or of the methods of oral history. However, the book may stimulate interest in these fields among students and general readers. The principal contribution of *Generations* is its presentation of longitudinal data about a case example of elderly married couples. Whenever Addie and Burnam are "on camera," the book compels interest; but when Egerton sketches background social history or writes vignettes (sometimes colorful) of the generations before and after the Ledfords, the focus of the book wavers.

The Ledford family furnishes an example of a recent development in typical American family structure, the four-generation family, with its special problems of caring for frail elderly members. However, Addie and Burnam are atypical "old old" people on a number of counts: they remain married for 79 years; they maintain a household independently for 75 of those years; and they retain mental and physical vitality in advanced old age. Nonetheless, the Ledfords do exemplify generalizations supported by survey

research about the American elderly: e.g., Burnam and Addie live near children; they enjoy a functioning support network of family, friends and neighbors; they cherish independence and express satisfaction with life; and, in the face of life's exigencies, they are active problem solvers and copers.

Egerton's style is lucid and sensitive. He has fashioned a poignant richly descriptive life history and written of his subjects with affection.

OF STUDIES IN AMERICAN INDIAN LITERATURE: Critical Essays and Course Designs. Edited by Paula Gunn Allen. New York: Modern Language Association. 1983. Cloth: \$25.00; paper: \$12.50. Bernard Hirsch writes, "This book is invaluable to the scholar and teacher of American Indian literature. Ms. Allen considers five different areas of concentration from oral literature to contemporary, provides excellent essays for each by a number of fine scholars, offers several helpful and informative course designs for both introductory and advanced courses, and includes a thorough bibliography. The book will, I am certain, stimulate

already active programs in American Indian literature and encourage the development of new ones."

There is no telling why someone in the publisher's promotion office chose to send us Nathan Goldstein's THE ART OF RESPONSIVE DRAWING (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc. 1984. \$29.95), the third edition of a drawing textbook obviously inappropriate for review here. But it's so good as a primer of how to see that we nevertheless insert this note in "Obnafrucepbobitroas" to alert readers who use graphic art in American Studies to a fine "sensitizing" tool. When we use art as artifact for the study of culture or society, we should never use it just for "substantive" content. Artists' ways of seeing have to be part of our discussion or we distort; the style, manner of perception and related artists' values are part of content, too, and we as culturalists should learn to see them. This is a good primer of the language, and the handsome cuts make eloquent illustrations of how artists feel about elements of drawing.

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unfortunate enough not to live on the high plains. The high plains are semi-arid; life there is very different than it is elsewhere. For one thing, as Your Faithful Editor discovered when, during a 1976 trip to Garden City, Kansas, to be Bicentennial speaker, he borrowed a bicycle to get a little exercise: the dry wind will peel the skin off the face of a Humidperson (Okay?) in about 25 minutes. For another, population has always been low. Drawn by the great beauty of the area, I have returned many times and have been to several conferences on high plains life. If you have never been briefed, we commend to your attention one at the Center for Great Plains Studies at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 20-22 March, 1985. John Braeman, who has been affiliated with this journal for longer than either of us wants to admit, is running it, and in our experience everything John does is first-class. He's in History; the zip in Lincoln is 68588-0327. Always thoughtful, he's trying to raise money to help participants pay their way in cases in which their own institutions are too broke or tight to do so. Go if you can, and tell John I sent you.

SUMMER SEMINARS for college teachers are designed to give teachers at institutions which tend to overwork humanists, or which have inadequate library facilities to support advanced humanistic work, a chance to do scholarship under a leading humanist at a major university with a major library. The seminars are usually

just wonderful. If you're interested in details, write Jeannette Beer, Division of Fellowships and Seminars, National Endowment for the Humanities, 1100 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Room 316, Washington, D.C. 20506.

THE SONNECK SOCIETY, which is clearly playing our song, held its 1984 meeting March 22-25 in Boston. One theme emphasized was turn-of-the-century Boston musical life. The conference included a furious round of musical events from chamber music to a premier of John Harbison's First Symphony by the Boston Symphony Orchestra. If you want to know what happened, write Steven Ledbetter, 65 Stearns Street, Newton Centre, Massachusetts 02159.

SONNECK elects honorary members, most recently Wilfrid Mellers to honor him for his scholarship on American music, especially *Music in a New Found Land* (1964).

IRVING LOWENS died on November 14, 1983; he was founding president of the Sonneck Society, dean of the Peabody Conservatory, music critic of the *Washington Star* and an awfully nice man. Sonneck has established an award in his memory for a significant piece of scholarship of any sort which deals with our music or that of the other Americas. Allen P. Britton is collecting funds to endow the award. Checks payable to the Sonneck Society, identified as being for the