

obnafrucepbitroas

NEW READERS of *American Studies* might want to know that this column serves as receptacle for brief notes on books—records, tapes and films, too, sometimes—which don't belong in our review pages, yet which seem to us of interest to people in the field. In "Obnafrucepbitroas" you might find news of ongoing editions, or discussions of unusual textbooks, reference works, edited collections, anthologies, reprints, hard-to-classify publishing projects. (We have periodically reminded publishers that we don't normally review such things.) The selection is idiosyncratic and probably unfair, but it is the result of editorial discussion.

A good example of the reason for this column is an odd volume which George Ehrlich conned for us. JOHN STEUART CURRY AND GRANT WOOD: *A Portrait of Rural America*. By Joseph S. Czestochowski. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, with the Cedar Rapids Art Association. 1981. \$32.00. There is a problem in deciding how to approach this book, which while related to an exhibition devoted to works by the two artists, is not an exhibition catalog. Nevertheless, it retains a number of art catalog conventions, which means we have a sequence of somewhat independent sections that are not really pulled together by Czestochowski's useful but brief (seven pages) "Introduction." Czestochowski, Executive Director of the Cedar Rapids Art Center, organized the exhibit, and the book reflects not only his interest in Curry and Wood as artists who depicted rural America, but also his own concern with the larger themes of the "American scene movement" that occurred between the two World Wars. The book contains chronologies of the two artists, a reprint of an essay on each, an analysis of Curry's mural, *Kansas Pastoral* (in the Kansas Capitol), by Sue Kendall, an essay by Thomas Hart Benton and *catalogue raisonné* of the graphic works of both artists along with a fairly large selection of reproductions of paintings, drawings and prints. The last is perhaps its most useful feature for the general reader.

Here is John Braeman on psychohistory: *LOVING, PARENTING AND DYING: The Family Cycle in England and America, Past and Present*. By Vivian C. Fox and Martin H. Quitt. New York: Psychohistory Press. 1980. \$38.50. Paper: \$11.95. This volume is made up of two parts. In the first ninety pages, Fox and Quitt provide an historical analysis of the "fam-

ily life cycle." That cycle is divided into six stages: Courtship to Marriage, Preparenthood, Childbearing, Childrearing, Post Childrearing and Spouse Loss. A brief essay compares each stage chronologically (from 1500 to 1800 as well as between the early modern period as a whole and the present), geographically (between England and America as well as from region to region within both countries), and socio-economically (from class to class). Specialists in the field will find little that is new, but the non-specialist will find this part a handy synthesis of the available scholarly literature. The remainder, and larger part, of the volume consists of reprinted studies arranged under the six-stage organizational scheme. Although all have been previously published, the author-editors have done a service by bringing together in one place materials widely scattered in at-times difficult-to-find books and journals.

A WOMAN TO DELIVER HER PEOPLE. By James K. Hopkins. Austin: University of Texas Press. 1982. \$30.00. "Under our ground rules," Tim Miller writes, "this first scholarly biography of Joanna Southcott doesn't merit a review in these pages, for Southcott was English and never had an organized body of followers in America. Nevertheless she is an important figure in the history of millenarian thought and was regarded as an important figure in the prophetic tradition by several marginal American religious movements, notably the House of David, a communal movement based in Benton Harbor, Michigan. Southcott announced late in the eighteenth century that she had been chosen by God to announce the Second Coming; in the early nineteenth century she published dozens of books and pamphlets concerning her revelations. Her chief fame came from her "sealing" of followers, which act certified them to be among the 144,000 the Book of Revelation said would be saved when the end of the world arrived. Her followers numbered perhaps as many as 100,000. Southcott died in late 1814 amid great public interest in her claim that she had virginally conceived a son, "Shiloh," although the pregnancy turned out to be nonexistent. Those interested in millenarian movements will appreciate this long-needed biography of this important figure in the history of religious dissent."

FIGHTER PILOT: The First American Ace of World War II. By William R. Dunn. Lex-

ington: The University of Kentucky Press. 1982. \$18.00. Short of funds and—curiously—short of good book manuscripts, university presses have turned to some odd publishing ventures. None odder than this memoir of a man who served in two armies, two air forces and four wars. The book looks like a boys' adventure book: the dust-jacket painting is a slick illustration of duelling planes; a Spitfire is pulling away from a burning Me. 109F. Turns out there is a good reason for the picture; Dunn painted it himself; it shows his fifth "victory" as an American volunteer with the RAF, the kill that made him an ace. The book is very good of kind: Dunn's rootless youth and cowboy adventures make later exploits and mistakes plausible, his fighting career is exciting; his fly-boy's perspective on bureaucracy and unfairness is instructive; his irresponsibility when not fighting is of a sort one thought Hollywood invented (though Dunn says the wartime film about his RAF squadron was stupid), and his brief accounts of the women he was close to are sad and moving—in them and in his versions of his treatment by military brass ("weenies") he reveals perhaps more than he intends. The distinctions Dunn makes or fails to make between friend and foe, his editorial opinions on decisions in Korea and Viet Nam, his ability to go on using the language of wartime hatreds ("Scratch one Hun"), his great courage, his obvious talent and his spiritual blindness connect to things we have learned and are still learning about Americans at war. His is a valuable "case history." But though there are things for a scholar to learn here, a tape in an oral history project or a manuscript in a one-ream paper carton would do as well as a book. Kentucky seems to have printed the thing to make money. I doubt that *Fighter Pilot* will; boys' books in this genre don't cost \$18.00 even now.

Not a lot of enthusiasm in Beth Schultz's report on a new reference work. She writes, AMERICAN STUDIES: A Guide to Information. Information Guide Library, vols. 10 and 13. Edited by David W. Marcell. Detroit: Gale

Research Company. 1981. \$34.00. These bibliographies would be useful primarily to the uninitiated student of American Studies and American literature; the entries on particular authors, e.g. Melville and James, and particular topics, e.g. Afro-American literature, American autobiography, American women writers, seem scant, and although well-known works are cited, others, indispensable for a full study of either author or subject, are omitted.

Francis Heller reports on THE DILEMMAS OF PRESIDENTIAL LEADERSHIP: Of Caretakers and Kings. By Frank Kessler, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1982. \$11.95, paper. Textbooks do not often make good reading but Frank Kessler has written one that is both constructive and enjoyable. He uses anecdotal material cheerfully and skillfully, and he does not hesitate to use a colloquial phrase where it fits. Kessler's approach reflects the pendulum swing that has characterized the literature on the presidency in the last two decades. But he ends on an optimistic note: our system may, after the extremes of Vietnam and Watergate, be "returning to the model that the founding fathers envisioned"—a president who would lead must also be truly accountable. Completed in January 1982, this book has the advantage that it can include pertinent aspects of the presidency of Ronald Reagan. Hurried production has, however, resulted in proofreading and other errors that mar what would otherwise have to be called one of the liveliest recent books on the American presidency.

Marshall Tymms has edited THE COLLECTED ESSAYS AND PROSE SKETCHES OF THOMAS COLE (St. Paul, Minnesota: The John Colet Press. 1980. \$13.50 by subscription). It contains published essays and letters, selections from unpublished material and "Emma Moreton, A West Indian Tale." Ken La Budde, formerly of our Editorial Board, did a study years ago of Cole's ideas; in these pieces Cole reveals his intellectual and aesthetic roots, so it's very good to have them available.

american studies column

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Cheap lunches and free housing are another incentive in these days of financial stringency: people only have to fork out for travel and for a good dinner with new and old friends on Saturday night.

And, because these workshops are strictly for volunteers, we can still have our regular chapter and local meetings run in more traditional ways. However, there's some strong feeling, arising from the coherence and productivity of the workshops, that we need to focus our regular meetings more tightly, too, so there's some feedback that might lead to deeper changes. At

least it's undeniable that the participants come away with an enriched understanding of a particular strategy for doing American Studies that they may or may not wish to incorporate into their own scholarly experience.

A VARIANT PATTERN with which MASA has been successful, first at a number of sessions of the first national American Studies Association meeting in Kansas City in 1967, and subsequently at several of MASA's own regional conventions, works as follows: a problem area is defined and papers solicited through an announcement which makes clear that contributors are expected to deal with issues of more than