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THE POISONOUS PLACENTA will get us all if we don't watch out, it says in Lloyd de Mause, *Foundations of Psychohistory* (New York: Creative Roots, Inc. 1892, \$26.95; paper: \$10.95). It is not impossible that some of de Mause's ideas have merit. Perhaps we all carry powerful subconscious memories of our lives as foetuses; perhaps dramatic historical changes in childrearing affect personality; perhaps modern nations act out the rituals of universal drama; and perhaps all these things are connected. But you can't prove it from this book. It is terribly provincial: there is no consideration of any cultural tradition but our own. It is awful as history: no colonialist, for instance, could live with de Mause's assumptions about the American colonists in the chapter on alterations in colonial personality. (Yet properly qualified and related to the real and complex histories of some of the colonies, his ideas might add perspective.) It is awful as anthropology, awful as history of journalism, awful as an argument, awful as English prose, and terrible evidence of an author painting himself into a corner. I suppose it's too late to save anything from all this, and that the writer will become the central figure in a cultish group of psychohistorical irregulars embarrassing to scholars and unintentionally harmful to themselves. Perhaps this has already happened; I don't know. A shame, too, because I sense that had de Mause known how to learn from good colleagues in different fields, had he been taught how to define and qualify, had he enjoyed the benefits of collegiality and a good editor (even a proofreader would have helped), he would have been capable of entering into a very fruitful dialogue with people in a number of disciplines.

AMERICAN POETS SINCE WORLD WAR II. Edited by Donald J. Greiner. 2 Volumes. Detroit: Gale Research Co. 1980. \$116.00. There is no way that subsequent volumes of *The Dictionary of Literary Biography* can match the natural unity and over-all coherence of Volume I of this series, which one can profitably read cover to cover as though it were a study rather than a reference volume. But the *DLB* seems to have maintained its standards. One would not like to have had the job of deciding which poets merited "master" (i.e., longer) entries and which not; indeed, since the *DLB* is admirably flexible in format, altering its rules volume by volume to accommodate the peculiarities of subject, it

might have been wise in these books to dispense with the distinction between regular entry and master entry. But that's minor. I have now used *American Poets Since World War II* enough to report that it is most useful; editors, publishers and contributors have done a great service to scholars and to poetry itself. This book helps locate currents; it often defines them in ways different than might this reader or that, but generally offers aid when one needs it. Recent poetry cannot, alas, *quite* stand on its own. One needs a little help, a push, a sense of context, a running start. Mr. Greiner and his crew provide those.

A report by Suzanne C. Lowitt on a much publicized edition: MARY CHESNUT'S CIVIL WAR, edited by C. Vann Woodward (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981, \$29.95). Professor Woodward's creative, revealing and scholarly editing of Mary Boykin Chesnut's diary has not diminished Mrs. Chesnut's stature as one of the most perceptive critics of Southern society during the Civil War era. Instead, by his imaginative editing and careful research he has enhanced the diary's usefulness for scholars and students of history, society and literature. What emerges is a more complex, yet ironic, picture of Southern society and its fascinating spokeswoman, Mary Boykin Chesnut.

A communique from Jim Gunn reads, SCIENCE FICTION BOOK REVIEW INDEX, 1974-1979. Edited by H.W. Hall. Detroit: Gale Research Company. 1981. \$85.00. One of the difficulties with scholarship in science fiction is that the literature is reviewed most extensively and often most knowledgeably in specialized publications, such as science-fiction magazines and fan magazines, that the general indexes never cover, even if they know about them. For almost ten years Hal Hall, special formats librarian at Texas A&M, has been publishing indexes of science fiction book reviews which cover most general publications as well as the specialized ones, and now Gale has brought out his index for the important five-year period, 1974-79, when science-fiction book publication was more than doubling. The book may be too expensive for the individual scholar, but libraries should have a copy. The editor promises annual updates and the possibility of later cumulations by Gale.

Here is what Tim Miller has to say about **WOMEN IN NEW WORLDS**, edited by Hihah F. Thomas and Rosemary Skinner Keller (Nashville: Abingdon, 1981, \$12.95): These essays were among the papers presented at the Women in New Worlds conferences in 1980. Their quality varies, but collectively they help with the ongoing recovery of an appreciation of the role of women in the development of American religion. The focus here is Methodism, especially in the nineteenth century.

Tim also reports, "If your research interests touch on the Basques, this book is indispensable: **BASQUE AMERICANS: A Guide to Information Sources**, edited by William A. Douglass and Richard W. Etulain (Detroit: Gale Research Co., 1981, \$36.00). An exhaustive bibliographic guide covering all aspects of scholarship on—and a good bit of popular treatment of—American Basques. Coeditor Douglass is the Coordinator of what surely must be the only Basque studies program in the country, at the University of Nevada (Reno)."

Dick Lowitt's comments on **THE AMBIDEXTROUS HISTORIAN: Historical Writers and Writing in the American West**, by C.L. Sonnichsen (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1981, \$9.95): "Eleven essays which reveal Sonnichsen as a popular, as opposed to a professional, historian writing in support of amateurs who focus on local and regional themes, who prepare for pleasure, if not for profit, studies based on research in primary sources in local archives, libraries, court houses and museums. His essays extol their virtues, offer them guidance in research and advice on publishers and publishing. They also indicate his bias against professional scholars, the academic establishment, and publishing houses of long standing repute."

A PRIMER OF THE NOVEL: For Readers and Writers. By David Madden. Metuchen, New Jersey: Scarecrow Press. 1980. \$17.50. This odd volume contains everything from a chronological list of novels and pre-novels to entries from *Masterplots* and previously published essays by the author. There are also sections on genres (The Historical Novel, The Novel of Consciousness) and techniques (Point of View, Symbolism), an extensive bibliography, and too many typos. Yet the author's contention that all this will be useful is correct; if this were a \$1.95 paperback, I would recommend the *Primer* to students and maybe adopt it as a text in certain courses.

WORDS FOR THE WIND: The Collected Verse of Theodore Roethke. By Theodore Roethke. Seattle: University of Washington Press. 1981. Paper: \$6.95. Lovely to have in print again this selection from works published from 1932 through 1958; 1958 was the original publication date of this volume.

SONGS OF THE FDR YEARS, quasi-folk, folk, topical or home-made, originally released commercially or dug out of archives in the Roosevelt library, on a 12-inch stereo record. Roy Berkeley, who made it happen, did most of the singing and strumming and wrote the liner notes, asks for help publicizing it; he'll sell copies to *American Studies* subscribers for \$5.95 including postage. The address is Box 311, Shaftsbury, Vermont 05262. He and Tim Woodbridge sing and pluck pleasantly; the songs are, to tell the truth, mostly of little musical interest, but one or two would perk up a class on the New Deal era. They certainly reflect attitudes and concerns of those times.

FOUR CRITICS: Croce, Valery, Lukacs, and Ingarden. By Rene Wellek. Seattle: University of Washington Press. 1982. \$8.95. So fragmented—or, to put it positively, voluntaristic—is our intellectual life that the subjects of these four thoughtful and erudite lectures are of first importance to only certain American scholars. How many, I wonder, of Wellek's auditors at Seattle, even those professionally committed to the study of the arts, could react critically to his talks? Yet he discussed European critics who moved significant American thinkers. There are lessons here for Americanists.

SPECIAL COLLECTIONS IN THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS. Compiled by Annette Melville. Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress. 1980. \$14.00. This exceedingly handy guide describes each collection, locates it and sets it in its historical context, then lists publications in which it is discussed. At the back are further good aids which serve, in effect, as cross-referencing headings, and an index. Even some illustrations.

SPORTS IN AMERICAN CULTURE 1980. Edited by Don Harkness. Tampa: American Studies Press, Inc. 1980. \$2.50. Discursive and sometimes disorganized, the comments informally transcribed here record a conference nonetheless interesting. Jocks and academics share their pet observations; though there are insights—as in Allen Guttmann's remarks on women's sports—there is far too little perspective. Precious little detachment, either, one wants to add.

Some more of those little "Western Writers Series" booklets from Boise State University have come in. They are: No. 46: **GEORGE R. STEWART**, by John Caldwell; No. 47: **SCANDINAVIAN IMMIGRANT LITERATURE**, by Christer Lennart Mossberg; No. 48: **CLARENCE KING**, by Peter Wild; No. 49: **BENJAMIN CAPPS**, by Ernest B. Speck; No. 50: **CHARLES F. LUMMIS**, by Robert E. Fleming. Each costs \$2.00.