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Book Reviews

Thanksgiving Before November—Norman Macleod—Parnassus Press, New York, 1936—\$2.00.

A second book from the Parnassus Press, by Norman Macleod, is *Thanksgiving Before November*. Similar in feeling to his first book, *Horizons of Death*, the volume reflects a radical and vigorous approach to the modern world. Many of the poems have appeared in *Poetry*, under different groupings, others in *The Nation*, and his name is often in many of the more experimental magazines. He also has been associated with *The New Masses*. The volume is of particular interest in this section, for the author has known New Mexico, has lived in Albuquerque, as well as in New York, Alabama, California, and various parts of the Middle West.

The volume is autobiographical in subject matter. It reflects varied experience, a wandering spirit, a peripatetic interest. To some extent it is kaleidoscopic, without depth or feeling, although always sincere. He writes with an uneven technique, sometimes pleasing with the surprise of occasional good internal rhyme, but varied, sometimes choppy and uneven. There are, however, lines of real poetry. Much is lost in a dry, hard shell of figures of speech. There are machine-like, precise similes, and metaphors which are often harsh, clashing, discordant, clanging against a world, rather than in it, of it, or with it.

The theme of the book rises in revolt. It is divided into three sections: "Early Battle Cry," "Footnote to These Days," "Communications from the Revolution." There is, throughout, something of a feeling of indefiniteness of purpose, and the treatment of subject matter does not lend positiveness of approach to either the subject itself or point of view. "The chains of our thought rasped by coruscation," is a line which illustrates this uneven feeling. His interpretation of love is defeatist or merely sexual. But there is a

pale sentiment as he progresses beyond the mechanisms of America into a larger world which he has experienced. There is a certain rhythm in the arrangement of the book itself as the author treads through experiences, falls back upon memory, and takes a circuitous path away from the realness of nature and the West, with which he seems to find some identification, to the despair of metropolitan civilization and the roar of the factory and revolt. What is needed there is strength of action rather than frustration, and one wonders if the negative quality of such a book gives any suggestive power to the reader in ways of action. It seems to me that poetry should sing of things to be done, as Walt Whitman did, as well as to mourn defeat.

Macleod seems to consider the West as an interlude to the life of cities and competition, but it is most often in these poems, "Liturgy of Eagle's Nest Lake," "A Mythical Figure in Santa Fe," and the rest, that one feels some identification of the author with his subject.

In the whole volume, there seems to be a confusion of personal and group reactions, and the line, "we are uncertain of the paths with our feet we take" is typical. One feels little of the intense reactions of metropolitan eras, except in the last section which shows some belief in revolution, tension of feeling, and as expressed previously, sincerity. The expression of ideas is after the flavor of the magazines which represent definite radical thought.

Taken in the spirit of reaction the book has sincerity and some force. For some, propaganda in literature is enough. Taken as true poetry, however, there is neither the "unmistakable," which Edwin Arlington Robinson demands, nor the "permanence which is perceived instantly," with which Robert Frost measures lines. William Rose Benét, in reviewing the author's first book, said, "There is nothing concocted about it. It is a 'dedicated to a bitter age.' What it seems to me chiefly to lack are rhythm and cerebration." In this second volume one would find many exceptions. There are poetic lines: "Footnote to These Days," is a notable example

of one poem which has some beauty of abstraction, feeling, intensity, and the intangible quality of flavor. If occasionally rhapsodical, however, there is little substance or belief in anything, for even the philosophy of revolt has the tang of disillusion; and class and social doctrine are not inherently poetic, unless mellowed with experience and significance.

ELOISE BARCLAY.

Albuquerque, N. M.

Return to Philosophy—C. E. M. Joad—E. P. Dutton and Company, 1936—\$2.50.

Professor Joad's *Return to Philosophy* is "a defense of reason, an affirmation of values, and a plea for philosophy." The defense of reason is chiefly pointed at Aldous Huxley's hedonism and the late D. H. Lawrence's primitivism. All the adherents of the "modern cult of having a good time," of turning loose and living instead of ossifying, are quietly reminded of the Aristotelian "golden mean" and of Bishop Butler's "cool self-love." We need reason to check impulse if we are to make even pleasure our end in living. The life of the mind is not necessarily inferior to the life which glorifies the surge beneath the belt. Professor Joad spends his day in study, in moderate eating and drinking and smoking and other bodily pleasures, in the active pleasures of reading poetry, listening to good music, walking, and viewing fine scenes. He contrasts his day with the day spent by a bewildered modern in passive, bought pleasures, which ultimately only irritate and bore. The contrast is platitudinous, as Professor Joad admits, but perhaps it cannot be emphasized too much, especially in view of the fact that many of the anti-intellectuals are themselves persons of fine intellect and inheritors of good traditions.

And why is the modern man so violent and so unbalanced? Perhaps because he holds no values, is completely at sea among "the many." And so Professor Joad turns to a re-affirmation of values predicated upon a dualism. Life is matter, but "purposive" evolution sees to it that our minds

transcend matter. "Thus our future progress may be conceived as one in which, passing beyond thought, we shall reach the level of illumination which the mystic and the artist now enjoy uncertainly and intermittently." It is hard to tell whether this is unadulterated Tennyson or pseudo-Plato. Certainly, Professor Joad's dualism leads him into quick and easy enthusiasms.

Values are real to Professor Joad because they are intuitively perceived. The lowest level of perception is the "sensory." The human mind can "jump" from the level of sensory impressions to the level of "non-perceptive intuition" of objects of thought (which exist independently of our minds, else no two minds would ever agree on any cause or relationship); and from this latter level, the mind can jump again to the realm of "objects of value." The mystic and the artist dwell often in this latter realm. The philosopher dwells there occasionally.

The plea for philosophy, then, is based upon the idea that the philosopher has an aesthetic enjoyment that is enduring. Dwelling constantly on the periphery of the realm of objects of thought, the philosopher's mind is susceptible to emanations from the realm of values, where logic is replaced by insight. The philosopher at his best, the great artist, poet, or musician give us values because they have caught the "significant form" that is revealed only in moments of finest insight. Significant form is the enduring abstract pattern of beauty, justice, and truth.

The fault with all this is not that it is flatly wrong. The best philosophy, as Professor Joad himself insists, is neither right nor wrong. Its worth resides simply in its revealing power. The fault is that Professor Joad is sketchy and incoherent.

It is well, however, to remind the bewildered modern that civilized man once cared for beauty, followed reason (to some extent), and sought serenity and wholesomeness in his life. At the same time, it is of doubtful worth to close one's plea for philosophy with such words as these: "... to with-

draw the mind from the things of this world is not in itself a good or an evil. It is an evil, if the things from which we are withdrawn are mainly good, a good if they are mainly evil." That is itself only a hyper-aesthetical hedonism. If philosophy should exist in a vacuum, as Professor Joad here implies it should, the more it was needed the less likelihood there would be of its ever arising.

DUDLEY WYNN.

Albuquerque.

Old Spain in Our Southwest—Nina Otero—Harcourt Brace and Company, New York, 1936—\$2.00.

In this day and age, when things Southwestern are on the ascendency, there is so much written about "Spanish heritage," so many interpretations given to "Spanish character" and "Hispanic psychology" that it is hard to find anything really new and different.

Many of those who believe they have gotten an understanding of this phase of Southwestern culture are simply giving us their own impressions rather than the essence of what is commonly called Spanish culture. Occasionally, some intelligent author rids himself of the sickening sentimentality and romanticism that affects so many Southwestern writers today, and strikes a note of genuineness.

This lamentable situation is the result of trying to "absorb" culture by going native or by becoming sophisticated. To those who have grown into a culture, and particularly to those deeply rooted in many generations past, the efforts of these neophytes are amusing and at times irritating.

It is gratifying to have a member of one of New Mexico's oldest families give us a bit of that color that is a part of her own experience. In the case of a person who has grown up in a certain region there is danger of seeing things too closely, with little objectivity. In her book *Old Spain in Our Southwest*, Nina Otero manifests greatly one thing,

namely: that she knows too much about her subject, and has difficulty in choosing that with which to deal.

This book is a series of episodes rather than a treatment of the subject as a whole. Since the book was especially arranged for school children, there is no attempt to convert the reader to a new philosophy or to establish a new point of view.

Nina Otero's point of view is simply that of a retrospective participant who sets down examples of a culture that has now been greatly changed. Her treatment throughout is quite sympathetic and devoid of insignificant detail, often emphasized by other writers to the point where it becomes ridiculous, but there is an overdose of things religious in this work. From the point of view of editorship, this is regrettable, but on the other hand such was Spain in our Southwest, so if a true picture must be given, religion will play a principal role.

It is interesting to see the point of view from which Nina Otero writes. To her, the *patron* of New Mexico is not a romantic character, but a real personage who stood at the top of the colonial economic system. The impression conveyed throughout the book is that there were two divisions of people, the *gente* and *los patrones*, and furthermore that the two were never in each other's way. That is, one was complementary to the other. To those who have in mind an American conception of democratically instituted society, such an arrangement as was to be found years ago seems almost tragic, and their treatment is colored by this mental set.

Nina Otero tells very naively the story of that which Spain left in the Southwest, and all with a magnificent indefiniteness. After reading the book, we do not know whether the conditions therein described were existent a half-century ago or are to be found today.

The various manifestations of New Mexico's Hispanic heritage are well chosen, and it is very unlikely that anyone will deny anything she says. It would be interesting to read

a sequel to this book written by one of the *gente* instead of the *patrones*. Would this book be as sympathetic to the overlord as Miss Otero has been in dealing with the majority, the vulgo?

Mention is made throughout the book of the Spaniard, giving us the impression that everyone in New Mexico was a Spaniard. It is very probable that the author had in mind not so much the racial heritage as the cultural, and in this respect she is justified in using the term.

The book is quite interesting, written in flowing, simple English, with no attempt at a sophisticated style. It is my opinion that a second volume should be forthcoming from the same author, in which she would tell us what she thinks, and express her ideas regarding the status of that which was once Spanish and which today we call Mexicano.

The reader will find that Nina Otero has no desire to convert anyone with this book and that she has drawn her material from a wealth of a lifetime.

A. L. CAMPA.

Albuquerque.

Apache—Will Lovington Comfort—Dutton—New Popular Edition, January, 1936—\$1.00.

Death in the Desert—Paul I. Wellman—Macmillan, 1935—\$3.00.

Apache Agent, The Story of John P. Clum—Woodworth Clum—Houghton Mifflin, 1936—\$3.00.

It is not surprising that so many writers have turned to the Apaches recently, for the memories of the Apache wars still linger in the minds of old settlers, and source materials of both oral and written sort are becoming highly valued. Three books about these Southwestern Indians are either newly from the presses or newly brought to attention by reprinting: *Apache*, by Will Comfort, was re-issued in a New Popular Edition in January of this year, which constitutes the fifth reprinting since 1931, the year of copyright. *Death in the Desert*, by Wellman, appeared in August of

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1935, and *Apache Agent, The Story of John P. Clum*, was published early in 1936.

Facts common to all three books are treated in the first as historical fiction, in the second as highly colored exposition, in the third as autobiography and biography. One impulse is shared by all three authors, that to make known the pages of the most brutal chapter in the American and Indian relationships. The Government's part in the guerilla relationships between the frontier towns and the desert bandits only added to the mistakes and misunderstandings long existent. Will Lovington Comfort most nearly sees the Apaches as a nation, struggling to preserve their identity, to keep their native ranges free of the stranger, refusing with a few notable exceptions to make friends with the White Man who had broken faith on a number of unforgettable occasions. A generation of friendship has not erased from memory the Johnson massacre of Apache men, women, and children at Santa Rita, where an American renegade betrayed a whole race in his own unregenerate nature.

In Comfort's book, Magnus Colorado is the chief figure, interpreted with imaginative understanding and authentic detail as the general and statesman of his tribe, slain at the last by a subterfuge of deceit practiced on him by the military. Wellman's account, like Clum's, leads into the campaigns of Victorio and Geronimo. J. P. Clum was outstanding as an agent who tried to see the Indian problem fairly; he describes in his letters and journal the waste and folly of the course the Government and military pursued in its Indian policy. For Geronimo, Clum seems to have had less sympathy than for any of the other Apache chieftains. The public acclaim, which Geronimo³ had showered upon him, appeared to Mr. Clum to grow out of the same mob curiosity which brings notoriety to any gangster today.

Mr. Wellman's book shows too much of the school of journalism, in which the author is trained. Aside from the title, there is little sensational in this book, and his story of Mangus Colorado lacks the thrill and charm of Mr. Com-

fort's book. Mr. Wellman must be a capable re-write man, for his facts are well assembled, simply and capably told. Minor facts or statements in his book are open to question, especially when Mr. Wellman overdoes the pacifism of the Taos Indians. He says, "the Taos people figured slightly, if at all" in the rebellion of 1680, whereas the rebellion had its inception in Taos, the chief conspirator being the San Juan Indian, Popé, who had found refuge in Taos. About seventy Spaniards were murdered in the Taos valley, only three escaping, while in the southern pueblos there was no such percentage of mortality.

Mr. Wellman is apt to take the "tallest" story in his desire to make a good tale. He says that Mangus Colorado was six foot six or *seven* inches tall, whereas, in his footnote, he quotes old timers, who saw him, as saying six feet one or two, and Lummis (who must have been in swaddling clothes in the East at Mangus' death) as saying six foot six.

It is something of restitution for a sorry episode in American history that three such discriminating books have been written by members of the ascendant and dominant race.

GUSTAVE WEIL.

Albuquerque.

Tongues of the Monte—J. Frank Dobie—Doubleday Doran, 1935—\$3.00.

Perhaps Mr. Dobie knows better than anyone else the experience many students, as well as teachers of literature, have when they feel the conflict between the routine of study and repetition of its fruits, crossed by the desire to know life at first hand and create it anew in words. Mr. Dobie is both student of folk-lore and discoverer of it; he is both teacher and creator. The list of his studies in Texas lore is large; two well known books in the Southwestern library are his—*A Vaquero of the Brush Country* and *Coronado's Children*. Yet this new book is as surprising, as novel, as though it came from another pen. The pen, however, shows the back-

ground I have just mentioned, the student and the lover of life.

Only a student of prose values could write as well as Mr. Dobie. So much more than his earlier work, this book reveals style, a cultivated sense of literary quality. Let anyone glance at the dedication, "The Things Which Are Caesar's" and say me nay. And the material itself—folk tales revested into a pilgrimage, at once imaginary and real, of the author (our good friend of the Texas Folklore Society) with his servant companion from the present place in which the book starts to the undated wonder world of legend, superstition, mysticism, and salty common sense—has made a book that is a landmark for Mr. Dobie and a landmark for folklorists in general. A literature that can pile up books of this sort has reached its golden age!

A number of the characters in the book are real: Don Encarnación, owner of the Ranch of Solitude and *un magico*; Don Santiago, ranchero, whose tall tales are of Juan Oso, the Mexican Paul Bunyan; Lupita and Dolores, fair ones, who resolve and complicate the lives of men; the vaquero, White Mustache, who nurses a jealousy which brings about his death by the blade called "The Faithful Lover," held in the hand of Inocencio. Further description of Inocencio is necessary, for he should be set aside as the outstanding figure in the book. An old vaquero, who has absorbed a philosophy from the proverbs common to the people, Inocencio serves the author loyally and lovingly from the menial service of his coffee in the morning to defending his life at any hour of the day or night. Sagely, his advice is scattered in his speech, appropriate to the occasion: "Truth and roses alike have thorns" . . . "He who sleeps on a petate may expect to get up belching straw" . . . "Only the spoon knows what is inside the pot" . . . "He who eats artichokes and kisses an old woman neither eats nor kisses" . . . "Remember to put on your guaraches before treading thorny ground" . . . Inocencio lives for the reader; so does Don Marcelo, whose deliberate manner is born of a viewpoint which he expresses, "If your trouble has

a remedy, why worry? If it has no remedy, why worry?"

Frank Dobie's background of life in his native Southwest was the preparation for the writing of this book. There is much of community between the peoples native to the land above and the land below the Rio Grande. The *bruja*, the *mal hijo*, the lore of bird and beast, the anecdote of the saint and sinner, here as well as there, branch from a common stem in the land and people. On this scene, Frank Dobie is no alien shoot. If it takes a wedding of a man with the land to produce a book great in its kind, such a union has occurred in *Tongues of the Monte*.

T. M. PEARCE.

Albuquerque.

Main Line West—Paul Horgan—Harper Brothers, New York, 1936—\$2.50.

To the energetic American of a full generation ago, progress and travel were almost identical. The conviction was tacit in its approval of pioneer ideals which had gradually been tested and solidified until at last to question them was to express contempt for a precious national heritage. *Main Line West* has its setting in this period after the turn of the present century and its scene is altogether western: the time and place are perfectly chosen to express a new and national courage over and above the regional. Then the railroad was the last word in civilized progress and the symbol of faith in substantial American growth.

But *Main Line West* is almost altogether a treatment of character, rather than a discussion of tendencies, and above all others stands Irma Milford, a serene and staunch character who, through vicissitudes of life and unsympathetic surroundings, nurtures the character of her child.

Irma is the wife of Dan Milford, traveling man, who does parlor tricks, tells jokes, sings in company; he has an easy acceptance of situation which is quite in keeping with his character, and he is altogether selfish.

When Dan fails Irma, as eventually he does, she does not sentimentalize over his loss, but plans for their child's future. How she manages to wrest strength and peace from many discouraging circumstances, and how she wins for Danny even when she leaves him most alone, this makes up the fabric of a story profoundly characteristic of the average American.

Courage, generosity, the capacity to absorb defeat and carry on, the tremendous strength of will required to plan a remote and tenuous future while facing an exhausting daily routine, these are the resources of Irma's character. Her splendid patience combines with a splendid strength: there is nothing like her in modern literature, and one must call to mind the character of Cordelia, or, better still, of Portia, to find an equally significant heroine.

In a dedicatory preface the author says:

The West is a country of beginnings; maybe it will always be so, and maybe the things it will start into being in the future will have much to do with nourishing the rest of the nation. But like such a country, it is often rude, and life there has a directness in people's ways and thoughts, like the weather they live under. When there is so much space of land and sky, a man or a woman reflects that, instead of the careful spacings of close human society . . . there is a very great beauty in this frank relation and influence of man under nature; there are also cruelty and ignorance. To discover those qualities together is one of the aims of this story, and to let them be a part of those beginnings I spoke of is another.

There are minor characters who are striking or amusing: the Kinneyman family, which is composed of individuals of some significance, who, once assembled are "annihilated" by sheer burdens of compromise; there is Kang H'sui, the Chinaman whose face resembles a peeled almond and whose great longing is for a cane with a carved ivory handle; there is Brother Trainor, the hypocritical evangelist; there are Oscar and Fat, a bully and a cowardly tramp—and others. But for the most part the book belongs to Irma.

At a time when not to be in business was to be under suspicion, Dan Milford marries Irma and makes his progresses from town to town, selling. Irma is forced to adopt the same precarious way, at first with her husband, and then, after some years in a California village, together with her child to take up the life of an itinerant evangelist.

Always Irma is strong enough to accept whatever befalls her without discouragement or despair: if things go wrong in one place, there is another, farther on, which will surely provide a better opportunity. And so, in her travels and trials the railroad is a constant symbol of a philosophy: that there is always a new life for the person willing to seek it, and that there is no substitute for the courage of individual initiative. This is a philosophy which Europe's crowded geography will not permit, and it accounts for the easy acceptance of circumstances by the westernized American; the true westerner is never surprised.

Generations ago Ibsen gave his message, in *An Enemy of the People*, that the strongest man is he who stands most alone; the one who listens to his own conscience and who will let no other voice, no circumstance, drown it out. That was the thought fundamental in *No Quarter Given*, Mr. Horgan's previous novel, wherein Edmund Abbey fought for his ideal of music, knowing well that not only poverty, but disease and death, would be his lot. It was the quality of his dedication to work which counted, and Edmund wrestled with his art and created music for the whole of humanity. His was a great spirit, inflexible and scornful of compromise.

Irma is equally strong: she looks within her own nature for guidance and strength, and in a manner too moving and glorious to spoil by summary, she bequeaths to Danny his most precious possession; the proud knowledge that the self-spirit is at once the strongest and the most solitary, the the most sacred thing in life.

ALFRED CARTER.

Roswell.

PERSONALLY SPEAKING

If you like soft custard with raisins impounded in the oleaginous mass, you will like the taste of *Saturday to Monday*, by Patrick Carleton, a young Englishman, scared to death of Aldous Huxley. That a tall, thin, bespectacled mind like Huxley's could frighten a generation of young novelists is understandable to those who have read his criticisms—many a writer still burns from his formaldehydic pen, for many have been seared like a spitted sheep. Consequently, Carleton cowers under the influence, and flies certainties as he would a glass of milk.

Soft though it is, *Saturday to Monday* is an interesting book, easily read; but, alas, easily forgotten. Its people read *The Way of All Flesh*, *Point Counter Point*, and *Madame Bovary*; they think in incessant paragraphs; they speak often as in dreams; they show, in small, what Huxley showed, in medium-size, with his *Antic Hay*; and yet they are, in their very naïvete, engaging people. One wants to change the healing, cool towel about their shaken forehead, athrob after a not easily remembered night, and say kindly to them: "It's all right, lad; we understand!"

Unfortunately, enthusiasm is unfashionable today. Maybe it's that Huxleyan shade⁸ lorning still about. But if enthusiasm were permitted, it would exult over *Head o' W-Hollow* (Dutton), the second book Jesse Stuart has published, and the first of prose. It is a splendid book, too: some twenty short stories of poetic beauty, fidelity, and power. There is a tang, an idiom, a haunting odor to *W-Hollow* that reveals at least two things: a writer of considerable talent and human understanding; and the importance of knowing a region with both a heart and a mind.

A homely, deep poetry is in this Kentucky Hollow, a poetry which calls to mind some of the rich lines in Haniel Long's lovely and vibrant *Atlantides* (Writers' Edition, Santa Fe). And there is drama, too—witness the brutal murder of the negro tramp, or the death of Battle Keaton . . .

Battle can see the cornstalks bend over and the shadows shift as the wind blows, but Battle can't smell the green corn in the wind, flavored with the scent of pussley and he can't breath again that sweet, hot scent of wind from the cornfield and feel the dry-hot, soft-plowed dirt under his feet . . .

Yes, it is a good thing that enthusiasm is taboo these days, or decorum might tinkle before the satisfying sigh of "Dear God, here is a book."

Comparisons, Shakespeare wrote, are slippery. Somebody with a bigger vocabulary said comparisons are invidious. Certainly, if Gipsy Petulengro's story, *A Romany Life* (Dutton), were compared with George Borrow's masterpieces of the Victorian days, *The Romany Rye* and *Lavengro*, we would be contrasting a facile, self-satisfied, and unimportant volume to the distillations of supreme story-telling. Yet because a work is unimportant, or self-satisfied, or facile, it need not lack entertainment and some hours of enjoyment. Nor does *A Romany Life*. It is full of escapades, it gurgles with psuedo-gipsy wisdom. But the greatest delight of this picturesque Romany life (invidious and slippery comparisons aside) comes to the reader who follows with wide eyes, not the adventures, but the mentality of its author.

When you say of *The Early Medici*, by L. Collison-Morley that it is sober history, ground exceedingly fine, your pen runs out of significant critical ink. Unquestionably such a German volume, dealing as a connected story with that remarkable line of courtiers, poets, bankers, rakes, and popes, represents meticulous cementing and organization. But it is dull, except as unadulterated history—and in a Huxleyan age dullness is the crime third to enthusiasm.

Elliott Coleman has the student's and esthete's face. It is long and pale, his lips are loose, with quick-running feelings, his eyes rest in religious abstraction. And so it is with his little book of poems, titled grimly enough *The Poems of Elliott Coleman*. For the verse is classic in form, but super-refined in expression; the emotions are sincere, but ineffec-

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tive. Only in his religious poems, completing the book, does Coleman approach spontaneous merit. Is scholarship incompatible with poetic genius? Well, in these *Poems* there is little of the latter. But, then, a generation which has *Atlantides* need not utterly repine.

For when full compt is taken, it is, perhaps, the poetry and the intelligence that counts. Whether the inenarrable lyric poetry of Haniel Long's *Atlantides* or the tangy, earthy poetry of Jesse Stuart's *Head O' W-Hollow*, no book can be completely forgotten when, like these two, it has added its full measure of understanding and human sympathy.

WILLIS JACOBS.

Albuquerque.