

STUDIES IN AMERICAN CULTURE. Edited by Joseph J. Kwait and Mary C. Turpie. University of Minnesota Press. 1960. \$4.75.

From the University of Minnesota's Program in American Studies comes a volume of essays by scholars who are or have been connected with that program. The essays vary in approach and in subject, and this variety seems healthy. Each has implications beyond the particular discipline in which it may be said to start; grounded in one field, it illuminates several. Some begin in literature, some in sociology, in philosophy, in history, even in that least promising-sounding of fields, "Americana."

In addition, two--those by Robert E. Spiller and Henry Nash Smith--specifically discuss American Studies, Mr. Smith's by illustration, using Mark Twain as an example of a figure better understood through an interdisciplinary approach; Mr. Spiller's by a review of the history and a discussion of the promise of the field. Both authors finally recognize that no narrow "Method" or formula is in sight; neither feels that this reduces the value of American Studies.

American Studies is a fruitful discipline to the extent that scholars in the field remember that the traditional academic categories are arbitrary. It exists as a separate field largely because the American experience is relatively short. Even the undergraduate finds that the connections between the categories stand out in higher relief in his American courses than in those surveying other cultures; this is simply because an American history survey, let us say, devotes more attention to less time than a comparable course in English history. It can afford to, and when the student steps down the hall to his American literature survey he becomes aware of the fact that the two courses shed light on one another. When he begins to think of the two as arbitrary divisions of a larger field which we might call "America," he is in fact a student of American Civilization.

Thus we can claim as ours any scholar whose thinking crosses the arbitrary borders between the fields, whose work is, so to speak, horizontal rather than vertical. And because of this fact, the concern with finding a special "Method" for American Studies has always seemed to me unnecessary. The "Method" already exists; the nature of the American experience brought it into being.

Indeed, if the field faces any threats, they are of the sort which too much concern with "Method" could aggravate. American Studies could become chauvinistic; it could also become defensive. The editor who tells his contributor, "Rewrite this article to give it the American Civilization approach" is doing violence to his own cause. His self-consciousness is as ungainly as that of the most spread-eagled of Federal period progagandists calling for a "fresh new culture."

The present volume is valuable in that it offers examples of numerous different kinds of fruitful approaches; its contributors on the whole spend less space worrying about "Method" than utilizing "methods." What is most commendable is their courage; they are not afraid of the big generalization, and find that the position on the end of the limb, if precarious, usually gives the best view.

We lack space to discuss the essays individually. Suffice it to say that the contributors are Theodore C. Blegen, Bernard Bowson, Reuel Denney, Charles H. Foster, Joseph Kwait, J. C. Levenson, Leo Marx, David W. Noble, William Van O'Connor, Arnold Rose, Mulford T. Sibley, Henry Nash Smith, Robert E. Spiller, Allen Tate, John W. Ward and David R. Weimer, and that Studies is a book worth owning.

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SOCIAL PROBLEMS IN NATION AND WORLD.

By Paul H. Landis. Chicago: J. B. Lippincott Company. 1959. N.p.

Sociology--"the American science"--has at last begun to break out of its national confines and to go beyond the concept of culture as illustrated by studies of primitives. This text is but one of several recent ones designed for use in standard sociology courses that is symptomatic of the trend. Taking his theory from social change, structure and institutions, personal adjustment, and demography and social policy, Landis discusses such seemingly disparate topics as America's role in world leadership and prostitution as a degrading work status. The sweep is large; the data are many. To make American Studies something more than provincialism and chauvinism, more of the comparative method, of which this book is an example, will need to be introduced into the thinking and teaching of the field.

Wayne Wheeler

THE FUGITIVE GROUP: A Literary History. By Louise Cowan. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press. 1959. \$5.00.

The Fugitive Group traces the artistic growth and critical development of this seminal group of Southerners from its casual beginnings around Vanderbilt University, through the years during which the little magazine The Fugitive was published, and to the appearance of Fugitives: An Anthology of Verse in 1928.

Miss Cowan keeps her critical head throughout. The Fugitives in these early years were very minor poets, a fact which the author keeps before us. Their relationships are of interest largely because of their later development and the focus which the club and the magazine gave their careers. The