

BOOK REVIEWS

Walter Darrell Haden, Editor

David Crockett. *A Narrative of the Life of David Crockett of the State of Tennessee*. A Facsimile Edition with Introduction and Annotations by James A. Shackford and Stanley Folmsbee. Tennesseeana Editions. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1973.

The second printing of this fine edition in 1976 attests to its special value: as the editors say, there is significance in the *Narrative* as an example of autobiography, as American humor, as a document recording dialect, and as history. Much has already been said about the work and the edition, but it may be worthwhile to look at it again simply as a piece of writing.

The format of this book is especially interesting. The edition is in facsimile style, with each page of the *Narrative* bordered by lines and set on the half-page closest to the spine of the book; on the outside half of each page are running observations from the editors, varying from a sentence or two to short essays. The effect is to make the reader far more aware of the *Narrative* as an edited document, far more the present companion of those who look on at a distance. One is also distanced by the line around the page of facsimile—as if the book were held in the hands of other persons and the running monologue the script for voices reading over one's shoulder. The use of first person, then, is curiously both enlarged and diminished. One becomes far less engaged by the "I" but more critical of the story-teller, more conscious of narrative as the manipulation of experience, something other than the experience itself. Ordinarily a reading is a transaction between the reader's mind and the voice of one person. But here the reader absorbs Crockett, conscious that the book is ghosted by Congressman Thomas Chilton of Kentucky, edited with heavy reliance on the work begun by the late James Atkins Shackford and completed by his brother John and finally incorporated into the notes in this edition by editor Stanley Folmsbee, Emeritus professor of UT. That the editor contrives to make the reader feel he can make independent judgments is remarkable—perhaps the effect of this same distancing, the illusion, as with scientific experiment, that one may indeed make objective judgments.

This reader finishes the *Narrative* far more interested in the ghost writer Chilton than in Crockett (if indeed Chilton designed the plan). Crockett, after all, could make himself into whatever the moment required and, when that image no longer worked, take himself to new pastures—not unadmirable traits, certainly. As a figure he is enormously engaging, a singular natural force who understands the uses of tale-telling, fantasy, language and political manipulation as well as any American Odysseus. But where Odysseus uses his understanding of language and human nature to reshape a crumbling civilization, to drive the political terrorists from his hearth, Crockett seems to be a little of the Cyclops-come-to-dinner who delights in boasting of his illiteracy, ignorance of politics, bear-killing, and canny stumping techniques. One cannot help marveling at a finely-tuned propaganda piece that derides the very skills required to present it.

The most interesting writing device in the *Narrative* is a thread that ties it together well: the use of President Jackson. In a masterful stroke he suggests through humor that Jackson is less than perfect and open to legitimate opposition from a fellow Tennessean while at the same time reminding his reader that he and Jackson are frontiersmen and he might well be presidential timber also.

Another consistent thread is the selection of incidents which demonstrate human greed and deception. This is especially apparent in the stories of his early life where he is a child-victim. The implication of his father's lending him out for work, his spurning of return and reconciliation until he can come home and humble his father in paying off a debt, and especially his coming home unrecognized—almost in disguise—and then revealing himself at dinner—all this intrigues the non-historian. The stunning simplicity with which the Crockett ghost explains his need for marriage is very well done. That he never gives the names of his two wives and, as the editors say, spent little time at home, tells us more about how he read his political audience than any presently living woman wants to know.

The *Narrative* is a campaign document, but it has no political discussions. It is an autobiography closer to the literary traditions of the travel book than to modern expectations of the form, e.g., it opens by justifying its writing as a defence against rumor, in the time-honored fashion of satirists such as Swift. The deep distrust of civilized institutions—shown in his insistence that he has no knowledge of school or court—has emotional truth if no basis in fact.

I think I would have voted for his ghost-writer Chilton; the person who put this *Narrative* together had considerable subtlety and a sense of deep order. Crockett says he always campaigned with a plug of tobacco in one pocket, whiskey in the other, and good stories to tell after the other candidates had talked politics. I probably wouldn't have voted for him; but, then, I couldn't have voted anyway!

Martha L. Battle

Chester Raymond Young, ed. *Westward into Kentucky: The Narrative of Daniel Trabue*. Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1981.

Chester Raymond Young's carefully edited and fully annotated edition of Daniel Trabue's narrative gives us full access for the first time to an important and beguiling historical document, previously obscure. Both the narrative itself and Young's handling of it merit wide admiration.

Daniel Trabue, a Virginia native and Revolutionary veteran who helped to found Columbia, Kentucky, left at his death a 148-page eye-witness account of life in Virginia and Kentucky during the era of Western exploration and early settlement, principally the period 1770-1800. By a somewhat mysterious process his manuscript became a part of the collection of documents amassed by Lyman Copeland Draper in the mid-nineteenth century:

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later it settled into the custody of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. Trabue's narrative, written in 1827 in a folksy and eccentric idiom, is a retrospective recital of hardships, frontier violence, near escapes from Indians and weather, precarious entrepreneurs, and evangelical experience. Trabue himself was a scout and settler, peddler of spirits, witness to the British defeat at Yorktown, miller and merchant, magistrate and sheriff, and an ardent Baptist. Typically he selects events with narrative interest in which his own action is central. His picture of the merrymaking that followed Yorktown—and of his quick attempt to capitalize on it by procuring and re-tailing a wagonload of rum—is one example. His tale of the marauding Harpe gang, a vicious band of lawless whites whose twenty-odd victims included Trabue's own son, is another.

Editor Young, the chairman of History and Political Science at Cumberland College, handles the Trabue material in a way that is difficult to fault. His decision to retain eccentricities of style in the text seems exactly right. His full introduction to Trabue's life and times is an essay of great skill, couched in so literate and graceful a style as to excite wonder in this age. Almost fifty pages of dense appended notes further betray Young's extensive research and what appears to be his total acquaintance with (and affection for) his subject. One of his jobs as editor is to correct gently Trabue's sometimes skewed facts: "Trabue's memory played tricks on him . . .," "Trabue grossly underestimates the ratio . . .," or "Trabue errs . . .," Young will note. While we enjoy hearing the aging storyteller reconstruct his past, the historian in us appreciates Young's running comment and penchant for elaboration and accuracy. Young discusses his sources further in a "Biographical Essay," just before the Index. His book is handsomely made, the type is set in an appealing form with an unjustified right margin (helping to convey the texture of a journal), and a few ink-drawn illustrations are added. One sometimes wishes for a map locating the principal places in Virginia and Kentucky that Trabue mentions, but such a lack is hardly a flaw in this scrupulous work.

The usefulness of the book, aside from its considerable value as narrative entertainment, is in the perspective it gives us on our past. Trabue's picture of how people felt after defeating the British at Yorktown, for example, is worth several chapters of drier history:

But upon the hole their was a General Rejoicing among our people that we had taken Lord Corn Wallis and Talton, and their seemed to exzist a perticular friendship one to another. All seem to be like brothers one to a nother (p. 124).

As Young points out, Trabue's spellings and idioms seem important as a record of tendencies in frontier language. His experiences as scout, soldier, businessman, and civic leader are no doubt paradigms of larger patterns. Historians of religions will find Trabue's account of his Huguenot heritage and of his own conversion (and Young's discussion, too, of the "Campbellite" schism) interesting. Kentuckians, especially, will get from the book a sharpened sense of their frontier heritage.

Like the heroes of certain matter-of-fact novels, Daniel Trabue emerges through the powers and tricks of language as a larger-than-life figure around whom his world seems to center. Thus, he modifies—but also reinforces in our minds—the myth of the American pioneer.

Neil Graves

Thomas Daniel and John J. Hindle, eds. *The Republic of Letters in America: The Correspondence of John Peale Bishop and Allen Tate*. Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1981.

Allen Tate is indisputably one of the important men of letters of the twentieth century. There is hardly an area of literary activity in which he did not excel. He was throughout his life biographer, social critic, essayist, novelist, short story writer, editor, excellent poet, and superb literary critic. Ultimately, however, it may be Tate's complete devotion to, as he calls it, the "Republic of Letters" that will establish his reputation in American literature. Early in his career he consciously attempted to "establish a 'Republic of Letters in the Modern World' by unifying writers and would-be writers around the concept that they composed a community set against an alien world . . . The poetic community has the dual function of making the world aware of the cultural crisis it faces and of preserving the health and vitality of the language." In order to develop his "poetic community" Tate spent a large part of his life encouraging, prodding, cajoling his fellow writers in their efforts to create a literature that would overcome the "dissociation of sensibility" which he thought was the dominant cultural phenomenon of his age. In thousands of letters to almost all of the prominent writers of the century, Tate expounded on the necessity for writers to band together. He defended Ezra Pound not because he agreed with Pound's politics, which he certainly didn't, but rather because, "I have no direct personal obligation to Pound, but I don't want him shot. I don't want a poet martyr." Perhaps nowhere is Tate's dedication to poets and poetry more clearly revealed, however, than in his correspondence with John Peale Bishop.

Tate had known Bishop casually since 1925, but their relationship dates from an evening in 1928 when Tate and Robert Penn Warren met Bishop in Paris for a night of celebration in Bishop's favorite cafes. Responding to their request, Bishop read selections from his poems, and their complimentary attitudes stimulated him as no other criticism had. In a letter to Tate some five years later, he wrote:

Do you remember the evening in the Rue Mignard which you and Warren spent with me over a bottle of Scotch? Well, it was probably pleasant enough and casual enough for you both. But it was from that evening, from the comments that you two made on the verses I most shyly showed you that I conceived that it might still be possible for me to make a place for myself as a poet. I do not think even you, who have been so much in my intimacy since, can know upon what despair and forlornness your words came. The confidence I had had in youth was gone with youth. I saw myself with little done and

that little had not only had no recognition that I was aware of, but I had almost convinced myself that it deserved none.

It is possible that Bishop was exaggerating in this letter and that he would have written his fine fiction and poetry without Tate's help, but the letters do reveal Tate's constant aid and criticism of most of Bishop's work. Commenting specifically on *Act of Darkness*, for instance, Tate writes:

There are no great changes that I thought necessary. In your letters this summer you spoke a lot of possible cutting in the first part of the book. You surely have done it already; I don't see how you could drop large sections, or small ones, in Book I . . . I have one other major criticism, however, and that is the character of Miss Lillian. She is absolutely the only character who doesn't come off beautifully. I think she is a little overdone.

But the critical comments do not come from only one side. Bishop contributes equally astute commentary on Tate's poetry. Writing on "Seasonal Confessions" (latter changed to "Seasons of the Soul") he states:

'Seasonal Confessions' is superb—one of your best poems ever. I agree with you that the rhyme scheme is a good one for a long poem. It seems at the end of each stanza to stop only for another breath before going beautifully on.

I am going to make a few comments. I don't like the *brown* ceiling. You have kept the rest of the poem in tones of gray, with an occasional accent of blue. So the brown disturbs me simply as color and in any case doesn't seem to me to be the decisive epithet. III 3: Not inside. say rather hers was nor living nor dead. IV 4. I think a comma after *it*. IV 9. I would rather see aged instead of old, or aging, or some other dissyllable. VI 6. I wonder if day clothes would not convey the same literal meaning and have a more powerful implication.

The correspondence between Tate and Bishop was from July 1929 until March 1944. Their letters do not reveal just the individual technical criticism of each other's work, but touch on many of the literary and social problems and the writers involved in that turbulent era. Indeed, one of the wonders of both of their careers is the wide range of literary people with whom they were intimately acquainted. From Dos Passos to Edmund Wilson, from Archibald MacLeish to William Faulkner, Tate and Bishop were familiar with them all, and their correspondence is liberally, and often wittily, sprinkled with allusions to their contemporaries. For instance, Tate on Wilson and T.S. Eliot: "Edmund's going over to communism is as sad as Eliot's passage to Christianity. Why don't they, if they must embrace a creed, take an enriching one?" And this scathing statement on Faulkner's treatment of some of his characters:

Faulkner's judgement of his Mississippians is sound in so far as he judges them not as New Englanders or Europeans, manques, but always as Southerners, acting within the

Southern scheme of things. They fail to measure up to their own conception of themselves—horribly and cruelly they fail—but this is not the full force of his horror in considering them. He seems to hate them as human beings, and that not because they fall below his own conception of human nobility. Rather he rages at some essentially human trait in them—above all that they are not perfectly intelligent and that their sexual activities are not pursued on some high and impossibly pure plane. There is, as one of his French critics said, a center of bad idealism there.

One could go on indefinitely, for the range of the subject matter in the letters is almost limitless. This from Bishop on Christianity:

I have occasionally meditated on what it was that Christianity freed men from. Certainly, in the beginning, it must have come as a great, supreme relief to have everything denied which up to that time men had painfully recognized as directing their lives. The fatality of character was opposed with the doctrine of grace, the decaying influence, the irrevocableness of Time by the doctrine of immortality (also I suppose in the beginning by the New Heaven and the New Earth) finally, the myth of Christ, born of a virgin and made one of the Trinity, assails the identity of numbers and the law of cause-effect. With the decay of Christianity, we are once more faced with these same realistic fates whom, you are kind enough to say, I have realized as (almost) pure vision.

Young and Hindle have done an excellent job in editing these letters. They have arranged them in a simple chronological order with only enough scholarly apparatus to insure the reader a sufficient context for understanding. The emendations are quite rare (in brackets) and when a word in the manuscript is illegible, they say so rather than attempting their own interpretation. Footnotes are sparse, used primarily to identify titles and sometimes obscure persons, and are conveniently placed at the end of each letter. Indeed, both the editors and The University Press of Kentucky are to be congratulated for a superb edition of this important and excellent correspondence. But let Bishop have the final word. In answer to Tate's suggestion that perhaps they should deposit their letters at Princeton so that in the future others could "examine the curious record of two friends and poets who always managed to keep at least one foot on the ground . . ." Bishop replies:

I think our correspondence might eventually find its way into the Princeton archives. But I don't like to give up my end as yet. There's nothing like old letters to recall the feel of times that are gone. I like from time to time to take yours out and peruse them, not only for the virtues they contain, but for the magic in them to give me myself again.

Frank Windham

Christopher Clausen, *The Place of Poetry*.
Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1981.

The Place of Poetry is a lucidly written book and a pleasure to read, summarizing as it does the difficulties poets faced when the intellectual cast of the western mind froze itself in scientific materialism and determinism. But Dr. Clausen limits himself too narrowly, I think, to the scientific mentality as the adversary of the poet, excluding the effects of egalitarian idealism and the widening but tenuous growth of literacy among the lower classes in the nineteenth century. He limits himself to the thought that, because poetry of that century was both revolutionary and groping for a new definition of human values, it was defensive; and limits himself too severely by ignoring altogether the assaults on the new ruling class, the bourgeois, the arbiter of taste in poetry as in everything else, and the social, political, and existential results of that assault.

Ignoring these effects, he cannot, I think, adequately explain why the poet in this century is in such confusion, since a reaction to the scientific mentality in the twentieth century is itself an anachronism, since egalitarianism has become either a totalitarian or bureaucratic mass society, since literacy has become technocratic jargon, since the anti-bourgeois revolution has become autogenocide. For poets or any thinking, feeling persons, the twentieth century is the first age during which global consciousness impinges almost intolerably on their individuality, the first age which faces the possible extermination of itself in a nuclear war, the first to glimpse its limitation ecologically, the first to suffer existentially as mankind rather than as individuals, the first to realize the horror of global conformity and the terror of proliferating nationalism, aping the super powers as Russia and the petty kingdoms in central Europe once aped the art and thought of France and England.

In short, the crisis for the poet in the twentieth century, which I think Dr. Clausen gives short shrift, has to do with scope of vision. Emily Dickinson, for example, was able to focus, in her eccentric way, the existential crisis concerning death and immortality; Whitman was able, in his egocentric way, to incorporate democratic idealism with the "kelson of creation", universal love. Eliot—and Dr. Clausen does mention that he was the spokesman of a civilization in despair—transcends Arnold and his personal love in "Dover Beach", finding in *The Wasteland* a sympathy and understanding commensurate with his vision of loss; but what of Stevens, who took Romantic individualism to its end point of solipsism and beyond?

No intelligent, sensitive reader in our century will profoundly respond to a contemporary poet unless he or she incorporates the complexities of the age, and not like Tennyson in his *In Memoriam*, in which the complexities are constricted to a rational, literalist presentation with a Hallam figure, dead literally and dead allegorically as a vague Christian hope. A reader will respond to someone like Sylvia Plath, perhaps, whose vision of terror is not ultimately personal but cultural, the Nazi at the center of our souls; or Roethke, whose sensitivity to nature often reflects its fragility and tenacity; or to "Howl", its imitation of Christ, masochistically and humorously presented to an America ignorant of the need for such imitation, The

American consciousness itself transformed into God, who forsakes, not so much the poet but the reality of suffering, so that the poet, in that apotheosis of rejection, transforms that rejection into personal redemption and love.

Dr. Clausen does indicate that the poet needs to reach beyond himself, that ideas have a place in poetry, and is aware that poetry is uniquely structured language, but he does not, I believe, make his suggestions quite as relevant as they might have been made.

Victor M. Depta

William Philliber, Clyde B. McCoy, and Harry C. Dillingham, eds. *The Invisible Minority: Urban Appalachians*. Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1981.

The Invisible Minority is an anthology of ten scholarly essays dealing who since 1950 have become a distinct ethnic minority in Urban North America. This group has often gone unrecognized as such. Over three million people have in the past thirty years migrated to the cities of the U.S. midwest, the south and the east from the Appalachian region. There have been some academic and popular studies of the Urban Appalachian but not too much public attention. Many popular impressions of this group have been very negative, based on stereotypes that have arisen in the popular mind. The problems facing Urban Appalachians have often gone ignored by people who normally express a great amount of concern for the welfare of other urban minorities.

The Invisible Minority is an anthology of ten scholarly essays dealing with this often-neglected group whom William Philliber calls unnoticed and unknown. The work is divided into three major sections: Appalachians as an ethnic minority, the migration of Appalachians to cities, and the attainments of Appalachians in the cities. In the first part arguments are made for regarding the urban Appalachians as an ethnic group, including the fact that negative ethnic jokes are told about them. In the second part, we find a study of the actual migration and its effect on both the cities settled in and the communities left behind. In the final part there are studies of how the Appalachians relate to occupational and economic situations in which they find themselves in the urban areas. Special attention is paid to the "ports of entry" and later dispersion of the Urban Appalachians.

The final paragraph presents the case very well for regarding and studying those of urban Appalachia as a significant minority group:

Although there are many facts that destroy most of the stereotypic myths concerning urban Appalachians, there is still an urgent need for more knowledge to address the remaining questions. At stake, ultimately, is the social welfare of many thousands of families who have not shared in the general success story of Appalachian migrants.

The Invisible Minority is written on a very scholarly level and can well complement books written on a more person-oriented and observational level. I feel this book has the capacity to be a standard for understanding the "invisible minority", the Urban Appalachians.

Bob Hayes

Sidney Saylor Farr. *Appalachian Women: An Annotated Bibliography*. Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1981.

Sidney Saylor Farr has done a fine job of annotating 1328 works written during the past 150 years about and/or by Appalachian women. Her bibliography includes biography, fiction, non-fiction, and folk material. It is a bibliography which can be read with pleasure.

There is pleasure, first of all, in the nice heft of 166 pages and the recognition that so many mountain women have been achievers in spite of their social and geographical restrictions.

There is a pleasure in seeing such a scholarly job done by a woman who is herself a native of Appalachia. Farr has been objective in including all kinds of works, not just those which represent her own favorable view of women. Her index is complete and useful. The entries are themselves conveniently arranged under subject headings. Each of the brief annotations gives a clear flavor of the work itself.

There is pleasure in the annotations because Farr has captured the sense of the power of these women. The Bibliography proves that they have had a voice in spite of insularity and lack of personal freedom.

And the ultimate pleasure of the book lies in the achievement of Farr. She has given easy access to a wealth of material for researchers interested in women's achievements or in the history of Appalachia.

Kellie Jones
