

Spring 1969
Midcontinent American Studies Association (MASA) Bulletin

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THE ANISFIELD-WOLF AWARD IN RACE RELATIONS: A very great honor has come to us with the selection of the book *The American Indian Today* as a winner for 1968 of the Anisfield-Wolf Award in Race Relations. The book, as many of you know, is a much re-edited and enlarged version of material which originally appeared as a special issue of this journal. The award goes once each year to one scholarly book and one belletristic book and consists of \$1500 for each.

In his letter to your editor, Ashley Montagu, chairman of the committee, says that in 1968 each of the awards has been divided between two books. He does not name the other book in the scholarly division.

The award committee is composed of Mr. Montague, Pearl Buck and Oscar Handlin. Nancy Oestreich Lurie, the co-editor of the book, and the editor have decided to distribute the prize money equally among all the contributors.

To our knowledge, the award has never before gone to an anthology, and it seems extraordinary that the committee expended the time and care necessary to recognize that this was not merely an assemblage of articles about Indians, but rather a painstakingly assembled and much re-edited and revised symposium. The editor has written to the members of the committee to express gratitude on behalf of his co-editor, the contributors and the *masj* staff.

The book will shortly be reissued in an inexpensive paperback format by Penguin Books. The announcement of the Anisfield-Wolf Award will be made formally in the *Saturday Review*, probably in April.

JULES ZANGER is the new literature man on our editorial board, and we welcome him cordially. Warren French's term has now expired. It is going to be hard to get used to the idea that Warren

is no longer on the staff. He was an exceedingly good editor—prompt, conscientious and helpful to authors.

The *Journal* as a matter of editorial policy tries to provide some services to contributors beyond a yes or no decision. Very good articles which are too specialized for us, for example, generally get praised in editors' comment sheets which the author is allowed to see and to use in resubmitting his paper to other periodicals. The author of a solid piece of research who fails, in our eyes, to see the real significance of his work, is generally asked to try his hand at interpreting his contribution; his revised essay then gets a second round with our readers. On revised and resubmitted articles, we guarantee authors the *same* set of readers. (Editors of university presses please take note! No practice causes more resentment than encouraging an author to revise and resubmit according to criteria developed by one set of consultants, and then, when he has put in another year's work on his manuscript, sending it off to three new men, who, often as not, ask that it be revised back to something like its original form.)

Mr. French was, it seemed to us, a contributor's advocate, frequently covering pages with detailed and helpful comments, in several special cases even helping authors with style and organization. It is not clear where he found the time: these have been fruitful years in his own scholarship, and he is chairman of a large department as well. Now that he is editor *emeritus*, we hope his presence on *masj* will continue to be felt.

MASA'S IN ST. LOUIS, LOUIS, MASA ISN'T SQUARE: Here is the program for the 14th annual meeting of the Midcontinent American Studies Association at St. Louis University on Saturday, March 29, 1969:

Panel Discussion: The Changes in American Churches.

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Chairman: Richard Smith, School of Divinity, St. Louis University.

Quaker Attitudes Toward Slavery. Robert Corrigan, American Civilization Program, University of Iowa.

The Mischief-Making Man-of-War. Linda McKee, Department of History, Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville, Illinois.

Presidential Address: Some Aspects of Thoreau's Ethics. Alexander C. Kern, American Civilization, University of Iowa.

This is the first time in recorded memory that *masj* has been put to bed before the annual spring meeting, so there is no way to include the usual gossip about Hertz Rent-A-Cars exploding on the way to the meeting, glorious local entertainment provided after the Executive Board Meeting on Friday night, good-looking graduate women, Vertigo Conferences next door and so forth. Undoubtedly by the time you read this such things will have been talked about; undoubtedly the papers will have been stellar, and conversation stimulating.

CONVENTION PAPERS: The present issue contains a number of articles which, in somewhat different form, were originally given as papers at the first annual meeting of the American Studies Association in Kansas City in October, 1967: Jay Gurian, "American Studies and the Creative Present"; Russel B. Nye, "Changes in Twentieth-Century Rural Society"; Elmer F. Suderman, "Fiction and Mennonite Life"; Kenneth Kinnamon, "The Pastoral Impulse in Richard Wright"; and Raven I. McDavid, Jr., "The Language of the City."

ABSTRACTS: Alexander S. Birkos, the editor of abstracts publications for the American Bibliographical Center of Clio Press, writes to remind us that "for a number of years your publication has been abstracted regularly in *Historical Abstracts* and *America: History and Life*. . . . May I encourage you to consider publishing a notice of this type in your *Journal*." Now we have done it.

NATIONAL ASA MEETING: There will in fact be a second national meeting of the American Studies Association, in Toledo, Ohio, from October 30 to November 1, 1969. Details are available from Ray Browne, English, Bowling Green University, Bowling Green, Ohio 43402.

Graduate and undergraduate students get free housing. The preliminary program looks good; Ray Browne is an ace conference-runner. Moreover, Toledo has a fine art museum.

MASA'S IN DE COLD, COLD NORTH: It now seems quite likely that the proposed joint meeting of the Midcontinent American Studies Association and the American Studies Association of Minnesota and the Dakotas will take place in the Spring of 1970, in Omaha, Nebraska. MASA is sending a representative to the northlands for the ASAMD 1969 meeting to make further arrangements. Omaha has been selected as a convenient in-between location, and the University of Nebraska at Omaha will be the host institution, as plans now stand.

DOING WELL BY DOING GOOD: Reaction to the new *masj* format has been most enthusiastic, and we are gratified. Circulation, as we said in our last number, is up markedly, but we still do not see how we are going to be able to meet costs. A suggestion which might be pedagogically useful to you, and which we have followed with great success at the University of Kansas, would help us considerably if it matches your needs: people teaching introductory courses in American Studies are often at a loss to illustrate to their students, early in the semester, the kinds of work which American Studies people do. We've found that adopting a single issue of the *Journal*—not one of the special issues but rather a general one, dealing with a wide range of American issues—is an effective way to demonstrate the range, richness, methodologies and above all, the utility of American Studies scholarship. Feedback indicates that while one would be reluctant to expose students immediately to a general issue of most scholarly publications, because the articles are liable to be too specialized, *masj* is immediately attractive and interesting. The issues raised by the articles in a given number of the *Journal* also invariably turn out to be relevant to other work throughout the course.

If the idea sounds attractive to you—and we urge you to consider it seriously—your bookstore can order copies at the usual textbook discount directly from our business office at Parkville, Missouri. We have adequate quantities of all general issues.

We would like to hear from those who have made use of the *Journal* this way.

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The issue currently in use in this manner at the University of Kansas is the Spring, 1967, number. Students were given a lecture on the nature of issues which concern American Studies scholars, and asked as they read each article to consider, among other things, what good its findings would be to a student of the culture. Since that's essentially the same questions which our editors ask in evaluating articles, the introduction to American Studies concepts *should* go well in class, as it has in fact each time we've tried it.

A BLACK ISSUE: Robert Hemenway of the Coe School of American Studies, the University of Wyoming, Laramie, Wyo-

ming 82070, will be added to the board of editors of the *Midcontinent American Studies Journal* to serve as guest editorial consultant for a projected issue on black culture in America. He and your editor are currently shipping back and forth successive revisions of the prospectus for the issue. Professor Norman Yetman of the American Studies Program at the University of Kansas has also offered his services on an informal basis to lend a hand with articles which are close to his specialty (the Negro personality). Prospective contributors may write either to Professor Hemenway or to the editor. The prospectus should be ready by the time this issue reaches you.

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WITH THIS ISSUE we welcome to the editorial board two new members, Robert W. Schneider, Northern Illinois University, and Norman R. Yetman, the University of Kansas. Hoary old readers of the *Journal* will remember two distinguished articles which Professor Schneider provided us early in our publishing career, "Stephen Crane and the Drama of Transition: A Study in Historical Continuity" (II, 1) and "Frank Norris: The Naturalist as Victorian" (III, 1). Professor Schneider replaces Richard Kirkendall as reader in history. Professor Kirkendall, with the added crush of responsibility of a department chairmanship on his back, had asked to be relieved of his duties as soon as a suitable successor could be found. We have worked Dick hard; his judgments have always seemed to us sound and his responses prompt. He has offered to continue to serve informally when an extra hand is needed, an offer we gratefully accept. Professor Yetman's appointment does not represent the replacement of one of our four readers; rather, it represents an expansion of the editorial board. It may be that in the future we will want to modify the arbitrary scheme of editorial categories we have heretofore used—history, social sciences, literature, other arts—and make increased use, instead, of people whose prime field is American Studies itself. Professor Yetman's duties will be a trifle more general than those of the other readers; we are considering redesigning our book review section, and he is to have a major part in that process and in whatever new policy we decide upon. His title will be Associate Editor, and his term of office indefinite.

SPEAKING OF REVIEWS: It would be good to know how readers feel. We have tried, in our first ten years, to do two things in our review section. On the one hand, we have provided a large number of brief reviews of specialized books of various sorts. There has been no attempt to determine whether these were really "American Studies books" in the sense

that they were interdisciplinary, focused on the culture concept or anything of the sort. Our intention was simply to provide an account of new works in the various disciplines which deal with the American experience in order to brief our readers on what's going on. Behind this policy is the idea that one of the functions of the *Journal* and of American Studies in general is to provide a place in which the live generalizations of men in a number of different fields can be pooled, so that a man working in any area of U.S. culture has access, once he leaves the area of his own most intense competence, to ideas more recent than those which were summarized for him in his days in graduate school. We tell the authors of these brief reviews simply to indicate the major hypotheses of the books under review and to make an evaluation of the quality of the scholarship.

A second kind of review, larger in scope, has similar intentions. We have used essay reviews when it has become obvious to us that a major amount of work has been done in a given area, and that an over-all summary and critique of developments would be useful to specialists in other fields and to culturalists in general. Examples of this type of review appeared most recently in the Fall 1968 issue (IX, 2), with Douglas Y. Thorson's "Keynes and Current Economics," and Robert Detweiler's "Religion and Literature in Recent American Scholarship."

We have generally been praised for our book review policies, but a number of factors lead us to reconsider them. For one thing, there is an increasing number of works produced by American Studies scholars, by people, that is, whose prime commitment is to American Studies as a field, and not to a traditional discipline. Perhaps most of our attention should go to their works, and we should leave books in history, political science, literature and so forth to journals in those fields. Certainly we cannot hope to cover all or

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even most of the books which appear in those different disciplines. Or perhaps we should stop dealing with individual works entirely and publish only essay reviews covering marked tendencies evidenced by the appearance, within a couple of years, of a flock of new works. Or, we could retain the idea of numerous short reviews, adding the further note of instruction to our reviewers that we will publish reviews only if their authors succeed in convincing us that the books in question provide evidence relevant to some major cultural hypothesis. This would not mean that we would never again run a review of a book like *George Yeardley, Governor of Virginia* ("At last," wrote our whimsical reviewer, "we have a book-length study of George Yeardley"). It would mean, though, that we would never review such a book unless our reviewer could convince us that it had relevance to some hypothesis large enough to transcend its apparently limited subject matter.

Since the review section is intended to be a service for our readers, we would like comments on how it can be made most useful.

CLASSROOM ADOPTIONS: our suggestion in a recent MASA Bulletin that readers who teach American Studies courses might make use of the *Journal* in the classroom brought several inquiries which may be summarized as follows: It's clear enough how one would use an issue of the *Journal* devoted to a single topic as a textbook in a classroom, but what good is a general issue to the teacher? Let's use Vol. VIII, No. 1 to answer these queries. The contents of that issue are as follows: "Urban League Adjustments to the 'Negro Revolution': A Chicago Study"; "The Challenge of Leisure to the Cult of Work"; "Hamilton and the Historians: The Economic Program in Retrospect"; "*The Dial, The Little Review* and the New Movement"; "The Artist as Censor: J. P. Donleavy and *The Ginger Man*"; "Much Ado About John Brougham and Jim Fisk"; and "Europe in American Historical Romances, 1890-1910."

Any American Studies course ought to deal most basically with methods of investigation. Even were Arvarh Strickland's article on the Urban League in Chicago of no special relevance to a class (that's hard to imagine), it would still be valuable in demonstrating that one way to get at a large-scale problem is to

isolate a sector of it and attack it in depth. Any principles discovered in an investigation of a history of one notable civil rights organization in one city might be applicable more broadly. And if, to one's attack upon a specialized problem, one brings a significant hypothesis to test, that relevance will almost be assured. Mr. Strickland's paper is a model of such investigation. He carefully defines the area, period and organization to be examined, and quotes Whitney Young in order to provide a hypothetical framework for testing his data. Young speaks of a "new and real revolution of expectation which has become internalized in practically every Negro citizen." Mr. Strickland suggests, with careful and accurate qualifications, that the experiences which he describes in Chicago in many ways involve the same pressures which other groups have undergone elsewhere. Even a student totally unconcerned with the nature of the Black revolution and the gradual transformation of the civil rights movement into something else, could be expected to learn something, in other words, about the methodology of social investigation. And certainly it would do him no harm to become familiar with an interesting sociological idea such as relative deprivation, which he should find an interesting tool, useful in handling other phenomena in the American historical experience.

R. C. Linstromberg's article on leisure can be taught either for its overt content—it is a very good piece of intellectual history—or on a rather more basic cultural level. We are dealing here with a concept so basic to us, indeed, that we seldom get the distance from it to see that it is peculiar. We have generally operated on the assumption that as a civilization becomes technologically more advanced, it produces for its citizens more leisure time, which in turn makes possible rapid advancement in certain artistic, scientific and cultural pursuits. The entire concept is questionable. A colleague who recently returned from spending a year living with Australian aborigines reports that these people, practically devoid of technology, seem to an outside observer to be extraordinarily leisured. Indeed, their life pattern seems so steady in its pace that it is difficult to separate "leisure" from other aspects of human behavior. That's exactly the point, of course: western society, with its characteristic departmentalization, wants to divide

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"living" into a number of categories. Many traditional cultures do not. So that beyond Linstromberg's very useful explanation of the challenge of the idea of leisure to the equally western categories involving work, productivity, the Protestant ethic and so forth, lie the author's own assumptions; we can look at his own categories as themselves products of a cultural situation of just the sort that it is very difficult for people within the culture to see. My American Indian students, for example, would not feel that sitting around drinking beer with a bunch of relatives came under the heading "leisure." They would call it something like "being with kin," which they would see as an important part of "living"; to be deprived of it would be in a very real sense "not living."

Why should students be concerned with Fred Moramarco's historiographical study of Hamilton? Beyond what they might learn about the nature of history or the nature of Hamilton—neither inconsequential—there is the matter of national self-consciousness. It is important for them to see scholars themselves as products of a culture, and historiography as a branch of intellectual history. What historians in a given period are doing with the past is significant not only for the past, but for the needs of the present. It is good for students in any area of American Studies to know how strongly motivated has been "the search for a usable past."

But then, what of a specialized article such as Nick Joost's piece on the *Dial* and the *Little Review*? Beyond the rather interesting details Mr. Joost discusses, there lies a very basic matter. In the quarrel between the two magazines, and for that matter, in the author's analysis of it, the idea that it is good to support the fine arts is never challenged. The concept is related to the one discussed in the article on leisure. There is a practically unchallenged (indeed, one of my students calls it "sacred") idea in our culture that the quality of our civilization is to be judged by the quality of its arts and of its intellectual life. Most of us in the universities, indeed, are professionally committed to the idea. We should see, and make our students see, that whatever its merits, it is a peculiarly western idea. In many other cultures, it is impossible to separate "the arts" from other areas of human activity. When the Navajo sand painter produces one of his beautiful products, he is not producing merely a work of

art. Typically, he might be trying to cure a sick child. What he is doing is at once science, magic, religion and art, and the "art content" cannot be separated from the others. This is not to say that what we do characteristically in our "elite arts" is artificial, false or bad. But it is different, and the difference is basic to the way we understand the world. This is to say that it is cultural, that it involves a basic value and that it is a proper concern for American Studies.

A similar point can be made in Bob Corrigan's examination of how J. P. Donleavy censored his own novel. Corrigan makes it clear that he strongly disapproves of the pressures upon Donleavy, as we all must. But if we examine the reasons behind our beliefs, we will find that we are again dealing with this notion of the sacredness of art as a separate and discrete human activity, which somehow confers merit on the culture which produces it. Corrigan's article is valuable also, in that it takes a social scientific hypothesis (in this case, the conclusions of the Kinsey Report) and tries them out in a specific instance, to see how close this artist's perception of what one could and could not get away with match the sexual fears and preconceptions of given socio-economic classes in the population.

This brings us to David Hawes' article about the relationship between the theatrical figure John Brougham and the unscrupulous financier Jim Fisk. Material of this sort is fun to teach for its own sake, of course, and we are aware that for many people American Studies simply means an anecdotal collection of material of this sort which is felt to be "colorful" in that it illustrates, depending upon one's point of view and nature of the material, "the good old days" or "the bad old days." In point of fact, however, much more can be done with it. If we take as a starting point an over-simple hypothesis, but one in which all culturalists essentially believe, namely, that close examination of any historical event, artifact or institution in our culture will ultimately be expressive of our value system, I think we will see what can be done with a study of this type. It deals with the relationship between "art," business and business corruption. It is tempting to stop at what might be called the first level, and simply conclude that the relationship between fine art and not-so-fine business corrupts art; that a business environment, in other words, is

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hostile to the arts. But there is a deeper level beneath this which we can get to through the value assumptions of the author and through our own reactions. Our hostility to Fisk's motives and intentions and our feeling that Brougham should have been treated differently show that we and the author both believe in something which might loosely be labeled as "fair play." Also present is the same value we already noticed in our examination of the *Dial* controversy and the article on the censorship of a novel, namely that the fine arts are something it is good to have, that a meritorious attitude to hold is that the arts ought to be prosperous, free and plentiful. This, again, seems so essentially "true" to us that we may be quite certain that it is a cultural and not merely a rational attitude.

Robert Ward's article, "Europe in American Historical Romance, 1890-1910," examines the manner in which given European countries were taken to be characteristic of given psychological traits. It is useful, first, in its own terms, as an illustration of the way in which the scholar can discover how people visualize the world and their relationship to it. But the author provides a speculative hypothesis which goes even further. He would have us consider "the possibility that the popularity of these romances with foreign settings reflects a shift of

vision in the United States"; he feels that we moved from "an aggressively hostile chauvinism" to an active interest in the rest of the world, and relates this to such phenomenon as the resolution in 1899 by the committee of seven of the American Historical Association to encourage far more teaching of European history in the schools, and Bessie L. Pierce's observation that there was "an appreciable broadening of outlook in this country" after 1890.

We have been terribly unfair to these articles in these brief statements about what can be done with them in the classroom, but we would hope that this brief discussion is sufficiently intriguing to encourage others to try their hand at exposing students directly to good recent American Studies scholarship. It is hard to conceive of an American Studies course which does not deal with some of these approaches; if the articles did no more than provide students with models of how to define a problem, organize one's investigation of it, and produce a meaningful term paper, they would be worth using. But in point of fact they do much more than that, and besides, as we said when we first made the suggestion that not only special issues of the *Journal*, but our general issues as well, would work well in the classroom, the *Journal* very badly needs the income which these classroom adoptions provide. —SGL