

as is so often the case with the kinds of analysis and quantification which social science seems to demand, much of the mystery and majesty of the sun dance is reduced to the merely prosaic. Maps, photographs, tables, and the like only serve as ironic commentary on a remnant ceremony, a living ritual now an inked relic. In large part this is not so much attributable to the inadequacies of anthropological method as to the static quality of an excessively objectified prose style, and in the final analysis to the medium of print, of books. If the best book is one which allows us to transcend it, into living history, then *The Shoshoni-Crow Sun Dance* is ultimately frustrating and disappointing.

It is another irony, in this respect, that Voget sees his book as a testimony to a people who, in adapting the past to the present, have in a sense transcended their own "doomed" history. In a sense, the mere codification of that noble process, however, underscores its futility.

Professor Voget is, admittedly, thorough in his tracing of how the Crow peoples adapted the Wind River Shoshoni sun dance. In seven no-nonsense chapters, Voget explains his understanding of Crow history, culture, and society; zooms in on the traditional Crow sun dance; comments on how Shoshoni leaders like Pablo Juan Truhajo were responsible for the assimilation of Crow culture; and offers an exposition on the details and symbolism of the combined Shoshoni-Crow sun dance.

It is all very informative and in its way interesting. It is also lifeless. And most readers will probably yearn to actually see the sun dance, to imagine this dramatization of a culture's courageous, almost desperate attempt to avoid deicide, to see and wonder, rather than to read and "know." To jarringly but perhaps appropriately paraphrase Hamlet, there is more, much more to Shoshoni-Crow culture and ceremony than can be dreamed of or explained in such printed philosophies.

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Daniel Walden, ed. *Twentieth-Century American-Jewish Fiction Writers*. Dictionary of Literary Biography, Vol. 28. (Detroit: Gale Research Company, 1984) xv, 367 pp., \$80.00.

During the last several years, the rapidly appearing volumes of the Dictionary of Literary Biography, particularly such specialized volumes as *American Writers in Paris, 1920-1929* and *American Realists and Naturalists*, have become an important tool of my college library's

reference section for American literature undergraduate students. Especially valuable is this new *DLB* for those of us who teach either a general multi-ethnic American literature or a specialized Jewish-American or Yiddish-American literature course. The fifty-one individual essays deal with all of the giants, including Bellow, Malamud, Doctorow, Mailer, Heller, and Roth as well as the much less well-known Gerald Green, Jay Neugeboren and Susan Fromberg Schaeffer. Daniel Walden, in an eminently sensible "Foreword," indicates that his method of selection was based on choosing those who wrote about the Jewish-American experience or whose work as shaped by "their Jewish cultural environment." He declares that "the importance of the American-Jewish experience in shaping a writer's fictional world...has been crucial in my determination to include that author." His choices have been very good; all major writers are included. Beyond those, of course, each of us would pick and choose with wide variations; I see Walden's choices as middle of the road, considering the hundreds of productive writers across the cultural and political spectrum who are potential entrants to this volume.

I have found that this volume, like others of the *DLB* series, has specific values, especially at an undergraduate institution. The book is useful as a first-place-to-go for specific authors, because it offers basic, accurate information in a well-packaged, attractive format. It is easy to be elitist about an academic discipline, but the current level of knowledge of many of our students who enter college today is frequently so low and so lobotomized that these handsome books are necessary for the pleasure of simply opening and browsing through; this is partly because the *DLB* advisory board, in addition to demanding large typography, has developed a sensible illustration policy concerning what it calls "the iconography of literature." The board asserts that "just as an author is influenced by his surroundings, so is the reader's understanding of the author enhanced by a knowledge of his environment." Therefore, the *DLB* volumes feature photographs and paintings, title pages in facsimile, and pages of original manuscripts for virtually all authors, major and minor.

Further, for each author an introductory bibliography lists all of the major works and a selection of the more important minor items. At the end of each essay is an updated and selective listing of interviews, bibliographies, references, and papers. This, too, gives the student not only a valuable overview and brief critical commentary, but also a source to begin a more in-depth, focused analysis of some specialized authorial or thematic problem.

Also, the choice of scholars to write each essay has been well made. For the Saul Bellow entry Keith Opdahl, well-known Bellow scholar, writes an essay of fourteen pages delineating the crucial events of Bellow's life and offering insightful critiques of his major novels. This essay is

sensible in indicating dominant themes and sensitive in its analysis of Bellow's artistic techniques. A thoroughly valuable introduction to the author's work, it is dignified, serious, and informed. While the level of achievement of the scholars is uniformly high, special mention might be made of Andrew Gordon's clear summation of Norman Mailer's recent work, Leslie Field on Bernard Malamud, Diane Cole on Cynthia Ozick, Bonnie Lyons on Henry Roth, and Sanford Pinsker on Philip Roth. Further, the relative space devoted to each author is reasonably apportioned.

One of the drawbacks of the series lies in the planning of these volumes; there are twenty-eight subject-oriented volumes, four documentary series volumes, and four yearbooks. To get a full view of Saul Bellow, then, the student must check, in addition to this volume, *DLB 2; DLB Yearbook: 1982*, and *DLB: Documentary Series 3*. That is somewhat cumbersome, but at least the student is alerted at the beginning of each essay concerning these other references. For multi-ethnic literature undergraduate courses, this book is indispensable.

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Roberta Hill Whiteman. *Star Quilt*. (Minneapolis: Holy Cow! Press, 1984) 79 pp., \$13.00, \$6.95 paper.

The central image of this collection of Roberta Hill Whiteman's poetry is that of a handmade gift sewn to last for generations. In an interview in *Contact II*, Whiteman says that a star quilt helps people, perhaps as a protector of a person seeking a vision. The title poem "Star Quilt" sets the tone and themes for the book, introducing the parallelism between makers of quilts and makers of poems.

Whiteman, an Oneida, of the Granite People, is interested in the poet's relationship to her people, and, in particular, the nature of the task of writing, especially in a culture that is still carried by oral tradition. She reveals her tribal heritage not so much in descriptions of communal gatherings as in her detailed observations of the natural world. The prevailing tone of her poems to family and friends is one of a meditative, musical sadness. Included among poems to parents, lovers and children are elegies for close friends or elders who have passed on. The themes which emerge from these personal relationships revolve around illusion,