

The United States has taken out the wrong parts of the Cold War apparatus. Washington has been cutting back elements of its own strength, rather than of the strength of others. Nothing could be more dangerous than continued American pressure on Japan to increase its navy, and to play a larger role in world affairs. With the waning of the Soviet threat, the United States no longer has an interest in a stronger and more active Japan.

The way for a country to deter war is to become so strong that no one dares to challenge it. For a powerful America to regain economic preeminence, it may be necessary to continue to make Japan pay tribute to Washington by supporting policies that are not in Tokyo's interests, as in the case of the Gulf War. The most important thing is to keep the balance of power tilted towards America.

Japan has always wanted to dominate the Pacific and thus to control its own destiny, but it discovered in 1945 that the price for such ambition could be prohibitive. Japan underestimated American resolve in 1941. Washington should never again allow Tokyo to believe it can successfully move against American interests.

*William R. Hawkins writes from Knoxville, Tennessee.*

## Trending West

by *Gregory McNamee*

### Prose & Poetry of the American West

Edited by *James C. Work*  
Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press; 733 pp., \$25.00

“Of making many books there is no end,” Ecclesiastes has it. Like the endless streams of cat-cartoon and celebrity workout books, the flow of books factual or fictional about the American West seems not only interminable but ever-increasing. The region has long been a popular setting for a great mass of pulp fiction, to which hundreds of new titles are added yearly. As writers of higher seriousness abandon the artificial canyons of New York for such sundry locales as southern Arizona and western Montana, not to mention Hollywood and even Texas, a host of books with promise to endure has been joined to what was as recently as two decades ago a very small body of worthwhile writing indeed.

Where there is a literature there is an anthologist, and with the increase of writing from the American West there has been an increase in collections purporting to represent it. In the last few years there have been serviceable

gatherings like Russell Martin and Marc Barasch's *Writers of the Purple Sage* (Penguin Books), a few dogs like Alex Blackburn's *The Interior Country* (Swallow Press), and a slew of in-betweens. James C. Work's sensibly named *Prose & Poetry of the American West* makes all but Russell and Barasch's collection redundant, and is one of the better-conceived anthologies of American writing of any kind.

Given an abundance of high-quality material—and in this instance there is no shortage of good writing on the American West, buried though it may be under a mudslide of dime-store novels—the anthologist's chief problem is organization. Mr. Work undoubtedly considered many schemes before arriving at the frame of his book, an arguable chronological division of the literature into four major eras.

The editor places the first, “The Emergence Period,” in the years 1540-1832, and he chooses as his exemplars, among other items, a sequence of Native American emergence myths, an account by the conquistador Pedro de Castañeda (a less gifted chronicler than his later compatriots Escalante and Garcés), and passages from the always stirring journals of Lewis and Clark. The section closes with Walt Whitman's lovely ode “Pioneers! O Pioneers!” Here Mr. Work's division breaks down, for by his own logic Whitman's well-known poem belongs somewhere near the middle of his next section, “The Mythopoeic Period (1833-89),” which showcases selections from Whitman's contemporaries Mark Twain, Bret Harte, and John Wesley Powell.

That section also introduces the work of early women writers like the quirky, often brilliant Mary Austin, whose *Land of Little Rain* and *The Land of Journeys' Ending* remain benchmarks of Southwestern writing; Helen Hunt Jackson, whose romantic novel *Ramona* (1884) introduced New England literary sensibilities to southern California; and Willa Cather, who ranks among the greatest Western writers, period. It is regrettable that Mr. Work could not have found room in his already overstuffed collection for something by Martha Summerhayes, a fine memoirist, but at least he had the foresight to omit an appearance by Mabel Dodge Luhan, who cultivated

## LIBERAL ARTS



### CULTURAL DIVERSITY AT THE IVY LEAGUE

Two Ethiopian women who came to America to study physics at Dartmouth College were killed last June by a fellow Ethiopian who struck them repeatedly with an ax. Haileselassie Girmay, a 32-year-old friend of the victims and an Ethiopian-born geology teacher at a Swedish university, was arrested at the apartment where the bodies were found. He was reportedly staying with the women while he visited. These are the first murders in the Ivy League college community in more than fifty years.

the arts of decadence and class snobbery in northern New Mexico, where they flourish today.

At heart, *mythopoesis* simply means the creation of a story, but in Mr. Work's usage it suggests the formation of a canon. There are a few cracks in the argument—is Luther Standing Bear, for example, to be reckoned as a writer in the same way as John Muir and Stephen Crane? Such questions go unanswered in the interests of cultural inclusiveness, and the editor might have taken a bit more time to explain why it is that one should read (as indeed anyone with an interest in Western writing should) the work of Isabella Bird and Sharlot Hall, the latter being Arizona's first territorial historian (as well as, although Mr. Work does not address the issue, one of the West's most vocal and virulent racists).

Mr. Work continues his canon-building theme with his third section, "The Neomythic Period (1890-1914)," offering such writers as Wallace Stegner (who properly belongs next to Edward Abbey, figuring here in the closing section, "The Neowestern Period," as one of the West's great iconoclasts), the late A.B. Guthrie, Wright Morris, Mari Sandoz, Frank Waters, and John Steinbeck, each of whom contributed to the development of a truly Western literature. In terms of literary quality, this is the best section of the book. Among its many pleasant surprises is the inclusion of Dorothy Johnson's superb short story "The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance," a masterwork of compression that is today known mostly through John Ford's film adaptation.

Mr. Work closes with selections from Ann Zwinger, whose scientific precision and literary skills place her in the forefront of contemporary nature writing; Gary Snyder, the one-time beat poet whose work now stands at the center of American literary environmentalism; N. Scott Momaday and James Welch, who can be jointly credited with the flowering of Native American literature in the last three decades, and Rudolfo Anaya, who holds a similar place in Chicano writing. He also rightly includes work by the Laguna Pueblo poet and novelist Leslie Silko and a harrowing sequence of poems by Jimmy Santiago Baca,

whose Albuquerque echoes Dante's hell. These two writers, like their older contemporaries, extend so-called ethnic literature into the universal.

The occasionally errant organization aside, *Prose & Poetry of the American West* is a highly useful collection. The editor has taken pains to select works of high quality, as many previous anthologists have not. This critical stance necessarily pushes aside the generic "Western," the Colt revolver of

literature, mass-produced and made of interchangeable parts. Mr. Work's intelligent headnotes add substantially to the value of the collection, which, despite its high price, will be of interest to a wide audience.

*Gregory McNamee, a regular contributor to Chronicles, is now editing a literary anthology on the natural environment of Arizona.*

## BRIEF MENTIONS

### LEFTISM REVISITED: FROM DE SADE AND MARX TO HITLER AND POL POT

by Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn

With a Preface by William F. Buckley, Jr.

Washington, D.C.: Regnery Gateway; 520 pp., \$29.95

About sixteen years ago, when the first edition of the present volume was published, the *nouveaux philosophes* were attracting attention in France, on the rest of the Continent, and in the United States with their discovery of what they called "socialism with a human face." Since that time, they have been eclipsed totally by a series of historical events that Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn, the Austrian writer and scholar, would be the first to warn us against celebrating prematurely. The face of socialism is no more human than it ever was—or can be.

Kuehnelt-Leddihn believes leftism in all its manifestations (communism, socialism, nationalism, national socialism, and democratism) arises from maladjustments of the spirit, perversities of the heart, and weakness of the intellect, either singly or together. In his view, nearly everything bad in human history has come from leftist tendencies, and nothing good can be set to their credit. *Leftism Revisited* traces this history of leftist heresy from the Greek democracies to (as promised) the Cambodia of Pol Pot, a depressing history that Kuehnelt-Leddihn furberishes with stimulating illustrative accounts of leftist inhumanities, brutalities, and atrocities, such as the Parisian mob's display of the Princess de Lamballe's private parts on the end of a pike, the frying alive of a kitchenmaid at the Tuileries after she had been rolled in butter, and the burial, up to the chin, of a Benedictine monk by the Vietcong, who left it to the ants to finish the job.

In preparing the new edition of his book, Kuehnelt-Leddihn has made a particular point of contrasting American with Continental "conservative-Rightists." As a High Church Catholic and a self-described "liberal of the far Right," he foresees that many of his opinions are likely to offend certain American readers, as for example that "Democracy is the concept of the totally politicized nation; it is a populism, like ethnicism (nationalism) or racism, and therefore leftist—and consequently totalitarian." Among the "false but clear" ideas that the left has succeeded in imposing on the modern world are "nationalism and democracy, two forms of collectivist horizontalism" that Kuehnelt-Leddihn thinks must be replaced if we are to find our way out of the postmodernist predicament.

When Kuehnelt-Leddihn writes that "in a way, and unrealized by most, the democratic age is over—even for the United States," he is in substantial agreement with the Hungarian-born American historian John Lukacs, whose *Outgrowing Democracy* is a book-length treatment of this idea. While I take their argument seriously, neither Kuehnelt-Leddihn nor Lukacs seems to recognize how the federal principle, properly regained, might be made to compensate—even yet!—for the failure of the democratic principle in America. But it would have to be pretty damn quick.

—Chilton Williamson, Jr.