

Review Articles

Social Function of Libraries

Social Functions of Libraries. By Bartholomeus Landheer. New York: Scarecrow Press, 1957. 287p. \$6.

In many respects this is one of the most amazing books this reviewer has read. It is repetitious and longwinded. It is full of misprints. It has statistical tables which were never filled in. It has unfortunate, if not bad, grammar. It is a curious combination of philosophical musing, sociological examination, and statistical inquiry into cultures and libraries, with often only a modicum of organization. But perhaps the most unfortunate thing of all is that underneath is a great deal of information, careful thought, and competent insight on the highest plane concerning the role played by libraries, that is worthwhile but that requires an excess of patience to uncover.

Dr. Landheer attempts to answer from a sociological standpoint the question "Why libraries?" He asks: who reads and why, in different types of cultures, his thesis being that reading is an answer to individual needs, felt differently by individuals as the density, complexity, pressure, and development of their society varies. Writings to satisfy these needs fall into five categories: devotional, cultural, achievement, compensatory, and informational. Writers, at least of the truly creative sort, are likewise answering a need felt to communicate, to comment on and justify their position and their society. The artistic writer lives in a world apart, and the stimulus to write presupposes a certain maladjustment. Writing puts him in the dynamic, as opposed to the static, element of society, and it is hoped that his products, although essentially personal, are likewise of meaning to others.

The discussion of—indeed almost attack upon—the accepted concept of "efficient readership" or "maturity in reading" is well done. No one value standard can be set upon reading or material until one investigates the individual reading instance and analyses the reasons for it. Good reading for one person becomes bad for another, and

this is not in terms of political or religious denunciation but in terms of the sociological and psychological needs of the individual.

Predictions on the future of libraries, as on anything these days, are perhaps questionable, but Dr. Landheer can see their becoming ever more necessary in an increasingly differentiated and faster culture. "The function of a library is not the spreading of knowledge, but the development of human personality. . . . Reading to be enjoyed requires time and the ability to rethink the thought-processes of others. Reading does not mean 'to be told something by someone who knows it better.' . . . Reading means to absorb what is essential to one's mental structure, and this process has no general rules of speed or capability." Given these needs, there can never be of making many books an end.—G. A. Harrer, *Stanford University Libraries*.

American Fiction

American Fiction 1851-1875, A Contribution Toward a Bibliography. By Lyle H. Wright. San Marino, Calif., The Huntington Library, 1957. xx, 413 p. \$7.50.

With *American Fiction, 1851-1875* Lyle H. Wright brings his admirable bibliography of this field across the first full century of the national life of the United States. This volume is a supplement to Mr. Wright's *American Fiction, 1774-1850*, first published in 1939 and reissued in a revised edition in 1948. Publication of the second volume marks the completion of a bibliographical project that can be verily described as monumental.

Combined, the two volumes record a total of 5,604 titles, with sixty more titles listed for the last quarter century covered in the second volume than for the whole seventy-seven years treated in the earlier compilation (2,832 titles against 2,772). Even this figure de-emphasizes the increased literary activity of the expanding country in the mid-nineteenth century as Mr. Wright's criteria for listings in the new publication were somewhat more stringent than those for the earlier volume.

"The momentous events," notes Mr. Wright in his preface, "that occurred during this quarter century are reflected in the fiction of the period. The slavery question, pro and con, was the theme of scores of novels, and as many more covered the Civil War, a national catastrophe that induced authors to attempt to be more realistic in their writing. The westward flow of the population was not overlooked. . . . During the 1850's the sentimental novel reached its peak in popularity, aided and abetted by the large increase in women writers. And the woman's rights movement gained impetus through the numerous novels and short stories which presented it in a sympathetic vein. Religion, including controversies between denominations, was also a favorite subject with authors."

Mr. Wright's preface is admirable as a straightforward, workmanlike presentation of the scope of his bibliography and of the methods used in its preparation. The devotee of American fiction can well wish that he had seized the opportunity to write an extended critical introduction. But he did not do so, and it is unfair—particularly in relation to such an expert job—even to wish that the introductory material had been differently conceived. Perhaps Mr. Wright will be persuaded to put the vast accumulation of knowledge that has accrued to him during the compilation of these bibliographies to further use in an eventual narrative history of American fiction.

In *American Fiction, 1851-1875* are packaged bibliographies of many of the greats of American-literary history for their most productive years: John Esten Cooke, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, William Gilmore Simms, Harriet Beecher Stowe. There are equally useful bibliographies for lesser authors and for literary figures well known in their own time but now remembered only by academicians: Caroline Lee Hentz, Joseph Holt Ingraham, John Beauchamp Jones, David Ross Locke ("Petroleum V. Nasby"), James A. Maitland, Henry Morford, Robert H. Newell ("Orpheus C. Kerr"), E. P. Roe, Henry W. Shaw ("Josh Billings"), Ann Sophia Stephens, Mary Virginia Terhune, John T. Trowbridge, and Augusta Jane Evans Wilson. There are early publications which pre-empt the later fame of such important literary lights as Ambrose Bierce, Samuel L.

Clemens, William Dean Howells, and Sidney Lanier.

American Fiction, 1851-1875 will be of immense and long-term use in every college and research library. It is admirably arranged in a straight alphabetical sequence that facilitates quick use. Cross references within the text take care of pseudonyms and name variants. Its title index is a necessary and useful adjunct.

Librarians will be rightfully annoyed that Mr. Wright has chosen to stick to an antiquated code of location symbols instead of using the now generally accepted symbols of the Library of Congress's *National Union Catalog*. He has chosen also to limit his locations largely to those libraries symbolized in his earlier volume. Consistency is hardly sufficient justification for such a limitation. Serious collecting has spread to a much wider number of college and university libraries now than it had a generation ago, and a wider geographical distribution in the location of copies would be highly desirable. He does, however, locate a few supposedly unique copies in libraries not among his charmed circle of old-timers, single titles at least at the Atlanta Public Library, Duke, Emory, Oberlin, Princeton, and the University of North Carolina.

Such a book as this is useful in many ways beyond its primary purpose. This volume is almost as interesting as a record of one aspect of American publishing and printing history as it is as a bibliography of American fiction. One can follow the imprints and note how the publishing business prior to 1876 was not fully concentrated in New York, Philadelphia, and Boston. There were books of fiction published in many of the smaller New England cities: Cambridge, Hartford, Springfield, Mass.; Portland, Me.; Providence, Central Falls, R. I.; in New York state at Albany, Auburn, Binghamton, Macedon, Middletown, Ogdensburgh, Utica. Comparable productions came from Carlisle and Pittsburgh in Pennsylvania and from more western presses in Cincinnati, Cleveland, Detroit, Chicago, St. Louis, Milwaukee, St. Paul, Des Moines, Topeka, San Francisco, and Portland, Ore. There were publishers to the south at Baltimore, Washington, Richmond, Raleigh, Charleston, S. C.; Atlanta, Macon, Mobile, Montgomery, Nashville, Memphis, New

Orleans, Little Rock, and Galveston; and in such smaller towns as Orangeburg, S. C.; Warrenton, Va.; Greenville, Ga.; Milledgeville, Ga.; Gallatin, Tenn.; and Jonesborough, Tenn. The fact of a publishing business in some of these Southern towns is undoubtedly explained by Confederate efforts to establish an independent literature as well as an independent nation, but not all the publications were within the war period, and the war certainly does not explain publishing efforts at Manchester, N. H.; Tidioute, Penna.; Mansfield, Ohio; Richmond, Ind.; or Galesburg, Ill.

Book catalogs have been described as the most dulcet of reading. How much more can be said for a bibliography; what vistas of the imagination it opens without even demanding that its books be read! There is fascination enough in just the title of such books as *The Fiend's Delight*, or *The Chester Family*; or, *The Curse of the Drunkard's Appetite*, *The Physiology of New York Boarding Houses*, *Kick Him Down Hill*, *Ten Old Maids*, and *Five of Them Were Wise and Five of Them Were Foolish*, and *The Masked Lady of the White House*.

For years "not in Wright" has been an aimed-for note of book dealers. The publication of *American Fiction, 1851-1875* will make such a note more desirable than ever to them. In truth, however, such a note usually means that a title was legitimately rejected from Mr. Wright's list. Such is the quality of his work that the notation of a book's Wright number is accolade enough.—*Richard B. Harwell*.

Norwegian Librarianship

United States Influence on Norwegian Librarianship, 1890-1940. By J. Periam Danton. Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1957. xii, 91p. \$2.00 (University of California Publications in Librarianship, vol. 2, no. 1).

During the past one hundred years or more the United States and the Scandinavian countries have influenced each other in many different areas—political, religious, humanitarian, scientific and technical, cultural, and educational. Quite properly scholarly attention first turned to the overwhelming fact

of emigration from Scandinavia to the United States which involved the movement of about two and a half million people from these small countries to new homes in North America. The classical American works on this subject by such scholars as Theodore Blegen and George M. Stephenson began to appear in the early 1930's. Since then scores of articles and books have been published on both sides of the Atlantic dealing with various aspects of the interaction between the Scandinavian North and America. For example, one might mention Einar Haugen's work on the Norwegian language in America, Franklin D. Scott's survey of Swedish student reactions to the United States, and most recently Carl Anderson's study on the acceptance of American literature in Sweden.

The remarkable influence of American librarianship in Norway has, until now, been only briefly noted in American library literature. The work under review is a detailed investigation of this influence, showing how seventy-one Norwegian librarians, who studied in the United States at various times during a period of fifty years and who later became leaders in their profession, brought about a revolution in library practice in their own country through the introduction of American bibliothecal methods and ideas. As the author indicates, this group, in absolute terms, seems to be small and insignificant, but he amply illustrates that its members had a positive effect on the cultural life of Norway which was far out of proportion to their number.

The study begins with a brief summary of Norwegian library history and is followed by an exposition of the activities of the two pioneers of the Norwegian library revolution: Hans Tambs Lyche, editor of the influential Norwegian fortnightly review *Kringsjaa* which carried many articles familiarizing its readers with American libraries and librarianship, and Haakon Nyhuus who in 1898 became director of Oslo's municipal Deichman Library. Lyche came to the United States in 1880 and stayed several years. He was first employed as a railroad engineer and later served as a Unitarian minister. Although never a librarian he was always an alert observer of cultural activities in general and libraries in particular. Nyhuus became a