

to me, the tough truth: he sees through the sentimentality of a writer like Herman Wouk, sees how that masks the actuality of war and diverts us from the lesson war can teach us. Erasmus said that war is sweet to those who haven't tried it; I think Fussell would agree, and not only about war. But it seems to me he misses an important aspect of the problem of fiction as reality when he concentrates so consistently on the problem of horror as reality. To Fussell, it seems, horror is the truth, but no one can tell it. The combat veteran (read: the veteran of life) wants to get across what it was really like. Fussell gives an example of a true report, in this sense:

Two adolescent boys dressed in "enemy" uniform tried to sneak up on our position. We machine-gunned them both. The brains of one came out his nose and he lived for a half-hour, making a terrible snoring sound and looking at us with bright blue eyes. The other died soon too: his leg was severed and folded back beneath his body. He cried for his mother for some time. I don't think I can stand any more of this.

God knows our age needs it written that way—about Hiroshima, about the Gulag, about torture in Argentina, and the killing of children in Guatemala, because those horrors can never be ended until they are perceived. Too bad, then, if Fussell is right in endorsing the view that war "forbids an objective consideration of what she really is. She paralyzes the spirit of investigation." Too bad if he is right that, since "as we know humankind cannot bear very much reality," we will have to make do with "falsely dramatized and falsely cheerfuled" accounts. Too bad if the ironical commentator, unable to bear the horror before him, lapses into little glosses on its bits and pieces. Too bad, but maybe true.

Fussell might see more clearly (or if he sees it, say more clearly) how fiction's form seduces the historical intelligence, how the smooth and bounded and finished work of art contrasts with the ragged edge of the human experience. He might recognize more fully the seductions of tough-guy literature that lure people into tough-guy politics. Perhaps he might question his own confidence in the frequency with which combat experience (read: terror, trauma) engenders "a feeling of mysterious shared ironic awareness." But for all that, Paul Fussell, even in this slight work, raises the question of the link and gap between real life and the story of it more starkly and insightfully than this reader has seen it raised.

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LET THE TRUMPET SOUND: *The Life of Martin Luther King, Jr.* By Stephen B. Oates. New York: Harper & Row, 1982. Pp. x, 560. \$19.95.

This biography of the foremost symbol of the black civil rights movement is a competent but not especially original account of the public life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Although a number of King biographies appeared during the

subject's lifetime and in the first three years after King's assassination in 1968. Stephen Oates's book is the first new study of the man in almost a decade. It provides an excellent portrait of much of King's emotional attitude toward the ups and downs of the movement, but it is far less successful at portraying either his relationships with other civil rights figures and organizations, such as the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), or the crucial roles played by many of his lieutenants in the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), such as Randolph T. Blackwell, Wyatt T. Walker, and Andrew Young. These two failings are particularly visible in the incomplete and at times misleading accounts that Oates provides of major movement protest campaigns such as Albany, Ga. (1961–62), Birmingham, Ala. (1963), St. Augustine, Fla. (1964), and Memphis, Tenn. (1968). The content of political discourse and disagreement within the movement is repeatedly slighted, while the often tense and awkward relationships between SCLC and its allies among local movement activists are also sometimes omitted. Though Oates's portrayal of King the individual usually rings true, the biography does not provide an adequate picture of the larger political context within which King lived.

Relying heavily upon earlier biographies by Lawrence D. Reddick, Lerone Bennett, and David L. Lewis, as well as upon King's own books and his widow's autobiography, Oates presents the most comprehensive account yet available of King's life prior to his public emergence as the foremost leader of the Montgomery (Ala.) bus boycott of 1955–56. The account of these first twenty-seven years of King's life is marred only by a less-than-adequate familiarity with scholarly work on King's intellectual development and theological training: for instance, no reference is ever made to the study that most King scholars consider definitive on this topic: Kenneth L. Smith and Ira G. Zepp, Jr., *Search for the Beloved Community: The Thinking of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (1974).

The chapters on the post-1956 years are not as strong as the earlier portions of the book. In large part this is the result of the research limits Oates set for himself. While he has used some materials from the King and SCLC Papers at the King Center for Nonviolent Social Change in Atlanta and while he has spoken with a number of King's former assistants, Oates apparently has not examined the now-available papers of SNCC, CORE, or the NAACP, nor has he utilized the voluminous files that the Federal Bureau of Investigation and U.S. Department of Justice maintained on King, files that trace King's actions and phone conversations on a day-by-day basis and which are available under the Freedom of Information Act. Likewise, Oates has interviewed few local activists who worked closely with King and SCLC, and he has not availed himself of the significant local archives that contain rich collections of materials on movement campaigns such as Birmingham and Memphis.

Oates's account of King's public career and the highlights of his life generally eschews any analysis while employing a pleasant narrative style. It is particularly good at presenting a persuasive picture of the emotional difficulties that King often experienced, difficulties that grew more pronounced throughout his

life and which by the time of his death had produced what Oates correctly calls "a deepening personal depression" (p. xi). Few people yet appreciate the great emotional toll that King's public life and symbolic role took upon the private man, and Oates's sympathetic and compelling presentation of this sacrifice is one of the best features of the book.

Unfortunately, little else in *Let the Trumpet Sound* measures up to this standard. The civil rights movement had many other crucial components in addition to the symbolic leadership role occupied by King, and many of them are slighted or ignored. Similarly, even King's own organization, the SCLC, actually consisted of much more than simply King and his own lengthened shadow, and that, too, is missing here. A reader seeking a good appreciation of Martin Luther King, Jr., as an individual will find Oates's book rewarding; one who seeks a balanced account of the civil rights movement and King's larger role within it will not.

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WORKING PAPERS: *Selected Essays and Reviews by Hayden Carruth*. Edited by Judith Weissman. University of Georgia Press, 1982. Pp. xxiii, 239. \$19.95.

Hayden Carruth's *Working Papers* provides a poet's-eye view of the literary and intellectual scene of the last thirty years, in his selected essays and reviews with an introduction by Judith Weissman. The forty-four works have been gathered from literary quarterlies such as *Hudson Review*, the monthly *Poetry* (which Carruth edited 1949–50), weeklies such as *Saturday Review* and *The Nation*, and from the *Chicago Daily News*. The reviews treat an assortment of philosophers, critics, and historians including Northrop Frye, Edmund Wilson, Eliseo Vivas, Eliot, Camus, and Sartre, and a larger group of poets including Pound (Carruth's hero), Williams, Auden, Stevens, Ferlinghetti, Levertov, Rukeyser, Eliot, Lowell, Jarrell, and Zukofsky. The essays address general questions of the relationships of poetry, love, and politics, and those of more narrowly focused subjects like "Ezra Pound and the Great Style" and "A Meaning of Robert Lowell."

Carruth, author of many books of poems since 1959, has also edited or co-edited three anthologies, including the important *The Voice That Is Great Within Us: American Poetry of the Twentieth Century* (1970). His considerable (and apparently wholly salutary) influence on poetry of the last three decades would alone justify this assemblage of some of his less readily accessible writing.

The book's weaknesses largely derive from its format. The collection does seem somewhat piecemeal and scattered. Also, given some of the times and places of original publication, one is not surprised by occasional senses of the glib and naive. Carruth's 1963 characterization of Camus as "one of the great