

Dixon, concluding that “typically for Pynchon, it is a fugitive robot duck that bears the burden of the most serious questions of responsibility posed by the text.” Ernesto Suárez-Toste has studied “Empathy vs. Surrealism in Elizabeth Bishop’s *Animals Poems*,” while Malgorzata Rutkowska has gone on the road with her “Travelers and Their Faithful Companions: Dogs in Contemporary Travel Writing,” focusing on John Steinbeck’s *Travels with Charley* (1961), Peter Jenkins’ *A Walk Across America* (1980), and Lars Eighner’s *Travels with Lizbeth* (1993). In her essay on “‘Brer Rabbit Takes a Walk’: The Trickster in Afro-American Folklore and Fiction,” Ewa Luczak uses examples from central figures like Joel Chandler Harris, Ralph Ellison, and Toni Morrison in sorting out the various questions of thematics and provenance in the African-American tradition of animal stories. The final title in the collection, Tom Cohen’s “‘Trackings’: Faulkner, Nietzsche, and the Question of the Animal in Post-Humanist American Studies,” is also the only essay that is not accessible to the ordinary reader, since its convoluted syntax and general abstract impenetrability puts it out of reach of anyone but (post-humanist?) specialists.

What all of these essays in sum make abundantly clear, is the pervasive importance of animals in the New World imagination, both past and present. From the very beginning, the colonists to the wondrous continent in the west, not surprisingly, integrated the animals of their new-found land in their perceptions of themselves and their fledgling nation. The Founding Fathers engaged in spirited debate about the national bird, for example, and while the (bald) eagle won out, a heavyweight like Benjamin Franklin voted for the wild turkey, risking a less than heroic “The Turkey has landed” a few centuries down the road... It is also entirely in keeping with this importance that a great many American football teams, for instance – from the Buffalo Bills to the San Diego Chargers – are given animal names, indigenous and otherwise.

Animal Magic is a valuable, interesting, and useful volume for anyone interested in understanding this central aspect of American culture, even if the enormously important role played by animals in Native American culture is conspicuously absent here, as is Disney’s all-American animal world. But asking for comprehensiveness in a collection of disparate essays is probably unfair; still, it is always a good sign when you reach the end of a book and keep asking for more.

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Hans. H. Skei, *Faulkner and Other Southern Writers: Literary Essays*. Oslo: Novus Press, 2004. 196 pages; ISBN 82-7099-392; Novus Studies in Literature ISSN 1503-3457; € 34.

More books have been written on Faulkner than on any other writer in English except Shakespeare; the question when reviewing a book in this seventh decade of Faulkner studies is whether there is room for yet another study of his work. Hans H. Skei’s *Faulkner and Other Southern Writers: Literary Essays* is a readable and welcome

volume for two main reasons. First, it gathers many articles and lectures on Faulkner that are out of print or otherwise difficult to access; second, there is a substantial section on other Southern writers, some of whom have been clearly influenced by Faulkner.

A quality of the 10 essays selected for the first section on Faulkner is that many of them cover aspects of his career other than the short stories, which is one of Skei's areas of expertise and sufficiently examined in his other books. There will inevitably be some redundancy in an anthology of this type, and Skei occasionally repeats himself or the well-covered ground of others in the field, yet there are also notable moments of originality where he brings new light to bear on Faulkner studies. This is true even where Skei claims he is simply pointing out the "fairly obvious" (24), such as in his critique in the second essay, "Faulkner before Faulkner," of the urge in literary studies to construct a coherent career of a writer after the fact, a fallacy of seeking the seeds of genius where none actually lie. This is not obvious precisely because, as Skei shows, literary studies and biographies of Faulkner inevitably fall prey to this need to make sense of Faulkner's career in retrospect, or to study the texts from the perspective of the life rather than for their own worth. The following essay on "Repetition, Variation, Renewal" in the late career risks committing the very fallacy the previous one critiques as it finds three events in Faulkner's career around 1950 as key background for the final works. Yet the saving grace, here as elsewhere, is Skei's thorough knowledge of the life, the career, the man, *and* the works.

Other remarkable essays in the first section include one on Faulkner's metafictional elements in which Skei convincingly shows that although Faulkner was a modernist and his concerns epistemological rather than postmodern and ontological, his texts nevertheless abound with commentary about themselves as artifacts. The longest essay in this section, "Beyond Genre," problematizes received generic notions in a discussion of how existential experience in the short stories can transcend the limits of story elements.

Skei has also included an intriguing essay comparing the Norwegian writer Olav Duun's novel *Menneske og maktene* (1938) with Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* (1930), highlighting how these two very different writers nevertheless share a modernist concern for existential dilemmas, as well as an acute sense of place and of insight into the human condition. This section also includes two other essays on the stories and concludes with one on Skei's own translations of Faulkner into Norwegian, with focus on the problems and challenges he encountered during work with the Snopes trilogy.

Many contemporary writers have had to deal consciously or subconsciously with the legacy of Faulkner, and crawling out from under his shadow is an especially arduous task for writers from the same region. The first two essays in the refreshing second section, however, are on civil war books that are not rivals to Faulkner's fiction, but nevertheless curiously novelistic texts from within the structures of other genres: Mary Chestnut's diary of the Civil War reads as a novel, and Shelby Foote's trilogy

The Civil War is a vivid historical narrative. Writing in the 19th century from an insider's position at "the center of the affairs of the Confederacy," Mary Chestnut speaks both with authority and depth. Yet Skei does not shy away from problematizing the notion of the "Diary" genre, especially given the fact that hers was written 20 years after-the-fact, as well as the pre-1981 editions of Chestnut's book. Skei traces the complex genesis and editorial history of how the Mary Chestnut papers eventually became the reliable *Mary Chestnut's Civil War* under the efforts of the leading Southern historian C. Vann Woodward.

Another Southern historian and novelist who falls under Skei's scrutiny is Shelby Foote. Whole libraries have been written on the Civil War, and Foote's *The Civil War: A Narrative* looms large on any shelf. Skei somewhat predictably points out the obvious theoretical distinctions between fact, history and fiction ("the older distinction between history and literature does not function well anymore") but here his strength lies in the application of an analysis of narrative strategies to a reading of the matter at hand. Then Skei curiously places an essay on Walker Percy in between the one on Foote's historical narrative *The Civil War* and a second one on his fiction, as if to structurally uphold the very distinction between history and novel he first set out to problematize. Since the second Foote essay ends with comments on landscape in *The Civil War*, it would seem more logical to place it first. In any case, these two studies fit closely together, as Skei finds the historian of *The Civil War* endowed with the skills of the novelist, and he sees Foote the novelist as "historian perhaps more than fictionalist," in part because he never introduces a character without including extensive historical and localized background.

In between the two Foote essays, Skei discusses the extreme literariness of Percy's *Lancelot*, showing how the narrative is not simply constructed of the narrator's long monologue, as is the usual reading, but rather of dialogic monologues, and that it freely moves beyond the single voice of the protagonist's banal past and present through a number of strategies. Eudora Welty's *The Optimist's Daughter*, by contrast, is analyzed as more monologic than dialogic since it is "a strongly controlled and willed narrative," and unable to let contending voices surface. The anthology is wrapped up with two essays on Cormac McCarthy. In the first of these, Skei opens with some general remarks about Faulkner's "influence," or rather lack thereof, on Southern fiction from the 1980s and 90s, then turns specifically to McCarthy's *The Orchard Keeper*, with some passing remarks on Faulkner's *The Hamlet*. The final essay on *Suttree* is more substantial, and finds some Faulknerian elements here as well, yet it ultimately reads as much as a long review of McCarthy's fourth book as it does a critical analysis.

A general quirk of all of Skei's work is his tendency to find evaluation as crucial as analysis, generalizations as intriguing as in-depth scrutiny, and plot summary as urgent as theoretical reflection. Yet his thorough knowledge of every topic he chooses nevertheless outweighs these flaws, which can be tolerated for the reward of the frequent insights he provides. Not all of the essays in the volume will be equally com-

elling to every reader, but Skei wisely included an index and one may also consult the informative table of contents for guidance. I recommend anyone interested in Faulkner or Southern literature to make room on their shelves for *Faulkner and Other Southern Writers: Literary Essays*.

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Jørn Brøndal, *Ethnic Leadership and Midwestern Politics. Scandinavian Americans and the Progressive Movement in Wisconsin, 1890-1914*. Northfield, Minnesota: The Norwegian-American Historical Association, 2004. 379 pages; ISBN 0-87732-095-0; \$40.00 hb.

Professor Jørn Brøndal received his PhD from the University of Copenhagen in 1999, where he presently teaches courses in the field of ethnicity and political development in the United States. In the intervening years he has made numerous presentations at conferences and published a variety of articles dealing with these subjects, including "The Concept of Being Scandinavian-American" (with Dag Blanck) in the pages of this journal in 2001. All circle around and draw upon the focus of his dissertation entitled *National Identity and Midwestern Politics*, as does the book being reviewed here, which recently has been given the prestigious 2005 Wisconsin Historical Society Book Award of Merit.

Brøndal's stated intentions for this work are to 1) "investigate the working of [Wisconsin's] political system that accorded ethnic considerations a certain role in politics"; 2) "analyze the challenge to this politics of tradition mounted by the progressive movement of Wisconsin"; and, supplementary to this, 3) "address the question of why so many Scandinavian-Americans spokesmen joined Wisconsin's progressive movement under the charismatic leadership of Robert Marion La Follette" (3). To this end the book is organized into three parts corresponding to these intentions – Part One: Structures; The Scandinavian Americans and the Politics of Tradition (145 pp.), Part Two: Dynamics: The Progressive Assault on Tradition (62 pp), and finally Part Three: Values; A Set of Scandinavian-American Political Principles? (50 pp) – the remaining 122 pages of the book are given over to appendices, notes, and index.

Part One consists of five chapters, four of which concern themselves with central social structures creating a Scandinavian-American identity and the relationship of these structures to the political system that existed before the onset of the progressive movement – though there is significant contextual overlap into the progressive era. The structures chosen are 1) the political and cultural environment within which a Scandinavian-Americans identity developed, 2) the role of the church, 3) that of secular societies such as mutual aid societies and the temperance movement, and 4) of the Scandinavian-American press. The section then concludes with a chapter which investigates overtly political Scandinavian-American organizations such political clubs and farmer and labor radical movements and then goes on to chart the