

lengths to which Jack will go in apparent defense of the Homestead are understood by Sam as evidence of his brother's insanity.

Jack Walker does duty as a second and secondary first-person narrator speaking in brief, cryptic passages that seem to blend the voices of Quentin and Benjy Compson and that represent some of the finest writing of what is on the whole a very beautifully written book. It's Jack who seems willing to accept the moral inheritance that Sam rejects, to live as the scion of a

pioneer aristocracy that stretches back to Captain Uncle Joe Walker, a legendary forebear who was a contemporary of Jim Bridger. With his own quirky determination he takes a definite stance against both the evil and the simple absurdity of modern life:

*... and all i want to know now is that what it really comes down to anymore bashing white niggers in the head with a cowboy boot or getting shot into space with a peebag and a*

*load of freezedry orangejuice because if it is and the world has got too civilized anymore for courage selfsacrifice and what used to be called honor i don't care they can stick me in jail and throw away the key and i can be dead like captain uncle jo and all the other heroes then like jim bridger said it used to be a man could see forever in this country but anymore nobody wants to look any further than the end of his own nose.*

## BRIEF MENTIONS

**DAY CARE: CHILD PSYCHOLOGY AND ADULT ECONOMICS,**  
edited by Bryce Christensen  
Rockford, IL: The Rockford Institute; 151 pp.,  
\$15.95 (hardcover), \$9.95 (paper)

*Day Care: cui bono?* would be an equally apt, if more cynical, title for this book, which is far less innocuous than its professional reserve might suggest. *Day Care* comprises a series of papers and the discussions thereof given at two conferences convened within the last eighteen months by The Rockford Institute and attended by child psychologists, economists, and policy analysts, among others. The topic of the first conference was the generally neglected question, "How does daycare affect children?" while the focus of the second was the growing preference among American parents and policymakers in favor of interests and values that are only partially motivated by economics.

In "The Risks of Day Care for Children, Parents, and Society," Dr. Jack C. Westman, professor of psychiatry at the University of Wisconsin, argues flatly that "full-time day care, no matter how heavily funded, is not in the interests of young children, their parents, or society, because it is a response to the employment of parents . . . not to the needs of the children nor parents." Daycare workers, he believes, cannot possibly provide a reasonable facsimile of the parental love upon which what he calls "the attachment bonds" of infants depend; deprived of those bonds, very young children may be unable to develop a basic trust in constant human relationships, with the result that "rancor, alienation, and strain" eventually poison the relationship between such children and their parents.

And with "The Economics of Day Care," Professor James Walker, an economist also with the University of Wisconsin, kicked off the second conference by seeking to demonstrate that the demand for daycare is not produced by maternal employment; instead, the same incentives that cause an increasing number of mothers to work also encourage them to deliver their offspring into the hands of professional attendants. Deborah Walker, another economist, calls attention to the naked self-interest of child psychologists, state bureaucrats, and providers of child-care services, all of them presently vociferous lobbyists in the campaign for state-supported daycare; while Allan Carlson identifies the movement as merely one aspect of a broad historical trend by which households have been encouraged to surrender their economic functions to the state. And Richard Vector of The Heritage Foundation refers constantly to the fact that traditional families, which are much more numerous than progressive activists care to admit, are forced to subsidize daycare for the children of parents both of whom work and who therefore enjoy much higher incomes than families in which only the father is wage-earner: a clear example of what Joseph Sobran calls "alienism," or the ideological preference for the abnormal over the normal that characterizes so much of the public debate in America today.

—Chilton Williamson, Jr.

If Sam is right to see a strong self-defeating quality in this attitude of Jack's, Jack also seems to have a plausible case that Sam is, despite his ostentatious heroics in Africa, both a physical and a moral coward. His evidence for that idea is part of the novel's extremely complicated subtext, to which all the characters constantly make cryptic allusions. The mystery element of the story—who done what and what for—involves the past as much as the present. In fact the Walker family closets are full to bursting with bones.

Home life on the Homestead is such a dismal affair that one understands why Sam prefers Africa. The Old Man rules the big house with a patriarchal authority. Grace, the mother of the three siblings, is an alcoholic prescription addict who spends most of her attention on darkly comical blithering about the various do-gooder causes she espouses. Her husband, the missing link in the Walker generations, was killed in a mysterious plane crash years before. Clarice plays the role of aging maiden, while Jack lives aloof in a trailer in the yard. There's nothing too pleasant for Sam to come home to; rather, "I felt like the 'cured' explorer contemplating a return to the fever swamps of the upper Nile."

Sam does his best to keep his distance from the family even while living in the house. He seems to see his brother only when Jack is riding bulls at the rodeo, and has only a little more contact with Clarice. He spends a lot of time drinking, conducts a strikingly sordid affair with Candy Fuller, his high-school girlfriend and the daughter of one of the Old Man's most loathed political enemies, and makes an oafish pass at Karen

MacPherson, who seems to be Jack's girlfriend and who also appears to have once been married to the moribund Frank Joad. What's left of his energy is devoted to trying to unravel the intricacies of the present-time plot and to influence the course of events by underhanded machinations and bribery.

There are always a disappointing few pages at the end of even the best Chandler novels where the characters stand around and recite explanations at each other. For a mystery writer, Chandler was strangely uninterested in the actual solution of the mystery. The mechanics of plot apparently bored him. His real interests were comparatively highbrow: landscape, tone, language, character. A similar problem occurs in the conclusion of *The Homestead*. The buried information comes belching out of the back-story in a rather perfunctory manner. The trouble between Jack and Sam has to do with a long-ago attempt to obstruct a nuclear waste train. The missing father didn't die by accident—the plane crash was a suicide inspired by the discovery that Grace was unfaithful and Clarice is the child of another man. (Interestingly, both brothers take that to mean that Clarice is no longer their sister, as if their mother was not related to them by blood.) Out of ingredients such as these might be constructed either *All the King's Men* or a few more episodes of *Dallas*. Considered solely from the standpoint of plotting, *The Homestead* falls somewhere between these two extremes.

As for the present-time plot, which ripples outward from the question of Jack's and Frank Joad's secret motive, too much of it simply fails to make sense. A lengthy subplot involving Jack's lawyer, Chuck Richardson, and the involvement of his wayward wife in some obscurely drug-related murder, never gets an adequate explanation. At length it's revealed that Jack's animus against Frank Joad is partly inspired by the discovery that Clarice is having an affair with him, but the pretext given for her contracting this liaison does not seem completely plausible. The whole drug-traffic angle remains clouded in obscurity. Additionally, we never know who fired a lot of mysterious gunshots, what was behind a couple of mysterious collisions, who actually took

those blackmail photos of Joad and Clarice. . . .

Maybe these are trivial objections; after all, no one really cares who killed the butler in *The Big Sleep*. But it's unfortunate that this novel winds up in a snarl of inadequate plot resolution, since it deserves to be taken seriously for the moral and social issues it addresses. There are problems here too, but lesser ones, and perhaps they are intrinsic to the material. Although Jack Walker has all the best lines and is probably the book's most admirable character, he gets comparatively little airtime, and ends up strangled by the strict limitations he has set for himself. As a result, Sam Walker emerges as the dominant voice, and not a very attractive one, on balance. "I am," he admits, "to every intent and purpose a child of my time," which is to say, in the final analysis which Jack's gnomic utterances help make, that he is the epitome of organized selfishness, unable and unwilling to look past the end of his own nose. It's hard to respect someone who is so determined to turn himself into a Snopes, hard to believe that he can grow into a healthier version of his brother's role in *The Homestead*, and particularly difficult, given his dedicated misogyny throughout the book, to conceive that he can form a viable connection with Karen MacPherson. If he does become our hero in the end it is only because we are stuck with him, as Lacey is stuck with George Posey at the end of Allen Tate's *The Fathers*.

Perhaps *The Fathers* is the most suggestive of the many models *The Homestead* has taken for itself. Williamson seems to have seized on the same problem and moved it a century forward in time. At the moment when the old order is inevitably to be devoured, the refusal to compromise is nothing more than an honorable form of suicide. Yet in the terms of the passing order, the success of the survivor must appear to be contemptible—and it is not just a question of what terms to employ, but of the meaningful existence of any terms at all. *The Fathers* is a virtually flawless work, and *The Homestead* is not; however, it is a significant address to an important theme, and in many ways admirable, though probably not the best book its author will write. ☐



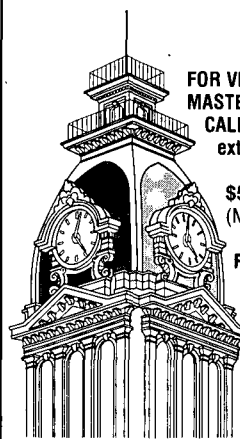
## SCORPIONS IN A BOTTLE:

Dangerous Ideas About  
the United States and  
the Soviet Union

Moral Equivalence, Glasnost. Find out how these notions affect the West in essays by William Bennett, Peter Berger, Sidney Hook, Jeane Kirkpatrick, Irving Kristol, Melvin Lasky, Michael Novak, and Joseph Sobran. Produced from the Hillsdale conference profiled in *Time* magazine.

"We...speak of the 'two super-powers' as if they were two far-off and equally dangerous giants; two, I think the imagery is, 'scorpions in a bottle,'"

MIDGE DECTER  
Committee for the Free World



FOR VISA AND  
MASTERCARD ORDERS  
CALL 800-253-3200  
ext. 801

\$5.00 softbound  
(MI residents add  
4% sales tax)  
Free Shipping!

HILLSDALE  
COLLEGE  
PRESS  
Hillsdale, MI  
49242

# The Warriors and the War

by Neal F. Freeman

## The Long Gray Line: The American Journey of West Point's Class of 1966

by Rick Atkinson

Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin; 576 pp., \$24.95

In the spring of 1962, the great Irish wit John F. Kennedy journeyed to New Haven to accept an honorary degree. He was in good form. "I now feel that I have the best of both worlds," he told the graduating class. "A Harvard education and a Yale degree." With the audience crawling into the palm of his hand, the President went on to describe his world view and to summon the young men to a life of service along the nation's new frontier. One new graduate in the front row, answering the call preemptively, reached across the back of his chair and shook hands with a friend in the second row, sealing their pact to join the Peace Corps. The atavistic, oxymoronic Peace Corps. Pure Kennedy, the Ivy League imperialist.

In that same spring, the President spoke to another graduating class, this one at the United States Military Academy at West Point. For this audience, he put aside the suave circumlocutions that had served him well in New Haven, Cambridge, Georgetown, and other capitals of the New Class. For, as he looked out over the serried ranks of freshly-minted second lieutenants, he did not see just another class of campaign aides and briefcase toters. No, these men would bear any burden and fight any foe. He saw something *special*, and to them he vouchsafed his ideas on how to fight a new kind of war. As he saw it, this new war would involve not just military convention, but diplomacy, maneuver, counterinsurgency—*nation building*. To pick and win these wars would require a new kind of military leader, and to

produce this new breed the Commander in Chief enjoined the academy to design "a new and wholly different kind of military training." The President's words were addressed to the West Point class of 1962, but their impact would fall on another group of young men—the plebes who would be inducted just a few weeks later into the hellhole known as Beast Barracks, the class of 1966. The Vietnam class.

So begins Rick Atkinson's story, *The Long Gray Line*. It is the story of their lives, these bright young men, and the story of our times. For these cadets, more even than for the rest of us, the dilemma of youth carried into middle years: how to push aside the shade of Douglas MacArthur and find a substitute, any substitute, for victory.

For the reporters among you, prepare to have your professional jealousies aroused. Atkinson is a fine writer. (It's also a pleasure to note that the copyediting is respectfully fastidious.) He introduces to us, with studied casualness, a cast of characters who engage us in their lives and, finally, make us care about what happens to them:

\*The Reverend James D. Ford, the civilian chaplain, is not a fussy cleric, but a man whose life is one long moment of truth—when he counsels the nerve-stricken plebe to hang on, when he marries the second lieutenant in a turnstile ceremony under crossed swords, and when he buries the dead in the West Point cemetery high above the Hudson River. More than 50 members of the class of '66 would die in Vietnam.

\*Buck Thompson, the cadet who more than any other fired the imagination of his classmates. One of the first members of the class killed in Vietnam, Thompson's name brings a cheer almost two decades later when, in the recitation of names at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, a classmate intones, "Richard W. 'the Immortal Buck' Thompson."

\*Marcia Bonifas. Unlike most authors of books about war and the men who make it, Atkinson is equally inter-

ested in the quirky heroism of military wives. And in Marcia Bonifas, whose husband, Art, having survived combat in Vietnam, is axed to death by jumpy North Koreans at "demilitarized" Panmunjom, Atkinson finds his heroine. Left grief-ridden with three small children and \$500 per month, she sets out for Colorado to start all over again. (You will remember the Bonifas incident. The newsphotos were horrifying: Kim Il Sung's crazies hacking the fallen American to pieces. For a moment, the world seemed to teeter on the edge of war. Then the U.S. responded boldly . . . by cutting down a tree blocking South Korea's view of the DMZ.)

And then there are the three principal figures through which Atkinson tells the story of West Point hazing, Vietnam battles, career crises, and personal journeys:

\*George Crocker. At the bottom of his class at the Point, he becomes the consummate professional soldier, the man you would pick first to share your foxhole.

\*Tom Carhart, the charismatic maverick—yes, even West Point has them—suffers from a terrible auto crash, grievous wounds in Vietnam, and a self-destructive streak in what will doubtless be a lifelong search for informing principles.

\*Jack Wheeler, son and grandson of professional soldiers, bounces from divinity studies to business to law to government, trying to find a place to stand so as to move the earth.

In the end we see Crocker, having put down the resistance on Grenada: "George watched the helicopters lift the students, cheering and waving, into the overcast sky. His soldiers waved back, some with tears in their eyes. Things have sure changed, he thought. The war was over. And this time he wasn't thinking about Grenada."

And we see classmates Carhart and Wheeler, the one a decorated veteran and uncertain citizen, the other a smooth technocrat who had avoided combat command, battling furiously