

Refurbishing American Authors

SEVERAL years ago the late F. O. Matthiessen, literary critic and Harvard professor, wrote an essay on Herman Melville. As an exponent of the New Criticism, which relies heavily on textual interpretation, Matthiessen used a phrase in *White Jacket*—"the soiled fish of the sea"—upon which to develop his theme. The analysis became celebrated among scholars, albeit for the wrong reason.

For it was discovered that Melville had not written "soiled," but "coiled." The basis for Professor Matthiessen's brilliant metaphorical interpretation was, in fact, a typographical error, pointed out by Professor John W. Nichol of the University of California at Los Angeles. Embarrassing, and yet perhaps unavoidable. With books by our major American authors we accept the printed text as definitive. *White Jacket* had been through too many editions and the gremlins had done their work.

In point of fact, texts of our major writers are not only woefully indefinite; to a significant extent they are unpublished. There are several manuscripts by Washington Irving housed in the special collections of the New York Public Library, and others slumber at the Sleepy Hollow Restoration in Tarrytown, New York. A lost "western" *Journal*, dating from 1832, was discovered at St. John's Seminary in Pasadena, California, in the Edward Doheny Collection. In the case of Emerson, much material from his notebooks remains unpublished, while his printed essays contain passages that he did not, in fact, write. Stephen Crane's *Collected Works* are incomplete and textually unsatisfactory. There has never been a full edition of Thoreau's writings. Many standard works from the nineteenth century are out of print, and those that are available contain, as with Melville, hundreds of booby traps for the unwary reader.

Ram-headed serpents, divine bulls and ominous ravens, a three-faced god and an alternating goddess are only a few of the deities found in the complex pantheon of an elusive, barbaric people. In her scholarly examination *Pagan Celtic Britain: Studies in Iconography and Tradition* (Columbia, \$25) Anne Ross—in the words of the scribe who recorded the great Irish epic, *Cattle-raid of Cuályne*—cautions that "... some things herein are feats of jugglery of demons, sundry others poetic figments, a few are probable ... and even more invented for the delectation of fools."



These figures are from the Gundestrup Cauldron, Denmark. At left is a sacrificial scene; at the right (top) is a beaked, winged horse and (bottom) a male figure riding a dolphin.

Some several years ago, the Modern Language Association of America decided it was time to begin all over. Now, with an initial grant of \$300,000 from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the MLA's Center for Editions of American Authors has launched a five-year program that will, hopefully, produce 172 volumes of Twain, Crane, Emerson, Hawthorne, Howells, Irving, Thoreau, and Whitman. Sixteen volumes have already been published, and when Phase One is complete the MLA plans to strike out with a new group that will include William Gilmore Sims, Charles Brockden Brown, James Fenimore Cooper, and George Washington Cable.

By the mid-1970s another 165 volumes will have been added. All editions will be printed "on paper that will last two centuries," according to Dr. William Gibson, the Center's director, and it is presently contemplated that only university presses will participate in the project. Like defense contracts, the initial batch of poems, fiction, essays, memoirs, journals, and letters have been placed with institutions in all sections of the country—California, Virginia, Indiana, Harvard, Ohio State, Wisconsin, Northwestern, and New York.

Like defense contracts, too, the National Endowment's grant, which is expected to be renewed for each of the next four years, is government money. In its own fashion the whole project bears comparison to Lady Bird Johnson's Keep America Beautiful program. For what the 160 scholars working with the Center intend to do is tidy up, in a big way, the soiled, as well as coiled, texts of these important writers—"monuments that have been defaced or eroded," as the Endowment puts it. A good monument should certainly last two centuries, and the grime should be removed occasionally so that we may get a good look at the original. "The theory is to produce a text the author would have approved," Dr. Gibson says, "excluding the hundreds and even thousands of errors in both punctuation and the works themselves that mount up in textual transmission, and including the refinements and changes that the writer has made in later editions."

As it turned out, when the editors came to Henry James this latter principle defeated them: James made so many refinements and changes, and was such an inveterate reviser of his own books, that no definitive edition, in the MLA's sense, seems feasible. With other writers the problem is largely that of literary detective work. For example, the two published editions of Thoreau's *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* differ in more than a thousand particulars. Which is correct? To a lesser extent the same situation exists with all of Thor-

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A Quarter-Century of Milestones

In the past twenty-five years the publications of scholarly presses have altered many aspects of twentieth-century civilization and greatly stretched its thought. The titles below, nominated by individual university presses, are among those with their imprint that they believe have made the strongest impact on contemporary society or most enriched its culture.

ARIZONA

NIETZSCHE: An Introduction to the Understanding of His Philosophical Activity. By Karl Jaspers, translated from the German by Charles Wallraff and Frederick J. Schmitz (1965). Friedrich Nietzsche is often misjudged as the source of such ideas as "God is dead" and the Nazi concept of "superman." Jasper's intent was not to formalize or categorize Nietzsche's thinking but to help the reader to understand it.

SIX FACES OF MEXICO. Edited by Russell C. Ewing (1966). This volume evaluates—in terms of her history, people, geography, government, economics, literature, and arts—how well Mexico is doing according to her own intentions, hopes, and desires, rather than in comparison to the American way of life.

STRATEGY FOR SURVIVAL. By Thomas L. Martin, Jr., and Donald C. Latham (1963). Adopted officially by the Office of Civilian Defense, this "know-how" manual clarifies the many interlocking factors that would affect the individual and the community in the event of a thermonuclear war.

WATER PRODUCTION USING NUCLEAR ENERGY. Edited by Roy G. Post and Robert L. Seale, with thirty-five collaborating authors (1967). Among the problems tackled here concerning expansion of the world's water supplies are nuclear power and the sociological factors involved.

BOSTON

THE CONSTITUTION, SLAVERY AND THE TERRITORIES. By Allan Nevins (1942). This study of various Constitutional interpretations put forth during the period of greatest ferment preceding the Civil War reveals many parallels between that phase of U.S. history and today's civil rights struggle.

THE POST-WAR CONSTITUTION. By Carl B. Swisher (1947). Among other issues, the author considers "the evolution of Congressional policy-making and the threat of its displacement by the Executive branch, which, not content with the power to execute policy, grows increasingly insistent on making it as well."

JOHN JAY, THE NATION, AND THE COURT. By Richard B. Morris (1967). The author, recipient of the Bancroft Prize in History, succinctly sets forth, in a work to be released later this year, the influence and ideas of Jay as they relate to the growth of nationalism in the United States.

BROWN

A BLAKE DICTIONARY: The Ideas and Symbols of William Blake. By S. Foster Damon (1965). The father of modern Blake studies assembles, synthesizes, and interprets the clues to Blake's meaning that are scattered throughout the body of his work, literary and graphic.

THE ARCHEOLOGY OF CAPE DENBIGH. By J. L. Giddings (1964). Defining the first three major cultural phases of the Western Arctic, the author evolves the idea of continuity in cultures of the Bering Strait region.

THE LEGEND OF THE WANDERING JEW. By George K. Anderson (1965). The history of one of the most pervasive and enduring legends of Western society is traced from its genesis (in the origins of Christianity itself) through its complex evolution down through the ages.

CAMBRIDGE

THE TWO CULTURES AND THE SCIENTIFIC REVOLUTION. By C. P. Snow (1965). Snow's view on the gulf that exists between the scientist and the nonscientist has become one of the most discussed statements of our generation; his view on the gulf between rich and poor countries has inspired such movements as the Peace Corps.

THE STAGES OF ECONOMIC GROWTH. By W. W. Rostow (1960). This non-Communist manifesto with facts and figures to show an alternative to Marxist theory has appeared in twenty foreign languages.

THE NEW ENGLISH BIBLE. New Testament (published jointly by Oxford and Cambridge) (1961). A translation in the language of the twentieth century has brought new life and vigor to Christian belief.

SCIENCE AND CIVILIZATION IN CHINA. By Joseph Needham (1954-). The countless contributions of the Chinese to human invention and technology, many hitherto neglected by Western historians of science, are recorded in the first four volumes of a monumental work in progress.

DOCUMENTS IN MYCENAEAN GREEK. By Michael Ventris and John Chadwick (1956). The knowledge of mankind has been expanded by the translation here of a language previously undeciphered.

THE FATHERS OF THE CHURCH SERIES (58 vols. to date, 1946-). Approximately 100 volumes will present essentially all of the extant patristic writings, including many works never before translated.

DOCUMENTS ON RUSSIAN-AMERICAN RELATIONS: Washington to Eisenhower. By Stanley S. Jados (1965). The classification adopted is chronological and alphabetical, while sections are grouped under these categories: Acts of Congress, Addresses, Aides-Memoire, Agreements, Announcements, Claims, Conventions, Executive Orders, Letters, Messages, Modus Vivendi, Notes, Press Conferences, Press Releases, Proclamations, Protocols, and Statements.

CHICAGO

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY. By Paul Tillich (3 vols., 1951, 1957, 1963). A unique philosophical explanation of theology that reckons with Existentialism and Freudianism.

THE RISE OF THE WEST. By William H. McNeill (1963). This diffusionist history of how the world was Europeanized won a National Book Award.

THE ROAD TO SERFDOM. By Friedrich A. Hayek (1944). A classical liberal's well-known criticism of the welfare state.

COLLECTED PAPERS. By Enrico Fermi (2 vols., 1962-1965). These famous documents on physics led to the discovery of nuclear energy.

COLUMBIA

THE COLUMBIA ENCYCLOPEDIA. Edited by William Bridgwater and Seymour Kurtz (third edition, 1963). The education of hundreds of thousands of people has been amplified by this one-volume compendium.

INTRODUCTION TO ORIENTAL CIVILIZATION (3 vols.: *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, *Sources of Indian Tradition*, *Sources of Japanese Tradition*). Compiled by William Theodore de Bary and others (1958-1960). Selected documents basic to understanding Asia.

INTRODUCTION TO CONTEMPORARY CIVILIZATION. Prepared by the Contemporary Civilization Staff of Columbia College (2 vols., third edition, 1960). Explanatory essays amplify documents selected for their importance in shaping thought and exemplifying movements in Western culture.

TWENTIETH CENTURY CHINA. By O. Edmund Clubb (1964). A noted Sinologist provides a clear and enlightening picture of China—past and present.

THE GEOGRAPHY OF MODERN AFRICA. By William A. Hance (1964). The major features of every area of Africa are covered in this definitive work.

CORNELL

THE PROBLEM OF SLAVERY IN WESTERN CULTURE. By David Brion Davis (1966). Winner in 1967 of Pulitzer Prize and *Saturday Review*-Anisfield Wolf Award, this inaugural book in a multivolume study is the first detailed analysis of slavery and the religious, philosophical, and literary sources of antislavery thought.

MARCELLO MALPIGHI AND THE EVOLUTION OF EMBRYOLOGY. By Howard B. Adel-