

LUNAR LANDSCAPES

by John Hawkes

New Directions, 275 pp., \$5.95

THE TITLE OF JOHN HAWKES'S NEW BOOK is deceptive at this particular time, since it has no bearing on the fantastic frontiers opened up for mankind on the wasteland of the moon. *Lunar Landscapes* explores, rather, man's inner desert as experienced by lonely people everywhere.

Lunar Landscapes consists of six very brief pieces and three short novels, written over a period of two decades and published, for the most part, between 1950 and 1963. The collection serves as a valuable sampler of Hawkes's fiction, its strength and its limitations.

His intensely personal universe, like that of many surrealist artists and writers, is dreamlike in its irreality and its unusual angle of vision, which produces grotesque distortions. If his characters do not "come alive" in any conventional sense of psychology and development, it is because Hawkes is concerned solely with their private anguish and their mythic representation. Thus, he seeks primarily not a story line but a mood as the setting for his *dramatis personae* in their isolation and despair. In the early "Charivari," for instance, a novella of some eighty pages and the most successful piece in *Lunar Landscapes*, Hawkes portrays a well-to-do man of forty, Henry Van, who is afraid of life, indifferent to his wife, dominated by his admirably sketched mother-in-law, and bereft of sufficient inner resources to withdraw into himself. If he is, clearly, not a dramatically new subject for fiction, the author does command attention by depicting him with a blend of pity and satire that underlines both his pathos and his absurdity. "These poor people," Henry muses, and one suddenly thinks of the Beatles' "Eleanor Rigby," marveling at the economy of means with which a mere song creates an essentially similar atmosphere.

The aridity of the landscape is reflected in the prose. It is beautiful, surprising, bathed in an eerie glow that casts long, ominous verbal shadows whose dimness reveals the twilight of the soul. But Hawkes's unquestioned mastery of language turns on itself. The author appears more interested in the poetic charge of his words than in their participation in a fiction. Like some symbolist poetry which it calls to mind, Hawkes's writing seems to sparkle in a vacuum—it may be lovely, but one regrets its failure to attach itself more to life. Perhaps one ought to consider *Lunar Landscapes* rather as prose poetry; it would then have a

clearer *raison d'être*, but most of the stories demand to be treated in a context of fiction.

Hawkes has an unfortunate tendency to indulge in exoticism. Some of these tales are set in Germany and Italy, where Hawkes served as a World War II ambulance driver for the American Field Service, and he allows himself to inject German and Italian phrases gratuitously and to give his characters outlandish names: Justus and Sesemi Kümmerlich, Metze, Lebrecht, Mauschel, Pucento, Adeppi, Arsellia etc. (These are first names!) At times he succeeds in rendering into an appropriately stilted English the heaviness of German syntax; on the other hand, in "Charivari," where the setting is apparently England, Hawkes is inept at reproducing the pronunciation of lower-class British slang.

One of the most striking aspects of *Lunar Landscapes* is Hawkes's flair for the grotesque. In "The Owl" he tells a chilling tale of the enthusiasm with which the population of an Italian town (darkly named "Sasso Fetore") prepares for the hanging of a prisoner. Like a Ghelderode play, "The Owl" probes the obscure side of the individual and collective soul in a baroque story replete with blood, violence, a hangman, and even a dwarf. Here fantasy significantly reinforces reality, but again the strangeness of the vision stays with us longer than the substance.

Lunar Landscapes proves once more that John Hawkes is one of the finer stylists writing in English today. It does not, however, suffice to mark him as one of the more compelling voices in current American fiction.

Tom Bishop

Tom Bishop is a frequent critic of contemporary fiction and theater.



Personal History

**FROM HAYES TO MCKINLEY:
National Party Politics, 1877-1896**

by H. Wayne Morgan

Syracuse University Press, 618 pp., \$12.95

**WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN:
Vol. II: Progressive Politician and
Moral Statesman, 1909-1915**

by Paolo E. Coletta

University of Nebraska Press, 380 pp., \$8.95

THE PAST TWENTY-FIVE YEARS have seen a revolution. The edict "publish or perish" has produced tidal waves of titles, ranging from *French Absolutism: The Critical Phase, 1620-1629* to *Andrew Law, American Psalmist*. At best they have thrown new light on dusty dogmas; at worst they have strained to the breaking point untenable theories such as the curious notion that the South lost the Civil War because it wanted to. At best they have given biography new dimensions; at worst they have rendered colorful men dull—as has happened with William Jennings Bryan in the second volume of Paolo Coletta's projected three-volume study.

Coletta's work has already been hailed as definitive, and it does give new stature to Bryan who, although "a great failure," was no figurehead but the architect of neutrality and a driving force behind the New Freedom. Yet it is doubtful whether Bryan requires so exhaustive a biography, with an entire volume devoted to his ten twilight years.

H. Wayne Morgan's *From Hayes to McKinley* is something else. Despite its unfortunate title (at least one historian has quipped that American history would be little different if none of the Presidents from Hayes to McKinley had ever been born), this is a rich, juicy fruit cake of a book, combining historical scholarship and literary artistry. It gives us a panorama of an age that was gilded if not golden: a Washington of palaces and shanties, with Congress governing in "a haze of cigar smoke" and lemonade being served at White House receptions. It was also a time of rather boring Presidents being bored by the job. Harrison called the White House his jail. Cleveland saw the Presidency as "a dreadful self-inflicted penance"; in order to avoid the office-seekers who quadrennially swarmed over Washington like ants, he sometimes worked at his desk from 12 P.M. to 4 A.M. A President had 125,000 non-military offices to fill, of whom fourth-class postmasterships

were the most rewarding politically.

These years saw the long death-watch for Grant who, like Eisenhower later, was still the nation's "first citizen." But there was a rising tide of indifference towards the Negroes, for whom the Civil War had supposedly been fought; as Daniel Chamberlain put it, "The North is tired of the Southern question." Economics, not the bloody shirt, was becoming the main issue, although there was less interest in the tiresome tariff question than in the revelations about Cleveland's illegitimate child. This was the era, too, of the Pullman Strike and the gunning down of strikers, of two Presidential assassinations, and of the revolt of the farmer through his Alliances and Granges and the Populist Party—though, as Morgan observes, the desire to preserve the small independent farmer signaled his passing.

Morgan paints the age in rich, glowing colors; but he also gives us a pageant of personalities, including the Presidents whom he highlights into individuality: the self-contained Hayes, dedicated to "country living and Sunday hymns"; the hapless Garfield, last of the log-cabin Presidents; Arthur, elegant and cold, "looking at the world through slightly closed eyes," redoing the White House in steamboat decor and serving twelve-course dinners, and driving through Civil Service reform. Morgan does not think too much of "Old Perpetual" Cleveland, with his negative honesty and negative government. On the shrewd and cheerless Harrison, who could charm crowds and make enemies with a handshake, one of his friends told a would-be supporter: "Don't think he means to insult you."

The author is equally skillful with such lesser luminaries as the tarnished "Plumed Knight" Blaine; Roscoe Conkling, "the lordliest Republican," a strutting Bird of Paradise in green trousers and scarlet coat; the attractive Mark Hanna; the acid-tongued Tom Reed; "Old Greasy" Coxey with his long hair and buckskins and his pathetic "army"; Mary E. Lease, the "Kansas Pythoness," who declared: "If one man has not enough to eat . . . and another man has \$25,000,000, that last man has something that belongs to the first."

To Morgan it was no accident that McKinley was to win the most clear-cut Presidential victory in a generation. Morgan denies the legends of corruption and vote-buying. McKinley, with all his charm, was a born politician; Bryan, springing up in the West like a prairie fire, was a gifted amateur.

McKinley's front-door, Main Street campaign, abetted by the hard-driving Hanna, was broad-based and professional. Unlike Bryan, who believed "in the outdated Jeffersonian virtues . . . in the Hamiltonian world of 1896," McKinley and the Republicans were "open to change and moderation." Bryan was essentially a rural spokesman, with little appeal to immigrants, laborers, or prosperous farmers. Warning wisely that "no one suffers so much from cheap money as the farmers and laborers," McKinley and Hanna put together a coalition of business, progressive agriculture, labor and the middle classes, welding the Republicans into a majority party. And three times, as the Republicans themselves put it, Bryan led them to victory.

Bryan was, in fact, a born loser, as

Mr. Coletta indicates. He was for states' rights in a time of ever-increasing centralization, for peace during a world-engulfing war. He "won" the Scopes trial but failed to halt evolution. The Eighteenth Amendment was his dubious monument. His naïveté led him to call Pancho Villa a Sir Galahad, and to accept huge lecture fees while he was Secretary of State.

Believing in the ultimate perfectibility of man, Bryan operated on the principle that Christianity was the only proper religion and democracy the only proper form of government. Thus, along with Wilson, he initiated the policy, still operative today, of American refusal to recognize de facto governments not to our liking. The British, looking on at Mexico and regarding only order and trade as important, wondered why we should be "shooting people into self-government." Though he condemned dictators and dollar diplomacy, Bryan's "paternal despotism . . . made the Caribbean more than ever an American lake." He sent gunboats while writing treaties banning guns.

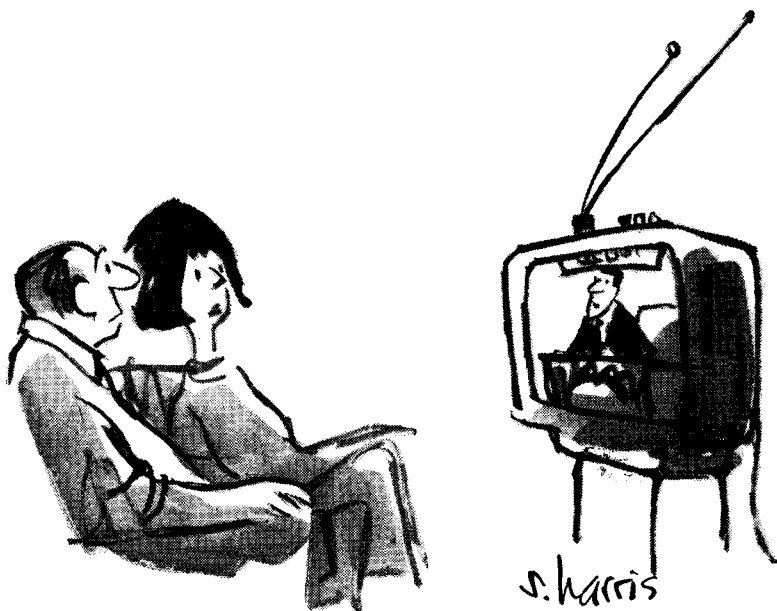
Yet his positive contributions were many. He fought an unyielding battle against J. P. Morgan and the "interests"; he virtually dictated the choice of Wilson as Democratic nominee and, until the ultimate break came, gave unfaltering loyalty to the man who had once felt that he should be "knocked into a cocked hat." Bryan's power in Congress was tremendous: the Federal Reserve system echoed a plan of his, the Clayton Act answered his demands; he saw the income tax and tariff reform become law.

But his greatest battle he lost. As a Christian, he believed all war to be anti-Christian; as a moralist, he saw no moral issue in the conflict of 1914-1918, and he may have been right. As a realist, he was appalled at Americans traveling on belligerent ships and at British ships running up the cover of the American flag. He was truly neutral—the first Christian pacifist in high office, Coletta calls him, observing that if Wilson had listened to him instead of to Lansing we might not have entered the war.

Coletta's penetrating and scholarly study does not convey the magnetism, the impact that was Bryan. But it does something more: by revealing in depth his character and dedication, it gives him new dimensions, if not as a master-mind then at least as a master politician.

Margaret L. Coit

Prize-winning historian Margaret L. Coit, a former journalist, is an associate professor at Fairleigh Dickinson University in New Jersey.



"Following the President's press conference will be an interpretation, followed by a discussion of the interpretation, followed by an analysis . . ."

**SPEAK FOR YOURSELF, DANIEL:
A Life of Webster in His Own Words**

edited by Walter Lewis

Houghton Mifflin, 505 pp., \$8.95

WALKER LEWIS, a lawyer and author who gave us a fine biography of Roger Taney, now has had the excellent idea of letting Daniel Webster tell his story in his own words. Lewis has distilled the eighteen-volume National Edition of Webster's *Writings and Speeches* into a 500-page elixir that goes down smoothly and warms us on its way.

Let Webster speak for himself? Try and stop him! Although he found himself unable to declaim before the school at Phillips Exeter Academy, he overcame his shyness with a vengeance. He was elected to Congress largely on the strength of a Fourth of July address, and it was his oratory that made him famous. When we think of Webster we think of him speaking: the great dark deep-set eyes glowing at his listeners; the huge voice that could be heard, unamplified, by a throng of 20,000; the overwhelming presence—no man, said Canon Smyth, could be so great as this man looked. And what words he spoke! Read aloud the end of the peroration in Webster's 1830 debate with Hayne over the right of a state to nullify federal legislation:

When my eyes shall be turned to behold for the last time the sun in heaven, may I not see him shining on the broken and dishonored fragments of a once glorious Union; on States dissevered, discordant, belligerent; on a land rent with civil feuds, or drenched, it may be, in fraternal blood! Let their last feeble and lingering glance rather behold the gorgeous ensign of the republic, now known and honored throughout the earth, still full high advanced, its arms and trophies streaming in their original luster, not a stripe erased or polluted, nor a single star obscured, bearing for its motto, no such miserable interrogatory as "What is all this worth?" nor those other words of delusion and folly, "Liberty first and Union afterwards"; but everywhere, spread all over in characters of living light, blazing on all its ample folds, as they float over the sea and over the land, and in every wind under the whole heaven, that other sentiment, dear to every true American heart—Liberty and Union, now and for ever, one and inseparable!

Rich, perhaps; a chocolate layer cake of American oratory that makes Everett Dirksen sound like Calvin Coolidge. But incomparably great. So, too, are the argument in the Dartmouth College case ("It is, sir, as I have said, a small college. And yet there are those who love it—"); the speech for the

prosecution in the White murder case; the Adams-Jefferson commemorative address; the speech in support of the 1850 compromise, and many more.

It is not only Webster the orator whom Lewis shows us. There is also Webster the diplomat, settling with Britain the disputed Maine boundary; Webster the farmer, saying he preferred the company of his oxen to that of his fellow Senators; Webster the fisherman; Webster the traveler, pleased by the number of dukes and earls who entertained him in England; Webster the family man; Webster the speculator in Western land, and Webster the impecunious (Lewis points out that in 1842 two of Webster's promissory notes, in the aggregate face amount of \$17,750, sold at auction for \$400).

Not everything in the book is pro-Webster, largely because not everything in the book is in Webster's own words. Lewis has supplied skillful notes connecting his selections from Webster's speeches and letters and furnishing background material on such topics as Webster's drinking (conclusion: rarely excessive), his Supreme Court practice (which yielded more than \$15,000 a year), his lifelong ambition to be President (when a Whig President was finally elected—William Henry Harrison—Webster could not resist giving him, unsolicited, a draft inaugural address).

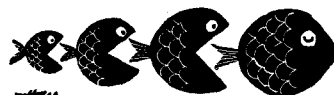
While he was a Congressman from Massachusetts Webster represented claimants for damage to American commerce done by Spanish cruisers in 1788-89, and succeeded in having Congress enact a law providing for the payment of the claims. His fee, 5 per cent of the amounts recovered by his clients, came to \$70,000.

While Senator from Massachusetts he actively represented the Second Bank of the United States during the struggle between Jackson and Biddle over the renewal of its charter by Congress. At the height of the fight Webster went so far as to write Biddle that his retainer had not been "renewed, or refreshed as usual," and that if Biddle wanted him to continue to represent the Bank rather than its enemies, "it may be well to send me the usual retainers."

In brief, it is the whole Webster, a Webster of godlike speech and human flaws, to whom Lewis introduces us. It is a pleasure to make his acquaintance.

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USA

**CAPTIVE CITY:
Chicago in Chains**

by Ovid Demaris

Lyle Stuart, 366 pp., \$6.95

MAYOR DALEY'S CHICAGO, still nursing bruises from the 1968 Democratic Convention and the Walker report, gets a belt right in its solar plexus from Ovid Demaris. His is probably the most comprehensive and best-documented account in recent years of the criminal-political alliance in the nation's second largest city, which allegedly is still first in the hearts of The Outfit, as the mob is dubbed thereabouts. Demaris says he had access to new information and to secret federal reports, and he quotes the latter at length to finger police, city- and state-elected representatives, a few judges, and a couple of Congressmen he claims were gang-dominated.

The opus thus adds up to a multiple-count indictment. If those named were tried, preferably with a change of venue—which is impossible—there might be some action. (That "change of venue" bit may be a little unfair; the majority of Chicago judges undoubtedly are honest, and they had Chicago Bar Association approval when elected.) Recently mobsmen have been prosecuted on such charges as contempt of court. Furthermore, the city's traffic tickets are fed into a computer so that violators are tracked down, even after three years, and fined large sums. Jail sentences have been imposed on a number of flagrant violators unable to come up with the money.

So maybe Chicago is getting ready for reform, though out-of-towners don't always remember that big trees from little acorns grow. Demaris failed to discern any such tendencies. And, indeed, no great reform wave occurred in Las Vegas as a result of *The Green Felt Jungle*, by Demaris and Ed Reid.

Anyhow, as a long-time Chicago watcher dating back to the Dillinger days, this reviewer suggests that *Captive City* tries to be an honest book. Out of some thirty-five references to Mayor Daley a couple are almost complimentary, even if the rest inferentially accent the negative.

Not that there is any suggestion the mayor ever took a dishonest dime: no one has ever accused him of that. Demaris gives him the nod as an astute politician, which might be considered laudatory by some; but the author's idea of what makes an astute politician is eyebrow-lifting if not eye-opening. If the West Side Bloc candidates are put into office it must be because they are the men the electorate wants, and