

Mr. Shepard wishes that we realize the sheer mass of this sub-literature (there were two and one-half million broadsides sold on the subject of James Bloomfield Rush's execution in 1849 alone), and its influence. Although unreliable factually, street literature played a significant enough part in England's social, cultural, and political thought for over 400 years that it can be used as a reliable gauge in understanding the society of its readers.

Additionally, The History of Street Literature explores the men and the methods of printing the various forms of "non-books." Publishers, for example, were said to have printed "the exact likeness of the murderer, taken right at the bar of the Old Bailey," when, in fact, they had been using the same woodcut for over 40 years. We are familiarized with the difficulties publishers encountered with the monopolistic practices of printing guilds and the punishments they endured because of official censorship, such as the loss of one's ears for publishing "sedicious and schlanderous Writings, Rimes, Ballades, Letters, Papers, and Bookes" during the reign of Queen Mary.

The influence of street literature is briefly explored in modern advertising and ballad scholarship, and there is a hurried examination of sub-literary survivals in Puerto Rico, Northern Ireland, and Northeastern Brazil. But it is during his chapter on survivals that Mr. Shepard drifts from his subject and begins to lecture us on the sins of modern civilization, left-wing radicalism, pop music, and society's certain Armageddon. One can only wonder why Mr. Shepard would allow such an interesting book to disintegrate into such senselessness.

The History of Street Literature contains about 80 pages of illustrative examples of the various forms of street literature, a glossary of terms, and an extensive bibliography. The price of eleven dollars seems somewhat high.

Prefaces. By J. Frank Dobie.

Pp. ix + 204.

Boston: Little, Brown, 1975. \$7.95 cloth.

Reviewed by Bruce A. Rosenberg

When J. Frank Dobie wrote, he opened a door to the reader through which he passed into a world of honesty, integrity, and decency; it is a world of the rocking chair on the front porch--casual, deliberate, forthright, homey--and of the prairie and its cattle, horses, and men. It is a world of insiders and outsiders with little common ground. As Dobie wrote of Cunninghame Graham, "he opens a window . . . but he never belonged, intimately and profoundly, to the pampas." W. H. Hudson, on the other hand, "opens a door and the reader passes through it." Frederic Remington (from upstate New York) portrayed soldiers merely as "clever imitations of Kipling's," while Andy Adams had "a sympathy for the land and for the cattle and horses and men of the land."

In this collection of eighteen essays, all previously published as prefaces for other people's books, we are invited to share the life and views of the life of Dobie in a very personal way; we are asked to participate in the personality of the author as few other writers require. He was the close friend or the good acquaintance of many of the writers he prefaces, but more importantly he is an intimate of the life they wrote about: "land has been personal to me from the time I began having feelings." Dobie paid Captain John G. Bourke one of the noblest compliments in the Dobie repertoire, one which reflects as much on the giver as the receiver, when he said that Bourke "knew the right tempo of this land of intense sun, where shaded repose was--and is--supremely valued even in the most violent times."

Dobie had considerable literary sensitivity and knew good writing from bad. He knew that the American West has yet to be the subject of important fiction, and so he valued other qualities almost as dearly. Andy Adams is praised for his "fidelity" and his "easy intimacy with life." Napoleon Augustus Jennings' A Texas Ranger was a book for those "who like a brave, clean-cut narrative, simply and honestly told;" Jack Potter's "lust for good fellowship and . . . generosity of spirits is better than a mountain breeze;" Gene Rhodes' dialogue is vivacious, "never glib," often "witty," and "uniformly natural." Charlie Siringo was "rollicky, reckless, realistic," and he was "an honest reporter." Captain Bourke had an "eager sympathy for nearly all things human except greed, fraud, and injustice." John Jenkins considered it "his duty to put down the truth whether it is complimentary or not." And Cunninghame Graham had "a contempt for hypocrisy," and was himself a "gentlemen of honor and spirit."

None of the people Dobie wrote about seem to have lacked these homey virtues, or else he was too gracious to mention it. When he criticized a writer on his beloved West, usually the grounds were dispassionately critical. Andy Adams' books "have no plots" and he "lacks dramatic power;" Gene Rhodes "never attained to the amplitude of Mark Twain;" Charles Russell "lacked perspective on the whole of life;" Siringo was "singularly wanting in sensitiveness to the beautiful" and "had almost nothing to say on life." Helen Hunt Jackson was a dedicated woman--"more dedicated to a cause than to craftsmanship," whose A Century of Dishonor, "because of too much earnestness along with too little skill in writing . . . is dull;" and Frederic Remington "habitually got and gave the right words, but less frequently the right tune."

Dobie was himself something at odds with the recent generation of folklorists for whom honesty and forthrightness are values to be studied in societal contexts, men and women who strive to suppress their personalities in their work rather than shape their folklore by it. Prefaces is at odds with folklore study today; in it Dobie reminds us how well he could put down word upon word with the same clarity and honesty he admired in others, and with the same unaffected forthrightness that he found in his beloved land. He should make us remember that when we lost him we lost a broader perspective on life and a burning hankering after goodness and the truth.