

Voice of the Democracy: A Critical Biography of David Graham Phillips, Journalist, Novelist, Progressive. By Louis Filler. (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1978. Pp. 206. Bibliographic note, notes, index. \$13.50.)

This is an intensive biographical and critical study of a turn-of-the-century journalist and novelist who has been nearly forgotten today in American literature. Complaining that "Phillips is as dead abroad as he is at home; but in addition, he is dead in Indiana" (p. 3), Filler claims that Phillips is not really buried, that he was a defender of democracy, and that he is relevant today. Much of the eclipse Phillips has suffered, says Filler, has been due to inaccurate and unjust criticism. The purpose of this volume is to show that Phillips believed in the American dream and advocated that the betrayers of that dream be exposed and restrained. Reluctantly a muckraker, Phillips helped kindle public resentment against political corruption in his "Treason of the Senate" series, which accused the Senate of subservience to industrial interests; the series was also a factor in passing the Seventeenth Amendment, which authorized direct election of United States senators.

In general, Filler is successful in his purpose. The book is a storehouse of information on Phillips, his work, and his times. Born in Madison, Indiana, in 1867, young Phillips was a sensitive and bookish dreamer who attended Indiana Asbury College (now DePauw University) but was graduated from Princeton, where he adopted a pessimistic view of life as a struggle. Phillips plunged into journalism, working first in Cincinnati then New York. In both cities he quickly rose to the height of his profession and soon was a favorite of Joseph Pulitzer. Experiencing a tragic love affair ending with the death of his beloved, he never married. Despite his fame as a journalist, however, he felt constrained and developed a passionate love of freedom and an ambition to become a novelist.

Phillips' first book, *The Great God Success* (1901), chronicled the moral failure of a newspaper publisher and was well received. As a result, Phillips left journalism. *The Master-Rogue* (1903), a portrait of a moneymaker, established him with the liberal editors as the most promising writer since Hamlin Garland. Phillips defended business because he believed that capitalism, by cleansing itself of undesirable elements, would serve the workers. He was critical of the establishment in politics, but he was sentimental and declared that love and compassion were the most important elements in life.

Following Phillips' assassination in 1911 by a psychotic, several of his novels were published posthumously. The best known was *Susan Lenox: Her Fall and Rise* (1917), which debased Phillips' reputation. The book's theme was the cause of prostitution and the influence of sex in life, and angry criticism denounced it as pornographic. It was later withdrawn, although today it would be considered mild.

Filler characterizes Phillips as modest, restless, rather quarrelsome, and difficult to please. He worked hard, often writing all night. He was a realistic idealist, who searched for truth and believed in progress and fortitude, and a fervent democrat, who was hurt by human anguish but failed to recognize human weakness. Though Sinclair Lewis was his successor, Phillips' fiction was much more daring in focusing on the rich and strong. Filler depicts the times of Phillips well, and *Voice of the Democracy* abounds in references to people such as Theodore Dreiser, Joseph Pulitzer, and Ida M. Tarbell.

The reader may wish that the author had attempted to tell more about the genesis of Phillips' ideas and books. Nowhere is there any definition of progressivism or its tenets and manifestations; evidently Filler takes such knowledge for granted. The main defect of the volume, however, arises through Filler's constant and often contemptuous criticism of other scholars in this field. For example, he calls earlier criticism "pseudo criticism" (p. 124); other critics are sometimes accused of being "mindless" (p. 129); I. F. Marcossan is a "pseudobiographer" (p. 196) and an "almost incredibly shallow man" (p. 192). Granville Hicks is a "tainted critic" (p. 71), and Mark Schorer has a foolish view (p. 198). Surely no such invective is justified. Nevertheless, the book is a valuable addition to Phillips criticism.

DePauw University,
Greencastle, Ind.

Arthur W. Shumaker

Kentucky in the New Republic: The Process of Constitution Making. By Joan Wells Coward. (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1979. Pp. 220. Tables, maps, notes, appendix, bibliographical essay, index. \$16.50.)

"Historians have rarely studied early Kentucky" (p. 201), writes Joan Wells Coward in an appendix to this work, and if she confines that assertion to the last four decades, she is certainly correct. Except for some fine biographies, volumes by Patricia Watlington, Otis K. Rice, George M. Chinn, and a few others represent the scarce output of more recent years.