

Engel places the twentieth-century effort to preserve the Indiana Dunes into the context of a larger movement in the Midwest "to reform the democratic faith of the nation" (p. xviii). He sees the band of crusaders seeking to save the shoreline of Lake Michigan from industrial and commercial exploitation and destruction—a group composed of political, cultural, scientific, and artistic figures, principally Chicagoans or residents of northern Indiana—as informed by a vision of community interdependence and opposed to the individualistic and capitalistic ethic of America. Engel identifies several stages in the story: the struggle that preceded the establishment of the Dunes State Park in 1923, the fight at midcentury against increasing industrialization, and the contemporary battle to preserve what little remains. The opening chapter of the book contains an absorbing account of the Dunes pageant of 1917, which dramatized the plight and the potential of the area. The final chapter describes the last-ditch defense of the Dunes mounted by Senator Paul Douglas of Illinois, who emerges in this volume as an ecological hero by contrast with a long line of Indiana politicians who, in Engel's judgment, sold out to private industry.

The most creative (and potentially the most controversial) aspect of this volume lies in Engel's description of the "religious dimension" of the Dunes movement. Drawing upon the works of Mircea Eliade and other phenomenologists of religion, Engel associates the reform movement with a "new humanistic faith" emerging at the time, a faith which identifies the "new" citizen as a reflection of the ultimate meaning of American society. He analyzes the pageant of 1917 and its participants, for example, in terms of religious ritual, seeing it as cosmic in scope, a symbolic pilgrimage to the center of the universe. For Engel the Dunes movement cannot be understood apart from this "geocentric" value system.

This book has a message. Engel echoes Douglas's passionate, almost apocalyptic tone as he writes, "Standing on the last acre of the Dunes we stand symbolically on America's last acre. Therefore to save the Dunes is to save our native land" (p. 237). Himself a professor of social ethics and a committed environmentalist, Engel views the struggle for the Dunes as a measure of basic moral issues in American life.

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Chicago's Public Wits: A Chapter in the American Comic Spirit.
 Edited by Kenny J. Williams and Bernard Duffey. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983. Pp. xx, 289. Map, illustrations, notes. \$22.50.)

This book works on three levels. First, it is an excellent anthology of comedy, featuring Chicago humorists—many of them

nationally prominent—from the 1840s to today. Second, though the editors do not directly address it in their otherwise insightful notes, the selections frequently showcase the major comedy types prevalent in the history of American humor, be they the crack-erbarrel tendencies of Finley Peter Dunne's Mr. Dooley or the antihero characteristics of Ring Lardner's Mr. Gullible. Third, while the selections often seem to follow national patterns, there still remains a strong regional stamp. This Chicago orientation is particularly apparent when one considers the continuing influence of politics on the city's humor, from the 1840 satirical attack on President Martin Van Buren which opens the book to the frequently biting commentary of Mike Royko in the closing pages.

A book of this nature, however, is not to be enjoyed for these reasons only, or even just for the new Chicago framework it brings to well-known humorists such as Dunne or Lardner. The recognition it provides for important but neglected humorists is also valuable. This reviewer most appreciated making contact with the ethnic humor of Charles H. Harris's Carl Pretzel (who surely influenced Dunne's Mr. Dooley) and the travel-book humor of Benjamin Franklin Taylor, whose volumes paralleled the early travel humor of Mark Twain.

Indiana readers will especially enjoy the inclusion of Hoosier George Ade, who first rose to prominence at the Chicago *Morning News* (later the *Record*) during the 1890s. The Ade material is drawn from his celebrated daily column "Stories of the Streets and of the Town" and the even more celebrated early "fables in slang" books. Selections such as "The Fable of the Two Mandolin Players and the Willing Performer" (probably Ade's most honored essay) rank with the best the volume has to offer.

Editors Kenny J. Williams and Bernard Duffey, professors of English at Duke University, brought excellent credentials to the project. Williams has already authored *Prairie Voices: A Literary History of Chicago from the Frontier to 1893* (1980); Duffey had written *The Chicago Renaissance in American Letters* (1954). In *Chicago's Public Wits* they do an admirable job of selecting and critiquing the largely neglected early urban humor of the city (from 1840 to approximately 1880), the heyday-period humor of the 1880s and 1890s, and the more individualized and complex world of twentieth-century Chicago humorists. This three-part examination of Chicago wit succeeds because it remains faithful to the editors' perception of the obligations of humor: "to amuse, to perceive with a sense of discovery, and ultimately to offer the reader a hold on a particular world" (p. xvii). For students of

humor, or of Chicago itself, this volume represents a good investment.

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Trial By Fire: A People's History of the Civil War and Reconstruction. By Page Smith. (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1982. Pp. xvi, 1038. End maps, index. \$29.95.)

With this massive volume the indefatigable Page Smith presents the fifth volume in his "People's History" of the United States, a project that began with his two-volume history of the Revolution. Smith is a narrative historian, a skillful storyteller with a unerring eye for interesting and enlightening detail. This approach makes his work somewhat old-fashioned; it is not what most academic historians are doing these days, as Smith, who has all the credentials of the professional historian, well knows.

But this book is not addressed to academic historians. Smith's goal is to reach a popular audience, to provide a readable study based on modern scholarship but accessible to the general reader. He feels that much of modern historical scholarship, especially that concerning Reconstruction, seldom gets beyond the confines of the academy. As a result, the true record of Reconstruction and its accomplishments is largely unknown. Revisionist historians have provided a fuller and more accurate picture, but their specialized work, Smith insists, has not reached the general public which still considers Reconstruction as a tragic era marked by unrelieved corruption and motivated by a vindictive desire by the victorious North to punish and humiliate the defeated South by imposing upon it domination by ignorant blacks and their vicious, self-seeking white allies, the carpetbaggers and the scalawags. Thus this long book is designed to reach the public that the academic historians have failed to reach.

If his intended audience provides one meaning for the "people" in Smith's subtitle, his approach to his material provides another. He seeks to depict the lives and fortunes of the people by including ordinary, everyday, homey incidents and by making extensive use of diaries and letters to present these incidents in the words of the participants themselves. Smith's work lacks the methodological apparatus characteristic of the new social history, which shares his goal of describing the lives of the common folk but not his methods. The new social historians would insist that surviving diaries and letters are not typical in any statistical sense; in fact, most are the work of people who are hardly typical in any sense. If the opinions of ordinary soldiers as expressed in