A different kind of misunderstanding or ignorance besets Hoggan when he speaks historiographically—perhaps, though, this is just another facet of his ungrounded assertions or of his unwillingness to consider contrary evidence. He asserts that Thomas J. Wertenbaker’s reputation as a student of eighteenth-century America “has been maintained without challenge since the publication of his first major study more than fifty years ago” (p. 49). How about the impressive rehabilitation of Wertenbaker’s “Puritan Oligarchy” coming from the works of Morison, Miller, and Murdock? And the major revision on the role of Nathaniel Bacon offered by Wilcomb Washburn, The Governor and the Rebel? That Hoggan knows something of Kenneth Stampp is clear from his reference to And the War Came, but it is just as clear that he is ignorant of The Peculiar Institution when he says, “Slavery was virtually bankrupt by 1861 . . . the high price of Negroes, the low percentage of profit on their employment—all these suggested that the slavery system in the United States was on its way out by 1861” (p. 99). Whether Stampp was right or wrong, Hoggan cannot legitimately ignore him in a discussion of the historical writing on the economics of slavery.

Pervading the book is Hoggan’s religious preoccupation. The reviewer neither comments on the quality of the author’s religious experience, nor questions his religious motives. But Hoggan’s frequent use of religious allusions gives the book a special coloration; to wit: “The specifically American system consists of a Christian constitutional system of limitations in politics and a free market along scriptural lines in economics” (p. 1).

A final disquieting factor is the extreme sloppiness of the editing. Apparently neither the author nor the editor knows that the leading student of Madison is Irving Brant—not Bryant, as it is printed in both text and index. And neither knows that Brant’s publisher is Bobbs-Merrill, not the Indiana University Press. Neither examined the discrepancy between Eugene C. Baker in text and index and the Eugene C. Barker in the citations. Walter Millis is credited with The National Spirit rather than his justly famous The Martial Spirit. The magnitude of the errors in this book indicates that Hoggan would have been well advised not to venture into the area of United States historiography.

National Historical Publications Commission

Walter Rundell, Jr.

The Middle Western Farm Novel in the Twentieth Century. By Roy W. Meyer. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965, Pp. vii, 265. Notes, appendix, bibliography, index. $5.00.)

Meyer has made a careful and extensive study of a particular literary genre which he has designated “the middle western farm novel.” Technically, he has confined his survey to the twentieth century, but he has of necessity gone back into the nineteenth century to look at the beginnings. The results are interesting and instructive.
He starts by laying down the criteria by which his selections have been made, illustrates the criteria by concrete examples, and then defends them. In succeeding chapters, he evaluates the farm novelist as historian, arbiter of values, social critic, and psychologist. The work is, of course, primarily in the field of literary criticism, but it nevertheless has much of value to the historian, the economist, the sociologist, and even the statesman. This reviewer is not well qualified to judge the book as literary criticism, but at least it makes interesting reading and from this point of view it is heartily recommended to anyone concerned with American fiction.

The novels dealing with the pioneering period in the western half of the Mississippi Valley are best from a historical viewpoint. They contribute a great deal to the social and economic history of the region in the last half of the nineteenth century. Perhaps they make an even greater contribution for various immigrant groups—German, Scandinavian, Czech, etc.—than for the native American settlers. The novels of Ole Edvart Rølvaag, especially his *Giants in the Earth,* are outstanding in this respect.

Possibly the most significant finding that Meyer has made is the fact that the middle western farm novel as a type rose to great prominence on the American literary scene in the early decades of the twentieth century and has declined almost to the point of disappearance in the past two decades. This would appear to indicate that the United States is undergoing basic economic and social changes as a nation. Agriculture is undoubtedly a declining industry from the standpoint of both the relative and the absolute number of people engaged in it. It is not, however, a declining industry at all from the standpoint of its volume of output. American agriculture is now producing more and better food, fiber, and industrial raw materials than it ever has before. But middle western farm life now differs much less from that of the towns and cities than it previously did. Especially, the pioneering period, which provided the best raw material for the group of novels under consideration, was a "one shot affair." If there should be another flowering of middle western farm novels, the subject matter would of necessity be quite different from that of the group which Meyer has studied.

The Appendix, 43 pages in length, in which the author presents an annotated bibliography of middle western farm fiction from 1891 to 1962, is one of the most valuable parts of the book. There is a second bibliography of a more general nature which is also quite good. The author is to be commended for his energy and his scholarship.

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