

to rhyme and metre the rather sterile exercise of a formalist.

Moody gave up the writing of verse about 1905 and succumbed to his fascination with the stage. *The Great Divide* proved him competent in theatrical technique and demonstrated his skill in dialogue. *The Faith Healer*, an earlier play which he revised after his first real success, failed to hold audiences, however, and a brain tumor cut short his career at an early age. Given a longer life Moody might have won an imposing position as a playwright able to combine realistic and symbolic technique in the manner of Henrik Ibsen. But it is also possible that Mark Van Doren was correct in his contention that Moody's real genius was in letter writing; the fragments from Moody's correspondence in Brown's book seem to support this theory. At any rate most of Moody's poetry has not worn well. The present biography is valuable as a record of an intellectual life and as a chronicle of a literary period. It is unconvincing in its effort to make of Moody a significant poet with a message for the present generation.

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*The Politics of Normalcy: Governmental Theory and Practice in the Harding-Coolidge Era.* By Robert K. Murray. *The Norton Essays in American History.* Edited by Harold M. Hyman. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1973. Pp. xii, 162. Notes, bibliographical review, index. Clothbound, \$6.95; paperbound, \$2.45.)

This short interpretative work examines politics during the years of Warren G. Harding's presidency and Calvin Coolidge's completion of Harding's term. Based on research even more extensive than that for the author's earlier *The Harding Era*, it depicts these years not as beginning a hiatus between Wilsonian crusades and Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal but as a formative historical period setting a positive pattern in governmental philosophy and operation for the rest of the decade.

In 1920 the nation was suffering from a complexity of ills: inflation (followed by rapid deflation), unemployment, the Red Scare, and international uncertainty. It seemed to many that Woodrow Wilson's innovative program had not

lived up to its promise, and, as the once aggressive President lay ill in the White House, the Democratic administration appeared to founder. Normalcy provided "traditionally understandable and historically acceptable methods" (p. 2) for meeting problems, and Harding personified the calmness of deliberate conciliation and compromise which would follow consultation with the "best minds" and result in restoration of a "proper" relationship between the executive and legislative branches. Once in office, however, Harding found it no easy task to work with a Congress divided within itself and well trained in conflict with his predecessor. Despite the obstacles—and his short tenure—Harding produced much of the normalcy program he had promised, and before his death in 1923 he seemed to be moving toward positive leadership to achieve what was yet pending.

Murray recognizes the existence of corruption but denies it was as significant to the politics of this period as is usually claimed. Senatorial investigations proceeded not only because of apparent irregularities but also because of political animosity and congressional desire to limit presidential authority and independence. These motivations—as well as publicity in the sensation seeking press—produced a "rhetoric of corruption" which Murray believes was more damaging to Harding's image than was any revelation of wrongdoing on the part of his subordinates.

It is easy to come away from Murray's book with the impression that Harding almost alone produced the spirit of his administration. Certainly he did personify its goals and methods, but other leaders were also pursuing the ends of peace, harmony, and unity. Of course, this is a minor criticism—evaluation of an administration's efforts necessarily must center on the President—as is the point that not all quotations are perfectly accurate and at least two (pp. 54-55, 75) are paraphrases rather than the quotations cited. The author's purpose is to understand the politics of the Harding administration in its historical setting. In this he succeeds. *The Politics of Normalcy* is a welcome addition to the studies of the early 1920s not only because it explodes myths—some of which have been exploded before, yet persist—but because it is suitable for use in undergraduate courses. Such use will speed a more accurate understanding of the period and may

also provide useful insight into how historical interpretations are formed.

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*The Woman Citizen: Social Feminism in the 1920s.* By J. Stanley Lemons. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1973. Pp. xiii, 266. Notes, essay on sources, index. \$9.50.)

For those who still question the wisdom of granting women the right to vote on the eve of a national election involving Warren G. Harding, this book should offer the final answer. J. Stanley Lemons of Rhode Island College seeks to explore the role played by activist members of the fair sex in a decade currently undergoing general historical reexamination. He admits his effort is part of that reexamination and contends the feminist movement by no means ended with the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment. Rather, it spilled over into the 1920s and became one component in a surviving progressivism which linked the era of Woodrow Wilson to the era of Franklin Roosevelt.

Early in this work Lemons draws a distinction between "hard core" feminists and social feminists. The former gave first priority at all times to rectifying the subordinate status of the American woman. The latter sympathized with this goal, yet often became disillusioned with the means utilized by extremists and even more often with their disregard for other social reforms. Social feminists believed that by working for all progressive legislation they would simultaneously advance the status of women. It is this latter group that most concerns the author, and it is the one he thinks was most influential in the 1920s.

A case in point is the Shephard-Towner Maternity and Infancy Protection Act of 1921. In spite of attempts by a reluctant Congress to bury the bill, an aroused group of social feminists representing numerous women's professional organizations mobilized support and eventually forced the passage of this first federal social security act. They then joined other reform groups in similar though less successful efforts for legislation granting national unemployment compensation, health insurance, and enforced limitations on wages