

## NOTES ON CURRENT BOOKS

*Ezra Pound and Italian Fascism*, by Tim Redman.

This book makes bleak reading. In great historical detail, Redman documents Pound's intimate relationship with Italian fascism. At a time when many critics decry anything left of Mao as "fascist," Redman usefully restores historical specificity to this much-stretched term. He charts Pound's preoccupation with political and economic theory, from his early Socialist writings to his fervent support of Benito Mussolini—a support that would ultimately lead to the poet's incarceration at Pisa and his trial for treason. Redman rejects the pervasive critical separation of Pound's politics from his poetry, but his book may ultimately repeat this division in offering only scant analysis of the poetry.

Cambridge \$34.50

*Reading Auden: The Returns of Caliban*, by John R. Boly.

The title promises more than the book delivers; this is not the book of detailed, subtle, exhaustive readings that Auden's poetry deserves but has not yet received. Although the book falls short of its titular promise, it advances a thesis that will prod scholars toward a more sophisticated interpretation of Auden's work—namely, that Auden's poems combine multiple, often contradictory, voices. Boly listens carefully for these discordant voices, and he effectively turns up the volume of the texts so that we can all be more responsive to the "heteroglossia" he uncovers in Auden's brilliant poetry.

Cornell \$31.50

*Shelby Foote: Novelist and Historian*, by Robert L. Phillips, Jr.

Foote, the astute commentator in the acclaimed PBS series "The Civil War," is not only our preëminent Civil War historian but an accomplished novelist. Phillips, a professor of English at Mississippi State University, shows how Foote's artistic distance from the elements of regionalism

brings balance and accuracy to his fiction, and how his keen sense of narrative is responsible for his persuasive historical writing. Examined are Foote's interviews and lectures, correspondence with his lifelong friend Walker Percy, and his six laudable novels. An exemplary study of one of America's finest writers.

Mississippi \$32.50

*The Aesthetics of Murder: A Study in Romantic Literature and Contemporary Culture*, by Joel Black.

This lucid and wide-ranging book sets aside conventional approaches to murder and studies it from an aesthetic perspective. According to Black, murder has been treated as an art form ever since De Quincey. Black makes the fascinating argument that the aestheticization of violence extended the Romantic theory of the sublime, and that the Romantic link between art and violence continues to find expression in episodes such as the shootings of John Lennon and Ronald Reagan—actions patterned on works of art. Well-written and often brilliant.

Johns Hopkins \$14.95

*Modernism and the Fate of Individuality*, by Michael Levenson.

This comprehensive critical study shows how modern novels negotiate the strain between a 19th-century conception of character and the 20th-century narrative forms that revise and contain it. In his subtle, complex account of the problematic representation of modern selfhood, Levenson finds examples from the works of Conrad and late James, E. M. Forster, Ford Madox Ford, Wyndham Lewis, D. H. Lawrence, and, finally, James Joyce and Virginia Woolf. Levenson's extreme sensitivity to language makes his textual readings, as well as his larger claims about the combative relation between self and community, both compelling and convincing.

Cambridge \$39.50