

NOTES ON CURRENT BOOKS

ing, and teaching of each in an effort to show that deconstructive literary criticism has always been, uh, *essentially* ethical. So now we know. *Harvard \$25*

Cool Memories, by Jean Baudrillard, translated by Chris Turner.

With every new book—or rather text—by a French poststructuralist wizard, one's awe at Foucault's final work grows: his belated reacquaintance with the Greeks propelled him along paths more traditionally associated with scholarship and the creation of knowledge. Baudrillard's *Cool Memories*, on the other hand, typifies the recent work of his confreres. Having abandoned, well, everything, he satisfies himself with a hodge-podge of quasi-Nietzschean, aphoristic paragraphs, without, however, holding himself to the intensity and intellectual rigor that made Nietzsche a great rhetorical model to begin with. Instead, we get stuff like this: "There is no aphrodisiac like innocence." "Space is what prevents everything from being in the same place." "Winter is an emotive event." "Every woman is like a timezone." "Nothing can match the loneliness of a pianist in a large hotel." *Cool Memories* contributes little to our knowledge, even to our knowledge of postmodernism, but it may act as a stimulant for those who turn to writing as a starting point for free association. Like, cool, man!

Verso \$45 cloth, \$15.95 paper

Selected Essays, 1965–1985, by Thomas Daniel Young.

Over the last 25 years Dan Young has become one of the venerable figures in the study of American literature and perhaps our leading authority on the Fugitive-Agrarians who ushered in the Southern renaissance of the 1920's and '30's. He has achieved his eminence quietly, remaining a modest scholar more interested in clarity and accuracy than in critical or rhetorical showmanship. In this collection, perhaps

more than in his other books, one sees the value of that approach. Anyone interested in the development of the New Criticism—and especially those fashionable theorists who now dismiss it without bothering to understand it—can profit from reading Young's essays on John Crowe Ransom. There are equally valuable pieces on Faulkner, Donald Davidson, and Robert Penn Warren, and a fascinating history of the fracas which erupted when the Bollingen Prize went to Ezra Pound in 1949. This collection is a valuable addition to the field of American literary study and a fit monument to Young's long service to that field. *Louisiana \$25*

The Men I Have Chosen for Fathers: Literary and Philosophical Passages, by Marion Montgomery.

"What idea is capable of restoring us to our personhood?" asks Montgomery near the end of this collection of essays about the writers who have shaped his thought. The answer, the Georgia-born novelist and critic believes, is a recovered awareness of what Allen Tate called "local universality"—timeless truths, incarnated as they must be in the customs and ceremonies of a particular place and time. A commitment to this idea (and an abhorrence of its opposite, the curse of abstraction) is what unites the disparate "fathers" Montgomery discusses here: Flannery O'Connor, Robert Frost, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, and others. When he confers paternity on O'Connor, or when a bit later he offers honorary Southern citizenship to Solzhenitsyn, one may suspect that Montgomery hasn't fully exorcised the demon of abstraction from his own thought. But neither had his models; their effort to do so—to engage the particularity of experience without surrendering the possibility of truth—provides the drama of their works. The same can be said of the eloquent personal statements gathered here. *Missouri \$24.95*