



Author Joseph Mathews discusses and dollar-importance in books of

THE future of Southwest literature probably depends upon the cold war jitters now, as it was affected for some time in the past by the *extremely* clever, insinuating termite action of Communist propaganda. The propaganda was for the purpose of appealing to the intellectual and to support him in his rebellion against the atmosphere created by the dollar powerful.

These clever insinuations, along with the intellectual's disgust with the emporium-like atmosphere of the United States, created an atmosphere under which there was dramatic expression of concern for the common man, the disillusioned, the worker, which expression was received by the general reader with acclaim. The literature of the nation was being written by vindictive sentimentalist. The ego in the reader caused him to identify himself with the underdog presented to him, or it gave him self-esteem as one who understood. The reader identified himself with the underdog in the time of the depression of 1929, before and after, which the intellectual vindictive sentimentalist presented to him for his consideration.

The Southwest had little to contribute to this championship of the underdog with the exception of *Grapes of Wrath* and Helen Hunt Jackson-type novels. Apparently some of the Southwestern intellectuals had not been touched by this type of politically nurtured sentimentalism. Stan-

ley Vestal, Kenneth Kaufman, Paul Horgan, Mary Austin, Frank Dobie, Manlove Rhodes—all colored by the Southwest—were writing as naturally as the meadow-lark sings. But since they had little during this time for the reader's self-identification, they were becoming limited in influence.

Now it would seem that since Russia has dropped the needle of insinuation and picked up the missile of statement, that still the Southwest won't have much of an opportunity to express its true self in literature in the near future.

One expects little of the immediate future for Southwestern literature because of the jitters over international relations, and any literature which fails to give the reader some comfort for his fears, his obesity, his heart's defects will not produce dollars for the publisher or the author. And if the dollar fails, and the author doesn't murder his wife, or fails to find some Southwestern dancer, cinemactor or actress, some TV cowboy or politician to write about, he is not apt at the moment to be noted. Even with the jet boost of publicity to get him off the ground, he can't remain airborne long if the jittery reader, the salacious reader, the nascent hypochondriac cannot identify himself with the characters or the themes of the books from the great Southwest. The book from the great Southwest may be beautifully written and mirror some phases of the characters of the Southwest perfectly, but still the below-the-belly-

button thinker won't have the boon of reader identification.

As for art, the artists, especially those of Taos, may even surpass their most impressive mirroring of the Southwest culture, both Indian and white, and the mirroring of the land and soul of the land. Artists are not apparently concerned with national politics and go on expressing what they feel, and their viewers seem not to demand self-identification in the canvasses they see. So it seems that viewer identification may not be too difficult in the case of some non-objective paintings when the viewer is the disturbed soul under the influence of Moscow's bluffing and TV pitchman's dire warnings against disease.

Now—what will happen to the very heart of Southwest culture, the literature of the Indian, is impossible to say. One might assume that by the time he becomes, after hundreds of years with European contact, a human being finally, with warm blood and philosophy, and a soul and a pre-God concept which came out of his own earth, the Southwest, it will be too late. He will not be an Indian then but an injured innocent, terribly mistreated by the whitemen. And that will be the theme song of the future, one feels, as it has been since Fenimore Cooper and Helen Hunt Jackson.

The comfortable man sitting in his well-appointed library, bitter over the white-man's treatment of the Indian, with thoughts of the century of dishonor de-

the limited impact, influence the Indian and the Southwest

tracting nothing from his own self-esteem for his advanced humanitarianism, had a grandfather. This comfortable man had a grandfather who struggled with the earth against drought, grasshoppers, prairie fires, who would have had to have been quite insane to have had an academic interest in the redman who tried to run him off the land he was trespassing. These are the two extremes expressed in all American literature about the native. He was a blood-thirsty devil who scalped the virtuous white trespasser, or he was "Lo, the poor Indian."

THERE is no Neolithic man with his own God-concept, a soul, a man who feared and wept, and starved and laughed and loved and played, in Southwestern literature except perhaps, in the books of Alice Marriott and George Bird Grinnell. There are many books about this in-between man, the man between the blood-thirsty devil and "poor Lo." But chiefly there are books by men fingering documents in libraries and archives who periodically take time to go out to a reservation and talk with some wretched creature who watches their faces closely to determine curiously what answers they want to their questions.

There are anthropologists and ethnologists and diggers in ancient mounds who make extremely important contributions to anthropology and ethnology. They have had

the Indian on the laboratory table, and being men of science, they know they needn't look for a soul there. For this phase of the future of Southwestern literature, the Indian, one suspects there is little hope.

It is already too late for a mid-flight between the bitter tales of grandfather fighting the land in earnest struggle and the sweet humanitarianism of the grandson in his comfortable library and the anthropologist with his bones and his systematized questionnaires.

Television has also stereotyped the Indian of American literature, the Indian of Fenimore Cooper and Helen Hunt Jackson, he will continue to be stereotyped in television. Television has, with its documentary films and its rather scholarly background in the atmosphere for its westerns and its often quite authentic-like characters, become suddenly ridiculous, by presenting the Indian with the mannerisms and the speech of Fenimore Cooper Indians. The Indian is still deep-voiced, dignified, quite honorable, in order, more effectively, to bring out the bestiality, the chicanery, the sadism of the bad guy, so that when the good guy shoots the bad guy, the TVviewer will be filled with righteousness and approval, vicariously vindicated.

The Southwest, it seems to me, will continue to express itself in literature, but it probably won't be dollar-important since the jittery reader won't be able to find himself in it for quite a long time.



Author John Joseph Mathews receives his citation for distinguished service from Dr. Cross.