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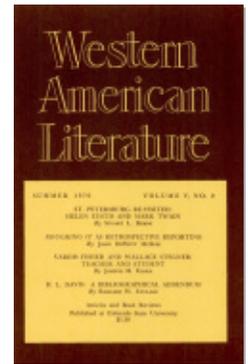
The Innocents by Clyde Ware (review)

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(Review)

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problem. Waiting for the right moment within the plot framework is Bucky Westmorland, a young, red-haired girl growing up at the edge of Starr's life and obviously suited by her long commitment to him and her maturing beauty—as well as phenomenal competence with horses and stagecoaches—to become his wife eventually. Bucky's capture by hostile Indians under Popo's leadership during an uprising by Sioux, Arapahoes, and Cheyennes in the later chapters of the book delays this outcome somewhat. To the novel's credit, her return is not gained by impossible heroics on Starr's part, but rather by ransom.

And finally, one cannot avoid a sense of strain at times when history related to stagecoaching or the West in general is drawn into the novel's structure in extensive blocks or too obvious conversations.

Taken on balance, *Six-Horse Hitch* succeeds in presenting a neglected area of Western experience in a soundly researched, knowledgeable manner—and with an oftentimes melodramatic, overplotted fictional flavor that a broad span of general readers should find entertaining. The more serious reader is apt to be distracted by the blend of realism and romance and a sense of unevenness in structure and focus. These facets of the book, it should be said, represent the side-effects of Mrs. Giles' particular concept of the historical novel and the manner in which it should achieve its aims. By its nature, the genre has always involved this kind of balancing out of approaches and commitments . . . strengths and compromises. The result in this case is a book which is unusually authentic and unique in background, quite readable, and yet somewhat disappointing when judged as a serious piece of literary art.

ROBERT A. RORIPAUGH, *University of Wyoming*

The Innocents. By Clyde Ware. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1969. 240 pages, \$4.95.)

A lonely prospector in the desert country of Arizona Territory inadvertently approaches an Apache village, realizes that he will be killed if he tries to escape, boldly enters and tries to make friends. He succeeds, at least to the extent of proving himself harmless and saving his life. In the camp he observes a most curious situation. A small white girl is a member of the snarling Apache dog pack. A captive and an orphan, the child had not been accepted by her intended foster mother and has been ignored for a long time by the Indian band. The dogs treat her as one of their own kind. Impossible? Yes. But Clyde Ware's writing in the early parts of *The Innocents* is so persuasive that the reader willingly accepts the situation.

The prospector trades for the girl, but she will not stay with him until he takes along one of the half-wild dogs also. They live the year around in

the harsh desert country, the man going to an outpost of civilization infrequently to trade gold for supplies. By slow degrees he wins the girl's loyalty and confidence, and they develop, as the years pass, a pure platonic love. She grows to young womanhood and he grows old.

In his delineation of the developing relationship between the man and the girl, the author seems inspired. One has the feeling that the simple events set against the austerity of the desert carry meaning as old as mankind; indeed, one is reminded of Greek drama.

Enter the guys in the black hats, who are interested in nothing but sex and gold. At about this point the author seems to have lost his inspiration and found it necessary to rely on reason and command of fictional technique. The reader begins to gain back the disbelief he had suspended.

The plot is thickened with a rich gold claim that doesn't exist, a plan to sell guns to the Apaches, a poisoned water hole, and the old man's sacrifice of his life to save the life and honor of the girl. It can hardly be true that the taste of melodrama arises simply from the lack of realism, for the latter events are no more unlikely than the earlier ones. It seems probable rather that the author did not take the time to fully understand his own meaning and find events to embody it in. He was writing about loneliness, about pure, simple companionship, about savagery, animal and human, primitive and otherwise. By the end of the novel he seems to be merely writing another fast-action adventure story. It should be noted, however, that if the first half of this book was not an accident, Ware can be expected to produce some exceedingly fine fiction.

BENJAMIN CAPPS, *Grand Prairie, Texas*

The Armchair Mountaineer. Edited by George Alan Smith and Carol D. Smith, (New York: Pitman Publishing Co., 1968. 359 pages, photographs, drawings, biblio., \$15.00.)

This book belongs in Bacon's category of books to be tasted. Consisting of excerpts from various works on mountain climbing, arranged by the editors, its shift of tone and topic from excerpt to excerpt (some two lines, some fifteen pages) prevents reading at one sitting. Among the authors excerpted are such famous climbers as Gaston Rebuffat, Tenzing Norkay, Edward Whymper, Emile Javelle, and William O. Douglas. The editors' kindness in providing a bibliography makes it possible for one to read at length the excerpts of a book which has interested him.

However, the editors' mode of arrangement is less successful. The various headings include "Why . . . Why Not"; "Mountain History"; "Mountain Men—and a Few Women, Too"; "Skiing"; "How to Climb"; and others. The