

## BOOK REVIEWS

PAINE. By David Freeman Hawke. New York: Harper & Row. [1974.]  
x, 500 pp. \$15.00.

Although Thomas Paine has attracted the attention of biographers from the time of George Chalmers, who wrote in 1791, it remained for the historian David Freeman Hawke to produce the first full and dispassionate biography of this Revolutionary gadfly. John Adams, meaning it as no compliment, called the years 1775-1805 "the Age of Paine": a not inaccurate description, since Paine knew "virtually every important political figure in England, France, and the United States during his lifetime" and since his pamphlets over a thirty-year period from *The Case of the Officers of Excise* to *Letters to the Citizens of the United States* helped shape the course of history on both sides of the Atlantic. The biographical method here employed is sensible and generally sound. Acting on Joel Barlow's assertion that Paine's "writings are his best life," Mr. Hawke keeps the writings at the center of his unfolding historical narrative. The method works well for the French years (1787-1802) when Paine's writings flowed naturally from public events, but seems at times forced for the period of the American Revolution in that history is put in the service of works like the *Crisis* papers and the resulting narrative is distorted.

Mr. Hawke's infrequent observations on Paine as a man of letters are so uniformly illuminating that the reader wishes there had been many more. It is his conviction, for example, that with the appearance of the essay on Lord Clive in the spring of 1775 Paine began "to be himself, to direct his thoughts and shape his style to an audience he knew well—the plain people from whom he had sprung." Having examined the numerous gifts Paine received in the 1780's for his wartime services, Mr. Hawke concludes: "From a nation unaccustomed to honoring literary gentlemen with cash rewards Paine had received more than almost any writer would ever receive from a national or state government in American history." The first part of *The Rights of Man* is characterized as a counter-manifesto to *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, in which Paine answered Burke's classical style in a vernacular aimed at "the swinish multitude" in England and thus hit him "where no one then, and few have since, dared to strike at him—as a literary craftsman."

If he has not achieved the definitive biography of Thomas Paine—and indeed such may never be written—Mr. Hawke, writing with easy command of late eighteenth-century history in a style at once clear and

lively, has produced a book that goes beyond the important contributions of scholars like Moncure Conway, Harry Hayden Clark, and Alfred Owen Aldridge. At the end he emphasizes the need for a new edition of Paine's writings; hopefully he himself will undertake the task. In the meantime we can be grateful that the Citadel Press has just reissued in paperback the most dependable edition to date, Philip S. Foner's *Life and Major Writings of Thomas Paine*.

*University of Oklahoma.*

BRUCE GRANGER.

THE WORLDS OF WASHINGTON IRVING: 1783-1859. By Andrew B. Myers. Tarrytown, N.Y.: Sleepy Hollow Restorations. 1974. ix, 134 pp. Cloth, \$8.95; paper, \$5.50.

The care and command Andrew Myers has exercised over this album of Irving's career, and the library exhibit it draws upon, should shore up the regard with which today we remember our first major author. Irving has lost for too long the admiration and applause he once justly attracted. Accompanying the illustrative materials, which themselves go far to give a comprehensive summation of Irving's life, Professor Myers adds a succinct verbal account which helps the reader gain a better focus on both Irving and the varied life of the time.

The property of the New York Public Library, deposited in its various special collections, the sketches, portraits, photographs, maps, and manuscripts providing the illustrations in this volume show Irving and his work from all sides. In his commentary, Myers touches up the picture with useful detail and thoughtful shaping. He stresses the wide range of varied fields in which Irving labored. He recalls the wide admiration in which his contemporaries held him. And he draws upon the body of Irving criticism to punctuate his balanced assessment of this long literary life.

The plural form in the title is neither a misnomer nor an error, typographical or other. Perhaps a pun on the title used by Van Wyck Brooks for his book on the first part of nineteenth-century literature, the "worlds" of Washington Irving here recall the presence in and of Irving in both European and American circles. By segmenting Irving's life into four parts, Myers offers his most penetrating analysis. He proposes these worlds for the author of the Sketch Book: those of Knickerbocker, Geoffrey Crayon, Gent., His Excellency, Washington Irving, and the Squire of Sunnyside. With this division, he not only reopens the dimly explored aspect of international literary and cultural relations. He also calls attention to the prominence Irving won in his diplomatic posts as an unusual achievement among literary men. Here, too, he rightly de-