

### Book Notices

woven this information into an almost romantically flowing narrative in which the reader's interest does not wane.

Gleaves Whitney's book is also part of a genre in western American literature that has been developing since the 1960s. Environmental crises, such as water shortages in the arid West, have occasioned numerous historical-political treatments which aim to influence policy making. Most of their authors use alarmist tones, with varying degrees of subtlety, to bring home their points. In this case, Whitney keeps such indulgences to a minimum and they do not interfere with his narrative flow, but the environmental hazards and potential policy solutions are still there. Whitney recommends land-use planning in particular: to prevent construction in flood-prone areas, to minimize pollution and congestion, to maintain agriculture, and to avoid growth beyond the resources available. He provides just enough examples of environmental disasters and their causes, and just enough tributes to people who have made strides in environmentally sound directions, to be convincing. His pleas for policy changes fall on eyes which his book primes with an irresistible picture of a region worth the effort.

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KATHERINE SCOTT STURDEVANT

*The Other Texas Frontier*, by Harry Hunt Ransom. Edited by Hazel H. Ransom. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1984. 92 pp. Illustrations. \$14.95 cloth.

Harry Hunt Ransom was one of Texas's most accomplished men of letters. At the time of his death in 1976 he had been associated with the University of Texas for more than forty years. He was thoroughly familiar with all the heroic stories, legends, and myths of the violent Texas frontier and most certainly gloried in them as do most Texans. But Ransom believed in the notion of the existence of a counterfrontier: a quiet settling of the land by thoughtful, undramatic citizens who were, in his words, the Texans without guns. In this book Ransom's widow collected brief essays on the lives of three notable—if not extraordinary—Texans which illustrate her late husband's thesis. The three are Ashbel Smith and Sherman Goodwin, both physicians, and Swante Palm, a Swedish immigrant bibliophile. These essays are so brief that they can hardly be classified as biographical, but since their main purpose is to create an impression, this brevity matters little.

That a counterfrontier existed can be conceded without argument. Ransom's thesis is correct. However, this book does not prove the fact; it would take a much more extensive effort to do that. Instead, this

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work should be viewed as a memorial to its author and the vast cultural and literary resources of Texas which he represented.

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