

It was not just numerical data on death and taxes that concerned Cohen, but how quantitative information was used in the new society which was unfolding. In its original eighteenth-century connotation, statistics meant quantitative information on the state, hence the establishment of regular census taking. Statistics, in conjunction with the new "science" of political economy, provide important new perspectives on how individuals and society *saw* themselves. The early statistical societies in Manchester, England, were formed by those interested in social and political reform and needed "certain" data to prove their point that there were widespread abuses in the new urban industrial society which had developed. Cohen points out that despite religious objections in some quarters, statistical information on contagious diseases which swept over cities such as Philadelphia and London, laid the ground work for the provision of safe water supplies and waste water treatment. The roots of our modern concern for numbers lie in the late eighteenth century and *have seen* a continuous growth even in the face of cries that this kind of quantification is de-humanizing. Thus, Cohen has presented a thoughtful essay on a neglected, but important, aspect of eighteenth-century life.

Although the three essays are widely different in context, they all have in common an original historical perspective on the history of science and technology in the early years of the Republic. In addition, they are particularly relevant to the history of Pennsylvania which really was the "keystone" state in terms of the history of American science and technology. ■

Emory L. Kemp *Program in the History of Science
and Technology
West Virginia University
Morgantown, West Virginia*

*The Early Career of Malcolm Cowley: A Humanist
Among the Moderns.* By James Michael Kempf.

(Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press,
1985. Pp. xii, 145. Preface, selected bibliography, index. \$17.50.)

Both James Michael Kempf and LSU Press are to be commended for producing what is not only a good but a necessary book, for the name of Malcolm Cowley is not nearly so well known as it should be.

Yet no one who has followed the literary scene in this century can have failed to be touched in some way by his efforts. Apart from his writing, we must remember his immense services as adviser to the Yaddo writers' colony, the Bollingen Prize for Poetry, and the National Book Awards, his services with the American Academy and the National Institute of Arts and Letters. He has worked for three decades as literary consultant to the Viking Press and as adviser to the Rockefeller Foundation on the support of literary magazines (although we may sometimes wonder if he entirely approves of the red tape which so often entangles such ventures). In the 1920s he was involved in founding, policy-forming, and contributing to a number of these esoteric journals which were instrumental in framing a national literature and in making the early years of this century something of a watershed in literary history—all this while indefatigably supporting and promoting those writers in whom he believed.

That he is not sufficiently known is much of his own choosing. At least two of his literary chronicles contain appendices which list his contemporaries over a fifteen-year span. In these he classifies himself simply as "critic, poet," two categories that readily divorce him from the wide public of best sellerdom and television adaptation. However, he has done much more. Primarily a cultural historian and philosopher, he is close, in our time, to Maxwell Perkins in the self-abnegating and thankless job of editor, as well as counselor, translator, explicator, and occasional teacher: all facets of the literary life that virtually beg for anonymity—except in the company of his peers.

Western Pennsylvanians often do not realize that they have a special claim on Cowley. He was born at the close of the nineteenth century on a farm near Belsano, at the intersection of routes 422 and 271 on the western slope of the Alleghenies, roughly a dozen miles north of Johnstown in Cambria County. When his doctor-father moved to Pittsburgh, to establish an office in the Wallace Building at the northeast corner of Highland and Center Avenues in East Liberty, Malcolm attended Peabody High School.

I followed him there about twelve years later and remember in 1929 taking with me to school a copy of his just-published book of poetry, *Blue Juniata*, not aware of a Peabody connection, and was surprised and pleased to find an English teacher who remembered him as "the young man who had turned in the best book reports I've ever seen coming from a high-school pupil." This was my first awareness that poets could be ordinary people who went to high school. Interestingly, Kempf in *The Early Career* mentions a 1917 letter in which Cowley

noted "that a high school teacher back in Pittsburgh was as stimulating as any he had his freshman year [at Harvard]" (p. 15).

With a Harvard scholarship interrupted, and World War I experience (six months driving a munitions truck for the French army) behind him, he was back briefly in Pittsburgh where his first paid writing was an army episode published in the *Pittsburgh Gazette Times* of January 6, 1918, for which he received three dollars.

But for the most part, these physical facts of Cowley's life are unimportant to Kempf, who frequently skeletonizes and only occasionally fleshes-out happenings which Cowley himself covered in his *Exile's Return* (first published in 1934 and reprinted with revisions in 1951 in what became a Book-Find Club selection).

It is the inner life that takes on importance in Kempf's careful evaluation, and here letters form a significant part of the study. He quotes extensively from the Cowley papers in Chicago's Newberry Library, probably the first scholarly use of them. The great majority of these were written to critic Kenneth Burke (a former Peabody classmate) and illustrate a mental and artistic growth amazing in both these young men between 1917 and 1923. There are also early poems rescued from *Harvard Advocate* anthologies and from "little magazines"—all tracing the formulation of a literary theory, showing Cowley adopting and discarding sundry avant-garde movements in that frenetic period when he lived a Grub Street existence in the aesthetic byways of Greenwich Village and Paris. But always he came back to his original position, a determinedly classical and humanistic approach to literature—one of clarity, restraint, formal structure, and simplicity of style. Over and over, these tenets are expressed in the letters to Burke.

The book's boundary is imposed by its title, for the "early career" stops short at the brink of the Depression with Black Thursday on Wall Street. Cowley was soon to assume the book-editorship of *The New Republic*, and interest among many writers was mounting in journals of social protest such as *The Partisan Review*. This was to culminate in what Cowley would refer to (in *And I Worked at the Writer's Trade* [1978]) as the most troubled time of his life, a period when misunderstanding had him at odds on all sides, not only with the avant-gardists who considered him aesthetically reactionary, but also—politically—with conservatives and radicals who incongruously labeled him Communist and a "lackey of capitalism"—all of them unfairly. In Kempf's hinting at this latter issue we get only premonitory rumblings, such as the quoted "Mine No. 6" (from *Blue Juniata*). This poem, which deplored the desecration of a country landscape by min-

ing interests ("the blackened stumps, the ulcerated hill"), at the time of its writing was perhaps only an environmentalist approach to what was to become a much deeper problem.

In this study, therefore, Kempf has given us only the early development—and this he has done well—of a writer who has consistently written common sense criticism, unfettered by the usual jabberwocky, always with communicability in mind, and always with kindness, a writer who for many years has served our literature well. It has been said—I believe it was by Anatole Broyard—of one obsessed with the written word, that "literature isn't everything." Cowley has always lived and worked as if it is. He deserves the thoughtful attention Kempf has given him. ■

Stanley D. Mayer *Pittsburgh*

*Merchants and Jews: The Struggle for
British West Indian Commerce, 1660-1750.*

By Stephen A. Fortune.

(Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1984. Pp. xiii, 244.

Preface, illustrations, maps, notes, selected
bibliography, index. \$18.00.)

This book fills a great void in the study of the period of settlement of the British West Indies. It concentrates on the role of Jewish merchants in Barbados and Jamaica from 1660 to 1750. Fortune's comprehensive work is divided into three major parts and examines the numerous business and economic activities of Jews in relation to those of other groups in the West Indies at this time.

This book contains a lucid analysis of Jewish participation in the social and economic development of the British West Indies. The historical background, government policy, and migration are examined in the first part of the book. Fortune assesses the evolution and significance of plantation life in the Caribbean; he considers the plantation in terms of its economic functions and class structure, explains reasons for the agricultural transformation in Barbados and Jamaica, and ascribes Jewish involvement in these Caribbean estates to the rise of commercial capitalism and profiteering. Fortune shows convincingly that the immigration of Jews to these two islands expanded significantly until 1770 and that the British government gave support to their