

1982, his rich, readable "personal chronicle" ranges widely, reflecting his experience as newsman and activist. His sketches of important but now almost forgotten figures, both white and black (remember Malcolm X?), in the early battles for racial equality would supplement any analysis of Southern society and politics at mid-century. He remembers Lyndon B. Johnson's Great Society for both its successes and follies. Reflecting on present trends, he emphasizes the growing importance of education and family stability in the destinies of individual black Americans, North and South. He views the Reagan Administration as blind to the true costs of ignoring the black urban underclass. He finds less hope for social progress in Jesse Jackson's activism than in the potential, as yet untested, of the emerging black middle-class and its ability to form political coalitions with middle-class whites. "The record of my time," he concludes, "demonstrates that it is possible to change hearts and minds—not by exhortation, or coercion, but through governance that recognizes the possibilities, as well as limitations, of our pluralistic heritage."

#### *Arts & Letters*

**THE SELECTED CORRESPONDENCE OF KENNETH BURKE AND MALCOLM COWLEY, 1915-1981** edited by Paul Jay. Viking, 1988. 448 pp. \$29.95

Friends at Pittsburgh's Peabody High School, Burke and Cowley went on to become two of America's foremost literary critics. And at least one virtue of this sampler of their 66-year correspondence is its demonstration of how varied the critical enterprise can be. From the beginning, Burke (who dropped out of Columbia to become "Flaubert" in Greenwich Village) was the more theoretical. By contrast, Cowley (Harvard, '20, after a wartime stint in the American Ambulance Service) was drawn to the flesh and blood of literary history. Burke became known for such cerebral studies as *A Grammar of Motives*; Cowley made his name with histories of American writers, including that of the "lost generation," *Exile's Return*. Candor is the hallmark of their correspondence, Burke at one point insisting that "a friend is none other than

that person whom one treats with all the shabbiness and dilatoriness that he scrupulously rules out of his business relationships." True to his principles, he told Cowley that his work was too much "journalism and diarism, and not enough criticism." Such carping seemed only to strengthen their underlying loyalty to each other, and to sharpen their thinking as well as their prose. Nor did they ever cease to share their common obsession. As Burke wrote late in life, "Ailments, ailments, ailments. But what to do, when one considers literature even at its best, an ailment, surpassed only by that much severer ailment, the lack of literature?"

**LAW AND LITERATURE: A Misunderstood Relation** by Richard A. Posner. Harvard, 1988. 371. pp. \$25

A literary work and a legal document must both stand the same test of greatness—survival over time. Posner, a judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit, casts a solonic eye on the many illuminating, if problematic, connections between the two ancient disciplines. In addition to analyzing a range of writers who have dealt with legal themes, from Shakespeare to Kafka to Twain, he also subjects legal texts to the methods of literary criticism. Posner provides a fresh approach to established literary works, and, along the way, refines our notions about the proper province of law: "The idea that law, despite or maybe because of its commitment to reason, misunderstands life is one that *The Brothers Karamazov* shares with [Camus's] *The Stranger*, but in the earlier and greater novel it is seen to reflect the inherent limitations of human reason and to argue for religious values, while in the later one it is equated with the persecution of nonconformists by a nasty bourgeoisie." Elsewhere, he admires Chief Justice Holmes's use of rhetoric (rather than strict logic) to support his brilliant dissenting opinion on *Lochner v. New York* (1905), which overturned a statute limiting work hours in bakeries. "The reason why rhetoric or style is important in law," Posner notes, "is that many questions cannot be resolved by logical or empirical demonstration." Posner resists making overly large claims for the interdisciplinary study of law and literature; in fact, he