
edged—may be more *excusable* than others, but only those deceptive practices which can be openly debated and consented to in advance are *justifiable* in a democracy.”

Arts & Letters

**THE PAINTINGS OF
CHARLES BIRD KING
(1785–1862)**

by Andrew J. Cosentino
Smithsonian, 1977
214 pp. \$22.50
L of C 77-608258
ISBN 0-87474-366-2

Charles Bird King is remembered today for his series of 130 portraits of American Indians, with and without their war paint. These sophisticated, ethnologically accurate studies, commissioned by the Department of War, were done mostly in Washington, D.C. as various tribal delegations visited to press their claims against the U.S. government or be feted by their White Fathers. Most of the paintings were destroyed in a fire at the Smithsonian in 1865, three years after the artist's death. Fortunately for posterity, King himself had made replicas of many, and others were preserved in lithograph copies. They were shown in a 1977–78 exhibition organized by the National Collection of Fine Arts. The show also included—and this book presents—King's *other* portraits (Mrs. John Quincy Adams at her harp, Daniel Webster, John C. Calhoun, President James Monroe comfortably disposed in the East Room) with some romantic landscapes of Harper's Ferry, W. Va., and the environs of Milan, Italy.

PETERSBURG

by Andrei Bely
Indiana Univ. Press, 1978
356 pp. \$17.50
L of C 77-74442
ISBN 0-253-34410-7

The “greatest masterpieces of the 20th century,” wrote Vladimir Nabokov, “are, in this order, Joyce's *Ulysses*; Kafka's *Transformation*; Bely's *Petersburg*; and the first half of Proust's fairy tale *In Search of Lost Time*.” Until now, English readers had no way of judging for themselves why Nabokov accorded so high an honor to Andrei Bely's forgotten 1916 novel—in which the central figure is the city of Petersburg as perceived during the ticking of an anarchist's bomb. The bomb, secreted in a sardine tin and intended for a high czarist official by none other than his own son, eventually explodes in the

official's lacquered study. By then, a series of interlaced plots and sub-plots has exposed Bely's gloomy notions of Russia, of civilization, and of the human will. Robert A. MacGuire and John E. Malmstad capture Bely's endless plays on words and almost musical use of sound in a new, annotated translation that has all of the texture of the original.

**THE COLLECTED POEMS
OF THOMAS MERTON**

by Thomas Merton
New Directions, 1977
1,046 pp. \$37.50
L of C 77-9902
ISBN 0-8112-0643-2

Monk, mystic, poet, and prophet Thomas Merton has been dead for 10 years. Yet reprints and analyses of his literary work appear at an accelerating rate, and nearly 50 theses and doctoral dissertations are now catalogued at Bellarmine College in Louisville, Ky. *The Collected Poems* documents a rare literary voyage. From the comparative simplicity of his 1940 poems through the complexity of *The Geography of Lograire* (1968), it is all here. The Trappist monk's widening Catholicism, his ecumenical insights, his fascination with the Oriental, and his concern, then rage, over the American social and political evolution and nuclear involvement are lightened by an occasional humorous poem evocative of the 1960s: "Never call a babysitter when the revolution/ Is in full swing/Baby has hoisted the black flag and taken over/The telephone company and everything."

**SELECTED LETTERS OF
CONRAD AIKEN**

edited by Joseph Killorin
Yale, 1978, 350 pp. \$15
L of C 77-20620
ISBN 0-300-02180-1

In his lifetime (1889–1973) Conrad Aiken never quite made it to the top rank of American poets, essayists, or novelists (although his *Selected Poems* won a Pulitzer Prize in 1930). He was, indisputably, a great correspondent. Unlike some other writers, Aiken did not keep carbons of his private letters, feeling that to do so was an invasion of privacy. Fortunately, family members and friends held on to some 3,500 originals. Among the lot selected by editor Killorin are several to or (waspishly) about T. S. Eliot, his Harvard classmate and lifelong friend-rival. A number reveal Aiken's relationship as teacher, admirer, and occasional paid keeper of dipsomaniac genius