

child as an ancestral spirit. The snake that Soyinka encountered on a relative's farm received no such greeting: It was instantly stoned and slated for dinner. Even during Soyinka's childhood, pragmatism and secular intelligence prevailed over traditional religion, just as they do in his mature fiction, where gods of the Yoruba pantheon are led out of their hallowed niches in cult shrines and set squarely in the company of fumbling men—for literary and not pious purposes.

In *Aké*, Soyinka comes through far less as a romancer than as a sweet remembrancer. His picture of the 1930s and '40s is re-created with charming vividness: sleeping children ("veteran warriors of sleep") fighting infernal battles for mat space on the floor; Hitler as a bogey man haunting the village as well as the nearby sea; the radical Kuti family championing a feminist revolt against the combined tyranny of the Alaké (the paramount chief) and the British colonial administration; the dawning of nationalist politics in the figures of Oged Macaulay and Nnamdi Azikiwe.

Perhaps the best thing about this book is the language. Soyinka is renowned for his skillful—sometimes too skillful—manipulation of English, and his descriptions here of everything from food to manners to smells bear witness to long practice at the trade: "Even the least pleasant smell, such as the faintly nauseating smell of a smashed bedbug, tinged with the whiff of camphor that should have prevented its appearance in the first place was part of Aké's extended persona; it was of the same order as the nocturnal rumblings of Sorowanke, the madwoman who lived by the mango tree, talking in her sleep." But the real stunner here is Soyinka's frequent use of Yoruba. Western-educated Nigerians often say that, during a truly down-home conversation in an indigenous language or even pidgin, correct English is likely to spoil the fun. *Aké* shows Soyinka "going home" in a way he has never done before. I salute the genius and the man, and look forward to the inevitable sequel.

—Isidore Okpewho

**HANDBOOK OF NORTH  
AMERICAN INDIANS,  
Volume 10, Southwest**  
edited by Alfonso Ortiz  
Smithsonian, 1983  
868 pp. \$25

If anyone ever runs a contest to pick the most misleading book title, then the *Handbook of North American Indians* will be one of the top contenders: Each volume is the size of a respectable dictionary, and when the series is complete, there will be 20 volumes. Together they will give an extraordinarily full and lively account of the native Americans, from the time that man first set foot on this continent down to the last quarter of this century.

The technical problems involved in a work of this scope are awesome. Transcribing words (in California alone, for example, well over 60 Indian languages were spoken), ascertaining tribal boundaries and settlement sites (particularly when the tribe is long extinct or has long since left the area), tracking down illustrations (sometimes misidentified items from European archives or museums)—all these require exact scholarship of

the first order and unrelenting editorial supervision.

The series falls into two parts: Ten volumes deal with particular regions, while the other 10 deal with particular topics, including languages, technology, and the history of Indian-white relations. So far, all the volumes to appear (this is the fifth, despite its number) have been regional ones, covering California, the Northeast, the Subarctic, and the Southwest (two volumes). Each of these begins with sections on the archaeology, history, and languages of the region, then goes on to deal with the individual tribes.

For the overall quality of these volumes, much of the credit must go to the general editor of the series, William Sturtevant of the Smithsonian Institution. He has succeeded in making the *Handbook* all things to all readers. The general plan and indexing allow the series to serve as an encyclopedia, yet each volume can be read alone. And while the *Handbook* is the indispensable starting point for the specialist, the whole series has been written with the layman in mind. When completed, the *Handbook* will stand as one of the glories of 20th-century American scholarship.

—Frank H. Stewart

**NONE OF THE ABOVE:  
Why Presidents Fail—And  
What Can Be Done About It**  
by Robert Shogan  
New American Library,  
1982  
312 pp. \$15.95

**THE HIDDEN-HAND  
PRESIDENCY: Eisenhower  
As Leader**  
by Fred I. Greenstein  
Basic, 1982  
286 pp. \$16.95

At first glance, observers of the modern Presidency might find these books pointing in different directions. A closer look reveals otherwise.

Robert Shogan, a *Los Angeles Times* correspondent, traces the growing enfeeblement of the Presidency from John Kennedy's brief tenure through Ronald Reagan's—a "twenty-year record of frustrations and failure" despite changing personalities, parties, and ideologies. Each Chief Executive and his men took power with unquenchable optimism, blaming unresolved national problems on their predecessors. None finished two full terms; all left in defeat (Kennedy, in death); each one, from LBJ to Nixon to Ford to Carter, expressed frustration toward the end.

Shogan sees this as a strong indication that something is basically wrong with the system, not with the individuals (he might have easily said both), and finds "the heart of the problem [is] a gap between politics and government" caused by "constitutional impediments to a healthy development of political parties."

Unwilling to leave his reader in despair after a nine-chapter recital of White House ineffectiveness, he extracts a set of remedies from the abundant recent literature on party reform. His recipe: Elect President and Congress together; add at-large seats to Congress; establish coordinating party councils made of Chief Executive, congressional leaders, and others; nominate Presidents by party caucuses of elected officials; provide for British-