

kim moreland, *The Medievalist Impulse in American Literature: Twain, Adams, Fitzgerald, and Hemingway*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996. Pp. 264. isbn: 0-8139-1658-5. \$42.50.

Kim Moreland's study contains a brief introductory chapter in which she runs quickly through quite a number of authors who provide evidence of a medievalist impulse in American literature. This introduction certainly demonstrates that such an impulse is widespread among American authors, but since the chapter also carries the burden of establishing the theme of the book, reviewing the previous criticism, and discussing the concepts of chivalry and courtly love that are important to Moreland's argument, the examples seem more a list than a survey.

The rest of the book consists of four chapters on medievalism in the works of Twain, Adams, Fitzgerald, and Hemingway, respectively. The analysis in these chapters is particularly enlightening about the ways in which the four authors' views on women are influenced by or are responding to the Middle Ages and notions of courtly love. Moreland traces the ambivalence that she sees in Adams's, Hemingway's, and Fitzgerald's views of women, for example, to an idealization that is at odds with the real. Thus Adams can be devoted to the medieval ideal of womanhood while disparaging feminists and the New Woman; and Hemingway can idealize medieval notions of women and use them, as did Adams and Fitzgerald, as 'a dispensation for criticism of modern woman' (189).

There are some points in the analysis that might be challenged, such as the observation that it is in the final apocalyptic scene of *Connecticut Yankee* that there is a 'shift in tone and unsympathetic portrait of the heretofore generally sympathetic Hank' (47). In fact, there are a number of incidents earlier in the book that suggest Twain's ambivalence about the character he referred to as an 'ignoramus.' Hank's need to devastate the hard-working country blacksmith Dowley is the most obvious example of a despicable side to his character. But there are also many elements of the study that are insightful, especially Moreland's clear explanation of Adams's theory of history.

While the main chapters of the book generally provide substantial analysis, one must wonder why, given the author's own acknowledgment that medievalism in American literature 'has had even less critical attention than this impulse in American culture' (9), some key critical works are ignored. Some essays in *Studies in Medievalism*, a journal that Moreland praises, or a couple of directly relevant essays in the special issue of *Arthuriana* (Winter 1994) devoted to the Arthurian legend in America might have provided useful material and support for her argument. One of those essays is a detailed analysis of Fitzgerald's interest in the Middle Ages, with emphasis on Arthurian themes; another treats Faulkner's *Mayday*, a work mentioned by Moreland in her opening chapter, as well as some of the earlier American works with medieval themes that influenced Faulkner.

The mention of Faulkner leads to another question about the approach of the book. Moreland claims that the medievalist impulse in American literature 'is best represented' by the four authors treated in her major chapters. But aside from noting

that two are 'at least partially associated with the South and two with the North' and two are from the nineteenth century and two from the twentieth (25), she offers no evidence for why these four are the *best* representatives. Why not Faulkner? Moreland's own observation that medievalism was of particular interest to 'the New England intelligentsia and the southern aristocracy' (3) would lead one to suspect that these two areas would be the focus of her interest. And if the intention is to demonstrate a scope for medievalism beyond New England and the South, would not Steinbeck, who is also mentioned in the introductory survey, be as good an example as Hemingway?

These questions about the overall structure of the book are not answered. Though the questions nag, they do not diminish the fine analysis that is the norm in the chapters on the four authors, nor do they minimize the importance of one of the few booklength studies of medievalism in America.

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