

prompted John Bentley Mays to write *Power in the Blood: Land, Memory, and a Southern Family* [BKL O 15 97]. Marks, when her quite elderly mother suffered a stroke, wanted finally to hear and record all that the older woman could tell her about their family history. Her mother was born into a prominent Jewish family in New Orleans; her father was an architect who designed, at Huey Long's choosing, the new Louisiana state capitol and many Louisiana State University buildings. Singing a "song of myself and my family," Marks blends the remembrances shared with her by her mother and by her aunt with fictionalized scenes she has spun from fact. Her "medley of truth and fantasy" imaginatively creates a four-generational group portrait as compelling as a novel. The core of the narrative is her parents' marriage; and the central story of that marriage was her father's imprisonment for "aiding and abetting crimes against the state" in connection with the LSU buildings he designed. —Brad Hooper

Morales, Dionicio. *Dionicio Morales: A Life in Two Cultures.* Nov. 1997. 192p. Arte Publico, paper, \$7.95 (1-55885-219-0).

DDC: 973.

Morales, president and founder of the Mexican American Opportunity Foundation, recalls growing up in two cultures during a crucial period when the Hispanic population was becoming a significant minority in the U.S. The migration of the Morales family—headed by a strong-willed father with an entrepreneurial spirit and an ingrained sense of justice—vividly portrays the cultural adjustments of Mexican immigrants to an environment where their labor was needed, but their settlement was less than welcome. Morales writes of California's ethnic and racial polyglot and the struggles of blacks and Japanese that paralleled those of Mexican immigrants. He recalls a turning point in his own youth—when he resisted discriminatory seating practices at a local movie theater—that set him on a path to fight for equality for Mexican Americans. Morales overcame bitter poverty and a struggle with tuberculosis that claimed the lives of many poor people to eventually gravitate toward political activism and the founding of the Mexican American Opportunity Foundation, a nonprofit advocacy and social services agency. —Vanessa Bush

YA/L: Unpretentious and accessible; for larger biography collections and libraries with a strong focus on Mexican American history. SZ.

The Oxford Illustrated History of the Vikings. Ed. by Peter Sawyer. Dec. 1997. 298p. index. illus. Oxford, \$45 (0-19-820526-0). DDC: 948.

Since the 1960s, historians have revised the view that Vikings were just pillaging pagans. Their revisions have benefited from archaeological discoveries and a critical analysis of contemporary sagas and annals about the Viking outbursts in their heyday from 750 through 1085. This volume embodies the new outlook as presented by 10

scholars, who break the subject into the geographical areas of Viking and Scandinavian influence and into such topical issues as the Vikings' seafaring skill and their eventual conversion to Christianity. The historians survey their areas well, discussing the significant archaeological finds in Britain, France, Ireland, islands in the Atlantic, and Russia. As the character of Viking contact in each area was qualitatively different, from assimilation in Russia to conquest in England to colonization in Iceland, a colorful spectrum of the Viking age emerges. A typically high-quality, glossily illustrated Oxfordian survey. —Gilbert Taylor

YA/L: Lovely illustrations and a solid text; a good resource where the price isn't prohibitive. SEB.

Perry, Mark. *Conceived in Liberty: Joshua Chamberlain, William Oates, and the American Civil War.* Dec. 1997. 480p. index. illus. Viking, \$29.95 (0-670-86225-8).

DDC: 973.7.

Chamberlain and Oates battled each other in the epic contest over Little Round Top, and after the war, they occasionally corresponded concerning the action of the regiments they commanded, the 20th Maine and the 15th Alabama. But they never met face to face, symbolically because they disagreed on the siting of monuments at Gettysburg, but in actuality because they disagreed about the causes and meaning of the conflict. Oates was an unreconstructed apologist of the rebel cause; Chamberlain, a haughty, professorial defender of Union virtue. This polarity of convictions, combined with the stories of two courageous men who had their defects, forms the backbone of Perry's dual biography. Perry narrates the battles, of course, but his treatment of Oates and Chamberlain in the Reconstruction era constitute the more interesting passages. Neither man, both eventually governors of their states, was keen on equal citizenship for blacks, only Oates was a better political operator in achieving his aims. Perry's study of two lives of the war and its aftermath will definitely engage the buffs. —Gilbert Taylor

Tapontsang, Adhe and Blakeslee, Joy. *Ama Adhe, the Voice That Remembers: The Heroic Story of a Woman's Fight to Free Tibet.* Nov. 1997. 272p. Wisdom, \$19.95 (0-86171-130-0). DDC: 951.

Tapontsang's searing tale of torture and imprisonment by the Chinese, recorded by American Blakeslee, is a twin to Palden Gyatso's wrenching *The Autobiography of a Tibetan Monk* [BKL N 1 97]. Like Gyatso, Tapontsang was born in the early 1930s in a small Tibetan farming community and lived a life she remembers as free and happy until the invasion of the Communist Chinese. A young wife and mother when the Chinese switched tactics from condescending propaganda to all-out violence against Tibetans, Tapontsang organized a group of women resistance fighters after the murders of her father and husband. Identified as a key rebel, she was beaten and dragged away as her baby daughter and toddler son looked on. In spite of being half-starved, forced to work in

a camp, and subjected to such horrors as the extraction of large amounts of blood, Tapontsang refused to confess or implicate others. She survived 27 years of brutality to bear witness, and one can only hope that it was not in vain. —Donna Seaman

YA/C: The personal approach makes this an excellent introduction to Tibet's political situation. LM.

Wood, Michael. *In the Footsteps of Alexander: A Journey from Greece to Asia.* Nov. 1997. 256p. index. illus. Univ. of California, \$27.50 (0-520-21307-6). DDC: 938.

If some BBC/PBS travel documentaries are the video equivalent of a lush coffee-table book, others are more challenging, wandering through less-than-gorgeous places off the beaten track and reexamining the conventional versions of the past. Wood's exploration of the lands through which Alexander the Great and his armies marched falls into the latter category; in traveling from Macedonia east to the Himalayas, Wood examines shifting notions of Alexander himself over the centuries, demonstrating how each era's assumptions and attitudes color its interpretation of the quasi-legendary leader. This tie-in volume is well (though not lavishly) illustrated with a mixture of Alexandrine art from a variety of cultures, landscapes that capture the wide range of geographies through which Alexander and his imperial armies passed, and portraits of cultures (in Turkey and the Persian Gulf, Afghanistan and Pakistan to the Hindu Kush) in which the influence of that long-ago juggernaut is still visible. A thoughtful, often fascinating narrative. —Mary Carroll

YA/C: More suitable as classroom support than as browsing fare. SEB.

FICTION

General Fiction

Borofka, David. *The Island.* Nov. 1997. 218p. MacMurray & Beck, \$19.50 (1-878448-78-1).

In 1968, while his parents wend their way through Europe in an effort to save their marriage, 14-year-old Fish Becker is sent off to spend the summer in Oregon with family friends. The wealthy, eccentric Lamberts live in a large, sprawling house at the top of a hill. The father listens to opera and tinkers with old radios; the mother is an insomniac and a drinker. Their children initiate Fish into the pleasures of sex, alcohol, and the mysterious accuracy of Ouija boards. For Fish, the summer becomes a rite of passage as he deals with an unexpected death, his parents' failing marriage, and his growing recognition of the complexities of adult life. Borofka has included too many plot strands for such a slight novel, and, indeed, some of them don't seem to belong to this particular novel at all. It's almost as though he had stitched together some of his short stories—their connection to one another not always clear.

However, the characters are three-dimensional, and the writing is frequently lyrical. —*Nancy Pearl*

Brizzi, Enrico. *Jack Frusciante Has Left the Band.* Tr. by Stash Luczkiw. Nov. 1997. 192p. Grove; dist. by Publishers Group West, paper, \$12 (0-8021-3521-8).

Generation Xer Brizzi, 22, has sold 700,000 copies of this novel, his first, in his native Italy, where it has also been produced as a feature film. That success is understandable, for Brizzi tells the tale of Alex, student at a Bolognese private high school for the economically and socially privileged, in sad, sweetly comic tones that should resound with anyone who is young and restless. Unprepared for a physics exam, Alex cuts class to drink and hang around with his crew of ne'er-do-wells, who strive for an elusive, cool sophistication, a kind of hip nihilism they see perfected in the privileged druggie, Martino. Alex wants Aidi to reassure him about the solidity of their relationship before she leaves for America at summer's end, but she wants simply to stay friends with him. Beyond Aidi, Alex wants a car, girls, loud music, and absolutely no part of the bourgeois adulthood that seems inevitable for him, no matter how he rebels against academic success and class privilege. —*Whitney Scott*

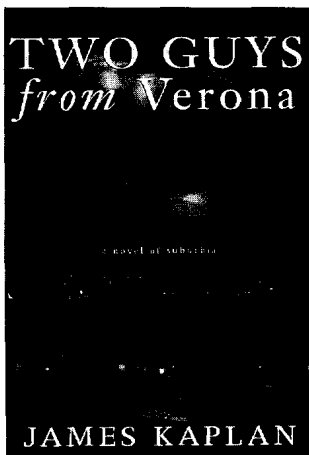
Chesnutt, Charles W. *Mandy Oxendine.* Nov. 1997. 136p. Univ. of Illinois, \$24.95 (0-252-02051-0); paper, \$10.95 (0-252-06347-3).

A century ago, Chesnutt's short first novel was rejected for publication, and to read it is to think we know why. It begins as an intriguing perspective on the color line in early post-Civil War North Carolina and on two—its white-appearing African American heroine and hero—who strain against it. Then, after a mysterious murder, it becomes plot-heavy and turns into a melodrama, including a near-lynching, that ends all too abruptly. As Charles Hackenberry convincingly explains in an introduction to the finally published story, the change in tone and texture from socially concerned psychological realism to stilted theatricality probably isn't why Houghton Mifflin refused it. Rather, Mandy Oxendine and Tom Lowrey are more independent and resourceful "black" characters than late Victorian America could accept, and Chesnutt's tacit endorsement of several strategies for escaping the oppression African Americans suffered in the postbellum South was even more threatening. Now, those characterizations and attitudes should captivate readers concerned with the history of race relations as well as lovers of African American literature. —*Ray Olson*

Clark, George. *The Small Bees' Honey.* Nov. 1997. 196p. White Pine, paper, \$14 (1-877727-74-1).

Clark draws on his own experience—notably, passing for white (despite being of British and Xhosa descent) in Rhodesia and South Africa and fighting in Angola with the South African Defense Force—in many of

★**Kaplan, James.** *Two Guys from Verona.* Feb. 1998. 320p. Atlantic Monthly; dist. by Publishers Group West, \$24 (0-87113-704-6). General Fiction



Michael Chabon, and Ethan Canin—is the perfect vehicle for the suspense that charges this witty, sexy, and wise comedy of errors and corrections. —*Donna Seaman*

At first glance, Kaplan's novel appears to be yet another dissection of suburban life and white male midlife crises; fortunately, a closer reading reveals its depth and complexity, because you don't want to take the great bard's name in vain. Kaplan's two guys from a New Jersey suburb called Verona are, indeed, end-of-the-millennium variations on Shakespeare's two gentlemen, and Kaplan, following Shakespeare's lead, explores the vagaries of male friendship. Will and Joel, now in their 40s, have been buddies since high school, and neither has really grown up. Will, a married father of two, works for his father, loves money and expensive things, and hasn't a clue about what matters in life. Joel still lives with his mother, drives an ancient Chevy Impala, longs for his high-school sweetheart, and works at a sub shop; but he's a mystic who sees ghosts, feels colors, and thinks about time. Will expects to get richer and happier, Joel expects nothing, and both are due for some radical change. Kaplan's marvelously supple and understated style—reminiscent of Updike, Salinger,

the 14 gemlike stories in this collection. In these pages, Africans recount their stories, while the line between myth and truth sometimes blurs, and passing-for-white husbands finally tell their European wives about their children's true ancestry. But the dominant theme is war—the fear and the sense of futility it engenders and the ultimate waste that results. Here soldiers may have deserted, been forced to kill comrades, or sought to atone for their actions, but all must—worst of all—live with their memories. In crisp prose, Clark vividly evokes widely disparate settings, from remote African fields to Florida department stores, and the shortest of his stories—taking up less than a page—are as memorable as those 30 pages long. A noteworthy collection. —*Michele Leber*

Coye, Beth F. and others. *My Navy Too.* Nov. 1997. 432p. Cedar Hollow, P.O. Box 23, Ashland, OR 97520, paper, \$16.95 (0-9658578-0-8).

Principal author Coye is, like her coauthors, a retired naval officer. Why must they all be retired in order to speak out against the navy's institutionalized sexism, sexual harassment, and homophobia? That and other questions are answered as this epistolary "political novel based on real-life experiences" unfolds. The events related run from the heroine's early days in the navy and attendance at officers' school in 1960, through her romance with a navy man she refuses to marry because of her attraction to women, to her eventual lesbian linking with life partner Jennie and her retirement from "Big Daddy Navy" in 1980 with the rank of commander. Whether this novel is, as it seems, highly autobiographical is never answered, but talented, intelligent young women considering naval service—indeed, service in any of the armed forces—might do well to read Coye and company's ultimately cautionary tale before enlisting. —*Whitney Scott*

de Carvalho, Mário. *A God Strolling in the Cool of the Evening.* Tr. by Gregory Rabassa. 1997. 265p. Louisiana State, \$26.95 (0-8071-2235-1).

Acclaimed Portuguese writer Mário de Carvalho ponders the often conflicting riddles of responsibility and virtue in this exquisitely crafted fictional memoir. When Lucius Valerius Quincius is appointed chief



PHYLLIS MARTIN, award-winning author of *WORD WATCHER'S HANDBOOK* and *MARTIN'S MAGIC FORMULA* for Getting the Right Job has already won critical acclaim for

Return to Chipping Sodbury

a contemporary novel of mystery and romance.

"I'm happy to see a writer of such quality join the fiction genre." Paul F. Knue, Editor, the *Cincinnati Post*.

"If you're beguiled by tiny towns and are sick of the sleazy, this book is for you."

Ann Marie Sabath, Author of *Business Etiquette in Brief*.

Order through Baker and Taylor or call 888-866-3820. FAX 888-866-3821.

