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Review of Prime Fathers

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"Scrapbook" also includes pieces on Humphrey and Lewis, but includes two less well-known and more general, more helpful pieces as well—an interview entitled "West of the Mississippi" and the extemporaneous speech "On Being a Western Writer." Only this last is published here for the first time.

The thematic thread of these pieces is like Manfred himself, larger than one might expect. If Manfred were speaking only of those who nurtured his writing, he would want to speak at length of his Aunt Katherine, too, and Meridel LeSueur, Professor Jellema in the philosophy department at Calvin College, and perhaps most of all Paul Hillestad, his editor for *The Golden Bowl*. But Manfred's interest in bringing these pieces together into a single book is instead in the larger issue of how one comes to be a good person and responsible citizen as an American artist living in the Plains.

Along the way we get other very helpful insights into Manfred's work, such as his almost religious sense of his artistic mission (p. 27), the almost archiving function of the surface of much of his writing (p. 153), and his very fertile awareness of the metaphorical implications of the surface of his fictions (pp. 125–7). This collection provides materials particularly useful in rereading and reevaluating the early novels.

Mick McAllister's brief introduction, after beginning curiously by seeming to appreciate Manfred's work for the wrong reason (Manfred's classical learning) goes on to explore usefully what Manfred is up to. "*Prime Fathers*," he properly concludes, "Shows us . . . the nurturing of a Mark Twain man, upright and unshakable in his art."

One should also note the publisher, Howe Brothers. They have done a good and competent job in the preparation of this book, in both hard-cover and paperback. They are relatively new to publishing western literature, and one looks forward to many other well-prepared volumes from them.

Prime Fathers. By Frederick Manfred. Foreword by Mick McAllister. Salt Lake City: Howe Brothers, 1988. xiv + 176 pp. \$15.95 cloth, \$9.95 paper.

Frederick Manfred's *Prime Fathers* is a great convenience for readers, critics, and scholars of his fiction. It gathers together miscellaneous pieces of his non-fiction that have previously been scattered over the last thirty-seven years in places as diverse as the *Chicago Tribune* and the *American Scholar*.

Prime Fathers includes four focused pieces ("Prime Fathers"), four less focused pieces ("Scrapbook"), and a ninth, early piece ("Wanted: More Ornery Cusses"), which Manfred uses as his introduction to thread the others loosely together on a theme very significant to him, the artist's relation to society. The section entitled "Prime Fathers" includes pieces on Hubert Humphrey, Feike Feikema VI (Manfred's father), Sinclair Lewis, and other writers he has known. The section entitled

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