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Review of Loren Eiseley: The Development of a Writer By E. Fred Carlisle and Loren Eiseley By Leslie E. Gerber and Margaret McFadden

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Students of Loren Eiseley who have long looked forward to an account of his life more complete than that found in *All the Strange Hours*, the episodic and ruminative volume Eiseley designated as his autobiography, have new grounds for disappointment. E. Fred Carlisle in *Loren Eiseley: The Development of a Writer* and Leslie E. Gerber and Margaret McFadden in the *Loren Eiseley* volume of Ungar's *Literature and Life* series provide some pleasant reading but fail to capture the essential Eiseley.

Carlisle offers a pointed disclaimer in the preface to his biography, describing Eiseley as "a very private person who had a powerful sense of the public image he wanted to present." Carlisle admits "even though I came to care about the man I sensed was there, as well as the author, I could never break through" (p. xi). Under these difficulties Carlisle would have been better advised to have abandoned his project, but he has, instead, slogged on to produce a prosaic and credulous retelling of events from Eiseley's autobiography and other essays, strung together with rudimentary sociological research. In Carlisle's alembic, the facts have been extracted and distilled while Eiseley's cosmic vibrations and metaphoric style have been allowed to evaporate. The valuable portion of the volume, a sensitive treatment of Eiseley's poetry, is a version of Carlisle's 1977 *Prairie Schooner* article.

Gerber and McFadden, on the other hand, have wisely abandoned attempts to pinion the private life of the elusive Eiseley and have instead produced a worthwhile volume which concentrates on analysis of his work. A single chapter of bare-bones biography is followed by expository sections particularly valuable to students since they explain Eiseley's appeal, define his place in the literary tradition, and clarify the scientific contexts and philosophical concepts that infuse his work.

Loren Eiseley: The Development of a Writer. By E. Fred Carlisle. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983. Checklist, index. xiv + 187 pp. \$15.95.

Loren Eiseley. By Leslie E. Gerber and Margaret McFadden. New York: Frederick Ungar, 1983. Chronology, notes, bibliography, index. xx + 159 pp. \$12.95.

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