



PROJECT MUSE®

Visions by Michael Fillerup (review)

Lloyd Becker

Western American Literature, Volume 26, Number 4, Winter 1992, p.
387 (Review)

Published by University of Nebraska Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/wal.1992.0153>

Western
American
Literature

EDITORIAL BOARD
The Editor and the West: Two Portraits by
Jack Kerouac and Sam Wagstaff James G. McGlothlin
Steinbeck's "Wendell" A. Remondino James G. McGlothlin
Recent Bibliographies of Studies in
Western American Literature English Literature
Research in Western American Literature
1992-1993 Jim Smith
Index to Volume XXVI John T. Caldwell
Reviews
Index to Volume XXVI

WOLFE STEIN MEMBERSHIP
THE WESTERN LITERATURE ASSOCIATION and THE STATE UNIVERSITY

➔ *For additional information about this article*

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/532328/summary>

Un-Due West. Those who like their humor to rise naturally from realistic situations will do better to seek their laughs some place other than Lindisfarne, Texas Occident.

DONALD A. BARCLAY

New Mexico State University

Visions. By Michael Fillerup. (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1990. 208 pages, \$9.95.)

Michael Fillerup's stories are filled with their author's genuine compassion for ordinary people and their problems and triumphs. The ordinary folk whose lives Fillerup delineates so tenderly are Mormons, struggling to be true to the demands of their faith, beset by occasional doubts, harried by bills, responsibilities and weather but persevering nevertheless.

Nearly all the characters share the physical, emotional fatigue described by the father in "Family Plantation Day": "At thirty-nine, things are happening to me now I never would have fathomed ten or even five years ago. Parts are beginning to wear out. My ignition's bad. I sometimes run out of gas before the finish line." Some experience more extreme self-doubts, like the missionary protagonist in "Hozhoogo Nanina Doo": "I've had to pray and conduct meetings with my own curses still ringing in my ears. And don't think that's not hard, pasting a smile on your face and shaking hands and trying to look as if all's well in Zion when you feel like a cesspool inside."

Despite the demonstrable compassion with which these lives are given voice and form, and despite Fillerup's ear for dialogue and eye for southwestern landscape, the stories frequently disappoint. In "A Game of Inches" the narrator comes home from work to smell his wife's enchiladas cooking and see his children watching "Wheel of Fortune." "Norman Rockwell would have done cartwheels," he exclaims, without a trace of irony, and his joy undercuts the pressures and tensions which the story had labored to establish.

It's not that we would wish his characters to succumb to despair; rather, it is Fillerup's failure to make critical moments—a woman's discovery of a lump in her breast, a convert's realization that wine and rock music still exert a powerful hold on him despite his carefully orchestrated routine of work and family, a macho hunter's growing panic as he realizes he is lost in the woods—as deeply resonant as they might be that ultimately dulls the edge of these stories.

LLOYD BECKER

Suffolk Community College