

# C O N T E N T S

## P R E F A C E

xi

### I · *The American Sisyphus* / 3

1. SISYPHUS AND ABSURD CREATION	3
2. THE ABSURD VIEW AND AMERICAN HUMOR	8

### II · *Faith and Confidence: American Solutions* / 15

1. CONSCIOUS AND UNCONSCIOUS ABSURDITY	15
2. PURITAN PERPLEXITY IN ACTION	21
3. JONATHAN EDWARDS: THE SOLUTION OF BEING	25
4. BENJAMIN FRANKLIN: MAN OF CONFIDENCE, CONFIDENCE MAN	32

### III · *From the Absurd Frontier* / 40

1. THE NATIVE AMERICAN ABSURDIST	40
2. THE TELLER IN THE TALL TALE	51
3. BITERS AND BITERS Bit	64

### IV · *The Descent to Faith: Herman Melville* / 77

1. CAPTAIN COOK'S TOE AND OTHER JOLLY PUZZLES	77
2. QUEEQUEG'S COFFIN	93
3. THE CONFIDENCE OF THE CONFIDENCE-MAN	112
4. THE JOKES IN <i>Billy Budd</i>	130

## *Contents*

### **v · *The Prisoner at the Window: Mark Twain / 133***

1. A HIGH AND DANGEROUS VIEW	133
2. THE INNOCENT ABSURDIST	139
3. THE FAILURE OF ABSURD CREATION	147
4. TRAGEDY TRAPS	157

### **VI · *The Prime Maniacal Risibility: William Faulkner / 167***

1. INVENTING ENOUGH STUFF	167
2. SNOPES WAS HERE	179
3. THE SAVAGE CARICATURIST	195

### **VII · *These Fruitful Fruitless Odysseys: John Barth / 201***

1. ODYSSEY IN THE FUNHOUSE	201
2. MYTHOTHERAPY	210
3. EPIC CIRCLES	222

### **VIII · *A Heritage of Corpses / 237***

1. CREATION ON THE RUN	237
2. THE GIGGLE IN THE JUNGLE	242

N O T E S	247
-----------	-----

I N D E X	265
-----------	-----