

"conjunction of pleasure and social purpose." But Glassie's Ballymenone is on the brink of change. Endless civil strife, television, and automobiles are threatening social ties. Private enterprise and a drive for material prosperity are supplanting the spirit of cooperation. New houses are built with vestibules between kitchens and an increasingly inhospitable outside world. The days of storytelling and conviviality will soon be gone.

CONSEQUENCES OF PRAGMATISM

(Essays: 1972-1980)
by Richard Rorty
Univ. of Minn., 1982
237 pp. \$29.50 cloth,
\$11.95 paper

Rorty's controversial assessment of the history of his field, presented here and in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1981), is that attempts to find absolute and indisputable "truths" have led philosophy to become arcane, professionalized, and mired in unresolvable arguments. Drawing from Continental philosophy since G.W.F. Hegel (1770-1831), Rorty, professor of humanities at the University of Virginia, subscribes to the view that "truths" held by one age are replaced by others in the next. Standards of knowledge, he believes, should be based upon the needs of a particular society at a particular time. Thus Rorty sees the philosopher's task as a modest one, along the lines of John Dewey's pragmatism: to criticize the thought of current and past generations for the purpose of living better today.

Arts & Letters

**THE ARGOT MERCHANT
DISASTER: Poems**

New and Selected
by George Starbuck
Atlantic-Little, Brown, 1982
119 pp. \$8.95

The unusual title comes from a line in one of Starbuck's poems, an ode to Americana: "O / it isn't the cuisinart it's the cuisine argot / and I don't care if it's the argot as in the argot merchant disaster / or the argot as in What kinda colada makings the bar got here . . ." ("Sunday Brunch in the Boston Restoration"). Here, as elsewhere, Starbuck evokes mercantile America, its plenty and its strangeness. His poetry mingles the opulent and the underworldly, decorative language and slang, jazz rhythms and traditional