



Hunting Mister Heartbreak

©2009 eNotes.com, Inc. or its Licensors. Please see [copyright information](#) at the end of this document.

In *OLD GLORY* (1981), Jonathan Raban followed the general path of Huckleberry Finn by piloting a boat down the Mississippi River from Minneapolis to Louisiana, observing the people and their customs along the way. In *HUNTING MISTER HEARTBREAK*, taking de Crevecoeur as his model, he returns to America for a longer and broader exploration. Sailing from Liverpool for New York City, Raban begins his journey with a stay in that great city during the late months of 1988 into the new year. Using Macy's Department Store as a paradigm, he notes how unchecked materialism and quick (often precarious) wealth have infected traditional American values. Leaving New York, Raban then travels by automobile to Guntersville, Alabama, where he rents a house in the woods and samples life in the Deep South, which he finds to be surprisingly "civilized" and even to his liking. From Guntersville, he flies to Seattle, Washington, and lives in a transitional part of the town. Finally, more than a year into his travels, Raban goes to the "end" of the continent, to find one of the last refuges of "outlaw" American life among the drug-runners of the Florida Keys.

Raban is an insightful and entertaining writer, but the reader slowly realizes that although the book is presented as a travelogue and social critique, it is likewise a personal investigation (Raban is also a novelist and literary critic). In each place, Raban takes on a new personality, trying out life as an American from a specific region of the country. There is more than a hint of invention in some of the scenes, calling into question the literal accuracy of his accounts. Nevertheless, Raban likes America and its people. Overall, he proves to be an astute critic and wryly romantic raconteur.

Sources for Further Study

The Antioch Review XLIX, Summer, 1991, p. 463.

Chicago Tribune. June 9, 1991, XIV, p. 4.

Library Journal. CXVI, April 15, 1991, p. 116.

London Review of Books. XIII, January 24, 1991, p. 17.

Los Angeles Times Book Review June 9, 1991, p. 2.

The New York Times Book Review. XCVI, May 12, 1991, p. 7.

Publishers Weekly. CCXXXVIII, March 15, 1991, p. 49.

Time. CXXXVII, May 13, 1991, p. 76.

The Times Literary Supplement. November 23, 1990, p. 1263.

The Washington Post Book World. XXI, April 28, 1991, p. 3.

Copyright Notice

©2009 eNotes.com, Inc.

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

No part of this work covered by the copyright hereon may be reproduced or used in any form or by any means graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, taping, Web distribution or information storage retrieval systems without the written permission of the publisher.

For complete copyright information, please see the online version of this work:
<http://www.enotes.com/hunting-mister-heartbreak-salem>