



Fiction, Drama, and Poetry

Reviewed work(s):

Source: *The English Journal*, Vol. 46, No. 4 (Apr., 1957), pp. 230-233

Published by: [National Council of Teachers of English](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/808414>

Accessed: 14/01/2013 15:38

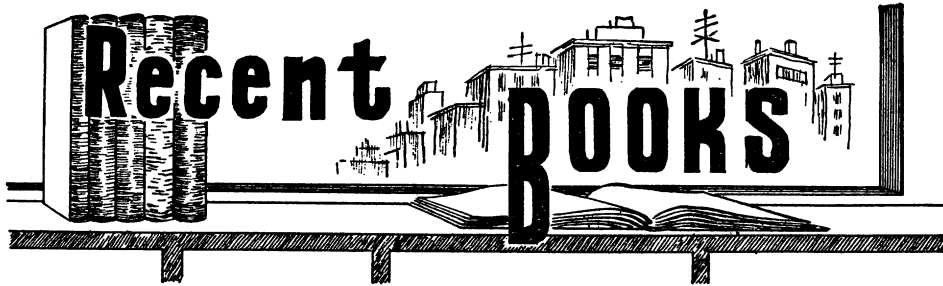
Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



National Council of Teachers of English is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The English Journal*.

<http://www.jstor.org>



Edited by GRIFFITH T. PUGH and BENJAMIN H. CARROLL, JR.

Fiction, Drama, and Poetry

THE SCAPEGOAT. By Daphne du Maurier. Doubleday. 1957. \$3.95.

One might hazard the guess that here is du Maurier's most lasting work. The casual reader will be entertained by constantly mounting suspense, exciting conflict, unforgettable characterization. But the more thoughtful will be challenged by deeper levels of meaning. Might our problems be solved if we could see them from the immeasurable distance of another's eyes, and yet not be removed from them ourselves? One man deals with the inner frustrations of another's life by the continually seeking, positive approach; another, by the negative. Activity, of course, wins. The chief character poses a great question at the end, and finds love, freely given and so kept, the profoundly moving answer.

—Olive Cross

ONIONHEAD. By Weldon Hill. David McKay. 1957. \$3.95.

An impecunious Oklahoma boy's thirst for learning and hunger for love take him into the University of Oklahoma for a tantalizing, very untriumphant year and more. Then his jeopardy from the draft board, his eternal bafflement in love, and his desperate need simply for a square meal make him enlist in the Coast Guard, where in time his longings, at least of the flesh, are gratified, and he even becomes a bit of a hero. The Coast Guard adventures make an amusing and spirited story, but finer by far is the opening section—an incomparably comic, true, and endearing portrait of a student's lot during the late great depression.

—C.

THE FALL. By Albert Camus. Knopf. 1957. \$3.00.

An eloquent and prosperous French lawyer, a bit of a libertine but a model also of humanitarianism who pleads *gratis* in behalf of the poor widows and orphans, is transfixed on his serene promontory of moral complacency and self-content by a sudden burst of ironic laughter, the first of a series of disquieting events leading to his fall, i.e. to his realization that love, charity, and ostensible sacrifice, whether in himself or in any other man, are but the disguises of pride and self-love. He then has to find a way to bear up under that appalling truth. The brilliantly-handled vehicle for this melancholy message is the dramatic monologue, here in a prose as succinct as poetry.

—C.

TILL WE HAVE FACES. By C. S. Lewis. Harcourt, Brace. 1957. \$4.50.

Based upon the classical myth of Psyche and Cupid, this didactic novel finds its significance in an examination of the meaning of life. In the barbaric kingdom of Glome, three daughters of the king seek different fortunes. The oldest, the homely Orual, is the protagonist; and the novelist limits himself to her consciousness, thereby excluding much of the delightful humor that is usual to his writing. Although the narrative is competently handled, the ponderings of the maturing Orual give greatest value to the work. A pagan priest, a Greek scholar, and Orual bring different lights to bear on moral questions.

—P.

BROTHERS AND SISTERS. By Ivy Compton-Burnett. Zero. 1956. \$3.75.

Through cleverly contrived dialogue filled with oblique wit Miss Compton-Burnett gradually unfolds her theme of brother-sister incest. Her sophisticated intellect perceives the ironies in a family haunted by a tragic truth. The implicit melodrama is carefully restrained, for deeds do not concern this author nearly so much as the fascinating psychological effects resulting from the sudden discovery of incest. Particularly the mother triumphs through a terrifying tyranny arising from her exaggerated demands for pity. The brilliant wit of this fiction has its source in a tension of emotion so frightful that only the stoic or the comic could endure it.

—J. Russell Reaver

THE HEIKÉ STORY. By Eiji Yoshikawa. Translated by Fuki Wooyenaka Uramatsu. Knopf. 1956. \$4.95.

The central thread in this immense but admirably articulated historical novel of twelfth-century Japan is the career of Kiyomori, head of a great warrior clan, the Heiké, which through accident of political alignment in time of crisis comes to be opposed by another warrior clan, the Genji, with fateful issue for both families. The narrative context for this affair is of such scope that the whole of a national culture seems to be projected in this single volume—itself a simplification by excision, the translator explains, of a still grander Japanese original. The work has become, in any case, a sage and highly pleasurable contribution to the literature of the world.

—C.

A SMALL FIRE. By Gladys Schmitt. Dial. 1957. \$3.50.

Authentic is the background of campus life in this novel. Not quite convincing is the liberation of Arthur Sanes—egocentric, middle-aged newcomer to the staff. Despised, mistrusted, frightened, he reveals his despair to veteran teacher Frieda Hartmann, who unaccountably responds with love. She knows his failure as an artist, his inability to break off with his mistress, his self indulgence at cruel cost to his family, his general insolence; yet, when he suffers

a mortal blow to his pride, she rallies him with her love, "a small fire" which, the reader feels, will be watered out with the next inevitable betrayal.

—Martha G. Chapman

BITTER VICTORY. By René Hardy. Doubleday. 1956. \$3.50.

Bitter Victory is a tense satirical novel about a group of World War II British commandos, who after a raid on a German outpost, find themselves making a forced and torturous trek across the desert to safety. The men all loathe Capt. Brand for his harsh and unreasonable discipline and for his insanely obsessive hatred of Lt. Leith, whom he suspects of having had an affair with the Captain's wife, Jane. The day-by-day agony of the march mounts as the author relates the hunger, the thirst, the exhaustion of the men, the depraved behavior of the Captain, and the despair of the Lieutenant. There is a double conflict—the unspeakable physical suffering of the men trying to save their lives; the yet more agonizing conflicts in the exposed minds of the two officers. The author himself was an active member of the French Resistance during World War II.

—Mildred Fay Henry

THE ETRUSCAN. By Mika Waltari. Putnam. 1957. \$4.50.

Admirers of Waltari's talent for fictionalizing history will welcome *The Etruscan* as a successor to *The Egyptian* and *The Wanderer*. Turms, the hero and narrator, starts at the Delphic Oracle in Greece and goes to Asia Minor, Sicily, Rome, and the Etruscan cities, where he finally "discovers" that he is a Lucomo, one of the holy leaders of the Etruscans. Standard fare from one of today's most facile pens.

—William Randel

THE DAY THE MONEY STOPPED. By Brendan Gill. Doubleday. 1957. \$2.95.

Between mid-morning and lunch, in one law office, a graying playboy, Charlie Morrow, offends his stalwart younger brother; plans an assignation with the secretary, whom he meets for the first time; refuses financial aid from his wealthy sister (after learning that he had been disinherited—

because of his prodigal spending); and then dashes off to lunch. The trite situation of the irresponsible but brilliant and magnetic rebel and the self-righteous, tiresome conformist in conflict is not so worn as to be devoid of interest. Supposedly, even after the money has stopped, there is a spark of purpose left to start charming Charlie on another chase. A profundity is intended that is not attained.

—P.

PRIZE STORIES OF 1957. Selected and edited by Paul Engle. Doubleday. 1957. \$3.95.

This thirty-seventh volume in the O. Henry Memorial Award series is a collection of twenty stories selected for their literary merit out of the year's offerings in some seventy magazines. The authorship varies from established names like William Faulkner to young writers taking their first step over the literary threshold. The stories are assortable into at least three recognizable interest groups: those dealing with "economic and social pressures," with conflicts and tensions based on race differences, and with the "shock and revelation" of the child. Thoroughly readable throughout, this three-hundred page book is a revealing gauge of the variety and merit of contemporary short fiction.

—Claude Flory

THE HOUR AFTER WESTERLY AND OTHER STORIES. By Robert M. Coates. Harcourt, Brace. 1957. \$3.50.

A salesman who "lost" an hour and part of his memory as well and never quite solves the mystery of the hauntingly romantic experience he may have had during his "blackout"; the respectable bank manager who plans the perfect embezzlement; the English teacher who finds disconcertingly that he can read people's minds—these are some of the average people faced with unaverage dilemmas in the fifteen stories of this volume. The stories are adroitly intelligent, technically superb, highly entertaining, and they enhance the reputation won by the author's five novels, previous collection of stories, and excellent work as art critic of *The New Yorker*.

—Paul Stoakes

THE BIRDS. By Aristophanes. (An English Version by Dudley Fitts.) Harcourt, Brace. 1957. \$4.00.

To extract what is viable of an Aristophanic comedy involves some sacrifice and compromise, a fact which Dudley Fitts, teacher of English at Andover Academy, has recognized, both in his metrical version of *The Birds* and in his earlier translations of *The Frogs* and *The Lysistrata*. And yet his English version retains something of the unashamed bawdy, the biting wit, the unflinching honesty, and the soaring poetic imagination which make the reading of the original comedy a delight. Mr. Fitts has taken less freedom in translating the dialogue than in presenting the lyrical passages, which admit of no comparable English meters.

—Laura Jepsen

ONE AND THE MANY. By Naomi Long Madgett. Exposition Press. 1956. \$3.00.

The question of whether poetry can co-exist with propaganda is raised again by Mrs. Madgett's collection. In lyrics of varied mood she reveals her responses to the vicissitudes of life. She exhibits firmness of structure, clarity, and general technical competence—but not a coherent philosophy. When she considers the lot of the Negro in America, she becomes the special pleader. Perhaps the most impressive poem on the "great American problem" is "Not I Alone," in which she attempts to speak for her race.

—P.

IN DEFENSE OF THE EARTH. By Kenneth Rexroth. New Directions. 1956. \$3.00.

In a kind of miscellany, with poems ranging from intense love lyrics to satiric epigrams, Mr. Rexroth displays considerable talent. In the final poem, "Codicil," he says of the poetry of Eliot and Valery that

... it is intense,
Subjective revery as
Intimate and revealing,
Embarrassing if you will,
As the indiscretions of
The psychoanalyst's couch.

His judgment, despite his aversion for "corn belt metaphysicals," seems applicable, in

part at least, to his own verse. "Seven Poems for Marthe, My Wife," another group of seven entitled "The Lights in the Sky Are Stars," a group of "Epigrams and Translations," and "Forty-five More Japanese Poems" suggest the variety of the contents. Impressive is the quality of the poems as well as the poet's sense of his own peculiar freedom to speak the truth.

—P.

POETS OF TODAY III. With an introductory essay, "The Poem in the Atomic Age," by John Hall Wheelock, Scribners. 1956. \$3.95.

Poets of Today III is the third volume in

a series launched as an experiment to determine if the presentation of complete books by several contemporary poets within a single volume might win more attention and a larger distribution than usually accorded a book of poems. In the present volume are included Lee Anderson's *The Floating World and Other Poems*, Spencer Brown's *My Father's Business and Other Poems*, and Joseph Langland's *The Green Town: Poems*. Previously the work of these three poets had been published only in periodicals. Together they give balance to the collection: Mr. Anderson's verse is experimental, Mr. Brown's traditional, and Mr. Langland's a blend of the two.

—P.

Nonfiction

THE SATURDAY BOOK, 16. Edited by John Hadfield. Macmillan. 1956. \$5.75.

This is the sixteenth issue of a beautiful and unusual annual presenting the work of thirty-five authors and artists. The annual poem is by Sara Jackson. In the section on "Specimens of Art and Nature" are included, among others, articles by F. W. Hawcroft on the artist John Middleton and by Evelyn Waugh on "The Death of Painting." The section, "Uneasy Pages," deals with ghosts. "Picturesque Tours" presents descriptions of foreign places. The final sections, "Personal Columns" and "The Cabinet of Curiosities," enrich the miscellany. The pictures and the printing are a credit to the art of bookmaking.

—P.

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW: MAN OF THE CENTURY. By Archibald Henderson. Appleton-Century-Crofts. 1957. \$12.00.

About half a century ago an American professor of mathematics set, as a major part of his own life work, the job of recording the life and work of England's greatest living dramatist. The present thousand-page monument of information, published as the Centennial Biography, includes much of the material from the already monumental *Playboy and Prophet*, published in 1932; it also covers the remaining twenty-eight years of Shaw's almost century-spanning life. Fully "authorized" and

most completely authenticated by Shaw himself, this stands as the most complete single account of Shaw's career, though not of his plays.

—Kellogg W. Hunt

FRONTIERS OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE STUDY OF MAN. Edited by Lynn White, Jr. Harper. 1956. \$4.50.

As the publisher declares: "In nontechnical language, but with scholarly authority, seventeen authors of distinguished reputation present what is being learned through the studies of human genetics, psychology, cultural anthropology, archaeology, history, sociology, politics, geography, economics, the history of science, of music, of art, and of literature, linguistics, mathematics, philosophy, and religion." In a concluding essay the editor shows that the contributors, though working independently, have come to a meaningful harmony as to the distinctive features of twentieth-century Man. The perspective on contemporary humanism is probably clearer and more comprehensive than in any other single volume.

—C.

SOCIETY AND SELF IN THE NOVEL: ENGLISH INSTITUTE ESSAYS, 1955. Edited with a foreword by Mark Schorer. Columbia University Press. 1956. \$3.50.

This heterogeneous collection of moderately stimulating essays is an outgrowth