



Fiction and Poetry

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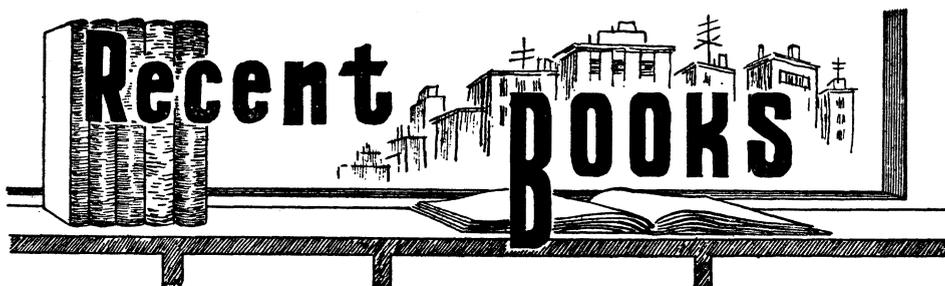
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Edited by GRIFFITH T. PUGH and BENJAMIN H. CARROLL, JR.

Fiction and Poetry

STOPOVER: TOKYO. By John P. Marquand. Little, Brown. 1957. \$3.95.

Deep in the groove of international spy fiction, this novel contains the sure-fire stereotypes: the lavishly-endowed man and girl from Central Intelligence; their relentless pursuit of Communists and the terrifying counter-pursuit; the slick professional murder and the off-stage torture; the hero's heart-rending choice between love and duty when the heroine falls hostage into enemy hands; the final gratifying, brutal kill. What raises this novel above the hackneyed is the sense that Jack Rhyce and Ruth Bogart are not just steelnerved, razor-brained professionals covering up in the guise of ordinary human beings, but are really ordinary human beings disciplining themselves to perform like professionals.

—Kellogg W. Hunt

WARDEN OF THE SMOKE AND BELLS. By Richard Llewellyn. Doubleday. 1956. \$3.00.

Franc, a fifth generation warden of a watch tower in the Italian town of Assisi, is the protagonist of a historical novel set in the thirteenth century. Other leading characters are the beautiful Emantha; the town's enemy, D'Orosa of Perugia; members of a caravan from Cathay, Marco Polo and Princess Na-Nou, daughter of the Great Khan; Il Cardinale; and Mayor Gandolfi. In a melodramatic action, fraught with danger, romance, and medieval trappings, Franc wins honor and his beloved. Yet, at best, the action is but a surface movement. The novel is entertaining with-

out being enlightening, exciting without being deeply moving.

—P.

THESE THOUSAND HILLS. By A. B. Guthrie, Jr. Houghton Mifflin. 1956. \$3.95.

The Western of the pulps is given classic treatment and a sense of reality by Pulitzer Prize-winner Guthrie. All the dramatic and familiar episodes of the early cattle kingdoms, before the days of ranching, are here, but they are enacted by three dimensional characters. Guthrie's Indians have depth and personality; even his cattle rustlers, brand-changing horse thieves, and cow punchers think and feel. The privations of frontier life, the violence of storm and drought, bars and gun fights are experienced by living people. Lat Evans' helping cut The Trail from Oregon to Montana is meaningful, for in the process he helps carve American character.

—Olive Cross

TWILIGHT FOR THE GODS. By Ernest Gann. Sloane. 1956. \$3.95.

Plainly a has-been, a commercial sailing vessel forlornly competing in an age of steam, the battered *Cannibal* sets out from the South Pacific, bound for Mexico, with her master, Captain Bell (also a has-been), staking everything on the success of this voyage. Her seven passengers are has-beens, too, until disaster shows them to be the kind of people "who don't know how to quit." A little too pat in plot, the book succeeds through the splendid characterization of Bell, whose love for his once beau-

tiful ship and for the peace of the sea is moving and unforgettable.

—Kellogg W. Hunt

A PIECE OF BLUE HEAVEN. By Abraham Margolian. New Elizabethan Publishing Co. 1956. \$4.50.

Based upon diaries and other factual material, *A Piece of Blue Heaven* is an account of Nazi deportation of the Jews from Amsterdam during World War II. Central in the story are six people who for a time find sanctuary in the home of a friendly Dutch surgeon; through them the reader meets both Jewish Council leaders and Nazis and learns something of the shameful deportation procedure and the horrors of the Gestapo. Cast in poetic form—but with the passages of blank verse throughout serving no real purpose—the novel fails to live up to its powerful theme, perhaps because the characters never come to life.

—John R. Hendrickson

AURORA DAWN. By Herman Wouk. Doubleday. 1956. \$3.95.

This is a reprinting or, more correctly, a reissue of a book first published in 1947, the first novel of the man who became famous for writing *The Caine Mutiny*. *Aurora Dawn* is the quite intentionally tautological name of a soap advertised with great fanfare by a New York advertising agency. This book is an excellent satire on the excesses, the shams, the sentimentalities of the advertising profession. The author writes with such arresting diction and bright turn of phrase that the slimness of the plot is unnoticed and the author's frequent conversations with the reader are forgiven.

—W. Hudson Rogers

TOWER IN THE WEST. By Frank Norris. Harper. 1957. \$3.95.

George Hanes is devoted to his older brother Jeff, a famous architect, and to The Tower, one of Jeff's buildings, which symbolizes to George his brother's courage and individualism. Jeff is killed early in the novel, and six months later Jeff's wife confesses to George that she is pregnant by her lover, a Roman Catholic, who re-

fuses to divorce his wife. George marries her to protect his brother's honor and spends the rest of the novel trying to hang on to The Tower and get rid of her. Why this trivial tale was picked as the 1957 Harper Prize Novel the present reviewer cannot imagine.

—James Preu

STRANGER TO THE SHORE. By Kenneth Dodson. Little, Brown. 1956. \$3.95.

A lifelong sailor, ship's carpenter Kurt Mueller finds himself a stranger to World War II intrigue in neutral Chile. His love for Adriana Luscher involves him in the nebulous intrigue and in a bloody brawl, and finally makes him at home on the shore. There are no surprises here. All the Fascists are vicious sadists, all Allied sympathizers are gentle souls. After several fully predictable skirmishes, the good men defeat the bad men and Kurt gets his girl. The slight plot and obvious characterization are partly redeemed by an exciting and all-too-brief sea chase.

—Hassell A. Simpson

THE EATING VALLEY. By Augusta Walker. Dial. 1956. \$3.00.

The title comes from the encroachment by erosion of a valley upon a town. Of more significance, however, is the life of Manuel, a soldier just returned from war, who marries a comely but simple girl and—before he is willing—assumes increasingly heavy family responsibilities. He attains joy but not without conflict. The contrasts between his own attitudes and those of his friend Lorenzo aid the reader in seeing the essential complexities of life even in a rather simple village. With insight and sympathy Miss Walker tells a story that means more than it says.

—P.

THE LOST STEPS. By Alejo Carpentier. Translated from the Spanish by Harriet de Onis. Knopf. 1956. \$3.75.

With great power and insight the author bares the mind of a sophisticated man who feels compelled to escape his way of life, his wife, and later his mistress, as he progresses geographically and emotionally toward the primitive. Life among the "arty"

in New York, a sojourn in a South American city during a revolution, and a trip into the jungle along the upper reaches of the Orinoco serve to accentuate the traveler's indecision—an indecision which, when overcome, leads to a greater irony. *The Lost Steps* is a novel to be remembered.

—P.

THE FOUNTAIN OVERFLOWS. By Rebecca West. Viking. 1956. \$5.00.

Some fifty years after the childhood experiences she is recounting, these reminiscences of Rose Aubrey revolve about her heroic mother and her adored but improvident father, a keen, increasingly melancholy journalist, ready to lay down his life for a civic cause in the shape, say, of judicial reform, but also ready, without scruple, to sacrifice his family and to waste their meager substance in his inveterate gambling on the market. That he finally deserts his wife and children is both their greatest grief and their only salvation, since they cannot otherwise forestall pauperism. Affectionately nostalgic, wise, and charmingly picturesque, this is an altogether delightful book.

—C.

THE CITY OF THE LIVING. By Wallace Stegner. Houghton Mifflin. 1956. \$3.00.

Once years ago Sinclair Lewis publicly bade Wallace Stegner escape the Harvard English faculty and assume the mantle his early fiction had earned for him. Stegner crossed the continent and now teaches creative writing at Stanford, a fact he may be too conscious of in the stories here collected—flawless examples of the art of the short story but lacking the old Stegner magic of, for example, "On a Darkling Plain." All eight stories are good, very good, but they somehow smack of craftsmanship. Perhaps the academic gown leaves no room for the mantle that Sinclair Lewis was thinking of.

—William Randel

STORIES. By Jean Stafford, John Cheever, Daniel Fuchs, and William Maxwell. Farrar, Straus & Cudahy. 1956. \$3.95.

In this volume four writers have assembled what they consider the best of their recent work. Largely of the episodic type,

the stories are well handled. A few of them are even outstanding, particularly the work of Jean Stafford, whose selections, characterized by a Balzacian precision of detail, could hold their own in any anthology. Readers will probably want to see more of William Maxwell's writing, which shows insight and a keen understanding of human frailty. The selections of John Cheever and Daniel Fuchs, while well written, possess a disturbing surrealistic quality which is likely to leave a bad taste.

—Elizabeth B. Hunt

THE BEST AMERICAN SHORT STORIES OF 1956. Edited by Martha Foley. Houghton Mifflin. 1956. \$4.00.

This distinguished annual is the forty-first of a series begun in 1915 under the editorship of Edward J. O'Brien. An addendum to the collection is a "Yearbook of the American Short Story," presenting an honor roll of American and foreign authors, a list of distinctive volumes of short stories published in America in 1955, and a list of distinctive short stories in American magazines for 1955. A catholic interest and discriminating taste have guided Miss Foley's selection. Anyone questioning the status of the short story in 1956 will be reassured by the variety, the honesty, and the skillful technique exhibited here.

—P.

THE WHOLE VOYALD. By William Saroyan. Atlantic-Little, Brown. 1956. \$3.75.

This volume contains twenty-one short pieces, some fact, some fiction, most a combination of the two. "*Voyald* is a way of saying 'void,' 'voyage' and 'world' at the same time." The father in the title narrative explains to his little son that every story is about "the whole human family . . . old or young, happy or sad, here or there, good or bad, wise or foolish, lucky or unlucky, or all of it mixed together." Applying this philosophy to the California-Armenian life which is his special province (in his thirty-odd other books: novels, short stories, memoirs, plays), Saroyan is as usual sometimes winsome, sometimes humorous, sometimes pathetic.

—Claude R. Flory

CHAPMAN'S HOMER. Vol. I, THE ILIAD. Vol. II, THE ODYSSEY. Edited by Allardyce Nicoll. Bollingen Series. Pantheon Books. 1956. \$10.00.

The Renaissance poet's tremendous achievement, which inspired Keats's sonnet on deep-browed Homer, is here presented in its entirety, in two admirably edited volumes, including not only the two epics generally attributed to Homer but also the "lesser Homeric." The editor, a noted English scholar, has provided introductions, textual notes, a glossary, and a commentary designed for the general reader. Although Chapman has had his adverse critics during the centuries, his resounding verse translation of the *Iliad*, expressing sometimes Homer's and sometimes his own inspiration—"a poet's echo of a poet"—remains a signal literary accomplishment.

—Laura Jepsen

THE POETICAL WORKS OF JOHN KEATS. Edited by H. W. Garrod. Oxford. 1956. \$3.00.

This volume in the Oxford series of "Standard Authors" is a replacement for H. Buxton Forman's volume on Keats of a half-century ago. The new edition has been reset, with the text revised by Mr. Garrod. A part of the introduction to the first edition has been retained. The chronology on Keats's life has been revised, and a critical comment on textual problems added. Also added is the fragment *Girpus*, a little-known drama of Keats's composition, preserved in the Morgan Library Woodhouse Book.

—P.

COLLECTED POEMS. By Edna St. Vincent Millay. Edited by Norma Millay. Harper. 1956. \$6.00.

The sonnets and most of the lyrics of one of America's most eminent of women poets are included in this definitive collection, compiled by the poet's sister. There are sixteen poems that have not appeared in earlier volumes of her poetry. One might

wish for more in the way of introduction and other editorial aids. Only on the jacket is there any biographical reference; between title page and text is only the table of contents. But the collection is a rich and full offering—"excluding only her plays, translations and childhood poems." —P.

THE CRITERION BOOK OF MODERN AMERICAN VERSE. Edited with an introduction by W. H. Auden. Criterion. 1956. \$6.00.

Eighty-one American poets are represented, many by a single poem. The arrangement is chronological by date of author's birth, from Edwin Arlington Robinson in 1869 to Anthony Hecht in 1922. The poems are not dated, but are in roughly chronological order—from the late nineteenth century to the present. Mr. Auden has avoided many of the most-often-anthologized poems; yet his selections are representative of the high quality of American verse. Supporting the thesis that American poets from Bryant on exhibit a distinctive, not-British quality in their work, the introduction presents American poetry as an indigenous growth.

—P.

ONE HUNDRED POEMS FROM THE CHINESE. By Kenneth Rexroth. New Directions. 1956. \$3.50.

Tu Fu, of the period of T'ang, is the distinguished Chinese poet whose works are the most impressive of those in the present collection. The thirty-five poems of his rendered by Mr. Rexroth reveal a true lyric beauty—simple, chaste, emotionally rich, evocative. Each is rendered here as an admirable English poem. The other selections represent the Sung period, which produced some of China's greatest poets, notably Su Tung P'o and the poetess Li Ch'ing Chao. In these poems the particular is made representative; nature and man are revealed by specifics; universal experience is given actual dress.

—P.

Nonfiction

THE HEART OF JAZZ. By William L. Grossman and Jack W. Farrell. New York University Press. 1956. \$6.50.

Lovers of New Orleans traditional jazz will consider this book a "must" for their libraries, and others interested in the broad