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## Books

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# Books

**THE COLLECTED WRITINGS OF WALT WHITMAN: THE CORRESPONDENCE OF WALT WHITMAN, 1842—1875, 2 vols., ed. by Edwin Haviland Miller. New York: New York University Press, 1961. Vol. I, 394 pp., Vol. II, 387 pp. \$10.00 each.**

Many of the major American writers of the nineteenth century cultivated a mythical public image. Hawthorne, Poe, Twain all encouraged (or at least did nothing to discourage) a picture of themselves that was more fancy than fact; but Walt Whitman was probably the most difficult of the lot. Scholarship has managed to dispel the Hawthorne who sounded like a Count Dracula floating around Salem only by the light of a full moon, the Poe maniacally addicted to drugs for literary inspiration, and the Twain who had no concern for structure. But Whitman has never been completely untangled from the "I" of *Leaves of Grass*. Readers have always reacted violently to Walt. They have labeled him a braggart, a mystic, an insufferable egotist, a blatant homosexual, a "kosmos," but until the publication of these two massive volumes of his letters (which constitute only half of the projected collection) not many have considered him a bore. Now, however, there can be no doubt; the Walt Whitman who lived and breathed (whatever the characteristics of "I") was insufferably dull.

His letters are grammatical monstrosities. They show—except for a few written during the Civil War, when Whitman was a nurse—a disturbing lack of imagination and personality. The poet repeated entire paragraphs in different letters written at about the same time. He developed a formula for ending letters, in which the last paragraph began, "I am sitting in the office" and then described, monotonously, the weather and the scenery he saw out his window. After his paralytic stroke in 1873, practically every letter contained a Pollyannaish statement that he might get well or might not, but was prepared for anything. Many of these letters (forty per cent, according to Professor Miller's count) have been in print before, scattered over more than fifty years; the rest are published here for the first time. And once they get gathered together in chronological order, they are hopelessly banal and lusterless.

- Professor Miller recognizes the insipid character of Whitman as letter writer. "I never think about literary perfection in letters . . . it is the *man* & the *feeling*," Miller quotes Whitman as saying. And the editor points out,

It would be absurd (and dishonest) to claim that the publication of Whitman's letters will suddenly unveil the truth which has escaped critics, biographers, and fanatics. Perhaps an editor . . . may be forgiven if he makes an unacademic assertion: the printing of the letters, with copious annotation from the riches of material now available, will bring this baffling figure closer to readers by focusing attention on the poet of immensities engaged in the intimacies of daily experience.

Certainly there can be no more confusion about how closely the Walt Whitman in *Leaves of Grass* parallels the Walt Whitman who wrote that book. Whoever touches both *Leaves of Grass* and the *Correspondence* touches a man; but in the latter case, the reader confronts a mundane, jejune, often bathetic and frequently soporific letter writer, and in the former he meets (to paraphrase Scott Fitzgerald's description of Gatsby) Walt Whitman's Platonic conception of himself.

The correspondence raises, paradoxically, exactly the opposite problem from the one that faced critics and biographers in the past. Instead of attempting to unravel fictional character from historical writer, critics now face the task of trying to explain how the Walt Whitman who wrote these letters could ever have composed his poetry. It is a problem that has to go farther back than the current studies of the textual revisions of specific poems from their first to their final versions for its solution; the question is, how did the man who wrote this kind of letter ever get even to the rough draft stage of his poetry? I do not mean that poets cannot be unpoetic in appearance (the photographs and the voices on recordings of modern poets reading their own verse have prepared us for the worst), but Whitman professed that a letter should reflect "the *man* & the *feeling*." And he insisted in the 1855 Preface that inspiration was everywhere around him. So consider these facts: the man who wrote "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd" wrote nothing in any extant letter about Lincoln's death; the man who wrote "Passage to India" and "To a Locomotive in Winter" was interested in his letters only in train wrecks that might kill or injure some of his "mechanic" friends, especially Peter Doyle; the man who wrote "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" described the same trip in a letter of 1863 thus:

I am quite fond of crossing on the Fulton ferry, or South ferry, between Brooklyn & New York, on the big handsome boats. They run continually day & night. I know most of the pilots, & I go up on the deck & stay as long as I choose. The scene is very curious, & full of variety. The shipping along the wharves looks like a forest of bare trees. Then there are all classes of sailing vessels & steamers, some of them the grandest & most beautiful steamships in the world, going or coming from Europe, or on the California route, all these on the move. As I sit up there in the pilot house, I can see everything, & the distant scenery, & away down toward the sea, & Fort Lafayette, &c. The ferry boat has to pick its way through the crowd. Often they hit each other, then there is a time—

The scene "very curious, & full of variety," with an "&c." to fill in the blank is a far jump from the observer of "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," and one can respect the artistry

of the poetry even more when one realizes how apparently uncongenial to Whitman the man the techniques of Whitman the poet were.

Professor Miller has done a superb job of annotating the *Correspondence*, which is full of obscure references. He has provided plausible dates, compiled lists of letters to Whitman, of letters from Whitman that are no longer extant or available, and of locations and prior publications of letters printed here. His footnotes are exhaustive; they reveal a fascinating portrait of Louisa Whitman, a cantankerous and completely disagreeable woman who should have received switches and ashes every Mother's Day. There are a few typographical errors in an otherwise handsome job of printing: the half-title of the first volume (p. 23) lists the dates included as 1842 to 1847, and it should be 1867. On the preceding page, Emory Holloway is spelled Halloway. And on page 32 of the first volume, when Jeff Whitman explains that carpenter's wages in New Orleans are "fifty dollars a month and found," Professor Miller emends this to read "I found," ignoring a common Americanism. "Wages and found" meant salary plus room and board, as the *Dictionary of American English* defines the term.

It is impossible not to admire Professor Miller's patience in assembling and annotating his material, with almost every page a lotus. The Whitman specialist will find the *Correspondence* a necessity; the general reader will do well to savor it to prove to himself that, just as he claimed he was, Walt Whitman was a very common man.

—Hamlin Hill

Formerly of the English Department of the University of New Mexico, Hamlin Hill is an Assistant Professor of English and American Studies at the University of Wyoming. He is collaborating with Walter Blair of The University of Chicago on the forthcoming facsimile first edition of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.

WEBSTER'S THIRD NEW INTERNATIONAL DICTIONARY UNABRIDGED. Springfield: G. & C. Merriam, 1961. 2,718 pp. \$47.50.

The third edition of the Merriam-Webster (Reg. U. S. Pat. Off.) unabridged is a publishing event indeed. The basic second-edition copyright was granted a generation ago in 1934. Since then of course there have been reprintings, revisions and addenda. As the language grew, so did *Webster's*—creeping middle-age-spread necessitating especially stout tables and stands to hold it—three men and a boy to transport it.

The new *Webster's* has the new look of the younger generation; by comparison with the second edition, it is tall and slim. Pages are a shade wider and a half inch deeper, but there are 612 fewer than in the 1960 reprint, a book a third again thicker. Since our vocabulary has not diminished in a year, how can such a physical reduction be accomplished without a corresponding reduction in coverage?

The answer to that knotty question is "Hmmm!" The fact is there are about a hundred thousand new entries in the third edition. These split in half, with one category of new words admitted and the other, new uses for old. The reduction in physical size has been accomplished in two ways: First, the definitions have been radically shortened by using symbols which will require for the first time in the sesquicentennial history of

this dictionary a thorough study of the front matter. Previously, when one looked up a word, he needed only to know the alphabet and how to read. Now, with the technical ability of a private pilot it will still be possible to extract all the juice from a definition, but without a preflight checkout, one may never get off the ground.

The second way the dictionary has been shortened is by eliminating the encyclopedic material. For instance, in old *Webster's*, if you wanted to find out something about Thebes, you had the gazetteer in the back. There you were given the modern name, the ancient name and the location of the city in Egypt with the same information about the Greek town, some facts about the old and the new town, references to maps included, references to some associated words such as *Thebaid* which turned out to be "Thebian suburbs" in its primary usage and "A Latin epic poem in twelve books by Statius on the subject of the Seven against Thebes" in its secondary usage. There were then full entries for the adjective *Theban* in use, such as *Theban eagle*, *Theban bard*, and *Theban year*.

Looking up *Seven against Thebes*, *the*, one could find the whole Greek legend pithily recounted, together with full names of each of the seven heroes. Here were references also to several classic authors who had retold the tale, and if you wanted to know more about them, there were short but informative accounts in the biographical section. So it went; and so a very interesting rainy afternoon could be spent, providing it ever rained and providing you were interested in Thebes. By contrast, the new dictionary brusquely defines *Theban* in its clipped and cryptic style, once for the town, and once for the inhabitants, and that's all. You've had it. Next subject?

Gone are the thumb-indexes for ABBR (necessary abbreviations are given in text); SIGNS; GAZ; BIOG; and of course NEW WORDS. These last are assumed to be covered in the text. Instead there is one called CONT which is table of contents—unnecessary in both editions as it is in the very front of the book, but the notch is probably there for symmetry to fill out two columns of notches. The old book had four columns and the outer ones straggled a little.

Of plates and illustrations, eight pages of "Flags, Seals, Coats of Arms, etc." have been condensed to one. There are no longer four pages of photographs of the editors of the dictionary (but Noah Webster, 1758-1843—still holds the frontis), nor four pages of photographs of airplanes. Pictures of architecture, American and historical, have been deleted. A plate of "State Birds" replaces "Common American." There are no "Noted Examples of Bridges," "Cathedrals and Other Religious Edifices," no "Coins of the World," "Orchids," "Emblems of Fraternal and Service Organizations," "Medals and Orders of Honor and Merit," "Types of Naval Vessels," "Orders of Knighthood and of Merit," nor are "Trees" illustrated. What great loss to knowledge the omission may represent can only be surmised. In its stead, they have "Cats," "Dogs" (all twelve known breeds so that now you can tell a cocker from a boxer), "Monkeys," "Shells," "Fishes," and "Tropical Fishes" (aquarium-style with popular or pet names). What great gift to science this may be can only be conjectured.

The first typical page in the dictionary is probably page 2. Using that as a sample, we find in an old (1947) edition this page beginning with *Abacus* and ending with

*Abat-vent*; in the new, beginning with *abalone* and ending with *abdomina*. There are 92 words to the 3-column page of the new as compared with only 68 in the old. In the first six pages, the new dictionary omits three of six illustrations of the old, namely the *aardwolf* (a "hyena-like quadruped of South and East Africa"), one style of *abacus* (the one with the sliding counters, not the uppermost division of a capital) and the Roman cloak called *abolla*. The type size and style are nearly the same in both dictionaries; the increase in entries apparently is accommodated through condensation.

There are two new editorial principles incorporated in this dictionary. One is the inclusion of any word that is frequently used, without regard for its respectability. Hence both "ain't" and "hain't" find their way into *Webster's* for the first time. "Finalize" and "Taxwise" are admitted in the same way that "colonize" and "clockwise" were long ago. Four-letter Anglo-Saxon vulgarisms have finally made the grade five centuries after Chaucer with the notation "usu. considered vulgar." The new dictionary cannot double for either *Godey's Ladies' Book* or the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. If it is no convenient storehouse for miscellaneous information it is even less an arbiter of good taste. On the other hand, slang that did not catch on has been dropped, and the editors claim that a lesser percentage of new slang has been admitted. Hence "ruptured duck" of post-World War II and second edition addenda is now as extinct as the dodo, which word, by the way, still thrives in the dictionary with two new slang usages: "flight cadet who has not soloed" and an "illegally weighted bowling ball."

More serious is the omission of rare and obsolete words, definitions of which are useful to students of period literature. We are sorry to see *cuneator*, a minter of coins, and Voltaire's charming *Cunegonde* go in favor of *cow college*, *coffin nail*, *garter belt*, and *potty seat*. But there is still the *Oxford* in libraries, and with words entering the language at the rate of a hundred thousand in a generation, serious students will have to go to the *Oxford* for the definition and history of archaisms.

The other innovation, if it can be called that, is a more generous use of quotations of words in modern context. To this extent, *Webster's* imitates the *Oxford's* use of historical quotations. The debt is admitted for the first time now that that lexicographical monument is out of print and not likely to be reprinted. Formerly the only recognition of the competition on the part of the G. & C. Merriam Company, the publishers, was a warning to the reader to beware of imitations. If by some odd quirk one desires to know how Bob Hope uses an occasional word, some of these pearls are on display with credits. Eisenhower, too, is quoted in preference to Dryden or Tennyson.

Figurative uses are out, such as "*Sea urchin* n. A boy sailor. *Jocose*. Irving." Etymologies are still included: "*G.I.* adj. [fr. unofficial abbr. (used by U. S. Army Quartermaster clerks in listing such articles as garbage cans) for *galvanized iron*, but taken to be abbr. for *government issue* or *general issue*]."

The dictionary pretends only to cover the language in use and has but a slight stiff bow for its history. In another generation or less, by the time of publication of a fourth edition certainly, not only will the encyclopedic material be dropped, but, we can imagine, much of the technical vocabulary as well. The trend in dictionaries is toward specializa-

tion and this is inevitable. We have more classical, mechanical, electronic and biological dictionaries and glossaries in print now, for example, than we did when the second edition came out, and we may look for more and bigger ones. Right now, you can find Carbon 14 in the new *Webster's*.  
—Richard C. Angell

EVERYONE KNOWS that the function of a dictionary is to record current usage and to set certain nebulous standards for "good usage" as practiced by the "best" of the current crop of writers and speakers—everyone knows this theory and pays lip service to it; but most writers and readers and students are more than likely to treat Webster's as something holy and wholly unquestionable. At least they treated the old Webster in this way; but I have my doubts about the new one.

The volume is slimmer, thinner-paged, wider-margined, easier to handle, and the editors may well be proud of the face lifting job they have done on it. It probably will wear better than the earlier editions—fewer ripped pages, torn plates, etc.—and probably will cause fewer sprained wrists and aching backs from trying to carry it. The pages are wider and contain more matter, and gone are the footnotes and guides to pronunciation. Gone also are the gazetteer, the lists of abbreviations, the biographical material, and some of the other features which used to be more useful in many instances than the dictionary itself. This new incarnation of the book includes more useful and fewer useless words than the earlier one; and it has finally admitted words that everyone has known since Middle English emerged from Anglo-Saxon but which never made the dictionary. I find, checking a few random entries, that the vocabulary seems somewhat more realistic, and there are fewer esoteric definitions than used to plague us. I find that in using the new edition I rarely am forced to wander through mazes of definitions of obscure definitions of obscurer terms used to define obscure definitions, *ad nauseam*—a parlor pastime which used to force me to spend a half hour trying to locate the precise meaning of a word I had always taken more or less for granted. In this respect at least the new dictionary is a time saver.

However, what is gained by greater simplicity and more realism in the definitions is lost elsewhere. Use of this dictionary necessitates a thorough study of the 56 pages of prefatory matter; and a smattering of knowledge of English grammar and phonetics would help. The pronunciation is indicated by a system of hieroglyphics that is a fascinating study in itself.

Any work of this magnitude is certain to contain a few flaws, and no one can please everybody. I look with a certain sentimentality toward the old dictionary, after having spent some twenty-five years with it, and I believe that the new one has certain advantages and other disadvantages. The flaws will become more apparent as the book is used. It is too early yet to be sure how much current unfavorable reactions are due to shock and how much they are due to studied criticism. I miss a great deal of the useful material which the old dictionary included, but I rejoice in the clarification of much of its obscurantism—the occupational hazard of lexicographers—and the greater clarity of

definition. However, I'm not going to throw away the old second edition until maybe after the fourth one appears.

—J. Robert Feynn

To writers and editors, the "Big Dictionary" is a constant companion, a bulwark of defense, a non-electronic brain, a Pierian spring (Q V in Ed. 2) of entertainment, conversation, frustration and controversy. When the Third Edition arrived at the University of New Mexico Press to take its place as the new arbiter of words, two editors, Richard C. Angell and J. Robert Feynn, were asked to review it for the *Quarterly*. The consensus: to use the new, but not "to lay the old aside."—R. D.



From the collection of Edward Larocque Tinker  
Courtesy of Kim Taylor, designer of  
*Corridos and Calaveras*, University of Texas Press

**CORRIDOS & CALAVERAS**, by Edward Larocque Tinker. Austin: Humanities and Research Center, The University of Texas, distributed by the University of Texas Press, 1961. 60 pp. Illus. \$5.00.

*Corridos* are the topical ballads of Mexico sung by *cancioneros*, Mexican counterpart of the medieval troubadours, usually to guitar accompaniment in *pulquerías*, *cantinas*, around the campfire, at fiestas, or wherever people gather. *Calaveras* are a subspecies associated with the peculiarly Mexican celebration of All Saints Day, dedicated with macabre humor to the dead, featuring skulls, skeletons, hearses, and coffins in toys, decorations, and confections, much as black cats and witches are the Halloween motif north



of the border. The *calaveras* frequently take the form of slyly satiric to broadly scurrilous epitaphs of the living.

Edward Larocque Tinker is author of this monograph and collector of the amusing and quaintly grotesque illustrated broadsides or handbills of the verses, samples here represented from the collection now in the Hall of Horsemen of the Americas at the University of Texas. He heard his first *corridos* extemporized around the campfires of Pancho Villa's guerrillas, his brothers-in-arms, when as a young soldier of fortune, he cast his lot with the Mexican hero-*bandido* before the United States had taken an official stand in favor of Obregón.

The *corridos* are not invariably lively and amusing as they run the gamut of folk experience and aspirations.

They are loosely classified according to subject. Those that point morals or tell of saints and miracles are known as *ejemplos*; those used for dancing are *sones*; while love songs, burlesques and satires are called *coplas* or *versos*. *Relaciones* are more imaginative and are of fantastic happenings, put fables into the mouths of animals, or list in great detail the beauties of towns or regions. They laud popular heroes, describe picaresque adventures, or even rise to heights of allegory. The *tragedias*, as their name implies, describe public catastrophes or individual misfortunes. They are sung in a minor key with slow, dirge-like solemnity, in contrast with the usual *corrido* that has a gay, animated melody.

Tinker traces the history of the genre, giving thumbnail biographies of some of the most noted composers, publishers, and illustrators. There are three theories about the significance and derivation of the name, one school holding that the songs were called *corridos* because they scandalously *ran* through the city; another because of the easy flow or *running* of the verse; the third, because the *cancioneros* sometimes had to run for their lives. *Corridos* are of great historical interest and social significance as outspoken criticism of corrupt officialdom, always on the side of the people. Many concerned with their production, from Maximilian's empire down, have served time in horrible *calabozos* as a result. Diego Rivera acknowledged his debt to one *corrido* broadside engraver, José Guadalupe Posada, calling him "the interpreter of the sorrows, the happiness, and the agonized aspirations of the Mexican people." Judging by the samples of Posada's work here, the prolific illustrator of more than fifteen thousand *corridos* was more an inspiring example than a teacher of technique for the revolutionary artists.

Eight single- and two double-sided *corrido* broadsides and two double-sided *calaveras* are offered on unquestionably much better tinted paper than the butcher-paper originals which sold for *centavos* in the *mercados* and on street corners in Mexican towns. Rather than work of Rivera, they are reminiscent of the old Nast cartoons of a comparable period in this country, but with overtones of coffee houses, Gin Lane, Beer Alley, and St. Paul's Churchyard of a century and more earlier when this same broadside method was the way of spreading the word in London with the same interesting, sometimes disastrous results. Something of the background of each *corrido* is given in an accompanying paragraph while complete translations are appended. It is a thin but large-size, handsome book.

—Richard C. Angell

THE DETECTIONS OF DR. SAM: JOHNSON, by Lillian de la Torre. New York: Doubleday, Crime Club, 1960. 190 pp. \$2.95.

This is the second book by Miss de la Torre (in real life, Mrs. George McCue, of Colorado Springs) in which Samuel Johnson is promoted to the ranks of fictional detectives. It may be a little odd at first to think of the great lexicographer as one with Hercule Poirot, Lord Peter Wimsey, and Perry Mason. But it is a logical development: Miss de la Torre's Johnson is hardly more fictional than the Johnson of, say, Lord Macaulay, D. B. Wyndham Lewis, or Hesketh Pearson, to mention only some of those who have rung the changes on Johnson as a great "character" *et praeterea nihil*. Miss de la Torre at least admits that her Johnson is fictional. Only one thing, it seems to me, is lacking in Miss de la Torre's picture of Dr. Sam: Johnson, Detector—a comely female secretary. Could not Mrs. Thrale or Hannah More be called in to play the part of Della Street?

As one who, in his fashion, cares who killed Roger Ackroyd, I feel that these stories show something of a falling off in criminological interest from Miss de la Torre's earlier collection. Perhaps Johnson's opportunities for detection are now pretty well exhausted, and the possibilities of other literary periods should be explored. How about having John Milton solve the mystery of who stole the Crown Jewels from the Tower in 1671 (his blindness will add to the piquancy of the situation)? Or William Wordsworth, assisted by Annette Vallon (fetchingly disguised as a *sansculotte*), rescue Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette from the guillotine? Or Mr. T. S. Eliot (known to his admirers at the Yard as "Old Possum") in a police car, siren wail-

ing, speeding across the Scottish moors in desperate pursuit of the thieves of the Coronation stone?

—D. J. Greene

Dr. Donald Greene, Associate Professor of English at the University of New Mexico, is a leading authority on Dr. Samuel Johnson. His book on Johnson's politics was published by Yale. He is the editor of the latest edition of the Johnson bibliography. His articles on the eighteenth century lexicographer appear frequently in scholarly journals here and abroad.

KING OF THE MOUNTAIN MEN, by Gene Caesar. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1961. 317 pp. \$4.95.

The period of the mountain man lasted from about 1820 to 1840, the most heroic man chapter in American history. Jim Bridger was the hero. Now we have no heroes. We try to make up heroes and get mechanized men. Our heroes are competing with chimpanzees. We strap a man in a capsule and fire him into space, but we make certain that no harm will come to him and that he is intellectually capable of the adventure by first going up with a monkey. Man has come full circle in his evolution and is again competing with an old relative. In our unheroic times we vie with a tin warhead and the corporation. We think in slogans and talk in bombs.

The stories of Jim Bridger will never occur again because the raw North America is all over—the country made the men. The wild furious savagery of the dangerous land, the high mountains filled with red death waiting to fall on the small bands of trappers. The high mountains made big men.

But Jim Bridger, even way back there, couldn't escape the corporations, the vested interest small men have in money and religion. John Jacob Astor was forming the

great American Fur Company and one of his early interests in life was to "eliminate at any cost Jim Bridger." And they did. The Mormons sent out a military expedition to destroy by force "this heathen in our midst." And they did. But Jim survived John Jacob Astor's religious zeal for "Free Enterprise" and the Mormon's financial interest in his trading post, to remain a hero.

Those days are over. We can't go home again. The mountains are finished. The mountain man is dead. We don't produce them any more because the land is benign and calls for tame men pushing IBM machines, and so Jim Bridger did not win in his battle with John Jacob Astor. The mountains are still there but they are organized.

This book—any honest, well done book like this book on Jim Bridger—could serve as a Marxist manifesto because it's about the fall, the end in America of personal individual genius. But the speech would miss the point because it wasn't the vested interests that finished Jim Bridger, or the Indians. It was people—thousands, then millions of us jamming for space, filling the West, piling up into the mountains. We demand organization against chaos. We demand the life of the hero so that we may breed. Jim Bridger, the hero, was not killed—he was smothered.

Read *King of the Mountain Men*. It will tell you exactly the heroic way, the wonderful way, it all was before the tract houses came.

—William Eastlake

William Eastlake, writer-rancher of Cuba, New Mexico, has been anthologized in several annual best American short story collections. He is the author of the novels *Go in Beauty* and *The Bronx People*. His story "Bird on the Mesa" in the Octo-

ber *Harpers* is an episode from a forthcoming novel, *Portrait of an Artist with 26 Horses*.

LAWRENCE CLARK POWELL, well known author of many books and essays on the Southwest, has been named Dean of the School of Library Service of the University of California in Los Angeles. Dean Powell is conducting a course there in Libraries of the Southwest which will embrace the history, geography, natural history, ecology, literature and lore of this region as well as all the many kinds of libraries represented here: public, county, state, museum, academic, school, private, commercial, industrial and special.

AN ANTHOLOGY OF SPANISH POETRY FROM GARCILASO TO GARCIA LORCA IN ENGLISH TRANSLATION WITH SPANISH ORIGINALS, ed. by Angela Flores. Garden City: Doubleday Anchor original, 1961. 510 pp. \$1.45.

On the Rua Amador Bueno in Santos is, or was up until a few years ago, a variety store known as the *Casa Tem Tudo* "the business establishment that has everything." Unfortunately in an effort to communicate so precisely and explicitly in another tongue, we lose some of the poetry, if one dares call it that, of *casa tem tudo*. There must be a moral in it.

It is interesting to compare this new paperback anthology with the English Penguin, introduced, edited, translated by J. M. Cohen, 1956. It does not include an index of first lines or nearly as many poets. The Penguin included the work of over a hundred poets not counting a generous number of *anónimos*, while the new book covers more thoroughly seventeen great ones from pre *siglo de oro* Garcilaso to the

late García Lorca, who wrote of modern Iberia, Brooklyn, Manhattan, and the Bronx as seen darkly through the glass of his troubled soul. Only three of the seventeen, Miguel de Guevara, Manuel González Prada, and Gabriela Mistral, are omitted in the Penguin, however, which provides half the number of poems of the others in the new book, and includes more verses of some important poets such as Góngora and Lope de Vega.

Another advantage the English book has over the new one is that the translations are on the same page. These are, to be sure, in agate-type footnotes, requiring a reading glass or good bifocals for those with less than 20-20 vision, and the prose translations by the editor are fairly literal, which may or may not be a good thing. The old Loeb Classics style of facing-page translations is of course superior as the foreign language text can be instantly compared, line-for-line, with the English. But this takes paper and paper costs money. Verse translations in the new book are in the back, separately indexed, necessitating for comparison, page flipping at the very least.

Perhaps too obvious to require comment is the fact that not all these verse translations are equally happy in conveying the aura and effect of the originals. One competent reader commented on the Góngora, for example, that the translations did not convey the condensed simultaneity of outrageous image and idea of the Spanish. One of these Góngora translations, of "¡Oh claro honor del líquido elemento," is Cohen's, who did the Penguin. It is not as close to the original in anything but stanzaic form as his prose translation which even so was relatively free. The problem is inherent in the material. One must have

a lyric gift and luck as well as a superior grasp of both languages to translate verse faithfully. Even then, like some wildflowers, some words will not stand transplanting.

Lysander Kemp, one of a dozen translators of this edition, probably has the gift, and, having grown tired of cold winds, gray skies, and correcting Freshman themes, was last heard from employing it, blowing a saxophone with a *mariachi* near Lake Chapala. So he has another requisite of the translator: luck. Of few of the others does this verse by Prada apply:

*Mal traductor de poeta  
Hace papel de lacayo  
Grotescamente vestido  
Con los arreos del amo*

"A poet's bad translator plays a lackey's part, grotesquely garbed in his master's finery." This is a lackey's translation, and not the neat but possibly copyright verse of the new anthology.

In spite of inevitable shortcomings, either one of these books is a real buy.

—Richard C. Angell

#### PAMPHLETS & PAPERBACKS ON AMERICAN WRITERS

There are several companies now specializing in series of inexpensive monographs on American writers that should prove a boon to students from high school through graduate school in the ever more popular American studies programs.

*Barnes and Noble American Authors and Critics Series.*

Most ambitious and thorough of the

new booklets is the Barnes and Noble series written and edited by acknowledged experts, illustrated, annotated, indexed and supplied with intelligently categorized bibliographies for those wishing a quick reference to the canon as well as those who wish to delve a little deeper. These books run close to 150 pages and retail for \$1.25 each. Titles to date are: Wolfe, Hawthorne, Twain, and Whittier with Henry Adams, Stephen Crane, Hart Crane, Whitman, Brooks, Hemingway, Fitzgerald, and Howells in preparation.

*University of Minnesota Pamphlets on American Writers*

A little less than fifty pages in length are these Minnesota pamphlets retailing at 65 cents. They too include excellent bibliographies but no index, or illustrations, and less biographical material. Titles include Hemingway, Frost, Faulkner, James, Twain, Wolfe, Eliot, Whitman, Stein, Stevens, Wharton, Melville, Fitzgerald, Recent American Drama, and The American Short Story.

*American Writers—American Century Series*

Hill & Wang, Inc., New York, have announced that they are publishing reprints of the American Writers Series in their American Century Series. These anthologies, similar in length and style to Viking's "Portable" series run approximately 600 pages and contain in addition to the author's original material in full-length works, 100 to 150 pages of critical introductory essays, updated bibliographies, chronological tables, and notes. So far, they have published Howells and Paine at \$1.95 and Whitman at \$1.75.

WINFIELD TOWNLEY SCOTT READS FROM HIS OWN POEMS, Yale Series of Recorded Poets, produced by the Yale University Department of English and the Audio Visual Center. New Haven: Carillon Records, 1961.

There is no question about it, poetry should be read aloud. No matter how well trained the musicologist, reading the score of the opera at home is not like being swept along with the music, listening to a skillful performance from a good seat in the opera house. In his easy chair, the reader may be able to imagine the effect, humming to his inner ear, but that is not the thing itself. So it is with verse that is just as surely written to be heard; what more authentic interpreter can there be than the composer-musician playing or conducting his own composition or the poet reading his own poem?

This is what the book says, yet, just as in the case of the musician-composer, the poet is not always his own best interpreter. Yeats as an old man joked about when, as a boy, he pronounced *O'Leary* as *O'Larry*, yet the amusing fact is that till the day he died he pronounced *Leary*, *Larry* and the grave, *grrive*. Indeed his brogue was so thick and his old man's voice so sepulchral that these got in the way of the words, the sense, and the feeling, which especially in his later verse are challenging and significant.

Most of the time, however, there is a singular thrill and a heightened appreciation in listening to the inflection, emphasis, and sometime lingual idiosyncrasies of the creator himself interpreting his verse; the nuances obtained by the listener transcend and actually differ in kind from those evoked merely by cold type for the reader.

This is especially true of the Winfield Townley Scott album under consideration. Next to the magnificent Caedmon recordings of Dylan Thomas, these poems are the best we have ever heard from the standpoint of audio-individuality, even topping the dry, ascerbic, and quiet intoning of St. Thomas Eliot, the intriguing squeak of e.e. cummings, and needing no music backdrop which, by Walton, enhanced Dame Edith Sitwell's "Facade."

Southwesterners must reluctantly give up the illusion, however, that Scott is one of them, like Bynner, say, or La Farge, and all the other good writers who have swallowed the desert and the desert has swallowed up. A large part of Scott's poetry, to be sure, is irrespective of time or place, universal as a geometry theorem. But the intensely personal part (an even larger part) is rooted as deeply as Frost, in New England. One cannot hear this beautiful voice without having the fact underlined. It is worth the price of the record to outlanders to hear Mr. Scott pronounce "mirror." And *mirror* is a keyword, a symbol for this verse; it is a mirror facing backward. Scott is not the minute assessor of the *Now*, nor the poet of prophecy. He is the master not of second-sight but of hind-sight.

New England is the key to Scott. Mark Twain to him is not from Missouri but from Hartford; Whitman, not the purveyor of the spirit of America but the peddler of books from a basket in a discrete location on the Eastern seaboard. This is not to say than Winfield Townley Scott is a regionalist. Like all real artists, his country is within. He belongs no more to New England than he does to the Southwest, but New England to him is a symbol of the national past as well as his personal past, and the

past to him is important—the basis of the present to which he speaks poignantly, the key to the future to which his poems are addressed. "How could you know today is today," he asks in *Memento*, "having forgotten yesterday and tomorrow?"

Fortunately for us and for posterity, waxing the moderns is a continuing trend. This Yale recording of impeccable fidelity is an addition to an extensive series of recorded poets; Harvard has its series, and there are specialized labels as well as those of the big commercial companies which always have their ears to the ground if not their eyes on the stars. (We mean the celestial variety, not Hollywood's for they are not chargeable with neglect there.)

A full, thoughtful hour with Scott is a delightful experience. The two dozen poems have been selected from *Wind the Clock* (1941), *To Marry Strangers* (1945), *Mr. Whittier and Other Poems* (1948), *Shenandoah*, and *Nucleus* (1954), and *Scrimshaw* (1959).

—Richard C. Angell

SOMERSET MAUGHAM: A BIOGRAPHICAL AND CRITICAL STUDY, by Richard A. Cordell. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1961. 274 pp. \$5.95.

"The day broke gray and dull. The clouds hung heavily, and there was a rawness in the air that suggested snow." So begins a novel with a scene that tells how a child, half-asleep, sees his mother die. The man who wrote these words was thirty-eight years old. At the age of eighty, when he tried to read these first pages from *Of Human Bondage* aloud, he was choked with tears. Grief overwhelmed him. Yet this is the man critics have called cold, dry, and unfeeling.

Critically speaking, Somerset Maugham has been his own worst enemy. For sixty-three years of writing—through 20 novels, 100 short stories, 27 plays, and 11 volumes of essays—he has steadily and courteously depreciated himself as artist and philosopher. And critics generally have taken him at his word. Because Maugham has described himself as a “mere entertainer” critics have said he is merely an entertainer; because he has insisted that a novel should “amuse” critics have called him trivial. Because he has been clear-sighted and unhypocritical he has been called cynical and brutal.

It is time to say directly that at his best Somerset Maugham is a genuine artist with a rich philosophical mind. Maugham is that rarity: an admirable artist who is also a philosopher and an admirable philosopher who is also an artist.

There is, of course, philosophy and philosophy. “Philosopher,” said James Thurber: “one who seeks a magnificent explanation for his own insignificance.” Maugham is not of that tribe. But what a splendid roll call too is that list of men throughout the years who have believed in reason and intellect, who have honored common sense and tolerance, who have sought to understand, regret, and forgive, who have opposed bigotry, fanaticism, and cruelty, who have relished wit, clarity, balance, straight thinking, and honesty, who have avoided the self-deception that familiarizes man to live a life of lies. Democritus, Voltaire, Hume, Locke, Montaigne, Bayle, Diderot, Shaw, Bertrand Russell: this list of secular saints is spare, tragically few, and perhaps the world should be grateful that to it can be added the name of Maugham. It is important to

remember that philosophy is not the exclusive preserve of the divines. The work of Maugham, in great episodes like the Persian rug scene in *Of Human Bondage* and in passages almost everywhere in his writings, has encouraged thousands of readers to thought.

Not everything Maugham has written is good. What can one say of the jejune *The Razor's Edge*? or of the trivial *Theatre*? Well, surely one can say this. Despite every banality like *The Razor's Edge*, there is *Of Human Bondage*, *The Gentleman in the Parlour*, *Don Fernando*, *On a Chinese Screen*, *The Summing Up*, the arresting essays on writers and painters, and—their neglect is criminal—the plays.

Maugham the dramatist was the Maugham who in the early 1900's made his name and fortune. Today it is the Maugham least known. To read the novel *Of Human Bondage* is an illumination and emancipation—it is almost to be force-fed, force-grown. This novel flings open the shutters of the mind; through one side, then another and another, one gazes out into the world stretching away everywhere. By the end of the book the reader feels that the shutters have been thrust open on every side, and the strong bracing winds of the world—and its light—flood in. Yet the neglect of Maugham's best plays is due to more than the power of his best novels.

The plays are too direct for a pusillanimous world. *Sheppey*, which might be termed Maugham's colloquial dramatic version of Dostoyevsky's novel *The Idiot*, asks us to practice the Christianity we profess, or shut up. *For Services Rendered* requires us to face the human consequences of war, and will not let us look away. The time for such plays will certainly come.

Professor Cordell knows Maugham well and has written an excellent survey of his life and writings. As if trained by Maugham's own prose style, his book is brisk, interesting, surgical, modest, and wide-ranging. There is no nonsense about it; there is crispness, wryness, and understanding. It returns us to Maugham. Of Maugham himself this last word can be added. As a writer and man he is not only worldly-wise: he is wise.

—Willis D. Jacobs

Dr. Jacobs, whose signature is well known to readers of these columns, is Professor of English at the University of New Mexico.

THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF THE BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES, ed. by Peter Gray. New York: Reinhold, 1961. 1,119 pp. Illus. \$20.00.

This year the Reinhold Publishing Corporation has added another distinguished volume, *The Encyclopedia of the Biological Sciences* to its line of scientific books. This same publishing house has had for some time an *Encyclopedia of Chemistry* and now, with the aid of some eight hundred articles and an almost equal number of authors, has done the same for the biological sciences.

The articles range from the classical biological concepts to those with the most up-to-date information available, and the contributors in all have made every effort to provide comprehensive treatments, although condensed, of their particular assignments. Covering the industrial, agricultural and medical applications of biology, as well as biological theory, the articles vary from about five hundred words to about ten times that figure in length and in each the writer has attempted to tell a complete story, not merely define a term.

The authors, as the editor states, range

in age from their early twenties to some in the nineties with a bulk of middle-aged contributors. All, including many Nobel prize winners, are recognized specialists in their particular subject and were invited to contribute on that basis.

Articles were sent in from nearly every major scientific center and nearly every country on the globe. In a check of the names and sources from the lists of contributors I found foreign specialists running about twenty per cent with the remainder in the United States, although many of these had migrated to this country after establishing reputations in foreign areas.

The standard subdivisions of developmental, ecological, functional, genetic, structural and taxonomic aspects of the biological sciences are included along with the more recent biochemical and biophysical information of molecular biology. Beginning on page 1 with "abiogenesis" and ending on page 1083 with "zoological gardens," the volume includes a wealth of stimulating and informative material which has been written not solely for the biologist who needs a quick comprehensive treatment of a particular subject, but for anyone wishing an authoritative review of almost any phase of the biological sciences. Generic plant and animal names are not given in the index, but in the descriptions of various family, class and phyla groups the more common genera are often included. However, if one is more interested in general topics he will find about a thousand words devoted to the "mating dance" as performed by grouse, scorpions, mayflies and others. "Space biology" and "biological warfare" have been summarized in about four thousand words with "symmetry" receiving about half that amount. Due to the



volume's breadth of coverage almost everyone will find articles of particular interest to him.

Brief biographies of outstanding naturalists and biologists have been interpolated. These accounts go back to Pliny the Elder and even a few scientists before his time but do not include scientists active at the present. The scope of biology is emphasized in listings and descriptions of the international biological societies, museums and journals.

The volume has been very carefully organized and compiled by the editor, Peter Gray, but even an editor can make mistakes. One that appears in the introduction is found in explanation of use of the index. In this paragraph a statement is made for finding a certain term: "The word 'archigonium,' for example, probably occurs in at least a hundred scattered places in this

volume. A reader who comes across it, and who does not know its meaning, may refer to the index where he will find the word ARCHIGONIUM followed by a page reference." I hurriedly looked in the index and found, with relief, the word ARCHEGONIUM; then I checked the context and in each case I found it spelled correctly as *archegonium*. This, of course, may have been the planned method of the editor to get the reader to use the index, but I have an idea Dr. Gray will never again pass the word "archigonium" when reading proof.

In general the encyclopedia is a very well written and illustrated volume, well worth the time, effort and money it took to produce it.

—Howard J. Dittmer

Dr. Dittmer is Professor of Biology and Administrative Assistant to the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences of the University of New Mexico.

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