

he never escapes but instead holds fast to the fact which is the sweetest dream that labor knows. Mr. Freeman says that he has a larger share of the English tradition than any other American of his time; Mr. Untermeyer says that "North of Boston" is one of the most intensely American books ever printed. Miss Lowell says that he has no sense of humor: half the essays say that humor is part of the cell-structure of his work. (Miss Lowell also says that he has no imagination, that his New England is decadent, that he is incapable of subtle undertones of expression or meaning.) To Mr. Munson he is the purest classicist of our time, to Mr. Lewisohn a pure specimen of the naturalistic revolt; Mr. Blankenship calls him a pure realist; Mr. Freeman finds no rebellion in him. Mr. Pound finds his poetry a bit slow, and Mr. Newdick finds it strained to the bursting point with dramatic tension. Mr. Pound says it is not "accomplished"; Mr. Muir decides that it is as deeply, severely, and intricately wrought as one of Plato's dialogues. (But Mr. Munson says that Frost lacks the common sense deliberately aimed at that Socrates achieved, whereas three or four find that he elevates common sense into metaphysical vision.) And so on: he has practically no emotion but he has intense and passionate emotions, there is no color in him save only black and white but he has a magnificent color sense, he is minor but major, he is all on the surface but you have to look for him in the depths. . . . Meanwhile Mr. Frost has remarked that he thinks of poetry as the renewal of words and that a complete poem seems to him one where an emotion has found its thought and the thought has found its words—and has gone about his business. You can get out of that just as much as you can get out of it. Thoreau also spoke in such phrases, and critics have succeeded in identifying the hound, the bay horse, and the turtle dove to which he once alluded. As you might guess, it turns out that the turtle dove is a girl who threw him down.

Mr. Thornton's book omits the two fashions in mathematical analysis which rejected Mr. Frost's poetry some years after its first full fame, but does contain the four essays from the English battle line that so embarrassingly repealed the rejection. Those two fashions were mutually contradictory but yet mystically one, and a glance at them will be instructive.

Mr. Frost's poetry was first awarded critical approval because it was thought to be in revolt against something, at a time when poetry must be in revolt. (To be sure, the best way was to revolt as Imagism, while Amy Lowell was active and Mr. Pound—who has invented many

of the fashions and most of the theories that rationalize them—was still an Imagist.) A period of anarchy followed, when poetry must be so many different things that it could be practically anything and criticism could still accept Mr. Frost, but order was again imposed with a metamorphosis of Mr. Pound and the rise of Mr. Eliot. Poetry now must not be anything like Imagism and must not even revolt, but must be the kind of poetry that Mr. Pound or, more purely and quintessentially, Mr. Eliot wrote. This kind of poetry took a lot of explaining—about a hundred pages of theory to one page of text—but a brief statement of its imperatives was contained in Mr. MacLeish's "A poem should not mean, But be." A poem, that is, must not crudely carry "meaning"; it must communicate by direct experience. To be sure, Mr. MacLeish presently doubled on his theory and has ever since done his damndest to make his own poems mean rather than be; and at the height of the imperative Mr. Eliot supplied footnotes and explanatory treatises on his work which showed that it was at least intended to mean a lot, whereas Mr. Pound has published glosses on his work which prove it so full of meaning that you are lost unless you are

equipped with anthropology, philology, half a dozen other sciences and pedantries, a half-knowledge of half the ancient and modern tongues, Major Douglas's economics, and the theory of Fascism.

Obviously Mr. Frost's poems neither looked nor sounded like Mr. Eliot's and Mr. Pound's. If Mr. Eliot's way was the right way to write poetry, then it followed that Mr. Frost's poetry must be pretty bad or pretty minor, and with that mathematical demonstration his decline among the theorists began. But just when a new crop of critics bottled on Mr. Eliot's theories (which, happily, have had little effect on his poetry) had mastered this mathematical integration of a new phase of symbolism, another imperative suddenly shattered it to bits. Mr. Eliot was discovered to be not only an antique esthete approximately on a level with Richard LeGallienne, Lionel Johnson, Austin Dobson, or the Sweet Singer of Michigan, but also decadent, Catholic, and dangerously fascistic as well. The only right way to write poetry now was to revolt in it against private ownership of the means of production and saturate it with the emotions, experience, and aspirations of the workers of the world, though you

(Continued on page 14)

On Hearing a Bach Fugue

By MERLE G. WALKER

TAKE hence the sound, but leave the counterpoint.

The anatomy of music is more strictly made

More stern than tone. Here is a pattern laid

More intricate than the union of the joint

With sinew, and more accurate than bone

Set in its socket. The separate note

Alone is vague, and each a monotone

Hung in its vacuous nonentity,

Until the bond of law and symmetry

Welds it to music like a world of stars,

And the great sweep of sound

Is fettered and is bound.

Thus Chaos brooded on itself and slept

A timeless sleep within the arm of space,

Till slowly on immensity there crept

The Word, articulate, and there was grace,

And love, that goes precisely, seeking its own,

Seeking a region it may circumscribe,

And faith, that hears behind the monotone

The theme repeated, and the cadence known,

Hearing the word spoken

And the law, unbroken.

All things indefinite find necessity,

The earth, its sun,

Ulysses moves toward his Penelope,

And no day done,

But some bright star beholds its satellite.

The note remembers its fugue, and sleep its night.

And the soul of man discovers a private place:

This is its planet, this its appointed space.

Smooth Brown Secrecy

TALE OF BALI. By Vicki Baum. New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co. 1937. \$2.75.

Reviewed by FRANCES WOODWARD

GIVE a born storyteller a handful of photographs, a few months' residence, and the romantic legacy of a small tin trunk full of crumpled documents, and he will spin for you a yarn about the place and the people. Vicki Baum is a born storyteller, and her particular tin trunk came from a Dutch doctor on the Island of Bali. The result is a long tale about the southern part of the island, its Radjas and its laborers, its cockfights and its lepers, its dancers and its wars. As in "Grand Hotel" she presents to us many individuals all of whom move in a loosely concentric pattern, all of whom eventually touch one another's lives at fundamental moments. There is an "Arabian Nights" quality to the book, and that faint inescapable flavor of spuriousness which inevitably accompanies any



Jacket design, "Tale of Bali."

attempt by a foreigner to convey by idiomatic twist the effect of simple alien language and unspoiled savage faith. The latter is, however, the technical handicap Miss Baum deliberately set herself, and her skill and gusto make her place and its people almost real in spite of it.

Bali is now the literary and sartorial fashion. The magnificent pictures and photographs in Miguel Covarrubias's recently published book about the island

serve to make vivid the people in Vicki Baum's tale. The books should be read concurrently, and "Tale of Bali" does not suffer in the comparison. Vicki Baum has made an attempt to guess what thoughts, what joy or suffering, lie behind the smooth brown secrecy of Balinese faces. Only a Balinese could with authority quarrel with the result; her guess is probably as good as anybody's, and she has made an absorbing story, besides conveying, some-

times with very moving effect, the reality of existences as remote as Martian lives.

See page 22 for biographical note on Vicki Baum.

In Pursuit of Honor

THE THIRD HOUR. By Geoffrey Household. Boston: Little, Brown & Company. 1938. \$2.50.

Reviewed by WILLIAM MAXWELL

THIS is a long and somewhat romantic first novel, with North and South America and Europe for its scene. The title refers to a monastic order conceived by an adventurous Spaniard named Manuel Vargas and founded by him with the help of Toby Manning, an English toy salesman. The others who make up the order—a Chilean laborer, an Austrian countess, a Jew, a Russian cavalry officer, an English clerk—are chosen by Manuel and Toby from among their associates, because in them the quality of honor is instantly recognizable.

According to Toby Manning, the honorable man was killed in the Great War, and now without him the world is growing more and more vulgar, concerned more and more with getting what it wants. The ideals implied in the word honor still exist, of course, and here and there one can find a man who holds them. Manuel and Toby and their associates are

ready to devote themselves to finding these isolated noblemen and, through the Order of the Third Hour, giving them leisure and power. In that way Manuel and Toby hope to preserve the good things of life against their natural enemies—communism, fascism, frantic money-making.

The year 1938 is probably a good one in which to examine the monastic ideal and to see what if anything it has for present-day society. As set forth in Mr. Household's novel, it is far from satisfactory. The same thing must be said for the novel itself. For one thing, Manuel Vargas has an unfortunate resemblance to Anthony Adverse, and Toby Manning, though attractive and pleasant, does nothing to establish his own nobility of mind and heart. The author takes that nobility for granted, and the reader has to do likewise, excusing as best he can Toby's theft of \$500,000 from the government of Mexico in order to establish The Third Hour. As for the other characters, they are heterogeneous without being really important. One does not find it easy to identify oneself with any of them. Nor does one finish the book convinced that any good can come of Mr. Household's abbey.



Kay Vaughan

NAOMI JACOB

Good Light Novelist

FADE OUT. By Naomi Jacob. New York: The Macmillan Co. 1937. \$2.50.

Reviewed by THEODORE PURDY, JR.

IN her excellent "Time Piece" Miss Jacob showed that she knew how to create character and make the reader like it, sometimes in defiance of real-life probabilities. This useful talent appears again in her new story, which is a sufficiently independent sequel, introducing a few of the people we met in the earlier novel. Shrewd but likable Claudia Bower, become something of a matriarch, dominates the book and her young granddaughter Jane Pinto, though the latter is a cinema star and the nominal heroine. Wilful and a bit spoiled, the girl hesitates about marrying the playwright Martin Sharrett, obviously chosen for her by destiny and the author. Instead, she lets her affections stray in the direction of her unreliable, attractive Russian stepfather, Alex Verschoff. In the end it takes Claudia's most efficient work to keep Jane from messing up a promising career.

It is hardly necessary to point out that all this is far from earth-shaking. Miss Jacob attempts nothing beyond the telling of an engaging yarn about some moderately credible and attractive people, and this she accomplishes with the usual technical competence of the British novelist. Certain passages indicate that the author, if she chose, might animate these clever creations of hers, and lend real significance to the plot. But in any case here is a well made story, neither too saccharine nor over-inclined to emotional outpourings, full of sure-fire tricks, but presenting them always in a new guise, acceptably written and with much genuine humor. Some Thomas Marshall of literature has said that what we need is a good light romantic novelist: in Naomi Jacob it is quite possible that we have found her.

See page 22 for biographical note on Naomi Jacob.