

Medieval Influences on the Elizabethans

INDUCTION TO TRAGEDY. By Howard Baker. University, La.: Louisiana State University Press. 1939. \$2.75.

Reviewed by JOHN WILCOX

THE dissertation of John W. Cunliffe, for years the classic statement of the influence of Seneca on the form and substance of Elizabethan tragedy, has been meeting rough treatment in recent years. Here it is finally liquidated. This turn is the result of a series of studies on medieval philosophizing about the Wheel of Fortune. By tossing the classic influence out of Elizabethan tragedy, Mr. Baker has provided a purge similar to the earlier rejection of Molière's influence on Restoration comedy. In the light of present-day scholarship, great English drama is more completely indigenous than any one believed.

This conclusion has been approached slowly, for since A. C. Bradley first related Shakespearean tragedy to medieval speculation about human destiny, scholars have been constantly piling up evidence that English thought in the sixteenth century was, to a greater extent than previously held, an extension and modification of ideas current through the middle ages. Humanistic influences did not replace the significant medieval heritage in the concept of tragedy, as the studies of Lily B. Campbell, Theodore Spencer, and Willard Farnham have made clear. The scholarly exposition by Mr. Farnham of the descent of Elizabethan tragedy from the philosophy of Boccaccio's narrations about the fall of princes had not refuted Dr. Cunliffe's demonstration that Senecan tragedy was the formative influence. But Mr. Baker now offers cogent evidence that the real influence on "Gorboduc," on "The Spanish Tragedy," and on "Titus Andronicus" was not Senecan, but medieval. His study shows that Cunliffe's parallels are fortuitous resemblances, not proof of a causal relation. Mr. Baker, in short, has cleared away the weeds that have been crowding Mr. Farnham's new growth.

With a happy combination of scholarly accuracy and a pointed style, Mr. Baker eliminates familiar dicta one by one. He makes us see that the five-act formula of "Gorboduc" entered tragedy by way of the school comedies like "Roister Doister," and that the chorus was more the medieval interpreter than the classic adjunct to action. He shows us that medieval ideas determined the Elizabethan attitude toward decorum and the unities, not Senecan tradition; that messengers and ghosts entered from gothic narrative; and that rant, sensationalism, and sententious precepts came direct from the Middle Ages. He leaves Senecan imitation

with "Gismond of Salerne" and "The Misfortunes of Arthur" as the pathetic survivors of a once flourishing brood. Elizabethan tragedy did not deal with Aristotelian purges of fear and pity after all. It stemmed from the pervasive sense of conflict between the love of life and a contempt for the world.

Mr. Wilcox is Professor of English at Wayne University and author of "The Relation of Molière to Restoration Comedy."

Business as Usual

IN SEARCH OF PEACE. By The Rt. Hon. Neville Chamberlain, M. P. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1939. 309 pp. \$3.50.

Reviewed by JAMES FREDERICK GREEN

UNTIL the day when Mr. Chamberlain can retire to Birmingham and write his memoirs, this collection of some thirty speeches must stand as his personal explanation of British foreign policy before and after the Munich Agreement. The Prime Minister provides—usually in the House of Commons—a running commentary on Herr Hitler's progress across Central Europe, and on Britain's progress from apathy to resentment. Those who have followed contemporary diplomacy with any care will find little new material here, for Mr. Chamberlain's addresses frequently reveal inadequate information, official bias, or studied ambiguity. The editor, Mr. Arthur Bryant, distorts the picture still further with introductory notes that praise but do not explain.

The self-portrait offered in these addresses confirms both the best and worst that has been written about the Prime Minister. Most American publicists have described him as a Tory who is sacrificing the Empire for the immediate interests of his class. It is at least clear that Mr. Chamberlain lacks the brilliant sarcasm and imperialist fervor of Winston Churchill, and the youthful idealism and graceful style of Anthony Eden. The Prime Minister has, however, a simplicity, dignity, political skill, and quiet humor that lend weight to his informal and often pedestrian sentences.

Mr. Chamberlain appears in these pages as a business man, sincerely devoted to peace but uncertain as to methods for its attainment. Limited in imagination and unfamiliar with European diplomacy, he reveals an almost pathetic faith in the traditional techniques of the industrial world. Here we have the Birmingham manufacturer trying to carry on business as usual with the Berlin revolutionist. The result for Mr. Chamberlain is disillusionment and dismay—a sense of personal humiliation. Rarely, if ever, in British history has a Prime Minister so completely reversed all his policies while remaining in office, or approached a general election with so little challenge from the opposition.

Goddess of Childbirth

THE PRIESTS OF LUCINA. By Palmer Findley, M.D. Boston: Little, Brown & Co. 1939. 421 pp., with index. \$5.

Reviewed by MABEL S. ULRICH

THE history of medical science, art, and lore is actually in effect the history of civilization. Every known tribe and nation has struggled to relieve suffering and to postpone death, and the methods used at any particular time or in any locality are an invaluable index of its general culture at that time and in that locality. It is moreover a story crowded with drama, and one that is attracting an increasing number of medical men. Among these is the distinguished gynecologist and obstetrician, Dr. Findley.

Dr. Findley's present book differs from others of its kind in that he tells his story largely through the lives and personalities of his prophets, and by tracking down all available records, tries to give them a sharper perspective than most of them have had heretofore, and in that his heroes are mainly those of his own specialty. His patron saint—or perhaps his muse—is the goddess of childbirth, Juno Lucina, but although she evidently has tried to keep him tied to her apron strings, he manages to escape from her repeatedly to wander over the entire field of medical history, thereby adding much to our interest.

The book's subject matter is divided into two sections; in the first, after briefly reviewing the medical practices of primitive man and those of the ancient Oriental civilizations, we come to Hippocrates and the birth of modern medicine, after which the tale unfolds by means of chronologically presented biographical sketches. Some of these will be familiar to the reader of recent "popular" medicine, but the great majority he can hardly have met before. The second section consists of five chapters that deal with special phases of obstetrics, such as the introduction of forceps by the extraordinary Chamberlains, puerperal fever, and the like. One of its most interesting chapters is that devoted to the midwives who had complete control of the field during all the centuries in which obstetrics was the ignored stepchild of medicine. (It was only when kings began to worry about their mistresses' deliveries that men began to edge in). Some of these midwives were of noble birth, and many were women of great learning and skill. One would like to know more of their lives.

In spite of its interest, this book can hardly be recommended to the general reader, since it presupposes more technical knowledge than he is likely to possess. To students, the medical profession, nurses, and others with biological background, it should prove interesting and highly stimulating.

Virginibus Puerisque

The Saturday Review's Guide to the Season's Books for Children

Title and author	Age & Sex	What It's About	Our Opinion
HERBERT THE LION <i>Clare T. Newberry</i> (Harpers: \$2.)	3-7 Both	Reissue of nonsense picture-book, longer story, more and bigger pictures. The amiable Herbert is funnier than ever.	Delightful
ON THE FARM <i>W. W. & Irene Robinson</i> (Macmillan: \$2.)	4-6 Both	Big picture book of farm animals with simple text. Method and ideas good, but the style and pictures just miss.	Passable, but not perfect
THE COUNTRY BUNNY <i>Du Bose Heyward</i> (Houghton Mifflin: \$1.50)	4-8 Both	Story picture book, which children will love. How the mother of 21 children became one of the famous Easter bunnies. Illustrated by Marjorie Flack.	Fun and morals combined
DOROTHY GORDON'S TREASURE BAG OF GAME SONGS (Dutton: \$1.50)	4-10 Both	Songs, pictures, how to play games as you sing; chosen from the author's radio programs. Illustrated by Veronica Reed.	Useful as well as fun
AND A GOOD FAT HEN <i>Eleanor Troy Williams</i> (Putnam: \$1.50)	4-6? We say 12-20 Both	A traditional nonsense memory feat, with the author's sketches. Very high-brow, but probably not beyond the wits of <i>Saturday Review</i> families.	Fairly amusing
THE WEATHERCOCK <i>Simonne Ratel</i> (Appleton-Century: \$1.75)	6-8 Both	About a proud weathercock in a French village. May be less nonsensical in its native tongue, but is hard to take in English. Pretty pictures.	Does not translate successfully
SAN BAO <i>Marian Cannon</i> (Dutton: \$1.50)	8-10 Both	San Bao goes to the Peking fair with his father and his donkey. Realistic story of China (no war!) with beautiful pictures.	Unusual
ABRAHAM LINCOLN <i>Ingri & Edgar Parin d'Aulaire</i> (Doubleday, Doran: \$2)	Up to 10 Both	The life of Abraham Lincoln, up to the eve of his assassination. It refuses to include this unhappy ending, apparently.	Nice pictures, but not Abe
JOAN AND THE THREE DEER <i>Marjorie Medary</i> (Random House: \$2.)	6-12 Girls chiefly	The visit of a little girl to her aunt on the island of Gran Manan in the Bay of Fundy where semi-domesticated deer become her playmates. Excellent illustrations by Kurt Wiese.	Charming
JUNIOR BOOK OF BIRDS <i>Roger Tory Peterson</i> (Houghton Mifflin: \$2)	Grammar school Both	A collection of the <i>Bird-Lore</i> leaflets, giving a brief account of each of 23 native species, with many excellent illustrations by the author.	As good a book as any available
THE LITTLE HOUSE ON RUNNERS <i>Marjorie Hayes</i> (Little, Brown: \$2.)	8-12 Both	The Brewsters put their little house on snow-runners and move down to Boston for the winter. Pretty full of Historical Personages, Alcotts, Hales, etc.	Nice little story
AN EAR FOR UNCLE EMIL <i>E. R. Gaggin</i> (Viking: \$2.)	8-12 Girls	Uncle Emil is a herdsman's doll that belongs to Resi Witt, a little Swiss girl. Beautiful pictures by Kate Seredy overshadow the text.	Don't miss this Swiss
TILI-RELI, Come to France. <i>Dorothy Gordon</i> (American Book Co.: \$1.)	8-12 Both	A trip to France, bursting with information. So You're Going to Do A Little Geography homework.	Sugar-coated
MAGIC STRINGS <i>Remo Bufano</i> (Macmillan: \$1.50)	Any age. Both	Lively puppet plays that can be engineered fairly simply. Decorations by Boris Artzybasheff.	Good and varied collection
SHE SHALL HAVE MUSIC <i>Kitty Barne</i> (Dodd, Mead: \$2.)	8-12 Girls	The story of a likable, active English family whose youngest, to their astonishment, achieves a fair start towards a pianist's career.	Good, especially for the musical
CALIFORNIA, the Story of Our Southwest Corner <i>Grace S. Dawson</i> (Macmillan: \$2.)	8-12 Both	A competent and sincere account of California from its days of Indian habitation to its present status.	Agreeably instructive
THE TURF-CUTTER'S DONKEY <i>Patricia Lynch</i> (Dutton: \$2.)	9-12 Both	More adventures of Eileen and Seamus with their unusual donkey and other friends. The real and unreal countryside of Ireland.	Middling
FORTUNE'S FOAL <i>Garland Bullivant</i> (Scribners: \$1.50)	About 15. Girls	A 15-year-old girl and her pony, which she trains and rides to success at a show.	Good of its kind

DURING the past two months you have probably read and heard a great deal about **PURSLANE**, by Bernice Kelly Harris, and **THESE ARE OUR LIVES**, compiled by the Federal Writers' Project. But we should like also to call your attention to some other recent books from Chapel Hill—

SEVEN LEAN YEARS, by T. J. Woolfer, Jr. and Ellen Winston. "... a book that should be read by every person in the United States who is interested in American agriculture and is concerned about the future."—M. L. Wilson, Under Secretary, U. S. Dept. of Agriculture. Illustrated. \$1.50

TOBE, by Stella Gentry Sharpe; with illustrations by Charles Farrell. A little colored boy who lives on a Southern farm tells what he and his brothers do the year round. Of the illustrations, Guy R. Lyle in *Wilson Bulletin* says, "They are superb." 72 full-page illustrations. \$1.00

TO MAKE A POET BLACK, by J. Saunders Redding. "Sympathetic understanding combined with intellectual honesty; pithy, original comments upon particular writers and their writings."—*American Sociological Review*. \$1.50

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A RIVER TOWN: MEMPHIS, by Gerald M. Capers, Jr. From the time of the Chickasaw Bluffs to 1900, the history of Memphis has been a turbulent one—a strange mixture of South and West. And Mr. Capers tells this history from the point of view that "an adequate biography of any of our key cities . . . would be more significant to the national epic than the biography of even so prominent a figure as Theodore Roosevelt." Illustrated. \$3.50

CALDWELL AND COMPANY, by John Berry McFerrin. With an objectivity not possible only a few years ago when the "Morgan of the South" crashed, Mr. McFerrin here discusses from actual records of cases, from newspapers of the period, and from personal interviews the "mad-house banking of the 1920's." \$3.50

BLACK WORKERS AND THE NEW UNIONS, by Horace R. Cayton and George S. Mitchell. \$4.00

TREES OF THE SOUTH, by Charlotte Hilton Green; with about 450 illustrations. \$2.50

THE PARTY OF HUMANITY, by Edwin Mallard Everett. \$3.50

CHILD LABOR LEGISLATION IN THE SOUTHERN TEXTILE STATES, by Elizabeth H. Davidson. \$4.00

A HISTORY OF BRAZIL, by Joao Pandia Calogeras; translated and edited by Percy Alvin Martin. The third volume in The Inter-American Historical Series. \$5.00

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