

ing to the *Springfield Republican*. In "Lean with the Wind" (Whittlesey House), Earl Schenck, known for his travel book, "Come Unto These Yellow Sands," offered a well-reviewed Tahitian novel.

The crop of historical novels was fairly large. Heading them was one of the finest "firsts" of the year. It was not for its historical background, nineteenth-century Indiana, but for its serene Quaker characters, who were yet full of laughter and the joy of living, that Jessamyn West's "The Friendly Persuasion" (Harcourt, Brace) was so well received by critics and public.

Of high quality also, "The House on Clewe Street," by Mary Lavin (Little, Brown), told of three generations of an Irish family before World War I. It was serialized in *The Atlantic Monthly*. The author's previous book of short stories, "Tales from Bective Bridge," won the James Tait Black Memorial Prize. Praised for its characters and retelling of Roman history in 37 A.D. was "The Fates Are Laughing" (Harcourt, Brace). The late author, W. P. Crozier, was editor of *The Manchester Guardian*.

"The Violent Friends," by Winston Clewes (Appleton-Century), was based upon the life of Jonathan Swift when he was dean of St. Patrick's, Dublin, and the two women who loved him, Stella and Vanessa. Crowded with characters from sixteenth-century Italy was Laverne Gay's "The Unspeakables" (Scribner). In "A Moment of Time" (Putnam), Sydney McLean told of a good, industrious New England woman. "An effective, restrained, and ingenious first novel," said *Time*.

"The Chapin Sisters," by Fynette Rowe (Current Books), was a record of the small triumphs, rivalries, and cold enmity between two sisters in an upper New York State town of the 1850's.

"A highly entertaining and charming book," wrote Rose Feld in the *New York Herald Tribune* of "The Happy Time," by Robert Fontaine, the first Venture Press book published. Not all reviewers agreed as to its merit. In fact, Simon & Schuster ran an unusual newspaper advertisement replying to their criticisms. These episodes of a French-Canadian family from the standpoint of a small boy succeeded, however, in attracting over 30,000 book buyers. An adolescent girl who wanted to become a pianist was the chief character in Madeleine L'Engle's "The Small Rain" (Vanguard Press). "Her writing is good to discover," wrote Edward Weeks in *The Atlantic Monthly*. The sensitive, subtle characters of a nine-



year-old boy and his beautiful and domineering older sister were imaginatively presented in "The West Window," by L. P. Hartley (Doubleday). Also delicately imaged was an Italian child's growth in an Italian convent, New England, and New York in Helen La Penta's "Piccola" (Harper).

TOM Hanlin, who had had many short stories published previously in the "little" magazines, was the author of a well-liked tragic love story of a Scotch miner, "Once in Every Lifetime" (Viking). In England it was the "Big Ben" prize novel. "Not for the squeamish," but "the Catholic novel for which literate Catholics have long been praying," said *Commonweal* of Henry Morton Robinson's "The Perfect Round" (Harcourt, Brace). It was the story of a battle-fatigued man who regained his faith in the Catholic Church with the help of a wisely humorous girl and the acquisition of a broken-down merry-go around. Mr. Robinson was joint author with Joseph Campbell of "A Skeleton Key to Finnegans Wake" and has also written books on historical and political subjects.

Generally reviewed as an excellent light novel, introducing a humorous ghost who directed the affairs of an

English household, was "The Ghost and Mrs. Muir," by R. A. Dick (Ziff-Davis). "Thirty-four Charlton Street," by René Kuhn (Appleton-Century), a novel about a parasitic Greenwich Village family, was an Avery Hopwood Award winner, as was "Family Tree," by Florence Maple (Knopf), in which a girl from the circus visits her mother's small-town relatives and changes the course of several lives.

Additional first novels of 1945 were:

"Animal Fair," by Evelyn West (Lippincott). A girl's attempts at a college education and at work on a newspaper.

"Claire: A Portrait in Motion," by Erin Samson (Harper). A gracious woman whose love of dancing fills her life raises two children and maintains a brilliant salon in the France of 1900-1925.

"Darkly the River Flows," by John Macdonald (Coward-McCann). Two warring brothers in Toronto. \$1000 Canadian Prize Novel.

"Everything Is Quite All Right," by Wendell Wilcox (Bernard Ackerman). A big, good-hearted, not over-bright girl finds her heart moved by the nondescript husband of her shrewish mistress.

"The Ghostly Lover," by Elizabeth Hardwick (Harcourt, Brace). A young girl's quest for security and love takes her from a middle-class Kentucky home to a New York university.

"Virgin with Butterflies," by Tom Powers (Bobbs-Merrill). A well-known actor's novel about the adventures of a beautiful cigarette girl on a weirdly wonderful trip to India.

"Voyage of Discovery," by Barbara Corrigan (Scribner). American university life in the 1930's.

The Home Front

By Lt. A. L. Glaze, U.S.A.

I HEARD a white man say
They ought to send us back to Africa.
I got mad.
It really hurt me.
I didn't say what I ought to
Because I want to live long as I can.
So I just say to him
"I reckon there'll be some argument before it happen."

He knowed we are their dependence.
He knowed we carry the weight
And keep it off his shoulder.
He don't want us to go to Africa;
He wants us to stay right here
And feel bad.

We don't want to set at their table
We don't want to sleep in their bed
We just want the things God sent us to enjoy.

Second Guesses for First Novelists

Peter Bowman

"Beach Red"

SECOND - GUESSING, as the sportswriters know, is always a rather futile practice after a game has been played. On the literary scoreboard, particularly, the act of publishing appears as irrevocable as an umpire's decision in Brooklyn, and the only profit to be derived from hindsight is a determination not to be caught off base again.

In "Beach Red," certain errors of judgment have been committed, both in authorship and in critical review. The unusual form in which the work is cast has created a mild controversy among professional readers as to whether it is prose or poetry, and in a quick double play from "split prose" to "sprung rhythm" to "six main stresses" the side has been retired. To me, however, the matter is of limited consequence because mere questions of form cannot detract from the essential communicative function of literature. "Beach Red" is written in language, and since the purpose of language is to transmit ideas through the use of words, I have merely broadened the concept to transmit ideas through the use of words arranged in such a way as to give them supplementary meaning and significance. I have tried to create a mood of inexorable regularity that would correspond to the subtle tyranny of the military timetable in the carrying out of a beachhead operation. To do this, I have established a word as the graphic symbol for our smallest calculable unit of time—a tenth of a second—and by a logical extension of the principle, each ten-word line has become a second and each sixty-line chapter corresponds to the passing of a minute. Since the action of the book is confined to the events of a single hour, it will readily be seen that the primary purpose of the time-scheme is to achieve a background of continuity against which the story may be more effectively highlighted. Specifically, I have attempted to do for the eye what the ticking of a clock accomplishes for the ear, and while the device may be somewhat arbitrary it has its counterpart in the relentless inflexibility of time itself.

A few critics have referred to the book as a "tour de force," implying that it was some sort of literary exercise in which I had deliberately imposed a set of limitations on my-

SWEET are the uses of hindsight. The Saturday Review asked six first novelists of 1945 to look back at what they had done and see if they found it good. Would they alter their books today if confronted with the opportunity (or the problem) of writing them all over again? What effect would reviews and criticisms have—for that matter, what effect did they have? Finally there is the matter of the usual post-publication ideas of the author himself as to how the book might have been improved. Go to it, boys and girl!

self purely for the sake of seeing how skilfully I could write within them. This is not so, and aside from being personally resented, tends to scoff at every man whose thoughts and actions and feelings have been set in motion by H-hour—for "Beach Red" was not intended as a whimsical arrangement of lines and sections but as a sincere representation of a composite American soldier living from second to second and from minute to minute because that is all he can be sure of. I am certain that if a man were approached under these circumstances and accused of "exercising," the remark would not amuse him.

If I were undertaking to write "Beach Red" again in the light of post-publication sentiments, I would not alter the basic premise of the book's form. Realizing its vulnerabil-

ity to misconception, however, I would try to work out a typography which would not look so similar to blank verse on the printed page. I would try to evolve a word-pattern that would be more distinctive and more inviting to the reader. As it is, the physical resemblance to a conventional narrative poem is too great, and while an author's preface or a clearly-stated publisher's note would have helped, I do not think that this would have been an entirely satisfactory solution. In the event that I would have found it too difficult, for one reason or another, properly to fulfill my obligations to the reader, I would then have sacrificed the background and insisted on conventional paragraphs.

"Beach Red" was written during the war and was intended for wartime reading, when there was high interest in our enemy, in the nuances of strategy, in battle reaction, in what is termed "the feel and sense of war." If I were doing it now I would undoubtedly place the principal emphasis on more permanent aspects of the struggle, with less attention to specific details of locale or weapons or purely military procedures. I would not categorize it with so journalistic a title as "Beach Red," nor would I feel it necessary (as I did when I was a soldier among civilians) to attempt in some measure to "interpret" G.I. thinking for the edification of those who might too abruptly be exposed to it. Then, too, writing during peacetime, with the benefit of retrospection and in the calm, unhurried spirit with which one may treat of past events, I might have produced a more polished job and received a greater unanimity of critical approval.

But I would have missed a lot of fun.

Adria Locke Langley

"A Lion Is in the Streets"

WOULD I change "A Lion Is in the Streets" now that I've heard all the criticism? What a dreadful question! I certainly would not change the characters because I cannot imagine them any way except as they are. They were real to me and I tried to make them real to the reader. I would not change the happenings because the happenings grew



Roger Coster

Peter Bowman: "... the only profit to be derived from hindsight is a determination not to be caught off base again."