

Fiction. *Over the last year the first-rate novels of American university life can be counted on the fingers of one hand, whereas numberless English novelists have found their years in Oxford and Cambridge and the newer universities a constant stimulus to creative literature. There may be many reasons why our writers have found the academic soil too arid for fertile recollections. Our guess is that the English writer is accustomed to keep in close touch with his alma mater, to know it in its cultural, rather than its athletic and carnival aspects. The English man of letters is indeed identified with his university all his life, so that the discerning can trace its influence on his work and his thought. The university novel reviewed below, Ruby Redinger's "The Golden Net," may be an exception to the rule. It is a complete revelation of the physical, intellectual, and moral aspects of the little world we know of as college life in the United States.*



—Helen Hewett.

Ruby Redinger—like Hardy with . . . "a large dash of the fevered romanticism of D. H. Lawrence."

A World in Small

THE GOLDEN NET. By Ruby Redinger. New York: Crown Publishers. 1948. 434 pp. \$3.

Reviewed by NATHAN L. ROTHMAN

THIS is not only a first novel, but a novel of the first magnitude. I think that will be plain to anyone who has read twenty-five pages of it, and the hundreds to come will only strengthen the impression. It is difficult, perhaps even undesirable, to say beforehand just what a first-rate novel ought to accomplish; we turn instead to the completed book to give a name to these accomplishments. "The Golden Net" examines a milieu and leaves it thoroughly described, subtly revealed in every possible aspect, physical, intellectual, moral. It examines a score of people and realizes each of them in total spiritual vitality. Playing milieu and people one against the other, it creates a complete organism out of their interrelationship, a world in small, and sets its boundaries at the horizon line, so that every preoccupation of the larger world outside makes entrance here, and is here resolved. This is a work largely conceived as the novels of Hardy were conceived, out of philosophical and esthetic principles. I should compare Miss Redinger's novel to Hardy's novels, with perhaps a large dash of the fevered romanticism of D. H. Lawrence to leaven it. These are dangerous comparisons, but I feel it would be unjust to withhold them.

The milieu she has chosen is the university faculty; the people are those of that world: professors, college president and deans, college wives, students, and the inevitable fringe of other folk. What Miss Redinger has done is to reveal the essential substance of this world. What it

means, for example, to be a scholar and to love scholarship—not scholarship mentioned in easy taglines, but scholarship spoken and experienced. Marcia Anderson, about whose head whirl the tides of this narrative, is a specialist in William Blake, newly appointed to the faculty of John Willard College. All through her life at John Willard—and it is certainly a period of emotional stress, far from being the safe, dull, cloistered haven of ivied walls—there exists like a parallel stream the consciousness of

another life she has, out of her knowledge of that poet. It is almost as though she has some existence within the mind of Blake, as he has in hers. It expands her capacities for feeling and perceiving; she is as great as we expect a person of learning and sensitiveness to be, yet rarely see such between covers.

Marcia's abortive love affair with

Your Literary I.Q.

By Howard Collins

"STRANGER, PAUSE AND LOOK"

Mrs. Beatrice Firestone, of Cincinnati, asks you to locate the following appeals made by various poets. Allowing five points for identifying either the poet or the poem, a score of sixty is par, seventy is very good, and eighty or better is excellent. Answers on page 19.

1. Piper, pipe that song again.
2. Hold off! Unhand me, gray-beard loon.
3. Now tell us all about the war,
And what they fought each other for.
4. O lift me from the grass!
5. Give, oh, give me back my heart!
6. Come down, O maid, from yonder mountain height.
7. Drink! for you know not whence you came, nor why.
8. Be a god and hold me with a charm.
9. Sing on, sing on, you gray-brown bird.
10. Tell them that I came and no one answered.
11. Stay, you must not strike it, God,
I'm in the way.
12. Think only this of me:
That there's some corner of a foreign field
That is forever England.
13. Give him a little earth for charity.
14. Let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves.
15. Weep no more, my lady.
16. Be still, my soul, be still; the arms you bear are brittle.
17. Come you back, you British soldier.
18. Time, you old gypsy man, will you not stay?
19. Let me tell the world.
20. O Mary, go and call the cattle home.

John Willard himself, the tractor king and president of the college, and her eventual gravitation toward Professor Paul Grant (a Melville scholar), are divergent lines of romantic force that impel the narrative. But there are many, many more things here, and many people, flooding the scene with a multiplicity of values. There is a magnificent portrait—across half the book—of Professor Esther Cornthwaite, the chairman of the English faculty, and behind her, in meticulous and malicious detail, the varied figures of her department in every revelatory posture: the aridity of faculty meetings, the exalting experience of teaching, and the fact of slow-rotting academic corruption,

and the confused currents of personal compulsion—loves and hatreds, ambitions, frustrations, the struggle to define integrity. There is the impact, upon these vulnerable walls, of Fascism. This is not a story about Academic Freedom, or a story about Fascism Within Academic Walls, or a story about Teacher and Pupil Relationships, or even a story about Love Among the Bookstacks. It is a novel larger than any of the elements in it, about a world made of many things, about people whose thoughts, motives, and emotions, are complex beyond any simple definition. It is a book profoundly and intellectually exciting, and it heralds an exciting writer.

Inherited Feud

THE LONG HABIT. By James K. Feibleman. New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce, Inc. 1948. 365 pp. \$3.

Reviewed by JAMES NELSON, JR.

THE Hoysradts, in the days prior to World War II, seemed like a normal, happy family. In the winter they lived in New Orleans; during the summer, they migrated to Isle Chên-ière, three and a half hours away by car.

Arthur Hoysradt had inherited, along with a big summer home and a profitable real estate business, a feud with the Ageton family. Although the reasons for the enmity had disappeared into the dim past along with its originators, the feud hung on, dormant. Arthur had added to his inheritance, too; he was the self-styled god of the oak grove that stood between his summer home, Havenwood, and the sea.

Starting with these relatively simple materials, Mr. Feibleman builds an engrossing and violent first novel. The peculiar merit of the story lies in the fact that Mr. Feibleman has made his violence completely credible. Through pitching most of the action in a low key, the brutality of the plot becomes inevitable and real.

At the time the book opens, the Hoysradt-Ageton feud has degenerated to the point where the adversaries merely ignore each other. Walter Ageton is seldom seen; and Arthur Hoysradt's favorite pastime is reading in the oak grove that fronts Havenwood, or discussing the rights and responsibilities inherent in his self-appointed job as king of the grove. His real intellectual companions are few—mainly his lovely ash-blond daughter Barbara, and Gifford Zale, the mildly eccentric philosopher

whom Arthur had dubbed Antisocrates.

When Arthur decides he must go to war, trouble begins. Susan, the Hoysradt's youngest daughter, is killed in an automobile accident involving Arthur. With this tragic accident fresh in his mind, Arthur leaves for an Army camp. Estelle Hoysradt links her husband's determination to leave Isle Chên-ière for the Army with Susan's death; and she searches for a way to punish him for the hideous accident. She finds her revenge in an affair with Walter Ageton. By the time the story ends, tragedy has all but destroyed both families.

Across the warp of tragedy, Feibleman has woven a delightful woof of philosophic mythology. Through Antisocrates, the skeptic, he frequently voices the legend of the year god who must be killed in his prime in order that the new king may be born strong.

Feibleman's calm presentation, which underscores events by underplaying them, is nowhere better than in his portrayal of the storm that brings the book to its close. The author builds a semitropical hurricane to almost unbearable intensity. This skilful bit of writing, however, provided me my only quarrel with the book. After a substantial diet of tragedy growing out of well-motivated revenge, the final tragedy resulting from the storm seemed unnecessary and lacking in justification. Mr. Feibleman may have a perfectly proper mythological explanation for it, but somehow it eludes me.

Incidentally, for those who wondered, the book's title is taken from a quotation by Sir Thomas Browne: "The long habit of living indisposeth us for dying." Mr. Feibleman has made an excellent and readable case in support of the statement.

Enemies of Man

A CONVOY THROUGH THE DREAM. By Scott Graham Williamson. New York: The Macmillan Co. 1948. 272 pp. \$3.50.

Reviewed by JOHN WOODBURN

DURING the early part of the war the men who worked the ships of the Merchant Marine didn't rate too highly with some of our pin-stripe patriots. Wartime is a great time for generalizations, and in the chow-lines at "21" and Mr. Billingsley's station-wagon-lunch they used to crack that most of the men on the supply ships had signed on in order to evade military service, and that all of them were there because of the money. You didn't hear so much of this as the war went on and the ships went down, and it began to appear that a man could be brave and valuable even though he was well-paid and belonged to a union. There were men, of course, who were attracted by the money, just as there are men in other branches of the service who were attracted by the idea of little pieces of metal on their shoulders, but there were also a great many men in the Merchant Marine who were there because they had been rejected by the military, and had found that the hard, nearly always dangerous work on the supply ships gave them a feeling of participation and service. If they were well-paid for it, so for that matter were some colonels and rear-admirals who spent the war in places like the Pentagon Building, with no drums of gasoline under them and no need of a convoy, except perhaps on those evenings when the waves were high on the bourbon-and-water at the Officers' Club.

Mr. Williamson's new, and second novel, "A Convoy Through the Dream," is about one of these young men who had been rejected for regular service, and who was impelled

G. T.

(1894-1948)

By J. B.

WARMTH was much of her,
The giving of warmth, warmth
shared.

Her words have it
But it was in beauty, too,
Eyes and movements of hands.
This calorific had light, was not
Cottonwool bundling but
Threw rays to learn by.
Now the fire's out.

Light is undying. Learning lasts.
Warmth is remembered.

The Saturday Review