

has chosen as the greatest, or even that he has argued a wholly air-tight case for their selection over a hundred others. What he has given us is his opinion, carefully considered and based on long experience, and he has written it down with his customary grace, in essays that are as pleasing

to read as the books they are intended to introduce.

John W. Aldridge is a young veteran-turned-critic whose article "The New Generation of Writers" published in Harper's Magazine last year was widely commented upon.

## Romantic Exile

THE COLLECTED ESSAYS OF JOHN PEALE BISHOP. Edited, and with an Introduction, by Edmund Wilson. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1948. 508 pp. \$4.50.

THE COLLECTED POEMS OF JOHN PEALE BISHOP. Edited, and with a Preface and a Personal Memoir, by Allen Tate. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1948. 277 pp. \$4.

Reviewed by GERARD PREVIN MEYER

THE simultaneous publication, four years after his death, of John Peale Bishop's essays and poems, is surely a literary event. The happy circumstance that his writings have been collected and edited by two of our best critics who were also his closest friends, lends additional distinction to the occasion. Tate, with whose Southern agrarianism Bishop

was loosely affiliated, views his subject as a fellow "Southerner of the Upper South," while Wilson, fellow-student (with Scott Fitzgerald) of Bishop's at Princeton and historian of the Twenties, part of which Bishop was and most of which he knew, approaches the poet-essayist from the direction of "All the Sad Young Men." At the intersection of these planes Bishop stands: doubly the *deraciné* (both in place and in time), and perhaps the most typical member of his writing generation, the Romantic Exiles of our century.

And now that the evidence is nearly all in, John Peale Bishop's place in the pantheon of American poetry seems considerably more secure than it appeared during his lifetime. We have been used to hearing the West Virginian dismissed as *too* typical, *i.e.*, *too* derivative, on the one hand, too immersed in class consciousness (upper level), on the other; yet his essays and poems in their progress (they are helpfully given dates by the editors) amply display an original mind and reveal the generous, passionate, humane personality finally emerging from beneath the successive masks of the "provincial," the dandy, the snob, and the ironist. "Behind the mask," as Bishop wrote in one of his "Aphorisms," "is a naked man."

Eighty of the essays, twenty-eight of the reviews, and most of the "Aphorisms and Notes" in the prose volume are devoted to poetry ("it was for poetry that he chiefly lived," testifies his friend Wilson). But his essays are not always confined to discussions of this high endeavor. Bishop's free-ranging mind illuminated a wide variety of subjects—the South and its tradition, myth, modern novelists, modern painters, Audubon, places, motion pictures. On all these, and on poetry especially, he was both luminous and penetrating, never pedantic; he wore his learning gracefully. His talent for epigram appears in isolation in the "Aphorisms"; but all his essays contain striking phrases which will not be contained, but jump out of the page and confront the reader suddenly with acute *aperçus*. In such wise he could arrive at the heart of a book or a poem, a place or a painting,



—From "Literary Lights."

John Peale Bishop and Edmund Wilson, Jr. bring forth "The Undertaker's Journal."

and uncover that heart to brilliant flashes of insight.

Bishop did not deny that his poetry was derivative; he explained rather why it was: "My imitation of other poets is in part a desire not to be myself." If we keep in mind his position as an exile in his century (he preferred the eighteenth), in his native state (his father, who stemmed from Connecticut, had been "stoned in the streets" as a Yankee), in his native land (he was an expatriate for some years), in modern civilization generally (which he admitted into his poetry only in its phases of decadence), this perhaps is explanation enough. But this is only part of the story, for it is evident that his excursions into the styles of Yeats, Pound, Eliot, and others (for example, if a collection of "Renaissance Lyrics of the Twentieth Century" were possible, Bishop's *pastiches*, with their honest sensuality, might well head the list) gave testimony of his search for a technique which might achieve that marriage of intellect and emotion needed to fulfil the aim of poetry, "the whole man."

Toward the end, the romantic exile came home to his own idiom, and achieved in his poetry a density of meaning projected with classic purity of tone. His emotions were always brittle, and constantly being fractured by his consciousness of the collapse of traditions, but in the best of his verse, as in his prose, he transcended and transmuted these crises. And at the last, self-assured, John Peale Bishop dictated his epitaph (its noble rhetoric "inevitably" recalls both Yeats and Landor):

Long did I live  
Consistent, lonely, proud,  
Not death, but fear of death,  
Restores us to the crowd.

### FRASER YOUNG'S LITERARY CRYPT: No. 276

A cryptogram is writing in cipher. Every letter is part of a code that remains constant throughout the puzzle. Answer No. 276 will be found in the next issue.

FPR ALBBSCXFQ XC

EPXAP RGAP BGC GAFT

KXMR PXT CRXOPWLZ

XT CLF QRF G

AXHXKXDRV ALBBSCXFQ.

G. P. TGQAR

Answer to Literary Crypt No. 275

Zeal without knowledge is fire without light.

T. FULLER.

## Trumpeted Storyteller

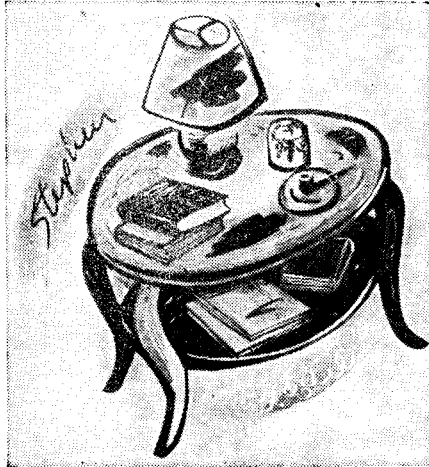
**STEPHEN CRANE: A BIBLIOGRAPHY.** By Ames W. Williams and Vincent Starrett. Glendale, California: John Valentine. 1948. xii + 164 pp. \$7.50.

Reviewed by JOHN T. WINTERICH

VINCENT STARRETT blew a lusty trumpet in the Crane-rennaissance parade of a quarter century ago, and he has been tooting and marching ever since. His call, indeed, has grown more clarion, his stride sturdier. His Crane bibliography of 1923 was an affair of forty-eight pages, but it was a mighty useful tool to the Crane student at the moment, and has been ever since.

Now, twenty-five years later, appears a new Crane bibliography, the work of a devoted and competent team: Mr. Starrett and Ames W. Williams. Neither title-page nor text gives the slightest clue to the share of the work borne by each collaborator. It doesn't seem to matter; both Mr. Williams and Mr. Starrett know their Crane; both know his books; both understand the niceties of description and collation.

An author-bibliography, if it is to be of any account, must be largely biography. It should give almost as good a picture of the man as the formal biography does, without, of course, trying to usurp the function of the latter. Biography, in general, would be better if more biographers



were, in addition, competent bibliographers.

Here the thing is done, which makes this an admirable monograph to study in order to see how it is done. Here is Crane, publishing his first book at his own expense, entrusting his second to an upstart firm of youngsters, and attaining instant fame with his third at the hands of an old-line house. Less than five years later, at twenty-eight, he was dead. After an interval corresponding nearly to the length of his own life, his collected works appeared in ten volumes. Mr. Starrett, in an introduction (the single attributed unit of the book), calls him "the first modern American storyteller." This bibliography is the story of his stories, well and graphically set forth.

**DELMORE SCHWARTZ**



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