

... genius in a carload of authors, unless you are positive that you are another Thomas Wolfe you'd be pretty wise to stick pretty close to the usual formula if you wish to sell to the slicks." She provides the formula, too, Rule 6 of which is my favorite: "Put your protagonist in a pool of trouble; each time he attempts to climb out, push him in again for fifteen pages or so and finally let him triumphantly emerge."

Miss Reid reduces everything to rawest essentials. Any editor of a slick magazine (her term) who reads her analysis of what he is looking for will probably commit suicide. This would depress Miss Reid, who cautions against morbid or off-trail deviations from formula: "Once you begin to sell you will lose all resentment toward formula, at least until the serpent named Significance rears his taunting head. Then you may decide to write a novel, where you at last can write anything you please from frustration stories to killing off as many darling little characters as you choose."

Miss Reid provides her own ideal opening for a short story: "So! Jack Smith banged the receiver down on the hook and swung around in his swivel chair. If he took the widow Jones out for dinner tonight, Sue would break their engagement. And if he did not take the widow out, his boss would fire him." As Miss Reid points out, "There, in only forty-six words, is a situation which would bother any man. . . . The situation is pregnant with action."

In this hilarious book the aspiring

writer can find all sorts of tabulated suggestions. One I liked was the following:

EYES. Mentioning the color of eyes helps greatly in pictorialization. Smoky gray eyes, eyes as blue as the skies, sea-green eyes, luminous gray-green eyes, slanty green eyes, eyes like brown velvet, gold-flecked, snapping black eyes, warm brown eyes.

One gets a depressing picture of American writing from reading these books. Writing becomes a racket. The big money lies just ahead. Work hard, and you don't need anything else. Stick to the formula and you can have an agent and a winter home in Arizona. Get typed and stay typed; you'll live to be rich and famous.

Fortunately, there is more to writing than that. No one, by wanting hard enough, ever wrote an "Oliver Wiswell." There is a world of writing inhabited by Flaubert, Willa Cather, Turgenev, Hemingway, and Samuel Butler into which one cannot muscle his way. Entrance to that world comes through dedication, brains, and hard work. There are no easy shortcuts, as Kenneth Roberts noted on March 25, 1931: "Struggled on in Chapter 12—a tough one. They're all tough."

James A. Michener's "Tales of the South Pacific," winner of the 1948 Pulitzer Prize for fiction provides the basis for the new Broadway musical hit "South Pacific." Mr. Michener's second novel, "The Fires of Spring," was recently published by Random House.

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The Criminal Record

The Saturday Review's Guide to Detective Fiction

Title and Author	Crime, Place, and Sleuth	Summing Up	Verdict
LADY KILLER George Harmon Coxe (Knopf: \$2.50)	Cable from actress gal friend brings Kent Murdock to dock where new liner disgorges some passengers who spell trouble and death.	Gem smuggling and double murder incisively portrayed against Boston background—with plot, dialogue, and characters stepping high, wide, and handsome.	No complaints
SOME LIKE 'EM SHOT Fred Malina (Mill-Morrow: \$2.50)	N. Y. lawyer, in Miami to help clear Negro of slaying shady politico, tangles with various gaudy members of Florida sassiety.	Plenty of lush local color, ample action, drinking, and canoodling. Sleuth is not too convincing and race angle ineptly handled.	Fair
HE'S LATE THIS MORNING Christopher Hale (Crime Club: \$2.25)	"Heart condition" that kills wealthy sexagenarian in Florida villa turns into conium poisoning—presenting vacationing detective with fine case of family hatreds.	Lt. Bill French follows "typical murderer" through two killings, and clinches case by smart deducing—with clan bickering at his heels.	Satisfactory

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The Film Forum

FILMS IN FRENCH

The Saturday Review's Weekly Guide
to Selected 16mm. Sound Films.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The films reviewed below are without explanatory subtitles. Apart from their intrinsic interest, they are likely to be of value in French language and literature classes. Many French teachers are also using French feature films, either with or without subtitles, as an aid to conversation.

LA ROSE ET LE RESEDA

Produced in France by André Michel after a poem by Aragon, spoken by Jean-Louis Barrault. Music by Jacques Ibert. Available from A. F. Films, 1600 Broadway, New York, N. Y. (12 mins.)

The combination of some remarkable talents has produced on the whole a remarkable film. The whole bagful of conventional techniques has been thrown out of the window. This is a film poem set to a spoken poem, and it is chiefly as a visual poem that it must be judged. The film starts with a solemn announcement of its theme. Ibert's music borrows from a Bach chorale, intoned over images of a little French village, its church, its tavern, its farm-houses all seemingly deserted. Then the square, tree-shaded and peaceful. Here the villagers are gathered, sitting mute and motionless on benches, facing their captors. The Nazi soldiers march up and down in their jackboots with a ringing precision. The people stare.

The soldiers become a wooden image of tyranny. The camera rushes up to an eyeless figure, dumbly grasping his rifle. The scene dissolves. The countryside is aflame behind the soldier. Peace descends. Across a rocky landscape rides a solitary figure on horseback. Looking down, he sees two men lying on the olive-clad slopes, two comrades killed in action. As he watches, they come to life and rise from the ground. Silently he rides away.

Here Aragon's poem begins. Its theme is the identity of sacrifice between the two men, *celui qui croyait au ciel, celui qui n'y croyait pas*. Believer and unbeliever share the same devotion to France, run the same risk of death, stand shoulder to shoulder. Barrault's nervous high-pitched voice carries the poem headlong forward to its climax, an evocation of pigeons wheeling out together into space, and of *la rose et le reseda*, the rose and the mignonette.

The visual imagery is on the whole spontaneous and effective, carrying the eye and the mind along with a real poetic impulse. The political imagery is less fortunate. It is not very pleasant to see Aragon, who may be supposed to hold God and the Republic in no very high esteem, extending his hand to the Church, and drawing in the sand the figure of Marianne. Politics certainly makes strange bedfellows.

PROFIL DE LA FRANCE

Produced by Abel Gance and Jean Tedesco. Available from French Films and Folklore, Box 2A, 431 Riverside Drive, New York, N. Y. (23 mins.)

This and the remaining two films on our list may be obtained with a line-by-line transcript of the narrative in French, keyed to a list of the less commonly used words.

"Profil de la France," a film of the old master Abel Gance, who is remembered best for his silent "Napoleon," is a study in French coastal geography. Opening on the rocky shores of Normandy, the camera moves down to the estuary of the Seine, and thence to St. Malo. After this it takes a leap to the sand dunes of Gascony in the far South, and works its way back northwards into Brittany.

But this is no conventional travel film. Rather it is a mosaic of images of France—the medieval churches, the traveling carnivals and native costumes—narrated in a style which would seem ornate and precious in English but which suits the French idiom excellently.

The voice is clearly recorded and the commentary is delivered moderately slowly, so that the film should be of use in intermediate grades for language teaching. While the camera work is excellent, the technical quality of the picture image is not altogether up to modern standards.

LE MOULIN ENCHANTÉ

Produced by La France en Marche. Available from French Films and Folklore, Box 2A, 431 Riverside Drive, New York, N. Y. (10 mins.)

This is a brief biographical sketch of Alphonse Daudet, centered around his famous windmill, but radiating out to include his life in Arles and short summaries of his most famous books. The magnificent landscapes of Provence are finely photographed, and as much information is crowded in as could be expected in a ten-minute film.

The commentary is delivered rather more rapidly than in "Profil de la France," but the technical quality of sound and picture is better.

AUTOUR D'UN CLOCHER

Produced by La France en Marche. Available from French Films and Folklore, Box 2A, 431 Riverside Drive, New York, N. Y. (10 mins.)

The life of a village, grouped round its belfry. The film follows the familiar pattern of a day's work, starting with the baker who gets up when it is almost dark, and following in their turn the blacksmith, the saddlemaker, the mailmen, and the children going their way to school. All very charmingly photographed.

—RAYMOND SPOTTISWOODE.

For information about the purchase or rental of any films, please write to Film Department, The Saturday Review, 25 West 45th St., New York 19, N. Y.

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