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**The World.** *The twelve years during which the shadow of Adolf Hitler darkened the continent of Europe profoundly altered the thinking as well as the lives of millions of human beings in every part of the world. During this period many Americans became willing to drop their century-old distrust of Britain and discussed the possibility of a closer union of the English-speaking peoples—even a political alliance. While Edgar W. McInnis's and J. H. S. Reid's "English-Speaking Peoples" (reviewed below) propounds no such program, it does delineate, with originality and perception, the essential unity of those who share common traditions and institutions. . . . Odd Nansen's "From Day to Day" (another book reviewed this week) is a brilliant and harrowing diary, with pictures, by an inmate of a Nazi concentration camp, revealing one of the most terrible effects of Hitler's iniquity.*

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## Unity in Diversity

**THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING PEOPLES.** By Edgar W. McInnis and J. H. S. Reid. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1949. 513 pp. \$5.

Reviewed by CRANE BRINTON

THE originality of this book lies in its subject matter. There are plenty of general histories and textbooks on the history of established nations, of cultural or political areas like Europe, of Western civilization, and even of *homo sapiens*. And there is a great deal of talking and writing about the English-speaking peoples, on their role in the world today, on the desirability or undesirability of their union. But no one has yet written a history which traces the story of the political units divided by the world war we call in this country the American Revolution.

Professors McInnis and Reid are at present teaching in Canada; the first is a native of the Maritime provinces, and was educated at Toronto and Oxford; the second is a Glaswegian educated in Scotland and in Canada. Both, of course, know their United States at first hand. Here is a characteristic Canadian background, and an admirable preparation for the job these historians have undertaken. They are aware—though they do not here say so as explicitly as some Canadians have recently—of the great role Canada has played, and of the greater one she may yet play, as an intermediary between the United States and Great Britain.

Their book is not in any sense propaganda for Anglo-American union, or for Anglo-American world hegemony. They are convinced, however, that they are writing the history of something real, even though for nearly two centuries there has been no

single political unit on which the historian can focus. Their title suggests an obvious but unimportant unity. Beyond language, beyond the diversity of environments, beyond the accidents of the history they narrate, they find a unity in diversity, a unity of "traditions and institutions" which have been adapted to new conditions overseas, but never wholly lost.

Their text perhaps emphasizes the diversity more than the unity. They are not, however, writing "sociological history," not attempting an analytical study of what makes the English-speaking peoples a reality, a fact in the world of human relations. Had they been Germans, and not members of this English-speaking community, they would undoubtedly have philosophized at length on the problem of the existence of an Eng-

lish-speaking community, organism, or soul. As it is, they go ahead with their narrative untroubled by problems which, perhaps, ought not to concern historians anyway.

This is excellent, straightforward political, social, and economic history, centered mainly on Britain, the United States, and Canada since 1689, but with the rest of the English-speaking peoples adequately considered, written rather in terms of movements, policies, political decisions, concrete environmental pressures, and group psychologies than in terms of personalities and intrigues. If you are looking for gossip or even for biography, this is not the book for you.

It is the fashion in literary circles to fasten terms like "academic" or "textbook" on this kind of history, with intent to damn. One suspects that Professors McInnis and Reid would accept these terms without worrying over the pejorative intent of those who use them. There is a place, a very useful place, for this sort of generalized, balanced history. How much better it is than those grab-bag textbooks of cultural history that gather specimens of all human activity, books in which the worn historian has to pretend an interest in art, letters, philosophy, science, technology, landscape architecture, and archery, books in which for lack of space or lack of skill everything and everybody is dismissed with an epithet, preferably well-worn! Our authors spare us the "ethereal Shelley" and the "sweet-voiced Keats."

Crane Brinton, author of "The United States and Britain," among other books, is professor of history at Harvard.

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## Mathematicians

By Fred Lape

WITH love that is strong as the flesh love  
mathematicians love their minds' creations.  
Beautiful as a face an equation worked out  
in the white clarity of proportion.  
And stronger the spell of the unsolved problem,  
the symbols running like music over their minds.  
Up to the face of death the passion holds them:  
the young Galois scribbling algebra notes  
all the night long, scrawling on the margin,  
No time . . . no time . . . and going out  
in the morning to be shot; and Gauss an old man  
seeing behind his darkening eyes the answers  
waiting.

They see cleanly, they can chart time  
and events, they can trace the space curves,  
but themselves points on the curves they plot.  
The events move, and the men are mortal.

like "the hairy-chested fellow" or "the lovely tense girl." And as in "The Saxon Charm" no pains are spared to improve the reader's mind. There's much talk of music—"glorious sounds." Beethoven's last quartets are dragged in by all sixteen strings. Stokowski imparts a golden nimbus to the cultural program. And David Harper, the hero, is an incredible dunce; we are told constantly of his wonderful brain, yet

he gets tied up in situations a cretin would eschew.

The first fifty pages of "The Fires of Spring" are quite touching. After these it explodes into what may charitably be called a phony. Do we hear the West Coast bidding?

John Horne Burns, author of "The Gallery," has a new novel, "Lucifer with a Book," scheduled for March publication.

## Wild West Bad Man

WICKED WATER. By Mackinlay Kantor. New York: Random House. 1949. 216 pp. \$2.75.

Reviewed by DALE L. MORGAN

THE cow-country West is at once the most and the least written about aspect of American life—the least written about, in a serious sense, in part because of the volume of absurdity that gets into print. It is only once in a while that a Walter Van Tilburg Clark, a Conrad Richter, or a Mackinlay Kantor sits down to write us a story about the West which necessarily becomes a story of the strange ways of the human heart and mind, and the strange and sometimes pathetic terms on which men and women must contrive to live.

Mr. Kantor's new novel is primarily a novel about a bad man which draws obviously upon the life of Tom Horn, who was hanged in Cheyenne in 1903. It is interesting, however, less as the story of the downfall of a hired killer than as a study in dark and complex motivations. Bus Crow is a villain in the good old Western convention, a big-boned, dark-faced, restless-eyed young man who likes to kill, who has chalked up sixty-seven dead men, and who puts away seven more before the novel has run its course. It is not this violence, nor even the social situation that spawns it, the war for survival between Pearl County's big cattlemen and the honest nesters and small-time rustlers, that engrosses Mr. Kantor. Why and how, he wants to know, is Bus Crow a killer, whence the sadistic impulse in him? We are made to see the roots of his behavior sunk deep in his childhood; the wounds of his childhood well up through the fabric of his adult life to soak it continually in sorrow, savage delight, hatred, and blood.

"Wicked Water" is the story also of Mattie MacLaird, a woman not quite "respectable" but less than predatory, who pretends to be twenty-five and would like to be thought younger

still, a blonde with hard blue eyes, loose and tender mouth, and, especially where scamps are concerned, over-generous impulses. In some respects she is the most interesting figure in the novel, for much more than Bus Crow, the deceptively easy-going manhunter, Speedy Rochelle, or the townsfolk of Pearl City, she exemplifies the anguished irreconcilables that are the warp and woof of human existence. More powerfully than by erotic impulse, she is moved by her maternal inclinations, and in pity for the boy who has been, she can give her body to the man he has become. Even when she knows him for a murderer, the boy can still interdict betrayal of the man. In the end it is Mattie in her tragic dilemma who is the most compelling figure of the novel.

Not the best novel that has been written about the West, and not quite on a level with Mr. Kantor's best work, being underkeyed and a little mechanical in some of its contrivances, "Wicked Water" is still an interesting and honest piece of writing that leaves the reader with something to think about.



—From the jacket of "Wicked Water."

## Values & Values

BORN 1925. By Vera Brittain. New York: The Macmillan Co. 1949. 320 pp. \$3.50.

THE BIG BARBECUE. By Dorothy B. Hughes. New York: Random House. 1949. 310 pp. \$2.75.

Reviewed by NANCY GROBERG CHAIKIN

MISS BRITAIN'S new novel is the story of a generation. In the person of Adrian Carbury, son of an idealistic English clergyman, we meet the generation which was jolted by World War II into a somewhat questionable adulthood. It was an adulthood based on insecurities, born of anxieties and unpredictables, rather than of stability, and it had to fight its way to maturity.

In Adrian's case, we have a history of the peculiar relationship existing between a father raised in rich, certain times, convinced of the futility and outrage of war by his soldiering in World War I, and a son whose frame of experience leads him to accept as inevitable the unrest and perpetual crisis which characterize his youth. With all the cruelty of adolescence, Adrian rebuffs the passionate interest and ambitious devotion of that kindly man who learns sadly what is, perhaps, the lesson of many parents: revolutionary to their own fathers, they are reactionary to their children. Though Adrian emerges at last to a maturity which recognizes the value of his father's perilous crusade against war, though he comes to understand him more and more as he plays his own role in the Second World War, the lesson is a hard one and is learned, characteristically, and, perhaps inevitably, a little too late. Adrian is to achieve his peace, we learn, after his father's death, through the stars, in the study of whose schemes and laws he has known, since childhood, the only constant order in an apparently disorderly universe.

Miss Brittain's book is a serious and earnest endeavor to examine the problems of a frustrated generation and to present, in the characters of her liberal minister and his son, the cleavage in thought and temperament which arise as a result of their respective eras. Unfortunately, her book moves too slowly to be effective, (when it moves at all!), for her characters have a tendency to analyze themselves and each other out of existence. We get the feeling of having read a treatise rather than a novel. There is too much speech-making, too much hymn-singing, too much

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