

late that he cannot ignore the machine represented by Mike Slattery (possibly the best portrait of a working politician anybody has given us) and yields a great measure of personal dignity. Finally, in search of personal fulfilment, Joe is offered and refuses the love of his daughter's New York roommate, which comes too late, and after that it is the twilight world of careful respectability, quiet alcoholism, and spectator relationships which set the stage for the assemblage of 1945. "Somewhere, finally, after his death, he was placed in the great past, where only what he is known to have said and done can contradict all that he did not say, did not do. And then, when that time was reached when he was placed in the great past, he went out of the lives of all of the rest of us, who are awaiting our turn."

Before killing himself, Marcus Brutus is supposed to have cried out his disillusionment: "O virtue! I thought you were something; but you are only an empty phantom!" Now, in focusing on the three generations preceding 1945 John O'Hara seems to have arrived at a similar conclusion, and for world travelers who read his book, this visit "back home" will offer plenty of fresh insight and nostalgic pleasure.

Sickly Strife

"Adam, Where Art Thou?" by Heinrich Böll (translated from the German by Merwyn Savill. Criterion Books. 176 pp. \$3), is a sturdy novel by one of Germany's postwar writers who takes as his theme here the utter senselessness of war.

By Robert Pick

OVER the last five years or so the name of Heinrich Böll has become very well known in his native Germany. He has been recognized as one of its new prose writers of distinction, and in fact he writes extremely well. His style has a persuasiveness all its own and a kind of sturdy beauty. By a succession of rather ordinary observations he brings his characters to life. With an economical use of details suggesting Japanese drawings he builds up a scene

out of an apparent chaos and leads the action to a climax without ever once raising his voice.

Take, for instance, the one love scene in his latest novel, "Adam, Where Art Thou?" Feinhals, a most unsoldierly soldier doing duty with a small field hospital in the eastern part of Nazi-occupied Hungary late in 1944, has been attracted by Ilona, a young teacher who has stayed behind in the school building which Feinhals's unit has taken over. He knows very little about the girl, a devout Catholic. Only when the Russian tanks approach the small town does she tell him that her family live in the ghetto, constantly endangered by the last-minute activities of the extermination squads of the occupiers.

That discovery does not influence the boy's feelings in the least: he is neither shocked by finding himself involved with a Jewess under the eyes of his racial-minded superiors, nor is he particularly moved by her tragic situation. All he knows and feels is his love for Ilona, and all Ilona feels is her love for him. For a moment they cling to each other and after a kiss part, never to see each other again. That scene is so powerful that its aftermath—Ilona's death at the hands of a concentration camp killer—is, for all its horror, an anticlimax.

It is much the same with the mordantly ironical story of another character in the novel, a mess orderly named Finck, who is sent by his colonel to Hungary in search of some genuine Tokay. Lugging a suitcase with some bottles of that choice wine, Finck is killed in a ridiculous attempt on the part of the town's commander to halt a Russian tank unit, and so he dies a hero of a sort, a comical figure really. Feinhals's encounter with Finck's family upon his return adds nothing to the pathos of Finck's death. Nor does Feinhals's own death, through an American shell, at the threshold of his parents' home give any new meaning to what happened previously in the story.

The theme of this novel is the senselessness of war—"a disease like typhoid," to quote, as the author does, Saint-Exupéry. But by necessity this senselessness, no matter how eloquently shown, fails to give sub-

(Continued on page 32)

Ophelia Sings Under Observation

By Anne Young

MY FATHER was a good man,
He never betrayed me—
My mother—God rest her—
A fair, gracious lady—
My brother, true as his own steel,
Till death and after,
Would defend me—my ladies,
For all their light laughter,
Were my friends—and little children
In a ring-game oft locked me
In their love—love? Who was it woke me,
Stabbed me, then mocked me
But him who calls me now Perdita—Ah Mother,
Did you whisper that while yet you rocked me?

Now the fiord is my father,
My mother the pale mere—
"If you rest on her bosom
You'll never know fear"
They sigh, my willow-maidens—
"Come, hang on me bravely,"
My brother, the stark ash tree cries—
Tenderly, gravely,
Sweet children of the east wind
In a mist-shroud will wind me,
Whilst my lover—that's the forked lightning—
Seeks never to find me,
And calls me now at last Petita—
Black cavern, hear that word—
Echo, be kind to me!

From Ash Can to Cataclysm

"American Painting from the Armory Show to the Depression," by Milton W. Brown (Princeton University Press, 244 pp. \$15), offers a history (and some interesting interpretations) of U.S. art from 1913 to 1929. Our reviewer is Professor Robert Goldwater, chairman of the Department of Art at Queens College, New York City, and author of *"Primitivism in Modern Painting."*

By Robert Goldwater

MEMORIES of the Twenties abound in the world of art, and many of its masters are still painting in styles whose main features they had developed during that time. Yet in an esthetic sense it is a period twice removed from the present: once by the realistic tendency (and WPA battles) of the Thirties, and once again by the increasingly abstract and symbolic painting of the last fifteen years. Thus, despite brilliant survivals, the art of pre-1929 appears as a story that ended with the impact of the Depression on the artist, and it is in this way that the author of *"American Painting from the Armory Show to the Depression"* quite properly tells his story.

His title tells us that he begins with 1913, when the Armory Show (that exhibition conceived in enthusiasm and generosity but born into vituperation and ridicule) presented the United States with a sudden kaleidoscopic view of the then shocking progression of European art from impressionism through cubism. Actually, however, he dwells at some length on the dozen years preceding the Armory show—years during which American art broke away from the pallid tenuousness of the nineteenth-century academic tradition. He is obviously fond of Henri, Luks, Sloan, Shinn, and their friends, of their energetic delight in scenes of city street, backyard, and tavern, and of their generous concern with the picturesque spectacle of their fellow men, most of whom, like themselves, were poor. Mr. Brown writes of these men, for whose sake (love giving license) he has expanded the name of the Ash Can School, with a detailed enthusiasm that he gives to no sin-

gle part of the ensuing two decades.

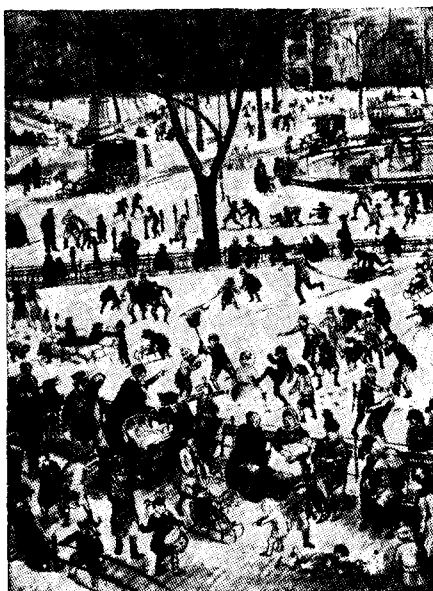
This is the key to an understanding of his two terminal dates. One is an artistic event, the other an economic cataclysm, and he is at some pains to explain their relevance by his belief in the double reference, esthetic and social, of all art—a belief with which there surely need be no argument. But it becomes apparent that he sees the period 1913 to 1929 as an interlude in a realistic tradition, which his turn of phrase constantly suggests is the proper direction and true character of American art. To him realism and "modernism" are opposite if not equal; the one public and socially useful, the other isolated, esoteric, and eventually meaningless.

Yet Mr. Brown has unraveled the complicated and interwoven events of thirty years of American painting to tell a clear and fascinating story. All these elements emerge with precision: the fight of Henri against the academy, Stieglitz and the *cenacle* of "291," George Bellows's athletic figure, Max Weber's immersion in the modern movement, Hopper and Burchfield as romantic realists, and Marsh's virtuoso draftsmanship. He has done pioneer work in gathering the documents that tell the tale of changing critical tastes from Frank Jewett Mather to Duncan Phillips, and of the education out of conservatism of some of the outstanding

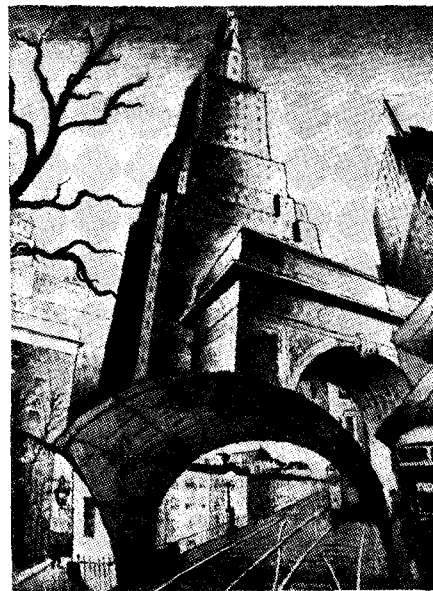
"modernist" collectors. His account of the "pseudo-scientific" theories of Maratta and Dow is among the most valuable sections of his book.

This is admittedly a broad history of the development and interaction of the general artistic tendencies of a time. Into it have been fitted short characterizations of a very great number of individual artists, and the result is a rich and well-filled chronicle. In many cases these descriptions are excellent, though in others the author's recurrent tendency to equate style with subject-matter and his strong preference for realism have altered a true perspective. Sympathy for backwoods "buck-eye" cannot save Walt Kuhn's posed figures from emptiness; and, whatever the initial impulse and influence, the Sovers' sentimental renderings have little to do with Degas. Similarly, Hopper's vision is much more penetrating than "snapshot," and Marin does not portray New York (much less Delaunay the Eiffel Tower) as "a fearful and oppressive social force." The significance of *collage* is hardly to be reduced to a "manipulation of materials," nor is love for the "esoteric" the outstanding quality of the Arensberg collection, centered as it is on cubism.

Though it is outside his theme Mr. Brown writes as though he regrets all that has taken place in American art and taste since 1940. Do we today still believe that "modernism" (sic) is a passing excess? I think most observers of today would give to the facts of the esthetic history a very different set of values. But Mr. Brown has written an important book, and it is good to see American art dealt with in a historical fashion.



William J. Glackens's "Washington Square."



—From the book

Glenn O. Coleman's "Bus View."