

Fiction

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were but houses and it took more than servants to make a home." He is being exploited by his servants and victimized by both the government and warring political gangs. Into this situation trips a blue-eyed, elfin-faced young woman from one of Seoul's orphanages, looking for a job; from here to the melodramatic climax in an invaded Seoul the resemblance to a class-B movie increases. Tough Johnny forsakes his money and dancing girls, makes ice-cream for the children at the orphanage, and engages in other philanthropic acts. The subject matter becomes absurd, the characters unbelievable. Even the language is either awkward or clichéd: the girl's "slight body tensed, then grew limp as his lips closed on hers." But the girl is safe; Johnny has fallen in love: "We're going to be married, and we're going to build a home . . . with a fireplace."

Mr. Sneider has already demonstrated that he is a versatile and talented young man. In several of these stories the versatility is more apparent than the talent.

LADY NAMED LOU UP TO DATE: Roy Chanslor has picked up an appropriate title for his novel *"The Ballad of Cat Ballou"* (Little, Brown, \$3.50), because it is a ballad for sure, and one in that bawdy, sometimes ribald, pseudo-tear-jerking tradition that has done so much in the past to soup up the American literary scene. Presumably based on a bunkhouse ballad of old Wyoming, this one tells of a hot-blooded gal who was loved by one man, lusted after by many others, and who ended up behind bars more than once in her career.

She stood there in the courtroom,
An' she heard the sentence dread,
As the judge said, "You must
dangle

By the neck until you're dead."

Mr. Chanslor's version of the ballad is in prose, but it swings and sways in its movement. I suspect he has twisted the noses of a thousand writers of Westerns, for not only does

Cat Ballou probably stem from a lady known as Lou but, for good measure, the author has lavishly dipped into the plethora of mammary glands that in late years have trademarked such yarns as "Forever Amber," effectively transferring all this to what he calls Wyoming. Did Cat Ballou so dangle by the neck? Did she join the others on Boot Hill or did she go to a greater reward? Just when you suspect that Mr. Chanslor somehow has managed an incredibly silly book he closes an eye, boots you back into line, and pleasantly reminds you you are reading a Western to end all Westerns, a *tour de force*, a dime novel of the first water.

—DONALD HOUGH.

LADY OR TIGER?: For those who remember Helen McInnes's psychological thriller, *"Above Suspicion,"* Paul Hyde Bonner's brief new novel, *"With Eyes Wide Open"* (Scribner, \$2.75), may be described as a restrained variation on the same theme keyed to the *haut monde*. Its methods are oblique. It hints circumspectly at the possible core of menace underlying the enigma of its story. At the end, in lady-or-tiger fashion, we are left to guess at the truth of the past and the shape of coming events.

The wealthy American Anthony Gaylord, seeking distraction from the grief of his wife's recent death, is solacing himself with solitary shooting in the Scottish lowlands. Thrown into an encounter with the noblewoman from whom he has leased the hunting rights, he discovers her to be a dazzling, sharp-shooting beauty. By the time Anthony discovers he is falling in love with Emily it develops that she has been twice widowed. In both cases the circumstances had been harrowing—and odd. People become self-conscious when her name is mentioned. When Emily comes to America to be Anthony's guest for some return-engagement shooting in South Carolina's swank plantation region (a white-haired financier-statesman has the place nearby) another death occurs to blight the jolly party.

We are left with the puzzle: did she, or didn't she? If she did, what prospect awaits Anthony Gaylord as "with both eyes open" he commits himself to marry Emily in a few months' time. Smooth, like all of Mr. Bonner's work, it is also curiously unreal, cool, and detached. It leaves me cool and detached. I don't much care whether the praying mantis eats Anthony Gaylord or not.

—EDMUND FULLER.

OLD-TIME BOSS: In *"The Big Fella"* (Macmillan, \$3.95) Henry W. Clune reconstructs the political climate of an upstate New York town in the



—Jacket design for "The Big Fella."

"... talent for organizing his fellows."

early years of the century. Mr. Clune knows his Americana well and describes it in realistic detail—from the gaslit foyer of the town fancy house (where the Big Fella picks up the monthly "ice" at the start of his career in statecraft) to the beery precincts of a political picnic (where he is tapped as a candidate for governor). The large gentleman is Dan Herne, a muscular politician whose talent for organizing his fellows carries him almost to the political heights, and who is made by Mr. Clune into the prototype of an American ward boss in the years before World War I. The vitality which Mr. Clune gives to Herne and his milieu is not shared by the other members of the cast; the long-suffering wife, the sensitive son, the Lillian Russellish Other Woman move woodenly against the richly documented background—but Mr. Clune's story has enough to sustain it nevertheless.

—MARTIN LEVIN.

JEWIS IN AMERICA: Readers acquainted with Charles Angoff's affectionate novels on American-Jewish life are sometimes astonished at the vast canvas of his work and the hundreds of characters who people his books. Now, in his latest collection of short stories, *"Something About My Father and Other People"* (Yoseloff, \$4.50), he introduces dozens of characters who do not appear in his novels, yet they are recognizable as the same sort of people.

In this collection of thirty-five short stories, mostly about Jews in America, Mr. Angoff focuses on undramatic, lonely forever-seeking men and women, who find that life, in its casually cruel way, passes them by. A woman is barren; a few men and women veer away from Judaism and find emptiness in its stead; a husband is cuckolded; a little boy remembers Anna Pavlova dancing.

These tales, as anyone can see, are

LITERARY I.Q. ANSWERS

1. Björnson.
2. Carmer.
3. Collodi.
4. Cullen.
5. Defoe.
6. Elliott.
7. Frost.
8. Greene.
9. Hughes.
10. Larcom.
11. Lewisohn.
12. Mitchell.
13. Maeterlinck.
14. Miller.
15. Moore.
16. Onions.
17. Rolland.
18. Sassoon.
19. Spender.
20. Tasso.

not blood-and-thunder adventure stories, nor are they sophisticated mood-and-atmosphere stories made famous in some of our slicker quality magazines. Neither are they left-over slivers from Charles Angoff's fictional workshop. They are solid character sketches and, more often than not, the people come to life.

In "Goldie Tabak" Mr. Angoff depicts the attractive shop girl who is admired from a distance by the narrator. That Goldie eventually leaves the scene in an attempt to defeat the tuberculosis that will claim her life is sad, but no sadder than most of the stories spun by the writer. "Simche der Chochem" is the story of a dentist who wants desperately to be a medical doctor. His attempt—which fails—is, somehow, typical of most of the men and women captured in these pages.

What distinguishes these stories is that Mr. Angoff—especially in his Jewish tales, which make up more than two-thirds of the stories—has a firm foundation of facts on which to build his Jewish characters. There is not here the glibness of Herman Wouk's characters, nor the Old Testament people of Sholem Asch. Mr. Angoff's Jews live in America and if you want to know the American Jew this is where you will find him.

—HAROLD U. RIBALOW.

ALSO NOTED: "The Captive Rider," by Anne Downes Miller (Lippincott, \$3.50), makes it plain that marrying a banker's daughter may lead to social but not to marital success. When Roger Parton looks up from his business affairs long enough to see that a personal crisis is brewing it dawns on him that he has lost the girl he should have married in the first place. Veteran-novelist Miller ("Speak to Me, Brother," "Heartwood," etc.) presents her social milieu convincingly and probes the human personality with skill and some depth.

"The Empire," by George de Mare (Putnam, \$3.95), is yet another addition to the shelf of novels about big business. One by one Mr. de Mare tests the public-relations men on the staff of the Empire and most of them are dismally found wanting. There is the love- and memo-worn executive who takes his life, the discarded section head who succumbs to thrombosis, the promising junior exec who lands on skid row when his wife has a nervous breakdown, and a host of hired and fired hands terrorized by the pay check. The Empire itself is a graveyard of ideals and cold-eyed caretakers who bare teeth to the inmates and exude charm to the public. Occasionally this first novel catches fire when it deals pointedly with desk problems, but too often it falls apart

trying to cope with a diverse variety of bed situations.

"The Dispossessed," by Geoffrey Wagner (Devin-Adair, \$3.50), tells of British Army Captain Terrell who is discharged from a mental hospital bearing a tag of "constitutional inferiority" after being shellshocked in North Africa. Inadequate though the diagnosis is, it ruins Terrell's career in Britain so effectively that he and his loyal wife take refuge in the U.S. An innocent mishap here lands him in the hospital where, once his case history as a psychoneurotic is revealed, the whole "therapeutic" routine begins all over again. In despair

he commits suicide. Poet-critic Wagner does a good deal of ranting against "Uncle Siggy's textbook" as interpreted by psychiatrists, but his highly competent storytelling makes the book a minor *tour de force*.

"A Man's World," by Douglas Fairbairn (Simon & Schuster, \$3), takes us into the adolescent world of an orphaned French girl and a roving deckhand on a luxury yacht. After a barroom courtship in Cannes the couple plot a stowaway elopement but are frustrated. This simply-narrated, tender first novel is a sort of male counterpart of Françoise Sagan's "Bonjour Tristesse." —S. P. MANSTEN.



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SARTRE**

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