

Fiction

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tribute to the author's skill. She manages to create exactly, "the infinitely fragile, delicate atmosphere of the sanatorium, the aura that surrounded Hardpan Farm."

THE RESTIVE RICH: Edwin Gilbert's fifth novel "Silver Spoon" (Lippincott, \$4.95), is set in Glenway, the vast baronial estate of the Gowden clan in Connecticut. The four thousand acres are dotted with the mansions of Horace Gowden, Sr., and members of his patriarchially dominated family. But while dominated, Horace's children show their own restiveness. Son Horace, Jr., escapes from corporate duties into astronomy, sister Hester paints, daughter Madeline periodically prowls the countryside for extra-marital excitement, while the younger son John, a kind of crew-cut Hamlet, interests himself in a local restoration project somewhat fashioned after Williamsburg.

The inbred cautions of the clan have been so extreme that only a major shift in its public relations policy would permit eminent photographer Grace Anders to come to Glenway to make a pictorial record of the family, its servants (ninety), and its preserves. Grace, a pretty, no-nonsense camera journalist, does things to Glenway: she breaks through Horace, Sr.'s tyrannous exterior; she gives Hester's artistic career a push in the right direction; and she provides the spark that changes John Gowden from a melancholy (and, if the truth be told, tedious) pussyfooter into a modern businessman alive to the creative and constructive social opportunities of big money.

"Silver Spoon" is centrally John's story, his emergence from inhibition and retreat, his discovery of love, and his development into manhood. The process is slow, sometimes infuriatingly so. But John has more problems than even perceptive Grace is aware of as he begins the difficult task of remaking himself in the austere pressuring environment of Glenway. He has problems with a dominant father and a kindly indifferent mother. He deeply mistrusts his father's odd major domo, Fole, a large, hulking man with a cat's tread and a roomful of birds and pornographic pictures. He fights a sense of guilt when his over-burdened brother collapses with a heart attack. And he has problems with women: with Betts, his sister-in-law, who is in love with him; with Lucinda Bayles, who has been chosen for him; and with Grace,

who fascinates him even as she uncovers his weaknesses to himself one by one.

Mr. Gilbert keeps his complicated story moving dramatically on all its levels, romantic, social, and financial. The corporate crisis may seem a little theatricalized, the solution to John's amorous difficulties a none too convincing surprise, and the obviously symbolic climactic hurricane just too neatly timed, but there is no denying the author's ability to manipulate masses of people and events entertainingly and illuminatingly.

—CHARLES LEE.

LOST ENCHANTMENT: Iris Murdoch, one of the most rhapsodically praised novelists of England today, has made her reputation with products of the imagination which seem dazzling, more than a little wayward, and valuable for the unexpectedness of their forays into the secret places of mind and heart.

In her new book, "The Sandcastle" (Viking, \$3.95), she has undertaken to put those brilliant gifts under the discipline of strict conformity to a familiar pattern. In any art much must be lost when the unique is exchanged for the serviceable. In foregoing the opportunities which her special gifts open to her, Iris Murdoch seems to have allowed herself to be caught in a narrow bypass, the only escape from which is back into the broad, featureless reaches of banality. She is still light years ahead of the routine performer in this field. To a domestic problem novel she manages to impart wit and grace and all the qualities of a civilized intelligence. Yet something a little dogged stiffens her touch and slackens her pace when first she practises to conform.

Her story is of a middle-aged schoolteacher who falls in love with a young girl—a painter of genius—and is loved by her in return. For a time he cherishes the hope of bolting to a new romantic experience, away from a bullying wife and troublesome children. But in the end he is made aware, with the courageous help of the girl, that to desert his responsibilities would be to "break so many, many things."

It may be ungenerous to outline this narrative so bluntly in terms of soap-opera and of the less elegant alcoves of Noel Coward's theatre. No work of Iris Murdoch could be completely stereotyped like the one or lushly sentimental like both, yet it is impossible to find in her treatment of the familiar the refreshment that one has taken from her experiments with the enchanted. The chief difficulty is that in accepting realism

Miss Murdoch has missed reality. Her central figure never comes alive as lover, husband, father, friend, teacher, politician or thinker. Every figure in the book is more believable than he and every other theme suggested is more provocative than that of his slightly hysterical infatuation.

Miss Murdoch turns away from sub-themes and minor characters with only tantalizing hints of what she might have done with them to anatomize at patient, sometimes even at pedestrian length, the crises of a love affair of which some of the turns seem wilfully inept and others seem unworldly almost to the point of childishness.

Urgent message from admirers in Wonderland to Iris Murdoch, self-exiled in Suburbia: Please come home! All is forgiven!

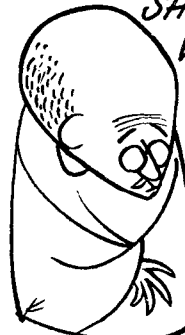
—JAMES GRAY.

TALENT OUT OF THE MIDWEST: In his first published book "The Anatomy Lesson and Other Stories" (Viking, \$3.50), Evan S. Connell, Jr., presents impressive proof that he is equally at home in a short narrative sketch about the death of an American pilot in the Pacific ("The Yellow Raft") and in the more complex long short story of domestic tension, "Arcturus." He can write effective satire as he does in "The Condor and the Guests," a merciless depiction of a cocktail hour in Parallel, Kansas, in which a group of thoroughly odious bourgeois torment the giant condor which their gross host has chained to a tree in his back yard. He has created some memorable and varied people: the haunted Mexican of "The Fisherman from Chihuahua" whose conduct shatters the repose of a waterfront bar in Monterey; the dedicated art teach-

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WHAT MEAN THESE STONES? By Millar Burrows. Meridian. \$1.35. The author of "The Dead Sea Scrolls" assesses the importance of modern archeological research in the Holy Land.

CORRECTION: SR's Picker of the Paperbacks regrets that in describing "Caste and Class in a Southern Town" in the March 16 issue he referred to the author, John Dollard, as "late." Mr. Dollard is very much alive, at Yale University, where he is professor of psychology.

er of the title story with his apathetic and untalented class of university students; the rootless expatriate of "The Walls of Avila" whose return home is somewhat less than triumphant.

In spite of Mr. Connell's indisputable talent and intelligence, I am forced to make the purely personal comment that I do not care for some of these perceptive and well-wrought

stories. I am confused by "The Trelis." I simply do not understand the dialogue between Inspector Polajenko and the talkative silversmith Tony Miula; perhaps there is some larger meaning here which I have failed to unearth. I think that the characters of "I Came from Yonder Mountain" are unconvincing, and that the story itself is contrived and unpleasantly arty. I am not sure whose leg Mr. Connell is pulling, for example, when he uses language like "barely parted and moist are the elfin lips" of the daughter in "Arcturus" nor do I understand the significance of the fact that the father in this story is "remotely descended" from Goethe. Frequently, in short, I am not quite sure where the author intends me to go. To whom does the artist owe the greater responsibility—to himself or to his audience? I am less sure of the answer to this question than I was a few years ago. Certain stories in "The Anatomy Lesson" cause me to reconsider this question and some of the issues which are connected with it.

—WILLIAM PEDEN.

the admiration. This is the first book of this Danish writer, published when he was twenty-three, and it reveals him as a true original. He has taken for his domain the world of fable, fairy tale, legend, and myth—the Nordic variants—and run them through his Kierkegaardian mind.

What emerges are some strange stories indeed. Example: the population of a town in Denmark finds its kitchens occupied by, of all things, tigers; and they won't leave until a young man goes to bed with one of them, learns their language (the tongue of primitive, elemental forces, alive, but yet buried within each of us, waiting to be called forth) and, for a time, frees the village of their unwelcome guests.

The title story, and the other six as well, are written with an ironic earnestness and a potent, topsy-turvy strain of logic that keeps the material ever revolving before your eyes. There is blood in these stories: they are never entirely divorced from life. This reader was relieved to put down the book, but this is only testimony to the success of Sorensen's method. It is the most hypnotically dreamlike of books and if you want to see how it is done, take a deep breath and throw yourself into it. You'll be different when you close the covers. The translation is by Maureen Neiiendam.

—GERALD WALKER.

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KIERKEGAARDIAN FABLES: Cross Kafka with Hans Christian Andersen, says Angus Wilson in his admiring introduction to "Tiger in the Kitchen" (Abelard-Schuman, \$3.50) and you have Villy Sorensen. One can only agree, both with the comparison and