

By Granville Hicks

THIS year I was surprised, though not dismayed, by both the National Book Award in fiction and the Pulitzer Prize. If someone had arranged a sort of daily double for the two awards, and if I were a betting man, I should have laid my money on James Agee's "A Death in the Family" for the NBA and James Gould Cozzens's "By Love Possessed" for the Pulitzer, and I should have lost.

So far as the National Book Award is concerned, my basic assumption—and in this I turned out to be right—was that Cozzens would not get it. I have served on a couple of NBA fiction juries, and I know that the jurors are inclined not to do what is expected of them. The acclaim given to "By Love Possessed" on publication was, I felt, almost a guarantee that the jurors would pass it by.

What is more important, I am convinced that the extravagance of such admirers of Cozzens as Brendan Gill and John Fischer did him harm in many quarters. After their effusions, and after some revelations of Mr. Cozzens's *Weltanschauung*, even one who had admired and praised the novel, as I had, had to work hard to remember it really is a good book. A full-scale counterattack was inevitable, and it came with Dwight MacDonald's completely witty but partly wrong-headed article in *Commentary*. The response to the MacDonald piece demonstrated how much resentment Cozzens and his devotees had managed to build up. That a more balanced evaluation of the novel will eventually prevail is indicated by the articles in a special Cozzens issue of *Critique*, a periodical published at the University of Minnesota, but for a time partisanship has been running high.

Assuming, then, that "By Love Possessed" would not win the National Book Award, whether it deserved it or not, I was prepared to bet on "A Death in the Family"—because it is good, because it is highbrow, and because a posthumous award always seems to have a special virtue. Why the jurors passed it by I have no idea. But, since they did pass it by, I am glad they chose John Cheever's "The Wapshot Chronicle." For one thing, though it is held together "by

spit and wire," as Carlos Baker observed in *The Saturday Review* of March 23, 1957, the "Chronicle" is as truly engaging, as completely readable, as any piece of fiction I encountered last year. For another, Cheever has been writing excellent short stories for twenty years or more with comparatively few kudos, and I was delighted to have his qualities recognized. One always feels happy when an award goes to a good writer, whatever opinions one has as to what may be best.

Unlike NBA juries, Pulitzer committees have tended to fulfil expectations, and that is why I thought "By Love Possessed" was a certainty. Cozzens's previous novel, "Guard of Honor," had received a Pulitzer, and the new novel seemed at least as worthy—an ambitious, carefully constructed, vigorously written book, conservative in outlook without being conventional and staunchly unfashionable without being stodgy. It is possible that "By Love Possessed" was turned down for what would seem to me to be the wrong reasons—for instance, because of the candor of scenes portraying sexual behavior—but the suggestion may do the com-

mittee an injustice. I just don't know.

In any case I can't complain about the Pulitzer choice because it would have been my choice if I had been voting on either committee. The decision would not have been easy. Certainly I should have given a thought to "The Wapshot Chronicle" and to Bernard Malamud's "The Assistant" and Mark Harris's "Something About a Soldier." But in the end I should have felt compelled to choose between "By Love Possessed" and "A Death in the Family."

How can one weigh two such different novels against one another? Cozzens is a great craftsman of fiction; Agee was a poet. Cozzens sought to sum up a lifetime's observation of men in society; Agee was releasing a cry from the heart. Cozzens's great strength is his detachment, Agee's his involvement. Each has his virtues, and each has his corresponding defects.

Choice becomes a choice between qualities, and if I ultimately choose Agee, it is because I know that his virtues have more importance to me in the present and because I believe they count more heavily for survival. Cozzens has always and rightly been known as a cold novelist, and although it seems to me that at the end of "By Love Possessed," when Arthur Winner realizes that his carefully built tower of reason has collapsed, he achieves a new kind of emotional intensity, a chill pervades

(Continued on page 47)



Pick of the Paperbacks



PYLON. By William Faulkner. Signet. 35¢. A powerful and original novel about three intense people caught up in the tenuous, dreamlike existence of the air races.

FOR THE SAKE OF HEAVEN. By Martin Buber. Translated by Ludwig Lewisohn. Meridian. \$1.45. The distinguished philosopher's fictional chronicle of the spiritual meaning of *hasidism* played against the background of the Napoleonic wars.

COURTROOM. By Quentin Reynolds. Popular. 50¢. This rousing biography tells the story of the crusading and controversial trial lawyer and judge, Samuel S. Liebowitz.

THE SEARCH WITHIN. By Theodor Reik. Evergreen. \$2.95. An articulate, literate psychoanalyst reviews his long

friendship with Freud, his own analysis, and the final codification of his own psychoanalytic philosophy.

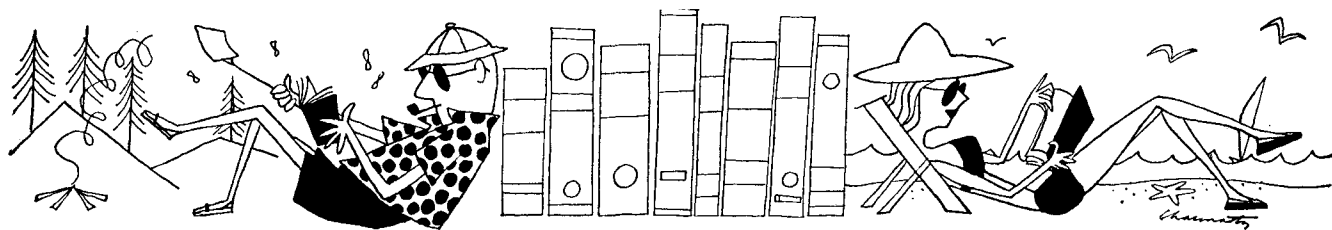
SMALLER CLASSICAL DICTIONARY. By Sir William Smith. Everyman. \$1.45. From abacus to Zosimus, this is a compact guide to gods and goddesses, myths and legends, and to the general miscellanea of ancient civilizations.

THE LIVING THOUGHTS OF RALPH WALDO EMERSON. Premier. 50¢. Selections from Emersonia include essays, poems, lectures, prefaced by a lengthy introduction by Edgar Lee Masters.

THE WORLD IN SPACE. By Alexander Marshack. Dell. 35¢. An introduction to the International Geophysical Year, what it is, what is planned, and what are the implications for future scientific study. For the layman.

BOOKS FOR SUMMER READING

This year's summer months offer reading material for the most diversified tastes, so, to spare you a measure of indecision in making your selections, SR, once again, has asked the book editors of thirty leading newspapers throughout the country to submit a dozen recent or soon-to-be-released titles that they themselves recommend. These appear below. On subsequent pages there is a forecast of some of the best books to be published in June, July, and August, as well as suggestions for non-literary fare complementary to your hobbies, your travels, and out-of-doors hours.



FIVE VOTES:

DEATH OF A NATION. By Clifford Dowdey. Knopf. \$5.

A stirring account of General Robert E. Lee and his men during three torturous days at Gettysburg's decisive battle. (Beatty, Cady, McManis, Molyneux, Troy.)

THE HARD BLUE SKY. By Shirley Ann Grau. Knopf. \$5.

The sultry atmosphere of the Mississippi Gulf envelopes this novel of fisherfolk who live in the remote and primitive world of the bayous. (Barkham, Bradley, Kirsch, Little, Nichols.)

TWO WOMEN. By Alberto Moravia. Translated by Angus Davidson. Farrar, Straus & Cudahy. \$4.95.

This realistic tale of a shrewd mother and her virtuous daughter, who becomes a prostitute, is a bitterly revealing portrayal of war's corruption. (Kogan, Lucchese, J. K. Sherman, T. B. Sherman, Tinkle.)

THREE VOTES:

THE CATTLEMEN. By Mari Sandoz. Hastings. \$6.50.

This historical account of the cattle industry with its cowboys and cattle barons gives a panoramic view of the Old West's glorious days. (Bradley, Hass, O'Neill.)

INSIDE RUSSIA TODAY. By John Gunther. Harper. \$5.95.

Behind the iron curtain and "inside" modern USSR, by an old hand at comprehensive and factual reportage. (Bradley, Lucchese, T. B. Sherman.)

THE LONG MARCH. By Simone de Beauvoir. Translated by Austryn Wainhouse. World. \$7.50.

Communist China, as seen by a leading French intellectual, who liked what she saw during her brief visit. (Hogan, Little, Nichols.)

SEIDMAN AND SON. By Elick Moll. Putnam. \$3.95.

A funny, often touching, novel of life and love in the complex milieu of New York's Seventh Avenue garment district. (Appel, Kirsch, Nordell.)

OTHER SELECTIONS:

ADMIRAL HORNBLOWER IN THE WEST INDIES. By C. M. Forester. Little, Brown. \$4.

THE AFFLUENT SOCIETY. By John K. Galbraith. Houghton Mifflin. \$4.

AFTERNOON OF AN AUTHOR. By F. Scott Fitzgerald. Scribners. \$3.50.

ALL ABOUT MEN. By Joseph H. Peck. Prentice-Hall. \$3.50.

AMERICAN MODERNS. By Maxwell Geismar. Hill & Wang. \$3.95.

ANATOMY OF A MURDER. Robert Traver. St. Martins. \$4.

THE BANQUET YEARS. By Roger Shattuck. Harcourt, Brace. \$8.50.

THE DIAMOND SMUGGLERS. By Ian Fleming. Macmillan. \$3.50.

THE ENEMY CAMP. By Jerome Weidman. Random House. \$4.95.

THE FINAL FACE OF EVE. By Evelyn Lancaster. McGraw-Hill. \$3.95.

THE FIRST YEAR OF AMERICAN HERITAGE. Simon & Schuster. \$10.

THE FLAMING HEART. By Mario Praz. Anchor. \$1.25.

THE FOOD OF FRANCE. By Waverly Root. Knopf. \$9.

FOREIGN POLICY: The Next Phase. By Thomas K. Finletter. Harper. \$3.50.

A FRIEND IN POWER. By Carlos Baker. Scribners. \$3.95.

FROM APE TO ANGEL. By H. R. Hays. Knopf. \$7.50.

THE GREAT EB. By Herman Kogan. University of Chicago. \$4.95.

THE HIRELING. By L. P. Hartley. Rinehart. \$3.50.

ICE PALACE. By Edna Ferber. Doubleday. \$3.95.

I'M NOT STILLER. By Max Frisch. Abelard-Schuman. \$4.50.

THE IMAGE MAKERS. By Bernard V. Dryer. Harper. \$4.95.

INDEPENDENT MAN. By Harry Barnard. Scribners. \$5.95.

LAND WITHOUT JUSTICE. By Milovan Djilas. Harcourt, Brace. \$5.75.

THE LOOM OF HISTORY. By Herbert Muller. Harper. \$7.50.

THE MAGIC BARREL. By Bernard Malamud. Farrar, Straus & Cudahy. \$3.75.

MAINLY ON THE AIR. By Max Beerbohm. Knopf. \$3.75.

THE MALIGNANT HEART. By Celestine Sibley. Doubleday. \$2.95.

(Continued on page 43)

THE thirty critics who participated in SR's annual summer book poll are:

DAVID APPEL, *Philadelphia Inquirer*
FREDERIC BABCOCK, *Chicago Tribune*
JOHN BARKHAM, *Saturday Review*
Syndicate

RICHMOND BEATTY, *Nashville Tennessean*

ALICE DIXON BOND, *Boston Herald*
VAN ALLEN BRADLEY, *Chicago Daily News*

CHARLES A. BRADY, *Buffalo Evening News*

ERNEST CADY, *Columbus Dispatch*
LESLIE CROSS, *Milwaukee Journal*

A. D. EMMART, *Baltimore Sun*
PAUL FLOWERS, *Memphis Commercial Appeal*

VICTOR HASS, *Omaha World Herald*
WILLIAM HOGAN, *San Francisco Chronicle*

ROBERT R. KIRSCH, *Los Angeles Times*
HERMAN KOGAN, *Chicago Sun-Times*

CARL VICTOR LITTLE, *Houston Press*
SAM F. LUCCHESI, *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*

JOHN MC MANIS, *Detroit News*
ROBERT MOLYNEUX, *Pittsburgh Press*

LUTHER NICHOLS, *San Francisco Examiner*

ROD NORDELL, *Christian Science Monitor*

FRANK O'NEILL, *Cleveland News*
ROBERT L. PERKIN, *Denver Rocky Mountain News*

JOHN K. SHERMAN, *Minneapolis Star & Tribune*

THOMAS B. SHERMAN, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*

ROBERT I. SNAJDR, *Cleveland Plain Dealer*

LON TINKLE, *Dallas News*
GEORGE TROY, *Providence Journal*

JOHN COOK WYLLIE, *Richmond News Leader*

FREDERICK YEISER, *Cincinnati Enquirer*