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**THE DEVIL'S OWN.** By Peter Curtis (Norah Lofts). Crime Club. \$3.50 Pleasant English spinster, having taught at home and in Africa, returns to native soil to assume rural post that breeds witchcraft, hexes, sudden death. Strong on atmosphere, but told with a sure touch.

**THE SEARCH FOR TABATHA CARR.** By Richard Martin Stern. Scribners. \$3.75. New York lawyer journeys to France and Austria on trail of coy heiress; cops, FBI, CIA, Reds, everybody gets in on this one. Noble scenery; yarn moves when allowed.

**DEATH ON A BACK BENCH.** By Francis Harper. \$2.95. M. P. does permanent fadeout during Parliament session; newshawk Jim Gibbs and wife endure two kidnappings each but bring home the big story. Jolly, lethal, and fast.

**STOP AT NOTHING.** By John Welcome. Knopf. \$2.95. Fast cars and fast horses share spotlight in this civilized travel piece that takes in Dublin, London, Provence, French Riviera. Placidly violent.

**WALDO.** By Lane Kauffmann. Lippincott. \$3.75. Florida realtor's sportive spouse confesses to playboy photographer's murder, but Northern lawyer, authority on criminal history (many fact cases are discussed), has other ideas. Witty and zestful.

**MURDER AND BLUEBERRY PIE.** By Frances and Richard Lockridge. Lippincott. \$2.95. Flier's widow witnesses Connecticut grand dame's will; New York City mugging death ties in; editor of village weekly alert; so is Detective Nathan Shapiro; love finds a way. Usual agreeable performance.

**ASSAULT ON A QUEEN.** By Jack Finney. Simon & Schuster. \$3.75. Restless radio publicity man joins group who plan refloating of ancient German U-boat sunk off Long Island; bold venture is thereafter put through in mid-Atlantic. Beautifully detailed yarn carries conviction—and reader.

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*We have been  
busy this year.  
Everything indicates  
we'll keep right on  
being busy—and diverse.*

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PRESS



## POETRY

## Four New Voices in Verse

*"Saint Judas," by James Wright (56 pp.), "Light and Dark," by Barbara Howes (78 pp.), "A Dream of Governors," by Louis Simpson (87 pp.), and "Apples from Shinar," by Hyam Plutzik (all published by Wesleyan University Press. Cloth, \$3; paper, \$1.65), are the works of four young poets which mark the inauguration of another new series of poetry publications. Winfield Townley Scott, the author of "Mr. Whittier and Other Poems," often comments on contemporary poetry for SR.*

## By Winfield Townley Scott

GEORGE P. ELLIOTT, discussing a contemporary poem which he admired, cited it as the sort of thing apparently written "not because it was beautiful but because it was true." The comment may be applied to the poems of James Wright. With his first book, "The Green Wall"—the Yale Younger Poets Series' book two years ago—Wright stated that he wanted "to make the poems say something humanly important instead of just showing off with language." And now with his second, "Saint Judas," he says, "To me, poetry in this age is the art of stating and examining and evaluating truth."

I don't suppose this obviates that Frenchman's remark, so admired in the twentieth century, that "poetry is made with words"; nor that it altogether eludes the other much admired insistence that poetry is "a game"—if we take the technics of this or any art in the broadest sense of "play." Nonetheless Wright's intent is profoundly different from the dominant theories and practices of verse in this century: from, let's say, the Imagist era, the subsequent Pound-Eliot years, or the more recent Neo-Classic, academic schools of the abominable sestina and other filigree works. There was, in a way, fervent moral intent in the politically-minded poetry of the 1930s but that poetry grabbed all the wrong traditions and, as everyone knows, is mostly dead.

Not to be too academic about it, one may at least remark that James Wright's tradition extends back to such poets as George Crabbe and Wordsworth and, in our own times, as Wright himself has specified, may be found in Frost and

Robinson; behind them importantly, I would add, Hardy, that almost secretly favorite poet of so many later poets as different from each other as Dylan Thomas and Robert Penn Warren. The danger of the tradition is banality, which young Mr. Wright does not always escape, bringing more solemnly weighted tone to the presented situation than it appears to bear. The glory of the tradition—and Wright shows exciting promise in it—is a poetry that moves us deeply through (what seems, at any rate) the simplest, most direct language; and that is, let us remember, at its most intense pitch of intellect and emotion, the greatest poetry in English.

I am not postponing James Wright but really talking about him all this time, for he represents ably the tradition he avows. His poems are of human sorrows, fears, and losses, of human loves, of the ugliness and pain in human guilt. These are indeed moral poems but they are not moralizing poems; they are nearer to Robinson than to Frost. It amazes me how Wright, though the voice and vocabulary are his own, can employ freshly the Robinson syntax:

Sorry for him or any man  
Who lost his labored wealth to thieves,  
Today I mourn him, as I can,  
By leaving in their golden leaves  
Some luscious apples overhead.

Now may my abstinence restore  
Peace to the orchard and the dead.  
We shall not nag them any more.

This by no means wholly typifies Wright: he has other tones. As Robinson himself remarked, "Nine-tenths of poetry is *how* it's done"—a good reminder when we discuss the moral intent of poetry. And Wright shows a fine, imaginative use of language—as in the beautiful poem "Evening"—as well as a probing seriousness into what-it-all-means.

His book, "Saint Judas," is one of the four titles with which Wesleyan University Press has launched a praiseworthy publication of poetry, in well-made, attractive volumes.

Barbara Howes's "Light and Dark" forwards an already notable lyric talent, which is far from vacant of mind. At times she is slight, at times less subtle as to her point than one could wish. But her best poems, and this new collection has a lot of them, have the well-controlled character of reticent understatement. Taking off from a nudist colony into a discussion of love, Miss Howes happens to provide a description of her own poetry:

... Well-tailored love

Not only demonstrates but hides,  
Not only lodges with variety  
But will keep private its dark bed.

She is a poet of blood and passion no less than a poet, at times, of cool observation. She can give lessons in gracefully turning upon a conceit, in deft (not mawkish) employment of the feminine or domestic note; and she can carry such grace to the deeper, more

In "Mexican Manuscript Painting of the Early Colonial Period" (Yale, \$10), Donald Robertson explores a hitherto dark area in art history. Illustrated with eighty-eight reproductions, his study focuses upon medieval Mexico at the point in time when pre-Conquest art met and fused with Spanish culture.



"Kings and Lords,"  
Mexico City, 1571.



"Merchants and Workers of Gold,  
Precious Stones, and rich feathers."