

are books that every once in a while I must take down and taste of a page or two. As long as I live I will every once in a while be taking this book down to taste of it for five or ten minutes or maybe a half hour.

And so . . . move on through the book and meet a highly companionable man who rates among many of us as the greatest of writers on modern war.

Mr. Sandburg's words are sure to be echoed by all who read this book. "Night Drop" concerns itself with the men of the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions who were parachuted or who glided into Normandy behind Utah Beach several hours before dawn on June 6, 1944. Their mission was to establish a firm foothold for the invading army. The operation started badly when hundreds of men and many gliders landed in flooded marshes which had not shown up on aerial photographs. Many drowned, and a huge amount of precious material was lost. In the darkness men stumbled inland, hoping to find their units, which were scattered all over. Small groups gathered under any officer who happened to loom out of the night.

GENERAL MARSHALL had been assigned to be combat historian of this operation. During the days and weeks after D-day he interviewed hundreds of the men who had taken part in it. He wrote his tactical combat report (intelligible only to military experts), and then wove these interviews into this book. Its fascination lies in the fact that it is a story primarily about men—not about tactics.

You meet men such as Harrison Summers, "a slender, quietly bashful soldier, Laughing Boy in uniform," who before morning had killed sixty-five Germans. You are introduced to tough Captain Ben Schwartzwalder (now football coach at Syracuse University), and to men like J. Lawton Collins, Matt Ridgeway, Maxwell D. Taylor, James Van Fleet, Slim Jim Gavin, and Anthony McAuliffe, all shouldering the first major commands of what were to be illustrious combat careers. But mostly you meet the ordinary paratroopers and, because of General Marshall's skill, you get to know them well, and often suffer with them during those first awful days. They seem almost a race apart. General Marshall writes:

The average American paratrooper is born south of the tracks, and such gentleness as he knows in childhood comes of the love of his family. He volunteers for jumping because he yearns for bigger country and a little prestige. They get it in the service, and nigh invariably they return to civil walks the steadiest of citizens.

PERSONAL HISTORY

Biography of an Attitude



Bryher—"spoiled" in a unique way."

"The Heart to Artemis: A Writer's Memoirs," by Bryher (Harcourt, Brace & World. 307 pp. \$5.75), chronicles an unusual childhood followed by years as an "eternal wanderer on the periphery" of intellectual society. James Gray is author of "On Second Thought," a collection of literary essays.

By JAMES GRAY

AUTOBIOGRAPHY is the most tempting and the most perilous of literary forms. Confession may lead deep into confusion rather than high into the light of understanding. It is not even necessarily good for the soul. The most conspicuous confessor of all time, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, comprehended his own tragedy less well at the end of a long, painful experiment in self-examination than he did at the start. The more vehemently he insists that his emotions were strong, the more clearly he reveals to the modern reader that they were pitifully weak; each time this self-conscious romantic clasps his heart and declares that love ruled his life, the more embarrassingly does he expose the truth—that the animating impulse of all his relationships was spite. It is no wonder that one of the most audacious of geniuses, George Bernard Shaw, resolutely rejected the temptations of autobiography. No one, he once wrote by way of explanation, could tell the truth about marriage unless he hated his wife.

An English-born citizen of the world, Bryher (née Winifred Ellerman) has

worked with many forms, most successfully perhaps with the historical novel. In her latest book she has told part of her own life story (more of it, she suggests, may be put down later), and has attempted to do something brave and original. This is less an autobiography than the biography of an attitude: that of a woman who came into the world in the time of Queen Victoria and lived through two wars and the revolutions of the spirit that inevitably accompanied them, always seeking the truth that might make her free. She surrendered her heart to Artemis, the huntress, inviting danger, hoping only for the reward of being able to function fully and spontaneously in the realms of art, thought, and human relationships.

The first third of this study is triumphantly successful. No one has ever examined the development of a child with so evident a determination to be candid, searching, and compassionate. There is not one sentimental stroke in the composition of this portrait; yet it becomes one of the most appealing images in all the gallery of little girls.

Bryher's father was an important financier and man of the world who liked to have his wife and child with him when he traveled to France, Italy, Egypt, Algiers. It was an extraordinary education to be exposed in this way to the study of languages, comparative literature, and contemporary civilizations, and Bryher was worthy of it. It gave her independence and insight, the dearest blessings of the private mind. There are luminous passages in these chapters about a child's discovery of time, about the revelation that came to her of the identity of desire in the diversity of creatures whom she encountered in her travels. Quite without self-consciousness, she says that she grew into a tough, cheeky boy, by which she means that she learned to own and operate courage, curiosity, and self-reliance. It may have been too much for a child to possess, and Bryher may have become "spoiled" in a unique way. In later years her psychoanalyst said as much when he told her in comic despair that she was "impossible" because as a child she had "lived in Paradise."

A jagged split in her life occurred when her parents decided that she must have formal schooling. Bryher is bitter, even today, about the place to which she was relegated, an institution whose announced purpose was to turn out

identical models of conformity. Certainly the experience must have affected her significantly.

Those first fifteen bright years put the half-century that followed in a curious shadow. On the surface they may seem to glitter, those later adventures; Bryher was at various times concerned with the activities of the founders of psychoanalysis, of the revolutionary spirits among poets and novelists, and of the experimenters with art films. She watched as the talents of Joyce and Hemingway were brought to light. She participated in the making of a motion picture in which H. D. and Paul Robeson played important roles. She had an acute appreciation of the distinctive qualities of these people, and her gifts enable her to present vivid images of them. Dorothy Richardson appears appealingly as a shy, withdrawn lady of the suburbs of art, so curiously self-sufficient in her possession of genius that she did not even know—and cared less—how much she had done to revolutionize and rehabilitate the novel. Freud emerges, not in his usual character of austere latter-day prophet, but as a tea-table conversationalist of wit and grace. Norman Douglas erupts here and there, as attractive in his buffooneries as in his distinguished literary gifts and his human generosities. Havelock Ellis is presented touchingly as a gentle universal uncle.

Perhaps the former “tough, cheeky boy” was more at home with the uncles of this world than with other people. Though she admires the candid confessors of literature—particularly Gide—Bryher makes little effort to explain her own latter-day self. Victorian reticences enfold her references to her relationships with father, mother, brother, first and second husbands. When she was a member of Gertrude Stein’s circle in Paris, Bryher’s impulse was always to escape to the kitchen with Alice B. Toklas. To paraphrase one of the famous sayings of the high priestess herself, Bryher was the woman who sat with the woman who sat with the wives of the geniuses who sat with Gertrude Stein.

Less whimsically, it must be noted that Bryher presents herself here as the eternal wanderer on the periphery of the glittering societies of this century. She leaves the reader to guess why, after that beautiful identification with her world in childhood, she never achieved—or even diligently sought—another close identification of the kind that most artists need. Her curious invitation to indulge in uninformed and perhaps impudent guesswork as to the essential meaning of her experience hardly fulfills the promise of one who says that she has given her heart to Artemis in the search for truth.

Snatched Pearl of the Antilles

“Cuba Betrayed,” by Fulgencio Batista (Vantage Press. 332 pp. \$3.95), is an account—and apologia—of the former Cuban dictator’s stewardship from 1933 until his flight on New Year’s Eve 1959. Fillmore Calhoun, an associate editor of *Newsweek*, writes on international and hemispheric affairs.

By FILLMORE CALHOUN

“I IMPORED God’s favor to light the way for the Cubans and to grant them grace of living in peace and harmony. In handing over the government to my successor, I begged the people to be on their best behavior. . . .”

This is Cuba’s deposed dictator Fulgencio Batista speaking through the pages of a self-financed book written from exile in Spain. It is an unctuous exercise in hindsight but it has value in setting some parts of the record straight. Plots and counterplots are recorded, blow by devious blow. Names are named and “villains” get their just deserts. But this is now done from long distance—not through assassinations or to the cries of pain from the torture chambers of Batista’s secret police. These matters he skips over lightly, as he does his deals of convenience in the 1930s with Blas Roca’s Communists.

Batista, according to Batista, was an honest man, a dedicated anti-Communist, a true friend of the United States, a brilliant administrator, and a sterling patriot. And some of the claims he



Fulgencio Batista—“exercise in hindsight.”

makes are actually true. Under his regime some relatively free elections were held, foreign capital was pumped into the Cuban economy, advanced social legislation was introduced, and the all-important sugar cane was harvested and sold. Yet what makes these accomplishments seem unduly glittering today is that they are presented against the black backdrop of the insanities and mismanagement of the man who succeeded him—Fidel Castro.

“A criminal and an aberrant . . . a monster of terror” are some of Batista’s milder descriptions of the new dictator, who, he laments, is still called a “demo-

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