

fault, but I cannot help myself, especially in the long afternoons, when a certain light falls over the forest and the birds hush up for a while. It is then that I stand at my window and peer into the wilderness and listen for something that I couldn't even recognize should I hear it.

Again she writes:

Having a baby should have made me complete, forced me to maturity, and put me in line with the world again. Instead it only made me more aware of my illness. The elaborate little escape that I had built around Mark collapsed like a paper horse before the wind.

Apparently telling her story does not cure her "illness," for at the end she says: "And me, Anna Marie, I am still a nothing, a useless toy made out of wax, pliable, impressionable, vulnerable to the sun and the rain." Yet perhaps one is to believe that steps have been taken towards recovery.

As quotations have made clear, Mrs. Miller's prose is rich in images. Indeed, I can think of no other contemporary novelist, except John Updike, who relies so heavily on figures of speech. Compared with Updike's apparent spontaneity, Mrs. Miller's use of imagery sometimes seems labored and sometimes excessive. Take this passage, for instance:

Black flies bump against the screen and the chickens chuckle in the hedge outside. The pumpkin-colored cats, some with tails of tabby or black, are dozing on the broken stone steps. A green lizard runs out upon the gutter spout, pausing to lick out his thread of tongue. He turns to stone. A fossil of the sun and deep shade. A small jade trinket against a foil of shingles.

Even in such a passage, however, the author does get the effect she wants, and in general her imagery is fresh and vivid. Speaking of Paw Paw, she describes "the clump of white hairs that sprouted from a mole on his chin quivering like thistles in dew." Telling how her grandmother sometimes cried out in her sleep, she says, "After a few seconds of trembling silence, the dark crevice would slowly close up and we would fall asleep once more, our hearts fluttering, as giddy as paper fans."

Miss O'Connor has said that Southern writers have another advantage in that they are more likely than Northern writers to have been brought up on the Bible. Obviously the Bible is part of Mrs. Miller's heritage, for she frequently quotes from it, and one sometimes feels the rhythms of the King James version. She has remarkable gifts for so young a writer, and we can expect much from her.

—GRANVILLE HICKS.

## THE PUBLISHING SCENE

# How Not to Read a Book

**F**EW ORDINARY readers realize the occupational hazards of book reviewing. Let me mention the most common: literary adhesions. This is as prevalent among critics as ulcers in the advertising profession. Symptom—inability to detach one's hands from the book under review. "It was impossible to put down," complained Critic Y. An advanced case. By comparison, Critic X gives the reader an outside chance. "I could not put the book down," he wrote. Critic Z's condition is serious, but not hopeless: "Once I started it, it was very difficult to lay it down." Obviously, Z put up a fight. But what are we to say of W? "It isn't easy to put down," he reported. I like the forthright attitude of Critic Q, who takes no responsibility at all for what happens to him and regards a book as a sort of virus infection. "Gets hold of the reader and won't let go."

There is the critic who, instead of finding the book stuck in his hands, finds *himself* stuck to the chair. Let me give an example. A few years ago one of my favorite reviewers sat down to read a novel about the sea. From what I have been able to deduce, he noticed an odd tingling in his spine about halfway through the book. He broke into a cold sweat, tried to stand up, but found he could not do so. He read on and tried to rise again. No dice. This must have been humiliating, but Critic tells us that he went bravely on until he finished. "[It] kept me tightly glued to my chair from beginning to end" was all he could write of the harrowing experience. At least, this is all that was quoted in an ad for the book.

There is the well-known case of a reviewer for the London *Daily Telegraph*, obviously a newspaper that screens its employees for physical fitness. This man reads standing up. "Kept me on my toes until the final chapter," he reported recently. The insomniac reviewer is characterized by an abnormal awareness of the actual moment when he retired. "Kept me out of bed until 2:30 a.m.," complained a New York critic of one recent book. His record is topped by half an hour in London. "Kept me out of bed until 3:00 a.m.," a *Daily Express* reviewer told his readers. Amateurs have done even better. A local publisher appeared at his office one morning after a sleepless night with a competitor's novel. "I literally stayed up until dawn to finish it," he said, in a statement widely quoted in advertisements. Treatment was begun

promptly by advising the patient to stick to his own authors.

I am fairly optimistic about reviewers who suffer from delusions of place—those who are constantly being "carried away." They are usually carried back by some other book. Not long ago a critic for one of our syndicates imagined himself to be living in Ordeal, Miss. What is disturbing about this—to me anyway—is that there is no Ordeal, Miss. Apparently, this is how it happened: sometime during the course of reading the book Critic began to have an odd floating sensation. No longer stuck to his chair, beyond the toe-stance position, he was truly in motion. Keeping notes, he jotted down, "The reader feels he . . . is now living in Ordeal, Miss." He called his wife, who had not read the book and was, therefore, still on their Connecticut farm. I reconstruct the following conversation:

Critic: Gad, it's hot tonight.

Wife: Why don't you open the window?

Critic: Those cries—shouts—I can't bear them.

Wife: I don't hear anything except Mr. Budgett's roosters. He turns those hen house lights on at midnight to wake up the chickens.

Critic: They're lynching a man out there. Listen to those milling crowds. . . . Why did we ever pick Ordeal?

Wife: Ordeal, where's that?

Critic: Damn, Missy! Mississippi. Where do you think you are?

Wife: Good heavens! You've had another spell. You've been *carried away!* [Her italics.] Shall I call the doctor?

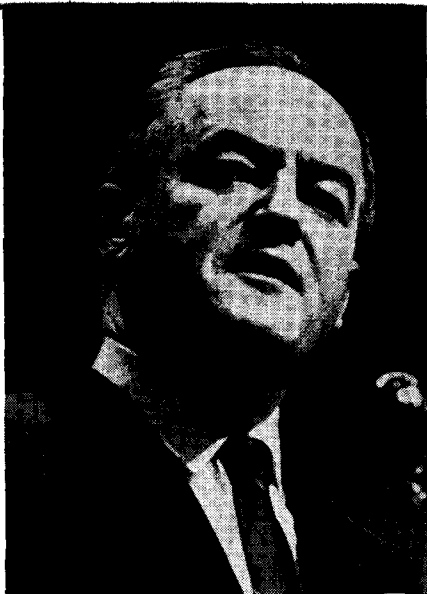
Critic (moaning): He wouldn't come out on a night like this.

Wife: The last time this happened, he pulled you out in no time. Remember? He prescribed "The Best Poets of New Jersey, 1961."

Critic (running his hand across his eyes): Yes. . . . I see now. How ridiculous. I guess I *was* carried away. [His italics.]

Critic responded to treatment.

Sometimes a man will simply find himself "swept up." This happened to Senator Hubert Humphrey when he read Emmet John Hughes's *Ordeal of*



Hubert Humphrey—"bold measures."  
—Pix.

*Power.* Since Humphrey is not a professional reviewer, he may be forgiven. Not so A. J. Cronin. Reading James Drawbell's autobiography, he came away reeling. "It staggered me," he declared. These are men for whom reading a book means loss of motor control. A reviewer for one of the wire services had an alarming experience while tackling a study of mountain climbing. "It had my head spinning," was all he could mumble, dazedly. A similar case of vertigo overcame a California critic in the presence of a novel about a bellhop. "I feel dizzy," he announced.

There are numerous minor afflictions that need not concern us at length—compulsive enjoyment ("I laughed so much tears came to my eyes and I had to stop"), pain ("I felt as if I had been run over by a truck"), and itchiness ("induces a skin-crawling tension"); and although I feel sorry for the man on the Gary (Ind.) *Post Tribune* with reviewer's scalp ("You won't be able to comb your hair after reading this one"), it is nothing compared to the dreaded complications of Cheyne-Stokes breathing.

This malady is almost entirely confined to British critics. Nineteen sixty-two was a particularly bad year—"the winter of the gasping critics" it will someday be known as in the annals of medicine. Within a few months four of England's outstanding reviewers were laid low. Initial complaint: "Breath-stopping excitement." One of them was pronounced dead on arrival after he had been carried to the first-aid room of his newspaper, the only clue to his demise being a scribbled note saying, "I found myself putting it down almost literally to get my breath."

There is a lesson in this for all of us. Keep an inhalator on hand for reading mysteries. Avoid books that have given the reviewer so much trouble. Finally, avoid reviewers who substitute kinesis for esthetics.

—DAVID DEMPSEY.

## Plan Today for a Richer Tomorrow

*War on Poverty*, by Hubert H. Humphrey (McGraw-Hill. 206 pp. \$4.95), appeals to the self-interest of all Americans to alleviate the intolerable conditions endured by one-fifth of the nation. Henry David, who heads the Office of Science Resources Planning of the National Science Foundation, was formerly president of the New School for Social Research in New York City.

By HENRY DAVID

"POVERTY," writes Senator Hubert H. Humphrey, is everyone's business. We are an interdependent society. Poverty is an infectious disease that can contaminate everyone. If for no other reason, those who have wealth and power today should remember how transitory riches and influence can be, and should lend their minds and hearts to the cause of eradicating poverty in America."

Poverty *should* be "everyone's business." Unhappily, it is not, as Senator Humphrey's book makes abundantly clear. It may well be that most of his fellow citizens are inclined to regard problems of poverty as somebody else's business. To those whose posture is one of distance and indifference, *War on Poverty* is to be warmly recommended. It is designed not for the student but for the layman who can be moved to understanding and involvement. It is infused with a sense of the relationship of individual morality to human needs and social responsibility. It ties self-interest to a concern with one's fellow men. ("As rich as we are," writes Senator Humphrey, "we cannot afford the waste of slums, the drag on the economy that stems from unemployment and rising welfare costs, the crime, the disease and vice that are the by-products of poverty.") It is nontechnical and programmatic in statement, and direct and quiet in utterance. It represents poverty as a challenge which the nation's "economic resources and brain power" can meet, and it sees a planned, concerted, and forceful response to that challenge as a means for realizing the American Dream—"the hope for a bright new society."

The bald facts about poverty in the United States have been receiving ever wider circulation in the past three years.

The signs are few, however, that the massive dimensions, complexity, and difficulties of the human problems which they symbolize are perceived with sympathetic and informed understanding by most Americans. One wonders about the volume and contents of the mail received by members of the House and the Senate as a result of President Johnson's declaration of "unconditional war" on poverty in his message to the Congress of March 16 of this year. The collective conscience of the wealthiest society in the world is yet to be sorely troubled by the number of its poor and the character of the lives they lead—lives marked, as Senator Humphrey emphasizes, not only by insufficiencies of "food, shelter, and clothing," but also by "shame, misery, and degradation." Senator Humphrey has good reason to ask: "How can we continue to keep 35 million of our fellow citizens beyond the boundaries of even a minimum existence?"

If an annual money income of less than \$3,000 is used as a measure of poverty, in 1963 about one out of every five families in the United States—or 9.3 million families—could be counted as poor. About one out of every nine families—or 5.4 million—had annual incomes of less than \$2,000 in that year. Obviously, a higher annual income cut-off point would mean a substantially larger population counted as poor. For many families, poverty tends to be an inherited status in the sense that it imposes conditions of life upon the young which increase the chances that they will fall into a low-income group when they become adults. It is enormously important, therefore, that almost three-fifths, or about 20 million, of the more than 35 million poor in 1963, were children. In the families with annual incomes of less than \$2,000, there were 8 million children.

The face of poverty that Senator Humphrey sketches should by now be familiar. So, too, should the interplay on which he touches between low income and such critical factors as education, race, ethnic characteristics, age, employment, health, and location. Measured in terms of dollar income, the most extreme poverty is found in the country's rural areas. Measured by the number of the poor, it is primarily an urban problem. Not far from three out of five of those counted as poor are living in metropolitan areas. While the vast majority of the poor are white,