

with the rapid shifting of point of view, and some have tried to blend past and present—William Faulkner, for instance, in *Absalom, Absalom!* and “The Bear.” But I can think of no one who has made such continuous use of these two methods as Kesey. And he has made them serve his purpose: that is, he has succeeded in suggesting the complexity of life and the absence of any absolute truth.

Most readers, I imagine, won’t worry about the method. After a little difficulty at the beginning, they will be carried away by the story, which is full of excitement. Kesey has created a number of remarkable characters—not only Henry and Hank and Lee and Joe Ben but also a union official, an unsuccessful theater operator, a minister, a bartender, and so on. Sometimes, I feel, he is carried away by a character and writes too much about him. He is, indeed, an extravagant writer, somewhat in the manner of Thomas Wolfe, but most of the time he has himself under control.

Hank Stamper may be regarded as the last of the frontiersmen. A fine athlete in high school, a demonic fighter, a belligerent individualist, he is cast in an heroic mold, as becomes clear in the scene in which he tries to save Joe Ben’s life. In other ways, however, he is vulnerable, and that is why his struggle with Lee is so dramatic. Not every episode in Hank’s saga is completely credible, but a character does emerge in which I can believe. As for Lee, I sympathized with him at first because he is an intellectual, but later he seemed rather petty in comparison with his half-brother. In the end, however, they are well matched, and it is fitting that they should stand together against the enemy. —GRANVILLE HICKS.

#### FRAZER YOUNG’S LITERARY CRYPT NO. 1094

A cryptogram is writing in cipher. Every letter is part of a code that remains constant throughout the puzzle. Answer No. 1094 will be found in the next issue.

FLY BKAPCKFM KQ QPBYFKBYQ

CKHLF; FLY BRDPCKFM RSERMQ

ECPAH.

QLRE

#### Answer to Literary Crypt No. 1093

A hotel isn’t like home, but it’s better than being a house guest.

—FEATHER.

## ON THE FRINGE

# Professors to Ping Pong Players

A new novel by John Hawkes was recently published. Entitled *Second Skin* (New Directions), it received typical John Hawkes-type reviews, the sort writers dream about. Despite the critical acclaim, his book has not been on everyone’s lips, another typical John Hawkes situation. Faced with this, Mr. Hawkes shrugged and smiled a that’s-the-way-the-ball-bounces sort of smile that seemed to flow up into the mild eyes behind the horn-rimmed glasses. “Well, I’m known in the universities if not to the general public.”

Does he mind being referred to as a writer’s writer? “I don’t think I am. Writer’s writer implies that the quality of a book is such that its appeal is limited to other writers. Maybe that was the case with my work in the beginning. It might have been too difficult for the general public, I don’t know. But I don’t think my last book, *The Lime Twig*, or *Second Skin* are.

“I don’t care about the general public but I’d like to be more widely read. There’s a paradox for you. I guess I’m a so-called underground writer who wants to be above ground.”

Mr. Hawkes, who is thirty-nine years old, lives in Providence, Rhode Island, with his wife and four children. “We have a gutted old baronial hall. The four kids are still gutting it. In winter we huddle around the fire to keep warm. I believe in leading a simple, unspectacular, normal life. My fiction is the opposite.”

Part of his normal life is devoted to his teaching career. After he was graduated from Harvard he taught creative writing there for three years. He also spent a semester as visiting member of the Humanities Faculty of MIT and conducted the novel workshop at the Writers’ Conference of the University of Utah. Since 1958 he has been associate professor of English at Brown University.

At Brown he teaches two writing courses, an intermediate composition course for those whose writing needs improvement, and an advanced fiction-writing course. “In any one year you find a variety of gifted students. Each uses the language his own way, one experimentally, another poetically. If you’re looking for a trend, I can’t say that I see any. There’s less imitation of Hemingway than there used to be. Salinger’s influence is still felt but it seems to be dying down. There’s still some

Faulkner influence showing up, which I think is good. Besides, it’s always easy to get over the Faulkner influence. If student writers imitate, they do it more consciously, as in parody, which, frankly, I don’t like.

“Pornography? There’s been none of it showing up in my classes. What’s been published to date seems to have had no influence. I’m sorry about that; we might have had something to talk about.

“I’m very enthusiastic about teaching. I expect to go on with it—and my writing, of course—no matter what happens.”

What has happened will take Professor Hawkes away from Brown for a year beginning this month when he embarks for California to work with a professional drama group, courtesy of a fellowship from the Ford Foundation. “I’ll be studying the relationship of drama to fiction. It’s something new and different for me, and I’m very excited about it. If you want something to say about me, say I’m open to the possibilities of life.”

Anyone who suffered a hernia while attempting to read *Youngblood Hawke* is excused from reading this portion of the column, which is devoted to an upcoming novel 623 pages thick. I decided that I ought to meet its author when I received a letter beginning, “Atheneum’s major work of American fiction of the year, William Goldman’s *Boys and Girls Together*, will be published on July 21.”

Since no publishing house has ever announced that it was bringing out a minor work of fiction, I checked further. I learned that the novel, which concerns six young people seeking their destinies in New York City, has already been signed for English publication, has movie companies interested in it (Mr. Goldman’s last book, *Soldier in the Rain*, made it to the screen with Jackie Gleason not so long ago), and has been sold to an unnamed paperback house (well, I know but I’m not supposed to tell) for a tidy \$100,000. On the off-chance that a potential best-selling author was being waved under my nose, I arranged an appointment.

William Goldman is one month shy of being thirty-three years old. All six foot of him looks built out of a football coach’s prayer (he can carry a copy of his novel in one hand without visible sign of strain) though he says that his sport was ping pong.

After about fifteen minutes of such

sparkling statements as "I'm a storyteller or that's what I try to do" and "I think I won't write a book of this length again," it occurred to me that Mr. Goldman wasn't too comfortable being interviewed. He admitted it. "I'd like to read a short piece about what a great guy I am, but I have a fear of sounding like a dope."

To put him at ease I told him that he should let me know when he said something he didn't want me to use. For a few moments, we went along swimmingly.

"I took two writing courses in college, one at Oberlin and one at Northwestern. I got the worst grades in both. I didn't flunk because so long as you turn in the stuff they can't flunk you. In spite of the courses I always assumed I would be a writer.

"In the summer of 1956, right after college, I wrote my first novel, *Tunnel of Gold*. I was marvelously naive about writing in those days. I went to bed each night not knowing what I would write the next day. The book was taken by Alfred Knopf, the first publisher who saw it. If no one had taken it I probably never would have written again."

And then the "you may not use that" phrase got into the conversation like a termite in a lumberyard. Not that personal questions were asked or revealing answers given. "I worry about what I'm saying. I continuously ask, 'Do you understand me? Do you get it?' I circle and circle around something when I talk because I don't think I make myself clear."

Rather than violate a confidence, if I had one to violate, I'd like to say a few words about Mrs. Goldman. The few words are "Wow!" Her picture—"She's a social worker, model and housewife"—appears on the back of the book along with that of the author and their daughter. How come the family portrait, I asked. As best I can figure out on a page of crossed-out statements, I wasn't told I couldn't print this, so: "It was the publisher's idea. There are some homosexuals in my novel and Atheneum thought it would be a good idea to show a picture of me with my wife and daughter."

As he was leaving, William Goldman said, "You know what I'd like to be by the time I'm forty? It seems to me that there are five people all named Elizabeth Bowen who go around reviewing each other's books all over the place. I'd like to be one of them."

Before he could say "but you may not use that" I slammed the door and raced for my typewriter. Just for the record, somewhere between the evasions I got the impression that William Goldman is a nice guy. And since I arrived at that conclusion all by myself I've given me permission to say it. And I'd like to see any ping pong player try to stop me.

—HASKEL FRANKEL.

## Away from the Brink of War

**Nuclear Disaster**, by Tom Stonier (Meridian. 225 pp. Paperback, \$2.45), **Tomorrow's Weapons**, by J. H. Rothschild (McGraw-Hill. 271 pp. \$6.95), **Peace and Arms: Reports from "The Nation,"** edited by Henry M. Christman (Sheed & Ward. 243 pp. \$4.50), and **A Strategy of Interdependence: A Program for the Control of Conflict Between the United States and the Soviet Union**, by Vincent P. Rock (Scribners. 432 pp. \$7.50), approach the realities of the atomic age from varying points of view. Harry Howe Ransom teaches political science at Vanderbilt University.

By HARRY HOWE RANSOM

**D**URING the October 1962 confrontation over Russian missiles in Cuba an American President and a Russian Premier found themselves looking down the nuclear gun barrel. This awesome experience was mutually edifying. It produced, more than anything else had done, the conviction in both countries that whatever their continuing ideological conflicts, their real interest lay in backing away from the brink of war.

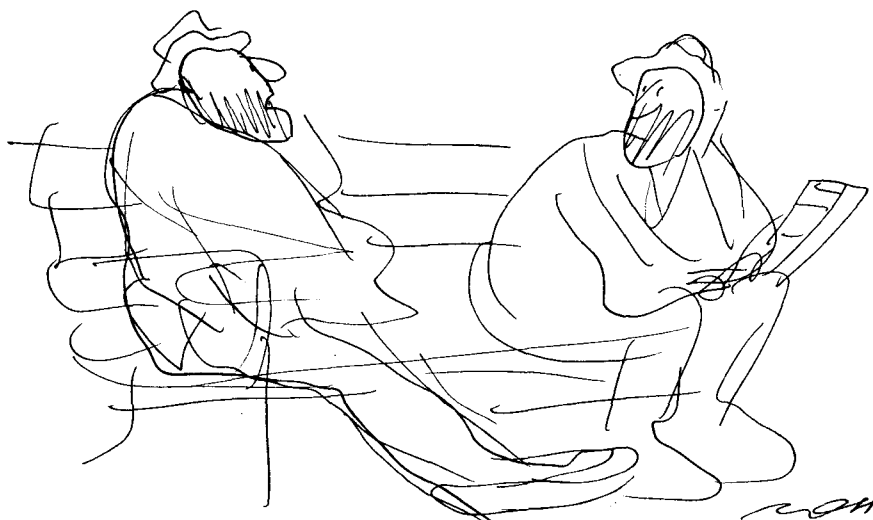
In perhaps the most important speech of his 1,036 days as President, John F.

Kennedy told an American University graduating class on June 10, 1963, that the Soviet Union and the United States "have a mutually deep interest in a just and genuine peace and in halting the arms race." More recently President Johnson, realizing his burden of unimaginable responsibility as nuclear-age Commander in Chief, asserted that "general war is impossible and some alternatives are essential."

An earnest search for such alternatives is now under way, leaders of both the United States and the USSR having apparently come to understand what many citizens do not yet comprehend fully: that today's (and tomorrow's) nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons have rendered war unthinkable. The four books under review are pertinent in varying ways to this urgent quest.

*Nuclear Disaster*, by Tom Stonier, a biologist at Manhattan College, is a competent synthesis for the layman of what is known and can be reasonably projected about the effects of a specific hydrogen blast or a general nuclear war. It provides a valuable counterbalance to some of the Pentagon-sponsored "thinking about the unthinkable" which presumes that nuclear weapons are simply more efficient instruments of rational policy, and that somehow we can survive a nuclear war.

Mr. Stonier describes what would happen if a twenty-megaton thermonuclear weapon were detonated at Co-



"It's not simply that I am unable to find work, or can't work—or won't work, but rather a complex amalgamation of all three."