

be talking about in this uncharacteristically purple passage, it is certainly not Christianity, a faith that shoves the meaning of the universe into the very texture of human history, in the life of the very man Muggeridge thinks he has rediscovered.

Sadly, Mr. Muggeridge's discovery of Jesus has not given him much joy. A fog of pessimism, even of fatalism hangs over these pages. The curtain always comes down, he complains, "only to rise again on the same scenery and the same players." He feels tricked by an ineluctable destiny, and welcomes death as a deliverance. He admires Kierkegaard because somber Soren "... wrests despair from the idiot jaws of hope," and "... turns us away from the frantic voice of history and all its hopes and desires in search of other, fairer, and more enduring vistas."

But Muggeridge's sickness is not quite unto death. He is still a master essayist. His description of the crucifixion, comparing it to British colonial soldiers executing an obscure Indian sadhu, is brilliant. So are his vivid sketches of incidents from Jesus' ministry. However, the best parts of the book for me were those chapters that Muggeridge devotes unabashedly to Muggeridge. One is a real interview, the other a constructed one in which Muggeridge interrogates himself. In these sections we are not only treated to an element of wry self-parody (sadly missing from the rest of the book), but we also get some fascinating glimpses of the author's boyhood as the son of a Fabian Socialist growing up in Croydon before World War I.

When Muggeridge is finished we know we've heard from a lively, opinionated, and cantankerous old man. It's been enjoyable, if annoying. But so what? Other elderly men have demonstrated that you don't *have* to get dour, ascetic, and reactionary in your dotage. The old men I rely on to prove this include A. J. Mussle, Nikos Kazantzakis, and Josef Hromadka. Muggeridge's book is not very generous. It is ill-tempered and cranky. It is lacking in love, short on hope, and almost completely devoid of charity. The Jesus he has rediscovered is not one I want to follow. Yet Muggeridge himself remains an irresistible old codger. He has not, thank God, "grown old gracefully." He is more stubborn and eccentric than ever. And this book is more about him than about Jesus. So if you can stand him for a few hours, it's worth the effort.

Harvey Cox

The next book by Harvey Cox, author of "The Secular City," will be "The Feast of Fools."

THESE WERE THE HOURS: Memories of My Hours Press Réanville and Paris 1928-1931

by Nancy Cunard

Southern Illinois Press, 216 pp., \$7

ON A BLEAK MARCH DAY in 1965 a handful of Nancy Cunard's friends gathered at Père Lachaise Cemetery in Paris to attend the placing of an urn containing her ashes in an unmarked vault. Daphne Fielding, in her recent biography, *Those Remarkable Cunards: Emerald and Nancy*, wrote of the event as "the sad, lonely farewell to a toast of the Twenties." Thus, after sixty-nine years, the ebullient, productive, increasingly tempestuous life of a once-Golden Girl was over; but her role as a special kind of artistic entrepreneur will undoubtedly survive in the endless literary minings of Paris in the Twenties and Thirties. She also survives as sculpted by Brancusi, photographed by Man Ray, and transmuted into Iris March of *The Green Hat*.

In his appreciative and punctiliously formal foreword to *These Were the Hours*, Professor Hugh Ford quotes William Carlos Williams as observing, "Out of passion, to defeat its domination [Nancy] ... kept herself burned to the bone." However, both in manner and matter Miss Cunard's memoir gives only a between-the-lines sense of a lady who was for burning—who trailed some meteoric streaks across her particular segment of sky. Seldom, one imagines, has a living legend been self-inscribed so impersonally.

In essence this brief book, completed shortly before her death, focuses on Nancy Cunard's adventures as the founder and operator of the Hours Press during the years 1928-31—first from an old Normandy farmhouse, then from a shop in Paris. The enterprise was devoted to producing exquisitely designed avant-garde works printed on an ancient Belgian hand-press, which the entranced proprietress learned to operate from a skilled, dour French printer.

A rebel against her titled British background, and particularly against her mother, Lady Cunard (Emerald), Nancy had settled in Paris in 1922. Vibrant and literarily gifted, she was drawn into the exploding center of surrealist writers and painters—and, as Professor Ford so discreetly puts it, "with several, notably Louis Aragon, René Creval, and Tristan Tzara, her ties became personal as well as intellectual." However, the twenty-four books painstakingly turned out by the Hours Press were, with two exceptions, works of English, Irish and American writers—among them, Norman



Eugene MacCown's portrait of Nancy Cunard, 1923—"a once-Golden Girl."

Douglas, George Moore, Roy Campbell, Robert Graves, Laura Riding, Ezra Pound (Miss Cunard's was the first one-volume edition of *XXX Cantos*), and Samuel Beckett, a Cunard "discovery."

Miss Cunard's fascination with the intricacies of type-setting by hand, the esthetics of design and other challenges raised by her highly creative publishing goals won't exactly mesmerize the lay-reader. But her series of pen-portraits of the great and the near-great whom she published will inevitably interest anyone already mesmerized by that almost mythic era whose catalytic *avant-gardisme* is reflected in these recollections. As to the almost mythic Nancy herself, here she remains a tantalizingly self-effacing raconteur; in speaking of the Spanish Civil War, for instance, she never mentions her participation as a Loyalist-attached correspondent for the *Manchester Guardian*. One must also turn elsewhere to learn of her passionate commitments to persons and events. In her way, the lady shed her own clearly visible light among the larger, stronger lights of a not-so-lost generation.

Patricia MacManus

Patricia MacManus, a free-lance critic, has vast acquaintance in the literary world as a result of her work with various publishing houses.

**Coming September 13
SR's Fall Travel Issue**

THE MAIDEN VOYAGE

by **Geoffrey Marcus**

Viking, 320 pp., \$8.95

ANY HISTORIAN WHO TACKLES the *Titanic* tragedy faces a problem. He cannot simply separate legend from fact; the "unsinkable" *Titanic* was built to be a legend, and this was the central fact that led to her death. The trivia, the conceits, the illusions of the Gilded Age are a part of the story; they can't be ignored, and many writers have been swamped by them.

Not so British naval expert Geoffrey Marcus, who has selected his material with evident thought and kept it under careful control. *The Maiden Voyage* matches attitudes and events with unusual clarity; it details the trivia, the conceits and the illusions and shows how they conspired to take the lives of 1,500 men, women and children. "The *causa causans*," Marcus writes, "may be said to have been the influence of great wealth on the North Atlantic traffic. The *Titanic* was essentially an appeal to the class, growing larger every year, which had more money than it knew what to do with. . . . It was the ever-increasing demand for first-class accommodation of the most spacious and costly character imaginable that led to the construction of these enormous, fast, luxurious liners which were traveling Grand Hotels."

The wealthy members of the steamer set, commuting between New York and Paris, demanded service and got it. The great luxury liners sliced in the night through ice fields at top speed to arrive literally on the scheduled moment. There was an army of stewards, valets and maids on the *Titanic*, but not one spare crew member to carry an urgent ice warning from the radio room to the bridge. The *Titanic* had Turkish baths and trellised verandas, but not enough lifeboats for more than half the people aboard. The pantries were stocked with fine wines, but the binoculars were missing from the masthead, where the lookouts scanned the sea for icebergs. These practices were justified by that word "unsinkable"; it was no mere blurb, but more in the nature of a guarantee that no act of God would annoy the elite.

Marcus devotes six chapters to an extremely comprehensive report—the best we have seen yet—on the various investigations. The euphoria lingered, it seems, even after the *Titanic* rammed an iceberg and went down. The British Board of Trade declared, in effect, that maintaining speed through the ice fields had not proved

hazardous in the past, so the captain of the *Titanic* could hardly be censured for doing so. In retrospect, this appears less of a whitewash than a numb acceptance of prevailing values. The only alternative would have been to blame an entire society. The British Court of Appeals was more realistic, however; it held in a subsequent opinion that the tragedy was "neither unforeseen nor unforeseeable." In cold fact, the North Atlantic sea lanes were overdue for a disaster, and Marcus has dug out several stories of "near misses" between ship and iceberg, as well as between ship and ship. It was not unusual for the great steel bows, knifing through the mist or the dark, to cut a fishing boat in half. A bitter indictment of this callous schedule-keeping had been written into a best-seller sixteen years previously—Rudyard Kipling's *Captains Courageous*.

The Maiden Voyage also offers the best account yet given of the role played by the Marconi wireless system. The 706 people who did survive owed their lives mainly to radio and the *Titanic's* two operators. It was their distress call that brought the liner *Carpathia* racing to the scene, too late to rescue swimmers but in time to pick up survivors in the lifeboats. The book includes photographs of the Marconi equipment and a good deal of interesting detail about the training and lives of the operators.

One can gain from *The Maiden Voyage* an understanding of the grip that the *Titanic* affair has held on people's imagination through a half century replete with tragedies. It was then—it still is—a symbol of presumption, of self-deception, of the vast inequalities of the Edwardian era. In his own summing up, the author returns to the original *Titanic* legend. "Notwithstanding her immense proportions and luxurious appointments—her restaurants, her 'millionaire' suites, her electric lifts, her Turkish baths, her squash court, her trellised verandas and the rest—the *Titanic* was still a ship. Every link in the chain of circumstances which had led up to her destruction was attributable, in one way or another, to disregard of this fact."

Allen R. Dodd

A former foreign correspondent, Allen R. Dodd is a magazine writer with an interest in marine and aviation history.



A COLD CORNER OF HELL

by **Robert Carse**

Doubleday, 268 pp., \$6.95

FOR A COUPLE OF WEEKS in the rainy fall of 1944 this correspondent happened to be aboard *HMS Rodney*, one of the last great battleships afloat. *Rodney's* wartime patrol took her out into the somber North Sea, and for a time she saw duty guarding one of the enormous convoys moving painfully through vicious Arctic seas to Murmansk to supply the desperate and courageous Russians. I have never seen dirtier water, felt more uncomfortable about the possibilities of returning safely to land, nor hated an assignment as much as that on the *Rodney*, so perhaps I read *A Cold Corner of Hell*, the story of the Murmansk convoys from 1941 to 1945, with more than passing interest.

Vice Admiral Rüge, specialist in German naval affairs, wrote after the war that between August 1944 and April 1945 the 250 or so ships on the Arctic run carried more than a million tons of war matériel to Russia. He goes on: "These weapons, equipment and vehicles allowed the Russians to equip a further sixty motorized divisions which gave them not only numerical but matériel superiority at focal points of battle. Thus, Anglo-American sea power exerted a decisive influence on the land operations in Eastern Europe." No one could better clarify the importance of this risky sea operation, conducted from beginning to end in ice and fog.

The Murmansk run stayed dangerous throughout the war and as late as April of 1945, just before Hitler's capitulation, twelve ships were lost, one of them the American *Henry Bacon*, homeward bound from Murmansk with twenty Norwegian women and children refugees aboard. Over the 1941-1945 period the men who made it to Murmansk by sea delivered 16,529,791 tons of cargo, but they paid for it dearly—829 lives were lost among the crews of the ninety-eight ships that went down in the icy waters.

Robert Carse does not write in the limpid style of Bruce Catton or the lovely rhythms of Barbara Tuchman for he is a seafaring historian with a love for stark sentence structure and simple, factual phrasing. This new book of his is a very masculine work, written in lean male terms, and I recommend it without reservation to any man who has ever had naval-war service, particularly North European.

Richard L. Tobin

Richard L. Tobin is associate publisher of Saturday Review.