

PICK OF THE PAPERBACKS

When James D. Watson wrote his book *The Double Helix* (Signet, 95¢) he showed the world a side of science and scientists little known beyond the fiction of C. P. Snow. The intensive research begun at Cambridge University in 1951 by twenty-three-year-old Watson, Francis Crick and Maurice Wilkins earned them the Nobel Prize in 1962 for their discovery of the structure of DNA, the vital molecule of heredity. "I knew that the story had to be told. It was after all an historical occasion," said Watson, a professor of biochemistry and microbiology at Harvard who at the age of forty has the same tall, angular, boyish looks of his Cambridge, England, days. "I knew it was a good story. I thought to myself, boy, this is like a novel." But it almost didn't get printed. The original publishers, Harvard University Press, abandoned it after Harvard President Nathan Pusey said he didn't want to see the university engaged in "trans-Atlantic arguments among scientists." Atheneum Press promptly picked it up, Signet has reissued the book in paperback, and this month *The Double Helix* was a leading contender for a National Book Award.

What Watson writes about is the rivalry, the antagonisms, the human emotions involved in scientific inquiry. His colleagues, the ebullient Crick and the cautious Wilkins, disclaimed the book. "People just don't like to be written about," said Watson. "And Crick, who would be outstanding in any manner of life, has a greater sense of privacy than most men. Then it's also true that any people who go through the same experience would describe it differently."

Writing and science have always been close to Watson. In fact, one of the sturdiest influences on him was *Arrowsmith*. "I can still remember getting it from the library when I was about thirteen. But then, I read a lot anyway. There wasn't much else for excitement in South Side Chicago." Something of a prodigy, Watson was a Quiz Kid, and at the age of nineteen he was graduated from the University of Chicago. Now he lives with his wife, his former Radcliffe lab assistant, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in a house that reportedly Owen Wister and Sean O'Faolain once occupied. He commutes every two weeks to Cold Spring Harbor laboratory in Long Island, where he is director of research in the field of viruses. Watson is also the author of *Molecular Biology of the Gene*, which has become the classic text. It has already sold more than 65,000 copies and brings him in some \$20,000 yearly. Harvard didn't publish that one either. —ROLLENE W. SAAL.

The Writer's Life

In *Making It* (Bantam, \$1.25) Norman Podhoretz, New York critic, editor of *Commentary*, intellectual-at-large, has very nearly written the traditional story about the poor kid from Brooklyn who by a combination of quick intelligence and ready zeal catapults himself into eminence. Podhoretz is honest, sometimes abrasively so. "Our culture," he writes, "teaches us to shape our lives in accordance with the hunger for worldly things; on the other hand, it spitefully contrives to make us ashamed of the presence of those hungers in ourselves." Podhoretz has raised himself above the

petty guilt at success and, in what many critics found complacency, rejoices in the structure he has fashioned of his life.

William Gibson's *A Mass for the Dead* (Bantam, \$1.25) is the poetic portrait of an extremely creative and sympathetic writer. In this autobiography Gibson, who wrote *The Miracle Worker* and *A Cry of Players*, evokes the world of his Bronx childhood, with its profusion of lace doilies and wax fruit. His story is not only of himself and of his growing up but of his family and how in witnessing their lives and deaths he was able to rid himself of disabling guilt and anger.

The late John Steinbeck was nearly sixty years old when he got into a clank-

ing pick-up truck he named Rocinante, took along his poodle Charley, and set out on a sentimental journey through the America which had been so strongly a part of his life and his writings. In *Travels with Charley* (Viking Compass, \$1.65), he tells what he saw and heard on this strange trek. Both mourning and rejoicing for his country, he was saddened by the loss of regionalism in our speech and habits and gladdened by the surging energy that he found nearly everywhere.

When Rainer Maria Rilke died in 1926 he left behind not only immortal lyric poetry but a vast collection of letters which remain among literature's most fascinating personal correspondence. Translated from the French by Jane B. Greene and M. D. Herter, *Letters of Rainer Maria Rilke* (Norton, 2 vols.: 1892-1910, 1910-1926, \$2.95 each) presents the life of a highly complex poet caught in the spiritual crisis of shifting times in Europe. Shy, almost reclusive, Rilke was quickly depleted by normal social contacts, yet he worked as Rodin's secretary in Paris, traveled to Russia, North Africa, and Italy, and wrote lengthy letters in meticulous calligraphy to people as varied as expressionist painter Paula Modersohn-Becker and poet-librettist Hugo van Hofsmannsthal. During the war Rilke withdrew in ill health to Munich, a waiting time that he recalls in imagery often reflected in his poetry: "My heart had stopped like a clock, the pendulum had somewhere bumped against the hand of misery and stood still."

Thinking Men

German-born psychoanalyst Erich Fromm has spent a lifetime trying to ease other men's anxieties. Both *The Revolution of Hope: Toward a Humanized Technology* (Bantam, 95¢) and *The Heart of Man* (Harper & Row/Colophon, \$1.45) focus upon man's special needs and longings in an increasingly mechanized age. "We are in the very midst of the crisis of modern man,"

writes Fromm in *The Revolution of Hope*, and what he presents is a frighteningly realistic picture of an automated, dehumanized society in the year 2000 A.D. So long as people seem to be denied the importance of their individual worth, they feel a sense of loss, of floundering in an alien environment. In *The Heart of Man*, which Fromm calls a counterpart to his earlier *The Art of Loving*, he is concerned with destruction not only of the world but of man himself. Like his other books, these two call out for a new humanism based upon a primary care for the individual in a mass, technologized civilization.

Just to give some idea of the diversity of thought in Maurice Friedman's *To Deny Our Nothingness* (Delta, \$2.25) the publishers have catalogued the book under Philosophy, Religion, Psychology, Literature; and, indeed, this reflective work offers a bit of each. Friedman is interested in what he calls "an image of man," the way each age regards itself and how, in assessing its own possibilities, it can reassert its humanness. He weighs the "image of man" in our own time through essays on Albert Camus, Martin Buber, Hermann Hesse and T. S. Eliot.

Erich Heller, a specialist in German writers, also looks to world literature for illumination about existence. Refining philosophical literary criticism into literary philosophy, the seven essays in Heller's *The Artist's Journey Into the Interior and Other Essays* (Vintage, \$1.65) reflect upon man's inner being as Heller sees it revealed in the glass of Hegel, Rilke, Goethe. In one essay, "The Realistic Fallacy," Heller dismisses the importance of nineteenth-century realism. Instead, what he sees as the overriding genius of writers like Stendhal, Dostoevsky, and Balzac "is the passion for understanding . . . the driving force toward the expropriation of the mystery."

Alan W. Watts resides somewhere at the other end of the spectrum from Fromm, Friedman, and Heller. A scholar of Eastern religions and philosophies, Watts determines in *The Wisdom of Insecurity: A Message for an Age of Anxiety* (Vintage, \$1.45) that instead of worrying so much about the disequilibrium of life, one should accept it, learn from it. Zen what?

Fiction

One of the great novels of the early twentieth century is Romain Rolland's *Jean-Christophe* (translated from the French by Gilbert Cannan, Avon, 95¢), a book which I suspect isn't read very much any more. In form it is a *roman fleuve*, a series of novels in which each can stand apart yet together form a continuous revelation of a lifetime. Written in the years before World War I, *Jean-*

Christophe comprises ten volumes, of which the first four in this new edition follow the hero's earliest adventures, musical prodigiosity, first exploits in love, and surging sense of his own creative destiny. Readers with lots of time will be pleased to know that Avon has already published the novels that complete Jean-Christophe's story.

In his SR review of Peter S. Beagle's *The Last Unicorn* (Ballantine, 95¢), Granville Hicks compares the novelist with J. R. R. Tolkien and Lewis Carroll, a fine compliment to a young writer but one which implies that such a book is for a special palate, like the author's earlier *A Fine and Private Place* (Ballantine, 95¢). If you like unicorns not merely on tapestries but intruding themselves on spiritual quests, or ravens that perch on gravestones and ruminate about the human condition, you probably ought to read some Tolkien and Beagle.

For those with heartier literary appetites, Joyce Carol Oates's *A Garden of*

Earthly Delights (Fawcett Crest, 95¢) is all meat and potatoes. Miss Oates, a young New York-born novelist, is simply a marvelous storyteller. Her book is about a flower of a girl born into the miasma of migrant workers during the early 1930s. How Clara flourishes and makes a life for herself emerges as first-rate fiction.

New and duly noted: Morris L. West's *The Tower of Babel* (Dell, \$1.25) tells an intriguing tale of double-dealing in the Middle East, where Israeli and Arab espionage accelerates to a matter of love and death. Fletcher Knebel's *Vanished* (Avon, \$1.25) speculates about what would happen if a U.S. President's confidential assistant should suddenly disappear. Scary. M. W. Waring's *The Witnesses* (Ballantine, \$1.25) is all about how Tsarist Russia was mowed down by the Bolshevik scythe. One British reviewer called it "A masterpiece . . . somewhere between *War and Peace* and *Gone with the Wind*."



—From the book.

"I'd rather wake up in the middle of nowhere than in any city on earth." Walt Whitman didn't write it but Hollywood's Steve McQueen did in one of the random quotations about life in the wilderness gathered by Terry and Renny Russell in *On the Loose* (Sierra Club/Ballantine, \$3.95). The brothers, teen-aged Californians, also took the lavish color photographs of the Pacific Coast, Glen Canyon, and the High Sierras, designed the calligraphy and handbound the original manuscript. The result is a curiously appealing and personal journal filled with youthful zest for the natural world. Since the book's preparation the older brother, Terry, was lost on a raft expedition.

Where the Novel Went

By LLOYD ALEXANDER

DESPITE fiendish tortures at the hands of our current literary tormentors, the novel has managed to escape from the erogenous dungeons of adult fiction with most of its virtue intact. Though its relevance as a modern art form is questioned, and its demise frequently announced, the novel is alive and well and living in the children's book department.

There, disguised in juvenile innocence, the novel continues doing its own thing: to deal as illuminatingly as possible, not as obscurely as possible, with the complexities of the human condition. Many adult writers, showing more ability at imitating each other than enlightening their readers, have turned the novel over, like a three-dollar watch hardly worth repair, to the kids to play with. But the children's novelists are making it work.

I don't imply that all children's novels are good reading for grown-ups, or even for children. Most, like most of anything, are mediocre—and a few, downright wretched. Children's writers suffer from their own occupational hazards, and risk lapsing into what *School Library Journal* recently diagnosed as "stylized boredom," "moral medicine," and "adult nostalgia." Nevertheless, the best children's writers stay pretty much immune to these fatal illnesses; and their work, by any standard, is excellent. Today, with more elbow room in the way of subject matter, and under no obligation to condescend or simper, children's novels can be (as they always could be) valid works of art.

The main problem isn't the books but whether children will read them; whether, in an age of real marvels, they will accept the imaginary marvels offered in books. With the goad of mass media the kids acquire a kind of sophistication based more in quantity of information than quality of experience. The bloom tends to go off the rose fairly early—replaced often by a touch of jadedness formerly found among the desperately poor or the desperately rich. Young people soak up a huge amount of hard data but have little encouragement to digest or interpret it. With more teen-agers jumping directly into adult reading, even the "young adult" novel seems to be go-

LLOYD ALEXANDER'S *The High King* recently won the Newbery Medal as the most distinguished contribution to literature for children published in 1968.

ing the way of knickers as a step in the growing-up process.

But I think this sophistication is more surface than substance. The kids are still superbly capable of delight, wonder, excitement; and a good story is still superbly capable of producing this response. If involvement is today's goal in films, theater, and art—what's more involving than reading? For the reader is totally involved in the author's viewpoint and consciousness. Yet it's not a mass experience. A child and his book are always in an intimate, personal, one-to-one relation.

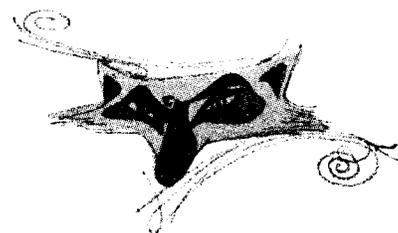
I'm not suggesting that adult writers return to the Victorian three-decker. Every generation has to find its own tonality in art-style as well as life-style. But the sorry state of the adult novel has come about more through lack of talent in its individual practitioners than anything inherently limiting in the form itself, which is versatile enough to flourish in any artistic climate. The novel still seems, even today, the most adequate literary vehicle to express coherently, in breadth and depth, basic human attitudes, emotions, and values.

Adult writers engrossed in producing high camp, low camp, put-ons, and parodies—and some of their own magnificent examples of "stylized boredom"—may have forgotten the effectiveness of a tale well told, as art and entertainment (if the two can really be separated). I'm tempted to urge them to browse through the children's shelves. On second thought, I won't. If they realize what a good thing they've given up, they might want it back.

By ZENA SUTHERLAND

Everybody In! A Counting Book. By Dick Rowan. Bradbury. 30 pp. \$3.50. Sounds like swimming? That's what it is: a series of photographs in which one child plunges into the water (full-page picture faced by a big, clear "1, one") and in succession is joined by nine others, including one small girl who can't quite bring herself to submerge. The series is then shown together as a recap. The faces of the children, who are mixed—black and white, boys and girls—register natural expressions. The digits are given importance by the format, and the photographs provide more interest than the usual cumulation of one dog, two robins, three apples, etc. Ages 3-6.

Harvey's Hideout. By Russell Hoban. Illustrated by Lillian Hoban. Parents' Maga-



—From "The Fox That Wanted Nine Tails."

zine Press. 41 pp. \$3.50. Harvey and his sister Mildred are muskrats, but their performance will be all too familiar to human siblings. The message is clear: it is more fun to be friendly and to share than to spar together and brood alone. The book surmounts the usual deadliness of message-carrying by its delightful dialogue and the humor of the situation. Harvey and Mildred, each pretending that they have big social events on their calendars, play unhappily alone until fate forces their hands—to their great relief. Ages 5-8.

Sylvester and the Magic Pebble. Written and illustrated by William Steig. Windmill/Simon & Schuster. 32 pp. \$4.95. Who could resist Steig's bland nonsense, his wild-eyed but engaging animal characters, or the gentle affection of Sylvester's family? The only child of loving donkey parents, Sylvester the pebble collector is by sheer chance holding a magic pebble when a lion approaches. In panic he wishes he were an inedible rock, and a rock he becomes. The parents mourn, the seasons pass, and time is healing the wounds of their loss. Picnicking on a convenient rock, father idly picks up The Pebble, and suddenly the dishes slide off a happy Sylvester restored to his family! The story is all the funnier because of the sweet blandness of the writing. Ages 5-8.

Princess September. By W. Somerset Maugham. Illustrated by Jacqueline Ayer. Harcourt, Brace & World. 36 pp. \$3.50. Were it not so tongue-in-cheek, this might be a moral tale, or at least a tale with a moral. An excerpt from *The Gentleman in the Parlor* (now out of print), *Princess September* has several elements of traditional fairy tales—the unpleasant older sisters who are jealous of the gentle youngest, the relinquishing of a beloved pet and its subsequent gratitude, and the natural and proper ending: the lovely Princess September, ninth daughter of the King of Siam, marries the King of Cambodia while her sisters are portioned out to his councillors. The illustrations are handsome, and the Maugham wit and style compensate for the humdrum plot. Ages 7-9.

Greyling: A Picture Story from the Islands of Shetland. By Jane Yolen. Illustrated by William Stobbs. World. 30 pp. \$3.95. Out of the legends of the Scottish isles comes a haunting story, bittersweet, of the selchie, the boy who feels a mysterious yearning to return to the sea, but cannot understand why. His foster parents, fearing his loss, know all too well; the child who has filled their lives is really a seal, and when he rescues his father from a storm-tossed boat, it is life for life. The man is given back to his wife, and the son