

mented everyone with her social conscience. Unfortunately she did little else to prove her commitment to the teeming millions than maintain her house in an appallingly unkempt state. Her battered garbage pails, reeking always of uncollected, rotting vegetables, were all she considered necessary to prove lofty moral principles; "tat and junk," Madeleine sneers, with revolutionary scorn for all interior decoration.

In life and death, Madeleine's complaints cannot be quieted. She brings guilt to Jarvis and his tidy, untroubled existence. Even a conventional housewife named Margot feels united temporarily with Madeleine and all feminine distress. Only Jarvis's second wife, Lily, remains impervious to Madeleine's yearnings. Lily does not waste a moment on guerrilla movements in Manila. Her only causes are Victorian doorbells, dieting, and neopeking fashion trends.

Weldon takes us through outrage, dinner parties, infidelity, and overeating, all with the same intelligent, exhausting intensity. Precise satire, impassioned monologue, and a sense of limited human possibility make this novel a daring examination of twentieth-century discontent.

—P. B.

Freedom Spent

by Richard Harris

Little, Brown, 391 pp., \$12.95

OBVIOUSLY disconcerted by the Bicentennial mood of self-congratulation, Richard Harris serves notice by accusing the American government of often denying its citizens the freedoms guaranteed by the Bill of Rights. To document this charge, he chronicles the legal odysseys of five defendants whose fundamental freedoms were trampled by an arbitrary judicial system intent upon stifling meaningful dissent. Specifically, we are witness to a high-school teacher's being persecuted for freely expressing his opposition to the Vietnam War, a married couple's home being invaded by a backwater authority in the course of a sedition investigation, and finally a lesbian couple's being denied the protection against self-incrimination in a grand-jury hearing pursuant to a federal crime.

Never mind that these victims were ultimately exonerated; Harris is indignant that they were pursued at all. To the extent that this provocative study impales the occasional abuses of the judiciary, it is worth

attentive consideration. As an indictment against our constitutional integrity, *Freedom Spent* is too often submerged beneath the murky depths of hyperbole.

—ALAN L. MILLER

Youthful Writings (Cahiers II)

by Albert Camus

Introduction by Paul Viallaneix

Translated by Ellen Conroy Kennedy

Knopf, 192 pp., \$8.95

ALBERT CAMUS gained early fame with his chilly renderings of the uncompromising existentialist hero (*The Stranger*) and the stoically happy Sisyphus, perpetually rolling his stone (*The Myth of Sisyphus*). Who, then, amid the earnestness of World War II, would have said Camus possessed a "too mystical soul" and a "sensitivity too ready to spill over"? Yet Camus had said so himself and proved this possession in the critical and lyrical prose written between the ages of nineteen and twenty-one. With naive intensity,

these writings record Camus' flights into "reverie," "oblivion," fairy tales, idealism, and easy emotion. They also show him slowly detecting the danger to his art presented by these flights: "I ought to learn to master my sensitivity," he says, "beneath irony and coolness. . . . Sensitivity ought to speak not shout." Camus discovers this need for self-control and finds the leading themes of his art by debating his favorite authors, like Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Gide, and Jean Grenier. He describes the heartless actualities of nature, poverty, aging, and death, and finally resolves "to determine what is false and what is true in each of our actions."

The introduction by Paul Viallaneix interprets Camus' mature writings in the light of his juvenilia and finds that his symbolic power, contradictions, ambiguities, and sincerity yield more truth than any of his dabblings in philosophy or images of commitment. But nothing in this introduction so illumines Camus' work as Camus' admission of struggling with sentimentality and self-control.

—JAMES SLOAN ALLEN



"Of course alterations will take a little time,
Can you pick it up the latter part of next year?"

Trade Winds

by William Cole

Old Man Dazzled by Love

Robert Graves must hold the world record for editions of collected poems. His *New Collected Poems* (Doubleday, January 7, \$10) will mark the sixth time that he's pulled together what he considers his best. At eighty, he's an old man dazzled by love. Almost all the new poems in the collection are love poems, many of them playful, even kittenish: he's having a good time. Here's "The Strayed Message":

Characteristic, nevertheless strange:
Something went badly wrong at the
Exchange,
And my private message to you, in
full detail,
Got broadcast over eleven frequencies
With the usual, though disquieting,
consequences
Of a torrential amatory fan mail

Note: Readers who, on my recommendation, got a copy of Ted Kooser's *A Local Habitation and a Name* will want to know that a new book by my favorite young American poet, titled *Not Coming To Be Barked At*, is now available from Pentagram Press, P.O. Box 11609, Milwaukee, Wis. 53211, for \$3.00 plus twenty-five cents postage.

The Literary Seen

This is a self-portrait of Wilfrid Sheed. The resemblance is slight, as are many of those in *Self-Portraits: Book People Picture Themselves*, collected by Burt Britton



(Random House, just out; \$12.50, cloth; \$6.95, paper.) Britton is a book lover whose work (at New York's Strand Book Store) puts him in contact with many writers. His obsession for the past five years has been to get self-portraits or self-caricatures of people he admires, "to try to reach, if possible, everyone who had ever given me *anything*, a poem, a story, a novel, a line even—what I call a gift." More than 600 writers (and some artists and photographers) have limned (what a word!) themselves in this whizzer of a book: Mailer, Updike, Lowell, Bellow, Roth, Baldwin, Jones, Capote, Styron, Malamud, Sendak, Ungerer, Gorey . . . on and on. When asked to draw impressions of themselves, even the most serious writers responded with graphics of humor and self-deprecation. Carlos Fuentes included his wife and three plump children. Three writers, surprisingly, drew just a hand (Paul Theroux, Rosalyn Drexler, and Elizabeth Bishop). Renata Adler put down that she had traced Harold Rosenberg's self-caricature, "leaving out the moustache and adding bangs." The work of the graphic artists in the book is indeed art. It's a high-spirited book, one about which it can be said—and how rarely!—"This has never been done before!"

Humo(u)r

Who are the greatest English humorists? J. B. Priestley says Chaucer, Shakespeare, Dickens, and Austen in his illustrated survey *English Humour* (Stein & Day, just published, \$16.95). Somehow I can't think of all of them as humorists; although, goodness knows, each has his moments. But are they as funny as Lear, Carroll, Gilbert? As P. G. Wodehouse? More profound, certainly, but where's the audible giggle? Wodehouse, Priestley says, is just a grown-up schoolboy. Ah, yes, but the funniest boy in class. There are some quotable gems in the book, such as Priestley's favorite stage direction, from George Canning's *The Rovers*: "Several soldiers cross the stage wearily, as if returning from the Thirty Years' War." There are long and proper appreciations of Waugh, Nancy Mitford, and J. B. Morton ("Beachcomber"), who is little known in this country. Priestley is properly appreciative

of the great *The Diary of a Nobody*, by George and Weedon Grossmith, and quotes from his own discovery, *The Diary of Thomas Turner*—by an eighteenth-century Sussex grocer who speaks of his mother-in-law as "having a very great volubility of tongue for invective, and especially if I am the subject." But Priestley skimps on Hilaire Belloc and A.P. Herbert, and nowhere did I see a mention of Thomas Hood, C. S. Calverley, or Saki.

Speaking of humor, here's a *really* unfunny book. *Titters: The First Collection of Humor by Women*, edited by Deanne Stillman and Anne Beatts (Macmillan, just published; \$14.95, cloth; \$7.95, paperback). I deplore the title; I deplore the subtitle, since I have an earlier collection of women's humor in my library (also published by Macmillan); and I deplore the contents, which resemble an edition of *The National Lampoon* on a bad-taste kick. If you can see humor in a double mastectomy, you'll like it. The only woman who appears in both collections of humor is Phyllis McGinley, and she must be surprised to find herself in such a slag heap of vulgarity. She could sue.

Wrapped Together

That arbiter of excellence, *The New Yorker*, has come up with three extraordinarily good new cartoonists in recent years, and each has a book this season. All three wrapped together would make a superb present for anyone with a sense of humor. There's Edward Koren, he of the scratchy, weedy line, with *Do You Want to Talk About It?* (Pantheon, \$7.95); William Hamilton, who's concerned with suburbanites, dinner parties, and would-be with-it types in *Husbands, Wives and Live-togethers* (Putnam's, \$7.95); and George Booth, whose characters are raffish and Pricelike, with his sloppy dogs and decrepit humans in *Rehearsal's Off!* (Dodd, Mead, \$7.95). ©

Answer to Middleton Double-Crostic No. 112

Edmund Van Deusen:
Astrogenetics

Knowledge of the Ice Age has not altered the faith of those who believe in biblical signs; no right-thinking yogi would ever buy a biofeedback machine. And even astrology . . . has had no trouble surviving the revelation that the stars are something other than lanterns hanging from the vault of the sky.