

# LITERARY SUPPLEMENT

OF THE

## Hunter College Bulletin

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### Explaining the Supplement

In endeavoring to issue a Literary Supplement to the BULLETIN, the Staff is attempting something the success of which depends entirely on the interest, enthusiasm, and support of college. The Supplement is not an attempt to feed opinions on contemporary literature and trends in the literary world to college, but an attempt to elicit opinions from it. We are trying to provide a vehicle for the expression of interpretation of new movements in the field of letters. Since the "Bookshelf" in the BULLETIN is insufficient for any extended discussion of modern literature or, in fact, any literature, and since ECHO is primarily a medium for creative writing, the Supplement offers to college the opportunity to air its views, to voice its criticisms, to crystallize its ideas on modern developments in literature. The Supplement should prove, if it is supported, a Forum for the expression of opinion. It aims to provide a medium for the intelligent consideration of major occurrences in the fields of the novel, the essay, the drama, biography, music, art and travel.

Although the staff of the BULLETIN is responsible for this first issue of the Supplement it is by no means intended that the Staff, is to continue to produce it. True, it will select and edit articles, and attend to the technicalities of printing, but the writing is to come from college. Anybody who feels inclined to utter a comment on contemporary literature, or any pertinent achievement in the field of letters, is most cordially, heartily, and sincerely urged to contribute. The Faculty too, is asked to share its views with the students, to assist, by a more highly specialized form of discussion, in the interpretation of various branches of literary achievement.

The Staff plans to issue the Supplement about once a month. Since this is in reality a tremendous undertaking in addition to the task of issuing the BULLETIN weekly, it can be readily seen that without the support of college, the Supplement cannot exist.

In many respects, therefore, this first issue is a trial. If college does not want a Supplement, the Staff is anxious to know it. It is the farthest thing from our minds to impose on college an institution it does not desire. But if college finds it can welcome the Supple-

**The Solitary**

I have been lonely for longer than I can say,  
And in my loneliness I have grown wise.  
The long years passed me, day by lonely day,  
And I thought the gods watched me with hostile eyes.

When I was younger I often said  
Life had a cruel way with me, and I would cry,  
And wish in a little passion to be dead,  
And think how pitiful a thing it is—to die.

I am not old to-day, yet have grown wise enough to know  
A god has other things to occupy his mind.  
It's quite a feat to keep four winds a-blow;  
Gods have no time for being cruel— or kind.

ment, if it feels it meets a real need, if it thinks it will support it, then the Staff is ready to receive contributions. Whatever the opinions of college may be, they will be welcomed in the regular Open Forum of the BULLETIN. Sincere opinion is solicited, whether it be favorable or unfavorable. But college is reminded that this meagre sheet is but the skeleton of what a Literary Supplement, rightly employed, may become.

No requirements are imposed on those wishing to contribute to the Supplement. Freshmen, Sophomores, Juniors, Seniors, Brooklynites, and Faculty are urged to write. Exercising only the recognized editorial prerogatives will the Staff select material.

It has taken a long time to gather together the material for this first issue. If the books are no longer so new that they are unfamiliar, it is because the publication of their reviews has been unavoidably delayed. The mechanics of issuing the Supplement are still imperfect. Perhaps in time the BULLETIN Staff may find it completely impossible to conduct the Supplement in addition to its regular duties. In this case its supervision could be placed in other hands. It is not the question of control that interests us, but the importance of keeping the Supplement alive.

The Staff, then, hereby offers to college the first edition of the Literary Supplement to the Hunter College BULLETIN. It is, in its present form, an humble offering, but it is an ambitious undertaking, as college will surely recognize. It is placed before college to be rejected or accepted. If it is rejected,

its sponsors will feel no shame. There is no harm in trying. If it is accepted, the possibilities for its growth and development are manifold. It is now out of the hands of its creators.

### THE UGLY DUCHESS

by LION FEUCHTWANGER

Translated by

Willa and Edwin Muir

Viking Press

335 pps.

Here is a portrait of medieval Europe done in primary colors, with broad sure strokes, and thick, shiny paint. It is a succession of warring nobles, sycophants, petty rulers and courtesans, on all of whose lives the Ugly Duchess, Margarete of Tyrol, has a more or less direct influence.

The author describes her ugliness with a delight that is comparable to the joy of an epicure gloating over a favorite morsel. Every detail of her loathsome features is stressed again and again so that the mere sight of her name on the page conjures up a vision of her beastliness. Her protruding jaw, her furrowed hanging cheeks, her scaly, patchy skin, her large, jagged teeth, and her coarse, copper-colored hair make of her a creature so repulsive that men cannot look upon her without shuddering. This ugliest woman in history, whom none seek but for self-advancement, knowing her vileness, hating humanity as it shuns her, beats down what womanhood there is in her and shows herself a mighty ruler. She wields the government with a firm hand, ousts her childhood hus-

band in a marriage never consummated, and weds a Margrave whose eyes are blinded to her ugliness when he remembers her valued possessions.

Her furious battle with the times she loses in the end, a victim of the ugliness she tried so fiercely to counterbalance with her vigorous manipulations of the kingdom. Death stalks her path. First, Chretien de Laferte, for whom she conceived a virtuous regard of which she was austere proud; her two little girls, carried off by the Black Plague; her husband the Margrave, deftly and silently killed; her son, Duke Meinhard, strapped to his death; and the magnificent and sinful Agnes von Flavon, whose splendor is the ultimate undoing of Margarete, and whose death leaves the Duchess but drearily exulting; all these pass into and out of her wretched life as if ensnared by her loathesomeness. There is finally nothing left to her but the quiet of a little island where the smell of food quickens her aging senses, and her heavy grotesque body lies languidly in the sun among undergrowth and flowers.

How authentic a picture of medieval Europe is this portrayal of Margarete Maultasch, Duchess of Tyrol, and her intrigues, it is difficult to decide. It would seem that life were nothing but battles for land and power; for women and riches, for aggrandisement of self and destruction of the weaker power. Murder, theft, deception, adultery, lust, conflict, are the turbulent elements of life. There is no love, unless it be passion; no regard, unless it be a bribe; no softness, unless it be a snare. Save Jakob von Schenna, her counsellor, there is not a sincere creature in the book. The rapid succession of events, the intricacies of the royal relationships, the constantly shifting scene, complicate the action so greatly that it is almost impossible for one who has not made a study of the period, to follow it with ease.

THE UGLY DUCHESS is, nevertheless, a powerful novel. The fine translation of Willa and Edwin Muir sets it forth in a highly realistic style, especially well adapted to the tumultuous occurrences which make up its plot. It reveals the inanities of royalty as it existed when Margarete lived, which, whether exaggerated or minimized, are certainly interesting. And so profound a study of physical repulsiveness can be the work only of a master of description.



## AMERICAN NOVEL TODAY

A Social and Psychological Study

by RIGIO MICHAUD

Former Professor of French at the  
University of California

Little, Brown &amp; Co., \$2.50 293 pps.

For the serious student of the novel as well as for the reader who merely dabbles in current fiction for his entertainment Professor Michaud's book is a valuable commentary. It is a sympathetic discussion of contemporary American literature tempered by a genuine feeling for its development in America, and conducted in a scholarly fashion. Although the tone of the book is informal, since it grew out of a series of lectures given by the author at the Sorbonne during 1926, nevertheless it imparts valuable information. The writer is looking at American literature from the point of view of a Frenchman, and his measure of it is made according to French standards. He takes up the Case Against the Puritans, Hawthorne, James, Wharton, Howell, Dreiser, whom he calls a bio-chemist, Sinclair Lewis, Anderson, Cabell and Willa Cather. He deals also with some lesser lights but the discussion of them is not very important. His discussion of Sinclair Lewis and Sherwood Anderson are more forceful, conclusive, and interesting than that of any of the others. Of Lewis' work Dr. Michaud says, "His first novels were organic, the latter are merely episodic. His characters suffer from high blood pressure!" Anderson he calls a "Freudian novelist *par excellence*. Personally, he is an uprooted man with a complex heredity. He insists on an incessant renewal of life, on change and migration as the essential condition of moral progress."

Dr. Michaud analyzes the writers, interprets their motives, and their styles with a clarity that is most enlightening. In most cases his summarizations are fair and exact. In some, of course, he is carried away by his intense feeling for his beloved French realists. Compared with the polish of these writers our Americans are made to suffer, when they are held up to his scrutiny.

The tone of THE AMERICAN NOVEL TODAY is as conversational and familiar as the easy-going style of most "informative" books of this decade. It offers learned truisms to be assimilated easily by the reader of the kind that can be repeated by him at will. It is a convenient book to read if one happens to be lazy and yet is mildly curious about what trails America is blazing in literature. In essence Dr. Michaud feels that American Literature is not very mature. He says: "I have been up to this point as objective as possible, sparing neither praise or criticism to present-day American novelists. I confess that the path I have followed has been rather ardu-

## A PRESIDENT IS BORN

by FANNIE HURST

Harpers, New York, 1928.

"The author takes occasion to make grateful acknowledgments to the Schuyler family for the privilege of access to the diaries of the Rebekka Schuyler Renschler," are the opening words of the book. Rebekka, sister of the most beloved and greatest of U. S. presidents, David Schuyler, could furnish from her notes incidents relating to David's personal life that the author has attempted to reconstruct into a narrative of his earlier years. Such is the elaborate frame of the there supported by numerous quotation in footnotes.

On Thanksgiving day in the year of our Lord, 1903, in the small town of Centralia, Ohio (the birth state of so many Presidents) as the numerous adult members of the Schuyler family sat down to the festive board, the Old Gentleman made a startling announcement. Mathilda Schuyler, mother to these husky already married sons and daughters was expecting another child. Thus Davy, a tardy seventh, arrived into the midst of an incredulous and amused kin, destined to rub his childhood against a forest of knees of grown-ups. There followed happy years of eager youth, filled with sweet-smelling apricot afternoons and curious discussions with his age old brothers and sisters.

The land owning Schuyler stock was known in Centralia for its integrity and upright honor. They were a forceful lot. These middle class farmers, respected and self respecting, tenacious, vigorous and good. Indeed the book might have been named SCHUYLER FAMILY, Miss Hurst sparing no pain in the masterly portrayal of these sturdy men and women. Be it through their actions or by way of the family at table conversation, on every page one can divide the steely strength of the Old Gentleman, Henry's lofty principles and Rebekka's great heart and courage of twenty men. A part of these splendid qualities was planted firmly in David's tender young soul to remain there forever. When through the betrayal of a friend, a financial crash descends upon the clan, amazingly beautiful becomes the picture of their proudly lifted heads in midst

ous and not always leading to gardens of pleasure. American realism does not provide on the road artistic oases like Flaubert's or Maupassant's. The great Dreiserian desert or the Andersonian jungle are hard enough to travel through. The writers whom I have studied are more interesting for the subjects which they treat than for the style. As artists they are imperfect, one might be tempted to say, uneducated. On the other hand, if I have been at all sedulous in depicting them, the reader will be struck with the unanimous character of their grievances. All of them almost ferociously criticize the normal man; all have of American life a somewhat tragic opinion. The more optimistic among them feign to be ironical. Few have either pity or resignation."

of humiliating genteel poverty. The character study is the best part of the work, so typically good of Fannie Hurst who is famous for her sure handed and spirited dealing with obscure American folk.

But to offset this, the prose is weak. After two or three chapters of writing choppy phrases, split infinitives and other grammatical looseness which the author has definitely adopted for a style there is no doubt at all that here is notably bad writing. Phrases cannot be piled one on the other like boxes in a shoe store and not lose their effect by the very monotony of repetition. The following is typical of the abundant description found in the book:

"High Street, of a Saturday, was pandemonium. Children with flat eager tongues for the sticky pleasures of the lollipop. Window-shopping women, spry from the sense of surcease from the rigors of the dishpan and diapering. Rattle of tin flivvers, mud to the hub. A gramophone in front of Smilley's music store braying to the din. The bright clatter of sunshine. The Tallahassee base-ball team doing a lock step out to Linden Park. Women with net marketing bags crammed with spinach and sprays of dill, pearl fleshed spring onions, and an occasional live wretch of a chicken."

A forceful staccato picture this. But after pages and pages of such jerkiness there comes a longing for the faithful verb and quiet of a complete sentence. Passages are sprinkled with striking similes those referring to food occurring very often. "Her skin had the pat, dewy clarity of butter." There is something about food that fascinates Miss Hurst, and I know of no living American writer who can describe the steaming richness of a Thanksgiving dinner with such gusto and delight.

On reading the book one feels that there is a purpose, an excuse for its being written. Certainly the author has not taken the trouble to footnote all these fictitious diary extracts in vain. Two probable solutions present themselves. Either Fannie Hurst has tried to follow the development of a boy who could not help become President of his country in view of his place of birth and splendid qualities, in which case she has completely failed, since David even though a clever and thinking lad shows no promise of fulfilling a destiny which requires so very little or so very much, or she has done a wiser thing. Desiring simply to write about a youth of this kind she invented this political apology in order to cast a halo over the narrative. It was a good trick, for David does achieve a glamor when one pauses over the hints that Rebekka offers of his future political success, his sweeping social reforms and the great industrial progress of the middle of the twentieth century when air hangers will have become as common as taxi stands.

## NOT MAGNOLIA

EDITH EVERETT TAYLOR

E. P. Dutton &amp; Co. \$2.50 242 pps.

In this first novel Miss Taylor has attempted a portrayal of the present generation with its gaiety, its impulsiveness, and its intensity. Her success in presenting a complete, authentic picture is, however, a matter for deep conjecture. One thing is certain. She spares no similes to gain her ends. There is an array of this figure of speech in NOT MAGNOLIA that would dazzle the most erudite rhetorician. Metaphors, too, are not neglected. Here is a rich example. "Merle was a straw through which sympathy flowed like a cool drink." Here is another. "Leigh's ladyhood had raised silken petticoats and fled." And another—"letting thoughts up like a flock of crows against a macabre sky."

The plot is at times vaguely discernible in the tropical maze of conversation and realistic exposition which goes to make up the major part of the book. The characters are sketchily drawn, and are with difficulty identified as individuals. Partly this may be due to the peculiar construction of the theme. The almost principal male character is only negatively felt throughout, even when he finally appears in about the last tenth of the book. The heroine, Leigh, rather well drawn, is the only one of the characters on whom a definite personality is bestowed. She is an admirable young woman, but there is not enough for her to do. Her long engagement to Stephen, the serenity of which is destroyed when he suffers a mental collapse, makes her deaf to the pleas of Oliver Varn, a young novelist, whom she later marries when she finds that Stephen has given his affections to another girl. Nothing stupendous here, and it is not developed to the best advantage. In the confusion of New York night life, a Southern college, a house party on a Southern estate, much of Leigh is lost.

Despite the obvious attempt of the author to be realistic, many of the characters are not convincing. There is a lack of clear-cut, decisive writing which causes even the interest in the story to waver at several points. Miss Taylor succeeds in giving a good analysis of Southern student life. Her mastery of the dialect is excellent. More description of Southern country would be welcomed. Since NOT MAGNOLIA is a first novel, its insufficiencies need not be alarming. A little more attention to continuity, a little less romanticism in naming characters, a little greater intensity of action would produce a fine story.

## Thanks are Due

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