

A Close Look at America In a Fast-Changing World

By CARTER BROOKE JONES
Star Book Critic

AMERICA IN THE MODERN WORLD. By D. W. Brogan (Rutgers University; \$3).

Despite its rather heavy title, this book is not in the least difficult to read. It is, on the contrary, penetrating without bombast, witty without straining to be amusing, always thoughtful and deftly written.

The work of an Englishman, it has none of that faint aloofness and touch of superiority which make some such books irritating. It is entirely friendly to America and yet critical enough to give any impartial reader pause.

Viewing Our Problem

The essay of a professor of political science at Cambridge, it could hardly be less pedantic or formal in its approach to our problems.

It displays, finally, such an intimate knowledge of the United States that you'd swear, if you did not know, that it was written by an American.

Not to Be Laughed Off

Mr. Brogan warns us, in the epilogue, that it will not do to laugh off as a mere stunt, as a waste of resources, the great Soviet triumphs in space. He explains:

"Showing mankind, for the first time in its very long history, the other side of the moon is more than a dazzling feat of technical invention and execution. It is a demonstration of the power of the Soviet society to do things unprecedented in the history of human achievement."

"If," he adds, "the Russians keep the lead in this conquest of space, this transcendence of human limitations, can we wonder that all over the world tens, even hundreds of millions of men, aroused from their millennial resignation, will wonder whether it be not true that communism has the key to human progress, that the old 'free world' is stagnant and deposed from its fairly recent role of world leadership? Sputniks may not fill men's bellies, but they may well fill men's minds."

To deal with a rapidly



D. W. BROGAN

changing world, "the American people will need to show flexibility of means if not of ends. Readiness to look unpleasant realities in the face, resignation to the fact that their destiny is totally enmeshed with that of the whole human race as it stands at the edge of space. Many comfortable and, in their day, rational and useful beliefs and habits will have to be scrapped."

Mr. Brogan points out that Americans are too apt to expect "democracies" in other parts of the world to be fashioned in the image of the United States, when, as a matter of cold logic, such a form of government may not be suited or practical for all these countries.

In the Arts

He finds a cultural paradox in this country. While we have a tradition of conformity in the arts, as our mass mediums of entertainment emphasize, yet—and he considers this a desirable form of tolerance—we are not closed to any new form of art or experimental philosophy or religion.

Mr. Brogan thinks it likely that the literary arts may be giving way in prestige, perhaps in cultural utility, to other arts, to the plastic arts, above all, to music. "Music, I think, has become

the refuge of the intelligent man and woman of today and that not because his tastes, but because those tastes have produced the market for hi-fi."

Talent Or Genius?

But "a lot of harm is done when a great popular success like 'South Pacific' or 'My Fair Lady' is puffed up until the distinction between talent and genius is lost sight of, between the work to which one may give the adjective 'immortal' with no pedantic scruple and commercial productions of high amusement value that are extremely unlikely to survive the generation that welcomes them. . . . 'My Fair Lady' is not 'The Marriage of Figaro'; 'By Love Possessed' is not 'War and Peace' or 'The Ambassadors'."

A PORTRAIT IN FULL LENGTH

Paul Cezanne Made His Detractors Look Silly

MORTAL VICTORY: A Biography of Paul Cezanne. By Lawrence Hanson. (Holt, Rinehart & Winston, \$4.50).

Mr. Hanson is certainly our most prolific and versatile biographer. No fewer than nine lives already bear his name, ranging from "Chinese" Gordon to the four Brontës. In most of these his wife, Elisabeth Hanson, is co-author.

This book is about that understandable, unlovable artist, Paul Cezanne. Because Cezanne is hard to understand both as a man and as an artist it should be said at once that his newest biographer accepts much and forgives more. He has been able, thus, to achieve a balanced position of tolerance and even admiration for the strange moody little man who was the despair of his friends and who has had the good luck to make his detractors look silly. As for his art, Mr. Hanson has, of course, taken the position that nothing can detract from his vigor and originality, qualities which made him one of the two or three most influential painters of his time.

Cezanne played a trick on all his future biographers by being born rich. No starving

in a Paris garret for him. His father supported him during all the years he was studying and painting and not selling in Paris. He made the Salon only after 19 years of steady rejection. But he kept on: "... a man with a rage to create ... but he didn't know what to create." Working between the new impressionism and his own brand of realism, he finally hit upon one of the magic formulas in all the history of art.

But what of him as a man? He was difficult. He never got over childhood hurts and imagined shortcomings. He didn't like or trust people. He was at his best painting things, not people. "When he paints one of his friends it looks as if he were revenge himself for some secret injury," said one of them.

But he kept on fighting for expression—his own expression—on canvas. When he got it, he worked harder than ever and left one of the greatest legacies of his time.

Mr. Hanson's book is workmanlike and professional in every respect. It breathes more, perhaps, of the fashionable portrait painter than of the shy, inscrutable little bourgeois from Aix who never really adjusted to the world, but time has made him fashionable, too.

—EDWIN TRIBBLE

Journal of a Romantic Migration Undersail

MERCER'S BELLES. By Roger Conant. Edited by Lenna A. Deutsch. (University of Washington Press, \$4.75.)

A year after the Civil War no one had heard of a population explosion, and in the Pacific Northwest there was an acute need for more settlers—female types preferred.

An enterprising entrepreneur named Asa Mercer tried to remedy this deficit by sailing some 50 women and girls from New York to Seattle where they were to marry bachelor woodsmen and thus assure the growth of Washington Territory.

Like many other imaginative leaders, Mercer disdained mundane matters, and was constantly in financial distress. Creditors harried him, and the cash he had collected from husbands and wives-to-be trickled away. While the S. S. Continental cleared Manhattan, the promoter hid himself in the coalhole.

The subsequent adventures and misadventures of "Mer-

cer's Belles" were recorded by Roger Conant, a 31-year-old bachelor reporter for the New York Times who went along in line of duty.

Once at Sea, Mercer tried to regain his lost prestige. He preached a Sunday sermon, barred card playing, forbade his girls from flirting with the ship's officers and ordered all abed by 10 o'clock.

Such male fastidious was roundly rebuffed. His girls, when they weren't seasick, blithely ignored him. They giggled at his preaching, stayed up late, strolled the decks with the officers and went on excursions ashore with them.

Finally, catching the spirit of his own venture, Mercer selected an amiable widow, wooed and married her when the ship reached Seattle after a 3-month cruise.

Laura A. Deutsch, who edited the Conant journal, lists the weddings of many other Mercer Belles in an appendix, by way of affirming the success of the romantic migration.

—JOSEPH O'KEEFE

American Slang: As a Lexicographer Tries to Define It

DICTIONARY OF AMERICAN SLANG. Compiled and Edited by Harold Wentworth and Stuart Berg Flexner. (Thomas Y. Crowell Company, \$7.50)

The universal fascination of slang, its color, its accuracy, its vitality, does much to make the "Dictionary of American Slang" a very good book; the volume's compilers, by what appears to be hasty and slipshod work and by a dull and cloudy view of their job, have done much to make it a very bad one. Eight thousand slang words and expressions, alphabetically arranged, are well worth the price of the book, but the reader will have to find a more painstaking and perceptive lexicographer to learn what Stuart Flexner vainly promises to tell—what American slang is, and how and why slang is created and used.

"American slang," according to Mr. Flexner, "is the body of words and expressions frequently used by or intelligible to a rather large portion of the general American public, but not accepted as good, formal usage by the majority."

Very well; but thereupon Mr. Flexner tries to differentiate slang, colloquialisms, cant, jargon, dialect and argot. In standard English one might say "Sir, you speak English well." Colloquially, according to Mr. Flexner, but not slangily, this comes out "Friend, you talk plain and hit the nail right on the head." Where would you actually hear that stilted sentence? In slang, says Mr. Flexner, the original English becomes "Buster, your line is the cat's pajamas" or "Doll, you come on with the straight jazz, real cool like." Either of these two prime examples of Mr. Flexner, in addition to not conveying the original meaning, is an insult to the vividness and point of genuine slang.

Slang as a whole is more common in speech than in writing, says Mr. Flexner, "thus, very few slang words (hence very few of the entries in this dictionary) appear in standard dictionaries." It is hard to understand what he is talking about when we find that almost all the entries in "American Slang" have citations from written sources.

Furthermore, the assertion that the dictionary is based on "the classical principle of historical sequence—wherever possible three dates are given: when the slang word was first used, when its meaning changed substantially, and when it went out of fashion" is simply a joke. The value of the book is greatly damaged by this slovenly research. Opening at random, one finds these first citations—"nix, 1942," "no-dice, 1952," "noggin, 1943," "no-good, noun, 1951, adj., 1946," "no-hitter, 1952," and so on, page after page. The definitions are often vague or not quite exact, as "no kidding—A somewhat doubting response to a statement that seems not entirely credible." There is no mention that it is also frequently an exclamation of pleasure. A nip is a Japanese, but there is no reference to the swallow one takes from a flask. Every dictionary has faults, but this one has more than absolutely necessary.

Its great value and interest lie in its extensive collection and explanation of the dirty word. Ubiquitous as people, useful as pockets, the dirty

word is usually denied the printed page even in dictionaries, where prudery should be only an entry with a long and shameful history. Perhaps the dirty word should stay as it is and never be cleaned up. Psychiatry may know that the words of pornography and scatology and race-hatred and the others of four letters, however long, should be kept taboo to act as necessary safety-valves. But if it should ever be decided that these words be made innocuous, that it is puerile to not admit what everybody knows, the job can be done by dictionaries such as this. Scholarship takes the curse of indecency. You don't blush at any word in a dictionary.

The spicy and otherwise naughty words are the most engaging, I suppose, and the great number of opprobrious and derogatory racial epithets is perhaps the greatest surprise, in regard both to quantity and venom. But the most bewildering reflection on slang is to consider how amorphous, how unclassifiable it is, and yet how unquestionably strong and durable. There are few valid

FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

Books and Vacations Belong Together

By BARBARA NOLEN
Contributing Writer

If you want to know how children's books are doing these days, don't ask a librarian or a bookseller. Just read **THE WALL STREET JOURNAL**. About 10 days ago, this financial newspaper reported as front-page news that sales of children's books have increased 124 per cent in the last seven years. This is a greater increase than any other type of book, though textbooks, technical, scientific, and reference books are not far behind. All of these types are way ahead of adult fiction, both hardback and paperback. What's more, these figures are for juveniles costing at least \$1, not for the masses of less expensive books which also help to develop the reading habit.

These figures prove statistically that every child today has a better chance to read than his parents, or his



"Bright Lights at Night," an illustration by Winifred Lubell from "Creatures of the Night."

grandparents, and much better books, too. He will still read the old favorites, if they're not pushed down his throat, and if they are available in pleasant-looking, well-printed editions. But his reading appetite is most stimulated by a constant stream of new books, all year round. During vacation, a book in the hand is as important as his bathing suit.

Happy Books

The gay, carefree feeling of vacation is captured by Allen Fisher, the children's poet, in a happy picture book called **GOING BAREFOOT** (Crowell; \$3). The illustrations by Adrienne Adams are as spontaneous and imaginative as the rollicking, intuitive text.

Other happy books about a child's joy, outdoors in summer, watching bugs and beetles and butterflies, can be shared by parent and child. **ILIKE BUTTERFLIES** by Ghady Konlik and Barbara Latham (Holiday House; \$2.95) is the perfect companion to **I Like Caterpillars** by the same author-artist team. In **QUICK AS A WINK** (Putnam; \$2.75) Dorothy Aldis alternates gay little poems about dragonflies, lady bugs, and other small creatures with short informational sections. Surprisingly this difficult combination of prose and poetry has artistic unity.

In the Woods

Most children are naturally curious about small insects and animals. In summer, especially, they are ready to explore in woods, field, or stream, by day or night. The right books can answer questions and suggest activities which will make outdoor explorations more satisfying.

CREATURES OF THE NIGHT by Dorothy Sterling (Doubleday; \$2.95) is a more comprehensive treatment of the subject so well introduced by Glenn Blough in **When the Sun Goes Down**. Other valuable books for the young naturalist are:

UNDER A GREEN ROOF by Anne Marie Jauss (Lippincott; \$2.95).

SMALL PETS FROM WOODS AND FIELDS by Margaret Waring Buck (Abingdon; \$3).

HERE COME THE BEES by Alice E. Goudy (Scribner; \$2.50).

SHELLS ARE WHERE YOU FIND THEM by Elizabeth Clemons (Knopf; \$2.75).

SCIENCE ON THE SHORES AND BANKS by Elizabeth K. Cooper (Harcourt; \$3.25).

Skunks and Mermaids

Sally Scott introduces a prowling skunk and a wasp's nest with amusing effect in a family story for 6-8 year olds, **JUDY'S SUMMER ADVENTURE** (Harcourt; \$2.50). For mixed ages under 12, Margaret Baker's mystery of a Brighton mermaid, **THE MAGIC SEA SHELL** (Holt; \$3) will appeal strongly to those who favor English fantasies. Of its kind, it's excellent.

In American junior fiction, runaway orphans are as out-moded as cruel stepmothers. In Sweden, it's different, at least in Astrid Lindgrén's story of **RASMUS AND THE VAGABOND** (Viking; \$2.75), winner of the Hans Christian Andersen medal, an international award.

Rasmus is an orphan who decides to run away from the orphanage to find a home of his own. In a very short time, he is homesick and hungry, a situation delightfully remedied by Paradise Oscar, a tramp who calls himself "God's best friend." Rasmus and Oscar become good companions, singing for their supper and sleeping under the sky, until they cross the evil path of two black-hearted robbers. There's a nice blend of outward and inward adventure, a book to be remembered by children and critics.

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A Scandinavian Tribute To U. S. Friendship

SCANDINAVIA PAST AND PRESENT: FIVE MODERN DECADES. Published by Edvard Henriksen. (Arkron, Copenhagen; for sale only by publisher, but available in all major libraries in the United States, public and at universities.)

This work, in three volumes, describing the life and history of the five Scandinavian countries—Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland and Iceland—was commissioned to be written in English especially for Americans.

Work in 3 Volumes

The guiding idea behind this immense undertaking, the publisher, Edvard Henriksen, explains in a preface, "has partly been to create a tangible expression of the gratitude which the Scandinavian peoples feel toward the United States because of what that country has meant during and after the last war, partly to produce a work which tells the comprehensive story of Scandinavia—past and present."

The three volumes contain about 2,150 pages. The historical and cultural development of the Scandinavian countries, with special emphasis on the artistic life of the old Scandinavians, is described in Volumes I and II. Volume III tells of what these countries are like today—their culture, systems of government, laws and defense, their social conditions, educational achievements, libraries, science, press, theater, films, radio and other communications.

Books Are Handsome

The volumes are beautifully printed and profusely illustrated. While the books at present

may be ordered only from the publishers—the price is approximately \$100 and bookstores may order them—some 2,700 copies of the work were sent to public and college libraries for the use of students and others interested.

The work should be invaluable to anyone whose interest in Scandinavia is deeper than tourist guides or more superficial books would satisfy. —C. B. J.

In Coney Island

THE BREAKWATER. By George Mandel. (Holt, Rinehart & Winston; \$4.95.)

The setting of this novel of youth is Coney Island during the depression years. The chief figure is Zale Rakusin, whom we meet in 1933 at the age of 14 and last see six years later, when he has grown into a troubled, ill-adjusted manhood. There is his friend, Fishie, a year younger, who kills himself at the beginning of the long story. There are other tragedies, all concerned with the confused life of several Jewish families torn between orthodox and modern dilemmas. Zale's old brother, Doodle, and others are important in the story. Mr. Mandel, author of "Flee the Angry Strangers," is a sensitive, often poetic writer. But "The Breakwater" is so determinedly literary that the earthy problems of the characters often are smothered in gaudy images. Apparently the author has tried to get away from the naturalistic approach. Perhaps he has tried too hard.

—C. B. J.

The Sunday Star WEEKLY BOOK SURVEY

The Sunday Star has arranged with some of the leading book sellers of Washington and suburban areas to report each week the books which sell best as a guide to what Washington is reading. The numbers represent the rank of each book among best sellers at the store named.

For Week Ending July 1, 1960

FICTION									
1. "The Leopard," Lampadusa	(2)*	2	2	3	1	1	2		
2. "Advice and Consent," Drury	(1)	1	1	5	1	5	5		
3. "Clea," Durrell	(-)	6	3	5	3	1	3		
4. "The Affair," Snow	(4)	4			6	3	2	1	
5. "Hawaii," Michener	(3)	3	3	2	2				
6. "View From the Fortieth Floor," White	(5)		4		4	4			
NONFICTION									
1. "Born Free," Adamson	(1)	1	1	3	4	5	1	2	
2. "Mr. Citizen," Truman	(2)	2	2	1	2	6	5		
3. "Stages of Economic Growth," Rostow	(6)	5	4		5	4	3	1	
4. "Carp's Washington," Carpenter	(3)	3	5	3	1	1	6	5	
5. "Felix Frankfurter Reminisces," Phillips	(-)	6	6	3		4	3		
6. "Perle," Mesta	(-)		5	4		3			

*Standing Week Ending June 24, 1960.