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Literary Paper Backs: Mermaid Dramabooks

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Succeeding chapters cover the field rather thoroughly. The first three of these, together with the introductory chapter, deal with stratification on a high level of general theory, while subsequent chapters attempt to relate this general theory to "middle range" hypotheses and research, as well as to less theoretically guided concepts and findings.

Both the subjective and the objective aspects of class are considered, with particular attention being paid to ratings, personal associations, style of life, and the symbols of class. Rank indices, class consciousness, and authority are examined rather searchingly, and the reader's attention is called to the fruits of speculation and research upon the interrelations of class position and personality structure. The amount of "drive" for achieving high social status or occupational status is a point of particular interest, and its correlation with social class is diligently considered.

The number of pages assigned to structure and to factors which tend to conserve the current stratification system is an indication of the emphasis of the book. Only 25 pages are devoted to change, whereas the first 477 pages are concerned with structure and function. In the section on change, a historical, case-method approach is used and the author confesses that he knows no way of singling out the factors which seem more important in causing or supporting change. This strikingly emphasizes the inability of the structural-functional approach, at the present stage of its development, to deal theoretically with the problem of change, which is certainly one of the main areas of interest and concern in stratification.

Despite the above criticisms, the reviewer highly recommends these two books as solid contributions to the field of social stratification.

FRANCIS C. MADIGAN

LITERARY PAPER BACKS

MERMAID DRAMABOOKS. Marlowe. Webster-Tourneur. Congreve. New York: Hill & Wang Inc., 1956.

DRAMABOOKS. George Bernard Shaw, by G. K. Chesterton. Dramatic Method, by Harley Granville-Barker. Shakespeare and the Elizabethans, by Henri Fluchère. New York: Hill & Wang Inc., 1956.

In a conference held at the University of Michigan last year Mr. August Heckscher, director of the Twentieth Century Fund, reporting on the effect of the paperback book on the reading habits of the American reading public, concluded that "it has been found that cheap novels

are bought by those who have been reading cheap novels in the magazines, while the good fiction and non-fiction is being consumed... by those who have been all along providing the market for this fare." That Mr. Heckscher rather accurately evaluates Philippine reading habits as well, one can easily establish by dropping in on Manila's largest distributor of paperbacks. This situation, though deplorable, is not unique. As long ago as 1758 a critic of the "Booksellers", one James Ralph, wrote: "The sagacious Bookseller feels the Pulse of the Times and according to stroke prescribes not to cure but flatter the disease: As long as the Patient continues to swallow, he continues to administer; and on the first symptoms of a Nausea he changes the Dose." (Unfortunately, the "Dose" now measures the better part of some *three hundred million volumes a year!*) Nor has time dulled the exactness of an even earlier condemnation written by Richard Steele in the *Guardian* (1713) on the effect of cheap and sensationalistic writing. "This unsettled way of reading naturally seduces us into as undetermined a manner of thinking and that assemblage of words which is called a style becomes utterly annihilated." And, we might add, so does one's set of moral values.

It is extremely gratifying, then, on receiving the above set of paperbacks from Hill and Wang Inc. of New York, to be able to pay tribute to "Booksellers" who prescribe "to cure not flatter the disease". And because Mr. Heckscher underestimates the effect of such publishing houses as Messrs. Hill and Wang his final verdict on the paperback industry may be overly pessimistic. For these publishing houses have made it possible for the ordinary educated person to collect a respectable library at less cost than the weekly cinema; they have contributed significantly to the efficiency of the teacher of literature. Perhaps only professors of literature fully appreciate how significant this latter contribution is. How much more thoroughly, for example, the development of Elizabethan and Jacobean drama can be studied when each member of the class has not only his Shakespeare but his own copy of Marlowe, Webster and Tourneur, and how much more effectively a class on the novel can be conducted when all the students are reading the same novel at the same time. Literature professors may be minority stockholders in the benefits of the paperback industry but they enjoy a substantial dividend.

The above Hill and Wang publications belong to two different series. The first, the Mermaid Dramabooks, are reprints of the original Mermaid series on Elizabethan and Restoration Drama, edited some seventy years ago by Havelock Ellis. Even their critical prefaces, written by such scholars and stylists as J. A. Symonds and Lord Macaulay, though perhaps "old hat" as criticism, are in themselves now part of the deposit of English literature. The volumes of Marlowe and Webster-Tourneur, inter-related as closely as they are with the

study of Shakespeare and English tragedy, will no doubt find a wider reading public here than the "manners" comedy of Congreve which is so peculiarly Anglo-Saxon. It would be a mistake, however, to consider Marlowe, Webster and Tourneur as merely the *before* and *after* of Shakespeare, for these English dramatists have added their own characteristic colors to that image of Western man reflected in the Elizabethan's great "mirror of nature." Only Shakespeare's *Macbeth* "outreaches" *Tamburlaine* as a study in the tragedy of ambition, and *Doctor Faustus*, the intellectual's *Everyman* (as Marlowe is our first intellectual dramatist) has as much meaning in the Age of the Satellite as in the Age of the Enlightenment. Twentieth-century man may well ponder the tragedy of Faustus, the man without faith "still climbing after knowledge infinite, and ever moving with the moving spheres."

Webster's plays are more often than not cited as examples of what Mr. Eliot meant when he said that the age of Shakespeare "moved toward chaos." They are the result of a theatre that had no conventions to prevent it from degenerating into sensationalism, vulgarity and extreme naturalism. For all that, the plays are well worth study for they bring us into contact with the extraordinary tortured soul of John Webster, the real antagonist of *The White Devil* and *The Dutchess of Malfi*. Though in both plays the wicked come to grief and lip service is paid to morality, it is Bosola and the dying Flamineo who echo Webster's own verdict on life: "There is nothing of so infinite vexation as man's own thoughts. I am in a mist."

The second series comprise the *Dramabooks*, which are modern critical commentaries on the theatre. The above selection is rather a mélange. Strict literary criticism was never quite G. K. Chesterton's forte, but like two other very English critics, John Dryden and Dr. Johnson, he is interesting even when he is wrong. He is especially interesting however when, as in the present case, he is concerned more with the man than his works. The chapters on "The Irishman," "The Puritan" and "The Progressive" are perhaps the finest bit of genetic criticism written on George Bernard Shaw.

A somewhat similar reservation must be made in the case of Mr. Granville-Barker, the author of the Dramabook *On Dramatic Method*. Most drama students remember Mr. Granville-Baker more for his two fine volumes of prefaces to Shakespeare's plays than the present work which contains the Clark Lectures delivered by the author at Cambridge in 1931. Yet fine as these prefaces are, Mr. Granville-Barker's literary criticism is not quite up to that standard of original brilliance which he attains when he limits his scope, as he does in *On Dramatic Method*, to strict theatre. This volume, then, is to be highly recommended to both students and scholars of the drama.

The third Dramabook, *Shakespeare and the Elizabethans*, is a reprint of an English translation of Henri Fluchère's work on Shakespeare first published in French shortly after the second world war. It is not only a surprisingly good work on Shakespeare for a Frenchman, but a fine book by any standards. French dramatic criticism, unlike the German, had its own rigid traditions of classical restraint in the theatre, and few French critics could ever see Shakespeare as anything more than a "strange, abnormal and disorderly genius." M. Fluchère's work does much to redress the balance and deserves the not easily given praise of Dr. Leavis: "As a compendium of relevant knowledge and thought, and a provocative discussion, the book is of the greatest use to university students. I know of no comparable book to recommend." These volumes are the beginning of a series. We may hope for even better things to come.

JAMES F. DONELAN

CLEAR THINKING AND WRITING

THE LOGIC AND RHETORIC OF EXPOSITION. By Harold C. Martin. New York: Rinehart and Company, Inc., 1957, 1958. x, 204p.

If the axiom, the pen is mightier than the sword, is true, it is also true that the wielding of the pen is a difficult and intricate art. To master it effectively demands the assistance of someone who is experienced in the technique and who has spent time and effort in teaching others how to produce clear and forceful prose. Such assistance is given by Harold C. Martin in his excellent volume, *The Logic and Rhetoric of Exposition*.

The book itself is a model of what it is trying to teach. It is intelligently conceived and executed in an orderly fashion. Beginning with the premise that clear thinking must precede clear writing, the first part of the book treats, in a far from superficial way, the fundamental problems of logic and the various proofs for assertions. In this treatment of the laws of right reason, Professor Martin feels obliged to make an excursion into the realm of philosophy. He does not attempt to settle the epistemological question, but he is aware of it and its implications in the art of communication. The all-important question of whether a definition is *real* or *nominal* is answered in the following way:

For most human purposes it is necessary to believe either that some definitions are real or that, in order to act at all, we must assume them to be so. Justice Holmes spoke of a certain undemonstrable postulate of law as "can't helps," and real definitions seem to make somewhat the same claim in our habits of thinking and writing (p. 10).

Professor Martin again has recourse to belief when classifying certain assertions which deal with "some general idea of the universe"