

FICTION

all the many lands he has known, Ireland, he maintains, holds the greatest number of ghosts. Italy comes next but its ghosts are religious—visions rather than ghosts. Such apparitions answer the question, "Are ghost stories true?"

There is good writing in this book. Mr. Reynolds knows well how to give you a glimpse of the Irish sky-scapes with its clouds scudding over a washed-out sky, and windy wrack here and there clinging to tower and tree as if the souls, driven forever onward in the rushing atmosphere of the spinning earth, were attempting to cling for a space to haunts that were dear to them in life.

Some of his stories repel me. I do not like to linger long on the story of great suffering or great wrongs. But Mr. Reynolds writes like a poet and sees with a painter's eye. His book is produced sumptuously and is worthy of the writing it contains.

Oliver St. John Gogarty, Irish poet, novelist, and essayist, is the author of "As I Was Going Down Sackville Street" and "Tumbling in the Hay."

Kasbah Dilemma

THE TEMPTATIONS OF MOURAD.

By Lucienne Favre. Translated from the French by Willard R. Trask. New York: William Morrow & Co. 1948. 314 pp. \$3.

Reviewed by **HOLLIS ALPERT**

THE TEMPTATIONS of Mourad seem to have fallen into two general categories: those offered at the house of Baya—a renowned establishment of the Kasbah—and the lure of shedding his Moslem heritage in favor of "Christian" manners and customs, as introduced by the French North African colonizers. Mourad, the son of a Berber village chieftain, took full advantage of both offerings, succumbed entirely to the first and gave lip service to the second. Lucienne Favre, a Frenchwoman who spent twenty years of her life in North Africa, tells Mourad's story with sympathy and understanding, and makes clear some of the problems inherent in the superimposition of a Westernized cultural framework upon centuries-old Moslem traditions.

At the same time she has written a sort of informal guidebook to Algiers, telling something of the political background and the French administration of the city during the period between the two world wars. The point-of-view throughout is that of Mourad, who looks out upon his exotic world through wise, clear eyes and who manages to regard the rather

inept ways of the conquerors and colonizers with a certain tolerance. It is made clear, however, that Mourad was exceptional in this respect. The native population, if they tolerated at all, did so through necessity and not through understanding. Many invasions had broken some of their proud and warlike spirit, and their energies were absorbed in eking out poor livings on farms and in villages. They accepted the presence of the French, but clung almost fanatically to their own traditions and moralities.

Mourad spent his early years in a Kabyle village in the Algerian uplands, where he learned from his father, Brahim ben Ahmed Shelif, of the wise precepts and the high deeds of his race. But already the French colonists' first automobiles were beginning to buzz along the roads which circled the mountain region, and a haphazard French educational system had begun to attract some of the more curious of the natives. Mourad was bright and perceptive, took easily to studies, and was prepared by M. Stievenart, the district schoolmaster, for attendance at the normal school in Algiers. He received a degree and a livelihood as a teacher of native children in the Kasbah.

But while he gave his days to earnest instruction of the young his nights were spent in voluptuousness, until it became plain, having reached his early twenties, that it was high time for him to breed the descendants expected of him. An unpleasant first wife was murdered off by a friend of his, who loved Mourad and wished to do him a favor, and the second wife

proved to be a model of patience and sweetness, who gave him the fidelity and the children he desired. But throughout the forty-five years of his life covered by the narrative there ran a plaintive longing for a sweetheart of his early years, Zina, who had the mental qualities he desired but for whom an all-important physical desire was missing. His large regret, in later years, was that he had not the foresight or the riches to provide for the having of three wives, who would have given him all of the qualities he would have liked.

The attempt to tell of the important events of a man's life over a period of so many years, bringing in at the same time so much of the detail of the environment, has greatly weakened the possible emotional impact of the novel. It is all seen through a haze of time, and the chronological arrangement of incidents hardly helps matters. Madame Favre, who has achieved something of a success in Europe with this book and with others, could learn something more of the craft of the novel, but the nature of the informational asides are such that they are always interesting, even if they do detract from the fictional quality of her work. She writes with lucidity and with temperate understanding, and has managed to conquer most of the temptations that so colorful a setting as the Kasbah (which she seems to know intimately) provides. Willard R. Trask has done an admirable translation, and has had the foresight to include a helpful glossary of Arabic and Berber terminology.

The Criminal Record

The Saturday Review's Guide to Detective Fiction

<i>Title and Author</i>	<i>Crime, Place, and Sleuth</i>	<i>Summing Up</i>	<i>Verdict</i>
THE WHIP <i>Sara Elizabeth Mason</i> (Morrow: \$2.50)	Young Midwestern girl confesses aunt's poisoning and goes to jail. Doubting psychiatrist has her retell life story—and picture changes.	One case where flash-back method of narration doesn't retard action. Nasty relatives balanced by beleaguered heroine and believable brain-prober.	Interesting
OUTRUN THE CONSTABLE <i>Selwyn Jepson</i> (Doubleday: \$2.75)	Beauteous and philanthropic London wife slays unloved spouse. "Nice guy" lover shields her and takes much on chin. Country lass saves day.	Rather long-winded, but well-supplied with eventful situations, pleasant—and reverse—people, including shadowy sleuth Mr. Ordinary Smith.	Passable
MAKE MY BED SOON <i>John Stephen Strange</i> (Crime Club: \$2)	Poisonings in placid Bucks Co. surroundings traced to tragic source by writer-tec Barney Gantt, his columnist wife, and assorted cops.	Atmosphere, plot, action, and suspense highly commendable. Characters agreeable, and generally true to life. Writing seems inept in spots.	Worth while

Poetry. *We should like to sound off this week on a matter having nothing to do with the books under review. Have you been irritated, as we have been, with the increasing bastardization by advertising copywriters of the poetic form for their sales messages? This is a purely mechanical device, having no relation to the requirements of cadence or parsing, with the most bromidic sales arguments set up in poetic form. So far as we can make out, it started with the perfume ads, quickly spilled over to fashions, and has now become so universalized that it apparently makes little difference whether the advertisement is for soft drinks, refrigerators, or financial statements—your copywriter insists on enshrining his words in staggered lines with opening capital letters. Would anyone care to join us in starting a Society for the Prevention of . . . etc., etc.?*

Right and Wrong Tracks

CRY CADENCE. By Howard Griffin. New York: Farrar, Straus & Co. 1947. 79 pp. \$2.75.

THE DIVER. By E. L. Mayo. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 1947. 66 pp. \$1.75.

THE BEAUTIFUL CHANGES AND OTHER POEMS. By Richard Wilbur. New York: Reynal & Hitchcock. 1947. 55 pp. \$2.

Reviewed by DAVID DAICHES

MR. GRIFFIN'S book raises an interesting question about modern poetry. Here is a writer, thoughtful, sensitive, observant, who responds interestingly to the life around him and who writes up these responses very capably. But there seems to be no particular reason why they should be written up as poems. As in so much modern verse, one appreciates the ideas and perceptions of the writer but can find little or no poetic compulsion behind the writing. A poem such as "The Cenacolo" is an able description of a painting, and an account of the thoughts aroused in the author by the painting, and it would make an excellent brief prose essay. One has the feeling that it is only the decline of the deftly written essay as a literary form which sends a man with Mr. Griffin's kind of sensibility to poetry. It does not help to describe the deck of a troop ship as "husky with men who whored with Space and Sky," for the unexpected verb there

adds no real force to the total conception—it is simply a sort of obeisance to the idea of poetic diction. Mr. Griffin's poems are far too full of such obeisances. Many of the poems do get across what the author wishes to communicate, though they often sound like notes for an essay, or are effective without being effective as poetry. "Cry Cadence" is thus an interesting volume, but it is difficult to see why the insights recorded in it are put forward as poems. The compulsion to find a poetic form derives from something more than intelligence and perceptiveness.

Mr. Mayo's poems are very different; for they pretend to be simple prose-like utterances, whereas in fact the best of them contain an echoing poetic meaning which begins to release itself a split second after we have read the words. There is an assumed lightness of touch here, a note not quite of irony but almost of timidity, behind which the richer meanings can be heard—not always, but often enough to convince the reader that the author has started with the kind of insight which demands poetic expression rather than just with some thoughtful observation to record. He understands what form does to an idea, and is not afraid to write something which is in itself trivial but in its poetic context is not. Sometimes he is little more than "neat," as in the almost epigrammatic little poem "The Mole." But there is more than neatness in such an opening

as "To pass the thirtieth year is but to be/Other than one expected." Some of these poems are topical, some trivial, some merely neat. But of the best of them ("The Dance of the Feather," for example) it can be said that these are modest poems, minor poems, but they are poems.

Richard Wilbur is clearly the most exciting poet of the three, though many of his poems sound still experimental and much of his work is less finished. He has already perfected a less complex kind of poetry than he is apparently capable of: a poem like "Tywater" is complete and perfect of its kind—more finished but less complex than "Walter Walker," which is a potentially finer poem. "Mined Country" is something neither Mr. Griffin nor Mr. Mayo could do: it is a carefully patterned poem in which the poet has felt himself into the total meaning of a situation which begins by being simple and ends by becoming a sustained and comprehensive metaphor. This is the real poetic method, and, though there is a certain raggedness in much of this volume, Mr. Wilbur is on the right track and is working his way towards impressive poetry.

Poetic Paradox

FORBID THY RAVENS. By Rolfe Humphries. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1947. 50 pp. \$2.50.

Reviewed by FLEMING MACLIESH

THE POEMS in this volume suffer more from a general failure to achieve than from any outright faults or obvious lapses. Mr. Humphries displays sensitivity and restraint; he has a good ear and the ability of a talented craftsman to manage meter and rhyme without being managed by them. He possesses the taste and discipline to avoid on the whole both the obviously sentimental and the grandiloquent, and he is not compelled to favor inadequacy with buckled lines, impenetrable allusions and fantastically contorted images, elaborately to display a bushel in the hope that everybody will suppose there is a light under it.

If these virtues make for polish, urbanity, and verse which, on the

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