

the portrait of him is far richer and more realistic than those available of any other of the British commanders.

The book is to be welcomed not only because of its style and presentation, but for the number of theses that are clearly maintained, theses that go to the core of our understanding of the war: It was not won by the United States so much as lost by the divided counsels of, and lack of sustained strategic planning by, the British politicians and commanders. ("The principle of policy-making," Willcox says, "seemed to be that sufficient unto the day are the expedients thereof.") It could never be won—as Clinton alone of all the British commanders realized—without a firm control of the sea and of the major harbors and a firm grasp of the logistic principles involved in movement on a continent. It was be-deviled, and hardly ever aided, by the existence of Loyalist groups, a nuisance in London, unreliable in America. And there were, as Gage and Clinton both said *ad nauseam*, never enough troops to do the job. "If you can't afford the expense of war, don't go in it," said Clinton.

For the confirmation he offers here to all these theses Professor Willcox is to be warmly commended. And he makes equally clear that Clinton could have won the war by defeating Washington's army in New York in 1776 had not Howe stopped him and after 1778 it was too late. This book becomes essential reading for any study of the reasons for Britain's first Imperial defeat.

And the man? Superficially he was very like his companions in disaster—unhesitating in physical courage; politician and would-be-intriguer always but statesman only occasionally; a summer soldier who could find solace, although less easily than they, in the ennui of his long winter evenings. But he lacked con-

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—From the book.

Sir Henry Clinton—"fatal hesitations."

## Skirting an Ocean of Violence

*Along That Coast*, by John Peter (Doubleday. 275 pp. \$4.95), the publisher's Canadian Prize-winner, concerns the racial situation in South Africa. Edward Hickman Brown, a former South African, is a free-lance writer in New York.

By EDWARD HICKMAN BROWN

JOHN PETER is blessed with the power to conjure up the Natal South Coast area, with its wild beaches and crashing breakers, and to do so in a lucid and lyrical prose. This book abounds with beautiful descriptive passages that succeeded in transporting me straight back to that lush and green subtropical strip along the Indian Ocean on South Africa's eastern shoreline.

If the author were equally adept with dialogue, this would indeed be a masterly novel. For, apart from the passages referred to above, it is written like a two-character play. The characters are Laura Hunt, a year beyond her Cambridge graduation, and Denton Todd, thirty-five and divorced after an unhappy marriage. We learn their previous histories mainly from their conversations, which is perhaps why they never quite came alive for me, never seemed wholly three-dimensional. And because Todd is the main protagonist of the novel, the girl suffered more in this respect.

Laura, a Canadian, is visiting South Africa in order to get to the center of what she calls "... the most important single problem in the world, in this century . . ." the problem of race. She meets Todd at a resort town a couple of days following her arrival, after she has witnessed an utterly unbelievable "racial" incident that culminates in an innocent, middle-aged Zulu's being hurled from a bridge into a lagoon fifty feet below. Todd and Laura spend their time discussing the South African situation as they walk along the beaches (thus giving Mr. Peter continued opportunity to bewitch the reader with his poetical imagery). Their attraction turns to love, and they are contemplating marriage when the novel's final tragedy overtakes Todd.

Three African characters are briefly introduced about a third of the way into the book, and they reappear at the end in order to bring it to a close. It is a measure of Mr. Peter's strength as a



John Peter—"the power to conjure."

writer that whereas I found these Africans to be contrived and unreal and the symbolism of the dénouement altogether too pat, I nonetheless could not help being carried along by the sheer power of his crashing finale.

MY main objection to the book is that it evades its implied objective, the analysis of the universal race issue as microcosmically represented by South Africa. Instead of such an examination, which would have necessitated the introduction of characters drawn from the conflicting groups, we are served up the jaundiced and bitter opinions of the thoroughly inconsistent Denton Todd. He has given up his legal practice in silent protest against what he believes to be a double standard in judicial administration; he calls himself a liberal, and yet at times he speaks and behaves like a caricature of the most bigoted racist. He tells the girl that "... the only real way to restore sanity to the white population . . . is to psychoanalyze every man jack of them. . . ." or, alternatively, "Kill the lot. . ." He offers no hope at all concerning the current white injustice and its inevitable black counterpart, apparently oblivious to the latter possibility. If such an oversimplified attitude, brought on by despair, can be sympathized with in an individual, it can hardly be accepted as a philosophical judgment.

Perhaps these are mainly the objec-

tions of a South African. In spite of them, *Along That Coast*—a first novel that, quite remarkably, never reads like one—is worthy of attention. One looks forward to the other books that must surely follow it.

**Renegades in Retreat:** With six of his novels available in English, Willi Heinrich is one of the most translated of German authors. His success is quite deserved, even though he has never matched the brutal realism of his first book, *Cross of Iron*. His stories of ordinary men fighting a war whose purpose they do not understand are of the kind that appeals to readers who value straightforward prose and depth of experience more than literary experimentation. At his best, Heinrich must be compared to Remarque, with whom he shares a disillusionment about loudly proclaimed patriotic ideals and a compassionate feeling for those squeezed against the wall.

Heinrich's new novel, *The Crumbling Fortress* (Dial, \$5.95), perfectly translated from the German by Michael Glenny, is set in the *Alpes-Maritimes*, near Nice, a ruggedly beautiful landscape that becomes part of the action as deserters from the Russian and German armies, refugees from Nazi Germany, French quislings, and the *Maquis* get into each other's way on the precipices. Every cliff-dweller has his own reasons for hiding out in the mountain fortress, and their life is not made easier by the widening cracks in its brickwork. A slight shift of the rocks, and there's a grave for all in the valley below.

Against this background of imminent danger Heinrich skillfully intertwines the fates of characters whose life histories are those of an entire generation, disenchanted Nazi enthusiasts, a renegade communist, disgusted soldiers. The best portraits are Herr Knopf, the aging Jew from Germany, and his young niece, who learns of love and death at the same time. The wise humanity of her uncle, a victim rather than a doer, does not have its like in any other Heinrich novel. Knopf's inner calm dwarfs the hotspurs around him and provides an excellent foil for the fast-paced developments.

Willi Heinrich is a competent storyteller and knows how to mix the ingredients in just the right proportions. There is no cleverly contrived plot in *The Crumbling Fortress*, but the shooting, the shouting, and the whispered words of love have a cumulative effect, like an echo in the mountains. The suspense carries you from page to page, rather than from the first page to the last, and you will not fall asleep if you read this novel rocking in the hammock, no matter how hot the afternoon.

—JOSEPH P. BAUKE.

**Problems of Small Royal Houses:** Joseph Breitbach, a versatile, German-born author living in Paris, has written a number of novels and plays in French and German that have found wide acclaim in Europe. That he is familiar with the most intricate details of industry and business, as well as the problems of small royal houses, is proven by the book with which he makes his curious debut in the United States. Not really a novel, *Report on Bruno*, translated from the German by Michael Bullock (Knopf, \$5.95), imitates non-fiction. Or perhaps it would be more precise to say that it mimics a type of nonfiction that reads more like fiction. In any case, the book is both fascinating and exasperating.

Its basic pattern seems simple enough. Bruno Collignon, grandson of the most influential minister of a small Western European kingdom, lives separated from his communist father and his alcoholic mother. His grandfather, whom he both loves and hates, is supposed to look after him, and Bruno seems to have everything a boy needs—everything but sufficient care and affection. Since Bruno is brilliant, he is introduced, at an age when other boys worry about their stamp collections, to ministers, secret agents, ambassadors. His grandfather shouldn't really be surprised when Bruno, with the help of his father (whom he starts loathing soon after), defects to Soviet Russia and refuses to communicate with anyone, even his former tutor, Stijn Ryssegeert. The first human being to treat Bruno as a person, Ryssegeert made one fatal mistake: he underestimated Bruno's jealousy. At the

end, after we have witnessed Bruno's transformation from de luxe delinquent to communist agitator and journalist-blackmailer, Ryssegeert pays with his life for this error: for, like many slightly paranoid intellectuals, Bruno is continually taking revenge.

There are some hilarious episodes: the Soviet ambassador intent on a boar hunt, making enemies of the "proletarian" helpers; her Royal Excellency, the Dowager Queen Mother, taking a trip to Russia to promote peace; the police activities against the ever-present "lyrical artistes" (frequented, among others, by the young Bruno and the cops themselves the moment they are off duty).

As a portrait of politics in a small monarchy, the book is of interest. As a thriller, it will while away a few hours. I only wish we could feel more sympathy for grandfather, who, as narrator, reports on too many intrigues, involving too many people whom we have hardly met.

—RICHARD PLANT.

**Don Giovanni and Lesbos:** Brigid Brophy is a clever young English novelist who evidently has sorceress blood in the family. Reading her two short novels, *The Snow Ball* and *The Finishing Touch* (World, \$4.95), is an experience much like a dream-filled sleep: enchanting, absorbing, sometimes frightening, and faintly bewildering. Awakening, one wonders at the source of the spell, the mystic significance of the symbols. But the magic lingers.

*The Snow Ball*, longer and by far the most effective of the novels, is set in an eighteenth-century London town house,

