

Nov. 22, 1947

THE

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NEW YORKER



Mark Rothko

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

THE THEATRE

(Next week, as indicated below, some theatres will rearrange their matinee schedules, because of Thanksgiving. There may be further changes, so you'd do well to check with the newspapers. ... E. and W. mean East and West of Broadway.)

COMMAND DECISION—A taut and expert drama having to do with our Air Forces in England and their difficulties with the boys in the Pentagon. With Paul Kelly, Jay Fasset, Paul McGrath, and Edmon Ryan, (Fulton, 46th St., W. CI 6-6380. Nightly, except Sundays, at 8:40. Matinees Wednesdays, except Nov. 26, and Saturdays at 2:40; special matinee Thursday, Nov. 27.)

THE DRIFT CIRCLE—John van Druten hasn't quite defined the central character in this play about a middle-aged professor and his war on youth, but it is still an interesting, intelligent piece. Leo G. Carroll is the professor; Neva Patterson, Susan Douglas, Boyd Crawford, and Walter Starkey are his young adversaries; and Ethel Griffies is a fierce and marvellous old lady. (Morosco, 45th St., W. CI 6-6230. Nightly, except Sundays, at 8:40. Matinees Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2:40.)

THE FIRST MRS. FRASER—And how she outwitted the Second. Jane Cowl, abetted by Henry Daniell and Reginald Mason, giving a cheerful, characteristic performance in St. John Ervine's eighteen-year-old comedy. (Shubert, 44th St., W. CI 6-5990. Nightly, except Sundays, at 8:40. Matinees Wednesdays, except Nov. 26, and Saturdays at 2:40; special matinee Thursday, Nov. 27.)

FOR LOVE OR MONEY—Young June Lockhart's unusual charm doing a great deal to alleviate a pretty mechanical play. With John Loder, Vicki Cummings, Paula Trueman, and Mark O'Daniels. (Henry Miller, 43rd St., E. BR 9-3970. Nightly, except Sundays, at 8:40. Matinees Thursdays and Saturdays at 2:40.)

THE HEIRSS—An adaptation of Henry James' "Washington Square" that is both a penetrating study of New York society in 1850 and an exciting play. Wetly Hiller is magnificent at the head of a cast that includes Basil Rathbone and Patricia Collinge. (Biltmore, 47th St., W. CI 6-9353. Nightly, except Sundays, at 8:30. Matinees Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2:30.)

HOW I WONDER—Donald Ogden Stewart's rather embarrassing mélange of high thought and low comedy. Garson Kanin has directed a fine group of players, among them Raymond Massey, Everett Sloane, and Meg Mundy. (Hudson, 44th St., E. BR 9-5641. Nightly at 8:40. Matinee Saturday at 2:40. Closes Saturday, Nov. 22.)

AN INSPECTOR CALLS—J. B. Priestley's play, which tries to fix the moral responsibility for a suicide, begins much better than it ends. Thomas Mitchell and Melville Cooper are in the cast; Sir Cedric Hardwicke is the director. (Booth, 45th St., W. CI 6-5650. Nightly, except Sundays, at 8:40. Matinees Wednesdays, except Nov. 26, and Saturdays at 2:40; special matinee Thursday, Nov. 27, at 3.)

MAN AND SUPERMAN—It's probably no news these days that women chase men, but Maurice Evans has given this Shaw play devoted to the subject a very nice production. He also stars in it, and is assisted by Frances Rowe, Carmen Mathews, Malcolm Keen, and Chester Stratton. (Alvin, 32nd St., W. CI 5-5226. Nightly, except Sundays, at 8:30. Matinees Wednesdays, except Nov. 26, and Saturdays at 2:30; special matinee Thursday, Nov. 27.)

MIRRA—Judith Anderson is overpowering as the bloodiest heroine in literature. Robinson Jeffers did the "free adaptation," and in the supporting cast are John Gielgud and Florence Reed. (National, 41st St., W. PE 6-8220. Nightly, except Sundays, at 8:40. Matinees Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2:40.)

THE WHISLOW BOY—Except for a little interpolated romance, this Terence Rattigan play, based on a famous British trial, is most satisfactory. The cast imported from England by



A CONSCIENTIOUS CALENDAR OF EVENTS OF INTEREST

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29

John C. Wilson and the Theatre Guild includes Alan Webb, Frank Allenby, and Valerie White. (Empire, Broadway at 40th St. PE 6-9540. Nightly, except Sundays, at 8:40. Matinees Thursdays and Saturdays at 2:40.)

A YOUNG MAN'S FANCY—Something to do with the reformation of a sissy at a children's summer camp. You may as well skip it. (Cort, 48th St., E. CI 5-4289. Nightly, except Mondays, at 8:40. Matinees Saturdays and Sundays at 2:40; special matinee Thursday, Nov. 27.)

LONG RUNS—BORN YESTERDAY: Judy Holliday as an enlightened tramp and Paul Douglas as a scheming junk dealer. (Lyceum, 45th St., E. CH 4-3256. Nightly, except Sundays, at 8:40. Matinees Wednesdays, except Nov. 26, and Saturdays at 2:40; special matinee Thursday, Nov. 27.) ... **BURLESQUE**: Bert Lahr in the revival of the 1927 hit. (Belasco, 44th St., E.

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BR 9-2067. Nightly, except Mondays, at 8:40. Matinees Saturdays at 2:40 and Sundays at 3.) ... **HAPPY BIRTHDAY**: The testimonial to Helen Hayes. (Broadhurst, 44th St., W. CI 6-6600. Nightly, except Sundays, at 8:40. Matinees Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2:40.)

... **HARVEY**: Frank Fay, Josephine Hull, and that six-foot, invisible rabbit. (48th Street Theatre, 48th St., E. CI 5-4396. Nightly, except Sundays, at 8:40. Matinees Wednesdays, except Nov. 26, and Saturdays at 2:40; special matinee Thursday, Nov. 27. On Sunday evening, Nov. 23, Brock Pemberton will play the lead in a special performance for the Stage Relief Fund.) ... **JOHN LOVES MARY**: About the soldier who comes home to marry the Senator's daughter. With William Prince and Nina Foch. (Music Box, 45th St., W. CI 6-4636. Nightly, except Sundays, at 8:40. Matinees Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2:40.)

... **THE VOICE OF THE TURKLE**: Harvey Stephens is the sergeant, and Phyllis Ryder and Peggy French play his two girls. (Martin Beck, 45th St., W. CI 6-6363. Moves on Sunday, Nov. 23, to the Hudson, 44th St., E. BR 9-5641. Nightly, except Mondays, at 8:35. Matinees Saturdays and Sundays at 2:35.)

Scheduled to open too late for review in this issue:

EASTWARD IN EDEEN—Beatrice Straight and Onslow Stevens in a play by Dorothy Gardner. Produced by Nancy Stern and directed by Ellen Van Volkenburg. (Royale, 45th St., W. CI 5-5760. Nightly, except Sundays, at 8:40. Matinees Thursdays and Saturdays at 2:40.)

MUSICALS

ALLEGRO—A play with music, and two jokes, about the first thirty-five years of a doctor's life. Richard Rodgers' score is all right, but Oscar Hammerstein's book and Agnes de Mille's ballets don't help at all. Annamary Dickey, John Battles, John Conte, Roberta Jonay, Kathryn Lee, Muriel O'Malley, and Lisa Kirk. (Majestic, 44th St., W. CI 6-9730. Nightly, except Sundays, at 8:30. Matinees Thursdays and Saturdays at 2:30.)

BRIGADOON—A good-looking and tuneful show, of Scottish persuasion. It is full of accomplished people, among them David Brooks and Pamela Britton, but its laughs are thin. (Ziegfeld, Sixth Ave. at 54th St. CI 5-5200. Nightly, except Sundays, at 8:30. Matinees Thursdays and Saturdays at 2:30.)

HIGH BURTON SHOES—Some nonsense dealing with the 1913 Rutgers football team and a couple of confidence men, made into a highly agreeable evening by Nanette Fabray's stylish performance and Jerome Robbins' wonderful Mack Sennett ballet. With Phil Silvers, Lois Lee, and Joey Faye. (Century, Seventh Ave. at 59th St. CI 7-3121. Nightly, except Sundays, at 8:30. Matinees Wednesdays, except Nov. 26, and Saturdays at 2:30; special matinee Thursday, Nov. 27.)

MUSIC IN MY HEART—Tschaikowsky's emotional life was certainly never as dull as it is made to seem here. His music, however, is occasionally well represented, and Vivienne Segal, Martha Wright, and Charles Fredericks are a lot better than their lines. (Adelphi, 54th St., E. CI 6-5097. Nightly, except Sundays, at 8:30. Matinees Wednesdays, except Nov. 26, and Saturdays at 2:30; special matinee Thursday, Nov. 27, at 3.)

LONG RUNS—ANNIE GET YOUR GUN: The celebrated Miss Oakley, polished to a shine by Ethel Merman and Irving Berlin. (Imperial, 45th St., W. CO 5-2212. Nightly, except Sundays, at 8:30. Matinees Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2:30.) ... **CALL ME MISTER**: Life as it never was in the Army—or out of it, either. (Plymouth, 45th St., W. CI 6-9156. Nightly, except Mondays, at 8:35. Matinees Saturdays and Sundays at 2:35; special matinee Thursday, Nov. 27.) ... **FINIAN'S RAINBOW**: The one about a leprechaun. (46th Street Theatre, 46th St., W. CI 6-6075. Nightly, except Sundays, at 8:30. Matinees Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2:30.) ... **OKLAHOMA!**: In saccula saeculorum. (St. James, 44th St., W. LA 4-4664. Night-

BOOKS

Jean-Paul Sartre on the Impotence of France

"THE REPRIEVE" (Knopf) is the second installment of Jean-Paul Sartre's trilogy, "The Roads to Freedom," of which the first volume, "The Age of Reason," was published last summer. "The Age of Reason" was a complete little drama that dealt with a limited number of characters and presented a crisis in their lives in the spring of 1938. "The Reprieve" carries along the same characters, but it throws open a bigger stage and adopts a quite different technique, which has been derived from "Ulysses" and Dos Passos' "Manhattan Transfer." You have here—besides the middle-class bohemians, mostly students, teachers, and radicals, that made the whole subject of the first book—a twisting and flickering crowd of proletarians, peasants, petits bourgeois, political figures, and Jewish businessmen, among whom thread in and out a French official returning from Morocco with a mistress from a jazz band, a neurotic adolescent boy who has run away from home, a crippled male patient in a hospital, being treated for a tubercular spine, and a shepherd who has thrown up his job to try his fortune in the outside world. The misadventures and wanderings of the last do recall Dos Passos' young country boy who has run away from the farm and comes to grief in the city, and Mathieu, the central figure, sometimes slips into the lonely cadences of Joyce's Stephen Dedalus; but Sartre, who has acknowledged these debts, has done something quite his own with devices that have often been borrowed to produce very feeble results.

Sartre has introduced an innovation by making the shift from one character or group to another occur in the middle of a paragraph (as Joyce does only once or twice in "Ulysses") or even in the middle of a sentence, and he often has two or more episodes melting back and forth into one another. He handles all this so expertly that it rarely becomes confusing, and he exploits it in many ingenious ways so as to indicate the participation by people who never see one another in the common emotional experiences and changes of psychological climate involved in a national crisis as well as in the long-established habits of

life. For though the original set of characters continues to hold the narrative together by their relations among themselves, being all in one way or another rather exceptional people, more sensitive than their neighbors to what is going on in the world, their opinions and movements are here woven in with those of this average swarm who go to compose the social entity of France. "The Reprieve" covers those days—September 23 through September 30, 1938—during which the French Army was mobilized, at the threat of German aggression against the Czechs, but war averted by the signing of the Munich agreement, which abandoned Czechoslovakia to Hitler; and it aims to show the state of mind of the French—the conscious indifference and the unconscious apathy—which made their defeat inevitable.

The stifling atmosphere of Vichy France and France on the eve of Vichy is Sartre's special subject; and he is remarkably successful here, as he was in "The Age of Reason," in giving us the creepy feeling of the corruption and irresponsibility of the lives of the educated people, with the addition of a sounding of the depths, hardly more reassuring, of an ignorant, grubbing, wine-guzzling working class. The chief male characters, Mathieu and Daniel, are shown, in their meditations, ap-

proaching more explicitly than in the earlier book the metaphysical position of Existentialism; and, under pressure of the mobilization, the Existentialist doctrine of choice—a kind of cramped and disheartened free will—is exemplified a little more often, though still mainly in a negative way. The hospital case on his stretcher, while being uncomfortably moved in a boxcar, controls his natural functions out of regard for the woman lying next to him (an episode very typical of Sartre, whose characters are mostly prostrate in some sense and whose exercise of will power is mostly confined to keeping themselves from being as objectionable as they might be). The boy Philippe "engages himself" in reality—in the Existentialist language—by defying his stepfather, the general, and shouting "Down with war!" in the streets; and when at last he gets into trouble, Mathieu intervenes to rescue him and spends the night with a common, good-hearted girl who is also protecting Philippe, and he shows them a faint warming of human affection that is evidently intended to figure as a first suggestion of popular solidarity. But when the war alarm is over, they will all presumably relapse more or less into their previous ignoble inertia.

The third of these volumes, "The Last Chance," has not yet come out in



K. Varsky

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French, and it is harder to form an opinion of "The Reprieve" than it was of "The Age of Reason" without knowing its place in the larger scheme. Taking it on the lowest level, it is worth reading as a piece of reporting on the France of the day before yesterday. Not all the cells of the social organism are explored with equal success. The weakest element of the book, it seems to me, is the sequence that shows Daladier, Chamberlain, and Hitler engaged in their negotiations. Here Sartre has to stick to the record and cannot, except in the case of invented marginal figures, allow his imagination to come into play—with the result that these newspaper statesmen seem a good deal less real and alive than they did in the newspaper stories. This problem Dos Passos handled better by treating, in "U. S. A.," the historical characters by a separate method: a series of documented biographies. Nor is the sequence in Sartre's novel that gives glimpses of an embattled Czech household either vivid or forceful enough to carry the weight it should, as it annoyingly, from time to time, wrenches our attention away from France. It is hard to see what purpose it serves unless it be a first feeding-in of material that is later to develop, by a further enlarging of the stage, into the drama of Europe as a whole. But when these scenes have been written off, you have a highly entertaining panorama pieced together from the unpromising material of shabby love affairs, aimless satisfactions, and egoistic ambitions, among which human fellowship and moral courage are only just beginning to wake.

THE translation of both volumes is by Eric Sutton and an exceptionally good job, adequate, as few translations are, on both the colloquial and the literary sides. The sequence of the hospital patient—who is one of Sartre's most sickening symbols for the diseased passivity of France—has been weakened by considerable expurgation. It is probably the duty of a reviewer to find some fault with every translation, so I will point out that "*cette épaisse odeur d'oignons rousis*" means that the onions were scorched, not that they were "reddened."

The jacket of "The Reprieve" is ornamented with the same picture as the jacket of "The Age of Reason," and this picture presents a mystery of a kind that can emanate only from a New York publisher's office. It is a drawing of Venus and Adonis, as smoothly and insipidly classical as if it had been de-



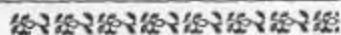
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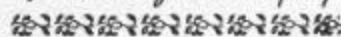
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signed for a cameo: the nude goddess is lying on the grass, importuning the virgin huntsman, who grasps his bow and tries to flee. Now, what on earth has this to do with Sartre? I thought there might be a faint possibility that it symbolized the situation of Mathieu, in "The Age of Reason," disentangling himself from his mistress. But it would be hard to find two characters in fiction who less resembled Venus and Adonis, and the reappearance of the latter pair on the jacket of the second novel puts this theory out of the question. We must accept one of two explanations: either the drawing is intended as an allegory of an Existentialist France refusing, in the person of Adonis, to engage its responsibility, or it is something that Mr. Knopf had had made for a book of another kind which he decided not to publish. —EDMUND WILSON

BRIEFLY NOTED

FICTION

RED PLUSH, by Guy McCrone (Farar, Straus). A six-hundred-page novel—the Book-of-the-Month Club selection for December—that was published in England a number of years ago under the title "Wax Fruit." It is concerned with the members of a Victorian Scottish family—two brothers and their three sisters—who are lured from the Highlands by the attractions of life in the wide world of Glasgow. The author picks up their story in 1870, when they are just catching on to the ritual of urban living, and drops it some ten years later. In the interval, the brothers successfully fit themselves into the city's business structure, two of the sisters develop into accomplished housewives, and the youngest girl wanders briefly afield to Vienna, where a violent dislocation in her life provides the only substantial upheaval in the pleasant but unnecessarily leisureed narrative.

THE TAMARACK TREE, by Howard Breslin (Whittlesey House). The Literary Guild's choice for December is a historical novel, but it at least makes quick reading. This virtue is mainly the result of Mr. Breslin's experience as a radio writer, an apprenticeship that has undoubtedly made it easy for him to pay out a large part of his story—an account of a Whig political rally held near Stratton, Vermont, in 1840—in long runs of brisk dialogue. The device is generally effective, although there is a

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NOTE: "Every Month Was May," by Evelyn Eaton, a collection of reminiscences, mostly of France between the two wars, has been published by Harper. A considerable number of them first appeared in *The New Yorker*. There are pen-and-ink illustrations by Garth Williams.

VERSE

A MAP OF VERONA, AND OTHER POEMS, by Henry Reed (Reynal & Hitchcock). This first volume by an accomplished young Englishman contains short poems, as well as several more ambitious, longer poems on legendary subjects. His ironic "Naming of Parts," here included, is one of the few memorable pieces of verse produced during the war years.

NOTE: "Forbid Thy Ravens," Rolfe Humphries' latest collection of verse, has been published by Scribner. Many of the poems first appeared in *The New Yorker*, including "Play Thy Game, Lord," from a line of which the title of this book is taken.

The three actors, Robert Montgomery, George Murphy and Ronald Reagan, joined another stellar figure, Lanky Gary Cooper, in giving their views.—*The Times*.

More commonly known as Lanky G. Cooper.

That greenish tinge on October oranges is a botanical peculiarity. It needn't bother you. These oranges are at their sweetest for they have been ripening on the trees since last May. The color does not mean that they are at their sweetest for they have been ripening on the trees since last May.—*Richmond Times-Dispatch*.

Aw, shut up!

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