



dog's eye view

Tell you what I notice, Mac. 'More and more girls with these converging fashion marks on their stockings.

Yes, Aussie, and the taper heel as well. When you see them both together you know it must be

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Pig Islander into French

FRANK SARGESON, of Takapuna, Auckland, has had a recent novel issued in a French translation; it is *That Summer*, which appeared in three parts in *Penguin New Writing* in 1944. When I heard that a copy of the French edition had arrived I asked Frank Sargeson if I might see it and he brought it to *The Listener* office. It was a small book—of 162 pages—in bright orange jacket with white lettering in large clear type, announcing:

CLIMATS

FRANK SARGESON

CET

ÉTÉ-LA

Traduis de l'Anglais par
Jeanne Fournier-Pargoire

Editions du Bateau Ivre

This publishing sign, Editions du Bateau Ivre, was printed in a circle round a miniature black and white seascape with wavy lines and a rocking boat for the reference to Rimbaud's poem.

After I had gazed at this pleasant cover in pure enjoyment for some time I looked up to find Frank Sargeson gazing in pure enjoyment too. Then he pointed to the title with his pipe and said, his nose wrinkled with amusement, "I suppose if you were translating that title 'Cet Été-Là' you'd say 'That There Summer.' That's of course if you were translating it into colloquial English, not *mandarin* English." His mocking tone made it quite clear that Mr. Sargeson was not going to let this success turn his head.

"CLIMATS," I said. "Why 'CLIMATS' at the top?"

"See the list on the back of prospective publications, the translations are all labelled 'CLIMATS.'" There were two from Hungary, others as well.

"Perhaps to give the idea of foreign literature, books from other climes." I read the blurb inside the wrapper: the author was described as "un des espoirs de demain;" his writing was distinguished by "a hard realism which serves as a frame for so much human truth."

"That's very interesting," Mr. Sargeson said, his pipe busy pointing again, "that they added this bit about human truth. Most English critics would have stopped at realism and left it at that. And of course that's not the important thing at all. It's very perceptive of these people; they've seen much further than the surface. It's really a very good translation—not that my French is good enough to judge, but I've shown it to someone whose is. Of course there are funny bits." Mr. Sargeson jumped up, put his pipe in his mouth, and busily turned pages to find me something.

"Un Bolcheviste Enragé"

"Ah yes, here. Remember I said 'he was pretty red.' Well, look how it comes out: 'c'était un bolcheviste enragé.'" He rolled the words from his mouth with a grand guttural. "And about the kid's legs, you remember, thin as sticks,



FRANK SARGESON
The Important Thing is Perception

and her father tells Bill 'it just shows you the way the working man gets it put across him every time.' Here's the French: 'ca vous donne une idée de la situation du proletaire.' In fact, on the whole, the translation emphasises a political feeling, brings out something fairly definite that way when it's all added up. Not that it matters, but it's interesting to see how small points add up to alter the flavour. And yet the whole atmosphere has been kept extraordinarily well; a colloquial thing like that couldn't have been easy, must have been a real puzzle in parts."

A Pig Islander

As we turned the pages we found more of these quaintnesses in translation. For instance, Sargeson describes Bert as "Maggie's bloke" which becomes in French "Le type de Maggie." This in itself is not strange—"type," meaning normally any fellow, chap, bloke, may just as easily as our "bloke" take on the specialised meaning in its colloquial use here—but it is strange to find Maggie referred to as a "typesse." Bill, asking about some "decent sheilas," is made to ask about "des poules à l'hauteur." The translator was apparently floored, Mr. Sargeson and I agreed, by the phrase "Pig Islander." Bert is described as being "not a Pom, it was easy to tell he was a Pig Islander." Not a "tow-tow," the French has it, "un brute d'insulaire." I cannot think how the magnificent bleakness of Sargeson's last sentence: "Maybe if only it had rained, I remember I thought" could have been caught in translation; as it is. "J'aurais voulu qu'il pleuve à seaux" has a more immediate, a more personal meaning, but in some way an effect of triteness quite absent from the original.

For a book that was published just a little more than a year after D-day—it was issued on June 5—Cet Été-Là