

author of the *Spoon River Anthology*; the "Court poetry without a court," written, though not exclusively, by Southern poets, and the "scientific language" of Karl Shapiro and many other recent poets. It would seem that America presents her poets with too little and too much: a wealth of crises and a dearth of stable notions of God, society and themselves, by which these crises could be linked and interpreted. Thus comes the paradox, recurrent throughout these poems, of a social optimistic myth coupled with an intensely negative personal view of life. Shapiro writes—

... And we have seen that when the hero lifts
The vizor of his helmet to the gaze
Of the ecstatic myth-mad populace
That it is nothing but a shell, a voice
Without a face, a brash and neutral horn
That amplifies our disappointing hopes...

One has the sense of a skeleton in a closet and poets too erudite to know the simple words that could pulverise it or bring it to life again. Perhaps the Southern poets are the most fortunate, who have ready to hand a Homeric myth, anti-urban, the old hates and blood-guils of the Civil War. The elder and more formal poets impress me most (Frost, Robinson, Eliot, Crowe, Ransom)—not on account of their technical competence (some of the younger have them there on the hip), but by simple evocative diction and a sense of continuity in the natural world and in the lives of men. Their work has its distinctive American tang; but they seem, happily, to have paid little attention to critics trying to write their poems for them.

—James K. Baxter

THE HUMAN FAMILY

PRIMITIVE HERITAGE, edited by Margaret Mead and Nicolas Calas; Victor Gollancz, English price 21/-.

THE worst part of this book is its subtitle, "An Anthropological Anthology." Once that horror has been passed, there are no barriers to enjoyment. The 16 parts begin with "Anthropology in Antiquity" and end with "Immortality." Between these terminal signposts the range of theme is wide and varied, and the editors have wisely looked for material outside their own discipline. In Part Four, "The Scene," are passages from Doughty, D. H. Lawrence and André Gide; authors drawn upon for the section on "Children" include Herman Melville as well as more scientific names; and F. E. Maning has found his way into "The Daily Round" with "Complimentary Robbery Among the Maori."



MARGARET MEAD

No place for "The Golden Bough"

N.Z. LISTENER, AUGUST 20, 1954.

There are also, of course, many academic contributions, carefully chosen. The general result is delightful. These pages should help readers to discover the immense varieties and underlying unities of "behaviour patterns" in human societies. Anthropologists, who will already know most of the material, may find the book a useful way of recovering or keeping the wider view of a subject which has had many shifts of emphasis. But it is a pity that not a single page could be found for Frazer. If, as Margaret Mead says in her introductory chapter, *The Golden Bough* is now left to the humanists, "trained to allow for changes in period without loss of pleasure in the materials themselves," there should be ample reason for quoting it in a book so wide in scope that it opens with Herodotus.

—H.

NOVEL SITUATIONS

THE BRIDGE OF FIRE, by Denis Godfrey; Jonathan Cape, English price 12/6. *AGAINST WHOM?*, by Phyllis Bottomo; Faber and Faber, English price 12/6. *SEA FRONT*, by Rachel Ferguson; Jonathan Cape, English price 12/6. *CONSIDER THESE WOMEN*, by Hebe Elms; Robert Hale, English price 9/6.

DENIS GODFREY, a name hitherto unknown to this reviewer but hereafter to be kept in mind, has in *Bridge of Fire* written a commendably sober and honest account of hair-raising happenings. This in itself is merit enough—the purple patch, the sexy snicker, are both so tempting when you are writing for a living that our hats must come off to anyone strong enough to resist them—but Mr. Godfrey has gone further still and made his very sobriety interesting. Consider the plot, and what lush unhealthy stuff might have been made of it: on a remote airfield in Ceylon, towards the end of the last war, a few hundred men are putting in their time as best they can. Their unhealthily monotonous lives are suddenly agitated by the arrival of reinforcements, not only in male but also in female form; and a few months later the seething resentment of the old lags results in the murder of a newcomer. But these sensational events are given exactly their right weight and substance in a very human story, which makes one anxious to read not only Mr. Godfrey's next book, but also his earlier two. Only in the rather difficult matter of the hero's last-minute conversation does he falter either in delicacy or in strength; and religious conversion, that blinding light on the road to Damascus, is something which only a genius can make either convincing or palatable to the ordinary reader.

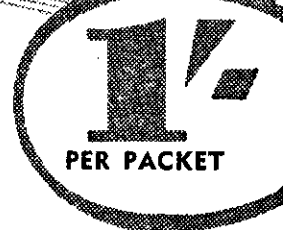
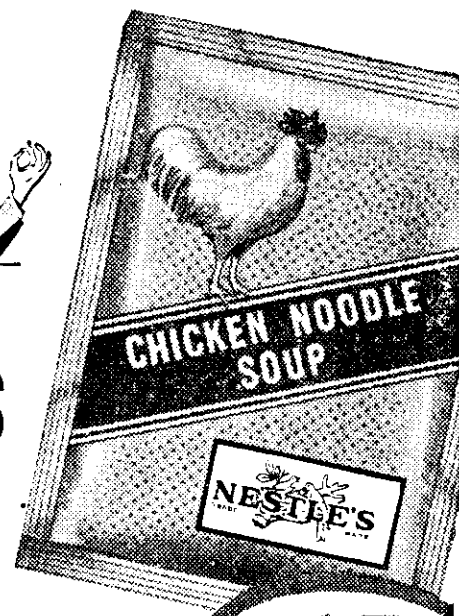
Phyllis Bottomo's *Against Whom?* is, naturally, the work of a far more practised writer. It deals with several neurotics and one warmly sane man in a Swiss sanatorium for tubercular cases; and manages somehow to be both clinical and emotional in its approach. Though the essential simplicity and the goodness of the priest, Father Bretherton, shines out as clearly as the Swiss sunshine, the other characters are too muddled, too frustrated by this teasing thing we call "civilisation," to stand much on their own as characters; and the melodramatic, self-pitying little hussy Caroline is too much a stock piece of fiction to carry much conviction either. In brief, a highly polished, sophisticated, competent novel on a not very original theme, by a past mistress of the craft.

Also highly competent, also sophisticated, but far less easy to read, is (continued on next page)

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