

# Books

Edited by William Hogan

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## 'A Tragic Twist of Fateful Sorrow . . .'

By Leroy F. Aarons

New York

**A** BITING, 56-page parody of "Macbeth," which puts Lyndon Johnson in the role of assassin and Robert F. Kennedy as unscrupulous avenger, had become a runaway best seller here.

The tract, entitled "Macbird," is the work of 25-year-old Barbara Garson, a graduate of the University of California at Berkeley and a leader of the Free Speech Movement during the student demonstrations there in 1964.

Published in pamphlet form by Mrs. Garson and her husband, Marvin, "Macbird's" first printing of 20,000 copies is selling out in bookstores and through mail orders as fast as they can be delivered. "It is our biggest paperback title right now," said Sy Rubin, president of the five Bookmasters' stores.

A second printing of 20,000 is planned, with distribution around the country. An off-Broadway production of the play has won \$30,000 in backing and is casting now for an opening soon.

The current Ramparts magazine carries excerpts from it, and City Lights Journal No. 3 has reproduced it.

### Classic Parallels

The run on "Macbird," which began as a joke, evolved to an "underground" pamphlet and now seems headed for national notoriety, is based largely on its outrageous proposition that the so-called Kennedy-Johnson rivalry has parallels in Shakespeare's classic tragedy about the lust for power.

Mrs. Garson exploits these possibilities with clever irony, casting Lyndon Johnson in the Macbeth role, John F. Kennedy as the Duncan figure and Robert Kennedy in the MacDuff characterization.

Mrs. Garson has a gift for rapier-like caricature, and she uses it to demolish most of America's political leadership with ridicule. Mr. Johnson is painted as a crude bumpkin, Robert Kennedy as a duplicitous conniver, Ted Kennedy as an idiot, Earl Warren, Wayne Morse, Robert McNamara and the late Adlai Stevenson also come in for their lumps.

### Explosive Passage

But the play's most explosive passage comes in the first act, where, in keeping with the original plot, Macbird (Johnson - Macbeth) arranges for the assassination of Ken O'Dunc (John Kennedy-Duncan). This implication already has created difficulties for the Garsons.

At least one off-Broadway theater refused to house the play, largely because of the assassination section.

Ramparts magazine, a New Left oriented journal which last month published an article raising questions as to the true assassin of the late President, at first turned down "Macbird." Later it reversed itself. Another national publication wanted to carry the full text of the play, but insisted that the assassin be changed. The Garsons refused.

Mrs. Garson, a petite brunet in glasses and dungarees who now lives in



**VIEW FROM THE TOWER** of the cathedral at Seville is from "Spain: The South," the second of a boxed two-volume photographic tour (the first is "Spain: The North"). This is a visual study by Hanns Reich with text by Anton Dieterich. Printed in Switzerland, it is a unit in the Terra Magica series published here by Hill and Wang (\$15 the set).

Brooklyn with her husband, is unsurprised but a little impatient with the attention being paid to this aspect of her play.

It was included, she said, only to keep the parody as faithful as possible to the original. Her basic aim in "Macbird," she added, was to expose the hypocrisy of the nation's political leaders, not to imply involvement of President Johnson in the Kennedy tragedy.

"Most commentators irk me by only taking up the criticism of Johnson," she said, "while they fail to notice that the

main villain — Bobby Kennedy — takes up the second half of the play."

The Robert Kennedy character conspires to destroy Macbird and seize power. After Macbird's death (from a heart attack as Robert is about to plunge in the sword) the Kennedy character makes this closing address to the populace:

*A tragic twist of fateful sorrow,  
friends,*

*Makes me your President this fearful day.*

See Page 24

S. F. Sunday Examiner & Chronicle



## The Christmas Story

**T**HE JOURNEY of the Magi, a detail by Sassetta (right) is one of a collection of beautiful full-page color illustrations from The Metropolitan Museum of Art's "The Christmas Story," edited by Marguerite Northrup, and distributed by the New York Graphic Society, Greenwich, Conn. (\$3.75). The text of this seasonal offering includes selections from the Gospels of Matthew & Luke from the King James Version of the Bible. Among the illustrations, in addition to the Sassetta, are reproductions of paintings by 15th and 16th Century masters and a charming assortment of early woodcuts.



*For unto us a child is born,  
unto us a son is given:  
and the government  
shall be upon his shoulder:  
and his name shall be called  
Wonderful, Counsellor,  
The mighty God,  
The everlasting Father,  
The Prince of Peace.*

ISAIAH 9:6



## Customs and Culture Among the New Books

**TAKE JOY! THE TASHA TUDOR CHRISTMAS BOOK.** Selected, edited and illustrated by Tasha Tudor. World; \$4.95. (All ages). This traditional book for the holiday season is generously illustrated in pastel and black and white pictures throughout. The collection of Christmas stories and poems is agreeably varied, selected from the works of Shakespeare, Blake, Anderson, Lagerlof and Dylan Thomas to name a few. The carols included are all set to music.

The most inspiring part of the book to this reviewer is the glowing account of the Tudors' very own Christmas as celebrated on their New Hampshire farm, the preparations for which begin with the observance of Advent. Here the reader will find instructions for putting on a marionette show, making unusual tree ornaments, and many recipes for delectable cakes, cookies and other holiday comestibles. —C. J.

**HOW DID IT BEGIN?** By J. Brasch. (David McKay Co.; \$5.50.) In this offbeat book the author, an Austrian rabbi, explores some of the neglected byways of his-

tory to trace the origin of everyday customs. Any history book will tell you when the Battle of Hastings was fought or when the Declaration of Independence was signed, but where can you learn why a bride wears a veil, why April 1 is called April Fool's Day, why we shake hands? Simple acts unthinkingly performed every day have strange roots in the past, and this Australian dutifully tracks them down. Some of his information is not applicable here (e.g. the day after Christmas Day in this country is not "Boxing Day," nor do we use the Australian phrase "fair dinkum.") Nevertheless this is a useful reference volume.

**GREEK CULTURE.** Edited by Alice von Hildebrand. **ROMAN CULTURE.** Edited by Garry Wills. **MEDIEVAL CULTURE.** Edited by Ruth Brant. **RENAISSANCE CULTURE.** Edited by Julian Mates and Eugene Cantelupe. (George Brazillier, Inc. \$6.95 each.) These are the four initial volumes in what promises to be a distinguished "Cultures of Mankind" series. The purpose of the series is to survey seminal cultural movements of the past as manifested in the writings of philosophers and poets, painters and sculptors, theo-

logians and scientists. In each volume the editor has drawn on representative works, with commendable emphasis on artistic achievements.

**THE UNITED STATES NAVY IN WORLD WAR II.** Edited by S. E. Smith. (Morrow; \$12.50.) This fat 1000-page volume, bulging with photographs and maps, is a history of U.S. naval operations in World War II from the sneak attack on Pearl Harbor to the surrender in Tokyo Bay. The text is the work of many hands,



from writers and war correspondents to eminent historians and fighting seamen, so that the work may best be described as a chronological anthology. The editor relies on standard naval historians, notably Samuel Eliot Morison, but many of the more graphic sequences are by ace reporters such as Bob Sherrod, Bob Casey, Quentin Reynolds, Ernie Pyle and John Toland. Though both oceans are covered, the emphasis naturally is on Pacific operations, where the U.S. Navy

fought its greatest and most decisive engagements. The narrative plan, with its many contrasting scenes and styles, makes for chopiness, but this is compensated for by the unusual vividness of the writing, much of it eyewitness stuff.

**AN AMERICAN PRIMER.** Edited by Daniel J. Boorstin. (University of Chicago Press; 2 vols.; \$14.95.) This is the second choice anthology to come from the University of Chicago Press this season. (The first: "Honey and Wax," edited by Richard Stern.) "An American Primer" is a literary garland on a patriotic theme, conceived on a broad scale and executed with exceptional taste and judgment. The two-volume set, more than a thousand pages in length, consists of writings and utterances, mostly of an inspiring character, by famous Americans, beginning with the Mayflower Compact and the Declaration of Independence and coming down to William Faulkner's Nobel Prize acceptance speech in 1950 and John F. Kennedy's Inaugural Address ten years later.

Each of the 83 exhibits was selected by a leading historian, who contributes both an introductory prelude and an explanatory postlude. Many

of the contributions are necessarily historic documents known to all, but many, too, are unfamiliar gems which deserve to be better known. H. L. Mencken on "The American Language" and Sinclair Lewis on "The American Fear of Literature" are examples.

**MEN AND APES.** By Ramona and Desmond Morris. (McGraw-Hill; \$7.95.) After Darwin the relationship between man and the primates became the butt of theological controversy and the subject of satirical humor, but in our own time all this has changed. The principal function of the ape today is to serve as a research subject for man, but if you want to learn of the weird and wonderful ways in which apes were regarded in the past, read this fascinating compendium by two British experts. Did you know that apes have been worshipped (and still are in India), feared and hunted, even used as lovers, some extraordinary examples of which are cited here? In our own generation we have unearthed much of the elaborate social organization which governs the behavior of apes, some with a high degree of sophistication. This book is popular science at its best, with many rare illustrations.