

of himself and the Works. For him life has been sufficient. Yet no one can read the book without feeling that spiritually he has died. Castle's daring and vision are absent from the younger man's character, and by just that deficiency within himself which protects him from Castle's physical adventuring.

Mrs. Parsons has balanced her issue and told her story well. More than a story remains. There remains a question of values which the reader must answer for himself. It is to the author's credit as an artist that her reader will not be satisfied until he has answered it.

THE KRAMER GIRLS by *Ruth Suckow*
(KNOPF. \$2.50)

FOR depicting sheer homeliness and the comfortable ways of homely folks, there are few better than Ruth Suckow. Her characters, from the first move they make, the first word they speak, become people one has known always. Their expressed emotions and those not expressed are alike known to the reader, and their yearnings and sorrows strike sympathy in those who comprehend the deep compassion underlying their creator's conception of them. This ability has made Miss Suckow what she is—one of the foremost novelists in America. But occasionally it is not enough; there is a need for more determinate narrative. Occasionally one wishes that into the everyday lives of her people Miss Suckow would put a little more of that contriving, that struggle to one end, that *fiction*, if necessary, that makes novels stories as well as character sketches.

In *The Kramer Girls* the lives of three sisters are set forth: Miss Georgie, the eldest, who should have gone into business; Miss Annie, the second, who is satisfied no matter what she does, and Rose, the baby, whose life is devoted to being what Georgie wants her to be. There is, among the sisters, a feeling of affection and tenderness that makes their relations at all times beautiful. Annie

is negligible, though very real; it is Georgie and Rose with whom the author is most concerned, particularly Georgie, though the center of the stage is held by Rose. Georgie is, at her death, the most beloved person in the town, but her life has been one of frustration, her energies and capabilities were always too big for her sphere. In trying to give Rose every opportunity she has lacked, she never realizes that Rose is not of her own mold; so Rose, too, is frustrated by the compulsion of Georgie's ambition for her.

Miss Suckow is the champion of women who have not yet found their place in a society that offers the conflicting inducements of independence and domesticity. Here that conflict reaches even less of a conclusion than in *Cora*. She has her undeniable warm glow of sympathy, but if she does not take care, her books will soon become all warm glow and no fire at all.

MYRA M. WATERMAN

THIS IS MY BODY by *Margery Latimer*
(CAPE & SMITH. \$2.50)

THIS is a book about a girl who is continually being misunderstood. At college she is misunderstood by her classmates; at home she is misunderstood by her parents; men misunderstand her; when she writes, she is misunderstood by publishers; and if she had ever got published she would undoubtedly have been misunderstood by the readers. I am afraid that this last is what has happened to Miss Latimer as far as I am concerned: I can feel no sympathy for her heroine. In fact I feel that anyone so insanely self-centered and demanding deserves everything she got and more. The theme of the book, namely the reactions of a sensitive young person to reality, is one that requires taste and judgment to be properly handled. In this case the treatment is so definitely neurotic as to divert the reader's attention from such literary qualities as her writing may possess.

GEOFFREY T. HELLMAN

THE ROAD OF THE GODS by Isabel Paterson (LIVERIGHT. \$2.50)

THOSE who have followed Mrs. Isabel Paterson's literary commentaries in the New York *Herald-Tribune* would have been astonished had she written the ordinary type of historical novel. Her attitude of mind is so utterly of today that it is difficult to picture her as delving into the past. Yet her evocation of the atmosphere of the northern forests of the time of Octavius, her feeling for and knowledge of the religion of the Barbarians, and also (as shown in the two figures of Artemidorus and Metellus) her understanding of the Greek and Roman, prove her an author who, had she wished to, might have turned to strictly historical writing and produced work of an exceedingly powerful and vivid quality. In its externals, its choice of background, its action, *The Road of the Gods* is then an historical novel, and yet after we have read but a few pages we realize that it is something much more than that; indeed that in its informing spirit it is totally of today. In every chapter we meet Mrs. Paterson's subtly ironic disillusion, a disillusion which is vocal only in the character of the Greek Artemidorus and more delicately so in the heroine Greda.

One thing at least Mrs. Paterson has which is utterly lacking in most contemporary writing—a sense of form. Also she can write graceful and musical prose. Perhaps she would destroy, but she follows Hedda Gabler's injunction to destroy beautifully. If she is a believer in the futility of faith in religion she has at least faith in the necessity of form and the necessity of style.

PENDING HEAVEN by William Gerhardt (HARPER'S. \$2.50)

MR. WILLIAM GERHARDT is very clever, so clever indeed that he is becoming a bore. His latest novel is all cleverness, and precious little else. It tells the story of a writer beloved

by three women with whom he lives a pasha-like existence, and who comes to his downfall through his love for a fourth. If *Pending Heaven* is a satire of the literary life and loves it simply doesn't come off, and if it is a farce it isn't funny. For the former it lacks incisiveness, and for the latter that simple directness of meaning which is the essence of successful farce. Mr. Gerhardt has evidently read Aldous Huxley, but it is only Huxley's trimmings which he has utilized. And all this is a pity, for in *Futility* and *The Polyglots* Gerhardt promised things which some day would count, but instead of allowing his talent to flower naturally he is at present apparently trying to force it in the hothouse of the exotic. In *Pending Heaven* his straining to be original is often painful, and it is in this sense of strain which wearies the reader before he has read fifty pages. There are unexpected words and clever phrases, but nearly three hundred pages of these makes one almost wish for a world of idiots.

GRENVILLE VERNON

THE FIERY DIVE by Martin Armstrong (HARCOURT, BRACE. \$2.50)

MOST of the stories in this book have the almost fatal disadvantage of being faintly reminiscent. Put down the "Portrait of the Misses Harlow", for example, and think how much better Katherine Mansfield did that sort of thing. And what a pity Conrad did not write "Sombbrero"; he knew so well how to convey that peculiar admixture of human and geographical primitive brutality. All of which is undoubtedly unfair to Martin Armstrong, against whom no charge could be brought either of plagiarism or of "playing the sedulous ape".

Three of these tales are historical fiction, relying, however, on their intrinsic human interest for their value and not on any antique trappings. The rest are of our own day, and of these the best is that which gives the book its title. The theme of "The Fiery