

The Bookshelf

Edited By
Laura Scott Meyers

Best Sellers During April

(Compiled by Publishers' Weekly)

FICTION:

"Portnoy's Complaint" by Philip Roth
"The Salzburg Connection" by Hellen MacInnes
"A Small Town in Germany" by John Le Carre
"The Godfather" by Mario Puzo
"Airport" by Arthur Hailey
"A World of Profit" by Louis Auchincloss

NON-FICTION:

"The 900 Days" by Harrison Salisbury
"The Arms of Krupp" by William Manchester
"The Money Game" by Adam Smith
"Jennie" by Ralph G. Martin
"Miss Craig's 31-Day Shape-up Program for Men and Women" by Marjorie Craig
"Instant Replay" by Jerry Kramer

anywhere — if it could have taken place. It is a microcosm of a very large city; there are tycoons, secret service heads and functionaries, hippies, drug pushers and turned-on teenagers, nymphomaniacs, deluded husbands, aging Lotharios, a Sex Goddess, and hundreds of young women to emulate her. There is a police captain of Herculean physique and moronic mind; there are Rolls-Royces, and in a Super-Shopping Center all the material things which man could use from birth to death. There is mystery, drama, tragedy — in a style that takes a sharp departure from anything we have read. We would call it a tour de force; the author says that "the story has been knocked together from two works of Euripides and Sophocles" and readers will find echoes of the Hercules legend throughout the book. But the author adds that "the ancient myth takes on an entirely contemporary cast" — which it does. Praise from Graham Greene includes the comment that "His audience will be the audience that only a good writer can merit, an audience which assembles slowly from far away in ones and twos; while the big

book club motor-coaches hurtle down the highway toward oblivion, the rumor spreads that here an addition will be found to the literature of our time." Well, maybe. We are timid in the face of such a formidable critic as Mr. Greene, but we do see the brilliance and profundity here. However, the world revealed is without spiritual content; not only is it wholly secular but wholly materialistic. And its message is often obscured by double meanings and contradictions. The author says "I am experimenting . . . and for one reviewer, this wraps it up

young adult; that one may hope to hear more from Charles Webb. There is an element of purity despite the unconventional situations, possibly because there is a blessed respite from the language that fly-specks the pages of so much of today's fiction. And the author seems to be saying something: that youth is lost and without any road-maps to find the stability, decency, motivation that they seek. Perhaps my generation-gap is showing; if anyone under 30 should read this review, will they tell me if I'm square?

LAURA SCOTT MEYERS

OUR LAST NOVEL is "Love, Roger" by Charles Webb, author of "The Graduate" highly praised by many but controversial. (We haven't read "The Graduate" either!) The dust jacket says that Charles Webb's fiction "keeps its distance from other contemporary writing," and that his favorite writer is William Dean Howells! Perhaps it would help in this instance to give a brief summary of the story: it is about a young college dropout who says (to a prostitute he is visiting) that he wants to be stable; that food and drink, clothes, shelter and SEX are just possibly not enough, and that there may be more to life than this. Almost everything in his life is by happenstance. He didn't really choose to be a travel agent; he just applied for a job and it was available. And being late getting to a big department store to pick up some printed stationery he had ordered, he found himself in the store after closing — and on an enclosed stairway when a young woman fainted. Their improbable situation led to a night in beds and linen (the department of) and a supper in a demonstration kitchen. The girl disappeared for a time but was succeeded by a nursing student of a one-day — conducted-tour acquaintance. It all takes place in Boston, and when the department-store girl reappeared, Roger handled the situation adroitly; he became the head of a ménage de trois, in which everybody behaves as though this were quite normal. Roger is a very complicated young man, usually letting life happen, but on occasion being decisive, even aggressive. And he never loses his aplomb.

This writing is so clever, so hilariously funny, so full of pathos and sympathy for the

THE LOVE MACHINE. By Jacqueline Susann. New York: Simon & Schuster. \$6.95.

THE THIRD EYE. By Etienne Leroux. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. \$4.95.

LOVE, ROGER. By Charles Webb. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. \$4.95.

Not attracted to current fiction, your reviewer has been reading a few of the brand new novels — from a sense of duty. And like Judith Crist, the motion picture critic, we find little to recommend. Three that strained our eyes are reviewed here with the suggestion that you might find better use of your eyes and time!

We did not read "Valley of the Dolls" that national bestseller of no literary merit, so we felt obliged to skim through the 511 pages of Jacqueline Susann's new novel, "The Love Machine." We can recommend it enthusiastically — to readers who enjoy dirty words, perverted acts, ruthlessness, materialism, who themselves "need" no one to love, respect or admire them, but who believe (as the writer seems to believe) that drink, sex and money are all that life comes to. Being married to a motion-picture and television producer, she places her robot actors in the artificial atmosphere of these industries as she sees them — in Hollywood and New York, with interludes on the continent. All women (especially wives) have affairs; all men have affairs; some are heterosexual and some homosexual. Women who make it have diamonds like doorknobs, furs of comparable quality; they travel in private planes, have rendezvous in resort hotels, become alcoholics, drug addicts, and occasionally commit suicide. If you think this is Life, then this is your dish! The writing is unredeemably dull; there isn't a glimmer of style.

WE READ "The Third Eye" because it is the final volume of the Welgevonden Trilogy, by Etienne Leroux, who writes in his own language, Afrikaans, and is receiving some critical recognition. We hoped to find some insights into the peculiar problems of South Africa, in which we have long had an intense interest. Not so! The action could have taken place