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Page 8-B **THAM ECCENTRIC**  
Thursday, May 1, 1968

**Leftover Life To Kill**

By Caitlin Thomas, 262 pp. Boston, Little, Brown and Company, \$4.50.

Reviewed by **ROBIN BAHR**

Caitlin Thomas is an extraordinary woman. As the wife of the late Welsh poet Dylan Thomas, she is of considerable interest. But, the self-portrait revealed by her lusty, at times overpowering prose in "Leftover Life to Kill," is not just that of the grieving wife, devoted to her famous husband's memory.

She is a serious writer in her

**BOOKS and REVIEWS**

own right, admittedly jealous of her husband's success in this country. And as a woman of violent extremes, she is a complex, fascinating personality. On the one hand she is excessively generous, loving, sensitive; on the other—selfish, self-indulgent, undisciplined, defensive.

It is probably these extremes that make it possible for her to write with such abandon and perception; but, as a person, these same extremes make it impossible for her to enjoy peace of mind—much less a conventional kind of life.

**THERE ARE** constant references to Dylan and his life together, but the book is primarily about Caitlin Thomas and the year she spent on Elbe with her son Colin following Dylan's death. She writes of what she did—including her affair with a 19-year-old boy; her run-ins with the disapproving lover-priest, whom she refers to as "The Church"; and her frantic efforts to get away physically and mentally from "the old Dylan-infested life."

There is no doubt that the Dylan Thomas writing style has infected her work. Descriptions are loaded with vivid, powerful, string-together words. The women at the hairdresser's are "a typical catch of teeming, shampooing, oiling, black-hair-frizzing, noisily scandal-mongering women, one of them nettled and pined like a monster-headed fish under the menacing droning, porpoise-puffing dryer."

She loves the sun and describes her desire to "let the sun fill me, instigate itself subtly into every hidden part of me, roast my entrails, dazzle and delight the inside of me." A group of young boys are "a spasmodically wriggling, punching-each-other, 'mimic quite quiet as reverent mice, the next overcast as hopping mad grasshoppers, mixed bag of boys."

these hot issues and made them tepid. "Ice Palace" is plain dull.

The central figure is a young girl, Christina Storm. At one moment she acts like an old woman of 60, the next like a 10-year-old child. So vacillating is her personality that she never comes alive.

The other characters also suffer from their presentation.

**CHRISTINE'S** two grandfathers represent the forces which have made Alaska and now bode to tear it asunder. One loves it and fights for its place in the sun; the other uses it for personal gain.

As symbols, these two may be acceptable; but as human beings, they are mere shadows. Even their names are too-obvious symbols—Thor for the fighter, Car for the user.

As a sop for her large coterie of female admirers, Miss Ferber has inserted a romance—likewise strained symbolism. She has failed to breathe life into the affair, and the outcome is really of little interest.

The style is not up to Miss Ferber's usual, and tends to be over flamboyant. "Ice Palace" certainly won't be one of the better novels of the year—it is not even good Ferber.

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**THE GREATEST** criticism I have of this pleasant and entertaining book is that it is really no more than "reflections." And that is hardly fair, because he warns us in the title. However, when he makes such fertile statements as "America is taking leave of capitalism" and "it would be quite beneficial for (the country) to develop . . . an explicit philosophy expressing its own ideal in communicable terms" one can only wish that he had explored these ideas at greater length.

**Ice Palace**  
By Edna Ferber, 411 pp. New York, Doubleday & Co. \$4.50.

Reviewed by **FRED MALLENDER**

Statedhood for Alaska, the evils of lobbying, the spoils of the north—wonderful material for a novel. But Edna Ferber has taken

**Hi-Fi New Revised Edition**  
By Martin Mayer, 128 pp. New York Random House, Inc. \$2.95.

Reviewed by **BETE GILLESPIE**

This guide to hi-fi completely covers the field. Newest developments, component parts, binaral sound—all are covered in detail. The author gives prices and recommendations on the newest available equipment. Whether you want a listing of the finest recordings or technical information on choosing and maintaining hi fi equipment, this book will prove helpful. Emphasizing the importance of equipment designed for its surroundings, one chapter is devoted to hi fi for smaller rooms, another on "big room, big sound."

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**AT TIMES** this style is over-powering—the criticisms get bogged down by the sheer weight of words. But when it is good, it can be electrifying, jolting to mind whatever she is writing about—alarming, exciting, enchanting, shocking, and moving the reader.

One feels angry and disgusted at times when she justifies (and I believe she does try to justify) her excesses and immoralities on Dylan's death. Her grief is bottomless. Her desire for self-destruction is understandable. But, she makes it clear that self-indulgence has always been a part of her character.

Whatever your personal reaction to Caitlin Thomas the woman (and most assuredly you will have one), you cannot deny Caitlin Thomas the writer. You might disapprove of what she says, but you will probably read with relish and revel in the candor and beauty with which she says it.

**Reflections On America**  
By Jacques Maritain, 200 pp. New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, \$3.50.

Reviewed by **JACK JACOBS**

Jacques Maritain is best known as a contemporary Thomist philosopher. Most of his writing is in the realms of Thomist philosophy and history.

This book, however, contains nothing of the first and little of the second. It is a compilation of observations and reminiscences on our country and its character, and the fact that the author is a philosopher need frighten no one.

His comments are at times critical, but always affectionate. In fact, the book reads like a father's letter to a loved, but wayward son. Maritain has lived in America for almost twenty-five years, and be-

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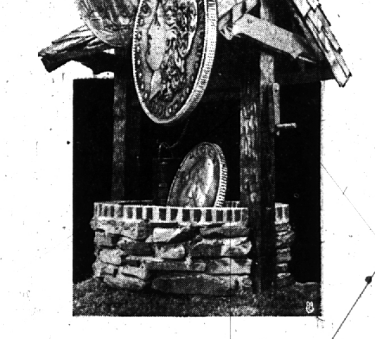
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