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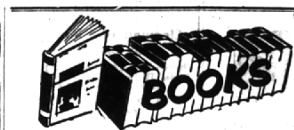
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REVIEWS

The Sugar Pill

By T. S. Matthews. 221 pp. New York. Simon and Schuster. \$3.75.

Reviewed by
TOM PHILLIPS

"This," writes former Time magazine editor T. S. Matthews, "is a book with a thesis. It is not a thesis that can be proved, but perhaps a case can be made for it. The thesis is that the press is not our daily bread but our daily sugar pill."

This statement by Matthews of his objective contains both the strength and weakness of his book. His thesis is that the press does not primarily instruct, does not deal "almost exclusively" or even mainly, with news, and does not have "enormous power" to mold public opinion, but instead only reflects it.

THE REAL purpose of the press, Matthews contends, is to survive in an extraordinarily competitive business world, and to do this "it entertains more than it instructs—much, much more."

Or, as the blurb on the dust jacket notes, "in order to survive, the newspaper covers the news with a sugar coating of entertainment."

To bolster his thesis, and at the end of the book it remains still an interesting but unproved thesis, Matthews develops a large part of his book to an intensive study of two newspapers—The London Daily Mirror and The Manchester Guardian.

These papers, and perhaps it is unfortunate he chose these two since they are known to only a few in this country, he thoroughly dissects, going so far as to count the number of stories in a certain issue which he thinks are "news" and those he thinks are so-called "entertainments."

HE DOES this in a witty, lucid manner and succeeds in accumulating a great deal of support for his thesis, but he still fails to convince. Despite Matthews' learned arguing, the reader remains convinced that the press does wield enormous power, that it does mold public opinion and that it does deal primarily with news and not entertainment.

Matthews' book is a very interesting one, not for the general reader but for those in the business with which he deals. It must be said, however, that the book might very well offer several entertaining hours to those willing to tackle it.

The American High School Today

By Dr. James B. Conant. 96 pp. New York. McGraw-Hill. \$2.95.

Reviewed by
ROBIN BAHR

Three weeks ago the Eccentric featured 10 of the 21 recommendations for the improvement of the American high school presented by Dr. Conant in his recently published report, "The American High School Today." This article, which included a description of the Birmingham and Bloomfield high schools in relation to each point, gave some idea of Conant's conclusions about American education. To have an even more meaningful basis for appraising our own community's education or for evaluating the efficacy of Conant's recommendations for our schools, one must read the book in full.

It is most heartening that in the midst of the furried attack on American education since Sputnik, such a distinguished and experienced educator as Dr. Conant believes in the basic soundness of American secondary education.

AT THE outset of his report he makes clear that the difference between the American and European high school is justified and necessitated by our peculiar American needs.

The "comprehensive" American high school, which expresses America's insistent belief in and demand for equal opportunity, provides general education for all the youth in a given community, vocational training for those whose education ends at high school, and academic training for those going on to college.

This is opposed to European high schools which provide either specialized vocational or rigid academic training to a highly selective enrollment.

DR. CONANT believes first and foremost in the validity of combining these three objectives and, secondly, that all three can be realized at one time. First, however, a school must have an "intelligent, devoted school board, first-rate superintendent and a good principal" and second, steps must be taken to correct our deficiencies. The two most serious are, he feels, the large number of small high schools with graduating classes under 100 which cannot provide adequate vocational or

A Wolf At Dusk

By Gwyn Thomas. 221 pp. New York. The Macmillan Company. \$3.50.

Reviewed by
FRED MALLENDER

All novels can be said to consist of plot, character development and underlying theme, but the historical novel usually relies heavily on plot, with scant attention paid to the other elements. Movement—intrigue, romance, violence and panoramic action—is the typical outline for such a novel. "A Wolf at Dusk," although undoubtedly historical fiction, is not a typical example.

Based in some part on fact, this novel is a fictionalized account of the later years of Don Juan de Tenorio, lover extraordinary. Afflicted with malaria contracted while hiding from the police, no longer the darling of Spanish women but the butt of their practical jokes, Juan wants the oblivion of anonymity.

HOWEVER, his escapades and the legend surrounding him which has grown all out of proportion will not allow him rest. The church uses and abuses him as a symbol of the devil, and the governor has designs on his neck. The Bishop, through the machinery and the machinations of the Spanish Inquisition, incarcerates Juan for a time and the governor makes him a virtual slave. However, his ultimate fate is a "prisoner" of a real fermatant of a female, who is incapable of loving him.

This plot is very skeletal and allows for very little movement or

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for any of the characters to take on flesh-like dimensions. "A Wolf at Dusk" is a "talk" novel and plot and character are merely used as convenient frames for conversation, and magnificent conversation it is!

March 19, 1959 THE BIRMINGHAM (MICH.) ECCENTRIC 7-B
IT FLASHES; it thunders; it surges; it darts; all in a moments of Miltonian sonority, perhaps, the best sphere for Thomas' ability would be the stage, if language and its lyrical use. There "A Wolf at Dusk" is representative moments of Shavian wit and

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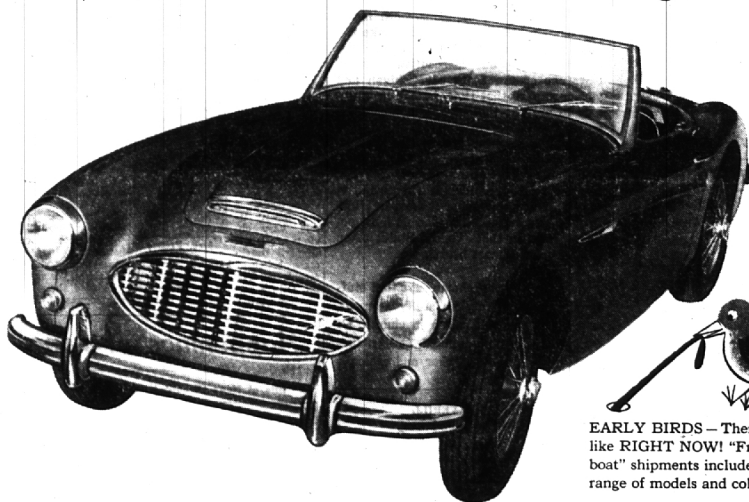
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