

https://dspace.org/

[Review of the book Short story study: A critical anthology, compiled by Albert James Smith and William Heppell Mason (Arnold, 1961)]

Rose, Brian Waldron

1961
Johannesburg College of Education
https://hdl.handle.net/10539/25181
Rose, B.W. (1961). [Review of the book Short story study: A critical anthology, compiled by Albert James Smith and William Heppell Mason (Arnold, 1961)]. Symposium: A Journal for Education in Southern Africa, p. 148.

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

BOOKS REVIEWED

. . . Modern science . . . grows from a comparison. It has seized a likeness between two unlike appearances; for the apple in the summer garden and the grave moon overhead are surely as unlike in their movements as two things can be. Newton traced in them two expressions of a single concept, gravitation." This line of thought is not without its dangers. The whole of sympathetic magic rests on the misconstructions placed on likenesses. The similarity between rain and water passed through a sieve, for instance led to the untenable idea that one could induce rain by the sieve. Much homeopathic medicine is built on the same slender deduction. Dr. Bronowski might well reconsider his thinking at this point. What is in common between the real scientist and the real poet, one might hazard, is firstly a capacity to observe acutely, secondly a capacity to bring observed details into a functional relationship, and thirdly a capacity to make working postulates. Metaphorical language truly involves, in its more obvious manifestations, comparisons. But the value surely lies in the implied interpretation or postulate of detail . . . this new patterning of relationship ?

The value of any book lies not in its assertion, but in its capacity to suggest a re-arrangement of thought. This book most certainly succeeds.

B.W.R.

●

SHORT STORY STUDY — A Critical Anthology. Compiled by A. J. Smith and W. H. Mason. (Edward Arnold).



At our present stage of fossilisation it is not easy to create a text book so out of line with tradition that by its newness of approach it startles us into a detailed examination of its intention and method. In many disciplines such a break would be anarchistic rather than original, but there is a growing feeling among the Teachers of English that a reconsideration of directions and methods is overdue; there is a growing awareness of an increasing dislocation between the theory of the schools and the practice of intelligent men and women handling the realities — whether these be a Director's Report on structural steel or a poem on pessimism in Western Europe.

This new Short Story Study is, one must admit, an intelligently planned book designed — as the compilers say — to fulfil four main intentions. They are :

(1) to provide a bridge between school or university and the world outside; a bridge between youth and maturity;

(2) to stimulate close and intelligent reading;

(3) to afford some understanding of the ground of such literary attitudes as tragedy, comedy, melodrama, pathos, and sentimentality;

(4) to inculcate sound critical approaches and to impart familiarity with vocabulary, tools and methods.

The book consists of ten short stories: Paste, by Henry James; A Rhinocerous, Some Ladies and a Horse, by James Stephens; Be This Her Memorial, by Cardoc Evans; Tickets Please, by D. H. Lawrence; Shooting an Elephant, by George Orwell; In the Train, by Frank O'Connor; The Mower, by H. E. Bates; Of This Time, Of That Place, by Lionel Trilling; and The Followers, by Dylan Thomas.

The format is arranged in this way: First of all there is a biographical survey of the author. From this certain critical comments are derived, when these appear to have a bearing on the story. The story follows. After this there is a commentary. It is chiefly through this that the compilers direct the pupil or student to a closer and more intelligent examination of the reading. This method can be good or bad according to the way it is handled, of course. Much of the directive in these commentaries is done by way of unanswered questions; but these undoubtedly have the effect of drawing the attention of inexperienced readers to the profundities and subtleties of the writing. The effect even on a reviewer was to send him back to the stories themselves in pleased agreement or in furious disagreement, and all this resulted in a very pleasureable couple of hours stolen from the routines.

This is the sort of book one would put in the hands of the matriculation group of superior intelligence who are not mentally contained by normal matriculation work. It would also make an admirable book of working material for first-year university students, and possibly would be a useful and happy basis for students from non-Arts faculties reading a year's work in English in order to comply with University regulations.

But everyone interested in the Short Story as a literary form should obtain a copy of this book, for it will be found most stimulating.

B.W.R.

For Better Banking

The

STANDARD

BANK

of South Africa Limited

(Registered Commercial Bank)

South Africa's most Experienced Banking Service

Grant 214/3045-2