A story that is published for the first time in English translation is "The Diary of Miss Sophia" (1927) by Ting Ling, the lonely and unfulfilled authoress who was awarded the Stalin Prize for literature in 1951 but was sent six years later to a labor camp. It is about the dilemma of an emancipated young lady who tries to save—or waste—the rest of her life according to her own wishes and whims.

But as is always the case with the reviewing of collections of stories, there is not enough room here for a discussion of all the themes, motifs, and styles represented in Straw Sandals. We can only add that this collection of stories—one play and one poem are also included—should be recommended for young sinologists and students of comparative literature. Harold R. Isaacs' valuable 38-page introduction and the section "About the Authors" will undoubtedly enable the unspecialized reader to understand many aspects of contemporary Chinese literature.

S. Elkhadem

MORRIS WEST

Harlequin

In the prefaces to the New York Edition of his collected works Henry James decisively marked—one by definition, the other by implication—the two courses which the modern novel has successively taken. The first was that which, recognizing internal-psychological complexity, has since moved toward the definition of an art of dramatic consciousness in which the universe is virtually a reflex of a person's sensibility (the way followed by James himself, by Forster, Woolf, Richardson, and Joyce). The second was that which, acknowledging the complications of the external world as a primary reality, has organized its structure as a model of that world, reducing human sensibility to a function of its design (the way followed by Huxley, largely by Graham Greene, by Orwell and, most recently, by Ian Fleming). The most sophisticated achievements in prose fiction have followed the former internally ordered method. Conversely, Harlequin, the latest novel in Morris West's extensive chartings over twenty years and through eleven novels of this latter circuitous "way," is severely flawed, partly by virtue of weaknesses inherent in the fictional mode in which the novel is shaped and partly because of a cumbersome structural dichotomy which has been progressively emerging in his work. Namely that of a world institutionalizing itself into ever more complex forms of evil or nihilism on the one hand, while the central characters on the other hand resolve their problems and conflicts through a simplifying Christian vision or in weighty but irrelevant moral pronouncements. What emerges in (to my mind Mr. West's best novel) The Devil's Advocate (1959) as a personal quest for salvation at odds with the lives of other flawed characters develops in The Shoes of the Fisherman (1963) into a conflict between Russia and America, the threat of nuclear war being resolved by a humble Ukrainian Pope who had once been tortured by the very Russian leader he now negotiates with. This pattern of the simple Christian visionary involved in a naive salvational relationship with a world of proliferating evil is complexified ten years later in The Salamander (West's third novel set in Italy yet moving in the course of its plot to innumerable world capitals), and is most racily articulated in Harlequin, again hopping from Geneva, to Hamburg, to London, to Washington, to Mexico City, and to New York.

Harlequin (its title would suggest as much) derives principally from romance. Throughout the labyrinth of the novel's plot and its elaborately structured imagery of kings, courts, jesters, princesses, wizards, geniuses, puppets, magic, dark woods, and monsters, one is reminded variously of episodes from the world's quest literature: from the Odyssey, the Medieval prose Lancelot, Nashe's Unfortunate Traveller, Gulliver's Travels, even Alice in Wonderland. Its hero, a descendant of a master-mummer of the Commedia dell' Arte, is a brilliant and cultured owner of a Geneva-based bank with branches in the world's major capitals. The villain is Basil Yanko, cadaverous director of a computer and systems-analysis industry programming the operations of large corporations throughout the world, among them George Harlequin's bank. As one move in a strategy designed to give him global power, Yanko seeks control of the Harlequin bank (to be sold later to the Arabs...
for oil power) by surreptitiously pro-
gramming into its system an act of criminal
fraud pointing to its director. Harlequin's
attempts to trace the deed back to Yanko
and to publicly discredit him initiate a
series of international intrigues, assassina-
tions, kidnappings, and stock-market fluc-
tuations in the best mystery-spy-thriller
vein. The profound changes in character
which West attempts to create in Harle-
quin and his friends as a result of their
deepening confrontation with evil are not
convincing, mainly because the plot ex-
gencies of this fiction rush both readers
and characters on so swiftly that neither
can pause long enough for meditation
and suffering to unfold. In the end the
hero dispells the evil surrounding him by
an act of conjuration worthy both of his
comic ancestry and of the Hesse of the
magic theater episode in *Steppenwolf*. The
novel ends in a Christian symbolical feast,
all loose ends tied nicely into a final
harmony.

One cannot justify this attempt to mod-
ernize the romance-quest with its factiti-
ous accumulation of events from the cur-
rent political scene, its too patent Christ-
ian moralizing, its undistinguishable
characters who become mouthpieces to
outworn ideas by trite evocations of its
clearly designed plot, its narrative skill
("pure entertainment," "a good yarn").
Eventually, every work of fiction (if the
art is not to become wholly degraded or
dissipated) must stand up to the critical
question of how and to what degree it
manages the unity and synthesis of all its
parts, its own as well as those implied by
its form. Henry James's criteria for the
modern novel ensure that unity of charac-
ter and universe which is the indispensa-
tible requirement of any work of fiction bv
identifying both with consciousness and
sensibility. The modern popular detective
novel with its focus on the fragmentary
nature of the institutionalized world es-
sentially dissociates the human spirit from
any meaningful relationship to that world
and turns its people into moral dwarfs
and puppets. Morris West, in spite of the
Christian sensibility he attempts to infuse
within his writing—indeed as a direct
result of his attempting to do so—cannot
bridge the gap between the hell without
and the peace within. He would have to
change his style and hence his vision to do
that.

Allen Bentley

STUART M. TAVE
Some Words of Jane Austen
Chicago: University of Chicago Press,

The modest accuracy of Stuart Tave's
title must have been designed. It exemp-
lifies in its subjugation of self-
advertisement to self-effacing precision
that quality which the book goes on to
celebrate as the essential art of Jane Au-
sten: a delicate understanding of the
range and significance of common En-
lish words. What also seems designed is
the relative sumptuousness of the book's
physical makeup, so that the modesty of
its title is balanced by, among other de-
lights, the elegance of its jacket design,
the quality of its paper, the varying design
in silhouette that graces each new chapter.
Not much expense has been spared. Al-
though I would not want to crack the
wind of a reasonable analogy, the combi-
nation of the plain-speaking and the visu-
ally elegant has an obvious relevance to
Tave's argument. The common English
word he frequently uses to describe his
delight in Jane Austen's novels is "lovely."
How this loveliness is achieved, he goes
on to show, depends upon an exquisite
propriety in the use of English. In Jane
Austen, beauty is accuracy, and accuracy
beauty, and that is almost as much as we
need to know.

Tave begins his book with a lovely
analogy. Jane Austen, he tells us, "was
fond of dancing and excelled in it" (p. 1).
Such an avocation need not surprise us,
for it parallels her art as a writer, "that
enjoyment and ability in moving with
significant grace in good time in a re-
stricted space" (p. 1). It is worthwhile to
ponder this description, for it illustrates
what Tave has in common with the sub-
ject of his study, namely a proper rever-
ence for the elegant defining powers of
precise English, what Dr. Johnson called
the "beauty of propriety," expanded by
Tave as follows: "It is the graceful beautv
that comes from the delicate adjustment
of the minutest parts" (p. 222). It does
not matter where we turn in Jane Austen.
On every page we are struck by the
elegance of those lovely sentences where
each minute part is so delicately adjusted.
Although Tave does not offer this par-
ticular example, here is Emma
Woodhouse moralizing to herself Frank
Churchill's ostensibly absurd act in travel-
ing to London merely to get his hair cut: