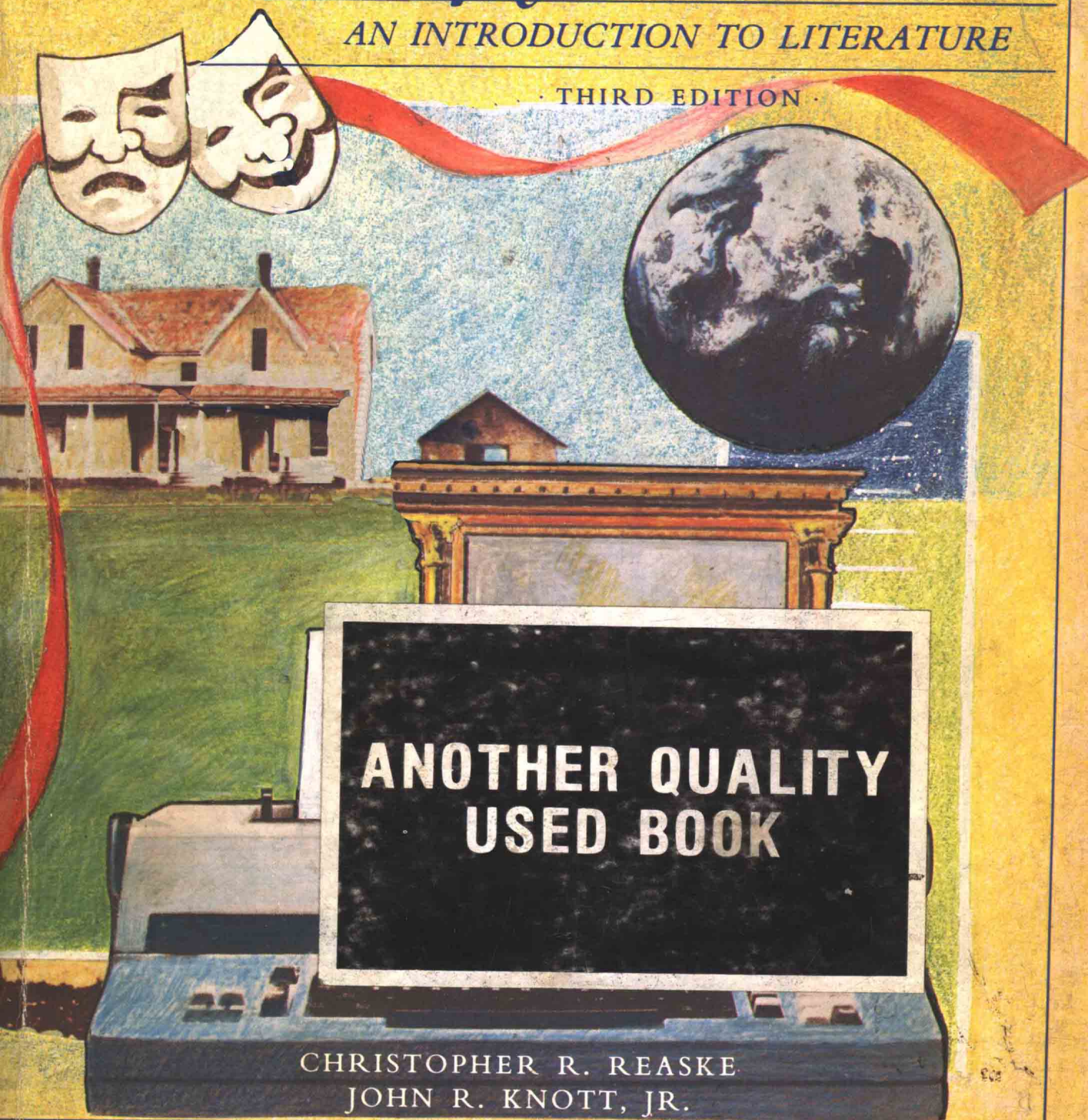


MIRRORS

AN INTRODUCTION TO LITERATURE

THIRD EDITION



CHRISTOPHER R. REASKE
JOHN R. KNOTT, JR.

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AN INTRODUCTION TO LITERATURE

THIRD EDITION

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Mirrors: An Introduction to Literature, Third Edition

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PREFACE

This third edition of *Mirrors* has been very extensively revised. We believe that it offers students a dramatic set of challenges. One entirely new section, “Men and Women,” has been added. It opens the book by addressing issues of gender and sex stereotyping through works from the genres of poetry, fiction, and drama. For those who wish to be introduced to literature by means of a single, unifying theme, this section acknowledges with immediacy the issues of sexual identity that are increasingly under debate. By including a number of selections from contemporary literature, this section reflects well the reality: gender is a pervasive concern in contemporary literature as well as in contemporary life. This new section received uniformly high marks from advance reviewers—we believe we have struck a responsive chord!

Following this new section, we again present three large sections organized around the genres of fiction, poetry, and drama. We have tried to recognize new trends in contemporary poetry by including poems such as “Bitch” by Carolyn Kizer, “Lesbian Poem” by Robin Morgan, and “Reunion” by Carolyn Forché. At the same time we have increased the representation of more traditional literature with poems such as Samuel Coleridge’s “Rime of the Ancient Mariner” and A. E. Housman’s “To an Athlete Dying Young.” Stories new to the fiction section include selections by a wide variety of contemporary authors—Raymond Carver, Barry Hannah, Gail Godwin, E. L. Doctorow, Nicholas Delbanco, Laura Furman, Margaret Atwood, Max Apple, Janet Kaufman, and Bobbie Ann Mason.

The drama section has been expanded to include *two* classical Greek tragedies: *Oedipus Rex* and *Antigone*. We think students will more fully appreciate the power of this important kind of drama by having two plays to compare and contrast. We have also added Sam Shepard’s contemporary drama, *Curse of the Starving Class*, as well as a new Shakespeare play, *The Taming of the Shrew*. As a satirical counterpoint to the Greek tragedies, we have included the comic play-within-the-play, “Pyramus and Thisbe,” from *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*.

We believe that adding the new thematically organized “Men and Women” section and increasing greatly the number of selections has made *Mirrors* a more comprehensive anthology for today’s college students. Previous users made many good suggestions, most of which we have incorporated. In the past and now once again, this anthology truly reflects the concerns that contemporary students and teachers of literature have shared with us. By greatly increasing the number of questions and writing assignments, as well as by arranging a variety of contrasts, we have tried to make the anthology a real text, an introduction both to writing about literature and to literature itself.

When *Mirrors* was first published, it won quick praise for being among the very first anthologies to present extensively selections by women, minorities, and contemporary writers from many countries. This “mix” has been carried through in this third edition, and we believe it gives this anthology a distinctive and bold character. We recognize and represent well the traditional canon of American and English literature, but we also make it clear through our choices that exciting literature is being created each year in a variety of cultures, by writers

of both sexes. It is in this sense that *Mirrors* provides a dynamic and engaging introduction to literature, reflecting not only the needs and interests of students but also our own sense of what literature, both contemporary and classic, is worth studying.

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PART ONE

MEN AND WOMEN

A THEMATIC INTRODUCTION
TO LITERATURE



MEN AND WOMEN

Questions about gender can launch the process of inquiry and response in an engaging way. What does contemporary literature have to say about men, about women, about the relationships between them, about conventional expectations regarding how men and women “should” live?

FICTION

To begin with, we present three stories by contemporary writers. In the first, “The Kindness of Strangers,” Laura Furman relates the story of a young man who goes home with a young woman he meets at a bar, only to be surprised, then confused, and finally awakened to new feelings about himself and the world. As the story moves toward a resolution, we are taken through twists and turns that underscore just how much our preconceptions about sex roles influence our thinking. As you will see, this story lets us see more about the man’s thinking than about the woman’s.

In the second story, Margaret Atwood’s “The Man From Mars,” we learn more about what is on the woman’s mind than on that of the man who meets her in the park. From the moment he begins to “court” her, he has begun to affect how she thinks about herself and her sense of what kind of woman she is and what kind she might be.

In the third story, “Bridging,” Max Apple presents a portrait of a single parent, a father who becomes a girl scout leader in the hope of encouraging his daughter to develop interests other than the passion for baseball she shares with him. The story offers a comic and at the same time poignant account of the father’s broadening sense of his own role and the frustration of his efforts to lure his daughter into more conventional kinds of behavior that he sees as necessary to her social development.

THE KINDNESS OF STRANGERS

Edward found May on the last cold day of winter. He spotted her in his neighborhood bar, and noticed first that she was comfortable there. She sat with one iceless drink, an ashtray, and cigarettes in front of her—an organized person. The bar, at the end of the afternoon, filled with smoke, and Edward could see himself and May reflected dimly in the mirror. Christmas decorations hung over the mirror and would probably remain there until next Christmas.

Though he had been fine when he came into the bar, Edward began to feel shaky. The smell of steak from the grill was getting to him. He leaned on one elbow and decided that as soon as he could move he'd go back to his apartment, take some Valium, and sleep. He was wondering how he could meet the woman down the bar, when he thought he saw her look at him and move her fingers in a quick salute. The basketball game on the TV above his head grew louder, then softer, and Edward thought he'd better do something about getting home before he fell off the stool. He stood, and while he was fumbling in his pocket for money she was beside him. They left the bar together.

She told him her name was May—a name Edward associated with prints of women in long dresses and floppy hats. May carried a cowboy hat and wore an Army jacket that was too large for her. In the street light her hair and eyes were a faded khaki color. "You look sick," she said.

"That's why I followed you out. I thought I'd be sure you got home all right."

"That's not far," said Edward. She sounded Southern or Western to him, and he felt as if he'd left Manhattan without knowing it. Now that they were out on the street, she seemed less than a good idea. All he wanted to do was fall asleep and wake up feeling better. "It's nice of you to worry, but I live right over there," he said, and he pointed to the large apartment building across Broadway. "I can just about make it."

"Of course you can," May said. "But you sure look green." Together they turned and walked the half block to the corner. "Is there anyone to take care of you once you get there?" May asked.

Edward thought of lying, but he said, "No."

"Then come with me." And when he shook his head, she said, "Goodness. You looked easy to me."

"That's me," Edward said. "Sick and easy. A wonderful way to be."

He didn't feel easy; he felt unemployed and difficult, and he wanted to be left alone. Still, this was the first adventure to offer itself in he couldn't remember how long. He thought of his empty apartment and the fact that it was Friday, and he said, "I have always relied on the kindness of strangers."

He followed May's lead and they crossed Broadway. As they walked by his house, Edward

wondered if the night doorman noticed him passing. Halfway between Amsterdam and Columbus, May said. "Here's where I live." The building, a renovated brownstone, was more high-toned than he'd expected. More than ever, Edward felt that he wanted to be sick in private.

"I must have a fever," he said. "Maybe I'd better go home."

"Don't be silly," May said. She led him down three steps and opened an iron gate. She let him in the apartment door, and went back outside again. He heard the gate slam and then the door. "Go right in," she said. "I'll open the couch for you."

A long hall led past a closetlike kitchen into the living room. In the widest part of the hall was a table, one side against the wall. One wall of the living room was brick, two were painted gray. The fourth wall was glass and opened to a dark garden. The couch May had spoken of was blue and there was a double bed in the room covered with a piece of blue-and-white homespun and pillows of red and blue. "This is a nice place," Edward said. Expensive, he thought. He walked to the end of the living room and looked through the glass doors. He could make out pots stacked upside down. When he turned back to the room, he saw that May had the couch open and white sheets spread over it. There was a pair of striped flannel pajamas laid out.

"I haven't worn pajamas since I was twelve," he said.

"Well, wear them or not. I always like to wear pajamas when I'm sick."

"Will they fit me?" he asked, picking them up and holding them to his chest.

"They're my brother's," May said. "They fit me and him. They fit everyone. Go brush your teeth. I'll make some tea for you."

Edward reflected as he obeyed her instructions that she must be an exceptionally nice person to take in a sick stranger. He wondered if she

always picked up strange men from bars, then thought he wasn't so strange, though a look in the bathroom mirror—pajamas, hair sticking up, toothbrush protruding from his mouth—showed he wasn't exactly a prize peach. She'd picked him, though, and that made it a benign act. He wouldn't hurt anyone and she must have seen that.

Edward had a terrible night. May settled him in his bed, gave him tea and club soda, used the bathroom herself, and then disappeared into a room he hadn't noticed at the street end of the apartment. When he found a comfortable spot on the bed, he would sink into it too far and feel sick again. He'd probably picked up a bug in the Szechwan place where he'd had lunch. He could taste the Garlic Eggplant.

Edward fell asleep at dawn. When he woke, it was three o'clock and he was alone in the apartment. There was a glass of club soda next to the couch—the ice cubes were half melted—and a fresh pot of tea, still warm to his touch. He could see a piece of paper—a note from May—propped up on the table across the room. He was probably not sick anymore, he thought, but when he stood he became dizzy. The note read, *Went to store. Back at four.* He was stuck there. He had no keys, and it wouldn't be right to leave without double-locking the door.

There was a time in his life when Edward would have searched the apartment, quick, before May returned. He would have liked to read her letters and diaries, but he decided against that course. There were no bookshelves and he didn't see even one magazine in the kitchen, living room, or bathroom. A look through the half-open door of her bedroom startled him—there was someone asleep in the bed—but it was only tangled sheets and covers.

Edward returned to the couch. He should get dressed, he should be ready to go home when she returned, but he didn't move. Instead, he lay