



Book Beat

James Ewing

The Award Season Is Here

'TIS THE SEASON of book awards.

Next Saturday the winner of the PEN/Faulkner Award for Fiction, based on books published last year, will be presented a \$2,000 award in ceremonies at the University of Virginia. PEN, an international organization of poets, playwrights, essayists, editors and novelists, has 1,800 members in the United States.

Five nominees for the award are *How German Is It?* by Walter Abish (New Directions); *The Transit of Venus* by Shirley Hazzard (Viking); *The Second Coming* by Walker Percy (Farrar, Straus & Giroux); *Aberration of Starlight* by Gilbert Sorrentino (Random House) and *A Confederacy of Dunces* by the late John Kennedy Toole (Louisiana State University Press).

On Monday, the Pulitzer awards, probably the most prestigious of the lot, will be announced. Unlike those of the other organizations, Pulitzer nominees are not announced in advance.

Then, on April 30, as we announced March 14, the annual American Book Awards will be presented in ceremonies at Carnegie Hall in New York.

An interesting aspect of the awards is the speculation over whether Walker Percy's *The Second Coming* will win more votes from the national critics than Shirley Hazzard's *The Transit of Venus*.

Earlier this year, a few eyebrows were raised when the National Book Critics Circle picked Hazzard's book over Percy's. Now both have been nominated by the National Book Awards and PEN/Faulkner. I was glad to see that the PEN/Faulkner critics also nominated *A Confederacy of Dunces*, a book that might never have been published had not Walker Percy recognized it as the masterpiece it was and so informed its publisher, Louisiana State University Press.

The greatest local interest in the April 30 National Book Awards is centered on Robert Massie's *Peter The Great*, one of five nominees in the autobiography/biography category. Mr. Massie is the son of Mrs. J.M. "Molly" Todd of Nashville.

Autograph Party

AN autograph party will be held at Zibart's in Green Hills Monday from 5 to 7 p.m. for Thomas Daniel Young, Gertrude Conaway Vanderbilt Professor of English at Vanderbilt University and author of *The Past in the Present: A Thematic Study of Modern Southern Fiction* (Louisiana State University Press, \$14.95). (See William Boozer's review at the top of the page.)