

**THE BEST AMERICAN  
SHORT STORIES 1978**

edited by Ted Solotaroff  
with Shannon Ravenel  
Houghton Mifflin, 1978  
428 pp. \$10.95

L of C 16-11387  
ISBN 0-395-27104-5

This fine collection proves beyond any doubt that the short story lives and flourishes in North America today. It justifies once again the faith maintained through some earlier, leaner times and 35 preceding volumes by Martha Foley, the series' long-time editor, who died two years ago at the age of 80. To choose the 22 stories reprinted here, Ravenel, a former fiction editor at Houghton Mifflin, went through 500 issues of 123 U.S. and Canadian magazines, from big (*Esquire*, the *Atlantic*) to decidedly little (*Ascent*, published by the English Department at the University of Illinois). At that, editor Solotaroff notes, she was able to peruse only about a quarter of the stories appearing in 1977 in the roughly 500 periodicals that now publish short fiction. The finalists are largely quite traditional narratives—though their characters may be as unexpectedly offbeat as Joyce Carol Oates's conniving Russians in "The Translation," or as wildly down-home as Robert T. Sorrells's fat, redneck tennis player in "The Blacktop Champion of Icky Honey." Lynne Sharon Schwartz's "Rough Strife," a Canadian entry from the *Ontario Review*, is a tender love story about a couple finally having a child after they had given up hope. Under a policy proposed by Solotaroff, the 1979 collection will have a different editor; Ravenel will continue to do the preliminary reading for future volumes.

**WEATHERING: Poems and  
Translations**

by Alastair Reid  
Dutton, 1978, 125 pp. \$7.95

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ISBN 0-525-23076-9

"I am awed by how things weather," writes Alastair Reid in his title poem. "An oak mantel in the house in Spain, fingered to a sheen/ the marks of hands leaned into the lintel, / . . . the watch/ my father's wrist wore to a thin gold sandwich. / . . . Weathering is what I would like to do well." This Scot, who served in the Royal Navy in World War II, has earned his living as a translator (principally of Latin American writers), poet, reviewer, and reporter (for the *New Yorker*) from many parts of the world. The poems he has chosen for this slim volume cover a span of 25 years. Included here are 64 of his own and 24 translated from the work of José Emilio Pacheco,