WMAIN-STREAM A Literary Quarterly

Winter, 1947

PARRINGTON AND THE SEARCH FOR TRADITION John Howard Lawson

THE MAN WHO MADE GOOD IN
AMERICA
Thomas Bell

CONFESSIONAL: A Poem Dalton Trumbo

REALISM IN THE DRAMA Frederick Engels

JOSEPH BERNSTEIN · MILTON BLAU · ARNAUD D'USSEAU MILTON HOWARD · LANGSTON HUGHES · LANCE JEFFERS MERIDEL LE SUEUR · MORRIS U. SCHAPPES · THEO. WARD

Volume 1

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MAINSTREAM

Winter, 1947

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All manuscripts should be addressed to The Editors of MAINSTREAM, 832 Broadway, New York 3, N.Y., and accompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelopes for return.

Mainstream

A LITERARY QUARTERLY

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Crisis In American Letters

AN EDITORIAL

"LUCKY ARE THOSE," wrote Gorky, "who know that the people are an inexhaustible source of energy and can transform all the possible into the necessary, all dreams into reality. For such persons always have a live creative feeling of their organic connection with the people. And now this feeling must grow and fill their hearts with great joy and a thirst for creating new forms for a new culture. . . ."

Where in American writing today are we to find this joy in creation, this thirst for the new, this confidence in the future of humanity based on kinship with the people and understanding of their history?

A desperate crisis of belief in man, in science, in progress, spreads cancerously through the literature which assumes that existing social relations are eternal. It is a literature convinced that each generation is fated to reenact the tragedies of its predecessor. It is a literature increasingly dominated by images of meaningless violence, decay and death.

Eugene O'Neill reflects this mood when he suggests that it is perhaps time for the human race to go down the drain and give the ants a chance to make a habitable universe.

W. H. Auden, now a naturalized American, despondently proclaims that "The lion of Nothingness chases us about," and urges us to collapse with him into a befuddled theology of Love borrowed from the Danish mystic Kierkegaard.

On a different level, the mass media—movies, radio, magazines—grind out evasions and falsifications of life that no longer have even the merit of inventiveness. Systematically, cynically, they crush intelligence and annihilate sensibility with their synthetic dreams. And many writers who a decade ago showed genuine promise are beginning to manufacture "terror and mystery" fiction and "love and psychoanalysis" fiction which are but aspirants, hat in hand, for Grade B scenarios.

The rejection of reality—of living, suffering, struggling people—operates on other levels with varying degrees of sophistication and malice. The pontiffs of *Partisan Review*, having excommunicated not only the Soviet Union

but the entire tradition of American democratic writing, promiscuously embrace every metaphysical clown; and with a fierce resentment of moral stature they trim Tolstoy down to the level of Sartre. Among the academicians too few have as yet taken to heart the words of Thoreau: "How vain it is to sit down to write when you have not stood up to live!" To the editors of most "little magazines" today one is tempted to say, with Milton:

"Wilt thou serve the Philistines with that gift Which was expressly given to annoy them?"

The sluggishness of the literary scene is widely noted by critics who are themselves reluctant to probe its possible causes in society. Lewis Gannett calls 1946 the "most arid" year in three literary decades. And even Brooks Atkinson, though bent on asserting the superiority of private enterprise in culture, is compelled to lament the "low vitality" of the Broadway theatre.

What accounts for this devitalized quality which the glossy exteriors of our culture cannot hide? Does not the literary crisis reflect a crisis in American life?

Ours is no ordinary period of "transition."

We have just concluded a war against fascist powers, yet ominous trends toward fascism have sharply asserted themselves in our nation.

We have just demonstrated in war the stupendous power of our productive machine, yet the threat of economic distress leaves room for doubt only as to whether the first blow will come in 1947 or 1948.

We have just made an epochal advance in the conquest of nature, yet the release of atomic energy haunts us like a hideous nightmare.

As a people we desire above all to live in peace with the world, but we have blindly elected a Congress prepared, unless fought, to press the claims of our economic potentates for world domination.

In the face of this crisis, many writers are at once appalled by the condition of our society and doubtful of its cure. They cannot create a positive image of capitalism—what writer has been able to do so on the level of art in the past fifty years?—but neither do they feel called upon to probe and illuminate the evils of a social order in which they can have no faith. Rejecting any disciplined effort to change the world, they embrace nihilism, mysticism, pessimism. Not society but man becomes the object of their disillusionment.

This outlook serves the purposes of fascism.

"The mystical and openly non-rational character of Fascist ideology and

Crisis in American Letters: Editorial

propaganda is only the inevitable expression of its class role to maintain the domination of a doomed and dying class," notes R. Palme Dutt in his Fascism and Social Revolution (1934).

The basic features of imperialist and fascist ideology—anti-rationalism, nationalistic militarism, racism, etc.—find their key expression in the crusade against communism and the Soviet Union.

The "American Century" esthetic has its most explicit exponent in Henry Luce, whose *Life* magazine has been alternating full-page editorials on literature with straight political editorials calling for war against the Soviet Union and a "get tough" policy toward American labor.

We shall select two of these "literary" editorials: on George Bernard Shaw (Aug. 12, 1946) and Eugene O'Neill (Dec. 2, 1946).

Life was disturbed by the tributes to Shaw on his 90th birthday. For one thing Shaw has said that "the capitalist system has really broken down" and for another, "he admires Stalin and what he calls Russia's 'genuine democratic socialism." Shaw, like H. G. Wells and Sidney Webb, belongs to the scientific tradition of the nineteenth century; he is therefore "irrelevant" today. The coming age, Life concludes, must "find a faith to keep itself going."

What this "faith" is becomes clearer in the editorial on O'Neill. Life is now anxious to discover wherein our democratic ideas need correcting if we are to produce great tragic drama. To begin with, we must reject the idea of progress and the scientific tradition from which it springs: "This idea is only about as old as modern science, stemming from Bacon and Descartes. But it has as firm a grip on the modern world as the expectation of Judgment Day had on the medieval world. And except among Russian Communists (for Marx swallowed it whole) the idea of progress has nowhere taken deeper root than in America." Americans must "virtually reverse two of their dearest values; on the one hand, we must recover our awareness of evil, uncertainty and fear; on the other, we must gain a sense of man's occasional greatness (which is quite a different thing from 'the dignity of the common man')." We must stop believing that there are no insoluble questions or that punishment is only for ignorance or inadequate effort. Finally, we must learn to feel "a due humility before the forces that are able to humble us, without wishing to avoid the contest where the humbling may take place." We will be "a more civilized people" when we embrace this anti-scientific, anti-democratic, anti-humanistic philosophy.

This reactionary program, as *Life* accurately notes, is against the grain of the American people. But Big Business does not rely on persuasion alone.

Through its commanding control of press, publishing, radio, films—all of which show a steadily increasing degree of economic concentration—the men of the trusts are in a position to control at the source much of the country's intellectual output. Illusions about the independence of the artist in our society are being rapidly destroyed as the writer's employer demands a product that will help enslave the American intelligence.

And what it cannot achieve with money, reaction strives to accomplish through intimidation. A developing reign of terror is directed against writers and other intellectuals who insist on coming to grips with reality. This terror campaign finds a symbolic expression in the Rankin Committee's Gestapolike persecution of Dr. Harlow Shapley last year, for it is the man of science who must above all be silenced by the fascists. But the overt efforts at intimidation are no more serious than the hidden terror. Romain Rolland once said that the real tyranny of bourgeois society is a hidden tyranny. And this, we may say, is the consciously instilled fear of speaking up against the prevailing code, the hesitation to write what is in one's heart, the maiming that expresses itself in the gulf between man's thoughts and man's actions.

Art in America will advance only in the conscious struggle against the social forces that are hostile to art. This struggle is today the precondition not only of artistic advance but of artistic survival. Those who pretend to serve the cause of literature by divorcing it from social struggle are in fact betraying the cause of literature. Those who in the face of a grimly threatening fascism renounce the concept of partisanship in literature—partisanship in behalf of the people and social progress—are in fact surrendering to forces that would destroy literature altogether.

We are in a grim fight for a livable future.

This implies a literature that does not shrink from the challenge of a changing America in a world reshaped by the war. It implies a literature that shatters the lies that blind the people to their true interests, describes the real relations of human beings and classes. It implies a literature that does not define evil in metaphysical abstractions but in concrete terms of social oppression.

This literature recognizes that conflict is inherent in reality, and that this conflict is not meaningless and senseless, but historically conditioned, a conflict between growing and dying social forces and ideas.

The richest tradition in modern literature is imbued with a profound sense of human dignity, with an affirmative aspiration for freedom and fulfillment. This is the authentic tradition of all that is vital in American literature.

Crisis in American Letters: Editorial

In our own days, the advance of this tradition depends above all on an understanding of the liberating role of the working class.

In the words of Frederick Engels to the novelist Margaret Harkness sixty years ago: "The revolutionary response of the members of the working class to the oppression that surrounds them, their convulsive attempts—semi-conscious or conscious—to attain their rights as human beings, belong to history and may therefore lay claim to a place in the domain of realism."

Living literature in our epoch will be created only by writers who identify themselves with the people, by writers who identify or ally themselves with the working class, the main force for democratic and cultural advance.

MAINSTREAM is an organ for such writers.

MAINSTREAM carries forward the progressive literary traditions of our country; advances a people's literature truthfully portraying American life; encourages working-class writing in America; and strives to stimulate Marxist thinking in literature and the other creative arts.

The fundamental character of this magazine is determined by its allegiance to the Marxist science of history, culture, and human progress which in our age has inspired such writers as Gorky and Sholokhov, Barbusse and Aragon, Nexo and O'Casey and Dreiser. We believe that American writing will be immeasurably enriched by the further advance of Marxist ideas.

MAINSTREAM invites the participation of both Marxists and non-Marxist progressive writers. We welcome the contributions of all writers who seek earnestly to depict the real relations of people in our society and who genuinely concern themselves with the fight against imperialism and fascism.

In striving for artistic quality, we oppose a schematic approach to literature as strongly as we oppose the esoteric. We believe that the best art is the most truthful art. We stand for a dynamic, many-sided reflection of life, a socially purposeful realism.

We call upon writers to fight anti-Negro, anti-Semitic, anti-labor and anti-Communist influences in life and letters today. We oppose all currents of mysticism, defeatism, and snobbism; we combat such degraded influences as Trotskyite nihilism in the literary field; we fight the literary anti-Sovieteers who constitute an auxiliary legion of the war-makers.

We are proud to present a new forum for significant American writing today. We invite the support of that wide audience which looks for a literature truly expressing the aspirations and struggles of the American people for economic security, peace, freedom and a friendship of equality with the other peoples of the world.

The Man Who Made Good In America

By THOMAS BELL

IN THE spring of 1910, three men were sitting in a grimy courtyard, talking. All were Slovak steelworkers, fair, solidly-built men in their late thirties. The oldest, Mike Dobrejcak, was wearing slippers and a long-sleeved undershirt; he had got out of bed only an hour or so before, and would soon be going off to a night's work in the blast furnaces. The others, his brother Joe and his best friend Steve Bodnar, were clean-faced and clean-shirted, notice to all the small world of a steel town that they weren't working. Times were bad; not as bad as they had been during the panic three years before, but bad enough.

The courtyard, its paving gritty with mill dust, was closed in by the brick row in which Mike lived, by the fire-escaped back of a Washington Street saloon, and by the board fence against which Bodnar had tilted his chair. Two doors down the row several men were playing cards, their table an old box, and at the far end of the yard, in the corner formed by the communal outhouse and another fence, a loom had been set up and some women were weaving carpets from old rags.

It was a fine May afternoon; the three men could feel the warmth of the smoke-hazed sun penetrating their clothes. The saloon-keeper's hired girl, who had entertained them briefly by coming out on the fire escape above them to wash a window, had clambered back inside, taking her ankles with her, and now the men were talking, like a good many other people in Braddock, about Andy Toth.

On a bleak New Year's Eve many years before, about midway in time between the Braddock lockout with which Carnegie began his war on the steelworkers' union, and the Homestead lockout with which he finished it in 1892, there had been serious trouble at the mill gate in Braddock. The workers had asked for New Year's Day off and the company had refused, where-

The Man Who Made Good in America: Bell

upon the day men gathered before the gate and tried to keep the incoming night men from going to work. Foremen and mill cops intervened, and very shortly a small riot was raging up and down Thirteenth Street.

When it was over there were a number of broken heads on both sides and one man, an Irish foreman, was dead.

Andy Toth, a laborer in the blast furnaces who'd just recently come to America, married and the father of two boys, was arrested and tried for murder. He admitted participating in the fighting but denied that he'd struck the foreman. He was nevertheless convicted and sentenced to hang, a sentence that was later commuted to life imprisonment. Still protesting his innocence, he disappeared into the state penitentiary, and after a while people stopped talking about him; and after another while everybody except his family—and perhaps the family of the dead foreman—had forgotten him.

Now people were talking about him again, for after all these years it turned out that he was just as innocent as he'd always claimed to be. It seemed that a man in the old country, convinced he was dying, had confessed to the crime for which another man had already spent nearly twenty years in prison. His name was Steve Toth but he was no relation. The name was a common one; toth was the Hungarian word for Slovak.

Contrary to his expectations, the repentant Steve Toth didn't die. Meanwhile, however, the village *notar*, perhaps wondering if Steve Toth had been in his right mind when he told his fantastic story, had written to Braddock; and after a suitable interval Andy Toth's sons, now grown men, journeyed to Europe.

Assured that he was safe as long as he didn't return to America, Steve Toth talked freely. He hadn't meant to kill anyone, he said. Everyone was fighting, and that he rather than someone else had struck the fatal blow, that it had proved fatal at all, was pure chance. He'd left Braddock at once and returned to the old country. When he heard that the police, to whom one immigrant laborer named Toth was apparently as good as another, had arrested Andy Toth, he had been afraid to reveal the truth. But he was glad, he said, to get it off his conscience at last.

What Andy Toth's sons felt or thought as they listened to him was not known. They returned to Braddock laden with affidavits and documents and set about getting their father out of jail.

There was a picture of him in the newspapers on his release, a stout, white-haired, dazed-looking man. He carried a rosary and he was quoted as saying that he'd always known he would be freed some day because he had

prayed every night and his faith in God's goodness had never wavered. Several priests took his words, his history, for a text the following Sunday.

Andy Toth did not breathe the free air of America long; almost as soon as it could be arranged, he went back to the old country. His wife, who had taken in boarders to support herself and her family, had died while he was in prison. His sons were American citizens with wives and American-born children. Andy Toth went back to the old country—to die, he said; a sentiment everyone understood and no one took literally.

What made the First Ward gasp, however, was the report that the steel company, in an unprecedented manifestation of generosity and remorse, had given him a check equal to all the wages he would have earned if he'd been working in the mill during his long years in prison.

People never get tired of talking about money.

"How much do you think he got?" Joe asked.

"It should be easy to figure out," Mike replied. "Fourteen cents an hour, twelve hours a day, seven days a week."

"For twenty years."

"Ah."

"That sounds like a lot of money."

A breeze rustled the drying leaves of the Pentecostal linden branches nailed over Mike's doorway, as over most of the doorways in the row. In Twelfth Street, on the other side of the board fence, a huckster was crying his chant of potatoes, cabbages and onions, and small boys with nothing better to do were echoing him, mockingly.

"You know how to figure, Mike. See what it comes to."

Mike smiled tolerantly, not unwilling to show off his learning. "If you like." He leaned around the corner of the doorway and called into the kitchen, where Mary was getting his supper and packing his lunch bucket. "Marcha! See if you can find me a pencil and paper."

She came to the door, a small, tired woman in a soiled dress, a year-old baby in her arms. The baby was gnawing gummily on a piece of bacon rind hung from a string around its neck.

"What do you want with pencil and paper?" she asked. Like the men, she spoke in Slovak.

"We want to find out how much money the company gave Andy Toth."

"Ach, you men! You'd do better to start getting ready for work."

But she brought him what he wanted, a brown paper bag and a stubby pencil.

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Mike flattened the bag on his knee and wet the pencil with his tongue. "Fourteen cents an hour, twelve hours a day." He put the figures down and multiplied carefully. "One dollar and sixty-eight cents."

"I could have told you that," Bodnar said.

"Seven days a week—" Another pause. "It comes to eleven dollars and seventy-six cents."

"What about the long turn?" Joe asked. "That's twelve hours more every other week."

"Yes, but how do we know the company figured in the long turns?"

"If he'd been working he would have had to put them in, like everybody else. And they say the company paid him just as though he'd been working. What do you think, Stefan?"

Bodnar said it sounded reasonable to him. But that, he went on drily, made it almost certain the company would think differently.

"If you start figuring it so exactly you'll need a better man with figures than I," Mike said. "What about the times they cut wages?"

"And don't forget they weren't paying any fourteen cents an hour in those days," Bodnar said. "I went into the mill for seventy-five cents a day."

"And shutdowns and layoffs," Joe agreed, nodding. "God knows we've had more than enough of those in the last twenty years."

Mike protested, "The more you talk the harder you make it."

They thought it over. One of the card players rose and crossed the yard to the outhouse, making some remark to the women at the loom as he passed and laughing as he shut himself inside.

"Let's keep it simple," Mike said. "A straight twelve hours a day, seven days a week, with no wage cuts or layoffs."

Bodnar grunted. "I'd like a job in a mill like that. Where is it?"

"In heaven, maybe," Joe suggested.

Bodnar turned his face and spat. "Or in hell."

"Be quiet," Mike said, "or I'll be here all day." He was putting down figures again. "Fifty-two times eleven-seventy-six—" He multiplied and added. "It comes to six hundred eleven dollars and fifty-two cents a year," he announced.

"That much?"

"In twenty years it should make a nice piece of money," Joe observed reflectively.

"Now I know why bankers enjoy their work." Mike was staring at the paper. "You put down some figures, add them up and there you are, rich."

"How much in twenty years?" Bodnar asked.

"One minute. It comes to—" Again Mike's pencil moved, while the others watched it, absorbed.

"Bohze moj'!"

"Well? Well? Don't just sit there. Tell us."

"As God is my judge, it comes to twelve thousand, two hundred thirty dollars and forty cents exactly."

They stared at him blankly.

"How much did you say?"

Mike repeated the figure.

"Twelve thousand!"

Mike nodded. "In one piece, cash money."

"Jezis! Twelve thousand dollars!"

"I don't believe it."

"There are the figures."

The immensity of the sum overwhelmed them. Speechless, they stared at the paper on Mike's knee.

"Good God!" Bodnar exclaimed. "When I heard they were giving him some money I wished him joy of it. I didn't think much about it. I supposed it would come to a few hundred dollars more or less, little enough for what he suffered. But twelve thousand dollars!"

"It's a lot of money," Mike admitted.

"It's a fortune! And for what?"

Mike glanced at his friend. "Do you begrudge him the money?"

Bodnar stared at the paper on Mike's knee and then struck a match and re-lit his pipe, emotion making him suck on it with loud, smacking noises. "If I do, then may God forgive me. But what I'm thinking is that I was working in the mill when they took him off to jail, and so were you for that matter, and we're working still. And do we have any twelve thousand dollars to show for it? Twelve thousand dollars? Twelve thousand turds!"

"We didn't sit in jail for twenty years."

"Devil take me if I wouldn't be glad to sit in the strongest jail they have for that kind of money!"

"Twenty years in jail is a long time, Stefan."

"Twenty years in that God-damned mill is a long time too, my friend!"

"Yes. Yes, it is."

"And what have we to show for it? Who's the better off today? Look at us!" He gestured abruptly, taking in themselves, the mean yard, the card-

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player reappearing in the door of the outhouse, sliding his thumbs up and down under his suspenders. "I ask you, who's the better off? Toth, gone back to the old country with a fortune in his pocket and the rest of his life to do as he likes—or we, breaking our backs in the blast furnaces to keep body and soul together?"

Mike didn't reply. Joe shrugged slightly, one hand holding his pipe near his mouth, the other cupping an elbow.

"I tell you, Mike, it starts a man thinking."

"Yes."

Mary called, "Mihal, it's getting late!"

In some upstairs bedroom a melancholy boarder, far from home, was hunched over an accordian and singing about a girl whose lover from over the wooded mountains never came to see her anymore, though once they had made love every hour, every minute, every day of the week including Saturday: "Za hory, lesy, Mā milā kde si . . ." The mills and blast furnaces were a low rumble on the other side of the housetops, and of his song.

"Mihal!"

After a while he got slowly to his feet. "Toth could make a pretty good speech when he gets back to his village," he said.

Bodnar grunted, still seething. Joe looked up at his brother. "A speech?" Mike nooded, and a far-away look came into his eyes and his voice took on the formal tone appropriate to oratory.

"I was thinking he could stand up before the people who had gathered to welcome him home and he could say to them, 'My friends, in my youth I went to America to make my fortune, as the saying is. I dreamt of some day returning here rich and famous. Money in my pocket, maybe even my picture in the papers. You all know what thoughts will come into a young man's head when he is going to America. So off I went and now I've come back, and here I am. Rich and famous."

Mike stood above them for a moment, a faint, twisted smile on his lips. "Rich and famous," he repeated quietly.

Then he shook his head, as a man will when he finds something too much for him, and went inside to get ready for work.

Confessional

By DALTON TRUMBO

You got my letter?
Yes . . .

Yes, I've resigned.

Not in a public way, you understand,

Not in a way to harm a soul who stays.

But quietly. All reasons plainly said.

And now, for the committee's good, I'll phrase
For you those parts unwritten and unread.

A drink?

I still have Haig and Haig, well-bought Before the war; but when it's gone I'll take Domestic swill or gin or beer until The liquor boys reduce their present fee.
Call profit system—Lord, don't talk to me!—
I know the monster quite as well as you.
I've said as much—

and often-

but for now . . .

First, I must beg of you, please understand I've seen the world, I've been the underdog. Born in a slum—that's more than you can say—Stood hunger, felt oppression, slept with tears, Swum in the city's sewage, known the fears That tenement children suck in with their milk.

I've still a picture . . .

no-

no, not for now . . .

Confessional: Trumbo

Straight to the painful point I must discuss: My mother died half-blind, tuberculous, Still weeping blood for every child she'd lost. She spoke her native tongue until her death...

And now I write.

(Ironic, don't you think,
That I should live so well from printers' ink
Writing a language she could never speak
Nor ever understand?)

My father's peak
Came in the early textile worker strikes.
He was a socialist, no less, and I
Was weaned on phrases you have had to learn
Later in life and then perhaps from books.

Ah yes, I've heard it all, and suffered much, And linger thus because we've touched the key To my rejected past, now that I'm free And well-to-do, and forty's not so old.

Where else, I ask, on earth could I aspire—Alone, with none to help, hungry and cold—To draw my chair so close beside the fire?

And now I'm grateful.

That is all.

And more . . .

I've joined with you before in many ways (And when I haven't joined I've still approved)
Sacco, Vanzetti, the Scottsboro boys—
I had no facts, I simply took your word.
Mark that full well. As measure of my trust
You must remember that I had no facts,
Staking my reputation hard by yours
And fighting where you fought with perfect faith.

But yet-

and then again-

one must go slow.

You read the papers, hear the radio; You know as well as I what's being said About important people.

There!

You sneer!

As if a dear-won reputation gone,
All blackened and degraded by the smear—
As if this were a simple battle-loss
To be shrugged off, accepted and forgot
With no repudiation of the cause
Which brought it all about!

And yet you know
All could be stilled, all calumny rebuked
By one most simple resolution which
(For tactic only, mind you) clearly states
Our forthright opposition, as I've said,
To both extremes, the left as well as right.
That I demanded, that I still demand.
Grant me but this, old friend—and take my hand.

I see.

You disagree.

I understand.

Sitting in virtue, all intransigent, Reproaching me although my clear intent Would tolerate no real comparison!

I know the other side. I've smelt their works
Deep in my blood, deep in my deepest heart!
I know who burnt the books, proscribed the Jews,
Held festival with gore and putrid flesh,
Slaughtered like beeves the unresisting men,

Confessional: Trumbo

Made whores their wives till life bled through the wound, And choked their screaming children with dry earth!

Good friend-

sweet friend-

my dearest friend— I know!

And every moan has echoed in my ear And every child has touched me in its fall And every corpse has shivered with my fear And I have stood blindfold at every wall.

You see?

Tears in my eyes!

I'll finish soon.

Here's at my point: the means are justified Directly to the end. In such a cause By so much blood already sanctified One dare not risk the whole for any part. Only great principles permit retreat And call for mighty compromise: I beg You think of this, and for immediate gain, For strategy (the fingers crossed) proclaim As Peter did three times on Passion's eve, In public fashion, and for safety's sake That we renounce, repudiate, disclaim All trace or spot or taint or tinge or stain Of anything that might be misconstrued—

Your drink is gone! Forgive me.

I've been rude.

A little splash . . . the belly growing warm . . . And conversation not so passionate— Already better.

Yes?

Well, here's the truth:
In these unhappy times, the press a-bay,
(And furthermore I'm told they have a way
Of planting servants and of tapping wires)
One speaks with care, avoiding certain words—
Even so innocent a man as I!
Sehr gut, the Germans say: we understand.

Between us two, I've always known the truth And recognized the lies. Those who profess A certain kind of action (such as yours)

Comprises in itself the cause of which
The mottled beast is the effect—all such
Befoul the air they breathe: as well contend
That abolitionists brought civil war
And Jews pogroms and Negroes by their acts
Incite the lynching bees in which they die.
This is the deep, the black, the master lie.

I comprehend it well.

I'm not a fool.

And I know who chose first to stand and fight Rather than flee the uncontested field In Germany and Rome and in Madrid. And while they fell no voice in all the world Had courage to cry out against their fate Nor will have here. You are the men who die Silently in the night, and all alone, Yielding with blood the highway over which The mottled beast at last moves on his prey—His final prey—always and always me . . .

I bow.

I give salute.

I recognize.

Confessional: Trumbo

But I am not in any near degree
One such as you, nor shall I ever be.
Yet I too dream and hold aspiring high—
In endless sequences of night have I
Bestrode the chilly heights of India
And tamed sea-horses in the ocean waves
And hunted angels through the cold thin air
And drunk Christ's blood in alabaster naves.
All this . . .

and more . . .

but, differing from you, I wish to be both rich and holy too.

I'm merely human—see this photograph?
Those are my children, fat and full of life,
And there, all warm and tender, stands my wife,
And this my house and these my precious things
All ordered and assembled for the night.
And no one shall disturb them, mark that well!
And no one shall conceal behind my name
The perilous plan, the smouldering flame
Which draws to me the fire destined for him!

In general prinicples we both agree. But friend, you push too fast, you agitate, Arouse the people, sermonize, berate, And I am not prepared to see you through.

Professing your beliefs, if I were you I'd boldly state myself, accept the blame And stoutly meet my fate.

Well, now, enough!

It's turning late, the fire grows cold, and I

Am overtired . . . outside and to the right

You'll find the closet with your coat. Goodnight . . .

But wait!

One word before you pass my door Into the outer gloom, into the dark:
Never, I swear to you, shall I oppose
The ends we both desire.

And in that time
When we shall see the shining city built,
Her sunny terraces and golden towers,
Her marble walls and gleaming vestibules
Proclaiming to the gods of air and fire
Their pagan reign has vanished as complete
As ruined Ninevah and buried Tyre—

On this pavilion we shall meet again
And I shall take my brother's hand and yours
And we shall face the compass at its points
And we shall sing together in the dawn
And we shall shout like angels in the sun
And hail the new Jerusalem!

Parrington And The Search For Tradition

By JOHN HOWARD LAWSON

An IMPERATIVE NEED of the hour is the rediscovery and revaluation of the American heritage. The offensive of reactionaries and warmongers during the past year has involved a conscious effort to capture the American tradition: monopoly capital uses its control of the media of communication to extend its monopoly to the realm of history and culture. Imperialism masquerades in the garments of democracy.

The masquerade has deceived a great many people, and its effectiveness may be attributed in large part to the continuing confusion in American thought concerning the meaning of *Americanism*.

Contemporary interpretations of American history tend to two extremes, which are opposite sides of the same basic misunderstanding: on the one hand, there is an idealized concept of democracy, which converts the word into a meaningless abstraction; on the other hand, there is a negative approach to the past, treating the tradition of bourgeois-democracy as a delusion preserved only to deceive the masses. Both viewpoints reflect the combined sentimentality and cynicism that limit American understanding of the full sweep and meaning of our history. Both viewpoints are abstract and negative because they regard democracy as an idea and not as a living movement of people that develops through continuous struggle and the interplay of changing forces and relationships.

Thomas Wolfe was not a Marxist. He wrote of the dark turmoil of his own soul. Yet he came at last to realize that the creative problems with which he grappled, the frustrations that inhibited his development as an artist, were historically conditioned, and that he must understand American culture as a process of growth and conflict in order to solve the conflicts in his own creative life. In the chapter called "Credo" at the conclusion of his last book, You Can't Go Home Again, he wrote:

I believe that we are lost here in America and that we shall be found. And this belief, which mounts now to the catharsis of knowledge and conviction, is for me—and I think for all of us—not only our own hope, but America's everlasting, living dream. I think the life which we have fashioned in America, and which has fashioned us—the forms we made, the cells that grew, the honeycomb that was created—was self-destructive in its nature, and must be destroyed. I think these forms are dying and must die, just as I know that America and the people in it are deathless, undiscovered and immortal, and must live.

I think the enemy is here before us, too. . . . I think the enemy is here before us with a thousand faces, but I think we know that all his faces wear one mask. I think the enemy is single selfishness and compulsive greed. . . .

Wolfe describes the enemy and his way of speaking:

I am one of your children, your son, your brother, and your friend. . . . He lies! And now we know he lies! He is not gloriously, or in any other way, ourselves. He is not our friend, our son, our brother. And he is not American! For although he has a thousand familiar and convenient faces, his own true face is old as Hell.

Look about you and see what he has done.1

Thomas Wolfe is dead. But the enemy is among us, ranting in the halls of Congress, talking of war, telling us that he is our friend and brother, that he alone speaks for America. His "thousand familiar and convenient faces" include a collection of historical masks which enable him to pose as the heir of Jefferson and Lincoln, protector of the Bill of Rights, guardian of a sacred tradition.

The current fever of Red-baiting is largely occasioned by the fact that Marxism tears the mask from the enemy's face, and reveals the visage that is as "old as Hell." Red-baiting is essentially an historical falsehood: it posits a bogus American tradition and then invents an equally bogus "Marxism" which is supposedly smuggled into this country by foreigners.²

Historical materialism, Marxism, is the scientific instrument for the study of history; it can be judged by its ability to generalize the facts of history and its usefulness in interpreting these facts. In terms of cultural history, it seeks to define the integral pattern of laws, beliefs, customs, life-

1 You Can't Go Home Again, Garden City, 1942, pp. 741-743.

² "The repudiation of American civilization was direct and explicit in the creed of Marxian communism as developed in the United States. A large proportion of the propagandists who advocated it on this continent were themselves of foreign origins, immediate or recent—men and women reared in the civilizations of Europe from the Channel to the Siberian steppes." (Charles A. Beard and Mary Beard, *The American Spirit*, N. Y. 1942, p. 534).

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ways and modes of thought that are the common heritage of the American people. It removes the *idea of democracy* from the cloud-land of abstraction, and examines its roots in the American soil from which it has grown.

The task is not new. It involves a revaluation and extension of the work that has already been accomplished by American scholarship. The book which is of paramount importance in the field of cultural history, and which serves as the indespensable basis for further study, is Vernon Louis Parrington's Main Currents in American Thought.

"TO FORECAST AN AMPLER DEMOCRATIC FUTURE"

Parrington began his study of American thought at the time of Woodrow Wilson's election to the presidency. The first two volumes were published in 1927. The last volume appeared in 1930 in an incomplete form with notes and fragmentary comments found amoung the author's papers after his death in 1929.

In explaining the influences that molded his thought, Parrington speaks of the intellectual ferment of the years that preceded the First World War: "The current liberalism dedicated itself to history and sociology, accepting as its immediate and particular business a reexamination of the American past in order to forecast an ampler democratic future."

This purpose illuminates Parrington's scholarship, and gives his work an extraordinary urgency, a continuous interrelationship between his quiet labor among books and records and the thunder of events which he sought to understand and interpret.

Main Currents in American Thought has been very widely read and generally applauded. Yet the living aspect of the book, its place in a transitional epoch in American and world history, has been singularly neglected. Parrington reflected the intellectual climate of his time.

Like all powerful and original thinkers, he tried to cut the web of contradictions that checked the free development of his thought. His humanity, his greatness—for he is one of the few writers of our time in America who can be so described—become apparent only when he is seen in terms of conflict and growth, a man alive, fighting his way to the solution of difficult problems, a man in motion. The motion is intellectual, but it is at the same

³ Vernon Louis Parrington, Main Currents in American Thought, ³ vols. Harcourt, Brace and Co., New York, 1927-1930, Vol. III, p. 403. All subsequent references to this work are indicated by volume and page number.

time intense and meaningful action. Parrington attempted to break down the wall between theory and practice, to discover the interrelationship of thought and action. He refused to accept the "democratic idea" as the stuff of doctoral theses or dissertations on the Constitution. He insisted that the idea be tested in the arena of social struggle.

In the first decade of the twentieth century, clouds of war were already gathering on the European horizon. The development of American capitalism and the entry of the United States in the world struggle for markets and sources of raw materials suggested the probability of American involvement. Parrington describes the social unrest of the period as a manifestation of "the growing uneasiness among the middle class—small business and professional men—who looked with fear on the program of the captains of industry."

The movement that brought Wilson to the White House brought a significant change in the interpretation of American history. The principles of economic determinism were popularized in Charles A. Beard's *Economic Interpretation of the Constitution* which appeared in 1913, shattering previous assumptions concerning the high purpose of the founding fathers. Beard adduced impressive evidence to prove that the members of the Constitutional Convention "were, with few exceptions, immediately, directly and personally interested in, and derived economic benefits from the establishment of the new system." Beard concluded that "The Constitution is an economic document based upon the concept that the fundamental rights of property are anterior to government and morally beyond the reach of popular majorities."

Limitations of space prevent a detailed discussion of economic determinism. It is sufficient for our present purpose to suggest its relationship to the social forces of the time and its influence on the development of Parrington's thought. Beard's book was a notable achievement in that it marked a break with the uncritical optimism of nineteenth century historiography. But Beard did not introduce any coherent theory of social development. He exposed the economic motives of the framers of the Constitution, but he did not relate these motives to social forces or popular pressures. He expressed in historical terms the viewpoint and the limitations of the movement of middle class protest and reform that supported the Wilsonian New Freedom.

Economic determinism has nothing in common with the principles of

⁴ Vol. III, p. 405.

⁵ Economic Interpretation of the Constitution, N. Y., 1941, p. 324.

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historical materialism. The economic determinist rejects the Marxist view that the whole life and development of society evolves through the growth of productive forces and production relationships. On the contrary, he asserts that the "acquisitive instinct," the desire for property and power, is the basic determinant in the conduct of government and politics. Thus economic laws are removed from the sphere of production and assume a subjective and psychological character.

This is the viewpoint of the middle class as it becomes aware of the threat to its own interests in the concentration of economic power and the greed of monopoly. The business man and the farmer indict the big capitalist, but they are not prepared to face the possibility of fundamental changes in production or to recognize the full reality of class conflict in modern society. Their indictment is essentially ethical, a demand for reform and for the democratization of government.

Economic determinism provided the initial impulse for Parrington's study of American thought. But he also learned the lessons of the First World War and the triumph of reaction that followed it. He observed the esthetic revolt of the 1920's with deep interest, yet without losing his critical perspectives. He praised "the work of the younger intellectuals, more disciplined than the muckrakers, with wider culture and severer standards. Concerned for civilization, the things of the spirit, a free creative individualism, rather than political liberalism." Yet he recognized the limitations of the culture of the postwar decade, its cynicism, its lack of historical roots. He said of the young liberals: "There is no past for them beyond yesterday. They are having so good a time playing with ideas that it does not occur to them to question the validity of their intellectual processes or to enquire into the origins of the ideas they have adopted so blithely."

POLITICS AND LITERATURE

Parrington was concerned with origins. He was aware of the instability that underlay the hectic life of the twenties. His last volume was written under the shadow of the approaching crisis. He seemed to be racing against time, searching for a faith to guide us through the approaching storm. His death came on June 16, 1929, four months before the storm broke.

Parrington used Beard's Economic Interpretation of the Constitution as a

⁶ Vol. III, p. 376. ⁷ Vol. III, p. 401.

frame of reference for his analysis of the pattern of American thought; he stressed the discovery that:

The drift toward plutocracy was not a drift away from the spirit of the Constitution, but an inevitable unfolding of its premises; that instead of having been conceived by the fathers as a democratic instrument, it had been conceived in a spirit designedly hostile to democracy; that it was, in fact, a carefully formulated expression of eighteenth-century property consciousness, erected as a defense against the democratic spirit that had got out of hand during the Revolution....⁸

It is important to note that this formulation rests upon Beard's factual analysis, but it goes beyond Beard's interpretation because it emphasizes conflict—the struggle between property-consciousness and "the democratic spirit that had got out of hand during the Revolution."

This is the key to Parrington's great contribution to American cultural history. He accepted the tenets of economic determinism regarding the motivations of the privileged class, and he examined the ideas which were the ideological weapons of the men who held political and economic power. But he recognized that the democratic spirit represented an opposing and apparently indestructible force. He introduced two concepts that marked a complete break with traditional methods of dealing with American literature: (1) Ideas are the expression of "forces that are anterior to literary schools and movements, creating a body of ideas from which literary culture eventually springs"; 10 (2) these forces, and the ideas that emanate from them, are in constant conflict, which is summarized as a "conflict between the man and the dollar, between democracy and property." 11

It is difficult to gauge the influence that this revelation exerted on American thought during the period of depression and social ferment that followed the publication of Parrington's work. For the first time the doctrine of human rights was presented, not as a static and accomplished reality, guaranteed by American laws and institutions, but as a need that arose from the experience of the people in their fight against the authority of property and privilege guaranteed by the organic law and buttressed by the increasing concentration of economic power.

⁸ Vol. III, p. 410.

⁰ There is no suggestion in Beard's book that Shays' Rebellion influenced the deliberations of the Constitutional Convention, or that the Bill of Rights was adopted in response to popular pressure.

¹⁰ Vol. I, p. 3. ¹¹ Vol. III, p. 410.

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The reins of power, including a very considerable control over the dissemination of culture, rested in the hands of vested interests. But all that was most vital and truly national in American thought was born in opposition to these interests. The authentic American tradition is a tradition of struggle against the anti-social greed of the capitalist. The democratic philosophy represented a continuity of development from Roger Williams and John Wise to Jefferson and Paine and the great figures of the New England enlightenment, to Walt Whitman and Wendell Phillips.

Parrington's remark, in a foreword, that "the interpretation here offered, runs in many points counter to that frequently given," is a characteristic understatement. At the time he wrote, literary history still followed the academic conventions established at the end of the nineteenth century by such writers as Barrett Wendell, whose *Literary History of America* makes no mention of Paine and refers only casually to Jefferson with the comment that, "for want of any memorable literature during our early years of independence, our literary historians have been glad to treat our elder public men as men of letters too." 13

Parrington's chapter on Paine and Jefferson¹⁴ is a memorable example of the skilful interweaving of political and cultural materials. The analysis of economic and social theory is lucid. The personalities and general interests of both men are fully depicted, and their significance in the development of American culture is suggested. The following chapter, "The War of Belles Lettres" illustrates Parrington's method in selecting comparatively minor literary creations and giving them fresh meaning by showing their relationship to major clashes of political interest.

Innumerable examples of Parrington's skill as a critic might be cited. No other writer has been so successful in the pungent summarization of the interplay of literary and social factors. Fitz-Greene Halleck is rescued from oblivion in three paragraphs that cover his political, business and religious affiliations, his pension from John Jacob Astor, his real abilities as a satirist, and his tolerant contempt for the Jacksonian labor movement.¹⁵

Modern literary criticism, with its haphazard organization and lack of rational standards, can learn much from the study of Parrington's style, his technical facility in the arrangement of complex materials. But we are here

¹² Vol. I. p. i.

 ¹³ Literary History of America, N. Y., 1901, pp. 117-118.
 14 Vol. I, pp. 327-356.
 15 Vol. II, pp. 200-202.

primarily concerned with the larger aspect of his work as a survey "of certain germinal ideas that have come to be reckoned traditionally American—how they came into being, how they were opposed, and what influence they have exerted in determining the form and scope of our characteristic ideals and institutions." In undertaking this task, he tells us that he has "chosen to follow the broad path of our political, economic and social development, rather than the narrower belletristic."

The distinction may appear to be a necessary and justifiable delimitation of the area selected for investigation. But in limiting his subject matter, the author also limits his conception of the design and direction of American cultural development. The artificiality of the separation is apparent in the course of the book: it would be valid if Parrington had chosen to deal with political and economic theory, but since he is admittedly concerned with American letters, the distinction between thought and art is impossible to maintain. The attempt to make the distinction, and the suggestion that the "belletristic" aspects of culture are narrower, reveals that the author has not been completely successful in bridging the gap between politics and literature. He establishes the interrelationship in the field of ideas, but the social and intellectual pattern does not necessarily encompass the personal and psychological problems of the artist.

This accounts for his occasionally hasty and questionable literary judgments—the statement that the problem of Poe "lies outside the main current of American thought," the generalization that Henry James "was never a realist," the astounding overestimation of James Branch Cabell as "one of the great masters of English prose . . . individual and incomparable," the description of Dreiser as "an individual apart—one who has broken with the group and sits in judgment on the group sanction." 20

The last of these statements provides a clue to Parrington's approach to creative art. He is deeply convinced that social forces shape literary culture, but the main drive of these forces, especially in the modern period, seems to inhibit the flowering of artistic individuality. In the past the nation's intellectual development was guided by democratic aspirations, which were given national form in the speculations of Jefferson and Paine, and supported by a vigorous and forward-looking middle class in the early nineteenth century. Parrington recognized, with a measure of truth but without adequate realiza-

¹⁶ Vol. I, p. iii. ¹⁷ Vol. II, p. 58. ¹⁸ Vol. III, p. 240. ¹⁹ Vol. III, p. 345. ²⁰ Vol. III, p. 356.

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tion of the complex interaction of life and art, that Poe and Henry James were outside the great mainstream of American cultural evolution. However, when he considered the position of the artist in the twentieth century, he found that the middle class had abandoned the great tradition and that the artist seemed to gain stature by opposing the main currents of thought. Thus he could hail Cabell and Dreiser as individualists who "stripped away group illusions" and challenged bourgeois society "murmurous of morality" and holding to fictitious and uncreative values.21

Parrington never abandoned his faith in the democratic tradition. But he could not find a way to apply it effectively and realistically in his contemporary world. The fight for human rights continued; but the lords of greed were in the saddle and driving hard.

"COERCIVE SOVEREIGNTY"

The central problem with which Parrington grappled throughout his work was the problem of democracy. He rejected the cynicism of the clever young men who "began to make merry over democracy." He also refused to accept the optimism of those who identified democracy as a spiritual faith to which Americans give uncritical allegiance. He spoke of "the weakness of the democratic principle in governmental practice. America had never been a democracy for the sufficient reason that too many handicaps had been imposed on the popular will."23

In examining this fact historically, he found it essential to admit that "the realities of the American past had been covered deep in layers of patriotic myths."24 Underlying the myths was the inescapable question of state power.

Parrington did not evade the question. The argument for a "unitary, sovereign state"25 presented in The Federalist as a defense of the guarantees of property rights embodied in the Constitution, assumed "coercive sovereignty" as a matter of course.

He uses the adjective, "coercive," repeatedly. He cuts through the pretensions of liberal philosophers who, as Lenin has pointed out, "make it appear that the state is an organ for reconciling classes."26 The state, according

²⁵ Vol. I, p. 285. 26 State and Revolution, International Publisher, N. Y. (1932), p. 9.

²¹ Vol. III, p. 354. Parrington makes a specific comparison of the two men. He says of Dreiser: "Like James Branch Cabell he broods over the plight of man in the universe." (P. 355.) 22 Vol. III, p. 412. 23 Vol. III, p. 410. 24 Vol. III, pp. 409-410.

to Parrington, is an instrument of class domination which even converts the idea of democracy to its own uses:

The idea of a beneficent progress, which was the flower of the doctrine of human perfectability, came to be interpreted as material expansion with constantly augmenting profits; and the idea of democracy came to be interpreted as the right to use the government of the whole for the benefit of the few."²⁷

The mood of pessimism in this comment has nothing in common with the easy cynicism of those who scoff at democracy. It is a sober approach to the actuality of power. However, Parrington tends to emphasize only one side of the actuality: control of the state is real, but the democratic forces are less clearly defined and visualized.

The brilliant chapter on Jefferson concludes with a passage which summarizes Jefferson's thought and points to the future course of American development:

He came to see that where men enjoy free access to the sources of subsistence, government is likely to be simple and honest, and society free and content, but where a policy of preemption has run its course, the function of government is seduced from its social purpose to perpetuate the inequalities which spring from the progressive monopolization of natural resources, with augmenting corruption and injustice. To preserve government in America from such degradation, to keep the natural resources open to all, were the prime desire and object of his life. That such an effort was foredoomed to failure, in presence of imperious forces that shape society beyond the capacity of political means to change or prevent, cannot detract from the nobility of his ideal, or the inspiration of his life.²⁸

There is much that is true and profound in this. Yet the characterization of Jefferson as a noble dreamer does not suggest the realistic and partially successful struggle that he conducted against the imperious forces seeking to control the society of his time, nor does it give an adequate impression of the great force of popular organization mobilized for his support.

The continuing influence of economic determinism molded Parrington's understanding of social conflict. He identified the forces that shape society with the greed of vested interests, never with the concrete conditions and relationships of production. Seen in this shadowy and frightening light, the power of money and property seems irresistible. The power of the capitalist,

²⁷ Vol. III, p. XXV. ²⁸ Vol. II, p. 356.

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divorced from the system of production on which it rests, appears far more complete than it has ever been or could ever be.

WHAT IS DEMOCRACY?

The democratic tradition is obscured and watered down when it is separated from the evolution of productive forces and relationships. The people is a vast abstraction, a tragic processional moving without direction "in the darkness with a great bundle of grief," unless the activity of the people in their daily labor and struggle for existence is understood.

Parrington knew that democracy cannot be identified with a governmental apparatus that exercises coercive sovereignty in the interest of a privileged class. Was it to be concluded, then, that democracy is an illusion? There could be no doubt that it "has changed service with each new master," and that "democratic professions have been only a thin cover under which the old class warfare has gone forward vigorously."

The use of the term, class warfare, requires examination. It is characteristic of Parrington. Bernard Smith observes that "He did not speak merely of 'environment' or vaguely of 'economic groupings'; he did not describe a given epoch as a whole, possessing characteristics shared by all who lived in it; he spoke clearly of classes and class struggles."

He is explicit in stressing the class consciousness of the rich and powerful. He refers to John Adams' belief that "the universal social state is one of ruthless class struggle, wherein the strong conquer the weak." In a trenchant paragraph he explodes the widely accepted illusion concerning Alexander Hamilton's service to the nation: Hamilton's truer significance is "to be found in his relations to the early developments of our modern capitalistic order . . . one to whom our industrialism owes a great debt, but from whom our democratic liberalism has received nothing." 33

His understanding—and scorn—of the class solidarity of vested interests does not find any compensating and affirmative recognition of the solidarity of labor and the people. The class struggle, as he sees it, is a more or less static opposition between property interests in general and the people in general. Since economic power invariably opens the way to political power,

32 Vol. I, p. 313. 33 Vol. I, pp. 306-307.

²⁹ Carl Sandburg, The People, Yes, Harcourt, Brace and Co., N. Y. 1936, p. 286.

⁸⁰ Vol. III, p. XXIV.81 Forces in American Criticism, N. Y., 1939, p. 333.

the men of property have a distinct, and apparently permanent, advantage. The people are bound to be the losers in the unequal struggle.

Thus the idea of democracy, permeating our literature and thought, is separated from political actuality. In acknowledging the class structure of society, Parrington is not sharply differentiated from many of the economists and historians of his time.³⁴ He came far closer to the truth than others in recognizing that generalizations about democracy are used as a means of concealing the class character of the bourgeois-democratic state. But he failed to grasp the essential fact that class struggle is the driving force of history, the means by which social relationships are transformed in conformity with the change and growth of the forces of production.

The class struggle is the struggle for the means of subsistence. It therefore expresses the reality of social relationships at a specific level of historical development. It is the life-pattern of the people who are the producers of material values essential for the existence of society. In conducting the struggle the people make their own history. But they do not make it out of whole cloth. Human activity, says Marx, is "conditioned by the circumstances in which men find themselves, by the productive forces already won, by the social form which exists before they do, which they do not create, which is the product of the former generation." ³⁵

Parrington was not entirely unfamiliar with the writings of Marx and Engels. He spoke of Marxism sympathetically, although he tended to confuse it with economic determinism. If he had read the last three chapters of the first volume of *Capital*, there is no indication that he considered their relevance to the study of American life and culture. A brief summary cannot give a satisfactory presentation of the Marxist thesis, but it may be of value in indicating a possible solution of problems which seemed insoluble to Parrington.

Marx notes that in England, and all parts of Europe, the historical genesis of capitalism required that the agricultural population be driven from the land and transformed into an industrial proletariat. Capitalist production demanded a reserve-army of workers who must sell their labor-power as a commodity because they possess neither land nor tools. The historical tendency

³⁴ Even such a conservative scholar as Albert Bushnell Hart observed in 1907 that "Everybody knows that there is in America a variety of social classes." (National Ideals Historically Traced, N. Y. and London, 1907, p. 85.)

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of capitalist accumulation is "the transformation of the individualized and scattered means of production into socially concentrated ones." 36

The specific conditions under which this process took place in the United States were of enormous significance in shaping the democratic struggles of the people and the system of ideas and beliefs that arose from these struggles. An important factor in American development was the availability of a vast expanse of free land in the West. Under these circumstances, writes Marx:

... the capitalist regime everywhere comes into collision with the resistance of the producer, who, as the owner of his own conditions of labour, employs that labour to enrich himself instead of the capitalist. The contradiction of these two diametrically opposed economic systems manifests itself here practically in a struggle between them³⁷ ... the bulk of the soil is still public property, and every settler on it therefore can turn part of it into private property and individual means of production, without hindering the later settlers in the same operation.³⁸

With the rounding out of the continental domain, the concentration of capital and the entry of the United States into the arena of world imperialist conflict at the beginning of the twentieth century, capitalism in the United States had fully entered on the phase which is foreseen by Marx as the course of world capitalist development:

One capitalist always kills many. Hand in hand with this centralisation, or this expropriation of many capitalists by few, develop, on an ever extending scale, the cooperative form of the labour-process, the conscious technical application of science, the methodical cultivation of the soil, the transformation of the instruments of labour into instruments of labour only usable in common, the economising of all means of production by their use as the means of production of combined, socialised labour, the entanglement of all peoples in the net of the world-market. . . . Along with the constantly diminishing number of the magnates of capital, who usurp and monopolise the advantages of this process of transformation, grows the mass of misery, oppression, slavery, degradation, exploitation; but with this too grows the revolt of the working class, a class always increasing in numbers, and disciplined, united, organised by the process of capitalist production itself.³⁹

This general process has reached an advanced and crucial stage. But what has this to do with Parrington and the quest for a usable tradition?

⁸⁶ Capital, 3 vols., Charles Kerr Co., Chicago, 1912, Vol. I, p. 835. ⁸⁷ Ibid. p. 838. ⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 841. ⁸⁹ Ibid., pp. 836-837.

American culture during the nineteenth century was to a substantial degree molded by the conflict between the free producer seeking to maintain control of his own means of production—as a farmer, a craftsman, a small business man-and the drive of capitalism which has for its "fundamental condition the annihilation of self-earned private property. . . ."40 At the dawn of American national development, the Jeffersonian faith in the rights of man and the hatred of special privilege reflected the early optimistic stages of the struggle. The ambivalence of New England thought in the period of intellectual flowering, the conflict between the real and the ideal which found its most profound expression in Emerson's work, mirrored the sharpening struggle, the dilemma of a middle class which was increasingly dependent on a mode of production that revealed its historical tendency in the New England cotton mills. The exploitation of women and children drawn from neighboring farms, and the dependence of the cotton manufacturers on raw materials provided by slave labor in the South, indicated the growing contradiction between an economy of free producers and the necessities of capitalist production.

The Civil War marked a supreme crisis in American culture as well as in the nation's political and economic development. The destruction of the slave system did not lead to the victory of the small producer, of which many Americans had dreamed. It cleared th way for the rapid growth of industry; it also brought the working class to increasing maturity and militant struggle. The expropriation of the small producer was concealed to some extent, in the 1870's, by the continuing expansion of the frontier. But the course of capitalist development was indicated in the quick and brutal suppression of the attempt of the people of the South, Negro and white, to establish democracy on the basis of ownership of the soil and the tools of production.

Capitalism, enjoying the fruits of stock-market manipulation, railroad construction and wholesale robbery of the public lands, could not afford to permit the development of a "free" economy in the South. The defeat of Reconstruction in 1876 anticipated the defeat of Populism twenty years later.

The early years of the twentieth century witnessed the transformation of the American life-pattern. The struggle for land continued. The farmer labored under the burden of debts and mortgages, and the competition of large scale agricultural enterprises with mechanized equipment. But the

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 848.

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decisive area of class struggle had by then definitely shifted to the workers in the mines and factories and railroads.

The magnitude of the transformation caused a profound ferment in the culture of the middle class, which clung tenaciously to old illusions and values while at the same time it was forced by the impact of events to realize that these values were no longer efficacious. The dark foreboding of Mark Twain's The Mysterious Stranger, Dreiser's early novels, Lincoln Steffens' indictment of political corruption, the revelation of the origins of business power in Gustavus Myers' History of the Great American Fortunes, were manifestations of the cultural climate in which Parrington lived and worked.

Like many other sincere thinkers of the period, he could not fully accept the defeat of the independent producer or acknowledge the leadership of the working class. In dealing with the earlier aspects of American development, he approached an intuitive understanding that the battle of the small producer to retain his status had been from the beginning objectively a challenge to the whole system of capitalist production. But he understood only the beginning of the battle. He could not follow its later stages. He could not find any satisfactory link between the struggles of a predominantly agrarian past and an epoch in which a bleak industrialism drained the nation's resources and stultified its economy.

The annihilation of the small producer seemed to him an ultimate doom. The victory of capitalism seemed oppressively complete. It meant that the free individual simply ceased to exist.

He could not follow the free producer into his new working class milieu. He could not see that the change that was taking place was a transformation and not a death, that the free producer transformed his personal labor into socialized labor, labor performed as a collective social act, which in turn pointed to the necessity, and the imminence, of social control over the whole system of production.

THE PROPAGANDA OF HISTORY

Parrington's failure to understand fully the role of the working class in modern society is related to an historical underestimation of the role of the people in shaping the course of history. The individual producer had always appeared as an isolated individual, occasionally combining with his fellows, occasionally stirred by democratic aspirations, but unable to organize effective and consistent opposition to the privileged minority.

This misconception may be attributed at least in part to the background of general historical information that Parrington used as a frame of reference. At the time that he wrote, the actual facts concerning the part that the American people had played in the nation's history were even less available than they are today.

The democratic gains of the Roosevelt era were reflected in a fruitful broadening of historical study, and the exploration of various epochs, movements and activities. This new illumination of neglected areas of research was provided chiefly by specialized studies and monographs; it has had little effect on the pattern of history as it is taught and popularized in so-called "standard" works of academic scholarship.

While Parrington revolutionized the approach to literary history and undertook extensive original research in the field of ideas, there is no evidence that he ventured widely in the field of general history. The struggle of ideas as he projects it takes place against a conventional backdrop of historical assumptions.

One of the pervasive myths cultivated by historians is the belief that historiography (the chronicling of events) and history (the events themselves) are synonymous. The ambiguity is so general that, as Allen Rogers Benham has pointed out, the word historiography is seldom employed by English and American writers and history is used to designate both human experience and the arrangement of that experience by its interpreters. The popular acceptance of this assumption surrounds standard works of history with a wall of infallibility and discourages critical evaluation of the basic premises on which modern historical thought rests.

The basic premises have changed very little since the days of Bancroft, Fiske, and Henry Adams. Economic determinism introduced a negative approach and punctured the earlier idealism, but the shift in emphasis did not involve any change in the framework of causation, and it remains unchanged to the present day. For example, a comparison of Woodrow Wilson's History of the American People (1902), the Beards' Rise of American Civilization (1927), and a modern work such as The Growth of the American Republic, by Morison and Commager (1942), shows a remarkable similarity in the interpretation of key-events, omissions, emphases and generalizations.

The pattern is incomplete and misleading. Democracy is idealized as an abstraction, but everything that relates to democracy as a force, everything

⁴¹ Clio and Mr. Croce, Seattle, 1928, p. 7.

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that demonstrates the power of the people, is either omitted entirely or misinterpreted and placed in a dubious light.

Parrington's conception of literary culture as the expression of economic and social forces is inherent in the design of his work. He continually relates intellectual currents to the background of political events. But it is the background that the historians have erected.

His treatment of the colonial period is rich in political references. However, these do not include any mention of Bacon's Rebellion or the long series of agrarian revolts that followed it. It is not without interest to the student of culture that the only poem written in America in the seventeenth century that can be regarded as a serious piece of literature is the epitaph written by an unknown follower of Bacon, lamenting that his death destroyed "our hopes of safety, liberty, our all. . . . "42

The hundred years of agrarian conflict that preceded the Revolutionthe Virginia Plantcutters' Rebellion, the outbreaks in Carolina and Maryland, movements such as the Elizabethtown Associates and the Westchester Levelers in the eighteenth century—created the background against which the colonial debate on human rights was conducted.

Parrington mentions the radicalism of the Cromwellian period in England, noting that "the literature of the Levelers was buried too deep under Tory obloquy to be resurrected."43 This is true insofar as it relates to formal literature. But the tradition of the Levelers was obviously transferred to America, since the rebels who assembled under the leadership of William Prendergast in 1765 called themselves by that name. The limited circulation of books and Tory censorship prevented Jefferson and his contemporaries from having extensive or accurate knowledge of the agrarian rebellions of the colonial period. It is nonetheless incumbent on the historian to explore the origins of social thought and action. It is hardly reasonable to suppose that the experience of the Leisler revolution in New York in 1689 when small farmers and tradesmen seized the government and administered the city for two years under a democratically elected Committee of Safety, left no imprint on the memories and political aspirations of the people.

Parrington makes no mention of these events. He also makes no reference to the Negro revolts that sounded an ominous tocsin during the colonial period. There is no treatment of the democratic aspirations that stirred Negro

⁴² The Democratic Spirit, edited by Bernard Smith, Harcourt, Brace and Co., N. Y., 1941,
p. 13. The poem is printed in many other anthologies.
43 Vol. I, pp. 279-280.

Americans on the eve of the Revolution, their repeated petitions to provincial governments demanding their freedom, their service in the war, and the impact of the institution of slavery on the whole course of the struggle and the social system that emerged from it.

All of these omissions follow the invariable pattern established in standard works of American history.⁴⁴

Parrington, being a keen student, admits that the social forces that led to the Revolution seem to have been inadequately explored:

The American Revolution remains after a hundred and fifty years somewhat of a puzzle to historians. . . . The appeal to arms would seem to have been brought about by a minority of the American people, directed by a small group of skilled leaders, who like Indian scouts, covered their tracks so cleverly that only the keenest trailers can now follow their course and understand their strategy. 45

There is a subtle irony in the passage. Parrington did not believe that history is made by a minority. He was looking for the people, but he could not find them in the history books.

In dealing with the period following the Revolution, he makes only casual mention of the activities of the Democratic-Republican Clubs, whose statements and manifestos were an index of the popular thought of the time.

Although the over-all plan of his work involves emphasis on political, social and economic thought rather than on *belles lettres*, his interest in culture *per se* and his inadequate treament of popular movements causes him to reverse this emphasis in dealing with the period from the Revolution to the Civil War. The literature of the Jacksonian trade union movement is only casually mentioned.⁴⁶ The Land Reform movement, which exerted an extraordinary influence on agrarian theory, is referred to without serious consideration of its significance. The struggle for women's rights is also omitted.

⁴⁴ In The Rise of American Civilization, published in the same year in which Parrington's first two volumes appeared, there is only a brief humorous reference to Bacon's Rebellion; the Leisler Revolution is omitted entirely; there is no discussion of Negro slave revolts or of the relationship of slavery to the Revolution. The treatment is approximately the same in other histories. In the study of Negro slave revolts a pioneer contribution has been made by Herbert Aptheker, American Negro Slave Revolts, Columbia University Press, N. Y., 1943, and Essays in the History of the American Negro, International Publishers, N. Y., 1945.

45 Vol. I, p. 179.

⁴⁶ The rich material in the History of Labour in the United States, by John R. Commons and associates, was available to Parrington, since the first two volumes, carrying the work to 1898, were published in 1918. But Parrington does not seem to have been familiar with the book. His only citations from Commons are from an article on Horace Greeley published in Political Science Quarterly.

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The Abolition movement in the North is discussed with feeling and understanding. But the roots of the struggle in the South are not explored. There is no consideration of the Underground Railroad, or of the influence of Negro journalism. The omission of the name of Frederick Douglass is especially striking.

Analysis of the structure of Volume II, covering the period from 1800 to 1860, offers a key to Parrington's general view of American history. The volume is divided into three books: "I. The Mind of the South; II. The Mind of the Middle East; III, The Mind of New England." The first division deals with the culture of Virginia and Southern arguments in defense of slavery. It concludes with a section devoted to "The Romance of the West," in which Jackson and Lincoln are discussed. Thus Lincoln appears under the general heading, "The Mind of the South." The excuse for the arrangement seems to lie in the idea that the pioneer democracy of the West inherited the Jeffersonian thought cradled in Virginia. The argument is tenuous, and Parrington is wise enough to avoid serious discussion of such an untenable hypothesis.

Nonetheless he constructs the whole volume around the three-fold division. Lincoln is sandwiched into the middle of the book as "a spokesman of the West," and his role as the representative of the nation at a moment of great crisis is inevitably underestimated. But the most astonishing thing about the plan is the exclusion of Walt Whitman. The poet who sang of "companionship thick as trees along all the rivers of America,"47 who spoke for "all in these states who live by their daily toil,"48 finds no place in the currents of thought that led to the Civil War. He appears in the third volume, under the rather irrelevant general heading, "The Culture of the Seventies," with the retrospective sub-title, "The Afterglow of the Enlightenment-Walt Whitman."49

Here is the root of Parrington's misunderstanding of the forces that shaped American history. He could not appreciate the relationship between Lincoln and Whitman, and the significance of both men in terms of the lifeways and culture of the people. This was not because of any underestimation of the creative spirit, the human stature, of the men as individuals. Where Parrington failed was in his understanding of the Civil War.

The war and the democratic movement of Reconstruction in the South that followed it showed the relationships of classes at the beginning of the

49 Vol. III, p. 69.

^{47 &}quot;For You, O Democracy," Leaves of Grass, Modern Library ed., N. Y., n. d., p. 95.
48 "The Eighteenth Presidency," Walt Whitman, edited by Samuel Sillen, N. Y., 1944, p. 105.

period of industrial expansion in their sharpest outline and most violent antagonism. The betrayal of the purposes of the war and the smashing of the attempt to establish democracy in the South reveal the true meaning of the alliance between Northern commercial and banking capitalists and the former slaveholders which continues in an advanced stage to the present day and forms the basis for the control exercised by monopoly over the political life of the nation.

In order to conceal the real nature of American imperialism—which is the major task of modern historiography—it is essential to conceal the origins of the political and economic power of capitalism in the middle nineteenth century. The meaning of the Civil War as a class struggle, related to the struggles that developed in Europe from the rise of the Chartist movement in England to the fall of the Paris Commune in 1871, must be obscured, because when the war and the temporary triumph of the people in the revitalized South are seen in this light, the power of the people and the mechanism of authority by which it is limited and controlled are clearly illuminated.

American bourgeois historiography treats the Civil War either as the result of a sectional misunderstanding that might have been avoided by concessions on both sides, or as a triumph of Northern industrialism over Southern agrarianism. Both theories merge in the myth that Reconstruction was a costly error, and that the attempt to give the Negro equal rights was a brutal disregard of Southern sensibilities and rights. The monstrous myth of racism is rejected by social science, but it is propagated shamelessly by every American official historian.⁵⁰

It cannot be too strongly emphasized that Parrington never accepted or tolerated racism. He had nothing but scorn for the enemies of democracy, and he knew these enemies as the vested interests, the monopolists, the imperialists of his own day.

But it seemed to him, on the basis of the historical data on which he based his thought, that the Civil War marked a break with the past:

The nation hurried forward along the path of an unquestioning and uncritical consolidation, that was to throw the coercive power of a centralizing state in the hands of the new industrialism. Here was a revolution that was

⁵⁰ "In propaganda against the Negro since the emancipation in this land, we face one of the most stupendous efforts the world ever saw to discredit human beings, an effort involving universities, history, science, social life and religion." (W. E. B. DuBois, *Black Reconstruction*, N. Y., 1935, p. 727.)

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to engulf the older romantic America, its dignified literary ideals as well as its democratic political theory.⁵¹

Thus the continuity between the beginnings of American development and its evolution in the industrial period is broken. The Civil War is depicted one-sidedly as the triumph of industry without any compensating democratic gains. Parrington writes of the year 1865, the year of victory, that "the democratic forces had lost strength during the war, and democratic principles were in disrepute."⁵²

It would seem, then, that the doom of the free producer (which was, in the broad view of history, sealed by the Civil War) is the doom of democracy itself.

Parrington came to the indecisive end of his long quest in the essay entitled "A Chapter in American Liberalism" written shortly before his death and placed at the conclusion of the uncompleted third volume. It is an unhappy statement, a confession of failure and continuing faith. He clings to affirmation. Democracy must be made to work. Since the reality of democratic control depends on power, the people must learn the secret of power: "If property is the master force in every society one cannot understand American institutional development until one has come to understand the part property played in shaping the fundamental law." If the old ideals are no longer valid, we must "put away all profitless romanticisms and turn realist." **

But there was no realistic theory that seemed adequate to meet the need. The end is uncertainty; the future, as he says at the end of the last page, "lies on the lap of the Gods." ⁵⁵

If Parrington had lived, the impact of events and the changing currents of American thought might have carried him beyond the discouragements of current philosophy to new social horizons.

For us his work stands as one of the great achievements of the American spirit, proof, if proof were needed, of the living power of democratic thought.

It remains to carry on the task that he left unfinished.

54 Vol. III, p. 408. 55 Vol. III, p. 413.

⁵¹ Vol. II, p. 474. 52 Vol. III, pp. 19-20. 58 Vol. III, p. 409.

Trumpet Player: 52nd Street

By LANGSTON HUGHES

The Negro
With the trumpet at his lips
Has dark moons of weariness
Beneath his eyes
Where the smoldering memory
Of slave ships
Blazed to the crack of whips
About his thighs.

The Negro
With the trumpet at his lips
Has a head of vibrant hair
Tamed down,
Patent-leathered now
Until it gleams
Like jet—
Were jet a crown.

The music
From the trumpet at his lips
Is honey
Mixed with liquid fire.
The rhythm
From the trumpet at his lips
Is ecstasy
Distilled from old desire—

Trumpet Player: 52nd Street: Hughes

Desire
That is longing for the moon
Where the moonlight's just a spotlight
In his eyes,
Desire
That is longing for the sea
Where the sea's a bar-glass
Sucker size.

The Negro
With the trumpet at his lips
Whose jacket
Has a fine one-button roll,
Does not know
Upon what riff the music slips
Its hypodermic needle
In his soul—

But softly
As the tune comes from his throat
Trouble
Mellows to a golden note,
And smoky fog
Of pearl-grey air grows sweet
As dreams come back
To 52nd Street.

Partisan Review: Esthetics Of The Cage

By MILTON HOWARD

IN ASSAYING THE CURRENT INERTIA of the creative will, at least as it is expressed in the products of the avant-garde literati the world over, I see three images that symbolize the spiritual history of our time.

The Man on the Bridge. We first saw him as John Reed reported him to us. He was the armed peasant-soldier, guarding the bridge that led to the beleaguered revolutionary capital. To the elaborate sophistries of renegades who sought to bedazzle his mind and outwit his vigilance, he could only mutter: "There are two classes. You cannot pass."

We did not expect that all our problems would find their solution in the axiom of the "man on the bridge." We did not expect that the kind of literature we sought would be limited to that perception. But we knew that without that anchored wisdom, the rest was transitory and false.

The Man in the Boat. It was Andre Gide who gave us this image when, for a brief moment, he permitted himself a sip of the waters of humanism, more, as we now know, out of a spiritual hedonism that wished to try anything once, than out of any alteration in his intellectual parasitism.

The beneficiary of modern culture, Gide keenly advised us, who enjoys the delights of the mind without sharing in the battle of dispossessed and alienated mankind, is morally "the man in the boat."

Around the craft in which he sits, the stormy waters are white with the frantically reaching arms of the drowning. Their cries deafen his ears. Their hands cling in despair to the safety of his vessel, before they go down. To cultivate the mind, sundering it from the claims which surrounding agony and heroism make upon it, is to be "the man in the boat" whose safety is predicated upon corpses.

It is the image of that smiling and murderous egoism in which Gide once marvellously saw symbolized the true repulsive image of contemporary culture.

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The Man in the Cage. Again it was Gide who gave us this image when, during the occupation of France by the Germans, he confided to his diary that he "could live happily even in a cage. The secret is to establish oneself equi-distant from the four walls."

It is the supreme image of calculating adaptation, the canny esthetics of survival, coined as a practical gadget for the elite exponents of "the modern mind" by that audacious European intellectual whose revulsion from Communism had for its haughty premise (miserably insincere we now know) precisely the refusal "to adapt oneself."

In reading the ten-years anthology of *Partisan Review*,* it is these images which define its moral, esthetic and political history.

Launched amid the chaos of prevailing values, it took for its banner the insurrectionary wisdom of the "man on the bridge." As one who participated briefly in its launching (I am one of those referred to, no doubt, by its present editors in their light allusion to original editors "rewarded for their political loyalty"), I can testify that what gave it life was the partisan alignment with the "man on the bridge," the decision to challenge the esthetics of the "man in the boat."

But its ten-years history, under the leadership of its present editors, has been nothing but an elaborate renunciation of these original premises. Its strategy has been to make way for the intellectual "man in the cage." Its aim is to advance the mood of a boastful disillusionment whose *social* essence moreover is adjustment to the dominant society in the United States which is not merely capitalist society in general, but capitalist society in which long-latent compulsions to world Caesarism are emerging into political and intellectual consciousness—the spiritual counterpart to the national superiority in the accumulation of capital and atomic armaments.

Having once perceived the folly and unprofitability (not to speak of the risk) of being part of the movement to forge an esthetic which challenged the money rulers of culture, the problem for the editors of *Partisan Review* was to formulate an esthetic-political strategy of retreat. Having "marched up the hill," the problem was how "to march down again" while avoiding the clumsy appearance of a precipitate opportunism.

The editors had insisted that their quarrel with Communism arose because they had launched a publication "which, from the standpoint of the

^{*} Partisan Reader, Dial Press, N. Y., 1946. 688 pp.

commissars of culture . . . had committed the unforgivable sin of infusing literary life with a revolutionary spirit."

Yet after a decade, this publication has been hailed by such literary organs of the "revolutionary spirit" as the *New York Times* as a model of "independent Marxism." (*Book Review*, Dec. 29, 1946.) We can easily trace the over-all literary-political strategy by which this social miracle was accomplished.

The editors launched the proposition that "the modern spirit," which had its literary origins in the convulsive poetic recoil of Baudelaire and Arthur Rimbaud from modern society, is in conflict with the political "liberal democracy of the educated classes." Whereas the essence of the "modern temper" is a spontaneous disgust, hatred, or despair with social life dominated by inhuman commodity relations, the essence of "liberal democracy" is belief in progress.

It became necessary, then, in the words of one of its editors, "to modulate between politics and imagination," or in the words of the anthology's editors "to bring about a rapproachement between the radical tradition on the one hand and the tradition of modern literature on the other . . ." (p. 683).

But the real aim was quite otherwise, as subsequent developments abundantly proved. For what was in view was a critical assault upon the Marxist view of the class nature of society, with all that this implies, and an effort to impose upon the revolutionary intellectuals an esthetic which retreated from every real problem of modern consciousness.

The heart of the ruse was to pretend that the "modern sensibility" which served the poet-pioneers like Rimbaud, Baudelaire, Laforgue, and which agonized in the novels of Dostoevski, for example, remained the only proper esthetic attitude for the creative intellectual in the United States. And they proposed this long after the social-intellectual situation which produced that sensibility had been superseded by new social forces and a new social-intellectual situation.

The trick was to pretend that the spontaneous "esthetic" anti-bourgeois revulsion of French poetry of the mid-nineteenth century (developed, of course, by later poets like T. S. Eliot and the rest) was justified as a sensibility sufficiently "modern" in the epoch which had already developed the insight of Marxism into the nature of modern society's alienation.

The idea was to perpetuate as the truly "modern attitude" what was truly modern only prior to the shattering philosophic-moral offensive embodied in the Marxist critique of bourgeois society.

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Non-Marxian, Utopian Socialism's rejection of a commodity-dominated society had had its "sensibility" counterpart not only in "freedom poetry" of a didactic nature, but also in the volcanic rages of Rimbaud and in the poetically objectified "disgust" of Baudelaire. But as the glowing utopianism of early socialism could become a reactionary sect if preserved beyond its historically justified limits, the marvellously experienced literary sensibility of "disgust" and "rage" could have no fruitful development beyond a certain historic epoch.

The poetics of "disgust" and "rage" carry with them the social corollary of helplessness. The victim of chaos is incapable of becoming the enemy of chaos.

From the moment that this social and political helplessness, however, is replaced by the rise of active socialist forces, the poetics of "disgust" and "rage" can no longer have a universal validity for the advanced sensibility of the time.

What was genius in an early epoch becomes a steadily developing decadence, developing all the aspects of nightmare, feverish inwardness and a dread of history.

The history of the "modern sensibility" is the history of the horror which capitalist social relations have engendered in the mind of every truly responsive artist. The "modern sensibility" is a triumph of the intuition, therefore, of the artist in nineteenth century capitalist society. As such, it commands our admiration.

But it is one thing to perceive its creative achievements, though these were rarely of the first order; it is another thing to preach to the "educated classes" of contemporary America, confronted by the enormous inhumanity of capitalist society, that their sole cultural recourse lies in a literature which is presumably in the great "modern tradition" because it is based on help-lessness, disgust, self-loathing, mysticism, and contempt for social action.

It is not a question here of a falsely-posed antithesis between "politics and the imagination." I would say that a genuinely responsive sensibility, even though operating without complete scientific insight into present inhuman capitalist social relations, if sufficiently relentless in its integrity, and basing itself simply on a belief in the worth of human life, would inevitably contribute to what we would call revolutionary literature.

It was in this sense that Victor Hugo hailed the novels of Balzac as "truly revolutionary literature." It was out of just such a heroically martyrized sensibility that Gustave Flaubert produced Madame Bovary and L'Education

Sentimentale. Esthetic integrity produced in royalist Balzac the novels in which Karl Marx and Frederick Engels found the confirmation of their revolutionary rejection of a society which exalts a monstrous egoism because within it men have material relations to each other and things have human relations.

Esthetic integrity in contemporary America would produce a literature of insurrectionary intensity against the grotesque frustrations and malformations which our society imposes upon human personality.

Had the editors of *Partisan Review* pretended to defend the "purity of sensibility" against the "prohibitions inherent in doctrine," this would have been a form of that flight from conscious intelligence which is widespread in a time when intelligence is necessarily subversive.

But it would have had at least the semblance of an effort to keep clear the lines of flow between a mindless "experience" and a mindless, and therefore presumably "honest," sensibility. One would have seen in this a distorted correction of a distorted doctrinairism (and let us remember that there is an abyss between doctrine and doctrinairism, one liberating literary creativity, the other stifling it).

But the editors of *Partisan Review* were too canny to preach a merely untrammeled sensibility as the path for our literature. Having perceived that the monopolist rulers of culture, while adamant against heretics, were quite willing to permit the advancement of a certain type of blustering "radical" malcontent in literature, they proceeded to work out their "modulation" between the "modern tradition" in literature and the "radical tradition" in politics in such a way as to falsify the true nature of both.

The "modern tradition" was seen as a static repetition of one-sided disintegrative attitudes borrowed from the experience of earlier writers, but borrowed from them without the benefit either of their sincerity or the justification of their earlier social situation. It was assumed, moreover, that this "modern tradition" was an attitude which needed merely to be resurrected and defended and not in any sense an attitude which needed to be newly created in terms of a revolutionary challenge to the morals of a commodity culture.

The "modern tradition," as seen by the *Partisan Review* editors, was artificially synthesized out of a hash of Kierkegaard, Joyce, Proust, Kafka, Trotsky, and the latest French existentialist banalities. What was remarkable in the critique applied to these writers was that their diversities and singularities, both of talent and insight, were lumped together into a grand total,

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the chief content of which was, oddly enough, nothing but an elaborate rationale of renegacy from the movement of modern history to transform capitalist to socialist society. The thing to prove was that modern man's true greatness lies in his frank realization of despair, isolation, and social help-lessness.

For this purpose, every writer was ransacked for evidence. Poor Kafka's terror in the face of the seemingly invincible Central European feudal-monarchist bureaucracy was eagerly seized upon as the permanent image of the intellectual elite in the face of all social organization of any kind whatsoever. What was at least honest fright on Kafka's part, and the bitter expression of a pitiably disintegrated consciousness, became in their hands the revelation of an attitude which alone had dignity, honesty, and relevance for the rest of us. It was necessary to be frightened, haunted, and paralysed as Kafka was. The "modern consciousness" demanded it.

Even Tolstoi and Dostoevski were dragooned into active service against Marxian Socialism, the former's aversion to historic action being preferred to Lenin's "inability" to penetrate into the moral abysses where are solved the mysteries of "the relations of ends to means," that philosophic alibi for private egotism and political retreat. And with Dostoevski, in whose novels an enormous sensitivity to human suffering is embodied, what was seen as highly valuable also were his political caricatures of a specific type of "Russian radical" of the mid-nineteenth Czarist Russia, caricatures which admittedly had their origins as much in Dostoevski's anti-Westernism in general as in his anti-Socialism in particular. It was sagely observed that perhaps Dostoevski could be recruited to the cause of disillusioning the intellectuals with the "mythology of Socialism" in the Soviet Union.

What was being created before our eyes was a special attitude toward literature in which was hidden a political motive quite different from the avowals of the "radical tradition." For what condensed out of the resounding verbiage of the "radical tradition" was nothing less than a contemptuous rupture with the entire tradition of Marxist Socialism, both in its philosophic aspects, its dialectically materialist methodology, and above all, in its practical political manifestations in the Communist Parties.

The initial stage of this rupture with the Marxist outlook followed the standard pattern of all such reversions in that it was offered as a rejection of "Stalinism" and a return to "purer" Marxism. This pretense was not long maintained.

The entire history of the modern intelligence reverberates with

the crisis imposed upon it by the huge spiritual problems of the transition from capitalist to socialist property relations. This generalization does not, of course, either exhaust or define the multitudinous problems of morals, individual and social relations, character and art, which so gigantic a transition engenders. But it suffices to define the limits within which every subtlety, every evasion, affirmation, every contortion of the contemporary intelligence, finds its frame of reference.

It helps us to understand how in its totality, the esthetic-political platform of *Partisan Review* was to substitute for the previous anti-capitalist attitudes of the intellectuals the new formula in which the disillusionment with capitalist society was now replaced by a presumably maturer, moreembracing, truly "modern" disillusionment in which working class Socialism was no less than capitalism the target of scorn and rejection.

But as with all such sweeping disillusionments, the road led back to the original faith, reinforced this time with coincidental appointments to the wealthiest universities and most influential publishing corporations. The despairing disillusion of Dostoevski, Kafka, property-hating souls who could never find acceptance among the official classes, became in the practiced hands of the *Partisan Review disillusionés* a very profitable matter. It opened to them the doors against which they had vainly pounded when they still believed with the "man on the bridge" that "there are two classes," one the oppressor.

We can easily observe all the windings of this intellectual "road back" which is grotesquely presented as a fiery "road forward." It expressed itself typically in the outburst of rage—"the working class, that pestiferous phrase of self-deceit and demagoguery by which Nenni and Togliatti attempt to manipulate the people into a new totalitarianism." (William Barrett, Winter, 1946).

We saw it in William Phillips' superiority to "the writers who have been displaying their capacity to conform by draping themselves in the official doctrines of the All-American anti-Fascism." (Winter, 1944). The "Stalinist social-mindedness" (Rahv) was despised as lacking the true flavor of the barricades. The publicly-expressed hatred of the British fascist, Oswald Moseley, was deplored by that mediocre satirist of human aspiration, George Orwell, as "a bad symptom." (Winter, 1944.) William Phillips, unimpressed with the anti-Hitler war, derided "the democratic myth" and "socially empty anti-Fascism." (Winter, 1944.)

Along with this had gone the earlier sponsorship of the revolutionary

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bravado of the cafes and police-agent type of anarchism: "Let the child do more than admire the beauty of flowers and the intelligence of the bees. Let us show him the pleasure of killing animals. Let us give our children armies of lead workers, barricades, factories, and an enemy army as horrible as the heart desires, made up of preachers, capitalists, cops. For the child, play should be massacre. . . . The child goes to the athletic fields and the brothels. Let us encourage this healthy tendency." (Nicolas Colas, Jan., 1940.)

Along with this, the financial sponsor of the magazine, G. L. K. Morris, delivered himself of his dream for art: "to express the mood of horror and despair... no profounder aesthetic task than this." The London Letter of the same issue exemplified the superiority of the elite to the mass: "We fight to destroy Hitler, but nobody knows or seems to care what we propose to do with Europe afterwards." (P. 56, Desmond Hawkins.) In 1940, the Paris Letter displayed the roots of the bitterness which afflicts the truly "modern literary consciousness": "And to further complicate the situation, war cannot be declared on Russia."

Lacking this desired opportunity, Koestler consoled them with neurotic estimates of the "death agony of the Socialist hope in the world" which Bertram Wolfe had previously described as the legacy of "a powerless generation." (P. 76, 1940.) The "literary man" whom the British espionage service prevailed upon Franco, in the midst of civil war, to treat with respect informed the ruthlessly revolutionary publication that "Lenin suffered a traumatic shock when his brother Alexander was hanged—hence his fanatical hatred of the bourgeoisie of which the Russian Revolution was merely a projection (p. 277, 1944). How pitifully shallow and inadequate appear the old "litanies of Socialism" (Phillips) in the face of this piercing historic insight.

In the Fall of 1944, it was again Orwell who was previsioning the future political development to the editors whose "revolutionary integrity" could not stomach "patriotic and socially empty anti-Fascism": "The Communists are using the slogan 'make Germany pay,' and are branding as pro-Nazi anyone who says we should make a generous peace." And James Burnham was upbraiding the stupidities of an "irresponsible public opinion which champions the Communist leaders of the 'resistance movements.'" (P. 70, 1945.)

There had also been displayed before us the antics of the debate over the significance of the first socialist state in the U.S.S.R. Gide had seen the revolution betrayed by Lenin, others had seen Lenin's revolution betrayed

by Stalin, others had seen base Lenin terribly fulfilled by terrible Stalin, others had seen Marx betrayed by Lenin, others had charged Marxists with misreading Marxism and others, Marxism with misreading history.

It was left to Philip Rahv, who had miraculously transformed Henry James into a Trotskyite, to sum up the ruthlessly revolutionary spirit which the magazine would defend against all coercions. In a spirit of remorseless realism, fearing nothing, ready to imperil everything for the sake of truth however lonely or dangerous, Rahv summarized the triumphant "rapprochement of the modern sensibility with the radical tradition" as follows: "The masses have shown little capacity for distinguishing between Stalinism and Socialism." (P. 610, 1946.) Further: "There is not the slightest scrap of evidence or theory to show that the masses are able to accomplish their own revolution or retain control of it. . . ."

These propositions had far-reaching consequences. While William Phillips and Dwight Macdonald had mocked the defense of the national independence of the capitalist democracies as against Hitlerism, Rahv now launched the view that, with the anti-Hitler war ended, "the conclusion is inescapable that the democratic institutions of the West are as much worth defending as the nationalized property in Russia." (P. 402, 1945.) To which was added the definition of the new "radical tradition": "Socialism is freedom, equality, democracy . . . but it is a Socialism no longer tied to the fetishism of economy promoted by the Marxist movement." (p. 402, 1945.)

The "revolutionary spirit" had given birth to a new Socialism in which is was no longer a relevant question as to which class owned the means of production. They had made it possible, in short, to become revolutionary supporters of a capitalistic socialism.

Within this maze of non-class moralism, the sharp logic remains uppermost, and cannily worked out—defense of the capitalist "West" was contemptible when it was being defended, in alliance with Socialism, against Nazism. It becomes necessary, however, against a newer and more tangible danger. What danger? The socialism of the masses which now has earned its right to extinction because "the masses have shown little capacity for distinguishing between Stalinism and Socialism."

Freed from the "Marxist fetishism of economy," the label of "socialism" is available to any reactionary violence directed against the "mass Socialism." The path has at long last been cleared for the rehabilitation of the ex-Communists in the eyes of the rulers of culture.

What was still in doubt, as in all such reconversions, was the sincerity

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of its intentions. There began to appear a note of frenzied anxiety, an abject abasement of repentance. With the din of an approaching anti-Soviet war strident in the later months of 1946 it was necessary for the "modern literary consciousness" allied to the "radical tradition" to establish a newer kind of rapprochment—this time with the governmental police power. And this too was performed in the classic manner, which always is not merely to hurl one's hatred against the extreme left, but against any manifestation of bourgeoisdemocratic liberalism whatsoever. Thus it came about that Philip Rahy, in a frenzy of disassociation from all former suspect connections, could label the entire liberal movement in the United States as a Soviet "Fifth Column" for its hesitation in supporting the propaganda for imminent war against the Soviet Union. He climaxed the tortuous but inevitable development of the "truly revolutionary spirit" with a "choose Russia or America" alternative (Summer 1946) which the publication expressed in a paroxysm of violence intended to obliterate any doubts in official circles that here at last was that "modulation of politics and the imagination" which could hold no challenge to the military dreamers of the American Empire.

In one of the most remarkable expressions of the "truly modern consciousness infused with a revolutionary spirit," the magazine's editors gave the show completely away as follows: "The war ended with the greatest goodwill toward Russia on the part of the capitalist powers. It has taken a year of aggression by Stalin to mobilize capitalist opinion against him . . . liberals will fall as the first victims of a terror of the Right as American public opinion becomes solidly mobilized against Russian aggressions. If certain liberals insist on digging their own graves, that might seem their private affair. . . ."

But as for the *Partisan Review* editors, they were having no part of it. This "terror of the Right" had haunted their imaginations for too long. They had long since calculated how to make their peace with it. They were not the ones to be "digging their graves." Within a decade, the original Marxist premises of the class nature of society had been transformed into a furious identification of America with the specific political policy of the masters of atomic armaments. For the Roosevelt tradition, they could find no words sufficiently contemptuous. Their Summer 1946 editorial shouted brutally, with premonitions of perhaps official advancement in the climate of a hopedfor anti-Soviet war, that with regard to such publications as the *Nation*, the *New Republic* and *PM*, their "pro-Russian attitude could no longer be explained by the "hypothesis of innocence." Liberalism had become Commu-

nism and Communism could not be conceived of as anything but the agency of a foreign power. The day had come when American bourgeois liberalism would have to choose, under the lash of the "truly revolutionary spirit," whether it would knuckle down or "dig its own grave" and face the police "terror of the Right." And where would the purveyors of the "revolutionary spirit" line up? With the "terror of the Right."

The long-range evolution had finally come to fruition. The esthetic of misery, isolation and helplessness, caricatured out of the works of earlier talent and genius, had become allied with contempt for the "optimism of progress." The "modern consciousness" had become mere preachments not only of the permanence, but even of the desirability, of human misery and alienation. One of their literary heroes of the moment, Albert Camus, quoted with rapture the snivelling piety of Kierkegaard: "One must strike dead earthly hope. It is only then that one is saved by true hope." (April 1946.) The "revolutionary spirit" was sponsoring the dreary homiletics of the Salvation Army.

No wonder, then, that they fell upon Existentialism as upon a new treasure. For Descartes' "I think, therefore I am," it had substituted the more modern "I am disgusted, therefore I am."

To a generation disillusioned with the old world, but powerless to create a new one, it was marvelously timely, since it sought to drain all political content out of social experience. To the boulevard revolutionaries who had insisted that they would never recognize "Socialism in one country," it had offered a sort of ludicrous "Socialism in one person," since its essence was to liberate the hard-pressed individualist from all historic responsibility, and transfer him at one leap into a timeless and unique "existence" in which he could existentially ignore the compelling social relations around him.

The comedy had worked itself out in a series of contrarieties. Lashing at "literary nationalism," they had wound up hailing the wildest chauvinism. It was only necessary that it don the costume of a holy war against the depraved "masses who had shown that they had little capacity for distinguishing between Stalinism and Socialism."

Pretending to don the garb of the haunted Dostoevski and lonely Kafka, they showed up as astute literary politicians "on the make," Dostoevskians with a practical turn of mind. They had shown how to make disillusionment profitable. The "radical tradition" had wound up as genuflections before J. Edgar Hoover.

We better understand now what William Phillips had meant when he

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urged the rise of a class of beyond-history intellectuals, an elite: "The measure of vitality has been the ability of intellectuals to maintain their identity and traditions, regardless of their political situation." (Winter 1944.) It was the American version of the "man in the cage."

But it was an aloofness to political life only when that life was degenerating into "socially empty anti-fascism," only when the "democratic myth" and the "optimism of progress" were infecting society. Let politics, however, assume the prospect of a counter-revolutionary war against these mass myths and mythologies and the sanctified aloofness of the dedicated esthete is replaced with a wild excitement of activity.

The whole thing was a deception from the beginning.

We could have taken, if not with approval, at least with a certain understanding, the genuine bewilderment, the genuine disillusion, where at least there remained the sincerity of suffering. With such alienated spirituality, victim of modern society, we could have found a bond of sympathy; we could have moved on from there in the common quest. For our view of modern life outlaws only what is linked to the hatred of man, only that which adjusts itself to the domination and corruption of finance capital. But what did Dostoevskian suffering and Kafkian bewilderment have in common with this socially profitable, this politically advantageous disillusionment?

The past decade was Dantesque. Its Dante will produce masterpieces in which there will be no sectarian sensibility expressing in literature merely the contrast between bleary misery and didactic hope. Our esthetic rules out nothing that helps man to "appropriate his multiple existence in a multiple manner, that is, like a complete man," as the genius of Marx exultantly expressed it for us.

The canny critics of *Partisan Review* founded no literary movement. Nor will they do so. Their relation to literature will diminish as they win recognition from the most consciously reactionary forces in American life. They are on their way to winning that recognition. They are destined to become the "Left-wing"—that is the radical-seeming wing—of the multimillionaire culture. It will be their assignment to lead the American mind back into the cage when the next social crisis will challenge its illusions and its integrity. Their decade of retreat has thoroughly prepared them for their task.

The Dawn Swings In

By LANCE JEFFERS

IT WAS as if fists had been clamped down on his eyes and his brain, for he woke drugged. With effort, Willie held his eyes open. Slowly he raised himself to a sitting position, muttering in wonder at the phenomenon of deep sleep: "Ah shore slep hard . . . ah shore slep hard."

And it seemed there was something to remember, he didn't know what, but there was something to remember—it tried to force itself into his mind. Suddenly, without prior thought, he said to himself—Today ah vote—and he felt drugged no longer, he was wide awake, and fear was a rod that pressed against the wall of his belly and chest. It jerked down into the groin with every beat of his heart. The area behind his eyes felt filled with tears and he wanted to stretch out on the bed and cry in despair.

He had a vision of red-faced men sprawled on the sun-gashed, paint-peeling court-house steps. Without warning as he began to mount the steps, one of the men casually rose and blocked his way. Then all of them were a circle around him on the steps, regarding him with clinical eyes. . . . He wondered if it would be that way, what he would do next if it were. . . . He tried to cut off the thought, destroy it, but it wouldn't go away.

A great sadness and self-pity flooded him. There must be some other way. . . . Maybe he shouldn't go. . . . Naw, he thought with angry shame; ah got to! He tried desperately to convince himself—hell, won't nothin' happen; ahm a vetrun. He became aware of sweat hanging on his forehead.

Mechanically he rose from the sheetless bed to dress, the threadbare O. D. shorts slipping far down on the bony hips and exposing in the front a gaping patch of black hair and burnt-brown skin. The top of his head nearly touched the festering paperboard ceiling. He was slightly stooped and carried his head down and a little on one side as if the neck were malformed. Tall as he was, it seemed as if he were always looking up at people. This, with his brown deer-eyes, and quiet mien, gave him the appearance of being very shy.

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Stretching every minute, every movement, dreading the morning that lay before him, Willie poked feet through the legs of the old Army-issue sun-tans, arms into the faded sun-tan shirt.

His mother, black and small and crinkled, bent with age, appeared at the door, hands spread like transparent claws on a ragged, white apron.

"Mawnin', son." Her creaking voice was weighted with dignity and forebearance.

"Mawnin'," he said shortly.

Though his head was averted, he could see her, feel her in the doorway, studying him. He wished she would leave him alone, get out and leave him alone. It was almost as if she were sucking his heart for pity, trying to make him feel bad. Get out!

He could feel her dejection and pain. He knew these were for him. He knew the words she would say before the sun stood astride the sky, knew that then he would feel bottomlessly sorry for her and for himself.

Jerkily, he pulled his belt to, and with unnecessary motions, straightened the cuffs of the shirt, as he waited for her to speak again. Then, with great relief, he heard the whip-cracking of grease on the stove. His mother half-turned her body to the noise. He could feel her relax wearily, and allow something other than him into her mind as she plodded back toward the kitchen.

Steam swirled above the plate that waited for him on the rickety kitchen table, heavy white plate laid with grits and black meat-strained gravy. Head down, he lapped up the hot food, cursing as it seared his mouth, but hurrying on, avoiding the sorrow-moulded eyes of his mother, sitting opposite him with folded arms, her food growing cold on her plate.

God damn it, he thought, why does she have to sit there like that!

Finished, he wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, roughly rose and pushed the chair away. He started hurriedly from the room.

"Son?"

He stopped in his tracks. He wanted to overthrow the table in her face, stalk from the room. It was bad enough, without her making it worse!

"Whatchawant?"

She was silent for a moment, as if reproving his tone of voice. Then, unable to restrain her grief, she cried, "Son, why do you have to go down there? Why do you do this to your poor old Maw?"

Ancient hate fisted up within him—poor old Maw! Me in the school-house, and her lyin' in a peckerwood's bed, tryin' to hustle a filthy dollar. You whore, le'me outa here!

As if divining what he felt, she began to rock slightly to and fro in the chair, and her jagged face shriveled. She made no sound, but tears zigzagged down the seams of her face like water running down over cracked and dusty glass. He could be angry with her no longer; he loved her. And the hate of a second ago made what he felt for her now, a fist inside him to pull his guts—to make him want to kiss the tears from her face, to ask for forgiveness for his long bitterness toward her, and for what he was going to do now.

"Maw," he said, voice breaking.

She cried out as if run through with a sword, and sobbed uncontrollably, throwing her arms into the air. He knelt and drew her rocking, rigid body to him, feeling deep compassion, deep shame, for her.

"Maw," he soothed her, "ain no need to be skeered. It ain like it was when you was comin' up. Ain no need to be skeered atall. . . ."

Gradually she quieted.

He was sure that now she would try to prevail upon him again, and he could take no more. Gently he pulled himself from her, stretched to his feet.

But she sat as if mummified.

"See ya tonight, Maw," he said. He waited a second for her to answer, then quietly left the house, feeling selfish and all knotted-up inside, knowing he should stay longer with her, but tired and unwilling.

He walked down the dusty, dew-matted street, sun hanging red and wet above the unpainted clapboard houses which sat on either side of the street like rotted mushrooms. From the porch of one sailed clear and lyric into the morning a woman's loud laughter, sounding like a dawn-cock crowing. A middle-aged man, hard-muscled and drawn-faced, dressed in a pair of greasy overalls, stepped from his shanty. He threw down a cigarette-butt with a quick and bitter gesture. He looked up and down the street, then started away, head down, walking as if he were bucking a high wind.

Willie tried to sort things out in his mind. His mother had jumbled him up and he didn't know where he was. He had to know why he was going to the courthouse, why he didn't do what she wanted him to, that which almost surely would be better for him. The question was jangling threatening inside him that had to be silenced. It was all her fault—if she hadn't asked him not to go, he wouldn't feel like this—Christ he hated her, she made a man wanta die!

All the old hate for her that had grown like a weed from poisoned earth blossomed within him again, the hate that had grown from sing-song taunts

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—"Whose hands is in your mammy's drawers, whose hands is in your mammy's drawers?"—and the triumphant shouts of laughter that followed, as, insane with rage, blinded with tears, he chased his tormenters.

But the question clanged on, demanding to be heard—why did he have to go down there? . . .

He thought of the two horsemen, white-mantled from head to foot, peak-capped, who yesterday in the early evening had filed through the Negro section of the town, bearing between them a broad white banner, rudely patched with red paint: "NIGGER VOTE AT RISK OF YOUR LIFE." Of the silence that like a suffocating blanket fell over the streets as the horsemen passed; of the Negroes who stared long after them, fascinated, like a bird by a snake's eyes. He thought of his own sharp, stifled anger, and of the fear which yawned and held tight within his belly, held him fast where he stood until the plodding horsemen had passed from sight. Of last night and the fifteen-odd young faces, heavy with gravity in the dimly-lighted, ornament-littered parlor.

When they first came together last night, they had asked each other, a kind of terror in their eyes, "See the Klan out tonight?" Then as they sat, apprehensive, each waiting for the other to speak, one brown, razor-faced man hysterically slashed the silence, frightened them all: "If yall crazy nuff to get yaselves killed, go haid!" Without another word, he slammed out of the house. Soon—hesitant, shame-faced, mumbling excuses and apologies—three more followed, leaving the room cold and shrunken.

It was Willie who spoke first, his voice large and fierce in the little room. "Anymore chicken—bastards lef' in here?"

When he had said that, there was a solid warmth in the room, and the men drew nearer each other, feeling the warmth and knowing their strength.

Then he spoke again, feeling himself a leader, wanting to draw the men even closer together.

"Got to tough-it-out sometime!"

But it had fallen flat. He realized that as soon as he had said it. It had the effect of making the men sad.

He knew that anguish ate inside each of them, as in him, when, a few minutes later, they decided to go through with it. . . . Most of them were poor workingmen like himself; before they went to the Army, none of them worried about voting. . . . Now it was different. Why?

He thought with resignation: ain no need to ask mahself why—ah know why. Ahm jus scared, that's all. Tryin' to find some way of backin' out at the last minute.

And he remembered the ride home on the train from separation center, the day after he had been discharged. He would always come back to the ride on the train—that was the beginning of the reason why. . . .

On the ride home he had sat in the first car of the train; the train was a well-ventilated streamliner, with large, clean windows, reclining seats, soft neon lights overhead, and a porter in a white coat. Willie had a feeling of tired happiness, a soft-flowing happiness jumbled with a contented disbelief about really being out of the Army. He didn't feel like getting drunk and raising hell, or doing anything out of the way. He was content just to sit here, watch the swampland and the grey earth flee by, listen to the muted, smooth churning of the train-wheels, and now and then tell himself that he was out—for good.

Next to him sat a quiet, friendly white boy from Tuscaloosa. They had been discharged together and had met again on the train. That in itself was wonderful—that he and the three Negroes sitting opposite him, across the aisle, had not been asked to move to the forward, partitioned section of the car reserved for Negroes—that when the conductor, an extremely tall, sallow-faced man with a false-toothed smile, came through the car, he merely beamed at them and called them "boys" in a friendly way, as if he weren't even aware of the law which stated that Negroes and whites were to be segregated.

One of the Negroes sitting across the aisle from Willie was a 1st Lieutenant, with a pair of crutches at his side. He was on leave, on his way to Atlanta. Beside the Lieutenant sat a white soldier, opposite him two Negro soldiers in a turned-around seat, and above him, sitting on the arms of the chairs, two white soldiers. All of them still in the Army, and Willie felt vaguely sympathetic and a little superior to them. The Lieutenant was telling stories of his experiences. The men were intent, listening. Every once in a while they would shake their heads, or break into crashing laughter and then gradually resume the intent silence. The only people in the car who appeared to object to the little gathering were the scattered few civilians, who looked on with stiff faces. Occasionally, however, their faces relaxed as they listened.

The Lieutenant was a small, dark-brown young man with a quick smile. A natural story-teller, he had a biting wit, and he talked in jerks with a hard, rasping voice. He seemed to be a fine fellow, for he talked as though he were an enlisted man too. Willie felt very warm toward him. And very

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proud of him too. Proud because he was an officer, but prouder still because of the purple heart and the combat infantryman's badge.

Willie would have joined the little group around the Lieutenant, but for some reason he couldn't bring himself to—as a matter of fact, didn't want to. It would have seemed too familiar. It was enough to sit here and think that this was a good way to be going home.

A big, plump M.P. with a fat-jowled face and Corporal's stripes on his shirt, worked his way down the aisle, hands on the seats to balance himself as he passed. He walked into the group of men opposite Willie. Without prelude he broke through the Lieutenant's voice. His own was heavy and plodding.

"All you colored fellas," he said peremptorily, "are going to have to move to the colored section."

He nodded toward the partitioned-off section of the car, visible through the open door in the center of the partition.

The Lieutenant threw words into the air like torches.

"Where a man sits on this train don't have a god damn thing to do with you! Get out of here and go knock some drunks over the head!" There was laughter.

The M.P.'s head bobbed back as if he had been slapped. He recovered quickly. He stepped forward and snarled at the two Negro soldiers sitting opposite the officer: "You fellas move up front before I get back or I'll arrest all of ya at the next stop!" He pointedly dropped his glance on the Lieutenant, and then turned around to Willie. He contemptuously flicked the discharge emblem on Willie's chest with his eyes.

"The same goes for you if ya know what's good fer ya!"

Fear struck like a knife into Willie's heart.

The M.P. started down the aisle.

The Lieutenant's hard voice ordered him back: "Say, Corporal!"

He kept on going.

"CORPORAL!"

The M.P. opened the door to the vestibule between the cars. The trainwheel's rushing-roaring-grating flooded the car.

Willie began to rise slowly from his seat, regretting what he was doing as he did it, but unable to help himself. He felt a dim, distant anger toward the M.P., but stronger than that, he felt weary and afraid—the fear that struck him was paralyzing; he didn't have what it took to fight back—Christ, he was just out of the Army . . . four years . . . on his way home . . .

if anything happened now . . . he had to get home at least . . . he was in the South; hell, anything could happen. . . .

As he took his duffle bag from the overhead rack, he felt the eyes of the white soldiers on him, sympathetic and wondering and contemptuous, and the eyes of the Lieutenant upon him, sad and bitter and contemptuous. Willie felt desperately ashamed, as if he were urinating in public, but he couldn't help what he was doing—it was as though his body were moving, and his mind were of no use at all. From the corner of his eye, he saw the Negro soldier nearest the window cross his legs, fold his arms and dig his buttocks into his seat as if it would take a team of horses to move him. Willie wondered if he were going to be the only one to move. With a feeling of sharp relief and justification, he saw the Negro soldier sitting nearest him suddenly get up, and start to take his bag from the rack. . . .

When Willie reached his seat in the Jim-Crow section, he slumped far down into it, sure that everyone's eyes were upon him. He wanted to leap through the window in his shame. He had no reason to move . . . M.P. had no power over him . . . he had let the Lieutenant down . . . he was a coward, less than a man. . . .

He called upon himself to go back to his old seat and get back the respect of the Lieutenant, the respect of the friendly white boy from Tuscaloosa. But he couldn't do it. His will had melted.

And as he sat, hating himself, he heard the laughter of the Lieutenant's group ringing loud and free again.

The M.P. didn't return. There was no one to arrest the two defiant Negroes at the next stop, nor the next.

When the train arrived at his station, Willie had to pass down the aisle past the Lieutenant's group. He knew their veiled eyes were upon him again as he passed, and he felt wretched and remorseful as he never had. . . .

In England and France and Germany he had learned—and it had been sewn into the fabric of his being—that not everywhere did men think and act as men did at home. Overseas, he had gotten a new respect for himself. But still, he rationalized about home, heatedly defended his home before the men in his company from the North who reviled the South—he rationalized about home, and sometimes convinced himself that it was not nearly so bad as some Negroes pictured it.

But the train incident struck to the core of his life—the way he had acted could not get the respect of the new Willie McHenry that had grown and developed in the Army. He had acted as if he had never left home—

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he had been stricken with fear that had sprung from the old days; he had failed to rise above a man who could not possibly have harmed him, even in the South.

He could fool himself no longer about home, nor about himself.

The shame and self-contempt that ravaged him on the train grew quickly into shame and contempt for his whole life—for having lived so long without protest, without effort.

Willie found pavement beneath his feet. Trees stretched into the air along the street, green and their foliage heavy. They cast a damp early-morning shade over the ground. Brown and white houses, prim and tidy, nestled far back behind smooth-clipped lawns. Across the street a stone-hewn church reared into the morning, half-hidden behind tall shrubs and low-hanging trees.

He realized that he had been unconsciously directing himself to the store. For the first time he remembered that he should go there first and get Jim's permission for a half-hour off to go to the courthouse. Maybe he shouldn't ask. Maybe he ought to go right on to the courthouse—he didn't feel like fightin' with Jim. Naw, he'd go on to work. If he had to fight Jim, it might as well be now, before he went, and not after.

He turned into Denman Street, walking fast, anxious to seize the morning in his arms and call it his.

As he walked down the main street of the little business section, he was sure the eyes of the whites were upon him. They looked at him strangely, their eyes were darts into his back. His spine was a chain of ice at the thought: maybe they know what ahm goin' to do, maybe they know what's goin' to happen to me.

He walked faster and glanced behind him—with a crunch that ripped his breath out, he collided with someone. Instinctively he backed away, half-bent over in apology. Bill Ed Dickson, the hulking town cop, moved toward him, eyes slitted and bright with malice, thick wrinkled mouth pulled down.

"Hey nigger, you think you goin' somewhere?"

Desperate, afraid he'd spend the day in jail and not even get his chance to vote, he bowed and bowed to the white man, trembling, trying to force out the words. But they wouldn't come, and a voice miles down within him echoed up: Who the hell is you?

Dickson must have seen it in his eyes, for he half-raised his club, growling, "What's your trouble, boy?"

But the voice down inside him wouldn't let him speak, and he suddenly didn't care, no matter what happened. He couldn't bring himself to apologize. He backed away from Dickson, turned, and almost at a run, fled down the street.

When he walked panting into the store, he found Jim the only one there, sitting on the front counter, his elbow resting on a pile of crisp blue jeans. He was reading the morning paper from New Orleans, crossing and recrossing his legs and angrily talking to himself. This was an old picture, one that Willie had come to know well, long before he went to the Army, and, walking into the store each morning he would feel a wrench of affection for the little old white man so brusque and peppery and goodhearted. He would silently laugh at Jim's funny ways: his unending petulant chatter to himself, full of curses for anything in the world that didn't suit his taste—his vehement, spittle-stained, hour-long advice to anyone who wasn't careful to avoid him—his ordering white people and black about as if he owned them. And with it all, he had a heart as big as a house—he'd give you the shirt off his back if he thought you needed it. Only thing was he'd never let you forget it. Funny little old man.

But this morning Jim wasn't funny; he was a threat. This morning was Willie's own, and no one with threats or orders would take it away from him. Walking into the store he felt hostile toward the white man, hostility a hard steel sheet within him.

"Mawnin', Mistuh Jim."

Annoyance jabbed him, the thorn-pointed annoyance that always jabbed when he said "sir" to a white man, called one "mister."

Jim's water-slicked, thinning grey head bobbed up, haggard thin little face frowning and resembling a wrinkled old peach.

"Mawnin'. Who you been runnin' from?"

"Nobody. Mistuh Jim. . . ."

The white man's eyes narrowed as he waited for Willie to continue.

"Mistuh Jim, and like to take an hour off now so ah kin go ovah to the cotehouse an cast mah vote."

The words out, he placed his feet firm and flat on the floor, leaned forward, and held the steel sheet before him, ready for anything that might come—a perfunctory order to clean up the store before he thought about doin' any goddamn thing . . . a scalding flurry of words denouncing his stupidity and hardheadedness in wanting to vote. . . .

Instead, Jim seemed to shrink inside himself. He became a very old man, beaten and waiting for death. He bit his needle-thin lips and looked at the

The Dawn Swings In: Jeffers

floor. Then he raised his head, and his eyes were wet and luminous. He looked at Willie as if trying to see far inside him.

Willie sensed the victory, and it leaped in him like a fresh flame.

Jim whispered; it was the sound of wonder and sorrow: "Determined, are ya, boy?"

Willie said nothing. Let him do the talkin'.

"Yeah, I've seen it comin' for some time now . . . you can't he'p yaself . . . ah doan know . . . ahd give anything. . . ."

He was silent, looking at Willie. With sudden spirit he burst out: "Boy, don't you know what your chances are of turnin' up for work tomorra if you go through with this? Why don't you come to your senses, go nawth, steada buttin' your head against a stone wall—ya kin get a good job up there, pay ya moren ah do—why do ya have to stay down here?" As he sputtered on, Willie drew what the man was saying close to him and examined it, and he had a feeling almost like sexual yearning. . . .

Then he lashed the feeling from him. He cut the white man off: "Mistuh Jim, steada tryin' to get me to go nawth, why don't you he'p me down here?"

"Why, whaddya mean?"

"Ah mean, why don't you go ovah to the cotehouse and vote same time ah do."

Jim was stupefied. He drew deep within himself again.

Finally, after a minute, voice tired, he said: "You know as well as ah do ah can't do that, Willie. Ah wouldn't do a nickel's wuth a business . . . ah wish—"

"Ah'll be back right soon, Mistuh Jim."

Erect and scornful, proud of his victory, Willie walked from the store.

And outside the sun seethed upon the pavement, and stunned the air, sucked up the air, and scorched the vacuum that remained. There was no laughter on the streets, no laughter, only the whine of conversation beneath the awning of the general store, the occasional sound of rubber tires grasping the cement. People walked wet and heavy through the street, slowly, trying to compromise the heat.

As he neared the courthouse, fear began to ride his belly, pushing it down into the groin. There was a frenzied thrashing in his chest, and his throat felt as if it were overlaid with dead flesh. He felt as if his legs would give way at any moment.

There were no waiting men on the courthouse steps—the steps were empty, the steps and the streets and the grizzled green lawn; there was no noise, no one to be seen. The only way a man would know anyone was

around was by the door's being open and the windows. A feeling of tremendous relief and jubilance surged up in him like a geyser.

Wasn't no need to be afraid, he thought, they wouldn't mess with a vetrun!

"Oh, Willie!"

The call was soft, almost like a purr. Pain like an electric shock flung itself through his body, and his intestines evaporated.

Where had the voice come from? But he must go on, no stopping now. "Willie!" The voice was more urgent this time. And there was no mistaking it—it was a white man's voice. If he didn't answer it. . . .

He was rigid for a moment, not moving forward. Then he turned around stiffly to see where the voice had come from.

"Over here, Willie."

It came from a brown '42 Oldsmobile sedan parked across the street and a few yards down. He wondered how he could have missed it. Completely numb, he walked toward the automobile, feeling almost as if he were floating. As he drew near, his mind automatically registered the fact: It was Rack Taylor who had called. He was sitting at the wheel, his handsome, deeply-tanned young face genial, his broad big shoulders limp. There was a man beside him in the front seat—it was Howard Johnson—and three in the back—Zore Kimball and Jack Griffin. The third looked like a stranger.

"Willie, what you doin' in the cotehouse today? Nigguhs don't usually have no business in the cotehouse, lessn it's stoolscrubbin'." It was a pleasant statement of fact.

Through Willie's mind tumbled the rumors that had gone around about Reginald Henderson, the colored dentist's son. The Negroes had long known that one or two white girls had a habit of driving their cars into the Henderson garage late at night. Then one night Reginald had to be taken to Jackson for an emergency operation, old Mr. Henderson said an appendectomy. But soon after, talk began to get around that the operation had been to patch the damage Rack Taylor had done . . . they say Rack Taylor liked to get a colored woman in his big white house in the country and use a razor strop on her before. . . .

A deep terror began to dig deep into Willie's body in slowly undulating waves.

The pleasant voice alerted him. "Come ta the cotehouse ta vote?"

The terror dug deeper, deeper. But he was damned if he'd answer. He had a right to be here just like anybody else. He was damned if he'd answer.

"Watcha say, Willie?" He knew this was his last chance.

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He was silent.

"Get into the car, boy." Now the voice was clipped, though still agreeable. Willie stood unmoving, stubbornness and fright seared into his face. He said forcefully: "Nosuh."

Taylor's deep blue eyes, incongruous in the dark skin, fastened upon him—queer blue eyes that seemed to grab yours like pincers and hold them. Looking at Willie, he spoke to the other man in the front seat. "Glove compartment, Howie."

There was the slight click of a spring. Then the sound of metal scraping on glass, as Taylor slowly moved the muzzle of an automatic back and forth on the lowered glass of the car window.

His voice was no longer pleasant. It was flat and softly emphatic.

"Nigguh-boy, jump in this car if you don't wanna get your ass broke!" Willie slowly reached for the door-knob, frantically searching his mind for something to do, something to do. . . .

Rack said: "Zore and Josh?"

The two men piled lazily out of the back seat on Willie's side, pushing him roughly out of the way. Josh, the stranger, was a gangling, loose-boned man with an absurdly boyish, sun-reddened face. Josh. Why, Willie thought, that's Josh McLauren! Ah haven't seen him since ah went to the Army—he's shore got big! In his surprise at remembering McLauren, he forgot everything else, and for a split-second almost turned to speak to him.

From a great distance he heard the guarded growl of the motor. Involuntarily he looked over to the courthouse. In the windows where no one had been, young women in print dresses and men in shirt-sleeves had appeared. They were looking down at the car with set faces, as if they were bidding an enemy a grim and final good-bye. Willie longed passionately for the time of a minute ago to return, time when he could have made another decision—and it seemed that if he willed hard enough, it would return. This wasn't happening to him. He was looking in upon another man's destiny.

They were riding through town, and people were stopping in the streets to look after Rack Taylor's car with a nigger in the back of it. Only one thing was going to happen to him.

Rack's voice was pleasant again.

"You know, Willie, that was a ba-a-ad thing you did . . . wasn't it?"

It seemed to Willie that he was moving upward, forward, trying to grasp something elusive—he didn't know what—something that was just beyond his reach. . . .

"Black sombitch don't know what's good fer 'im," muttered Howie.

"Ya see," Taylor resumed, "ah know you been layin' with white women and raisin' all kinda hell overseas. An' ah doan hold that against ya . . . but when you came home," he concluded earnestly, "ya shoulda been a good little nigguh-boy . . . shouldn't ya?

"... Now, if ya had used your head, you wouldn't be here now. You'ld be lyin' on top of some good black stuff, jus' grindin' away. Or, you'ld be thinkin' about it. But you ain thinkin' about it now . . . are ya?"

He paused again. "What are ya thinkin' about, Willie-boy? . . . Tell me—what are ya thinkin' about?"

The blue eyes were upon Willie again in the rear-view mirror: "Ya thinkin' about how you're gonna get that big thing of yours cut off? Maybe after all you are thinkin' about some good black stuff. Come on now, think about it—you're ridin', ridin'—"

As the voice purred on, hate rocked and pounded in Willie like a piston—he could have exploded with it. If there were only something he could do! To sit here and take it! He wouldn't go down like a dog, God damn if he would! He clenched his fists and stiffened his body for the attack, then relaxed. No, he'd wait. He'd make a plan. Fast, now, it had to be fast—

His eyes fell on a lube wrench lying on the floor near his foot, half-covered with a blanket, and a feeling of triumph boiled up hot and bitter inside him. You peckerwood son-of-a-bitches, sittin-there-thinkin' ahm gonna go down like a dog—you wrong, you wrong!

They turned off the macadam highway, and the purring voice stopped. The car elbowed its way over the ragged, deserted road. Dust pillared high into the air behind them. Beside the road rambled hay-colored bushes; beyond lay barren, parched fields.

Suddenly Willie broke into a wail: "Mistuh Rack, please don't, suh; ahm sorry; please, good white folks, *please*, ah know ah did wrong, ah'll never do it again——"

Sobbing piteously, he bent over and put his face in his hands. Howie snickered. There was a surprised grunt from Griffin at Willie's side, and he knew that Griffin was watching. But impatient, eager, unwilling to wait longer, he grabbed up the wrench and raised it to swing and there was a wild bull-cry from Griffin:

"RACK LOOK OUT!"

Four Greek Poems

The poems printed below were chosen from a number written by different authors and sent us from Greece. These authors have taken part in one or another phase of the bloody and continuing struggle of the Greek people to liberate their country. We hope some day to be able to provide more details about them. For the present the poems must speak for themselves.—THE EDITORS.

THE TIME WILL COME

This tough arm that in times gone
Had held a rifle
Can it fall dead, can it misfire?
What horror, what sentence could weaken
Your breast that has known outlawry?
I saw you once more
With your eyes severe and your head upright
Defending your dream and offering
Your blood-stained sweat
For the quenching
Of a new thirst.

Yet before the last cloud vanishes
On the setting of this red-lighted day
Which appeared through such reflections
Of anger and shame
Whatever you may say, young brother
Whatever you may say
Put aside a few moments of silence
For the lost ones.
The time will come, when
Lamentation will end

And all creation will smile
And we may encounter in March
Some fair morning.
Then the dead—the innumerable dead
Will shiver within their graves
And the living and the just and the judges
Will compose a hymn with their names
Such as was never heard before
And that hymn will be one cry
Spreading to infinity
O brood of liberty, proud sons
The earth has expanded
To make room for some kindness.

WILD THYME

O had you been here, You merchants of countries To see from a criminal corner With what joy those exiled boys Broke into shouts when they saw Wild thyme growing On these desert Libyan shores.

TO BYRON

We did not dare
Recall your face
Fair poet, tonight
For your people
Have imprisoned us
In double barbed-wire.

Four Greek Poems: Anonymous

Why did you come to Greece to die? Fair poet, why?

We honor friendship
We love liberty
Now that your people
Torment us unjustly
What can we say?
Look, double sentries
Are guarding us.
Tonight we cannot
Recall your face, because
Our thought may be pricked
By a spike in the wire
And stain your soul.

PHALERON SHORE, 1946

After so many summers
There came down to Phaleron
Five, six youths of a suburban club
For a first swim.
And as they cast off
Their worn out clothes,
Stood naked,
On their flesh there appeared the marks
Of so many foes
From shells and bombs
Of the Italians, the Germans, the English
Of the famine in '42.
A girl's breast also appeared and vanished
Like a blackened fruit, crushed
By the boots of the hired thugs.

And as they plunged into the sea laughing One stayed out.

He stretched in the shade and recalled (His lung was touched and he could not Bathe in the sea

He that before drew his strength
From the crest of the waves.)

He now sat
In the shadow of a rock
And recalled those dead in the war
The hanged, the executed
The lucky ones killed by a bullet.

And he found they were the best
And he looked at the sea, at the sands
And it seemed that this was no sea
Nor Phaleron sands that he knew
Nor was this the flesh of boys and girls
Mutilated
Nor was Greece only Greece
Containing us
But infinite pain and gladness
Painted in colors, skilfully.

On Realism In The Drama

By FREDERICK ENGELS

The following letter from Frederick Engels to Ferdinand Lassalle is dated May 18, 1859. The letter is part of a forthcoming volume, Literature and Art, by Marx and Engels, to be issued by International Publishers. The volume also includes a letter by Marx to Lassalle on the same subject. While Lassalle (1825-1864) performed a service to the German working class movement for a period, he was sharply criticized by Marx and Engels when he followed the path of compromise with Bismarck and the Prussian Junker state.—THE EDITORS.

YOU MUST HAVE found it somewhat strange that I have not written you for so long, especially as I owe you my opinion of your Sickingen. But that was just what delayed me so long. With the present poverty of belles lettres I seldom read such works and it has been long since I read one in such a way as to leave a detailed judgment, a definite opinion. The usual balderdash is not worth it. Even the few fairly good English novels which I still read from time to time, like Thackeray's for instance, although they have an undoubted literary and cultural-historical significance, have not been able to interest me to this extent even once. But owing to such a long lack of exercise my critical faculties have grown dull and I must take considerable time before I can give a definite opinion. Your Sickingen, however, deserves a different attitude from those literary products, and so I did not grudge it the time. The first and second reading of your national German drama, in every sense, both as to theme and treatment stirred me so strongly that I was compelled to put it aside for a while; the more so since my taste, made crude by these days of literary poverty, has brought me to a state (I confess it, to my shame) that even things of slight value make an impression on me on first reading. So, in order to achieve a perfectly unbiased, perfectly "critical" attitude, I put Sickingen aside, i.e., lent it to some acquaintances (there are still a few more or less literary-bred Germans here). Habent sua fata libelli

[books have their fate]—when you lend it seldom returns, and so I had to obtain the return of my *Sickingen* by force. I can tell you that after a third and fourth reading my impression has remained the same, and being certain that your *Sickingen* can stand criticism, I am now giving you my critical opinion.

I know that it will be no great compliment to say that not one of the official poets of Germany today could write anything even distantly approaching this drama. But it is a fact, and one too characteristic of our literature to pass by in silence. To stop first on the formal side I must note that I was pleasantly surprised by the skillful plot and thoroughly dramatic character of the play. In the versification, it is true, you allowed yourself some liberties which are more troublesome in reading than on the stage. I should have liked to read the stage version; in its present form it probably could not be staged. I was visited by a young German poet (Karl Siebel), a countryman and distant relative who has had quite a bit to do with the theater; as a reservist of the Prussian guard he will perhaps be in Berlin soon, so I may take the liberty of giving him a note to you. He has a very high opinion of your drama, but thinks it entirely impossible to stage on account of the very long monologues during which only one acts while the others would have to exhaust their supply of mimicry two and three times over, in order not to stand there like supers. The two last acts prove that you could, without difficulty, make the dialogue vivacious and quick, and as this could be done in the first three acts also, with the exception of several scenes (which happens in every play), I have no doubt that in preparing your play for the stage you will take this into consideration. The intellectual content must, of course, suffer by this, as is inevitable, and the perfect blending of great intellectual depth and conscious historical content, with which you justly credit German drama, with Shakespearian vivacity and wealth of action, will probably be achieved only in the future and perhaps not by Germans. It is truly in this blending that I see the future of the drama. Your Sickingen is entirely on the right road, the principal characters in fact are representatives of definite classes and tendencies and hence definite ideas of their time. and the motives of their actions are to be found not in trivial individual desires but in the historical stream upon which they are being carried. However, the progress still to be made is in making these motives more lively, active, so to say, spontaneously occupying the foreground more through the course of the action itself, and on the other hand, the argumentative debate (in which, by the way, I recognize your old oratorical talents,

On Realism in the Drama: Engels

brilliant before a court of justice and popular assembly) becomes more and more unnecessary. You yourself seem to recognize this as the ideal aim in establishing a difference between a stage play and a literary play; I think Sickingen could, even though with difficulty (because to achieve perfection is not so simple), be made over into a stage play in this sense. The characterization of the persons is involved in this. You quite justly object to the poor individualization which prevails at present and which is reduced to trivial cleverness and is an essential indication of the decay of epigonean literature. It seems to me, however, that the person is characterized not only by what he does but also by how he does it, and from this point of view, I believe the intellectual content of your drama would not have been harmed if the individual characters had been more sharply differentiated and contrasted. The characteristics of the ancients are inadequate in our age, and in this, it seems to me, you could without harm have paid more attention to the significance of Shakespeare in the history of the development of the drama. But these are secondary matters, and I only mention them that you may see I have also given some thought to the formal aspects of your play.

With regard to the historical content—you have very vividly, and with permissible indication of subsequent developments, presented the two sides of that movement which are most important to us: the national movement of the nobility, represented by Sickingen, and the humanistic-theoretical movement with its later development in the theological and church sphere the Reformation. Here I like best the scenes between Sickingen and the emperor, between the papal legate and the Archbishop of Trier (here you have succeeded, in the antithesis between the worldly legate, educated in the classics and esthetics, politically and theoretically far-seeing, and the limited German priest-duke, in giving an excellent individual characterization which yet follows distinctly from the representative character of both persons); the characterization of Sickingen and Karl is also very neatly rendered in the scene between them. In introducing Hutten's autobiography, the content of which you justly consider essential, you chose a very risky means of introducing this content into the drama. The dialogue between Franz and Balthasar in the fifth act, in which the latter tells his master of the genuinely revolutionary policy he should follow, is also of great importance. Then comes the really tragic moment; and just because of this importance, it seems to me there should have been stronger indications of this in the third act where there are many opportunities for it. But I am falling back again into secondary matters.

The situation of the cities and princes of that period is also presented very clearly in many places and in this the so to speak official elements of that movement are exhausted. It seems to me, however, you have not stressed sufficiently the unofficial plebian and peasant elements and their accompanying theoretical expression. The peasant movement was in its way just as national, just as much directed against the princes, as the movement of the nobility, and the colossal dimensions of the struggle in which it succumbed is sharply brought out by the ease with which the nobility, leaving Sickingen to his fate, takes up again its historical role of court servility. It seems to me, therefore, that even with your conception of the drama which, you will have seen, is to my mind too abstract, insufficiently realistic, the peasant movement deserved more attention. The peasant scene with Jost Fritz, it is true, is characteristic, and the individuality of this "rebel" is rendered very correctly, but it does not adequately represent the crest of the wave of the agitation, then already high, as against the nobles' movement.

According to my views on the drama, the realistic should not be over-looked because of the intellectual elements, Shakespeare should not be forgotten for Schiller; the introduction of the remarkably many-sided plebian society of the time would lend entirely new material to enliven the play, would give an invaluable background for the action on the proscenium of the national movement of the nobility, would first throw the proper light on this very movement. What a variety of quaintly characteristic character sketches are to be found at this period of dissolution of feudal ties in the penniless ruling kings, poverty-stricken freelancers and adventurers of all sorts—a Falstaffian background that, in an historical play of *this* type, would be much more effective than in Shakespeare.

But besides, it seems to me that this neglect of the peasant movement is the reason you have drawn the national movement of the nobility incorrectly in one respect and so failed to see the *genuinely* tragic element in Sickingen's fate. To my mind the mass of the then imperial nobility did not think of forming an alliance with the peasantry; their dependence upon the income from the oppressed peasantry did not permit this. An alliance with the cities was more feasible; but this was not effected or was effected only very partially. But success of the national revolution of the nobles was possible only if an alliance with the cities and peasantry, especially the latter, was effected. And this, to my mind, was the most tragic circumstance, that this basic condition, an alliance with the peasantry, was impossible; that the policy of the nobility, therefore, had to be necessarily trivial; that

On Realism in the Drama: Engels

at the very moment when it would take the lead in the national movement the mass of the nation, the peasantry, raised a protest against this leadership, and so it had to fall inevitably.

I have no means of judging as to how far you are historically correct in the assumption that Sickingen was connected in some way with the peasantry, and this really is not the question. By the way, as far as I remember, Hutten's writings, where he appeals to the peasantry, carefully avoid this ticklish question of the nobility and attempt to direct all the anger of the peasants especially against the priests. However, I do not in the least take issue with your right to consider Sickingen and Hutten as statesmen who had in mind the liberation of the peasantry. But then you would immediately have the tragic contradiction that they both stood between the nobility which was decisively opposed to this on the one side and the peasantry on the other. To my mind this constituted the tragic collision between the historically necessary postulate and the practical impossibility of its realization. Neglecting this point, you reduce the tragic conflict to lesser dimensions, in which Sickingen, instead of waging open war with the emperor and the empire, wages war against only one duke (although with correct intuition you here bring in the peasants), and he perishes according to you simply on account of the indifference and cowardliness of the nobles. But this would be motivated altogether differently if you had earlier stressed the growing wrath of the peasantry and, consequent upon the previous peasant "Bundschuh" and "poor Conrad" rebellions, the undoubted change of the nobility to a more conservative frame of mind. This is only one of many ways in which it was possible to introduce the peasant and plebian movements into the drama, there are at least ten other ways just as suitable or perhaps more so.

As you see, I approach your work with the highest criteria—in fact, the *highest* both esthetic and historical; and the fact that only thus can I find any objections to raise is the best proof of my high regard for it. *Mutual* criticism has long, in the interests of the party, necessarily been as candid as possible, on the whole; however, we are all very pleased at every new proof that whatever field the party enters it always shows its superiority. And this time also your play proves this so.

Notes From The Gallows

By JULIUS FUCHIK

One of the most remarkable human documents of the war was smuggled out in separate sheets from the Gestapo prison at Pankratç, Prague. The author, Julius Fuchik, was the editor of Tvorba, Marxist literary magazine in Prague, and the editor of Rude Pravo, official organ of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. He was executed by the Nazis on September 8, 1943.

It was a Czech guard, A. Koltinsky, who brought paper and a pencil to Fuchik's prison cell and carried away the secretly written notes. The author's wife, following her release from a concentration camp, managed to collect the numbered sheets which had been preserved by various friends. We are privileged to present two extracts from the manuscript by a writer who, as he says of one of his comrades, is "always pointing others into the future, when his own future pointed straight toward death."—THE EDITORS

Twenty-four hours

IN FIVE MINUTES the clock will strike ten. A beautiful, warm spring evening, April 24, 1942.

I am hurrying as fast as I can while pretending to be an elderly man with a limp—hurrying to reach the Jelineks' before the building is closed at curfew, at ten. There my "adjutant" Mirek is waiting. I know that he has nothing important to tell me this time, nor I to tell him. But to miss an appointed meeting might cause panic, and I should hate to cause extra worry for those two fine souls, my hosts.

They greet me with a cup of tea. Mirek is there—and the Fried couple, also. That is unnecessary risk. I like to see you, comrades, but not together this way. So many in one room at once is the best way to jail, to death. You will either have to stick to the rules of conspiracy, or quit working with us, for you are endangering yourselves and others. Do you understand?

"We understand."

Notes From the Gallows: Fuchik

"And what have you brought me?"

"Copy for the May first number of Red Rights."

"Excellent. And you, Mirko?"

"There's nothing new. The work is going well . . ."

"That's all. See you after the first of May. I'll send a message. So long."

"Another cup of tea, chief?"

"No, no, Mrs. Jelinek. There are too many of us here."

"At least one cup, please."

Steam rises from the fresh-poured tea.

Someone rings at the door.

At this time of night? Who can it be?

The visitors are impatient. They bang on the door.

"Open up! The police."

Quick through the window. Escape. I have a pistol; I'll hold them back. Too late. Gestapo men under the windows, aiming pistols into the room. Detectives have forced the door; rush into the room through the kitchen. One, two, three—nine of them. They do not see me because I am behind the door through which they came. I could easily shoot them in the back. But their nine pistols point at the two women and three unarmed men. If I fire, my five friends will fall before I do. If I shoot myself, there will be shooting anyway, and those five will die. If I don't shoot, they will sit in jail six months or a year, and the revolution will set them free, alive. Only Mirek and I will not come out alive; they will torture us. They won't get anything out of me, but out of Mirek? A man who fought in Spain, a man who lived through two years of concentration camp in France, who came from France back to Prague illegally in the middle of war—no, he will never tell. I have two seconds to decide. Or is it three seconds?

If I shoot, I don't save anyone, except myself from torture—but I sacrifice the lives of four comrades. Is that true? Yes.

So it is decided. I step out of the corner.

"Ah, one more."

The first blow in my face. Hard enough to knock a man out.

"Hands up."

Another punch, and another.

This is just as I imagined it would be.

The orderly apartment is now a pile of furniture and broken things.

More blows and kicks.

"March."

They dragged me into an automobile. Pistols always pointing at me. They start on me in the car.

"Who are you?"

"Professor Horak."

"You lie."

I shrug my shoulders.

"Sit still or we shoot."

"Well, shoot."

Instead of shots, they punch me.

We pass a street-car. It looks to me as though it were draped with white. A wedding car—at night? I must be feverish.

The Petchek building, Gestapo headquarters. I never thought I should enter here alive. They make me run up to the fourth floor. Aha, the famous II-A section, anti-communist investigation. I seem to be almost curious.

A tall thin commissar in charge of the arrest unit puts a revolver in his pocket and takes me into his office. He lights my cigarette.

"Who are you?"

"Professor Horak."

"You lie."

The watch on his wrist shows eleven o'clock.

"Search him."

They strip me and search.

"He has an identity card."

"The name?"

"Professor Horak."

"Check up on that."

They telephone.

"Of course, he is not registered. The card is forged."

"Who gave it to you?"

"Police headquarters."

Then the first blow with a stick. The second, third . . . shall I count them? No, my boy, there is nowhere to report such statistics.

"Your name? Speak. Your address? Speak. With whom did you have contact? Speak. Their addresses? Speak. Speak, or we'll beat you."

How many blows can a man stand?

The radio squeaks midnight. The cafes must be closing, the last guests going home. Lovers stand before house doors unable to take leave of each

Notes From the Gallows: Fuchik

other. The tall thin commissar comes into the room with a cheerful smile.

"Everything in order, Mr. Editor?"

Who told them that? The Jelineks? The Frieds? Why, they don't even know my name.

"You see, we know everything. Speak. Be reasonable."

In their special dictionary to be reasonable means to betray.

I won't be reasonable.

"Tie him up and give him some more."

One o'clock. The last streetcars are pulling in, streets are empty, the radio says good night to its last faithful listeners.

"Who else is a member of the Central Committee? Where are your transmitters? Where is your printing shop? Speak. Speak."

By now I can count the blows again. The only pain which I feel is the lips I have been biting.

"Off with his boots."

That is true, my feet have not yet been beaten numb. I feel that. Five, six, seven—as though that stick shot up to my brain each time.

Two o'clock. Prague is asleep. Somewhere a child will whimper, a man will pat his wife on the hips.

"Speak. Speak."

My tongue feels along my bleeding gums and tries to count how many teeth have been knocked out. I can't keep count. Twelve, fifteen, seventeen? No, that is the number of commissars who conduct my "hearing." Some of them are visibly tired. But death still does not come.

Three o'clock. Early morning moves in from the suburbs. Truck-gardeners drive toward their markets, street-sweepers go out to work. Perhaps I shall live to see one more day break.

They bring in my wife.

"Do you know him?"

I swallow the blood from around my mouth so that she will not see . . . but that is foolish because blood oozes from every inch of my face and from my finger tips.

"Do you know him?"

"No, I don't."

She said it without betraying her terror by even a glance. Pure gold. She kept our pledge never to recognize me, although it is almost unnecessary now. Who was it gave them my name?

They led her away. I said farewell with the most cheerful glance I could summon. Perhaps it wasn't cheerful. I don't know.

Four o'clock. Is dawn breaking, or not? The darkened windows give no answer. And death is slow in coming. Shall I go to meet it? How?

I struck back at someone and fell to the floor. They kick me. Stamp on me with their boots. That's it, now the end will come quickly. The black commissar pulls me up by the beard and shows me a handful of torn out whiskers with a devilish laugh. It really is comical, and I don't feel pain any longer.

Five o'clock—six—seven—ten. Then it is noon, the workmen are at their benches, children are in school. People buy and sell in the shops, at home they are getting lunch. Perhaps mother is thinking of me this moment, perhaps my comrades know that I was arrested and have taken precautions against being caught themselves . . . what if I should talk . . . no, I never will, you can count on me, truly. Anyway the end can't be far off now. This is all a nightmare, a horrible feverish nightmare. Blows all over me, then they throw water on me to bring me back. Then more blows, and shouts "Speak, Speak, SPEAK." But I still can't die—Mother, Dad, why did you make me so strong to be able to stand this?

Afternoon. Five o'clock. They are all tired out by this time. Their blows come slower, at long intervals, kept up out of inertia. Suddenly from a distance, from an immeasurable distance, comes a calm quiet voice, as kind as a pat:

"Er hat schon genug. He has had enough."

Some time after that I was sitting at a table, which kept falling away and then coming back to me. Some one came in and gave me water. Somebody offered me a cigarette, which I couldn't lift. Someone tries to put on my slippers, but says he can't. Then they half lead and half carry me down stairs into an auto. As we drive someone covers me with his pistol, which seems laughable, in my condition. We pass a streetcar, garlanded with white flowers, a wedding car—but maybe that is just a dream. Either a dream or fever, or dying—or death itself. But dying is hard, and this is easy—or it isn't one or the other. This is light as down—if you take a breath you will blow it all away.

All away? No, not yet. Now I am standing again, really standing alone, without any support. Just before my face is a dirty yellow wall, splashed ... with what? With blood, it looks like ... Yes, it is blood. I raise a finger and smear it ... yes, it is fresh ... it is my blood

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Someone behind hits me on the head and orders me to raise my arms and bend my knees to a squat. Down—up—down, the third time I fall over

A tall SS-man stands over me, kicking me to get up. It is quite unnecessary to kick. Someone else washes my face, I am sitting at a table. A woman gives me some sort of medicine and asks where it hurt worst. I say all the pain seems to be in my heart.

You have no heart, says the tall SS-man.

Oh, I certainly have, I say, and am suddenly proud that I have strength left to stand up for my heart.

Again everything vanishes—the wall, the woman with the medicine and the tall SS.

When I come to, the door of a cell opens before me. A fat SS-man drags me inside, pulls off the shreds of my shirt, lays me on the straw mattress. He feels my swollen body over and orders compresses.

"Just look," he says to the second man and wags his head. "Look what a thorough job they do."

Again from a distance, an immeasurable distance, I hear that calm quiet voice, as kind as a pat:

"He can't last till morning."

In five minutes it will strike ten. On a beautiful warm spring evening, April 25, 1942.

May intermezzo, 1943

This is the first of May 1943, an intermission in which I have a chance to write. What luck!—to be a Communist editor again for a moment, and write a story on the May parade of the battle-strength of the new world.

Don't expect to hear about waving flags, nothing of that kind. Nor can I tell you about any exciting action, which people so like to hear. It was much simpler than that today, no explosive waves of thousands of marchers who poured through the streets of Prague on May 1st in other years. No exquisite sea of millions, which I have seen flood the Red Square in Moscow. You don't see millions, or even hundreds here, only a handful of comrades. And yet you feel that this is not less important, for here is a review of a new force as it passes through the fiercest fire and turns not to ashes, but to steel. A review in the battle trenches, in trenches where we wear field gray.

This test takes place in such minor events that I doubt if you, who have

not lived through the furnace of battle, can understand it as you read. Perhaps you will understand. Believe me, strength is being born here.

The morning greeting from our neighboring cell taps out two measures from Beethoven. It is more emphatic today, more festive, and the wall speaks in higher tones.

We dress in the best that we have. The same in all the cells.

We have breakfast in full gala. The trustees parade before the open cell doors with black coffee, bread and water. Comrade Skorepa hands out three buns instead of two as his May Day greeting. The greeting of a careful soul, who finds some simple act to express his feelings. Our fingers touch under the buns and exchange a pressure ever so slight. One dares not speak—they even watch the expression of our eyes. But the dumb can talk quite clearly with their fingers.

Below our window the women prisoners run out for their setting-up exercises. I climb up on the table to look down through the bars. Perhaps they will look up. They see me, and raise clenched fists in greeting. And again. It is lively down in the court—really cheerful compared to other days. The guard does not see—or perhaps doesn't wish to see. Even that is a part of the May Day parade.

Then comes our period, and I am to lead the exercises. It is the first of May, boys, let's begin with something new, whether the guard is looking or not. First exercise is swinging the sledge-hammer—one, two, one, two. Second comes cutting grain. The hammer and sickle—the men begin to understand. A smile goes down the ranks and they bend to the exercises with a vim. This is our May Day demonstration, boys, this pantomime is our May Day oath that we shall stand firm, even we who march toward death.

Back to the cells. Nine o'clock. The clock tower in the Kremlin is striking ten and the parade starts across the Red Square. Come along, Dad, they are singing the Internationale. The Internationale sounds around the world, let it ring out in our cell too. We sing it, and one revolutionary song follows another. We don't want to be lonely—nor are we alone. We belong to those who dare sing freely out in the world. They are in battle, just as we...

"Comrades in the prisons
Behind those frigid walls,
You're with us, you're with us
Tho you can't march in our ranks."

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Yes, we're with you.

In cell 267 we thought that a fitting close to our May Day celebration, 1943. But it was not the end. The trustee from the women's corridor is strolling out in the court-yard whistling the March of the Red Army. Then she whistles Partizanka and other Soviet songs—adding her courage to that in the men's cells. And the man in the uniform of the Czech police, who brought me paper and pencil and stands guard outside my door so no one can surprise me while I write. And the other Czech guard who started me at this writing and carries the sheets away to be hidden until the right time for them to appear in print. He could pay with his very head for this piece of paper, and risks his life to build a paper bridge between today behind the bars and tomorrow in liberty. They are all fighting the one battle, fighting courageously, wherever they are placed, with whatever weapons come to hand. They are so simple about it, so unostentatious and utterly without pathos that you would never realize this is a battle to the death, in which it is still nip and tuck whether they win or lose their lives.

Ten times, twenty times you have seen the soldiers of the revolution parade on May Day, and it was grand. But only in battle can you see the real strength of this army, and realize that it is invincible. Death is simpler than you thought, and heroism has no halo round its head. But the battle is crueler than you supposed, and it takes immeasurable strength to hold out and win through to victory. You see this army move, but don't always realize what strength it has. Its blows are so simple and logical.

Today you realize it.

At the May Day parade of 1943.

Song For My Time

By MERIDEL LE SUEUR

IT WAS A SAD THING going to my sister's after we had the news of Bud's death. It was the first August without the big war and it seemed in many ways to be still going on. Papa had had a letter from his sister in Germany asking why she was alive when so many were gone. "I have a right to die," her letter said. Papa sat a long time with the letter without lighting the lamp and the cattle crying to be milked.

The train ran smooth through all the farms and villages and they looked the same. It was hard to think of hundreds who were gone and would not come back. When the train stopped at Horicon I got out of the glassed coffin into the sweet air, the earth hanging in blue harvest, the corn racing to ripen before frost, late this year, and only one round to go. And Bud would not be there for the harvest moon husking this year. He was the champion. Why did he have to go to Spain in the first place, far from Wisconsin, and now dead in this war? Papa was always asking this and I asked it now smelling the milky wheat chaff and the long bow of the hills let a sharp arrow to my breast, and I felt bitter as milk weed that my brother would not have the comfort of those little hills for sleep with our grandfathers, who gave us comfort too on winter nights, thinking of them beyond the copse, their fierce eyes closed, their stubborn beards thrust to the skies, lying in the earth we had cleared, cut, seeded and salted every year.

I thought for the first time then of death. Heavy with absence and remembrance I felt it rise in me from papa's sister's letter like the graved earth and death seemed inevitable and good. When you think of death there is a shift of focus and the light darkens a little. When I went back into the airless coffin of the train, I saw for the first time into the eye of the old woman across the aisle who had gotten on at Madison. She looked like a hollow reed, her face the anonymous one of sorrow, and with the bitter odor of weeds after frost.

Song for My Time: Le Sueur

I had an impulse not to sing my sorrow alone, a single song, my heart breaking now with the sorrow of not seeing him dead, with the final knowing of the body, and I wanted to put him with all brothers who are gone, not mine alone. But I could not feel it. I could not say that any grief was equal to mine, nor any absence more than mine.

I sat beside her and she continued speaking, her voice light and hollow, single and alone. She did not look at me. "I blame them," she said, "I surely blame them. I got as far as Madison and there was a wire saying he was dead, no use to come. I blame them. They used him poorly. He thought it was his duty. A hundred and eight missions. With a hundred only he might have lived. Do you think he might have lived?"

"At least," I said, "You can bring him back to home, but me ..."

But she did not hear me. "I blame them, I surely blame them . . ." I was angered so I thought if I did not move I might strike the closed face, the still lipped mouth, the thin energy of age which seemed to feed gluttonously on grief. She did not mind when I moved away but lipped her grief in little morsels.

When I saw my sister coming towards me I wanted to get back into the train, go on, because the cut of the bone of her cheek was like Bud's and her hand held out to me was the hand of my brother and I drew back seeing it suddenly cut off, the strong flesh of milking and husking muscles gone from the bone. I pulled away from her embrace and the sight of her son, growing tall too with the same family jaw and the blue eyes like Bud's and I resented his shining face, the green sap life in his bones.

I thought I could not stay in her warm home. They seemed to have forgotten. They were boiling kettles of potatoes and eggs all evening to make potato salad, for which we are famous, to take to the Union picnic. "But that's Bud's Union," I said, "The one he worked so hard to help make, when he came back from Spain."

"And boy," my sister's son said, "Would Bud like to see it. It's grown. It's wonderful."

"I don't see how you can do it," I said, "Not even knowing where he is buried." And happily I saw her face darken as if water three feet deep poured over it.

"He would want us to go," the boy said.

"A lot you know of grief and sorrow," I said, "Or what it takes to make a man, a young whippersnapper like you." I saw a thing rear in his neck,

spring into his head, make a hollow of his mouth from which no words came and he turned, bumped into the door, found it, and went out.

My sister looked into the kettle of potatoes. "Four from his graduating class died at Iwo Jima." And for a moment I felt the stone of my grief crack asunder. But it was solid round my heart again when she said, "You know who will be there Mona, Bud's friend Steve from the Lincoln Brigade . . ."

"I can't . . . I can't . . ." I said and the black grief ran inside me like an underground spring I saw once falling over the mossy face of a white rock.

But it was on account of my sister's son and the way he stood in the dark of the stair well that night shyly asking me to go. I felt him young as I knew my brother once, when the sweet blood jetted in us in unutterable swiftness and pleasure with not a shadow of the violence that was to come.

I told them I would sit at the table in the grove with the lunch and they could go have a good time at the concessions where already people gathered around, the band playing and the cries of the barkers and the meeting of friends from far places. They left me there under a sycamore which was Bud's favorite tree and I had to turn away to keep from seeing his face in the shifting leaves and the spotted tree bark as he used to grin down from his house in our sycamore tree.

Then I began to watch the people. I could not understand it. They poured in a bright stream off the interurban. They came in old cars. They dropped their babies in the grass. A group of tall dark people of a kind I had never seen took the table next to ours. I could not take my eyes from them. One young man, his unaccustomed shirt white as snow, was making cracks in a foreign language about all the young girls. The eyes of the older women rolled knowingly over the heads of their suckling children. And fright struck in me like a bell. I could not understand how they could go on and on in all the risk and danger. They had been in the war too, nobody on the wide green earth could keep out of it all now. I could not understand how they laughed on a day in August, filled the earth's grass with their fat and merry children. The grief ran in me over the dark moss. I could feel it in my throat. I said my aunt's words, forming them secret and alone—I have a right to die.

"Are you Bud's sister?" The voice froze my face like stone. I nodded. "Well," the voice was strange as if it came from wood. He did not ask if he could sit down, but he did. I felt him beside me. "Who are those people at the next table?" I asked.

"They are comrades from Haiti, come to work in the beets," he said, and

I had not heard that word "Comrade" since I had heard Bud say it. I turned to look at him and he took his corn cob pipe out of his teeth and smiled at me, as if bowing a little. I had never seen such a face. He was small, almost warped, his body wrenched, twisted but so strong I knew it was from the labor he had done. He was like a gnome, his head bashed in on one side, half his teeth missing. A long cut severed one cheek in a white ridge and you could see where it had been sewed up. And in this battered flesh his eyes hung big, the biggest eyes I have ever seen and they were sad, but they were also strangely merry.

A soldier came through the grass, carefully trying to ride the uneven ground with one leg and a crutch. I tried not to look at the empty trouser leg which hung almost from the hip, but I could not help seeing how the stump moved forward out of memory for walking. The gnome said to me, "Today would make Bud happy. All these people . . ."

"I do not want to talk about my brother," I said, and waited for him to oppose me. But I could only smell the strong odor of his tobacco and I found myself wishing he would tell me about Bud and the Union, for we never knew much, only Bud's letters saying he was working hard in Milwaukee and then his coming home thin as a rail and half sick and we just got him fattened up when there was Pearl Harbor.

I found myself waiting for the little gnome to speak. Out of a pouf of smoke he said, "I always figured the finest thinkers come from plowers. Bud always figured out why he did things, why things were like they are—a thinker."

I never thought of my brother as a thinker. After awhile he spoke again. I seemed to be overhearing him. "It's different today than the first days when we stayed up all night and ran off leaflets and got to the gates at dawn for the first shift and they would throw them away like as if they was poison ivy. It's different today . . ."

"Different," I cried bitterly.

He seemed to move closer, "Yes," he said, "Now with mining you have no time to think, or on a power machine or in a saw mill. They are raffling off a quilt. We'll walk over, lots of your friends are asking for you."

"My friends," I said, but before I knew it we were walking towards the hub of the activity and he had his hand lightly on my elbow. He came hardly to my shoulders but he seemed powerful and he talked to me all the way and I never heard such talk as if he knew every tree he had laid his ax to, even now when age and rheumatism had slowed his skill and power after he had

built a hundred barns or more, drawing off the prairie wind, neat as water on a gentle slope. Now he had a bad job spraying furniture, but a strong man he said is like wood, a green sapling breaks, but not a man. "Now you take Bud," he said easily and it seemed better now to hear the name spoken in the afternoon. We stopped under a grove where a group of old men sat around a lamb and one of them turned the skewer over the hot coals. "Now Bud," he said. "Different things season a man. The labor movement made a strong man of Bud. . . . It takes heat and fire, the right temperature, the right cooling . . . the right winds on the right day, slow freezing. Bud was a man rightly tempered in struggle and the love of brothers."

I felt as if I had never known my brother then. I stood silently in amazement. His words were so strange, like nothing I had ever heard before. He spoke of a writer named Gorky, something about a story he might write about Bud. One of the old men around the lamb unbent his legs, stood, bent and spoke to the one who was turning the skewer who looked at me, his leathery face smiling. I stood embarrassed as the risen man came toward me. He was small and neat as an animal and he bent his dark fleecy head in a little bow and said something in another language. I looked at the two men so strange to me and the gnome smiled and nodded, his merry eyes containing us both. He turned to me. "He wants to tell you he knew your brother in Spain. He was with the Polish anti-fascists. . . ."

"In Spain," I cried. How could people know each other this way? I did not know them this way. I felt alone. They both nodded and smiled. "Yes... Yes..." they both said eagerly as if holding something out for me to take which I could not even touch. The lamb turner cried out something and threw his head back and the others spoke sharply, a sudden excitement like a fire in a wind between them. I was startled. I looked from one to the other. I hung to the face of the old gnome. He took his pipe out, "They say those who struggle know each other. They say to tell you the fight against fascism is cheered everywhere."

I could not speak. I felt mutilated, more so than the soldier I had seen. I felt less human than these people and deeply ashamed as if they might secretly seize upon the contraband I carried, as if my thought of death might be written on my flesh as violence on the flesh of the soldier, as struggle upon theirs. I put out my hands and felt the fire. I smiled and tried to bow as they had done and as we passed on felt their warm glances, heard their strange excited speech, smelled the round roasting of the lamb. "We will have some when it is done," the old man said.

Song for My Time: Le Sueur

We passed into the tense circle of noise and pressing bodies. I looked now into each face to read its history there. Are they like myself, I thought, striking with fear and terror. I saw far off the people lying on the grass, and the children playing, summer and men and women marking their space upon the earth, close packed in the nut of the world.

Then I saw him. Bud had brought him to the farm once. He was sick then with his teeth falling out from Spain. I was afraid of him. It was Steve. But I could not get away. He was pushing through the crowd and he came up, his face shining with moisture, his eyes black as I remembered. And perhaps it was the strange sympathy of the heat beating upon us all like a tide going through us, but he spoke my name and put his arms around me like my brother, smoothing my hair. I stood there struggling not to cry. When I looked up, it was not Bud's face and he was smiling. I drew away.

"Come dance," he said and did not wait for me to answer but drew me away from the old man who was smiling in a cloud of his smoke. As we went into the pavilion I saw the women sitting along the sides fanning their children and they smiled at me and I knew they spoke softly to themselves, "Bud's sister." All around the dance floor they smiled. A couple poked Steve. "Hy Steve. Don't be a hog . . ." Steve stood beside me, "Bud's sister." "Yeah," they said pressing my hand. "Yeah, we know."

Steve opened his arms and timidly and strangely I went to him. "I just got back from the Pacific myself," he said with that strange warm smile they all seemed to have.

"You too," I said, "Why did you both have to go?"

He stopped dancing and held me away. "Why?" he said. Then he drew me to him again.

"Yes," I said, "Spain. Everything . . . Don't you get tired? My aunt in Germany is tired. Papa is tired. I——" I thought of my own death and I could not see the bready women and the pavilion.

"Tired?" And I was astonished to feel his whole body laughing and I looked up and saw him laughing. "Tired," he cried and it seemed to be like the speech of the old Greeks and Lithuanians around the lamb. "Fascism has a smell. You can smell it anywhere once you get to know it. It worries your snoot like a hound dog in hunting time with a wolf prowling the sheep. You want to be at them. You can smell it," he said again and I could see the wings of his nostrils flare baring his white teeth a little.

We went back but the lamb was not done yet. "In a little while," they

said with hands, gestures, and we nodded and Steve said something in Spanish and they all saluted him with some shout and much laughter.

I heard a man's voice through the loud speaker. "The speaking begins," Steve said. We pushed into the packed crowd. They parted smiling, and some took off their hats when they saw me. I saw my sister smiling at me and her son came and proudly stood beside me. "How do you like it," he said, and I did not answer but I smiled. I stood on tiptoe to look over the many heads. By the pavilion three great horns blared out. A man was speaking introducing a woman from the union who surprised me the fine way she spoke, then the soldier with the leg gone spoke very slowly, saying he could not speak but there was great silence in which his slow words fell, solemn and respected. One of the dark Haitians spoke very swiftly in his own language which some understood. Steve stood close beside me and explained things, bending down as if I were a child. I was caught up like those around me, listening, and suddenly it seemed I felt all their suffering with my own, it entered me like the heat and the closeness of their bodies, all under the vast sky, and the sun a golden hammer pounding, penetrating the web of man who stood alive, erect in his own courage.

Then they all stood without moving except on the edge when some baby cried or some boy ran in, thinking himself a guerilla or one of the 34th Division in which so many of their brothers fought. The speaker was a man like many there, short, strong, a worker, and in his strong blunt hands he seemed to hold many threads that connected with all parts of the earth. There in the August day of Wisconsin we saw caves in Yenan where men and women unnamed, their place unmarked on any map, worked in dim light, day and night; and below the earth we saw small groups meeting in little rooms with serious faces. He named and spoke of all the countries, and the earth seemed to become whole as an apple and they were woven all together with the Wisconsin earth and history and the dusk was peopled. The woman on the edge of the platform gave her breast to the young one and the speaking went on as if smiling warriors came up from the dusk, and we were all warriors and the speaker mentioned us all, everyone, as if every man on the earth had a space of dignity and stood in the light that included all others. I thought then how great was man when he was most human and I looked at Steve and knew how my brother loved him and he seemed so tall I knew there was something taller than we knew about the human man when he was most human just as he was most paltry and ridiculous when he was burlesqued and defamed and cruel.

Song for My Time: Le Sueur

I did not draw away when Steve took my hand. I stood there while they clapped as the speaker finished. I was running manifold over the earth the trees like birds running with me. I listened to the tide going and the sun a golden hammer. Then I heard my name called and a shock went through me. They were all clapping and pushing me forward and the old fright went through me and terror and aloneness. But they thrust me forward on their hands and I was standing on the platform, lifted there, and when I turned I knew the saying of my speech was something that I had to have courage to do, and with not my little fear to cripple me, so I began hearing my voice, strange and small, saying as I felt I had no right with death so near in my mind two hours before, that it was nothing I had done yet, only my brother who belonged to the body of my life and of the earth's. I saw them all there smiling that smile I had never seen before as if they loved me and I had to say further that we were all together and I saw the young girls in white dresses who had been walking restless all the afternoon, their arms entwined around fragrant waists, stop to listen. For the first time in my life I felt the draw and pull and strength of something outside my own mouse grief. I believe my voice strengthened. I had a feeling of great power as if it would grow and enter every being. I said, using the only language known to me of fertilization and growth, that this is a dark time, the seed goes down into the soil not beautiful but strong and hard. Like in Europe, the miracle of the underground, not of birds singing in trees, no, underground. A certain time of year, I said, God speaks in the furrow not in the perfume and blossom of flowers. I saw the startled happy face of the old man, his pipe forgotten. This is the day of descent I said into tomorrow. My brother did this and others, it takes millions of seed. Those who look to death, who do not give this seed into the dark, are ghosts of yesterday. My brother will live. I looked down at the faces, and bodies, in the heat. Everything I said will live in Man, and in those who mother and father him forth. I stopped and felt very foolish and I saw Steve with his hand stretched from below to me and I jumped down into the darkness of their shouts, applause and those who embraced me and put a hand on my shoulder and above all the eyes looking at me with happiness.

I hardly knew what happened after that. Many women moved near me. Steve was beside me. The old man seemed to be near. The lamb was roasted. The old warriors cut slices of rich juicy meat and as the sun went down we bit into the delicious smoky flesh. I did not want to leave ever. My sister looked anxious, thinking I was tired. "A little while longer," I said. "Please."

Steve kept my hand in his. "Machine gun callouses," he laughed, showing me. The Lithuanians were counting the money from the lamb . . . Slowly, sleepily, happily the people were all going home, the children hanging blissful and limp.

We heard singing from the barbecue grove and there sat the old lambeating warriors roasting a little beast on the hot fine coals, passing a bottle of strong white liquor and one began to hum.

They sang together many songs I had never heard, some slow and sad, some with marching anger and their women joined them and sometimes they sang together and some danced in the clearing and I had never heard anything like it, living so near and never known to us.

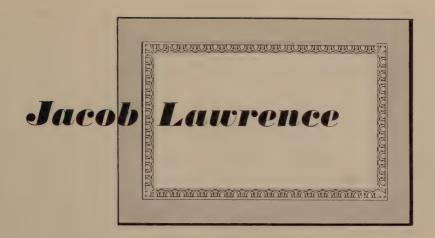
I said to Steve, "Who are they all over the earth?"

He smiled and nodded, singing a chorus. The old gnome was standing by the embers marking time with his pipe and I saw his long arms and the giant hands spatulate like living animals swinging from the boughs of his body, which looked as if it had been forged by Vulcan, hammered out.

"I will sing the song," he said, "Together we will sing the chorus."

His voice was surprising from the great barrel of chest, pouring from the spigot, powerful and warm, and he seemed like a giant in the woods. Steve took my hand waiting for the chorus with pleasure and when it came he nodded and beat time with his head, smiling, pressing against me in the earth darkness.

And together we all sang the chorus.



by Gwendolyn Bennett

MAINSTREAM is proud to present, in its first number, a group of reproductions of the work of the distinguished American artist, Jacob Lawrence. These paintings, from the collection of Mr. and Mrs. Milton Lowenthal, are part of twenty-two gouache works comprising the artist's John Brown series.

It was just five years ago that Jacob Lawrence came to the attention of art critics with the showing of his work at the Downtown Gallery. In his thirtieth year now, Lawrence begins to attain his full stature as one of America's important artists. His paintings have been exhibited in many of the country's outstanding art shows and examples of his work are part of the permanent collection of several museums and galleries. To Jacob Lawrence goes the well-deserved distinction of being the first Negro painter to have had a one-man show at the Museum of Modern Art.

Any evaluation of the work of Jacob Lawrence must take into consideration his beginnings and the sure, steady growth of his art. Artists and teachers who knew Lawrence when he was beginning to paint scramble for the honor of having first discovered his ability. Charles H. Alston, whose work is well known, says, "I discovered Jake first," and goes on to tell of the grave, solemn-eyed youngster of ten who drew weird masks with colored crayons as a student in his classes at Utopia Children's House, a community center in Harlem. Later Lawrence studied with Alston, Henry Bannarn and Lesesne Wells at the Harlem Art Workshop, a project sponsored by the Government.

I remember Lawrence as the youth of nineteen whose work had just been praised by Vaclav Vytlacil, then a teacher at the Art Students' League, and who turned to me with a troubled frown, saying, "I'm worried about the fact that no matter how I try I just can't draw like the rest of the fellows up at Mike's." "Mike's" was the studio Alston and Bannarn maintained to which younger artists were en-



John Brown, while tending his flock in Ohio, first communicated to his sons and daughters his plans for attacking slavery by force.



Photo by Carl Van Vechten

couraged to come and work. I have always prided myself that I urged Jacob Lawrence not to worry about whether his work was like that of others around him.

When critics first began to notice Lawrence's work, many referred to it as "primitive." This characterization is inadequate and misleading. For here is an artist who has studied hard, worked ceaselessly, learned from many people, but who has always molded what he saw and learned into a form that was distinctly his own. The result is an art that is disciplined and refined in an adult sense, yet filled with the childlike clarity of pure-colors, boldly juxtaposed. In the

organization of his canvasses Lawrence shows a strong angularity, creative strength, and a clear perception of transitions and contrasts. His harmonies are original and telling. In his work, subject and form are amalgamated into an exciting whole. His symbols are clearly legible. His subject matter is as broad as the history of the Negro people; his method of tackling it as uncompromising as their struggles and growth. His message is a ringing affirmation, that people are strong and from their strength must come their liberation.

John Brown took to guerrilla warfare.





John Brown made many trips to Canada organizing his assault on Harper's Ferry.



July 3, 1859, John Brown stacked an old barn with guns and ammunition. He was ready to strike his first blow at slavery.



Sunday, October 16, 1859, John Brown with a company of twenty-one men—white and black—marched on Harper's Ferry.



John Brown held Harper's Ferry for twelve hours. His defeat was a few hours off.



John Brown was found "guilty of treason and murder in the first degree." He was hanged in Charlestown, Virginia, on December 2, 1859.

The Seasons On Ninth Street

By MILTON BLAU

WINTER

The wind climbs the broad back of the river Curling a cold arm about the snarling throat, Sits there laughing, howling like a lunatic, Swinging a swift whip at the mourning mansions, Snapping merchants' signs from shrivelled braces Like cigarets from mouths.

The sky presses close and rests
On squat marble columns of smoke from inside fires.
Sidewalks freeze over with feet and footprints
Hurrying to and returning from mumbling factories.
Windows fog and freeze into a lost fairyland
Of magic frost: the perfect snow flake falls
Into the grey churned sea of passage
While white islands fix themselves on hydrant heads,
On the swan necks of lamp posts,
The countless frozen petal blows bury away
The rust of seasons on the cast iron fences
And leave cold blankets in the backyards.

Winter, winter troubled time
When the walls are warmer than the day.
Winter and her bountiful snows barricading the streets
Translating the whirling crystal tear
Into a fifty-cent-an-hour shovel
And an open man-hole.

SPRING

Go gay, go green you ghosts of trees, Whisper to rivers of fat loamed lands; Sing you phantom robins! Turn the grey heart in the new lit sun For spring has come on brittle toes Over the frozen roads of roofs.

The song of the paper lunch bag crackles

Over the dry sandwiches swinging, bouncing

Against the drum of the two-cent apple

While the workman walks lightly this day.

Unmindful of the world he punches into place

On the poor press with its flywheel of faith

With its crumbling blade in the middle air.

The housewives sing the blurred song of dreams Where women walk with grace and ease over lanes Of roses, dreaming, the table of sweet breads, The heaped grapes toppling while the last coals Twist into cold grey stones.

SUMMER

My gouty ill-complexioned gutter puffs
Its sagging jowls, drooling spittle
Of black tar bubbles between cobblestones,
On the bald patches of smooth worn road.

Under houses, through cool corridors
The soft shoes slap to the courtyards
Where the sun sometimes drops its fingers
Down the straight walls to the dry stone
Where the cop shrieks, where the robber runs.

And the night of summer eats the long wail Of the outbound bucking tug. The salt breeze,

The Seasons on Ninth Street: Blau

That damp ghost of hope, lifts a lock of hair From the head of the fat woman who sits eternally In the wide weeping chair, waiting, knowing That the fountain will rise from the struck stone Into the astonished heaven.

It is the time of the naked swimmer
And of melting ice-cream.

It is the time of open beer joint doors
And of shirts flung open.

It is the time of the big rain racing
And of wet skirts poured on thighs.

It is the time of watermelon and the vendor's
Great wild cry.

FALL

What sign signals that summer has said its hot word? No quiet tree suddenly breaks into a golden grin; No mourning branch shudders a final leaf to earth. Yet the long shadow falls across the cooling street On the hour of returning; tumbles through the windows Into the staple cup of supper coffee.

The sidewalk caldrons cease to cook.

The smell of air comes to the level of noses.

Night, crouched behind the chimney, leaps down

Like a buccaneer from the bloody deck of the full rigged sky.

Windows scream down. Doors cough shut.
The gentle stars bleed pale but nothing dies
In this celebrated season of dying.
Nor leaf, nor blossom, nor the hope
Which prevails forever in the weather of time.

Five Negro Novelists: Revolt And Retreat

By THEODORE WARD

IT IS A DISTURBING FACT that with the possible exception of Langston Hughes, whose work is not under consideration here, one cannot point to a single Negro writer of fiction today who may be said to have earned the love of the Negro people.

Certainly, this is not due to any absence of the spirit of struggle from the works of Negro writers, for opposition to oppression has been the chief characteristic of Negro literature during the past twenty-five years. The estrangement seems rather to be due to moral and socio-historical blindness, which has led them to adopt the individualistic hero of the 19th century and prevented them from realizing how incompatible his aspirations are to the needs and, perhaps, as yet, inarticulate desires of the young Negro of to-day as he faces the deadend of capitalist America. Idealists essentially in outlook, the nearest approach these writers appeared able to make toward the real solution of the Negro problem was to pose a fatuous hope for eventual accomodation of the race within the framework of bourgeois democracy. But if we may judge by recent trends in fiction, even that hope is being abandoned and replaced by a spirit of defeat; while the warm, indubitable existence of the Soviet Union, where the problem of race has been solved. and toward which the oppressed of the world including the Negro masses are looking with ever increasing insight, is either being ignored or scorned.

This curious phenomenon, interestingly enough, began with the publication in 1940 of Richard Wright's *Native Son*. It is thus, partly at least, a reflection of the influence he has exerted upon his Negro contemporaries. It also mirrors in somewhat warped form the extension into the field of the Negro novel of the social realism which characterized the grand ferment of the 30's, and which was exemplified in the works of such forerunners as Maltz, Steinbeck, Conroy, Halper, Caldwell, Gold, and Hemingway, to

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name a few of the white writers, to whom, incidentally, Wright himself is admittedly indebted. In this broad sense, the development must be attributed to the general awakening on the part of the foremost section of American writers in the 1930's as to the character of art as a weapon in the struggle for a better world. In a narrower sense, it represents a baseless trend toward the contemporary literature of despair—a trend which is particularly difficult to understand in view of the profound change in the perspective of the Negro people, for whom an entirely new epoch has opened, owing to the developing conditions of their alliance with white labor.

But to consider the manifestation from the standpoint of the novels themselves. Chronologically they are: Blood on the Forge, by William Attaway (1941); The White Face, by Carl Ruthaven Offord (1943); If He Hollers Let Him Go, by Chester B. Himes (1945); The Street, by Ann Petry, and The Foxes of Harrow, by Frank Yerby, both of which were published in 1946.

Because of its total dissimilarity from the others and our desire for clarity, we turn to the last, Frank Yerby's best-selling ante-bellum romance, which renders a peculiar disservice to the Negro people. After nearly half a century this author renews a trend which we had hoped would be forever forgotten, and he does it in a manner that is shameful. It is true that he seemed to have been interested in writing a sort of tongue-in-cheek portrayal of the life of a Louisiana slave baron, hoping perhaps that it would at once be popular as well as revealing as to the pretentions and degeneracy of the class. But the only irony he achieves consists in his further glorification of the monstrous figure and the system of Negro slavery.

In fact, Yerby makes a subtle choice in Stephen Fox as a hero who founds his barony through larceny at cards. But his delineation of this despot, "whose horses, dogs, Negroes and women obey him," is weakened by lack of focus upon the major problem of slavery and the struggle of Fox to establish and extend his dynasty upon the backs of the unwilling bondsmen. Instead, by surbordinating this problem to the conquests of Fox as a parvenue, Yerby succeeds only in bolstering the lie that the slave owners, despite their lust for riches and power and their cruelty, were benevolent.

With one eye fixed, moreover, upon the almighty dollar and the other askance as to the outlook and role of the slaves, Yerby flounders, trips and, in the act of sprawling, splatters his own people with the mud of white supremacy ideology. By characterizing the slaves as supine and unintelligent, he supports the notion of Negro inferiority and withal falsifies history at a time when leading writers of the country are waging a splendid war against

just such stereotypes, and when the greatest need is manifest for truthful pictures of the race and its culture.

The whole period covered by Yerby's unfortunate romance was filled with insurrectionary activity on the part of the slaves.

But Yerby prefers to gloss over this fact. In a strange obsequiousness before the idea that the parasitic life of his hero represented the acme of living, he condones Negro servitude as no better than deserving—at least for American blacks, since throughout the book he manages to communicate the idea that the latter constituted a lesser breed than their kinsmen on the West Indian Islands.

By filling his story with unattainable belles, gallants, sexy mulatto mistresses, voodoo, steamboat races, the plague, and accounts of two wars—all handled with considerable skill—he manages to reach his goal of writing a merely popular novel.

But to return now to the proper chronological order. Blood on the Forge, by William Attaway, also falls into the category of historical fiction. But it is a work of considerable merit, and would, but for the defeatist character of its conclusions, rank high as a piece of sound social realism. As the Editors of Negro Caravan attest, it is "a ground-breaking novel in its dealing with the Negro worker in the steel mills." It is also, we believe, an authentic account of the objective situation and relation of forces in that industry in 1919—the year with which it is concerned.

Opening in the South, the novel sketches the background of oppression from which hundreds of thousands of Negroes took flight, like the Moss brothers of the story, going individually and like cattle in the sealed boxcars of the "labor agents" into the industrial centers of the North. It reveals the disillusionment of these migrants, within the very hour of their arrival in the North, when the children of the white workers greet them with "Ya-aa's" and whizzing stones, and they discover to their dismay only hatred and contempt, rather than friendliness, in the eyes of the white adults. The novel mirrors the distrust and suspicion of the white workers in the mills, and the tendency of the latter to regard the Negro green-hands only as potential scabs. It indicates the short-sightedness of the union organizers, who failed to take proper steps to mobilize support of the newcomers; and it exposes, likewise, the vicious role of the "race leaders" of the times, who entered the situation as lieutenants of the steel owners and succeeded by their race baiting tactics in influencing many of the Negro workers to remain in the mills during the strike. Nevertheless, the novel lacks the necessary force and spirit to be classed as other than defeatist.

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Perhaps it was Attaway's intention that the three brothers, Melody, Chinatown and Big Mat, should be regarded as mere symbols of the Negro migrants of the times. He depicts them as bewildered, overawed by the mammoth size of Bessemer on the Monongahela, a monster too new and too big for them to comprehend. In face of the developing conditions of a situation pregnant with the threat of inter-racial violence as well as of the impending strike, they remain quiescent, robots of fate until finally overtaken by circumstance. If there is struggle at all, it is largely confined to the personal affairs of the brothers in relation to their women and their own private dreams, though Melody does take a timid step or two toward an understanding of the white workers and the mystery of the Union. The main impression created, therefore, is that of a trio of primitives adrift in a world they neither can nor greatly care to understand.

In the end, Chinatown is blinded in a blast furnace explosion which kills several other workers and thus precipitates the great steel strike. Big Mat loses confidence in himself when, despite his great physical strength and the new sense of self-respect gained by winning the nickname Black Irish from the white workers, he discovers that his woman no longer cares for him. The mill operators make him a deputy, and by a chance remark on the part of another he gains a sense of the destructive power that has thus been conferred upon him. He then sets out to compensate for the loss of his sexual prowess and all the bitter frustration of his life as a Negro. In a sadistic orgy he thrashes his woman into a bloody pulp, and he becomes a raving terror in the ranks of the strikers until he is finally slain by one of them as he is smashing up the headquarters of the union.

Melody leads the blind Chinatown away, "two castoffs of the mills," on their way to the poverty ridden "Strip" of Pittsburgh, "a place where rent was nearly free."

Thus, for Attaway, nothing remains of this struggle of the men in steel. Though writing in 1941, he completely overlooks the fact that what he was dealing with was but a stage on the one hand in the transition of the former Negro farm-hands into industrial workers, and the fight on the other hand of labor in general for security. Seeing only the surface of the period, Attaway is compelled to reiterate the false idea that by reason of previous conditioning in the Jim Crow South the Negro cannot understand that it is a matter of self-interest to support the struggle of white labor, and in consequence, must remain a perpetual threat to the latter's welfare and organizations. But history has already debunked these "eternal truths." Everywhere the Negro has proved that he is not a strike-breaker, and as Tom Girdler himself can

testify, the open shop is not only closed in Steel, but the Negro played a glorious role in the long struggle through which it was organized.

Because of his omission of these aspects of objective reality, which existed beneath the surface in 1919, Attaway, for all of his fine and promising craftsmanship, allows his novel to suffer both in spirit and dimension. By reason of his failure to include those elements of truth which in retrospect we know were present in the general situation, his story does not rise beyond the level of the contemporary literature of defeat.

With *The White Face*, by Carl Ruthaven Offord, we enter the deeper waters of this trend toward defeatism, and incidentally encounter as well the first signs of the influence of Richard Wright. Written as an expose of fascist penetration in Harlem as well as of the danger of the Negro's being stampeded, under the pressures of race prejudice and economic insecurity, into a reactionary outburst, the book nevertheless falls short of its progressive intent. On the contrary, it represents what appears as a distillation of the author's own bitter, nationalist feelings, which, by nature of situation and plot, comes near to being unbridled anti-Semitism.

Fundamentally, it seems that Offord, in the effort to demonstrate his thesis concerning the Coughlinite danger, makes the mistake of enthroning the intended victim of the fascists, the Jew, as the unqualified symbol of white domination over the Negro in Harlem. He depicts the Jews as skinflint pawnbrokers and "junkies," and he creates a picture of the Jewish housewives, who depend upon the Bronx "slave mart" for their Negro domestics, as a breed of merciless exploiters. In this manner he justifies the arguments of the Negro Coughlinites, who pose as honest Negro nationalists. The impact of these impressions of the Jews remains uppermost, despite the fact that near the end of the book, one of the characters, Alice Morley, interprets their role as that of the agents of the capitalist class operating in Harlem.

Against this background of Jewish domination, moreover, Offord projects a hero for whom the reality is undifferentiated. For Chris the universe is dominated by a leering and implacable white enemy—be it gentile or Jew. "The White Face" symbolizes the source of Negro oppression. In this respect Offord has chosen to borrow from Richard Wright. From the point of view of psychological spine, Chris, as a character, is but Bigger in the garb of a Negro sharecropper impaled on the cross of race hatred and unable in his agony to relish the proffered aid of even his own wife. He is inflexible and bitter in his will to freedom, but his conduct and aims remain individualistic and in the end he possesses all the appearance of being a monster.

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Chris becomes the ready victim of the Coughlinites, who appear to him to be the answer to his prayer. Offord, like Wright, raises the ridiculous perspective that the Negro, denied justice, moves toward the scurvy ranks of the fascists as the way out. The fact that Chris is threatened with exposure and arrest by Manny, the Negro chief of the Coughlinites, is without bearing, since it is clearly shown that the former was ideologically prepared beforehand to join the ranks as one of Manny's black henchmen. This is shown even more clearly in that at Manny's suggestion Chris begins to entertain the idea of killing his own wife, because she is opposed to the aim of the Coughlinites to stir up a Negro progrom against the Jews.

This is, of course, likewise a matter of preparation. But behind the plant is the idea that Chris will stop at nothing and is impatient of anything less than the immediate manning of the barricade. Nella seems an outright traitor to Chris when he learns that she has exposed him to the enemy, by mentioning his case to her employer, and securing the latter's promise to speak to her son, Mervin, who is a lawyer and may be able to help.

The rest of the story is a lurid account of how Nella resists the efforts of the Coughlinites to incite a pogrom against the Jews under the pretext that she has been raped by a Jew and her husband thrown in jail for going to her rescue; the fight of the Negro Congress to save Chris from being extradited; and withal the latter's death, as in the hour of victory, he is shot down by his guards, when he snatches a gun from one of them and attempts to kill Nella in a final outburst of his uncompromising hate.

Inasmuch as the Negro Congress represented a coalition of Negro, labor and progressive whites, in dying thus Chris appears on the one hand, to repudiate the idea that the Negro can afford to trust the white man under any circumstances; while, on the other hand, he seems to reject the notion that the Negro can even afford to accept his freedom so long as the white man is instrumental in its procural. If that is so, then we may only submit that what The White Face offers is nationalism with a vengeance.

Chester B. Himes also concentrates a good many shortcomings within the covers of his short novel called If He Hollers Let Him Go, though at first sight they may not be apparent. Indeed, he creates the impression that his work seethes with authentic and deep-seated emotion, and one succumbs to the idea that his position is valid. His story moves with dazzling swiftness, and one turns from it with the feeling that one has witnessed a serious indictment of race prejudice and oppression. But that is a reaction which time and reflection do not sustain. Within a little while one begins to suspect oneself the victim of an intellectual hoax. Then bit by bit one comes to the realiza-

tion that one has been imposed upon through the skill of a writer cynically trafficking in the natural indignation of his oppressed people.

Although technically seen through the eyes of his hero, Bob, his characters are drawn derogatorily. His heroine, Alice, is painted as physically most attractive, but characterless; while the rest of his Negro women seem calculated to please white-chauvinist standards of taste, in every instance being morally or intellectually limited and ludicrous. His very method of character description bears the imprint of petty bourgeois snobbery and contempt for the masses. For example: "A dark brown woman came along in a dark red dress with a light green hat carrying a shoebox tied with a string, falling along in that knee-buckling, leaning-forward, housemaid's lope, and frowning so hard her face was all knotted up . . . an ugly, evillooking old lady." Still more revealing is his view of the Negro people as "simple-minded, generous, sympathetic sons of bitches, who're sorry for everybody but themselves, and who love white folks more the worse they are treated."

From this assumption that the majority of his race "stupidly" accepts white domination, Himes proceeds to the theory of the exceptional young man who finds life under Jim Crow unbearable and hence develops a neurosis which drives him eventually to run amok.

This, of course, is the theory which Richard Wright advanced when he employed fear as the basic motivating force of his Bigger Thomas in *Native Son*. Himes thus presents in Bob a protagonist who differs but slightly from his socially illiterate prototype. Like Bigger (and Offord's Chris) Bob aspires to freedom, but it is a narrow, individualistic demand, selfish and exclusive of the desire of the masses for liberation. Like Bigger, Bob is bent upon staging his own little private revolt, and like Bigger, Bob exults in the prospect of his course ending in disaster.

Were it not for the political implications manifest here, one might be tempted to dismiss the phenomenon as a reflection of ego-mania on the part of these authors. Certainly there is a preponderance of evidence that it is not the Biggers and the Bobs who reflect the basic character of the Negro's reaction to the pressures of race prejudice and oppression. It is well known that the Negro people have exemplified the greatest courage and stability and capacity for progress despite the most limited opportunity. Their fight against oppression is a positive fight, not a blind, anarchistic revolt which is actually symbolic of defeat. The Negro people are advancing, and will continue to advance under the developing conditions of their alliance with white labor.

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But Himes, like Wright, attacks this growing alliance. He characterizes it as an unstable, temporary, Roosevelt war measure. And this, notwithstanding the fact that it antedates the war and represents, in fact, a direct outgrowth of the great national upsurge of labor and the people during the 30's, which culminated in the founding of the C.I.O.—and, indeed, was predicted by Karl Marx a hundred years ago as an inevitable development under the contradictions of capitalism. Nevertheless, in one sweeping passage beginning with a Hitlerite caricature of the union steward, Herbie Frieberger, whom Himes describes as possessing "a flapping loose-lipped mouth and a big hooked nose," he slanders the Jews, falsifies the role of white labor in relation to the Negro in the trade unions, and charges the Communists with desertion of the Negro's struggle for freedom.

Himes thus is creating precisely the impression desired by the enemies of labor and the Negro people; namely, that the Negro has no alternative but to distrust the white workers and the unions.

One cannot, of course, deny that the Negro has legitimate complaints to make against the unions. In the A. F. of L. the existence of Jim Crow unions is in itself an indictment of the leadership, though there are significant beginnings of a rank and file movement for Negro integration. The C.I.O., moreover, despite its policy against Negro exclusion and discrimination, has a great many weaknesses. In some C.I.O. unions the question of the need for integrating the Negro on all levels of skill and leadership is not even being raised; while the best that may be said is that the fight in general is developing unevenly. This does not alter the fact, however, that the fight is not to destroy the alliance between the Negro and labor, but to improve it. The demand is for the encouragement and growth of consciousness embodying the realization of the need for developing a more energetic fight within the unions.

In any event, it is by reason of his lack of a realistic outlook that Himes makes of If He Hollers Let Him Go merely a sensational tirade, worthless as an explanation of Negro life and devoid of any acceptable suggestion as to how he may go about the task of improving his lot in a profit maddened and class-ridden world.

The last and perhaps the most significant writer in the group we are dealing with is Ann Petry, who also reflects the trend in fiction toward the philosophy of despair. In her novel *The Street*, Miss Petry has written a burning support of the theory that in America life for the Negro inevitably ends in a cul-de-sac. Miss Petry sees the Negro as caged in by white prejudice, economic injustice and hate. On the basis of this image and by confining her

perspective to the observations and rhythms of her heroine, Lutie Johnson, she achieves a work of great power. Unwittingly, however, she puts on the blinkers of bitter, nationalist frustration, and dashes headlong into the wasteland of defeatism. And the tragedy of it is that the distortion here (as in the case of Attaway) arises from the rigid exclusion of elements of growth and struggle in Negro life.

There will, naturally, be those who will honestly question such a view of Miss Petry's novel, and understandably. Life for the Negro is a bitter thing, and none may deny so honest, sensitive and talented a writer as Miss Petry her right to apprehend it as such. What is being questioned here is her use of an image which is false and bears very grave political and cultural implications for her race, though it should be stressed that unlike Wright and Himes she employs it without political bias. But glance for a moment at its history, which unfortunately involves a word of personal reference.

Originally this image represented a folk conception of the universe as the latter impinges upon the mind of the Negro. It was invented by this reviewer and used as the theme and title of his play called Big White Fog, in which the Negro was pictured as being lost for a time in the fog of white prejudice only to gravitate ultimately toward the light of Marxism. Richard Wright, recognizing the force of this image as a core of meaning, first made use of it in its original form in his Fire and Cloud. Later, in his very next short story in fact, Wright began to transform it, changing it in Bright and Morning Star from "big white fog" to "iron white mountain." Subsequently in Native Son he substituted it altogether for his own invention of the "steel cage." Already at the time Wright had taken a position that was critical of the Communist program in relation to the Negro question, as he later admitted in The Atlantic Monthly articles which signalized his open break with the Party; and it was apparently in view of the change in his political outlook that he thus rejected the notion of fog as one which allowed too much freedom as well as the possibility of the Negro's finding his way out. In its stead, he preferred to conceive of the Negro as being trapped in a steel cage, cut off from all freedom of movement, choice or decision—a prisoner in the hands of forces beyond his volition and control.

As utilized by Wright and Himes the image of the steel cage becomes at once a political weapon as well as a device for literary economy. On the one hand, it denies the manifestations of inter-racial unity; while it provides, on the other hand, a method of tightening and limiting all phenomena in the story to the point of desired exclusiveness. If the Negro is imprisoned in a steel cage, then it follows that his keepers are outside and his life may be

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authentically treated as singularly alone. The results are works of sensational, thrilling power. With Wright it is a matter of King Kong roaring in his wrath and threatening momentarily to burst his cage asunder and run riot in his terribly destructive power. With Himes, who makes no modification of the image but handles it with less force, it is similar. With Miss Petry it is defeat, the voluntary battering out of brain and smashing of wing against impassable steel barriers. Let there be others who also suffer, their pain cannot possibly be so great, nor their lives so grievously restricted, for they at least have the freedom to roam. The division, like the bars of the cage, is vertical!

There you have the heart of the sort of damage being done to the spirit and consciousness of the Negro people and their struggle for freedom in a society horizontally separated along class lines. By raising the spectre of hate, these writers engender a distrust that blocks any alliance between the Negro and his exploited white brothers. By choosing of the uninformed protagonist and by the deliberate narrowing of their canvas they foster the illusion that whites in general are free, when the only freedom the latter may be said to possess is the freedom conferred upon them by the ruling class to abuse the Negro, kick him around, lord it over him, strive to make him feel cheap and low and woebegone. For when you come down to it, under the class order of society, even the so-called right of the white man to sell his labor power is as mythical as his vaunted freedom of speech, freedom of-ad nauseumsince there are millions of whites who cannot deny that there have been times when there weren't any jobs to be had, and even when there were, though white they had nine times out of ten to take the kind they didn't like or starve.

Miss Petry, we would again emphasize, does not go out of her way to deny this reality. But in her preoccupation with Lutie's aspirations and search for individual happiness, she neglects to include any recognition of their dependence upon collective effort. By implication she makes of *The Street* a one-way thoroughfare from which those who enter cannot escape but remain doomed to insecurity, degeneracy and terror, and upon which the forces of progress never impinge. There is only bleakness, discouragement and defeat. She gives a compelling picture of poverty and struggle. But nowhere in this wasteland do we gain any sense of the faith, optimism and fortitude which for generations have characterized the Negro spirit and the heroism of the Negro mother in particular.

Why? Is it not the function of the honest writer to stimulate and inspire, to provide an understanding of a people's life and culture? Again, is it not

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precisely because almost nothing has been done by the Negro writers to celebrate the Negro's great tradition for freedom, or to create new heroes who might be emulated, or to suggest new patterns of conduct which might be practiced, that a girl like Lutie may be said to have grown up to mother-hood with so little understanding of her environment and the avenues open to her to work and fight with others to improve it?

But to conclude. In our view, the time is not long when we shall have done with the trends represented by the works of these new Negro novelists, particularly since the outlooks upon which they in the main are based are untenable, reflecting, as they do, an impermanent lag between consciousness and reality, an anachronistic kowtowing before the seeming impregnability of capitalism, and a tendency to accept Jim Crow and lynching and lack of opportunity as valid evidence for the denial of the new being born within the old. They contradict and deny the very ferment out of which the authors themselves have been projected unto the literary scene, and are incompatible with the accents of forthrightness and power which distinguish the majority of their works. And this is proof in itself that the present situation cannot long obtain, for this ferment and these accents in themselves reflect the general intolerance of the people toward the old order of mongrelized existence and their determination to change it. There may still be confusion, but sooner or later these writers, if they are to be worthy of the name of writers, will recognize their own role in the grand tumult, and cease being merely by-products. Sooner or later honesty alone must impell them to grasp the cut-to-the-bone meaning of the emergence of the giant and militant trade unions and the element of mutual self-interest involved in the alliance between their advanced section and the Negro; the crushing of the military might of the fascist axis and the ensuing struggle for its ideological defeat. as the necessary pre-condition for the continued advance of the people to the stage where eventually they will take their life and destiny into their own hands.

For to interpret the life of the Negro in America otherwise than by taking these phenomena into consideration, is to be false to their needs and aspirations and to hamper their march, along with the people of the world, to freedom.

The Theatre Critic As Thinker

By ARNAUD D'USSEAU

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In this difficult postwar period the serious playwright is beset by a score of problems. If he is an historical optimist, his problems are complicated by the apathy, cynicism and confusion around him; in declaring his faith in the future, he cannot allow his work simply to reflect an applecheeked enthusiasm or become sententious. As always, he has the most important problem of keeping in touch with his audience, of finding the theme, the idea, the situation that will admit the enormous complexities and hardships confronting us, but still express his sense of hope.

Fortunately, he has a major aid. Today audiences think more socially than ever before; conflicting ideologies and political attitudes have been mortised into their consciousness and vocabulary by the upheavals of the past three decades; the preoccupation, it might be said, now that we have the atom bomb, is bound up with the human race's desire for self-preservation. Audiences are neither as ignorant nor as naive as they once were; they are aware of the spiked bludgeon, the hovering blow.

But how to get these things on the stage, well and truthfully? It is not easy to anatomize evil because the outward symbols—so important in the theatre—are changing, and because they are being much more cunningly disguised by those who employ them. It's difficult, too, to depict good, not because there are not good people at work, but because so many have become uncertain of their direction and ultimate goal. In the theatre, the playwright must use symbols that are universally recognizeable, not those which belong to himself, or to a relative few who share his opinions. But the new symbols, the new images, the new language are difficult when a world is in transition. If it were asked of the playwright, what problem is tougher than any other, this could be said to be it.

The past helps. Each new generation is always given the opportunity to consider what forms it can borrow creatively. Which plays and dramatic

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theories have in them the seeds of growth, which have the seeds of contamination and decay? The optimistic tradition on the American stage is meager; pessimism and misanthropy have been declared much more vigorously. Europe offers us more. In Ibsen's best plays, the acid cuts away much of the dead tissue, but still allows the organism to live. Shaw, too, gives us something. But I would say that it was Chekhov who provides the most: in his plays there's the frustration, the protracted unhappiness, the tragedy, but always permeated with aspiration and hope. The social relationships of his characters are illuminated as well as defined, because we have the extraordinary creative achievement of economic stagnation seen in motion. Superficially, there might not seem to be anything we can take from Chekhov, but underneath we see there is: the clinical realism, the character always seen in a social context, the personal and historical dilemma depicted as one.

Finally, there are the practical problems. Our theatre, to state a commonplace, exists in a hostile society. The distaste for new ideas and new forms has become aggravated, current production practices are corrosive; the theatre shares the present blight of all our art forms. How does the playwright combat the pernicious effect of commercialism, yet have his plays seen by more than a handful of "drama enthusiasts"? How does he avoid the valiant yet painful experience of witnessing Miss Elizabeth Bergner appear before her audience to explain the importance of John Webster by quoting from the Encyclopedia Britannica?

All this is a rather long preamble to a consideration of *The Playwright as Thinker** by Eric Bentley, a book which attempts to reassess the modern drama from its beginning to the present and suggest a basis for the drama's future growth and development. We picked up Mr. Bentley's book with a great deal of enthusiasm, believing he might be able to answer some of the above problems. Unfortunately, he has not. Indeed, he seems deliberately to have avoided them, for his thesis is this: that if the drama is to have a rebirth, we must examine the "various questions of new forms;" and that in doing this, it is much more profitable, even at the risk of academicism, to make this examination under the glow of the lamp, rather than in the glare of the footlights.

In focusing his attention on new forms, Mr. Bentley pretty much ignores the problem of content. Though a number of ideas receive passing attention, no real analysis is made of the playwright's intense preoccupation with them:

^{*} The Playwright as Thinker, by Eric Bentley, Reynal & Hitchcock, New York, 1946.

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his philosophical conflicts, social concerns, moral anxieties, etc. A few examples: Georg Buchner wins praise, but no investigation is made of his interest in German agrarian reform, his sharp attack on the bourgeois liberalism of his period, and the fact that to his name is accredited the first socialist pamphlet. In discussing Nathan the Wise, another obvious example. no light is thrown upon Lessing's concern with the role of the Jew in the Germany of his day. Schiller's interest in politics is alluded to, but in no way developed so that the reader is given an instructive picture of the great German poet's problems while writing Don Carlos and William Tell. Even when Mr. Bentley deals at greater length with men like Wagner, Shaw, Strindberg and Brecht, he does not give us anything very substantial in this respect. Instead, he prefers to set up a distinction between forms and what he calls "essences." Essences is a pretty fancy word, but what does it mean? My Oxford gives this definition: "Absolute being, reality underlying phenomena. . . ." From which one would assume a need on the part of the critic to be absolutely clear as to the nature of reality. Mr. Bentley never is.

Two major faults stem from this failure to consider the problem of content. One is the lack of a sound historical approach, so important to the working playwright if he is to have a solid understanding of his heritage. The other fault arises when Mr. Bentley attempts to create a new vocabulary for us. He believes this will "infuriate the logical reader,"—presumably ourselves. But we're not infuriated; we're not even terribly hurt; we're merely confused, because his scrambled vocabulary leads Mr. Bentley into all sorts of confusions of his own, forcing him constantly to redefine his meaning and widen his frame of reference so that it will admit expression of dramatic genius for which he has not allowed. Thus we find Ibsen and Synge, two completely antithetical playwrights in terms of their tradition, brought under the heading of "naturalism." At another point, Mr. Bentley's semantics become so involved that he's obliged to take time out to state that his use of the word "modern" can mean not one but four things. Anyone interested in getting a more coherent development of the modern drama would do better to consult Barrett Clark's European Theories of the Drama or John Gassner's Masters of the Drama. Of even more specific value is John Howard Lawson's Theory and Technique of Playwriting, a book to which an increasing number of playwrights are becoming indebted.

We believe Mr. Bentley's reason for emphasizing "new forms" is an old one. He is still trying to rescue a large portion of the modern drama from the dead end of idealism. He is also trying to escape the fundamental

problem of dramatic realism, something indicated throughout his book by his superficial estimate of Chekhov, his under-estimation of O'Casey, his neglect of Gorky, and his disproportionate praise of Zola.

In a measure, this emphasis on "new forms" explains why, when discussing the great playwrights of the past, Mr. Bentley is forced to italicize those aspects of their genius which are least firm. For example, Mr. Bentley has a vast admiration for Ibsen; but not the Ibsen of the middle period, when, in his "quest for integrity" he was still relentlessly pushing back the "boundary stakes" of the modern drama in hard, materialist terms. Mr. Bentley superciliously derogates this period, and celebrates the later plays, which he regards as the Norwegian's best. Sharing Ibsen's own idealistic dilemma, but half a century later, Mr. Bentley doesn't see that the later plays with their intense subjectivity, their mysticism and their denial of the conscious will in social terms, are a moving and tortured testimony of Ibsen's inability to rise above the middle class and judge it in the light of a new historical perspective.

In discussing Shaw, Mr. Bentley also disappoints. Instead of assessing him from another time and generation, he implies that Shaw's historical role is an absolute one, as good for us today as it was for his contemporaries at the turn of the century. Any discussion of Shaw demands several assumptions: that socialism rescued Shaw from the values which led Ibsen back to his fiords and long Scandinavian nights, and that Marx not only made a man of Shaw, but a much better playwright than he might have been ordinarily. Any estimate of Shaw must be based on the fact that he debased his knowledge of Marxism, that frequently he evaded problems he raised, and that this was the chief reason for his distate for action on the stage. Shaw, and Mr. Bentley in turn, accept much too absolutely Ludwig's dictum "that action is merely a suitable occasion for dialogue." The fact is that action, when considered primarily in terms of theatrical reality, serves a much more important function. It is the sharpest and most explicit means in the playwright's possession for revealing character. In a play, as well as in life, what a man does is always more important than what he says, no matter how well, entertainingly or convincingly he says it. This is demonstrable in Shaw's own case: his best plays are those in which the action is most clearly defined, his poorest those in which the action is diluted or all but ignored and the dialogue is allowed to become windy, discursive, overblown.

In seeking to find new sources of inspiration for the modern drama, Mr. Bentley reserves his greatest enthusiasm for Strindberg who he believes

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serves as a bridge between the 19th and 20th century and provides us with a "healthy influence" and with "ideas (which) could help create a new school of drama." It is his further conviction that Strindberg broke up the bourgeois forms of comedy and tragedy, and he indicates that if this process can be carried forward creatively, there's hope for the modern drama.

But is it not more accurate to say that it was through Strindberg we see certain forms of bourgeois tragedy and comedy being broken up? Middle class society itself was breaking up, and Strindberg reflected this. Moreover, Strindberg was not only a penetrating interpreter of middle-class society in his best plays; he was also its tragic victim. His fatal weakness was that he shared the heaven and hell of his characters. As he grew older, it became only the hell of his characters until his collapse duplicated that of Maupassant's. Indeed, in the career of both men we find certain parallels: both embraced the nihilism of their period; both lost their moral moorings, as Tolstoy noted of Maupassant; and both in later life were overocme by their aberrations. Today, Strindberg offers us little; the form of his plays are so determined by their miasmal content that technically as well as in terms of ideas it is all but impossible to borrow from them.

This unrestrained admiration for Strindberg, more than anything else, illustrates the contracting path down which Mr. Bentley is padding so gaily. Appalled by the neglect of Strindberg in this country, he admits at the same time that the tragic Swedish playwright was, among other things, "anti-feminist, reactionary and religious." He then cynically concludes: "He might have come in with the revulsion against Marxism of the late thirties and early forties, had some one left his books on the desk of an Arthur Koestler or a W. H. Auden. Nobody did, and now we will have to wait until another generation is disillusioned, which may not be long." Is this the healthy influence of which Mr. Bentley speaks?

While he insists that the theatre should deal with political ideas, Mr. Bentley's conception of politics is abstract; to him all political ideas would seem to have equal merit; he never sees politics in a form that would really challenge an audience and if necessary the censor. This last failing makes it easy for him to pass from Brecht to Satre without changing gears. At the same time, when discussing Ibsen in an earlier chapter, he is able to neglect a play like *The League of Youth*. The League of Youth is not a particularly good play of Ibsen's, but it did challenge audiences when it was produced, and its form still has something to tell us about the treatment of a political theme.

The Playwright as Thinker suffers from the author's lack of any practical

knowledge of the theatre and of its imaginative requirements. The highest drama is drama in which the playwright has manifested a complete awareness of every aspect of his medium, in which the play is both good theatre and good literature, moving, as it were, on two levels at the same time. At the beginning, Mr. Bentley admits this fairly obvious truth, but the idea is never central to the design of his book. Instead he sets up a division between the "boulevard theatre" and what he calls "high drama," seeking to place an emphasis on the drama as "literature" and expressing a certain contempt for those plays which realize that the visual and the oral are equally important. This gives much of what he has to say its bias, and when he comes to a consideration of practical problems, makes his ideas singularly weak.

Anyone interested in the theatre has been aware of the recent battle which has raged furiously between those who create and those who judge. Playwrights, producers, directors and designers have been on one side of the redoubt; the critics on the other. The charge, and with much justification, has been that the critics themselves have not been aware of the great tradition they were serving; they have been asking the playwrights to produce great plays, yet they have not been providing great criticism. Instead, they have been sitting back comfortably and letting the playwright sweat it out alone: in Chekhov's phrase, they are the flies on the horse's rump.

If we're to have a great drama, it is the job of the critic as much as that of the playwright to hammer out the values that belong to a new drama. The critic, too, must be sharply aware of the ideas abroad in the world, the new forces, the new struggles. Like the playwright, he must strive for honest enquiry in a world of conflict and torment. He must also be aware of the practical problems faced by the playwright; to drive a wedge between the "theatre" and the "drama," is to have the playwright wind up ultimately writing closet dramas. He will be "free," but only because he is no longer concerning himself with directors, scene designers, actors, and in the final analysis, his audience. Today, the tendency of the serious playwright to withdraw is strong enough without the critic's encouragement. If it's still true that the theatre is the first of the art forms to reflect our life around us, then the playwright concerning himself with the real issues and personal dilemmas of our time needs the critic's help more than ever before. It's a pity that Mr. Bentley, willing to expend so much energy and erudition. could not have got hold of this central idea. Had he, dramatic criticism. recently so impoverished, would have been enriched; as it is, it's pretty much where it was before Mr. Bentley wrote his ambitious book.

The Folk Art Of Sholom Aleichem

By MORRIS U. SCHAPPES

PEOPLE'S CLASSICS in a special sense are the classics of Yiddish literature: the works of Mendele Mocher Seforim (1836-1917), I. L. Peretz (1852-1915), and Sholom Aleichem (1859-1916). Each made his own decision about his relationship to the Jewish masses of his native land: Russia in the case of Mendele and Sholom Aleichem, and Poland in the case of Peretz. Each could and did write in Hebrew—the "classical" language of antiquity and of the religious rituals. But each one early in his career determined, in the face of much pressure, to write mainly in the language spoken by more than 95 per cent of the Jews of Eastern Europe, Yiddish. Wishing to write for the Jewish masses, they used, not their "jargon" as the scorners called it, but their vernacular. All three were close to their people, but closest of them was Sholom Aleichem. Peretz himself once remarked that Sholom Aleichem takes the words out of the very mouths of the people, and turns them right back into their ears.

In identifying himself not only with the content of the life of his people but with their very form of expression, Sholom Aleichem was making war on the external and internal enemies of the Jewish masses. Yiddish was a language despised by those non-Jews who despised Jews in general; it was held in contempt even by those "friends of the Jews" whose Jewish friends spoke Russian and Polish and German and Hebrew. Yiddish was also mocked by those middle-class Jews who assimilated the contempt of the anti-Semites for the Jewish masses in a vain and demoralizing effort to deflect that contempt from themselves. In the Soviet Union, the war of Sholom Aleichem and the Jewish people against anti-Semitism has resulted in victory, one evidence of which is the fact that Sholom Aleichem has been

^{*} The Old Country, by Sholom Aleichem. Translated by Julius and Francis Butwin. Crown Publishers, New York, 1946.

translated into ten languages used in the Soviet Union and that 3,263,000 copies of his works were sold there between 1935 and 1945. In the United States, where the anti-Semites are still rampant, we have had to wait for the thirtieth anniversary of his death to get the first sizable, viable volume of Sholom Aleichem's writings. Since people's classics rise and fall with the status of their people, the publication of *The Old Country** must be seen as an event in the protracted battle of the American Jewish masses for full equality.

The sampling before us does not profess to be representative; it has only one short sketch, for instance, of such a basic and characteristic re-creation of Sholom Aleichem's as Menachem Mendel, the *luftmensch*, a type unknown to American literature, but a real and large part of the world that Sholom Aleichem so faithfully reflects.

What is it, then, that Sholom Aleichem brings to the American reader in the very small portion of his work that is included in this selection of twenty-seven stories about the life of the Jews in the Russian Pale of Settlement between 1890 and 1910? In its most general aspect, he provides an answer to one of the questions so often put by those who are exemplifying the renascence of Jewish consciousness that fascism has precipitated. If you wish to know what Jewish culture has been, is, or can be, study Sholom Aleichem as an exemplar.

To Marxists, culture has roots and a soil, as well as a trunk, blossoms, and fruit. We regard the culture of a people (or any section of it) as an expression of that people's psychology, which is in turn ultimately conditioned by the way in which the people make a living and the kind of human relationships they therefore develop. What is the psychology of Sholom Aleichem and his people, as we have them in this one book, and how do they make a living in Kasrilevka, the imaginary but so real "town of little people" that is his symbol for the Tsarist Pale?

Make a living, did you say? Who makes a living? What kind of living can you make in a system in which the only piece of land a poor Jew can own is in the cemetery? You work hard, trying always; you are a shoemaker, a tailor, a milkman, a matchmaker, a tutor, but always you wage unequal and "constant warfare against poverty." Poverty is writ large in this volume. Yet this is poverty without grime. Sholom Aleichem does not dwell on the multitudinous details of poverty in which the middle class writer would revel as he sets a naturalistic dish before his well-fed middle-class audience, hoping at best to arouse their "sympathy" for the poor. He is

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writing about the poor to the poor who know their poverty only too intimately. The gauntness he takes for granted; he prefers to show you the sparkling eye of the gaunt—when it sparkles. Sholom Aleichem is not trying to show those unacquainted with hunger what it is to sit down to an all but empty table surrounded by eight young mouths. Instead he seeks fleetingly to divert the attention of his readers from their own hunger-pangs by wresting a smile from pale lips. Nor does he adopt the callous, callow, insulting attitude of the self-satisfied writer who would make self-satisfied readers believe that these strange poor people could not be happy without their poverty. If, nevertheless, even without the grime and the sordid details, and even with all the good-humor and the chuckles, you should find that every laugh is father to a sigh—well, that may be because you are human after all, and perhaps you too have known a bit of poverty.

Sholom Aleichem's celebrated humor is richly exhibited in this volume. It is as unlike the humor of Mark Twain, with whom Sholom Aleichem is so frequently and ineptly compared, as the narrowly circumscribed Russian Pale of Settlement was unlike the booming, expanding United States in the last half of the nineteenth century. Sholom Aleichem's humor is that of a people rich in poverty, a people so driven to the habit of weeping that it relieves and sustains itself by laughing. Without hysteria, which connotes hopelessness and desperation, this laughter heals and cheers. It is a highly moral humor, and is therefore not aimed at the lowly and unfortunate. His poor will laugh at their own misfortunes thereby asserting superiority over them, but they are too sympathetic to laugh at the misfortunes of others, thereby adding to them. Then there is the humor of rueful self-evaluation, as well as the humor of defiance—of the triumph of the mind while the body suffers defeat. And of course there are the shafts aimed against the rich, the pretentious, the "powerful."

Except in the case of the last-named type, Sholom Aleichem made his original audience in Yiddish laugh with his characters rather than at them. This audience was intimately connected with the backward small-town life that he portrayed, being usually no more than one step removed from it. Pity was always an ingredient of the humor; even Menachem Mendel could not entirely be laughed at, because but for the grace-of-something-or-other the reader, or his brother, might have been a *luftmensch* himself. The element of condescension, therefore, although present, was minimal. For the modern American reader, however, whose social and cultural distance from Kasrilevka is so great, the note of condescension may become aggrandized

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in a way that Sholom Aleichem did not intend, but that he cannot prevent. The backwardness of the past is always funny, but poverty is not.

Sholom Aleichem makes you understand that whatever the poor do is conditioned by their poverty. Take the old-fashioned custom of matchmaking as it operates among the daughters of the poor, with the desperate need to provide the girl with a dowry for a good match. Tevye the milkman, having "matched" his daughter with a well-to-do widowed butcher three times her age, explains to the sobbing girl after he has agreed to call the matter off that "God knows the truth: all we wanted was to shield our daughter from poverty." Thus Sholom Aleichem explains without justifying.

But in this selection we have not only the poor. The rich are always with us. There are the Jewish rich of the summer resort of Yehupetz, the local rich in each town, and then there is Rothschild, who is everywhere, and who is on the minds and lips of the poor Jews less frequently only than God himself. But the rich have no independent life in these stories. They are seen only through the eyes of the poor, although the eyes are not all focussed alike. Once Tevye, referring to "the important business men from Yehupetz," admits that "Talking to them makes me feel that I am somebody, too; I amount to something in the world." But that random and unsatisfying sense of identification is usually drowned in the sense of contrast between the life of the rich and that of the poor. The rich, seen not in relation to each other or to their own families but in relation to the poor, are not pleasant. Sholom Aleichem and his people have no use for them; they could do without them. As Berel the Redhead, who learned in his childhood the difference between himself, the "pauper's child," and Sholom-Ber, the rich boy, says, "Ever since that time I have had nothing but scorn from the rich and the children of the rich. . . ." That it will not be always thus Sholom Aleichem foresees when he reflects that "Peiseh the boxmaker" will be poor "till the time should some day come, the happy time when everything would be different. as Bebel said and as Karl Marx said, and as all good and wise men say."

How did the name of Marx get to Kasrilevka, which is "stuck away in a corner of the world?" Julius and Frances Butwin, who selected and translated the stories, have unobtrusively revealed a pattern in the works of Sholom Aleichem. These Jewish small towns are seen first as isolated, backward communities, but gradually one notices the small town Jews going out into the "world" and the "world" crowding in upon the Jewish communities. "I doubt if the Dreyfus case made such a stir anywhere as it did in Kasrilevka," is the way one story begins, and reflecting on the qualitative intensity

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of that story you may agree with Sholom Aleichem. The effects of "emancipation" and the "enlightenment" manifest themselves in the synagogue among the younger students, who begin secretly to study Russian and read novels. Yisroel, the shammes (sexton), learns that his son Benjamin had become a convert to Christianity in order to "combat" the quota system that excluded him from medical school. Artzybashef's novel, Sanine, which stimulated a wave of suicides among the young intellectuals of Russia, leads our Haika and Etka to poison themselves. On the other hand, there are forces that bring struggle and life. Tevye's Hodel marries a revolutionary worker (without benefit of match-makers), follows him to Siberia when he is caught and exiled, leaving Tevye puzzled but not a little proud of these children of his. "Revolutions! Constitutions!" They have their influence on Kasrilevka, and Kasrilevka contributes its forces to them too. It would be wrong, however, to make Sholom Aleichem out to be a socialist writer. In fact he was much more the petty-bourgeois nationalist, the Zionist. Nevertheless he was so close to the Jewish people that he reflected all its desires, including the socialist aspirations of its working class.

In one sense, of course, Kasrilevka was never isolated. The psychology of fear of anti-Semites that was a characteristic of the life of most Jews in the Pale is revealed with wonderful subtlety in the story, "A Country Passover," in which two boys, Pedka the Gentile and Feitel the Jew, wander off to play together the afternoon before Passover. Towards evening, when the boys return happily, they find the town in an uproar over rumors that Pedka had been killed by the Jews for Passover ritual purposes. "I hope it goes by without trouble," Feitel's mother says of the Passover, after Feitel had been properly beaten by his father. There was no trouble that Passover; but reading this story, the reviewer in the Birmingham, Alabama, News found that it taught him much about the Jews in Poland, who in the middle of 1946 were subjected to the fascist underground's pogrom in Kielce.

An omnipresent factor in the life of the poor Jews of Kasrilevka is their God. The poor need their God. They need him to explain their misery as predestined, and to stimulate hopes that God has also predestined an end to their misery. God is always on the lips and in the minds of the orthodox Jew, to whom life is literally one continual religious ritual. God is embedded in the language and the folk-lore. These Jews speak about God and to God. Generally, they insist that "Of God you don't ask questions." But sometimes you feel yourself just forced to ask, as Tevye does once, "O God, All-powerful and All-merciful, great and good, kind and just, how does it happen that to

some people you give everything and to others nothing? . . . But then I tell myself, 'You big fool, Tevye! Are you trying to tell Him how to rule His world?' . . . And yet, what would have been wrong to have it different? . . ." Here obviously Tevye asks but does not stay for an answer. But God evolves in this universe of Sholom Aleichem's, although the stimulus is human. This Tevye, looking at his daughter Hodel and her husband, who is about to go off on a secret mission, ruminates: "and I think to myself: what a great and powerful Lord we have and how cleverly He rules the world. What strange and fantastic beings He has created. Here you have a new young couple, just hatched; he is going off, the Good Lord alone knows where, and is leaving her behind—and do you see either one of them shed a tear, even for appearance's sake? . . ." In the ideology of predestination, God sanctifies all changes by assuring the pious that they are predestined. The Tevyes accept change, although they do not help bring it about. Hodel and her Feferel have wrought the changes, and the old country of the Pale is now part of the new land of the Soviets, and the Jews can live everywhere in that country without restriction and with complete equality.

The translation by Julius and Francis Butwin is fundamentally successful in that it adequately conveys the basic meaning of the originals and even a great many of the overtones and connotations. These translators (Julius Butwin unfortunately died before the work was quite finished) have created a sound, fluent, idiomatic equivalent of Sholom Aleichem's homespun and intimate Yiddish. The imperfections are minor, and the practise of translating more of his works would tend to reduce the flaws. The Butwins have exploded the myth of the untranslatability of Sholom Aleichem.

The life of the Jews in this country is in many respects very much different from the life depicted in *The Old Country*. Yet Sholom Aleichem's example can help progressive American Jewish writers find the means of discharging their responsibility both to their people and to progressive American literature as a whole, which has been deprived of the richly-textured pictures of the life of the American Jewish masses. Without such pictures, portrayal of American life is incomplete, and the work of American Jewish progressive writers is likewise incomplete. Bourgeois assimilationism and national nihilism are tendencies that progressive American Jews need to oppose vigorously. While we wait eagerly for more translations of Sholom Aleichem, we wait no less eagerly for original American work in the same people's tradition.

Stendhal's Sense Of History

By JOSEPH BERNSTEIN

MATTHEW JOSEPHSON seems to have set himself the worthy task of making known to American readers the great figures of 19th century French literature. The author of impressive biographies of Emile Zola and Victor Hugo, he now gives us a life of Henri Beyle, who used the pseudonym of Stendhal in his writings.*

In his earlier biographies, Josephson ably captured the breadth and sweep of Zola and Hugo. What was important was not so much the details of their lives—although in this respect Josephson showed himself a most careful researcher—but the impact of their genius, their passion for human freedom and social progress. Now, too, Josephson has on the whole acquitted himself well. He has a good understanding of Stendhal's life and works; he shows the inter-relations of the man and his times. In fact, there is if anything too much piling up of details, too much documentation, too close attention to the *minutiae* of Stendhal's amazing career.

Admittedly, however, Stendhal presents a more difficult problem than Zola or Hugo. Here we have a man who delighted in mystifying his contemporaries; who assumed at least a dozen noms de plumes; who wrote down fragments of his works in specially devised codes; who was diplomat, soldier, traveller, art-critic, and lover as well as first-rank novelist. Born in the French provincial city of Grenoble, he took the pseudonym by which posterity knows him from the tiny Prussian town of Stendhal, through which he once passed on his retreat from Russia with Napoleon's Grand Army. Nearing death, he furnished his own epitaph:

Arrigo Beyle, Milanese Visse, amo, scrisse (Henri Beyle, citizen of Milan, Lived, loved, wrote)

^{*} Stendhal, by Matthew Josephson. Doubleday and Co., N. Y., 1946.

thus paying handsome tribute to the Italy he loved and to which he had exiled himself for many of the mature years of his life.

Stendhal, "one of the glories of France," died in 1842 virtually an unknown writer in France! With almost uncanny insight, he prophesied several times that he would be read and understood around 1880. Once, for example, he wrote: "I count only on being reprinted in 1900." Yet two of his novels, the Red and the Black and the Charterhouse of Parma, are now justly considered masterpieces of world literature. Scenes such as Julien Sorel's love-affair with Madame de Renal in the Red and the Black and the description of the battle of Waterloo in the Charterhouse of Parma are outstanding in world fiction. For Stendhal was right about posterity: since 1900, he has more than come into his own. As Josephson points out, the Frenchmen of the Resistance movement turned to Stendhal as one of their favorite authors in the heroic days of the Underground. There are devoted Stendhaliens in every country: in the U.S.S.R., for example, he is with Balzac the most widely read French novelist. If in the United States Stendhal is probably less widely read than elsewhere, Josephson's volume should serve to quicken American interest.

What accounts for the seeming paradox of a writer obscure in his own lifetime and triumphantly heralded in our own? What makes him our writer, a writer for our times? How explain the mystery as well as the mystifications of Stendhal? Josephson attributes it mainly to his psychological genius, his objective exploration of the human psyche in terms that make him a precursor of modern psychology and Freudian-influenced psychological fiction. In his own words, Stendhal was ever an "observer of the human heart"—one of the keenest in all literature. This rotund, pot-bellied, sidewhiskered little man had many love-affairs, ranging from the sublime to the ridiculous. Yet at the height of amatory success or in the depths of despondency, he never failed to observe and record his own passions and emotions. He was an indefatigable prober, a clinician, so to speak, of the human heart. His volume De l'Amour (On Love) is a classic study of love.

His heroes, Julien Sorel in the Red and the Black and Fabrizio del Dongo in the Charterhouse of Parma, are projections of his many-sided personality. They are young men of his time—the first quarter of the 19th century. But they are also timeless in the sense that they are representative figures, studied and taken to heart by each succeeding generation. They are the ambitious young men of a rising social class, possessing energy and will "to take arms against a sea of troubles." They are representatives of the

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young European bourgeoisie, the class that was then historically in the ascendancy, believing in itself, believing in its future.

Josephson is well aware of this even though he is perhaps inclined to devote too much attention to Stendhal as an erotic, a self-analytical lover and psychological precursor. He recognizes that Stendhal was "a figure of transition, who had sprouted between the end of the eighteenth century and the coming of the industrial nineteenth century. How much history he had seen, how many dynasties had risen and fallen even in the first three decades of his life, whose most impressionable years were spent amid the violence of revolution and continental war. It is because he is a transitional thinker, a hybrid of the eighteenth century's rationalistic and revolutionary enlightenment, and the romantic philosophy that was soon to react against the commercial nineteenth century, that Stendhal is so appealing to the men of our own troubled epoch."

What a life was Stendhal's! He grew up in the period of the Great French Revolution and the rise of Napoleon. He crossed the St. Gotthard Pass with the legions of the "little Corporal" into Italy; he was on the disastrous campaign in Russia and retreated with the wreck of the Grand Army from Moscow in 1812. He witnessed the Bourbon Restoration of 1815 and the establishment of the reactionary Holy Alliance. Prince Metternich's secret police shadowed him constantly in Italy; Bourbon France so stifled and repelled him that he sought voluntary exile in Northern Italy. He foresaw the coming of the 1830 Revolution: indeed, to this political changeover he owed a diplomatic sinecure abroad. For three decades he knew most of the great figures of Europe in arts and letters, science, government, and military affairs. He talked with Napoleon; visited Byron and Shelley in Italy; knew Rossini, Lamartine, Mérimée, Cuvier, Ampère, Winckelmann, and the young Delacroix; met George Sand and Alfred de Musset in Lyons, just as the two were setting out for Italy on their much-publicized elopement; was intimate with that generation of young Italian enthusiasts and revolutionaries, poets like Silvio Pellico and Monti, men of the Carbonari movement. And in his old age he felt a thrill of legitimate pride when Balzac wrote glowingly of his Charterhouse of Parma.

To understand Stendhal one must remember that he was history-minded. He remained to the end a Jacobin—"a violent Jacobin, an extreme Republican," to use his own words. Having seen the rise of the Third Estate, he knew that thenceforth the face of the world was changed. This was true despite all his drawing-room poses and posturings, his cynical quips, his friendships

among the titled aristocrats and his suits for their favors. Nurtured on Voltaire, Diderot, Helvétius and the other Encyclopedists, he never lost his admiration for the men of the 18th century Enlightenment. He paid tribute to Thomas Jefferson. For he was at bottom a radical democrat. "My parents communicated to me their aristocratic tastes and reservations," he acknowledged. "This defect has remained with me. . . . But at the same time I desire the welfare of the people passionately and believe we can only win that by settling the question of ... representative government." Following his third visit to England in 1826, he commented that after 1815 in England "the nobles and the rich of every sort seemed to have signed a definitive alliance, defensive and offensive, against the poor people and the workers." He greeted the 1830 Revolution in France which replaced Bourbon absolutism with the constitutional monarchy of the bourgeois-king, Louis Philippe. And in a letter written in August 1830, he commented: "All that the newspapers have reported in praise of the common people is true. . . . Out of one hundred men on the 28th of July, only one man was well clad. The lowest canaille was heroic and full of the most noble generosity after the battle."

This spirit, this sense of history, this fundamental belief in human and social progress permeates his novels. Fired by the Great French Revolution, he saw the rise of the overweening Napoleon, then the arch-reactionary Bourbon Restoration. But the clock of history could not be turned back to the ancien régime. Feudalism lay in ruins: the bourgeois revolution had triumphed. No amount of repression or reaction could hold back the "dynamics of social change."

This is what Stendhal is saying to us in his great novels, behind the curtain of a romantic setting and an involved plot; Julien Sorel, the hero of the Red and the Black, is both product and protagonist of this period of sweeping social changes. "He is the spirit of analysis in action; he is will, audacity, and energy," in Josephson's words. This son of a poor, backward peasant has lifted himself by his own bootstraps, by a combination of self-examination and audacious energy, to hobnob with the great lords and ladies of reactionary France. He takes literally the results of the French Revolution, which opened "a career to the talented." Like a military tactician, he prepares his campaign to win the heart of the high-born Mathilde de la Môle—and despite his success, his creator, Stendhal, calls him "an unhappy man at war with the whole of society." He is the prototype of the individualist warring against a world of status, rank, entrenched position and privilege. He is the portrait of a young man as hero at a time when society was in

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turbulent flux, when bourgeois values were heroic and on the side of reason and progress.

Similarly in the *Charterhouse of Parma*, one feels behind the maneuvers and intrigues of the ducal court at Parma the stirrings of revolutionary action, the spirit of the *Carbonaro* movement of the young men of the newly emerging Italian middle classes. Fabrizio del Dongo is a more successful Julien. He is more seasoned in the rules of the game of *success in life*. And elderly, urbane Count Mosca, that magnificent Machiavellian in statecraft and diplomacy, never quite forgets the Jacobin principles which had touched his youthful years as with a searing flame.

Could the wise old side-whiskered Henri Beyle have foreseen that he would be better understood in 1946 than in 1880 or 1900? Posterity has come to know and honor and love his novels. They are positive; they breathe optimism, defiance of fate; they are energetic "hymns to life." In style they are sober and clear, written, as he himself boasted, in the manner of the Civil Code of Napoleon. His books are in sharp contrast to the works of his contemporaries, the Romantics. Where they are vague, fuzzy, and histrionic, his are keen, dry, sharp as a blade. His prose is precise and concentrated, lean and lucid, without excess ornamentation.

To be sure Stendhal is no Balzac. He does not have the latter's almost fabulous fertility, his Antaeus-like virility, and prodigious inexhaustibility. His universe is narrower, more restricted, more concentrated. But he makes up in depth and intensity what the other great novelist offers in vastness, massiveness, and fecund variety. Indeed, it was Balzac who said of his contemporary: "Often there is a whole book contained in a single page of his."

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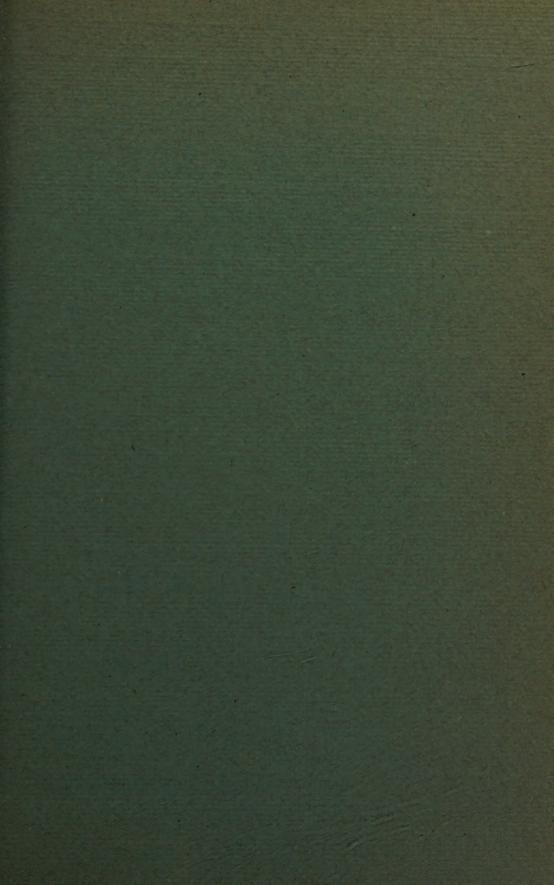
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