AUGUST
1948

lasses & MAINSTREAM

n this Issue: **FROM McKINLEY TO WALLACE: W. E. B. Du Bois**
IE CASE OF THE CONTEMPTUOUS WIFE, by Helen Clare Nelson
ERETZ: Classic of Yiddish Literature, *by Morris U. Schappes*
arshall, Mothballs and Movies, *by Matt Williams* · STORIES *by*
ora Birtles and Phillip Bonosky · POETRY · ART · REVIEWS

An Appeal and an Offer to

M & M READERS

With this, *Masses & Mainstream's* sixth issue, the complex technical problems that go into the creation of a new magazine have been solved. Two big jobs still remain: (1) consistently to improve our magazine; (2) systematically to enlarge its circulation. These two jobs are interdependent. Ours is the responsibility of ensuring the constant deepening and enrichment of the content of *Masses & Mainstream.* You, our Readers, hold the key to the further expansion of its present circulation of 17,000 and, thereby, the extension of its influence in the cultural life of America.

Our goal is to achieve a circulation of 25,000 before the end of 1948. We are appealing to the readers of *Masses & Mainstream* to help us secure additional subscriptions from friends, neighbors, associates. Building the circulation of *Masses & Mainstream* means to reinforce a new weapon against the thought-controllers and warmongers.

As a special inducement to our Readers for their efforts, we are offering the following free premiums for new subscriptions sent in from now until Labor Day, 1948 (if you already own these titles, you may select their equivalents from the International Publishers list):

1 sub —*Dialectical Materialism,* by V. Adoratsky.....price $.75

2 subs—*Literature & Art,* by K. Marx and F. Engels....price $1.85

3 subs—*Art and Society,* by S. Finkelstein.....price $2.75

4 subs—*History of the Labor Movement in the U.S.,* by Philip Foner.....price $3.75

5 subs—*Selected Works of Karl Marx,* 2 vols.....price $5.00

Send in the names and addresses of your new subs, together with $4.00 for each yearly sub, and the titles of the books you want, and we will do the rest. All remittances should be made to:

NEW CENTURY PUBLISHERS, 832 Broadway, New York City 3

VOLUME 1, NUMBER 6

masses & MAINSTREAM

August, 1948

MASSES & MAINSTREAM *is published monthly by Masses & Mainstream, Inc., 832 Broadway, New York 3, N. Y. Subscription rate: $4.00 a year; foreign and Canada: $4.50 a year. Single copies 35 cents; outside the U.S.A., 50 cents. All payments from foreign countries must be made either by U.S. money orders or by checks payable in U.S. currency. Re-entered as second class matter February 25, 1948, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879.* MASSES & MAINSTREAM *is distributed nationally by New Century Publishers, 832 Broadway, N. Y. C.*

AMONG THE CONTRIBUTORS

DORA BIRTLES, an Australian novelist who is author of *The Overlanders,* a best-seller which was made into the movie of that name, writes us about her story in this issue: *"In 1936 I lived for a year in Greece. On a trumped-up passport charge I was fined in a little local court at Kefissia and sentenced to three days in the women's prison at Averoff . . . every fact in the story is true and so too is its atmosphere. The period is that of mass imprisonment of political liberals just before the Metaxas dictatorship."*

YORK CUNNINGHAM is a young Negro artist who lives in New York. This is his first published work.

RAE DALVEN has compiled and translated a volume of modern Greek poetry to be published in the Fall by Boni & Gaer.

MORRIS U. SCHAPPES is an editor of *Jewish Life* and a member of the faculty of the School of Jewish Studies in New York.

BEN SHAHN, one of America's foremost artists, was recently given a retrospective show at the Museum of Modern Art.

MATT WILLIAMS is an American film technician now living in Paris.

• •

COVER: A woodcut by Leopoldo Mendez

All manuscripts should be addressed to The Editors of MASSES & MAINSTREAM, *832 Broadway, New York 3, N. Y., and be accompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelope for return. Payment is made on publication.*

FROM McKINLEY TO WALLACE

My fifty years as a political independent

by W. E. B. DU BOIS

JOHNNY MORGAN used to keep a newsstand in the front part of the Post Office in my hometown. Through the displays of literature there I got my first idea of national politics. I was fascinated by Keppler's cartoons of BLAINE—THE TATTOOED MAN, in the campaign of 1880, when I was twelve years of age. Blaine was a Republican and our Lawyer Joyner, who was a Democrat, was looked upon with a certain suspicion. So that, perhaps, I got something of an independent twist in politics by having it impressed upon me at an early age that a leading Republican was a grafter, while all the respectable people that I knew were Republicans.

There was little of what could be called politics in the local situation. The selectmen and the few other officers elected at the town meeting received no salary, and probably very few perquisites; it was chiefly a matter of honor. Perhaps, of course, there was something beneath all of this which I did not know. However, on the whole, our town did not consider that politics was an altogether decent occupation. The less government the better was our motto, and no respectable man ever offered himself for public office. He always had it "thrust" upon him. We did not take any interest at all, so far as I can remember, in state politics; but the national election did call for some attention and action.

Garfield's assassination took place while I was in high school; Arthur became President. I cannot remember that I had any particular attitude toward either of them, or any political judgment. But when Cleveland was elected in 1885, I had graduated from high school and

was at Fisk University in Tennessee. There I began to see national politics from the viewpoint of the South.

I remember the alarm that was felt when we realized that for the first time since the Civil War a Democrat was in office. Around me was a fierce and brutal political life. I remember going downtown and staring fascinated at the marks of bullets in the door of a public building where a politician had been shot to death the day before. Politics was associated with disorder. My schoolmates, most of them older than I, frequently carried pistols. On the whole, however, Cleveland pleased me because of certain political appointments of colored men, like Matthews and Trotter, and because nothing happened to indicate any attempt at re-enslavement of Negroes.

It was here that my first political activity took place, when I made several speeches in favor of prohibition. This was a subject upon which I felt expert: in my Massachusetts hometown, drunkenness was the great curse and temptation. I spoke two or three times, therefore, violently in favor of laws to curb it. I was about nineteen at the time.

I was at Harvard when Harrison was inaugurated in 1889. My main thought was on my studies and I can remember very little that I thought or said concerning the new President. So, too, when Cleveland came to power again in 1893, I was in Germany, and felt no great interest. I missed knowledge of Mark Hanna until much later.

By the time of the next election, the McKinley campaign of '96, I found myself in the midst of political controversy. First of all, I was just finishing two years' teaching at Wilberforce in McKinley's own state of Ohio. Then, before McKinley was inaugurated, I had gone to Philadelphia to make my first sociological study; and from there to Georgia to begin my career as a teacher. There I was disfranchised.

I saw the rise of the Free Silver movement, and the beginning of Populism. I was wrong in most of my judgments. My Harvard training made me stand staunchly for the Gold Standard, and I was suspicious of the Populist "Radicals." At the same time, I had seen face-to-face something of the social-democratic movement in Germany. I had gone to their meetings; and by the time McKinley got to work on his high tariff and showed his evident kinship to big business, I began to awaken. Certain of my earlier teachings now came into conflict. I had been trained to believe in Free Trade, which the new McKinley high tariff contradicted. I began to realize something of the meaning of the new Populist movement in its economic aspects.

WHEN Theodore Roosevelt began the first of his two terms in 1901, I was teaching in the South and trying to study and measure its currents. I began to see the situation more clearly. I was attracted to Roosevelt by his attitude toward my folk in the appointing of Crum to the port collectorship in South Carolina and his defense of the little black postmistress at Indianola, Mississippi. Also, I knew he was right in his fight against the trusts. His luncheon with Booker T. Washington raised such a row in the South that it made me a strong Roosevelt partisan. Then came reaction. I believed in the "muckrakers" whom Roosevelt eventually attacked; they were revealing the graft and dishonesty in American political life. Roosevelt was hedging.

I was particularly incensed when he punished, with needless severity, the colored soldiers who were accused of having revolted under the gravest provocation at Brownsville, Texas, in 1906. On the whole, by the time he went out of office, I held him under deep suspicion. Then, in 1910, I came to New York to help organize the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and there my first real step toward independence in politics took place.

I was bitterly opposed to Taft, who followed Roosevelt in office. Taft, without doubt, catered to the South and did little or nothing for the American Negro. I wrote in June, 1908:

> "When all is said and done, the flat fact remains that William Taft represents that class of Americans who believe that Negroes are less than men; few of them ought to vote; their education should be restricted; their opportunities should be limited; their fate must be left to the white South; their 'value' is their money value to their neighbors; and on occasion they may be treated like dogs (*vide* Brownsville)."

I felt that the announced policies of the Democratic party—its anti-monopoly stand, its denunciation of imperialism, especially as this affected the brown and black people of the West Indies and the Philippines, its pledge to support organized labor—merited the Negro's support. I pointed out:

> "Throughout the South great corporations are more and more grasping and grinding, and crushing Negro labor in mines, mills, lumber camps and brickyards, and then posing for praise in giving them work at rates twenty-five per cent below decent living. If this nation does not assume control of corporations, corporations will

assume control of this nation. Have you no interest in this, Mr. Black Worker?"

Taft triumphed, though it was unquestionably true that more Negroes voted against him than ever before voted against a Republican candidate.

In the critical election of 1912, I at first saw salvation in the new "Bull Moose" movement under Theodore Roosevelt. I even went so far as to offer a plank on the Negro problem to the Bull Moose convention. Joel Spingarn took it to the convention, but Theodore Roosevelt told him he must beware of "that man Du Bois."

This proffered plank demanded the cutting of Southern congressional representation in proportion to the disfranchisement of the Southern masses, an end to lynching, the abolition of segregation, the elimination of peonage, the equalization of education, the democratization of the armed forces, and the prohibition of restrictive covenants. The plank was never so much as discussed. Most Negro delegates were refused seats at the convention and Roosevelt tried to woo the Bourbon South through his teammate, Parker of Louisiana.

I decided then that our best policy in politics was to support Wilson and the Democratic party. Wilson was a scholar whose works I had used in my classes, and although a Southerner, he certainly appeared to be a liberal one. I, therefore, joined forces with Bishop Walters of the Zion Methodist Church, who was already openly a Democrat, and tried to see how many Negro voters could be induced to vote the Democratic ticket. It was a pretty difficult job in 1912 for a Negro to be a Democrat. He was considered as either deliberately disloyal to his people, or a plain grafter. It was difficult to get a Negro audience to listen patiently to any advocacy of the party which once stood for slavery, and against the party of Abraham Lincoln.

In the resulting election the Negro vote did something for the election of Woodrow Wilson; how much it was impossible to say. Certainly more Negroes voted for Wilson than had ever before voted for a Democratic Presidential candidate since the Civil War.

We extracted from Wilson certain clear promises for justice toward the American Negro, and, at a time when lynching was rampant, we hoped to get a clear statement against it. The result was bitterly disappointing. There has been no time in the history of the United States when so much legislation calculated to infringe the political and civil rights of Negroes was proposed in Congress and state legislatures.

They tried to repeal the Fifteenth Amendment; sought a Federal ban on intermarriage; and attacked Negro office-holding. Many of the Southerners looked upon Wilson's election as a field day for a permanent caste status for Negroes. This was a severe blow to my attempt at political leadership; but at the same time there was very little that my opponents could say in favor of the Republican party.

IN 1911, I joined the Socialist Party. I became a member of that celebrated Chapter No. 1, in which several of my colleagues were already enrolled—Mary White Ovington, William English Walling and Charles Edward Russell. The N.A.A.C.P. at the time was definitely tending towards the left, although naturally Villard was on the right, and Spingarn rather in the middle.

I had hardly joined the party, however, when the question of the next election came up; and, as I have shown, first I tried to back Roosevelt, and then did what I could to support Wilson. I quickly became aware that I was going contrary to the party line; that a member of the Socialist Party must vote for the Socialist candidate under all circumstances. For me to do this seemed a betrayal of the best interests of the Negro people. They could not afford to have a man in the White House whose election was not due, at least in part, to their vote. The situation was critical. Therefore, I resigned from the Socialists and never since have joined a political party. For registration purposes I usually have enrolled as a Socialist, and lately as American Labor.

This incident illustrates perhaps one fair criticism that could be made of my independence in politics. My tendency was to stand outside of party and think, explain and choose. At the same time, I am quite aware that practical democratic government calls for party organization and action, and party organization implies the subordination of individual will to the party platform. Unless this is done, democratic government tends toward anarchy.

It is this necessity, however, that makes the role of the politician and statesman approach hypocrisy and condonation of wrong so often. It was this, of course, that explained the fact that Franklin D. Roosevelt depended upon bosses like Hague and Kelly. It must always be a difficult point of decision as to how far a citizen can be a loyal party man and an independent voter. With my particular type of thinking and impulse to action, it was impossible for me to be a party man.

In October, 1916, I wrote:

> "The Negro voter enters the present campaign with no enthusiasm. Four years ago the intelligent Negro voter tried a great and important experiment. He knew that the rank and file of the Bourbon democracy was without sense or reason, based on provincial ignorance and essentially uncivilized, but he saw called to its leadership a man of high type and one who promised specifically to American Negroes justice—'Not mere grudging justice, but justice executed with liberality and cordial good feeling.' They have lived to learn that this statement was a lie, a peculiarly miserable campaign deception. They are forced, therefore, to vote for the Republican candidate, Mr. Hughes, and they find there little that is attractive."

We tried to get some reassuring statements out of Hughes, but were unable to do so. He was practically silent on the Negro. Nevertheless, we felt there was almost nothing that we could do except to vote Republican during that campaign and that was the advice I gave. Wilson was re-elected, narrowly, and the war came and our participation in it.

We were then brought into politics by the demand for decent treatment in the draft and in the training centers, particularly in the South; and especially by a demand for Negro officers. The Wilson administration became conscious of the political and social power of Negroes and was scared for a time of possible German influence. It yielded in the matter of Negro officers, after we had campaigned widely. Eventually, 700 officers were commissioned. Wilson also promised Villard a Race Commission of Inquiry, but did not keep his word. Then came the scandal of the treatment of Negro soldiers in Europe. The result was, naturally, to turn most Negroes definitely toward support of Harding in 1920.

I did, then, point out:

> "The Republican party has for twenty-five years joined the white South in disfranchising us; it has permitted us to be Jim Crowed, deprived of schools and segregated. It has partially disfranchised us in its party councils and proposes practically to eliminate us as soon as this campaign is over. It has encouraged and recognized the 'Lily-White' factions, and nearly driven us from public office. In addition to this, the Republicans represent reaction and privilege, the abolition of freedom of speech, the punishment of thinkers, the suppression of the labor movement, the encouragement and protection of trusts, and a new protective tariff to tax the poor for the benefit of the rich.

THE HOUSE THAT JACK BUILT

"The Democratic party stands for exactly the same things as the Republicans. Between their professed and their actual policies there is no difference worth noting. To be sure, the Northern wing of the party has tendencies toward some recognition of the laborers' demands and the needs of a stricken war-cursed world, but this is more than neutralized by the Solid South."

HARDING'S death brought Coolidge to the White House. Coolidge was as colorless toward the race problem as toward other things. But at the suggestion of Bill Lewis, a leading colored Democrat of Boston, he went out of his way to appoint me special Minister Plenipotentiary to Liberia to attend the inauguration of President King. I was at the time already on a visit there, so my appointment was purely a gesture of courtesy.

I remember on my return making a detailed report to Mr. Coolidge and recommending things that really would have been of advantage to Africa. He listened very patiently; I was not at all sure that he understood anything I was saying. He certainly paid no heed to it.

In 1924, my support went to La Follette's Progressive Party for it seemed clear that he and his party were infinitely superior to the Coolidge-Davis alternative.

Of the two million Negro votes that year about a million went to Coolidge, and probably as many as 500,000 to La Follette, the latter a splendid tribute to the developing independence of the Negro voter.

The election of 1928 probably represented the lowest point to which the influence of the Negro in politics ever fell in the United States since enfranchisement. Indeed, in all respects it was probably the most disgraceful of all our political campaigns, bringing in not simply anti-Negro hate, but religious intolerance, the question of sumptuary liquor laws, and a general bitterness and antagonism.

The campaign went so badly that I succeeded in October, 1928, in getting colored leaders representing all phases of thought to join me in a statement, one of the most important, perhaps, in the history of the Negro since the Civil War. It said in part:

"All of us are at this moment united in the solemn conviction that in the Presidential campaign of 1928, more than in previous campaigns since the Civil War, the American Negro is being treated in a manner which is unfair and discouraging. We accuse the political leaders of this campaign of permitting without protest,

public and repeated assertions on the platform, in the press, and by word of mouth, that color and race constitute in themselves an imputation of guilt and crime. . . .

"We are asking in this appeal for a public repudiation of this campaign of racial hatred. Silence and whispering in this case are worse than in matters of personal character and religion. Will white America make no protest? Will the candidates continue to remain silent? Will the church say nothing? Is there any truth, any issue in this campaign, either religious tolerance, liquor, water power, tariff or farm relief, that touches in weight the transcendent and fundamental question of the open, loyal and unchallenged recognition of the essential humanity of twelve million Americans who happen to be dark-skinned?"

This was signed by R. R. Moton, of Tuskegee; John Hope, of Morehouse; Mordecai W. Johnson, of Howard; C. C. Spaulding, of the North Carolina Mutual Insurance Company; James Weldon Johnson, Secretary of the N.A.A.C.P.; Eugene K. Jones, of the National Urban League; Mary McLeod Bethune; Monroe N. Work; Reverdy C. Ransom, bishop in the A.M.E. Church; Channing H. Tobias, of the Y.M.C.A.; Carl Murphy, editor of the *Afro-American;* L. K. Williams, president of the National Baptist Convention, and others. It represented practical unanimity among the Negro leaders.

I wrote in November, 1928:

"Many Americans place their hopes of political reform in the United States on the rise of a Third Party which will register the fact that the present Republican and Democratic parties no longer differ in any essential respect; that both represent the rule of organized wealth, and neither of them has been willing to take radical ground with regard to the tariff, the farmer, labor, or the Negro.

"The efforts, however, to organize a Third Party movement have not been successful. The Populists failed. The Socialists failed. The Progressives failed. The Farmer-Labor movement failed. Many reasons have been advanced for these failures, but by common consent the real effective reason has seldom been discussed and that reason is in the Solid South: the fact is that no party in American politics can disappear if it is sure of 136 Southern electoral votes."

HOOVER, who was inaugurated in 1929, furnished every reason for the final driving of the Negro out of the Republican party. The Negro was not mentioned in his message to Congress. My indictment

of Herbert Hoover was written in 1932. I accused him of consorting with the "Lily-Whites" of the South and helping to disfranchise Negroes in the councils of the Republican Party. He nominated known enemies of the Negro for public office, as in the case of Parker of North Carolina for the Supreme Court. He was unfriendly to Haiti and Liberia, and permitted outrageous discrimination in government, especially in the case of Red Cross relief following the Mississippi flood in 1927. In a Tennessee speech in 1928, he promised to appoint to office no person to whom white Southerners objected. Not only was Hoover antagonistic to the Negroes in particular, but in the great national problems of industrial depression, the international debt and the tariff; "in all these President Hoover had been either wrong or helplessly inadequate and each of these failures affected us."

That meant that with the advent of Franklin Roosevelt, President from 1933 to 1945, the Negroes went largely into the ranks of the Democratic party for various reasons: as a rebound from the policies of Taft and Hoover; in gratitude to Roosevelt because of his recognition of Negroes as an integral part of the nation needing relief and work, and capable of bearing their burden in the Great Depression.

The support of Roosevelt by Negroes was not unanimous nor continuous. He made concessions to the South in the matter of wages; and the National Recovery Administration (N.R.A.) aroused much complaint of discrimination. He was often ill-advised by Southerners. But nevertheless, under no recent President have Negroes felt that they received as much justice as under Franklin Roosevelt. I supported him in all four of his terms.

Truman's accession in 1945 brought in a border state politician of apparent good will but narrow training and small vision. His final advocacy of civil rights, his appointment of a Negro Territorial Governor, and other actions during the Second World War brought him a considerable measure of Negro support, so that the Democratic party still probably has a larger Negro following than the Republican. But unfortunately, with the true Truman method he has already begun to talk soft on civil rights. He had not a word to say about them on his recent barnstorming trip to the West and Southwest. This, plus his action in the case of Palestine, and his attitude toward Russia, have made it probable that in the next election the majority of Negroes are going to vote for either a Republican or for Wallace.

My own influence, wherever it can be exercised, and the area is small, has been distinctly in favor of Wallace. Not simply because of his attitude toward Negroes, which is unusually liberal, but even more because of his advocacy of peace, and because of his friendship for and understanding of Russia. I cannot escape the feeling that the attempt of Russia to change the economic foundation of modern life is an even greater phenomenon than the French Revolution.

As I look back upon these fifty years of political activity I can see first, of course, that they occupied a comparatively small part of my thought and work. They were incidental to my main object in studying the Negro problem and interpreting the Negro people to the world. Yet they were important to me in changing my early attitude, which sought completely to divorce politics from the mass of social activity, and brought me to the much truer idea that a basis of political life is and must be economic.

Helen West Hel

A Quiet Summer's Day

A Story by PHILLIP BONOSKY

BY JUST looking out of the window, I can see a gypsy woman, dressed in wild colorful clothes, scratching her behind industriously while her dirty-haired children roam like beetles among the pots and pans. The yellow head of my own boy weaves in and out among them.

These are not fortune-telling gypsies, but artisans, repairing boilers and copper kettles. They live—three or four families merged into one (whose children belong to whom?)—in a single-room broken-down shack on this street, next to the Chinese laundry. The room is filled with exotic and fascinating debris, and the ceiling is hung with tenting, and across the open door has been flung an embroidered ivory-stained curtain. They live as if in a tent, and at night all crowd into sleeping bags which are spread on the floor.

Our section is a real melting pot. You come here to live only if you are poor, exploited, dark-skinned and foreign-born, and gypsy. You are nobody, if you live here, and yet the great brick-walled steel mill a block away huddles over you, wanting you badly, with its hundred eyes watching to see that you don't really escape. It listens to your breathing at night, plainly heard through the thin walls of your shack, and in the morning shrills a sharp whistle at you calling you to come, knowing that you will.

On this street of our city that runs down to the railroad track with its winking warning red lights our life lies exposed on a summer day.

The Greeks have taken their marble-topped tables onto the sidewalk, and sitting over their bitter black demi-tasses, play cards or read the Greek papers and mourn over the rape of Greece. There are no arguments; they are all pro-guerrilla: and the rich Greeks, like all the rich, live elsewhere.

Grocery stores selling goat cheese and shoelaces half-spill onto the

sidewalk with potted plants and gilt pictures. The Negroes have a church here now, an old store-front still marred with obscene drawings. The street window has been painted over to shut out the curious-eyed, but there are deep scratches through the paint nevertheless and white kids peep through. On Sundays they come here and sing and pray to God, crying to Him to let them go, while their children play tag with one another, and their adolescent sons stand rebelliously on the corner, with their hands in their pockets and their eyes in their dreams.

There is a bakery shop, which smells like a mother; there is a Greek church with its crooked cross and its foundation stone telling everyone that it was founded in 1902.

Off the main street the crowded houses of our people are surrounded by neat gardens. These gardens are rich. They are black and carefully tended. Every grain of soil in them has been personally handled at one time or another through the years by the master of the house. There grow strong tomato plants, smelling faintly of skunk, the bleached celery covered with paper bags, pepper plants, big round cabbage that children laugh at because they're so fat, kohlrabi, beans that have climbed yellowly up long poles, red-ribbed beet leaves, delicate lettuce plants, onions with their green authoritative spears up. Dogs and babies know to keep out of the gardens. But bordering them are rows of sunflowers which in one summer spring up taller than yourself.

THE creek which curls around our little section like a noose is an open sewer. Waste from the mill is so thick in it, it almost needs to be pushed. No fish could live in it for five minutes. Bugs fall from overhanging trees and sink. Tin cans, some with their glowing advertising up, of smiling faces and ripe fruit, float along with sometimes a cat or a puppy for company. But still, where it looks cleaner, our children go and play; they roll up their trousers above their knees and wade up or down away from their sneakers and scuffed shoes left behind them on the bank with tightly balled-up stockings wadded into the toes.

These children of ours are all colors: coffee like the Puerto Ricans, dark and light cocoa like the Negroes, amber like the Filipinos, brown like the Spaniards, white-faced like the Greeks with their black curly hair, blond-haired like the Slovaks and Russians and Lithuanians, or red-haired like the Irish and, as it happens, a Jewish boy; and the

Illustration by York Cunningham

alien gypsy kids, who won't play with the Chinese boy, shine like maple.

From all parts of Europe and Asia, their fathers speak pidgin English and Greek, Chinese, Russian, Yiddish, Spanish. They seem to have nothing in common, at first glance, except when you turn to look in the opposite direction—there stands the great stone fort only a

couple hundred yards away, with its watchful hundred eyes and its angry whistle crying at the children from hour to hour.

But the children don't always play in the creek. There is a park, which the family that owns the great machine-tool works has donated to the town. This fact is commemorated in bronze which has been cemented into a huge granite block and anchored into the earth at one corner of the park. Nothing, nothing will uproot that rock and its bronze testimony.

The park is free to all, including the Communists, our only defenders, who may come once a week and, speared by the eye of a policeman swinging a billy in an endless circle, talk about the troubles and the injustices that the people of our section suffer. They speak of the creek and ask that the mill be forbidden to pour its waste into it, but what can the mill do? Build a sewer? They tell us about another country of our own, a country waiting to be born in our wills and our hands, where no injustice is, where socialism reigns, where man no longer is an enemy of man.

The old men and women sit on the benches under the buckeye trees and listen; the newly-married couples listen; the children run away. Their parents listen with timid dreams in their eyes, and refuse to let themselves believe. Out of the corners of their eyes they watch the policeman and understand. Later, in secrecy, they accept a pamphlet or exchange a confidence. Or they sign a card.

But the park has other events as well: the high school band comes and plays at night on the concrete rotunda of pillars in the middle of the park. When the musicians arrive at the close of a piece all together, everybody applauds and the players smile with surprised expressions. The popcorn man whose one arm is paralyzed opens paper bags with his teeth and swears like a monkey when too many customers crowd him all at once. To children who catch his fancy he gives a warm peanut free.

The machine-tool manufacturing family has also given us a little zoo, made up of indignant and worried animals, plucked like ourselves from all over the world, alien for many generations; but unlike us the animals are caged. A peacock that never spreads his fan, chasing after his dowdy hen; a zebra who gets cold in the winter and weeps for months; a sloth who hangs upside down on a bare branch and only

looks at the sky; monkeys who commit indecencies before the watchers. The adults gaze at them frozen-faced, the little children titter.

There is an alligator who lies in the shallow water, with his slit swamp-colored eyes elevated on his head, unseeing, and no matter what you yell at him, what insults you throw at him, never moves. The monkeys and macaws shout back. The baboon even shakes his bars, and will throw a water pan at you.

ACROSS the highway from the park is a great red building. This is the county jail. Here once Eugene Debs was arrested for exercising the right of free speech and spent a month or two. But since nobody has put up a bronze plaque commemorating this fact, it is doubtful that anybody remembers this; not the popcorn man, not the zoo keeper, not the high school boys, not, certainly, the pigeons. Least of all do the men who can sometimes be seen wheeling wheelbarrows, or carrying planks, who are in there for who knows what crime: murder, gambling, drinking, bribery, vote-stealing. Across from their towers the guardsmen can see the unarmed towers of the mill just through a row of trees.

I take my boy for walks in the sun, although we never just walk. If there are two tracks on the path, we become locomotives; or we are horses. Or when we get on the swings we become birds capable of taking off into the sky. Only we don't choose to as yet. At night, with the big yellow moon half-drowned in the little pond, we sit and try to catch fish with a pole, a piece of twine and a safety pin. For bait we use pellets of bread. A frog hidden in the rushes across the pond watches us from the dark and croaks at us.

When I am writing alone in the room, my boy leaves me with provisions for a long journey and disappears into the neighborhood. He tells me he'll come back, but I always have to go and look for him. I find him darting in and out of the homes of the Negro families; and when I approach to ask them if they'd seen my boy, their faces become animated, they know who I mean. I find him eating molasses and bread with their children.

Or if he's not there, I'll find him suddenly part of the gypsy children, threading in and out among them talking to the gay women in nobody knows what language. Or if he sees me coming, he may run

into the Chinese laundry and go and hide under the counter while the two old Chinese laugh and laugh.

I don't know whether I am his father or his brother or a figment of his imagination. I only know I have given them a hostage. I know that they know.

THE day has been sunny and warm, a June day. Roses are full and blooming everywhere. A sunflower rises to the bottom of my window and in a few weeks will be tall enough to obscure my view of the yard. My boy is out somewhere and I am writing.

I hear them running, coming through the gate, pounding on my door. There are about three half-grown children I almost recognize. Their eyes are white and they cry shrilly at me: "Your little boy fell in the creek! Your little boy, drownding!"

My heart shudders as I stare at them, and suddenly as my head flies up to look beyond them, I catch a radiant glimpse of blue sweeping in a blinding arc over the holy sky. For a moment my eyes are hurt and tears rise.

All that was potential and sinister in our environment suddenly leaps out from behind the sheen of summer. The children's faces become static and pinched before my eyes.

I am off through the gate, down through the pebble-strewn alley, down through the cinder paths beside the luxuriant gardens, the dogs, the houses, the familiar posts we had lingered over, intimate with his presence—and over me the great blue sky seems to dwindle my running into an irony, reaching beyond to where the small group has already gathered, seeing what I cannot see.

I race the ambulance and hear its screaming like my own screaming in my ears. As I turn the corner, I see it coming up the opposite road, its red light pulsing needlessly in the daytime, its white square body looking like a wedding cake.

I throw myself across the ditch into the field, aware as I jump of clutching a pencil and feeling it snap in my grip as my feet hit the ground. I clutch tighter and the jagged end of the broken half tears against my palm.

The weeds are tall in the field, and this has been a dumping ground, too, and my feet clatter through the tin cans, and suddenly I trip in

the tall grass, losing sight abruptly of the little group standing by the creek across the field.

I am up again and for a moment cannot find them, and in a brief panic half-whirl around, and finding them again, stumble across the field. They see me coming and open a circle. They stand and watch as I struggle across the field; waiting immobile until I arrive. I plunge through them to the little boy on the grass, and suddenly freeze.

"This is not my boy!" I cry in the same agony I would have cried, "This is my boy!" Lying there, his brown eyes staring into the sky, his brown face almost blue, is somebody else's child; somebody else's but not mine.

My eyes close for a moment and I rise to my feet and suddenly I feel taller than anyone standing there and can see across the field into the vast distance and my eyes race along the long arc of the sky. My heart has stopped beating and in my head there is only silence and even my pulses have dropped out of my wrists.

I can now see them arriving, see them as I suddenly saw myself, tiny people urged by panic, covered with irony as they run. A woman whose face is so white I can see it this far away is running across the field; she falls as I fell, she pulls herself up by grasping the grass and tearing a handful out by the roots. She forgets to drop it as she runs and bears it to us.

And now she falls at our feet over the body of her child. She knows he is dead, knew it before the other children told her, knew it years ago when he was born. She buries her head on his wet chest, and I can see the back of her throbbing head, while his face stares away from her, filled with some childlike perversity, away from his mother stubbornly into the sky. She shakes him and his head moves but his eyes never turn to her; he seems for a moment like a petulant child who has been hurt too much to answer and stands separate from the world.

The ambulance can't come this far, and two men are running across the field, one carrying a rolled-up stretcher, the other a respirator. They ungrip the mother and apply the machine over the boy's face; only his fixed eyes remain above the machine and seem to stare patiently beyond all of us, already irrevocably committed.

Along the road I see men, on their way to work, pause and look over to us. But they have no time to lose and they hurry on. Where

is the boy's father? Cars and busses go along the street far away, and nobody can see us here from the street because there are trees in the way; we can hear, carried to us on this calm summer afternoon, the sound of music from a corner saloon.

There's no use to work with the respirator. The mother is weeping a little apart from the crowd. Her other children are standing near her and one of them is explaining in a hushed defensive voice what had happened, how they had forgotten their brother, how they had missed him, how they had finally found him. "I *told* him to watch our shoes," the older boy explains over and over, watching his mother with his quick eyes, wondering if she hears him, wondering if he'll get whipped.

Now I remember my own child and begin to look for him. Far up the field I see his yellow head over the grass. Two goats are tethered to a crabapple tree, but a baby goat wanders freely. I walk slowly up the path now, feeling grief drain behind me as if into the dark circle over the sunny grass. I am aware of weariness as if I had run in some endless nightmare. I feel my hand throbbing. Looking down I see blood on it and am relieved.

I feel a quiet fallen in me; but I feel no peace. I am happy and at the same time I feel my fear still tight inside. The little boy lying on the ground is somebody else's little boy, and so, in all honesty, I am happy; but I know that he remains with me, as I go. He has become identified with my own child; a consanguinity, like another family relationship obscured till then, unites them both. The woman is weeping for my child, too. I am going merely to claim him but not to have.

He has been chasing the baby goat, and when he sees me, stops and says casually, as if to the goats, "There's my Daddy."

I take him by the hand without a word and begin the homeward walk.

Finally I say to him, merely as if this were required for some forgotten parental reason: "Why did you come here, Danny? You know I told you to play near the house."

"I had to come," he explains to me seriously.

"Why did you have to come?"

"To see the baby goat," he explains almost reproachfully.

We are taking a path that will lead us around the knot of people.

"You know I told you never to play near the creek," I tell him gravely but almost to myself. "A little boy fell in the creek and died. A little boy just as little as you are."

He pulls on my hand so that I'll look down at him.

"But, Daddy," he says, "you *told* me not to play in the creek!"

I pick him up and carry him. Because I can hold him I feel him safer for a moment. The fringe of the crowd touches us. It begins to move across the field, following slowly the two men with the stretcher, on which is lying, for all we can see, only a blanket.

The crowd thins into a procession moving behind, the curious and the grieving. All the women are crying, except now the boy's mother. It seems as if she is unwilling to follow them; she should go home now and prepare for the funeral.

The ambulance moves off with its siren beginning to whine. Again the red lights on it begin to pulse. It leaves a clinging cloud of dust behind it which hangs in the summer air, like a stain in quiet water.

We walk slowly down the alley I had run through. Others come, too, and I hear the boy's name now and the fact that his father had just left for work in the mill. The gypsies are standing in the doorway, with their golden earrings for once motionless in their ears, their children peeping out from behind their scarlet dresses. The two Chinese have forgotten their laundry for a moment and also watch, but they don't know what's happened. The Greeks sit at their marble-topped tables up and down the street. They are being whispered to. All the women seem to be holding their children in their arms.

The mill whistle suddenly blows, loudly and commandingly, in this summer's silence. The men who had glanced over at us curiously have reached the gates in time; they are inside now. Now they start to work. The hundred windows in the big walls stare at us. They have seen everything.

As we turn into the gate of our yard, I notice that I had torn a rambling rose vine off the fence. It couldn't have been anyone else, it must have been I.

Four Poems

by KONSTANTINOS P. KAVAFIS

THE CITY

You said, "I will go to another land, another sea,
Another city will be found better than this one.
Everything I try condemns me
and my heart is buried like a corpse.
How long will my mind remain in this wasteland?
Wherever I turn my eye, wherever I look,
I see the black ruins of my life here
where I lived so many years, wrecking, spoiling."

You will not find new places, other seas.
The city will follow you. You will roam
the same streets. You will age in the same neighborhoods
and you will grow white in these same houses.
You will always come to this city. For other places—do not hope.
There is no ship for you, no street.
Since you destroyed your life here,
In this small corner, you ruined it for the whole world.

Konstantinos Kavafis (1868-1933) was born in Alexandria, the son of a rich merchant who migrated there from Constantinople in 1840. Kavafis was educated in England and returned to Alexandria where he spent the rest of his life. He had his poems printed in loose-leaf sheets which he distributed among his friends.

WALLS

Without thinking, without regret, without shame,
they built thick and high walls around me.

And now I sit despairing here,
I think of nothing else; this fate devours my mind;

For I had many things to do outside.
Oh! Why didn't I see them building the walls?

But I never heard the noise of the builders,
Imperceptibly, they shut me out of the world.

Irving Amen

SATRAPY

What a pity, when you are built
for beautiful and important works,
this unjust fate of yours always
denies you encouragement and success;
and tawdry customs hinder you,
pettiness and indifference.
And how horrible the day when you yield,
(the day when you give up and yield),
and you leave on foot for Sousa,
and you go to the monarch Artaxerxes,
who appoints you to his court with favor,
and he offers you satrapies and such.
And you accept with despair
these things you do not want.
But your soul seeks, for other things it weeps:
the praise of the people and the Sophists,
the difficult, unbribed Hurrahs!
The agora, the theatre, and the wreaths.
How can Artaxerxes give you these things,
where will you find these things in a satrapy
and what life will you make without these things?

MORNING SEA

Let me stop here. Let me, too, see nature awhile,
morning sea and cloudless sky,
mauve brilliance, yellow shore,
all lit beautiful and large.

Let me stop here. And let me pretend I see these things
(I really did see them for a minute when I first stopped)
and not that here too, it is my fantasies,
my memories, reflections of pleasure.

Translated from the Greek by Rae Dalven.

THE CASE OF THE
Contemptuous Wife

by HELEN CLARE NELSON

WHEN I was in my teens I spent a lot of time acting out to the finest detail various roles that I might conceivably fulfill in later life. These altered with what I was reading or seeing in the movies, and since I read much and saw as many movies as possible, my range was immense.

No reasonably dramatic human experience was too petty for my fantasy, and by the time I was fifteen I was all set to play any of a thousand parts that fate might toss me. I knew exactly how I would behave should I turn out to be a murderess in the dock, an international jewel thief, a madwoman, the toast of Paris, the first woman President of the United States, or the little match girl; and so on.

Now I have never felt that these exercises were a waste of time or a sinful escape from reality. In many a sudden crisis my subconscious has floated up to me a pattern of behavior, all thoroughly worked out years before, that neatly suited the occasion until I could get the real hang of it.

Recently, however, this artful device failed me utterly, leaving me with a feeling of disillusionment in the ways by which we can prepare ourselves for life through imagination and identification. The occasion was the citation for contempt of Congress of ten Hollywood writers, directors and producers, of whom my husband was one.

During the first week of testimony before the House Committee on un-American Activities in Washington last fall I had been more or less preoccupied with the broader meanings of the Committee. But on the day my husband was cited I was abruptly faced with a personal problem that was to occupy a disproportionate amount of time and thought. The problem was one of simple decorum: How to behave when one's husband is in contempt of Congress. The attendant confusions and those springing from the counterpart of the problem—how to behave *toward* one whose husband is in contempt of Congress—

were so great that I hastily present my experience. For it is not too farfetched to imagine that others may face a similar situation in the future and derive some poise from what has gone before. In my experience no solid standards of etiquette were arrived at, but a beginning was made.

We happen to live in the only apartment house in a block of modest homes on the wrong side of the tracks in Beverly Hills. In spite of my husband's fabulous earnings as a screen writer (in one newspaper they added up to $100,000 a year), in our five years in Hollywood we have never had a swimming pool; nor, indeed, enough cash for a down payment on a house with a yard for our three-year-old daughter to play in. In the careful budgeting of our Hollywood haul there has been no room, either, for a staff of servants or a mother's helper. Consequently it devolves on me to take my little girl to a public playground nearby for two hours in the morning and three in the afternoon, doing my scrubbing and washing and attending gay, leftish Hollywood parties as best I can at night. Though unexciting, these outings are a welcome diversion, for I often get tired of looking at the broken-down furniture in our rented walk-up apartment and think back longingly to the *meubles* from Macy's that we abandoned with foolish unconcern when we sublet our New York apartment on Twelfth Street and flew to the rich heart of Hollywood.

On the morning my husband was cited, my daughter and I started off in our accustomed way, my little girl bursting with energy and I in the painful stupor that the morning air here produces in me. I had not yet given the House Committee a thought. So that when my neighbor, Mrs. P., a hearty mid-Western type who usually bellows, "Hi, there!" sent us an odd look and suddenly dipped around the side of her house in a kind of rabbit-like two-step, I merely thought vaguely that she had just remembered some urgent matter, or perhaps had broken her garter.

I did not at once relate Mrs. P.'s conduct to what was to become the leading etiquette problem on our street. We continued innocently on our way, and it was not until we returned from the playground and encountered a second neighbor, Mrs. Q., that Mrs. P.'s behavior began to have meaning.

Mrs. Q. is a nice middle-aged housewife who works daily in her garden, and she was crouching over a begonia as we approached. When

she saw us she put down her trowel, stood up, and threw out her chest. Only in movies in which Anne Revere plays the infinitely understanding mother have I seen the kind of look that Mrs. Q. cast first on my daughter and then on me and then on both of us. Long, meltingly kind, and terribly understanding, it paralyzed me.

"Oh," she said at last, and moving lithely across the grass she took my hands in hers. *"Oh!* If there's *anything* I can do—*anything.* I've always thought *so* much of you and the—*little girl."*

Instead of replying brightly, "Certainly there's something you can do. Protest the actions of the Committee to your Congressman and the Speaker of the House," I let my hands lie foolishly in hers. Taken by surprise, I succumbed completely to the mood of Mrs. Q. and murmured in a low tone, matching hers, "No—no—thank you so much. There's nothing."

Between us, moist hand in hand, we effectively endowed the situation with all the aspects of a wake—a wake, that is, for one soon to be justly dead by hanging by the neck from the gallows. One second after we parted I knew with terrible clarity that nothing I could ever say to Mrs. Q. from that moment on could drain away the insidious meaning of our long handclasp. Thenceforth she would be my Arm in Time of Trouble, never failing, always there.

The loud honking of a Buick brought me out of my irritated engrossment with this idea. It was neighbor No. 3, a goat-faced woman with five dogs and no children, to whom I happened never to have spoken at all. *She* leaned out of the car window and, without slowing down, shot me what can only be described as a horribly athletic grin. It was swift, it involved all her face muscles, it was violently there—and then it and she were gone.

Even now, months later, I haven't classified that grin. Was it one of plain human friendliness? (All of a sudden?) Of simple, warm *camaraderie?* (Not necessarily in a political sense, of course.) Did it perhaps spring from some earthy American sense of comedy (with the House Committee as its focus)? Again (horrid thought), it had some of the force and angularity of what might be stark derision. Or was Goat Face just feeling good for a change, what with the Christmas season just around the corner?

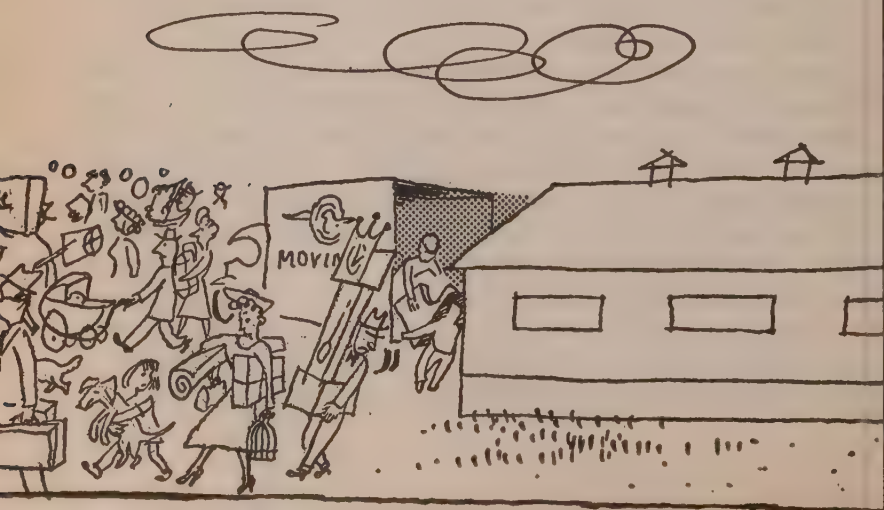
During what I now think of as the Week of Contempt, my telephone was very silent. I believe it rang three times in seven days. Social invitations didn't come in by mail or phone or special messenger. I had let

my driver's license lapse, since we have only one broken-down car, always in use, and, left to our own devices, my daughter and I were thrown more forcefully than ever upon the street. Children must have sun, contempt of Congress or not.

It seemed to me suddenly that we were *always* in the street, going or coming from the playground or making a couple of two-mile circles around our block. It became increasingly clear from day to day (nay, hour to hour) that the neighborhood was really taking Contempt seriously. Overnight my daughter and I became public figures, and I think it is safe to say that absolutely *no* one on our long street, where nothing noticeably more exciting than a small incinerator fire had occurred in a couple of years, failed to regard us as completely fascinating.

People who had followed a monotonously uniform pattern of behavior now began to show a talent for highly individual conduct. No longer the merely casual and friendly smile or wave or nod. At first it was a game to guess how who was going to act when we bumped into each other. By the end of the week it was clear that for the sake of everybody's nerves some easy system should be worked out to relieve us all of the burden of deciding from second to second how to behave toward each other, whether in or out of Contempt.

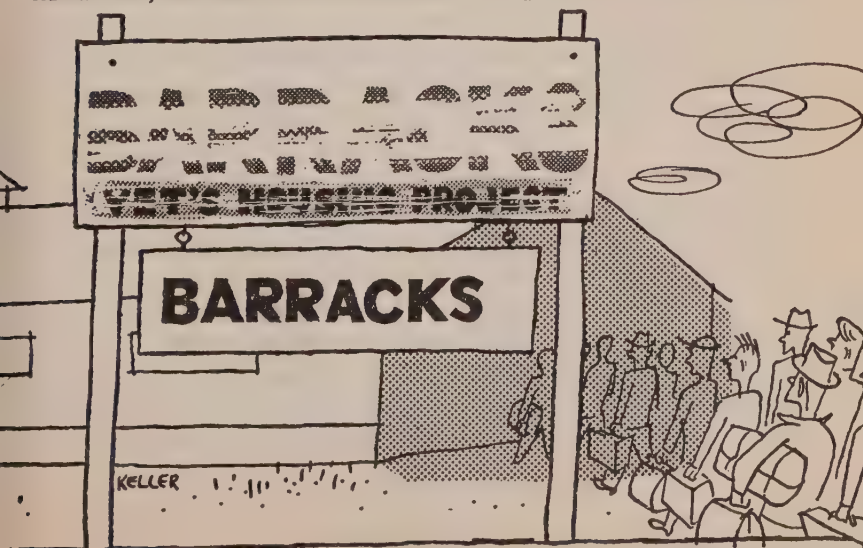
LOOSELY, behavior fell into three categories. There were the peekers. Those, that is, who were unwilling to risk encounter with one married to one in Contempt, but kept closely behind hedge or curtain, peering as we strolled. Peering or peeking has not been common on our



street, there not being much to peek at. The technique of the peekers was poor. I had no trouble determining my attitude toward the peekers. I felt that they were craven and clumsy, and a delightful degree of contempt for *them* gave me a splendid poise in passing their windows and hedges.

There were the snubbers. These, depending on what boarding school they had or had not gone to, either cut me in two with a meat-cleaver stare or frankly turned the backside, muttering assorted calumnies, usually fairly vulgar and quite audible. In spite of the fact that Mr. Hearst's *Examiner* makes an almost perfect delivery score on our street, the snubbers were relatively low by count. Etiquette here, too, was simple. Snubbing or cutting is a simple and direct act, which leaves only one socially acceptable response. One merely gracefully ignores the one who has ignored *one,* and if the latter has been loquacious or noisy about it, one scores a fine point by not responding in kind. (This last I picked up at the private school *I* went to in the great Northwest, where they took these things really seriously a number of years ago.)

Class Three consisted of the cut-ups. Here was indicated the first need for a really solid standard of behavior in relation to the social state, Contempt of Congress. In the course of my daughter's and my wanderings, we had had occasion to view fleetingly—of a Saturday afternoon or a Sunday morning—the men of our street, a solid lot who go to work early and come home late. So fleeting, in fact, had been our vision of them that my total impression had been dim and incomplete—a greasy elbow here, the back of a T-shirt there, a couple of feet under a Chrys-



ler, etc. On the week end following the testimony of the "friendly" witnesses in Washington, heads of men previously bowed over cars, gardens or back-yard fires suddenly began to bob up all over the place. At least six men in two days found occasion to leave their chores, amble within closer range and, suitably occupied over a piece of grass or a twig, toss off some quickie that I was never able to handle in our good old American (forgive me, Mr. Thomas) way—*e.g.,* lightly toss one back, equal or better.

Example: Well, see where the old man made the front page. Hah!

—Yes.

—Quite a show they're putting on back there in Washington, hah!

—Yes, hah.

—Well, hah, when they get ready to bomb the White House, you give me an inside tip, eh? Hah? Hah-hah.

—Surely will, hah-hah.

These exchanges were never successful on either part. Invariably the initiator of the joke (often a much longer and duller variant of the above) would pause in the middle of the badinage with the tightly self-conscious look of one who wishes desperately he hadn't *begun* the joke. Invariably I gave an idiot impression—of one who either didn't understand banter as a form or (more probably) was actually involved in a secret plan to bomb the White House and therefore could hardly be expected to pass the time of day about it. A feeling of failure ensued, melting, on Crescent Drive, into the sad mood of "East is East and West is West. . . ." I always walked away from these encounters with the dismal feeling that I had left some kind, Sunday-loving man with the pensive notion that in his midst there *were* people disguised as housewives and children who spent the long California evenings copying blue-prints of atomic missiles and supersonic planes.

OF COURSE there is no doubt that by this time I was a little hypersensitive. Two weeks is a long time to stay cooped up with a three-year-old, with the main *divertissement* of the day the rebroadcasts of the Hearings in Washington. At almost any hour one could switch the radio dial and hear a transcript from some part of the proceedings. I had absolutely no will power when it came to deciding whether to do the day's dishes or try to dial in the testimony of John Howard Lawson for the fourth time. Mr. Thomas's "No, no, no, no, *no!*" held me endlessly spellbound. The fascination of Mr. Stripling's voice, with its quality

of a lonely banjo string plucked over and over by a mechanical finger, never wore off.

I sat on the edge of my chair, betting with myself whether either gentleman would crack at last and say "communism" instead of "commonism." I shuddered to learn that from the headquarters of the Commonist Party of the U.S. on Twelfth Street in New York had streamed the ideas for all those films that we had stupidly thought were contributing to the war effort—or Art. I was entranced by a man whom I first took to be Mortimer Snerd (after all, *everybody* was testifying) but who turned out to be an ex-F.B.I. man who had discovered a code by which he had been able to determine that Dalt T. stood for Dalton Trumbo and Ring L., for Ring Lardner, Jr. and Alvah Bessie, for Alvah Bessie.

What made these sessions really unhealthy, however, was the numbers of cookies that I ate while listening.

It so happened that among other abnormal things during this period, our house was full of, not to say snowed under by, home-made cookies. Some time before my husband left for Washington I had written to my Republican parents in the great Northwest, casually reporting that their son-in-law had been subpoenaed to appear before the House Committee on un-American Activities. My mother, a musician who understands almost everything but politics, and a generous correspondent, had apparently been stunned into silence. Day after day I waited for a letter, beginning, for example, "Well, *really* . . ." or "Just what does the subpoena *mean,* dear? Is it good?" But nothing came. At about the time that the neighbors were beginning to behave in atypical ways, packages began to arrive from the great Northwest. No letters. But one after the other, packages of home-made cookies.

To my mother, who is a professionally busy woman at sixty-five, baking cookies is a real chore, not just a pleasant grandmotherly pastime. With each arriving package I fell into deeper and deeper gloom. Naturally, my daughter was delighted with so many cookies. On the day, however, that she looked up from a new package with an expression not of childish pleasure but of slowly maturing suspicion, adult in its severity, and said, "What? *More cookies?*" I was thoughtful. Even her world, it seemed, was not to be inviolate by the Committee. Though she might not carry with her through life any open scars from this period, who was to say that twenty years from now some psychoanalyst would not trace a well-advanced neurosis to the deep insecurity of that

week in her fourth year when there were so many cookies in the house?

My own immoderate consumption of cookies while I listened to Thomas *et al.* on the radio I ascribe partly to hunger (only my child's meals were regularly served) but mainly to nervousness. The more frantic Mr. Thomas became the more cookies I ate. My digestion was temporarily ruined, but as long as the cookies lasted (and they did) I was helplessly caught in a Pavlovian reflex that could not be broken. When I heard the word communist I reached for a cookie.

THE more I think of it the more I feel that the condition, Contempt of Congress, is just too new to people to expect orthodox behavior from *anyone.* Those who didn't go off in one direction seemed to in another. A couple of blocks from us, for example, the mother of four let the natural caution and reserve of a lifetime go to the winds in six minutes. Clutching an infant to her breast and snatching a two-, a three- and a four-year-old from the path of delivery trucks between sentences, she became so indignant against the Thomas Committee and all its works that she laid bare the most intimate details of her life with a man who (a) had asked for a divorce a week before her last was born; (b) finished off a quart and a half of whiskey the day she came home with the new one; and (c) openly dined now five times a week with some girl from the office. This normally reticent woman flees now on sight of me, and warmly as I feel toward her, I can think of no simple path by which we can go back to our pleasantly impersonal relations.

After living for four months in a state of Contempt (or have I? the exact status of wives and progeny of those in Contempt has never been very clear to me or, of course, to my family or neighbors), I can see that lack of precedent affected my own behavior, too, and that I no doubt confused others even more than they confused me.

When the first telephone calls began drizzling through, for example, I was as excited as a girl about to be invited to her first ball. Any private thoughts I had had to the effect that people were certainly being awfully careful about telephoning the home of one in Contempt were forgotten with the first thrill of the telephone bell. All was forgiven at once, and in my elation I forgot that my mood was not necessarily shared by the person at the other end of the line.

My joyous "Hel-*lo!*" in the tone of an unemployed chorus girl just elected Miss America must have been startling to one in the outside world who was probably thinking soberly of the main currents of po-

litical thought in America. My boisterous hello was answered in these instances first by silence; then a faraway voice, always grave, muffled as under a pillow, said rapidly, "How are you?"

"Oh, *fine!*" I would burst back loudly, gay as a lark. "How are *you?*"

"Fine. Look—" (voice fading further)—"I just called to find out how you are and if there's anything. . . ."

"Oh, we're *fine!* Who *is* it? I don't recognize you at all."

(Silence.) "Don't you?" (Mirthless laugh.)

Along about this time I began to catch on. The conversations ended with mixed feelings on both sides. Joyous as I was to be talking to anyone, even if I didn't know who it was, I was still deeply enough under the influence of all those subversive films I had been seeing for so many years to feel that the really sporting thing—even with Thomas and Stripling galloping for all they were worth—would be to announce at least one's nickname in making contact with the home of a subversive character. Anyhow, that's how they did it in those anti-Nazi films Warner Brothers used to make.

ONE other event of the period is perhaps worth recording for the sake of the new light that it threw (for me) on the F.B.I.

We share a two-party telephone line with the people who live directly below us. When we first moved into our apartment we thought it odd that the telephone company had put such close neighbors on the same line, but since we seldom interfered with each other and since we ourselves had nothing in particular (Mr. Thomas, please note) that we minded having overheard by chance, we weren't perturbed.

The people downstairs consisted, at first, of a nice old lady who became our sitter on all those (*cf.* testimony of Mr. Menjou) nights that we went to hear Paul Robeson sing. There were also the old lady's daughter and the old lady's grand-daughter. Last summer the old lady died, and there remained what my husband used to refer to as the "old baby doll" and the "new baby doll." The old baby doll, who is about fifty-three, and the new one, about twenty-eight, affect the same hair dye, style, colors and costumes, in a kind of Rita Hayworth ensemble that rather stands out on our street. Relations between us had always been friendly, if not advanced, and even through the Week of Contempt the old and new baby dolls had smiled and waved.

On the Sunday night after the Committee abruptly ended its sessions, I picked up the telephone. Instead of the dial tone I heard a res-

onant male voice. "F.B.I.," said the voice, very cheerfully and appealing and not at *all* like in the movies. More like the owner of the Stork Club.

Startled, I listened. My first thought was that our phone was indeed being tapped and that someone had just got tired of sitting there all by himself, saying nothing. Then in came a dulcet voice that I readily identified.

"This is a neighbor of Alvah Bessie," said the old baby doll downstairs. "I'm on their party line, and I just thought you might be interested in some of the names I heard today."

"What's that?" said F.B.I.

"I'm on the party line of Alvah Bessie. *You* know, the writer . . . . in Washington? He got subpoenaed? I just thought I'd give you the names I heard on the phone today."

"Sorry," said F.B.I. "I don't get it."

"The *names,*" said old baby doll a little frantically, "the *names*—of people I heard on the party line of Alvah Bessie, the writer."

We have never deceived ourselves that my husband's name was a household word. Nevertheless I was a little miffed at F.B.I., whose frankly puzzled and open manner I doubt very much was simulated for some crafty purpose.

My heart beating violently, I waited. I had made two calls during the day: one to the headquarters of the Committee for the First Amendment, an organization which was raising funds to fight the Thomas Committee, and one to a Republican *Republican* aunt (God save her now) in Alhambra.

In her patriotic frenzy, dear old baby doll had got everything hopelessly mixed. Not only had she got the name of the secretary of the Committee for the First Amendment all wrong, but the name of the restaurant in which the Committee had temporarily rented quarters she construed as the name of a person, and my aunt she had down as a Mrs. Alhambra of Cheviot Hills.

How long she would have gone on counting off these oddly put-together proper names I don't know, for after two or three names F.B.I. grew restive.

"Look, lady," he said, still in the bright warm voice of a maître-d'hôtel who nevertheless has his breaking point, "I don't know what you're talking about. Now if you'll *just*—"

At this point I could restrain myself no longer.

"The lady," I said, "is trying to tell you some of the names she overheard today on the party line that we share."

"Who are *you*?" said F.B.I. I was really beginning to be sorry for him. He sounded so baffled and like such a nice young man (of course, this reaction may have been partly the result of my two-week isolation in Beverly Hills.)

"I'm Mrs. Bessie," I said, giving him my full name and street address. "My neighbor is trying to say that she has been listening in on my line and she has a list of names she wants to give you in connection with the Thomas Committee investigation in Washington."

Now old baby doll came in again, but what she said was quite inaudible.

"Hey, hey," said F.B.I. "One at a time, ladies. One at a time."

"Certainly," I said in what I hoped were soothing tones. "I don't think these names will be of much use to you, anyway, but in case they are, I'll hang up and my neighbor can call you back."

In spite of the apparent coolness with which I had instructed the F.B.I. concerning the nature of his information, I was really awfully angry when I hung up. I don't know which insulted me most, being informed on, being listened in on, being waved and smiled at while all this was in the making, or an objective distaste with the informer for getting everything wrong if she *was* going to inform and for being so stupid as to use the party line to do the informing on.

I was enchanted, however, with my first and only encounter with the F.B.I. It just goes to show, though, that here again you can't go by those movies, where the F.B.I. is gimlet-eyed, bird-eared, on his toes every second, and *never* to be addled by two women on a telephone line at once.

OUT of all the confusions of those weeks, on the part of neighbors, friends and relatives, the F.B.I., the Association of Motion Picture Producers and myself, I can recall only one incident that may have lasting and dangerous after-effects. I would like to record this incident in the hope that it may save me from being indicted for conspiracy, which I hear brings a much stiffer sentence than contempt.

Besides our Macy's furniture, we had left in our New York apartment on Twelfth Street a black paper suitcase containing some old pieces of fur, some old pieces of tweed, some old table linen, an old evening coat, and some old unsalable manuscripts. We had also left

behind a box of old silver tureens, platters, bowls, etc., that my mother had sent me when I was married.

Though our style of entertaining has never run to heavy silver service, I had always felt guilty about these pieces, blackening away in New York, especially if my mother should ever turn up and ask what had become of them. In view of the imminent unemployment in Hollywood, I now felt that the old fur, the evening coat, and the tweed might come in handy for cutting up into clothes for our little girl. The silver we might either pawn or dazzle our remaining friends with.

I had written my husband in New York, where he had gone when the Hearings ended, to do something about shipping these out. The night before he was to come home I decided I had better send him a telegram to remind him. The message read as follows:

> REMEMBER BLACK SUITCASE ON TWELFTH STREET AND MOTHER'S SILVER. LOVE. LOVE.

Ten minutes later, as I was bolting and barring windows and doors against my neighbors beneath (again the influence of those Warner Brothers anti-Nazi films, in which the informers against the anti-Nazis didn't stop at just *informing*), a terrible vision appeared to me. I suddenly saw Mr. Stripling sitting before a desk beneath a rostrum, floodlights beating from all sides, *my* telegram neatly smoothed out before him. In front of him an investigator was speaking into the microphone in the throaty but not-to-be-laughed-at voice of Mortimer Snerd:

"By a code," he was saying, "which I have discovered, I have been able to decipher the meaning of this message. For *black suitcase,* read *atom bomb;* for *Twelfth Street,* read *Headquarters of the American Commonist Party;* for *mother's silver,* read *Moscow gold.* With the help of members of our staff located in the main capitals of the world we have discovered that *love love* is the international code for *Workers of the World Unite!"*

Sleepless nights have produced no creative ideas on how to clear myself with Mr. Stripling. The best I came up with was a telegram, composed about four one morning, as yet unsent, to all the members of the Committee:

> YOU CAN SUBPOENA SOME OF THE PEOPLE ALL OF THE TIME AND ALL OF THE PEOPLE SOME OF THE TIME BUT YOU CAN'T SUBPOENA ALL OF THE PEOPLE ALL OF THE TIME.

THE MONEY-TREE

by NAOMI REPLANSKY

"When you are tall, you who are small,
Then take this word from me:
It's only your brow's honest sweat
Will grow the money-tree."

"Now I am tall my sweat falls down
And honest all the time,
But scant and silver is the yield
And thin as the thinnest dime."

"Look here, goodlooking, life is short,
Grab from it what you can.
It's arms apart, and wide the heart,
And catch a wealthy man."

"It's arms apart, and wide the heart,
And who comes marching in
But some poor guy with a loving eye
To make my hunger twin."

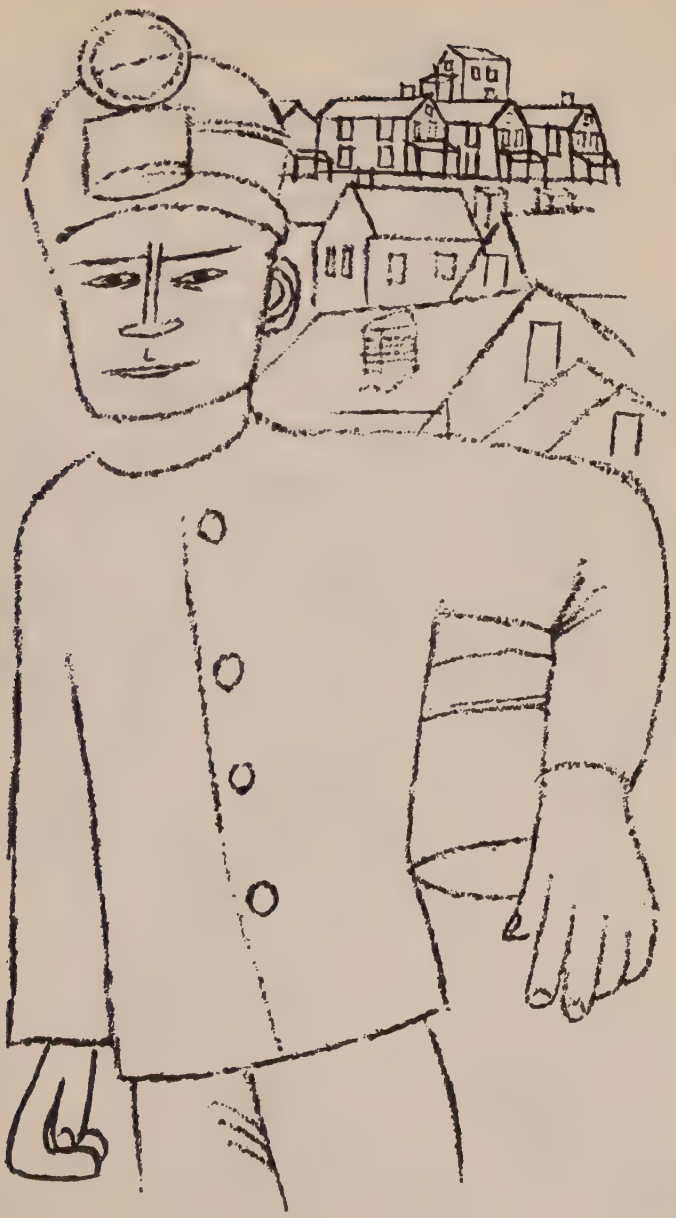
"All's doublecross, and yours, the loss,
So why not share the loot?
O fling your coins in the field of chance
And watch the tree take root."

"The cards are marked, the dice are fixed,
My horses all run lame.
By skill or luck, by hook or crook,
I cannot beat the game."

Now when she died, she died in pain,
In honest sweat died she.
Then, with the special eyes of death,
She saw the money-tree.

Its roots were knotted in her hands,
Sprang from her hair and hide.
It was from herself, herself,
The tree grew fair and wide,
While strangers plucked the last green buds
Before she wholly died.

THREE DRAWINGS
by
BEN SHAHN



PERETZ: *Classic of Yiddish Literature*

by MORRIS U. SCHAPPES

IN 1910, addressing an audience of Jewish intellectuals in Kiev, Isaac Loeb Peretz, then fifty-eight and already internationally renowned and translated into German, English and other languages, declared:

> "The Jewish community is being shaken up. Banners are flying. Blood has flowed. The prisons are crowded. Great dreams are being dreamed. But have these events been reflected in our Yiddish literature?
>
> "We have to raise our literature to such a plane that other literatures will find themselves in need of ours."

By the time Peretz died in Warsaw only five years later, he had helped mightily to create for Yiddish literature a felt need among the democratic literatures of the world. His poems, plays and stories, especially the latter, had helped to shake up the Jewish community of czarist Poland. On the flying banners some of his inscriptions were lettered. He had helped make the Jewish masses dream new dreams, and given new secular, democratic content to old religious dreams. He had spent several months in prison in the summer of 1899 when the czarist secret police raided a workers' meeting at which he was reading one of his stories. He had been deprived of the right to continue to practice law in 1887 because he was suspected of disloyalty to czarism and loyalty to Polish independence. In his own way he had been an inspiration to the Jewish workers in Poland, whose meetings he addressed, whose classes he taught, and whose desire for learning of all kinds he tried to satisfy with the written and spoken word.

Often, because of the censorship, Peretz veiled his meaning in Aesopian language (as Lenin did in writing *Imperialism*), but the workers had understood him. Sometimes, for the same reason, he first published

his writings abroad; about two score pieces appeared in the United States after 1891 in the Yiddish Socialist press, *Die Arbeiter Zeitung, Zukunft* and *Abend Blatt.* If his was the socialism of the Hebrew prophets rather than of Karl Marx, the workers, even though the most advanced noted the difference, recognized him as a force for progress. Of his hesitations they could be critical; of his direction there was no doubt. Whatever his misgivings, Peretz rested his hopes upon the proletariat.

Now that there are three volumes of translations of Peretz readily available in English, the American reader has enough to be able to enjoy, understand, and learn from this vital figure.* The sixty-six translated stories, sketches, tales, fables, allegories and essays are, except in the last category, fairly representative of Peretz's prose. At least the essential features are there. When a classic from any country or literature swims into the ken of the American reader, it is necessary to evaluate it and integrate it into the mainstream of progressive American literature. In the case of this Polish Yiddish classic, there is an additional necessity for this integration. Hundreds of thousands of American Jews came to this country from the Poland that Peretz describes. Millions of non-Polish Jews have been nourished on Peretz's works in Yiddish, and some of this nourishment has provided the cultural stuff that shaped at least the childhood days of a large section of the present American Jewish population. To know America in its complete variety, we must know this Jewish population, culturally and psychologically.

A broad window on this psychology is opened to us in the available writings of Peretz. Nor is it a window opening only on the past. The Jewish Poland of Peretz is gone. It went not only the way the Jewish Russia of Sholom Aleichem went, when the revolution transformed it. Polish Jewry was not, in the main, thus transformed; it was annihilated by the Nazis. The precious tiny remnant that is rebuilding Jewish life in the new democratic Poland has a decidedly different economic, political and psychological physiognomy. But in the United States, and in some other countries to which they emigrated, there are

* *Stories and Pictures,* translated by Helena Frank, first published in 1906 by the Jewish Publication Society of America; *Peretz,* translated by Sol Liptzin, with the translation facing the Yiddish text page for page, published in 1947 by the Yiddish Scientific Institute; *Three Gifts and Other Stories,* translated by Henry Goodman, published by the Jewish People's Fraternal Order in 1947.

now more Polish Jews than there are in Poland, more of Peretz's children than there are in Poland, although in some sense most Jews are culturally Peretz's children. To know Peretz, therefore, is an aid to understanding the Jewish people today, in this country and elsewhere. And to help you understand the people is a great function of progressive literature.

PERETZ is perhaps more readily accessible, more easily absorbed and integrated, than is Sholom Aleichem. It is not only that there are fewer localisms in Peretz. It is rather that his cultural base was, from the beginning, broader, and extended from the traditional orthodox religious ideology, mythology, literature and lore to the more modern democratic and scientific culture. Heine, Buckle, Shelley and Wundt, modern psychology, sociology, biology and physics were a part of his intellectual equipment from his late 'teens on. What was essentially Jewish in content, therefore, Peretz draped in the form of what is generally human; and what was generally human in content, he presented in a specifically Jewish form. To his Yiddish readers, Peretz brought the winds of doctrine and style from the advanced thinking of all Europe; to non-Jews he can, in translation, bring the quality and meaning of an epoch of East European, especially Polish, Jewish life.

Not long after Ibsen had made Nora slam doors on male superiority, Peretz in 1891 was making Chaim the porter insist that in heaven, challenging the Jewish orthodox custom by which his beloved wife Channah would be his footstool, he would force the Heavenly One Himself to allow his Channah to sit side by side with him. And anyone who believes that, having read Ibsen, he has no need for Peretz, should read the story, variously entitled *Domestic Happiness, An Idyllic Home* and *Domestic Bliss* in the three volumes under consideration, and learn what specific colors a democratic content takes on in a Jewish form. Peretz, in fact, was a persistent crusader against the prevailing treatment of the Jewish wife and daughter in the home, the market-place, the synagogue, the marriage-mart and in heaven; one will find a revelation of many aspects of Jewish family life in the stories translated by Helena Frank and Dr. Liptzin: *In the Post-Chaise* (1891), *Married* (1895), *The Woman Mistress Hannah* and *Seven Good Years.* Certain features in American Jewish family life, as well as the very sharpness of a younger generation's reactions against it, are illuminated by Peretz.

In much of his writing, there is a bitter realism. In 1890, shortly after he became a clerical employee of the Warsaw Jewish Community for which he was to work until his death, Peretz was on an expedition of field investigators sent out to compile statistics of the condition of the Polish Jews. He went out into the villages and hamlets and homes of the Jews. What he saw never left him. It is a permanent page in the annals of the poor of all nations. He came face to face with the gauntness and protruding bones of the poor. He looked into the lightless eyes. He saw the petty cunning of the poor who outwit the poor. He wrote about *The Dead Town* in which the people do not die because they never lived. He saw hunger breeding visions: "Eating little means sleeping little, and whole nights without sleep or food incline one to the Kabbalah" (*Cabbalists*). After leaving one town, he reflected, "If I come across another such, I, too, shall begin to crow, like the madman" (*Misery*).

Depicting similar conditions, Sholom Aleichem wrote in another mood. Sholom Aleichem is filled with compassion for the suffering. In Peretz there is more of wrath at the fact that they are suffering (*In Time of Pestilence*); there is bitterness at the backwardness of the Jews themselves (*Tales That Are Told*); there is hatred. When there is humor in these realistic sketches, it is not gentle. It is the stunned humor of sanity gazing at a lunatic world (*The Emigrant, The Madman*); it is the humor of Goya's *Caprichos.* It does not relieve you, nor let you rest. Perhaps one reason for this difference is that Peretz was then addressing himself to a different audience from that which Sholom Aleichem had in mind. In a letter to Sholom Aleichem in 1888, when Peretz was just beginning to write in Yiddish, he said: ". . . and if I ever do think of my reader, I conceive him to be of a higher social level [than yours]. My reader is a man who has read and studied a modern language."

Thus it seems to me that at that time Peretz was trying to prod the conscience of the middle-class intellectual who did not know the conditions of the Jewish poor, or, knowing them, had cushioned himself against the consequences of the knowledge. Peretz had to hit very hard to pierce that cushion of indifferent smugness. In one of his keenest stories, Peretz even dissects the contradictory reactions of an actively philanthropic person who cannot decide whether his giving a fourth nickel to a ragged, homeless boy in the dead of winter will not lead him to expect a fifth tomorrow—and when will it end? (*The Poor*

Little Boy, 1894; this and all the other stories, dated 1891, mentioned in the preceding paragraph are in the Helena Frank translations.)

But realism is only one of Peretz's methods. He is a master of varying styles. One of them is the folk tale, or the story in which folk lore is the foundation. Now he does not write these folk tales for their quaintness or their exoticism, but for their point—and their point is always progressive. Peretz uses realism and folk-symbolism as different tools to achieve essentially similar purposes. In fact, his folk tales were addressed more particularly to the Jewish workers than to the "man who has read and studied a modern language." The minds of the Jewish workers were stuffed full of this religious folk-mythology, which is as rich, incidentally, as anything that has come out of Greece or India. This stuffing could be a hindrance if, under religious orthodoxy, it constituted superstition. Peretz, however, transmogrified this mythology into a democratic, leavening asset. In 1908, at the first International Yiddish Conference in Czernowitz, Peretz clearly defined his concept of Hassidism, whose folk-mythology he had been using:

> "The Jewish common man is losing his faith both in the great religious scholar and in the man of great wealth. The 'charity' of the rich does not satisfy his needs. The Torah [wisdom] of the religious scholar brings him no happiness. The common man himself is beginning to yearn for something, to be aware of his own desires, to want to live his own poor life his own way. Thus Hassidism emerges. It is the Torah of the common man."

Taken as a creed or a way of life, Hassidism in the 1890's and thereafter, when the organized working class was becoming a progressive social force, could not have been an instrument of ideological clarification. But Peretz was not himself a follower of Hassidism, a mystical devotee of miracle-workers. He was a sophisticated intellectual who used the Hassidic style of folklore and mythology to stiffen the determination and hope and spine of the Jewish workers. Henry Goodman, in his perceptive essay on Peretz, observes that "No writer is more at home in heaven than Peretz."

Yet Peretz himself did not believe in that heaven, nor did he try to get his audience to have faith in it. He shamed heaven as he shamed

mankind in his famous story, *Bontche Shweig* ("Bontche the Silent"), in which Bontche, having suffered without the slightest complaint all the ills to which an impoverished worker, and a Jew at that, could be subjected, is rapturously received in heaven and offered absolutely anything he wants; but all the overwhelmed Bontche can think of asking for is a hot roll with fresh butter every morning for breakfast. The workers loved that story from the moment it appeared about 1891; and they saw the meaning of the guarded statement which Peretz, with an eye to the censor, put in the mouth of the Presiding Officer of the Heavenly Court: "On earth there was no understanding. Perhaps you yourself did not know that you might have cried out and that your cries could have shaken and toppled the walls of Jericho! You yourself did not know of your slumbering strength." That which Bontche did not know, the workers were learning. *Bontche Shweig* roused silent men to protest.

He makes the Good Angels and the Bad Angels of Hassidic mythology serve proletarian purposes. There is the lovely story, entitled varyingly *Beside the Dying* (Liptzin translation) or *At the Head of the Dying Man* (Goodman translation), in which the Good Angel twice fails to accomplish his mission of bringing dying men to heaven, once because the dying man, as the Bad Angel demonstrated, had been a pious fraud, and the second time because the dying man was so good that he did not want to go to heaven where no one would need his ministrations, but preferred to follow the Bad Angel to hell, where there would be the misery he had become so used to helping.

Peretz infuses faith in victory with his half-realistic allegories about the time when men will grow wings (*The Days of the Messiah*), or when men will all stand up straight, and not be able to beg or scrape (*At the Fakir's*). He develops the will to resist evil and oppression to the very death, if necessary, in the famous and often translated story, *Three Gifts,* or in the beautiful long story, *Self-Sacrifice,* translated for the first time now by Dr. Liptzin. To this last item, Dr. Liptzin, who is chairman of the German Department in the College of the City of New York, has added a brilliant essay showing how Peretz has transformed the Tannhauser legend of medieval Teutonic mythology and the Admetus and Alcestis story of classic Greek mythology into a form distinctively Jewish. From the point of view of style, the American reader who is familiar with realism will perhaps be most interested in those works of Peretz in which he employs the elements of folk mythology,

or in other words, in those works which are in form the most Jewish.*

Students of the short story form should remember that these stories were written between 1890 and 1910. If the reader is reminded of the techniques of James Joyce in *Dubliners* or of Katherine Mansfield, he should remember that Peretz *preceded* them, even though he did not influence them. The faculty of sharp notation of the essential detail, and the knack of the apparently inconclusive ending that somehow leaves nothing to be added, can be studied with profit.

BECAUSE of Dr. Liptzin's completely misleading general introduction, which is in contrast to his able specific comments on the various stories, it is also necessary to call attention to certain features of Peretz's ideology. Dr. Liptzin stresses the article, *Hope and Fear.* In it, Peretz places all his hopes in the victory of the working class, but he simultaneously expresses his fear that after that victory the working class might be vengeful, might be unable properly to use its power, might become a hindrance to the development of the individual personality. In his essay, Peretz carefully sees to it that neither the expression of hope nor the expression of fear outweighs the other. He states the contradiction even-handedly and does not resolve it one way or the other. For himself, Dr. Liptzin has resolved it: in him the fear dominates the hope; his fear of the workers makes him turn his back on the hope that the workers will win.

Dr. Liptzin seeks to remake Peretz in his own new image. He does this at a time when the working classes of the Soviet Union and of the new European democracies are demonstrating ever more clearly that the resolution of Peretz's contradiction is to come not in the abandoning of hope for the victory of the workers but in the shedding of the fear that power will be misused. Millions of readers of this essay of Peretz

* The translations, made by three individuals forty years apart and quite independently, are very uneven, but they can all be useful until better ones are made. Helena Frank has a good sense of speech rhythm, but is full of awkward literalisms that jar the reader who knows Yiddish because the original phrasing seems to stick out clumsily all over the translation, and that will give the reader who does not know Yiddish an entirely false conception about Peretz's really carefully wrought style. Liptzin's translation is smoother, but it is also academic, unidiomatic, wordy, infelicitous. Goodman's is both smooth and idiomatic, and his translations are generally superior. Unfortunately, however, three of the finest stories (*Bontche Shweig, Three Gifts* and *At the Head of the Dying Man*) are seriously marred because the publishers inexplicably gave him texts to translate that had been considerably cut and edited for student use.

can now say with greater conviction than ever that his fears were groundless and that only his hope was justified. It is not in the spirit of Peretz, who was always looking for the valid new, to bind ourselves, as Liptzin does, to the invalid old. In 1910 there were many writers who feared the working class, and fought it. There were few of the stature of Peretz who, while not overcoming their fears, at least saw, and said, that there was no other hope except in the working class.

From another aspect of Peretz's thinking we have much to learn. Peretz was an able and clear-headed opponent of bourgeois assimilationism, which he knew weakened the Jewish masses. In his essay on *Education* written in 1891, and now translated by Dr. Liptzin, Peretz is rich in illuminating formulations of a problem still not solved by the Jewish or other national groups in the United States:

> "Humanity-at-large does not yet exist. Cultural groups, distinct peoples, differing civilizations are now the actors on the stage of the world.
>
> "We too hope for a common humanity but we shall never attain to it your [the assimilationist's] way. We shall never get to it by destroying individual languages, or by annihilating separate peoples, or by extirpating differing civilizations. We want rather to enrich languages, national traits, civilizations by additional common treasures until there shall evolve out of these various units one world-culture, a universal tongue, the larger humanity. . . .
>
> "We Jews have not suffered these thousands of years in order now to forget our own civilization. We want to and we have to continue our way of life, so that we may later unite with the company of mankind as equal partners with equal rights and equal shares. . . .
>
> "You intellectuals, who have worked hitherto in foreign fields, you are to blame if our own acres are overgrown with weeds and thorns. . . .
>
> "As long as there is no universal system of education for mankind-in-general, then each individual is the product of his specific national entity. . . ."

THUS for more than twenty years, in essay, speech and especially by the style of his own art, he fought to rouse the national consciousness of the Jewish intellectual, to help win him for the Jewish masses. His own development helped him in this respect. After the traditional Jewish religious training of his youth there had come a period when his eyes opened to the forces of the Enlightenment (called the Haskalah

in Jewish history) and to the sweep of general European culture. His first collection of poems was written in Polish about 1870. By 1876, he was publishing poems in Hebrew, and he continued to write in Hebrew throughout his life. The czarist pogroms of 1881, however, intensified his desire to use the Yiddish of the masses (in the far off United States these pogroms, it will be remembered, helped transform the quality of Emma Lazarus's Jewish consciousness).

After 1888 his writing was chiefly in Yiddish, and when he read his stories at workers' meetings, he read them in the language of the people. At that time, the use of Yiddish was a fighting issue, so to speak. In 1891, in the essay, *Education,* Peretz is still a bit tentative in asserting that Yiddish must be the third language of the Jews of Europe, with Hebrew and the language of the country of residence as the other two. His view evolved, however, although Dr. Liptzin would give us no inkling of this process. In his still untranslated speech at the 1908 Czernowitz conference, already mentioned, Peretz was much more definite in affirming that Yiddish was then the main living language of the Jewish laboring masses throughout the world. To the understanding of the American Jewish community, especially its working-class section, these positions and views of Peretz are a contribution.

Of the three European Yiddish classic writers, Mendele Mocher Sforim, Sholom Aleichem, and Peretz, the last two are, even though very insufficiently, becoming available to the American public. These translations are a force for democratic unity, and an enrichment of the fabric and color of American life. To the progressive American Jew, they can suggest answers to many knotty cultural problems. To the general reader, they offer the joy and the stimulus that comes from all democratic cultures.

THREE DAYS in the AVEROFF

A Story by DORA BIRTLES

THE old maid, Calliope Pappathoyanikis, wardress at the Averoff prison, had a packet of cigarettes in the pocket of her gray and white striped petticoat. Twenty cigarettes for nine drachmas fifty, or, since she had given her nephew something to buy them for her, ten drachmas the packet, fifty leptas the cigarette. Not that Calliope had ever smoked a cigarette in her life; she believed it was against the law of God for women to smoke. That it was also against the regulations of the State for female prisoners to smoke was quite another matter, a matter for profit. What happened to their immortal souls was no concern of Calliope; if they were in prison they must be damned already.

"P'st, p'st," she whispered to the aristocratic Persephone Stratopoulus, condemned to five years for robbing a State official and suspected of having put her second husband out of the way for the sake of his insurance. *"Etho!* Here!"

Perse had the permanent job in the prison of cleaning the lavatories, a sinecure since it exempted her from work in the prison spinning factory. Never in actual fact, thanks to Calliope, the wardress, and an instinct for finance, did Perse perform the dirty job herself. Perse was a well-built, bold looking woman, and a terror to the male prison guards. They never felt safe alone with her.

"Eighty drachmas," said Calliope in a whisper as sharp as her long nose.

Perse counted out a number of small-value coins.

Calliope re-counted them. "What's this? Only sixty-five! I said eighty." Calliope, the wardress, would have snatched back the packet of cigarettes except that Perse held it very firmly indeed.

"The first three I sell I'll give you the extra fifteen drachs," said Perse, and stood firm on that.

Eventually Calliope went off grumbling and threatening all kinds of things that she never meant to carry out. Perse was much too useful to her—and a strong determined woman. Calliope was really very frightened of Perse. But a profit of eighty drachmas on an outlay of ten—and no work to do for it! It was worth keeping in with Perse. Calliope tucked the money into a little bead bag and put it in the pocket where the cigarettes had been. Then she went to look at herself in the mirror that hung in the wardresses' sitting-room. If Perse continued to sell two or three packets of cigarettes a week she, Calliope, would soon reach the figure of sixty thousand drachmas that was necessary for her dowry. She pulled her white linen collar straight and tucked her gray hairs under the still dark ones. What it would feel like to be married! A nice steady man with a government salary. A widower perhaps. Some women had all the luck. Perse, for instance, had been married three times and still got an income from her second husband's estate. It made her the aristocrat of the Averoff. She had meat brought in almost every day, and twice a week fresh fish. The good food made her strong.

Calliope was glad it had been Lulucha, the smallest of the wardresses, and not she who had been beaten black and blue the time Perse got hold of a bottle of *ouzo*. The scandal that had been! The wardresses had learned a lesson from it all right. They might hate each other like poison, but in future there must be no tattle-taling, at least not more than a normal amount. "If there's another investigation," Vaslos, the shrewdest of them, had said, "we'll all lose our jobs. Lulucha ought to have held her tongue about the beating."

Sixty thousand drachmas. It took a lot of collecting. Calliope cursed again, as she had every day for twenty-three years, the brother who had so selfishly got married himself before providing the dowry of his sister. It didn't matter to her that he had married off three sisters. He had left Calliope unmarried and that was a disgrace to the family.

"ANASTASIA! Anastasia!" called Perse loudly down the corridor. It was a very long corridor, at least thirty-five meters long and two wide, and every square centimeter of it was scrubbed twice a week. There were four corridors like that and two shorter ones. All the prisoners were supposed to take turns in scrubbing them, but it was easy to buy out of the unpleasant task. There were always volunteers among the moneyless prisoners who would scrub a corridor for two drachmas, the equivalent of an English penny. "Anastasia!" Only

Perse would dare publicly to call like that. Calliope, who was on duty in that corridor, took no notice.

Presently Anastasia asked permission to go to the toilet, and as she passed Perse's cell she put her head in. The doors of all the cells, for the convenience of the supervising wardresses, were usually left open. Perse was lying on her plank bed taking the delicious first draw of a new cigarette fresh from the packet. "It's all right, I've got them as usual," she said to Anastasia.

"When do I get mine? Tomorrow?" asked Anastasia.

"No, Saturday, when the job's done."

"Midday, then. Last week you kept me waiting till evening."

"You ought to be glad to get four, not three like in Nicalaetho's time."

"She didn't smoke them down as far as you do."

"Go along. You'll have the whole bag of cats down on me if you don't get out of that doorway."

Anastasia stepped inside the cell, which was a forbidden thing. "Give me just one whiff now, and I'll tell you a thing."

"What is it?" Perse asked languidly.

"That scarecrow, Calliope, is on the marriage market again. Sixty thousand drachmas she's promising, and no question about where the bridegroom spends his nights." Anastasia made an obscene gesture. She was a fat slovenly woman who had been run in for keeping an unregistered house and was well-known to the police as a cheap abortionist and a disposer of unwanted children. In her care children took sick and died in no time at all.

Perse laughed. "Where did you get the news from?"

"The friend of my cousin who is related to her brother's wife. Truly she keeps pestering the life out of him; she says it's a good investment now, that if he puts it off much longer, the older she gets, the larger the dowry has to be! As if he hadn't thought of that long ago. He hasn't the slightest idea of paying at all—he intends to let her die an old maid." They both laughed.

"The saddle-sore old she-ass." Perse handed over the cigarette and watched to see that Anastasia took only a puff or two. Then she carefully extinguished the cigarette that was only a third smoked, and placed the butt under her pillow along with an ikon and her flint-and-tinder cigarette lighter. At that moment there came a great hubbub from the far end of the corridor. Slogan shouting and the rattling of

doors, the kicking of wooden-soled shoes against iron and the banging of metal dishes together. The din of women shouting at the top of their voices. Anastasia turned curiously in the doorway.

"What is that?"

"Nothing. A gadfly buzzing." Perse turned over on the bed.

Food, meat and vegetables! Food! Food! We want our lawful food! Slogans took shape from the babble of sound.

"The *Communisti* making a demonstration," said Anastasia. "They say it's in the rules we should have meat once a week and fish twice, and all we've had for the last fortnight is half a salt herring with our beans."

"They're always after something or other and never buy a cigarette off me though they smoke like chimneys out of jail. They give me a pain in the head; I wish they'd shut up," said Perse.

But the clamor was spreading down the corridor; like a fire, Red slogans were running among all the prisoners.

"You don't have to worry," said Anastasia. "You're provided for. I could do with a nice piece of fish myself once a week." More than once she had hinted that Perse was mean with her provisions. *"Meat and vegetables!"* she suddenly bawled with the rest.

"Get out of here," said Perse crossly. "Go on. I don't want any of that in my cell. Get out!"

ANASTASIA stepped out into the corridor and met five or six wardresses running along with their faces quite pale. Vaslos, who was least afraid, had a revolver stuck out in front of her as harmless as a banana. She was shouting orders. *"Siopee! Siopee!* Silence! Silence." (Bring your batons down on their fingernails, girls; pull the hair out of them; remember, never tackle alone.) *"Siopee!* Silence!" But all her noise and fierceness was just adding to the uproar. Anastasia stood respectfully by the wall to let them pass, and all Vaslos bade her was to hurry up about her business. Anastasia got on well with the wardresses. She never forgot to give them presents on their saints' days.

When she came back after a few minutes, there was an argument going on at the end of the corridor, in front of the cell belonging to Katchis, a tobacco worker, who had been sentenced to three years in prison and one in exile for going on strike. Katchis was putting the case reasonably. On either side of her were Antoinetta and Maria

Melitos, sisters, and Communists. Katchis talked calmly, but in a loud, clear voice, as if she were addressing a public meeting. All the women listening in their cells could hear quite plainly everything she said. Anastasia crept nearer. She liked to be in everything that was going on. She enjoyed the rows among the women. There were always rows in prison.

Vaslos, the wardress, was no fool. She got her temper back again and listened to what Katchis had to say. Then she said that if the demonstration ceased she would make it her business personally to bring the matter before the Commandant of the prison himself. She was a thick-set woman with heavy eyebrows that met in the middle, and a moustache right across her upper lip. She was a widow who had taken on the prison job instead of a government pension; she was younger than the other wardresses and ambitious to rise in the service. When Vaslos made this promise, the organized demonstration stopped right away, though the women who had joined in out of a sense of injustice or for the fun of the thing were very excited and wanted to keep on making a row. But Vaslos soon settled that. She had a trick of slamming the cell doors suddenly so that their fingers got jammed in the hinges; or, if they were wise to that, she brought her knee up suddenly and jabbed it in their stomachs.

"That's the way to handle a situation," she remarked to Calliope, who was as close to her as a second shadow. "Nothing like a convenient promise to bring them to order. The *Communisti* are intelligent and they listen to an intelligent woman talking. Now, these other women . . ."

"But if you mention it to the Commandant, won't he see from the accounts that the fish and meat and the potatoes and vegetables are all booked up just as if they really had had them? And where will we be then?" Calliope had a nag in her voice like an aching tooth; she never talked but she whined. The fact was that the wardresses took turns in cheating the prisoners' housekeeping allowance from which the Commandant had already taken his percentage. When Vaslos was responsible there was always a demonstration. She wasn't afraid to cheat to the limit, which was no meat and no fish, short weight in the bread and no oil in the bean soup.

Lulucha, too, was frightened of another investigation; she hadn't come out of the last one very well. She believed the Commandant had a relative on his wife's side that he wanted to get on the prison

staff, and she was the wardress he liked least. "You oughtn't to promise a thing like that, Vaslos, without consulting us," she said.

"Why bother to mention it at all?" said Vaslos with her cocksure air.

"You mean not go near him?" The wardresses were lost in admiration.

Lulucha still grumbled. "All very well for you, but they'll keep on making demonstrations. I know them, when they set their minds on a thing. Worse and worse it'll be. Then we shall have to get in the police guard again to help us. That's very bad. Makes it look as if we can't manage them ourselves."

"Not a bit," replied Vaslos. "A really big demonstration is good for us if we use it in the right way. Who gets it in the neck if there is a really big row? Not us. All that happens is that one of them gets labeled dangerous and has a few more months added to her sentence, while we get commended for our courage in a difficult situation. That is, if we keep our heads."

"As you did tonight," said Calliope. She never lost an opportunity of buttering up Vaslos. The corridor was now quiet, and the wardresses went back into their little sitting-room at the top of the stairs to make coffee. A police guard of three men came up from the guard-room, but Vaslos sent them down.

"All over," she said.

• •

Moonlight dropped down over the Averoff like a clean sheet. Beyond the gates the sea lay dead, silver-bellied and black like the scales on a caught mackerel; the prison, shaped in the form of the Greek letter II, sat within its high walls, plain as writing on a white page; in the long corridors the souls of the sleeping prisoners wandered free, pale-thoughted ghosts dreaming of liberty. The light in the guard-room was no more than the yellow eye of a cat watching over a mouse-hole. Who could escape?

IN THE prison yard next morning Perse sold six cigarettes at five drachmas each, and at midday gave Calliope her fifteen drachmas on the way to building up her capital again. "I can sell two more packets by Monday," she said. "Business is good, and there are six or seven expecting money from home, and visitors for the Melitos sisters and Troponia."

"It's so dangerous for me," whispered Calliope. "You don't know the agony I go through every time. Couldn't you sell them at six drachs each? That would make 120 drachmas the packet, and you need only give me ninety back, that's ten more for each of us; fair as fair."

It was a good offer. For a moment Perse was tempted. Then she said, firmly: "No, I'd be putting up the price on myself." It was quite true that she smoked up all her share of the profits. Calliope couldn't convince her that she stood to gain. "Anyway," concluded Perse, "they won't pay more than five drachs for a cigarette that they can get outside for half a drach. It's not reasonable. Now, if you would just buy as many cigarettes as I can sell at two-fifty or three drachs each, you'd have that dowry of yours in no time at all."

Calliope winced at the cruel reference to the dowry. The argument about the price of cigarettes was a long-standing one. "No, I've told you before, it's too risky. It's a great favor I'm doing you, and if you're not satisfied I can stop it at once." Always the discussion finished like that. Calliope tried to pull up her dignity as a wardress; it was like clutching at a stocking that has already fallen down. "See to it that the *apopatos* is better done this time. It was left a disgrace last week. Get back to your place."

IN THE exercise yard during the two hours' rest, Perse sought out Anastasia. The political prisoners were all doing drill. Antoinetta Melitos was giving the orders, and the others were bending down, touching toes, turning and jumping and flinging their arms about. It was part of their discipline to keep themselves fit and active during the long dull prison days. The other women prisoners were sitting on stone benches in the sun and gossiping. Anastasia was listening to a celebrated murderess tell her gloomy tale. With the help of her mother, she had cut her husband up into small pieces so that she might more freely enjoy the attentions of her lover.

The other women listened greedily and she didn't spare the details. "You have no idea how I suffered," she said, "going along the road from the village to the cliff where we threw him over. We had him in two bags on either side of the donkey, but first they dripped so we had to put baskets filled with straw under them and then we could not get the baskets to balance. First they would slip this side and then that, and we were afraid they would fall off and spill all over the road. And we could not put our hands in to fix the weight better, you

understand, in case someone came along and said to us, 'What have you there in the bag that is so freshly killed?' "

"Didn't it turn your stomach sick when you were chopping him up?" asked Anastasia.

"Give me at least a *chiputa* and I'll tell you," said the murderess, suddenly cunning. "After all, I did it, and I'm here for life and I might as well have a *chiputa.*"

"I haven't one till tomorrow," said Anastasia, "but if you care to clean the you-know-what you can have it—a good one, mind you."

The other woman laughed. "Do it yourself, Anastasia. Who'd do all that for a miserable *chiputa?*"

"Come along, do tell us," begged Anastasia.

"No, I won't tell you, then," said the murderess, "not without a *chiputa.*"

Now a *chiputa* is a cigarette made from the fag-end of the collected butts of cigarettes, for in the Averoff a cigarette is consumed slowly. First it is smoked, not all at once but in stages, to make it last, and the butt is saved. The tobacco from several butts is rolled into a second small cigarette, a *gopa.* When this is smoked, there still remains a fragment of tobacco. Then this, also, is re-rolled and makes a tiny, thin third cigarette, called a *chiputa.* And a *chiputa* is highly prized. Perse, the aristocrat, smoked the original cigarette. From the fag-ends, Anastasia made hers. The *chiputa* went to the highest bidder.

"Tell us," Anastasia commanded.

"Well, I can't say it did turn me up," said the murderess, thus encouraged, "not more than a dead sheep would have. And indeed it occurred to me once or twice, 'What a waste of good meat.' Not that I would have eaten it," she responded to the group thrill of horror, "I'm not that low, not even in sausages."

"Were there some parts that you particularly enjoyed cutting up?" asked Anastasia suggestively. "You know . . ."

One of the women in the group slapped her little seven-year-old daughter who was standing by, all eyes and ears. "Be off with you!" The child ran in the direction of the creche.

"*Ta diavolakia,* Little pitchers," said another woman who was nursing a child still at the breast. Mothers in the Averoff who have nowhere to leave their children may bring them into the prison till they are eight years old. The State does not provide food for them, and until a charitable organization took the matter up, mothers used to starve

themselves to feed the children. But now the children get good food, if a strange bringing-up. They run about the yard and sit with their mothers in the factory.

The group broke up. Perse and Anastásia strolled up and down. "Calliope has been snivelling again. She says the *apopatos* was left a disgrace last week. You'll have to see to it better tomorrow."

"It's that little wretch, Irenaki," said Anastasia. "She's done it for three weeks running now, and when she's finished she looks at me as if she'd cut my throat for less than a butt-end. By the way, you might leave your butt-ends a little longer."

"If you weren't my friend," said Perse, "I'd give the butt-ends to Irenaki myself, and then she'd be willing enough." Just then customers came up. Theodora Argatouli and Georgina Teofus who shared one between them, carefully cutting it in two, and Fina Chiogaopoulous, who had scrubbed two corridors and a half for the right to smoke one cigarette. Amalie Grammaticopoli, who got money regularly, bought two and grumbled at the price—as she always did, trying to get a discount for taking two.

Anastasia went off to look for someone to do the lavatories. There was always the danger, if she fell out with Perse, that Perse might take the trouble to hunt someone up herself. Lately, Anastasia had found it more difficult to get the work done for the price of a *chiputa.* That was because it was such a horrid job, even to those hardened to prison. Also because the Communists had been sneering.

"*Guruna,* pig," they called her. Pig. Pig in the middle. They made jokes at her fat. "Unearned increment," they called it. And worse. A pun that was much worse. They also put around the joke that she liked the *kathiki,* chamber-pot. They could always get a laugh at her expense. Not that they were above buying a *chiputa* occasionally themselves.

ANASTASIA found Irenaki sitting sulking beside a pile of sacks that she had been given to sew labels on. Irenaki was slight and pale, and tired-looking. She had fair, curly hair and blue eyes that bulged a little. She resembled an expensive doll that some child had left out in the sun and knocked about for a long time. For a while she pretended not to see Anastasia who had sat down coaxingly beside her. Irenaki never had any money. She had been caught selling dope in the tourist hotels. She took dope herself. Her husband ran the traffic in a big way. He had a lot of agents, but he had not been picked up.

Perhaps he was tired of Irenaki, whom he had taught to take dope, because now he was getting a divorce because she was in prison.

"Want a smoke?" asked Anastasia, ingratiatingly. Her face and her big belly creased into two fat smiles.

Irenaki's sullenness splintered. "I'm not going to do it this week. Not if I die," she said shrilly. "It makes me want to retch the whole time. Look at my hands! I'm not a working woman. I'm not your slave!" She bent her head over her work and the tears dripped down on it, but she wouldn't utter another word.

"Very well, dearie, very well. Just as you please," said Anastasia at last, very smoothly. "I can always get someone else. If you change your mind, let me know. It will be a good *chiputa,* tissue paper, too. Perse's doing well and we can afford to be generous this week." She often liked to make it appear that she was in partnership with Perse and not just her hanger-on. As she went away she made an inhalation through her nostrils as if she were just beginning a choice new cigarette. "That will keep her dreaming," she thought. "Now that I've mentioned the *chiputa,* Irenaki will keep thinking of it till she must have it, and then she'll step out of the lines and say it's her duty just as she always does." But she decided to try someone else, one of the peasant women, just in case Irenaki hung out. The work had to be done early the next day.

She was not fortunate in her choice of the right moment. She had not noticed that Lysistrata Melitos was among the group.

"Looking for your prey, Anastasia?" said somebody, and someone else grunted discreetly, like a pig that smells acorns. Not one of the whole crowd would take on a job, though they wanted the *chiputa* badly enough. It was the influence of that damned Melitos. Anastasia was furious.

"What right have you to call yourselves Christians," she broke out, "when you do just what the *Communisti* tell you to?"

"No we don't," said Fina Chiogaopoulous, "we think that way ourselves. Five drachmas for one cigarette! You're just a pig-in-the-middle profiteer."

A girl called Sophie, who came from a mountain village in Mana, said: "I don't smoke. It's not Christian for women to smoke. You smoke. You're no Christian yourself."

"And I'm no murderess, either," retorted Anastasia, her irritation getting the better of her. The others had to hold Sophie off her. Every-

body in the jail knew what Anastasia was, and that though Sophie was in for murder, it was her married brother who had done it. It had been a "taking-back-the-blood" killing, one of the mountain feuds where the family arranges who is to take the guilt if the case comes to court.

Lysistrata, the Communist, had taken no part in the conversation. Anastasia now turned against her, her mouth chockful of donkey-driver's abuse. "You, you Communist, no wonder they put you in jail. You'd ruin any country if you were free. Even here you're not satisfied until you go turning things upside down, ruining an honest bit of business. What do you poke your nose in for? Stopping someone else from earning a good *chiputa* she wants to smoke! You smoke yourself, but you're too mean to buy even a half cigarette. You're *mizeria,* dirt mean, that's what, because you could buy a cigarette right out. You're mean. Dirt mean. *Mizeria.* You don't want anybody else to enjoy himself."

It was funny how, under the fury of this attack, the group was going Anastasia's way.

"I'll never pay five drachs for a cigarette," said Lysistrata calmly, "while most of us don't get enough to eat. It's 1,000 per cent profit, and no cigarette is worth that. Just joining hands with the authorities."

"Nothing of the sort. It's business. Isn't it girls?"

"Bad business for us," said another comrade, "1,000 per cent profit. That's capitalism if you like!"

"Anyway," said Sophie from the mountains, "Lysistrata's not mean. She empties her plate, giving tastes all around, if she's got anything good to eat. You and Perse never do that."

The bell rang for the afternoon's work.

The criminal prisoners went into the factory. The politicals were marched back into their cells. They did not do hard labor. Many hunger strikes had been necessary to confirm this right. On the way upstairs they began to sing. The Dimitroff song.

"Enough of that! Enough of that!" Calliope, the wardress, ran up and down. "I'll call the guard up. They'll soon knock the revolution out of you!"

"Take care, Calliope, we're going to have another demonstration about the food." They liked to pull her leg sometimes. "Get your revolver out like Vaslos." All the same, they stopped singing. They didn't want the guard up.

• •

Sunshine clear as new honey dripped from sky to earth. Shadows were black as the hoof-prints of devils. The sea, asleep, was like the back of an old gray tortoise. From the factory came the humming of spindles; the prison bars cut the sky into slices. Inside their cells the political prisoners studied the only book they were allowed to read, the Bible. Time was like the ear of a cat listening for a sound that never came.

THAT afternoon the pious Marina Stephanelokepi was told she had to go back to the hospital, her disease wasn't cured. She began to bang her head against her cell door. "I'm not going. Not back to Hell! I had months of it before. God is unjust. God is unjust. God . . ."

"There, there! There, there! Don't take on so!"

But Marina flung her ikon on the floor of the corridor and trampled on it; smashed it to pieces; jumped up and down on it, grinding her heels into the broken pieces. All the prisoners watching at their doors could see what she was doing.

"Come, come," said Calliope, shocked, "don't tread on God and the Blessed Virgin. You ought to pray to Him instead to help you."

"I have prayed. I've prayed day and night, night and day, not to be sent back. And now this! What use is He to me? What use?"

She went wild. She would have battered herself crazy. They had to get the guard up to remove her. She clung to the bars of her door, and locked her feet around the post of her bed. They had to knock her unconscious to make her loosen her grip.

Everyone was sorry for Marina. The Lock hospital was ten times worse than the prison. The women had to work like slaves there. When they came out, whether they wanted to go or not, they were sent to the registered houses.

That evening there were six or seven olives each to go with the bread for supper. Vaslos was climbing down. She reported, quite falsely, since she hadn't been near the Commandant, that he would do what he could about the diet, but that it was very hard, the government was making economies.

IN THE still night Irenaki lay awake thinking of her drug, dreaming, as Anastasia knew she would, of the taste of perfumed tobacco. Moonlight filled the sky with overlapping nickel drachmas. The souls

of the sleeping prisoners were puffs of cigarette smoke blown down the long corridor. She solaced herself, tortured herself, with the usual dream. She was in the Grand Bretagne. Couples were dancing. She was wearing the white net with the full skirt and the gold beading, and the gold mesh purse and the gold sandals. Her husband looked down at her with his sleepy, cat-like eyes. He offered her his gold cigarette case. The special cigarettes, her cigarettes, were under the jewelled clip. Turkish tobacco. The devilish grains invisible but turning the smoke gray, grayer, white as soiled snow. Summer time and the Zappeion. Little tables under electric lights. Men in white suits. "How excited your eyes look tonight. They look like blue stars. Your dress is a jasmine flower. You might be a moth in my garden. Have another cigarette, my dear, my darling."

She would go mad like Marina Stephanelokepi. She put out her arm in the moonlight. It looked gray, greenish, like something poisoned. If she bit it, sucked the blood, perhaps it would poison her. She put her teeth around the gray-greenish flesh, but her bite lacked resolution. When it came to drawing blood she released herself. The shadow of her head turned the arm pallid again, dull like the nickel drachmas in the sky. If only she had a cigarette!

Next morning in the lines everyone would be waiting for her to say it was her turn to do the disgusting duty. Often she had said she wouldn't. And always she had. Always. She hadn't any will of her own, only a longing, a craving . . .

She tapped on the wall and woke Antoinetta, the Communist.

"Have you a cigarette? A *chiputa?* Half a *chiputa?* I'd give anything for a cigarette. Just an ordinary cigarette without anything in it. You know I'll have to do what Anastasia wants. And I hate it. I don't want to do it. I just want a little cigarette, only one."

Antoinetta was touched. "I can't do anything now. I haven't even a *chiputa* myself. But here's a Bayer tablet and a little piece of chocolate. If you chew them together you're sure to go to sleep. Poor, pretty one. You mustn't do what Anastasia wants. She's a real *guruna.* I'll see what I can do for you in the morning. Go to sleep now and remember, don't give in to Anastasia."

First thing in the morning Antoinetta went to Perse, the aristocrat, and paid her five drachmas for a cigarette, a whole new unsmoked cigarette that she gave to Irenaki.

Irenaki lit the cigarette at once and walked up and down with it

in front of the other women. It was dangerous, but she didn't care. She didn't care for anybody. She smoked hungrily, all the cigarette, not saving any for another time. It was unprecedented to see anyone, most of all Irenaki, doing that. The other women noticed it at once and began clacking. When Irenaki had finished she slung the small butt at the feet of Anastasia. Someone else picked it up. Anastasia was too astonished to move.

Now that day was the one fixed for the visit of Demetrius, the father of Antoinetta and Lysistrata Melitos, the Communist sisters. They were not very easy in their minds about the visit, for their papa was a little cracked. He was a rich man who had lost his money and so he believed the whole world was persecuting him. The doctors said he had a split personality. Sometimes he could be the cultured, educated man who was charming to women and who read Plato and Homer in the original, and sometimes he got into senseless brawls, came home fighting drunk, had no respect for any woman and used language too filthy for tavern or mule-market. They awaited his coming with trepidation, for, after the affair of Irenaki, Perse and Anastasia had laid a complaint that the Melitos sisters were undermining authority in the prison and making propaganda among the women.

"It's a new disobedience. They call it solidarity. Poor Anastasia had to give three good butts to get the toilet done at all today," Perse reported.

However, when Demetrius Melitos came he was in a good mood. It was his first visit to prison. He was wearing a very high white collar and carrying a spotted Malacca cane. He had a newspaper parcel under one arm, but made no mystery of it. He was very much the gentleman and fascinated Vaslos and Calliope and another old dame who escorted him to the visiting room. They could not tear themselves away from him. They twittered all around him. He had that effect on women. He kissed his daughters and began a badinage with the old wardresses.

"I had no idea I was to meet so many pretty women," he said. "I always thought prison was a dull place."

"Oh no," they chirped back, "we're not pretty in the least. We're too old."

"Why," he said, "age doesn't matter in the least. Remember what Diogenes declared."

"Papa, Papa," whispered his daughters, tugging at his coat-tails, for they knew what was coming, and trembled.

Calliope sprinkled sugar in the vinegar of her voice. "What did Diogenes declare?"

"He said that in the dark all cats are gray."

The wardresses laughed. They thought he was paying them a compliment.

"Papa, Papa, do stop!" whispered the daughters.

"Now don't interrupt me when I'm having an interesting conversation, my dears. Recollect that War is War for Everybody."

They groaned. If he told that one they would have solitary confinement for a week at least.

"Do tell us, Mr. Melitos. Don't pay any attention to them."

So he plunged into the anecdote about the grandmother, the two granddaughters and the invading army. He told it well and the wardresses were amused, though for the second time they didn't see the point. "War is War for Everybody," concluded Demetrius triumphantly. Then he went on in the same strain till the time allowed for the visit was almost over.

"But your daughters didn't tell us that they had such a charming father," said Calliope. "Such an interesting talk we've had. Is your mother alive, my dears?"

Demetrius winked at the girls, and they said he was a widower. At last the wardresses tore themselves away and Demetrius, alone with his daughters, handed over the parcel. In a moment, however, Vaslos was back. "What is in the parcel?" she asked.

"Ahem," coughed Demetrius Melitos, and he gave a very good imitation of a lovesick rabbit, "I hardly like to say, Kiria Vaslos, especially in front of my daughters. I'm a modest man. But in the parcel is something their dear aunt gave me to bring them. A sainted woman in a convent. A pair for each of them. I understand they're made of linen and have a band at the top and buttons, and you could count the number of legs on two fingers. But don't make me say any more because I would have to make you blush, and though I like to see ladies blushing I wouldn't want to embarrass you because I want you to do me a favor." He drew out a new 500 drachma note. "Just buy these daughters of mine, and yourself and the other ladies who were here with me, a morsel or two for supper tonight. Just something to remind us all of a very pleasant visit. *Poulakia mou,* Good-bye."

The 500 drachma note melted so fast from sight that nobody saw

it go. Vaslos gave the Melitos girls a warning look and went off with the bustling Demetrius down the stairs. They could hear the outrageous compliments he was paying her as far down as the outside office. They hardly dared look at each other in case their laughter should crack the room.

The parcel contained, as Demetrius had hinted, two fine pairs of panties, but inside these was a bottle of *ouzo,* two big slabs of chocolate and eight double packets of cigarettes! And the paper wrapping all this up was the last six issues of the illegal *Rizospastis,* the Communist paper.

"Darling Daddy," said Lysistrata. "He's a terrible conservative, but he does this for us!" They secreted the stuff as best they could in their cells and laid the panties out on the bed for the wardress to see.

Then they began to laugh. Their cells were separated by five or six others, but they could still feel each other laughing. They had to stuff clothing into their mouths to stop the laughter. The whole business of their mad papa ogling the wardresses was so fantastic. Hours later, when they met going down to supper, their eyes were watery and their voices shaky from having laughed so much so silently.

But supper was a triumph. Dumplings with a trace of garlic for everybody! "The gift of the Melitos' papa," Vaslos announced. Afterwards, goat's milk, cheese and baklava.

"We could sell Persephone the *ouzo,*" Antoinetta whispered to Lysistrata, "at fifty or eighty drachmas the nip. How about it?"

"No," replied Lysistrata. "We're not profiteers. We'll give it away —to our friends."

"The best of having once been a capitalist like Papa," said Antoinetta, "is that one can bribe with the grand manner very pleasantly, even Vaslos."

Vaslos acknowledged the smiles of the prisoners who had, for once, fed well. Her temporary popularity gave her a tighter grip on prison discipline.

"We must save a few cigarettes for the next time Irenaki feels bad," said Antoinetta. Lysistrata nodded. Going up the stairs the political prisoners sang "Solidarity Forever."

Calliope, the wardress, fussed.

"Don't worry about it," said Vaslos blandly, "it's only a hymn."

right face

ONE WORLD

"The Communists and Left-wing Socialists, who together form the People's Democratic Union, now hold fifty-one seats in the Diet. The Social-Democrats and the Americans each have forty-eight seats."—*A special dispatch from Helsinki to the New York* Herald Tribune, *July 2.*

QUALIFIED

"We women know we'll never be President, so we can afford to be honest."—From the seconding speech for Senator Taft by Mrs. Caroline Hyde Kelly, G.O.P. delegate from Missouri.

"For the first time in my life I know what it feels like to get hit by a streetcar."—*Governor Warren accepting the Republican Vice-Presidential nomination.*

THE BOURBONS . . .

"The parties in this conflict are not merely Abolitionists and slaveholders—they are atheists, socialists, communists, red republicans, Jacobins on the one side, and the friends of order and regulated freedom on the other. In one word, the world is the battleground—Christianity and atheism the combatants; and the progress of humanity the stake."—*Dr. James H. Thornwell, President of the University of South Carolina, speaking in 1850.*

. . . NEVER FORGET

"We are now in a deadly conflict between atheistic Communism and Christian civilization throughout the world. If Communism wins, Christianity will perish, liberty will die, and freedom will disappear from the face of the earth."—*The Honorable John E. Rankin of Mississippi, speaking in 1948.*

WE INVITE READERS' CONTRIBUTIONS TO THIS DEPARTMENT. ORIGINAL CLIPPINGS ARE REQUESTED WITH EACH ITEM.

books in review

Mailer's Men

THE NAKED AND THE DEAD, by Norman Mailer. *Rinehart. $4.00.*

WHATEVER its subject, the underlying theme of every serious World War I novel was the contradiction between the professed aims of the war and its imperialist objectives. In the Second World War the contradiction was replaced by a paradox: while this was a war of liberation, it was not fought and could not be fought as such by millions of soldiers from the capitalist countries which took part in it. Life in the army reflected and intensified the division of interests and the struggle for individualistic self-preservation of civilian life. The soldier in combat was torn between the natural feeling of comradeship and a heavy, frightening sense of isolation from his fellows. The so-called orientation program could do little to lift his morale. The farcical manner in which it was administered merely emphasized the hostility of the brass to any democratic implications.

Like other individuals, the writer was bound to suffer the strains of disillusion, and like them he could be tempted to surrender to his sense of injury. The hardboiled, the cynical and the self-pitying author are common to both postwar periods. Also the hardboiled, the cynical and the self-pitying character. But the complex world of war, as of social conflict, cannot be mastered by personal outrage alone. Only knowledge is the effective enemy of the cliché. It is the persistent reaching out for new knowledge —of individuals, of the organization and techniques of war, of intellectual character and of social meanings—that gives *The Naked and the Dead* its power of conviction, and strips it of false and caricatured sentiment.

The reviewers of Mailer's book have dealt mainly with his superb narrative talent, but their fascination with its documentary qualities has made them indifferent to and sometimes impatient with its deeper intent. The *New Yorker* critic, John Lardner, thought the book was too long and too complicated. David Dempsey in the New York *Times* also complained of its length which, he said, left nothing to the imagination. Others felt it to be over-intellectualized.

If this criticism were accepted,

not only the high standards but also the limits of war reportage would be imposed upon the novel. Yet it is obvious that the great scenes which are closest to reportage—the pulling of the guns and the fight at the river, the drunken search for souvenirs, and the incidents of the patrol to Mt. Anaka —far exceed its aims. The details of materiel, natural beauty, feeling and action are not just exciting in themselves; they are all directed toward some crystallization of character or regrouping of human beings. Even boredom, fatigue and fear become like living enemies and evoke the transformations of men in conflict.

So we watch the process that makes men do what they do because of what they were before, and also do what they could never have done—things far beyond their own imagination. And because the men of the Intelligence and Reconnaissance Platoon of the Headquarters Company of the 460th Infantry Regiment are Americans, this extension of their lives into past and possibility becomes a fateful adventure of our time, and nation. How will they achieve the solidarity that always eludes them, how will they be able to thwart the plans of others for their subjection? The duel between the fascist General Cummings and his aide, Lieutenant Hearn, like the contest between the general's agent, Sergeant Croft, and the men of his platoon, takes place on the island of Anopopei; but it is America they are fighting for.

The intellectual content of Mailer's novel is expressed in two ways: dramatically, through the most intense action, sharp individualization and direct statement by the characters of their ideas; symbolically, by means of an allegory and a discriminating irony. The latter method is used to convey Mailer's own tentative thinking, his attempt to resolve what he has experienced into some kind of philosophical or political judgment.

It would be superfluous for me to add my comment to the praise of Mailer's extraordinary dramatic power, but I should like to call attention to his careful preparation of the mental ground for action. Red Valsen is one of the men of the platoon. He is looking at the sea from the ship's rail before the landing at Anopopei:

"After a time Red had that feeling of sad compassion in which one seems to understand everything, all that men want and fail to get. For the first time in many years he thought of coming back from the mines in the winter twilight with his flesh a dirty wan color against the snow, entering his house, eating his food in silence, while his mother waited on him sullenly. It had been an acrid empty home with everyone growing alien to one another, and

in all the years that had passed, he had never remembered it except in bitterness. And yet now, looking at the water, he could have some compassion for once, could understand his mother and the brothers and sisters he had almost forgotten. . . . But the compassion lasted for only a few minutes. He understood it all, knew he could do nothing about it any longer, and was not even tempted."

Sergeant Croft is brooding over the death of one of his men:

"His reaction was similar to the one he had felt at the moment he discovered his wife was unfaithful. At that instant, before his rage and pain had begun to operate, he had felt only a numb throbbing excitement and the knowledge that his life was changed to some degree and certain things would never be the same. He knew that again now. Hennessey's death had opened vistas of such omnipotence that he was afraid to consider it directly. All day the fact hovered about his head, tantalizing him with odd dreams and portents of power."

Private Goldstein is watching a tropical storm:

"The bottom of the sea would look like this, he told himself. There were subterranean storms that he had read about, and this must be like them. Apart from his awe, and his concern that the tent should remain up, Goldstein was watching the storm with a fascinated interest. Probably the world had been something like this when it first began to cool, he thought, and felt a deep excitement as if he were witnessing creation. It was silly to think about the tent in the same moment, but he could not help himself. . . . Already Goldstein was planning the next tent he would build."

Without such insights, developed and enriched throughout the narrative, the action, however fascinating, would take on an arbitrary, capricious quality divorced from understanding. Red's defeat at the hands of Croft, like its counterpart, Hearn's death, would seem like a pessimistic contrivance; Goldstein's strength would appear as the author's effort to counteract an impression of defeatism; while Croft would stand as a baffling tour de force, based in the literature of psychopathology. Instead, the reader is given the power to see human lives in the making and to perceive the multitude of factors—biological, economic, social, psychological and intellectual—that must be assembled for the performance of this or that unique action. So far he must judge the book not in terms of what he may suppose to be its connotations, but on the grounds of its truth to its subject and theme. Does the reality frighten him? If so, let him not blame the writer, but take a deep breath.

Neither can General Cummings' victory over Lieutenant Hearn be interpreted as a sign of Mailer's private conviction. Hearn cannot resist Cummings because he is caught in the web of his own class-molded character. "He had been born in the aristocracy of the wealthy midwestern family, and although he had broken with them, had assumed ideas and concepts repugnant to them, he had never really discarded the emotional luggage of his first eighteen years. The guilts he had made himself feel, the injustices that angered him were never genuine. He kept the sore alive by continually rubbing it, and he knew it." That is why his ideological struggle against the general always breaks down in compulsive, infantile defiance ending in capitulation, and why Cummings' indefinable homosexual suggestion has so devastating an effect upon him. Even so, in drawing the general out he exposes the latter's exact and yet brittle mind, his prissy calculations so vulnerable to upset, and his miserable paranoiac view of himself in relation to other human beings. Cummings' vanity makes its way through his fashionable impersonal verbiage: "The machine techniques of this century demand consolidation, and with that you've got to have fear, because the majority of men must be subservient to the machine, and it's not a business they instinctively enjoy." A few moments later he says, "You know, if there is a God, Robert, he's just like me." This is just after he has made his unspoken pass at Hearn.

Mailer's ironic handling of the general underlines his political concern. He seems to be sparring, looking for an opening. The same is true of the symbolic joke played upon Cummings when the front collapses in his absence and the hack, Major Dalleson, is forced to press to victory over the outnumbered and weakened Japanese troops against whom the general had planned such a brilliant maneuver. The great calculator is mocked because the mass of data which he thinks he controls always conceals some overlooked, unforeseen element that negates the proof he has worked out. It is the same thing that stands in the way of his dream of the authoritarian society: "Hearn he had been able to crush, any single man he could manage, but the sum of them was different still, resisted him still." The general, who is an "idealist," cannot imagine how animal matter, even when it is human, somehow baffles his superior vision.

It is at this point that the irony becomes speculative and we may look for Mailer's interpretation of his drama. It is here, also, that the ascent of Mt. Anaka ties in. For Sergeant Croft, too, is an "idealist," fulfilling on his plane the same anti-human and annihilating mission of power to

which the general is dedicated. Neither can exist without destroying; they must climb mountains to no purpose, and lead others to death for their own exaltation. So irony overtakes Croft. He is driven off the mountain by a swarm of hornets which scatters his patrol. Human, all-too-human. But later he realizes that he could not have gone without these men who defeated him when he was so near the peak.

I hesitate before this parable, and I wonder whether Mailer is entirely satisfied with it. He must have some material force which will provide an ultimate bulwark against the conscious fascism of Cummings and its implementation by Croft. But he looks for it somewhat too often in the lowest common denominator of human resistance. Fear, inertia and the impulse to herd together acquire the status of democratic principles.

History is hardly so simple, mechanical and "economic." I think the allegory would have been strengthened by a greater awareness of the revolutionary role of conscious ideas. Mailer's parable is a hymn to the material resilience of man, yet it remains inconclusive because no member of his cast can quite suggest how to complete it. But he has come a long, hard way toward working it out.

CHARLES HUMBOLDT

Laski on America

THE AMERICAN DEMOCRACY, by Harold J. Laski. *Viking.* $6.50.

THE publishers describe this book, with the usual dust-jacket modesty, as a new landmark in American social history:

"In 1838, Tocqueville: *Democracy in America.*

"In 1888, Bryce: *The American Commonwealth.*

"In 1948, Laski: *The American Democracy.*"

The comparison defines the author's intention. His work encompasses the whole field of politics, social organization and culture. The troubled, and generally hostile, reviews in the press signalize the book's importance. In the New York *Times,* Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., regrets Laski's portrayal of the United States as "a monstrous capitalist colossus, monolithic in its structure, irrevocable in its purpose, dedicated to the triumph of finance capital throughout the world."

Since Schlesinger is one of those "scholars" who have abandoned the responsibilities of scholarship to become propagandists for American monopoly, one can understand his resentment at a work which deals with some of the more obvious facts about Wall Street's control of American politics, its use of the police power of the state to crush opposition, and its plans for world conquest. It is heartening to find these facts in a volume by a

BATTLE OVER CONEY ISLAND, *by Chaim Gross*

widely respected authority on political science. Yet it is a sad commentary on the present level of academic thought that the mere statement of the facts is such an innovation, an apparent violation of the academic code, indiscreet mention of matters that are not spoken of in public by historians and social philosophers.

Laski adopts a progressive approach. He rejects the anti-democratic bias, the hatred of rationalism, the mystic justification of war and violence, that permeates so much of the historical thought of our time, from Spengler to Toynbee. However, the scope of his work, and the decisive issues with which it deals, challenge rigorous consideration. It is an erudite survey, rich in detailed observation and rewarding insights. But it fails to give an integrated understanding of the forces that are shaping American society at its present stage of historical development.

Laski's erudition includes a decent respect for Marxist theory. But there is no indication that he has digested the value of Marxism as a science of history, a method of studying the evolution of society. In neglecting the lessons of historical materialism, Laski provides no alternative method. Indeed, his work is additional proof that no alternative method is available. His survey is fragmentary and unsystematic because it has no working hypothesis, no system of laws and principles which could serve as a frame of reference. Laski knows that the contemporary social structure is historically evolved. But his method is unhistorical. He dips into history casually whenever he wishes to make a point. But the American scene today is not placed in an understandable, consistent historical perspective, either in terms of American experience or in terms of world relationships and forces.

The key to the problem may be found in the plan of the book. The comparison with Tocqueville and Bryce gives an *historical* clue to the way in which Laski organizes his material. Tocqueville, writing in the fourth decade of the nineteenth century, used a purely descriptive technique. Half a century later, Bryce, reflecting the social thought of his time, made an institutional survey of the American system.

Apparently deeply influenced by these nineteenth-century studies and anxious to duplicate their distinction, Laski simply combined the descriptive and institutional methods. Thus he duplicates the weakness of Tocqueville and Bryce, a weakness inherent in the intellectual climate of their time and the class viewpoint from which they wrote. They did not have the slightest conception of history as a dynamic process. They regarded institutions and ideas—the ideology of the ruling

class and the superstructure of business, church and state that embodies that ideology—as the whole stuff of history.

Laski's work resembles his nineteenth-century predecessors because he clings to nineteenth-century historical theory. He treats social evolution as a movement of ideas and institutions. He recognizes the existence of social classes, but he denies that class struggle is the driving force of history. He emphasizes the reality of economic power, but it is never concretely related to the changing forces and relationships of production.

The tendency to divorce key issues from the context of class conflict and productive relationships is facilitated by the plan of the book. Indeed, it is the real reason for the plan. The interaction of historical forces is concealed by isolating aspects of the social situation, and treating these aspects as concepts, the dominant American concept and the recurring theme of the book being the "philosophy of the business man."

The author's most incisive statements are detached from the pattern and meaning of events. He observes "that the approach to foreign relations of the State Department and of the Roman Catholic Church resembles closely that of American finance-capitalism, and that they are all concerned with setting limits to democratic fulfillment in those nations in which the power of a small privileged class has for long been used to exploit the poverty and ignorance of the masses." Here is a system of relationships that cries for further investigation and that illuminates the complex forces, in the United States and the world, that underlie and determine present American policy. But there is no follow-up. The observation is left to stand by itself. The author finds the root of aggressive policy in the business man's beliefs and prejudices, "the almost unlimited power of the human mind to equate what it ought to do with what it wants to do."

One could cite innumerable examples of the contradiction between concrete, objective details and the abstract, subjective scheme of the book. Laski mentions the possible rise of a new party, somewhat along the lines of the British labor party, in the chapter on Federal politics and again in dealing with labor organization. But the possibility is ignored in the discussion of American imperialism. He sees the continuity of the democratic tradition from Jefferson and Lincoln to Franklin Roosevelt and Henry Wallace, but there is no hint that in extending this tradition effective opposition to present government policies can be mobilized.

Laski lumps such a giant as Parrington with such pigmies as Edmund Wilson and Alfred

Kazin; he echoes the silly clichés concerning the "frustration" of left-wing writers which leads them to turn "to Moscow with all the zeal of a Mohammedan who goes to Mecca that he may be purged of sin"; he condones the brutally reactionary beliefs of Herbert Hoover as manifestations of "the Puritan spirit."

Underlying the errors in detail is the basic failure to understand the role of the people in making their own history. The treatment of thought as a thing-in-itself tends to touch the fringes of Toynbee's theory of an elite, an intellectual minority leading the stupid masses. In the same way, the theory and practice of Social Democracy, as we observe it today in Laski's own party in England, moves toward the denial of democracy and support of monopoly.

Laski attempts to oppose this trend. But in doing so he is at war with himself, split between the realities he observes and the mode of thought which he tries to superimpose on the real world. The abstract image of the business man obscures the identity of the privileged minority that dictates American policy. It diverts attention from the creative power of the American people, and their relationship to the vast ferment of popular forces stirring across the world.

Laski achieves greatest clarity when he approaches most closely to the viewpoint of Marxism. The chapter on "America and its

Minority Problems" is especially significant in this regard. It is the best chapter in the book because it deals with the problem historically, and to some degree in terms of the productive relationships in the South. Laski is familiar with Herbert Aptheker's pioneering studies of Negro history. He knows that the democratization of the South after the Civil War was prevented by a counter-revolution, engineered by an "alliance between the old Southern planters and the Northern capitalists." He knows that the problem of discrimination has been fully solved only in the Soviet Union. Yet he contradicts the implications of his own investigation by accepting Myrdal's thesis that discrimination is an ethical dilemma. As a result, Laski attributes the trouble, as he does all other difficulties, to the psychology of the business man: "America will not go forward to the solution of these grave and growing issues until its citizens have displaced the business man as the idol to be worshipped in its market places."

Yet the next, and final, lines of the chapter contain one of Laski's rare statements of democratic faith and hope.

"That time is not yet, although it will come. It will come because America nears in each decade the stage in which it will be driven to the realization that it can have either finance capitalism or democracy, but not both. Even its rulers will then be surprised how deep-rooted in its soil is the tradition which makes democracy the parent of freedom."

One can only wish that these words, and not the philosophy of the business man, had been made the theme and message of the book.

JOHN HOWARD LAWSON

Chekhov

THE PERSONAL PAPERS OF ANTON CHEKHOV. Introduction by Matthew Josephson. *Lear. $3.00.*

THIRTY years ago it was the fashion to compare Chekhov's plays to those of Maeterlinck and Schnitzler, and to regard his short stories as little more than shapeless anecdotes written by a shy, gray-minded doctor who died of tuberculosis at the age of forty-four. Today, this verdict is very much altered. There is still the Broadway reviewer who insisted after seeing a recent production of *The Cherry Orchard* that it was merely a melancholy theatre piece about trying to reclaim the mortgage on the old homestead, and several seasons back the Old Vic's brilliant presentation of *Uncle Vanya* received an ignorant critical reception in this country; but these are the exception.

The dramatic work of Maeterlinck and Schnitzler have been relegated to the library shelf, while Chekhov's plays, in the last

decade, have been interpreted by some of our best actors. Three of them also have received the tribute of new and necessary translations by Stark Young. Mr. Young has removed the heavy varnish originally applied by Constance Garnett and others, and given us, for the first time, a sense of Chekhov's style.

The old complaint that the stories are without a beginning, middle or end is rarely heard anymore; we know they very definitely have all three, once we but learn the key in which they are written. Critical estimates of Chekhov's work and a full-length biography have been offered American readers in recent years, and now we have *The Personal Papers of Anton Chekhov,* the title of which has been derived by re-issuing in one volume his *Notebook,* his *Diary,* a selection from his letters, and for some reason a short story called "A Moscow Hamlet"; there is also an introduction by Matthew Josephson providing some of the main facts of Chekhov's life and summarizing his literary achievement.

Mr. Josephson corrects most of the wrong things that have been said about Chekhov's work; he places it generally in relation to contemporary writing; and, more importantly to my mind, he has insisted upon Chekhov's stature:

"Chekhov was a writer who put forth only modest claims for himself, and was given to brevity and understatement. He had not Tolstoy's great moral certainties, nor the large canvas of Dostoyevsky. His songs were short; yet his more than 600 tales and novelettes, by their cumulative effect, provide a *Comedie humaine* of Russian life in their own right."

And, I insist, there are the plays, the magnificent plays! In seeking to fix Chekhov's literary reputation, even his most sympathetic admirers seem to have no real notion as to the worth of the plays. Perhaps it's because their greatness is not immediately apparent on the printed page; perhaps it's because they know very little about the modern drama and its development. Whatever the reason, there is the fact that the plays were not matched in Chekhov's time, nor have they been surpassed since his death, and to consider his reputation without a detailed appreciation of their merits is like judging Tolstoy and omitting *War and Peace,* or thinking of Dostoyevsky and forgetting that he wrote *The Brothers Karamazov.* Thus, I feel it's a pity that Mr. Josephson didn't take more specific care of some of the false estimates that persist in regard to the plays: that nothing ever happens in them; that they are without humor; that their portrait of the middle class has only a Russian relevance, etc.

The *Notebook* remains as fresh and fascinating as when it was first published in English more

than twenty-five years ago. It can be said, I think, that it's all but impossible for a good writer to ever keep a poor notebook; the only question is what facet of his genius is going to be offered the reader. In Chekhov's instance, we are presented with the precise same writer we find in the stories and plays. By the time he had begun to set down those names, descriptions, incidents and reflections which seemed to him significant, his style and direction were fixed.

We do not find, as we do, say, with F. Scott Fitzgerald, the notebook becoming a repository for those "best things" that were being saved for another and happier day. It is also very much different from the personal documents of Ibsen and Henry James, where one studies the copious annotations for an insight into the writer's conscious application of his craft, and for a comparision of beginnings with revisions and the final work of art. With Chekhov, the notes are read simply for still another glimpse into the mind of a writer of the very first order who was cruelly denied the time and energy to give a character or a situation a fuller development.

Or to look at it from another angle: anything as intimate as a notebook tends usually to be subjective, the writer in self-communion, the emphasis largely and self-consciously on his own problems; Gide and Kafka are the

latest examples. Not so with Chekhov. The eye looks outward as well as inward; objectivity, a profound respect for fact, a constant search for the contradictions in human behavior illuminate every note.

Chekhov never got around to putting down in any formal way his ideas about writing; therefore the only expression we have of his opinions is to be found in his letters which, in the present volume, have been selected for this purpose. They were few; they were frequently intertwined with his convictions about human conduct (Chekhov made no separation between the two); and they are best summed up in his belief that "in the future literature would go hand in hand with science." Man and society would be studied with the same objectivity and moral purpose as the molecule and the neutron.

As the letters testify, this insistence sometimes forced him painfully to reject old loyalties. Tolstoy's hold on him was great, and his respect for Tolstoy's genius was immense; yet when Tolstoy wrote mystical nonsense, Chekhov labeled it nonsense, preferring to view life as a materialist. Suvorin, Chekhov's publisher, was an old friend; he aided Chekhov's literary career immeasurably, defending him against frequent attacks. Yet when the facts of the Dreyfus case were made known and Suvorin's anti-Semitism became apparent, Chek-

hov broke with Suvorin and expressed his admiration for Zola. And his stand on behalf of Gorky, when Gorky was expelled from the Academy for his revolutionary activity, is well-known.

It was Chekhov's faith in the scientific that made it possible for him to write frequently of unhappiness and despair without ever becoming its victim; it gave him his historical sense and kept his humor intact; and it is perhaps the chief reason why he is one of the most popular writers in the Soviet Union.

ARNAUD D'USSEAU

Spiritual Deadpan

THE HEART OF THE MATTER, by Graham Greene. *Viking. $3.00.*

IMPERIAL colonies have been, for a long time now, an incomparable source of raw material for the English. They have provided Graham Greene with a grim and enervating setting for his study of the dilemma of a Catholic whose feelings of responsibility and love are equally divided between his loved ones and his God. The colonial scene cries aloud for new literary treatment, in the manner of E. M. Forster and not of Somerset Maugham, but Greene's setting, a semi-anonymous African colony, is only a backdrop in front of which he works out an abstract problem.

The problem—sympathetic entrance into which would seem to be limited to Catholics—is that of a man whose pity and love for his wife and his mistress begin to supersede the demands of Catholic dogma. Scobie, an assistant police commissioner of a seaport town during the war, pursuing an honest, if dispirited, round of duties at the outset of the book fulfills the Aristotelian canons of tragedy by ending in spiritual disaster and suicide. He is out of love with his wife but his pity for her because of her failure to be popular with the British colony leads him to borrow money from a Syrian merchant, who is suspected of selling diamonds to the Nazis, so that she can take a trip to South Africa. In her absence he falls in love with a girl who is a survivor of a torpedoed ship.

From this adulterous relationship proceeds a complication of lies onerous to him, and with the return of his wife, a pious Catholic, begins a spiritual damnation to which he was liable from the very start because of his despair with life. He has, concretely, to take communion with his wife, the necessity for which proceeds, again, out of his desire not to hurt her; but he does so without confession, in a state of mortal sin, for he does not repent of his love for his mistress. In order to hide his adultery he has, meanwhile, served on one occasion as a tool in the smuggling activities of the Syrian.

This is his situation when he is offered a promotion as Commis-

sioner, a post which must be filled by some one whom scandal cannot touch. He cannot give up his mistress, he will not hurt his wife, he cannot endure his false position toward his God, and so he takes the way of eternal damnation—suicide disguised as natural death, again in order not to hurt his wife and mistress. The possibility that he may be helping the Nazis indirectly in his dealings with the Syrian doesn't seem, curiously enough, to be ever a factor contributing to his spiritual torment.

No doubt Greene has meant to write the Passion of a common man but the despair which is at its base, the hero's desire for peace away from the world, is a very modern one and its source is a social one. It is constantly on the periphery of the novel—in the decadent role the English officials play in the colony—but it never enters the center of the stage, it is never an active participant in the tragedy. Thus, the hero's constantly reiterated sense of responsibility is a joyless anomaly, based as it is on an *undefined* ideal, for since it comes between him and his God the author owes it to the validity of the conflict to anchor it somewhere. And Scobie's marriage and affair are such anemic passions that they do not attain the stature required of symbols in a moral drama. Except for a moving scene in church when he has decided on suicide and his whole nature revolts against the decision, Scobie's conflicts are presented in a kind of spiritual deadpan.

The effect of Greene's lack of vision on the treatment of the story is as debilitating as the climate of the colony is to the British. Every scene, whether of passion or exposition, is submerged in diffidence and listlessness, whole areas of feeling and experience natural to them being left unexplored and unsuggested. Every character emerges small and mean in social relations; only when they strive toward God, as do the hero and the priest, does the author relax his acidity. The numbed outlook of the hero is that of the writer, so that for interest Greene has finally to rely on the technique of the thriller, in which he has had good grounding. Thus, toward the end one is treated to a few pages of suspense when the hero goes to communion. Will he or will he not take the wafer? And a bit later, will he or will he not commit suicide?

The failure of the book to come to life proceeds also from the belief, shared by the hero and the author, that man is completely alone and that "no human being can really understand another." This hypothesis—which becomes thesis in the concluding chapter—comes ill from any writer. The very act of writing is an attempt to disprove that, though it may not be possible to point to *The Heart of the Matter* as evidence of successful contradiction. That

kind of statement is as valid a working hypothesis as to say that man cannot know the universe scientifically. One leads to the end of science and the other, in this case, to artificial drama. What one looks for, really, is not for final truths about human beings but for tools which will help in the adventure of human relationship.

JOSÉ YGLESIAS

J. Crow, Realtor

THE NEGRO GHETTO, by Robert C. Weaver. *Harcourt, Brace. $3.75.*

THERE have been four dynamic components in the history of the American Negro people during the last fifty years. These are the Negro's entry into cities (particularly, though by no means exclusively, outside of the South), his proletarianization, his unionization and simultaneously the growth of a Negro bourgeoisie. The latter still remains very small, but its reality may be indicated by the fact, for example, that there were, in 1946, about 85,000 urban Negro families in the North-eastern and North-central states earning $5,000 or more per year.

These phenomena are complexly related to the Negro ghetto, some tending to enlarge its area and others simultaneously working toward its destruction. Of additional and direct significance is the current disintegration of the lower- and moderate-in-

come home-building industry, and the historic neglect of Negro housing.

The data concerning this shame of America are collated skilfully, accurately and fully by Mr. Weaver. His book is noteworthy, too, for its demonstration that this shame results from the coldly calculating policy of the propertied classes. He shows that the responsible parties are "the well-organized real estate dealers, home builders and home finance institutions" catering to the most bigoted section of the American population, "the residents in exclusive, middle- and high-class neighborhoods."

It was a member of this elite, an officer of the Brookland-Dahlgree Terrace Protective Association, who told his fellow-leeches in the nation's capital last year: "You're having a scourge here. You see colored real estate agents scurrying up your street. It's too bad you can't take a nice healthy club or crowbar and lay them in the gutter where they belong." It is the textbook of the National Association of Real Estate Boards which defines objectionable purchasers as "a 'Madam' who had a number of 'call girls' on her string, a gangster who wanted a screen for his activities by living in a better neighborhood, and a colored man of means who was giving his children a college education and thought they were entitled to live among whites."

The work is important, too, for making clear the fact that federal, state and city housing authorities have generally tended to reinforce the pattern of segregation and have not begun to make any real contribution toward meeting the housing needs of the Negro people. However, and this is of equal importance, Weaver does show that in specific instances, where will, initiative, courage and intelligence were present, non-segregated public housing projects have been conducted with a marked degree of success.

The book is weak in failing to clinch for the reader the integral relation between a satiated dog-eat-dog economy and the whole social pattern of divide-and-rule, of inhumanity, of exploitation, within which pattern the Negro ghetto is a logical design. This analytical weakness in terms of causation results in a very hesitant and verbose attempt at formulating a program for action. Instead of developing and underscoring the necessity for creating a grass-roots mass political movement designed to unseat the present power-wielders, the volume closes with a page of pious phrases about the need for "a more equitable distribution of income."

This is a real disappointment, but it must not obscure the services Mr. Weaver has rendered all students of society in his carefully documented presentation of the essential data concerning the millions of Americans today penned up within the Negro ghetto.

HERBERT APTHEKER

films

Marshall, Mothballs & Movies

by MATT WILLIAMS

Paris.

THE Marshall Plan promises the French people a fifty years' supply of mothballs. What this will do to the French mothball industry is not difficult to predict.

Perhaps, most French people are not concerned about mothballs; but when they begin to see a creeping paralysis overtake other French industries one by one, it causes a real anxiety and a growing fear in their hearts. They are beginning to see what such "planning" can do to their livelihood. Although the European Recovery Program has only been in effect a few months, they can see their industries toppling like the walls of Jericho with each fanfare of the American imperialist trumpet sweetly trying to play the tune of humanitarianism.

But for the French workers in their second largest industry, this is not just a matter of predictions of things to come. The motion picture industry of France has already felt the touch of death. It may be a strange coincidence that in France, as in the United States, the motion picture industry was singled out for first attack.

The French government sold out their motion picture industry a year and a half before our Secretary of State made his altruistic Harvard speech. They managed to hog-tie the industry with a series of special taxes and then proceeded to open the floodgates to the foreign product. The pinnacle of these international accords was the Blum-Byrnes agreement of 1946 which gave American films a priority of 9 to 4 on French screens without reciprocal arrangements. In effect, this was a test-run of the Marshall Plan and the results after two years of operation can be seen today.

If there are any diehards left who still have illusions about the humanitarianism of this program, let them survey the French motion picture industry today.

This was an industry of 100,000 workers, the pride of the French nation. In 1938, a normal pre-war year, they produced 130 feature-length pictures. French films ranked high in the world market and in the French-speaking countries like Belgium, Switzerland, North Africa and Canada the proportion of French films

shown was equal to that in France itself. Some of the greatest artists and directors in the world worked in their industry. French films were renowned for their quality and at international expositions invariably won outstanding awards.

Even in 1946, after just getting back on their feet following four years of Nazi occupation, they managed to produce ninety-one feature films. The industry was beginning to revive when this renaissance was promptly stifled by the Blum-Byrnes accord. The industry was forced back on its knees again and became virtually a service organization for the American film monopoly.

For 1948, the total output of French production will barely reach forty films. Seventy-five per cent of the film workers have had their job cut from under them and they see no hope for the future if the present situation is allowed to persist. Studios are closing one by one and most of those that don't shut down completely are being converted to dubbing stages for re-recording French tracks on American films. They have lost their foreign market including that of the French-speaking nations. This year no French films will be entered in the international competitions. Their best artists, actors and directors, forced into idleness, must leave their country in order to continue their work. Such great names of the French cinema as Marcel Carné (*Daybreak, Chil-*

dren of Paradise), Jacques Becker (*It Happened at the Inn*), and René Clement (*Battle of the Rails*) have already left France.

It is more than an industry that is being throttled here. The French people feel about their cinema the way Americans do about baseball; it is part of their tradition and culture.

Let's not forget that the cinema had its origin in France as well as in America. The French people speak of Louis Lumière as the inventor of the movies. They haven't forgotten the great pioneers of the industry. They name theatres after Melies. They have a sense of history about their cinema as they do about most of their cultural forms. To them, it is as much an art form as a commercial enterprise. Perhaps the United States is still too young a nation to afford such retrospection. How many young American movie-goers today have ever heard of D. W. Griffith?

The French sentiment about their films is expressed in the way their industry is organized. There are no major studios as we know them. Each production is an individual enterprise, and in most cases motivated by more than a money-making scheme.

The attitude of the workers is different, too. To become a professional film worker here, artist or technician, one must have special qualifications. It is like becoming a doctor or going into the church. The aspiring professional must attend the Institute of Cinematography for two to three years, pass rigorous tests and receive a diploma before he is allowed to work in the studios.

Maybe this is just the European way of doing things but it makes sense in terms of better pictures. The French film workers have a professionalism and a dignity about their work that you don't often find in Hollywood.

These may be some of the reasons they are not passively standing by to see their industry gutted. The French film industry is not dead yet, nor is the French spirit of resistance. This industry was the first to be attacked and it is the first to strike back. In Washington, last November, the Hollywood Ten gave their answer to the Thomas Committee. Today, in France, the French film industry and the entire nation are giving theirs. If this is any indication of what is to come when other French industries begin to feel the effects of E.R.P., then Mr. Marshall had better start preparing another speech.

An unprecedented movement is sweeping France today. It has come in the form of the Committee for the Defense of the French Cinema. Never in the history of the cinema in France, and perhaps in the world has a worker-consumer unity been welded on such a scale. Organized by the professionals of the motion picture industry barely three months ago, the Committee now has a

membership of over 1,000,000 movie-goers throughout France. An intensive campaign has been waged here to sign up audiences in the fight to save the French cinema.

Unity has been achieved on all levels in this campaign. Every branch of the industry is represented—production, distribution, exhibition. The executive board, composed of every group within the industry, ranges from M. Remauge, president of the Producers Association, to Charles Chezeau, of the Film Workers Union. Claude Autant-Lara, president of the Technicians Union, is general secretary of the Committee.

The Committee was launched publicly at a mass demonstration on May 30 at which 1,200 delegates, representing professional and audience groups totaling 350,000, presented the issue of saving the French cinema to the nation.

Taking a leading role in the Committee are such renowned figures of the French cinema as Pierre Blanchard, Jean-Louis Barrault, Maria Casarés, Charles Spaak, Noël-Noël, Georges Auric, the composer; Nicolas Hayer, the cameraman; to mention only a few. Deputies of the National Assembly, from the extreme right P.R.L. to the Communists, have taken a stand in support of the Committee.

Working committees of professionals and audience were set up to enlist the active support of the 7,000,000 weekly movie-goers of France. Local committees are now functioning in every *arrondissement* of Paris. Speakers are addressing audiences during the intermissions in the neighborhood theatres. Volunteers are sent out into the provinces to speak to audiences and circulate petitions everywhere. Information centers are set up and bulletins issued to clarify the question for the French people.

The people are responding enthusiastically. They see the depressed condition of the French cinema, which they prefer overwhelmingly to any other. The Defense Committee estimates that eighty-five per cent of French audiences are taking an active interest in the campaign. Teachers throughout France are beginning to talk publicly against the bad influence of American gangster films on the children in their schools. The Schuman government is being flooded with letters and petitions to revise its reactionary, anti-French film policy.

This campaign, begun on a broad cultural issue, has taken on all the aspects of a patriotic, political fight for national independence and promises to spread to other industries when the effects of E.R.P. emerge from behind the smoke-screen.

A spokesman for the Committee declared: "This is a movement to save the motion picture industry of France from extinction. We welcome competition. We

want to show the best of the foreign product on our screens, including American films. However, we do not want our French cinema dominated, and in effect controlled, by the film trusts of any foreign nation. American films, some good, some mediocre, but mostly bad ones, are forcing our own films off our screens."

He added, with a touch of Gallic humor, "We are for showing good foreign films, but as for the 'stinkers,' we can produce our quota of those ourselves. . . ."

The aims of the Committee are simple:

1. Abrogation of the Blum-Byrnes agreement. The government has until July 27 to obtain the revision of this accord.

2. Reduction of taxes on French film production.

3. A tax of twenty-five per cent on all foreign films dubbed in French. In a free competitive market, this would allow only the better foreign films to be dubbed and shown on French screens. It would also create a fund to aid the French industry.

4. Reciprocal agreements granting proportionately equal showing time to French films on American screens that U. S. films receive in France.

It doesn't take a Solomon to see that these are fair, democratic terms. The French people are face to face on this issue with the "good faith" of the Marshall planners, but if there is any around, they haven't found it yet.

music

PROKOFIEV'S *"Duenna"*

by SIDNEY FINKELSTEIN

THE Lemonade Opera, directed by the composer-conductor Sam Morganstern, has put on a beautifully staged, well-acted and thoroughly musicianly performance of Sergei Prokofiev's operatic comedy, "The Duenna." Unlike other youthful opera companies attempting to bring opera to city people at low prices, this company does not limit its goal to being the poor man's Metropolitan. Producing "The Duenna" is a musical scoop, for the work is one of the comparatively few attempts at opera in our times which stands up as a perfect blending of music, word and stage action. The substitution of two pianos for an orchestra was more than made up for by the intimacy of presentation, the clarity of diction in the singing which enabled the audience to hear every word, and the intelligence of the ensemble.

The excellent English libretto by Jean Karsavina is an adaptation of Mira Mendelsohn's Russian version of Sheridan's eighteenth-century operetta. Highlighting the bourgeois-baiting elements of the original, the libretto tells the familiar story of true love opposed by the commodity principle that dictated marriages in upper-class circles.

The music alternates in style between a song-speech, entrancingly illustrated by the musical accompaniment, and melodic arias, duets and ensembles. The musical flow is interrupted by set dance forms, such as the minuet and gavotte, and even an occasional contrived form such as a rondo or theme with variations, for voices and orchestra.

The work has special interest in that its turn to the eighteenth century for theme and style is one of the trends of music in our time. Richard Strauss' opera, "Ariadne Auf Naxos" is another such work, and outside of opera, there is a host of symphonies, concertos and sonatas in baroque or rococco style. Stravinsky, in fact, has made an entire musical esthetic out of eighteenth-century forms. "The Duenna" is one of the very best of such stylized works. Yet it suffers from weaknesses typical of the entire trend. These weaknesses are glaringly apparent when we compare

any of these works to their eighteenth-century counterparts.

The eighteenth century was far from being a period of periwigs and silver buckles, musically speaking. Men like Handel and Mozart can justly stand alongside of Voltaire and Diderot. Serving an upper class, they spoke under the masks that were customary in the times, and it is this mask of airy wit and stylistic artifice, that provides the present-day revivals with their borrowed patterns. But there was a brain operating under the mask. Mozart's Figaro looms up musically and dramatically as the hero of his opera. And in him we see not the upper merchant class, satisfied with its aristocratic connections, but the lower middle class, which was to play a fighting role in the revolutions soon to come. His counterpart in "The Duenna," the Duenna herself, is only a clever trickster.

There is a similar contrast in the music. Mozart used not one but many idioms, all from his own time: light, rococco airs for the page, a lustier folkish and dramatic song for Figaro, an idiom capable of heart-searching poignance for the wronged countess. What Prokofiev does is to take over only the rococco, the idiom of lightness and wit, giving it a contemporary chromatic and harmonic iridescence. The result is music of charm and tenderness, put together by a master craftsman, and thoroughly delightful. But it investigates no new human problem, and therefore offers no new musical advance. The eighteenth century can provide fit subjects for great works of art, but not if the contemporary artist limits himself to art forms of that time. This is to treat the age not in terms of contemporary insight and in terms of its human and historical realities, but in terms of its own, now inadequate, consciousness of itself.

I do not wish to imply that Prokofiev is one of those composers who have looked to the eighteenth century for a refuge. At approximately the same time that he was working on this opera, he was also producing such completely different works as his great dramatic ballet, "Romeo and Juliet," and the heroic folk and epic musical panorama of "Alexander Nevsky." He suffers from none of the one-sidedness that characterizes the contemporary neo-classic composer. "The Duenna" is a typical work of Soviet music in the Thirties, in which this composer and others were gaining a comprehensive technique and strong foundation in every department of music. The work is an asset to our operatic stage until something better comes along. And if I read the Soviet music criticism correctly, which is that our age need not be overwhelmed by the past but can produce its own Mozarts and Beethovens, better will be forthcoming.

NEW BRITISH POETRY

London.

THE only thing approaching a new look in British writing is the "New Romanticism" to which *Poetry* (Chicago) devoted a number over a year ago. It is a "movement" which probably seemed more clearly defined at that time than it does now. It may produce nothing very valuable, but it is interesting to see how the movement started and where it seems to be going.

It probably began as a reaction against the social poetry of Auden and others in the Thirties. English surrealism, I think, may be taken as an early phase of this reaction. The new attitude was not *politically* reactionary—and still isn't, *at least at the level of individual consciousness*—but was aroused by the feeling that the social poetry tended to omit the personality, the powerful emotional drives of the individual. It was probably pushed forward too, by the restless need for change, which is so common to modern poetry and which has its roots in the vicissitudes of the class struggle, the constantly changing relationship of forces between and within the working class and the bourgeoisie.

These changes, like the broader uneven development of capitalism, result in an uneven development of consciousness; the bourgeois intellectuals, individually and as sections within the group, are constantly facing a changed and changing reality and having to make new adjustments. The speed of these changes, taken together with the differing levels of consciousness, account, in large part, for the nature and velocity of literary movements.

There is also the factor of the individual which can never be disregarded when dealing with literary phenomena. Given the beginnings of a reaction against the social poetry of the Thirties, it was the powerful verse of Dylan Thomas which polarized these attitudes—which might otherwise have remained "in solution"—and made them, after elaboration by Treece, Hendry and others, into first the Apocalypse group and then into what *Poetry* calls the New Romanticism. The fact that American poetry during and after the war has followed somewhat different lines is explainable, I think, by the lack of a force such as Thomas, and by the fact that the complex of ideas

and feelings which we rather loosely call Romanticism seems more a constant of the English mind than of our own.

The attempt to give the new writing a program began early. "The technical problem of how to write organically is today almost one with the human problem of how to act organically. . . . Apocalyptic writing notes the ever more pitiless war waged between these two [man and machine; subject and object]; the war for justice to man, to prevent his becoming an object as in abstract art or the Totalitarian States. . . ." This is J. F. Hendry writing in *The New Apocalypse.* He goes on, in these terms, to damn both the church-going poet and the Communists and to state the need for myth, especially in its symbolic and prophetic aspects. A fuller elaboration of these views, among others, is found in a recent book by the anarchist, Dr. Alex Comfort. Out of similar ideas much of the New Romantic writing was derived, but it has become something else at the present time.

It is worth noting here that, as has been said, *on the level of individual consciousness,* the writers involved are not reactionaries. They *think* of themselves as revolutionaries. Some are anarchists; a few are not far from the Communist Party; but many of them think of themselves as Leftists for whom no political movement is profound enough to encompass the revolution which they desire, a revolution which begins with the individual if it does not end there. Without cutting too deeply into this rather familiar "theory," one may see, I think, that by keeping their rebellion *outside* of politics they have confined it to bourgeois categories.

The early work of this group bore some surface similarity to surrealism—although Treece, as one of the Apocalypse spokesmen, rejected surrealism. The Apocalypse produced, at any rate, some verbal excitement and a few good poems. But the work now being done under the label of New Romanticism seems to me to be going in another direction, becoming interested in nature in a traditional—sometimes a derivative—manner. In the later work of Treece, for example, there is less obscurity, and the more transparent surface reveals—what may have been there all along—a lot of conventional attitudes:

Do you know the snow
Quietly creeping over
highroads and hedges,
Muffling man's sounds
and making a deaf world?

This is not the best poem in *The Haunted Garden,* but the method and attitude here seems to be a norm toward which Treece and others are working. If so, all the shouting has been for nothing.

Perhaps I have taken too much space to describe a movement which may not be very important —but it is the only thing which looks like a movement in English poetry just now. Other poets continue along individual lines. It is risky to try to describe a whole body of writing with a few words, but I think it may be possible to say that English poetry generally shows a tendency to become simpler and less obscure than it has been. Some of Dylan Thomas's poetry, his best I think, seems to indicate this. Edith Sitwell appears to be turning from the highly polished surfaces with which her verse was formerly concerned and trying to deal with broader social themes—an ininteresting development when one considers how long she has been writing.

Within the last six or eight months the best books of poems have been reprints—of Day-Lewis, Thomas and others. In some ways the most exciting book was Edgell Rickword's *Collected Poems,* a volume which shows him to be one of the most important poets of the Twenties and early Thirties. It would be an important event if he were to start writing again. The same goes for Roy Fuller.

Nothing has been said here about the English novel; best not to speak ill of the dead.

THOMAS McGRATH

You can buy additional copies of

MASSES & MAINSTREAM

AT THE FOLLOWING BOOKSHOPS AND NEWSSTANDS

EAST:

Boston: Progressive Bookshop, 8 Beach St.
Baltimore: Free State Bookshop, 220 N. Liberty
Newark: Modern Bookshop, 216 Halsey St.
New Haven: Nodelman's News Depot, 100 Church
Pittsburgh: Literature Dept., 426 Bakewell Bldg.
Philadelphia: Locust Bookshop, 269 S. 11th St.
Washington, D.C.: The Bookshop, 916 17th St.

NEW YORK:

Books n'Things, 73 Fourth Ave.
Brentanos, 1 West 47th St.
Cambridge Galleries, 11 W. 8th St.
Book & Card Shop, 100 W. 57.
Four Seasons, 21 Greenwich Ave.
Bookfair, 133 W. 44th St.
Gotham Book Mart, 41 W. 47th St.
International Book & Art Shop, 17 W. 8th St.
Jefferson School Bookshop, 575 Ave. of Americas
Lawrence R. Maxwell, 45 Christopher
Local 65 Bookshop, 13 Astor Place
Workers Book Shop, 50 E. 13th St.

MIDWEST:

Chicago: Modern Bookshop, 180 W. Washington St.
University of Chicago Bookstore, 5802 Ellis
Ann Arbor: New World Bookshop, 210 N. Fourth Ave.
Denver: Auditorium Bookshop, 1018 15th St.
Detroit: Alice Ferris, 2419 Grand River
Duluth: Lyceum News, 331 W. Superior
Indianapolis: Indiana Theatre Mag. Shop
Kalamazoo: Garrison's News, 242 S. Burdick St.
Milwaukee: People's Bookshop, 722 W. Wisconsin
Minneapolis: Hennepin News Co., 600 Hennipin
Omaha: New World Bookshop, P.O. Box 1231
Salt Lake City: Peoples Bookshop, 75 So. W. Temple
St. Louis: Stix, Baer & Fuller
St. Paul: Courtesy News Co., 377 Wabasha

SOUTH:

Atlanta: Max News Store, 20 Walton St., NW
Birmingham: Midsouth Book Dist., Box 2322
Chapel Hill: Junius Scales, Box 62
Dallas: Hub News Stand, 1401 Elm
Houston: Jones Newsstand, 918 Texas
Progress Book Dist., P.O. Box 4085
New Orleans: Gilmore, 107 Royal
Tampa: Chapman & Graham, 306 Zack St.
Winston-Salem: Carolina Book Dist., Box 1246

FAR WEST:

Berkeley: 20th Century Bookshop, 2475 Bancroft Way
Hollywood: Universal News, 1655 N. Las Palmas
World News Co., 1652 N. Cahuenga Blvd.
Los Angeles: General News Agency 326 West 5th St.
East Side Bookshop, 2411 Brooklyn Ave.
Smith News Co. Box 3573, Ter. Annex Bldg.
Progressive Bookshop, 1806 W. 7th
Murphy, 11515 Santa Monica Blvd.
Sun Lakes Drugs, 2860 Sunset
Portland: S. S. Rich, 6th & Wash.
Seattle: Frontier Bookshop, 602 Third Ave.
San Francisco: International Bookshop, 1400 Market
Maritime Bookstore, 15 Embarcadero
Santa Barbara: Modern Bookstore, 405 W. De La Guerra
Sacramento: Beers Bookstore, 810 Eye St.