Mainstream

BERTOLT BRECHT

IN MEMORIAM

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Readers will note that, beginning with this, our September issue, the name, *Masses & Mainstream* has been changed to *Mainstream.* We have taken this step because we feel that the simpler name would be less unwieldy and less puzzling to new readers and subscribers.

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POWER IN AMERICA

HERBERT APTHEKER

C. WRIGHT MILLS is a forty-year old Texan who did his undergraduate and early graduate work (in philosophy) at the University of Texas, and his later, doctoral work (in sociology) at the University of Wisconsin. He is an associate professor of sociology at Columbia University, and also teaches at the William Allen White Institute of Psychiatry in New York City.

For a decade, now, his books have been appearing, at about two-year intervals; his latest, *The Power Elite**, is the sixth volume to come from his pen. The other volumes have dealt with the work of Max Weber, with labor leaders, Puerto Rican immigrants, white collar workers, and the psychology of social institutions. Mr. Mills commands a vigorous and vivid style which undoubtedly helps explain the fact that his *White Collar* sold 30,000 copies in its original six-dollar edition—a phenomenal sale for a non-fiction book in our country—and that his *Power Elite* has also reached best-seller proportions.

It is apparent, then, that in Mr. Mills we have a scholar of remarkable vigor and versatility, with a wide range of experiences and interests and with considerable influence in and beyond the academic community.

Of the books he has so far produced, *The Power Elite* is the *magnum opus;* on it, while engaged in other work, Mills devoted seven years of research and thought. It led Michael Harrington, of *The Commonweal,* to pronounce Mills "the most imaginative and brilliant of all the sociologists writing from American universities," a judgment with which I agree.

THE central theme of Mills' latest work is that there *is* an elite who do completely dominate the American social order; this power complex, he holds, is made up of three related, but fairly autonomous forces

* Oxford University Press, N. Y., 1956, 423 pp., $6.

—the masters of the private corporative economy, the rulers of the governmental political apparatus, and the commanders of the colossal military machine.

The volume undertakes to demonstrate the reality of this analysis, by describing the sources, nature, habits and conduct of each of these three strands, and by polemizing against the major differing estimates of the contemporary American scene.

Mr. Mills' conclusions deserve to be read in his own words. In searching for those paragraphs in his volume which would do this with fullest justice —given the limits of extracting imposed by a critical essay—I have chosen two:

> *The shape and meaning of the power elite can be understood only when these three sets of structural trends {identified above—H. A.} are seen at their point of coincidence: the military capitalism of private corporations exists in a weakened and formal democratic system containing a military order already quite political in outlook and demeanor. Accordingly, at the top of this structure, the power elite has been shaped by the coincidence of interest between those who control the major means of production and those who control the newly enlarged means of violence; from the decline of the professional politician and the rise to explicit political command of the corporate chieftains and the professional war lords; from the absence of any genuine civil service of skill and integrity, independent of vested interest* (*p.* 276).

And, to fill in other fundamental features of his estimate, the paragraph ending the volume:

> *The men of the higher circles are not representative men; their high position is not a result of moral virtue; their fabulous success is not firmly connected with meritorious ability. Those who sit in the seats of the high and mighty are selected and formed by the means of power, the sources of wealth, the mechanics of celebrity, which prevail in their society. They are not men selected and formed by a civil service that is linked with the world of knowledge and sensibility. They are not men shaped by nationally responsible parties that debate openly and clearly the issues this nation now so unintelligently confronts. They are not men held in responsible check by a plurality of voluntary associations which connect debating publics with the pinnacles of decision. Commanders of power unequalled in human history, they have succeeded within the American system of organized irresponsibility.*

PROF. MILLS sees, in America, a trinity-like immoral omnipotent elite, dominating for purposes of aggrandizement and perpetuation. He combats, with a high degree of effectiveness, the views of those who, through various systems, present an idyllic America, in one form or another, as features of the "New Conservatism." Thus, he refutes the thesis of those who, like Louis Hartz, see nothing but a "middle class" among the propertied interests here, and explain their vision on the basis of an absence of feudalism in American history. Mills would have been even more effective had he pointed out that there was a relative, not an absolute, absence of feudal forms and institutions here; and that there was a pre-feudal form in our history—chattel slavery—which played a decisive role, as its survivals still so mightily affect present society. Yet he does offer the fundamental refutation to this argument. For, while he sees that the (relative) absence of feudalism "is of decisive importance to the nature of the American elite, as well as to American society as a historic whole," nevertheless "this does not mean that there are no upper strata in the United States. That they emerged from a 'middle class' that had no recognized aristocratic superiors does not mean that they remained middle class when enormous increases in wealth made their own superiority possible."

Related to historians who see only a "middle-class" history, are sociologists who see now only a "middle-class" society. Mills labels this the nonsense it is—a fairy-tale, that: "Once upon a time in America there were the fabulously rich; now that time is past and everyone is only middle class." He does this in an entire chapter, entitled "The Very Rich," which is, of course, crucial for his argument of a power elite. The chapter is an effective refutation and does demonstrate what is an irrefutable fact: the existence of an infinitesimal fraction of the population which owns and controls a decisively significant portion of the nation's wealth. Once again Mills' argument would have been enhanced, and his own picture of America greatly improved, had he refuted the idea of our country as one vast middle-class elysium by referring not only to the very rich but also to the *seventeen million* people living in American *families* with a total annual money income, before taxes, in 1954, of less than $1000, not to speak of the majority of families with less than $4000 annual income, before taxes!

Connected with the idea of an all-middle-class America, is the idea that while some rich remain, they are a vestigial phenomenon, whose days are numbered, antedating the present "confiscatory" tax system. To the contrary, Mills shows the historical continuity of the very rich, and demonstrates that with each passing generation the fraction among them who are "self-made" men—who pushed their way out of a "lower" class into the

highest circle—falls. The very rich of 1925, he shows, were the lineal descendants, very largely, of the very rich of 1900, and "the 1950 very rich are very much a continuation of the very rich of 1925."

By the way, on the legend of a confiscatory tax system—so far as the very rich are concerned—Mills has a fine, detailed, factual exposure substantiating his conclusion: "For virtually every law taxing big money, there is a way those with big money can avoid it or minimize it."

ANOTHER "New Conservative" myth, basic to the State Department's "People's Capitalism," is the notion that the ownership of the corporate system is widely dispersed. "The idea of a really wide distribution of economic ownership is a cultivated illusion," writes Mills. "At the very most 0.2 or 0.3% of the adult population own the bulk, the pay-off shares, of the corporate world." Such figures are enough where the concentration is on the power elite alone, but once again this unrelieved focus gives rise to one-sidedness. Thus, it is important in examining the question of dispersal of corporate ownership not only to see that a fraction of 1% owns "the bulk, the pay-off shares," but to see that a total of 4% of the population owns some corporation stock. It is important also to see that dispersal of ownership—such as there is—actually assists monopolization; for it cuts the percentage of ownership required for effective control.

At the same time, Mr. Mills would have avoided a certain appearance of tendentiousness if he had noticed this 4% of stock owners, for that amounts to some 6,500,000 people—no insignificant base, surely, in purely numerical terms, for the building of illusions about a "People's Capitalism" and similar petty-bourgeois visions.

Mills also tackles and denies the idea of an "income revolution" in America, put forth by Simon Kuznets and Arthur E. Burns, and intimately connected to the "People's Capitalism" propaganda. In doing this, Mills would have strengthened his case had he referred to, or known, the excellent critique of this idea by Victor Perlo.* He also explicitly and effectively negates John K. Galbraith's widely-heralded theory of "countervailing power" and A. A. Berle's transparently demagogic dependence on a "corporate conscience"—both devices for wishing away the unpleasant reality of monopolization. Characteristically witty and well-turned is Mills' concluding dismissal of Berle's hypothesis: "Mr. Berle, in brief, mistakes expedient public relations for a 'corporate soul.'"

The Nevins-Hacker effort to make "creative-personalities" and folk

* *The Income 'Revolution'* by V. Perlo (International Publishers, N. Y., 1954). Mr. Mills never refers to or cites American Marxist writers, though their work anticipates and expands on much of his own. This is true of Anna Rochester's studies of monopoly, of the Labor Research Association's studies of the economy, of Louis Fleischer's critique of Berle, of H. Aptheker on Riesman and Nevins, and of other instances.

heroes out of the voracious robber-barons is deftly handled by Mills, though once again he attributes contrary evaluations only to the muckraking school of Gustavus Myers. Actually, the original study entitled *The Robber Barons,* by Matthew Josephson (published in 1934), is a good deal more profound than muckraking and is in no way deepened by Mills himself.

Various "harmony of interests" schools and David Riesman's theory of infinite power sources—all efforts at displacing a class-struggle concept—are found to be inadequate by Mills. His arguments are directed against these ideas in terms of vindicating his own theme of a power elite, and they are effective, for his own theme is so much closer to social reality. Again, however, Mills views the arguments rather narrowly, from his own special vantage-point, and does not offer an alternative general theory of historic and social dynamics. The nearest he comes to this is in another section—sixty pages away from his polemic with the Riesman and "harmony" ideas—where, commenting upon earlier epochs, he writes, as an aside, of "the Marxian doctrine of class struggle, which surely was then, and certainly is now, closer to reality than any assumed harmony of interests."

Unfortunately, this appears in the thirteenth chapter of a fifteen-chapter volume, and receives neither demonstration nor evaluation. Since to the ideas of harmony of interest, Mills gave an entire chapter (pp 242-268), it is unfortunate that he saw fit to consign "the Marxian doctrine of class struggle" to only part of a sentence, especially since he finds that idea "closer to reality." It would be splendid to have another volume from so penetrating a mind as that of Prof. Mills directly testing the validity of that Marxian doctrine in terms of the present American scene.

MILLS' rejection of the various conservative apologias is philosophically grounded. He directly attacks the eclecticism so prevalent in the teaching of social science in American colleges and insists that value judgments and interpretive generalizations are part of the scholar's effort. Social scientists, he holds, must "go beyond a mere enumeration of all the facts that might conceivably be involved and weigh each of them in such a way as to understand how they fit together, how they form a model of what it is you are trying to understand." He does not accept the idea—also quite prevalent in American academic circles—of history as chaos or "blind drift" and sees its existence, somewhat invidiously, I thought, as "largely a fatalist projection of one's own feeling of impotence and perhaps, if one has ever been active politically in a principled way, a salve of one's guilt." The attribution of motives arising out of feelings of impotence or guilt is unfortunate; surely it does not help in understanding

the hold of such ideas upon a man like Charles A. Beard. But its explicit rejection by Mills is another happy augury of a break with philosophic nihilism.

On the New Conservatism, then, Mills takes an unequivocal and generally well-argued—and much needed—negative position. He overstates matters, I think, when he declares that, "In America, there has not been and there can be no conservative ideology of the classic type"—an overstatement that stems, in this instance, from Mills' complete ignoring of Southern life and history, which causes errors elsewhere in his book—and so he insists on referring only to a "Conservative mood." Be that as it may, his description of that "mood" is very sensitive and exemplifies Mills' thought-provoking abilities and his vibrant style:

> *It is a mood quite appropriate to men living in a material boom, a nationalist celebration, a political vacuum. At its heart there is a knowledge of powerlessness without poignancy, and a feeling of pseudo-power based on mere smugness. By its softening of the political will, this mood enables men to accept public depravity without any private sense of outrage, and to give up the central goal of western humanism: the presumptuous control by reason of man's fate.*

PROF. MILLS certainly retains a splendid dedication to humanism (I am not so certain as he that the West alone may claim it), and his healthy sense of outrage has not been dulled. His volume is filled with powerful and unequivocal writing in defense of civil liberty, of rationalism, of dedication to learning as in itself a noble pursuit; it is filled also with burning attacks—as passionate and not as muted as those of his mentor, Veblen—upon the social and personal immorality of the rich, their coarseness, cruelty, hypocrisy, greed and lustfulness.

He finds that the vulgar accoutrements of the elite—their white Cadillacs with gold-plated dashboards, their homes with faucets pouring out Scotch, bourbon, champagne or beer, their ladies using lipsticks that cost $300, their gentlemen sending shirts from California to New York by air-express so that Sulka may launder them—are merely the manifestations of deeper moral decay, "the higher immorality" as he calls it.

Where in American literature is there so acute and devastating a paragraph on *Fortune's* ideal executive as this one?

> *Speak in the rich, round voice, and do not confuse your superiors with details. Know where to draw the line. Execute the ceremony of forming a judgment. Delay recognizing the choice you have already made, so as to make the truism sound like the deeply pondered notion. Speak like the quiet competent man of affairs and never personally*

say No. Hire the No-man as well as the Yes-man. Be the tolerant Maybe-man and they will cluster around you, filled with hopefulness. Practice softening the facts into the optimistic, practical, forward-looking, cordial, brisk view. Speak to the well-blunted point. Have weight be stable: caricature what you are supposed to be but never become aware of it much less amused by it. And never let your brain show.

One wants to go on and on with examples of superb prose-pictures of the elite, and their lackeys, as of the "expense-account executives" and their bought and paid-for "All-American Girls." I can't resist sharing his lines on that which is "the American danger." He does not see it in the "barbarous irrationality of dour political primitives"—whose significance, I must say, he generally underestimates—but rather in "the respected judgments of the Secretaries of State, the earnest platitudes of Presidents, the fearful self-righteousness of sincere young American politicians from California." He goes on:

Such men as these are crackpot realists; in the name of realism they have constructed a paranoid reality of their own; in the name of practicality they have projected a utopian image of capitalism. They have replaced the responsible interpretation of events with the disguise of events by a maze of public relations; respect for public debate with unshrewd notions of psychological warfare; intellectual ability with agility of the sound, mediocre judgment; the capacity to elaborate alternatives and gauge their consequences with the executive stance.

THE BOOK is peppered with illuminating and suggestive ideas—it is filled with thought and every page stimulates thinking.

There are perceptive passages on education today with the schools geared as adjusters rather than inspirers; there are telling estimates of the mass media which "often encroach upon the small-scale discussion, and destroy the chance for the reasonable and leisurely and human interchange of opinion"; there are stimulating references to the problems of American metropolitan living—the fragmenting and de-personalizing of people, their de-humanization, even, in certain respects, and the difficulties of maintaining full, time-tested, mature friendships.

Mills has a way of seeming to toss off a paragraph—but it has not been tossed off, you may be sure—that has enough in it for hours of thought. As an example: At one point he refers to the instrumentalizing of knowledge, so that now and everywhere it is a question of what knowledge will *do* for you, or how much prestige it will bring one's side or nation; knowl-

edge sanctifies authority. "Knowledge is no longer widely felt as an ideal; it is seen as an instrument. In a society of power and wealth, knowledge is valued as an instrument of power and wealth, and also, of course, as an ornament in conversation."

Mills' ideal is knowledge which tells one what he is and so frees him, and defines a social order and so helps free its inhabitants. But is the separation of knowledge in itself and knowledge as instrument a real one or rather a mental construction? Does the immutable usefulness of knowledge necessarily make less elevated the passion to know, the search for truth because of the beauty and excitement of the search and the unutterable fulfillment of success? Is the human usefulness of knowledge incompatible with the holding of knowledge as an idea? Has not Mills confused what Tawney called *The Sinfulness of an Acquisitive Society* (re-titled simply *The Acquisitive Society* for the American market!) which corrupts everything it touches, with what knowledge must be or become in a socialist society?

I HAVE three main areas of disagreement with Mills. In my opinion, he at times tends to identify the characteristics of the elite with those of the American people as a whole; he depicts the power elite as, in fact, all-powerful and so makes the masses of people generally powerless; his projection of the concept of a triangular power elite, which he explicitly offers in preference to that of a ruling class, is based on a misconception of "ruling class". Moreover, in his tri-partite division of the wielders of control he avoids comparing the relative weight of each of the three, and tends to ignore the central depository of power—the financial overlords.

We turn to a consideration of these points of difference.

The confusing of the elite with the general American population and a certain excessiveness of expression that goes beyond the permissible bounds of even heated debate appear in such passages as these:

> *For all the possible values of human society, one and only one is a truly sovereign, truly universal, truly sound, truly and completely acceptable goal of man in America. That goal is money, and let there be no sour grapes about it from the losers.* (*p.* 164).

That Mills is not here expatiating on what the elite think, but rather that he is presenting what he thinks the elite have succeeded in imposing upon the morality of America is clear from the whole context of his volume. He makes this perfectly plain, repeatedly, in his work. Thus:

> *The moral uneasiness of our time results from the fact that older values and codes of uprightness no longer grip the men and women*

of the corporate era, nor have they been replaced by new values and codes which would lend moral meaning and sanction to the corporate routines they must follow.

And:

Money is the one unambiguous criterion of success, and such success is still the sovereign American value.

Mills is wrong, I think, in the success he attributes to the elite's effort to make all Americans morally as corrupt as they are themselves. God knows there is moral corruption—and one of its basic sources, racism, is completely forgotten by Mills—but the mass of Americans is not corrupted. The fact is that the mass of Americans do not have the goal of "making money"; they are, rather, making, or seeking to make, a living. And most of them seek this—as man has historically always sought it—as part of a collective unit. This has in the past and does now, everywhere, including in our country, develop a sense of comradeship, a spirit of fraternity, of helpfulness which is present, notably, amongst the "lower" classes.

The fact further is that, despite all industrial and monopoly capitalism has been able to do, the productive components of the American population still have a feeling of creativity, a sense of social responsibility. I shall never forget the remark made to me by the great pioneer in American Negro historiography—the late Dr. Carter G. Woodson—who said, apropos of other remarks: "I have never deliberately set out to make money in my life."

Dr. Woodson was nearly alone in the eminence he reached, but he was not alone in his moral dignity; and had he been, there would have been no possibility for accomplishment even for him. We find Prof. Mills' own writing filled with splendid passion for learning and decency; with profound concern for the welfare of others as well as with every mark of the pride of craftsmanship. And in his acknowledgments, at the conclusion of *The Power Elite,* Mills names thirteen fellow-scholars "who have generally given me the benefit of their advice," and thanks many other colleagues at several institutions of learning for their help. Furthermore, he writes:

Several friends who know at first hand the Federal government, the military, or large corporations have helped me enormously. Without their help this book would be much the poorer, which makes all the more onerous to me the fact that at their request I cannot acknowledge their help by name (*p.* 364).

Surely that a professor at Columbia University finds it necessary, in a scholarly work, to withhold the names of some of those who have helped

him, is a shattering commentary on the degree of success which the elite have had in their campaign of intimidation and repression; but that they have not fully succeeded in intimidating, let alone corrupting, is confirmed by Mills himself.

Surely Mills has seen a thousand examples of sacrifice, creativity, unselfish struggle, and steadfastness. These qualities are all about us and, notwithstanding Nixon and Eastland, they are firmly imbedded in the vast majority of the American people.

RELATED to Mills' making universal the elite's own corruption, is his attributing omnipotence to that elite and helplessness to the masses of American people. At one point, laboring to deny the conspiracy theory of history—and Mills overworks himself on this, apparently fearing that his thesis lends itself to this kind of concept—he writes that such a theory "is a hurried projection from the difficult effort to understand how shifts in the structure of society open opportunities to various elites and how various elites take advantage or fail to take advantage of them."

It is the limitations of Mills' confining his vision to the elite—which actually distorts the elite, too—that leads him to focus on how various elites react to "shifts in the structure of society." But what shall the social scientist say of those shifts in society's structure; are these not very much more significant, more deep-seated, than the resulting maneuverings of the elite?

And if the problem Mills has set himself is how an elite reacts to the structural shift, can he simultaneously hold the elite to be omnipotent within that society whose shifts induce such reactions? The fact is that the power elite theory, being devoid of conflict, is a theory that cannot explain the dynamics of society; but since change is continual and certain, its explanation is basic to science even if one only wants to understand what *is,* let alone if one wants to play a part in what is *to become.*

Elsewhere Mills makes quite plain his feeling that only the top of American society operates meaningfully and effectively for, "The middle levels are a drifting set of stalemated, balancing forces: the middle does not link the bottom with the top. The bottom of this society is politically fragmented, and even as a passive fact, increasingly powerless. . . . "That this is deep-seated in Mills appears from the fact that it also runs through his book *White Collar,* published in 1951. Most Americans, he there wrote, "are not radical, not liberal, not conservative, not reactionary; they are inactionary; they are out of it. If we accept the Greek's definition of the idiot as a privatized man, then we must conclude that the U.S. citizenry is now largely composed of idiots."

Quite aside from Mills' deliberately shocking prose, which is a literary

mannerism, this idea of the masses of people as "powerless," as, politically-speaking, idiotic, is not true. It is true that the elite have succeeded, through their domination and prostitution (to a large degree) of the mass media, in spreading much cynicism and corruption. It is true that the active repression of dissidence and non-conformity has taken its toll. It is true that the mistakes and failings of the non-conformists themselves—including us Marxists—have hurt. It is true that a decade of capitalist "prosperity" has had its morally-corroding effect.

BUT it is also true that what appears to be inaction is a searching for effective alternatives; it is also true that what appears to be apathy is a conscious withdrawal having deep moral and political motivations; it is also true that passivity is often a shrewd judgment on a pre-arranged frame-up, of which the abstainer wants no part.

And it is also true that, despite everything, there is profound interest in politics amongst broad areas of the American population; despite everything this interest does find expression in organized forms and does have profound effect upon the course of history and, not least, upon the course of action taken by the power elite.

Between the will of that elite and its capabilities of implementing that will stands public opinion, including American public opinion. That public opinion is not simply shaped by the elite and that public opinion does affect what the elite tries to do and what and how it does what it does. Moreover, in whole areas of life—as in wages and working conditions, housing and education, the battle against Jim Crow and against war—the desires and the power of masses do exert great influence, manifested in busses that stop running and in atomic bombs that, though loaded aboard planes that are alerted to take off, never are dropped in war.

LET US be somewhat more specific by examining the two actual instances cited by Mills to demonstrate the elite's decisive power.

In a chapter entitled "The Military Ascendancy," Mills writes of Admiral Radford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who felt "that Red China had to be destroyed even if it required a fifty-year war" and who argued "for the use of 500 planes to drop tactical A-bombs on Vietminh troops before the fall of Dienbienphu in 1954." Certainly, that Admiral Radford, with such views, holds the position he does, reflects the power of the elite—of which he is himself an eminent member. But, what of the fact that there has been no war with People's China? What of the fact that the United States did not use atom-bombs in the Indo-Chinese

liberation struggle and, in fact, did not actively intervene therein with force at all?

Is there no relationship between American mass opposition to the continuation of the Korean War and the failure of Admiral Radford to start his fifty-year crusade against China?

Moreover, let us turn to the Dienbienphu incident a little more closely. The fact is that on April 3, 1954, Secretary of State Dulles held a secret meeting with eight leaders of Congress, including the then Majority leader, Sen. Knowland, the Minority leader, Sen. Johnson, and the Speaker of the House, Martin. Present, in addition, were the Secretary of the Navy, the Under-Secretary for Defense and our old friend, Admiral Radford. The Congressmen were told by Mr. Dulles that the meeting was being held at the President's request. They were told that the President wanted a Joint Resolution from Congress permitting him to use air and naval power against the "rebels" besieging Dienbienphu.

The National Security Council—correctly described by the man giving the fullest report of this extraordinary meeting,* as "the inner core of the government where our most vital decisions are worked out"—had approved, of course, of this line of action. Admiral Radford then spoke to the Congressmen and told them that two hundred planes aboard two carriers in the South China Sea, and hundreds of other planes in bases in the Philippines were loaded and ready to strike at a moment's notice. "Some of those at the meeting," writes Mr. Roberts, "came away with the feeling that if they agreed that Saturday to the resolution, planes would have been winging toward Dienbienphu without waiting for a vote of Congress—or without a word in advance to the American people."

But this was not done, and even Vice-President Nixon's carefully-prepared and well-publicized speech to the newspapers editors' convention on April 16,—"if the U.S. could not prevent the loss of Indo-China, then the Administration must face the situation and dispatch troops"—did not force it to be done. On the contrary, that speech brought a deluge of mail from the "idiots" demanding that peace be preserved; and world public opinion (manifested in desperate diplomatic action by England and France) not only blocked Dulles and Radford and the rest of the elite, but resulted in the First Geneva Conference of April 26, 1954. There, despite Dulles' boycott, peace, not war, came to Indo-China.

Of course, in this, American public opinion was not alone; world public opinion, and splits among the imperialist partners, and divisions in the opinions of the American elite (the last something completely ignored

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* Chalmers M. Roberts, "The Day We Didn't Go To War," in *The Reporter*, Sept. 14, 1954.

by Mills) were also potent forces. But all of these were related to American public opinion and it is an indubitable fact that opinion was very powerful in staying the hand of Mills' "Military Ascendancy."

MILLS' other specific reference to the "powerlessness" of those not of the elite is the 1954 Congressional elections. Of them, he writes as follows:

> *Slogans and personal attacks on character, personality defects, and counter charges and suspicions were all that the electorate could see or hear, and, as usual, many paid no attention at all. Each candidate tried to dishonor his opponent, who in turn tried to dishonor him. The outraged candidates seemed to make themselves the issue, and on that issue virtually all of them lost. The electorate saw no issues at all, and they too lost, although they did not know it.* (*p.* 253).

Certainly, there is much truth in this analysis. Much of the campaigning, though not all of it, is on the abysmally low level Mills describes. It is true that many of the electorate seemed—perhaps in self-defense—to "pay no attention at all," and it is true that in 1954, as compared with 1952, there was a decline of 32% in the number of voters, but certainly some of this was the result not of inattention, but of close attention and deliberate decision to abstain.

But when Mills says "the electorate saw no issues at all" he is quite wrong and the results of the 1954 election show it. For the electorate saw issues—whatever Mills may think of its vision—and voted accordingly, giving the Republicans, despite President Eisenhower's strong appeals, a serious set-back in the Congress. The Republicans suffered a net loss of eighteen seats and became the minority party in Congress. Quite striking was the defeat of particularly Right-wing, McCarthyite candidates, as Clardy and Ferguson in Michigan, Kersten in Wisconsin, Graham in Pennsylvania, Meek, Vail and Busbey in Illinois and Shepard in New Jersey. I do not want to go into a lengthy analysis of that election, and there was much quite partial and obscure in its results, but enough has been said to serve my main purpose: to demonstrate a grossly excessive and substantively wrong estimate of the 1954 elections by Mr. Mills, which, in particular, ignored the conscious participation therein of 42,000,000 Americans. To say that this "electorate saw no issues at all" is to fly in the face of facts.

And the main fact is that the elite are by no means omnipotent and that the people are certainly neither powerless nor politically idiotic. It is worth remembering that despite the nearly unanimous desire of the press

owned by the elite, Franklin Delano Roosevelt was three times re-elected President. And the voting percentages for FDR, taking 1936, 1940, and 1944 together were: Bourgeoisie: 38.8%; Middle Class: 52.6%; Workers: 69.6%.

Today a decisive political fact, marking a continuation of the FDR heritage, is stated in these words by Samuel Lubell, conservative political statistician:

> *The most heavily Democratic districts in the North are becoming those which are poorest economically and which have the largest Negro population—two characteristics which tend to pull the representatives of these districts back to the old appeals of the New Deal.**

We are not here arguing the limitations of the two-party system, nor the deep reality of political demagoguery. We are arguing that the two major parties must react to public opinion; we are arguing that public opinion is articulate, does have power and has demonstrated that power throughout American history. If the masses are viewed as helpless, then all concern with political activity, in any democratic form, is, of course, illusory. But they are not helpless and not uninformed. When this is established one can argue about the best forms and methods and programs for political action and I am urging Mr. Mills to join in this effort because it is not illusory and is worthwhile.

In one section of his work, Mr. Mills feels called upon to argue against writers like Le Bon and Lederer and Ortega y Gasset who have raised the "fear" that the masses are all-powerful and, describing the masses as unthinking brutes, have raised the alarm that their alleged omnipotence threatens "civilization." Mills is effective in his challenge of the anti-democratic uses to which these men have put their theories of the masses, but he is wrong, I think, in denying their power and in ignoring the great new political fact in modern history—the idea of the people's sovereignty. It is, indeed, the effort to implement that idea, and the resistance thereto, which makes up the body of world politics in modern history.

Necker, Minister of Finance for the last Louis before the Great French Revolution, saw this then new force, ". . . that invisible power which, without treasure, without guards, and without arms, imposes its laws on the city, on the court, and even in the palaces of kings."

There is much yet to be done before that will is imposed everywhere and fully, but its existence is a central social fact, and its growing ascendancy is plain in history. Our own era will not see its demise; rather I think, it will see its triumph.

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* Samuel Lubell, *Revolt of the Moderates* (N. Y., 1956, Harpers), p. 215.

I HAVE TRIED to show, in the above pages, some of the limitations of Mills' power-elite concept as compared with the Marxian one of class struggle. Mills states that he is avoiding "simple Marxism" and "vulgar Marxism" because he thinks it does not do justice—in its concept of the ruling class—to the complexities of the modern power structure. But there is a Marxism which is neither simple nor vulgar; and it is certainly not the economic determinism that Mills equates with Marxism.

Though, as we have seen, Mills insisted on the need, in social studies, of going "beyond mere enumeration" and of "weighing" descriptive data "in such a way as to understand how they fit together," in his own trinity —economic, military, political—he does not himself do this. He seems to fear that doing it may, in this case, blur distinctions or play down autonomous and interacting features. It is on this ground that he rejects "simple Marxism."

But Marxism does not deny the weight of the military or political—or psychological and cultural, one may add. It seeks rather to pin-point the basic, the fundamental, the source. It holds that *ultimately* the economic relations are determinative, *not* that other relations are insignificant or without great impact—including impact upon the economic relations.

Noah Webster asked, in 1787, "In what, then, does *real* power consist? The answer is short, plain—in *property.*" That is, in property ownership and property relationships, and I think that answer *is* short, plain, and basically true. Similarly, despite Mills' three-point elite, his own work shows not only that the economic and political and military are interdependent, but also that the economic is ultimately decisive.

He sees that "the top of American society is increasingly unified"; he knows that " 'interlocking directorate' is no mere phrase" and that it is basic to "the community of interest . . . that prevails among the propertied class." As he writes, "there is an ever-increasing interlocking of economic, military and political structures." Yes, and that interlocking comes together and is dominated by the control over the productive plant. As Mills writes: "Money provides power and power provides freedom."

Right here, too, I think Mills errs in assigning to financiers simply "middle-men" roles in the domination of the great corporative structure. An analysis of the facts of the American economy—made both by government and private inquirers*—demonstrates the controlling interest of the nine conglomerates of financial power in our country. This is the apex of power today in the United States, and its absence from Mills' work seriously hurts its validity from the viewpoint of sheer description.

* It is noteworthy that Mills never cites, in his books, the work or the ideas of Lenin, though he does pay tribute to Marx. The financial oligarchy is well documented in Victor Perlo's *American Imperialism* (N. Y., 1950, International), especially chapter 3. Here references to the relevant literature will be found. A useful later work is *Bank Mergers and Concentration of Banking Facilities,* Staff Report to Subcommittee number 5, House Committee on the Judiciary, 1952, Government Printing Office.

MILLS' *The Power Elite* is one of the most important works produced in America in a decade. That it is so heavily indebted to Marxist thinking is a tribute to the vitality of that system and of its continued applicability to the American scene.

I have expressed my differences with Professor Mills at considerable length because of the challenging nature of his work. It is, of course, altogether possible that my own views are quite invalid, and perhaps Mr. Mills would do me the honor of commenting upon them. However this may be, Mills' work will enhance any reader's comprehension of the American social order. Its production does honor to the originality and courage of the American academic community from which it has sprung.

BERTOLT BRECHT

The sudden and untimely death of Bertolt Brecht, German poet, playwright, and novelist, at the age of 58 is a tragic loss to contemporary literature. From the beginning of his career at the end of World War I (he was born in 1898 in Augsburg, Germany), Brecht based his art on a deep moral revulsion against the cruelty and inhumanity of a society based on the hunt for private profit. His first well-known work, *Legend for a Dead Soldier* (1918) depicts the makers of war commanding a dead soldier to go once again to the front; his tremendous novel, *A Penny for the Poor,* based on his world-famous *Three-Penny Opera,* is perhaps unsurpassed in modern literature as a picture of "business"; his plays, *Mother Courage* and *Lucullus,* are great canvases in which war is the criminal. His work in the theatre, as playwright and director, had the unmistakable stamp of his special genius—satiric, historic, popular, and audacious in form. Brecht was an exile from Nazi Germany for fifteen years; he lived for several years in the United States. In 1948 he finally was able to return to Germany after having attracted the attention of Congressional "investigators" of whom Brecht wryly told a Parisian journalist recently; "When they suspected me of stealing the Empire State Building, I figured it was time to leave." It is our hope to give our readers in future issues a more detailed study of his work.—The Editors.

BRECHT'S DEATH:

A Letter From Berlin

Dear Friends:

Brecht died last night of heart failure. He hadn't been feeling well for some time. He had been out at his country home in Buckow, north of Berlin, trying to get some rest. Last Thursday, when he heard that my husband, Max*, was sick he wrote him a letter telling him to spare himself, to cut out overworking, to concentrate on getting well, and he sent him a bottle of champagne to cheer him. But Brecht himself was only well enough to come into town once a week to take care of the most pressing business of the Berliner Ensemble. I asked what was the matter with Brecht last week and I was told "He's just terribly tired—tired from a lifetime of intensive work." Even last week there was a certain depression among the people in the Berliner Ensemble. Everyone was worried about Brecht. But nobody thought of death. That Brecht could die was unthinkable, it's unthinkable now; the blow to the German theater, to German letters, to German unity, to the whole cause of peace and socialism, is shattering. I dare not telephone the Berliner Ensemble today to ask any questions, I can too well imagine in what a state of complete prostration they all are—actors, directors, writers, stage-hands, publicity agents, secretaries, doormen, cleaning women: Brecht was adored.

The last thing Brecht had been working on was *Days of the Commune,* a play he wrote in 1948, and which the Ensemble was planning to try out in Karl-Marx-Stadt (formerly Chemnitz) in the German Democratic Republic at the end of September. As of last week he was not satisfied with the text and was still working on changes. He had recently finished writing "Annotations to Galileo," in which he summed up some of his theories on the theater. I had asked last week for recent poems, but his co-workers were doubtful as to whether there were any. They were sure there were no recent stories—not for many years. Brecht, they said, was most interested at the moment in writing essays on peace and German unity. He had not written a new play for some time but had devoted most of his energy to directing, revising and adapting, and training new directors, actors and actresses. Brecht admired the poetry, the theatre and the manners of China, and this was manifested in all his work, in his modesty and in his genius for creating through a collective.

On Sunday August 12th in the literary supplement of "Neues Deutschland" there appeared an old poem by Brecht, *"Oh Falladah, die du hangest!"* written in 1918. Poems of Brecht's never appeared without his permission, and his permission always had some purpose. It can therefore be safely assumed that he particularly wanted to repeat the message of that poem, and therefore I have translated it for you should you care to publish it with an obituary. It is the last poem of his published before he died. I have stuck close to the sense and the feeling but had to sacrifice the rhyme. I also send you a reproduction of a lithograph by the Republic's foremost sculptor Fritz Cremer, holder of the National Prize, which illustrates it.

EDITH ANDERSON

* Max Schroeder, well known German literary figure who was imprisoned in a concentration camp from which he escaped, finally reaching the U.S. He is now an editor of the publishing house Aufbau Verlag, in Berlin.

OH, FALLADAH!*

BERTOLT BRECHT

I pulled my load despite my weakness.
I came as far as Frankfurter Avenue.
There I was just thinking, Oh dear!
This weakness! If I let myself go,
It could happen that I'd break down . . .
Ten minutes later only my bones
Were left lying in the street.

Because hardly had I broken down
(The driver ran to the telephone)
When hungry people rushed out of the houses
To grab themselves a pound of meat,
Tore the flesh off my bones with knives,
And there I was, still living,
I wasn't even finished dying.

But I knew them from before, the people!
Why, they brought me sacks to keep the flies off,
Gave me stale bread and even told my driver
To treat me gently.
So friendly then, and now so vicious to me!
As if they suddenly were changed to other people! Oh,
What had happened to them?

And I wondered, what kind of chill
Must have come over the people?
Who beats them so unmercifully
That now their very hearts are frozen?
Oh help them please! And do it soon!
Or something may happen to you
That you never thought was possible.

* *Falladah is the name of a legendary talking horse in one of Grimm's fairy tales, "The Goose Girl." He was killed to prevent his telling the truth, but he told it after he was* dead just the same.

Drawing by Fritz Cremer for Bertolt Brecht's poem "Oh, Falladah!"

CHARACTER AND FATE

The Novels of Ellen Glasgow

BARBARA GILES

ELEVEN years after Ellen Glasgow's death only one of her nineteen novels remains in print besides the Modern Library edition of *Barren Ground.* To a generation that knows Southern literature through its currently famous authors, her works would probably seem archaic. Miss Glasgow believed, for one thing, that "character is fate": character—not a "doom" composed of paralyzing horrors, or a chloroform peace for brightly crayoned insects. At times, she applied this belief narrowly, and character, overwhelming the characters, became *fated,* a doom in itself deriving from heritage or "blood." More often, however, it expressed her sense that a person's destiny was (or should be susceptible to his own aspirations and deeds—which meant, for the heroic character, a destiny bound up with his revolt against the "evasive idealism" that Miss Glasgow regarded as the source of all the hypocrisy, cruelty, and sentimentality that she found in the South.

When the author was twenty-two, she opened her own attack on this "evasive idealism" with a first novel that would have seemed daring enough even from a Northern writer. Coming out of Virginia, whose novelists and historians were dedicated to rouging the dead cheeks of the Confederacy, it was a minor scandal—minor because it was first published anonymously, and because "educated" Virginians read little that did not flatter their own images. The title, *The Descendant,* is sardonic since the hero is an illegitimate son of "poor whites" whom he doesn't even know. To escape the revilement and ostracism of the townspeople, he flees his native Virginia for New York City where his experiences, including near-starvation, convince him that it is not his unlucky birth but "the system" that oppresses him. Forthwith he gets a job on *The Iconoclast* and later becomes the editor, meanwhile engaging in a turbulent and tragic affair with a Southern-born woman artist who shares the iconoclasts' belief in Free Love.

THE novel is far removed from the polished ironies of Miss Glasgow's later works. When she wrote it she had spent exactly two weeks in Manhattan with a carefully chaperoned group of Richmond maidens; she had never met an iconoclast, and her experience with love seems to have been confined to flirtations at the University of Virginia balls. Yet, despite the novel's naivete, lack of humor, and old-fashioned melodrama (when another editor accuses the hero of diluting his principles the latter simply picks up a revolver and shoots him dead), there is a genuine freshness, as well as vigor and intelligence, in the underlying ideas, especially in the attacks on caste traditions and the prevailing cant, by no means confined to the South, about marriage and "pure womanhood." And while the author was never to be so radical again, these two objects of her assault remained her principal targets through most of her succeeding books.

She showed little consistency otherwise. Her own life was a shifting battlefield of opposing traditions and loyalties, emotional instability and intellectual toughness, of realistic perception, romanticism, and irony. On her father's side she was descended from Scotch-Irish Calvinists, who revered "fortitude," duty, property, and justice without mercy; on her mother's from the high-living, determinedly "gay" aristocrats of the Tidewater. That the clash of these two influences, each with its own shining pretenses and shoddy realities, loosed furies in the household of ten children, is obvious even from the discreet account Miss Glasgow gives in her autobiography, *The Woman Within.*

Nor was there reassurance in the social milieu outside. "I cannot recall the time," Miss Glasgow records, "when the pattern of society, as well as the scheme of things in general, had not seemed to me false and even malignant." It was her opinion that she was "born" with this feeling—just as she was "born" a writer—and that it was a product of her "morbid sensitivity." Morbidly sensitive she undoubtedly was—the phrase may seem euphemistic considering her description of the hysteria and nightmares that tormented her infancy. But if her first terrifying memory was of a hallucination, the evil "face without a body" that was to haunt her until her death, the next ones were of human cruelty: a dog stoned by a gang of boys, an old Negro being forced, pleading and resisting, into the almshouse wagon—when she was overcome with horror and "a heartbreaking pity for the abused and inarticulate, for the helpless victims of life, everywhere. . . ."

IN *The Sheltered Life* (1932) old General Archibald relives just such episodes in his memory; but here Miss Glasgow has transposed the adjective, helpless, to describe the pity, which she presents as more compelling and tragic than the fate of the sufferers. This was not so in her

earlier books. The victims themselves, unless they were despicable, were not helpless or inarticulate, though they fought alone and were usually vanquished. While growing up, the author had found a way—which she was later to lose—of combatting the paralysis in horror and pity by building defenses and then weapons against the masters of cruelty: truth against appearance, satire against sentimentality, wit against vapidity. From the mingled nightmares of illusion and actuality she turned to books, not for escape but for "something to hold on to," reading extraordinary amounts of philosophy, social history, and economics—the last especially, because it was "solid and hard." With no formal schooling—one day spent in first grade had made her ill with fright—she got to "know John Stuart Mill by heart" and became a follower of Henry George and of Darwin.

Sustaining and real as she found this world of ideas, it did not enter directly into her novels after *The Descendant.* Rather, it seems to have stimulated and fortified her in personal battles with actuality. She became a Fabian Socialist when she was seventeen, a suffragist at eighteen, and soon cast off her father's God of blood and vengeance, a step which she was to find considerably simpler than casting off her father's rage at the event. Aside from an older sister and brother-in-law, no one among her family or friends had any tolerance for "notions," least of all when they entered the heads of young women. She learned, however, to judge the Philistines more accurately than they judged her, replacing her fear of them with contempt as she appraised their motives and morals in the stern light of ideological clarity. Her only "escape" from them was an imagined change of locale: the setting of her second novel also was New York but, as in *The Descendant,* the main characters are Southerners. (They too lead an unorthodox, semi-Bohemian life, but the novel is more an immature attempt at the "comedy of morals" which the author perfected some thirty years later.) Her search for character, for a character whose fate would follow from struggle, was a difficult one.

ONE thing she seems to have concluded early: that heroes were not to be found, or even imagined, in her Richmond society. To invent the fire-breathing Michael Ackersham of *The Descendant* she relied on whatever knowledge or fancy she had concerning the lowest-born "poor whites" of Virginia. Her next hero-in-politics, appearing in her third novel, *The Voice of the People* (1900), is drawn from a group she obviously knew much better and viewed with considerable hope: the very small, independent farmers of the South. No iconoclast, Nicholas Burr joins the church at an early age so that when he dies he may "meet Tom Jefferson in Heaven." His schooling (provided by a sympathetic judge), his entry into politics, and his crusades against the gentry-run machine are pre-

sented in a great deal of realistic detail by the author, who got herself smuggled into a Democratic state convention, where no woman had ever been, and hid behind a pillar in order to take notes on the proceedings.

Unfortunately, this more sober and plausible hero is not very inspiring. Lacking the theatrics of Michael Ackersham's temperament, he also lacks the real fire of bolder concepts, and the Jeffersonian ideal is nearly cut down to the dimensions of a high-minded lesson in civics (thus Nick's opposition to lynching, although it costs him his life, is based upon the single principle of legality).

The truth is, as we shall see, Miss Glasgow didn't really believe that heroes were to be found anywhere. There were only heroines.

And they arrived at heroism in combat with men—that is, with men conditioned by that form of idealism known as the "code of perfect behavior" which, when explored by the author, turned out to be a more complex and destructive phenomenon than its manifest absurdities might indicate. Not that she failed to record the absurdities, which are the source of her finest comedy; and not that her research, however meaningful the results, was free from a strain of subjective bitterness which ended by impairing her perspective and limiting her creativeness. Nevertheless, her best books came out of her passionate engagement in this particular battle. It seems to have impelled her, above anything else, to her most intensive studies of people and to have largely accounted for the hard work and ardor she put into perfecting her artistry, working toward "a style so flexible that it would bend without breaking."

IN all of her novels, the "code" plays some villainous role. With the publication of *Virginia,* in 1913, it became the all-inclusive enemy. Miss Glasgow called this work "the first novel of my maturity," and the writing is certainly more skilled, the psychology smoother than in her preceding novels. It also contains a scene which, although incidental, was more daring by Virginia standards than anything in *The Descendant*—that of a Negro woman reminding her son's influential white father of his paternity in a desperate effort to save the youth from jail.

Here Miss Glasgow not only violated what was then the sternest taboo of Southern literature; she cut through the code's "evasive idealism" to expose one of its roots. She touched upon another in her description of the ladies going about their genteel ways oblivious to the "Southern way of life" represented by the half-naked Negro children playing around them in the dirt.

Otherwise the novel is more notable for its aim than its accomplishment; the aim being, as Miss Glasgow tells us in her book of prefaces, *A Certain Measure,* to portray the ironic consequences of a woman's at-

tempt to be "the perfect wife as man had invented her," a woman "whose vital energy had been deflected, by precept and example, into a single emotional center." Virginia, the heroine who attempts this, is so successful that she is finally left without a quality more arresting than her fidelity, which is worse than useless since her husband no longer wants it.

The joke, if one can call it that, is supposed to be on him—it was men who dreamed up this perfect wife—but the point is not well made. When we first meet Virginia she has already been robbed of so much "vital energy" that it is hard to imagine what potential ever existed. Her unworthy husband at least promises more interest. So, for that matter, do some of the lesser characters, whose use of "beautiful behavior" as a desperate refuge, or a ruthless powerhold, suggests deeper social meanings than Virginia's tearful story. She is a heroine only by virtue of her staying power and the author allows her to stay too long.

Life and Gabriella (1916) is another story. Given a widowed mother who lives by her needlework but as a lady, never a "seamstress," and a married sister who is a caricature of Virginia, Gabriella feels herself free of illusions concerning either polite society or romantic love. When, despite her resolution, she is taken in by the spoiled son of a New York financier and he turns out to be faithless as well as improvident, she lets him go and supports herself and child by working in a Manhattan dress shop, of which she eventually becomes the owner. Imaginative, intelligent, and determined, Gabriella is a first and sketchier version of the blue-eyed, radiant, but rather stern-faced Glasgow heroines whose fullest and finest portrait is that of Dorinda in the first half of *Barren Ground.*

PUBLISHED in 1925, *Barren Ground* marks an immense increase in the novelist's power. It is revealed in the first page and a half, which describe a landscape, one of broomsedge, snow, and desolation, but a land not yet dead, not quite changeless:

"At these quiet seasons, the dwellers near Pedlar's Mill felt scarcely more than a tremor on the surface of life. But on stormy days, when the wind plunged like a hawk from the swollen clouds, there was a quivering in the broomsedge, as if coveys of frightened partridges were flying from the pursuer. Then the quivering would become a ripple and the ripple would swell presently into rolling waves. The straw would darken as the gust swooped down, and brighten as it sped on to the shelter of scrub pine and sassafras. And while the wind bewitched the solitude, a vague restlessness would stir in the hearts of living things on the farms, of men, women, and animals. . . ."

The dwellers near Pedlar's Mill in 1895 are "good people," a category that Miss Glasgow tells us is very different from that of "good families"

but not to be confused with "poor whites." They are poor and they are white but some of them, like Dorinda's parents, own a thousand acres of this barren ground though it contains but "a single cultivated corner." However, they are not to be mistaken for impoverished gentry either. They wear overalls, and the overalls smell of manure. Their acreage, so far from enriching them, has only increased the distance between farms, adding isolation to the bleak hardships of survival on a soil drained of fertility.

The author devotes considerably more space than is indicated here to this agricultural setting, its problems and their effect on the people who must live with them. It is more than a setting where Dorinda is concerned: her story is bound with the conditions of life at Pedlar's Mill, as her character is bound with her fate. Miss Glasgow introduces her in the book's first paragraph, briefly, almost as part of the landscape: a girl in an orange-colored shawl whose "attitude in its stillness gave an impression of arrested flight, as if she were running toward life." A few pages further we learn that ". . . there were moments when it seemed to her that her inner life was merely a hidden field in the landscape, neglected, monotonous, abandoned to solitude, and yet with a smothered fire like the wild grass running through it. At twenty her imagination was enkindled by the ardor that makes a woman fall in love with a religion or an idea."

What Dorinda does fall in love with is Jason Greylock, son of a local doctor-farmer. The father, defeated in his struggle with the farm, is dying in half-madness of alcoholism, and Jason has come back from his medical studies in the city to attend him. The stay is supposed to be temporary, but the old man takes his time with death, and, as the reader discovers before Dorinda does, Jason has already begun to sense the doom that will result from his own weakness and cowardice. A week before he and Dorinda are to be married, he is "forced" by the well-to-do-father and brother of a weak-minded girl to marry her instead, leaving Dorinda with an unborn child.

UP to this point the novel reminds one somewhat of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles,* in its feeling for the countryside, the people as typified by Dorinda's parents, and in the story of betrayal. (It is probably not a coincidence that Dorinda, like Tess, is confronted at a crucial hour in her life with a Gospel-spreader and his printed sign warning of eternal damnation.)

However, Dorinda's subsequent story is practically the reverse of Tess'. For one thing, her social position in relation to her betrayer's is not nearly so humble as that of Hardy's heroine. And she is not disposed to humility in any case. Like other "ruined" girls who strew the pages of Miss Glasgow's novels, Dorinda refuses to stay ruined. Running away to

New York and finding work there, she is finally able to return to the farm with borrowed capital and a headful of agricultural science which she uses with fanatical industry and shrewdness until the thousand acres of barren ground are transformed into a flourishing dairy farm. Eventually when Jason, as defeated and alcoholic as his father, is forced to sell his farm, Dorinda buys it at auction. And when, some years later, he is dying of consumption she fetches him back from the poorhouse to expire in her home.

Put this way, it sounds like a tale of revenge—and, essentially I think, it is. Yet Miss Glasgow evidently did not intend it as such. In fact Jason, without knowing it, has his own revenge over Dorinda, who finally comes to realize that no matter how great her material triumph over him, she has after all allowed him to ruin her emotionally. Never permitting herself to fall in love again, she marries a man physically repulsive to her, and not until Jason's death is she rid of her obsession with the early tragedy. The obsession and its anguish serve the novel in two ways: they save the story from moving in a straight line toward an expected "happy ending," and they sustain the reader's sympathy for Dorinda, enabling him to carry over her portrait from the first half of the book to the second.

YET so much of her is lost in that second half that Dorinda seems almost a different person. And this is so characteristic of many of Miss Glasgow's works—the rich setting, the vigorous, sure opening, the gradual narrowing and thinning of both character and story, and the attempt to hold all together with a resounding finale or a last twist of irony—that it is worth closer analysis.

In the novel's first section, Dorinda is very much a person of the farmland and its life—able because of her youth and an imagination fed on books to stand a little above it, to feel indignant pity for its victims, wonder at their endurance, and often impatience for what seems futile or shiftless in their methods. The "vein of iron" that locks them in hopeless battle with an iron earth is a more volatile force in her. Yet for all her spirit, impulsiveness, and independence of mind, she is part of them in her own sense of duty and involvement in the home chores and her work in the village store. When she dreams of escape and adventure she imagines it coming, romantically, through a stranger from the passing train. It doesn't occur to her that she herself might conquer a soil that has conquered others. That dream arises after she has been in the city for two years and it is evoked during a concert by music which, in a wonderfully descriptive passage, summons up the colors and lines of the country at its

best, and she becomes aware that her very capacity to feel depends upon her return to the farm and to struggle with it.

Yet right there, when the novel seems to promise most, it begins to deteriorate. Dorinda's capacity to feel does not, after all, revive very far; not to anything approaching the swift intensity that illuminates and heightens the surrounding, the people, and the drama of her own life earlier in the book. Aside from flashes of pleasure in natural beauty and satisfaction in her fierce struggle with the land, her inner life is dominated by Jason. She has ceased to love him, the author assures us; she has virtually "ceased to think about him"; but his image remains as an object of hatred and a "torment in the nerves."

If this torment serves the novel in some ways, if it softens the portrait of Dorinda as an ambitious and rather ruthless businesswoman, it hinders it in others. Few people appear in this part of the story. Dorinda's nervous dread of encountering Jason keeps her secluded for years on end, and the workers on her land are seen entirely as her employes, men and women who must get out the pats of butter that can be sold for a good price to Washington restaurants. She is as hard on them as on herself—as she is hard toward life.

In her preface the author states that *Barren Ground* was written as a story of courage and fortitude. That Dorinda has courage is unquestionable. She defies the dread code-of-perfect-behavior (reinforced here by the Presbyterian threat of eternal damnation, at practically every point, not least by succeeding in a farming enterprise at which men have failed. But why must this triumph be accomplished at so much cost of human feeling?

It is not even in character for the Dorinda we first know to permit a man she despises—and so miserable and abject a one as this—to imprison her forever in the sterile torment of hatred. Miss Glasgow, however, does not use a development of character as a "device," though she sometimes pulls too hard on the strings of the resulting fate. She obviously thought that the later Dorinda had grown consistently from the earlier one, the consistency being in the "vein of iron" with which she is endowed.

"Vein of iron" is a phrase that frequently appears in the Glasgow books and is the title of her next-to-last novel.. As a quality it is supposed to be an attribute of Presbyterianism—not the Presbyterian religion but what might be called the "Presbyterian character," which Miss Glasgow hated and admired by turns. It appeared to her sometimes as fanatical, fatalistic, vengeful, and often hypocritical; sometimes as a source of strength, endurance, and true conscience. In either case it was joyless.

But there was another strain in her heritage and environment that both attracted and repelled her. One is tempted to call it the "Episcopal character" except that the term is too narrow. "Virginia aristocrat," with

some emphasis on "Virginia," comes closer. Her attitude toward this type is usually derisive or indignant; its conspicuous representatives are the most evasive of the idealists, the cruelest in caste pride, the most ridiculous in their pretenses. Nevertheless she herself is not devoid of respect for the Virginia high-born—for their supposed qualities, that is, of *noblesse oblige,* "gay" courage, scholarly learning, and romantic sensibility.

IN her research into character, the author explored these two principal sources over and over, alternately preferring one or the other and never sure which particular aspect of each was the true one. Practically all her leading persons are variations of a few "types," with the variation arrived at through further examination and a new insight. She can take a character from one novel and use it in another, but changed—sometimes into its opposite—simply by the addition or subtraction of the same dominant qualities. Thus Dorinda's mother, who evokes some exasperation but much more sympathy, reappears as Milly's mother in *They Stooped To Folly* with her thwarted missionary zeal, her martyrdom, even her neuralgia, all increased to the point of monstrosity. The first woman was brave and pathetic; the second is mean and self-pitying. Miss Glasgow may even caricature her own heroine, as when she turned Virginia into Gabriella's clinging-vine sister.

Or some qualities of two different types might be combined. This the author tried to do with her heroines, who are rarely of the aristocracy but are provided with a full quota of romantic imagination and a courage that is, if not gay, certainly more joyous than the grim "fortitude" of Dorinda's Presbyterian ancestors.

It is no use, however. The vein of iron always takes over; the romance must be expiated, the rebellion paid for, in suffering that approximates eternal damnation on earth. And the heroine's very character, like Dorinda's and even more like Ada's in *Vein of Iron,* begins to show the uglier side of its hardness. Curiously, this fate is always prepared for by the same kind of early tragedy, that of having succumbed to a charming but spineless man. Why Miss Glasgow couldn't imagine a vein of iron in a male who was not also repugnantly homely, humorless, or of brutal disposition, is never made plain.

Part of the answer may be found in the social roles played by her various types in relation to the code of evasive idealism. Roughly, the "bad" aristocrats invented and perpetrate it, the "good" minority is trapped by it, the hard-shelled Presbyterians reinforce it, while the genuinely strong ones defy it. What Miss Glasgow seemingly couldn't imagine was masculine attractiveness apart from the obvious, conventional "charm" of the gentry. This resulted in her placing the man, whether or not he actu-

ally was an aristocrat, in the "good," but trapped and powerless, category. He becomes a "villain not through intention but through weakness. Besides, the author's feminist soul never allowed her to forget that it was "man"who put over this code and she never let him forget it either.

There was of course a deeper, more personal reason for her bitterness on this subject, as appears from her memoirs. Whatever the reasons, it is a pity. Some of these hero-villains—Virginia's husband, Martin Welding in *They Stooped To Folly,* and Craig of *In This Our Life*—are men of ideas and highly unorthodox ones at that. Craig is actually a "Communist," or what Miss Glasgow conceives of as one. But since these ideas are barely stated and never come onto the stage in action, they promise a certain dramatic excitement that isn't fulfilled.

WHICH is not to say that the novels lack ideas. Every character trait reveals some part, if not more than a thread, in a pattern of contending traditions, social morals, prejudices, and potential rebellions. The author was happiest when she could portray the trait in caricature, as she does throughout *They Stooped To Folly* (1929), the second of her three "comedies of morals" that followed *Barren Ground.*

From Virginius Littlepage, an elderly gentleman derived from the Old South (who found it "less shocking to commit adultery than to utter the word in a lady's presence"), to his son Curle, representing the New ("Boost, Don't Knock"), they all stand for one or another element in the shifting picture of a Southern city a few years after World War I. It is the author's most sustained performance and by all odds her wittiest.

True, the story has been freighted with *three* generations of ruined women (one to each generation), but the cargo is lightly handled. Even Milly Burden, a Dorinda type, becomes rather lost in the comedy. She is less memorable than Mary Victoria, Virginius's daughter, a beautiful young creature with a flutelike voice that never quivers for an instant in humor or humility. Possessed by a "sense of duty" and a missionary zeal gone drunk on spreading American dollars and idealism around the Balkans, Mary Victoria comes home to concentrate all her passion for reform on her helpless bridegroom, who wants to write novels about reality instead of working in the family bank. With her arrogance of birth and money, her supreme faith in the "good influence" of a pure and well-born woman, and her eternal crusading, she combines the worst features of the Bourbons and the religious fanatics. She would be gruesome if her creator hadn't made her so wonderfully absurd.

What one misses in Miss Glasgow's ideas is a concept, and a person to convey it, that will not shatter at the first descent of personal tragedy, leaving only the bleakness of frustration and fortitude, which are poor

nourishment for the imagination. The author, who wanted "something to hold on to," who searched for it in wider ideologies than she could find in her own milieu, never worked wholly free from the paralyzing pity and horror with which she first looked upon cruelty. She held on to many things, one after another, but rejected them all in the end, except for the frail supports of irony and more pity. Unfortunately more pity can become too much. It can, if attended by bitterness, become pity of self.

In her later years, Miss Glasgow was to lament, in the very words she gives Dorinda, that "life had cheated her." The truth seems, rather, that she was unwilling to commit herself fully to "life." For all her pity—of mistreated animals, people dying or disabled, the bereft and utterly helpless—she was deficient in sympathy, a warmer, more outreaching emotion that could have led her into closer understandings, friendships, and alliances.

It is significant that while she can describe with anguish some particular cruelty visited upon a Negro, she regards the Negro people in general as "an immature but not ungenerous race," and scarcely includes them in the Southern picture. Until her last novel, *In This Our Life,* they appear only peripherally, as stereotypes, and when she attempted finally to portray a young Negro faced with the problem of financing his professional education in the South she did it with sighs of baffled compassion. The direct relationship of the "code," with its self-deception, corruption, and brutality, to the inhuman wrongs visited upon the Negro is exposed briefly and partially in *Virginia* and the insight there is not developed later.

ONE is reluctant to discuss her last two novels at all. Both of them, *Vein of Iron* (1935) and *In This Our Life* (1941) include such broad social phenomena as the depression but the most charitable thing to be said at this point is that the author was too exhausted by illness and old age to react with anything but aversion to the challenge of change. It is appalling to find a writer who once composed fictional editorials on iconoclasm (darned good editorials too) using a saintly, ascetic old philosopher to describe men and women on the breadlines as "sheep that asked only for better browsing"; a woman who had once fought her own terrified view of life with the perspectives of great thinkers now taking every opportunity to sneer at persons who hope that "human nature" can be altered by any science or system in the world.

Her early despair about people, never fully overcome, has returned full-force but grown smug and superior. And a belief toward which she

was always inclined, that human beings are "born" with noble or ignoble characters, reveals itself as basically a belief in "good blood" or "bad."

One prefers to remember that she fought for most of her life against this very conclusion. Out of the struggle came some memorable books, made so by passages, chapters, and whole sections that celebrate with poetic brilliance the ability of the human spirit to triumph over adversity and evil. Where she was sure of her target, whether it was the Southern "sentimental fallacy" or the mean uses of "eternal damnation," her aim was beautifully precise. And she had not only a gift for language and wit which she labored to perfect, but a talent for describing human emotions with an intensity and poignancy too rare in fiction—especially present-day fiction—to go unappreciated. Less hindered by the conditions of her life and the peculiar disability of her temperament, she might well have conquered the barren ground of fatalism.

THE PULPIT PERILOUS

REV. STEPHEN H. FRITCHMAN

IN RECENT years many persons have forgotten, or are too young to have known for themselves, that this country has a great tradition of religious freedom and social responsibility in religion, not only in theoretical declarations, but in practice by churches and temples of many persuasions.

I have no desire to draw an exaggerated picture of the role religion has played in the building of free American social institutions or the part it has played in shaping a conscience for our nation. It suffices now to remind ourselves that it has been a factor from coast to coast, and from earliest days. The Quaker, the Baptist, the Jew, the Unitarian, the Episcopalian, the Methodist and many another citizen in the past three hundred years came here with a lively memory of European intolerance in his mind, with the names of forefathers written tragically in family Bibles as victims of religious struggle in England, Germany, France and other nations.

Alas, the current revival of piety and gospel preaching seems all too silent on the militant social conscience of the colonial reformers who settled our eastern shores and later cleared the wilderness. Ernest Sutherland Bates in his splendid book, *American Faith,* a few years ago told some of these proud stories of religious responsibility, even if Dr. Peale and Dr. Graham and Dr. Horton find a more personal gospel more acceptable in these days of the test oath and the withheld passport.

Henry Steele Commager's *Theodore Parker: Yankee Crusader,* records the energy with which this New England prophet spoke to thousands in Boston's Music Hall. His *Sermon on Merchants* is still a high

water mark of American social preaching, like his hour-long addresses on the status of women, on the slave trade, on the plight of industrial workers, on slum housing, on the exploitation of sailors. The break with Calvinist determinism in the early 1820's by Channing, Parker, May and many others opened the gates for a whole new stream of practical reform under the compulsion of a new-found conscience. If man was essentially good, if all men might find salvation, if the kingdom was of this world as well as the next, then, said Parker, let us be about the Lord's business.

THERE should be a re-reading of the chapter in our history that tells of the Protestant church in the last thirty years of the 19th century, when the churches began to move with profound dedication toward the ideals of humanism and democratic collectivism. I find the history of social religion in this country enormously helpful when one sees so many church spokesmen today speaking in whispers, lest word of their tentative prophecies reach Senator Eastland or Congressman Walter.

One can still find in libraries issues of Rev. Jesse H. Jones' *Equity,* the monthly journal of the Christian Labor Union in 1872. This gifted minister of a Congregational Church in North Abingdon, Massachusetts, is probably the true father of the social gospel movement in the United States. Jones felt that the Christian church should minister to the industrial workers. He shaped his Christian Labor Union by the model of the new Knights of Labor. He and his co-organizers were supporters of Steward's 8-Hour Movement. *Equity* proposed the formation of cooperatives, workers' stores and banks.

Then there was the ministry of Washington Gladden. Conscious of the dilemma of the Christian church in this period trying to retain a traditional dogmatic faith in the new climate of modern science, Gladden urged his fellow citizens to concentrate on the social ethic of the Judaeo-Christian heritage. He was a pupil of Horace Bushnell and Mark Hopkins, both advocates of a Christian humanism. During the 1870's this brilliant young Congregational minister formulated the major axioms of the "social gospel," as it was to be called for the next eighty years. Gladden felt the central issue in social religion was improving the relations between workers and employers in industry. He was one of the first preachers in America to tell financial and industrial leaders that labor had the right to organize and the right to strike. He asked from his

pulpit: "Shall there be a caste system recognized and established in our churches so that the rich shall meet by themselves in grand churches and the poor in the mission chapels?"

Space forbids my mentioning many of the early leaders of the social movement in the churches such as William Dwight Bliss, the rector of St. George's Episcopal Church in Lee, Mass.; Rev. George D. Herron of the Congregational Church in Burlington, Iowa, and Walter Rauschenbusch of Rochester Theological Seminary in New York State. The greatest of this prophetic line in our time, of course, is Dr. Harry F. Ward, the retired professor of Christian Ethics at Union Theological Seminary in New York. The debt we owe these men and the thousands of ministers and lay members they influenced is beyond calculation. If organized religion ever emerges from its bondage to a doomed capitalist order and asserts its independence, it will be in part due to the genius of these early advocates of an enlightened and socially responsible faith.

THESE 19th and early 20th century architects of the social gospel spoke without ambiguity, an art desperately needed in our own time. "Revolutions," said George D. Herron, "even in their wildest forms, are the impulses of God moving in tides of fire through the life of men."

"Competition," said Walter Rauschenbusch, "as a principle is a denial of fraternity. . . . The social gospel with its mission of building the kingdom of God on earth is the religious reaction to the historic advent of democracy. . . . It seeks to put the democratic spirit, which the church inherited from Jesus and the prophets, once more in control of the institutions and teachings of the church. It seeks to create a more sensitive modern conscience."

What has happened to this tide of social responsibility in religion in the past ten years since the end of World War II? It is not a picture totally white or black. On the whole, from my point of observation on the West Coast, the scene is tragically dismal and morally stagnating. Churches with a forthright social message speaking to the condition of all classes of men and women are rare indeed. They do exist, and all honor to their members and the preachers they make possible.

I for one find the most forthright Christian leadership today coming from the colored churches. I would nominate for preacher of the year Rev. Martin Luther King of Montgomery, Alabama. I do not know in detail the brand of his theology, but he is a rebuke to scores of thousands of

Protestant, Jewish and Catholic clergy in this land in the year 1956. He and hundreds like him in Negro pulpits are preaching a religion that acts as a leaven in men's daily lives.

AS THE minister of a church that has effectively broken the color barrier, I have some right to say that literally thousands of American churches have yet to discover the damning fact that eleven o'clock on Sunday morning is still the hour of maximum segregation in the week. Negro ministers have died in recent months because of their bold support and participation in the struggle for an unsegregated America. All tribute too, let me add, to the Methodists who recently officially adopted a program of desegregation in the entire denomination of Methodists with their millions. All power to the Baptists, another two million plus denomination today, which has taken forthright stands on civil interference with religious freedom.

Let us remember the Episcopalians' action at their last triennial convention in Honolulu, with their magnificent condemnation of religious imperialism in Asia during the past century. I mention these random examples to make it clear that there are signs of a social conscience in the church today. It is supported by many clergymen and their congregations from coast to coast every Sunday morning and during the week. But the Christian church is still a stretcher-bearer organization, carrying the wounded off the field, not an architectural and construction crew building the new commonwealth.

IN THE *U.S. News and World Report* for February 3, 1956, there is a four-page report entitled "Laymen and Clergy at Odds on Role of Church in Politics." The subtitle reads: "A five year controversy in the Protestant church (The National Council of Churches) is disclosed for the first time. The issue: Should the clergy takes sides in political, social and economic questions?" J. Howard Pew, chairman of the lay committee of 120, and former President of Sun Oil Co., summed up the controversy: "Throughout our committee's term of life it repeatedly brought to the National Council's attention the seriousness of the problems involved in its issuance of statements and controversial studies in the fields of sociology, economics and politics."

Mr. Pew found himself and other laymen protesting the Council's

actions opposing the Bricker amendment in 1953, an issue neither ethical nor religious in his opinion. On another occasion they were displeased when the National Council urged Congress to end procedural abuses on the part of investigating committees, and protested the forcing of witnesses, under the pretext of investigating subversive activities, to testify concerning their personal, economic and political beliefs.

What disturbed Mr. Pew the most was that the clergy opposed him and the lay members of his committee ten to one. In his protest he stated that the National Council was giving ever more attention to economic and political questions. Most significant was the vote of his layman's committee, 115 to 15, stating: "Our Committee believes that the National Council of Churches impairs its ability to meet its prime responsibility, when, sitting in judgment on current secular affairs, it becomes involved in economic or political controversy having no moral or ethical content."

In Europe the church has long been known as a bulwark of reaction, but it has not always been so in the United States. The battle in the past decade to use the power of the church to support the ruling class has been going on with vigor underneath the surface in most of our denominations, including the one I serve. While resolutions get passed at annual meetings and conventions, while national boards of directors occasionally take progressive stands on specific issues of civil and political rights, the trend since 1945 has been toward a new piety, a new liturgical concentration, a new burst of church building, and the preaching of a gospel of comfort and inner fortification. In less elegant words the Sunday text has become: "You never had it so good."

THE STUDY of the Monday morning church pages of the newspapers of the land is the best reflection of this emphasis. The tremendous advance in the writing, publication and sale of religious books of a noncontroversial character, books dealing with peace of mind, private mysticism and personal adjustment, is a further evidence of this tide of emasculated religion. The ministers being graduated from our seminaries today are far less well prepared to serve as leaders in the field of social religion than they were a decade or two ago. A study of the curricula of these theological schools is indeed interesting documentation of this trend. The flight to public worship, philosophical neo-orthodox disputation, and personal counselling of the neurotic victims

of our sick civilization (all legitimate functions of the church, to be sure) has made the modern minister, with rare exceptions, a quiet consenter to the prevailing economic and political institutions.

The ministerial associations in our various cities on the whole are preoccupied with evangelism, techniques of administration, and the growing threat to their traditional leadership in America by the Roman Catholic hierarchy. In five years of membership in a Los Angeles Protestant ministers' group, I remember but one resolution on a controversial issue: the group condemned the bad taste of the billboard advertising for a film featuring Miss Jane Russell.

It is my belief that in the past decade the churches of America have surrendered their once respected role of social leadership in every field of our collective life: political, economic, cultural, labor, governmental. We once had controversy and difference of opinion, to be sure, but over major issues, over social methodology, over rate of social change, not over the right of the church to lead in the shaping of a public conscience; that was beyond debate.

Protestant clergymen who preach the social gospel have especially felt the anger of the House Committee on Un-American Activities, and this infamous and unauthorized excursion into the field of religion has sought to defame many of the most vigorous critics of our social order. Scores of clergymen, some deceased, a majority alive, have been placed on a list of untouchables. The professional informers used have testified without any previous knowledge on matters of organized religion, in a fashion that would be laughable were it not so sinister. Even our Supreme Court, a few weeks ago, had to protest the kind of evidence used by these notorious professional witnesses.

THERE is little advantage in minimizing the assault by agencies in the American community, governmental and non-governmental alike, on the free exercise of religion so carefully safeguarded by our founding fathers. Dr. Albert Lindsey of Tacoma, Washington, journeyed to the East Coast a few weeks ago to tell the Evangelical Christian churches in convention: "Religious liberty in America is being slowly but surely taken away. There seems to be a code of platitudes prepared. You either use these or you are silenced. More and more channels are being closed to religious discussion."

Recently a liberal rabbi and myself were asked to be on a television

panel with a Jehovah's Witness and a Baptist Fundamentalist to discuss "Can there be an atheist morality?" This was the first time in the memory of man that such a question had been discussed on a television show. The mail was the largest and most favorable the station had ever received on this Sunday afternoon TV forum show, which illustrates my thesis that the blackout then briefly lifted is a calculated tactic for silencing the liberal voice, rather than a result of public indifference.

There is the relentless persecution of Dr. Willard Uphaus in New Hampshire, who received a sentence in the Merrimac County Jail for refusing to become a common informer and provide names of guests in his World Fellowship Center to the State Attorney, Mr. Wyman, who apparently thinks being a Christian is synonymous with giving the names of the twelve disciples to every Pilate who asks for them.

One of the most scandalous illustrations of our declining religious freedoms is the successful postponement recently of the much advertised hearings on violations of religious freedom promised by Senator Thomas Hennings, Democrat of Missouri. Several of us on the West Coast were prepared to go to Washington to testify on the California situation when nameless pressures led to the indefinite postponement of these scheduled hearings.

One of the most shocking assaults on religious freedom last year was the underwriting of a special study of "Communism in Religion" by the Fund for the Republic, a study under the direction of Prof. Clinton Rossiter of Cornell and Rev. Ralph Roy of Brooklyn. Mr. Roy's unethical attack on liberal ministers four years ago in his book "Apostles of Discord" is about the poorest qualification for undertaking such a study as can be imagined. Never was guilt by association used more assiduously than in this attack, even by Whittaker Chambers or Louis Budenz in their palmiest days. One expects such yellow journalism practices from a Pegler or a Hearst, but to recruit such workmen from the theological seminaries is a new low in the warfare of ideas in America.

WITH illustrations such as these, one can understand why Pastor Martin Niemoeller in Boston last year warned of the danger to the church in "falling back to the line of least resistance and retiring to a purely 'religious' mission, thus giving the secular authority a free hand and leaving the people without counsel or guidance." It has not been better said. A religion subservient to the prevailing powers in the

state and the market-place will of course seek to silence every non-conformist, especially in the pulpit, lest the echoes of prophecy give some moral sanction to his words. The red smear, the "sickle behind the cross," to use Mr. Roy's term, is the easiest weapon at hand.

The effect of all of this is a colossal silence in the pulpit today. And this brings me to the question of the blacklist of clergymen which is one of the scandals of our time. Fascist-tempered private publications such as *Alert* and *Red Channels,* magazines like *Time, Newsweek* and *Life,* reports published by the Un-American Committees, and some of the widely syndicated columnists like Fulton Lewis, Sokolsky and Westbrook Pegler, have spearheaded an assault on the liberal churches and their clergy so continuously these past years that we find on the whole a new crop of ministers, especially the younger ones in the several denominations, who feel it the better part of wisdom to stay out of the 8th century prophets and the more inflammatory sections of the four gospels.

The letters I receive from young, and not so young, ministers who have been dropped from fellowship by cautious departments of the ministry in several denominations make it all too clear that the wave of reaction and intimidation has most certainly affected our religious bodies. The Melish case and the McMichael case, and to some degree my own case, are all illustrations not lost upon the thousands of younger ministers who see the difficulty of practicing a traditional non-conformity today. The long list of clergy spread on the pages of the *American Mercury* by J. B. Matthews two years ago was but one widely circulated experiment in the blacklisting technique in religion. The closing of the pages of the *Christian Century* to Harry Ward and others who once graced its columns can be paralleled in many another church journal. The denial of passports to several Protestant ministers is testimony of a blacklist existing in the State Department. Of course, many an American minister wishing to enjoy the pleasures and rights of foreign travel consciously or subconsciously avoids giving too bold a message on Sundays, if he wishes to get a passport—and if he thinks his chance might be jeopardized by his hostility to the Taft-Hartley Act or his support of the Rosenberg appeal for leniency or his demand for the end of nuclear test explosions.

What must it do to a man's preaching to learn of the thousands of names of ministers on the nebulous and elastic blacklist that exists in governmental and editorial offices? Dr. Leonard Mays has been quoted

in the Baptist *Watchman Examiner* regarding the files of one Federal agency which lists the names of many ministers whose only sin is a long career of loyal Christian citizenship including vigorous dissenting opinions from the pulpit and in the press.

BISHOP Bromley Oxnam has discovered, as has Rev. Jack McMichael, the eagerness of Federal hearings to rely on faceless informers, purchased perjurers and anonymous gossip, treated soberly as evidence. Senator Eastland has issued a new report filled with slander against so-called "communist" religionists. It is not an easy thing for a man to make a living in the profession of religion and to find new pulpits, or be recommended by his bishop for promotion, when the climate of public opinion is against an outspoken pulpit voice and a militant participation in the crucial issues of our times. Our senators know this well in their campaigns of name-dropping from city to city.

One cannot expect to fill fifty or seventy-five thousand pulpits with martyrs or John the Baptists wearing leathern girdles and eating wild honey and locusts. What actually happens is that young men with strong convictions on matters of social change simply by-pass the ministry nowadays; they find other fields for service to their fellow men. Thus we get a self-purge of the ministry by absenteeism. And the field is left to those who seek a "living" and consider a ministry of personal guidance and liturgical service the remaining function of the clergy. Whether this is adequate or not for the needs of the American people is a matter of opinion, but it is apparent that it condemns the church to a decreasingly important role in our democratic life.

While religion is enjoying a vast revival today, it is open to question whether it is not a religion of opiates and flight, a religion bereft of meaning to those who see the necessity for a drastic reform of our social order. With new millions spent on church building in this past decade, the church becomes more and more a priesthood of supporters for a competitive, monopolistic, class-riven system which the rest of the world finds discredited.

Unless there is a major revolt by church members themselves, they will find themselves impotent to meet the challenge of a world which is sweeping into the dustbin of history all institutions indifferent to the demands of men for peace, social justice and the equality of all races and nations.

SOME NOTICE should be directed to the particular assault on religious freedom that has occurred in the past four years in the state of Cali-

fornia. The other forty-seven states are watching the outcome of a bold attempt by this state in which I live to control not only clergymen, but also church members through the denial of tax exemption to churches and other traditionally exempt institutions which refuse to sign a loyalty oath. This oath was adopted into the Revenue and Taxation Code following a revision of the California Constitution in November, 1952. The claim form for tax exemption in California now requires church officers to sign this statement in behalf of their church bodies:

> *"The applicant does not advocate the overthrow of the government of the United States or the state of California by force or violence or other unlawful means nor advocate the support of a foreign government against the United States in event of hostilities."*

My own church has three times voted in membership meetings, the last time unanimously, to refuse to sign such an infringement of its rights as a church under the United States and California Constitutions with the guarantees of religious freedom.

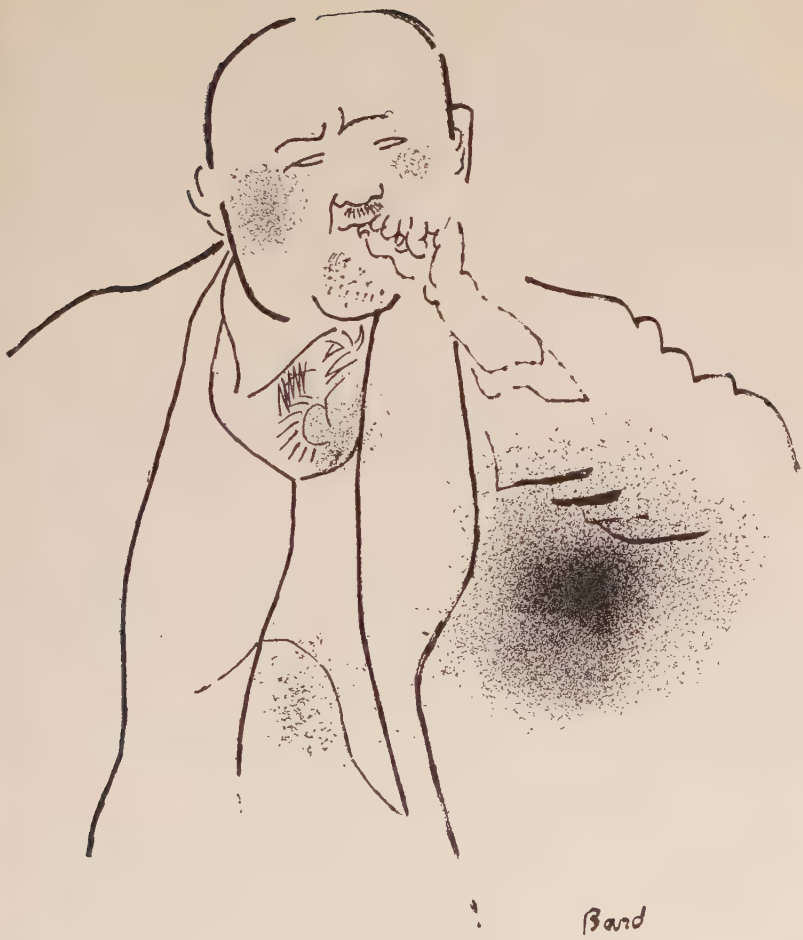
The matter has been for two years in litigation. We have paid so far about $26,000 in taxes, legal fees and other necessary expenses in our protest of this iniquitous invasion of our traditional rights. We are a church without an endowment, with a white collar and workingclass and professional group membership. We find it no easy thing to assume this annual burden, though we feel the issue is inescapable if there is to be anything resembling a free pulpit and pew in the years ahead in this country.

We have read enough current history to know that the logic of legislators who succeed in securing consent to one oath is to move forward to ever more costly commitments of one's conscience. In Nazi Germany the first oaths were relatively mild, but they ended in oaths utterly destructive to human dignity and integrity if one wished a bread card. If it seems farfetched that such a direction is in the minds of Assemblyman Harold Levering and others organizing this assault upon free churches, let it be noted that last year new legislation was proposed by State Senator Burns in Sacramento authorizing the dismissal of church officers who were proven (in the usual fashion of investigative committees, of course) to have any association with so-called "subversive" organizations, past or present. This legislation was defeated after most strenuous pressure by delegations from religious bodies and inter-denominational public meetings.

Two Quaker groups, three Methodist churches, two Universalist churches and three Unitarian churches have refused to sign the California loyalty

oaths. There are doubtless others who refused the oath but paid taxes without seeking their recovery in the courts. At the present time in the Superior Courts there have been three victories and one defeat. The Methodist church in San Leandro, the People's Church (Unitarian-Universalist) of Van Nuys, and the Berkeley Unitarian Church have won favorable decisions in the lower courts. The First Unitarian Church of Los Angeles lost in the Superior Court in a decision which claimed no issue of religious infringement was involved. The State Supreme Court has decided to hear the cases jointly in mid-June rather than have them go separately through the Court of Appeals. If this State Supreme Court battle is lost, it will, I am sure, continue to Washington to the United States Supreme Court. The issue is one of enormous significance, not only for the churches involved in the litigation, but for every independent and morally alert religious body in the nation today. If this device for controlling the opinions, the conscience and the teachings of a religious body can be made to work in America in 1956, we have to all intents and purposes returned to a state-church, and gone back to a pre-Madison, pre-Jefferson period in our national life.

I need hardly point out that if "religion" can be only theistic supernationalism then all liberal religious thought is in danger. Unity in diversity has been the cornerstone of American religious life since the formation of our government at the end of the 18th century. If Dr. Toynbee is right that the trend in religion is toward a greater inclusion of the Asian traditions of Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism, in some form of a universal faith, then restricting efforts like these in California and the District of Columbia are bound to hamper our American participation and leadership in such an effort as Dr. Toynbee recommends. If there are several million people in America, sons of Roger Williams, Bishop Asbury, William Ellery Channing, Hosea Ballou and other prophets of religious independence, then they had better arouse themselves from their slumbers.



MAN WITH CIGARETTE

Phil Bard

(Courtesy Museum of Modern Art)

WE AIN'T COMMON THIEFS!

WILLIAM WALLACE

"The trouble with you, Annie, your mind ain't flexible. You're like a a cast iron pipe, there ain't no bend to you." Joe McAfee raised his coffee cup and drained half the contents in a gulp.

"The hell you say." Annie replied calmly. She was not to be disturbed by any criticism as mild as that.

She reached over from the kitchen table where they sat and turned on the fire under the pot. It was evening, the kids were asleep. Tomorrow Joe would earn his day's pay driving a lumber truck and Annie, among other things, would mop the worn linoleum floor in the kitchen where they sat. Now they looked toward the window sill across from them, where a green leaf sweet potato vine grew in a bowl of water.

"In this day and age, Annie, you got to change. You got to learn what the new developments are. You got to move your ground when the wind starts blowing in the right direction."

Annie scratched her ear thoughtfully. "In other words, you got to be shifty and talk out of both sides of your mouth. That just about fits somebody like you."

"Somebody like me? Now just what do you mean by a crack like that. Are you saying I don't have any principles?" Joe drew his massive shoulders erect and scowled.

"You got just about as much principles as Sammy McGruder and he has no more principles than a average goat." Annie brushed a strand of dark hair back from her forehead and secured it in place with hairpin.

"That is a hell of a thing to say to the man you legally married." Joe was indignant. "You know damn well in all the years we've been married I have never run out with another woman or beat you up. I don't believe in that kind of stuff."

Annie leveled a forefinger at him and her blue eyes accused him sharply. "But you tried, didn't you?"

"That ain't so." Joe defended himself. "You have smacked me a lot more than I ever smacked you."

A tight smile appeared on Annie's lips. "Yeah, but what about you and Sammy McGruder's wife?"

"Sammy McGruder was a *Anarkist,* for Christ's sake. He told me so himself. He didn't believe in nothing." Joe leaned back in the wooden kitchen chair and one of the leg sections came loose. He grabbed for support on the table and almost upset it.

Annie grinned and pointed at him. "See, you liar! Start to tell a lie and see what happens!" She slapped her thighs and laughed.

Joe got to his feet, inserted the loose wooden leg back in the old chair, secured the brace carefully and eased his weight back down. He sat still for a moment, waiting to see what would happen.

"Glue, Joe. Glue would fix that. It's been six months."

He ignored the comment and continued. "Listen, Annie, you shouldn't say them things about Sammy." There was a plaintive tone to his voice. "What he believed didn't hurt nothing."

"Maybe it didn't but you shouldn't be hanging around Sammy McGruder and all his wild talk anyhow. That's where you get them fool notions about stealing from the job."

"It is *not!* Sammy didn't say nothing about that. That is entirely my own idea."

"Your own idea? You should be ashamed to admit it. Imagine! You turning into a crook after all these years and already you are starting to get a paunch."

"Goddamn it, Annie. I ain't!"

"Which? Turning into a crook or getting a paunch?"

"Neither one!"

Annie shrugged and lifted her nose slightly as she turned away. Joe glowered mightily and spluttered and muttered for a few seconds before he could manage a reply. "Why is stealing from the job any more crooked than anything else?"

"You talk like a child, Joe. I'd be ashamed if one of the kids talked that dumb. You know we are not the type of people that come from common thiefs."

"Stealing from the job ain't being exactly a thief. What did I just tell you about old man Anderson? He lied about them shingles and made four hundred bucks just like that!"

Joe snapped his fingers like the crack of a whip.

"Shhhh! You'll wake the kids if you holler like that. You talk like a nut."

"I don't care. You say I'm a common thief just because I want to steal something from that thief when he is the best damn thief that ever walked. I've seen that sonofabitch make deals. . . ."

"Joe! I won't listen to that swearing in this house. I tell the children not to talk like that and then you holler around with your filthy mouth. What do you want me to do? Tell you to go ahead and steal stuff out of a box car? Is that going to make it all right just because I might be fool enough to tell you to go ahead and do it?" Annie was all prepared to lecture on the right and wrong of the case when suddenly she relaxed. "Aw, Joe. What am I getting up steam for? You know what you are? You're a lot of hot air, Joe. That's all."

Joe was indignant. "That's all *you* know about it. One of these days you are going to pass me the challenge once too often on that crack about the hot air. And do you know what will happen?"

"The hot air will all come out?"

"No, by God, I'll just up and do it!"

"You'll do what?

"I'll do whatever the hell it was I was talking about."

"Yeah?" Annie raised her eyebrows and turned away. "What about the time you was going to start a worm farm in the backyard and raise angle worms to sell. What happened to that?"

"I'll tell you what happened to that. I just had my first bin made and a hundred worms in there when you dumped your wash water in and it drove 'em out of the ground so the birds got 'em. You call that *my* fault?"

"You had one lousy lug box with a little dirt in it and you expected someone to recognize it as a worm farm. At first I thought it was only the cat box."

"I would've had a good business right there only you killed off all my breeding stock."

"Why didn't you go ahead and build the bins out of lumber like you talked about? Why didn't you get some more worms? If you talked so much about it and sent for the pamphlets and everything, why didn't you *do* something about it?"

Joe was silent for a minute. He rubbed his hand through his stiff brown hair and scratched at the bald spot that was just beginning to show at the back. His chest swelled beneath the sweat-stained blue work shirt he wore and he let out a long relaxing sigh.

"Aw, Annie. Who in the hell wants to raise a bunch of Goddamn angle worms? Nobody but a nut would go in for a thing like that."

"Hummph! I could have told you that in the first place. For all the time and hot air you wasted on it, I could have told you the same thing to begin with." Annie brought a handkerchief out of her apron pocket to blow vigorously at her nose. "It's the same thing with all this talk of yours about stealing a box car load of shingles. Just hot air."

Joe's face clouded and his brows dropped menacingly. "It certainly the hell ain't! I mean it. Someday I'm going to swipe a whole Goddamn car load of shingles and sell 'em. You just wait." He shook one large forefinger threateningly.

Annie sniffed. "The day pigs fly. *That* will be the day."

Joe was silent for a moment. He sighed heavily and reached over to the stove for the coffee pot to pour another cup.

"Look Annie." He was very patient. "We got three kids and drive a 1948 Ford. Right?"

She was about to reply when he held up his hand and stopped her. "Wait a minute! I know what you're going to say and it don't make no difference. The whole thing is this. C. H. Anderson has got three big cars, in fact four. One for him and one for his wife and one for each of them big-assed kids in school. He owns them and that don't count the others he has bought for his dumb brothers. Four cars he owns. Two is Cadillacs, one a Ford convertible and the other a Buick." He paused and eyed her accusingly. "We got one. Exactly one Goddamn Ford that needs a ring job."

He smacked the oil cloth table top with his hand. The coffee cups bounced and the canned milk rolled off on the floor. Annie picked it up and took a wipe at the spilled cream with a dish rag.

"Them cars are *his,* Joe. He didn't steal them. He earned them by hard work, all four of them," she concluded righteously.

"He bullshit too! He never earned a lousy cent in all his life. He stole it all in some smart deal. Work? He couldn't lift a bundle of roofing shingles over his head if his life depended on it."

"So? That's so much? I suppose because you do it all day, because you're stronger than him, that means something. For instance I suppose that because you're better at lifting than me, you think you're better. You think just being strong is something important?" Annie's lip drew back in a very delicate sneer.

"If being strong is so much, then an elephant is the most important creature on earth. More than Einstein."

Joe thought about it a minute and a shrewd look came on his face. "What about a whale? It's stronger than a elephant *and* Einstein."

"That's got nothing to do with it, you jerk. The thing that counts is brains, not just brute strength." Ann was scornful.

"That's what I'm telling you! That old thief C. H. Anderson has got more brains in his ass than I got in my head. Like that deal I told you

about when he bought that warehouse .He stole it! I mean he stole it right out from under the noses of three other thiefs and he told them *all* lies. He's got brains. I mean, he's got brains he ain't even used yet."

Annie replied precisely. "Mr. Anderson is a business man with a regular business and a license to operate it and he pays taxes. If he can buy something cheap and sell it dear, then he is a good businessman. That is business. He buys the shingles by the car load for one price and sells them for another. That is business."

"Yeah. And in between I carry them Goddamn shingles around like a mule and all I get is a paycheck that don't go nowhere."

"It goes to the grocery store."

"Right!" Joe was triumphant. "And when it goes there you drive a '48 Goddamn Ford. I work my ass off and we got a Ford that needs a ring job. Old man Anderson don't work a single lick and he's got FOUR cars." Joe leaned forward and laid his fist heavily into the palm of his hand with each word. "And every one of them cars has good tires with plenty of rubber on them. Thick tread." He indicated with his thumb and forefinger the exact measurement of richness of that heavy rubber tread. "You know how many tires that is? Sixteen tires he's got. Sixteen tires!"

Annie was calm. "That's twenty tires, honey. The four cars would have twenty tires, counting the spares."

"And no telling how many good tires he has stacked away in his garage that he ain't even used yet. And you know what we got? We got the white fabric showing on two of ours. The *fabric!*"

Annie replied with a practical set to her mouth. "We ought to save out and get a couple of re-caps. I feel ashamed to park down town with the tires showing the white fabric. It looks bad enough when they are just smooth with no tread."

"All right! That's what I've been telling you. By rights the only fair thing would be for me to steal some of his tires. *We need* 'em."

That made Annie sore. "I've heard just about enough of that kind of talk and I don't intend to hear no more. We are NOT the kind of people that are common thiefs even if you want to be one. If the kids heard you talking like that I would smack you one for sure."

"All right. All right. Don't get sore. I couldn't steal his tires if I wanted to. What would I do? Jack up his car and take the damn tires off with him standing there watching me?"

Annie eyed him with despair. "You got a dirty mind somehow, Joe. All the time you are swearing with a foul mouth and talking about stealing and then you run around the house with no clothes on and the window shades up. Sometimes I don't know what's wrong with you."

Joe was indignant. "Wrong with me? What did I ever do that was so awful?"

"I'm glad YOU don't think it was so awful. I can certainly tell you that I wasn't raised up to think grown people rassling other people around on the floor with them intentions in his mind, is not MY idea of what is right."

"We're married, ain't we? Who in the hell do you think a man has got the right to rassle with on his day off if it ain't his own wife?"

"Yeah," said Annie accusingly. "And you sent the kids off to the movies to get ruined all afternoon by cowboy pictures."

"Ruined? I wish I could've been ruined like that when I was a kid. You know how I went to the movies? I hunted up bottles to get the deposit on them."

"What's the difference? You sent *our* kids down to the store with a shopping bag of bottles to cash in."

"They didn't have to collect the bottles, did they? They was our bottles, wasn't they? No kids of mine have to go out and scrounge around for their bottles."

"Yeah, and then the minute they're gone you have to start grabbing at a person and rassling around and everything."

"We're married, ain't we?" Joe demanded.

"Yeah, but you used to try it before we was married. You ought to be a little bit decent after all these years, not just the same."

"Well," Joe said defensively, "we're married. . . ."

"And its a good thing too!" Annie interrupted indignantly, "With you always trying to rassle a person on the floor and everything. And then all this talk about stealing a box car load of shingles." She paused despairingly. "There's something wrong with you, Joe."

"There ain't nothing wrong with me!" Joe replied indignantly. "Should I like it because old man Anderson has got four new cars while we ain't got a one? He don't turn a finger. He don't worry about a tire blowing out or the clutch slipping or new rings or the cheap gas being a cent and a half cheaper. He drives in and pulls out a twenty dollar bill like it was a dime and says fill her up. Just like that!" Joe snapped his thumb and forefinger.

Annie was overwhelmed by the storm and fell silent for a moment. She took the corner of her apron and wiped the ring of coffee left under her cup.

"Look Joe, maybe you are right about it not being fair. It's a world of unfairness we are born to. But all I know is this. If you get caught stealing shingles out of a box car you will go to jail. Maybe Mr. Anderson is

the biggest thief in the country in his business deals but he won't go to jail for it and you will."

Joe interrupted her. "Is that right? Is there a single solitary damn thing right about that? I work my ass to the bone year after year and we don't have a pot to. . . ."

Ann yelled suddenly and raised her hand as though to swat him. "Joe! I'm sick and tired of your swearing in this house every minute. I'm sick of it. You hear me?"

"Aw Annie, it don't mean nothing." Joe was subdued. "Don't be sore. Nobody hears me except you."

"The kids hear it and I'm sick and tired of it. That's where they learn. Next they will be hearing you with this talk about being a thief."

Joe tried to defend himself. "You think I'm the only one that thinks about stealing from work? Listen, there is plenty of guys. I'm just a sap because all these years I ain't stole nothing," he said self-righteously.

Annie eyed him slyly. "What about the oil you take out of the barrel at work and put in the car? You steal *that*. What about when you was carrying rolls of ten cent toilet paper home in your lunch box and them nails from work and them two wrenches. . . ."

This exasperated Joe. "Aw for Christ's sake, what are you blowing your top about? I ain't talking about that. I'm talking about stealing. Can't you understand nothing? I'm talking about taking something that ain't yours, that amounts to something. Some *money*. Or something to sell."

Annie was undisturbed. "It is still stealing."

"It certainly the hell is not stealing. It is just taking something that you happen to need. Like if you saw a water fountain and you needed a drink of water and you took it. Would you call that stealing?"

"Naturally not," Annie replied. "It'd be a public fountain and anybody could drink there that wanted to and besides it'd be public tax money that was paying for the water and besides. . . ."

Joe interrupted her wearily. "Yeah, yeah, yeah, I know. But what about if you was walking along the street thirsty as hell and you went up to somebody's water hose on the front lawn and took a drink. I suppose you'd call that stealing their lousy water?"

Annie thought for a minute. "No, it wouldn't be stealing. It'd be trespassing and if you had the sense God gave a jackass you'd just knock on the door and ask for a drink and they'd give it to you in a glass."

"Yeah but suppose the hose from somebody's lawn was clear out to the edge of the sidewalk and without asking them you just took a drink of *their water* out of *their* hose that *they* had paid for. Would *that* be stealing?"

When Annie didn't reply immediately, Joe slammed the table tri-

umphantly. "You see? The oil I took was just a little bit and I needed it. The same thing!"

"That's different altogether," Annie said.

"How come?"

"Because oil costs money."

"So does water," Joe retorted. "Listen, that oil costs him about ten cents a quart in the drum. If I was hungry and swiped an apple off the the tree in his back yard, would that be so bad?"

"Yes, but you ain't hungry" Annie snapped, "and you don't eat oil."

"The car does. That thing eats oil by the gallon."

"Well that ain't Mr. Anderson's fault. That don't make it right to steal oil from him every other day."

Joe was exasperated by her complete lack of ability to grasp logic. "I don't steal it, for Christ's sake. Who in the hell would steal oil? I just use it because I need it. I don't steal the damn stuff, I just use it."

Annie wasn't convinced. "I suppose if you stole a thousand dollars you'd just use that? It wouldn't be stealing, you'd just use it?"

Joe was struck by the thought. "Well by God I would. I'd use it to get a little better car."

Annie lost interest in the whole thing. She shrugged. "Go ahead and do it. Be a thief."

Joe shook his large head slowly from side to side. "No, Annie. I wouldn't do it. I don't want to go to jail."

"Well, then why in the name of sweet suffering hell did you talk about it then?"

Joe scowled for a minute. "Aw I don't know. To figure out if there was anything wrong about it." He paused and scratched his nose thoughtfully. "There ain't. You admitted that."

Annie's face took on a pained look. "Joe, you are a real nut."

"Naw, Annie. I ain't. The trouble is you don't understand. You don't know how the facts of life really is."

Annie slapped herself on the thigh and laughed. "That's good! Me with three kids, one uncle in the alcoholic ward, my own mother kicked off the pension and two operations for gall bladder and you say I don't know the facts of life."

Joe was patient. "What I mean is, you don't understand the real facts of life."

"What more is there? Me, a woman married for 14 years and last month the slats broke."

"It's the outside facts I'm talking about. You stay at home around the house all day, doing a little bit of this and that, maybe reading a magazine or something, but you don't get out. You don't learn."

"A little bit of this and that, eh? Is that all I do?"

"Well, I mean you keep busy. But it's all little stuff. Stuff that anybody knows about."

"All right, Mr. Brains, who was it fixed the washing machine? Who put up the T.V. antenna? Who cut the lawn last week? Who put the new muffler on the car? Who painted the kids' bedroom?"

"Look, for Christ's sake, if you're going to insinuate about stuff and blow your top about it. I could do it too. Just because you happened to do a couple of little things I didn't get time to finish, that ain't no reason to blow your top."

"For a year and a half, you didn't have time to finish it, so I *had* to do it."

Joe had a pained look on his face. "This is exactly one of the things I'm telling you about. Something you learn on the outside. You can't just blast out at somebody like that if you're working with 'em. You got to say a little bit and keep your trap shut. But not you, oh no! You blast out and start hollering about every little thing that comes across your mind. If you was to do that with some guy you was working with, you'd get smacked for sure."

Annie rolled back her lip in a ladylike sneer and her voice purred. "You wouldn't like to try it, would you?"

"There you go! That's what I mean. If you was to talk like that on a job you wouldn't last no time at all." He shook his head sadly. "That's what I mean. You don't know the outside facts about life. Like with me swiping oil once in a while. You got to do them things and keep quiet about it."

"In other words, be a quiet thief."

"No! Goddamn it, No! Can't you understand a single thing through your head? Like when you work with some guy you think has a face like a chicken's ass, you don't come right out and say it. You can't or you'd be asking for trouble. Some things you can say and some things you can't."

"In other words, be a bald faced liar."

"No! It ain't being a bald faced liar or a baldheaded liar or any other kind of liar. It is just learning to get along."

"Joe, the trouble with you is you got a sneaky mind. I think you inherited it from someplace way back in your family. You sure didn't get it from my side of the family. We was never that way."

Joe waved his hand at her. "What are you talking about? Your old man stole horses in Utah."

"Aw!" Joe shook his head sadly. "You know, Annie. Sometimes I wish I was back in the old days. I'd rob every rich sonofabitch that came along." He sat there crestfallen.

"But there ain't no chance nowadays. They got radar and jet planes and electric eyes and all that bullshit. If Jesse James was alive today he couldn't even move. In his day there was room to DO something." He looked across at Annie. "How in the hell is a man ever going to get even?"

"Get even!" Annie said scornfully. "Go ahead and try. Hit the boss with a brick. Throw a rock through the window of a bank. Go ahead! They will put you more in jail for that kind of stuff than for stealing."

"They'll put you more in jail?" Joe questioned. "What are you talking about, *more* in jail? I suppose for stealing they put you in jail all except your feet hanging out and for throwing a brick through the window of a bank they put you all the way in with feet too?"

"Suit yourself," Annie said unconcerned. "Throw bricks at the windows of banks or be a thief. Either way you go to jail. Then you'll get even with them all. Even more in the hole than now."

Joe slapped the table with his open palm as a final thought struck him. "Well then, I wish there was a strike! I wish there was a big God-damn strike that shut down everything. I mean everything!"

Annie yawned and stretched luxuriously. "You're just lazy. You'd like an excuse to be off work." She yawned again. "Anyhow, I'm sleepy and my back itches."

"Sleepy are you!" Joe got to his feet and put his massive arms around her. "I got a treatment for that." He hugged her tightly and scratched her back in slow gentle strokes. "I know what's good for that. Scratching, that's what's good for that."

They embraced, each one to the other, with relaxed loving familiarity. Joe the philosopher of ethics and Annie the woman of sweet healthy plumpness, who never came from the type of people that was common thiefs.

JIM CROW BLUES

CHARLES HUMBOLDT

Well if you find a dime they say that brings you luck
Well if you find a dime they say that brings you luck
I say find a dime that's luck enough.

Well if you break a glass they say that means bad
Well if you break a glass they say that means bad
I say break that glass 'cause you're already had.

Well if you want to live and just get along
Well if you want to live and just get along
They'll show you soon as soon you couldn't be more wrong.

Well if you tell them yes and stash what you think
Well if you tell them yes and stash what you think
They'll drag you to their water and sure make you drink.

Well if you stand around and say that ain't so
Well if you stand around and say that ain't so
They'll sure pull on your ears but you won't go.

Well now you got your luck and that ain't bad
Well now you got your luck and that ain't bad
You got a lot more than some others had.

RiGhT FaCe

Baffled

"We would like to be beastly to Nasser," said one source, but we haven't figured out a sensible way to do it."—British Foreign Office spokesman, quoted in the New York *Times.*

Private Club

"The Fair Accommodation Practices Act of Ontario failed to stand up under another test today. Judge Douglas C. Thomas ruled that it did not protect a Negro who had been barred from renting an apartment.

"The Act forbids discrimination on the grounds of race, creed or color in 'places to which the public is customarily admitted.' Judge Thomas said he could not see how the common type of apartment house could be considered a place to which 'the public is customarily admitted.' "—N.Y. *Times.*

A Case in Politeness

"The Suez Canal runs through Egyptian territory, but it is an amenity intended for all the converging sea commerce of the earth."—New York *Times.*

Ethics

"I don't think defending a murderer or a rapist is nearly as serious as defending a Communist. . . . This lawyer is so intellectually honest he made it difficult for himself. He's a fine American, but his legalistic views are too lenient as far as Communists are concerned."—Statement of New Jersey Republican leader of state Senate, Wayne Dumont, rejecting former Superior Court Judge John Bigelow as member of Rutgers University Board of Governors.—New York *Post.*

books in review

Tennessee Williams as Poet

IN THE WINTER OF CITIES, by Tennessee Williams. New Directions. $3.50.

THERE have been so many literary Catos crying out at the loss of virtue in the Republic of Poetry that I suppose one should hesitate before adding another voice. Nevertheless.

In the period since the war, poetry seems to me to have moved toward a new (less happy) phase of the General Crisis of the art. A cartoon of its progress would look something like this: "Modern" poetry began shortly before World War I as an attempt (omitting here its formal interests) to bring in a new subject matter, to rescue the art from the pale gentility of the end of the Nineteenth Century. The last bench-marks of this movement (not necessarily in formal terms or terms of success) are in the Thirties: range, if not always depth, of subject matter.

At the same time, another movement was going on: "neo-metaphysical" and "symbolist"—Eliot, Ransom, Tate, etc. In the late Thirties and early Forties this movement became dominant — largely through its criticism. Cattlemen, they got rid of the barb-wire and locomotives of the Sheepherders' opposed camp: they won the Battle of the English Department and took over the Indian Territory of the quarterlies.

But this faction was dying at the point of its greatest success. It is now in a state of advanced decay. Some of the poets—Jarrell for example—seem to know this but don't seem to know what to do about it or don't have the strength.

Cattlemen and sheepmen—what about the outlaws, the voices from across the tracks? There was Hart Crane a long time ago. There is Naomi Replansky and Don Gordon. There is certainly Yvor Winters. Possibly Roethke. There is a lively and warring band of anarcho-communo-pacifico-romanticos, a lot of them north of the fog line at Big Sur on the West Coast.

Meanwhile, the Fifties have brought us the real caterpillars of the poets' commonwealth—a bunch of shambling *elegantes* without the range of interest of the one camp or the wit and intensity of the other. Gingerbread houses with nothing inside; a new gentility not even academic.

No belly and no bowels.
Only consonants and vowels.

At last Ransom is right.

Tennessee Williams' new book has a lot of surprises in it. In the first place it is, in a way, a voice from across the tracks. It is in large part about a real suffering man and not about "literature." In the second place it is much more open and direct than one might expect from him, knowing some of the plays—that's as it should be, but it surprises still. Finally, again in relation to the plays, it has a roughness, in some places a crudity

ve wouldn't expect; but even the crudity s an attempt, I think, to break with asier and smoother ways of working, an ttempt to *release* experience.

The book has two terms. One of these s personal, direct, narrative, "autobi-graphical." The poems are sizeable, oose in structure, in line, even in anguage. The general subject is familiar enough: alienation, the sensitive in a rustrating society; and the poems are bout childhood and family, love (mostly ts difficulties) the inroads of time. Some are fantastic dramatizations ("The Dan-gerous Painters"); a number are pictures, often tender, of the displaced persons of he city ("Old Men"; "Interior of the Pocket").

Here is a sampler:

. You know how the mad come into a room, too boldly,
their eyes exploding on the air like roses, their entrances from space we never entered.
from "The Beanstalk Country"

. Those who ignore the appropriate time of their going
are the most valiant explorers,
going into a country that no one is meant to go into,
the time coming after that isn't meant to come after.
from "Those Who Ignore the Appropriate Time of Their Going"

. And he remembered the death of his grandmother whose hands were accustomed to draw white
curtains about him
before he moved to
Electric Avenue. . . .
from "Recuerdo"

Quotation, unless extensive, is likely to e unfair. But these examples I take as an verage: they have some of the directness nd surprise of the best poems; some uggestion of the softness and slackness of ne less successful ones.

This part of the book, the more direct experience—perhaps two-thirds of the whole work here—seems to me the best. Even when the experience, as in some of the poems about love or sex, is of a different tradition than my own, the poems have an honesty I admire. There is a true effort in most of this work to get at the experience without prettifying it. Sometimes the effort wrecks the poem, but there is some virtue in such failure. What hurts the poems most, I think, is this: that the experience is seldom *judged;* there is little in the way of a point of view.

The other term of the book is lyric and this I think is much weaker. Some of these are earlier poems—but even so. Here the poems *are* sometimes "literary" as with "The Christus of Guadalajara"—though even this might have succeeded but for lack perhaps of conviction, intensity. There is a group of "folkish" poems here and I don't think they can be very good even if some of them are sung to music by Paul Bowles.

So here is the book: some of it rather special, but for the most part a real attempt to use not uncommon experience. I think, whatever its weaknesses, it is worth ten books of the new rococco.

Poetry, whatever its jokes, should be at least as serious as a popular novel.

THOMAS MCGRATH

Parasite's Progress

THE PARASITE, by Mendele Mocher Seforim, tr. from the Yiddish by Gerald Stillman. Ill. by Forrest Jacobs. Thomas Yoseloff, $3.50.

It has been gratifying to watch the steady growth, this past decade, of the

American readers' appetite for the Yiddish classics in English translation, whether on stage or page. Who that has seen it will forget the image of Howard Da Silva as Mendele Mocher Seforim, ambling heavily down the aisle, near-sightedly pushing a carriage full of books, to open a performance of Arnold Perl's captivating dramatization, *The World of Sholem Aleichem?*

Less well known than his disciples, Sholem Aleichem and Peretz, Mendele the Book Seller—pen name of Sholem Yakov Abramovitch (1836-1917)—has gradually been coming into his own. *The Parasite* is the third of his works to appear in translation, following *The Travels and Adventures of Benjamin the Third* in 1949 and *The Nag* in 1955. Despite a bit of remoteness that veils this "Grandfather of Yiddish literature," as it does most grandfathers, there is bite and delight in this picaresque novel, published in its first version as a Yiddish newspaper serial in 1863-1864 in Odessa.

Serfdom in Russia had just been abolished in 1861, and new social forces were coming alive, stimulating new ideas and hopes for democracy. The small band of Jewish intellectuals of the Haskalah (Enlightenment) had been advocating secular education as the remedy for the stagnation, backwardness and superstition that prevailed in Russian Jewish life. Mendele was a product of this Haskalah, but he went beyond it. In Russian literature, Gogol and then Saltykov-Shchedrin and others had written realistic satire, social literary exposés, unmasking the institutions that reinforced feudal stagnation and hindered change. Mendele began to do likewise. Until then he had written in Hebrew, in behalf of the people but not for them. Now he decided, "I will write in Yiddish . . . it is time to work for my people," and *The Parasite* was his first such work. It created controversy and a sensation.

Mendele was the champion of the impoverished and exploited smalltown Jewish mass in this period of the transition from feudal to capitalist social relations. He unmasked systematically the relationship of the Jewish poor to the Jewish power, the man of money. The Parasite is the Man of Influence to whom the poor resort in hopes that he can reach the Man of Money. (In the original, the work is entitled, *Dos Kleine Mentshele,* or the Little Fellow, The Biography of Itzhok Avrom, the Man of Influence.)

As the competent translator, Gerald Stillman, says in his informative introduction, the Parasite "milks the rich" and "grinds the poor." The structure of this little novel of 150 pages is built on the device of the death-bed confession and will of a reformed Parasite who has decided to tell all so that his words may "rings in the ears of the rich, the politicians" of the Jewish small towns. Ears did ring, and respectable voices were raised in wrath, but the Yiddish reader was heartened by this witty new spokesman for justice and bought edition after edition of this work and of his later, even sharper, writings.

Itzhok Avrom was not born a Parasite. He was born into such bonescraping poverty that his two sisters and a brother simply died of hunger. Apprenticeship to a store-keeper, a tailor, and a shoemaker cantor brought him no craft-training but many beatings and continual-hunger. Thus, when he learned what it meant to be a Parasite, he decided to become one and was cunning enough to succeed. To be one, he confesses, "You don't need any special trade or knowledge, but you must be able to cringe and crawl, you must be a lickspittle and be able to beat around the bush." He worked by the motto that

money is the root of all wisdom." He ound that "the foolish public came to us every opportunity, beseeching us to do favor, to use our influence, to help, to ct, and they paid for all this through the ose." Of course there was a price to pay: Being a confidence man, a very easy and rofitable business, turned my heart to one. I did not believe in truth, in decency, in pity, in friendship, or in any of ne other valuable human feelings. I beeved only in that which was useful and ecessary for me." And he shows that the espected leaders of the Jewish community —the merchants and moneylenders and eligious functionaries and tax-collectors nd unethical doctors—are no better.

Confessing in remorse, the Parasite inructs the Rabbi in his will to read this utobiography to the assembled town orthies before using the money he has ft for the building of two institutions: a almud-Torah that will teach both Juaism and secular subjects, including the ussian language, "so that the children ay become good Jews and good human eings;" and another school where chilen will learn both Torah and a trade, nd thus become "well-educated craftsen who will know their own worth nd who will therefore be able to compel hers to appreciate and understand their lue." Mendele's "program" is not so nportant nor so effective as his deft tire and perception of social relations. For the 1879 edition, Mendele exnded the work tremendously, more than pling its size, and in 1907 he made a al revision, polishing the text carefully r style. Mr. Stillman has chosen, for is translation, to combine both editions, aking what was felt to be the best from ch." I should have preferred that he ke one or the other as more authentic an *any* translator's combination.

MORRIS U. SCHAPPES

Justice To Be Done

WAS JUSTICE DONE?—THE ROSENBERG-SOBELL CASE by Malcolm Sharp. Monthly Review $2.50.

MALCOLM P. SHARP, Professor of Law at the University of Chicago and associate counsel for Julius and Ethel Rosenberg in the latter stages of a tragic episode in the cold war, has made a notable contribution to the understanding of the Rosenberg-Sobell case. Less argumentative, more objective and more concise than some of the other writings on the subject, his book can have great influence if it achieves the circulation it deserves.

Like many other American liberals, Professor Sharp originally felt that the Rosenbergs were, perhaps, guilty of the charges against them but he was shocked at the severity of the sentence and at the inexplicable refusal of the United States Supreme Court to grant certiorari. In the spring of 1953, he was retained to assist the late Emanuel Bloch in the preparation of the second motion for a new trial. His review of the record led him to the conviction that both the Rosenbergs and Sobell were innocent and that both the verdict and the sentence were the products of the political environment of the early 1950's.

IT would be difficult for any reader of Professor Sharp's book to come to a contrary conclusion. The evidence is reviewed in its entirety. Particular attention is paid to the proceedings in June of 1953 when a motion for a new trial was made, based on the discovery of the missing console table, which had played a significant part in the trial, and on the critically important, newly discovered, pretrial memoranda of David and Ruth Greenglass.

Not the least attractive feature of the

book is an introduction by Dr. Harold C. Urey, whose preoccupation with nuclear physics has obviously not interfered with his extraordinary ability to write (and speak) clearly and convincingly about less abstruse subjects. Both Dr. Urey and Professor Sharp have accepted a premise which differs materially from that adopted by other writers on the subject, such as John Wexley and William Reuben. Wexley and Reuben both argue that there was no espionage at all—that the entire "atom spy" scare was a hoax made of whole cloth. Urey and Sharp, on the contrary, assume that there was atomic espionage but that the Rosenbergs were not at all involved. Obviously this difference in premise results in a substantial difference in approach to the case. For example, in "The Judgment of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg," Wexley devotes much energy to breaking down the stories of Fuchs and Gold; Sharp can and does let the testimony of both go unchallenged, since neither implicated the Rosenbergs. Even much of the testimony of the Greenglasses can be accepted without too much dispute; it is only where they implicate the Rosenbergs that their testimony need be attacked.

In a few aspects of the case particularly, Professor Sharp's discussion excels anything else that has been written on the subject. His discussion of the evils of any legal system that permits conviction of a defendant on the uncorroborated testimony of an accomplice (and especially an accomplice who has not been sentenced) is unanswerable. In New York State, for example, such a conviction would not be permitted. It will be noted that substantially every government witness—Gold, Bentley, David Greenglass, Ruth Greenglass, Elitcher—was by his own testimony an accomplice.

THE parallel between the Rosenberg-Sobell case and other similar cases in the past,—Sacco and Vanzetti, Mooney and Billings, Dreyfus—has frequently been noted. Sharp, in a penetrating consideration of the political background of the Roenberg case, notes an important and ominous difference. In the other cases mentioned, political issues were, no doubt, of great and even decisive importance, but they were not part of the record in the case. The fact that Sacco and Vanzetti were anarchists, that Mooney and Billings were trade union leaders, that Dreyfus was a Jew, unquestionably influenced the course of those cases, but "on the record" the principal dispute in both Sacco and Vanzetti and Mooney and Billings was over the identification of the defendants, and in Dreyfus the critical evidence consisted of forged documents.

But in the Rosenberg case, this was not true. Both of the Rosenbergs were questioned at considerable length on their political views. Mr. Saypol, in summing up to the jury, referred to the assumed political views of the defendants. And Judge Irving Kaufman, in passing sentence, laid at the feet of the Rosenbergs responsibility for "the Communist aggression in Korea, with the resultant casualties exceeding 50,000." As Professor Sharp points out, "The Judge's explanation of his action is an additional factor in the disquiet which may be felt by an observer."

One criticism of substance may be voiced. Although the case against Morton Sobell is considered and the paucity of the evidence against him is noted, Professor Sharp could have devoted more attention to Sobell's case than he did. It is easy to see how the drama of the Rosenbergs can make Sobell appear a relatively less important figure. This was true even during the trial. But the fact is that something

an still be done to help Sobell. It is too arly to relegate his case to the past and to ook for an abstract determination by the nture as to whether there was a miscar- age of justice. More concrete recognition the fact that the Sobell case is still very uch alive would perhaps have resulted a more extensive treatment of the case gainst him.

VICTOR RABINOWITZ

Fiction in England

AFTER THE THIRTIES, *The Novel in Britain, and its Future, by Jack Lindsay.* Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1956. 15s.

IN THE first half of his book on the last twenty-five years of the English novel ack Lindsay sets out to describe and ac- ount for the retreat from socially responsi- le writing after the promising decade of ne Thirties, a decade which stimulated so any English writers, along with writers other countries, to enlarge the social ontent of their work, and in some cases express a growing identification with e working class in face of the economic isis and the threat of fascism and war. This retreat, begun during the war ars, became in the post-war period a vir- al surrender by the writers of those oad, humanistic elements that had arked their writing in the earlier decade. ne division of the world into two hostile mps, the tentative reforms of the Labor rty, and the increasing domination by e ruling class of the instruments of mass lture—the movies, the radio and tele- ision—cast a deadening blight on English eative life.

Unfortunately Lindsay does a very in- fferent job with the material he proposes to investigate. He is largely content to write of the work of relatively few writers, chosen by no perceivable system. The result is a very thin picture of the stimulating decade of the Thirties which brought a new humanity of content into the work not only of avowedly left-wing writers but into the work of established middle-class writers as well.

Similarly when he goes on to an assessment of the next decade and a half, Lindsay presents writers as examples who at best seem quite arbitrarily chosen. He gives a glancing treatment to Graham Greene, devotes a somewhat longer but wholly unsatisfactory discussion to C. P. Snow, but does not mention at all the novels of Joyce Cary. Now it is surely writers who have a body of work behind them, extending from the Thirties or before, who would prove the most revealing in any attempt to assess the rise and fall of thematic content. Placing his main emphasis on novelists who have written little and of that little only such work as he singles out, Lindsay seems to be writing for a coterie—and like all coterie writing the result is tedium. Marxist criticism should address itself to a far wider scope than is evident in these pages.

The second half of the book is concerned with aesthetic theory. The relationship between the two parts of the book is never clearly established and seems, like so much else in the book, quite arbitrary. Reading this theoretical section of the book, Ralph Fox's *The Novel and the People*—from which Lindsay liberally quotes—and Christopher Caudwell's *Illusion and Reality,* inevitably come to mind. Lindsay in no sense advances beyond the arguments of these two important books of the Thirties. Moreover his illustrations seem so personal and peculiar, as in the choice of novelists in the first half of the book, that the reader's atten-

tion, tired by sweeping generalizations, is lost in perplexity and irritation as he tries to understand the relation between the theories advanced and the odd examples chosen to illustrate them.

It is regrettable that Lindsay who has published many books and has been a part of the whole literary movement during these years in England could not have given us a book that is very much needed. Such a book would deal broadly and at the same time in carefully selected detail with the excitement and promise of the Thirties; then would trace the retreat from this hopeful period towards the private world of introversion and defeatism that has characterized the writing of the later years, using largely the books of writers whose work has dominated the literary scene during this time.

A carefully done book of this kind would be useful for those who lived through these decades, and it would be of special value for the younger writers and intellectuals—at least here in America—who have chiefly received their account of the important earlier years from those older writers who, having shared in the stimulation of the Thirties, have since tried to cover their traces with jocular remarks about "youthful indiscretions" like witnesses currying favor before investigating committees.

Perhaps Lindsay's far too superficial and self-indulgent book will suggest to others that they might try their hands at a more searching account. Particularly a study of writing in America during the past twenty-five years would very much help get our past into ordered perspective, and thus make possible the finding of more fruitful directions as we move into the future which is making such new and insistent demands upon us.

MURRAY YOUNG

ETTERS

itors, Mainstream:

As yet, I've not read Fadeyev but the ɔspect intrigues me far more than perus-g further attempts by Charles Humboldt explain his suicide. I don't know but aat Mr. Humboldt is a total abstainer, t I've read his article twice—first when d sober and then when mildly drunk—d to my muddled mind it remained even gasping paragraphs tortured with enty-two questions. Still, I'm not com-etely unsympathetic. I find Fadeyev most considerate for checking out before giv-g Mr. Humboldt the key.

With every good wish,

n Francisco R. M.

itors, Mainstream:

Three years of intensive travel and ob-vation have led us to a conclusion ich seems inescapable,—the American ay of Life is breaking up and breaking wn. This degeneration is apparent from jittery economy, through politics built ound person and personality, to the ten-n, anxiety, fear, suspicion, hatred and apism which we encountered at all so-l levels.

This statement stresses psychological re-ions. The social decay which we tried describe in *USA TODAY* goes far ond psychology to the structure of ited States society. It is not the atti-es and outlooks of the top motor ex-tives which are disorganizing and dis-oting the auto industry, but the con-dictions implicit in a competitive ac-sitive society dedicated to the accumu-on of profits. It is not the cussedness the rising generation that has led to epidemic of juvenile delinquency, but the loosening of home ties, the relaxation of home and school discipline, the new techniques of transportation and communication and the all-but-universal footlooseness of a generation on wheels.

An entire generation has been sold on the desire for comfort, gratification and wealth. On the national level it has been sold on the virtues of expansion, both military and economic. The drives toward expansion, occupation, domination and exploitation which underlie finance capitalism and animate power politics have been spread systematically during the past sixteen years of high productivity from the upper income levels of the United States until they have reached every nook and cranny of American life.

USA degeneration has been influenced only indirectly by forces from outside the United States. It has arisen chiefly from within the country. Inflation, the greed of the rich for more and ever more, the rise of the army, navy, air force and the veterans' organizations as prime factors in the making of public policy, the ties which bind business, the military, politics and the channels of public information into closer and closer coordination, have grown with the enlarging wealth and increasing power of the United States.

Forces shaping public policy in the United States do not operate six days a week and rest on the seventh. They work 24 hours of every day, during an election year like 1956 as they work in the "off" years. They operate during hot wars and cold wars. They function in times of prosperity and depression, and also in times of "peace".

The degeneration of capitalist society

in the United States will be speeded by periods of hectic profit-making like the years from 1940 to 1956. It cannot be checked or substantially modified by shifts in governing personnel, or alternations in political parties, in policies, outlooks or attitudes. The social processes move forward inexorably under Democratic as under Republican administrations,—under the presidencies of Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Truman as under those of Coolidge, Harding and Hoover.

If the degeneration in the United States is organic, as we are assuming in this analysis, nothing short of organic changes in the social structure will have important consequences for the American people.

HELEN AND SCOTT NEARING

Editors, Mainstream:

Have been away for a while, so haven't seen M&M till recently. Re Mr. Bothwell's review, which seems to have stirred up quite a bit of dust, I feel I must also comment on.

I am not a Graham Greene fan at all. In fact, I dislike him. But he does happen to be a successful and influential figure in our world of today. Fight him if you will, yes, but choose more intelligent weapons, please.

Whether a reviewer is for or against is not too important. But Mr. Bothwell seems to leave me with a feeling of embarrassment. It's his tone that I object to. I think most of us (thinking progressives, that is) these days are being more consciously human and sensitive. All of us, that is, but Mr. Bothwell, obviously. His utter contempt and world-weary attitude seem odd to encounter in an M&M review. I felt as though I might be reading a piece done by a sophomore, greatly influenced by Noel Coward, in some college publication. So very precious! And his reply to his critics, with a wave of a rather weak-wrist, was the clincher. His pitying bewilderment as to why such fuss is made over a work that will soon fade away is plain crust. Can he really be so unbecomingly positive about his views?

I think the editors should be commended for striving to get away from the old, dogmatic, cliche-ridden critiques of the past. But to go to another extreme? C'mon, now. A little more maturity, please.

Sincerely,

JUST A READER

NATHANIEL BUCHWALD

Yiddish culture in the United States sustained a heavy loss in the recent death of Nathaniel Buchwald, at the age of 66, critic, playwright, and journalist. For years, Buchwald's writings in the *Morning Freiheit, Yiddish Kultur,* and in the literary quarterly, *Zammlungen,* won him an ever-wider audience and position of authority. His theatre criticism in *Jewish Life* was equally influential. Buchwald's writing for *Masses & Mainstream* (his last article for us was a study of the Off Broadway theatre in the June, 1955 issue) was highly valued, and the editors, along with their colleagues in the Yiddish field have suffered the loss of a keen and devoted co-worker.—*The Editors.*