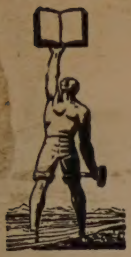

Mainstream

Barbara Giles THE DREAM OF F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

Russell Davis FOUR FANTASIES

Howard Fast MY DECISION

and a COMMENT BY THE EDITORS

BOOKS IN REVIEW

Charles Humboldt: *The Radical Novel*

Ralph Doyster: *Ivan P. Pavlov and the Conditioned Reflex*

Thomas McGrath: *Kenneth Rexroth, William Pillin and Other Poets*

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THE DREAM OF F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

BARBARA GILES

WHEN he was young Scott Fitzgerald had two ambitions: to be "one of the greatest writers that have ever lived"; and to possess enough money to live with "grace and mobility." For the first he was equipped with talent and enthusiasm; for the second with talent and the *Saturday Evening Post* market, which followed the golden curve of the Twenties. He had come of age shortly before the decade opened, a decade that encouraged extravagant and sometimes conflicting dreams—when nothing, in fact, seemed quite real unless it *was* extravagant—and it was possible to feel, as Jay Gatsby did, that "the rock of the world was founded securely on a fairy's wing."

In addition the times seemed almost made for him. In its very form and style his first novel, *This Side of Paradise,* which was published in 1920 but dealt with the two preceding decades, contained all the chaos and high colors of the post-World War era. Its hero, Amory Blaine—obviously representing the author—becomes one of the disillusioned and "lost" generation but not until his rebellions against Philistinism and social convention have run their course in a moneyed world of surface glamor and excitement corresponding to that of the prosperous circles of the Twenties. And finally, while the novel was a poor one—atrociously constructed and spuriously "literary"—it revealed a unique gift for recording the distinctive beat and images of a period. With its popular success assured, Fitzgerald saw his future material spread before him. "America was going on the greatest, gaudiest spree in history," he wrote many years later (*The Crack-Up*), "and there was going to be plenty to tell about."

But the material was not so simple. Neither was his double ambition—nor the writer himself. He could, and did, slash graceful patterns from the shining stuff, sew them up with glittering threads, and sell the crea-

tions for enough to bring him $113,000 within four years. He could also turn out a serious work like *The Great Gatsby* (1925) and be told by T. S. Eliot that it represented "the first step that American fiction has taken since Henry James." Yet nearly everything had gone wrong. He was in debt and his own life had turned into a gaudy spree, with plenty of mobility but very little grace. It was becoming more and more difficult to find the time and self-discipline between parties and paying for parties to produce any novel—*The Great Gatsby* was his last until 1934. Worst of all perhaps, he knew that Eliot's estimate was flattering; it was his own opinion that he was "a first-rate writer who had never produced anything but second-rate books," and while this judgment too can be disputed, it comes somewhat nearer to the truth. In any case one thing seemed clear: that so far from being "one of the greatest writers," he was not likely to be one of the great.

Why? It is easy enough, with all we know now from the author's published letters and articles in *The Crack-Up*, the biography by Arthur Mizener (*The Far Side of Paradise*), as well as Fitzgerald's works of fiction, to offer answers: that you can't impartially serve art and the big-ad magazines; that a life of spectacular sprees is hard on a serious purpose; that clinging to hopes of magic and paradise-on-earth doesn't help an insight into reality. . . . Each of these generalizations has its truth. Each can be demonstrated in Fitzgerald's case with a special richness of detail, from sordid to tragic. Still, how much do they explain? From other literary biographies we know that impressive books, even great ones, have sometimes been produced by writers whose lives were excessively disordered; who could not afford to disregard a "commercial market"; or whose freedom from some superstition or other immature quirk was not quite complete either. Obviously such circumstances didn't help toward the expression of their talent, but neither were they insurmountable. Fitzgerald's talent survived also, and grew not a little. The question is why the best it produced fell somewhere short of what was promised—promised not by his early fame but by the works themselves, in their scope, intention, and the quality of the writing.

THE scope was the world immediately around him, and he usually wrote about it at the time he was observing it or very soon thereafter. For most of his work that time was the Twenties. Considering the pace at which the decade moved and his disastrous personal involvement with it, he recorded it with remarkable objectivity. For a multitude of young people he crystallized new attitudes and forms of behavior arising from the current revolt against the stale deceptions of convention and senti-

mentality that had bound their elders to fake postures of dignity—a revolt seeded by disillusionment with the "great cause" of World War I and growing to heights of abandon and violence under the hot sun of prosperity. Some of the grimmer aspects of this violence, the murders and general gangsterism, shadow the edges of Fitzgerald's portraits although, apart from a scene in the short story "May Day" which shows a crowd of drunken veterans in 1919 smashing up the offices of the socialist newspaper, and the description of Mussolini's police in *Tender Is the Night,* the grimmest situations making for violence are omitted. The people Fitzgerald knew and wrote about were mostly those who sang and danced to the assurance that "The rich get richer and the poor get children"—the song is quoted in *The Great Gatsby*—and some of them were of the richest. About them also he could be objective, and his observations in this field may seem now to have greater value than his studies of the decade as a whole.

It is exactly this "objective and impersonal quality," as he himself recognized, that gives strength to his most worthwhile novels and stories. Where it fails, they fail also. To say that it fails at the point where he succumbs to the very glamor and glitter he describes or is "taken in" by the wealthy whom he dissects, narrows the truth considerably—and in any case it applies more to his life than to his fiction. The subjective weakening of his work which, unhappily, operated most conspicuously at a novel's most vulnerable point, in the creation and development of a central character, came rather from his own special conception of the "lost" individual in a world of corrupt and mediocre values . His heroes do not wholly belong in any real world. Each has been conceived with a quality or qualities that we can associate more readily with the wistful, outsize imaginings of early youth. Amory Blaine, though he is a spoiled brat, is endowed with enough conquering charm, esthetic sensibility, and poetic talent to make him a walking daydream of college freshmen. In *The Beautiful and Damned*, Mark and Gloria are both spoiled brats and their story reads almost like a tract illustrating the awful results of idleness and dissipation; yet one can't help feeling that privately Fitzgerald sympathizes with the protagonist's conviction that the world owes him a glorious living because "beauty" is above the grubbing, compromised souls of money-makers. Even Monroe Stahr, hero of Fitzgerald's last, unfinished, and most promising novel, *The Last Tycoon,* has been touched by the magic brush, becoming a man who has "looked on all the kingdoms, with the kind of eyes that can stare straight into the sun." All the author's central characters are "beautiful and damned"—Jay Gatsby may seem an exception but, as we shall see, he isn't really—doubly damned as a rule,

by some weakness of their own and by an exterior world that exploits or tramples upon beautiful qualities.

The power of that world, as Fitzgerald did see clearly, lay in the possession of great wealth. This fact he documented extensively, with pitiless precision, throughout the best of his short stories and books. In the two first, comparatively very minor novels he was more inclined to lay the blame for the damnation upon the damned. There are definite overtones particularly in *This Side of Paradise,* of a belief which probably derives from the author's Irish Catholic upbringing, that what is beautiful is seductive and therefore evil in itself. But *The Great Gatsby,* a far more serious and complex work, shows a marked shift of emphasis. What *looks* beautiful to Gatsby, the life of immensely wealthy, socially established people, turns out to be quite the opposite, although its seductiveness and evil are very real and end by destroying him.

GATSBY himself is enormously wealthy, but he has come out of poverty over the quickest route open to poor American boys of his time —the gangster road of bootlegging and its attendant "big rackets." While this has taught him everything one can know about ruthlessness in the outlaw areas of society, he has no idea of what he is up against in the callousness and corruption of the "legally" wealthy, those born to fortune and social position. In the realm of friendship and love, Gatsby is a simple-hearted dreamer. His very claim to heroism rests upon a dream. It is that he will again meet Daisy Buchanan, whom he was once too poor to marry, and obliterate the five years of her present marriage by getting her to admit that she has never loved anyone but him—after which, of course, he will marry her himself. To this end he has made his millions and bought a mansion in "West Egg," Long Island, facing "East Egg" where the Buchanans live. To diffident to approach Daisy directly, he hopes that she will happen in on one of his fabulous weekend parties, to which everyone actually invited is urged to bring all his friends and acquaintances.

The description of these parties, which have become carnivals attended by "the world and its mistress," is a motion-picture of a society that had recently acquired both the "new freedom" and abundant means to express its orgiastic impulses fully. Fitzgerald's accuracy of eye and ear, his ability to record the items of behavior that reveal people to others as their mirrors cannot reveal them, functions best in the writing of such scenes, which are essential to the main story but do not involve the major character directly. At these orgies Gatsby is merely the host, naively grateful toward his guests for coming to drink his champagne

speculate about his true identity—is he a murderer? a blackmailer? a former German spy?—and disport themselves with a vulgarity appropriate to the "vast, vulgar, and meretricious beauty" he has created in this showplace on Long Island Sound. His relative innocence is protected by the obsession of his dream and by his farm-boy ignorance of the ways of "society." Only when Daisy finally comes and he sees her disapproval does he realize that most of the people on his lawn aren't "nice" in the East Egg sense—as Daisy and her friends are.

The distinction is very subtle. Tom Buchanan, Daisy's husband, doesn't bring his mistress to Gatsby's revelries; he entertains her at a small party, as sordid as Gatsby's large ones but less amusing, quarrels with her and breaks her nose within the discreet walls of a Manhattan hideout. The Buchanans' close friends know of her existence—they are a little shocked that she "calls him up at the dinner hour"—but Daisy, who knows worse than that about Tom, never has any real intention of leaving him though she convinces Gatsby and herself that she will.

Daisy is an exceedingly nice girl. It was this quality which first captivated Gatsby when he was a poor Army officer and she made him "overwhelmingly aware of the youth and mystery that wealth imprisons and preserves." Like the yacht he saw when he was seventeen, she represents the glamor and magic of leisure-class wealth. Fitzgrald makes this point explicit in a brief passage between Gatsby and the novel's narrator, Nick Carraway:

> "She's got an indiscreet voice," I remarked. "It's full of —"
> "Her voice is full of money," he said suddenly.
> That was it. I'd never understood before. It was full of money—that was the inexhaustible charm that rose and fell in it, the jingle of it, the cymbals' song. . . . High in a white palace the king's daughter, the golden girl. . . .

His knowing the source of Daisy's charm doesn't interfere at all with Gatsby's infatuation. Years before he met her his adolescent visions of personal destiny were fired by images of the leisure class which are used later to furnish the story of his life that he tells Nick (". . . after that I lived like a young rajah in all the capitals of Europe . . . collecting jewels, mostly rubies, hunting big game, painting a little . . ."). Listening to him, Nick reflects, is like "skimming hastily through a dozen magazines." But to Gatsby (and many others, no doubt) these are obviously the ingredients of the authentic "American dream," authorized in movies and print, and no less solemn and beautiful because of its cash requirements. Daisy, whom he genuinely loves, is a

highly special dream, the one whose fulfillment would seal the reality of his status as a man commanding romantic amounts of wealth.

Daisy's only dream is of Gatsby himself and it can't prevail over her "sophistication," her own word for what boils down to an acceptance of Tom's vices and cruelties along with his inherited millions and the social power that derives from them. This is true even before she learns of Gatsby's lawless enterprises. And any remaining loyalty to the sentimental view disappears when she has a chance to escape a hit-and-run manslaughter charge by letting Tom reveal to the vengeful husband of the victim that Gatsby is the owner of the "death car," a piece of information that results in Gatsby's murder and the husband's suicide.

IT SHOULD be a tragedy but it isn't. It should be, altogether, a book of considerably more power—there are so many fine things in it. The scenes are vivid and rich, the atmosphere and action soundly joined, and the material is remarkably compressed without losing grace or humor. There are some unforgettable touches: Tom Buchanan's impassioned attempts to expound the "colored menace" which reduce the one "scientific" piece of reading he has done to the brutal gibberish it essentially is; the huge eyes of "Dr. T. J. Eckleburg" that occupy the whole of an advertising sign at the ash heap on the road to Manhattan which the superstitious take for the eyes of God; the realistic blending of comedy and viciousness in the group behavior of drunks. . . .

But the author has been finally tricked by his own double conception of Gatsby with which he intrigues the reader. Through the narrator Gatsby is presented as a series of question marks: faker? dreamer? criminal? an "elegant young roughneck," misled but intrinsically honest? That he is all these things slowly becomes clear; also that, compared with people like the Buchanans, he is trusting and generous in personal relationships. Fitzgerald, however, can't leave it at that. Gatsby too has to have something "beautiful" and in his case it is his dream—not the substance of it but the immensity and strength, the heroic persistence of an impossible vision held against reality. This is too much. As a dreamer first corrupted by the tawdry promises of his culture, then betrayed by the object of a more romantic aspiration, Gatsby is convincing—not, however, as an embodiment of the tragic fate of The Dream. Near the novel's end Fitzgerald seems to have realized this for he has his narrator, in a sudden passion of loyalty, "build up" the dead hero's most sympathetic qualities—his shy loneliness, simplicity, trustfulness, goodness of heart. . . . This conscious inflation, however, serves only to remind the reader of the other Gatsby, the bootlegger in a pink suit, the

social climber. Finally when Nick, in a farewell view of West Egg, muses upon "the old island here that flowered once for Dutch sailors' eyes" and we find that he is comparing the explorers' dream to Gatsby's illusion that he can literally turn back the years before Daisy had married, we go from skepticism to revolt. What, after all, is this imperishable illusion but the conviction of a man with an unlimited bank account that money can buy anything from "class" to a reversal of time? And are we supposed to weep for that? The best epitaph on Gatsby has already been spoken by the only one of his former guests who bothers to attend the funeral: "The poor son of a bitch."

DICK DIVER of *Tender Is the Night* is also undone by the holders of an immense fortune, but the process is more subtle. One might say in fact that it is so subtle as to have escaped much of the author's understanding, with the result that an already badly organized book is flawed through the middle by what may appear to the reader as an omission of two or three central chapters. It is too bad, for the novel has a wider range than *The Great Gatsby,* the relationships are more intricate, and Fitzgerald has at least attempted to attach some of his characters to occupations instead of letting them float up as end-products of a culture whose workaday world barely appears. The writing is often brilliant, especially in the second section which deals with a delicate and difficult blending of horror, pathos, and love.

Again through the eyes of a third person the principal character in the book is presented as a mystery, so we learn only gradually that he is a thirty-four-year-old psychiatrist who has married the daughter of a famous Chicago industrialist and that it is her money which provides for the expensive simplicity of their life in a secluded mountain villa on the French Riviera. There is no mystery, however, about the nature of the beauty worn by this Fitzgerald hero, who has the power to bestow "carnivals of affection" upon people and to evoke from them "a fascinated and uncritical love." "To be included in Dick Diver's world," we are told, "was a remarkable experience." When he and his wife give a dinner party the faces of their guests turn to them "like those of poor children at a Christmas tree," whereupon the couple "daringly" lift their worshippers "above conviviality into the rarer atmosphere of sentiment" in one dazzling moment that is over "before it [can] be irreverently breathed."

Some of the lushness is rubbed off against the sharpness of a more realistic context and further mitigated by the reader's growing awareness that something quite other than charm and peace have been buried in the foundations of this shimmering surface. Several chapters later it is re-

vealed that Nicole, the wife, is subject to occasional spells of insanity, the result of having been seduced by her own father when she was a child, and that the carefully arranged life of pleasure-and-work on the Riviera is part of the couple's "bargain with the gods" against further disaster.

Ironically, it is he who deteriorates while she finally mends. Since his deterioration is the tragic point of the book, it is important to understand just how it comes about. And exactly here is where the author lets us down. When we first meet the Divers they have been living their cautiously pampered life for some ten years, a life so civilized in its courtesy and consideration, its self-discipline, amusements, and choice of friends that it is supposed to represent "the furthermost evolution of a class." At the same time we can understand, as Fitzgerald intends us to, the threat it contains for a person with a serious ambition—taken away from his practice, Dick is at work on a tremendous volume in his field of science—and his restiveness under the double power of the wife's wealth and her emotional dependence. And we begin to suspect—apparently before he does—that the recipients of his carnivals of affection are not really worth such expenditures of time and feeling.

But these aspects of the picture are rather lightly sketched in relation to the whole. Neither here nor in Book Two, which goes back ten years to the story of Nicole's breakdown, Dick's meeting her and their courtship, are we prepared for the swiftness of the destruction that follows. Retrospectively we can find the omens, but between them and the disaster there remains an unexplained space. Thus, in Book Two Dick's future sister-in-law, unaware that Nicole is in love with him and he is attracted to her, tells him of her plan for taking care of her young sister when the latter will have left the sanitarium—which is to take her back to Chicago and "throw her with" the intellectuals around the University (where "Father controls certain chairs and fellowships and so on") in the hope that she will fall in love with "some good doctor." Dick's response to this is a secret "burst of hilarity":

> . . . the Warrens were going to buy Nicole a doctor—You got a nice doctor you can let us use? . . .
> "But how about the doctor?" he said automatically.
> "There must be many who'd jump at the chance."

THIS, while plain enough as a forecast of the Warrens' later attitude toward him, is still a long way from his bitter realization more than ten years afterward that if he was not actually bought by their millions the effect on his work and life has been no different—he has been used as a piece of property, not a valuable piece but necessary for the job. Some

process in this development has been skipped. At one moment this hero is confident, intelligent, in command of other people as well as himself; almost in the next he is sinking into melancholia, a hatred of people, and alcoholism. The reasons are given, but we do not see their actual operation.

As Fitzgerald was to confess in *The Crack-Up,* he was not much of a thinker, preferring to rely upon his observations, attitudes, and intuition. When he did try to handle ideas, he used them rather like newly discovered props for whatever drama he was working out but they were not allowed to stay on the stage for long. To go into the process by which Dick's professional talents and ambition are exploited to their destruction he would have had to know considerably more about his profession than, only too obviously, he does. And in fact it is difficult for us to quite believe in Dick Diver as an earnest member of any important profession; his creator's dream of magic charm and kindliness has overwhelmed such details of reality. Similarly, to go deeply into the process by which the owners of the world's wealth can succeed in perverting the uses of science would have required more understanding of where and how the power of wealth arises. Like Henry James, Fitzgerald seemed unaware that the source of great fortunes, rather than their possession, is the real evil. At one point in *Tender Is the Night,* he seems to be leading up to this idea in a description of Nicole Diver out shopping:

> For her sake trains began their run at Chicago and traversed the round belly of the continent to California; chicle factories fumed and link belts grew link by link in factories; men mixed toothpaste in vats and drew mouthwash out of copper hogsheads; girls canned tomatoes quickly in August or worked rudely at the Five-and-Tens on Christmas Eve; half-breed Indians toiled on Brazilian coffee plantations and dreamers were muscled out of patent rights in new tractors—these were some of the people who gave a tithe to Nicole, and as the whole system swayed and thundered onward it lent a feverish bloom to such processes of hers as wholesale buying, like the flush of a fireman's face holding his post before a spreading blaze. She illustrated very simple principles, containing in herself her own doom, but illustrated them so accurately that there was grace in the procedure. . . .

THE IDEA of having his rich heroine represent the "doom" as well as the "grace" of a whole system is a new one for the author and it could be very fruitful, but unfortunately he does nothing more with it. For that matter, he was not entirely clear either in his attitude toward the simple ownership of large fortunes. He hated the leisure class, he

once stated, "not with the constructive hatred of a revolutionist but the smoldering hatred of a peasant," from the time that one of its members had, by power of wealth, taken his girl from him. Yet it appears from his life and his writings that this was not the basic subjective element in his thinking about wealth. That element seems to have been his tendency to feel that if wealth is evil and insures damnation this is so not only because it is beautiful in itself but because nothing beautiful is possible without it. His heroes, no matter what their beginnings, must always be immersed at some point in the golden bath. All of his heroines except Kathleen of *The Last Tycoon* wear the same sort of "magic" as Daisy Buchanan did, and the grace they carry sometimes seems as important to the author as the doom they contain. Even their daydream qualities are based upon the actuality of hard cash and while this point is recognized and deliberately used by their creator, one wishes that he would occasionally evoke his visions from less gilded areas of humanity.

Happily the daydream is not projected upon lesser characters. The "objective and impersonal" side of Fitzgerald's talent reaches a merciless height in the description of such persons from *Tender Is the Night* as "Baby" Warren, Lady Caroline Sibley-Biers ("the wickedest woman in London"), and other leaders and dedicated followers of an "international set" whose humorless arrogance and vicious pleasures make the revelers on Gatsby's lawn seem no more menacing than college kids on a spree. The only grace left to any character in the end is Nicole Diver's and we see it beginning to disappear, the "pitiful and brave" sternness of her lovely face changing into the self-preserving hardness of her horse-trading grandfather as she turns from Dick to a primitive-minded professional soldier.

Most of these lesser people are too real for any dream, even a nightmare. It is nothing new to find an author whose aim is most accurate when it is guided by contempt or hatred for the target; but Fitzgerald, oddly, seems also to succeed best in reverse proportion to the importance of the character. One brief scene in *Tender Is the Night,* in which the head of the Swiss sanitarium forces Nicole's father to admit his role in her mental breakdown, leaves a more living impression of both a psychiatrist and a rotted man of financial power than a dozen longer scenes designed to illustrate the same general types. In this respect the author is like a portrait-painter who can "hit off" a subject in one or two sittings but loses his perspective if he tries to work over them at length. This is demonstrated in some of Fitzgerald's most effective short stories, like "May Day," which weaves several stories of representative characters into a pattern of American life six months after the Armistice, without

a detailed closeup of any one of them; or in "The Diamond as Big as the Ritz," a symbolic fantasy requiring no real character study. "The Rich Boy" is a longish treatment of a single character, but the writer has protected his detachment by emphasizing his own role as observer ("If I adopt his [viewpoint] for a moment I am lost") and frankly using his protagonist to illustrate a generalization about the rich.

In *The Last Tycoon* Fitzgerald attempted to break away from the old pattern, to deal not only with a character in a real world of work and purpose but with a whole industry, that of the movies, complete with creative problems, production worries, labor unions, gangsters, and warring producers. From the 126 pages he had completed before his death it is impossible to estimate how far he would have succeeded in carrying out the ambitious project set forth in his outline and notes. The central character, Monroe Stahr, is an intensely purposeful, independent producer whose creative seriousness has survived many years of climbing to the top in Hollywood. An old style paternalist and individualist, he is pressured by forces he cannot understand, the labor drive toward unionization and the growing strength of the conscienceless, strictly commercial type of producer represented by his own partner. His dilemmas, his everyday coping with craft problems, and his personal miseries help to make him the most credible hero Fitzgerald has produced. Of course there are the eyes that can "look on all the kingdoms" and "stare straight into the sun"; there is the magnetism that prompts a woman to invite him to "a romantic communion of unbelievable intensity"; the glowing impression he gives her of "a brazier out of doors on a cold night"; and his reputation among the studio hands as "the last of the princes." Had Fitzgerald lived longer he would almost surely have revised such phrases to take out the corn. We can feel less certain, however, that Stahr would not have turned out after all to be another carrier of that fatal "beauty" which blurred the strong outlines of previous Fitzgerald novels. But it is ungrateful to speculate. The 126 pages that have been given us are more than a promise: they contain in themselves the most realistic fictional account yet written of America's most incredible mass industry, in which the author himself was a tormented worker.

There remains one other book, *The Crack-Up,* a collection of autobiographical articles and letters which reveal how deeply Fitzgerald himself was caught in the very dream of magic charm and power that he projected upon his heroes—a dream that cannot be blamed upon the Twenties since it obviously antedates them, going back at least to his Princeton days and probably much farther. Two sentences in *Tender Is the Night* sum up as much of the author as of the hero: "A part of

Dick's mind was made up of the tawdry souvenirs of his boyhood. Yet in that somewhat littered Five-and-Ten he had managed to keep alive the low painful fire of intelligence." In Fitzgerald's case the fire burned higher at some times than at others, highest of all in his craftsmanship at his best. The grace he wanted in his life remained lodged in his style, as did the richness and the "magic," so in that sense perhaps his dream was not entirely wasted.

WHAT WOULD his writing have been if he had come of age in another decade? He might not have succeeded so early and he might not have been so impatiently ambitious for further triumphs. He could not have been billed as "a spokesman for the Jazz Age"—a label he detested—and more or less forced to act out the role in accordance with promotional needs. Many things would have been different, and no doubt the difference would have affected his writing. But one may carry this conclusion too far. We can, for example, easily imagine his being "taken up" early by the promotional apparatus of this decade also, tagged with some fashionable label—perhaps as a spokesman for despair or "the impossibility of human communication"—and fed very much the same visions of triumph. Moreover, he wouldn't have lacked his old material: the rich are only richer, the orgies bigger, and the corrupting power of money more evident. We cannot, however, picture his writing as we know it in the present mainstream of favored literature. Whatever else Fitzgerald felt about people, glamorous or detestable, he was fascinated by them—their thinking, the way they moved, their words, and the very sound of their voices, which he caught with an accuracy comparable to absolute pitch in music. If his characters are lost they are not lost in the cold, sunken inanition of so many modern characters of fiction. They live, they communicate, and where there is despair the reader is at least permitted to understand it.

FOUR FANTASIES

RUSSELL DAVIS

THE GIMMICK

I HEARD about it, but I refused to believe it. It was possible, but it had been possible for a long time and had never arrived. Still, Macy's basement is Macy's basement. I work only a block away. I slouched over.

There it was, a hell of a big thing, with chromium exhaust pipes, a little funnel to pour in soap, and a rump like the Queen Mary. Beside it on the balls of his feet in a charcoal ensemble with a fake flower in his fake buttonhole, stood the salesman.

I rattled two subway tokens together in my pocket to assure myself I was liquid and said, "Pretty unwieldly, isn't it?"

"It gets around," he answered.

"Oh, wheels under there?"

"It'll fly, walk, play music, spin dry, pitch out baseballs or empty the slops. Also candle eggs, shoot billiards, drive nails in concrete and pasteurize the baby's apple jack," he recited.

"I guess it can do anything," I ventured.

"Anything you can think of."

"Can it pray?"

His face changed. "Look, Mac, if you'll write out your philosophical comments and drop them in that little box over there, Reader's Digest has offered a 5 year subscription for the corniest. Personally, I got a quota to meet."

I gave him my cold stare. "I'll buy it."

He stared back. "How do you know you can? I haven't told you the price."

"Extend the payments," I snapped.

He whipped out a large pad. "Very well. Open up. Tell all. And

I warn you, build up the financial, water down the sex, and skip the gags."

I answered all his questions.

"Fine," he said, finishing page twelve.

"When will it be delivered?"

"It will deliver itself," he replied, "about Thursday."

"Barring, I suppose, any previous appointments?"

He shook his head. "I certainly hope your credit's good. It seldom is with you jokers."

During the next few days I disposed of my car, television, air conditioner, rotisserie, blendor, phonograph, wire recorder, washing machine, vacuum cleaner, refrigerator and electric blanket, until I felt naked. Thursday evening I was sitting down to a defrosted blueplate that I had shaken out of the slot-machine in the subway when, sure enough, there was a timid knock at the door.

"Come in," I called.

And the damn thing did.

Let me assure you that I didn't bat an eyelash. I am neither terrified nor awed by machines, only irritated when they break down. There was actually nothing really new in its entire repertoire. For example, in place of necessarily cumbersome operating knobs it simply obeyed a fairly sizeable list of clearly enunciated one and two-syllable commands. Nothing eerie about this. Electro-audio-mechanisms capable of this and much more have been knocking at the doors of the world's factories for over twenty years now without so much as a "Who's there?" But seemingly it could do everything: wash, iron, do dishes, swallow the garbage, shampoo the rugs, lullaby me with Brahms, wake me with the Used Car Dealers Calypso, shave me to the quick, filter coffee, pop up toast and then either take me to work and hang around outside feeding coins into the parking meter or stay quietly at home taping soap operas. True, it was sloppy with orange juice, delivered it full of pulp and seeds, mashed potatoes issued from its spout studded with dark lumps, and it shot a blank on squeezed carrots—all it knew was slicing them into limp flat strips. But I must expect a few bugs. The main thing was that apparently some manufacturer at long last had overcome the infantile greed and inherent charlatanism of his class and plunged beyond the usual faked up new model of an old mistake calculated to outlast its guarantee by no more than a quarter of an hour.

On the third evening I had it dicing beets, cutting elliptical circles in three-quarter-inch plywood, shuffling four packs of cards and playing Papa Loves Mambo on its marimba section while it sponged down

the venetian blinds, when I suddenly got the idea of racking up a set of punch cards, one for each entry in the fourth at Belmont, and throwing them in the hopper. I shut the other activities off; after all none of them was so pressing.

There was a faint buzzing. Then, "Apoplexy by a length," it predicted with all the solemnity of a Times Square automat tout.

I stared at it. I happened to know for a fact that in all her ten years addiction to the needle Apoplexy has never yet left the starting gate in the right direction. Pettishly I racked up another set of cards, more complicated, since they covered the entire baseball season, and demanded to know which league could logically cop the pennant.

It hesitated, cogitated a few minutes, then with a slight preliminary sputtering or clearing of its throat, mumbled, "The Pirates."

"Mush-head!" I snapped.

The machine made no reply.

I suppose with the idea of wreaking vengeance, I picked up a bushel basket of rock hard greening apples, dumped them in and ordered it to make cider.

It failed, or, as it seemed to me, refused. After a brief inconclusive munching, nothing. I banged a drinking glass against its spigot. "Cider!" I shouted. "Cider!"

"Look, isn't it about your bedtime?" it inquired wearily.

Now even this is not as impossible as it sounds. Instead of actuating a warning light, it could be that the mechanism had been arranged so that when the thing became overheated or jammed, it actuated a recorded stock remark according, say, to the time of day. Yet I could not help sensing such a naturalness in its reaction, particularly in the tone of the voice that spoke, that I took a step backward and gazed at the thing marvelling, and completely forgot my anger.

"What hath God wrought?" I murmured.

For an answer the machine gave vent to a sound that I think is best described as a juicy but unfriendly kiss.

At this I went to my toolbox, selected a Phillips screwdriver, came back, and ignoring the warning about tampering in the guarantee agreement, removed the large cover plate on the side. There, astride a bicycle saddle, his feet poised over more pedals than the Roxy pipe organ keyboard, and surrounded by an array of levers, wheels, switches, pull handles and microphones, perched a pudgy pasty-faced fellow in his middle to late thirties, drenched in perspiration. He glared at me.

"Slavedriver!" he barked.

Needless to say, I have brought an action against the manufacturer

which, if successful, will expose his shoddy product far and wide and alert you, the consumer, to what I am convinced is the most flagrant, outrageous and unprincipled flimflam ever fobbed off on a defenseless and gullible public!

THE TIGER OR THE WOLF

ONE Sunday a little before my seventh birthday my father took me to the zoo. It was a soft spring morning with a pale green fringe on the trees and the gravel paths freshly raked and clean. We made a slow tour of the elks, deer, antelope, elephants, giraffes, a sleeping rhinoceros and some large tropical birds who sat on branches occasionally emitting droppings.

"Well, time to go home," said my father.

"I want to see the bears," I said.

"Next time."

"I want to see the bears, I want to see the bears."

"All right," said my father unexpectedly, "go and see the bears. I'll wait for you."

"Can I?" I cried, excited.

"Hold on," he said.

I skidded to a stop.

"Be careful. Come right back."

"I will, I will."

"Now go," he said.

My feet churned like a locomotive slipping its drivers. I raced up the dappled path and soon came to a large clearing. The bear cages faced me out of a rocky side hill. Most of the bears were asleep, some on the rocks in the sun, others like the polar bears inside their caves in the coolness. The ones awake weren't doing anything, just staring into the middle distance. As I watched, one of these suddenly yawned, rolled over on his side and went to sleep. I waited for him to wake up, but he didn't. After a while I went slowly back down the path to where my father was sitting on his bench. He looked up. "Well, see the bears?"

I nodded.

We went home. My father lay down in his big leather chair under the Sunday paper with his legs sticking out, crossed. I scuffed up and down on the rug trying to make sparks come out of my fingers, until he yelled at me to stop. Then I had nothing to do. I went and stood in front of him.

"Pop."

He didn't answer.

I tapped his knee.

"Uh huh," he grunted.

"Pop," I said.

"What is it?"

"The tiger got out of his cage."

He shifted his position and turned a page. "Why don't you go out in the kitchen and help your mother?"

"But the tiger got out of his cage."

"Hm."

"The tiger—" I uttered an exasperated sigh—"got out of his cage."

"How?" he inquired.

"Jumped."

After a moment he let go one side of his newspaper and looked around the edge of it. "Just when, may I inquire, did this event take place?"

When he had let me see the bears, I answered.

"You're telling a fib," stated my father, frowning.

"Oh no," I said.

"Well, what did you do?"

"Ran."

"He chase you?"

"Yes."

"Catch you?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Some people were coming up the path and one of them laughed and that scared him, I guess. He jumped into some bushes."

"Then what?"

"Then I came back to you."

"Why didn't you tell me?"

"I was afraid," I said.

My father grabbed the loose edge of the paper and folded it, then folded it again down across his knees. He hunched himself up to an erect position and faced me squarely. "Look, you've got to stop making up these stories. Now I told you about the boy who kept crying wolf when there wasn't any wolf and how finally when there was a wolf nobody came to save him because he had fooled them so many times. You remember what happened to him. He was gobbled up."

"But I saw him," I said.

"You couldn't have. If you did, it was an optical illusion. I don't expect you to know what that is, but it's your imagination. You've got to watch out your imagination doesn't run away with you. It might get you in serious trouble. Suppose you'd gone running all over the zoo this morning yelling tiger and got everybody in a panic. What then?"

"But I saw him," I said.

My father compressed his lips. He took the newspaper from his knees and placing it carefully on the arm of his chair stood up. "Do you know what I'm going to do now?"

"No," I said.

"I'm going to call the zoo on the telephone," said my father.

I watched with increasing suspense as he took up the telephone directory and began shuffling the pages. At this moment my mother hurried in. "Lunch is ready," she announced. She turned to me. "Go wash." Then she noticed my father. "Who are you calling?"

"The zoo," he replied.

"The zoo!" she exclaimed. "What in heaven's name for?"

My father spoke into the phone. "This the zoo? I just came from your place with my—I say I just came from your place with my little boy. He says he saw a tiger jump out of its cage."

My mother grabbed me by the shoulders. "What happened?"

I twisted. "Oh, the tiger jumped out of its cage," I said uneasily.

"What?" cried my mother. "What?"

My father had hung up. He cleared his throat. "Well, they say the tigers are all in their cages. Everything is all right."

Both my mother and father looked at me.

"Then he must have jumped back in," I said.

My father's mouth opened, but instead of speaking, he turned and left the room, returned immediately with his hat and my cap. "Lunch can wait," he said to my mother.

She followed us out on the landing. "Don't take chances," she called.

My father strode silently along the sunny sidewalk, hauling me after him at a steady trot. When we reached the zoo, there were more people than there had been in the morning; we had to thread around and through them. He paused only once to get directions from a man in a faded uniform. "Where are the tigers?" my father shouted, and as the man pointed, rushed on. My wrist became slippery with perspiration he only gripped it more tightly and pulled harder. As we approached a large domed concrete building with cages extending out on either side, he turned suddenly and picking me up advanced without letup through the crowd straight up to the rail back of the heavy bars of the

ages and held me out over the rail right up to the bars themselves.

"There. See? Reach your hands out. Touch the iron. Touch it. Go head. I'm holding you."

I smelled a strong, animal smell. Through the bars I saw two tigers ing contentedly on their stomachs twitching their ears.

"Feel it!" commanded my father.

I touched the steel bar in front of my nose. He jerked me back and, anging his grip on me so that he could get one hand free, pointed ward. "Look. See the bars over the top? See? Could a tiger get out ere? No, of course he couldn't. Now—look at the floor of their ge, the floor they're lying on. It's solid concrete, like the sidewalk, ly harder. See it?"

"Yes," I said.

He carried me out to the outskirts of the crowd now and, putting e back on my feet and bending at the knees until our heads were on level, he faced me. "Now the tigers," he said slowly, extra distinctly, ouldn't jump out—could they? Could they?"

"No," I said.

"What?"

"No."

"You didn't see the tiger jump out—did you?"

He still had hold of my shoulder with one hand.

"No," I said.

Now he let go and stood up. "All right," he said with finality. Turn- g away from the cages he put out his hand to take mine and took few steps with his hand out waiting for me to run up and take it.

But I didn't. I remember the puzzled look that came over his face as turned and saw me standing away a little, not budging.

"Well," he said, "what is it now? What's the matter?"

"Nothing," I answered.

"Then come along." Again he started in the direction of home. I lowed slowly several steps behind.

He kept stopping and turning around. "Lunch is waiting, you know."

I followed slowly. The space between us increased. He noticed this. ally he stopped altogether. So did I. "Come here," he ordered.

People were strolling around us. I didn't move.

"It was a wolf," I said.

A woman pushed a baby carriage between us diagonally, curving und me.

"It was a wolf," I said, "it was a wolf." I said it loudly.

"Come here!" shouted my father.

"A wolf!" I screamed. Eluding him with several quick steps to
side as he came for me, I turned and broke into a run, crying "W
Wolf!" into the faces of the placidly strolling people.

A PIG CAN SEE THE WIND

LUNCH with Eli, the wind blowing, rain coming down. He said, fac
the window, "It's going to repeat that storm."

I said, "Na."

He said, "It's just blown over one of those no parking signs w
the concrete bases."

"So?" I said.

We got up and wandered out, paying our checks, and boom sw
clatter, the wind pushed against us and the rain got under my hat b
and smeared up my glasses as we crossed the street. In the entra
to the building that we approached, a photographer with his cam
held crookedly was swinging his body this way and that way, shielding
lens from the rain, his lapels flopping, his hat looking freshly blown
and jammed back on, and a little knot of people stood behind shelte
watching, while around the corner struggled blurred figures, skirts cling
and flapping.

"Taking a picture of the wind," I stated captiously, thinking
pictures seen in the papers of people seen in Monday's wind at the in
section of Who and When, but more loudly than I had intended,
that I felt foolish and was glad to hook into the revolving door.

"Maybe he has a pig's eye for a lens," said Eli as we got ins
and he continued, "I remember it must be twenty-five years ago I wa
kid, the papers were full of a story about a boy who lost an eye, and
doctors were going to graft in a pig's eye, and the big question
whether the boy would then be able to see the wind because there
a widespread superstition that a pig could see the wind."

"What happened?" I said. "Could he?"

"I don't remember how it came out," said Eli.

As we walked toward the elevators I thought to myself of a pig,
the eye sliding forward frowning, sliding slickly to the rear under
thick blond eyelashes like the hairs of the brush that comes attac
to the inside of the cover of a jar of library paste, watching from un
those thick blond hairs, watching the wind, the serene wind, the f
like wind, the jelly that travels. . . . "A pig can see the wind," I
musingly.

"I've got to get a pack of cigarettes," said Eli. He went off.
I went in the elevator.

...But I can see, I can see the wind!
...Hush, child, hush.
...But I can see the wind!
...Be quiet or I'll lock you in the closet.

ALL ABOARD FOR HEAVEN

Come along, everybody wants to take a trip to Heaven in a Red guar rocket, starting immediately, buy a ticket, climb in, take a seat, rting immediately, can't wait, leaving for Heaven immediately. See stars, all the planets, all the notables and immortals, the famous and near-famous and never-thought-to-be-but-now-are-famous, all in Heav- all in view.

Young man——

Hello mother, what can I do for you? Can I sell you a ticket to aven? Only a dollar sixty.

Young man—are you coming back too?

Sure.

I mean, will you bring me back?

Sure, if you want to.

What if I don't want to?

Anything you say, mother, but I'll have to charge you full round fare unless you make your decision now. Get aboard, take a seat.

You ain't the devil, are you?

Me the devil? I should say not! Why mother, do I look it?

Well, you got no horns, not much hair either. How about a tail?

got a tail? Let me see your fingernails. They ain't pointed, I hope.

No ma'am!

You guarantee everything?

Everything, everything is guaranteed, the angels, St. Peter and the ing pearly gates, the whole works. Climb in, we're starting. No to fasten seat belts, no lurch, no turns, no vibration, here we go. k, we're going past the moon now, there's Mars and Venus, we're ing to Mercury. Cigars, cigarettes, after dinner mints and chewing ? Very cheap up here, no Federal tax after twelve miles. Now I take a few minutes of your time? I have here a very interesting hure, twenty-eight pages in full color, describing all the wonderful

sights and sensations and identifying all the points of special inter as we go, plus a large map of Heaven which folds out and contains complete index, and also a pair of dark glasses which will be of use to y as we pass by the sun, all for twenty-five cents, a souvenir of your t and a guide and memento to take home and show your friends. Tha you, thank you. And now we enter the gates of Paradise. Here we a There are the mountains, here are the fountains, the wispy clouds, sev angels playing harps, there is Dante and Beatrice, Homer and M Homer, and Milton, and also Cyrus J. Wintergreen, the President w was so nearly impeached.

But he's a fictional character!

Sh-h, not so loud, he doesn't know it. And now we're going ba unless you want to stay. Do you? No? Very well, we'll go back. Ok we're taking off for Earth. Here we go. Here we are, Earth, last st Have to ask you ladies and gentlemen all to get out, make room passengers waiting to get aboard for the next trip which is starting imm diately.

Young man, young man—

What's wrong, mother? Leave something? Lost your glasses?

No, young man, I just want to say—

Go right ahead, mother, what do you want to say?

That that's the nicest excursion I ever took. I'm going to recomm it highly to all my friends.

Why, thank you, mother, you do that, goodbye and God bless y Next trip, all aboard, going to Heaven in a Red Jaguar rocket, start immediately.

A Correction

Readers may have noticed the dropping of a line at the very top of page 45 *of our February issue. The omission occurs in the "Peking Letter" by Chang Chi-ching. The line in its entirety should read: "Some of the past debates, Lu went on to say, were scholastic 'paper wars.'"*

TO KNOW EARTH IS TO KNOW HEAVEN

BILL McGIRT

When have I known earth the most, the fullest?
In brief fulfillment or yet in desire. . . .
Where on the mountain, where by the live water,
with whom in covers, with whom in what singing?
(Laughter is cruel but when, as the tide
moves with gentle lips and seeking tongue
thru marsh grasses, sounding the sea-echoes,
the laughter is an overflow of soul
seeking the new levels where self is
in others boundless and O fuller waking!)

Even with fingers buried in the fish,
with the bold fragrance fresh still of the sea
saturating my senses, still a song
lifts up my spirit and dissolves the walls,
fills the deep windows with such futures,
stretches the grey street to far vistas,
aye, brings in the space my throat has bridged.

Now chained on this rock for teaching brothers
secrets of freedom fire, still I hold
a surer breadth than all the surest gods
or all the pious mortals. I do not brag:
this is the force of life. To suffer now
the secret of finding, this were more divine
than anything else I could conspire
with gods or devils to find purpose in.

The secret? To know earth is to know heaven:
To drink the deepest springs in human eyes,
to find the loveliest limbs on human trees,
to scan the widest fields in human faces,
to kiss the palms of god in human hands,
to dare to see what can be and what will
and sing to sweat upon this mortal rock
until the fever dies and smile returns. . . .

O on the mountain, O by the thrash of sea,
by bench of toil, by bitter heft of soil,
I taste the flesh that is eternity.

Three Drawings by David Lemon

MEXICAN PORTER

HEADS

THE BAY: SAN FRANCISCO

MISPLACED STATESMAN

ALAN MAX

THE science of criminology is not as simple as it appears on Dragnet, where the criminal has to be apprehended in time for the final commercial.

It is true that for 16 years, George Metesky bought the ingredients for home-made bombs and went all over New York City depositing his products under the very nose of New York's "Finest" in theatres, railroad terminals and in the New York Public Library itself.

But please read the description of the Mad Bomber and look at his photographs. The courtroom lights are reflected in his gold-rimmed spectacles. He wears a somber blue-suit with pencil stripe. His shirt and tie are neat to the last millimeter and his shoes have that shine—not overglossy—which reveals their wearer to be a man of good taste.

If you met such a man walking down Forty-second street, I insist it would be impossible to tell him from one of our atom-bomb statesmen.

Almost six feet in height, his hair slicked back in a neat pompadour, clean-shaven and rather ruddy—couldn't this be Lewis Straus of the Atomic Energy Commission?

His manner, as he listens to the exchange between his lawyer and the judge, is relaxed and self-assured. Couldn't this be Admiral Radford before a Senate Appropriations Committee as he tells how he had advocated using 500 planes to drop atom-bombs before Dienbienphu in Indo-China?

Study that photograph of the Mad Bomber as he peers through the bars in his detention cell in Westbury, Connecticut. Observe the wholesome smile and winning personality. Isn't he a dead-ringer for Secretary of the Air Donald A. Quarles as he beamingly peers through a pane of glass in a laboratory at some testing device in connection with the hydrogen bomb?

Listen to Metesky as the reporters fire their questions at him. He is self-assured and genial—for all the world like Harry Truman fondly reminiscing over the decision on Hiroshima.

The question is not how did George Metesky escape being taken into custody in all those years. The real question is how did he manage to escape being taken into the President's cabinet?

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* Courtesy of the *Daily Worker.*

AN EXCHANGE WITH HOWARD FAST

I: MY DECISION

HOWARD FAST

Several weeks ago the world-renowned progressive novelist, Howard Fast, granted an interview to Harry Schwartz of the *New York Times* declaring his wish no longer to consider himself a Communist. Among the factors determinng his decision, most prominent was his disillusion because of past events in the Soviet Union and his disbelief that any radical change had taken place since the death of Stalin and the Khrushchev report.

Mr. Fast's announcement must be a blow to thousands of members of the Communist Party in whose minds he had been identified with every good cause for which they had fought as well as he. But many others, too, were disturbed by his act and particularly questioned the release of his statement through the medium of a newspaper which is surely no friend of the American progressive movement, of which Mr. Fast considers himself a part, as evidenced by the conclusion of his article. We, also, felt that he was most ill-advised to take this step and we therefore urged him, a former member of our editorial board, to state his position in our pages. We told him that we would, of course, comment on his declaration. Mr. Fast accepted our invitation. His article follows.—*The Editors.*

RECENTLY, I took the step of publicly severing my connections with the Communist Party of the United States; and in an interview with the *New York Times,* I presented some of the reasons for this decision of mine. Now I am asked by the editors of *Mainstream* to state my position more fully, and I have decided to do so in terms of communism and morality.

What follows is not a justification of my action, but an explanation. I took this action for two reasons; firstly, as the only extreme protest against the course of events in the communist world that I saw as being meaningful and purposeful; and secondly, because I feel that the Communist Party of the United States—mostly through events beyond its

control—is compromised to a point where it can no longer make any effective contribution to the continuing struggle for democracy and social justice. I feel that I must state this as a beginning to make my position very plain.

Looking back at my life, I find two major forces that brought me to communism. The first was a maturing belief in the goodness and inevitable brotherhood of man—a brotherhood in peace and common creativity. In this belief, I learned my equalitarianism out of the Prophetic teachings of Judaism, the love and brotherhood of man preached by Isaiah, and the morality, in terms of the poor and oppressed, of Jesus Christ. My democratic understanding was based on the writings of Jefferson and Lincoln.

The second force was an understanding of the role of the working class in modern history. The working class I was born into, and I studied it well through the first eighteen years of my life. I began to understand its historic role through the works of George Bernard Shaw, Jack London, Upton Sinclair and C. Osborne Ward. Later, in the process of self-education, I was able to read and understand the work of not only Marx and Engels, but of Mill and Veblen and Darwin and Morgan —and many other related Marxist and non-Marxist social thinkers.

I became a Marxist within my own personal structure, as I think many people do. I have been characterized as a religious person, and while I will not deny this within a broad frame of reference, my religion does homage to man, not to the supernatural. If a deep and unshakable faith in the goodness and splendid destiny of man is religious, then I must own to that.

I joined the communist movement for two reasons. I believed that in the Communist Party was the beginning of a true brotherhood of man, working with devotion for socialism, peace and democracy. Secondly, I believed that the Communist Party offered the most effective resistance to fascism. As a part of this, I believed, as did millions of men of good will, that the only truth about the Soviet Union was the picture presented by friends of the Soviet Union.

In these beliefs I will not admit to being anyone's dupe. Hindsight is all very well, but let us also use it to recall that during the past generation, millions of the finest and clearest minds in the word shared these beliefs. If I was slow in recognizing certain facts, recall the savage persecution of Communists this past decade in America. Whatever the truth of Russian police rule, the Truman government seemed determined to create a police state that would outdo it. That was not a time when clear and objective thinking came easily.

Nevertheless, I and others within the Communist Party realized that something was tragically wrong in the world communist movement long before the Khrushchev "secret speech" appeared. We were asked to swallow such absurdities as the Soviet theory of "cosmopolitanism." We saw Jewish culture disappear in Russia, and all our pleas for an explanation brought only silence. We saw capital punishment reinstated with a vengeance.

We also witnessed many disturbing internal factors in the Communist Party of the United States, a destroying rigidity and unbendingness, a narrowing of approach and purpose that made it impossible for many good people to remain within it.

These things marked a process of development, both in myself and in many others. Yet it did not prepare us for the explosive and hellish revelations of the Khrushchev "secret report." The dimensions of this horror were not only beyond anything we could have dreamed of—but also beyond, far beyond, the worst accusations of the worst enemies of the Soviet Union.

My own reactions to this unspeakable document are a matter of public record, for I spelled them out in the New York *Daily Worker*. I was filled with loathing and disgust. I felt a sense of unmitigated mental nausea at the realization that I had supported and defended this murderous bloodbath, and I felt, as so many did then, a sense of being a victim of the most incredible swindle in modern times.

I also experienced for the first time the limitations of the man, Khrushchev, not only in his describing the hell he pictured as the work of one man, but in the cynicism of his definition and explanation of this as "the cult of the individual"—an explanation not only empty, but almost facetious in its unrelatedness to the events it describes.

A leading French communist intellectual, reading what I wrote in the *Worker* on this occasion, sent me a bitter letter (in English) charging me with playing into the hands of the enemy. "As you may have seen in the papers," he wrote, "following the publication by the bourgeois press of the report credited to Comrade Khrushchev, it (the French Communist Party) asked the Communist Party of the Soviet Union to give a more complete theoretical explanation of the serious wrongs attributed to Comrade Stalin. The Soviet Communist Party then issued a statement implying precisely this theoretical analysis, a statement which forms a document of major importance to every militant of the working cause and which has enabled the working class parties to make a sound appraisal of the ideas already involved."

Heaven help us!

I will not deny that I can never again be the person I was before I read that report. Then something broke inside of me and finished, but I waited nine months before I took the step I am explaining here. I waited because it was my whole life as well as the lives and hopes of so many dear friends that was involved; I also waited because friends whom I respected argued thus:

"Surely it is better to face the reality of this thing than to live in contented ignorance of it. Remember that the Soviet leaders themselves brought it into the open. Now things will change. Stalin is dead. New leaders are in power now. They must change."

It was at least a hope—a hope that the Soviet Union would pick up the banner of socialist democracy and perhaps begin to reclaim a world moral leadership, a leadership it had lost.

WHAT was the result of that nine months? I specify it, not as an indictment, but simply as a record of objective fact to which I reacted. First, there were the additions to the "secret report." We learned of the liquidation, in 1939, of the leading Communists of Poland—hundreds of the noblest and bravest men in Poland, murdered by Stalin and the men around Stalin. From a story in a Polish communist-Yiddish paper, *Folkshtimme,* we received our first "valid" proof of what had happened to Jewish culture in the U.S.S.R.: the extinction of every Yiddish newspaper, magazine, school, printing press—and the legal murder of a host of Jewish writers and cultural leaders. From an eye-witness report in the *Manchester Guardian,* we got the story of how some twenty elderly Jews were sentenced to from three to ten years imprisonment—for the possession of Zionist literature. From a host of sources, we learned of the fear, the pervading terror among Soviet Jews.

How do we account for such behavior after six million Jews were murdered by Nazism?

To continue: from the Soviet Union itself we learned of two more executions, and the blood hardly dry on the Khrushchev report! From Khrushchev himself we were treated to a new mode of diplomacy—diplomacy by insult and vulgarity. From the crisis in Egypt we learned of the new brink-of-war tactics of Soviet foreign affairs. For the first time, in relation to Israel, we witnessed the elevation of anti-Semitism to foreign policy. In November, 1956, Premier Bulganin sent notes to Great Britain, France and Israel. The notes to Britain and France were both reasonable and conciliatory in tone; the note to Israel was couched as an ultimatum in a tone both shrill and insulting. Since Israel was the least culpable of the three, and the only one of the three acting in

terms of direct national security, the uncontrolled prejudice was both apparent and significant.

From Hungary and its tragedy we learned of a new kind of socialism —socialism by slaughter and terror.

From Poland, where a struggle within the Communist Party was being waged between the Gomulka forces and the Soviet-backed forces, we learned only recently of how the Russians had attempted to swing the election to their own adherents by the use of anti-Semitism.

I itemize only a little, for my space is limited, but there must be an itemization because this is a connected picture. In June, 1956, our expressed hope was that Russia would do away with capital punishment, not only because this was implicit in the "secret report," but because criminology and history have demonstrated the futility and senselessness of this barbaric process. It would have required only a decision of leadership, but instead, while the dead made dead unjustly were being reinstated, the heads of the living continued to roll, without any proof of their guilt presented publicly. And all this after Khrushchev's long and terrible revelation of the results of secret trial and execution.

So with habeas corpus, so with self-incrimination. We have had news recently that guilt by confession alone would no longer be part of the Soviet legal system; but this is a far cry from the meaning of our Fifth Amendment, which guarantees that no accused can be forced to give evidence against himself in any form. The contrast of a socialist state claiming to be the highest type of social organization on earth, yet lacking the rudimentary legal rights and protections which both the United States and England grant their citizens is thought-provoking, to say the least.

Friends point out that it is not to be expected that Russia should have the same legal procedures as the West. A communist lawyer said to me recently, "But these have never been part of their legal code in Russia or anywhere else in Europe." That is to the point, and neither has there been socialism in Europe before. The incredible thing is that this is a socialism which denies and derides the democratic process. Yet it is socialism. Economically, Russia cannot be regarded as anything else but a socialist state, and economically, this Russian socialism works. No one can evade the evidence of production statistics; the growth of the Soviet Union as a socialist industrial force is beyond argument, and speaking economically and in a sense, socially as well, a miracle has been performed in forty years.

But one cannot discuss socialism economically and leave it at that. In Russia, we have socialism without democracy. We have socialism

without trial by jury, *habeas corpus,* or the right against self-incrimination, which is no more or less than protection against the abuse of confession by torture. We have socialism without civil liberty. We have socialism without the power of recall of government. We have socialism without public avenues of protest. We have socialism without equality for minorities. We have socialism without any right of free artistic creation. In so many words, we have socialism without morality.

Perhaps the cruelest and strangest development of history is the appearance of socialism under the domination of totalitarianism. And unless this is seen and faced and dealt with by the Left, both Communists and Socialists, then the present agony of mankind will continue far longer than it has to.

A ruling class can give only lip-service to morality; a dictatorship must eschew it as the sinner eschews his conscience. Yet what is morality—in its truest, deepest sense—but the ideology of the oppressed? From whence came the prophetic writings of Israel, the preaching of Jesus Christ, but from the tortured lips of the oppressed? I speak not of the dogma of the Church, but of the ethical content itself; and was it not this same ethical content that provided the first revolutionary ideology for the struggle against feudalism? The positive side of an ethic is in an understanding of the togetherness of mankind; this never changes; the ethic is the plea for equalitarianism, the human embrace of brotherhood, love and tolerance. The other side of the ethic is against oppression, for there is no brotherhood without freedom and human love cannot flower without liberty.

It is said of Rabbi Akiba that a heathen came to learn the Talmud. The rabbi told him, "It is not difficult. The substance is thus—love thy neighbor as thy brother. All the rest is commentary." Yet it was this same gentle Akiba who supported Bar Kochba in his glorious, pre-doomed revolt against Rome. Seemingly, these qualities are opposites; actually, they are one, for there is no freedom without brotherhood and no brotherhood without freedom. This is the basis of the ethic, the core and heart of it; and tyranny is immoral precisely because it interdicts the freedom which is not only the bread and wine of man's dignity but also gives him access to the bread of life. It was no accident that Jesus Christ, like the earlier prophets, preached more against temporal tyranny than against codified sin; it was precisely this that made him Christ.

IT IS equally no accident that the Russians contribute so little on the question of ethics. Ethics, fostered by the men in the Kremlin, could only amount to an invitation to resist them in their power. And there is

less importance in the fact that the "secret report" was an immoral document than that it imposed a moral necessity. It was a confession, not of sin, but of the vilest oppression—apart from fascism and colonialism—that the twentieth century has known; and the necessity it imposed was that the tyranny—call it a dictatorship of the proletariat or what you will, it remains tyranny—that had created and practiced this oppression should open the door to morality by removing itself from government.

It is also neither an explanation nor an excuse to quote the history of Russia under the Czar. We talk here of socialism, and if socialism is a science, such explanations only degrade the men who claim to lead it. There is nothing either racial, geographic or mystical about democracy; it is a stage in the development of civilized man within his social structure; and the Russian leadership's contempt for democratic process is only a commentary upon their own socialist understanding—or lack of understanding. Savage and intolerant "Puritanism" has never been a substitute for knowledge.

I remember well the violent moral judgment that the Soviet writer, Ilya Ehrenburg, delivered upon the Nazis and the hardly less violent denunciation of the Americans. But when Ehrenburg became aware of the content of the "secret speech," we waited in vain for his wrath, his righteous anger or his moral indignation. Strangely, for a man who had seen and judged Nazism as he had during World War Two, he evidently found nothing in the murder of Jewish writers and poets and journalists to protest.

Though Jewish himself, Ehrenburg survived, for evidently a variation of the "honorary Aryan" exists in the Soviet Union.

I met Ehrenburg in Paris after that. I did not know that the Yiddish poet, Itzik Feffer, was dead; for me, he still existed as I had seen him in New York years before, handsome and tall and proud in his Red Army uniform. On this occasion, I was chewing gum, as I often do, and Ehrenburg characterized it boldly and bluntly, as a bestial practice. As a gum chewer, I was morally judged by him, and perhaps rightly so, for in a large degree, this judgment characterized his understanding of morality. The ridiculous and the terrible often walk hand in hand. That Howard Fast could indulge in this barbarism of chewing gum injured Ehrenburg's sensibilities, even as the man who remained seated when a Victorian English lady entered the room offended her sense of the decent and fitting. But the moral response was no deeper than the Victorian manner. In a popular Soviet novel, a leading novelist pursued this line in describing how two sex-starved people, a soldier and a nurse, each of them celibate for years, spent a tortured night in the same room,

each yearning toward the other, each upholding the honor of a Soviet citizen through abstinence. When this writer, here in America, was challenged as to the validity of such a picture, he replied, "Our people like it that way."

Without begging the question of a writer's responsibility toward reality, is it true that any people like it that way? These are not petty examples; they are definitions of a fake prudery, a childish parade of virtueless virtue that is substituted for real ethic and real morality.

IT WOULD be both wrong and malicious to make any comparison between this Soviet tyranny and the tyranny of fascism; but my rejection of such a comparison does not lessen the culpability of a totalitarian socialist leadership. The Hitlerian state, which abandoned morality for racism and bestiality, embraced ignorance and the vilest medievalism, plunging headlong almost from the moment of its creation toward its final destruction in the holocaust of World War Two. The dynamic of the socialist state, even as it exists in Russia, is something else indeed. As much as the dictatorship at the top may reject and fear the truth in this area or that, the social and economic structure of the state itself propels toward an enlarging area of knowledge. A whole generation of engineers, atomic scientists, biologists, physicians, physicists, astronomers and a hundred other scientists and artists cannot be lulled or tranquilized forever with copybook maxims unrelated to the reality of life. The material concern for the health and welfare of the people, as demonstrated by the wonderful and amazing strides of the Soviet medical and health services must come into sharp conflict with the "Genghis Khan" attitude toward human life and humanism that was and still is exhibited by the leadership. And most sharply of all, the very teaching of a Marxist and materialist approach to history must inevitably challenge and unmask the crude corruption of Marxism that has taken place in the Soviet Party structure.

It is the brutalized and dehumanized practice of power that the theory of socialism has been most corrupted. But within the Soviet Union, an increasing contradiction between Communist Party leadership and practice and evolving socialist society exists; and in good time this contradiction will become intolerable to the Soviet people.

Where then does the duty of the man of good will, the progressive, the socialist, the communist lie? I answer this question only for myself. I say that it lies with socialism, with the ancient and enduring dream of brotherhood, with the Soviet people, who twice created out of ruins the fabric and potential of a good society, with the Poles, who so gal-

lantly went their own way toward democratic socialism.

I say that it does not lie with the pretentious dogmatism of Soviet leadership, indicted not only for their acquiescence in the crimes of Stalin, but for their continuing record of intolerance and dogmatic bossism since the exposure of those crimes.

I HAVE come to believe that within the very structure and historical development of the Communist Parties, as we know them in recent years, there is an almost incurable antithesis to the socialist democracy which they name as their ultimate goal. In a struggle against fascism and colonial oppression, history has shown these parties to be magnificently disciplined and courageous, but in other circumstances, they fall prey to a tragic contradiction. Programmatically for freedom, their very structure denies freedom within itself; against oppression, their very structure oppresses within itself; and conceived as a liberating force, the monolithic power structure chokes both the democratic process and the liberating thought. Their historical development has been toward an ever increasing and ever more rigid bureaucracy—and this very process nurtures an egotistic and dehumanized stratum of leadership, which is perpetuated to a point where the threat of recall must be seen by leadership as a threat to the existence of the organization. The rationale of those in power can then turn into paranoiac hatred and corroding suspicion.

It is this development that is being fought by a great many American communists who remain within the organization of the Communist Party, and I acknowledge their integrity and purpose. But can one for a moment believe that a similar struggle is possible in the Soviet Union? It is the very lack of any operative channel for either free elections or free recall in the Soviet Union that has so far prevented the change—not of system but simply of government—that the society is ready for.

Since the appearance of the Khrushchev "secret report" nine months ago and since my initial written response to it, a number of things have happened to me personally. A flow of letters from the countries of Eastern Europe have pleaded heartbreakingly for succor—as if I had some power to intervene against the terrors and sufferings that beset them or some speical persuasiveness to direct toward their leaders. I am afraid, however, that criticism of any validity is as abhorrent to the Kremlin leadership as social justice—in spite of their endless talk of criticism and self-criticism being a motive force in Soviet society. Where jail or death is the price of criticism directed at government, such claims are not only false, but even obscene.

I do not enjoy writing such things. I record them with distaste and soul-sickness. A life-long structure of belief lies shattered around me, and for nine long months I have paid the price for my own short-sightedness in mental anguish and turmoil. But I will not and cannot remain silent any longer. I judge no one else, but I know deeply that for me to hide my convictions would be despicable. If knowledge has unfolded for me a tragic and shoddy picture of the men who lead the Soviet Union, it has not lessened my faith and firm conviction in the ultimate brotherhood and basic goodness of man. Nor do I believe that mankind will be turned aside from socialist democracy and from the vision of the good world we will one day create. No power-clique of men of small soul and less humanity can long resist the tide of history.

As a postscript to the above, since it was written I received the inevitable summons from the House Committee on Un-American Activities to appear before them as a friendly witness. I made no bones about showing them, not only that I was an unfriendly witness, but that I utterly despised all they represented. Nothing I have said about injustice and petty tyranny here at home, or about the assorted madness of our foreign policy has been withdrawn in my mind. Let the issue not be confused. The fact that in the U.S.S.R. justice is so much of a stranger does not mean that justice walks uninhibited in our courts. I have written hundreds of thousands of words on the injustice that exists in my own country; I shall continue to write about it.

The fact that I have finally been able to spell out the facts above concerning injustice elsewhere does not close my eyes or my heart. It only opens both more.

I intend to continue my solidarity with all people of good will in America, communist and non-communist, who fight injustice and treasure the precious, the infinitely precious, traditions of Jefferson, Franklin, Lincoln and Douglass—to mention only four of the many great who built the foundations of that most splendid thing, American Democracy.

II: A COMMENT

THE EDITORS

BEFORE commenting on Howard Fast's article we should perhaps first say from what standpoint we view it. Obviously we are in no position to speak in the name, nor even in behalf of the Communist Party. But as editors of our country's only Left cultural periodical what Mr. Fast says concerns us deeply. He says it at a time when the socialist-oriented forces in the United States are beset with many baffling problems and their confusion—his document is an example—is very great; yet when the need to achieve some sort of working co-operation, if not unity, is apparent to almost all. It is within that larger context, communist and non-communist, that his opinion falls, and it is one we believe he will eventually relinquish.

Consider the manner of his reasoning. He says that he is protesting the course of happenings in the communist world, and that the Communist Party of the United States is compromised by events which are mostly beyond its control. How compromised? By matters of which its members could not know, by acts which they do not condone and in fact condemn? If a friend passes a bad check one may be "compromised," but only through guilt by association, to which Howard Fast does not subscribe. Yet so much of his article is devoted to Stalin and Khrushchev that one might think he was resigning from a party to which he never belonged: the Soviet Communist Party.

The party which he actually *did* leave, the American Communist Party, is in the midst of perhaps its greatest crisis. It has suffered and still suffers the continuous assault of the most powerful ruling class in all history. This alone is a source of disorientation for a small party. Internally, over and over it has been crippled by the rigidity and a dozen other evils of narrowness which Mr. Fast mentions. Yet if many left for those reasons, many stayed despite them, on grounds that seemed to them firmer and more justifiable; and we are not speaking of blind loyalty. Among them are veterans of great strike struggles and drives to organize the workers and farmers of our country, fighters for true Negro freedom and civil liberty, defenders of the abused and the victims of injustice,

laborers in the supreme cause of peace. Can one really despair of such people at a moment when they are trying to overcome faults of which most are conscious in varying degrees? And suppose their success is not unequivocal, and lots are still caught in the flypaper of phrases, or bear dogma like bags of cement on their backs? Should not one have as much patience for them as they must have to solve their immensely intricate problems? Howard Fast is an impetuous man, yet it took him a long time to arrive at his resignation. But organization is easily as painful as resignation and more wearisome; a multitude of minds is more complex than one. Therefore, we beg him not to settle back in his disenchantment if things do not turn out for the best so rapidly. Democracy brews surely but slowly in the ferment of rank-and-file persuasion.

LET US turn for a moment to Mr. Fast's reaction to the Khrushchev revelations and subsequent developments in the socialist world. As he knows from our editorial statements in past issues, we have no desire whatever to scrabble excuses for crimes committed by anyone. Nor are we impressed by semantic victories whereby crimes become "mistakes." A man who kills his wife cannot plead that he had neglected to study the woman question. Neither do we accept the argument that anti-Semitism in the form of anecdotes about Jews is different and less reprehensible than white chauvinism in the shape of jokes about Negroes, and that anyone who concerns himself unduly with the matter must be a Jewish nationalist. While it is true that Eastern Europe, Czarist Russia included, had a long history of anti-Semitism, one would think that the Soviet Communist Party leaders would have been particularly careful to wipe out every trace of prejudice in themselves and have understood better their historic role in effecting a qualitative change in that as well as other oppressive traditions. In any case, discrimination against national groups and cultures was not confined to the Jews. (Some people, not we, seem to get a curious consolation from that.)

Yet Howard Fast must be aware of a tragic contradiction of which he does not speak in his piece. When the Nazi army began its invasion of eastern Poland, hundreds of thousands of Jews were removed from there and White Russia to save them from the special dangers which threatened them. And this was done on the orders of the same leadership which was later culpable of the repression of Yiddish culture and responsible for the death of its major representatives.

(At this point we cannot resist the introduction of an ironic note. The January issue of the magazine *Liberation,* an independent monthly,

contains an impassioned article by an Israeli citizen accusing his government of being a tool that *seeks* to be used by wicked hands. The author of the article, M. Stein, is identified as a Tel Aviv attorney who "purchased a printing plant in order to publish a Yiddish newspaper. When the Israeli government banned his paper, he went to court and invoked an old English law against the suppression of newspapers. The government did not test the law but confiscated the paper every day until Stein had to give up publication." Thought provoking to say the least).

We have commented previously, in individual articles as well as in editorial statements, on the inhibition of creative thinking in Soviet ideology, art and science during the so-called Stalin Era, and have also described a similar situation which prevailed on the Left in this country. We share Mr. Fast's opinion of its harmful effects on books, paintings, music, scientific research and Marxist thought, as well as on the characters of those engaged in these pursuits. However, recent stories such as those of Harrison Salisbury in the *New York Times* and certain novels we have received within the last few weeks, incline us to believe that the ice is breaking. What these books reveal is not pretty; but is not that what Mr. Fast is listening for: honest voices in place of self-serving and silence? If Ehrenburg cannot satisfy him, perhaps the younger men will. As for the American Communist Party's cultural milieu, there is much evidence that its artists and scholars are determined that things should not go on as they once did. This sentiment seems almost unanimous among them.

Mr. Fast reproaches the Soviet leaders for not yet having transformed their legal system so that certain aspects of Anglo-Saxon law or their equivalents would now be incorporated into it. We are not competent to discuss this. We can only say that, from the little material available to us in English, it appears that while a number of significant steps toward the democratization and humanization of legal processes have been taken since the death of Stalin, the specific features which are sine qua non for him have not been adopted. These features are immensely precious to us; it is difficult for us to understand why they should not be transposed bodily to any country whose aim is the achievement of full democracy; but perhaps the question requires more study than Mr. Fast has given it. Everyone sometimes runs into facts that give his indignation pause.

Mr. Fast's anger sometimes overwhelms his judgment. In his charge he expresses no awareness of the increased international tension which

the American State Department has provoked by its ill-disguised intervention in the affairs of the New Democracies. He does not consider that one of the aims of such interference is to distract the governments of the socialist countries from the solution of their internal problems and from making the changes which they themselves assert they want to accomplish. (This does not mean that we deny that preposterous errors, inexcusable repression, and terrible crimes were of the greatest consequence in precipitating the recent Hungarian events. Nevertheless, as severe a critic of the action of the Soviet army as G. D. H. Cole, the British historian and socialist theoretician, recognizes that "the Russians had a difficult choice to make" for he is "not able to believe that, had they stood aside, the Hungarian people would have been in a position freely and democratically to decide their own destiny."*) Under such external pressures as the socialist countries have suffered since the XXth Congress it is not always possible, with the best of will, to erase long-ingrained injurious practices by a stroke of the pen, or to alter a legal system by "only a decision of the leadership." That in certain circumstances abstract morality gives way to extreme emergency is not just some perverse Leninist concoction; it is a fact in war and other situations in which individuals, as well as nations find themselves imperiled. But who is the foe of morality in the present case: the embattled parties of the socialist world or the lofty-minded Central Intelligence Agency which expends a billion dollars a year more or less for the avowed purpose of destroying socialism?

In his dissatisfaction with the nature and speed of Soviet reforms, Mr. Fast shows far less sympathy and understanding than not only Professor Cole but even Isaac Deutscher, author of a critically hostile political biography of Stalin, and surely no friend of the present Soviet leadership. Writing on the course of Soviet democratization in the anti-Communist cultural journal, *Partisan Review,* Deutscher estimates that the break with the past "is now felt in every aspect of Soviet activity and thought: in domestic and foreign policies, in education, in philosophical writing, in historical research, and, indeed, in the whole atmosphere of Soviet life. The scale and range of the changes taking place indicate that what we are witnessing is a many-sided, organic, and at times convulsive, upheaval in the existence of a huge segment of humanity."

Moreover, unlike Mr. Fast for whom all problems are dominantly and often exclusively moral, Deutscher presents the material evidence

* *The New Statesman and Nation,* January 12, 1957.

of democratic expansion (for example, the introduction of a new wage system, the condemnation of the "progressive piece rate," and the abolition of all fees for education, a step no nation of the "free" world has so far taken). He also names the social and economic factors impeding the process of democratization: the relative inadequacy of productive forces, the relative scarcity of consumer goods ("the decisive *objective* factor which sets limits to egalitarianism and democratic reform"). His patience is also instructive. Describing the present phase of reform as transitional, he remarks: "The present degree of liberalization is probably just sufficient to allow some scope for new processes of political thought and opinion-formation to develop in the intelligentsia and the working class. By their nature these are molecular processes, which require time to mature. But once they have matured they are certain to transform profoundly the whole moral and political climate of Communism, and to transform it in a spirit of socialist democracy." On this question, Howard Fast is less thoughtful than Isaac Deutscher.

Mr. Fast believes that socialist democracy can no longer flourish under the aegis of the Communist Parties who have led one-third of the world's people to socialism. He attributes this inability to their structure and historical development. He pictures a kind of dialectical process by which the people, say of the Soviet Union, having saved mankind from the horrors of fascism (at the cost of countless lives) and having reached an extraordinarily high stage of cultural and spiritual development, will find unbearable the contradiction between communist rule and society at large—even though this rule guided them to victory and put them on the road to happiness. As Mr. Fast depicts it, this contradiction verges on the catastrophic.

Now, that contradictions exist is no surprise to Marxists; only a classless society will abolish or reduce them to relative insignificance (for them to be replaced by other contradictions we cannot foresee; such is the dialectics of all life). But it is not at all inevitable that they reach a critical point, any more than that the strains of normal family life must always be resolved by divorce. What happened in the Soviet Union under Stalin and in Hungary under Rakosi has not occurred in China, and every sign there points to a successful and infinitely less painful resolution of the specific problems of socialist rule. (In passing, while through ignorance of the Russian language, we are unable to judge what present-day Soviet ethical thinking is like, we know from translations how much the Chinese Communists are absorbed by questions of human conduct, principle, motive, relations between people, the control of arbitrary

leadership, bureaucratic habits, and the like.) Or are the Chinese not Communists? And what of the Poles whom Mr. Fast praises because they "so gallantly went on their way to democratic socialism"? Is theirs a Communist Party or not? He cannot have it both ways, so that those Parties which have disappointed his moral expectations are Communist and those which meet them have ceased to be.

What has escaped Mr. Fast is that the contradictions he sees as inherent and destructive in all relations between the Communist Parties and the people have appeared, not as inherent, but rather in a fresh and positive form, in the internal life of various Parties and in the course of their fraternal contacts as independent organizations. The enemies of socialism may be pleased and its friends dismayed by the sharpness of debate and the degree of personal feeling involved. But these are no more acute than the disputes within the Abolitionist Movment in our own country, which constituted the method by which its essential program and tactics were forged.

In this respect we want to refer to an excerpt from Palmiro Togliatti's report to the Eighth Congress of the Communist Party of Italy.* (The full report bears the significant title, "The Italian Road to Socialism.")

Togliatti criticizes the Soviet Communists for not investigating deeply nor exposing the origin and conditions under which the errors and crimes they denounced had been committed. He views the "dramatic posthumous signalizing of the aberrations in the character of, and the wrong done by, a leader" as avoiding a clear obligation: to analyze the causes of the notorious distortions of Communist principle in order to decide how best to end them and prevent their recurrence. He notes that the failure to complete this task has done damage to the construction of socialist society and "even greater damage when the passage was being made from the construction and existence of socialism in one country alone to the existence of a socialist world made up of a system of states." Among other effects, it encouraged mirror imitation of Soviet solutions, and prevented a distinction being made between what is basic and "universal" (as the Chinese put it) in the Soviet experience and what is the job of each socialist country to solve for itself. Further, it often bred incredible mental calcification. One instance, cited by Togliatti, was the repression by the Rakosi government of the national holiday celebrating the 1848 revolution.

We believe this to be a fundamental and long-awaited criticism, and do not admit to hindsight in appreciating its urgency. In May, 1956, the editors called for such further explanation as Togliatti outlines. We

* *Political Affairs*, February, 1957.

said then: "The desire for an answer cannot be stifled, and therefore the accounting must come from those who are best able to give it. It must come for the sake of the prestige of the only movement in the world which has as its aim the liberation of all mankind.

"The cry for such an accounting," we said and repeat, "is not just a concoction of the enemies of socialism. It is the wish of those who yearn for the advent of socialism. It must be satisfied, for otherwise millions will be tugged at by doubts that will cast shadows even over the greatest achievements of socialism in the coming years." Recent events, and the disorientation of the intellectuals and many others of good will by them, have reinforced our conviction.

At the same time, we do not accept Howard Fast's picture of these happenings as a debacle. If they have destroyed any illusion of imperialism's reluctance to profit from defects and crises in the socialist world, they have also driven an intellectual opening-wedge into questions which most Communists once considered settled for good and for all. Togliatti's report, which we cannot begin to describe here; the Chinese experience; the developments in Poland; Kardelj's remarks on the relation of social to individual incentives, all these are marks of a new approach. On the one hand, we watch the colonial peoples take lessons in equality under the guns and bombs of the "free world." On the other, we hear the first speakers in a great debate to determine how international solidarity shall be tempered and strengthened by deference to national interests. As for the members of the Communist Party here, they tell us that they hope the old rubber stamp is worn out and they do not want it repaired. Discipline must be the product of the mutual respect of persons. One may disagree with such people; but they are not compromised. So we are not convinced by Mr. Fast's argument.

In the foregoing remarks we have outlined our disagreement with Howard Fast. We regret that much of our argument dealt with questions only secondarily related to the American scene, but here we had no choice, since those were the terms in which he defined the reason for his defection from the Communist Party.

So the reader may well ask why we consider his statement a disservice not simply to the Communist Party, not just to the cause of socialism, but to the American progressive movement as a whole? Briefly then, it is our opinion that the Communist Party has just begun its most difficult and painful task: the review of its past and present role in American life, its relations to the working class and to the people in general.

If the reader will examine some of the published resolutions adopted by its recent National Convention, he will find a recognition of the Communists' need once and for all to place common interests above doctrinal differences in their contacts with every individual and organization —working class, farmer, Negro, foreign-born, and the like—seeking the betterment of life in this country and peace in the world at large. A need not merely to subordinate differences, but genuinely to immerse themselves in common tasks and to identify themselves with the outlook of others even when that view is not theirs. If Mr. Fast says: "I'll keep my fingers crossed," who can deny him the right? The Communist Party has made many, many mistakes. But it also has a noble past of devotion and struggle, as Mr. Fast himself admits, else why did he join it? He says he was no one's dupe.

We know that no political party can rest on the laurels it has gathered, but must justify itself by its future. Yet at this time, when the development of American capitalism presents the progressive movement with such enormous and devious challenges, can that movement afford to ignore any group which offers its manifold experiences and best insights to the good fight? It needs everyone and every gathering of men and women to wage it. And if the Communist Party is such a group, then the ranks should be opened for it.

Mr. Fast may say that he does not deny the American Communist Party the right to participate in anything it pleases. But he does question its worthiness of his adherence to it in such a manner as to cast doubt on its democratic ideals, and to encourage the factional belief that its existence is harmful to the progressive cause. With all respect to him, we think such a view unwarranted and its effect deterrent to a desperately needed unity. And in all friendliness, we urge him to reconsider it. If on the other hand we have read into his statement a conclusion which is not latent there, we shall be more than happy to withdraw it.

A LAST word to friends on both sides of our argument—Mr. Fast's and ours. Let them read his ending carefully and hear the note of solidarity it sounds. For our part we are not inclined suddenly to regard him as one sees a photographic negative where the bright spots are darkened and the round parts hollowed out. Nor do we think that the differences between him and his former comrades, sharp as they are, need be exacerbated so that a hostile chasm lies between them. In this difficult

time, when a "hundred schools contend" and none can prevail, it is not so much what a man has come to doubt as what he fights for that should determine our feelings about him. Once the contenders can be convinced how much they *do* have in common and how precious it is, the bridge can be rebuilt sooner than they may imagine.

Note to Readers

We are proud to welcome three more writers to our Board of Contributors. One is a former member of the Board, Meridel Le Sueur. The others are Jesús Colón, whose "Puerto Rican in New York" appeared in our February issue, and Jack Beeching, the British poet and novelist, also one of our contributors in the recent past.

books in review

Fiction on the Left

THE RADICAL NOVEL IN THE UNITED STATES, 1900-1954, by Walter B. Rideout. Harvard University Press. $6.00.

THE literary historian works in a medium that rarely affords full satisfaction. The need to generalize presses upon him whenever he should be sitting down for a talk about this or that book. Often he must fly past events packed with ardor and works of art, the simplest of which has some intricacy worth remark. But he has too little time. He has to get each period and its production into plausible categories. Exhibits of very unequal value benefit alike from his even-handed scholarship, and only by violating proportion can he convey his taste and special likings to the reader.

Mr. Rideout's singularly fair study shows both the virtue and the difficulty of passing from chronicle to criticism. His problem is aggravated by the fact that political doctrine has played such a salient part in and around the development of the American novel of social protest. Even while he insists that fiction is much more than a human mask hung upon an ideological rigging, his own descriptions are confined in the main to ideological content. When he escapes this limit, however, his observations are perceptive and generous, as in his discussion of Ira Wolfert's *Tucker's People,* Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead,* the unjustly neglected single novel of Henry Roth, *Call It Sleep,* and the work of Howard Fast. He, too, in the field of criticism is the victim of the kind of confinement to a theory which he analyzes and deplores in a good deal of Left-oriented writing.

For example, one would think that the title of his book pretty well defined its nature. Yet to avoid a misunderstanding he feels to be crucial, he differentiates the novel of social protest, whose author believes that the faults of the socio-economic system can be remedied, from the "true" radical novel which *"advocates that the system be fundamentally changed."* (Mr. Rideout's emphasis.) He justifies the distinction as traditional and corresponding to the one that people make between reformers and revolutionaries. But this conventional division, essential to political thought, is not particularly valuable for literary judgment, nor is it based upon the principles implicit in Mr. Rideout's aesthetic outlook. Furthermore, it tips the scales of the radical novel with writers whose talents were not adequate to the complex demands made upon them by their social outlook, while excluding writers like Caldwell or a book like *Grapes of Wrath* which only miniscule political sifting would deny a place in the tradition of American radical fiction. After all, whatever Steinbeck's opinion might have been about

the ultimate improveability of the faults whose consequences he dramatized, the reader might easily have differed with him, convinced to the contrary (or reinforced in a prior contrary conviction) by the novel itself. Mr. Rideout's concept of the radical novel might have been more fruitful if he had not restricted himself predominantly to showing what the political position of the writers did to their works, but included those writers whose insights widened the social horizons of their readers.

Nevertheless, *The Radical Novel* performs a notable service. It is always attentive to the underlying depth of conscience and conception which inspired the socialist novelists of the beginning of the century as well as all succeeding progressive and Left writers. The fact that, as Mr. Rideout says, the greater part of socialist fiction holds more interest for the historian than for the critic, does not deter him from seeing its positive aspect: "The great contribution of the Socialist novelists was that they earnestly assisted in the detailed exploration of layers (of society) which many more popular writers were still observing casually, desultorily, or superciliously. . . ."

Turning to the Twenties he observes that while the intellectuals' hostility was directed mainly toward the surface aspects of bourgeois society, the importance of their criticism of its dominant values cannot be ignored; if that generation of writers is to be reproached with irresponsibility, the irresponsible accusation must come, as it has, from the Right rather than the Left.

A great part of the chapters devoted to the subsequent development of the revolutionary novel is taken up with an accurate account of the publications of the movement, as well as the ideological controversies of the Thirties and Forties and their influence upon the creative output. Much of the space given to the history of publications might have been better applied to a more critical examination of specific novels, particularly certain of those written in the Forties and Fifties. The chapter which covers these years has the rather schematic title *The Long Retreat*, and the need to prove the thesis implied by it has caused Mr. Rideout to overlook the quality of many books which do not fit his thesis, for example the work of Barbara Giles, Dalton Trumbo, Ring Lardner, Jr., and Philip Bonosky. Ben Field and John Sanford are not mentioned at all. One wishes, too, that at least some critical aside had been directed at the short story, drama and poetry, to which the Left made such specific contributions.

Because of the present upheaval in critical thinking, readers on the Left will find most interesting the recapitulation of past discussions: Mike Gold's blast at Thornton Wilder, the debate over the nature of the proletarian novel, the Maltz controversy, the United Front tactic and its reflection in art, the differences over socialist as contrasted with critical realism, the polemical use made of Engels' observations on Balzac, etc.

In the light of Mr. Rideout's dispassionate account, these episodes reveal a growing pattern of intellectual behavior which has harmed the Left more than it has inspired it. The tone and the manner of argument had all the sharpness of those political disputes in

which moral accusation took the place of analysis. To admit the possibility of error was to welcome fatal mistakes. "Which side are you on?" became a challenge thrown at one's comrades, the assumption being that the class struggle was not so much reflected as exacerbated in the realm of art. As indeed it was, because the dominant criticism of the Left ceased to be suggestive and became hostile to, and exclusive of, almost all but one viewpoint at a time. But this "correct" viewpoint was not enriched thereby; on the contrary, the more righteous the critics, the more silent the writers.

The function of a principled approach is not to drive other conceptions from the field, like a strong-arm squad. Had the theoreticians opened a road for writers instead of stringing up a tightrope for them, there's a chance that we might now have a few more novelists whom the Left could call its own.

For all that, the creators of the radical novel rank above the creamfed literati of today who are amused by its failures and keep mum about its successes. The social conscience which moved them could not guarantee them all talent, but it kept them awake to a world whose cries are lost for the moment in showers of gold and shouts of fun.

CHARLES HUMBOLDT

Singing and Plain Speaking

IN DEFENSE OF THE EARTH, by by Kenneth Rexroth. New Directions. $3.00.

100 POEMS FROM THE CHINESE, Kenneth Rexroth. New Directions. $3.50.

DANCE WITHOUT SHOES, by William Pillin. Golden Quill Press, Francestown, New Hampshire. $2.50.

THIS looks like a vintage year for Kenneth Rexroth — three books that I know of in the last few months and a half dozen others in preparation. More important, his new book of poems *In Defense of the Earth,* seems to me the best thing he has done.

It is a sizeable book as such books go—almost a hundred pages. You can put in your thumb and pull out a plum from almost anywhere in it—it has lyric poems, translations, epigrams, didacticism, japeries—all the variety that a book of poems can but seldom does have, the variety of a lively personality who tries to make poetry out of just about everything, as a poet should.

A poem should sing; or else speak plainly. These poems do both, and it is hard to say which they do better. Here is a passage from "Time is the Mercy of Eternity" which seems to me perhaps the best poem in the book:

> Far away the writhing city
> Burns in a fire of transcendence
> And commodities. The bowels
> Of men are wrung between the poles
> Of meaningless antithesis.
> The holiness of the real
> Is always there, accessible
> In total immanence. The nodes
> Of transcendence coagulate
> In you, the experiencer,
> And in the other, the lover.
> When the first blooms come on the

Apple trees, and the spring moon
Swims in immeasurable
Clear deeps of palpable light,
I sit by the waterfall.
The owls call, one beyond the
Other, indefinitely
Away in the warm night.
The moist black rocks gleam faintly.
The curling moss smells of wet life.
The waterfall is a rope
Of music, a black and white
Spotted snake in the moonlit
Forest.

This quotation will indicate some of the values of these poems: the way they can move from the social to the natural world, the ease with which the abstract and the concrete, the personal and the "historical" are brought together, the long and lovely cadences that stretch out through several lines, and the accuracy of observation. They are lean poems, very direct for the most part.

There is a lot here that I'd like to quote—the fine and honest poems to his wife, or "The Mirror in the Woods" or "A Living Pearl," or "For Eli Jacobson"—all of them very fine poems. Here is one from "A Bestiary" (written for his daughters):

POSSUM

When in danger the possum
Plays dead. The state when dying
Plays danger. With the possum
This trick works; sometimes
He escapes. But when the state
Plays with death, it really dies.

The following, to go back to the bigger, more full-bodied poems, is from "The Bad Old Days." In the poem Rexroth tells how out of boyhood reading and experience he had made a vow to fight human misery and oppression:

Today the evil is clean
And prosperous, but it is
Everywhere, you don't have to
Take a streetcar to find it,
And it is the same evil.
And the misery, and the
Anger, and the vow are the same.

A word about the verse structure. Some readers may be put off by the kind of line which Rexroth writes. This line has, typically, seven or eight syllables—the seven syllable line is his darling. It is arranged by count of eye, with the accents falling pretty much as they will. If the reader will simply read right along he will soon begin to feel the cadences which are the real basis of the rhythm structures of the poems. Most poems are, finally, based on big cadences, crescendo and diminuendo, sea or moon rhythms, rather than on the line; although the line usually represents a smaller and stricter rhythm inside the big one. This isn't the case, usually, in the poems here. To my way of thinking there is some loss involved in the choice of this kind of line. But there is a gain also; it allows the poet to use some pretty flat and prosy material *without* having to try to hop it up into something high-falutin. Thus the poems are always honest and without "poetical" pretense.

If you only buy one book of poems a year, this would be a good one to buy.

Of Rexroth's translations from the Chinese, I have no way of knowing

their value as scholarship, and the poet makes no claim for them as such. As poems in their own right (as he would have them taken) they seem to me good, if seldom exciting.

I suppose, in any case, that's the wrong thing to look for. The Chinese seem never to have had a romantic poet—at least by the standards of our tradition—or one that remains romantic in translation. I am not making romantic feeling into an absolute value, only using it in a descriptive sense.

One might say that they seem to have created the only realistic poetry in the world. There is little of intense personal feeling, or of ecstatic or visionary, or of romantic love, or of mystical nature-worship, or even of very close observation of nature. There is not even (if translations are any evidence) any real exuberance of language.

What remains? A great deal that might be called social poetry, characterized by wholeness of judgment, and what appears to be immense subtlety. The poems seldom raise their voices, but one great category is involved with politics and especially with the ugliness of war. Another master category celebrates the natural world, the changing seasons, sowing and harvest, and a number of natural objects: the willow, wild geese, moonlight, rivers, wine. Because of the apparently hypnotic pull which these things have on the poets' imaginations, they have become symbolic and traditonal.

Here is an example:

CLEAR AFTER RAIN

Autumn, cloud blades on the horizon.
The west wind blows from ten thousand miles.
Dawn, in the clear morning air,
Farmers busy after long rain.
The desert trees shed their few green leaves.
The mountain pears are tiny but ripe.
A Tartar flute plays by the city gate.
A single wild goose climbs into the void.

This is so simple one doesn't know quite what to make of it, and that deceptive simplicity is characteristic. It is typical that it has the farmer stuck there working among the images of the beautiful and the melancholy. He keeps the poem from flying off with the wild goose, a little pretty thing. But, of course without the wild goose the poem would never quite get off the ground at all. It is this mating of the realistic with the most delicate symbolism which gives Chinese translations their unique flavor. They are at once homely and exotic, direct and impressionistic. They never (*at least in translation*) have the intensity of many poems from our own tradition. They never fly so high nor fall so flat. There is no nonsense about them—a pleasant thing in itself, these days.

About a third of this book is made up of translations from Tu Fu, perhaps the greatest of the Chinese poets. The poems, for the most part, are ones I haven't seen in translation before. The rest of the book deals with work from the Sung Dynasty, most of it, says Rexroth, never before Englished. If you like Chinese poetry at all, this is a good book to have. Another, and the best single book I know, is Robert Payne's *The White Pony* which came out some years ago, a sizeable over-all anthology from *The Book of Songs* to Mao Tse-tung.

Dance Without Shoes, a selection of the Book Club for Poetry, is William Pillin's third book of poems. Readers will remember his poems from the late Thirties as some of the best social poetry of the time. Then there was a period when he seems to have written very little, then *Theory of Silence* appeared a few years ago, now this.

What has been happening in Pillin's work now gives it a greater degree of concentration, more of a quality of song too, as the poems become more personal. Not that these poems have moved out of the social world—a recurrent image in them is "the hand that fumbles at the key—(which) may pound with iron fist." He lives uneasily in a dangerous society, and a part of the horror is in what has happened to former hopes:

> Terrible beyond thought
> is the silence of a choiring future.
> Terrible is the emptiness of hearts
> denied the marvels foretold in the book. . . .
>
> Return us to pillars and arches of white cities.
> Let the pianos sparkle their little blue flames.
> Come, sages, devise your programmes of love. . .

Meanwhile, out of this unpleasantness in which all of us live, Pillin has made some quite beautiful poems: about love, about music (whose images he returns to a little too often), about growing older, about work, about the changes of the seasons. The poems are for the most part traditional (he seems to like the quatrain best of all forms) and precisely made, and they have, many of them, a great serenity. Here is the first stanza from "A Memory of Lilac":

> When you put lilac in an earthen crock
> how arctic the aroma it distilled;
> this glacial cluster on a bluish stalk
> is partly spring's and partly winter's yield.

There are two kinds of softness which occasionally mar these poems. One is "romantic" and associated with music; the other is "realistic" and occurs when some piece of everyday living gets into the work without having become poetry. These weaknesses also indicate two lines of Pillin's development: the one wholly lyric, the other meditative, more realistic, involved with day to day living. Taking the quatrain above as an example of the lyric, here is the other mode, part 2 of "Prelude and Dance on Quitting a Rotten Job":

> I just made a tray of hammered copper
> with a bull on it and winged Europa
> grasping the tapering horns.
>
> This is one of my two days of freedom.
> Half of yesterday I spent in illness and worry,
> a fugitive between storm and storm.
>
> I will sit a while with silence and swallows.
> Near my cottage are two fig trees.
> If you can imagine a man at a window
> reading Chinese poems by slender lamplight
> it is I, Pillin. The smog has abated,
> wind is scented with a million flowers

blowing from northern orchards.
The autumn evening is cool
and the wise woman who makes
pottery
brings me hot wine and black olives.

A good companionable poet to read. I hope he sits there a long time writing his poems.

• • •

Another group of recent publications by poets deserves attention. This is called the *Pocket Poets Series* (75 cents) put out in San Francisco by the City Lights Pocket Bookshop. The most recent one, *Howl,* by Allen Ginsberg was preceded by translations from the Spanish by Kenneth Rexroth (Thirty Spanish Poems of Love and Exile), *Poems of Humor and Protest* by Kenneth Patchen, a selection from his books, and a collection by Lawrence Ferlinghetti, *Pictures of the Gone World,* organizer of the series, one of the best with some really witty-funny things in it.

Howl begins at the top of its voice and stays there. It too is about the state of modern man, but in this case the disease is seen as social, the curse of industrialism, of money, of bourgeois crudity. Ginsberg's point of view is that of the anarcho-romantic poet. It is a limited point of view, no doubt, and one which often leaves the poet in the position of asserting "only" his personality—and, of course, personality was thought to be safely expelled from poetry by Eliot long ago. It does, certainly, lead to excesses; Ginsberg's poetry is shrill, reckless and exhibitionistic, and to some people will surely seem appalling.

I think it is a bad poem in many ways, that it has no structure, that it is all climax, but I can't help liking it.

The first part of *Howl* is actually one sentence of several pages, but it is really a simple sentence. The verse too, at first glance, is likely to seem overly simple, the long lines merely a convenience. This last is not true, however. At worst these loose long cadences have an appropriateness, and at their best they have both power and music.

Still, whether or not one rejects the poem because of lack of effective form, there is no denying its drive—for all its looseness it has great energy. This may not be the supreme virtue, but without it nothing of value happens in poetry. It would be good to see it married to the father-virtue of control, but, unhappily for present American poetry, that doesn't happen very often. Indeed there is such a war between sensibilities of those who prefer the "bland" to the "wild" school of poetry that some people will summarily eject Ginsberg and others of the "wild" heresy from their tight little kingdom. Which, meantime, the wild ones are trying to blow up. This battle of the poets may be a bit ridiculous but it exists.

THOMAS MCGRATH

Intact Vision

COLLECTED POEMS, by Edna St. Vincent Millay. Harper and Bros. $6.00.

MISS MILLAY brought to her poetry a passionate openness to life and an indestructible love of free-

dom. These are great assets to a poet. Whether in her early rebellion against the sexual customs of the New Englanders or in her later elegies for Sacco and Vanzetti and the murdered Spanish Republic, her personal vision remained intact. It is the vision of one who celebrates a world where marvels

". . . blaze before me still, as wild
And clear, as when I was a child,"

a world in which beauty is still possible and love something more than an advertising slogan for the latest Grade B motion picture.

Her themes are, for the most part, the traditional ones of romantic anguish —love, death and the transitory nature of happiness. These themes are perhaps shopworn but are by no mean exhausted, as witness much of Dylan Thomas.

Why then are we not so moved as we should be in rereading most of Miss Millay's poetry?

It is, I think, because she rarely succeeded in looking at the world save through the hand-me-down spectacles of Sappho or Shakespeare or Keats. We can understand her devotion to her literary forebears, but it makes us uncomfortable to watch her looking over her shoulder as she writes to see if that ghostly conclave will approve.

Keatsian romanticism is, in particular, a very dangerous liquor when redistilled, and Miss Millay often fills her cup with it to the overflowing. The result is a great deal of poetic attitudinizing where we would be happier with simpler statements carrying with them the authority of immediate emotion.

Despite this criticism many of the poems—particularly those where we sense that her real emotion was great enough to break through the bonds of poetical artifice—still have the capacity to move us. That Miss Millay was herself aware of the dangers of "poetical language" is apparent from the growing simplicity and even homeliness of many of her later poems which, for me, hold greater interest than much of the more generally lauded early work.

I am sorry to say that the present volume does her far less than full justice. It has been compiled—edited is hardly the word—by her sister, and its 740 pages include far too much material that might better have been omitted. The book lacks index, critical or biographical introduction, and has no indication of dates or chronological order. As a result the reader must wander aimlessly through a great deal of trivial material in search of the poem upon which Miss Millay's reputation must finally rest. A far slenderer volume, edited with some discrimination, would have done the trick.

GEORGE HITCHCOCK

The Conditioned Reflex

IVAN P. PAVLOV, TOWARD A SCIENTIFIC PSYCHOLOGY AND PSYCHIATRY, by Harry K. Wells. International Publishers. $3.50 cloth, $1.50 paper.

THIS is the first of two volumes on Pavlov and Freud. A meaningful comparison of these two men requires a suitable basis. They were contemporaries, both were physiologists by training, and their major works relating

to psychology appeared during the first third of this century. As for Pavlov's connection with psychology, the observation that salivary and digestive secretions responded to extraneous factors at feeding time caused him (around 1900) to turn from his studies of digestion and to focus his attention on the "psychic reflex" as a unique way of studying the central nervous system. Other problems encountered in these studies—such as the animal's falling asleep when faced with a difficult differential sensory discrimination, or showing "neurotic behavior"—led Pavlov to probe the physiological aspects of mental disease during the later years of his life.

Freud also started in a physiology laboratory. But as a physician in Vienna he found that anti-Semitism made it difficult for him to get a university appointment or to practice medicine. Like Pavlov he altered his direction after his first experiments; but Freud moved from problems of medicine and physiology to psychology. He turned his attention not to neurological diseases or psychoses, but to the treatment of people whose lives were miserable for no apparent reason, physiological or medical. Freud related such phenomena to the nature and quality of their formative experiences and upbringing, to emotional crises in their lives.

Let it be clear then that although Pavlov and Freud started as physiologists, their contributions to psychology are in sharply different areas, and these contributions made their impact at distinctly different stages in the maturing of psychology. Psychologists took to Pavlov first, and by now have largely assimilated his work. They opposed Freud for many years; the integration of Freudian discoveries and the testing of his theories is only now in process. Pavlov's studies were adapted to the conceptions of psychology in its formative period. Freud, however, was not dealing with physiological materials nor experimental laboratory approaches, but with an area of human personality and with character structure and dynamics far too complex to be handled by any of the current (1900-1940) psychological theories. A comparison of the work of these two men obviously cannot be made in any direct way.

Pavlov's effect on American psychology was felt soon after psychology was launched as a scientific discipline in this country with the founding of the American Psychological Association in 1892. In contrast to the dominant German school of psychology with its emphasis on sensory and perceptual problems, American psychology was more interested in the problem of functions, such as learning. In 1909 Pavlov's careful studies in conditioned reflexes were described in a long article by Yerkes and Morgulis. This galvanized many psychologists, especially the Behaviorists, who introduced the new terminology and who, with schematic formulations and pictorial line-drawings of the "connections" involved in conditioning, re-wrote psychology. This set the pattern for the major orientation of psychology here until about 1940. Pavlov was invited to this country, and made a major address at the 9th International Congress of Psychology at Yale University in 1929. In the volume, *Psychologies of 1930*, three chapters are devoted to Russian Psychologies: Pavlov's on "A Brief Outline of the Higher Nervous

Activity," Kornilov's on "Psychology in the Light of Dialectical Materialism," and Alexander L. Schniermann's "Bekhterev's Reflexological School." Widely used textbooks in general psychology, in social psychology, the psychology of adjustment, and comparative and experimental psychology all made extensive reference to Pavlov's works. His concepts were projected into all areas of psychology. In the 1935 *Psychological Abstracts,* there are over 110 entries under the heading "Conditioning." Research projects in conditioning extended Pavlovian studies to animals and humans, children and adults. The publication in 1940 of Hilgard and Marquis' volume, *Conditioning and Learning,* affords the first serious critical evaluation of conditioning.

It had been amply demonstrated that the conditioned reflex methods were applicable to psychology and had many important uses. But the conditioned reflex does not constitute the sole nor the major part of human learning. It may be that the broader concept of conditioned response (not reflex) can be used to indicate learned behavior since classical conditioning does not include such areas as instrumental learning (where the act itself brings a change in the environment, as when pushing a lever brings food), or selective learning (such as making choices), as insight learning. Learning theory must go beyond Pavlov's method of frequency pairing; and of course the more complex problems of symbolic thinking, problem solving and character organization move into still other levels of operation.

The remaining phase of Pavlov's work, on the problem of mental illness, rests on his conceptions of irradiation of inhibition and excitation, his assumption of neurological similarity between inhibition, sleep, and hypnosis; and finally, his observations on the temperamental differences in dogs. These concepts have not been successfully verified, nor have they proved very useful. His character "types" follow the ancient classification of Hippocrates, along a continuum from excitation to inhibition. But animals that are excitable in one set of conditions may prove to be inhibited in another. Besides, there are many other dimensions along which animals may be compared. Again, to describe mental illness as related to inhibition sets a problem rather than provides a useful diagnosis or method of treatment.

Pavlov's orientation here, may I repeat, is that of the physiologist looking for something wrong in the nervous system; it is like that of the physician who wants to do something *to* and *for* the patient. This is also the approach of those who employ institutional care, shock or drug treatment, and lobotomy.

In contrast, the contemporary psychotherapist is not usually dealing with people who have a "disease." In our society people grow up to physical maturity and are trained to be members of the society in their families, in their schools, through participation with the various groups of their society. Where the wholesale education process has failed, and where it converts a potentially useful and happy person into an inadequate, inhibited defensive one, it is the occupation of the psychotherapist, usually upon a retail level, to attempt personality *re*construction.

In the Soviet Union, it was the work of Makarenko and his followers in education and rehabilitation (*The Road to Life*) which provides the comparable approach, not that of Pavlov and physiology (see the treatment by a Pavlovian of a "spoiled child," and Wells' comments, pp. 168-9).

This long introduction to the review of Mr. Wells' work is necessary since practically none of the above-mentioned standard information is to be found in his book. He asserts that Pavlov's work "is not as yet well known in the United States" (p. 6).

In his preface, Wells states that "Pavlov founded a new science, the physiology of the higher nervous activity . . ." and that "This book seeks to present the claims of the Pavlovian science of the higher nervous activity." He provides no setting, either in physiology or in psychology for the works of Pavlov, and he confines his exposition almost exclusively to the translated works of Pavlov. Instead of offering any evaluation in terms of other available evidence, he quotes everything as if the fact that Pavlov said it makes it true. Nor do I know of anyone else who has sought to deify a scientist by asserting that his work "founds a new science." Scientists do not form cults or religions.

The author's method of political interpretation of these scientific problems is seen by his linking of what appear to be three different events: the rise of imperialism, the rise of psychology, and the "apparent insuperable impasse in the physiology of the brain" (p. 210). The "psychology" to which he refers is the theory of instincts common in the 1880's, as expressed by William James. Wells implies (p. 212) that American psychology did not develop on the basis of experience and new facts, but instead chose instinct theory so as to be the handmaid of the reactionary ideology of imperialism. He forgets or is unaware that by 1915-20, when imperialism was flowering, instinct theories were routed. But Wells says: "Thus psychology arose and developed with the rise of imperialism and at a time when science stood powerless to resolve the mystery of the brain" (p. 212). This image of physiology standing in its tracks from the 1870's and hence free to develop idealistic rationalizations for imperialism, till Pavlov broke the shackles with his materialistic "new science" of the conditioned reflex (which Wells says is not well known in the United States) is a distortion of the facts, as I have tried to suggest earlier in this review. Here I will not list the important researchers from the 1870's on, and their materialistic orientation, but point out only that it was in 1891 that recent and vitally important antecedent work on the nervous system resulted in the formulation of the Neurone Theory (by Waldeyer)—a theory which rested upon the facts which disproved the idea that the nervous system was made up of continuous networks, but instead is made up of separate cells or neurones each consisting of a cell body and its processes, and having the capacity to conduct impulses through restricted chains or pathways of cells.

The measure of Mr. Wells' confusion about physiology may be illustrated by the following quotation: "Various forms of irradiating or concentrated protective inhibition occur in the cells

of the hemispheres, the most reactive cells in the human organism, when, for example, they are subjected to emotionally strong stimuli exceeding the bounds of endurance; or when there is a too sharp clash of excitatory and inhibitory stimuli—to act or not to act in a certain way" (p. 135). However, the nervous impulse is a chemical-electrical event which traverses the nerve something like the way a fuse burns, "all or nothing," and there is a refractory period after an impulse has passed before the nerve is reconstituted and can transmit another impulse. Since the impulse is "all or none," the impulses are qualitatively the same, and differences relate to the frequency of the impulses and the spread of arousal to other nerves. Let us not stop to discuss whether "irradiating inhibition" is the same as "concentrated protective inhibition," nor question the phrase "various forms," nor even ask if the inhibition is really in the cells of the hemisphere, and why not at the synapses (connections), or really in the terminal organs of muscles and glands; nor stop to question whether "the most reactive organs in the human organism" are nerve cells—when we know that the sensory cells are the reactive ones that trigger off the nerve cells. Let us just take the phrase, "when, for example, they (brain cells) are subjected to emotionally strong stimuli exceeding the bounds of endurance." What can this mean? A nerve in the brain is connected at its terminals to the terminals of other nerves at synaptic connections. If you say passionate or angry words over the telephone, the copper wires and the electric impulses are not upset by the words being "emotionally strong," or "exceeding the bounds of endurance." These are psychological terms that apply to the feelings of the persons involved, not to the telephone system or nervous impulse. To proceed, the remark "when there is a too sharp clash of excitatory and inhibitory stimuli—to act or not to act in a certain way" may have important meaning for Hamlet and the rest of us, when faced with a choice; but the way nerves interact is not by way of "sharp clashes" nor worry about how to act. Mr. Wells' kind of anthropormorphic writing about the brain should not be confused with Pavlov's scientific investigation.

RALPH DOYSTER

Sour Meditations

A PIECE OF MY MIND, by Edmund Wilson. Farrar, Straus and Cudahy. New York, 1956. $3.75.

THESE essays are Mr. Edmund Wilson's "meditations" at sixty. They have interest largely from the fact that their author was for many years one of our most important literary critics. Unhampered by the narrow confines of academic criticism, free of the usual commercial commitments, he ranged the fields of contemporary writing and ideas very much as his personal interests dictated.

Concentrating mainly on the new, experimental writers in the twenties, Mr. Wilson responded quickly to the new mood of the Thirties, and along with a serious interest in Marxist literary and philosophic theory, he did interesting reportage on both America and the

Soviet Union which he visited in 1935. In the Forties his interests became again more strictly literary with, at the same time, frequent rearguard actions against the Marxist concepts that had compelled his attention in the earlier period.

Reading his critical articles was always a stimulating experience however one might disagree with his conclusions. They were in the mainstream of ideas, admirably lucid, and always concerned with intellectual ends.

His books *Axel's Castle, The Wound and the Bow, The Triple Thinkers,* and *To the Finland Station* (this last a study of the development of socialist ideas), were marked by qualities of perception, seriousness and concern for contemporary problems. If in his later essays Wilson tended to bicker superficially with Marxist concepts, at least by his very concern with them he accepted the challenge they offered, thus separating himself sharply from the philistinism that characterized most American literary criticism.

It is the uniquely high level of his former critical writing that makes the present book so depressing. Announcing that "old fogeyism" is setting in at sixty, Wilson proceeds to make public his thoughts and "musings" about a variety of subjects which seem to him to be important. On religion, the state of the nation, war, the Jews, the USSR, sex, he expresses opinions that the best may be described as crochety and peevish, at worst wayward, perverse and hopefully "shocking."

Thus America's participation in both World Wars was a mistake; Europe is degenerate, a troublesome set of quarreling countries hopelessly divided by differences of language and insoluble economic rivalries; America and the lives—at the same time, American bathrooms offer more balm to the spirit than any European cathedral. There is much more in a similar vein.

Wilson finishes his book with a recollection of his father, a lifetime Republican who, Wilson decides, was like himself, a stranger in the America that had emerged at the end of the 19th century. His father's isolation, he feels, was after all not so different from his own, and he sinks back, he tells us, content with his sequestered life and his reading of the classics.

But there is a profound difference between Wilson's life and that of his father's. Wilson lived beyond the Twenties; felt deeply the impact of the depression; visited the Soviet Union; attempted to familiarize himself with USSR have many similarities, but the USSR is "Byzantine," therefore too strange and "Eastern" for us ever to have workable understanding with; America as it is reflected in the pages of *Life* magazine is not, Mr. Wilson says, the country in which he feels he Marxist thought far more than did most of the critics of his generation; observed, at least, the struggle against fascism and war, and lived through the historic conflict of World War II. Moreover, he has been fully aware of the Cold War—or so his rather smug disdain of some of its features would lead one to believe.

Contemptuous of the fashionable doctrines of those American intellectuals who have in one way or another accommodated themselves to the present situation, repelled by the gross values glorified in *Life* magazine, refusing the illumination made possible by a Marx-

ist view of society, Mr. Wilson's present opinions as set forth in these essays are a measure of the depth to which the current intellectual dilemma in our country has brought a once keen and searching intelligence.

MURRAY YOUNG

Books Received

COMPOSERS ON MUSIC, edited by Sam Morgenstern. Pantheon. $7.50.

THE exposure of what great composers think of each other has provided many an amusing moment to students of music able to sit back and enjoy the creative productions of hostile schools long after the smoke of their battles has cleared away. It fortifies the listener's decisions to stick to what he likes when he learns that Mendelssohn was aghast at Hector Berlioz's delusion that the *Symphonie Fantastique* was music, or that Tchaikowsky, though appreciative of Moussorgsky's talents, could also say angrily that if the latter's ugliness was music then he didn't know what music was. Yet, there is more than amusement in these contrasts between present judgments and the composers' opinions in the past. For this collection, skillfully brought together, shows that by and large the great creators of music were also great critics, that those who thought most creatively *in* music, so to speak, also thought most keenly *about* it. A careful reading of these selections from the writings, letters, and conversations of the great classical masters will provide a musical aesthetic for today against the aridities of many a contemporary practitioner and theorizer. The classic masters never viewed themselves as anything but the voice of the noblest and the best in human experience. Editor Morgenstern has made available to the student of musical development a valuable guide no less than a highly diverting panorama of opinions.

YOU, WHO LOVE LIFE, by Helen Sobell. Sydmar Press, 30 Charlton. $2.50; paper, $1.00.

These are love poems of a special kind. They are rooted in the pain of deprivation and the agony of a brave, imaginative woman who watches her husband, Morton Sobell in Alcatraz prison, suffering under the cynical brutality of "legal" justice. They rise above personal anguish to an assertion of solidarity with all those who wish life to be lived with dignity.

Ring Lardner, Jr. has a short foreword to the poems, and they are accompanied by lithographs of Rockwell Kent.

Letters

Editors, *Mainstream*:

A colleague has just returned from Hungary, where she attended meetings which made representations to the Government about George Lukacs, talked to his son, and also herself raised the question with a responsible member of the Government.

The information is as follows: Professor Lukacs is at the former Royal Palace in Sinaia, in Rumania. He is well and energetic. His papers and documents have been sent off to him at his request, so that he can resume his work.

He has interrupted the work on Marxist Aesthetics, on which he had been engaged, to begin one on Marxist Ethics, a cherished project of his, which he now regards as more urgent.

The Minister emphasized that whatever criticism the present Government may have of the Nagy Government and of certain of its members, it has none whatever of Professor Lukacs, whom it regards as having been persuaded to take part in the latter for the highest motives.

It counts the weeks, even the days, to the time it will be possible to invite him back to Budapest, but for the moment it feels certain that his return would lead to his being made the center of importunities and intrigues through no fault of his own.

I make no comment on this view, which anyone acquainted with the present situation in Hungary will recognize, at least, is not groundless.

But I must say I think it is a mistake of the Government not readily to communicate these facts frankly and directly to inquirers abroad, even when their inquiries have been couched, as has often been the case, in a hostile manner.

What the present Hungarian Government lacks, and needs above all, is confidence, and nothing whatever is to be gained in present circumstances by standing on ceremony in such matters.

IVOR MONTAGU

London, January 21, 1957

Editors, *Mainstream*:

In her book, *The Stalin Era*, discussed in your January issue, Anna Louise Strong tells of this incident: when three of her co-workers had been arrested, she protested strongly and asked her superior why the Soviet people were not protesting arbitrary arrests. She got this reply, "What is our duty to the coming world crisis? We must come up to it as strong as possible. . . . We are going to do it. With two Five Year Plans complete we can do it. Those who doubt or interfere are traitors, not only to the Soviet land but to mankind."

To this, Anna Louise Strong says:

"These were strong words; they silenced me."

And these seven words explain the essence of the Great Madness much better than all her pages of verbial balancing about coalitions of conscious traitors and careerists, of Gestapo fifth-column and doubters, who somehow blinded the leadership, including the leader himself, into believing that bloodbaths for the best of the fighters make the fortress stronger.

Anna Louise Strong was silenced by what seemed to her strong logic, so strong, because it was so colossally remote from common sense. She did not ask her superior whether he believed the arrested to be guilty. She did not ask, how come that three comrades who

seemed to be among the best, are suddenly traitors. She did not ask whether misguided, unbased and seemingly arbitrary punishment does not weaken instead of strengthen the country.

One one hand I felt that Anna Louise Strong was waging a just and admirable battle: she does not want us to forget the glory of the early Soviets, she does not want us to belittle a memory consecrated by revolutionary romanticism. I was carried way at times with her train of thought—or rather, emotion.

On the other hand, I felt that she was committing a grave error by presuming that those who raise the crimes and mistakes of the Stalin era to the forefront, have forgotten.

There is a key paragraph in the "Stalin Era." It says: "To my friends in the West I would say: this was one of history's great dynamic eras, perhaps the greatest. It changed not only the life of Russia but of the world. It left no man unchanged of those who made it. It gave birth to millions of heroes and some devils. Lesser men can look back now and list its crimes. But those who lived through the struggle and even many who died of it, endured the evil as part of the cost of what was built."

These are strong words. But they will not silence thinking Marxists. There is little reasoning in Anna Louise Strong's book why the major crimes were necessary parts of the cost of what was built. There is still less convincing reasoning why we must not analyze the errors to learn from them.

Hers is essentially the attitude of an old-timer, who has become part of the struggle and all that went with it, and denies the "newcomers" the right to evaluate the past objectively. It is unscientific and, in spite of its wonderful revolutionary pathos and progressive intentions, retrogressive.

RUDOLF BAR

Editors, *Mainstream*:

In my article dealing with Strachey's book, a sentence appeared which was not a part of the final corrected version. I would like, therefore, to make the correction in this letter.

The sentence to which I refer is the last one in the paragraph on page 22, which takes issue with Strachey's characterization of the state and expresses my own conviction that the class essence of the state has not been altered in either the United States or Great Britain. Then followed the sentence: "Yet Strachey is raising genuinely new problems." This should have been omitted.

In my view it is not Strachey who raises these new problems, but rather the actual political developments of the last decade which have given rise to new questions of a practical and ideological nature. I believe future events will give rise to additional ones, and I illustrated this in terms of the possible consequences of election of an anti-monopoly coalition government in the United States. Other examples could be given.

Mr. Strachey does not deal with the matter in this light however, and at least as I read him appears rather to be restating an old thesis although in a new setting and with fresh language. Whether it is new or old, however, his handling of this question will help provoke discussion and debate by Marxists.

CELESTE STRACK

". . . will endure for generations."
—HERBERT APTHEKER

The Ordeal of Mansart

By W. E. B. DU BOIS

Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois, the dean of American letters, has completed a monumental study of what it has meant to be a Negro in the United States from 1870 to the present. This work is in the form of a novel, totaling 1,500 pages, to be issued in three volumes, one a year, beginning March, 1957, by Mainstream Publishers, of New York. The overall title of the trilogy is *The Black Flame.* The first book, entitled *The Ordeal of Mansart,* is scheduled for release on March 25, 1957.

Dr. Du Bois, who wrote two novels a generation ago, and is the author of such classical studies as *The Souls of Black Folk, Black Reconstruction,* and many other works, brings to this great novel everything that has made him a figure of world-wide renown. The book is written with the poetic imagery, the incisive wit, fierce devotion to justice and absolute commitment to truth which have characterized the career of this preeminent American.

In recognition of his achievements and contributions, the New York Public Library has officially accepted for its permanent exhibit a bust of Dr. Du Bois by the distinguished American sculptor, William Zorach. This statue will be formally presented to the Library, in April, by Van Wyck Brooks and other notable men of letters.

Historian Herbert Aptheker says of *The Ordeal of Mansart*:

"At the age of 89, Dr. Du Bois has capped his life-work with an historical novel which will endure for generations."

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