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NO HARD FEELINGS

CHARLES HUMBOLDT

With this issue we introduce a somewhat irregular feature for your approval. Readers have asked us why we don't have a column of editorial comment, reviving the Our Time *of a few years ago. Like many good ideas, we put it off as long as we could. It seems a shame though not to indulge in some ex cathedra pronouncements and piercing consideration of the Big Things going on in the world. We don't propose to do quite that because we have a fondness for the little things as well: the fun of gossip, epics but epigrams too, some teasing and a pinch of malice. So under this heading you may find just about anything: small talk about books and movies, anecdotes, a joke, ideas for short stories, touches of the grotesque, sometimes in poor taste, thoughts about peace and politics, sub-standard rhymes. And so on, in just about that disorder. In other words, whatever can take place or pass through your mind in the course of the day. Whoever stirs the stew will sign it. We will also print your letters here provided they are indignant enough. The thought needn't always be timely or finely finished. If the stone is worth anything, the jeweler can take care of it. If not, no amount of polishing will help. Our motto will not be "Take it or leave it," but "Take over from here." . . .*

FOR Dr. Du Bois in his 90th year: Some philosophers tell us to live dangerously. Others warn us to walk with caution. The friend of freedom makes men want to live forever.

* *

Some weeks ago an illustrious liberal weekly published a fine, though apparently somewhat mangled, tribute to Dr. Du Bois. In

the course of it the author commented on the way in which this fighting scholar's work had been shoved under the carpet in American intellectual circles because it did more than just flirt with the truth in describing the causes of the oppression of the Negro people. Curiously, however neither the publisher (*Mainstream*) nor the title of Dr. Du Bois' latest book, *The Ordeal of Mansart,* was mentioned. Considering the tenor of the article, this could only have occurred through inadvertent oversight or editorial excision. One of our contributing editors called the omission to the attention of the magazine, asking that his letter be printed as a gesture of courtesy to the subject of the article. A few days later he received a phone call from the advertising department suggesting that we place an ad for the book if we wished to publicize it. His letter was not printed, nor has the book been reviewed. What the left hand giveth, the right taketh away.

* *

The dream of a left-wing money raiser. A very pretty friend calls to say that she has $10 for his worthy cause but that he must meet her at a nearby restaurant. She arrives with a prominent woman psychotherapist who greets him coolly, and the three have lunch and discuss many matters, some of which are of interest to him. His friend slips him the money under the table. They go out and he puts the ladies into a cab. Just then they both cry out that they have forgotten their purses, so he returns the $10. As the taxi pulls away, his friend leans out of the window and tells him to meet her at a tea-room bar uptown at four. He is about to go off when the restaurant cashier runs out to say that he's forgotten to pay the bill. He returns and is shown two columns of figures. The one on the left is lightly pencilled and he starts to add with difficulty, but notices that the cashier has begun to drum on the counter in irritation. He switches to the right column, and there at the bottom in heavy crayon he reads: $14.85. He reaches under his coat, drags out his pay envelope, and tears it open. He finds the bills rolled up like balls of dust. Struggling to get some small change he stumbles against the cashier who lets out a shriek as though she had been assaulted. He mumbles, "Oh, hell. I've got enough to worry about without that," and rushes out disgusted.

* *

The throat specialist, B., is truly fond of the talented young writer. He invites him twice a week to his comfortable home for dinner, and they discuss the recent plays of Tennessee Williams and Samuel Beckett over brandy snifters. Yet when L.'s sweetheart comes to B. for treatment

he advises her, "A girl like you, with your looks, you should have a rich man to take care of you. You shouldn't pick a man for his brains alone. There's something infantile about that."

* *

A friend in China sends me an essay of Lu Hsun's, hoping that we will find it useful. Written in 1930, it urges the writer to keep in touch with actual social conflicts and not just shut himself up to scribble and study. What good advice, but how inapplicable to our dilemma. It would be something to *get* most of our writers to study. A lot have stopped reading altogether. If they are poor, or simulating poverty, they walk around like fools in Christ, wearing rope sandals in wintertime and beards to house a family of swallows. They are damned proud of their ignorance, if a saint can be said to be proud of anything. If, on the other hand, they have made the grade in the mass media, the evening is less likely to find them in the library than in the rumpus room or glued to the TV set like a chicken with its head pressed to a straight line. That is the animal whose habits they must study today, for it's their bread and butter—and their washing machine, summers in the country, baby sitter, and their children's private school tuition as well. They will tell you the thing has gotten too big for them. And who is to say exactly to what degree they are right or wrong?

* *

A. orders a glass of milk in the cafeteria. When it comes he is disconcerted because it is a whole pint instead of the usual half. Not only does he have to pay double, but now he must drink twice as much strontium 90.

* *

The characters of Cozzens' novel remind me of Ambrose Bierce's remark about Southern hospitality: that it meant giving food and lodging to those who didn't need food and lodging. In *By Love Possessed* the noble traits without which neither philosophy nor tragic irony can flourish are confined to the well-heeled sires of Brocton. Here the word "noble" swings to the right of ambiguity and comes to signify not an ethical quality but the hallmark of the white Protestant middling-to-upper class elite of doctors, lawyers and rich bully-boys. Only these can dispense largesse and are permitted to commit small crimes, for it is only their benevolence and their breaches of faith that are justified by an 11th commandment: Thou shalt not sin unless it is for thine own kind. Some people may detect pathos in the situation of an old anti-Semite who is caught (and covered) by his friends manipulating funds en-

trusted to him because he wants to pay off the investors of a transit company which failed after he had advised them to purchase stock in it. Cozzens seems to regard this creative act as on a part with Scott's writing novel upon novel to wipe out the indebtedness of his publishing venture. He is too clever, though, to say this baldly. Instead he has the enlightened cynic Penrose teach Winner that principles must often bow to expediency, to the facts in short. What a fall for the tragic sense of life: to end in a shrug of Brooks Bros. shoulders! Even so one might be moved by Tuttle's laborious conniving on behalf of his spiritual creditors, the unhappy stockholders, if the thought didn't occur: suppose they were Jews or uppity Negroes or Puerto Ricans on home relief? A coarse unliterary idea, I suppose, but when a writer has a thesis he cannot expect to be judged as an impartial observer of social events.

Remember the Luce attempt to create a new culture hero: Big Businessman, the Happy Warrior? That balloon failed in all trials, the world about us providing poor weather for the optimism with which it was blown up A more subtle, that is sacrificial, figure had to be constructed: the gentleman who yields reluctantly, then gracefully, to the general decay, the better to temper himself for the battle in behalf of status quo. Penrose and Winner are such sadder but wiser replacements for the creature who was never fully born except from Ayn Rand's disordered mind.

In Cozzens one hears the voice of reasonableness, that is, of reason degraded in the service of things as they are or should have remained. It is the voice of Penrose saying: don't piss up the wind. To show us what this advice comes to in practice Cozzens invents an immensely respectable Negro who will not put his lips to the sacramental cup until every white man in the church (Episcopal) has sipped from it. He knows that all men, if not unequal, are at least different under God. Here we have *noblesse oblige* in reverse. Everybody and everything in due place. Don't spill the cart if even one frozen apple is left at the botom. Fitness is all. And the critics who pissed down the wind for joy at seeing their few remaining values stomped on in this book were they masochists or slaves at heart?

* *

Maybe I have a special animus against the Brahmins. During the war I served in a signal company attached to the Air Corps. The officer in charge of our small group of technicians was a young Back Bay nobleman, tall, blond, and grey-blue eyed, with a large Hapsburg nose and protruding underlip. He knew nothing of the operation over which

he exercised supervision, but we liked him because he amused us with stories and was sophisticated enough not to disrupt our working schedules as the second lieutenants—mostly traveling salesmen—always did.

We were then in Sicily preparing for the Italian invasion, and four of us—not our captain—landed with the second wave. Later, another officer with whom I became friendly, told me that Captain F. had informed him smilingly that he had sent four Jewboys to the beach at Salerno.

* *

Sign in a shop window: "Genuine Imitation Leather."

* *

The head of National Airlines, George Theodore Baker, is described in the papers as a though hombre all around. Yet when Richard A. Mack of the F.C.C. is on the spot, Mr. Baker at once shouts in agony that his friend is being crucified. In these times of religious revival once must expect almost anyone to identify himself with Jesus Christ or his martyred disciples. One would think that hanging on the cross was the punishment customarily meted out for predatory behavior. A while ago a gangster and extortioner screamed at the reporters who were nagging him: "Why crucify my family with all this propaganda. . . . If there is a God in heaven let him strike down those who are persecuting me. . . . I have a brother who is sick and dying of cancer. . . . I hope those who crucify me have cancer."

* *

Saw "The Last Bridge" with Maria Schell. Shades of "Open City"! Beware the West Germans bearing compassion. Since they can't quite convince us that they *were* on our side in World War II they have figured out the next best version of their role in the world of the 30's and 40's. They loved their Fatherland just as you and I or the Yugoslavs loved theirs. They had sweethearts like anybody. And when captured they could be persuaded, though hardly, to treat their wounded enemies, whom they discovered to be human beings, too. But to comprehend the depth of their crimes, to decide to remain with those enemies who acted humanly, unlike her compatriots, that is beyond the imagination of the sweet doctor and "anti-fascist" (as one of the partisans calls her quite gratuitously). She must stagger back to her people and her soldier-boy, her *schatzie*. "I have my own country as you have yours." she says with her lovely smile while her countrymen are burning down villages after they have locked the men, women and children in the houses. (Sorry, I forgot, that was in real life as I saw it in the Jura mountains. In the film the village could have been destroyed by shellfire, or perhaps

the first house caught fire from a kerosene stove explosion.) And the equally lovely partisan answers: "You hate us. I understand. We hate you. You understand." Such compacts are not for human beings. They are for tigers and antelopes.

And what of the thrilling moment when Maria gives a political lesson to her captors? Seeing a Red Star on a partisan's cap, "You are not nationalists; you are internationalists," she says reproachfully. Whereupon the fighters explain to her humbly that she is mistaken. The star is their national emblem, too. Only then does she relent.

The ex-Nazis would not have dared to make a con-film like this even five years after the war. As for its humanity, that reminds me of what Friedrich Hebbel once wrote of the ideal German hero, that his motto was: "A piece of bread I can't give you, but my life—with pleasure!"

* *

A mission house in the neighborhood announces a free showing of "Martin Luther." A few days later a friend tells me that he heard a teen-ager reporting to her pal: "Was it any good? It was crazy, all about a priest who joins the Communist Party and starts tacking leaflets on the church door."

* *

When someone tells you that he has retired from the public scene to find himself don't be too ready to believe that he is letting the field of his soul lie fallow for the moment. It may be that his imagination has shrunk to the boundaries of his own skin. Sensibility is like a toy balloon. You can stretch it just so far, and then it blows up and you have nothing left of that exquisite sphere which you hoped would embrace a world without suffering, without struggle, without others in short.

* *

How agitated the well-educated parents are because a school for "difficult" children has been opened in their neighborhood. The old building in which the kids are to be housed is back-to-back against the sleek new structure to which their children were moved a while ago. The architectural relic was to have been razed and a playground put on its site. So the grown-ups have a legitimate gripe. But behind their very real anxiety is the outrage of those who feel their most precious self-interest has been violated. They tell you these other children —eleven of them the first day, one or two more than the Negro children at Central High in Little Rock—are being placed in a fire trap. But what they really think is that these dangerous brats, these young

Calibans must be banished at once from the symbolic Island of Well Being so that their children may play in a peace denied to the invaders. Otherwise why did they permit a local rental agent to address them on the threat to business and the depreciation of real estate values? What value do they place on what passes through a poorer mother's mind when she must escort her child through a gauntlet of police and baying photographers? Why was a simple human motion to welcome the new children tabled? What must a boy, already badgered to desperation, feel when he hears that merciless adults—readers at some time or other of the New Testament, Shakespeare, Tolstoy, Mark Twain—are determined that the sun shall not shine on him in their part of town?

And yet I suppose things will turn out all right in this case. Already the image of themselves as tolerant people is seeping through the crust of their present anger. They will become ashamed and realize a little, but not hopelessly, late that when a man owns a piece of land he does not rule the birds that sing on it.

* *

The Catholic philosopher, Jacques Maritain, long a guest in the United States, tells us that American capitalism is misunderstood and should really be called economic humanism. Hearing such soft soap, I think fondly of another religious man, a certain Swami who once came to these shores to announce, through a follower, that he was about to break his thirty-year silence in Hollywood.

Maritain's attitude toward the October Revolution is interesting. For him this "history-making event was intrinsically rotten." To counter its influence, one must hope for the gradual prevalence of the Christian ideal which "will bring about the changes required by that social justice which the Communist revolution was forbidden by its own ideology even to mention." (*On the Philosophy of History.* Scribners. $3.50.) This is news. M. Maritain posits a law of the progress of moral conscience, according to which, for example, slavery, once universal, is no longer justified. He has no explanation for the operation of this law other than the will of God, so that one must assume that for many years it pleased the Almighty to leave men in such ethical darkness that they made other men serve as their beasts. But when Marx showed the evolving concepts of justice to be historically conditioned, that, according to Maritain, was tantamount to denying men the right to seek it. One might as well say that because men of science have mastered the

laws of aerodynamics, they have forbidden the human race even to speak of flying.

* *

Distrust of the senses. There is a furious blizzard outside. The wind drives the snow horizontally and sends it twisting over the rooftops. S. goes to the window, watches for a while, then picks up the phone, calls WE 6-1212 and stands quietly while a snappy oracle tells her what the weather will be like for the next few hours.

A man walks along gaily with his hands in his overcoat pockets. He becomes aware of rain falling on his hat, stops, puts his hand far out like Noah from a window in the ark, feels the drops but is not quite sure. Doffs his hat respectfully and lets a spit or two fall on his bare head. Still not satisfied, he trips to the gutter and looks into a small puddle. Nods his head sorrowfully, mutters, "Yes," and shakes his fist at the sky.

* *

People ask why present-day poets do not write simply. I won't go into that here, but I will say that simple poetry is very hard to write. I've received dozens of poems on the A-bomb, the H-bomb, the sputnik, and our foreign policy. The authors obviously felt deeply about these topics and some wrote that *their* verses would show the young squirts how to put things plainly. Well, you'd be surprised how many unconsciously-mixed metaphors and grotesque images there were in these forthright verses. Here, though, are four lines by Naomi Replansky (*Ring Song,* Scribners, $2.50), which I would call *true* simple poetry:

> My spoon was lifted when the bomb came down
> That left no face, no hand, no spoon to hold.
> Two hundred thousand died in my home town.
> This came to pass before my soup was cold.

PICASSO AND OTHERS

JOHN BERGER

PICASSO

BECAUSE Picasso holds the position he does, every misinterpretation of his work can only increase contemporary misunderstanding of art in general. That is the justification for adding a few more hundred to the millions of words through whose mesh he himself always escapes.

Above all, Picasso suffers from being taken too seriously. He recognizes this himself, and it is one of his themes. The indignant take him too seriously because they attach too much importance to the mad prices his works fetch and so assume that he—instead of his hangers-on—is a racketeer. The ostentatiously tolerant take him too seriously because they forgive him his excesses on the grounds that, when he wants to be, he is a great draughtsman. In fact, this is untrue. His best drawings if compared to those of Gericault, Daumier or Goya appear brilliant but not profound. Picasso's future reputation as a great artist would not, as is often said, be guaranteed by his realistic works alone. The enthusiastic take him too seriously because they believe that every mark he has made, the date on which he made it and the address he happened to be living at, are of sacred significance. The critical minority in the Communist Party take him too seriously because they consider him capable of being a great socialist artist and assume that his political allegiance is the result of dialectical thinking rather than of a revolutionary instinct.

The tragedy of Picasso is that he has worked at a time when a few live by art alone and the vast majority live without art at all. Such a state of affairs is of course tragic for all artists—but not to the same extent. Certain painters—such as Cezanne, Degas, Gris—can work for the sake of research. They work to extend painting's conquest over nature. Picasso

is not such an artist; it is significant, for instance, that for over forty years he has scarcely ever worked directly from a model. Other painters —such as Corot, Dufy, Matisse—work to communicate a quintessence of pleasure and are comparatively satisfied if this pleasure is shared even by a few. Again Picasso is not such an artist. There is a violence in everything he has done which points to a moral, didactic conviction that cannot be satisfied simply by an awareness of pleasure. Picasso is, as Rodin was in a different way, naturally a popular dramatic artist, terribly handicapped by a lack of constant popular themes.

WHAT makes a work by Picasso immediately recognizable? It is not only his familiar formalizations but his unique form of conviction, of utter single-mindedness in any one canvas. Possibly that sounds a vague quality. Yet if one goes into a Romanesque church and sees side by side a 12th and an 18th century fresco, it is this quality of single-mindedness which distinguishes them, when all the other obvious differences have been allowed for. The 12th century painter, if a local one was usually clumsy, unoriginal and entirely ignorant of theoretical pictorial principles. The 18th century painter was often sensitive, highly skillful in rendering an unlimited variety of poses, and steeped in valid pictorial theory. What then explains the force of the 12th century artist's composition, the expressiveness of his drawing, the clarity of his narrative, and the comparative feebleness in all these respects of the later work? It is surely the earlier artist's single-mindedness—a single-mindedness which in terms of religion was impossible in the 18th century. Because the earlier artist knew exactly what he wanted to say—and it was something quite simple—it did not occur to him to think of anything else. This reduced observation to a minimum but it gave his work the strength of seeming absolutely inevitable. It is precisely the same quality which distinguishes Picasso's work from those of his contemporaries and disciples; or, in a quite different level, it is the same quality that one finds in the humorous drawings of Edward Lear.

Look at the drawing of the hands and feet in *Guernica.* They are based on no more penetrating observation than those in the work of an efficient cartoonist. They represent no more than the *idea* of hands and feet. But—and this is why *Guernica* can still strike our hearts until we are forced to make resolutions—the idea of hands, feet, a horse's head, a naked electric light bulb, a mother and ravaged child, are all equally heartrendingly and entirely dominated by *the* idea of the painting: the idea of horror at human brutality.

Picasso

I believe that in almost every work of Picasso's a single idea h dominated in this way and so created a similar sense of inevitabilit If the idea is, for example, that of sexual beauty, it demands more subt forms: the girl's back will be made to twist very sensitively; the pri ciple remains the same and rests on the same ability of the artist to for go all questioning and to yield completely to his one purpose. Forn become like letters in an alphabet whose significance solely depen upon the word they spell. And that brings us back to the tragedy Picasso. Obciously in the case of an artist such as I have describe his development within himself and his impact on others depends e clusively on his ideas, on his themes. Picasso could not have paint *Guernica* had it only been a personal nightmare. And equally, if t picture which now exists had always been called *Nightmare* and knew nothing of its connection with Spain, it would not move us as does. All aesthetes will object to that. But *Guernica* has deservedly becor the one legendary painting of this century, and although works of can perpetuate legends, they do not create them. If they could Picass problem would have been solved, for his tragedy is that most of his l he has failed to find themes to do himself justice. He has produc *Guernica, War and Peace,* some miraculous Cubist studies, some beau ful lyrical drawings, but in hundreds of works he has, as a result of single-mindedness, sacrificed everything to ideas which are not wor of the sacrifice. Many of his paintings are jokes, either bitter or g but they are the jokes of a man who does not know what else to except laugh, who improvises with fragments because he can find noth else to build upon.

It would be foolish to imagine that Picasso could have develo differently. His genius is willful and instinctive. He had to take w was at hand and the unity of popular feeling essential to sustain themes of a dramatic artist such as he is, has often been lacking or bey his horizon. He then faced the choice of either abandoning his ene or expending it on something trivial and so creating parodies.

Yet finally why is it so impossible to end without saluting h Because by his dedication to his great themes, by his constant tremism, by the audacity of his jokes, by his simplicity (which is usu taken for incomprehensibility), by his very method of working, he proved that all the paraphernalia, all the formulae of art are expend for the sake of the spirit. If we now take him too seriously we des his example by re-establishing all the paraphernalia he has liber us from.

HENRY MATISSE, 1869-1954

MATISSE'S greatness has been recognized but not altogether understood. In an ideological climate of anguish and nostalgia an artist who frankly and supremely celebrated Pleasure, and whose works are an assurance that the best things in life are immediate and free, is likely to be thought not quite serious enough. And indeed, in Matisse's obituaries the word "charming" has appeared too frequently. "I want people who feel worried, exhausted, overworked, to get a feeling of repose when looking at my painting." That was Matisse's intention. And now, looking back over his long life's work, one can see that it represents a steady development towards his declared aim, his works of the last fifteen or twenty years coming nearest to his ideal.

Matisse's achievement rests on his use—or in the context of contemporary Western art one could say his invention—of pure colour. The phrase, however, must be defined. Pure colour as Matisse understood it had nothing to do with abstract colour. He repeatedly declared that colour "must serve expression." What he wanted to express was "the nearly religious feeling" he had towards life—towards the blessings of sunlight, flowers, women, fruit, sleep.

When colour is incorporated into a regular pattern—as in a Persian rug—it is a subsidiary element: the logic of the pattern must come first. When colour is used in painting it usually serves either as a decorative embellishment of the forms—as, say, in Botticelli—or as a force charging them with extra emotion—as in Van Gogh. In Matisse's later works colour becomes the entirely dominant factor. His colours seem neither to embellish nor charge the forms, but to uplift and carry them on the very surface of the canvas. His reds, blacks, golds, ceruleans, flow over the canvas with the strength and yet utter placidity of water above a weir, the forms carried along on their current.

Obviously such a process implies some distortion. But the distortion is far more of people's preconceived ideas about art than of nature. The numerous drawings that Matisse made before he arrived at his final colour-solution are evidence of the pains he took to preserve the essential character of his subject whilst at the same time making it "buoyant" enough to sail on the tide of his colour scheme. Certainly the effect of these paintings is what he hoped. Their subjects invite, one embarks, and then the flow of their colour-areas holds one in such sure equilibrium that one has a sense of Perpetual Motion—a sense of movement with all friction removed.

Nobody who has not painted himself can fully appreciate what lies behind Matisse's mastery of colour. It is comparatively easy to achieve a certain unity in a picture either by allowing one colour to dominate or by muting all the colours. Matisse did neither. He clashed his colours together like cymbals and the effect was like a lullaby.

Perhaps the best way of defining Matisse's genius is to compare him with some of his contemporaries who were also concerned with colour, Bonnard's colours dissolve, making his subjects unattainable, nostalgic. Matisse's colours could hardly be more present, more blatant, and yet achieve a peace which is without a trace of nostalgia. Braque has cultivated his sensibility until it has become precious; one feels that just to look at his art is almost to violate it. Matisse broadened his sensibility until it was as wide as his colour range, and said that he wanted his art to be "something like a good armchair." Dufy shared Matisse's sense of enjoyment and his colours were as gay as the fêtes he painted; but Matisse's colours, no less bright, go beond gaiety to affirm contentment. The only man who possibly equals Matisse as a colourist is Leger. But their aims are so different that they can hardly be compared. Leger is essentially an epic, civic artist; Matisse essentially a lyrical and personal.

I SAID that Matisse's paintings and designs of the last fifteen years were his greatest. Obviously he produced fine individual works before he was seventy. Yet not I think till then had he the complete control of his art that he needed. It was, as he himself said, a question of "organizing the brain." Like most colourists he was an intuitive painter, but he realized that it was necessary to select rigorously from his many "instincts" to make them objective in order to be able to build upon them rationally. In terms of the picture this control makes the all-important difference between recording a sensation and reconstructing an emotion.

The Fauves, whom Matisse led, recorded sensations. Their paintings were (and are) fresh and stimulating, but they depended upon and evoke a forced intoxication. When Matisse painted red flashes against ultramarine and magenta stripes to describe the movement of goldfish in a bowl, he communicated a pleasurable shock; one is brought up short by the climax but no solution follows. It was for this reason, I think, that Matisse finally abandoned Fauvism and returned to a more disciplined form of painting. Between 1914 and 1918 he produced paintings—mostly interiors—which are magnificently resonant in colour, but in which the colours seem *assembled* rather than dynamic—like the fur-

nishings in a room. Then for the next ten years he painted his famous Odalisques. In these the colour is freer and more pervasive, but, being based on a heightening of the actual locale of each object, it has a slightly exotic effect. This period, however, led him to his final great phase: the phase in which he was able to combine the energy of his early Fauve days with a quite objective visual wisdom.

A word about the political and social implications of Matisse's work. Because he painted subjects with associations of Leisure it is as absurd on the one hand to accuse him of working for the leisured classes, as it is on the other to deny the significance of his membership of the French Communist Party. He wished to paint what one has a right to as a welcome and a reward after a hard day's work. Let it stand at that. Historically it may eventually be seen that Matisse simplified and sacrificed too much for the sake of the peace of his art. But he lived through a far from peaceful age. He may have chosen the unnaturally smooth, placid water above the weir, but the weir was there. To temper our gratitude now in view of a possible future perspective would be the worst form of academic cowardice.

FERNAND LEGER AND THE FUTURE

OUR productive, scientific abilities have outstripped our ethical and social conscience. That is a platitude and no more than a half truth, but it is nevertheless a way of summing up at least an aspect of the crisis of our time. Nearly all contemporary artists who have faced up to this crisis at all, have concentrated on the ensuing conflict of conscience. Leger is unique because he has seized upon our technical achievements and by concentrating upon their real nature has been led on to discover the spirit, the ethics, the attitude of mind, necessary to control and exploit them to our full advantage. It is because of this—because Leger has put the facts of our environment first and through them has arrived at his attitude to life—that one can claim that he is so boldly a materialist.

As an artist Leger is often accused of being crude, vulgar, impersonal. He is none of these things. It is his buoyant confidence that makes him seem crude to the diffident. It is his admiration of industrial techniques and therefore of the industrial worker that makes him seem vulgar to the privileged; and his belief in human solidarity that makes him seem impersonal to the isolated.

Leger's greatest works are those which he has painted since the war

Leger

and those in which, dealing with the human figure, he expresses directly the profound humanism of his materialist philosophy. Among these are studies for his famous large painting of builders working together on scaffolding, and monumental heads with their striped flags of bright colors superimposed over their contours.

The sketches for Les Constructeurs are such an obvious expression of Leger's whole attitude to art and life that little need be said about them. They do however show how thoroughly and how pliably—in terms of design—he prepares for his large works which appear so simple and so firm.

The paintings of heads with their superimposed strips of bright orange, red and blue, represent the culmination of Leger's art. Leger began with the machine. His cubist pictures were untheoretical. In them he simply used the cube and the cylinder to re-create the energy of machine blocks and pistons. Then he discovered the machine-made object. Unlike most artists but like the average man of our century, he was not interested in its associations but in how it was made. From this period in his painting he learned how to manage solids—how to manufacture them, how to preserve a surface with paint, how to dazzle with contrasts, how to assemble mass-produced signs with color. Later, interested by how color changed the appearance of shapes and vice versa, he began designing abstract murals. Yet, unlike so many others, he always realized that abstract painting meant nothing if separated from architecture. "It is our duty," he said, "to spread light and color"—and he meant into the mean, grimed city apartments. From this phase he learned to see beyond the single static object: he learned to connect. And with this formal development came a human one. He saw that the machine had made labor collective, that its discipline had created a new class, that it could offer freedom. He suddenly saw machines as tools in the hands of men, no longer as mere objects in themselves. From that moment everything he painted ceased to be a celebration of the mechanical industrial world as it is, and became a celebration of the richer human world to which industrialization would eventually lead. He painted Adam and Eve and made them a French worker and his girl granted Leisure. He painted bicycles as a symbol of the machine available to the working class which could convey them to where they wished. And he painted his monumental heads with their waving flags of color.

The sublety of these works is subtle. Leger is not one to parade his sensibility as though it were his only virtue. The bright dynamic colors reflect what he has learned from the machine. The unblinking confi

dence of the heads, expressed in their faces themselves and in the steady unchanging contours which define them, reflect what he has learned from those who work machines. The two then combine. These paintings incorporate all the formal discoveries of modern art and yet are classic, suggest order and yet are full of gaiety. The strips of color run across many different forms yet are so finely modified and placed that they give to each a solidity and definition which is nothing short of miraculous. I have called these works flags. They are emblems for something permanent and are as full of movement as pennants in the wind.

In fact Leger is the only modern European artist to have created an heroic style. Many factors prove this; that his work has a dignity and a sense of scale which in no way relies upon his literal subject; that on one hand it is as formal and architectural as a Corbusier building, and on the other is as simple in meaning as a ballad; that the nudity of his figures is less private than any painted since Michelangelo. (Leger's use of chiarascuro in his nudes is also reminiscent of Michelangelo.) Those who complain that Leger's figures are cold and impersonal misunderstand the nature of heroic art. He makes his figures nude to emphasize what they have in common. He calls one picture Les Trois Soeurs. The heroic artist cannot by definition be interested in idiosyncrasies, but that is not all the same thing as being cold.

Leger stands beside Picasso. Picasso is the painter of today; his greatness rests, as I have previously tried to show, on the vitality with which he expresses our present conflicts. Leger is the painter of the future. And by that I do not simply mean that his future as an artist is assured, but that he assures his audience, if they have the courage to accept it, of their future.

GOYA'S DRAWINGS

GOYA'S genius as a graphic artist was that of a commentator. I do not mean that his work was straightforward reportage, far from it; but that he was much more interested in events than states of mind. Each work appears unique not on account of its style but on account of the incident upon which it comments. At the same time, these incidents lead from one to another so that their effect is culminative—almost like that of film shots.

Indeed, another way of describing Goya's vision would be to say that it was essentially theatrical. Not in the derogatory sense of the word,

but because he was constantly concerned with the way action might be used to epitomize a character or a situation. The way he composed was theatrical. His works always imply an encounter. His figures are not gathered around a natural centre so much as assembled from the wings. And the impact of his work is also dramatic. One doesn't analyze the processes of vision that lie behind an etching by Goya; one submits to its climax.

Goya's method of drawing remains an enigma. It is almost impossible to say how he drew: where he began a drawing, what method he had of analyzing form, what system he worked out for using tone. His work offers no clues to answer these questions because he was only interested in *what* he drew. His gifts, technical and imaginative, were prodigious. His control of a brush is comparable to Hokusai's. His power of visualizing his subject was so precise that often scarcely a line is altered between preparatory sketch and finished plate. Every drawing he made is undeniably stamped with his personality. But despite all this, Goya's drawings are in a sense as impersonal, as automatic, as lacking in temperament as footprints—the whole interest of which lies not in the prints themselves but in what they reveal of the incident that caused them.

What was the nature of Goya's commentary? For despite the variety of the incidents portrayed, there is a constant underlying theme. His theme was the consequences of Man's neglect—sometimes mounting to hysterical hatred—of his most precious faculty, Reason. But Reason in the eighteenth-century materialistic sense, Reason as a discipline yielding Pleasure derived from the Senses. In Goya's work the flesh is a battle-ground between ignorance, uncontrolled passion, superstition on the one hand and dignity, grace and pleasure on the other. The unique power of his work is due to the fact that he was so *sensuously* involved in the terror and horror of the betrayal of Reason.

In all Goya's works—except perhaps the very earliest—there is a strong sensual and sexual ambivalence. His exposure of physical corruption in his Royal portraits is well known. But the implication of corruption is equally there in his portrait of Dona Isabel. His Maja undressed, beautiful as she is, is terrifyingly naked. And in the same way one could sum up the theme of many of his graphic works by describing how one admires the delicacy of the flowers embroidered on the stocking of a pretty courtesan in one drawing, and then, how suddenly, immediately, one foresees in the next the mummer-headed monster that as a result of the passion aroused by her delicacy, she will bear as a son. A monk undresses in a brothel and Goya draws him

Goya

hating him, not in any way because he himself is a puritan, but because he senses that the same impulses that are behind this incident will lead in the Disaster of War to soldiers castrating a peasant and raping his wife. The huge brutal heads he puts on hunchback bodies, the animals he dressed up in official robes of office, the way he gave to the cross-hatched tone on a human body the filthy implication of fur, the rage with which he drew witches—all these were protests against the abuse of human possibilities. And what makes Goya's protests so desperately relevant for us, after Buchenwald and Hiroshima, is that he knew that when corruption goes far enough, when the human possibilities are denied with sufficient ruthlessness, both ravager and victim are made bestial.

Then there is the argument about whether Goya was an objective or subjective artist; whether he was haunted by his own imaginings, or by what he saw of the decadence of the Spanish Court, the ruthlessness of the Inquisition and the horror of the Peninsula War. In fact, this argument is falsely posed. Obviously Goya sometimes used his own conflicts and fears as the starting point for his work, but he did so because he consciously saw himself as being typical of his time. The intention of his work was highly objective and social. His theme was what man was capable of doing to man. Most of his subjects involve action between figures. But even when the figures are single—a girl in prison, an habitual lecher, a beggar who was once "somebody,"—the implication, often actually stated in the title, is "Look what has been done to them."

ONE of the most interesting confirmations that Goya's work was outward-facing and objective is his use of light. In his works it is not, as with all those who romantically frighten themselves, the dark that holds horror and terror. It is the light that discloses them. Goya lived and observed through something near enough to total war to know that night is security and that it is the dawn that one fears. The light in his work is merciless for the simple reason that it shows up cruelty. Some of his drawings of the carnage of the Disasters are like film shots of a flare-lit target after a bombing operation; the light floods the gaps in the same way.

Finally, and in view of all this one tries to assess Goya. There are artists such as Leonardo or even Delacroix who are more analytically interesting than Goya. Rembrandt was more profoundly compassionate in his understanding. But no artist has ever achieved greater honesty than Goya, honesty in the full sense of the word meaning facing the facts

and preserving one's ideals. With the most patient craft Goya could etch the appearance of the dead and the tortured, but underneath the print he scrawled impatiently, desperately, angrily, "Why?" "Bitter to be present," "This is why you have been born," "What more can be done?" "This is worse." The inestimable importance of Goya for us now is that his honesty compelled him to face and to judge the issues that still face us.

COURBET'S ART AND POLITICS

THE immensely complicated relationship that exists between art and politics is rarely understood. There are those who merely deny that any valid connection is possible, and there are those, on both Right and Left, who believe that a work of art should simply be an election speech, that the artists should, according to his temperament, either be a statistician supplying evidence of a host of damning or encouraging facts, or be an orator declaiming the visual equivalent of slogans. The issue is further complicated by the fact that the area covered by "politics" in people's minds varies according to the political convictions of the person concerned. Politics can include a comprehensive philosophy of life or just be a concession towards the solution of a few unavoidable interim problems. One can say, however, that, except under certain special circumstances, it is a misconception to consider the artist as either a statistician or an orator; rather, he is nearer an oracle, and like all oracles will therefore speak intuitively and from the heart as well as from the mind. But it is also true that he will find new meanings, make new comparisons, reveal new facts, and, although these will not contribute directly to a specific and already established political programme, they will express certain fundamental human values from which that programme, its morality and other manifestations of the human-will-to-power, can naturally draw strength.

All this—and very much more—is relevant to the art of Courbet. Because Courbet was a declared and incorruptible Socialist (he was of course imprisoned for the part he played in the Commune and at the end of his life was driven into exile in Switzerland), reactionary critics have pretended that his politics were nothing to do with his art—they couldn't deny his art itself if only because of his important influence on later artists such as Manet and Cezanne; progressive critics, on the other hand, have tended to assume that his art is great as an automatic result of his political loyalty. . . . So it is pertinent to ask: exactly

Coube

how his socialism was implied in his paintings, how his attitude to life was reflected in the innovations of his art.

First, though, it is necessary to clean off some of the mud that has stuck. Because Courbet was uncompromising in his convictions, because his work and his way of life "vulgarly" proved that art was as relevant to the back-parlor, the workshop, the cell, as to the drawing-room, because his paintings never offered the slightest possibility of escape from the world as it was, he was officially rejected in his lifetime and has since been only grudgingly admitted. He has been accused of being bombastic. Look at his self-portrait in prison. He sits by the window quietly smoking his pipe, the invitation of the sunlight in the courtyard outside the only comment on his confinement. Or look at his copy of a Rembrandt self-portrait. He had the humility to impose that discipline on himself at the age of fifty. He has been accused of coarseness. Look at a Normandy seascape in which the receding air between the empty sea and the low clouds holds firmly but with an extraordinary finesse all the mystery implied by the apparent fact and the actual illusion of an horizon. He has been charged with sentimentality. Look at his painting of a great hooked trout; its truth to the essential facts forces one to feel the weight of the fish, the power with which, struggling, his tail would slap the rocks, the cunning necessary to play him, the deliberation necessary to gaff him—he would be too large to net. Occasionally, of course, such criticisms are fair, yet no artist only paints masterpieces, and the work, say, of Constable (whom Courbet in his independent contribution to langscape painting somewhat resembled), Corot or Delacroix is just as unequal, but is far less frequently singled out for prejudiced attack.

But to return to the main problem: Courbet believed in the independence of the artist—he was the first painter to hold a one-man show. Yet to him this meant independence from art for art's sake, from the prevailing Romantic view that the artist or his work were more important than the existence of the subject painted, and from the opposing Classic view that the inspiration of all art was absolute and timeless. He realized that the artist's independence could only be productive if it meant his freedom to identify himself with his living subject, to feel that he belonged to it, never vice versa. For the painter as such that is the meaning of Materialism. Courbet expressed it in words —this indestructible relationship between human aspiration and actual fact—when he wrote, *"Savoir pour pouvoir—telle fut ma pensée."*

COURBET'S acknowledgement, with all the force of his imagination of the actuality of the objects he painted, never, however, deteriorated into naturalism: a thoughtless superficial goggling at appearances—a tourist's view of a beauty spot, for instance. One does not just feel that every scene he painted looked like that but that it was known like that. His country landscapes were revolutionary in so far as they presented real places without suggesting any romantic antithesis with the city ,but within them—not imposed upon them—one can also discover a sense of potential Arcadia, a local recognition that for playing children and courting couples such ordinary scenes might gather familiar magic. A magnificent nude in front of a window and landscape is an uncompromising portrayal of a woman undressed—subject to many of the same laws as the trout: but, at the same time, the picture evokes the shock of the unexpected loneliness of nudity: the personal shock that inspires lovers, expressed in another way in Giorgione's *Tempest.* His portraits (the masterpieces of Jules Valles, Van Wisselingh, The Hunter) are particular people; one can imagine how they will alter; one can imagine their clothes worn, ill-fitting, by somebody else; yet they share a common dignity because all are seen with the knowledge of the same man's affection. The light plays on them kindly because all light is welcome that reveals the form of one's friends.

A parallel principle applies to Coubet's drawing and grasp of structure. The basic form is always established first, all modulations and outcrops of texture are then seen as organic variations—just as eccentricities of character are seen by a friend, as opposed to a stranger, as part of the whole man.

To sum up in one sentence, one might say that Courbet's socialism was expressed in his work by its quality of uninhibited Fraternity.

DRAWING IS DISCOVERY

FOR the artist drawing is discovery. And that is not just a slick phrase, it is quite literally true. It is the actual act of drawing that forces the artist to look at the object in front of him, to dissect it in his mind's eye and put it together again; or, if he is drawing from memory that forces him to dredge his own mind, to discover the content of his own store of past observations. It is a platitude in the teaching of drawing that the heart of the matter lies in the specific process of looking. A line, an area of tone, is not really important because it records what you have seen, but because of what it will lead you on

MINE WORKER

Renato Guttuso

see. Following up its logic in order to check its accuracy, you fin confirmation or denial brings you closer to the object, until finally yo are, as it were, inside it: the contours you have drawn no longer mar ing the edge of what you have seen, but the edge of what you have b come. Perhaps that sounds needlesly metaphysical. Another way putting it would be to say that each mark you make on the paper is stepping-stone from which you proceed to the next, until you hav crossed your subject as though it were a river, have put it behind yo

This is quite different from the later process of painting a "finished canvas or carving a statue. Here you do not pass through your subje but try to re-create it and house yourself in it. Each brush-mark chisel-stroke is no longer a stepping-stone, but a stone to be fitted in a planned edifice. A drawing is an autobiographical record of one's d covery of an event—either seen, remembered or imagined. A "fi ished" work is an attempt to construct an event in itself. It is significa in this respect that only when the artist gained a relatively high stan ard of individual "autobiographical" freedom, did drawings, as we no understand them, begin to exist. In a hieratic, anonymous tradition th are unnecessary. (I should perhaps point out here that I am talking abo working drawings—although a working drawing need not necessar be made for a specific project. I do not mean linear designs, illust tions, caricatures, certain portraits or graphic works which may "finished" productions in their own right.)

A number of technical factors often enlarge this distinction b tween a working drawing and a "finished" work: the longer time neec to paint a canvas or carve a block: the larger scale of the job: the pro lem of simultaneously managing color, quality of pigment, tone, t ture, grain, and so on—the "shorthand" of drawing is relatively sim and direct. But nevertheless the fundamental distinction is in working of the artist's mind. A drawing is essentially a private wo related only to the artist's own needs; a "finished" statue or canvas essentially a public, presented one—related far more directly to demands of communication.

It follows from this that there is an equal distinction from the po of view of the spectator. In front of a painting or statue he tends identify himself with the subject, to interpret the images for their o sake; in front of a drawing he identifies himself with the artist, us the images to gain the conscious experience of seeing as though thro the artist's own eyes. It is this which explains why painters always va so highly the drawings of the masters they admire, and why the gen

public find it so difficult to appreciate drawings—except for sentimental reasons, or in so far as they are impressed by purely manual dexterity.

The distinction I have tried to make is relevant for on it are based the standards with which one approaches any show of drawings. In appreciating these, deftness, charm, ingenuity are, in themselves, beside the point. Everything originally depends upon the quality of discovery. Mannerisms, however elegant, are barriers to discovery as clichés are barriers to thought; this is true, for example, of Pietro Longhi and some drawings (not all) of the younger Tiepolo.

Then, by contrast, go to the Raphael *Head of a Muse* and feel how he discovered the fullness of the form growing under his hand like a pot on a wheel; how Durer discovered the direction of every fold and fissure as though he were reading Braille, how Guercino discovered the sensuality of his Venus as though he were sleeping with her, how Guardi discovered the space of a room as though he were filling it with air from a pair of bellows; how Rembrandt discovered his figures as though encompassing them with the knowledge of a father. In every case one senses their surprise.

I HEARD A MAN CRYING

JESUS COLON

WHEN I was a young man I lived in a rooming house on Atlantic Avenue in Brooklyn. I was working as a scaler. Long distances long hours and the dirtiest kind of work you could imagine.

As the ships came in, a scaling crew moved in to clean the ship from top to bottom. Cleaning was done especially at the bottom, underneath the machine room, and inside and around the furnaces.

If the ship was an oil tanker you had to go down to the bottom of that tank ship after the oil was pumped off and collect the oil that the pump was unable to swallow, with a small tin shovel and a pail. The pail was placed on a hook at the end of a rope and hoisted up by those working on deck. Pay was better "down below" than on deck so I always chose to work inside the tanker. As the job was about finished we were supposed to "paint" the inside of the oil tank with Portland cement by just throwing cement at the inside walls of the oil-moist tank. Imagine twenty or twenty-five men throwing cement at the oil walls of an enclosed tank.

When we came out our faces, eyes, brows and hair looked old and gray. We looked like the grandfathers of our own selves. Some winters when the snow and ice covered the river solidly, the temperature down below at the bottom of the oil tank was below zero. Good thing that we were given rubber boots which fastened at the top of our thighs and rubber pants, jackets and hats that made us look like old seafarers.

Everywhere we went at the bottom of that tank, we were followed by a long eltctric wire at the end of which there were three or four electric bulbs protected from breakage by a wire net. Sometimes when we gave the order to hoist the pail filled with oil and we kept looking up at that hole through which a ray of sun kept mocking us down below

the edge of the pail might abruptly hit the edge of the hole way up there and a splash of ice cold oil would come spattering down and smear your face and neck. Sometimes the oil used to run down your back until it reached the very tip of your spine . . . and more. So, no matter how you scrubbed yourself, some of the oil always remained all over your body from your head to your toes. When I took the old crosstown trolley car with its spongy yellow straw seats and sat in one of them on my way home, I usually left a mark of black moist oil like a great heart parted right down the middle.

It was way into the evening when I came in from my scaling job. I was very tired. The room was very cold. I chose to get into bed with all my clothes on instead of going through the task of starting a fire in the dead coal stove in the middle of the room. (Why is it so difficult for tropical people to start a fire in a hard coal stove?)

As if coming from way out into space through the cracks in my window and from the crevices dividing the door and the floor I heard a very low moaning sound. It went up and down like a wave. Then there was silence for a minute or two and then it started all over again in a repressed way as if the person from whom the crying, moaning sound came did not want to be heard by anybody. Then as if the pain or emotion could not be held back anymore a piercing cry full of self pity and desperation came distinctly to my ears. At last I could trace clearly from whence it came. It was from another room on the same floor. I knocked at the door of the room. After a short pause the door was opened by a man who then turned and sat himself on a narrow bed which filled the room.

He covered his face with his hands and then let his crying run fully. I could see that the man was robust, built strong as a bull. He was possibly accustomed to heavy work out of doors. It was sad, yes, tragic, to listen to such a specimen of man crying. So clumsily and innocently strong was he.

In between the minutes that he could control his emotions and his natural shyness he told me of missing a boat where he was working as a coal passer. The boat belonged to a Spanish shipping company. He himself was Spanish. A story of the ignorance of the language, of fear of the immigration laws, of shyness and of pride, not to beg, not to ask for anything followed.

The man had not eaten since . . . he didn't remember how many days. He was actually starving, gradually dying of hunger.

Have you ever heard a man crying? A young strong man crying? Crying of hunger in the midst of what is supposed to be the greatest

and richest city in the world? It is the saddest, most tragic sight you could ever imagine.

At that hour we left the rooming house and went to the nearest restaurant. He ate as if he had never eaten before in his life.

Next day I took him to an old iron junk yard in which they were asking for young strong men. The job was to break old iron parts of machinery with a sledge hammer. My new Spanish friend wielded the big sledge hammer with the gracefulness and ease of a young girl skipping a thin rope on the sidewalk.

For the first few days I managed to bring him to his place of work. Then he would wait for me in the evening at the wide door of the junk yard until he learned how to take the trolley car that would take him to and from the rooming house where we were living.

I moved. I don't remember the last time I saw that burly, strong young Spaniard.

But I will never forget as long as I live, his deep anguished crying of hunger that night . . . long, long ago.

THE ORIGIN OF LIFE

J. D. BERNAL

THE question of the origin of life is, in these years, as important if not as dramatic a question as was the origin of species a hundred years ago. Both were supposed to have been answered in the Book of Genesis when in the first days of creation living things came into being by divine command. But this achievement was not considered in early ages a particularly great one. Three hundred years ago the origin of life appeared to be a perfectly natural phenomenon; it was expected that flies would come out of rotten meat, mice and frogs out of mud, and even human bodies were deemed to breed their own lice. However, from the Renaissance onwards a number of sceptical experimenters gradually demolished this naive view. Redi put muslin over meat and prevented the maggots from appearing in it; Spallanzani put boiled broth in sealed vessels and showed that it did not go bad. The discussions went on and were not really closed until the great controversy between Pasteur and Pouchet about a hundred years ago, when Pasteur's experiments seemed to show that no form of life, even the smallest bacterium, could arise except out of living material. It would seem as if the question of the spontaneous origin of life had been settled once and for all in the negative.

Nevertheless, for the last hundred years, biologists have been in a very unfortunate dilemma: they had to admit at the same time that life could not arise spontaneously, and also that all life was descended from one or a few at most extremely primitive forms. "How did these primitive forms get there in the first place?" was a question to which there would be no answer and so it was considered somewhat improper to ask it. The attitude of the scientists was rather like that of pious people long ago who believed that the earth was supported on an ele-

phant which rested on a tortoise. If anyone asked what the tortoise stood on, he was told not to ask any more questions. And that is effectively how biologists remained for the last hundred years, content to study the actual forms of life and their evolution without pursuing them further back into their origin on the pre-organic earth.

However, in recent years the climate has changed and, indeed, there had been no complete cessation of interest in the origin of life, as shown by occasional pronouncements of such great biologists as Huxley in his address to the British Association on "The Physical Basis of Life." Nevertheless, the problem of the origin of life was not considered a serious part of science. Even Darwin said, "Talk about the origin of life? You might as well talk about the origin of the elements." But nowadays we do talk seriously about the origin of the elements, in fact this is one of the major features of modern astrophysics, and sooner or later we are bound to talk about the origin of life as well.

IT IS one thing, however, to state that life originated from inorganic matter and quite another to give some indication of how, when and where this transformation might be deemed to have taken place. The first attempt at this along modern lines was made in 1924 by Oparin, then a young biochemist in the Soviet Union; and three years later a very similar proposal was made quite independently by J. B. S. Haldane in this country. Both had seized on the idea that the difficulties about the origin of life came from not examining closely enough what the conditions must have been like when life originated. There is little chance of life originating on the earth today because life is already established, for any rudimentary type of life which might conceivably form itself now would be seized upon immediately and devoured by existing organisms. It would also be subject to the strenuous physical conditions that have been brought about by life, notably in the presence of extremely active oxygen in the atmosphere.

What could the original conditions have been like? Oparin and Haldane found a clue in biochemical mechanisms of different organisms. There are those that are common to the most diverse forms of life—to bacteria, plants and animals; while others occur in higher organisms only and were presumably evolved later. The mechanism of fermentation, for instance, is found everywhere even in the lowest bacteria, whereas that of oxidation, though enormously widespread, is more limited. There are certain organisms that are actually killed by oxygen. The suggestion, therefore, that life originated in an atmosphere which contained no oxygen was able to explain many of the features of life,

in particular how it would have been possible for such complicated chemicals as are needed to build life to originate in the first place. It appeared, therefore, that there was an enormous period of biochemical evolution which preceded the earlier stages of what Darwin had established as organic evolution. These views were put forward in Oparin's first book, *The Origin of Life,* published in Russian in 1929 with an English translation in 1938, and have been fully summarized in the new edition of his book of which the English translation had just appeared* in time for the symposium in Moscow around which this article is being written.

For a long time Oparin and Haldane remained somewhat lone pioneers, but as time went on it became apparent that a great deal of biochemistry was becoming intelligible only in terms of such a chemical evolution of life. This belief was in line with a philosophic revolution in many fields of thought which demanded something more than an acceptance of the structures of the inorganic or the organic world as given facts, but rather required their explanation in terms of their origin, that is of *becoming* instead of mere *being.* This concept, which owes a great deal to the spread of Marxist ideas, has stretched already to cover such questions as the origin of the stars, the origin of the planets, the origins of the earth's crust and of mountains. It was natural that the origin of life should come in if only as a missing section of the much more general problem of the origin of the universe itself. Interest in the subject mounted and there appeared a number of articles and books in many different countries—in France, the United States, and Britain, as well as in the Soviet Union. A quite interesting little controversy on the subject appeared in *New Biology* in 1953.** It was therefore timely that there should be a full-scale discussion on an international plane of the whole subject. And this was achieved under the auspices of the International Union of Biochemistry in a symposium on the Origin of Life which took place in Moscow last August.

THE importance and seriousness which the subject has now acquired is shown by the evidence and the number of the participants from different countries. Most were biochemists, but a number of geologists and astronomers contributed to the discussions. More than forty of them came from abroad, mostly from the United States and Britain. Few symposia on any subject can have been attended by scientists covering such wide fields of knowledge. Moreover, most of those attending and

* A. I. Oparin, *The Origin of Life on Earth.* Oliver and Boyd. 35s.
** *New Biology,* Nos. 12, 13 and 16, 1953.

giving papers were scientific workers who are leading the new discoveries in their respective fields. All missed certain scientists who had shown their interest in the subject but who were unable to come there, such as Urey and Brachet and, most of all, Haldane, whose recent establishment in India prevented his attendance. It would be invidious in an article of this character to attempt to give names of those present for it would take far too long to explain what each of the participants had to contribute, but the feature they all had in common was that their particular work, whether it was photo-synthesis, the behavior of viruses, the nature of nucleic acids or proteins, was seen by the participants to be related to the central question of the origin of life. Indeed, relatively few contributions were primarily concerned with this problem, for the study of the origin of life has yet to establish itself as a discipline. Though it now has, thanks to Dr. Pirie, the name of *biopoesis,* there is so far no chair or research department devoted to it in any part of the world. This gap was the less felt in Moscow for we were all given as the meeting began copies of the translations of Oparin's book, which gives a masterly survey of the whole subject. Moreover, the very arrangement of the symposium followed the general conception of a division of the chemical evolution of life as a sequence of stages, which were discussed in more detail in my own contribution. This enabled the different pieces of evidence contributed by the experts to fall naturally into place.

The symposium itself was an unqualified success. The arrangements were particularly well made, there was excellent simultaneous translation carried out, interestingly enough not by trained translators but by working scientists. Most of the papers had been circulated beforehand and so there was a real possibility for discussion which was long and fruitful. One very important aspect of the symposium was that though discussion was very free and there were many clashes of opinion, these were on scientific lines and not along those of geography or politics. Indeed, the symposium showed more than the mere absence of international friction in science, there was evident a strong wish for real, effective cooperation which was strengthened by the numerous visits which were paid by the participants at the symposium, before and after, to various scientific institutions in Moscow and Leningrad.

Although it will take some time before the results can be effectively put together and worked into a new picture of the origin of life, enough has emerged already to show what progress has been made and how much more could be done with relatively little effort in the near future. It cannot be claimed that there was any revolutionary change in our

knowledge brought out by the symposium. What was evident, however, was that the general lines put forward by Oparin and Haldane still hold, even though it is already clear that the processes of biopoesis are very much more complicated than they originally thought them to be. On a number of important points their views have been substantiated, but a number of difficulties which they did not foresee have also come to light in the interval which still prevents the picture from being completed. Where the symposium was valuable immediately, however, was to show to those working in the different fields of astro- and geophysics, as well as of biochemistry and biology, what these difficulties were, so that they would have them in mind in carrying out their work in the immediate future.

THE subject of the origin of life, unlike that of the origin of species, is, however, particularly difficult to present even to the relatively scientifically educated reader of today. This is because the field with which it treats is one which cannot be visualized and which is outside ordinary experience. The origin of life must have been an essentially very small-scale and almost purely chemical process, and can be understood only in chemical terms. It is not, in any case, too easy even for the specialist because it involves an approach to a number of different specialties, and very few, if any, are acquainted with all of them. To understand what came before life the student must know something of astronomy and geology, while to account for the act which began life, it is necessary to understand inorganic chemistry and its transition to organic chemistry. At a later stage, when we must suppose some kind of organism to be present, knowledge of biochemistry becomes essential.

Nevertheless, the broad outlines are fairly easy to set forth. We must imagine a beginning on an earth otherwise very similar to ours, but without life. We have to find out how, from the actual elements and very simple compounds that existed in primitive oceans and atmosphere, something with the most rudimentary chemical characteristics of life can have emerged. We have to trace, step by step, the evolution, in these early forms of the complexity of structure and of chemical processes that are found even in the very simplest single-celled organisms that we see today. The work of building up such a picture, if only a self-consistent and plausible one, requires two kinds of minds: imaginative minds who can throw themselves into the conditions which may have existed at the various stages and deduce how the primitive forms of life are likely to originate and change, and critical minds which can point out the inconsistencies in any of the explanations given. Here

we are evidently already in the new stage of scientific research, one which exceeds the capacity of individual human minds and which requires organized cooperation covering a range not only of specialties but of temperaments.

At least we may hope from such researches to find a plausible sequence of events. It is not sufficient for us to solve the general problem of biopoesis to show how any kind of life might have originated anywhere. We have to explain how the particular kind of life—the kinds of chemicals and reactions—that occur here on this earth, actually originated. We have to do this on the basis of the evidence which is contained on the one hand in the rocks which inform us about the stages which preceded life, and on the other in living organisms where the chemicals and their interchanges are in a sense living fossils which bear in themselves the evidence of their precursors. There are, for instance, a number of biochemical substances fairly familiar to people in these days, proteins, sugars and fats. One of our problems is to know which of them came first. For example, the substances now very much in the mind of biochemists, the nucleic acids, particularly associated with reproduction and protein synthesis, themselves contain sugar molecules, therefore their existence must be subsequent to that of the synthesis of sugars. The enzymes, by which most chemical reactions in living things are carried out, are mostly proteins, but proteins themselves must have been formed at some time and therefore must contain evidence for earlier stages of substances capable of helping forward chemical reactions.

IT IS possible to see the whole story as one of the succession of stages which occurred on the earth over a very long period of time. It is estimated that the earliest fossils that we know are about 800 million years old. But at that time, at the base of the Cambrian, life was very fully evloved: practically all the major types of animals that we know today, except the vertebrates, existed, and it is evident that some fairly elaborate organisms must have existed for a considerable time beyond that, possibly as far back as 1,000 or 1,500 million years ago. However, the origin of life must go back further still, but not indefinitely further back, because we have, as it were, a fixed starting point with the date of the oldest rocks that we know on the earth, which also fits in with what we know of the formation of the solar system, of an age of about 3,000 million years. It is still impossible to fix the earliest point of the origin of life but we have at least another 1,000 million years to play with. Once we understand better than we do the stages of the origin of life, it may be possible to find the particular trace elements and

isotopes that are characteristic of living structures and by finding them in dateable rocks establish the chronology of the chemical history of life, all other traces of which have been extinguished by geological changes.

As we see it now, the problems of the origin of life can be divided into a prologue, that is the situation of the earth before there was any life; a first stage in which the small chemical molecules of the kind of amino acids and sugars were formed from inorganic chemicals; a second stage—and perhaps a decisive one—in which these small molecules joined together to form polymers of the kind we now meet in proteins, nucleic acids, carbohydrates, etc.; a third stage where something like an organism of an extremely primitive and almost structureless kind came together from the interactions of these polymer molecules. These are followed by further stages which mark, on the one hand, the evolution of more complicated biochemical changes, such as fermentation, photosynthesis and oxidation, and, on the other, that of the complex structures which are now being elucidated in cells by the use of the electron microscope, such as the formation of chromosomes, nuclei, mitochondria, microsomes, and other members of the large population of sub-units or organelles that are now recognized as necessary to the functioning of even the simplest cell.

The discussions at the symposium registered considerable progress along both these lines, but more perhaps on the biochemical than on the structural side. Not surprisingly, as the most distant from us in time, the subject of the original surface and atmosphere of the earth was the most disputable. Here two views met in almost direct conflict. The more conventional view that the earth had once been a hot, detached portion of an earlier sun which had gradually cooled and formed a crust, is now challenged by another, associated particularly with the names of Schmidt in the Soviet Union and Urey in the United States, that the earth has been formed by an aggregation, under moderately cold conditions, of cosmic dust. However, these disputes do not substantially put in question the nature of the primitive atmosphere, which practically all the geochemical experts indicate as likely to be very different from what our atmosphere is today, particularly in the absence of oxygen, which appears to us to be the particularly life-giving gas. Oxygen in anything like the quantities we have in the atmosphere is now considered to have been produced by life itself, by the green plants that keep it in its present concentration over the whole of recent geological time. However, before there were plants the atmosphere was of a distinctly mephitic character, consisting of marsh gas, ammonia, sulphuretted hydrogen, and other rather unpleasant compounds. While

most admitted the presence of these gases in the primitive atmosphere, there were disputes as to how much nitrogen and carbon dioxide were also present. There was, also, some dispute on the origin of the carbon in the atmosphere. A Soviet oil expert, Professor Kropotkin, maintained that much of the oil in the earth, especially that at very deep levels, could not have been formed by biochemical agencies, but this was not the view of the majority of geologists present. It was pointed out that not only the oil itself contained characteristic biochemical compounds, but in oil wells as deep as 3,000 feet below the surface there are living bacteria which exist by oxidizing the oil at the expense of the sulphate in the water. This picture of organisms which have been buried for hundreds of millions of years at such depths and in complete darkness, showing the extraordinary persistence of life, seemed rather to point to the organic character of existing oil supplies but does not exclude the possibility of primitive supplies of methane.

HOWEVER, these disputes seem relatively irrelevant to the central theme of the emergence of life because there is now sufficient evidence that the first step in production of simple organic molecules from any set of elementary gases containing hydrogen, carbon, nitrogen and oxygen, was not as difficult as was previously thought. Professor S. Miller, who was the first to do this in Professor Urey's laboratory in Chicago, gave us at the symposium further details of the work of synthetizing amino acids and other organic compounds from simple bases under the influence of electric discharges. Professor Terenin, at the Bach Institute at Moscow, reported that the same thing could be done with ultra-violet light, and Pavlovskaya and Passynski, in the same laboratory, have repeated and extended Miller's results using different gases. It would now appear that practically any such mixture of gases subject to a great variety of agents, not only electrical discharges and ultra-violet light but also every form of radio-active alpha, beta or gamma rays, will produce, and in fair quantities, compounds of basically organic nature, not only acids but also carbohydrates and vegetable acids. It is almost necessary now to conclude that such organic compounds must have accumulated for a long time on the earth in the absence of any organisms to destroy them.

The explanation of the next stage, the formation of large or polymer aggregates in which the smaller molecular groups were tied together in long chains, seemed to be much more obscure, but this was probably due to the complexity of the processes involved rather than to any fundamental difficulty. Indeed, sufficient experimental proof was indi

cated to show that it was not an impossible problem but rather it was difficult to choose which method was most likely to have occurred. Some years ago I put forward the hypothesis that the polymerization itself probably occurred on some pre-existing mineral substances, clay or quartz; and this has received some support both from experiments on the synthesis, by Terentiev, of optically active organic compounds on asymmetric quartz crystals, and by the work of Akabori in Japan, who has not only produced extremely simple protein chains, such as polyglyceine from amino acids on clay, but has even been able to insert other amino acids into these chains.

SO FAR, however, in the discussion there is nothing to indicate any of the characteristic features that we now associate with life. These obviously belong to subsequent stages. The first is the cyclic interchange of chemicals by which a *metabolism* is set up. Molecules enter into and leave such a system either at the same rate or with a positive addition which we call growth. Such interchanges require a fair concentration of matter, and this is the essential point of Oparin's original hypothesis of the origin of life. He postulates that this concentration was brought about by the formation of gelatinous aggregates, so-called *coacervates*, which can be formed in the laboratory by mixing substances such as egg-white and gum. Oparin and his co-workers reported at the symposium, not only more experiments in the formation of these coacervates, but also in reactions carried out by organic chemicals trapped in them, a kind of rough model of metabolism. Now it must be admitted that at the moment the actual physical state of what Pirie has called *eobionts* (dawn forms of life) is still very difficult to picture. However, as the latter sessions of the symposium showed, although we cannot say very much about where these processes took place, quite a lot can be said about the processes themselves.

The greatest advance marked by the symposium, indeed, was in its contribution to the question of the evolution of metabolism—a history of process rather than of structures. The mere existence of metabolism raises many fundamental problems. The second law of thermodynamics had always seemed to imply that processes going on of their own accord in nature necessarily result in a general increase in disorder, so-called entropy or muddled-upness of the system. If one mixes, for instance, hot and cold water one always gets tepid water. No one has seen a bowl of tepid water by itself separating itself into hot and cold. But living systems do carry out just such separations. They organize themselves, and they produce out of a uniform environment substances of

marked differences, wet and dry, acid and alkali. How is it possible? Do the laws of physical chemistry apply to them or is some new vital force at work? This problem is now reasonably solved by the recognition which we owe largely to Professor Prigogine, from Belgium, who attended the symposium and read a profound paper on the thermodynamics of living systems. In his view the laws of thermo-dynamics were made on a too restricted scale, namely they referred entirely to closed systems in which neither matter nor energy went in or out. If we consider a limited system as open, a system in which matter enters and leaves, not necessarily in the same state, and also where energy flows in and flows out, the rule leading to greater entropy no longer holds. If, however, we insist on treating the whole of the universe as one closed system, then we can say that life manages to increase the order in the small region in which it exists at the expense of increasing the disorder everywhere else. There is nothing in the evolution of life that in any sense breaks what are the laws of the physico-chemical world. But life cannot be considered as merely physico-chemical, and this was very ably discussed in a paper by Broda who put forward the concept of the dynamical state as the essential characteristic of living processes, and a dynamical state that takes origin in a previous non-dynamical one.

The processes going on in organisms today, though they are extremely efficient, take place with extremely gentle steps. Organisms manage to carry out the kind of chemical reactions for which we need boilers and furnaces without raising the temperature more than a few hundredths of a degree above that of their surroundings. They are able to do this because they possess extremely complicated chemical agents, the enzymes, which further specific chemical changes involving a minimum of energy. The oxidation of sugars, for instance, takes place by a cycle of changes involving some sixteen different minute steps and the formation and transformation of a far greater number of intermediate chemical substances. Now, the very enzymes and co-enzymes which are used in even the simplest of living systems today are themselves the product of life. Before they existed how was life possible? One rather simple answer was provided by Fox and Shaer in suggesting that this was made possible simply by heat, that life originated in a very much hotter environment than exists now, that is, almost boiling water in which, at the present day, life is found in hot springs. They were able to show by experiments that quite a number of changes which can only possibly be produced by enzymes at ordinary temperatures, occur spontaneously at such high temperatures. This, however,

was open to a number of objections and an alternative suggestion seemed more plausible, namely, that there are a number of almost inorganic substances, various phosphates, complexes of ions, such as iron, cobalt, copper, etc., that can, rather inefficiently, do the things that enzymes and co-enzymes do today. The general conclusion was, however, that early life was not a particularly efficient system, it has been streamlined by the process of evolution, and the systems we see today are really the end product of such a selection operated on chemical lines. The logic of natural selection, of course, does not begin with organisms; it must operate at any stage in which the more efficient can replace the less efficient, whether it be a chemical process or an ability to adapt to a local environment.

It now seems to be agreed that the earliest type of metabolism at present in action is that of fermentation, as proposed originally by Oparin. This implies the absence of oxygen but the presence of some form of sugar as the main source of energy. Fermentation itself is not nearly as efficient as oxidation, and must result in the production of large quantities of virtually waste products from the point of view of early life. One of these, carbon dioxide, may have accumulated enough to trigger off the next stage, that of the reverse process of photosynthesis by which plants grow out of air and sunlight. One conclusion that seemed to emerge from the symposium was that the earliest photosynthesis was one of the absorption of carbon dioxide into the organisms with the consequent growth, and at the same time the release, not of oxygen as in modern photosynthesis, but of sulphur, a process which does not involve such large energy steps and which is at present carried out by a number of very primitive algae. Evidence of this may exist in the sulphur isotopes found in early pre-Cambrian rocks. The second phase of photosynthesis, that which did produce oxygen, was to have an enormous effect not only on life but on the earth's atmosphere. Once the chlorophyll was effectively working, the atmosphere, loaded with oxygen, cut off the ultra-violet rays which had been all through its previous periods a potent factor in promoting chemical changes. It cut off, say, one source of food supply while providing another. But the presence of oxygen also stimulated the development of what definitely appears to be secondary metabolic changes, those of oxidation, which turned a sugar, not merely to an alcohol and carbon dioxide, but entirely into carbon dioxide and water, liberating far more energy than fermentation, thus making animal life possible.

While these major metabolic changes were going on, the two essential mechanisms of growth had been evolved in the form of protein-like

enzymes and nucleic acids. Here the recent great advances in the struc ture analysis of nucleic acids and proteins, and the relations betwee them as exemplified in the viruses, have opened up a new field of possi bilities, not, however, without raising new and difficult problems.

The association between nucleotides proteins and nuclei acids, or, rather of their components the nucleotides, seems to be a very early one. Both work together as enzyme and co-enzyme in facilitating chemical change The proteins are apparently responsible for the specific kind of reaction that takes place, the nucleotides for the energy transfer that makes i work. In the simplest organism we know, however, including bacterio phages and viruses, the nucleotides are arranged in long, often spirally curled, chains in which the order of their four different types, Adenine Guanine, Uridine and Cytosine, seems to be of fundamental impor tance. Evidence is accumulating that it is through this code that the orde of reactions essential to the proper functioning of the cell is main tained. Further, the division of organisms in sexual as well as asexua reproduction is preceded by a reduplication of specific nucleic acid and variations in them are associated with mutations. Nucleic acid accordingly seem to function as *memories* assuring both the continuit and evolution of organism.

The proteins seem also to consist of chains, not here of four, bu of some twenty-five different amino acids and each of the almost innumer able varieties has a different arrangement. It now seems that protei can be formed, under present conditions, only through the medium c nucleic acid acting on a cell, as in the infections produced by viru nucleic acids as reported by Fraenkel-Conrat and Schramm, or on a ce extract, as has been shows by Straub working on the production of th enzyme amylase in liver extracts. On the other hand, it seems to b equally evident from recent experimental work that nucleic acids a synthesized by proteins. And so we have again the old "chicken and egg paradox—if proteins are needed to make nucleic acids and nucleic aci to make proteins, which came first? The problem, however, may n be as insoluble as it seems, because proteins and nucleic acids as we kno them now are very elaborate systems. They must needs have been pr duced by simpler substances carrying out similar functions, though wi less efficiency. The earliest of these may have been metal organic co plexes and metaphosphates respectively, and the activities of some varieti of these were discussed at the meeting.

STRICTLY speaking the work of the symposium should have bee confined to the study of the origin of life up to the complexi

represented by the simplest cell. However, some very interesting papers were given about the behavior of more complicated forms of life which throw light on possible earlier stages. Information of the same kind can be obtained by studying comparative biochemistry, that is, the way in which various chemicals are distributed among different groups of animals and plants. It is to be hoped that in this way it will be possible to build up a fairly reasonable and detailed system. The genesis of each particular kind of chemical compound in present day organisms may not be the same as that which first originated these compounds. But it must have some relation to it, and the study of this sort of biogenesis was reported on in many cases—notably in those of nitrogen metabolism by Braunstein, of chlorophyll by Krasnovsky, in the blood group proteins by Pauling—all of which pointed to the possibility of a biochemical evolution still going on, that is one in which a variation in external circumstances could favor one chemical reaction rather than another, and if this turned out to be over-all more efficient could establish it as the new biochemical pathway. Simpler organisms, such as bacteria, are particularly capable of this kind of adaptation; we know this now to our cost, because of the way in which the bacteria originally stopped or killed by antibiotics are now managing to exist in their presence. Indeed, there is one streptococcus for which streptomycin is an obligatory for growth; it cannot live without its poison.

IT WILL be some time before it is possible to assess the value of the contributions given at the Moscow symposium. When they are published they are certain to arouse further discussion in scientific circles: as a result we may hope to have within a few years an ordered account of the more probable stages in the development of living systems from inorganic matter. Clearly many great discoveries have still to be made, and at a time when we are only beginning to penetrate the actual structure of present day organisms we are obviously not sufficiently informed to be able to say very much about their origins. Nevertheless, the effort to plumb these origins is a valuable one, and this symposium shows it, because it has caused biochemists themselves to think about the subjects in a way, to ask themselves different kinds of questions, and in the process to come across different phenomena, evolve different experimental methods. Up to the beginning of the present century, much of biology consisted essentially of observation and naming what was observed. Only in the last fifty years has serious experimentation begun. Biologists are now learning how much more complicated living systems are even than was imagined, and they can-

not fail to admire the extremely beautiful set of balances and mutual relations of chemical reactions which are quite as delicate as, and much more various than, those of the physical actions of the higher animals. But as they discover this world of almost unlimited complexity they are also discovering the means to understand it. They are discovering not only how the system works, but how it builds itself up to work. They are beginning to see that process of adaptation which leads always to new arrangements, that process of overcoming difficulties which if not overcome would wipe out that particular form of organism, that law of the survival of the fittest which is now seen to apply as much to the chemical as to the organic sphere of evolution. Here also it reveals itself as a dialectical process.

The great lesson we are beginning to learn from the studies on the origin of life is how order was evolved out of disorder. In the past order had always been thought of as something impressed from outside, the action of some god or metaphysical ordering principle. We now begin to see this ordering as a perfectly natural and spontaneous process; we find that things fall into order because only in order can they continue and maintain the process in which they take part. One might ask then, why is it necessary for the process to be maintained? The answer is that it is not necessary, but where it is not maintained the process stops, that particular kind of system disappears and the field is left to those which have, by superior order, managed to maintain themselves. It would never be difficult for philosophers to demonstrate by irrefutable arguments that life is much too complicated a thing ever to have originated—that it cannot exist; nevertheless, unfortunately for them life is there, and it is our business to understand how this impossibility actually took place.

WE LEARN in the study of the origin of life something of the inexhaustible quality of the very stuff of existence, the elementary particles, the atoms, the molecules, the nucleic acids and proteins, the simple metabolic chains. These can without making use of anything essentially new or different, by simply relying on properties already there, produce in their structures and reactions all the complexities of life, and there is no reason to believe that these possibilities are themselves exhausted . We now know that there is a high probability that there are even in our galaxy some tens or hundreds of thousands of stars around which planets circulate under similar circumstances to our own and we might expect to find on them other forms of life. However

from the study already made, it would appear that although in detail life is extremely various—we have the millions of species that are to be found on our earth today—nevertheless in essentials it follows certain patterns. They are limited on one hand by the physical-chemical properties of a few atoms, mainly carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen, and oxygen, and on the other by geometrical and physical limitations on the kinds of complex arrangement which are possible.

The variety of different kinds of life on different planets will lead us to much more general concepts of biology. Our biology on this earth is a limited subject, as peculiar in its way as human anatomy, but as we know there is comparative anatomy and so there will be comparative biology. We may hope to find, for instance, on other planets different stages of the evolution of life, perhaps some of the earlier stages that we now seek by the most indirect methods in the study of existing biochemical pathways.

The new subject of biopoesis is admittedly a very speculative one, but its speculations are neither abstract nor useless. On the one hand, as I have tried to point out, it is of value in understanding the biochemistry of existing organisms which is in turn the basis for the development of rational medicine and rational agriculture. On the other it removes from ignorance or myth another enormous area of our experience. The origin of life fits in as part of the great sequence of origins reaching back as far as we can see; there is no necessary limit to it. It reaches forward through the evolution of living forms to the origin of mankind and society, to the development of civilization, and further on to the development of new societies and civilizations, and to the greater and unlimited possible achievements of mankind.

TWO POEMS

JACK BEECHING

CHILDREN OUTSIDE A CINEMA

Through this bright doorway drop the cheated faces
Past printed phantoms blazoning success.
Their secret islands now are desert places,
Their nearby mouths will never answer yes,
But phantom kisses make their longing less.

Over and over rolls the stone-cold dream,
A dislocated pattern for the eye,
A dance of shadows where the lovers seem
Unweeping monsters heartless as they sigh,
Manifestations of a sensual lie.

Here in the city since all trees are curbed
Only man's plantings vigorously grow.
Blight on the field of flesh makes flesh perturbed
As green corn clothed with salt instead of snow.
Man reaps the hunger that his phantoms sow.

Yet even in dark dream some trees grow tall,
Phantoms become a disregarded shade,
So that in loving doorways lips may call
Yes to the ploughshare's deep and turning blade,
For here dance flowers human love has made.

SORTING FURS

The furs rich women wear
Are filth in the ship's hold,
A clot of rancid hair.

Yet they are priced and sold
And in Great Trinity Street*
Make profits manifold.

The merchants there smell sweet.
Their shirts are gleaming white,
Their food is fit to eat.

With fur in mouth and ears
And stink inside his head
And only his heart sweet

My uncle who is dead
Spent forty poisoned years
Sorting furs for bread.

* Headquarters of the Hudson's Bay Co. in London.

RiGhT FaCe

Code Breaker

Col. James A. Smyrl faces dismissal from the Air Force if a Penta gon board upholds a verdict announced yesterday at Lackland Air Forc Base. Three generals reached the decision after a nine-day hearing.

The hearing board, headed by Maj. Gen. Eugene P. Mussett, foun Colonel Smyrl had failed to demonstrate acceptable qualities of leade ship required of a colonel and was temperamentally unsuitable. Colone Smyrl had testified he wanted to remain in the Air Force "more tha anything else."

Maj. Gen. Herbert Grills, Lackland commandant, ousted Colone Smyrl March 22 as training commander. General Grills said the colone had disregarded an order to allow recruits three hours of free tim weekly.

Colonel Smyrl testified that he had been ordered to make enoug basic trainees available to provide $300 a day in patronage for civilian-operated skating-rink concession at the base. He said he ha been relieved as training commander after telling General Grills h knew of no way to carry out the directive.—The *New York Times.*

Horatio Alger Story

ELLENVILLE, N. Y.—William R. Rose, former president of th defunct Home National Bank, who now drives a truck, has been o fered a free half-interest in the paper mill that benefitted from Mr. Rose alleged manipulation of the bank's funds.—The *New York Times.*

Careful!

ROME.—Religious orders are founded on obedience and subjectio to authority, Pope Pius told a group of 20 monks and nuns fro twenty-five countries.

The superiors of religious orders, the Pope said, exercise a rig when they issue commands and the inferiors have the duty of obeyin

There is no truth in charges, the Pope added, that the strict disciplin enforced in religious orders restricts the development of the hum personality and results in a certain "infantilism."

The Pope was speaking to a meeting of fathers and mothers superior of religious orders throughout the world gathered in Rome to discuss their common problems.—The *New York Times.*

Skeptic?

The quest of Americans for religion may not be so sincere as the nation's rising church membership figures indicate, according to Dr. Ronald E. Osborn, professor at Butler University's school of religion.

The "fear of being different is now a larger consideration than the fear of hell," he asserted.—The *New York Times.*

Dead Wrong

President Eisenhower "fully agreed with me" on the desirability of a change of policy by the Voice of America, the Senator reported.

Many Russians told him, he said, that they resented the anti-Communist broadcasts. Their resentment stemmed from the mistaken belief that communism was responsible for their improved living conditions, he remarked.—The *New York Times.*

Who, Who?

WASHINGTON.—Who invented the phantom Egyptian ship bearing arms to Tunisia? Was the State Department misinformed about it? If so, by whom? Or was an Egyptian arms ship diverted from Tunisia at the last moment?—The *New York Times.*

Fruit of Education

The Indiana University Extension Center here mailed cards to its students asking:

"What do you think the effect of sputnik will be on America's future?"

Ten percent of the first- and second-year college students answered that they didn't know that the Soviet Union had launched a satellite. —The *New York Times.*

PASSAGE FROM INDIA: A WORD TO HOWARD FAST

JIM M.

I MET you when you arrived in Calcutta in 1945. I was a patient in the Army hospital next to the Overseas Press Club where you stayed. In reminding you of your brief visit as correspondent to India, I wish to make comparisons of your actions then with your actions now. Your stay was so brief you probably wrote it off as an insignificant moment to be forgotten. But I am resurrecting it and want to describe it so you will know why I am not surprised at your present position . . . though I deplore it.

One evening I attended a gathering of progressive Indian literary leaders. Thehe was talk of reprinting your book *Freedom Road*. So, it seemed a fortunate coincidence when your cousin called me to say that you had just arrived and we were to have dinner with you.

We met, had dinner and talked. You told of your new child and confessed you were homesick already and impatient to be back home. Also I recall you were nervous and fearful of every fiying insect and crawling bug. You admitted that you were especially afraid of them.

We told you about the cultural leaders and the next evening we took you to the home of the editor of the largest literary magazine in the Bengalese language. Present was a professor from Calcutta University, a writer on the *Calcutta Statesman* (the N. Y. Times of Calcutta), playwrights, artists, poets, and novelists. Also there was one gentle old man who was remely the leader of the Kisan Sabbha—the 9,000,000-strong All-India peasant organization.

The reception for you was a success. Do you remember being asked if you would permit them to "pirate" your books? You were charming in your pleasure and agreement. Do you remember that the conversation came around to the matter of rickshaws? You were emphatic in stating your abhorrence of the system of rickshaw coolies and that you could never demean yourself to ride in a rickshaw drawn by a human "beast of burden." You philosophized dramatically. Expressions like "dignity of man," "human spirit," "injustice," etc., etc., sprayed from your lips.

They told you that the rickshaw-pullers were all tightly organized in Com-

munist-organized and led unions; that shameful and humiliating as it was, it was the means of livelihood of tens of thousands of men struggling for survival; that through their union and party they fought for the social change which would end this backward and terrible way. Boycotting their services would not help them. Employ them and pay them well.

Politely they criticized the unreality of your "principled" squeamishness. Such emotions, they said, prevented a sober approach to work and struggle. They spoke of the terrible famine just past during whch tens of thousands died in the streets. How was one to approach the job of fighting to save lives with insufficient food and medical supplies? They had to steel themselves to the necessity of deciding where the dividing line was between helping those who might be saved and those who, although still alive, were too far gone. This and other examples seemed to waken you to the realities of India's fight for "justice," "freedom," etc. You seemed to get the point.

When you were asked to attend other gatherings to meet other people and discuss the use of your books, you agreed enthusiastically. Plans were made for the very next evening. But . . . the next morning you had a chance to get on a Liberty ship and go home. So, homesick and fearful of cholera and malaria, you up and left without a word.

Side note: After the war I spoke to you and asked the reason for your hasty evacuation. Did you really expect me to believe the ridiculous story about the C.I.D. putting pressure on you—an accredited correspondent with clearance from the State and War Departments? Anyway, you took a Liberty ship home than which there is nothing slower no how, no where, no sir. If you had waited a few days you could have been flown home in 5 days—a trip which took a month on the ship.

Meanwhile back at the ranch . . . that night I had the embarrassing task of informing them that you had left. They were puzzled and disappointed. The leader of the nine million peasants sadly commented that he regretted having deferred speaking to you the night before. He had wanted your first evening to be one of welcome. Now he had missed giving you voluminous material on the struggles of Inda's peasants for life. land, freedom and justice. You see, it was hard to get material to the outside world—the British imperialists censored and proscribed his movement. Ah well, perhaps another way could be found.

Now a pause. What's all this about? Let us see perhaps if present times can show parallels with your desertion in India 13 years ago. Do you object to the word "desertion"? Then what was it? The world was at war. Everybody with any worth had some part to play in it. You volunteered as a war correspondent—an honorable service made great by the Ernie Pyles who died in the harness and the Reynolds and Ehrenburgs. When a man enlists in the army he can not resign any more than a drafted man. When you enlisted, at that moment you gave up your right to resign until your job was done! Fortunately for you, you could not be punished as a deserting soldier would have been.

You had your chance—you took up valuable space on planes and ships to go out into the world arena (free of charge); you used up precious shots for

typhus, cholera, etc.; you came to India to do a job but you ran away from it. When your children ask you, "Daddy, what did you do in the war against fascism for "justice," "freedom," "brotherhood of man," what will you say?

Your homesickness for your baby and wife, and your dread of the vermin and pestilence of India deprived you of contacts and experiences few men could have had. They would have brought you to Ghandiji, to Nehru, to Maulana Azad, to—whom not? The historic conference at New Delhi was about to begin. India's future was to be debated and perhaps resolved.

You had an opportunity to interview Tata (India's Benjamin Fairless), to meet General Thein Pe of the 60,000 guerrilla Burmese Independence Army. You could have met and addressed the entire student body of Calcutta University. What rich and unusual experiences you could have had and what valuable service you could have performed for the people of the U.S. and your employing papers and magazines! But you ran away! *And lied about the reason!*

Yes, you faced moderate danger in even starting the trip to Asia during the war. But the stuff necessary for the long pull? Not enough to overcome homesickness and fear. You faced danger in courts and jail in the U.S., but for the long pull? What is the reason for your desertion now, dear boycotter of rickshaw-pullers?

On TV you said: "From the first moment one joins the Communist Party one begins to leave it." Smart, smart! From the first moment one is born one begins to die. From the first moment one goes to Asia to help in the war against fascism, one begins to leave Asia and the fight against fascism.

Have you thought of taking a poll of the thousands of people in the progressive movement who warmly and remuneratively supported you because they thought you offered your talent in their fight? Do you think many would condone your offering yourself to the hucksters of the American Century of Imperialism?

I was a loyal customer of your books. I apportioned a part of my wages to support you as a writer when the anti-communist world did not. When did I ever harm you? Why do you try to harm me? In your TV debut you said: "The Communist Party breeds force and violence." You continuously linked the CPUSA with the Soviet Union as if one meant the other—and thus you bolstered the Eastland-McCarthy-Smith claim that the CPUSA and its members are agents of a foreign power. Thus you harm me. If you continue in this pursuit, give me my money back.

Your "slow boat" via your new book brings you into the camp of the cold-war warriors. Aren't you ashamed?

JIM M.

books in review

A Burden of Concern

ORPHEUS DESCENDING with BATTLE OF ANGELS, by Tennessee Williams. New Directions. $3.75.

THE last Broadway-produced play by Tennessee Williams was no hit. *Orpheus Descending,* a work unique in richness and power in our theatre found nothing resembling the hospitality experienced by other Williams' productions. New Directions has published *Orpheus Descending* together with the earlier play from which it derives—*Battle of Angels.* This, Williams' first-produced play, met an even more disastrous end in its Boston try-out. Side by side, the early play and the recent one urge us to peer into the creative process of one of our most gifted artists, as did the publication of *Baby Doll* and the two one-acters from which it derived. In the present case curiosity is most rewarding. The success of Mr. Williams' method is made plain for all to see—that magic which transforms the unwieldly material of the first into the poetic reality of the second. It is easier to remark the success than to dissect the method. But we can only gain by trying. There is no dramatist in our theatre who will not profit by studying in Mr. Williams' book.

In his introduction Tennessee Williams describes *Orpheus Descending* as a play about "unanswered questions that haunt the hearts of people." On its surface it is the tale of a wandering guitar player who settles his waywardness in a conventional small southern town. On its surface also it is a realistic play about ordinary people in a country "department" store; but to test it with the demands made of a realistic work is to court frustration and irritation. More, it is to blind oneself to a technique which adds great depth and lightness to the drama.

Val Xavier wanders into Lady's store and she hires him to help her since her husband Jabe is dying of cancer. They come to love each other. In the end Lady is shot by Jabe and Val is torn to pieces by the Sheriff's lynch mob and its hounds. Two other women circle Val: Carol Cutrere, a degenerate wealthy young woman and Vee Talbott, wife of the county sheriff and a "primitive" painter of visions. Within this arrangement of four major characters and a melodramatic plot, Mr. Williams has constructed a vehicle for the statement of themes, like a musical composition in its counterpoint and harmony, soaring far beyond the dimensions of the play. The harsh theme of violent Southern bigotry is played against melodic variations on human struggle against such corruption.

The burden of Williams' concern and hope for what makes life meaningful is carried by Val and Lady. But there is no heaviness in the touch. They are made most endearing by the simplicity and affrmativeness of their gropings, and by the open sexuality of their expressed love. (This is a theme which has long tormented Williams' writings; in Marlon Brando's version of them, the equation of sexual manliness with brutality has influenced the manners of countless adolescents—or did it merely record an existent social fact? Val at any rate is cut out of another cloth, he is closer to D. H. Lawrence than to Brando-Kazan.) Val and Lady's love for each other is tinged with the colors of the larger themes of the play. Their love is life, creativity, contact, and their enemy is the death which grows from corruption.

Williams blends his themes in every scene. In the first major dialogue between Lady and Val we are enchanted by Val's story of the little blue bird who sleeps on the wind, a symbol of spiritual freedom unlike the people who are "bought and sold in this world, Lady, like carcasses of hogs in butcher shops." Soon he introduces Lady to his "life's companion," his guitar, covered with the names of musicians "written in the stars." "See this name? Leadbelly? Greatest man ever lived on the twelve-string guitar! Played it so good he broke the stone heart of a Texas Governor with it and won himself a pardon out of jail . . . . And see this name Oliver. King Oliver? That name is immortal, Lady. Greatest man since Gabriel on a horn. That name? That name is also immortal. The name Bessie Smith is written in the stars!—Jim Crow killed her, John Barleycorn and Jim Crow kill Bessie Smith but that's another sto . . ." Lady tells Val of her immigra Italian father's death at the hands a mob who burned him in his wi garden for selling liquor to Negro The symbol of the "confectionery" e ters, which Lady wants to make ju like the wine garden, music and a and she hires Val to help her with

Again in the scene where Sheriff T bott "straightens out" Val, the sa blending of themes occurs. Earlier V (Talbott's wife) explains to Val wh her painting means to her. Val tells h he understands, that before she start to paint, existence didn't make sen

Val: You lived in Two River Cou ty, the wife of the County Sheriff. Y saw awful things take place.

Vee: Awful! Things!

Val: Beatings!

Vee: Yes!

Val: Lynchings!

The duet of brutal horrors is co tinued between them and Val sa "And so you began to paint your sions. Without no plan, no trainin you started to paint as if God touch your fingers. You made some beau out of this dark country with th two, soft, woman hands."

In the third act when their cont is interpreted as Val's messin' w the Sheriff's wife, Talbott and his m sadistically threaten Val and grab guitar. Val clutches it and jumps the counter. Talbott says: "I'm gon tell you something. They's a cert county I know of which has a big si at the county line that says, 'Nigg don't let the sun go down on you this county.' That's all it says, it do threaten nothing, it just says 'Nigg don't let the sun go down on you

this county!' Well, son, you ain't a nigger and this is not that county, but son, I want you to just imagine that you seen a sign that said to you, 'Boy, don't let the sun rise on you in this county!' . . . I think if you value that instrument in your hands as much as you seem to, you'll simplify my job. . . ."

The characterization of Carol Cutrere at first glance seems a sensational theatrical device. (Indeed she was pitched to this tone in the Broadway production.) Carol is the other side of the coin of rebellion—conformity swelled to grotesque delinquency. If she epitomizes the struggle against corruption in its most hysterical and hopeless form, she also pleads for identification.

"I used to be what they call a Christ-bitten reformer. You know what that is?—A kind of benign exhibitionist. . . . I delivered stump speeches, wrote letters of protest about the gradual massacre of the colored majority in the country. I thought it was wrong for pellagra and slow starvation to cut them down when the cotton crop failed from army worm or boll weevil or too much rain in summer. I wanted to, tried to, put up free clinics, I squandered the money my mother left me on it. And when that Willie McGee thing came along—he was sent to the chair for having improper relations with a white whore—(Her voice is like a passionate incantation) I made a fuss about it. I put on a potato sack and set out for the capital on foot. This was in winter. I walked barefoot in this burlap sack to deliver a personal protest to the Governor of the State. Oh, I suppose it was partly exhibitionism: there was something else in it, too. You know how far I got? Six miles out of town—hooted, jeered at, even spit on!—every step of the way—and then arrested! Guess what for? Lewd vagrancy; Uh-huh, that was the charge, 'lewd vagrancy,' because they said that potato sack I had on me was not a respectable garment. . . . Well, all that was a pretty long time ago, and now I'm not a reformer any more. I'm just a 'lewd vagrant.' And I'm showing the S.O.B.'s how lewd a 'lewd vagrant' can be if she puts her whole heart in it like I do mine! All right. I've told you my story, the story of an exhibitionist. Now I want you to do something for me. Take me out to Cypress Hill in my car. And we'll hear the dead people talk. They do talk there. They chatter together like birds on Cypress Hill, but all they say is one word and that one word is 'live,' they say 'Live, live, live, live, live!' It's all they've learned, it's the only advice they can give."

The critical question which has plagued Mr. Williams' work will be and has been raised again in connection with this one. Isn't this drama as "decadent" and "corrupt" as the world it uncovers? Doesn't it finally spell a message of total defeat?—since we are left with the violent deaths of Val and Lady and asked to place our hopes in the anarchistic symbol of Val's snakeskin jacket brought back by the Conjure Man to Carol Cutrere.

I think we must play this music in the key in which it is written. "I've won, I've won, Mr. Death!" Lady shouts a moment before Jabe kills her. Her victory has more significance for the audience than Jabe's destruction of her. It is shot through with the beauty of humanity's striving for human meaning in existence.

HELEN DAVIS

Africa without Myth

DECISION IN AFRICA, by W. Alphaeus Hunton, International Publishers. $4.00.

THERE has been a considerable increase in American concern for Africa in recent years. It has taken the form of a growing number of institutes, departments and courses of study in American universities relating to African life and culture; the emergence of a few committees exclusively devoted to forming public opinion on African issues, and the increased coverage of African developments in the press. There have also been a few moving pictures and several novels focusing on Africa.

This "rediscovery" of Africa by Americans is in part a consequence of the Cold War; it has accompanied the unfolding of big business economic and strategic aims on the continent. In fact, much of the investigation and information is financed directly by big corporations or indirectly through funds and foundations they control.

It is unfortunate in these circumstances that the trade unions have shown only a slight interest in African developments, have expended hardly any of their considerable funds on projects of solidarity with African workers, and have parroted the State Department's line (of absence of line) on Africa as on other foreign policy matters.

It is even more regrettable that the onslaught of McCarthyism and the temporary disorientation of the American Left resulted in the dissolution of the Council on African Affairs. This was the single agency which for 17 years could be depended upon to inform and actively rouse the American people to a clear understanding of their large stake in the Africans' fight for freedom and independence. Since the Council—led by Paul Robeson, W. E. B. Du Bois and W. Alphaeus Hunton—disbanded in 1955, there has been a dearth of material interpreting the revolutionary upsurge in Africa from the standpoint of the class interests of American workers, the democratic interests of the nation and the quest for world peace.

This need has now been admirably met with the publication of Dr. Hunton's book which should become required reading for every American who wants his government to adopt a democratic foreign policy.

Here are some of the remarkable features of *Decision in Africa*:

1. It contains a wealth of up-to-date information on the near-slave conditions of the masses of African workers in industry and agriculture. A generous supply of charts and graphs helps to present this data in clear and meaningful terms.

2. The economic stake of European imperialism in the continued degredation of the African peoples is clearly shown.

3. The political schemes and rivalries of European nations rising from the exploitation of African resources and peoples are elaborated in such a way to show how African provides a major temptation to world war and atomic destruction.

4. The African people's movement for independence and freedom are described in their various stages of development.

5. The direct and indirect intervention of U.S. capital as it, on the one hand supports, and on the other supplants, European capital in Africa, is effectively detailed.

6. The alternative to continued subjection to colonial rule is presented: closer solidarity and coordination among the peoples and nations of Africa and Asia, and expanding economic assistance and moral encouragement from the steadily growing socialist sector of the world.

It is incredible but true that a laborer on a Nyassaland tea plantation works for one cent an hour. On a white settler's plantation in the Kenya highlands the African can make 42 cents in a seven-day week as head of a family, provided the labor of women and children is included. In Ghana and Nigeria the farm worker fares better because large groups or white settlers never gained a foothold on Africa's West Coast. But everywhere agriculture, the main economic life of the continent, is a mixture of feudal conditions and the most abominable, oppressive capitalist class relations.

Trading companies on the West Coast, foreign concessionaires in Algeria, Liberia and the Congo, European settlers with their special privileges in East, Central and South Africa—all operate as an assortment of powerful leeches preying on the African's life and land.

The industrial worker, as might be expected, fares better—but that is saying very little. He remains the most miserably exploited wage earner in the world, tied often to a semi-feudal labor contract, living in shantytown slums on the edge of the white men's cities, subjected to a variety of pass laws which circumscribe his freedom. He is a veritable stranger and outcast in his own country.

But such exploitation is bound to beget resentment and opposition. The African, from the earliest days of European conquest, resisted the encroachments of his oppressors. The story of this resistance constitutes one of the most stirring chapters in the history of man's struggles for freedom. It has been hidden from Americans in order to justify the myth of African, and Negro, inferiority. But it can be hidden no longer. Everywhere in Africa modern movements have sprung up which challenge the looters. Dr. Hunton tells their dramatic story.

Workers have organized trade unions and engaged in bitter strike struggles in all parts of the continent. Eighty thousand tenants of the Alexandria Township outside Johannesburg launched a bus boycott protesting a fare increase in 1943—12 years before the Montgomery boycott. Political demands range from the insistence on voting rights in South Africa to Nigeria's projected independence in 1960.

In 1945 the fifth Pan African Congress met in Birmingham, England. It was attended by Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya and Kwame Nkrumah, now prime minister of Ghana, and presided over by W. E. B. Du Bois. The Congress declared: "We are unwilling to starve any longer, while doing the world's drudgery, in order to support, by our poverty and ignorance, a false aristocracy and a discredited imperialism. All colonies must be free from foreign imperialist control, whether political or economic."

Dr. Hunton tells us that, "Opposing this came the demand for Africa and Africans to produce more and more of the raw materials required by Europe and America to recoup the imperialist losses sustained in Asia, and to remain subservient."

There is no question in the author's mind as to the outcome of the conflict.

"If 'losing' Africa," he says, "means its ceasing to be the special preserve of Western interests, then it is as certainly lost as Asia." This is true because "the monopoly by monopolies has been cracked." Africans today have the active and increasing support of the Bandung powers and of socialism in the struggle for independence.

This does not mean that the transition to self-government will necessarily be easy or peaceful. It will vary from nation to nation. It will probably be most difficult in those countries with relatively large settler populations. (Algeria provides today's headlines; yesterday it was Kenya; South Africa's continuous war against its African majority has been a long-time running story.) It is precisely in these areas that American capital investment has reached formidable proportions. And this, more than anything else, explains the shameful Dulles foreign policy of acquiescence in the French war in Algeria, the British army's role in Kenya where it today keeps 60,000 Africans in concentration camps, the merger of the Rhodesias and Nyassaland against the wishes and interests of the Africans, and the barbaric apartheid policies of South Africa.

What, then of American workers, progressives, radicals? Do they, by their customary inaction, also acquiesce in these crimes? Hunton pictures the African facing the world with a quizzical, challenging mein and asking: "Who is on my side?"

Certainly the vast majority of Americans belong on the African's side. And this book will help to place them there. The problem is to put it into the hands of as many potential readers as possible. A project to achieve this would be a fine way to engage in peaceful competition with the Soviet Union which far ahead of us in providing its peo information about Africa. Today Moscow one can buy for 50 kop (less than five cents at the current of exchange) any one of a curr series of 32-page brochures enti *Countries of Africa.* These are p lished as part of a mass popular re ence series in 150,000 copies each. this way the Soviet Union seeks to duct its policies *vis a vis* Africa on basis of an informed public opin We can compare this with the situa in the United States only with the unflattering results.

Here, then, is a book Americans n to nourish our underdeveloped kn edge of African affairs. We have fered for generations from an ignor induced by the need of the ruling to belittle the American Negro and African antecedents. W. Alph Hunton offers us a splendid opportu to overcome this costly national h icap.

LOUIS E. BURN

The Jews in the Worl

A TREASURY OF JEWISH POET edited by Nathan and Marynn A bel. Crown Publishers. $5.95.

ONE can only agree with the ec of this *Treasury* that to most ple—and this applies to Jews as as non-Jews—Jewish poetry as a v phenomenon is, as they say, *"Terr cognita."* The greatest Jewish p the Bible, everyone knows more or But over the more than 3,000 yea their history, the Jewish people hav a number of of excellent poets in a ber of languages who are not gen known. It was the intention o

ditors to present "a reasonably comrehensive sempling of the significant nd characteristic in Jewish verse hrough the ages, throughout the world. ews have written verse in all of the najor languages (including the Chinse) and the Ausubels have included xamples in English translation from nost of these languages. They have not rranged the poems chronologically but n four divisons, "The Spirit of Man," "The Jew in the World," "God" and "The Mind of the Jew." Each main division is subdivided further into aspects of the subject. For the most part it seemed to this reviewer that the editors succeeded very well in maintaining the relevance of each poem to the topic under which it is included. The range of poems by the 260 poets represented is as wide as man himself —from solemn religious themes to light verse and "wine songs."

The editors introduce the work with a brief, useful sketch of the history of Jewish poetry: the Bible, Hebrew poetry from Hellenistic and medieval times down to our own day, including that of Israel, Yiddish poetry and, along the way, translations into English of verse written in various other languages. In this introduction they state their principle of incluson: "Jewish poetry consists of all poetry created by Jews." This leads to some puzzling inclusions. Here are a few examples. The editors include 11 poems by Rainer Maria Rilke and seven by Hugo von Hoffmannsthal, each of whom had one Jewish parent. Yet there is no sign in any of these poems of a specifically Jewish character. They also include two poems by Horace Traubel, intimate of Walt Whitman, for which this reviewer can see justification neither as poetry nor as "Jewish." Then there is the poem by the Eighteenth Century Moses Mendes, British Restoration dramatist, which begins:

> Declare, my pretty maid,
> Must my fond suit miscarry?
> With you I'll toy, I'll kiss and play,
> But hang me if I marry!

There are four more verses but one is enough. How can this poem be said to be Jewish in any meaningful sense?

The Ausubels err, it seems to me in not having sufficiently taken account of the complicated problems that arise from Jewish status as a minority or a minority group since the fall of the Second Temple, except of course for the modern State of Israel. The fact of assimilation or integration of Jews into the majority and dominant group renders their concept of Jewish poetry highly dubious.

The key to the problem is language, not in its simple denotative sense but in its full cultural depth. For language incorporates modes of thinking, customs and the character of a people and is incurably peculiar to the people using it. To the degree that the consciousness of a Jew who expresses himself in the majority language is preoccupied with the tradition and customs, ideas and predicament of the Jewish people, they may be reflected in the poetry he creates. But a Jew who is immersed in the dominant culture and language may also create poetry without any perceptible Jewish character and not appreciably different from his non-Jewish fellow poets. A glance at current poetry magazines will bring this point home. Sometimes the same poet may create in both areas, for example, Karl Shapiro and Delmore Schwartz, who are properly and generously represented in the anthology.

On the other hand, verse written in Hebrew or Yiddish, used at present or in the past uniquely in Jewish communities, is inexorably Jewish because

it incorporates modes of thought of the Jewish community. Hence we disagree with the edtiors that poems in these languages may not be "identifiably Jewish" if they concern universal themes like love. The editors give the instance of the love poetry of Judah Halevi, great Twelfth Century Hebrew poet, which they say could "by no stretch of the imagination" be considered Jewish if not for the Jewish identity of its author. True, in the English translation of Halevi's love poetry, a few examples of which are included in the *Treasury,* one could not guess its Jewish origin without information about the author. But in the *original Hebrew,* such poems on universal themes are Jewish because the language embodies a Jewish way of thinking and feeling, just as Elizabethan love poetry is specifically and inexorably English. Similarly, a Yiddish poem on a "universal" theme written in an American ghetto is Jewish because it is couched in language deriving from the cast of mind of the Jew who was in significant respects culturally and in his experience partly differentiated from the rest of the American people.

A large part of the anthology is of course taken up with translations from the Hebrew and Yiddish. Passages from the Bible and Apochrypha form a small but precious portion of the book. Interesting material from the intervening centuries up to modern times acquaint the reader with less known material. The great Hebrew poets Halevi, Solomon Ibn Gabirol, Moses Ben Ezra and Abraham Ben Ezra, the modern Hayyim Nachman Bialik and Paul Tchernichowsky and outstanding contemporary Israeli poets are there. Yiddish poets from Europe, including a number of the unjustly executed Soviet Yiddish writers, and others like I. L. Pere Abraham Reisin, Yehoash the radic labor poets Morris Winchevsky, Mor Rosenfeld, David Edelshtadt and Jose Bovshover, and other recent poets a represented.

Jewish poets in a number of la guages have written poetry which c appropriately be called Jewish becau their Jewish consciousness is appare from the subject matter. Many of tha are in the book. This reviewer wou have preferred that the Hebrew a Yiddish poets, as well as those in oth languages who wrote on Jewish them were more fully represented, in pla of the large number of poets who, this reviewer's opinion, do not prope fall within the category of "Jew poetry."

But we are in debt to the edit for having labored to make this coll tion available, even though we do always agree with their principle of lection or their judgment. This bo is a useful addition to Nathan Ausub other treasures of Jewish folklore a Jewish humor. Through no fault of editors, however, the illumination sometimes not too brilliant, since translations are far from conveying full flavor and precise nature of original.

A brief biographical index gives formative data about the poets. U fortunately the book is not free fr factual errors, but these are minor.

Readers of this magazine may interested in the fact that the bo includes "Genesis," by Jules Alan W from the Summer, 1947 issue of quarterly *Mainstream.* Three poems Binem Heller, Eve Merriam and Y Suhl) were drawn from *"Jewish Li Anthology,* 1946-1956.

LOUIS HA

Letters

Editor, *Maistream*:

The Fund for Social Analysis has just been organized as an informal group of individuals interested in aiding research on problems of Marxist theory and its application, bringing together people who want to encourage such studies and to provide financial assistance toward their production. It operates without paid personnel or other overhead costs, and distributes all money raised by the sponsors through voluntary activities in research grants. In its Statement of Policy, the Fund defines its purpose as follows:

Socialist thinking in the United States has traditionally neglected analytical and basic theoretical work. The retarding effect of this failure on the socialist and labor movements in our country is today more apparent than ever before. Under the recent pressures for social conformity, research on problems opened up by Marxist theory has dwindled to a particularly low level. It is the purpose of the Fund to do what it can to correct this situation by providing grants-in-aid for research and publication to social scientists analyzing or applying Marxist hypotheses.

In making its awards the Fund will be guided solely by its estimate of the intellectual qualifications of the applicants and the significance of the problems they propose to study. Its object is to promote research in an area of inquiry, not to popularize a set of uncriticized beliefs. Its Committee on Awards has entire responsibility, not subject to review, for making grants. For the first year of the Fund's operations, the Committee on Awards comprises the following: Frank Coe, Irving Kaplan, Harry Magdoff, Stanley Moore, Russell Nixon, Annette Rubinstein and J. Raymond Walsh, as well as a panel of consultants in special fields who are available on call. Grants will ordinarily range from $500 to $3,000, but applications for larger or smaller amounts will be considered.

Projects for books and essays in all fields of social science will be welcomed. Preference will be given to topics bearing upon current problems over those of purely historical interest, topics bearing upon the United States over those solely concerned with other countries, and to studies already under way over projects merely in outline. Applications for grants and further information should be addressed to the Corresponding Secretary, The Fund for Social Analysis, Room 2800, 165 Broadway, New York 6, N. Y. Applications should contain the following information:

1. Name and address of applicant.
2. Outline of project.
3. Such parts of project as may have been drafted.
4. Plans for publication.
5. Amount of money requested and proposed use.
6. Previous publications, if any.
7. Relevant biographical data.
8. Such references (names and addresses of persons familiar with the applicant's work and intellectual qualifications) as applicant may wish to submit.

(Extra copies of the application form and previous publications will be appreciated but are not required.)

MARY JANE KEENEY
Corresponding Secretary.

Editor, *Mainstream*:

Chinese language reform is still being tested in use. Since the article I wrote on that subject for the July 1956 issue of *Mainstream,* further modifications have been made in the Latin alphabet that has been chosen for writing down phonetic Chinese.

"The revised draft Chinese phonetic alphabet," as New China News Agency calls it, now consists of our familiar 26 letters. The five symbols for Chinese sounds that were added to the alphabet previously tried out have been dropped. And the letter V, although its sound does not occur in spoken Chinese, has been restored to Chinese phonetic standing for facilitating ". . . the transcription of borrowed words."

Return to the full Latin alphabet followed 12 months of China-wide discussion and testing of the 30-symbol alphabet, and almost continuous discussions among Chinese linguistic experts. The latter began work on evolving a phonetic form for written Chinese in 1949, shortly after the People's Republic of China was proclaimed from the great Gate of Heavenly Peace in Peking.

These linguistic experts, who are members of the Committee for the Reform of the Written Language, examined some 1,200 alphabets. These were submitted by interested persons and groups, Chinese and others, within and without China. These alphabets included not only those based on old forms of Chinese script, but the Cyrillic alphabet used in the Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic, as well as various forms of the Latin alphabet. It is to be presumed that they also studied the standard Korean phonetic symbols, said by many linguistic specialists to be the most perfect in the world, with nearly 500 years of us behind them.

While it may be contended that th new use of the Latin alphabet fo writing Chinese conforms closely t the system evolved by Sir Thoma Wade, the new Chinese use of th Latin alphabet actually does away wit many of the artificial difficulties tha the Wade System introduced. To us a simple illustration, the Wade Sy tem applied to English would hav differentiated between the sounds "put" and "but" with a single quot tion mark, thus: p'ut (put) and p (but).

Other complexities of the Wade Sy tem have been likewise abolished. Fo instance, the Chinese R sound is i deed very close to the J sound. S Sir Thomas thought it best to prese the Chinese R by the symbol J, to th bewilderment of nearly everyone wh has used Wade orthography. (Th Wade System is used in so recent an excellent a book as *Teach Yourse Chinese,* by H. R. Williamson, pu lished by the English Universities Pre in 1947.)

As now written in China, the sy bol for the R sound is R, even thou this R is still pronounced with a tigh throat than in American speech, a with the teeth nearly closed. Oth simplifications need not concern us f ther, but they will all make Chin easier for Americans to learn.

And Chinese *is* an important la guage to learn, because it is spoken more people than any other langua on earth. And the pace of Chinese dustrialization—China now produces million tons of steel annually; t figure was a bit over 1 million tons 1952—guarantees that China will b increasingly larger in world affairs.

RALPH IZARI