



# Mainstream

*Eve Merriam*    **WOMANPOWERSHIP**

*Jack Lindsay*    **THE MOVERS AND THE  
MAVERICKS**

*Shirley Graham*    **LETTER FROM TASHKENT**

*George Hitchcock*    **CONSIDER THE NERVOUS  
SYSTEM**

**POEMS** by David Martin, Marguerite West, Stanley  
Kurnik and John Morgan.

**REVIEWS** of Simone de Beauvoir, Alfred North White-  
head, Maxwell Geismar, Helen and Scott Nearing,  
Martin Luther King, Jr., Vladimir Nabokov, Lawrence  
Ferlinghetti, Marek Hlasko and others.

**December, 1958**

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# WOMANPOWERSHIP

EVE MERRIAM

---

**A**MONG odd jobs in Hollywood, there are certain characters who get occasional work as professional insulters. A wealthy producer or star gives a lavish party, and to liven things up some Desperate Desmond is hired to pick fights with the guests, drop forks down their collars, smear lobster on their laps. It's a gimmick, a pepper-upper you understand, all in the spirit of good novelty fun and—what's the matter, you got no sense of humor or something?

These Hollywood sports are fringe players. The *Ladies' Home Journal*, playing the same game, is making a fortune out of it. By insulting their entire female audience, circulation has grown and grown until now nothing but the *Reader's Digest* stands between it and the summit's advertising rates. Apparently nothing succeeds like an excess of insults, and there is nothing like a dame when it comes to being taken and taken and taken. We are a nation not of Moms but of masochists. Needless to say, the magazine's campaign is the admiration of Madison Avenue, and imitations are springing up everywhere, but none of them are as hardy as the original.

If you haven't been following their campaign of "What Men Ought To Know About Womanpower," you've got to get with the lexicon. It all revolves around this key word *womanpower*. Now by *womanpower*, the *Journal* does not mean the female labor force of twenty-two million working predominantly at clerical and domestic jobs for preponderantly low-paying jobs because sex prejudice still exists. Nor does it refer to those whose main hours are taken up with trying to provide a haven for the isolate family unit in a fall-out threatened world where our Chief Executive is primarily concerned with integrating golf into his daily schedule.

In the magazine's own definition, "Womanpower is what *Ladies' Home Journal* calls that wonderful feminine influence that's been dazzling and mystifying the male sex since Adam. Because it exists everywhere, it's hard to pin down. In fact, womanpower is really a lot of different powers—as witness the examples below."

The first example given is Veto Power. You must not make the



mistake I did of thinking that this somehow is related to voting and the women's suffrage movement. You will be all wrong if you figure this has any connection with those who stood up to jeers and spit and stones, stubbornly clinging to the notion that women were citizens and therefore entitled to vote. No, *Veto Power* portrays a smiling lady with earrings, her arms gracefully laden with Supermarket bundles, while the caption deftly gives the answer in the form of a question: "Who puts her foot down gently—and daily—when Junior wants jelly beans for supper?"

Well, *Veto power*, *Seato power*; maybe we can get a better score on another aspect of *Womanpower*. Take *Power of Attorney*, as the *Journal* does, but be sure to keep off the track off history and feminist pioneers who forced a way into higher education to become lawyers, doctors, professionals. You want to get wrinkles with all those heavy books? Here is the *Journal's* own original definition. It shows a man (naturally) driving a car and a woman sitting alongside. "Power of Attorney. If she hadn't been along, would the officer have tipped his hat when he handed you the ticket?"

**N**OW comes *Power of the Press*. Thinking about editors like Charlotte Bass or Dorothy Day, or even columnists such as Eleanor Roosevelt, Sylvia Porter, Dorothy Thompson will get you nowhere. All writers and newspapermen are out. *Power of the Press*, you see, is a pun. *Press*, get it? Steam-iron-flushed wife happily hands hubby his suit, while the copy hosannally proclaims: "When you need it, your dinner jacket appears—with that tiny trace of its previous dinner removed."

There are a lot more examples of *Womanpower*, but do you still want your son to marry a girl when he grows up?

The *Journal's* over-all slogan: "Never underestimate the power of a woman" stands triumphant. Who would even try? *The Journal's* done it so thoroughly for us.

Maybe I'm misjudging. Do you suppose the campaign has a Machiavellian long-range plan in mind? To insult us all to the point where we'll get mad enough to stand up and use our human power to demand a few long overdue family rights—like more and better schools for our children, day care centers, recreation programs for teen-agers, horrorless TV shows and foreign policy, and wages, hours and peaceful co-existence suitable for both sexes?

# THE MOVERS AND THE MAVERICKS

JACK LINDSAY

---

ANYONE writing about English Poetry today can hardly escape dealing mainly with Movement, the exponents of which are often called the new University Wits since the three leaders Amis, Wain and Larkin were together at St. Johns College, Oxford. True, when John Berger twitted them with the ineptitude of a name like Movement without any qualifying adjective, Wain retorted angrily that the poets had not invented it; it had been wished on to them by an article in the *Spectator*. But the name is somehow suitable; the lack of epithet suggests a combination in a vacuum, or at least a journey without destination, as well as hinting at a resolve to be on the bandwagon, whatever the bandwagon is. And we shall see that it is not wholly unfair to put the Movers in something like this context.

The Movement came to the fore in 1955-56, and cannot be understood fully without being related to the wider trend generally called that of the Angry Young Men. But before we turn to that relation, it would be as well to consider the poets and their poems. Roughly, the Movers object to what they call Romanticism, under which term they include anything sloppy, vague, aspiring or concerned with the larger wholes of experience. In taking a stand against the indeterminate form and the thin sensibility of much that was fashionable in the preceding decade, they have performed a laudable job; but too often they identify clarity of form merely with the villanelle or terza rima, and their blows at the sensibility-cult hit out at diversely-equipped poets lumping together Dylan Thomas, George Barker, W. R. Rogers and W. S. Graham. Above all, they want poetry to deal with the particular, with the small and easily manageable theme, the everyday fragment of experience detached from responsibility.

Movement made its first wide impact with the anthology *New Lines* edited by Robert Conquest (of the Foreign Office) in 1956. The editor calls his group "as concentratedly contemporary as could be imagined," submitting "to no great systems of theoretical constructs nor agglomera-



tions of unconscious demands" which are defined as giving the Id too much of a say). "It is free from both mystical and logical compulsions, and—like modern philosophy—is empirical in its attitude to all that comes." It sticks to "reverence for the real person and event" and looks to Orwell "with his principle of real, rather than ideological, honesty." (In fact the writers influencing it are largely Orwell, Empson with his concentrated intellectual ingenuity, and Robert Graves with his matter-of-fact wringing-the-swan's-neck disillusionment.) Movement poses its direct particularity against "the debilitating theory that poetry *must* be metaphorical" and wants the hard dry use of the intellect, uncontaminated and resisting "subjective moods and social pressures."

An attempt at a counterblast was made by the semi-romantics in *Mavericks*, 1957, which attacked Movement's "antagonism towards sensibility and sentiment" as fundamentally anti-poetic and cynical, lacking moral responsibility and "strong central impulses," preoccupied with technique and "undergraduate sniggers." The *Mavericks* spoke of "significant experience," mocked the fear of "the image" and of "primary Dionysian excitement," and referred to "the mystery conversing with the mystery." Creation was described as "a dreadful struggle between the poem and the poet," between "the nameless, amorphous Dionysian material and the conscious law-abiding, articulating craftsman." The dreadful-strugglers included David Wright, Danni Abse, A. Cronin, Jon Silkin, John Smith, J. C. Hall, Michael Hamburger; and their manifestos concluded rather weakly with a complaint that Movement was cornering publicity.

But what do we find if we look at the poems on either side, ignoring the portentous theories that seem to pose scientific strictness against passionate purpose. It is hard to find much divergence in the choice of theme, though generally the Movers write in a more astringent style. The latter indeed eschew nature-poems, but they have no objection to travel-notes; they plume themselves on reflective clarity and detached concision, but despite their shudder at any social link they can at moments indulge in a self-pity that they lack the link. "I might have been as pitiless as Pope," one tells us; but renounces the temptation. They self-consciously repel the contacts or impacts that might extend their art, and with puritan fervor ignore the lumpish Id. So, as part of the collection of oddments, *dissecta membra* of memory and disarticulated moments, they play round after all with childhood and self. Identity becomes just one more *thing* in a world of cut-up things or units of time; and childhood, seen through the delimiting telescope, is a safe sphere of experience for the scrap-collector, the dabbler in the bric-a-brac of the isolated moment. Thus, Elizabeth Jennings, much praised

as a feminine Donne, is skilled at fingering and devising patterns of abstracted relationship, in which the self is a thing of brittle manipulated components:

When I decide I shall assemble you,  
Or, more precisely, when I decide which thoughts  
Of mine about you fit most easily together

Then I can learn what I have loved . . . ("Identity")

But this sort of intellectualised puzzle-game cannot be compared with the dynamic interplay of thought and image in Donne, in which the concrete fluidity of change is grasped and in which the impact of person on person is real. It is the nicely-balanced juggling of a person alone with himself or herself, alone with a mirror-image.

IF we turn now to the Mavericks we find that they too deal with small events, that they too avert their eyes from all wider relationships or transfiguring impacts; the faint significance with which they seek to invest the trivial moment or matter is not at root any different from Movement's effort to impose the stamp of its wit, its reflective sense of superiority. We meet a snowman, seven teeth, islands, maps, a letter to the *Times*; but so far from any Dionysian self-identification, the poet is helplessly cut off and cut up. He seeks to achieve a fly's-eye with many facets, to multiply his sense of division; not to find the living unity of self and world, self and nature, from the inner conflict of which proceeds great art. "Circling in much circumstance we puzzle/ Each other with a new and double fate" (Cronin): that is what the looking-back into childhood induces. It is the dilemma of deadness or thingification which Movement also faces without comprehension.

Thus despite the loud theoretical argument and certain variations in technical approach, there turns out to be no essential difference between the two trends. This point is well brought out in (of all places) a review in the *Times Literary Supplement*:

Both groups interpret their experience in terms of fragments whose significance and relatedness derive exclusively from personal contact. The cosy empiricism of Movement, and the soft centre of inward Maverickish experience, are equivalent. Neither group presents a poet whose imaginative powers can raise these outlooks into a unified field of vision. While the Mavericks attach importance to subjective content, Movement are convinced that both subjective experience and external events are irrelevant to their creations. Unhappily for them, the interaction of the principles



constitutes life. Neither exists independently; a mind attempting the rejection of one or both, seals itself in a vacuum where value is determined by personal experience alone, or evaluation and choice are denied meaning.

In fact there is no such thing as "personal experience alone," since personality is a social product; the attempt to isolate it means an attempt to live on one's spiritual capital, which leads to bankruptcy; it means also an "empiricism" which in fact is a confusion of all sorts of broken-down philosophies, generally with the more obtuse and backward-looking predominant.

If we look underneath the theoretical formulations of the two schools we find indeed there is no difference. The Mavericks treat experience as a lump, coming from outside, on which the poet struggles to impress his personality. Here we have the abstract split confessed. In creative process the poet tries to resolve his inner conflict by realizing its unity with the conflicts outside himself; but this is excluded if we set the poet as an entity against the outer world as an entity. The Movement position is put by Larkin (in *Listen*, 11, 3). He thinks a man is obsessed by an emotional concept and constructs a verbal device to reproduce it. Here there is the same sort of abstract and unreal opposition—emotion and form—as among the Mavericks. Emotion never exists in this way as a sort of solid lump, for which words are "form." In practice this means writing like Larkin's "Wants":

Beyond all this, the wish to be alone:  
 However the sky grows dark with invitation-cards  
 However we follow the printed directions of sex  
 However the family is photographed under the flagstaff—  
 Beyond all this, the wish to be alone.

We recognize then one of the unresolved inner-conflicts of Movement: the desire for the social link that is "refused." Larkin's "emotional concept" turns out to be only an impotent sense of the split in self with the *howevers* raising a faint wail of protest. Amis declares against the rage "to build a better time and place":

Warnings clearly said, shapes put down quite still  
 Within the fingers' reach, or else nowhere;  
 But complexities crowd the simplest thing,  
 And flaw the surface that they cannot break.  
 Let us at least make visions that we need;  
 Let mine be pallid, so that it cannot  
 Force a single glance, form a single word;



An afternoon long-drawn and silent, with  
Buildings free from all grime of history,  
The people total strangers, the grass cut,  
Not long voluble swooning wilderness. . . .

The spiritual landscape is that of the neat suburban street.

WE see here indeed the link of Movement with Auden and realize that the unresolved problems of the poetry of the 1930's still determine the positions today. Larkin, considered the leading poet of Movement, might indeed be called a completely flat Auden—though Auden's own prime weakness was a sort of impotent flatness. In Auden's poems the parts were almost always larger than the whole; in taking a passage, or even a line, one often felt a profound poetic impact, but when one went through the whole poem, the impact was diminished. A fundamental lack of structure derived from an inability to develop a theme by the realization of inner conflict sustained to the point of resolution. Auden had borrowed from Eliot the mechanical notion of poetry as the fitting of Objective Correlatives to an emotion, and this notion it is that still controls Movement and Mavericks alike, sterilizing and perpetuating the split-self which it is poetry's business to overcome. It led in Auden to many witty and amusing congregations of illustrative detail, but destroyed his emotional grasp; the theme was unfolded and expounded, but never poetically realized or integrated. But whereas in Auden, at least in his Thirties' writing, there remained something of a struggle between the mechanical method and the responses which he made to Yeats, in Larkin and the others this struggle is gone; only the flatness of the correlating schemes remains, at moments pleasantly descriptive and cleverly worked-out, but never rising to poetic penetration. The Maverick poet Vernon Scannell wrote for both schools when he ended "How to Fill in a Crossword Puzzle":

Sinful it might be, Sense or simply Seduce.

The snag about these clues is the alternatives are endless.

Write in the words faintly because you may have to alter them,

And be warned. When the puzzle is solved, and like a satisfied lover

You lean back sighing and sleepy, then you will never find

That the black squares hide the secrets you will never uncover.

Neither school is aware that poetry is not the filling in of blank crossword-puzzle spaces, and that in life there is dialectical unity of white and black.

After insisting on the shadow-nature of the sparring between Movement and Mavericks, between neo-realist and neo-romantic, we can proceed to see that there are certain gains as well as losses in Movement. This appears when we relate the school to the general irruption of the Angry Young Men. Though its leading trio were at Oxford, the tone of the school is rather that of the redbrick universities; there is a determined provincial note shading into a jaunty philistinism. We meet here the generation that came up with the Welfare State and feels simultaneously proud of a rise in the world (from a working-class or lower-middle-class level) and resentfully assured of state-aids and the rest of it. They have come through; and having done, ask what it is all about. Their world after all seems hollow, dull; the real plums lie elsewhere (note how Amis in *Lucky Jim* has respect only for big-business.\* They want to show up the cheat and the empty world, but don't know where to start or what is actually at fault. Struggle has died out of the world they knew, except for the uneasy echoes of the war.

Amis puts this position overtly in his pamphlet *Socialism and the Intellectuals*. He sees politics as equated with self-interest, wage-claims and the like; and finds an insoluble conflict between romanticism and realism. The first involves self-delusion, a hankering after violence, infantile aggressiveness and "an irrational capacity to become inflamed by interests and causes that are not one's own, that are outside oneself"; the second appears in certain academics, some students, steelworkers, bankers, dockworkers, who have inherited socialism, hold a settled job, have "contact with reality," or else feel personal issues at stake. Here again the split-self is loud in the opposition of causes outside oneself to personal issues, and so on.

The political world seen thus as something essentially "outside oneself" leads in turn to the idea of "culture" as something equally phoney and fabricated. Amis provides the crudest example of this aspect, being unable to distinguish the art born from the blood-and-sweat of life from the pretentious thing prattled about by the academics and sensibility-boys whom he mocks at. But the same sort of confusion one way or another afflicts all the A.Y.M. of the phase to which he belongs. (I am not however here attempting a full analysis of the A.Y.M. movement which in writers like Osborne comes much closer to real problems of art and life; I am concerned with the aspects that show up most prominently in the poets under consideration.) The sense of cheat leads to a wish to upset the apple-cart and thumb noses at the grave world—

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\* The typical jobs of these poets are university lecturing and schoolmastering; Larkin is a provincial librarian.

an excellent anarchist start-off for the young; but if unduly prolonged it ends by turning the rebel into an acceptable playboy encouraged by the very forces against which he reacted; and there is much of this in Movement. The inability to grasp what is really at stake, the refuge in empirical triviality, is coupled with a smug sense of ironic superiority; soon the method turns into a defense against being disturbed by the "irrationality" of the complicated real world, in which there is no fence between causes-outside-oneself and personal issues. And the Mavericks with their terror of "social pressures" drift to the same position, only a trifle less astringent and cocky.

IT is worth while to note the part played by Logical Positivism—the "modern philosophy" of Conquest—in the piecemeal approach to reality, the drastic opposition of what can be validly handled by poetry and what is false or irrelevant because involving a living whole. The connection is indeed vividly shown by Veronica Hull in her lively novel, *The Monkey Puzzle*, where Logical Positivism helps the heroine to escape from preconceived beliefs (Catholicism, etc.) but dessicates her mind in the process, flattens her into a nervous collapse. Miss Hull belongs to the second phase of Angry Young People and carries her criticism into the complex of naive presuppositions that underlie the world of Movement.

In this note I have had to deal with general points, since there was no space to analyze in detail the work of the poets discussed. And I have stressed the shortcomings, since that seems to me what the situation needs. Already the phase represented by Amis, Larkin, and even Osborne, seems to me to be becoming demoded; younger writers still are coming forward, and in some of them there is a thrust far beyond the Movement positions. The poet who most clearly represents the new phase is Christopher Logue, who, after a period of consolidating various influences, has liberated his own personality and is able to use what was useful in Movement without succumbing to the weaknesses.

It is strange, yet

If I tell you how sunlight glitters off

Intricate visions etched into breastplates

By Trojan smiths—you believe me,

You sanction my desires.

And if I say:

Around my bedpost birds have built their nests



That sing: No. No—you share my anxiety,  
My loss becomes your evidence . . .

But if I speak straight out and say:

Infatuated by cheap immortality . . .  
Distinguished each from each by pains  
You measure against pains . . . you stand  
To lose the world, and look alike  
As if you spat each other out, you say:

Logue grinds his axe again, He's red.  
Or cashing in. And you are right.  
I have an axe to grind. Compared to you,  
I'm red and short of cash. So what?  
I think, am weak, need help, have lived,  
And will with your permission, live.  
Why should I seek to puzzle you with words  
When your beds are near sopping with blood?  
And yet I puzzle you with words . . .

Movement has had many negative virtues as Logical Positivism is admirable in breaking down metaphysical systems but is unable to find a method for dealing with experience in its fullness—providing in the end a new sort of sterile abstraction, a semantic void—so Movement has done good work in breaking down the limited and meager sensibility cults, and by denouncing "subjective content." Its demand for clear form has made it hard for poets to keep on turning out vague emotional divagations. Though its revolt tends to substitute a personal cockiness for the authorities it denies, it saps its own defenses and makes breaches through which a more vital relationship of art and life is possible. After Dylan Thomas a new start was essential; and though Movement is not creatively strong enough to provide a new start, it calls a necessary halt.

We stand therefore at a very interesting point in our poetic development today. In poets like Logue there is a good hope that the ground-clearing of Movement will not have been in vain. Things are moving fast. The next few years may well see an important new expansion of poetry, clear and direct in form, unafraid of imagery, losing nothing of personal integrity but linked with the wider issues, the whole-hearted engagements, that can fertilise, deepen and extend the poet's world.

Such an expansion will find afresh its relation to the work of the three great poets in our immediate past, Yeats, Edith Sitwell and Dylan Thomas, with their rich and unceasing struggle to find the dialectical point where life and art are one; but it cannot use their methods. It must find its own new orientations, which will be determined partly by the whole enveloping process of life, and partly by the effort to overcome the unresolved problems posited by Movement and its kindred trends.

## FOUR POETS

### WITH A BROAD SICKLE

I went with seven into Spain,  
Two came back and five were slain.  
Life is careless of its grain,  
It cuts with a broad sickle.

Only the fool is unafraid.  
But one mistake I have not made—  
To hide from the prodigious blade  
That cuts with a broad sickle.

Peace of God I have not found,  
And yet my field by love is bound  
On all four sides. I stand my ground  
Where life cuts with a broad sickle.

Some reap no more than they can mill,  
But I who have no barn to fill  
Scatter my sheaves where they will,  
And cut with a broad sickle.

My faith is in the nameless, they  
Whom we a thousand times betray,  
Who will yet have their judgement day  
And cut with a broad sickle.

Cleanly and evenly divides  
The crescent as it onward glides;  
The ripe corn falls, the root abides  
Under the broad sickle.

DAVID MARTIN.



## THE FISHER

Before man's hate they plunged and found  
And propagated without laughter.  
His and the waiting vessel's power  
Ten aeons after

To sit upon the spring green earth,  
His mind subdued to the brown river,  
His eyes subdued to peace, not mirth  
And cast his lines.

The pale lines flicker.

The pool's convulsed. . . .

Then springs the quick

The drowning one. . . .

Netted the nailed man knows this hour.

MARGUERITE WEST

## THE EYE OF THE COMPASS

I think often now of homeless men  
Who wander up and down the sun,  
Over the endless or empty horizon;  
And I wonder just how each one

Came to be broken off the central hive,  
To be cast adrift upon the five  
Points of the compass star, to live,  
To journey onward, yet never to arrive.

And there are many, let it be said,  
Who consider it fortunate, indeed,  
If they've but a bed, a bite of bread,  
Or a roof for shelter over their head.

For everyone may search both far  
And wide, and be guided by a star;  
Still, I think myself that they are  
Fortunate, whose lives do not war

With the simple condition of the dead  
Who lie there a few feet below the sod,  
And I wonder what lives they have led  
That lay upon Earth as on bridal bed?

While each of us in his narrow shell,  
Tight as a fist or hard as a nail,  
Goes marching up and down his cell  
All of us making our own little hell!

STANLEY KURNIK

## TO HENRY WINSTON IN TERRE HAUTE PRISON

### I

Sometimes I wonder as I spend  
The lonely nights on the banks of the Wabash  
Far away, how memory's

A love's refrain of guttural Rappites  
Hymning State repairs on buildings  
In New Harmony. In Terre Haute

Our Feds sing jailed and the wind is Debs  
Chanting unfree at the gates.  
Northward where the Monon ends

Sister Carrie unhomed hums  
A hymn in Chicago. Wendell went  
To the world with a welcome song

And never saw the Hiroshima  
Maidens sun their fallen hair.

### II

I wonder as the memory  
Haunts my reverie when the moon  
Is bright tonight along the Wabash

How Levi Coffin's Union Station  
Was also a great place for music  
And how the Indian Burial Mounds

Are somehow right for lovers' songs.  
Yet our banks are far from good praises  
(Indiana, hurrah for you)

Where raintrees drop their silent gold.  
Beside a garden wall when stars  
Are bright I see us bring a harvest

Gleaming home to praise new winners  
In a Hoosier Fieldhouse Festival.

JOHN MORGAN



# LETTER FROM TASHKENT

SHIRLEY GRAHAM

---

**T**HROUGH the wide windows of our jet plane we looked down on the plains of Southern Russia. We flew across the Volga River. Below were the steppes over which a thousand years ago swept invading Tartars. Then the land crinkled into jagged ridges. Patches of snow gleamed in dark hollows. The plane circled and dropped down upon a plateau ringed about by snow-capped mountains. We had come to Tashkent, capital of Uzbekistan, one of the 16 Republics of the Soviet Union—east of the continent of Africa, north, but not far, from India, near the center of the continents of Europe and Asia. The plane came to a halt in front of an imposing airport surrounded by gardens. Above the building fluttered many colored flags. Tapestries hanging from the white pillored porch were inscribed in Arabic, Hindustani, Uzbek and Russian: WELCOME TO THE CONFERENCE OF ASIAN AND AFRICAN WRITERS.

A welcoming committee conducted us to a car which took us along tree-lined streets with red banners stretched across, bearing greetings in many languages. Later, when darkness fell I discovered that the branches were hung with tiny electric lights. "Christmas trees" were all about us.

The car slowed down as it turned into the huge square with its magnificent Alisher Navoi Theatre where the Conference was taking place. People were everywhere, but especially dense about the large, new hotel facing the Navoi Theatre across the square. This luxurious hotel had been completed just in time for the Writers Conference—plaster was scarcely dry in some of the rooms. But windows and floors were polished, the rugs were brilliant, the chandeliers gleamed. The people of Tashkent had gathered in front of their fine new hotel awaiting their first guests. Alert school boys in smart uniforms and girls with long, thick braids sought autographs from favorite authors; old men, wearing the peasant garb of medieval Tashkent, stood beside young mothers holding babies in their arms.

There was a rustle of whispers when we arrived. Our appearance, obviously, was somewhat puzzling. They had watched the arrival of bearded, turbaned Moslems, of soft-eyed Indian women wrapped

in silk, of tall black Africans in multi-colored robes. Now what? Respectfully and quietly the crowd made a lane for us to pass through. I hesitated, unwilling to pass by all those eager, inquiring faces without some outward expression. I smiled a greeting, then, leaning towards an old woman, whose eyes under her shawl peered out from a thousand wrinkles, I laid my hand on my heart and said softly, "Za meer! Za druzba!"

And all the wrinkles ran together with pleasure. "Za meer! Za druzba!" she answered joyfully. Her smiles were reflected in the crowd. "Za meer!" they called. "Za druzba!" The plaza echoed with the voices. We were welcome! Whoever we were—from whatever place we came—they knew that we had come "In Peace and Friendship."

These words were keys to the Asian-African Writers Conference which met in Tashkent, Uzbek, SSR, October 7-13—the first time in modern history that such a widely representative body of writers from these two continents had come together. In ancient times there were close cultural and economic links between the peoples of Asia and Africa, but the slave trade, colonialism, pillage, exploitation and oppression of the peoples of these continents had long since wiped out such exchanges.

"Eight hundred years ago scholars of Europe traveled to Timbuctoo to study there in the university," Majhemont Diop, Senegalese poet, told me. "But that was before the rape of Africa," he added bitterly. Mulk Raj Anand, Indian novelist whose books are read in most parts of the world, recalled that imperialism had obliterated contacts in his country even between the provinces.

The Tashkent conference, extending as it did from Japan and China to Egypt and Ghana, and from Central Asia to Indonesia, was a continuation of a purpose—to tumble the walls and burst the fetters of colonialism—which had inspired Bandung and was accelerated by the meeting of writers in Delhi in 1956.

From forty-eight countries abroad came 168 writer-delegates; those from the Soviet Asian republics brought the total to over 200. In addition there were at least a hundred writers from western Europe, guests, and visitors. India sent the largest delegation headed by Tara Sankar Bannerji, and including such eminent writers as Bengal Senate President Chatterji, Yash Pal and Mulk Raj Anand. China came next with twenty-one, headed by the novelist Mao Tun, with four women and several writers in "minority" languages. Uganda, Somaliland, Nigeria, Jordan, and Palestine were represented by expatriates at present living in Cairo, and Turkey was represented by its beloved poet, the exiled

Nazim Hikmet. Liberia and Ethiopia were conspicuous by their absence. South Africa was not expected. It had been feared that French Africa would be prevented from attending, but on the second day its delegates arrived: from Madagascar, Senegal, Guinea, Dahomey, the Ivory Coast. To the applause of the assemblage they marched to the rostrum, having refused to be intimidated either by De Gaulle's edicts or by the anti-communism of "Présence Africaine." They took their places besides representatives from Algeria, Portuguese Angola and Mozambique.

**O**PENING the conference, Sharaf Rashidov, chairman of the Preparatory Committee, a writer, and president of the Uzbek Republic, said, "Our conference is unfettered by any racial, political, geographical, ethnic or other limitations. Far from erecting any barriers between the literature of East and West, it forms a firm bridge for the development of friendly ties between the literatures and cultures of all countries throughout the world."

Speakers addressed the conference in plenary sessions held in the auditorium. Five commissions were set up in separate rooms of the spacious Navoi Theatre to exchange ideas and study problems related to: promotion of friendly contacts between Asian and African countries; women in literature; children's books; the drama; cinema and radio.

Delegates were given earphones for translations in English, French, Russian and Arabic. Plenary sessions could be picked up from any part of the building. In fact, on a warm sunny afternoon it was possible to sit outside in the square and listen to speeches being made in the auditorium.

Possible, but not to be recommended. For the area offered too many diversions. Around the bookstalls lining the square milled crowds which might have come out of a tale from *Arabian Nights*—all seeking books. They examined, admired and bought the works of classical and modern African writers. One stall in a day took in 10,000 rubles' worth of orders for books in the Tartar language. On two huge stands were exhibited headings of newspapers and title pages of magazines published in the Soviet Union. (Altogether there are about 10,000 newspapers and 750 magazines. Books in the USSR are published in 124 languages.) Many delegates at Tashkent for the first time saw remote, little known languages in print.

"They said the Russians wouldn't let us speak as we wished. What a lie!" whispered Dr. Aisha Abdel-Rahman, of Cairo. She lifted her



eyebrows eloquently and sighed, "But I wish somebody would do a bit of cutting." With about forty members of the Women's Commission, presided over by Hsian Ping-hsin, a gray-haired, sweet-faced Chinese woman, we were seated at a long table hearing and recording reports. At one end of the table a scholar from North Korea had been reading from a voluminous manuscript for what seemed a long time. Paragraph by paragraph his paper was being translated in Russian, then in French, then in English. The afternoon was slipping away. From the very start of this really excellent paper every face around the table, regardless of differing nationalities, had carried one question: "Why had not a woman been sent to make this report?" I fear the women's commission was not as tolerant and patient with the brother delegate as it might have been. But no one asked him to cut one line from his carefully prepared paper.

While the framework of the conference was efficiently and skillfully set up no attempt was made to curtail, restrict, or organize any speech. With so much of antiquity behind them and so many years of repression and muted voices, it is not surprising that many of the speeches were very long and intricate with details. Some idea of the scope and diversity of the discussions may be gleaned from a few titles:

Marlo de Andrade of Angola reported on the "Development of Literature in African Countries Under the Domination of Portugal"; Dr. Gobind Singh, head of Khush College, New Delhi, delivered a "Synopsis of Hindi Literature," listing thirty-one of the "most outstanding works of modern Hindi Literature"; Khim Maung Yi, of Burma, called attention to "International Tension and Its Effect on Writers"; in her report on "Women in Japanese Literature," Tsuyako Miyake emphasized the activities of the "Writers Association for Women" in Tokyo; a poet from Daghestan, a remote, mountainous republic, reported that books of Western and Eastern origin are published in nine of the thirty-six languages spoken by Daghestan's 1,000,000 people. The wealth of China's reports cannot be summarized in this short survey.

The *responsibility* of the writer was emphasized over and over in many languages and with differing approaches. Said Tara Sankar Bannerji: "We certainly do not control the material resources of the world. That is left to the politicians. But that need not make us unduly diffident. For, if we can see below the surface impulse of history, we should have no doubt that the course of history has always been determined by ideas. Generals with flashing swords or politicians busy with their diplomacy, big and showy though they be, are not as

significant or as important as the men of ideas who control the human mind. Men of literature, who know the magic of recreating life, and thereby giving shape to the ideas, are more powerful than the men of ideas who are mere philosophers. We may hasten man's journey to ruin and confusion if we are careless or we may take a hand in elevating him to godhood. Literary men of all countries have, therefore, a great responsibility."

Nazim Hikmet, "the beloved poet," reminded us: "Brothers, modern writers bear the hearts of their peoples on their hands. We brought the hearts of our peoples to the Tashkent Conference. The heart is skillful in two things—in hatred and in love. At the Tashkent Conference our hearts are united by boundless hatred and boundless love: hatred of slavery, war, colonialism, and backwardness; and love of freedom, national independence, progress, nationality, and a happy and just life on earth."

THE conference had certain high dramatic moments. One was when Hafiz Jhullundhuri, most revered of all the poets of India and Pakistan, cried out in his native tongue against the "imposition of the language of conquering oppressors" being laid upon his people. "Why should we speak English?" he demanded. Then he held us spellbound while he chanted a "song of India."

Cedric Belfrage, editor of *The National Guardian*, describes another big moment: "The life of W. E. B. Du Bois received a crown of tribute in history's first gathering of writers from all Asia and Africa. With only his wife and one deported editor to record the occasion for his own country's press, the 90-year-old American scholar drew the only standing ovation to an individual in Tashkent's magnificent Navoi Theatre. . . . His voice rang clear from wall to intricately carved wall of the auditorium, speaking for the freer, friendlier, brinkless America for which he and his ancestors fought."

Nor will any delegate ever forget the closing hour of the conference. We adopted unanimously an "Appeal to the Writers of the World" calling upon all writers "to raise your voices against all the evils which are being committed both against individuals and against whole nations," calling on them "to sing of freedom and hope for a better future for all our peoples." We cheered the announcement of the establishment of a permanent Bureau of Asian and African Writers in Ceylon, and accepted the invitation of the United Arab Republic to hold the next Writers' Conference of Asia and Africa in Cairo.

Then to the speaker's stand came the leader of the delegation from

Ghana, representing the youngest nation in this body of many nations, though the beginnings of its culture are lost in antiquity. She was a statuesque, black woman, her tall figure draped in the vivid colors of her country's flag: gold and green and red. She wore her headdress of the same colors like a crown. In rich, swelling tones she thanked the people of Tashkent for their warm and tireless hospitality and in the name of the Asian-African Conference of Writers she pledged all of us to the unfaltering fulfillment of peace, friendship, and freedom—to a great new era of cultural growth and advancement. As she spoke, her eyes flashing in the deep-carved ebony of her face, this black woman was Africa, the Mother—Africa, of deep and mighty rivers, Africa, hailing the new dawn with joy and happiness!

IT IS a source of grief to us that we were the only Americans at Tashkent. Greetings to the conference from Nikita Khrushchev, from Gamal Nasser, from Jawaharlal Nehru, from Chou En-lai, were hailed and applauded without partiality and with equal enthusiasm. The European press was there to cover it. It is only to the loss of the American people that our press and leaders ignored it.

For the Tashkent meeting between Asia and Africa is a reality which any part of the world ignores at its own peril. Even the place of meeting had historical significance. It is doubtful if any more appropriate place could have been found than this city, deep in the heart of Eurasia, whose people have emerged from medieval darkness in the past thirty years. In ancient times, along a road not far from the present city, traveled caravans of merchants bearing silk from China and ivory from the Congo. Over this road scholars from Timbuctoo met scholars from Peking; languages and cultures mingled and influenced each other.

Again in this October of 1958 scholars of these two mighty continents came together. The centuries of separation have been long and bitter, but now that separation is ended. Together they will move forward towards: *Peace, Friendship, Freedom.*

Tashkent, October 15, 1958.



# CONSIDER THE NERVOUS SYSTEM

GEORGE HITCHCOCK

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HE JUMPED off the train a minute before me and when he saw me pitch forward into the gravel, he took a running step or two until he was at my side.

"Hurt yourself?"

"Not likely," I said, putting a brave face on matters.

He helped me to my feet. "It was going pretty fast," he remarked. I knew he wanted to give me solace, but I wanted none of it. I was seventeen and acutely conscious of it.

"I've jumped plenty faster," I said. "On *and* off."

"You've got to put the inside foot down first."

"I know."

"It preserves your center of gravity."

"Sure. I know." But I didn't like a total stranger to talk like that to me. From the tone of his voice you would have thought he was teaching school.

We stood in silence and watched the last few box-cars thump past. Then there was the faded red caboose with a brakeman standing on the bottom step swinging a lantern. Then nothing at all except for the silence in the air and the changing block lights on the semaphore in the middle distance.

"Ignorant bastards," he said without any particular emotion.

"Who?"

"Brakemen."

I could think of nothing to say to that, so I started walking down the track toward the distant town. He kept step with me.

"Ever been a sheep-herder?" he asked.

I admitted that I had never been a sheep-herder and I tried to make it sound definitive. I didn't much like his looks and my pride was still rankling about that fall. But he wasn't so easily rebuffed.

"Chaw?" he asked, offering me a piece of plug.

"Thanks," I said. I nearly wrenched my teeth out getting a bite from the plug, but, after all, I was seventeen and it didn't do to act inexperienced. I had an idea that I had already sunk pretty far in his estimation, what with that header and then never having herded sheep.

"You may find it hard to believe," he said, settling into an easy stride beside me, "but the General Electric Company has swindled me out of well over one million dollars."

I did find it hard to believe but I didn't tell him so. When you take a man's chewing-tobacco you bind yourself to a certain amount of polite conversation. So I just stuck my quid in one cheek and managed to say, "That's a lot of money."

"It is," he said with a faraway look in his pale blue eyes. I waited for him to go on but he had apparently lost interest in the subject because he let a full minute go by in silence and then began to whistle "Tipperary" with the nonchalance of a man who is willing to let bygones be bygones. When he had finished I asked him if he had ever been in Yakima, Washington, before. That was the name of the town we were approaching.

"I've been everywhere," he said.

I could have anticipated that, but I wasn't going to give up so easily.

"But have you ever been in Yakima, Washington?" I asked.

"Young fellow, when I say everywhere, that includes Yakima, Washington." He took a long squint at me and added, "You better spit that quid out 'fore it burns a hole in your cheek."

I liked him a lot less after that remark but I kept my mouth shut. I was afraid if I opened it flames would shoot out and engulf us both. I suppose he saw how defenseless I was because he put his hand on my elbow and said, "We've got a great deal to learn on the subject of human physiology, haven't we?"

I nodded wisely.

"Consider the nervous system," he went on. "It may surprise you to learn the number of amperes of electricity, both positive and negative, which course up and down the human body during any single day. In order to carry this load I compute that there is over seven miles of wiring within each of us."

"Wiring?" I said, not because I was much interested but because sooner or later I had to open my mouth anyway.

"Call it nerves, call it wires."

I thought that one over for a while and by the time I had come up with an answer we had already reached the first shanties on the edge of town.

"I think I'll scrounge something to eat," I said and vaulted over the whitewashed rail fence that ran along the right-of-way. He unnerved me. I didn't care for the way in which he kept switching subjects just when you thought he had found one in which he was in-

terested. When I was on the other side of the fence I looked back. I thought perhaps he would miss me and call me back. But he was still walking along the tracks, poking at the weeds between the ties with a willow stick. I ducked behind an old cow-shed and got rid of his chewing-tobacco.

Yakima, Washington, is a town of about 20,000 chiefly noted for its red apples. It was really dull. I tried the back doors of both the town's bakeries with no success at all and was chased out of three restaurants in spite of my sincere offer to wash dishes. Finally I settled down to stealing empty milk bottles from doorsteps. That is really very challenging work but at two cents a bottle it takes you a long time to get much return on it. But by five o'clock I had earned enough for a can of Van Camp's pork and beans which was a penny cheaper than Heinz's 57 Varieties although there isn't as much porkfat in it. I was sitting under a maple tree in the town square eating them with a wooden Dixie-cup spoon, when I saw him coming across the grass toward me. I got up very nonchalantly, as if I hadn't seen him at all and just wanted a shadier spot to eat in, and sat down on the other side of the tree. But it didn't do any good. He followed me around the tree and sat down beside me.

"Have some pork and beans," I said politely. That's the sort of trouble you get into if you accept a man's chewing-tobacco.

But to my relief, he had already eaten. So he chewed on a blade of grass and waited for me to finish.

"With all that electricity coursing inside of you," he said, "you'd think a human being would need plenty of insulation."

I made no comment.

"Have you ever wondered why a man with lots of muscle is strong and a man with no muscle is weak?"

Now he was getting onto a subject I knew something about. I had taken Charles Atlas's Body-Building Course from beginning to end. So I told him.

"Superficial," he said, tapping me on the knee with his willow stick. "Superficial."

"Well, what's *your* answer?"

He squinted over my head as if he were trying to read an oculist's chart somewhere in the sky and said, "The true function of muscle is to act as insulation against the escape of all that electricity. The more muscle a man has, the less electricity escapes, ipso facto, the stronger he is——"

"Wouldn't fat do just as well?"

He gave me a cold look.

"That shows how little you know," he said. "Fat *conducts* electricity."

That stumped me. Charles Atlas had had nothing to say about the electrical properties of fat.

"I think I'll get a drink of water," I remarked casually. But I couldn't get away. He followed me to the drinking fountain and even held the handle while I drank. He waited until I was through and then said, "That's why fat men are always sweating."

"I know lots of fat men who don't sweat," I said.

"Name one." He certainly was stubborn.

"You wouldn't know them. They're just personal friends of mine."

"Just name one."

He had my dander up now, so I reeled off a whole string of imaginary names. I was always good at inventing things on the spur of the moment.

statements. But I kept myself under control and only said:

"I told you, they were just personal friends of mine. Of course you wouldn't know them."

"And not one of them ever sweats?" he asked with the same superior air.

"I didn't say that. I just said they didn't sweat any more than the average man."

"No, you didn't. You said you knew fat men who didn't sweat at all."

I was really beginning to get irritated with him. I hadn't asked for this argument. I had been quietly sitting there minding my own business, not harming a soul in the world, until he came along and began forcing his opinions on me.

"Why don't we drop the whole thing?" I suggested with an edge to my voice.

"It's just a question of scientific fact," he said. "Either you know these people who don't sweat, or you don't, that's all."

Right then if somebody had offered me two cents I think I would have knocked his block off, he irritated me so much with his positive statements. But I kept myself under control and only said.

"Look, I'm not interested."

He must have seen how I felt because he mumbled something about some people being touchy and just stood there by the drinking fountain holding the faucet on but not bothering to stoop over and drink. Then he sat down on the grass again and bent the willow stick across his knee until it finally broke. He didn't seem angry, just a little disap-



pointed. It was beginning to get dark. The air was cool and no longer dusty and I could see the barn-swallows swooping around overhead looking for gnats. I lay down on the grass, too. And then I thought how far away from home we both were here in Yakima, Washington, and that it really didn't matter whether I got irritated with him or not, he was just trying not to be lonely. Actually, there was something kind of pathetic about him, sitting there with his head down and the two broken pieces of stick in his hand. So after a while I asked in a friendly voice:

"What about the blood?"

"What blood?"

"*The* blood. Is it a conductor or an insulator?"

His face lit up all over at that.

"Neither," he said. "It's the cooling system." He took that old black plug out of his pants pocket.

"Chaw?"

But I said, no thanks. At least, I had learned my lesson about that.

# NO HARD FEELINGS

CHARLES HUMBOLDT

**J**OHN Foster Dulles is the modern Iron Maiden. When he embraces a country, it springs a thousand wounds from the spikes of his loving care.

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Having preferred Camus to Aragon or Sartre and Pasternak to Sholokhov, perhaps the Swedish Academy will pass by Sean O'Casey in favor of Mgr. Fulton Sheen.

\* \* \*

A visit to midtown. Fifty-seventh and Madison. A tall man in a Brooks Brothers tweed shakes his briefcase at passersby and shouts, "I hate this god damned business. I tell you I'm an engineer!" . . . Forty-seventh and Park. A gentleman wearing a dark Homburg points to an old brown autumn leaf in front of his apartment house. The doorman shakes his head with delicate disapproval and carries it indoors. . . . Forty-fourth and Lexington. A young man stands crying, "Where is my mother? She isn't dead. She isn't dead." . . . I hold the cafeteria entrance door an instant so that it will not swing back into the face of the man behind me. He walks through as though it had been opened by a photoelectric eye. I blush, remembering how often I've had to run at least twenty feet to get through a door which some self-appointed saint was using to put me into his debt. . . . Thirty-eighth and Third. What is the old lady wearing like a toque on top of her head? As she bends down, I see it is a plastic wolf's mask. . . . A short, skinny man waits angrily on the subway platform for someone to brush against him. Each time this happens, he begins to mutter like a mechanical toy releasing its spring, but I think that only death will unwind him fully. . . . Another wraith dashes into the train, jumps back just before the door closes, flies upstairs, then creeps down again like an Indian scout. Still another hoots like a locomotive and calls "Next stop, Bellevue, all out folks." And—this time I distrust myself—there at the top of the flight, two cataleptics stand a few feet apart, like grotesque caryatids,

holding their topcoats wrapped tightly around them and glaring at nothing. Let's call it a bad day and say nothing about society.

\* \* \*

The four plays of Camus have just come out in English with a special introduction written by the author for the edition.\* While some writers keep a fresh and childlike spirit throughout their lives and others lapse into early senility, Camus is the eternal adolescent. It doesn't embarrass him to confess him to "that immoderate devotion to truth which an artist cannot renounce without giving up his art itself." He is just the man Diogenes was looking for.

Having proclaimed the absurdity of human existence,\*\* Camus feels entitled to impose categorical imperatives in defiance of that absurdity, without bothering to examine whether circumstances make them realizable or not. It is all or nothing with him. Freedom? The positive hero is its unreserved champion; the man condemned by dramatic judgment has violated it absolutely. But what of Camus' ideal of moderation, of limits? Suppose the struggle for freedom for many produces a lack of freedom for some? Call it off! But what of the unfreedom of many? Well, that must wait until, until . . . at least our hearts are pure and our hands unstained in the interim. The ideal sits like a seagull on the water in the very calm eye of the hurricane.

Because the motives of Camus' characters are always secondary to his illustrative purpose, their actions are fantastically disproportionate. In "Caligula," the emperor having discovered through the death of his sister, with whom he has had an affair, that "Men die, and they are not happy," proceeds to abuse his boundless freedom by acts of arbitrary cruelty. Camus intends us to see in the revolt against the courageous but "mistaken" ruler the victory of the limits which men naturally impose upon their own and others' destructive drives. By elevating a madman's mind to the level of a philosophical principle, he has won the argument hands down. He has also made the argument ridiculous. It's like listening to a case in which a man who has strangled twelve housewives pleads that he did not understand the woman question.

In "The Misunderstanding," Martha has long wanted to escape from her cramped and colorless life in the mountains of Moravia and to take

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\* CALIGULA AND THREE OTHER PLAYS, by Albert Camus. Alfred A. Knopf. \$5.00.

\*\* For the exposition of Camus' thinking, which this doesn't remotely pretend to be, the reader is referred to the article, "Nobel Prizewinner Albert Camus," by Annie Ubersfeld, in the October issue of *Mainstream*.

her mother with her to some sunny seacoast. To this end the two women have been accumulating money by robbing and murdering guests at their small inn. The last of these will prove to be Martha's brother, who has returned home after many years to take them away with him to the south. Jan will not identify himself because he wants first to see his sister and mother as they really are. His high-minded fancy costs him his life. When the mother discovers whom she has conspired to murder, she commits suicide, while the abandoned Martha, still convinced that she has been right to demand happiness, rails at Jan's wife, Maria, who has come to the inn looking for him. In a world without meaning, where such cross purposes are at work, there can be no more pity for the innocent than for the guilty sufferer.

Camus' prefatory remark on this interplay of tragic error—for such it is in his eyes—is that it can be reconciled with an optimistic view of man's nature, or at least his potentialities. "For, after all, it [the play] amounts to saying that everything would have been different if the son had said: 'It is I; here is my name.'" Can Camus really intend that there is a world of difference between drowning strangers and putting a prodigal son out of the way? But a still more Camusian moral is in store for us: "It amounts to saying that in an unjust or indifferent world man can save himself, and save others, by practicing the most basic sincerity and pronouncing the most appropriate word." How noble it sounds, but by dint of what straining does Camus deliver this lesson instead of the more prosaic one that you'd better let your kinfolk know who you are so they don't slit your throat for a house on the seashore? Camus' work is a tribute to the belief that if you squeeze a sordid fact or sodden personality hard enough, truth will issue from it like nectar from a stone. The only proof against such art is a sense of humor.

For the terrorists Kaliyev and Dora in "The Just Assassins," justification cannot come from an external source, from the aim to be accomplished, but only from their willingness to accept an evening of the score. Whoever sheds blood must die himself. As Camus puts it, "Our world of today seems so loathsome to us for the very reason that it is made by men who grant themselves the right to go beyond those limits, and first of all to kill others without dying themselves." Their philosophy of limits does not deter the terrorists from killing the Grand Duke (though Kaliyev will not throw his bomb so long as there are children in the carriage). All they want to do—in the name of moderation, presumably—is to compound a futile political gesture with a useless personal one. Camus' eleventh commandment is aimed not at halting the solitary romantic rebel, but at paralyzing all forms of revolutionary



mass action. He is the spokesman not of those who will die if they must, but of those who insist on dying as an example to a complacent audience which has no intention of dying or even of missing the last train to New Rochelle.

According to Camus' own testimony, "State of Siege" is that one of his writings which most resembles him. We may assume that he sees himself as the hero Diego, who defies The Plague, symbol of totalitarianism. Liberty is his religion in this century of "tyrants and slaves." He tells us that his allegory has never been shown either in Spain or "behind the Iron Curtain," though it has played for years in Germany (West Germany, of course, where in deference to liberty the Communist Party is outlawed and there is a movement afoot to exact the death penalty for those who show signs of wanting to re-constitute one).

"State of Siege" begins as a masque of tyranny and ends as a juvenile pageant, with the hero flaunting his immortal scorn for despots and dying in a flood of his own eloquence:

See how the swirling waves are glowing, like anemones! Their anger is our anger, they are avenging us, calling on all men of the sea to meet together, all the outcasts to make common cause. O mighty mother, whose bosom is the homeland of all revels, behold thy people who will never yield! Soon a great tidal wave, nourished in the bitter dark of underseas, will sweep away our loathsome cities.

The tidal wave is no symbol of human agency. It is a rhetorical substitute for Camus' refusal to face the problem of how liberty is to be wrested from those who rule in a class-divided society. Cadiz is the scene of his play. Why a Spanish city? In fairness, it must be said that Camus still speaks of his devotion to the cause of Republican Spain. Could it be because this Spain was not soiled by victory, but was betrayed instead and let fall under the blows of fascism?

In the play, even Diego's death does not accomplish what we were tempted to believe it would: an unblemished future. Why not? After all he did not raise his hand against the plague, only his voice! Could it be because Camus knows that Diego's death is merely a pose, or that defeat must always be renewed as a rite in his own religion of liberty? Our argument with him is not that he believes freedom to be a difficult and evasive goal in any society, but that he posits such conditions for the effort to achieve it as to make it a priori unattainable. Isn't this hypocrisy? At first I couldn't take that unctuous style of his; now I see that it is quite functional.

From the condition of book reviewing in the United States, it looks as though the State Department had opened an office called "Literary Criticism." From now on few intellectuals abroad will escape the hisses or warbles from our shores. Which brings me to Tibor Dery's *Niki*,\* which provides American readers with their first introduction to this writer. According to most Hungarians, Dery is a writer of classical stature. Among his works is a massive trilogy of life under the Horthy regime, during which he, as a Communist, suffered voluntary exile. Despite his qualities as a novelist, he has not been translated before.

Dery's opposition to the acute manifestation of bureaucracy in Hungarian life, particularly after 1950, brought him into conflict with the leadership around Rakosi. *Niki* was published in the Spring of 1956. The book enjoyed a wide sale, because it registered the feeling of many workers and common people about the abuses of the preceding period. Could it be that the regime, aware of the resentment and its justice, welcomed—not without anxiety, of course—evidence that it did not wish to stifle any longer expressions of anger at faults of whose danger it was at last aware?

This is no place to recapitulate the drama of the Fall of 1956. However, in order not to be misunderstood, I want to make clear that I consider the counter-revolution and imperialist intervention to have been the primary sources of the uprising, and the dissatisfaction of the people a contributory but insufficient cause.

Dery's role at this time is obscure to us, but he was later arrested and sentenced to nine years' imprisonment. Since then, as the *New York Times* reported recently, Hungary's economy has undergone marked improvement and the government has won the confidence of people by the steps it has taken to eliminate the sources of discontent. The lessening of tension in the country has in turn permitted the amelioration of the harsh measures taken during the crisis of two years ago. Recently two of the writers condemned with Dery have been released. Would it be presumptuous to anticipate that he, too, will be freed?

In the blurb which accompanies reviewers' copies, the date of the Hungarian publication of *Niki* is not made clear. One might think it came hot off an insurgent press to inspire the freedom fighters. It is printed here as a cold-war instrument, recommended by those who never thought of translating the major work of the Communist Dery, *Face to Face*. Nor of publishing along with this novelette the somewhat earlier story, "The Birth of Simon Mynyhért," which describes the mobilization

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\* NIKI, by Tibor Dery. Doubleday and Co. \$2.95.

of all the resources of a socialist community to preserve the life of a child on a distant snowbound mountainside.

*Niki* itself is a lesser work, but it would be misleading to call it slight. In its close observation of animal and master, it resembles Thomas Mann's charming portrait of his dog, *Bashan and I*, written during the first World War. Both books are characterized by a forgiving irony, though in Dery's case the tone is more severe when the great ones of the world are mentioned; that is, all those who abuse their power over man, child, or helpless animal.

Bashan was adopted by the Mann family. The fox terrier bitch Niki chooses the engineer Janos Ancsa and his wife, running away from her owner, an ex-officer of Horthy's army. What endears her to the couple would be called dependence by a formula-ridden observer. Actually it is the pure and joyous feeling of love, unencumbered by anxiety, calculation, or regret. If Niki does not understand events that her brain cannot absorb, she sees and hears many things that preoccupied humans are distracted from their cares and surrender to routine. This capacity for undivided attention is the source of her energy, her astounding leaps, and, alas, the cause of her death. For her simple, intense soul, lacking the longer perspective of man's hope, just misses holding on until her master's return after a five-year absence in prison.

Dery does not tell us of Janos Ancsa's experiences in that interval, though an old miner friend and Communist is able to assure Mrs. Ancsa that her husband is unharmed. The engineer was arrested and is released without explanation; and this upright man, devoted to his country and the new society he is helping to build, will never know who thought him guilty or of what.

The life of Niki with the Ancsas is a delicate study of a relationship into which speculative elements must enter in some ways even more arbitrarily than they do into the descriptions of the human comedy. Have we the right to assume that the animal mind experiences the same noble emotions and the "cliffs of fall" which delight and appal us? By their art, both Mann and Dery convince us that we do not lose by thinking so. Dery does, of course, go one step further. His irony, never coarse like that of poorer writers with whom he is sure to be compared, was addressed to but not against, a nation and a party passing through perhaps the most painful phase of their effort to overcome a ruinous fascist-ridden past.

It urges that the difficulties of the struggle should not harden men against their instinctive friendliness, and warns them that scoundrels will take advantage of a vigilance which is not tempered with under-

standing or which is careless of justice. Unlike so many contemporary saints, Dery does not deny that power—authority—is necessary; he *is* concerned with the use and manner of its wielding. Janos Ancsa bears his responsibility toward Niki with tenderness; his figure is a plea that those with a heavier charge should do likewise.

Literary evidence is not infallible. It tells me that Dery is no Pasternak; and so I can only hope that he will have the chance to prove it.



Up to this late time of writing (Nov. 21) the American press, excepting the *National Guardian* and *The Worker*, has been quiet as a hamster about the details of the letter sent to "Boris Leonidovich" in Sept. '56 by the editors of *Novy Mir* when they rejected the manuscript of *Doctor Zhivago*. This 10,000-word document has been available for some while in English, in No. 44 of the Soviet weekly journal *New Times*, and appears in the December issue of *Political Affairs*. (We published a review of the book last month.) Those who were troubled by the tone of Zaslavsky's blast in *Pravda* are urged to consider the calm and thoughtful attention which Pasternak received from his fellow writers two years earlier. It is clear that, contrary to his claim, much more than a few passages were involved in the difference between him and them. It's also apparent that Pasternak rejected the criticism in toto—as he still does, witness his disingenuous letter to *Pravda* (*N. Y. Times*, Nov. 6)—decided that the novel must be published come what may, and shipped it off to Feltrinelli and "immortality."

This is no place to tackle the issue of freedom of expression, but it has a peculiar slant in this case. It's hard to see how any Soviet editor would have liked the book any more than did the board of *Novy Mir*. Should they therefore have appealed to the government in their predicament, urging that it be issued anyway, considering Pasternak's status as a poet and translator, and perhaps even with an eye to the honors which they could have been sure were soon to be bestowed upon him by the generous "free world"? And arranged a cocktail party for the author to assure us that he was not being terrorized? I'm not asking maliciously. It's only that from the tears and fury of certain columnists one might think that no worthwhile ms. had ever been lost in the shuffle here, and no writer had ever been forced into eternal TV after a year or so wrestling with the novel that was going to tear the pants off the national scene.



# Right Face

## *Galloping Exegesis*

An article by Herbert Hoover, "Myth of the Fourth Horseman," appears in the current issue of the *Saturday Review*.

Mr. Hoover contends that St. John intended the name of the Horseman of the Apocalypse on the red horse to be "Revolution," not Pestilence or Slaughter as he is often designated. Referring to St. John's warning against war in the sixth chapter of Revelation in the New Testament, Mr. Hoover wrote:

"Our belief is that he was trying to express for the other horseman the name which we know in modern times as Revolution. Revolution can of course be good or bad, but St. John's horseman had no good purpose.

"We do not allow our imaginations to extend to the idea that St. John was prophesying communism, even though one is tempted partly because of the prophetic statement that power was given to the horseman to take peace from the world."—The *New York Times*.

## *Pack Up Your Troubles*

A leading figure in the field of atomic science suggested this week that continuation of low-power nuclear tests was important quite aside from weapons development.

The reason: to learn techniques of survival in a world rendered abnormally radioactive by atomic hostilities. The proponent of this idea was Dr. Stafford Warren. . . . Dr. Warren was medical director of the World War II Manhattan Project, which produced the first atomic bombs. He spoke at a local Optimists Club meeting.—The *New York Times*.

## *Arrest That Man*

Martin H. Maier, assistant editor of the Purdue Opinion Panel made this report:

"The students think engineers are the bastions of our strength but that the scientist is an incompetent radical."

The poll found that high school students believe that a scientist

is unable to have a normal family life, is more likely than other people to be mentally ill, is odd, has little regard for humanity and is apt to be radical and unpatriotic.—AP dispatch.

### *Come to Think of It*

PHILADELPHIA.—Henry R. Luce, editor-in-chief of Time, Inc., advocated here today a program for construction of atomic bomb shelters at a cost of \$2,000,000,000 to \$3,000,000,000 a year. He suggested that Federal, state and local governments share the cost.

At the Founder's Day exercises of the University of Pennsylvania, he declared that he was not offering his proposal as "a panacea or an escape hatch" because he had come to the conclusion that "shelters are not only a practical but also a moral necessity."

At stake, he asserted, was survival.

"Survival of what?" he went on. "Of mankind, if you like, or of civilization. Certainly, of the United States of America."—The *New York Times*.

### *A Cloud in Kilts*

LONDON.—The Government replaced two high army officers who had resigned because of a dispute over whether an amalgamated Scottish regiment should wear trews or kilts. Brigadier Archibald Ian Buchanan-Dunlop replaced Maj. Gen. Edmund Hakewell-Smoth as colonel of the Royal Scots Fusiliers, the Lowland trews-wearers, and Maj. Gen. Ronald Brawell Davis succeeded Maj. Gen. Robert Elliott Urquhart as colonel of the Highland Light Infantry, the kilt-wearers. —The *New York Times*.

## books in review

### Bright Light on China

THE LONG MARCH, by Simone de Beauvoir. World Publishing Co. \$7.50.

SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR deserves a medal. Her *Long March*, a big book, fact-filled, idea-filled, and the first positive treatment of the new China and its world-meaning to be put on the general U.S. book market for many a long year, has breached the information-embargo at just the right time. Many reviewers seem to have been as murderously angry at its daring to appear as Mr. Dulles is at its subject, the New China itself, for daring to exist. No wonder, for apart from describing a fact verboten by Mr. Dulles, its whole stance reasserts a relation Americans are forbidden to think about. This is that the democratic tradition, born when the bourgeoisie was revolutionary, cannot live as an appendage or defender of monopoly capitalism or imperialism; but that its natural sympathy, alliance and fulfillment lie with the young socialist world—the vast new reality born in hope and travail in the last 40 years.

Mr. Dulles has successfully burned it out of his mind that his own country was born of revolution and that revolutions are the inevitable form of historical renewal so he hates China's revolution for reminding him and is

ready to obliterate it, with the rest of the world if need be—with nuclear fire launched to the sound of pious litanies.

The pretrumanized, eisendulled reviewers have been taught by the inquisitions, *auto da fes* and rewards for penance that are the backyard aspects of Mr. Dulles' foreign policy that it is healthier for the body, if not the soul, in today's America to show no sympathy with radical progressive change anywhere on earth. These have fallen over themselves to stick faggots under Mlle. de Beauvoir and smell the burning of her heretic flesh. For even the bolder spirits among them—who dared talk back to the McCarthies—did so on the grounds that liberals who had no truck with revolutions were being unjustly accused. How loud their plaint that the truer a man was to the democratic ideals of 1776 and 1789 the more efficient he could be, if the reigning powers only realized it, in fighting the revolutions of today and undoing them on soft cat feet!

And now comes a French intellectual of wide repute, a non-Marxist democrat beyond doubt, an heir of 1789 if there ever was one—and talks of the revolutionary dictatorship of the working folk, as Lincoln Steffens, that heir of 1776, once used to. He said of Lenin's Russia, "I have seen the future and it works." Simone de Beauvoir says, "This new China embodies a particularly exciting moment in history:

that in which man, so long reduced to dreaming of what humanity might be, is setting out to become it . . . in this morning's early light the prospect ahead is already visible, and it is limitless."

Like Steffens, Mlle. de Beauvoir takes it very much for granted, as Rousseau and Jefferson did, and Lincoln and Mark Twain and Whitman, that people have a right to revolution—to progress—but that counter-revolution—regression—is no one's right but an evil to uncover, fight and tread down as the very condition of progress. Only after taking sides, making it plain where she stands in the great issue does she discuss her differences of interpretation, criticisms and so on—within the larger unity.

What horrid wickedness! How diabolically like the principles and emotions that were once meant by "American"—so much so that it took a host of un-American committees, witch hunts, jailings, blacklists, loyalty oaths to give them uneasy burial. One can picture the pained rage of some of the critics at the undeserved test to which this apparition put them. Instead of being brought out by some small Left house, so no one would have to review it while all could cite its seeing print as proof of American freedom, Simone de Beauvoir's book bore the trade-mark of a big publisher, and had to be written up. Its author, a several-times best seller, could not be kept on the reservation. How to push her in there quickly? "Aroint thee, witch, the rump-fed runion cries."

Mlle. de Beauvoir, may it be said, knows her runions. She deals faithfully, naming names, with some French specimens, and her every word applies to the U.S. breed. "For these initiates,"

she writes finely, "the world is mystery, conjuration, conspiracy . . . the naive spectator, dazzled by superficial appearances, is blinded to the underlying truths. More alert, more adroit, whenever they want to know whether the sun is shining, our clairvoyants look not out of the window but into their crystal ball. . . ."

"Nevertheless," she declares, "I have very often found that eyes are not useless and that objects when looked at disclose something." Americans, by good old instinct a see-for-yourself nation, would do well to read her book and borrow her eyes, particularly at a time when their government, demonstrating a contrary theory of knowledge, well summarized by Mr. Nixon's Quemoy thesis on the deadly dangers of public opinion, prevents visits to China with penalty-bearing passport bans and is determined that Americans shall see the Chinese people through bomb-sights only, even if it is to their own perdition.

The reviewers, on their part, offer us their inward-turned "third eye" instead of the author's normal two. Professor Joseph R. Levenson, who did a hatchet job on her book in the *Nation* of June 28 exemplifies their approach. She has accepted Chinese hospitality and been bewitched, he warns darkly, mendaciously hiding the fact that her differences with the Chinese and all Marxists are as evident as her favorable views. His philippic is entitled "The Heart Has Its Reasons." Indeed it must have. Mlle. de Beauvoir's, by the evidence of her work and whole tone, turns like a compass needle to people who fight and build for a better life. There is that in it which makes her write of the Chinese with a fullness of respect and complete absence of either condescen-



sion or exoticism—singular even among sympathetic western writers. Her reasons surely do not stem from her purse. Putting this work before U.S. readers now, and doing them such a signal service, she can expect no fat royalties, improved publisher-rating or the necessary preliminary reunion applause. Prof. Levenson and others like him are there to see to that.

Now for Mlle. de Beauvoir's presentation of China. It is on two phases. She is chiefly concerned with meanings, impressions, ideas. But she has also decided that, on the new China, one must first of all basically inform. So she gives us a lot of straight reporting, passing on of fact, precisising of wide-ranging background study. Such an approach is both modest and effective. For example, she does not just talk about wealth and poverty but gives figures showing that in 1949 the average annual income in the U.S. was \$554 per capita, in China \$29; rail mileage in the U.S. was 80 per thousand square miles of the country's area, in China 3; U.S. life-expectancy 64 years, Chinese 25 years. Here was the revolutionary need. Elsewhere the author gives us Chinese family budgets, city and country, five years later—a real leap from a standard of dying to a standing of living—and the reader understands why the Chinese people defend the revolution with their lives, and also the distance still to go—why they are determined to speed the constructive effort, now that all conditions favor it, till all the 600 and more million have full access to every human value, material and spiritual. The fight and the labor are buoyantly confident, "In Peking, like it or not," Mlle. de Beauvoir notes, "there is happiness in the air." She likes it. No wonder the runions rage.

Notable too, in her book, is the sense of process, of the "uninterrupted revolution," of the fact that, in the author's words, "China is transition." Land reform was the "initial stage in socialist revolution" while China's industrialization will put her in the forefront of material development. Of cultural matters, she says: "The Chinese do not dream their culture, they live it . . . they are refusing to stay in that supposed wonderland to which the perhaps innocent but none the less contemptuous admiration of some westerners would assign them. The day—it will come—when they are the equal of the world's most advanced nations, there will not be any more drawing distinctions between China and the West; everyone will share in a universal culture. This assumes its particular figure in each particular country. No question but that China shall put her impress on it; but her originality lies ahead of her, not behind." How different is such a conception from the static idea of cultural cross-fertilization at the level of the past, from all efforts to explain our own day in terms only of the "Judeo-Christian tradition" or Confucius, and from the eclectic mixtures of the Beat with Zen Buddhism, Jewish orthodoxy with Herman Woukism, the American Century with the piety of Dulles and Spellman.

Mlle. de Beauvoir's section on the fortunes of missionaries, and particularly of the Catholic Church in China, incidentally, would in itself justify studying and pondering this book. Informed by deep and deeply-felt knowledge of the clerical-secular struggles in French and general European history, and of the contemporary significance of these issues, it is sharply polemical and incandescently enlightening.

A constant focus on the future prevents this book, written about a visit made three years ago to the world's fastest-changing land, from being outdated along with many of its details. Mlle. de Beauvoir could not predict but nonetheless prepares us for the immense strides of today—the phenomenal crops, the new-found pace of industry, the advent of communes—the cells of the coming society. Note her title, *The Long March*. A march is not to be understood by, or as, standing still. She starts us walking—and the direction is forward.

That is the main thing. Without this essence, this faith in democracy and progress and the people's power to achieve it, nothing else matters. But it is not the whole thing. To analyze the forward movement of a people led by Marxist-Leninists utilizing social laws discovered by Marxists, one must grasp the categories of this outlook, particularly the class struggle as the motive force of development. The lack of such an outlook results in an account of China's history and revolution that is not always coherent and sometimes eclectic and confused.

For instance, one cannot agree that "feudalism was overthrown" 2,000 years ago by Chin Shih Huang the "first emperor," who built the Great Wall and set up the all-Chinese centralized monarchy. If it was, what followed? Nor is it true that the Chinese bourgeoisie emerged a victor from the revolution of 1911, which put an end to the empire and set up the first republic. Even if it did, what was it the victor over, if not feudal relations on the land, which by the same token could not have disappeared 20 centuries earlier? Mlle. de Beauvoir, having talked to many participants in the great land re-

form of 1950-52, knows and says that it was still the feudal land system that was being destroyed then. To explain where it came from she is obliged to invent a "new feudalism" that somehow arose, after the "victory of the bourgeoisie," under the Kuomintang. A little Marxist thinking would have enabled her to square her theory with her observations.

More regrettable is the misunderstanding of class struggle after the revolution. The author reports the fight between the two roads, capitalist and socialist, for the post-liberation peasantry. But at the same time she rejects a Chinese Communist statement of 1954 that "class struggle is of course inevitable" as mere "lip service to a Stalinist thesis according to which class struggle is intensified as socialism gains ground, a notion that has just been denounced in the USSR." What are the facts? The inevitability of class struggle is one thing, its inevitable sharpening another. The struggle is there so long as classes are. Its sharpening, though not inevitable, can certainly take place, particularly if "contradictions among the people" are not properly handled by the working class party and if external interference is strong. It is certain if both these factors are present, witness Hungary. Are we at a point in history in which this no longer applies? The facts say no. Not thinking in terms of class forces, Mlle. de Beauvoir is at sea when she compares Chinese experience to the Russian NEP, on the nature of NEP, and other matters in the same field.

In the cultural sphere, Mlle. de Beauvoir errs in holding that "the hundred flowers and schools" was a vindication of Hu Feng. In fact, the Chinese see the fight with Hu Feng as a necessary

pre-condition of the "hundred flowers," and when Hu Feng tendencies recurred in the course of the implementation of the policy, the struggle had to be resumed—not only to reassert the purpose of the "hundred flowers and schools" but to make way for a thousand. For the "flowers and schools" were, and are, a policy of building socialist culture, fructifying it from all past human achievements and thus solving the problem of heritage, strengthening it through sharp open debate with all other contemporary tendencies, emboldening it to recognize its own defects as revealed in the debate—and to absorb the useful ideas of opponents. But all this does not, and never did, add up to opening the door for a comeback of bourgeois or feudal ideas or an eclectic "leavening" of key Marxist principles, which would not strengthen socialism but weaken it. Are non-socialist tendencies still alive in Chinese and world culture, and should they be heard? The Chinese answer yes to both questions. But should we look forward to their constant reproduction and existence even after the old social systems have disappeared? Here the answer is no. As the Chinese see it, the purpose of open debate is to promote socialist, communist culture—not "one flower" but one culture, united in aim, as a garden for all the flowers of the human intellect, blooming for the whole of working society, wrested wholly from the uses of exploitation.

Mlle. de Beauvoir's misunderstanding on this point, and not only this, goes hand in hand with her notion of "the intellectual as leader" in China. But China is not a Platonic, aristocratic republic, ruled by "socialist" mandarins. She is a workers' and peasants' state. The intellectual can indeed be effective,

perform and grow beyond all previous possibilities, but only if he merges his life, thinking and action into the working people's experience and needs, as Mao Tse-tung and other revolutionary leaders did—with no detriment to their mental powers! Individualist isolation is only a last clutching at private property as a guarantee of position and authority, for was not the highly educated man's schooling itself an investment made possible only by his having been born in the ruling class, or by the hopes it had of training a good servant? The goal is, in the shortest period of time, to abolish the intellectual "class," too—to merge work by hand and brain—to make every brain worker a producer of physical values, every manual worker a thinker, the all-round man of whom the Utopians, Walt Whitman, William Morris and Marx and Engels wrote.

It is wrong to say, as Mlle. de Beauvoir does, toward the end of her book, that "the nationalistic character of the enterprise is in a sense more emphatic than its Communist character." In fact, China's social revolution moves on incessantly because of its Communist aim, nothing else. It is national in form, of course: it was made in China, by Chinese people, it liberated them from every form of exploitation national and social, and speaks in Chinese. No action is abstract, without real doers in a particular place. But the Chinese revolution, thorough-going because it gripped the masses of the whole of that nation, is also a part of the chain reaction that began with October. It is a vindication of the general Marxist-Leninist theory of revolution; and the Chinese people are in love, there is no other word, with Marxism-Leninism because it is supremely useful. The whole process of the revolution, Mao Tse-tung

has said, has been "learning to aim the arrow of Marxism-Leninism at the target of the Chinese revolution." If one misses with the arrow once, one can improve skill and try again; if one throws away the arrow, or bends it, the game is over. Which is 'more emphatic', the general law of the struggles of the working folk or its application in a particular national situation, by a particular people to its problems? In action, the two are indissoluble. But all this has nothing to do with the primacy of nationalism. "Without the Communist Party," goes a popular saying and a popular song on the lips of millions, "there would be no New China."

The arrow and its correct aiming at the target. The Marxist-Leninist Party learning to be of the masses, the servant-leader of the people en masse, to change the world. The working people achieving their aims with true pathfinders. This is the *Long March* for China, full of struggle and hope. And this is the long march for all who would understand the world, and would remold it nearer to the heart's desire.

ISRAEL EPSTEIN

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## Metaphysical Rationale

WHITEHEAD'S PHILOSOPHY OF CIVILIZATION, by A. H. Johnson. Beacon Press, \$5.00.

NEARLY a decade has passed since the death of A. N. Whitehead, the British-born Harvard Professor of Philosophy, and today it is more than ever apparent that here was a major philosophical figure in the classic tradition. He was a system-builder on a grand scale, concerned with answer-

ing all essential questions relevant to the nature of the universe and man's place in it.

In his search for a comprehensive world view, he sought to answer the great philosophical questions: the ultimate features of the universe, the interrelation of permanence and change, the body-mind relation, and the nature of history and society. In dealing with these and other traditional philosophical questions, Whitehead explicitly and at times passionately took issue with the dominant modern types of philosophy such as positivism, semanticism and pragmatism—the current versions of Berkleyan subjective idealism, which insist in one form or another that the words depends on how I (or we as human beings) think, feel, talk or act. In opposition to such philosophies, with their dismissal of the great philosophical questions, Whitehead never doubted that there is an objective world and that it can be known in all its aspects by man through science and art. He wrestles with the major problems of philosophy and thus returns to the classic tradition abjured by such leading contemporary philosophers as James, Dewey, Wittgenstein and Carnap. He bases himself on the natural sciences, especially modern physics and mathematics, and attempts to find solutions which will help man build a better life.

Examination of Whitehead's philosophy is therefore a fruitful undertaking. There have been a number of book-length investigations of his philosophy of nature and of his metaphysics, among them being my doctoral dissertation, *Process and Unreality*, published in 1950 by Columbia University Press. After years of work with Professor Whitehead at Harvard, I tried



in the above-mentioned book to deal seriously but critically with his answers to the major philosophical questions. I tried to demonstrate that lacking the materialist dialectical method of dealing with change, Whitehead was led completely speculatively to postulate two worlds and ultimately two gods, one changing and contradictory, the other unchanging and perfectly harmonious. Thus he "solved" the major philosophical problems by creating a dualistic philosophy of a changing contradictory material world which is dependent on an unchanging, harmonious ideal world existent only in the mind of one of the two gods or aspects of God's nature. This, of course, was no solution at all, but rather constituted a speculative metaphysical system in the tradition of Plato, Leibnitz and Hegel. Whitehead's system is in the final analysis a latter day form of objective idealism in which the material world is viewed as dependent on the mind of God (rather than, as in subjective idealism, on the mind of the individual or of man in general).

None of the books on Whitehead, however, not excepting my own, deal with his philosophy of civilization. All are concerned exclusively with his natural philosophy and metaphysics. This situation is remedied by A. H. Johnson's *Whitehead's Philosophy of Civilization*. Dr. Johnson is Head of the Department of Philosophy at the University of Western Ontario. (Parenthetically I might add that we were fellow graduate students under the old master at Cambridge.) Johnson states that the aim of his book is to present not a critique but an outline of Whitehead's philosophy of civilization, and this he does competently and with a minimum of intrusion of his own

ideas. Indeed, one gains the impression that Johnson is in all but full agreement with Whitehead. The book is expository and within its stated aim constitutes a job well done. He avoids Whitehead's peculiar technical terminology and consequently the volume is relatively simple reading. The real problem at hand, then, is to discuss the adequacy of Whitehead's own philosophy of civilization as outlined by Johnson. The subject includes his philosophy of history and his social philosophy, with a religious theme running through both.

Like most current philosophies of history in the so-called Western world, Whitehead's is an attempt to construct an alternative to the materialist conception that man's consciousness, his culture, is ultimately determined by the way he lives, works and produces. Again like most such attempts, Whitehead resorts in the first place to what is called "the factor theory." In the *factor theory* all factors which enter into history—technical, industrial, economic, cultural, psychological, religious, etc.—are treated as of equal importance. By this means the materialist conception is eliminated theoretically and the ground is cleared, as it were, for the erection of an alternative structure. Whitehead's particular alternative is an idealist-religious one. He starts with the proposition that "as we think, we live" and proceeds to develop the notion, a la Toynbee, that religious ideas constitute the ultimate *determining factor* in history. Thus for a rebirth of "Western civilization," a new reformation is required and Whitehead advocates a return to the fundamentals of the teachings of Jesus Christ as presented in the Gospels. Here we see a very common device:

in the form of a two-step argument. First, the *equal-factor* theory is utilized to eliminate the central Marxist-materialist thesis, by calling it an over-emphasis on one factor. Second, a single factor other than the productive and economic structure of society is duly selected and assigned a dominant and determining role. In many cases today this factor is said to be *psychological*, as in the psychoanalytical theory of history. But with Whitehead, Toynbee and others, it is held to be the philosophical-religious factor. According to the latter, it is the way people, nations or eras think about the universe and God that determines the way people live in that nation or era. In such a view, historical change is dependent on changes in philosophic and religious views and beliefs: "As we think, we live." Having condemned a determining factor at one level, it is re-instituted at the next. The practical effect of this, as of other idealist philosophies of history, is to obfuscate the real nature of history and historical change and thus to confuse people thereby slowing down change. In short, idealist philosophies of history, Whitehead's included, tend, in spite of all talk about historical change and progress, to buttress the status quo.

This conclusion becomes transparently, almost ridiculously, clear when we turn to Whitehead's social philosophy. The latter, in a sense, is the philosophy of history applied to a given society at a given time. While maintaining that current evils—poverty, unemployment and war—are largely the effects of capitalism, he blames them on individual capitalists with a "wrong" philosophy (mechanical materialism) and a lack of Christian religion. Based on this analysis, he

recommends that business executives reform their practices and become "enlightened executives." In short, they should lead the new reformation back to the Gospels and thus overcome their crude "mechanical materialist" notions. He admits that such reform would be a slow process but he envisages the "possibility of extensive improvement" and cautions that "successful progress creeps from point to point."

His political philosophy revolves around the usual notion that the state, far from being an instrument of class rule, stands as an impartial umpire high above the din of partisan politics and class strife. Political progress then depends on careful and informed use of the ballot so that the best men (philosopher kings) will act as referees in the tug of war between conflicting interests. This is, of course, the accepted view of the modern state as propounded by the leading ideologists of all the capitalist nations.

In sum, Whitehead's philosophy of civilization is anything but unique or original. It follows the most common outlines of bourgeois thought with regard to history, sociology and politics. There is, however, one unique feature of his thought, and one which may become important in the future—if it is not already significant. As we have noted, Whitehead is primarily a so-called natural philosopher concerned with the ultimate problem of the nature of the universe and man's place in it. His chief claim to attention is his metaphysics, "his "solution" of the body-mind problem, change and rationality. The unique and perhaps highly important feature of his philosophy of civilization is the fact that he roots the usual bourgeois plati-

tudes deep in his view of the universe. In short *he furnishes a metaphysical justification or rationalization for practical capitalist ideology.* Capitalist ideology is sorely in need of such a modern, science-oriented positive theoretical foundation. None of the contemporary philosophical "schools"—pragmatism, logical positivism, semanticism, etc.—furnish such a basis. Rather they are content with a negative role. They undercut science and therefore Marxism by denial of objective reality. They are forms of subjective idealism which reduce science to ways of organizing human experience. But such a philosophy cuts two ways. It not only undercuts Marxism—the materialist conception of history and the science of political economy (as well as the natural sciences)—but at the same time and by the same means it undercuts any divine or natural justification for bourgeois ideology. What is required is some philosophy which will root the shibboleths of bourgeois ideology deep in the nature of things. Such a philosophy would then buttress these shibboleths by giving them "metaphysical status." Whitehead's philosophy more than any other contemporary system meets this need. As the world-historic struggle between capitalism and socialism progresses, it may well be that the capitalist class and its apologists will turn more and more to metaphysical justification—the kind of philosophical-religious support they had in the mid-nineteenth century. When they do, Whitehead's unity of metaphysical and social philosophy is ready at hand. There are signs that such a turn is already under way.

Dr. Johnson, himself, is aware of the ideological potentiality of Whitehead's philosophy. Noting that "Whitehead's

philosophy of civilization has a firm metaphysical foundation," he points out that this demonstrates that "the concept of democracy held by the Western world is in accordance with the nature of the universe in general, and men in particular, as set forth by Whitehead's theory of actual entities." He concludes, "Therefore, the democratic way of life is not an artificial imposition. It is firmly grounded in the nature of man." Thus the unity of Whitehead's metaphysics and his social theory "serve to show" that capitalism and bourgeois democracy are of the nature of the universe and of man. And, naturally, what is of the nature of things is permanent, eternal and cannot be changed. Such a notion could be highly useful to the capitalist class in the world ideological struggle. It could as an ideology be more useful than pragmatism in the bourgeois struggle against Marxist social science and materialism. As Dr. Johnson puts it, "Whitehead has done great service to the cause of democracy, in that he has shown the ideals of Western democracy are in accordance with the nature of things, and therefore not an artificial dream incapable of realization in the world in which we live. Since Whitehead's philosophy is more accurate than that of Communism's 'materialism', the democratic ideology has a much better foundation than that available to Communism." Of course Johnson simply *states* that Whitehead's philosophy is "more accurate," without any discussion whatever of dialectical materialism.

Dr. Johnson's book is a good summary of Whitehead's philosophy of civilization. Once again we are shown that philosophy is not only an abstract academic discipline but that it is deeply

rooted in the class struggle. Whitehead does in fact create a metaphysical rationale for the status quo—allowing of course for “creeping progress.”

HARRY K. WELLS

## From Rebellion to Conformity

AMERICAN MODERNS: From Rebellion to Conformity, by Maxwell Geismar. Hill and Wang. \$3.95.

AMERICAN MODERNS by Maxwell Geismar is a collection of interesting though uneven critical essays written during the past ten or twelve years for publication in a wide variety of periodicals such as *The Nation*, *The Saturday Review*, *The New York Times*, and *College English*. Some of them are rather truncated discussions of general aspects of contemporary American literature; others are merely brief reviews of individual novels; several were originally written as introductions to a new Pocket Book or Viking Portable edition of a “classic modern.” All have been considerably revised, with the addition of much substantially new material, particularly in the last section of the book.

The first section, “In General,” contains a series of stimulating, if fragmentary, discussions of the singular emptiness of the current literary scene in the United States. Although there is here no sustained analysis of causes, Geismar’s strong feeling that significant literary phenomena can be explained only in terms of more fundamental social phenomena is apparent throughout.

For example, tracing the path of

many of the gifted “Classic Moderns”—Faulkner, Lewis, Dos Passos, Steinbeck—from rebellion to conformity Geismar speaks of the thinness of their later work and concludes: “No middle course seems to be possible [for them] between the extremes of Marx and the extremes of Horatio Alger.”

Again in his “Postscript to the Post-war Generation” he summarizes a dominant current literary fashion with:

Pity the poor artist! The retreat either to modes of personal sensibility or those of religious and social authoritarianism may be a refuge for him. But it is rarely a source of great art. The real drama and content of his period lie directly at the center of the chaos that surrounds him. It is there he must turn to come close to the spirit of the age, if he can only catch it.

The same point is made in a different way in “The ‘End’ of Naturalism.” Here, after a very brief review of the “Sexual Revolution” in American literature which was, as Geismar says, actually a victory for “the freedom to discuss human character and human relationships in terms of . . . primary needs and desires,” he adds:

But now in this new epoch of personal freedom for artistic expression, we have also moved into another period of social and political conformity—of timidity, fear, and suspicion. . . . This is a new and serious mode of spiritual repression. . . . It threatens the life atmosphere of American thought and American art.

An amusing article on “Higher and Higher Criticism” again stresses the same moral:

While the crucial and revolutionary issues of our time are being fought out in the dark, and the human race may be getting ready to be atomized, it almost seems that the real function of the New Criticism is to keep our



best young intellectuals absorbed with their playthings, no matter what happens to the nation or the world.

Finally the last piece in this first section—"The Age of Wouk"—concludes:

Marjorie will always marry the man in the gray flannel suit in the typical configuration of the classless—and mindless—society. Well, what does it all really mean? I suspect that the final impact of the atomic age has had the effect of a lobotomy upon the national spirit. Don't look now, but we're all dead.

The middle section of the book—"Americans and Moderns"—deals at some length with six important individual figures. After separate discussions of Dreiser, Hemingway, Dos Passos, Faulkner, Lewis and Wolfe, Geismar considers Steinbeck and Marquand under the title "Further Decline of the Moderns," and throws in, for good measure, a short piece on "By Cozzens Possessed."

Many of the judgment in these essays further illustrate the same general thesis of the relation between social consciousness and literature. Most of them also verify, without otherwise much affecting, Geismar's earlier evaluation of these writers, whom he considered at greater length in his first book, *Writers in Crisis*, many years ago.

For example, speaking of Dos Passos he says:

When we turn back to *The Big Money*, twenty years later, we realize that it marks the start of the central disenchantment in this writer's career which has continued, with lowered hope and failing nerve, to his more recent books.

And of Sinclair Lewis:

Just as Lewis has foreshortened the whole exterior scene of his people's activity, so he ignores the basic determinants of the life which surrounds them. The real institution of finance capitalism lies outside his world: a world of continuing worse results and no causes.

Finally the last and, unfortunately, the weakest part of the book is the section headed "Newcomers," which reviews the work of Norman Mailer, John Hersey, Nelson Algren, J. D. Salinger, Saul Bellow, James Jones, William Styron and John Howard Griffin. It is well-written, informative and, despite an amazing and almost grotesque over-estimation of the last two figures, generally useful summary of the writers who have caught the public eye since World War II. But we read it with an increasing sense of disappointment.

Perhaps the slackening of our interest here is largely due to the essential unimportance of the material the critic has to deal with. Yet I think we also disturbed by the lack of any sustained critical discussion of fundamental causes. It is true that the author has not promised us any such conclusion, but it is also true that the material increasingly demands it.

The subtitle of the book, "From Rebellion to Conformity," has been amply illustrated throughout the work, but the fundamental reasons for this sorry pilgrimage have nowhere been really considered. Nor is this merely a failure of omission. For side by side with many incisive comments on the social irresponsibility of contemporary literary figures, like those quoted above, we find occasional remarks as fatuous as: "It is ridiculous . . . to discredit the social novels of the 1930's simply

because the Russian Revolution turned out to be a failure."!

Yet with all its imperfections of superficial assumptions, fragmentary discussions, and fear of seriously probing the political issues upon which it touches, this book is, in terms of current American writing, most valuable. Geismar is almost the only important critic today who has any knowledge of, or feeling for, the rich tradition of social significance in literature, and his current volume serves as an interesting and useful postscript to his major three volume work on *The Novel in America*.\*

ANNETTE T. RUBINSTEIN

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\* *Rebels and Ancestors* (1890-1915).  
*The Last of the Provincials* (1915-1925).  
*Writers in Crisis* (1925-1940).

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## Two Kinds of Socialists

**SOCIALISTS AROUND THE WORLD**,  
 by Helen and Scott Nearing. Monthly  
 Review Press. \$3.00.

**THE BRAVE NEW WORLD**, by Helen  
 and Scott Nearing. Social Science In-  
 stitute. \$3.50.

**B**ETWEEN October, 1956 and May, 1957 Helen and Scott Nearing took a trip around the world. They crossed Canada, flew to Japan, thence to Hong-kong, South Asia, the Middle East, Europe and the British Isles. *Socialists Around the World* is a report on what they saw and heard. In the winter of 1957-58 they traveled to the Soviet Union and to the People's Republic of China. *The Brave New World* is the report of that trip.

The first book records interviews with and observations of members of the

non-Communist Left in Europe, Asia and North America. Recent and current events in France, featuring the all too typical behavior of official French socialists in acquiescing in or colluding with the efforts of reaction to establish a fascist dictatorship under De Gaulle, make the first section, "Confused Socialists of Europe" extremely timely. Summing up the history of the socialist movement, and outlining the beginnings of ideological bankruptcy which determined its post-World War I development, the authors conclude:

It is this anomalous position of having been on the left, and committed to the establishment of socialism; being forced into the center and attempting to co-operate with definitely anti-socialist parties, which has caused so much confusion, heart-searching, dissatisfaction, and frustration among socialists of middle and West Europe.

With regard to the matter of being "forced" into the center, the explanation is always the same. The Nearings record this question and answer from an interview with a Netherlands socialist party official:

"You work with the Communists?"

"Never. They are a party of no importance here.

We join with the Catholics and Liberals in denouncing them."

A later interview with a West German socialist worker shows the effect of such an attitude on policy. He says that his party "is not only anti-communist . . . but it is also becoming anti-socialist," citing the party's opposition to the proposed nationalization of heavy industry, and the characteristic appeal of the red-baiting leadership against the rank-and-file on the basis of the "emergency" as examples.

The same pattern of frustration and confused objectives is manifested in country after country. A young British socialist comments bitterly on the failure of nationalization under the Labour Party. A French socialist writer says that if France would only drop its colonial possessions and retreat to its own boundaries, it could become a modest, self-sufficient "welfare state" and that, in such a situation "France would have no more need of socialism than Holland or Switzerland." One may well sympathize with these rank-and-file European socialists who, in most cases, know what socialism means, but have been bullied and red-baited into a political vacuum by their leaders. One also feels the growing conviction that in the unanimous dedication to peace these scattered and confused workers, farmers and intellectuals may have an issue on the basis of which to force united action and perhaps break the strangle-hold of a backward, time-serving leadership.

After a discussion of the difficult situation in North America, the Nearings turn their attention to the Far East, dealing with the complex of forces shaping socialist policy in India and Ceylon, Indonesia and Japan. They give a clear picture of the fraternal relationship between the socialist movement in Southeast Asia and the Chinese Communists in the face of the determined efforts of the C.I.A. to sabotage it. We are reminded between the lines that socialism as a left-wing political movement in this new "new world" is not necessarily to be confused with what goes by that name elsewhere, and that modern socialists drawing on the great traditions of Marx and Engels can constitute a dynamic and progressive force

making a genuine contribution to the well-being of humanity.

Passing from the atmosphere of *Socialists Around the World* to that of *The Brave New World* is passing from the murky and uncertain dawn of the present into the rich fullness of a future day; it is to pass from conviction tempered by indecision and doubt into the confident optimism of accomplishment. In this detailed and enthusiastic review of present trends in the USSR and in People's China, the Nearings help us to penetrate for a moment the iron curtain of hate drawn by Churchill and held tight by Dulles, and to catch yet another precious glimpse of what is to come when our dream of peace is realized.

Peace and friendship is today's great message of Socialism to plain men and women all over the world. There are other messages, of course, of progress, of construction of sacrifice, of heroic effort—all fully detailed in the Nearings' report. They tell of amazing accomplishments, the wonderful things in progress and the great enterprises projected, citing figures which bear out their findings and which prove once again that with regard to bushels of wheat, acres of rice, tons of pig iron, women in professions or kilowatts of power, the Soviet or Chinese statistician denotes anything under a hundred thousand as a few.

These facts are becoming more and more widely known and accepted so far as the USSR is concerned. The stable existence and burgeoning economic and social growth of the Soviet Union can no longer be questioned. But, as the *New York Times Magazine* (11/2/58) hopefully suggests in its lead article ("Are There Seeds of Re-

volt in Red China") set up as the saboteur's handy guide and agent-provocateur's compendium, 650 million Chinese may still be wrong. This hope, however, that nestles so comfortably in the Pandora's box of atomic destruction presided over by Dulles, receives no support from the Nearings. Like the famous "Russian experiment" which so bemused our utopian assignees in the 30's, the People's Republic of China is founded on the dreams and the determination of a mighty people whose will to forge a new society is not to be shaken:

We found in the Chinese people a sincere humility alongside an unshakable confidence in their step by step accomplishment of whatever tasks they set themselves. We found humor and lightness, with a deep underlying gravity and purposefulness. We found contentment with sparse simple living against a background of ancient culture. And, paramount, we found a willingness to learn, to change, to adapt and "rectify," duplicated nowhere else on earth.

And, at the risk of blasting some of the "hope" alluded to above, the authors reached this conclusion after speaking to peasants, students, teachers, workers and capitalists, one of the latter, shuttling back and forth between his enterprise in British Hongkong and the one in People's China, testifying that he much preferred to do business under Communist conditions.

The "West" can harass and disrupt with their Hitlers, Chiangs and Rhees—the Nearings were told that the Korean War delayed the start of the first Five Year Plan until 1953—but no harassment can stop the course of history. The story of Stalingrad, destroyed in the course of its heroic defense and rebuilt in a manner no less inspiring,

the story of the Wuhan Dam Project and of the participation of the whole people of China in the construction of their nation, this living epic of creative enthusiasm and triumphant accomplishment which so far outshines the pallid shadows of literary imagination—who but a madman could behold such a spectacle with anything but admiration and praise? Unfortunately there are a few refugees from rationality who have found asylum for such lunacy in our pentagonal sanatorium. The message of peace and friendship, the theme of this excellent book, may be lost on the inmates, but the great mass of attendants who have the real custody of Western opinion must hear the message and act to keep our rabid charges in check.

These two books, especially the latter, point the way. The susceptible Nearings have caught the peace-fever in their travels. It is a beneficent contagion.

DAVID AVERY

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## Montgomery Story

STRIDE TOWARD FREEDOM, by Martin Luther King, Jr. Harper and Bros. \$2.95.

**I**N *Stride Toward Freedom*, Rev. King has written a book of historical significance. It is, first of all, an excellent, detailed account of the Montgomery bus boycott. Although the heroes of that year-long campaign of "massive non-cooperation" were many, it is right that Dr. King should be its historian. For it was he who provided the warp and woof of leadership in a situation which, unless it were handled with perspicacity, patience



and understanding, might well have resulted in the unleashing of untold violence and bloodshed.

As the whole world knows, the Montgomery story began with a simple incident which is shamefully common fare throughout the South and border-line states: the arrest of Mrs. Rosa Parks for her refusal to comply with a bus driver's command that she relinquish her seat to accommodate boarding white passengers. The subsequent events of the boycott, including the Supreme Court decision on this aspect of desegregation, did much to change the life of Montgomery and added another milestone to the struggle for racial equality in the United States. The non-violent nature of the resistance of the Negroes served to heighten the drama since it was contrasted with the all-too-familiar divide-and-conquer techniques of the city administration, Ku Klux Klan antics, minor harassments, arrests, bombings. Martin Luther King was himself the object of this unleashed terror, the events of which he relates with great narrative skill.

The last chapter of the book, "Where Do We Go From Here?" provides some of the perspectives, both past and future, from which the Montgomery incident must be seen. There are brief discussions of the Negro people's changed economic status, their entry into industry, and the links of their struggle for first-class citizenship with the discontent and fight for complete liberation of the people of Africa and Asia. The section on the protracted battle for desegregation of the schools gives a perceptive description of the mentality of the forces resisting it, and exposes the myths of inherent Negro inferiority and criminality used to

bolster the rationalizations of the white supremacists. Rev. King is severely critical of the failure of most church, labor and social welfare leaders to take action supporting either the Negro community or those among the whites who express their solidarity with it, sometimes at considerable risk to themselves. As for the Administration, he has this to say: "The Office of the President was appallingly silent, though just an occasional word from this powerful source, counseling the nation on the moral aspects of integration and the need for complying with the law, might have saved the South from much of its present confusion and terror."

Dr. King's religion is of the active sort. His belief is not confined to Sunday preaching but translated into direct and forthright action. Thus, even the Gandhian method of non-violence which he espouses, along with the Christian doctrine of love, is seen by him as opposed to Reinhold Niebuhr's advocacy of passive non-resistance to evil.

Materialists will, of course, find Rev. King's philosophical idealism alien to their view of causality in natural and social processes. The criticism of Marx' thought is certainly based on simplifications that do not convey his meaning, particularly on the questions of the relation of means to ends and of the individual to the state. The theory of non-violence has antecedents predating Gandhi; they may be found in the abolition movement itself, in the debates between Garrison and Douglass over how, and whether, slaves should resist their masters. Dr. King would naturally be inclined to Garrison's side since he regards non-violence as primarily a moral issue. Others may feel that there is a difference between advocating violence and recognizing the

moral right of people to resist their oppressors in whatever fashion they deem fit.

However, it would be quite disproportionate to make these considerations paramount in one's estimate of Martin Luther King and his book. The superb protest of the gallant people of Montgomery against the deep-seated pattern of segregation in the South will take its place in the history of this country along with the immortal slave rebellions and the brave days of the Reconstruction period, and King's name will be added to those of Nat Turner, Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, Frederick Douglass, W. E. B. Du Bois and Paul Robeson when the final chapter of the fight of the Negro for full citizenship is written.

MARVEL COOKE

## Funny as Crutches

LOLITA, by Vladimir Nabokov. Putnam. \$5.00.

IN A sententious epilogue, "On a book entitled *Lolita*," Vladimir Nabokov candidly explains that "For me a work of fiction exists only insofar as it affords me what I shall bluntly call aesthetic bliss." He adds that he is waiting for someone to come along with a hammer and take a good crack at the "topical trash" of Balzac, Gorki, and Mann, whose writings, we may assume, do not appeal to his exquisite sensibilities.

By now everyone knows that *Lolita* is the unblissful tale of a middle-aged connoisseur's seduction of and life with a twelve-year-old girl—if the fictitious little monster of the title may be so tamely described. Through

the adventures of this ill-assorted couple, the reader is taken on a rambling survey of the American hinterland, a circumstance which has enabled some critics to allude to the book as a "satire."

The publicity let it slip out at once that *Lolita* had been banned not in the narrow by-ways of Boston, but, of all places, on the wide-open boulevards of Paris, a disclosure well calculated to entice a public already jaded by the literary succession of Amber to peruse—at almost two cents a page—a text too juicy for the French. With regard to the charge of obscenity, however, this reviewer has been advised by an enthusiastic aficionado of the "beat" that the story of a man who marries a widow (whom he plans to murder) for the express purpose of seducing her pre-adolescent daughter can hardly be described as obscene because it does not contain a single four-letter word.

Others who have found *Lolita* commendable have leaned heavily on the supposition that the essential plot-line is merely the device by which the author, through the first person of his confessedly degenerate hero, is able—in the composite style of Proust and Joyce, says *Time*—to belabor the dead horse of American provincialism. One might ask parenthetically that if this were the case, why did the author feel called upon to use such a bizarre device; surely his grand satirical tour of the country could have been made on some other literary pretext? Be that as it may, Nabokov is accorded high praise for reassembling the effigy previously dismembered by Sinclair Lewis, and exuberantly dismembering it again. And we are once more invited to pay strict attention to that old husband's

ale of the looming menace of "Mom" as Nabokov patches up Wylie's paper tigress and hurls the barbs of his Continental wit at the venerable travesty of American womanhood.

Readers who incline to the view that the *Lolita*-theme is ancillary to the presumed satire, or who wish to sample the atmosphere of the book at a bargain rate, may invest 35 cents in a current paper-back reprint called *Laughter in the Dark*, complete and unabridged, BY THE AUTHOR OF *Lolita* (Berkeley Books, N. Y., 1958), a story of a man's affair with a sixteen-year-old. The *Partisan Review* critic who, according to the book-jacket, found *Lolita* "the funniest book I remember having read," should be absolutely convulsed by the later scenes of *Laughter in the Dark* which give a screamingly funny picture of the blinded hero being deceived by his juvenile mistress under his very (sightless) eyes. Lest we feel that he singles out the United States for special treatment, be assured that Nabokov is just as cordial to European women in *Laughter in the Dark* as he is to American women in *Lolita*.

The text of *Lolita* is generously salted with French, German, and Latin tags, the purpose of which is evidently to reinforce the labored urbanity of Nabokov's prose. The inclusion of several scraps of doggerel—one of which is aptly labeled "a maniac's masterpiece"—does little to enhance the writer's reputation as an English stylist. *Laughter in the Dark*, a translation, reads much more smoothly.

It is, of course, refreshing to observe those members of the critical fraternity who greeted the persecution of the Hollywood Ten with commendation, now leaping to the artistic defense of

a writer who is merely obscene. And no doubt our ardent devotees of the dignity of the individual deviate will assure us triumphantly that such a work could never be published in the censorship-wracked USSR.

DAVID AVERY

## Digs at the Crooked World

A CONEY ISLAND OF THE MIND  
poems by Lawrence Ferlinghetti  
New Directions Paperbook. \$1.00.

The publishers are rushing this paper-back edition through because "... it seems clear that Lawrence Ferlinghetti is that rare phenomenon nowadays: a poet of real stature who will gain a very wide influence." And they go on to quote Ralph Gleason in *Downbeat*: "... he is quite possibly (this statement will shock him) the most important poet now writing in America."

With these rather august words in mind one opens the volume and plunges into the West Coast's answer (if an answer was needed) to Archibald McLeish. We of the West Coast can show them Easterners how to make free and yet remain urbane at bottom. . .

The book is in three parts: "A Coney Island of the Mind," "Oral Messages" (for jazz accompaniment), and a selection from his first book (1955) entitled *Pictures of the Gone World*. His Coney Island poems raid the world of art and literature for some good poems and some aesthetic poses hiding behind clowns and circuses. Goya sets off a splendid, angry poem on the idiocy of life in America. Other poems make use of quotations to guide or lose us through a landscape of various authors

and painters like Patchen, Kafka, Dante and Morris Graves, Chagall, etc. A cool Christ and nude-provoking Saint Francis can also be found hereabouts and the section ends with a sugarcane version of the last page of Joyce's *Ulysses* made into history. The whole thing is well carried out but leaves one with a dilettante's-view-of-the-world taste in the mouth. This is mainly due to the use of quotations. What does this device achieve? I guess solidarity within coterie, for if you dig the quotes you are in on the joke and you get a lift, you are in the bargain basement of American psychology and you've got a handful of 98c panties.

This use of the question or allusion to other works persists in his "Oral Messages," tinting everything with a non-poetic, running commentary approach to the creative act, sapping all tension. Ferlinghetti runs the danger of becoming a colloquial Pound or Eliot. Oral poems like his "I Am Waiting" or "Autobiography" are almost entirely made up of literary and Joe College gossip ranging from contemporary sources to a little bit of Wordsworth here and a glimpse of the White Goddess there. These two works are saved by a freshness which begins to get lost in "Junkman's Obligato" with that classically insincere 'let's go back to the hills' of so many you-go-first poets in the English tradition. "Dog" is a very funny poem built around that over and under creature he correctly calls ". . . a real realist." In "Christ Climbed Down" we have the much abused carpenter's son dragged into the poem only to escape the present commercialism of Christmas. Where the poem could have struck a deeper note, it settles for snide remarks about Bing Crosby and other over-obvious fixtures of present day

Americana (?). "The Long Street" aims at forlornness and achieves it; the real Ferlinghetti manages to come through without mirrors, but in "Pictures from The Gone World" the world is once again the introspective bedroom of the sensitive.

The problem of length is apparently an acute one with the San Francisco Branch of World Poetry. A poem like the "Sunflower Sutra" of Ginsberg can be great whereas his famous "Howl" is a failure. To a lesser degree, something similar operates with Ferlinghetti. The longer poems achieve length through mechanical reiteration of the same thing dressed a bit differently each time. We are left with the mesmerizing pattern of a litany. One could predict that a San Francisco poet, armed with more self pity than either Ginsberg or Ferlinghetti (and with more paper), will yet outdo Ecclesiastes.

I find little to enjoy in Ferlinghetti's lyric passages but a lot to laugh with in his digs at this crooked world. All crooks should read him. They will find that he has the tremendous virtue of being lucid (sometimes pellucid). The following quotes ought to make anybody spend the dollar just for the hell of it:

Poem No. 4, 1st part:

. . . some cool clown  
pressed an inedible mushroom button  
and an inaudible Sunday bomb  
fell down  
catching the president at his prayers

Poem No. 13 stating how he would go about writing Dante's *Commedia*:

. . . but there would be no anxious



angels telling them  
 how heaven is  
 the perfect picture of  
 a monarchy . . .

In his "Autobiography" he says:

I have read the Reader's Digest  
 from cover to cover  
 and noted the close identification  
 of the United States and the Promised Land  
 where every coin is marked  
 In God We Trust  
 but the dollar bills do not have it  
 being gods unto themselves . . .

That's all, friends; I leave the mush  
 for you to find.

ALVARO-CARDONA-HINE

## Writer en Deshabille

THE EIGHTH DAY OF THE WEEK,  
 by Marek Hlasko. E. P. Dutton. \$2.75.

**M**AREK HLASKO was six years old when World War II broke out. He and his generation do not remember the Fascist Poland of Pilsudski and and of Beck, the Poland whose heads of state invited Goering to hunt wild boar in the thousand-year-old Bialowieza Forest before the Wehrmacht razed that forest as it razed the country. They do not remember the barracks of the unemployed, stretching like small wooden cities in the suburbs of Warsaw—huts where families of twelve and more, father, mother, grandparents and children, shared single rooms with other families, an old sheet or blanket the only wall between the two "homes." They do not remember the watery soup and the dry bread twice a day, and the bottles of rot-gut vodka that helped people forget. Some members of this

young generation may honestly believe that the beginning of the despair, the misery, the degradation, began with war; that whatever went before had been sunny and good.

But the war itself, the occupation, lasted five and a half years. This they cannot have forgotten. While they were growing up, the methodical Germans were destroying the country as they were murdering its people—methodically. By the time Marek Hlasko was twelve and liberation had come, the countryside was a waste. Five thousand head of cattle were all that were left in a once predominantly agricultural country. The cities were rubble. Not only the Ghetto, but all of Warsaw was a vast ruin. There had been senseless bombings, calculated to break down morale. There had been night raids on homes and daytime raids on city blocks.

A boy of twelve does not forget what had been, by then, half his life. Could he have remained completely unaware of what his city was like when its people returned to the ruins and began to rebuild? Was there no one in his immediate environment who might have given him some sense of identification with the romantically heroic effort that the rest of the world—right, left and centre—recognized with unanimously awed admiration?

Perhaps a childhood made up half of war and half of fascism so blinds and corrupts that all vision is stunted and sensibility destroyed. *The Eighth Day of the Week* seems to tell us that. For it is a book made up of senseless despair and bitter undirected hate. Its author is victim of a curious myopia. He finds only evil wherever he looks. It is as if his sense of observation had been permanently atrophied until he sees, smells and hears in clichés. The city he

writes about is one vast slum where a girl cannot walk a block without being accosted and insulted two dozen times by men who, by their own admission, are nevertheless too undernourished to be dangerous; where poverty is so vast no one owns anything, yet every window has a radio blaring propaganda into the night. . . .

In this strange Hogarthian beehive a boy and a girl are in love. They want to sleep together but cannot find a room. They search for one. "Walls," says the girl. "Four walls, Perhaps three? Can there be a room with only three walls? Could one live in such a room?" This is an odd question to ask when one has grown up in a city of gutted buildings, slowly, painstakingly rebuilt. Every citizen of Warsaw knows that thousands of his fellows do live and have been living in rooms with three walls; yet Hlasko's heroine remains unaware of this simple fact until her sweetheart takes her to the ruin where he himself has been nesting. If he were a real writer, capable of translating his surroundings into artistic truths, what couldn't the author have done with this bit of potential symbolism?

*The Eighth Day of the Week* will not make any great splash or be long remembered on its own merits. It is a book by a cosmopolitan member of the beat generation, and in a sense it has about as much depth as *Bonjour Tristesse*. But it is a symptom,, and it has to be considered as a symptom. Marek Hlasko published it while living in Paris where he was lionized as a potential exile. Some months later, the papers here carried a story to the effect that he had arrived in Western Germany, asking for asylum, but the following day a rather sheepish follow-up piece admitted he'd been living abroad

for some time. The piece skirted any explanation of why he had felt he must move on from Paris, traditionally so hospitable to bohemians of all nations. Perhaps the reports which had been trickling through to the effect that he was drunk almost constantly, that he had been picked up by the police while running naked through the streets, might have had a bearing on this recent attempt to make him into a political expatriate in still another country. To this reviewer, these unrelated facts, together with the touting of an otherwise slight and undistinguished novella, seem to form a recognizable pattern. The reader will have to draw his own conclusions.

KAY PULASKI

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## Welcome Honesty

TIME OF THE JUGGERNAUT, by Herbert Steinhouse. William Morrow and Co. \$4.95.

MR. STEINHOUSE is a reporter for the Canadian Broadcasting Co. and an associate of UNESCO. Though not an Angry Young Man, he was moved by anger to write this, his first novel.

The setting for *Time of the Juggernaut* is France and Algeria in the year 1955, and the atmosphere of the Cold War pervades the scene. The book's hero is a young American journalist dedicated to his work to the point of telling the truth. This fault is responsible for his difficulties once he starts reporting on the Algerian struggle for independence. He becomes *persona non grata* to the French authorities and, by extension, to the officials of his own country. He is even more troublesome and suspect when the United States inaugurates

a drive to clean "subversives" out of INTORGAM, the International Organization for the Advancement of Mankind, a UNESCO-type outfit in Paris. Then his offense consists in remaining loyal to a friend in the organization who refuses to answer an investigating committee's command to return home and confess all.

Steinhouse has written an exciting polemical novel, well-informed in Franco-Algerian history and demonstrating his awareness of the political and economic bases of historical problems. To illustrate, the novel recounts an interview by the reporter hero, Marty Richardson, with an Algerian leader in Paris, in the course of which they discuss the French conquest of his country in the 19th century. The Arab tells him:

We had two thousand schools . . . and . . . several good universities. You don't hear of all that these days, do you? No you do not, because an imperial power invariably begins by obliterating a colony's history.

All the best lands, like the three great plains of Mitidja, Oran, and Bone, passed into the hands of the greedy *colons*. . . . All the good topsoil, the orange and olive groves, the wheat fields. . . . And then my impoverished people scattered helplessly to the barren hills and the desert, or became an agricultural proletariat on the new colonial estates.

This is more than we learn from most non-fiction analyses of the issue.

The novel is also valuable for its detailed account of the events which precipitated the present crisis and collapse of the Fourth Republic. Mr. Steinhouse has further managed to incorporate some credible character development into the portrait of his romantic heroine.

ELLEN LANE

## Books Received

THE HONORABLE MR. NIXON, by William A. Reuben. Action Books \$1.75.

THIS is the fifth printing, expanded and considerably revised, of an earlier work published two years ago. It is an analysis of the presidential aspirant's pivotal role in the drama that saw New Deal official Alger Hiss convicted as a "Communist spy." It challenges as a out-and-out fraud every element of the so-called evidence which Richard Nixon and Whittaker Chambers produced to have Hiss indicted and convicted.

Mr. Reuben, a former publicity director of the American Civil Liberties Union and author of *The Atom Spies Hoax*, here resorts to the records and official court documents to show that Nixon's interest in Hiss can be traced to the United States Chamber of Commerce; that Nixon "proved" that the Democratic Party was soft on spies and traitors by "discovering" a non-existent Communist spy ring; that he used State Department documents since shown to be forgeries; that Nixon (not McCarthy) was responsible for introducing the Republican Party's slogan, "twenty years of treason"; and that Chambers' celebrated pumpkin papers, the microfilm supposedly found as a result of Nixon's persistent investigation, have disappeared since Eastman Kodak declared that no marks on the films showed they were not manufactured until 1947—nine years after Nixon claimed they had been turned over by Hiss for delivery to the Soviet Union.

Mr. Reuben's painstaking documentation in support of his opinion that Nixon's career is based on equal parts

of fraud, deception and chicanery should prove an eye-opener for any reader. Since this month marks the tenth anniversary of Mr. Nixon's pumpkin-paper discovery, the new facts presented in this book come most timely.

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CHINESE ART, by William Willemts.  
George Braziller. \$5.00.

ONE doesn't usually congratulate a publisher, but in this case he deserves the greatest praise for issuing at a reasonable price a work of extraordinary scope and descriptive value. *Chinese Art* is some 800 pages in length, and there is not an idle one among them. Even the reader who has fancied himself informed about the subject will be confronted with a wealth of historical data, technical material and stimulating comparisons with European concepts and practices in art.

The arts dealt with are jade, bronze, lacquer, silk, sculpture, pottery, painting and calligraphy, and finally architecture, with a most interesting section on town planning. For each of these, Mr. Willemts has supplied a detailed account of the qualities of the material, the processes of manufacture, the manner of working as well as the social use to which the specific craft or art is put.

In dealing with the political and social background of the categories of artistic expression, Mr. Willemts does not make the error of regarding them simply as class-tainted phenomena. Yet he is aware that the source of certain limitations have a class basis. For example, while he notes that "Sung painting shows no symptom of the frustration that its limited social context might have en-

gendered," he speaks of its "exquisite parochialism" and its almost inevitable lack of human-heartedness. Again, in comparing Chinese and Western town planning, he makes the interesting observation that "one factor making for an harmonious and integrated Chinese town-plan was that land could not theoretically be owned, and so did not lend itself to commercial exploitation by private individuals." And he remarks with delicate humor, "It would be strangely ironic if these traditional features of Chinese architectural design, so completely integrated with China's age-old agrarian society, should prove more suited to industrial town-planning than those we have so far managed to put into practice in the West."

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## Publication Note

The once famous *Anthology of Magazine Verse*, edited by William Stanley Braithwaite, is being revived after a thirty-year silence. It will contain the work of poets published in 1958, as well as a selection from the seventeen previously published anthologies (1913-1929). Among the poets represented are Hart Crane, Witter Bynner, William Faulkner, Amy Lowell, Robert Frost, Edgar Lee Masters, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Marianne Moore, Robert Penn Warren, Elinor Wylie, Vachel Lindsay, Carl Sandburg, and William Carlos Williams. Mr. Braithwaite, whose eightieth birthday is being celebrated by the issuance of this collection, has been assisted by Margaret Haley Carpenter. Pre-publication orders (price \$5.00) may be sent to Schulte's Book Store, Inc., 80 Fourth Ave., New York 3. The regular price will be \$5.95.



## Letters

Editor, *Mainstream*:

I hesitated to answer Arthur's letter in the November issue of *Mainstream* because it seems to me that no two people could see a story with the same eyes and that inevitably there must have been people who didn't like "The Socks" just as there must have been people who did; that some of the people who liked it might even have liked it for reasons that never would have dawned on the author, and that some of those who disliked it might have had cause with which the author could sympathize—and why get worked up? However, since you expressly ask me to answer, I'll do the best I can.

Arthur, I don't know quite where you see the sneer at members of the Communist Party in "The Socks." True, it is a humorous story about two young Communists. But there is such a thing as laughing *with* people, and not *at* them. That is what I was doing in writing this story. The two obviously quite young Communists in it were extremely earnest about their views and were ready to make all sorts of sacrifices for the sake of issues that the Party was fighting for. Surely you will admit that this was made clear. Then why did I laugh? I laughed because there was something touchingly funny about their collision with one another and with their principles in their head-on rush to do right. Does this mean their principles were no good? Far from it. But you, as an old-timer, must remember how hard it is not only to struggle with outward enemies but with the enemies in one's own consciousness—in short, to ripen from immaturity

(when one understands society and Marxism, but not one's self) to maturity, when one—well, you know, Arthur, you're grown up, too. You know how terrific we are when we're mature.

Look. The boy and girl in "The Socks" came from petty bourgeois families, like so very many Communist kids in the New York Party in the Thirties. Remember? And believe me, most of them were pure gold. I didn't laugh at them then and I'll never laugh at them. If the Party got sick, almost mortally sick, it wasn't their fault, it was the fault of a whole lot of other things which it isn't the purpose of this letter to deal with. Your anger against the story is apparently motivated by belief that Communists who are human, all too human, do not make the kind of literature that raises the Party's prestige, whereas a Communist hero who is larger than life, a nobly striding Colossus, does. All I can say here is that you couldn't be more wrong. Take the character Nagulnov in Sholokhov's *Vinigin Soil Upturned*. What a fiery Communist he is, how moving he is, and what a schlemiel he is, what an anarchist! Sholokhov's Communists all have something cockeyed about them. They're human beings. And that's why Sholokhov is read with passion in every literate country in the world, and that's why he has done more for Soviet prestige than any of the other Soviet writers without exception.

Another mistake I think you make, Arthur, is that you want to confine Communist literature to one genre. If you think it over, you will probably discover that you resist the idea of writing any humorous story about Com-

munists. I know it doesn't look this way in New York today, but the world is going Communist, and one of these days in the not too distant future, there isn't going to be any genre of literature left that isn't concerned with Communists or Communists versus non-Communists or people who are becoming Communists. It is in calm anticipation of this happy time, and in the unshakable belief that even I, no chicken, am going to live in it, that I stand by the right of Communists to be laughed *with* in *Mainstream*. It would be unseemly indeed if *Mainstream* did nothing but grin but you can hardly accuse it of that. So please, Arthur, don't be mad. We're gonna be of that number when the new world is revealed, both of us, most of us.

EDITH ANDERSON

Editor, *Mainstream*:

I read Edith Anderson's story, "The Socks," in the October issue of *Mainstream* with enjoyment, not unmixed with nostalgia for the days "not so long ago," when I, too, was a naive young worker in the left wing movement. Imagine my surprise, in your November issue, to find an Arthur Somebody taking violent objection to this piece as a "sneer at the left." I disagree. I'm sure Norman eventually learned how to wash his socks, and that both Norman and Susan are still toiling for the Left and that their drives and attitudes have been seasoned by experience, as mine have been.

The characterization in this little story was dimensional. Too often, alas, the people in left wing fiction are stereotypes, Horatio Algiers in reverse. I am reminded of a Soviet Union writer and critic, writing in your magazine, some

time back who warned writers of the Left against "belittling their characters" by "depriving them of all resemblance to real people." Miss Anderson has not done this. I would like to know who she is. How about some biographical notes, and more of her stories in *Mainstream*?

KATHLEEN CRONIN

Editor, *Mainstream*:

The letter from "Arthur" in the current issue brings me to doing what I should have done in the first place—sending a fan letter to you and the author of "The Socks."

This was a tender, sweet and very loving story and I'm sorry that "Arthur" would seem to prefer idealization to reality. As one of the army of young wives (of the 30's) who let the socks pile up while I attended meetings and distributed leaflets, this story brought back such a wave of remembering that it was impossible to know whether to laugh or cry. I did both.

Yes, "Arthur," this was the period "of the party's finest contributions to our country," these were "noble activities" and noble characters, but not the least noble quality of it all was that this mountain of accomplishment was achieved by thousands and thousands of young girls and young men utterly innocent of the importance of socks.

It does not belittle what we were or what we did to show how we did it. On the contrary, I think it makes our own efforts more imitable. Too often we present our past and ourselves in the light of a sacrificial perfection far beyond the reach of ordinary endeavor.

The truth is that we didn't wash the socks, Arthur, and we didn't cook very well either, and we were more passion-

ate in our tastes and in our lives than caution and good sense would dictate, but Arthur, we were magnificent!

It is only because we were so "heroic" that this little aliveness from out of our past could make a story. Without the acknowledged, albeit not spelled out, contrast between what we were and how we lived, there could have been no story. This contrast or "conflict," if

you prefer is the essence of art and of life—and of history.

Be more gentle, Comrade Arthur. It is you who are sneering at us because you are placing your weight on the side of an ethic that would elevate sock washing to an act of revelation. The very nicest people didn't wash the socks in those days, Arthur, and a good thing it was, too!

PERFECT HOUSEKEEPER

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STATEMENT REQUIRED BY THE ACT OF AUGUST 24, 1912,  
(Title 39, United States Code, Section 233) SHOWING THE OWNERS  
AMENDED BY THE ACTS OF MARCH 3, 1933, AND JULY 2, 1935,  
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5. The average number of copies of each issue of this publication sold or distributed, through the mails or otherwise, to paid subscribers during the three months preceding the date shown above was: (This information is required for daily, weekly, semiweekly, and triweekly newspapers only.)

JOSEPH FELSHIN, Publisher

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 2nd day of October, 1958

(Seal)

MYRON J. BLUTTER, Notary Public

State of New York, No. 03-5360

Qualified in Bronx County

(My commission expires March 30, 1960)



# THE BRAVE NEW WORLD

by HELEN and SCOTT NEARING

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