Mainstream

THE WISE LAUGHTER OF SHOLEM ALEICHEM

EZRA LANDAU

ELIJAH

Sholem Aleichem

JOHN BROWN'S BRAIN

Truman Nelson

WATCHMAN! WHAT OF THE NIGHT?

Thomas McGrath

WHERE A MAN BELONGS

David Martin

GREENWICH VILLAGE SOUTHERN STYLE

Lawrence Gellert

ecember, 1959 50 cents

Vol. 12, No. 12

Mainstream

DECEMBER, 1959

MAINSTREAM *is published monthly by Masses & Mainstream, Inc.,* 832 *Broadway, New York* 3, *N. Y. Subscription rate* $5 *a year; foreign and Canada* $5.75 *a year. Single copies* 50 *cents; outside the U.S.A.* 60 *cents. Re-entered as second class matter February* 25, 1948, *at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March* 3, 1879.

THE WISE LAUGHTER OF SHOLEM ALEICHEM

EZRA LANDAU

SHOLEM ALEICHEM—the pen name of Sholem Rabinowitch, born March 2, 1859, in the town of Pereyaslev, in the Ukraine—is a literary nd cultural phenomenon so closely identified with the life of the Jewish eople a generation ago that he can be fully understood only against the ackground of that life-pattern. Between him and the masses of the people as a devoted kinship almost unparalleled in world literature. He was a *olk*-writer in the profoundest and purest sense of the word. When he tarted his epitaph with the line, "Do light a Yid a *posheter*" ("Here lies a *imple* Jew"), he expressed not the slightest touch of fawning or con-escension; he was stating a simple fact, almost a plea to be accepted in he great brotherhood of the common folk.

And with him this was an artistic credo. "The people's writer," said holem Aleichem, "is, for his own time, a mirror in which the rays of life ust be reflected . . ."And again, some years later: ". . . nothing can happen n the life of the people—anything joyous or tragic—which should not ffect the writer, and *really* affect him to the very marrow."

Nothing did happen in the life of his people that was not reflected ith compassion and understanding in Sholem Aleichem's works. No mple "mirror," however, could have reflected that period of transition; o simple voice could have spoken for the starved and voiceless Jewish asses of people in Eastern Europe, pressing in misery and despair upon ch other in the crowded Pale of Settlement—disfranchised, unsettled, npoverished and despoiled, stirring restlessly, hoping for someone to

gather up their sorrow, their anger, their dreams, and speak for them. Sholem Aleichem became *their* voice, and he set forth to calm the "Great Panic of the Little People."

He portrayed an epoch of great change in Jewish life, when the old, the feudal, was decaying and dying, and the Jewish people were trying to adapt themselves to the new life. This period was extraordinarily complex and full of contradictions. The struggle between the serf-owners and the new industrial capitalists brought disruption and impoverishment to the masses of people in old Russia, and in the crowded Pale of Settlement it resulted in the complete ruin of the already unstable and oppressed Jewish workers as well as sections of the middle class. The basis of their livelihood was still further restricted; the densely packed masses of the small towns could see no prospects at all for economic improvement. They were hit *from every side*—by czarist disfranchisement, exclusion from many industries and professions, the bloody pogroms of the 1880's and the resulting increases in mass-emigration to America. It was a time when "Meat was not a Jewish commodity" (Mendele Mocher Sforim); when the *shtetl,* the small Jewish town in Eastern Europe, had no more strength to stay alive, flayed as it was by czarism from the outside and oppression by its ruling groups within. Sholem Aleichem has described Kasrilevka:

> The town of the little people into which I am taking you, dear reader, is exactly in the center of that blessed Pale of Settlement where they have settled Jews one upon the other like herring in a barrel and instructed them to be fruitful and multiply. And the name of this famous town is Kasrilevka.

It was a time when this "mole hill," as Sholem Aleichem called it, began to move. The Kasrilik, the native of the town, set out for Yehupetz and from there to America. And Sholem Aleichem became the artist of this great flight—the portrayer of chaos and confusion, of transition and rebirth. His characteristic theme is that of a people torn from medievalism, pushing at the doors of a new order which tantalized them with its promises and then drove them away. The mannerisms, the convulsions, the searchings of the Jewish masses in this process are also the source of his humor. He discarded, laughed away that which had become useless, antiquated, and absurd. At the same time he did not let his reader become intoxicated by the external glitter of the new. His task was to help the people cross a threshold, to help them understand and master new conditions. Not only the content, but the very form of his work—its realism—had this goal.

IN THIS task Sholem Aleichem was not alone. He shares certain characteristics with Mendele Mocher Sforim (Sholem Yakov Abramovitch, 1836-1917) and Itzhok Leibush Peretz (1851-1915). These three writers are considered the creators of modern Yiddish literature, each in definite area of Jewish life in old Russia. Together they forged a literature which affected Jewish life everywhere, from their time to the present. They are known as the *classical* writers of modern Yiddish literature.

Why has their influence been so strong? And why has the progressive ew of recent decades struggled to safeguard their tradition?

Foremost of their common characteristics was that intimate identification with the people which we have already described in Sholem Aleichem. Mendele Mocher Sforim epitomized this in a dedication to one of his works: "I was destined to go down to the lowest level of the people's life nd there, from amongst the rags, to lift out my heroes." The second haracteristic was their common protest against evil and their defiant efense of man—a defense neither passive nor sentimentally humanist, ut militant. Peretz cries out, in one of his poems, "How dare man smite is brother?" Sholem Aleichem proclaims, "A Man is a Man," a bit of play n Yiddish on the word *Mentsh,* which means both man and servant.

All three writers were intensely aware of the social function of literature. "We are the hammer and the people the anvil," said Mendele. "Let s keep hammering until the people awake." And finally, they had in ommon a deep-rooted, bright hopefulness—a belief in the ultimate beration of mankind—not easy to keep alive under conditions of pogoms, persecutions, and expulsions.

The function of Yiddish classicism, whose outstanding master probly was Sholem Aleichem, was to teach the people self-respect and self-ecognition, to awaken the sense of human worth in a time that suffocated uman dignity; to show the oppressed how to stand up to the rich man, ie clergy and, if necessary, the ruling social order. The struggle for ebirth is the theme and the inspiration of Yiddish classicism.

All these characteristics are purified, refined, and rendered unique in holem Aleichem's work. His universalism makes them more enduring; ey belong to generations yet to come. The humanism that marked iddish classicism of the latter nineteenth century was strengthened in holem Aleichem's writings by an uncommon faith and ennobled by a eness of lyricism seldom found elsewhere in all of world literature. ntimental love would not have been enough; pity, or self-pity, was not e emotion of his humanism. It was the emotion of loyalty and devotion hich results in *deeds* for those you love—a synthesis of love and readiness aid the loved ones—a maternalism, if you wish. No other writer so

hugged mankind to his breast as did Sholem Aleichem—or so carefully and realistically refused to be deceived by his love, which came from faith not illusions of perfection. This love said: I believe in you even though you are ugly; my belief in you enables me to see your potential beauty As he put it, back in the1880's:

> This benighted street [the Berdichev street he is describing] please believe me, is dear to me, deeply ingrained in my heart, as though it were some sort of forlorn creature, an orphan, an unhappy child. I love it—the Berdichev street—I love it with my whole being, without tricks, without fawning, without compliments, although more than once I have laughed at its stupidities, its bizarre absurdity.

Thus is his love coupled with criticism. His goal was to release hi beloved Kasriliks from their backwardness. At that time it was a matte of historic and social importance in Jewish life to remove the warts, t comb the matted spots out of Menahem Mendel's hair (Menahem Mende a *luft-mentsh* type in perpetual, tragic pursuit of the get-rich-quick chimera is himself a growth on the body of the people!) and to do it in such way that Menahem Mendel himself is not destroyed in the process. Sholer Aleichem's method was that of mercilessly condemning Menahem Mendel environment and conditions of life while mercifully considering the ma himself, victim of those conditions. The latter is not mercifully considere because he is good but because the deformity and ugliness which life ha forced upon him do not obscure his potential goodness.

Menahem Mendel, uprooted, helpless, tosses in a tragic delusio deceiving himself always with the pathetic belief that "This time I wi certainly succeed!" He clings to this perverse faith only because a ma must believe in something. Sholem Aleichem took upon himself the tas of challenging this wild fantasy that could end only in tragedy ar collapse. Menahem Mendel could easily have become a caricature, ha not the writer given him certain moral and tragic undertones. He sits judgment upon himself; underneath his pathetic faith runs a subdu tone of skepticism. And although he deceives his family with his promise it is his own unfortunate self that he defrauds most of all. In the en after all his failures, he begs for death, and says in a letter to Shay Shayndel, "If the Blessed one would only perform a miracle for m Robbers should waylay me and kill me, or I should just drop dead in t middle of the street. My dear wife, I can't endure it anymore. . . ."

PERETZ once said, "It is the purpose of satire in literature to scra off the mold. Sholem Aleichem was a mold-scraper." The mold

craped was that of backwardness and the confusion produced by the emergence of a capitalist order. He is almost brutal in tearing away one llusion after another. The reader's first, superficial impression is that his vay of treating Menahem Mendel, or another character, Shimele Soroker, s at times virtually wicked. Why must he reduce the former to the bsurdity of arranging a match between two *girls?* Or why, when Shimele Soroker wins the 200,000 rubles in the lottery, doesn't the author allow im to keep them instead of having someone else swindle them away? The answer is very simple: Sholem Aleichem never permitted the slightest fantasy in trying to solve the problems of his people. Not by lottery ickets, not by the stock markets of Yehupetz or Kiev, would they be elped. The author does not deal in counterfeit history. For this the people evered and embraced him—while he castigated them, kept them from lozing in a daydream of false answers and easy solutions. And they knew im as, first of all, the fervent and honest defender of the oppressed, the prooted, and defeated. His motto was "A human being is a human eing—don't lord it over human beings!"

To seek greatness in the "little people with little ideas" was characteristic of this author. There is the story called "The Happiest Man in Kodny," vhich contains, as all his work does, a humor that reveals the deep and ainful tragedy of a life. It is the story of the poor Jew whose only son is dying. The son of the town's rich man also is sick and "a professor" is summoned to examine him. The poor father comes to beg the rich one o allow the doctor to examine his son too, but of course he is driven way. When he sees the doctor sitting in the coach ready to leave, he hrows himself on the ground beneath the horses' hooves. The coach is topped and the professor himself comes out to see what the trouble is. He invites the poor Jew into the coach and listens to his story, then romises to return in several days to examine his son. He keeps his word nd the Jew, who tells the story (on the train, naturally!), is bringing im to Kodny, the professor traveling first class and the Jew third. At very station the poor man runs to see whether "his" professor needs nything, and in telling the story he describes himself as the happiest nan in Kodny. While the story glows with humor as well as irony, we re given an exalted figure rather than a comic one, and, beyond mere aughter, a disturbing revelation of a life in which consolation must be lerived from such "happiness" as this.

It was Sholem Aleichem's aim to free his people from the feelings of hame—of haplessness, inadequacy, good-for-nothingness—which had been mposed upon them as victims of a conscious process of degradation and lehumanization. In his stories he shows how this process operates and its

results. There is one, "An Esrog," about a Jewish tailor whose dearest wis was to have *his own* esrog (a citrus fruit used in the Succoth ritual). Hi child, who tells the story, is severely beaten for bragging about his father' dream. He is made to understand that a poor man does not *want* thing The boy begins to believe that his father is a *shlemiel.* An esrog, indeed That is for the rich, not for an unlucky Jew. So he becomes ashamed o his father.

In the story, "Two Dead Men," the author describes a Jew who always hungry. In Kasrilevka they called this man, naturally, Rothschil "When you ask him if he is hungry, he doesn't answer. And if yo ask him whether he is *very* hungry, he still doesn't answer, but hi yellow, emaciated face screws up in a sort of smile and his frightene eyes look downward, apparently out of shame that a human being can g so hungry." The shame of a world that lets a man be so hungry!

One of Sholem Aleichem's most moving stories is "An Easy Fast which describes the feelings of Hayim Heiken, who must eat the foo that his factory-working children earn for him because he, their fathe can no longer be a breadwinner. He can literally no longer eat. "Every bi of bread is a drop of blood. He is drinking his children's blood. Yo hear? He, Hayim Heikin, is drinking their blood." He, the useless, elder Jew (most likely in his forties) cannot find any work; he is being di carded. What does he dream about? "Eh, how would it be, for instanc if a man didn't have to eat! Ai Ai! His children could all stay at hom no more slavery, no more sweating, no more striking; no more gamblin no more factory, no more manufacturer, no more Rich Man, no mo Poor Man, no more envy, no more hate, no more, no more! A Paradis A veritable Garden of Eden!"

But the author did more than show how the feeling of inferiori was imposed upon his characters; he attempted to lift the feeling itse Hayim Heiken's defense of himself before his child, while tragical despairing, is more than a defense. In his last moments, when he h starved himself to death, he imagines that his children are gathered arou him. There is something urgent that he *must* tell them. "Is he, Hayi Heikin, to blame, that so many Jews, *k'n'hora,* have all ganged up in o place and are squeezing each other till they can't breathe? Is he to blam that a man needs the sweat and blood of another? Is it his fault that peop have not yet reached the stage where one man does not drive another you drive a horse? At least for a horse you feel sorry—God's creatu kindness to dumb animals!"

Only a people which feels its own worth and believes in itself is capab of freeing itself. Because Sholem Aleichem knew this, because he kn

e social and economic sources of shame and humiliation, and because, ›ove all, he believed in the Jewish masses as the bearers of the future fe and fate of the people ("Whoever is acquainted with our people nows that many more heroes are to be found among the masses than nong our higher class . . .")—because of all this, Sholem Aleichem lfilled the historic task of liberation from shame and guilt better than ıy other of the Yiddish classic writers.

Toward the Jewish rich he was mercilessly critical, regarding them as ollow, barren, sick, in need of a doctor. Their degeneracy is revealed in e novel, *Sender Blank*. The greatest tragedy not only for Tevya, but for ıolem Aleichem himself, is that Baylka, Tevya's youngest daughter, has marry a smug *nouveau riche*.

II

"Man is always hopeful of, always
pushing towards, better things;
and to bring this about, a change
must be made in the actual way of
life; so laughter is brought in
to mock at things as they are so
that they may topple down, and make
room for better things to come."

SEAN O'CASEY

EAR IN MIND that Sholem Aleichem is describing an unbearably tragic life; what, then, is the source of his humor? There was a time ıen he was considered to be more a man of mood than of intellect. He ıs—allegedly—a mild man full of pity, the good-natured, all-forgiving ·iter. True, his humor was difficult to classify, for despite its historic ·ent and the woeful milieu it described, his laughter was clear, bubbling, d full-hearted. Yet any attempt to reduce him to the level of mere ontaneity, or to ignore his awareness of the social function of his art, es in the face of fact.

His literary antecedents in the realm of humor were among the world's tstanding social realists, Dickens and Gogol. When he was first translated o Russian about half a century ago, the press noted a marked likeness to ckens. His reverence for Gogol was profound; in his youth he even went the length of imitating Gogol's dress and mannerisms. The influence *The Inspector General* is most marked in one of his early comedies, 'aknehoz," a satire on the Jewish hucksters and brokers of Kiev. (This

comedy was confiscated by the Czarist police as being "anti-religious." But of course, writers are not created just out of a literary tradition. One must turn to experience to find the substance that made Sholem Aleichem so much more than a teller of funny stories or just another star in the galaxy of folk humor—experience enriched by comprehension and partisanship.

As early as 1884, the young Sholem Aleichem spoke of "satire as a useful foil in every fight," and he quoted Ludwig Boerne:* "Without satire, literature is of a lower quality, its critique angry and irritating." In 1887, still early in his career, he complained:

> This is what my heart bemoans—that my generation does not understand me and does not see the tears in my eyes when I laugh, and does not feel the pain which I carry deep inside me.

And a short time later he commented very characteristically on an aphorism of Moliere's:

> Moliere said: "Beat me, but let me laugh." And I, Sholem Aleichem, say: "Don't beat me, because I'll continue to laugh. And my laughter will hurt *you* more than blows would hurt *me*.

This is the quintessence of Sholem Aleichem's humor. "Life," he said, "is rich in facts, full of curiosities, many misfortunes, a sea of tears, all of which, when they go through my prism, will become laughable." Laughable, but not minimized or moderated. But why did he want the misfortunes to become laughable? How does one equate oppression, the Pale of Settlement, starvation, disfranchisement, hopelessness, with humor? The truth is that only humor, which in Sholem Aleichem welled up from his love for man and faith in his potentialities, could have helped untangle the confusion and make the sufferings of his people more bearable. By helping his Tevyes and Motls to rise above their afflictions, he placed their suffering in proper historical perspective, in relation to a future time when their anguish would inevitably disappear.

Sholem Aleichem's humor, like the humor of all great writers, simplified the complex relationships of a new, bewildering life; through his ridicule, the people rid themselves of the mental clutter of the past, they scrape off what was obsolete. But, while he chides the weaknesses and backwardness of those he loves, he exposes the ugly antics of the enemies of the people.

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* 1736-1837. German democratic publicist and literary critic.

Let us see how he set himself the task of liberating the people from he bonds of their medieval past. Yosl, the conductor of the newly estab- ished Kasrilevka tramway, demands carefare of his passengers and gets ne refusal after another. (They simply don't have it!) When he reaches ne half-frozen old lady, she addresses her fellow-passengers as follows: I knew he would finally get to me too. Down deep in my heart I knew that e would pick on me too. The horse is going to the city anyway, what ifference does it make to him if another person rides?"

Sholem Aleichem sympathized with the wonderful logic of the horse is going there anyway." But he also makes us realize that it is logic that belongs to an outworn and disappearing society. The only elationship between man and man in the new life is the cash nexus. The oor Jewish woman must be freed from her quixotic notion. She may even ave justice on her side; but it is the justice of a passing world. Therefore, aughter must be protective; it must create a consciousness capable of escuing a people from utter catastrophe. Sholem Aleichem aimed at saving rom despair a people whose daily bread was despair. He did not wish to ollify their troubles, nor serve as a lightning-rod for their anger. Quite he contrary. Where complaining would perhaps have eased the spirit and ears alleviated the anger, Sholem Aleichem's humor—often grotesque, t time unbearable— purified and sharpened the people's wrath. If through the tragic reality of Jewish life sometimes appeared gruesome, its outcry as truly explosive.

T IS difficult to classify this humor: Laughter through tears? Laughter *despite* the tears? I would say, rather, laughter *instead* of tears. Such aughter keeps man from being crushed; it pleads on his behalf. It is asically an *active,* creative instrument. It justifies man not only as he is, ut for what he will be—free and without hurt.

For me, the essence of Sholem Aleichem's humor is in Motl the antor's son's well known exclamation after his father's death: *Mir iz gut, h bin a yosem!"* ("I'm happy! I'm an orphan!") It may seem that I am raining a point here, and over-interpreting an innocent bit of childish xuberance. However, the daily usage of the expression by millions of iddish-speaking Jews, for the past two score years, seems to support y contention. It is not that orphanhood is so desirable and not that otl did not love his father nor that Motl is an insensitive child. No. otl is telling us something else: In the face of a cruel, anarchic world hich has no pity for little children and forces orphanhood upon them, the face of this, a man must make out of orphanhood itself a banner hich leads him forward. Despite my being an orphan and despite the

desolation visited upon me, I still feel good, so long as I am a man a can laugh and believe.

This optimism, stripped of illusion, attracted Maxim Gorky to hi As early as 1902, Gorky invited him to prepare a volume of his stories Russian translation under Gorky's editorship, but events in Russia, amo them the Kishinev pogrom of 1903, thwarted the project. When Shol Aleichem then undertook to issue a publication, *Hilf* (*Aid*), to help t victims of the pogrom, he appealed to the leading Russian liberal writ of his time—Leo Tolstoy, Vladimir Korolenko, and Gorky, for contrib tions. Gorky immediately sent a story; Tolstoy gave him three. Lat speaking about Gorky to a Yiddish writer, he said: "You had better lea from Gorky how to write. Gorky describes the bitter, unpleasant tru but when you read Gorky you do not shed tears; on the contrary, yo eyes light up!"

In the postscript of his early novel *Stempenyu,* Sholem Aleich wrote: "He who is acquainted with our people is well aware of the f that you will find many more heroes among the masses than amongst t upper class." He became the most devoted advocate of the little man, role in this respect reaching far beyond the confines of Yiddish literatu Modern writing is often occupied with the common man, with the lit fellow. Often, he is even portrayed sympathetically. But he is usually lo helpless, without hope, caught in the web of circumstance over which has no control. Born to suffer, he is dehumanized, even reverts to the st of a roach. To the creators of such figures, some his contemporaries a others whom he anticipated, Sholem Aleichem protests: that is no w to deal with people. His people, too, are caught in a maze of suffering a oppression, but they are not doomed, not swallowed up by life. He v neither accept nor glorify their pain. Even the lowliest struggles to be born.

HE IS the most intimate writer in all of Yiddish literature, a medi noted for its identification with the reader. (I speak of the class writings, all of which strove to establish a people's democratic cultu Mendele, Peretz, Abraham Reisen, Morris Winchevsky—as many other were at one with their audience, face to face with the reader. But e this characteristic took on unique quality with Sholem Aleichem. regarded himself as the writer for the ordinary Jew, for the Jewish wor for servant girls. He made certain that this is how he would be rem bered. To the already quoted lines of his epitaph—"Here lies a sin Jew"—he added "who wrote Yiddish for women and for the com people . . ." He referred to himself as the "folks-schreiber" (peo

writer), and his purpose, the aim of his art, was to serve them by reflecting the rays of their life.

Even more, he saw himself as part of what he wrote, an "insider," an inhabitant of Kasrilevka. He demands for himself the privileges of an insider:

> The writer begs the reader's indulgence for these hard words about his Kasrilevka people. I am, you understand, dear friend, myself a Kasrilik. There I was born, there I grew up, there I went through all their *Hederim* and schools and although one is constantly in a busy whirl, nevertheless I have not for one moment forgotten my dear, sweet home—Kasrilevka—may its days be increased, and my dear, sweet brothers, the Kasrilevka Jews, may they be fruitful and multiply.

Literature was for him an instrument in the effort to educate and elevate his people. He began his literary career with his "Judgment on Shomer,"* a severe criticism of false, deceitful and unrealistic writing, and already at that early date, part of a calculated strategy in the struggle for a people's literature. For Sholem Aleichem's art, like all great art, was not sporadic nor just spontaneous. He was one of the most conscious—one could say, militant—craftsmen in Yiddish literature. Every sentence, every phrase uttered by his characters, all their speech mannerisms, were calculated to support the idea of the work or to create the mood which would make it clearer. The "easy-goingness" and good nature in his stories were consciously refined artistic methods. He pursued, not merely literature": he wanted an art that would help—these are his words—push up the spirit of the people."

In 1888, he spoke about Yiddish literature, using one of his typical maternal similes: ". . . naked and barefoot . . . we must re-diaper it, straighten its young bones . . . bathe and cleanse it." One year later, he had gone much further: "The spirit of the people is rising . . . we are not writing for a chosen few, but for the whole people. And the people understand us, our opinions and ideas enter the hearts of our brothers. What more can we expect?" He pleaded with the writers of his time to take their characters and heroes from amongst the people so "that they may know how rich its forces are, how many of its wonderful beings are wasted."

How should one write? he asked. "What can be more honest, simpler, more wholesome, and more beautiful than simple talk, the way people

* Pen name of Reb Mayer Shaikowich, imitator of cheap French romantic novels. Sholem Aleichem's attack forced him to break off his literary career in Russia.

talk?" Master of modern Yiddish, he turned the folk language into a literary instrument with superlative virtuosity.

He is magical in monologue. One's first impression may be that of over-loquaciousness; but this, too, is calculated. Each of his characters has his own speech, a language which reflects, on the one hand, a cultural and social tradition, and on the other, a highly individualized response to the environment and the sphere of ideas which impel him to act. He shares this trait with all the great social realists of world literature.

The Sholem Aleichem centenary which is coming to a close has been of very great import in stimulating the rebirth of humanist writing, as well as in giving direction to the Jewish people in their effort to assert positive ethical and cultural values commensurate with their role in the world. Sholem Aleichem embodies in purest form the basic qualities of a modern secular and progressive Jewish outlook, a democratic outlook and faith in the common man.

When Gorky read the Russian translation of "Motl the Cantor's Son," he wrote to Sholem Aleichem that he was stirred by the "wise and warm love for the people" which glows through the whole work. How rare today is this "wise and warm" love of Sholem Aleichem, and how brightly it endures!

Illustration of a scene from Sholem Aleichem's story, "The Enchanted Tailor," by Tanhum Kaplan. This is one of a series of 26 color lithographs in a portfolio published in 1958 by the Graphic Workshop, Leningrad Section of the Artists Fund of the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic. The Yiddish text reads roughly as follows: "They all bathe in our blood, and there's no one to stand up for us. Who pays the taxes? We do! Whom do they skin alive to support the *shochet* (ritual slaughterer) and the bathhouse—forgive us for mentioning them in the same breath. Us they skin alive! What are you keeping mum for, Jews? What a crime—cutting the throats of a whole family!"


געלט אין דער קאָראָבקע ווער צאָלט
א העפּקי'רעס, מע זאָל לאָזן קוילער א גאַנצע מישפּאָכע!

ELIJAH

SHOLEM ALEICHEM

IT'S not good to be an only son, to be fretted over by Father and Mother: Don't stand here. Don't go there. Don't drink this. Don't eat that. Cover your throat. Hide your hands. No, it's not good, not good at all to be an only son.

Passover has come at last, the dear sweet Passover. I was dressed like a young prince. But what was the consequence? I was not allowed to play or run about, lest I catch cold. I must not play with the poor children. I was a rich man's son. Such nice clothes, and I had no one to show off to. I had a pocketful of nuts, and no one to play with.

It's not good to be an only child, and fretted over.

My father put on his best clothes and went off to the synagogue. My mother said to me: "Do you know what? Lie down and have a sleep. You will then be able to sit up at the Seder and ask the Four Questions." Was I mad? Would I go to sleep before the Seder?

"Remember, you must not sleep at the Seder. If you do, Elijah the Prophet will come with a bag on his shoulders. On the first two nights of Passover, Elijah the Prophet goes about looking for those who have fallen asleep at the Seder and takes them away in his bag." . . .

Ha! Ha! Will I fall asleep at the Seder? I? Not even if it were to last the whole night through, or even to broad daylight. "What happened last year, mother?" "Last year you fell asleep soon after the first blessing." "Why did Elijah the Prophet not come then with his bag?" "Then you were small, now you are big. Tonight you must ask father the Four Questions. Tonight you must say with father, 'Slaves were we.' Tonight

ou must eat with us fish and soup and matzo-balls. Sh, here is Father, ack from the synagogue."

"Good Yom-tov!"

"Good Yom-tov!"

Thank God, Father made the blessing over the wine. I, too. Father rank the cupful of wine. So did I, a cup full, down to the very dregs. See, to the dregs," said Mother to Father. To me she said: "A full cup f wine! You will drop off to sleep." Ha! Ha! Will I fall asleep? Not ven if we were to sit up all night, or even to broad daylight. "Well," said ıy father, "how are you going to ask the Four Questions? How will you ecite the Haggadah? How will you sing with me, 'Slaves were we'?"

My mother never took her eyes off me. She smiled and said: "You vill fall asleep—fast asleep." "Oh, mother, mother, if you had eighteen eads, you would surely fall asleep, if someone sat opposite you, and sang ı your ears: 'Fall asleep, fall asleep'!"

Of course I fell asleep.

I fell asleep and dreamt that my father was already saying. "Pour out hy wrath." My mother herself got up from the table and went to open the oor to welcome Elijah the Prophet. It would be a fine thing if Elijah the rophet did come, as my mother told me, with a bag on his shoulders, nd if he said to me: "Come, boy." And who else would be to blame for ıis but my mother, with her "fall asleep, fall asleep"? And as I was ıinking these thoughts, I heard the creaking of the door. I looked to- ards the door. Yes, it was he. He came in so slowly and so softly that ne scarcely heard him. He was a handsome man, Elijah the Prophet— ı old man with a long grizzled beard reaching to his knees. His face as yellow and wrinkled, but it was handsome and kindly without end. nd his eyes! Oh, what eyes! Kind, soft, joyous, loving, faithful eyes. Ie was bent in two, and leaned on a big, big stick. He had a bag on his ıoulders. And silently, softly, he came straight to me.

"Now, little boy, get into my bag and come." So said the old man) me, but in a kind voice, softly and sweetly.

I asked him: "Where to?" And he replied: "You will see later." I did ot want to go, but he said to me again: "Come." And I began to argue ith him. "How can I go with you when I am the only child of my ther and mother?" Said he: "To me you are not an only child." Said I: They fret over me. If they find that I am gone, they will not get over it, ey will die, especially my mother." He looked at me, the old man did, ery kindly and he said to me, softly and sweetly as before: "If you do ot want to die, then come with me. Say good-bye to your father and other, and come." "But how can I come when I am an only child?"

Then he said to me more sternly: 'For the last time, little boy. Choos one of the two. Either you say good-bye to your father and mother, an come with me, or you remain here, but fast asleep for ever and ever."

Having said these words, he stepped back from me a little and turne toward the door. What to do? To go with the old man, God-knows-where and get lost, would be the death of my father and mother. I am an onl child. To remain here, and fall asleep for ever and ever—that would mea that I myself must die . . .

I stretched out my hand to him and with tears in my eyes I said "Elijah the Prophet, dear, kind, loving, darling Elijah, give me on minute to think." He turned towards me his handsome, yellow, wrinkle old face with its grey beard reaching to his knees, and looked at me wit his beautiful, kind, loving, faithful eyes, and he said to me with a smile "I will give you one minute to decide, my child—but no more than on minute."

I ask you: What should I have decided to do in that one minute, t save myself from going with the old man, and also to save myself fro falling asleep forever? Well, who can guess?

JOHN BROWN'S BRAIN

TRUMAN NELSON

We are publishing herewith the complete text of an address to the John Brown Convocation at the University of Minnesota on October 16, the one hundredth anniversary of John Brown's raid on the arsenal at Harper's Ferry. Excerpts of the speech appeared in the *National Guardian* of October 26, but we felt that the character of the speech warranted reproduction of the full text. Mr. Nelson, a novelist and critic, is the author of *The Sin of the Prophet.* He is now completing a novel on John Brown's life.—The Editors.

IN THE next five year, bulldozers of scholarship and pseudo-scholarship are going to heap on the great public scenes of the Civil War, masses of words "til our ground," to quote Hamlet, "singing his pate against the burning zone, makes Ossa like a wart." And in this most profitable compost pile, there will be few or no elements of doubt that both sides were separately but equally righteous in their Cause. The slave and the abolitionist will be left out or dismissed in caustic or condescending parenthesis. . . . The aspect of conscience, that quality which Wendell Phillips, the great abolitionist, called the common sense of the mass, will be fragmented, individualized and psychologized until it does not fit, but justifies the crime.

Lee and Jefferson Davis, along with Lincoln and U.S. Grant, will be all-American Americans, laboring under a constitutional misunderstanding. The whole titanic drama of millions of black people kidnaped from their home-place and brought to the land of the free to be used as beasts of burden; the burden of guilt they laid then on our hearts; the slaughter that comes out of this and nothing but this; their subsequent days of

being liberated, deluded, despised and then thrust back into slavery, will hardly be touched on. For all their agony and toil, no one will be presented the bill—no one will be found individually guilty or scarcely rebuked.

The one man in whom this age is embodied—whose personality towers over the announced heroes of his time, as the great mountain called Whiteface towers over the rock within whose shadow his bones still lie—will be treated as if he were not there, in the hope that some day he will go away and not plague us as he does with the still unresolved and accursed question for which he died.

At this commemorative hour, a hundred years past, he set out on the road to Harper's Ferry with 18 men, Negro and white. What were his precise objectives, we do not know. He was good at keeping secrets and he had a lot to keep. Although we have a rough knowledge of the ensuing facts as they succeeded each other in time, several things happened which would have disrupted the most carefully laid plans and made them as illogical as John Brown's seem to generations of arm-chair commandos. Let us say, as we can say of all military leaders from Napoleon down, that he had a lot of luck for a while and then he lost it . . .

He had luck in that he took over a rifle works and a U.S. Arsenal with all its supplies without firing a shot; that he had a Virginia town at his mercy; that he took a number of white hostages without bloodshed and was in a favorable position to exchange them for slaves. Although I do not to show his contempt but his love for his country and to purge one murkily viewed side of his character. He occupied the arsenal, I believe, not to show his contempt, but his love for his country and to purge one spot of federal soil from the usurpations of slavery. Shortly after arrival, he dispatched a party to the home of George Washington's grand-nephew. They took Colonel Washington prisoner and forced him to hand over to one of them, a Negro named Anderson, the sword the Father of Our Country had received from Frederick the Great as the leader of a great human liberation. With the power of this sword, and standing on the grounds of the United States Arsenal, the liberated slaves could be made citizens and men who would go forth to redeem the subverted pledges of the Declaration of Independence.

However, before this could be gotten fairly under way, something happened which was the worst of all symbols and converted a well-executed commando raid into a classic Greek tragedy. The first man was killed by the raiders. He was not a slaveholder or any part of their system of tyranny but, alas, a Negro already in full possession of his liberty and who had made no sign of resistance against them. With this brutal circumstance, all the surface virtue of this small liberation movement was

swept away. The natural laws of Aristotle's Poetics began to over-rule those of the Declaration and the event became centered in the personal drama of a good man with the noblest of intentions betrayed by a tragic flaw, or an error of judgment which transforms all that he had intended into its opposite. Once this had happened, John Brown instinctively passed into a phase of inward resignation to a penalty of blood and doom.

IT SEEMS almost superfluous to tell of what happened: of his loss of control over the event and his own forces; of the killing of his two sons, one under a flag of truce; of his being pinned down in one small building from which he heroically withstood, for 36 sleepless and foodless hours, the armed might of the State of Virginia until, in what seemed to be the bitter end, Federal troops under Robert E. Lee crashed through his last stand.

The leader of the assault group tried, apparently under orders, to make an end of John Brown, lunging at him with a light sword which wounded him slightly in the kidney but whose lethal thrust was deflected in some way which bent it so that Lieutenant Green had to use it as a club, showering blows on the fallen old man's head until onlookers felt sure he had broken into the skull. Covered with blood and filthy with powder stains, he was laid on a cot to be badgered, unto his dying breath, by nearly a dozen hostile inquisitors; a Senator, a Governor, two Congressmen and a District Attorney—all shortly to become Confederates or copperheads—along with Lee and Jeb Stuart, whose disastrously shifting loyalties should be the eternal shame of the United States Army. . . .

It was here that Brown had what is now called, in the patois of the intellectual, an existential experience. . . I use it in the hope that he will be finally recognized as a hero of the resistant mind as well as of action. Lying on a heap of rags, soiled and crusted with his own blood, advised on all sides of his imminent death, he found and expressed the totality of his life; he was his life. His best hopes were already entombed; not only had no slaves been liberated, they had not even risen. Out of the eighteen pathetically young men who had followed him, ten had died horrible deaths and the rest were marked for hanging.. If ever a man was driven to acknowledge that his existence was all nothingness on one side and all void on the other, John Brown was—here. The terrors Pascal and Tolstoy experienced when the abyss of physical extinguishment opened under their feet were beatific visions compared to this. He had every physical advantage with which to will an immediate soma and death but, instead, he turned sharply on his enemies, evading their verbal traps, explaining, justifying, . . . admitting with candor that his failure was due to his own

tardiness, folly and sentimentalism, his mind surmounting and controlling his physical plight. He fought them off for three hours, never once admitting any consciousness of guilt but, on the contrary, making them the criminals.

THE VENOM they were trying to slip into his blood to kill him revived him like plasma. Finally, Governor Wise, exhausted by the ordeal of defending himself against this wounded lion, said: "The silver of your hair is reddened by the blood of crime and it is meet that you should eschew these hard illusions and think upon eternity."

All in all, John Brown had given such a thundering "No" while on the edge of darkness, the question comes, verily, was he not the greatest of all Existentialists? Let us compare him to Pascal, who we are told, was the original of this new and conquering breed of Prophets. When Pascal was forced to think on the nexus put to Old Brown by Governor Wise, he said this: "When I consider the short duration of my life, swallowed up in the eternity before and after, the little space which I fill, and even can see, engulfed in the infinite immensity of space of which I am ignorant, and which knows me not, I am frightened, and am astonished being here rather than there; why now, rather than then."

Pascal, like the rest of us, eventually scared himself to death in bed. But the man who felt the hangman's knot already at his throat answered in words so strangely like that I have felt compelled to make this rather far-fetched comparison—and yet worlds apart. "Governor, I have, from all appearances, not more than fifteen or twenty years the start of you in the journey to that eternity of which you kindly warn me; and whether my tenure here shall be fifteen months or fifteen days, or fifteen hours, I am equally prepared to go. There is an eternity behind and an eternity before and the little speck in the center, however long, is but comparatively a minute. The difference between your tenure and mine is trifling and I want, therefore, to tell *you* to be prepared. I *am* prepared. You slaveholders have a heavy responsibility and it behooves you to prepare more than it does me."

Whatever Brown was, he was not another Pascal; he had that extra dimension the Existentialists have forsworn: the eternally reverberating "Yes" of perfect faith in man's transcendent fate.

The State of Virginia, carrying out the law with all deliberate speed, arraigned, indicted, tried and convicted John Brown of murder, treason and insurrection, two weeks after his capture. They tried to shuffle the old man off to oblivion but the shock waves from his explosion were uncontrollable. The daily newspapers became new books of Revelation

"Read his admirable answers to Senator Mason and the others," wrote Thoreau. "Truth, clear as lightning, crashing into their obscene temples." No public man was allowed to remain uncommitted. Seward, the Republican front runner for the Presidency, was accused of misprision of treason because he had received a letter of warning, prior to the Raid, which he had not reported. Abraham Lincoln was accused by Senator Douglas of having inspired it with his House Divided speech and felt obliged to deny and defame John Brown in a way that has cut him down, in my eyes, to a level less than true greatness.

THE OLD MAN was carried back and forth to the courtroom on a stretcher, still wounded, with his poor beaten head too clamorous with pain to hear what was being said about him. He was forced to fight off friends on one side trying to save him by calling him insane and thus negating the whole purpose of his life; and rescuers on the other, who would thus destroy his opportunity to bridge with his death that morass of misunderstanding between himself and the black man into which he had floundered with the incomprehensible shooting of the Negro Haywood in the first hours of the Raid.

His enemies revived his old sin of commanding the execution of five men in Kansas without a trial, an act which, abstracted from the revolutionary situation which made it a cruel necessity, could not be considered anything but the most heinous of crimes. One day he was brought unexpectedly into the courtroom whilst the jury was considering another verdict, abruptly sentenced to death and asked if he had anything to say. This was his greatest moment, when, naked to his enemies, he got off his stretcher and, without a trace of disquiet or uncertainty, wrung from his brain the irreducible essences of his life.

He began with his reaffirmation of having no consciousness of guilt, saying he denied everything but that he had come to free slaves . . . something he had always admitted as his intent and beyond which he had never meant to go. Reasonable men in his own day had to grant this, the very smallness of his operation denied that he had any plans to take over existing agencies of political power in the insurrectionary sense.

The volcanic thrust of the speech came in two great strains, one an appeal to and excoriation of the Christian conscience of a nation which still professes its existence under God. "This Court acknowledges too, as I suppose, the validity of the law of God. I see a book kissed, which I suppose to be the Bible, or at least the New Testament, which teaches me that all things whatsoever I would that men should do to me, I should do even unto them. It teaches me further, to remember them in bonds as bound with them. I have endeavored to act up to that instruction."

The other contained the finest expression of revolutionary moralit ever given by any man, anywhere. "Had I interfered in the manner whic I admit, and which I admit has been fairly proved—for I admire th truthfulness and candor of the greater portion of the witnesses who hav testified in this case—had I so interfered in behalf of the rich, the powe ful, the intelligent, the so-called great, or in behalf of any of their friend either father, mother, sister, brother, wife or children, or any of that cla and suffered and sacrificed what I have in this interference, it would hav been all right. Every man in this Court would have deemed it an act worth of reward rather than punishment. I believe that to have interfered as have done, as I have always freely admitted I have done, in behalf of H despised poor, I did no wrong but right. Now, if it is deemed necessar that I should forfeit my life for the furtherance of the ends of justic and mingle my blood further with the blood of my children and with th blood of millions of this slave country whose rights are disregarded b wicked, cruel and unjust enactments, I say, let it be done."

After this speech, the din of execration and disclaimer stilled for moment and John Brown stood revealed in his own light as if by a ligh ning flash. His personality, his mind and his continuity in time wer understood. I quote from the New York *Tribune* of Dec. 10, 1859:

"Brown was descended from a brave revolutionary stock. He held th doctrines of the Declaration of Independence were the property of th slaves of Virginia of our day as really as of their masters in 1776; that th equality of birth, the inalienable right to liberty, the duty of governmen to protect this right, and, failing to do so, the duty of the oppressed overthrow such governments which that Declaration proclaims we principles applicable to all ranks and conditions of men. Brown hel therefore, that every slave in Virginia had as perfect a right to walk o of the state as Henry A. Wise; that every so-called law which prevent him thus doing was invalid in its inception and oppressive in its operatio and was no law but sheer piracy; that if the slaves, through ignorance timidity refrained from exercising their inalienable rights, it was h duty to enlighten them and assist them and that any law which forba his doing so was to be treated as an invasion of his own rights and set defiance. Brown had a remarkable practical mind. He went straight whatever he undertook. Doubtless he was too much of a literalist a possessed too mathematical a judgment to take the wisest view of t complicated question of American slavery in all its relations; he we at his work as he would solve a mathematical problem. He knew the were 4,000 slaves in Jefferson County, Virginia. Now, if he could, by bold stroke, take off five hundred of these, he would reduce the numb

in that country one-eighth. If the blow proved successful, it could be repeated again and again there or elsewhere and so on until his mission closed with the termination of his life. That was his way of doing his part of the work which was the great idea of his life."

HERE is a calm judgment of his exact contemporaries, stated in an hour when it could do more harm than good. We are amazed to find it exactly opposite from what we are taught was the universal, popular verdict; that he was a muddling but well meaning fanatic with absolutely no intellectual content whatsoever. This contrary finding, in my eyes, stands as final in respect to his impact on the best men of his day.

But what of now? What is there left to set the seal on his prophecy and place the crown on his apostleship? For me, John Brown's usable truth lives in this: that he reaffirmed and tried to regenerate for a tainted and confused nation, the source of that revolutionary energy with which we transformed a moribund world nearly three centuries ago, and could again, a new and exalting unit of loyalty. A man can commit treason only against his unit of loyalty . . . which is his country, or his class, his firm, his church, his family or his race. John Brown claimed the unit of loyalty should be man himself and in a trial of a thousand years, he could never be imbued with a sense of guilt for saying, Let my people go . . .

We hear a great deal nowadays about the *guilt* of the white South as if, somehow, this explains away and absolves them of the constant wrongs they are doing their colored neighbors. I do not believe this guilt exists to a significant degree.

The crime of the white South springs from their racist unit of loyalty, which, to my mind, places them beyond redemption until they take an honest look at their society and its discontents. . . . First of all, they should wake up to the brute fact that the golden age they hark back to and cherish so was a slave-holding, slave-breeding, slave-driving, slave-hunting hell on earth based on the wild and tragic phantasy that man could hold property in man. They might realize then that its image and all the so-called heroes who sustained it with fire and blood are anathema to at least one-third of their fellow citizens at home and to the overwhelming majority of the citizens of the world. Secondly, they must be told that most of us know that when they talk about States Rights, they mean white rights and nothing but that. . . . All the revolutionary doctrines, all the lawless acts John Brown represents would be swallowed as a sacrament today if they had been performed to protect the purity of the race. He knew this and he said this. There has never been a time when the white South did not put race before every other form of loyalty. There was very little talk about States Rights whenever they were able

to compromise Congress and the Supreme Court into bringing the powe of the Federal government against the Negro and not for him. Is i States Rights that tell a man he cannot send his children to those commo schools to which they are entitled by the law of the land of their birth— because he is colored? What is the political system that prevents colore men and women from voting for the agents that represent them in th government, and form policies to which these disenfranchised people ar supposed to give their unquestioning loyalty and, when called upon, thei heart's blood? The John Brown that is in me, and there is a little Joh Brown in all of us, tells me that this is white rights; that it is anothe form of slavery and that it will never be anything else until all th people of the South can vote and go to the common schools of their choic

YOU PEOPLE out there—you universarians with your brains hone scapel-sharp by the abrasive grain and counter-grain of study and self examination—are you going to give the consent of your silence to th blandness, the de-principalizing that the hucksters of history are going t pour out like cough syrup for the next five years? Can't you get up a littl resistance movement—at least a committee of correspondence to try t slip back a few of the astringent values which are going to be draine out of the living body of our heritage until it is bled white?

I have already enlisted for the whole war. It will not be altogether a la bor of love. I hate the white southern racists and all their works. I hate ther for clapping me into a prison of my white skin as inescapable as that o my darker neighbors. What they do to others in the South makes me wan to secede from the white race—and what the white-skinned racist does i the North is just as abhorrent. . . . I hate them because they have stole my birthright of human brotherhood, alienating me from my bloo brother by their cruelty to him in my image . . . setting up impassab barriers of suspicion between me and people I want to clasp hands wit in loving admiration of the dignity, patience and restraint they hav shown in struggling upward to a level of liberation and privilege whic my kind accept as due them by their birth alone. I hate them becau they have blocked out of the culture of my time the full expression o the wisdom of a people to whom the meaning of life has had to b privation, suffering and alienation but who have lived with quiet co fidence, and far more than we have, with infectious and inexplicable jo I hate the white South because they have made me ashamed of my ow country, which not only presents to a vibrant world grappling with t problems we ignore the complacent surface of a sluttish society whc mass ideal is unlimited consumption of all possible goods and servic

but has lost all of its revolutionary virtues in an hour when the darker people of the world are finally climbing into the light and are forced to seek elsewhere the encouragement which our revolutionary fathers meant for us to bestow on mankind. . . .

Believe me, unreconstructed abolitionist though I may be, I do not want to punish the white South forever for the sins of their grandfathers, but they keep waving that Confederate flag in my face and I keep remembering what Garrison said about them long after Appomatox. "They are in the Union but not of the Union. They are under the Constitution but not for the Constitution, except as a matter of duress; they are nominally Americans but really Southerners in feeling and purpose. If they could see their way clear to throw off the authority of the Federal government and to resuscitate their defunct Confederacy, they would instantly rise again in rebellion and expel every loyal Northerner from their territorial domains."

THIS MAY SEEM irritatingly wide of the mark until we consider that the latest demand of the Constitution upon the white South has been answered by them with the integration of 74 children in five years—a rate of acquiesence in which it would take nearly 80,000 years for the 2,500,000 Negro children to receive what has always been one of their inalienable rights. Something tells me that even this progress will soon be obliterated by the tides of bogus sentimentalism engulfing us with the tributes paid the South for its "honor, integrity and heroism" in what I ask God to forgive me for calling "the War Between the States." Every meretricious spangle of this will be exploited to the full, to bedazzle the American people out of thinking about the forward motion and the overdue demands of the Southern Negro.

But in another sense, the long swinging orbit of history has given us a chance to redeem ourselves with a little plain-talking and truth-telling. On a platform at Gettysburg, someone said once that this war, now to be re-examined, was fought for the liberation of all the people, by all the people of this country. Let us proclaim this and celebrate it so; otherwise, the judgment of the *next* hundred years will be that John Brown and the men who sang his song on the bloody line at Gettysburg really did die in vain.

THREE POEMS

THOMAS MCGRATH

WATCHMAN! WHAT OF THE NIGHT?

Wrenched out of sleep by the sound of the world
At your window, or shaken by a child's nightcry,
Or plunged from dreams where plane or train arrives,
Miraculous as rebirth, at the holy city—

Waking then, in the soul's dark watches,
(The child asleep now, the world run down, and you
Turning on the rack of midnight, remembering
Hope) your life tastes dead on your lips—

And it is the hour of energy's low ebb
When the sick man lets go the rope, drops down
The dark river: hour of suicides, poems,
When hope and despair drop their disguises.

And then will arise that taunting vision of life
Born out of dream or the world's need—born out of
Your need: familiar to you as hunger:
The legendary world the heart remembers.

Then you are left incomplete: like ghosts
Your dead selves ring your sleep; and all your deeds
Seem empty as rooms in a vacant house—recording
Only the sound of the wind, or a sound of mourning.

But they are not: they have a value which the morning
Light will color, recalling you to a world
More incomplete than ourselves, needing your joy, your
Fist for justice, needing your heart for its truth—

Still, in the still night, before the morning,
It is hard to remember this. Hard, hard and
All-important: for life runs round the clock;
And the world after midnight is part of the world after all.

ANNIVERSARIES

for Don and Henrie Gordon

1.

Twenty-five years ago—
Headlines in the snow—
The jobless scrawled a text for mutineers;
Then history seemed sane,
Though Franco sailed for Spain
And Hitler swore to live a thousand years.

2.

Now Progress, his machine,
Turns water into wine;
With loaves and fishes stuffs the multitude;
For power he milks the sun
To see the cities flame
And drives the Goddess from the sacred wood.

3.

Yet anniversaries
Should mark our praise, as trees
Salute the queenly coming of the Spring.
All sacred marriages
Keep evergreen in this:
Coupling with time, they bind him in a ring.

4.

Though time turns, history moves
As if to prove our loves,
Having no pattern but the one we give.
While countries bleed and burn
Not any shall sleep warm
Unless, good friends, you teach us how to live.

5.

Five and twenty years,
A pulse-beat of the stars,
Astounds the May Fly's million generations.
Your middle style of Time
Is suited most to man.
This whispering wrist sustains the dream of nations.

TRAVELLER

for Boris Greenfield

How far, traveller, have you come from those woolen seasons
In the untranslatable village, where melamed winter
Rapped your knuckles with its stick of cold!
How far
From the Moon of Black Bread, from the Month of Cucumbers,
From the first radish, like a hidden mine
The geen tang of its secret ore like a distillation—
Spiritual whiskey—the pure taste of the Spring.
How far you have come, friend, to this Chelm-by-the-Sea,
To the chromium suburbs that can't even pronounce your name!
Country dry as a gourd, where, among synthetic gypsies
You meet the second half-century on all fours like a man
Fighting a wild bear. . . .
How strange it must seem
So far from the village and the studious boy,
Here, among friends, where even your children
Must often seem unfamiliar with their outlandish notions. . . .
It must have been a hard trek, old friend, I am glad
You have arrived among us.
We, too, are travellers,
Companions of the voyage on the inescapable journey.

A CORRECTION . . .

In the play "Prometheus Found," by George Hitchcock, published in the November issue of *Mainstream,* the first nine lines in the left-hand column of page 43 were misplaced. They should have been set at the bottom of that column. We regret the error, and hope that you were able to detect and right it yourselves.

. . . AND A HINT

We hate to break into your Christmas cheer, but it's only fair to tell you that we're so late in coming out this month because we lacked funds to pay the printer on time. So, loud greetings to you all, but we're hanging out a small sock below. Put it on your tree.

WHERE A MAN BELONGS

DAVID MARTIN

MR. COWEN did not get up until the other fellow had finished dressing. He felt a resentment against this uninvited room-mate: the landlord had promised him that, although there were two beds, he was going to have the room to himself. But at eleven o'clock the man had simply walked in, taken off his boots and trousers, and gone to sleep in his shirt. He had snored and groaned all night, keeping Mr. Cowen awake half the time, and since daybreak had been lying on his back, rolling himself one cigarette after another and grunting with satisfaction. He was a powerful young chap, a drover by the smell of him, and to Mr. Cowen, who felt tired and nervous, there was something irritating about his easy-going unconcern. Now with a "Morning, mate, how d'you sleep?" the other man went out. He did not wait for a reply.

Mr. Cowen threw back his sheet and put his feet down on the uncovered floor, strewn with cigarette ends. The hard sun of the wheat country, glaring already at this hour, fell on his face and hurt his eyes. He was aware of a stale taste in his mouth. He had been drinking the night before; moderately, but he was unused to beer and had done it only to be matey.

In a corner of the room stood the heavy case that contained his sample range: medium priced cotton frocks manufactured in Sydney. It was a good range, but Mr. Cowen had little hope of doing business; even out here the Melbourne people, with their big, efficient factories behind them, were undercutting him. Also, what he had seen of the town, the evening before, had discouraged him. This was the first time that he had travelled so far west, and already he regretted it.

Dressing slowly, he gazed out from behind the yellowing net curtains. Across the road there was another hotel, an identical twin to the one

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David Martin is an Australian novelist and poet, who has appeared a number of times in *Mainstream*. His most recent contribution was the story "Chocolate" in our August, 1959 issue.

where he was staying. The railway line passed it close by, trailing away into the hazy plain that lay flat and empty until wheat and sky met at the horizon. It was a long, meandering township, its entrance guarded by two pubs, with the wheat investing it closely. Mr. Cowen thought of wheat as "corn," not because he was an Englishman (he was a Hungarian when last he had a passport), but because to his modern language master in Budapest any grain that went into a loaf was corn. He had no energy left for these small adjustments. At his age the big ones were tiring enough.

He could see into the yard of the hotel opposite, shaded by a generous Morton Bay Fig. An aviary stood in the sun. A gray parrot clung expectantly to the wire netting, and small, multi-colored song birds were flashing from side to side. A girl came out to empty the slops; a red haired young person who whistled like a man. Up the street, the newspaper boy came cycling. Mr. Cowen watched him throwing his bundles over fences and low walls. One paper was caught in the branches of a tree, and Mr. Cowen, with a little spurt of interest, waited to see if the boy would dismount to retrieve it. The boy, however, merely turned to gaze back at the paper over his shoulder, and cycled on cheerfully. For a moment amusement struggled with chagrin in Mr. Cowen's mind. Chagrin won: he felt that if the paper had been his, he would have liked to box the lad's ears. Next, the postman came cycling along the footpath, as carefree as the newsboy and the girl with the slops. "There'll be mail today," Mr. Cowen thought. He was about to turn away from the window, when he caught sight of a dark figure walking up the street, towards the town.

This was an aborigine of undetermined age. He was dressed in a torn old khaki shirt that hung down over a pair of greasy drill trousers. He was bootless, and his bare black feet gave him an exotic air in Mr. Cowen's eyes; there was something unexpected about them. He remembered having seen the man the evening before. A little incident: the blackfellow had come into the bar unobserved by anybody, obviously hoping for a drink, but not asking for one. The landlord had motioned him to the door, and he had walked out again. But the big drover chap, the same who had suddenly come into his room and fallen into the vacant bed, had followed him out with a glass of beer, which the black man had drunk outside, round the corner.

"It's going to be a scorcher," the shirt-sleeved landlord remarked as Mr. Cowen entered the breakfast room. "My oath!" Mr. Cowen answered with assumed jauntiness, walking across to his table, from where a blue envelope beckoned. He sensed the hotel keeper's astonishment at the

back of his head and inwardly cursed himself for a fool, to use colloquialisms without being able to pronounce them properly. But the landlord, unable to place Mr. Cowen's exact origin, had decided that he was probably a Yorkshireman or something like that; a new chum.

The contents of the letter did not improve Mr. Cowen's humor. It was from Hungary, had followed him all over the state, and was addressed to Mr. Jack Cohen. His brother was a slow learner: it had taken him almost a year to understand that Jacob had given way to Jack, and it would take at least another before he would assimilate the change in the family name. His brother's news was dreary. Mr. Cowen's claims for compensation from the German Government for the robbery of his old business were collecting dust in Bonn. A big sum was involved, but his brother wrote that there was no hope of his getting a visa to go to Germany and stir matters up.

Mr. Cowen munched his lamb's fry and listened to the conversation at the next table where two of his drinking companions from last night had settled down, together with the man who had shared his room. One was a commercial traveller, the other a local farmer, in town to buy a new tractor. The two were arguing about the local race course and what official rating it deserved. He found their talk strange and soothing, pleasant like the fan that gently hummed beneath the ceiling, and like the homely clatter of dishes from the kitchen. He made a mental note not to buy a paper, but to give the news and all its bother a miss.

The traveler leaned over: "I say . . . That letter on your table. Mind if I have the stamp? My little bloke collects 'em. . . ." Mr. Cowen handed the envelope over and promised to see whether he had more stamps in his suitcase. He realized too late that the letter was addressed to Mr. Cohen, but refused to let it worry him. After all, it was only for the sake of convenience.

When he went out, the landlord called from the bar that he had a registered letter for him. It was lying athwart an ashtray on the beer-stained counter, to be safe from the sticky moisture. The shutters of the room were fastened and still imprisoned the fug of last night's easy hours. In the half gloom the landlord waved the docket on which Mr. Cowen had to sign. As he saw his name spelled out in the large letters of his lawyer's old-fashioned typewriter his stomach muscles contracted and saliva gathered in his mouth. He had to lean hard on the pen to affix his name without trembling.

He was still shaking when he emerged into the street. It was now nearly time to go to his customers, and his sample range was still waiting, but he could not face the lonely confine of his room. "Open the letter,"

he said to himself. "What is the matter with you? Why fall into a panic? What does it signify, after all? Even if you haven't got it—they won't do anything to you. You're all right either way." But his heart was beating fast and he had walked the distance of two blocks before he stopped and once more drew the letter from his pocket. It too had been forwarded after him. "Risky, risky," he thought. "It could have been lost."

Suddenly he had a surpassingly clear vision of the detective who had interviewed him. What a face! It was impossible to say whether it was hostile or friendly. Mr. Cowen had a nervous aversion to all policemen, which was natural after years of shuffling in and out of police stations for permits and registrations. A sordid business. But that detective! And the waiting. The running, the begging and the waiting. And now!

He had stopped outside a milk bar, and his face looked back at him from the plateglass window. "Do I look old?" he wondered. "Is this a middle aged or an old face? What is happening to us all: what am I doing here?" He turned and looked up and down the street. Two-storied houses in this section, the cold spirals of neon signs, buffoonish, incongruous in this dusty rurality. A petrol station at the far end, where the road narrowed to vault a bridge and to become country again. And he in the middle of it all. With the same sharp clearness with which the detective's face had come back to him he remembered that, as a child, he had sometimes tried to memorize a scene, an occasion; such as when he had taken leave from the ocean after his first seaside holiday. Here I am, he thought, in Australia. I look at my face.

He tore open the letter. Only a few lines in cautious lawyer's English: *We beg to inform you . . . have been notified . . . prepared to grant you a certificate of naturalization. . . .*

Carefully he folded the letter and put it into his pocket. It's over, he thought. I am still the same man. My God! After so much wandering, so much dying. Prepared to grant you . He tried to calm himself and to be philosophical, but it was too difficult. He would have liked to go and tell somebody, perhaps that big landlord of his hotel with the strong forearms. But instead he walked on, smiling to himself and sighing. He would tell the owner of the frock shop. They would have a drink on it, whether or not he booked an order.

So that security officer had not been hostile. He had merely asked his questions in the way of business. Naturally. There would be no more questions. No waiting with a dozen other silent aliens on chairs along the walls of drab police stations. No longer that feeling of guilty innocence. He remembered the day when he had not paid his tram fare and

when he had been summonsed, and the silly, fear-inspired letter he had sent to the transport people. A whole night he had lain awake, imagining what the magistrate would say to him—*you come here, we show you hospitality, and then you go and cheat us*—but the magistrate had not spoken to him at all. He had felt degraded, a coward. Of course, even now things could never be as in the old days. That was not possible: the old days were dead, they had been killed. But still! "An Australian," he said, "fair dinkum!"

The heat became more intense. He began to enjoy the splendid, nourishing warmth that made the country fruitful and held the town in a baker's grip, making the people free and careless. The farmer who was buying a tractor was driving down the middle of the road in a sulky, and by his side at a red-cheeked, bald man, hale and of his own age. The bald one held the reins; he dipped his whip as he passed. A countryman of mine, thought Mr. Cowen. He's my countryman and I am his. Well!

Happily excited, he pursued his way along the High Street, past the school. Through open windows came the chirruping of a hundred voices. A woman sang out: Ow . . . Ow. And back came the high-pitched, eager echo: Owl. Somewhere in the building a piano was tinkling the scales; up and down, up and down, up and down.

Where the High Street narrowed, a hundred yards or so further down, was an unpretentious wine saloon, tucked just round the corner from the petrol station, keeping itself to itself. A small group of sun-tanned men was hanging about outside, talking animatedly. Mr. Cowen recognized his room companion. Those other men were probably his mates. Their whole appearance bespoke the transient nature of their presence in this town, yet Mr. Cowen envied them their carefree bearing. It seemed to say that home was where they happened to be, and in their laughter he felt a subtle challenge. The hard-snoring drover of last night waved to him cheerfully. Mr. Cowen nodded. These were not the right people with whom to celebrate his good fortune, and he walked on swiftly to the bridge and crossed over.

A little way down, on the far bank of the sluggish creek, pulled into the reluctant shade of a withered tree, stood a little humpey, made of two sheets of corrugated iron and a slab of stringy bark. In the entrance to this refuge, surrounded by two kangaroo dogs and a heap of old cooking utensils and rusty tins, sat a black-fellow sucking at an empty pipe. He sat there as if he had been waiting all morning for Mr. Cowen to come along, and the latter suddenly realized that this man was again the same he had seen last night; probably the only black in the whole

township. You couldn't get away from people here, unless you walked right out into that blazing emptiness!

He was the first full-blood Mr. Cowen, city-bound these five years, had encountered. His face was shrivelled and bony with wisps of white hair growing out from the chin. He was still unshod, but a pair of boots lay by his side. He had been trying to stitch them with a piece of wire, but had, apparently, given up the task and now was just taking his ease.

Mr. Cowen gazed at him from the bridge.

The black man leaned forward and called out: "Got a bit tobacco, mister?"

Mr. Cowen fumbled for a packet of cigarettes and, ducking through a fence, went round to where the other was waiting for him. He handed over the full packet, which was accepted with a military salute. A feeling as of pity welled up in Mr. Cowen. Also a consciousness of the strangeness of this meeting: here were they, the oldest and the newest Australian, and the new one had a right to be sorry for the old one. A right to be sorry! What good was it to that man to be an Australian? What good indeed? Only to be left, rotting and abandoned, with a slum of his own, at the edge of the town. At least Mr. Cowen, passport or no passport, had never been refused a drink.

The aborigine crumbled two cigarettes in his cupped hand and deftly filled his pipe with the golden tobacco. He lit up and began to smoke. An expression of great joy spread over his face. After a few moments he took the pipe out of his mouth and addressed Mr. Cowen.

"You belong this place?"

Mr. Cowen shook his head. The desire for communication was still strong in him, though he did not know how he could explain so much to this dark, friendly being.

"Yes, I belong here," he said, looking down on the questioner, and smiling. "But I've come a long way. I am a Jew. You don't know what that is, I suppose?"

The old man put his pipe back and thought for a moment, his bushy brows, long like two ears of wheat, contracting. At last he removed the pipe again and scratched his teeth with the stem.

"Jew," he said, nodding his head with sober deliberation. "I know Jew. Jew, him belong fellas kill Jesus?"

Mr. Cowen turned and walked quickly back to the fence and the bridge. The aborigine called something after him, but he did not hear him, and in front were the laughing voices of the men outside the wine saloon. Some had walked up to the corner of the High Street; they made way for him as he passed by.

GREENWICH VILLAGE SOUTHERN STYLE

LAWRENCE GELLERT

Within recent weeks there has been a sharp increase of tension in New York's Greenwich Village. Small gangs of local toughs, mainly teenagers, have been assaulting Negro patrons of the various coffee houses that have mushroomed in the area south of Washington Square. Negro escorts of white girls have been particularly singled out for attack and some have been beaten insensible. Mr. Gellert, just returned from a trip through the South, here gives us a record of three dialogues, in which he served as interrogator. The talks took place at the fountain in the park, a rendezvous for young folk singers and guitar players.

1

If a nigger comes through here with a white girl, we are going to bust 'em.

Why would you do that?

It ain't natural. It just ain't natural, that's all.

What isn't natural?

Niggers and white women sleeping together.

How would you know they're sleeping together?

What the hell does a nigger want with a white woman else?

Don't you ever go walking with a girl without sleeping together?

Damn right I do.

So?

Niggers is different.

How about the white girl—hasn't she anything to say about it?

Niggers got 'em buffaloed. They think niggers is hot stuff. They're better than whites, in bed.

Oh come. Did any white girl tell you that?

I'd poke her face in if she did!

Then how do you know they do think so?

I just know they do—the ones that go with niggers anyway.

How can you know?

What other reason would a white woman have for wanting to with an ignorant black bastard?

Some of these "ignorant black bastards," as you call them, go to New York University and graduate at the top of their class.

The son of a bitches! I had to go to work when I was sixteen.

Looks as though you have personal reasons for hating Negroes.

Sure I have.

Because they're ignorant or because they're smart?

I just don't want to see any of them come through here with white women, that's all I say.

Maybe you're jealous because the white girls are pretty?

Maybe I am.

Supposing the white girl is homely—think of the homeliest girl you ever saw—one that no white man would go with—one that you would run away from—would you begrudge her walking around with a man—just any man—even a Negro?

I'd rather see her walk a dog.

But why?

Because God made the races different. And they shouldn't get mixed up.

You're Sicilian, aren't you?

Yeah. My father was, what of it?

And your mother?

I don't know.

Well, you're pretty dark skinned yourself.

You mean like a nigger?

Oh no. I never call anyone that. But I've heard some called that when they weren't nearly so dark as you are.

I'd like to hear somebody call me that—I'd fix 'em.

If you knew some more about the country your people came from, you'd realize that Africans were almost within swimming distance of Sicily for ages and ages—also they had canoes that could commute there week ends.

I don't know what you're talking about. But let me tell you something, I don't care nothing about who they are. If a nigger comes through here with some white woman—pretty or homely as sin, before we get through with them they'll wish they never met. They come down here for our Fiesta couple of months ago, the nerve of 'em, and I tell you if they

ain't run right into St. Anthony's Church until the cops come, we'd have splashed them all over the gutter. . . .

2

What time is it mister?

You're the umpteenth youngster to ask me the time in the past half hour. Is a watch too heavy a load for you beatniks to carry?

Don't call me a beatnik. That's a dirty word. And as for a watch, just tell me where they're giving them away. I'll run to get one.

I take it all back. Sorry.

It doesn't matter about the watch. But one thing you've got to get straight, mister. There's a tremendous difference between beats and beatniks.

Like what?

Beatniks are only caricatures of beats. They're sloppy Joes and Sloppy Janes.

With those skin tight pants and man's shirt sticking from under your belt, you're not exactly attired like a debutante yourself.

I'm clean mister. And my hair is combed. . . .

Then does appearance alone explain the difference?

Of course not. You brought it up yourself. The beats write and paint and play instruments. Or at least we try to. You can hear some of us play around this fountain in nice weather—that is when the cops don't chase us. Many of us exhibit paintings on the sidewalk around the Park during the Spring and Fall shows. But these beatniks do nothing but guzzle rot gut whiskey, puff reefers and get high and jumping on good balls. They go hallabalooing and panhandling and actually manage to attract more attention than we do. And naturally they are lumped with us. And how can serious artists function with a tin can like that tied to their tail?

Do you play any instruments?

Oh yes—guitar and banjo also. But I'm studying painting seriously.

What type of painting do you do?

I'm just a student now—my second year at the Art Students League.

What do you think of this abstract expressionism?

Like a Jackson Pollock canvas?

Yes.

Guess it represents our time.

In what way?

Well, every generation tries to find its own direction independent of tradition. And it's bound to seem extreme and unintelligible to the old

sters. I read a good deal about the period following World War I and the so-called or self--styled Lost Generation. They were like our beats. The reason why some of us who try to paint or make music or write poetry seem to go to more exhibitionistic extremes than your generation is owing to the high cost of living which makes it much harder today to maintain Bohemianism without money. Just look at rents! And the cost of food? Why just carfare to school costs me fifteen cents each way. In one of the books of your period I read that used to buy a steak dinner.

I don't go back quite that far, young lady. But how does that explain abstract art?

I think one of the prime motives for this abstract art, at least with artists, is that they don't have to study for years and years before they can shmear and sell. Fellow I know got his hand on a brush the very first time and called the daub Opus No. 1 and actually sold it for ten bucks. Bet you Rembrandt didn't do it with his first try. And you know artists like to eat too.

How about this Rock and Roll music?

It's not popular now. Progressive Jazz has taken over. And what's wrong with it?

I wouldn't know. It's noisy for one thing. All percussion with the melody completely whammed out of it.

You're talking about dance music. It makes you shake your feet. That is all it's trying to do. That's exercise. Strenuous too. Lot better than curled up couples on some couch listening to some aphrodisiacal sweet stuff. That's when you must watch what is going on with kids. Not when they're working it off with strenuous dancing. You know, we still love Beethoven and Brahms.

Do you have many acquaintances also seriously following various artistic pursuits?

Of course. Oodles. And now I'll bet you'll be asking me if there are some Negroes among them?

Why should I?

Because my father does, all the time. And he's not as old as you are,

Age has nothing to do with it. Anyway, what do you tell your father?

That my choice of colors is restricted to my paints—not my friends.

Well, that sounds like a good answer.

Yap, that's exactly what my daddy said. It was so good in fact, that he's decided to give me no more money until I give up my room in the Village and go back to Williamsburgh where he can keep his eye on me—and my friends.

You will be going home?

In a coffin. I'll take a job first.

How old are you?

Nineteen.

That's an age one should be able to reason with.

Yeah. My mother came to see me last week. She said dad saw me walking with a Negro girl. Imagine that! And he nearly had a heart attack. Why? Because through this Negro girl, I might meet a Negro boy. Does he worry about me being run over by an automobile? Or catching cancer from filtered cigarettes or whether I'm getting anywhere with my work in school? No sir. He never gives those things a thought. Only that I might meet some Negro boy and have an affair with him—or worse—marry and settle down to beget some café au lait babies. And you should know my dad used to be a member of the Workers Circle. Bragged about his work in the union during the depression and called himself a progressive, liberal intellectual. Even voted Wallace for President in 1948! Oh God. And look at the mess he turns out.

You may be doing your father an injustice.

Me?

Yes, you. He's thinking perhaps only of your future. You must know by now it's pretty tough living in this world without the added handicap that mixed couples encounter.

Who in Hell said anything about me marrying—a Negro, or anybody else?

I'm merely trying to explain if I can, the seeming inconsistency you find in your father.

It's not only my father. It's the whole stinking past generation. The way they treat the Negroes in this country and with all that blah, blah about liberating colored colonial peoples all around the world. You should be ashamed. You know I sometimes think that we beats are the only honest people left in this country. The rest of you just blow air to flit the subject to some convenient corner out of sight.

How do Negro acquaintances of yours feel about it all?

Well, there—over there—he's talking to that other Negro—is Nick. He's a poet. Recites his lines at the Bizarre.

Could you introduce me to him?

No, he would resent being questioned by you.

How about calling him over and just discussing it between you? I'll stand by in the wings-like listening.

No, he would never give me his slant straight. He wouldn't want to hurt my feelings, with some real gone stuff, low down. I know he has some secret grieve. But he never mentions it.

It might do him some good to talk about it.

Well, I don't know. He's touchy. He's jumpy. He's all nerves. He doesn't like to talk to stranger whites. But if you want to tackle him by yourself—just walk over and try your luck. But don't say I sent you and don't blame me if he pops off worse than a firecracker.

3

Pardon me—you are Nick aren't you?

Why?

You recite poetry at the Bizarre . . .

No sir, I do not.

Well, something's wrong here.

It's with you like most white people who seem to think that all Negroes look alike.

Oh no. Some girl pointed you out—or I thought she did. Guess my eyes are none too good—I'm terribly sorry.

Over at that joint you mention I heard some guy calls himself a poet bellowing over a loud speaker about a tooth he held in his hands. See this, he roared, it's my mother's tooth. How do I know it's my mother's wisdom vizor? I knocked it out of her mouth myself. And then he rattled off a whole catalogue of grieves he held against her—from pre-natal up until the end of time. You call that poetry?

There must be some poetry around lots better than that, I hope.

It doesn't matter. It has nothing to do with me. My father is a postman. He walks the Bronx Route—and you know neither snow nor ice nor whatever else the sign above the Main Post Office Entrance reads, stays the rounds of his delivery. It's hard work, and skin off his back to pay for his son's education. And he says he's bound to see to it that it's no wildcat gamble, but a sound investment. No poetry for me. I'm studying Law at NYU there.

You live home with your parents?

No, my schedule is too full and irregular to travel the distance to the upper Bronx. Rent a cubby hole in a cellar on Charleton Street. I don't mind it too much. There are worse things.

In the Village?

Yeah. Actually I once lived in Birmingham, Ala., and prefer it there in some aspects.

It can't possibly be that bad here.

You wouldn't know, sir. Down South a Negro becomes conditioned to regard every white hand as against him. Here when a white man sticks his mitt out it doesn't really mean he's friendly—or that he's

necessarily your enemy either. You suffer a traumatic experience before you learn whether he's going to shake your hand or biff you one in the eye. That's how come I spoke to you rough before.

That's all right. I think I understand.

More than that. Some places they serve colored—in restaurants for example—other places they just let you sit. You can never tell unless some other Negro with more experience in the neighborhood can check-list the places for you. We are charged more rent here because we are Negroes, just as elsewhere. But what is worst of all, I'm being stopped all the time by dicks and addicts—whites mostly. They demand to know whether I've stuff on me for sale. I know what they're looking for. But just because I'm Negro, halfway decently dressed and around the Village, why should that mark me as a junk pusher?

You carry those books there. Doesn't that allay suspicion of drug pushing as you call it?

Oh no. They've become standard props for the real pushers. There are quite a few Negroes doing it, I know. But do you find the stuff growing in Harlem gardens? Of course not. And none of the big shots in the racket are found in Harlem—not on your life. They're not even Negroes. Also it's lately a habit among the cops to ask for identification papers. They always frisk the men from the Bowery. But with Negroes, they do it whether they're hobos or passengers in cars just passing through the Village or well dressed residents. They seek to make it a point to single you out of a mixed group—white and Negro—when you're walking with classmates whether male or female or both. I don't exactly seek them out —I mean the white girls and boys—nor do they flock after me. Sure, there are Negroes who'll go seriously cultivating white friends and white women too. But that's only because the whites have greater opportunities and for a certain type of human being, white or Negro, climbing can become a career. The lighter skinned boys and girls are considered more desirable mates among Negroes themselves, because the gradation of skin color determines for the individual member of the race the extent of handicap to be met with in earning a living. We actually have us a whole section of Harlem town, called jokingly "Strivers Row." We refer to the residents there as Tit Danglers and Sucklers. But why condemn an individual at the very bottom of the social scale who wants to lift himself a few notches? Or to make it possible for his offspring to do so?

Actually, mixed marriages between white and Negroes are frowned on in Harlem. Especially a Negro man with a white woman, because it removes a potential bread winner from the racial group. So it looks like an economic problem at bottom, doesn't it?

RiGhT FaCe

The Child's Hour

"My little girl, almost nine, is beginning to ask me question about war: 'Will there be fighting in front of our house?' 'Where will I and the rest of the family get guns to fight back?' What do I tell her?"

* * *

"We suppose that you might start out with something about the history of war . . . Then something about atomic war and the larger and less personal scope that war is taking—less hand-to-hand fighting and more bombs. Whereas a 3-year old might worry about hand-to-hand fighting in the street outside her house, atomic warfare might seem more remote and less personally worrisome even though we know it is far more dangerous.

"You might emphasize, since she has an appetite for information, the Civil Defense aspect of war. Explain that she as a little girl probably might not be drafted, but that she can take part in Civil Defense. This might give her thinking a more positive turn.

"In telling her about war as in telling about sex or any other large, pervasive topic, you don't tell it at once, or once and for all. Ideally your answers are given, appropriately, at the time questions are asked, and presumably the whole picture emerges only gradually.

"Thus, if you are a family which lives in fear of war, no matter how reassuring you try to be verbally, your daughter will probably get a fearful picture of the whole thing. If you are among those who live, if not happily at least adaptively, with the notion of possible atomic warfare, she may be less anxious."—Doctors Frances Ilg and Louise Ames of the Gesell Institute answer a question in the Scripps Howard papers.

Despite!

Despite United States aid since 1955, the only evident change here

[Vientiane, Laos] is the number of luxury cars crusing the three main streets and some thirty side streets and alleys.—Special to the *New York Times*.

Help! Help!

In this country [England] there was almost despair on the official level at the first press reaction to the Soviet proposals, because front-page newspaper headlines shouted "Scrap the Lot—K Proposal." And because readers went around muttering, a little self-consciously, "Why not?" or "What's wrong with that?" there appeared to be a basis for depression—Walter H. Wagonner, special to the Sunday *New York Times*.

What's in a Name?

South Africa defended its practice of separating the white and non-white races today as a "policy of peaceful co-existence."— The *New York Times*.

A Laughing Matter

RALEIGH, N.C.—A white farmer charged with manslaughter in the death of a Negro he said he had shot at as a joke has received a suspended sentence of three to five years.

Roger Earl Williams, 38 years old, of Wake Forest, N.C. was also ordered to pay $2,750 to the victim's wife and four children.

Mr. Williams said the Negro, William Person, 28, had been a friend of his and that he had fired at him in fun to make him run faster. The bullet struck Mr. Person in the back.

A magistrate cleared Mr. Williams of any blame, but later the Wake County grand jury indicted him for manslaughter.—AP dispatch.

Make Way, Tarzan

Let me center for just a moment on "Solomon and Sheba" itself—and explain why I think this film is a direct and volatile example of "my kind of movie." The formula I've used has been to take the most arrant adjectives such as "majestic" and "epic" and try to give them their full range of meaning on the screen. The cast, headed by Yul Brynner and Gina Lollobrigida and numbering in the several thousands, was chosen to give the film vitality with the biceps and romance of popularity.—An address to the trade press by Director King Vidor.

books in review

The New Gulliver

INSIDE THE KHRUSHCHEV ERA, by Giuseppe Boffa. Marzani & Munsell, New York. $5.00.

HAVING recently returned from an extended stay in the Soviet Union, I can testify at first-hand to the perceptive and penetrating view of that country that Giuseppe Boffa, foreign editor of the Italian Communist newspaper, *L'Unita,* gives us in this fine, though misleadingly titled, book.

There is no other work extant at the moment, as far as I know, which deals so lucidly and in such intimate detail with those highly controversial, though profoundly decisive events leading up to and culminating in the famous 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in February, 1956. Boffa does not stop there, however, but follows with an account of the consequences of the decisions taken at that Congress which were reaffirmed and carried further in the 21st Congress.

Though Boffa is more than well-informed on events, he does not feature exotic "inside" information. This too is one of the book's merits, for Boffa focuses attention where attention belongs: not on behind-the-scenes tidbits, but on the political developments ultimately visible to all who wish to see and within reach of all those who have the power to analyze. Boffa once again proves that the crux lies not solely in the facts taken in isolation but in the process of their development, in their meaning. We have long known that "facts" do not exist outside of and independent of their class context. Thus large sections of the capitalist world interpreted the events which led up to a climax in the 20th Congress as signs of weakness. On the other hand, the working class estimated these events in an opposite way—as evidence of temporary difficulties along what was overwhelmingly the triumphant road of progress.

Who was right? Time has already proven who was right, though what is still to be fully understood—and this is where Boffa renders an important service—is *why* the Marxists were right, in

this instance, as they have been in almost every critical juncture of events during the last fifty years or more, in spite of an array of difficulties unprecedented in history.

Boffa's theme is the triumph of socialism over distortions and obstacles. That triumph is the drama of our epoch, and this book, striving to respond fully to this fact, succeeds in large measure in recreating the main forces that have been locked together in titanic struggle. The superficial moralists who hung themselves up on what one might call the "Stalin hook" have missed the real moral grandeur of the people who suffered all, struggled with all, conquered all. When the failures of Stalin were exposed, the Soviet people brought their own lives simultaneously out into the pitiless light of full scrutiny and subjected their consciences to ruthless, moment by moment examination. They were able, in this unprecedented review of their history, to separate the true from the untrue, the hypocritical from the sincere, the real from the false; then to remedy, without panic or hysteria, what had to be remedied, strengthen what had to be strengthened, and not resting there, go on to draw the plans of a future which are breathtaking in scope and promise. In fact, what strikes any but the most superficial of observers in the Soviet Union is the extraordinary quietness and maturity of the people, the mellowness with which they consider problems, the broad tolerance of their views on political as well as personal questions. Boffa does credit to the Soviet people by entering deeply into both their agony and their triumph and showing us, with intimate precision, just how they accomplished the renewal of socialism after removing the barnacles. The author was uniquely equipped for his role, not just because he happened to be on the spot as a newspaper reporter during those critical five years following Stalin's death. Others had been on the scene even longer but understood less. What distinguished Boffa is that his clarity and understanding, his receptivity to the truth was owing to the fact that he did not view events in the USSR from the factitious point of view of the "objective observer" or "the neutral commentator," much less as the journalist from the bourgeois press whose job it was to muddy the waters as much as possible and to sow as much doubt and confusion among Western intellectuals as the opportunity permitted. Boffa came to the Soviet Union as a committed Communist, passionately involved in the outcome of the struggle, and *therefore* equipped to see reality.

Something did change at the 20th Congress, something tremendous. Although world attention was focused on the famous "secret" speech, another speech, not secret at all, was delivered at the same Congress in which very important theses were expounded for the first time, and it is only today that this latter aspect of that critical Congress is now getting its due.

Here is where Boffa does a fine pioneering job. Khrushchev's recent visit to the United States is almost in direct jet-line from that Congress in Moscow to Washington, and if in fact it took him three years to make the trip, one can look upon those three years as the time needed for a full vindication of the theses first worked out at the 20th Congress. Those theses declared that war was not "fatally inevitable" and could be blocked and even ultimately removed altogether from history by the intervention of the people; and, as a corollary to this, the prospect for a

peaceful evolution into socialism was projected as quite feasible for a number of countries. All countries would take the same basic road to socialism, though the means would differ.

In the three years since these theses were enunciated we witnessed the attempted counter-revolution in Hungary, the stirrings in Poland and the wild, mad attempt of the second echelons of world imperialism to win back lost positions in the Suez assault. These "interuptions" held up but did not prevent the trip; these developments delayed but did not destroy the drive toward the summit. As dramatic as the events around the personality of Stalin and his cult were, the fact is that the long-time forces, whose significance was momentarily dwarfed by the Stalin revelations, are now in their turn placing his role in something like a sensible perspective.

Boffa succeeds admirably in delineating the process by which these theoretical concepts were applied in Soviet life. The second half of his book describes in great detail how the quality of life in the Soviet Union changed or was modified since the 20th Congress. Almost no part of Soviet existence has remained untouched, beginning with the immediate consequences of the denunciation of the personality cult, which reverberated to the farthest corners, liquidating hard cores of bureaucratic resistance wherever they were encountered.

The decision to de-centralize the administration of industry gave further momentum to the process of debureaucratization, and steps were taken to return to the jurisdiction of individual republics certain administrative and legal powers which had been monopolized by the central government. It was in the struggle against this development, as well as many other features of the new policy, that Molotov, Malenkov, Kaganovich, and others were defeated and removed from positions of power and influence.

The bold decision to open up vast areas of virgin soil to cultivation in order to correct past errors of policy in agriculture and simultaneously to solve once and for all the food question, was another aspect of the grand new strategy which, under Khrushchev's initiative, marked the beginnings of the transition to Communism. Thousands — hundreds of thousands—of young people voluntarily left comfortable, or at least familiar homes and surroundings to go out into the wilderness and plow up the land. Thousands of administrators of industry left the coziness of apartments in big cities to go to live in the provinces.

The legal apparatus of the country was overhauled and brought into closer harmony with the actual socialist relations of production that already existed. All those who had been unjustly—or justly—imprisoned in the past had their cases reviewed, and where they were proven innocent, or even where there was doubt as to their guilt, they were freed and rehabilitated and resumed their places in society. What is more, the returned deportees, instead of repudiating the Party and the society which victimized and injured them, on the contrary overwhelmingly reaffirmed their faith and loyalty and took up their duties in building socialism where they had been broken off. Boffa gives us some personal instances of such cases.

Boffa also describes the great educational reforms which were inaugurated recently and whose ethic of work-and-study is intended to replace the one-sided and unsocialist concepts of the division of intellectual and physical labor.

There were many other changes and

developments in Soviet life which Boffa examines and elucidates. But topping them all was the decisive change in the strategy of conducting foreign affairs. The world has never seen so skillful, so stubborn, so flexible a policy aimed at preserving and consolidating peace as the policy inaugurated and chiefly administered by Khrushchev. We have had first-hand experience of this policy in action during Khrushchev's recent visit to the United States. As a result, we can say, for the first time in many years, that peace between the two main world powers is a possibility.

But these changes in internal and external policy called for a tremendous force behind them, namely the approval of the Soviet people. How was this approval secured? Boffa gives us a good illustration of how socialist democracy works and ensures, when it is allowed to operate, *and even when obstacles are placed in its way,* that basic decisions affecting the people's welfare are democratically arrived at. The decision to liquidate the centralization of industry was taken only after a tremendous debate, involving hundreds of thousands directly through large and small meetings in which every point of view was expressed. Although the debate was initiated by the Central Committee of the Party, the Central Committee did not arrive at a decision until the discussion had ended and the numerous resolutions adopted at the various grassroots meetings had been digested and consolidated. What Boffa is describing is "democratic-centralism" in action, in which a reciprocity between "leaders" and "people" extracts from each what each can contribute, without hampering either free expression or disciplined and united action.

The superiority of socialism as a democratic force is here fully shown proven. Its efficiency as a form for organization of society is equally cl The basic contradiction between creators and the exploiters having b removed, the difficulties that remain natural obstacles inherent in the prog sion and development of all phenome inertia, local stakes in local conditi the struggle between what was and w must be. Important contradict though they may be, they can never velop into the proportions of capit contradictions whose solution in the has almost always meant the spillin so much blood!

One last word. Boffa does not hes to give us his account in personal te He offers us his own thoughts and e tions as a sounding board against w the great events he describes w hurled. But it's a relief to read, once, a "personal account" of ev which spares us the egotism, the p ness and gossip so characteristic of reports. Boffa does not fake what does not know, nor are we tricke pushed into a position that goes ag our understanding, though we powerfully persuaded to alter our p dices, and even more important, to gin to thaw out the hard ice of sk cism and even hostility which has gr up inside so many people who felt betrayed and disillusioned by events. But his is no evangelical and new gods are not erected where ones fell.

Boffa shows us that it is not en to try to understand developments i Soviet Union from pre-established retical positions or—what is more l today—from pre-established preju For the simple fact of the matter is the nature of socialism is qualitative distinct and different from all

social systems that there is little to be gained from analogies or historical parodies.

The Soviet Union is not merely repeating the laws of growth that are, essentially, the same laws of growth which England followed after its industrial revolution, with all the misery and oppression that characterized such a period. Nor, having reached a level of prosperity and comfort, will it sink into a bourgeois-like suffocation and corruption as has occurred in the United States. What is so exciting about the Soviet Union is that it stands not mid-way, nor three-quarters way toward fulfillment; it stands on the very threshhold of great leaps forward that will take it much farther than the moon! What we are seeing here is the great exit door from humanity's suffering and historic limitations being pried open—forced ajar only a crack so far and under the most difficult of conditions — but still opened; and man, at last throwing off his bonds, a huge Gulliver, is preparing to step through. Man is leaving the Kingdom of Necessity for the Kingdom of real Freedom, and how tragic it is that so many see in this great stride forward only the collapse of human hopes!

For them Boffa sums up:

> In the society that came out of that October revolution there is a moral superiority as well as a social and political superiority. It has given man a new dimension, previously unknown. It has truly revealed to every individual that "nothing human is alien to me"; it has shown him that his personal destiny is inextricably tied to a common solidarity. Man *is* his brother's keeper . . .
>
> And he is much more: he is his brother's liberator and his creator.

PHILLIP BONOSKY

Good Will Is Not Enough

THE WAR LOVER, by John Hersey. Alfred A. Knopf. $5.00.

A FEW weeks ago, following the Khrushchev visit, Nelson A. Rockefeller, one of the leaders of the bi-partisan war party in the United States, opted for our resumption of nuclear tests. For the sake of peace, of course. Like all Mr. Rockefeller's gestures, this one revealed his contempt for the hopes of people and his realization that in order to put them to sleep, you must first pretend to wake them up. His brain—or the streamlined PR setup which serves as that organ—works on the theory that it is not what men want but how much or how little they know that determines what they will do or what can be done to them. He is out to prove Lincoln wrong.

Mr. Hersey, on the contrary, surely thinks himself a child of Lincoln's. He wants to fool nobody at any time and he is certainly against fighting. Yet, compared to the twisty Governor-for-the-moment, he is a very Adam of innocence. The years since World War II have apparently taught him nothing of what really counts in the way of political cause and effect. It's as if one could show him a dollar bill—or 40 billion —and he would ask: "What's that?" He will dazzle you with information about the controls and fluids in a Flying Fortress and he can probably assemble a machine gun in total darkness. But ask him who controls the flow of oil and who has the power to release the bombs—Buzz Marrow, is Mr. Hersey's answer, the murderous flier of a B17. It's a pitiful response, and one can imagine how it would wither under Mr.

Rockefeller's cool and amused stare. For *The War Lover* is an earnest and anxious novel, but not a serious one.

Somewhat of a late-comer in the herd of war stories, it must face the challenge of the old bulls. Here it shows to sad disadvantage. If Norman Mailer, in *The Naked and the Dead,* never managed to find the human elements with which the sources of war might be stopped, he had still some inkling of what and who might be responsible for its recurrence. Even in the specific area of Mr. Hersey's action—the bombing of German industrial and civilian targets from bases in Britain—I think of at least one book: Saul Levitt's *The Sun Is Silent* (Harper and Bros, 1951) which is written with fewer naturalistic details or stylistic affectations, and a greater interest and diversity in character rendering, while it is less mechanical in its organiation. Furthermore, there is some hint, though hardly developed to sufficient degree, of the reasons for the frustration shared by all bomber crews, their feeling that something fishy was delaying the ground war in the west which would have given visible meaning to their ordeal, and offered them support against their fears.

To get back to Buzz Marrow, he is the pilot of the plane whose co-pilot is the narrator, Bo Boman. The relationship between the two men is symbolized in Boman's watching the movement of their respective controls as "still sitting in Marrow's seat I moved the wheel and the column and the rudder pedals to the extremities of their operating ranges. And across the way my own co-pilot's wheel, unmanned, my column, and my pedals moved in perfect automatic harmony with the movement of the pilot's controls." By this passage, which comes early in the book, we are to understand the ambivalence of Boman's admiration, and his latent hostility toward his superior who is a genius in flight, a master with instruments, and a cruel, brutish son of a bitch for whom most men are stones in the path and all women machines to tinker with until they wear out. Boman's respect for Marrow hardly lessens until his girl tells him how his hero had made more than a pass at her, only to sheer away from the chance which she, from some too obvious but far-from-convincing motive, has offered him. This leads Boman to the rather belated revelation that Marrow has all along been driven by the love of destruction and death, and he is confirmed in his insight by the pilot's loss of nerve on their twenty-fourth mission.

Unhappily, this dramatic issue has been prepared for too well and too far in advance, so its effectiveness is sharply reduced at the "moment of truth." Moreover, the cause of Marrow's collapse is too profund to be sufficient, while the narrator's discovery comes so tardily that one is inclined to suspect his intelligence. In other words, Mr. Hersey has built a mock-up from reports and blue-prints; but the flesh is missing from the figures.

The lack of scope in an author's viewpoint can have curious, diminishing effects upon his technique. I shall try to indicate very briefly how this works in the present case. In order to achieve the difficult linkage of theme and action, Mr. Hersey resorts to obsessively attentive detail. Often this vain effort ends in gross, because superfluous, imagery. Before a raid, Boman feels that "My heart was taking off and my palms were beginning to sweat like Old Faithful." He observes a contraption-loving crew chief giving a final roll to his engine "for he wanted his million-dollar baby to come home again when next she went out

ecause she had so many hours of his fe's work, like gallons of his seminal uid, in her parts." Expectant father, erhaps?

The unvaried alternation of chapters evoted to the five and a half months' our of duty and to the single mission to chweinfurt is not too successful a device. breaks the sensory and emotional con-nuity, though it does distract the reader om realizing how conventional and atic is the love affair between Boman nd the English girl, Daphne.

These are not central errors, however. lore crippling is Mr. Hersey's failure make the characters powerful enough vehicles for his grave intention: to pit e love of life against all death-striving rces in nature and man. This inade-uacy is more intellectual than artistic. oman is not up to coping with Marrow ntil the latter's breakdown on the ucial mission because the author him-lf does not face the implications of rategic bombing as a fake, spasmodic bstitute for the opening of the Second ront. Nor can he get himself to admit at finance capital may have more to with modern war than the inherent sorders of the psyche.

First person narration is a delicate atter. It is always a triumph when the riter can separate himself from the aracter so that he is at once creator, server, and judge to a degree. Often, ough, the author's views do not extend yond those of his creatures, including s "I." Then he must bear responsibility r their mental poverty. In *The War ver* we are left with Boman's outlook d Daphne's conclusions. The former nfesses shamefacedly that he is badly epared for war: "I said I'd waded rough translations of both *Mein mpf* and *Das Kapital* but hadn't got t while wading . . ." Boman's sense of loss in this respect pervades the book since it is extended to all the minor characters; but he is, of course, one of those whose ignorance be bemoans. That is why he is impressed by Daphne's wisdom:

> "Why do you keep silent about the reason for war? At least, what *I* think is the reason for war: that some men enjoy it too much." She said she didn't mean just the life of campaigns, getting away from everything humdrum, from responsibilities, from having to take care of others. "More than that," she said, "I mean, the pleasure your pilot gets." She said something about the gratification that wells up out of "the dark slimy place of toads and snakes and hairy men"—from deep, deep down. . . . We wouldn't have a real peace while these men still had that drive in them.

"Well," say the unobtrusive men at the Big Tables, the kind fathers in banking houses, the philanthropists and massive endowers of culture, the moles of the Cold War, the planners of the Korean police action, the real invaders of Guatemala, the indulgent uncles behind the "freedom fighters" in Budapest, the brains behind the big slaughter at Suez and the little bombing of Havana, "Hersey's got us off that hook. Now hairy Buzz Marrow can take the rap."

And so long as Buzz is in the loghouse, they will see that he gets the best of care. Social workers will gentle him, psychology professors will test him to distraction, doctors will give him weekly spinal taps, his fur-lined couch will be plugged in to MUZAK. After all, when he's recovered from his ineradicable angers, he must be in shape to resume

his practice of killing—but as a normal fellow, guided only by his loyalty to the system which has been so good to him.

Boman, on the other hand, goes on to his last mission resolved to do nothing that will involve taking a human life. In short, he takes someone else's rightful place on the plane, bestowing his foolish mercy on the Nazi war machine. This is what can happen when good will shuns knowledge.

CHARLES HUMBOLDT

Shenanigans

THE TEMPTER, by Norbert Wiener. Random House. $3.75.

HE PIRATES the ideas of a crabbed, poverty-stricken genius, his friend; uses them to put the company for which he works in the vanguard of the push toward automation and fabulous profits; induces a vain, weak-minded man to take credit for inventions he never could have made; traps him into a position of virtual servitude, that robs him of any real values in the life he has been leading. It makes the story more interesting that all this is done by a kind, even rather tender-hearted man whose conscience is alert and whose views are on the liberal side.

As Chief Engineer of a New England firm engaged in manufacturing the machinery that makes ships run, Gregory James (who tells the story in the first person) is called on for policy-making suggestions. His recommendation transforms Williams & Albright into an industrial giant with a monopoly over one of the key processes in the development of automation. But the idea is not his own. He has taken it from the work of one Woodbury, whom he met while on a visit to England.

Putting the recommendation into ef fect is a process that stretches from th end of World War I to the depth o depression in 1931. For James each step in which he takes a leading part, in volves a compromise with conscience. H intends to give Woodbury full recogn tion for his pioneering work. He woul prefer to reward Watman, the Junio Engineer who actually adapted Wood bury's theories to the manufacture o specific machines. Instead, he has to pe suade Dominguez, a prominent unive sity professor, to take credit for the in vention and maneuvre him into signing lucrative contract which takes away h freedom of action and, in the end, eve his manhood.

The story affords a fascinating insigh into the ways of corporations and the effect on the lives of individuals an on the public. We learn just how patent suit may be rigged, with the com pany selecting the lawyers and witness on both sides; how public opinion manipulated; the slow, careful, plausib method of approach that gradually e snares the professor. All this chicane emerges not from any conscious plan b from the demands of a system built profit and competition.

The author is in an excellent positi to know the field of which he writ Professor in the Department of Mathe atics at the Massachusetts Institute Technology, he founded and named t science of cybernetics, which concern self with finding common principles the function of automatic machines a the human nervous system. In bo world wars he did important work electronic inventions such as anti-aircr predictors and radar. *Mainstream* re ers may remember an article on "T Education of Scientists" by Dr. Wie in the May, 1958 issue.

It would be too much to expect that Dr. Wiener should also be an accomlished novelist. This novel, his first, nows little acquaintance with accepted ctional techniques for arousing and olding reader interest. The style harks ack to the previous century. Probably o that the main character, James, may ot seem all cogs and wheels, he undergoes a Victorian love affair ("her noble lassic face [was] expressive with earnst sincerity"). He's noble too. ("As he had commanded and implored me ot to try to write to her again, I could nly follow her wishes.") The romance nds tragically.

As the story goes on, the style either mbers up a bit or else one just stops oticing it, getting wholly absorbed in is clearly-presented, authentic picture f the hidden realities of economic delopment under capitalism.

RUTH MAHONEY

The Lion's Den

VA, by Meyer Levin. Simon & Schuster. $3.95.

BASING himself on the actual experiences of a young refugee to rael, Meyer Levin has written a novel hich takes a Jewish teenager with an domitable will to live out of her oomed middle-class home in occupied oland, follows her into the heart of he Aryan world across the border into many itself, shows her working first s a servant in a mildly Nazi household nd later in a factory and finally, invi bly, leads her into Auschwitz and at o the Promised Land.

If the story is familiar, it is nevertheless worth retelling, for here are vents which must not be permitted to grow stale in the conscience of the post war world. Unfortunately, Mr. Levin's yarn never quite comes off, largely because a yarn is exactly what it is. Here is the Nazi world with its face washed clean for popular consumption, probably on the theory that only in this popularized form can it be made acceptable to the so-called "average" reader. So we have women's-magazine details of clothes and flirtations and "girl talk" presented not as the everyday minutiae of living which should chill us by implying a monstrous contrast with their frame of reference, but merely as the natural thoughts of a young girl. They sound shockingly false to our ears, and not only the heroine herself emerges as shallow, but the lack spills over and becomes the writer's own.

Even a novel scrupulously avoiding editorializing must, if it is to create serious impact, imply a viewpoint over and above the protagonist's. Today we know that in order not to permit themselves to be destroyed by starvation and brutality and overwork and concentration camp routine most of the Jews who did survive Hitler either started out or forced themselves to become for the duration such self-absorbed, egotistical individuals that it would have been difficult to find them attractive human beings; a fact of life which our own liberating troops observed and found difficult to accept. But any such comment is missing in *Eva,* although it could easily have been included by a more perceptive writer, thus adding infinitely to the dimensions of the book. Nevertheless, as Eva's story progresses and the realities of Auschwitz take over, the story writes itself, makes it own comment and grows beyond the stature of the girl who is its mouthpiece.

With all its faults, here is a book many people would profit by reading.

KAY PULASKI

Women Embattled

CENTURY OF STRUGGLE: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States, by Eleanor Flexner. The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. $6.00.

LIKE PEACE, the struggle for human rights is indivisible. Eleanor Flexner in this conscientious and carefully documented study points out again and again how close-linked was the woman suffrage movement in the United States to the abolition movement and to the efforts of women to secure for themselves higher education and decent wages and working conditions.

The relationships between the movements were not simple nor were they always maintained without argument and difficulty. The author's sharp perception of organizational problems is nowhere more effectively displayed than in her handling of the critical period following the Civil War. At that time groups hitherto working together for the rights of Negroes and the rights of women were split asunder because the exigencies of the struggle for the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments led many to lay aside the work for woman suffrage until the more urgent battle to secure the vote for Negro men should have been won. Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony could not accept or condone this choice. Frederick Douglass' support had been indispensable to Elizabeth Cady Stanton at the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848 when she first proclaimed it woman's sacred duty to secure the franchise. Some twenty years later she could not understand Douglass' plea for pr cedence at that time for work in beha of the freedmen of the South. But Lu Stone understood and so did Julia Wa Howe.

A discussion of the basic forces unde lying any movement is more convincin not less, for the inclusion and objecti appraisal of instances where certain those forces are not fully operative. here. The author has unfailing cand and a flair for detail. She can never accused of straining facts to fit her thes Nevertheless, under her hand the emerges as an organic whole the swe of American history, especially that the century preceding the final ratific tion of the woman suffrage amendme in 1920. Her focus is on a movement th had a very considerable degree of co scious unity and purpose, a separa entity, a distinct life of its own. S does eager justice to the character, t heroism, even the idiosyncracies of t highly individual women who led th movement. But the reader is made awa throughout that the movement its stemmed from the conditions of life all women, was inevitably shaped by t major social and economic developme in the country, and could reach its g of the franchise only as the conditio of success matured. Women who we ready to spend themselves without sti to secure the ballot were filled with z for other causes as well, and wom more aware than men could be of c tain needs rendered ever sharper by t growth of industry, urgently desired voice of their own in political decisio By a process that was complex, difficu but understandable, they finally won The book tells how.

Eleanor Flexner has made discrimin ing use of a wide range of source m terial, much of it available in special c

ections at Radcliffe and Smith. Her scholarly acumen is apparent, her feel for the dramatic, her human touch, unerring. She does not flinch nor does she allow her reader to flinch from the grimmer aspects of the struggle. She points out with wit and wisdom the growing conservatism of the movement in the later years and the class basis of this tendency. She deals in detail with the political realities of the final state-by-state battle for ratification.

Questions arise. Women won the vote; to what end? Has extension of the franchise resulted in more effective democratic choices on the part of the electorate? How widely, how wisely do women participate in political life as legislators and office holders? Women's access to higher education now approximates that of men; how vigorously do women seek the training they can have, how frequently distinguish themselves in the professions? The author poses these questions, but wisely refrains from attempting final answers. This is a substantial piece of historical writing, a book to own, to study. I do not see how a woman can read it without turning from the last page to ask. personally and in all seriousness, what use she is herself making currently of rights so hardly won.

GRETA CORSMAN

Witty Drought

O TO BE A DRAGON: New Poems, by Marianne Moore. The Viking Press. $2.75.

THE poems in Marianne Moore's *O to Be a Dragon,* as indeed in all her work, are marked by one fundamental weakness: the absence of deep emotion where it is plainly required. Muriel Rukeyser, in her review of this volume in *The Saturday Review of Literature,* discovers the source of Miss Moore's metres in the hymns sung in the last century; she finds her clue in the lines Miss Moore quotes:

> to hear them sing: "My work be
> praise while others go and come.
> No more a stranger or a guest
> but like a child
> at home."

These lines derive from:

> O may Thy house be mine abode,
> And all my work be praise.
> There would I find a settled rest,
> While others go and come;
> No more a stranger or a guest,
> But like a child at home.

Yet an examination of Miss Moore's work indicates how completely she has strayed from this simple rhythm; her own rhythm, like her content, is completely cerebral, whereas the hymns, whether one is moved by their content or not, were the expression of fundamental emotions . . . man's relation to the universe.

Miss Moore has often been praised for her observation and wit. Yet her wit seems insufficient to fuse her observations into a totality. Indeed, the poems in this volume are frequently meandering; the title poem itself, in its six lines, illustrates this:

> If I, like Solomon . . .
> could have my wish—
>
> my wish . . . O to be a dragon,
> a symbol of the power of Heaven—
> of silkworm
> size or immense; at times invisible.
> Felicitous phenomenon!

It is possible, after conscientious con-

sideration, to arrive at a theory of what Miss Moore wishes to convey in this poem: she informs us, in a footnote, that Solomon's wish was an understanding heart; flexibility, then, is an attribute of an understanding heart. Yet the discovery of this possible meaning does not bring with it the delight which a difficult poem, understood, can finally give; neither tone, rhythm, nor choice of words add to the totality of emotion, and the choice of symbols from two widely different contexts contributes to the initial impression of lack of unity.

There is no doubt that Miss Moore's technical resources are expert, her intentions praisworthy. Yet both are put to the service of a diminishing of passion —not understatement, but dryness. The skeleton is admirably articulated, but the organs are missing.

MARGUERITE WEST

Prospecting the Novel

TWELVE ORIGINAL ESSAYS, ed. by Charles Shapiro. Wayne State University Press. $5.00.

THIS book contains twelve essays on our most important novelists from Cooper to Faulkner, but instead of being presented as a kind of round-robin on American writing, it is, according to the preface, "a tribute to the variety and intensity of our contemporary critics." This seems like a wrong-way-round approach; but as a garland of contemporary criticism the book is interesting and valuable. That's just its weakness, too, contemporary criticism being what it is. (I'm not putting down the New Criticism, which at least forced us to look at the book or poem itself and delivered us from the various windy absolutes of a priori criticism.) Th New Criticism is moribund now, o course, and this is a sort of memoria volume—though it certainly was no so conceived. It's hard to know whe something is dead.

One does not find in this book, then general surveys of the several wilder nesses of these novels and writers. In stead we have for the most part a care ful staking of small claims in more o less undisputed territory. Thus there i a disappointing study of *The Scarle Letter,* disappointing since it is by Mal colm Cowley. There is a "Rereading o *Moby Dick,*" by Granville Hicks whic is careful but adds little to various othe studies of Melville. And there is th inevitable re-tread of articles on Henr James, by Richard Chase. George E Elliott on *Huckleberry Finn* is good and Herbert Gold takes off on Sher wood Anderson in an impressionist wa which is good as far as it goes. Isn't i possible that someone will place An derson squarely in the tradition of th Sheepherders (bourgeois liberals an radicals, occasionally breaking out t become Outlaws) as opposed to suc aristocratic Cattlemen as Henry James Or that, instead of "The Stillness o *Light in August*" (Alfred Kazin), w might expect a little deeper cut tha this Master's paper?

John W. Aldridge on *Gatsby* is i teresting ,although his paper seems t add up to frontier—or Middle Weste —virtue (Natty Bumpo rides again) opposed to Eastern sinfulness. *Gatsb* is probably a little more complex tha that. But it would be nice to hav someone try to see beyond the Amer can Dream, or the Twenties, to a boo which is a very substantial criticism o bourgeois society.

Two things do come through very trongly in this book. One is the fidel-y of American fiction in offering crit-cal evaluations of the social images of he various periods as well as pictures f those many gone worlds.

The second thing that comes through —and it is not meant as a criticism f a valuable project—is that this tradition" of the novel (where's Tom Wolfe? Dos Passos? Steinbeck? Or is e completely disreputable in academic ircles?) is a bit played out for critic-sm. *And* it's time a few new names ere added. Nathaniel West has a more odern sound (this is not a value dgment, but some speak more loudly t times than others) than some of the ontemporary novelists dealt with here. nd there's Algren, John Sanford, Rob-rt Penn Warren and others before one omes to the Novelist of the Day.

This may be a completely wrong-eaded reservation. The collection of ssays was conceived as an invitational ffair and perhaps, given the nature f present criticism, it couldn't have orked out in any other way. In any ase, with whatever oppositions one ay occasionally feel, it is a useful horus of criticism, made into a hand-ome book; and it gives us as good a eneral picture of twelve of our most mportant authors as we are likely to et.

THOMAS MCGRATH

Restless Decade

OLITICS, REFORM AND EXPAN-SION, 1890-1900, by Harold U. Faulkner. Harper. $5.00.

DR. FAULKNER, professor emeri-tus of history at Smith College, has written a lively, factual account of what has been called "the watershed of American history." This one of the ten already completed volumes of the projected 40-volume New American Nation Series, edited by Henry Steele Commager and Richard B. Morris. Like its companion studies, it is designed for the general reader as well as the scholar.

Dr. Faulkner regards his decade with open-end vision. He writes: "No line unmistakably divided it either from the 1880's or the first years of the twentieth century." Yet the period did mark certain qualitative changes.

Industrialization, for example, had been in progress for a number of years, but the concentration and pyramiding of industry into the gigantic trusts was something new. "Manifest Destiny" had been talked about since the 1840's; with the annexation of Cuba and the Philippines America's Age of Imperialism began.

For the majority it was a Restless Decade, certainly not a gay one. It saw the highest number of strikes so far in our history, including the bitter American Railway Union strike against Pullman, led by Eugene Debs. Five of its years were passed in a devastating depression, of which Dr. Faulkner says: "Unemployment in such numbers (two and a half million) revolutionized the idea of poverty." It was in this decade that the newly born Populist Party polled over a million votes in the 1892 elections, and Coxey mobilized his Army of unemployed to send the first "petition to Washington with boots on."

The depression itself forced some grudging acknowledgement of "the responsibility of government to provide

for those who could not provide for themselves," and spurred a small step toward some kind of public works. As a result, the Social Darwinism of Spencer, Fiske and Sumner began to give way to the ideas of social responsibility advanced by Henry Demarest Lloyd, Lester Ward and Thorstein Veblen. Out of what had begun as welfare work by the settlement houses and such women as Jane Addams, Lillian Wald and Florence Kelley, came the campaigns for elimination of the sweatshop, child laor and night work for women; and eventually a host of minimum wage laws.

Dr. Faulkner traces these changes with refreshing objectivity and from a generally liberal viewpoint. His masses of facts are scrupulously documented. For the reader who wishes to go furthat there is a comprehensive bibliography, arranged by subject matter for easy reference.

Where the work falls short, it seems to me, is in the author's apparent reluctance to probe more fully into the underlying causes of the historical events he describes. This is especially noticeable in his discussion of the 1893 depression. He does list a number of contributory factors, including the European panic of 1890. But he fails to tie them to the basic one, which Samuel Gompers himself characterized as "capitalist greed" and overproduction.

Furthermore the socialist currents, small as they were, receive less than adequate treatment. To "Marxian Socialism" Dr. Faulkner devotes less than a page. There is no mention of socialist influence in the founding and program of the People's Party (the Populists), or its contribution to the social thinking of the day. Finally, it would ha been well if he had expanded his v brief account of the situation of t rising movements and personalities the '90's.

Nevertheless, Dr. Faulkner's book a valuable survey of an importa period in American life. It is in w come contrast to some contempora efforts to rewrite American history the benefit of big business.

DOROTHY ROSE BLUMBE

British Perspective

SOCIALISM AND THE MIDD CLASSES, by Andrew Grant. ternational Publishers. $2.75.

IN this medium-sized but well do mented volume Andrew Grant tempts a Marxist analysis of the in ests and ideologies of the various st of the so-called British "Middle Class and their relationship to the two b classes, the bourgeoisie and the pr tariat. He attempts also to indicate H many elements of these strata, who objectively proletarians but whose id ogy is petit-bourgeois, can be won c to the ideals of a socialist society b progressively oriented and dynamic activated Labour Party.

In his first chapter Grant discu what he calls "the muddle of 'mi class.'" Here he shows how Eng bourgeois writers create the illu that a large new independent "mi class" has grown up which is ten to outrank in size and importance industrial working class, some of w is also developing middle-class tions and attitudes.

He shows that this "middle class not really a class but consists of m

rata of both the old independent petit ›urgeoisie and of the newer white ›llar and professional workers.

In his second chapter he gives an ıalysis of the class structure of Britain. 'e shows that, contrary to general be-ef, the relative size of the so-called niddle class" in relationship to that the industrial workers has not ma-erially changed during the present ntury. However, its social composi-on has been considerably modified. he basic proletarian white-collar and lated strata now predominate, and are ıe objective allies of the industrial orker.

In his last chapter Grant notes that ıring the 1930's a movement to the eft began to make some headway nong the "middle strata" and helped e Labour Party to win its victory in e 1945 elections. But instead of car-ing out a socialist goal and expand-ıg the social services, the Labour rty squandered the necessary funds in "colossal arms programme."

The defeat of the Labour Party in e ensuing election, however, had a ıd effect upon many of its rightist aders who are now planning to regain e "middle class" vote by soft-pedal-ıg the issue of socialism.

Grant concludes that only by pre-nting (1) a united Labour Party hich ceases its continuous attacks on Communists"; (2) a concrete plan to tablish socialism; and (3) a serious ıdy of the real and fancied interests the middle strata in order to per-ade them how they would benefit ›m a socialist society, can the Labour rty gain a really significant victory. r the workers in Britain as well as the U.S.A. both blue and white llared, make up the majority of the nation. Only when united can they move forward toward the establishment of a real socialist society.

ROBERT HOOD

Books Received

THE BEST PLAYS 1958-1959, ed. Louis Kronenberger. Dodd, Mead and Co. $6.00.

LOUIS KRONENBERGER'S collection of *The Best Plays of 1958-1959,* in which ten plays are summarized with liberal excerpts from the dialogue of each, is one of the best of the long series of forty-two such Burns Mantle Yearbooks. This is true despite the fact that, as Mr. Kronenberger himself indicates, the ten best plays of the year are not necessarily ten very good ones.

The essential value of the volume, aside from its use for factual reference, derives from the editor's introductory thirty-five page survey of the season. This includes a cogent analysis of the reasons for general disappointment with the theatre in a year that offered plays by such well known writers as Eugene O'Neill, William Faulkner, Archibald MacLeish, Tennessee Williams, Budd Schulberg and the by now famous newcomer, John Osborne, as well as the brilliant hitherto unknown, Lorraine Hansberry.

As Mr. Kronenberger says in naming "A Raisin in the Sun" "the best new play of the season," only in that drama was there actually the "sense of something that wholly fits the theatre and yet looks full-faced out toward life which could be one definition of a sound play."

For the rest, his essay briefly characterizes more than twice the number of plays presented at length in the volume,

and makes some casual but provocative general comments on American humor, attitude toward the classics, and interest in the theatre. The appendices give, as usual, full information on casts, dates, the Chicago season, and American plays in London, as well as brief obituary listings for those American actors and actresses who died during the period covered.

BEST SHORT STORIES FROM THE PARIS REVIEW. Introduction by William Styron. E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc. $4.00.

IN HIS introduction to this collection of 14 short stories, all reprinted from *The Paris Review,* William Styron says: "The state of drowning, of bewilderment, of horror, of a sense of betrayal from all sides, is probably the healthiest situation in which a writer can find himself; . . .".

Only one or two of the stories are quite as bad as this implicit estimate of their authors' condition would lead one to suppose, but few convey any sense of mature people writing or real people being written about. They are almost all well, if often over-elaborately, observed; they all show a real command of their language; only a few are palpably contrived or false as is the latter part of Philip Roth's "Conversion of the Jews" and Hughes Rudd's unpleasantly patronizing depression story, "The Fishers."

Yet except for Owen Dodson's "The Summer Fire," possibly Evan S. Connell's "The Fisherman from Chihuahua," and two early pieces by Samuel Beckett and Jack Kerouac, these stories all give an impression of fair-to-excellent students fulfilling an assignment in an advanced writing course.

One can only hope that some of writers will grow up and find somethi to say. They already possess an am set of tools for saying it.

CONVICTION, ed. Norman MacKen Monthly Review Press. $4.00.

THE touchstone of the material p sented here might well be the wo of Jimmy Porter, the now almost lege ary Angry Young Man of John borne's play, who says: "There are more causes." As one of the ess points out, this fatuous remark assu that all the old causes have been w Not so, say these twelve British soc ists representing a wide spectrum belief from Socialist Pacifist and So Democrat to Marxist. Their major c plaint is that the rosy picture of suc entitled the British Welfare State i sham, if one can speak that well o

The articles dealing with cult such as Raymond Williams's "Cul Is Ordinary" and Richard Hogg "Speaking to Each Other," are part larly noteworthy. Mervyn Jones's " Time Is Short" argues a peculi cynical case for Socialist Pacifism. simple is Peter Marris's essay on Br imperialism, "Accessory after the Fa Hugh Thomas's "Outside the O Door" is very interesting, but stum lamely toward "non-absolute, s democratic regimes comparable to own," as a goal for international so ism. Paul Johnson's "A Sense of rage" calls for a return to militan cialism, but is somewhat too emoti in tone to appeal to one's rationa viction.

Prevailing throughout the book sense of restlessness, a desire to

er and over again that society is not healthy as the ruling class would ve us believe, and that its problems n only be solved by socialism. Most pealing is the emphasis on the need do things now, new things. The riters do not approach their audience ith a feeling of *noblesse oblige.* but ther with the desire to identify themlves with all kinds of people throughit the nation. The open mind as disayed here is a challenge that political inkers cannot afford to ignore.

HE BOLSHOI BALLET STORY, ed, Zelda Heller. Heller and Heller, 550 Riverside Drive, New York 27, N.Y. $1.25.

THE present volume is an intelligent condensation of three key exposions of the work of the world's leading *rps de ballet.* The first of these is a mprehensive study of the Bolshoi llet school, and describes every phase the school's life from admission reirements to the Stanislavskian ballet techniques. Its co-authors are the school's principal, Yelena Bocharnikova, and its art director, Mikhail Gabovich, creator of the Romeo role in Prokofiev's Romeo and Juliet.

The second is the short autobiography of Galina Ulanova, *The Making of a Ballerina.* Mme. Ulanova needs no introduction to an American audience; but her biography, which was printed in major part in the June, 1959 issue of *Mainstream* is an extraordinary self-recording of the emotional and intellectual development of this great artist.

Last, there is *Inside the Bolshoi Ballet,* by Yuri Slonimsky. This is a history of the company from its inception as a ballet class set up in 1773 for the inmates of the Moscow Orphanage by the Trusteeship Council of that institution. There are helpful synopses of the action of famous ballets, as well as interesting theoretical observations. Sixteen illustrations precede the text. Photographs are always intriguing, though these are not remarkable. Balletomanes will want to have this useful little book.

INDEX FOR VOLUME TWELVE, 1959

(Listed separately are Books in Review, pages 63-65)

OOKS IN REVIEW

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