JULY, 1961
50 cents

Mainstream

Phillip Bonosky: REPORT FROM BUDAPEST
S. Finkelstein: UPDATING SHAKESPEARE
Atlee Washintgon: A SOLDIER'S SONATA

ART by *Maurice Becker*
REVIEW by *Philip Stevenson*

The Artist in his Studio

Since the Depression years, museums have encouraged a type of work which implies that "Man" as subject matter was an outcast. But the "human figure" is and always has been the central theme of most of my work. A leading museum will sponsor a competitive exhibition in 1962 *called "The Figure." Let us hope this signals the return of the "outcast" to our painting.*

MAURICE BECKER

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Among Our Contributors

Phillip Bonosky is the author of the recently published novel, *The Magic Fern* (International, $5.95). His report from Hungary is based on a visit he made last summer to Eastern Europe. *Sidney Finkelstein* is the widely read Marxist scholar. He is currently teaching Shakespeare at the New York School for Marxist Studies. *Atlee Washington* is a Negro writer from Chicago. *Philip Stevenson* is the Californian author and critic. Among our reviewers, *Oakley C. Johnson* is the veteran author and educator. *Mark Dean* is the pseudonym of a New York doctor. *Maurice Becker,* whose art we are featuring in this issue, was born in Russia in 1889. In his long and illustrious career in this country he has had about thirty one-man shows, as well as numerous exhibitings in groups. A photograph of the artist at work, along with a statement by him, may be found on the inside cover.

Next Month

The legal and historical background to the struggle of the Negro for equal rights will be the subject of *Leon Josephson's* stimulating contribution to the August issue. This is a timely and informative work of scholarship but one which pulls no punches. It is indispensable to a full understanding of the current upsurge of freedom riders and sit-inners in the South. Don't miss it. We will also have reports on some of the books and issues which are making news, both in this country and abroad. Poetry, reviews, art work, all this as well, will be included in the August *Mainstream.*

in the mainstream

Cuts on Broadway

It is no news that the American theatre has been ailing for years. It is news, however, when the leading organization of playwrights, the Dramatists Guild, seriously proposed last month that dramatists take voluntary cuts in their royalties as a means of propping up the fabulous invalid. Such proposals have been made before. But what is noteworthy this time is that the playwrights—some 470 of them—voted overwhelmingly to accept the stipulation, and they have called upon actors and theatre owners and technicians to follow suit.

What does all this mean? How is it possible for the theatre to be brought to such a pass that it now faces "the worst economic crisis it ever had" precisely at a time when the average theatregoer (who doesn't come to the theatre by subway) is living in plushier apartments, with bigger expense accounts, and more highly inflated salaries than in his entire history?

Is it possible that what these facts are trying to say is that the theatre cannot depend upon the thin slice of the population which goes to theatres, whose interests, problems, ideas, likes and dislikes are far too unrepresentative of the mass of the population, as their incomes are far greater, and therefore they are too remote from the real concerns of the people and must suffer from lack of blood and air?

It is pointless to call upon the people to support the theatre for its own sake. The theatre must serve it; the people must find something important and useful in it to them. If the theatre ignores their problems, they will ignore the theatre. This is only logical. There is much evidence in history to support the simple truth that the theatre has flourished when it reflected the hopes of the people, the issues of the times. We cite only the WPA theatre, which is the only theatre in American history that came close to the people and even became for a time the voice of the people.

It is an irony that when the theatre confines itself to the problems of the middle-class, or its intellectuals, it ends up by boring the very

people whose point of view it aspires to reflect. For there is no vitality there, no future, no scope; and in the end, even the middle-class gets bored at both the accurate picture of itself and equally at attempts to evade that picture, to glorify what cannot be glorified.

With few exceptions, Broadway, (and included in this—though to a lesser extent—is off-Broadway) has stood aside from our turbulent times, or has joined the dismal chorus of despair, cynicism, "conservatism," mysticism, and it has paid the price. Although it has never joined the posse of McCarthyite witch-hunters, on the other hand the *ideas* it has expressed have seldom gone beyond the intellectual leading-strings of our fear-ridden times.

Accepting royalty cuts will never save the theatre. For even if the theatre was free, it would still play to half-empty seats as long as the level of thought remains bound to *Advise and Consent, A Call on Kuprin, The Devil's Advocate, A Far Country,* not to mention at all the *Wild Cats* and *Do Re Mi's.*

THE fight for an audience cannot be separated from the fight for a new content in what the theatre has to say. There is a reciprocal—one might say dialectical—relationship there. To bleed actors and playwrights is—to change the figure—barking up the wrong tree. Breaking the economic monopoly on the theatre ownership and rentals would be closer to the root of the matter, eliminating the giddy speculation that goes on today in "backing" new plays which must produce dividends rather than ideas, and so determines the kind of play that will be produced—all this is bound up with the basic abnormality which finds profit once more with its greedy hand on the throat of Art, only today it is much greedier and much more ruthless. No panacea exists to save the theatre, except to fight for the right ideas in the first place; and this is not to be accomplished overnight. It is really a throw-back to Hooverism to suggest that the theatre should spread the poverty as a way out. Give us a good play—we ask the playwrights—which deal hopefully with our world and our problems, and we will beat a path to your door—and break it down to get inside if necessary!

"Justice Rationed"

We in the West are the proud and exclusive possessors of "moral principles," as newspaper and magazines constantly remind us. We don't always put these principles to work, especially in our international dealings,

for in such situations we have to be "practical." But we have these principles, unlike various "backward" peoples, and it is the height of insensitivity on the part of such inferior beings to ask us to act on them sometimes when such action might lose some money. This unreasonable attitude bothers the *New York Times* as may be seen in an editorial of March 8th, which ended as follows:

> If, by some happy miracle, communism had been banished from the earth, the Africans would still have struggled as they did for independence, the Laotians would have quarreled, the Cubans would have had their revolution.
>
> The revolution of our times, in so far as anything so vast and complicated can be pinpointed, is a demand by the people of the earth for a better life, for what many would call social justice. Men and women want land to till or jobs in the cities, schools for their children and hospitals when they are ill. They know now that it is not the will of God or Allah or destiny that they should live in misery. They know that justice should not be denied them because they are black or brown or yellow, or because they were born to certain parents in certain places. And when they know what freedom means, they want freedom.
>
> This is a world in trouble, but perhaps the trouble is that too many people are demanding justice all at once and there simply is not enough to go around.

Perhaps the *Times* is worried over the fact that "justice" in an underdeveloped country means a halt to the lucrative process of an outside monopoly squeezing that country dry. It is an intriguing thought, that justice has become something like cost or a commodity, for which the demand exceeds the supply. Could the *Times* have been influenced by the Communist Manifesto, which said, "The bourgeoisie . . . has left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous 'cash payment.' It has drowned the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervor, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of philistine sentimentalism, in the icy water of egotistical calculation."

We envision a quota system being set up, to dole out justice, with the *Times* deciding how much should be parcelled out and to whom. It may even come about that somebody falsely accused in a law court, and demanding "justice," will be told, "Sorry, you must go to jail, our supply of justice is temporarily exhausted because we had to lend it to a needy country. There simply isn't enough to go around."

REPORT FROM BUDAPEST

PHILLIP BONOSKY

MORE than any other city in Europe I had wanted to come here. It had seemed absolutely necessary for me to walk the streets where bullets had flown only a few years before, and where the very future—so it was widely proclaimed—of socialism itself was being decided (betrayed, some said) on these streets during those few short weeks beginning in October, 1956.

Time had passed. But few of the questions that had been raised by the '56 events had been decisively answered; or so it seemed from the distance and the time. For though four years had gone by, in the minds of many here in the United States, as well as in other countries, Hungary remained frozen, as though struck by some kind of historical witchcraft, in the same gesture, the same stance that it was left with, in the American newspapers, at the end of the revolt, its armed expression put down by Soviet troops. In fact, Sir Leslie Munro, of New Zealand, issued periodical bulletins, under the auspices of the UN, that continued to describe Hungary in those already petrified terms. His opinion remained the official opinion of the usual majority in the United Nations. He characterized the situation in Hungary thusly:

> "The people of Hungary rose against the tyrannical regime imposed upon them by Soviet domination. They succeeded in establishing a new Government which sought to secure the recognition of Hungary as a neutral state. Then the Russian Army entered with its tanks. The free Hungarian Government appealed to the UN. The Soviet Union proclaimed a puppet government in Budapest. . . . The Hungarian people resisted with incredible

bravery for weeks. They failed before Russian tanks and Russian armed forces. . . ." and ever since those weeks there has been ". . . repression in Hungary. . . ."

The simplicity of this picture, even the primer tones in which Sir Leslie Munro declaims his version, have been preserved by quick-freeze political techniques, always as fresh when it is reopened as when it was first frozen, and the image has been so sanctified by usage as to have entered American schoolbooks, becoming with scarcely any aging at all, a vintage product of the Cold War.

One could perhaps dismiss so naive a picture that smacks so much of a TV script for an adult Western, where good men are clearly distinguished from bad, and virtue neatly triumphs in time for the commercials. But what cannot be so easily dismissed are the moral questions raised by "angels with scorched wings" or, for that matter, raised by one's self, though from an entirely different viewpoint. For "something" had happened on the streets of Budapest in October, 1956, of great moment to socialist-minded people the world over; and what had happened was extremely grave, with lessons whose implications probed as profoundly as our difficult and complicated times.

There were two questions paramount for me, which I bore with me through the blue haze that covered Budapest that calm autumn morning when my plane sailed over the Danube and settled among the green and rolling hills near Budapest—hills covered with vineyards ripening that marvelous tokay grape for which Hungary is justly world famous.

The first question was: to what extent were the people anti-socialist in their real motives during the '56 events; and, second, what role did the writers really play then and what role do they play now? Of course there were other questions. But these two were uppermost in my mind as I called upon the first group of writers in Budapest.

It should be stated as a warning that more often than not one already brings with him the answers he is searching for—in his prejudices, limitations, hopes, fears, illusions, in his life-experience. I was no different than anybody else in this respect. I hoped to find positive answers to all my questions. I wanted to be able to bring back a report, from first-hand evidence, not only for the open skeptics and doubters, but also for the sincere, troubled people who were truly shocked by events, and could see no interpretation of them which did not disillusion them in the aims and methods of socialism, and which did not compromise the purity of those aims and methods to a fatal extent.

But I had no guarantee that I would find positive answers; and I would

not conjure them up from nowhere. Only the child-minded need myths. As it turned out, though I found positive answers to my questions, these answers bore the mark of experiences that are also heavily interlarded with grief and even catastrophe. Enough examples of these negative episodes exist for any enemy of socialism to pluck them out of the total situation and arrange them in a bouquet of ill-smelling flowers of evil: and this has been done, God knows, almost every day in the press and at the UN. Unfortunately, in the very nature of things, the "positive" that has come out of Hungary has not come in the dramatic, explosive form that characterized the negative events. These new, favorable developments are to be found at the more pedestrian level of industrial and agricultural progress, in the rise of wages and living conditions, in the steep upsurge of cultural activities. None of this takes place against the background of gunfire and barricades. But in the long run—even now—they are decisive for Hungary.

The dialectics of this prolonged period of revolution and counter-revolution is such that resemblances between opposites occur, and the villain mimicks the hero, the liar the man of truth. There is an interpenetration of opposed forces, inevitable in close combat, so that at certain junctures, when certain guiding lines for one reason or another disappear, or are confused, when the context suddenly shifts and "right" becomes "wrong" —then everything known and familiar seems to disappear, all things become confusion, and the moralist is in complete despair. There is no "right," there is no "wrong," no good, no bad, no truth, no falsehood. In such a night, the devil takes on the visage of the angel—and the angel is hung on lampposts. The angel does the work of the devil—and the devil laughs at his most diabolical success.

SO IN Hungary for a short time. *Time* is the keynote here. Never before did the shape of things change so drastically, so quickly, and so bewilderingly as it did in those short weeks during October, 1956. A "Communist" at the head of the government was calling for capitalist-controlled troops to fight Communist troops. The hero of the country, Matthias Rakosi—a martyr who had spent years in prison for his political activities, and then had become head of the government of his country right after its liberation by the Red Army, had left the country in disgrace. The man who was to become the rallying force around whom the nation would find its center again—who was to defeat Nagy and help send him to the gallows—this man had been imprisoned by the country's first premier now in flight; he had then voted power for Nagy—whom later he would replace—at a most crucial moment to lead the country.

All were Communists—not rank-and-file Communists but leaders. At different times each found himself on one or the other side of the bitter conflict. For the mass of followers, in the period of intensest internal struggle, these changes and alterations of leadership were monstrously confusing.

And yet, even in the depths of that tremendous confusion, when brother drank the blood of his brother, when one fought shoulder-to-shoulder with one's mortal enemies, when one struggled in the name of freedom to forge the chains of slavery—nevertheless, objective factors operated throughout the entire complicated period and furnished the hard line of reality which, finally, emerged, became clear, prevailed, and was Truth. Not reaction triumphed in Hungary, but progress. And a true standard for judging the actions of all, both individuals and parties, existed and ultimately became clear: then it admitted of no doubt and was accepted by the overwhelming majority of the people as true.

The objective factor which operated in every aspect of the struggle, even in its profoundest confused stages, was the actual power and strength of socialism, of workingclass rule, both Hungarian and international. And it is this fact which decided whether Tibor Dery was a hero or villain, or whether Gyorgy Lukacs erred with heart or brain, or whether Nagy was a traitor or Rakosi a tragedy. It was this fact which determined, in its time, that the barricades of Spain were in the battle for men's hope—and the barricades in Budapest were in the service, ultimately, of the tyranny of reaction over mankind. In the final analysis the decisive moral factor was a class factor; it was made in favor of the workingclass by the workingclass and through it for everybody. It alone had the power to raise the subjective nature of the participation of many individuals into an objective factor, which could then be evaluated Good people, from good motives, did bad things: the force that takes a parasitical grip of the will and perverts the aim of the will to undesired ends is the errors and distortions which become objectively allied to alien forces. The errors of Rakosi constructed the disguise behind which Nagy could betray the revolution. The errors of Western intellectuals, who lost sight of the only source of morality today—workingclass power—helped reaction. There was no "third force" then or now.

The truth that emerged from the violent struggle on the streets of Budapest was not that socialism was weak—but that it was strong. It was not a defeat for socialism, it was a victory. Nothing else can account for confident Hungary today and the temper and vitality of its people, including the intellectuals, as I saw with my own eyes.

I met no resistance to my inquiries wherever I went. The mood in

which my questions were listened to, however, might be described as a kind of sympathetic understanding of my motives. But if I expected to come to Hungary primed to be tactful, inclined to avoid difficult and embarrassing questions, I was soon relieved of that burden. The '56 events are not whispered about, nor, on the other hand, do they stick in everyone's craw. They are referred to calmly and openly, with serious analytical reflections; no questions are dodged or discouraged. The curious feeling one gets, however, in discussing Hungarian events is not of an accuser-accused relationship but of being a mutual prober of an objective phenomenon whose significance the Hungarians are as eager—no, much more—to understand and to plumb fully as yourself. But, four years later, the events have become absorbed into experience, and—such is the irony—represent for artists and writers a mine into which they dig with constantly more fruitful results. Gabor Tonai writes in a report on the Hungarian literary situation since the counter-revolution:

> "To some extent in 1958, but much more so today, we are able to consider the counter-revolution, from the point of view of the development of socialist literature, as an episode rich in instruction that ought to influence our ideological activity, criticism and organization."

Budapest lay serene under the late autumn haze when I came there. Was the Danube blue? In any case, it afforded a setting for a city curiously reminiscent in its architecture of the 150 years of Turkish occupation over the 16th and 17th centuries. Strolling through the streets one sunny afternoon, I came upon a class of school-boys, in athletic shorts, running races around an amphitheatre whose old and crumbled terraces had first been built by the Romans some time in the 4th and 5th centuries A.D. Was this part of the old city of Aquincum? I didn't ask, then. But the cemeteries for the Red Army dead, and the great Liberation Monument on Gellert Hill, visible from almost any part of Pest across the river, brought history up to the moment.

HUNGARY suffered the fate of all small semi-colonial nations whose language it is not necessary to know in order to plunder it. Its great national poet, Endre Ady, remains almost wholly Hungarian; so, too, Josef Attilla, the workingclass poet of the Thirties, who killed himself in despair under the Horthy fascist regime. Americans know of Sandor Petofei—poet of the Revolution of 1848—because a writers' club bearing his name played a role in the '56 events. But beyond this—beyond Jokai, Arany—Americans know little of Hungarian literature. The names of

contemporary writers that are known in the United States today are strictly those that the Cold War has brought into view—Tibor Dery, Gyorgy Lukacs. The same primer reading of Hungarian intellectual life dictates that all Hungarian writers "went on strike" after the crushing of the counter-revolution, or are not worth consideration.

It is always difficult to conjure up on the neutral stones of today's Budapest the image of the recent past. Yet as I travel through the city I cannot escape observing the pock-marked walls, though the greater part of the damage, including the damage done to the famous museums and book-stores, has not only been repaired but even finer buildings have been erected in some places. Kossuth stands pointing toward the neo-gothic Parliament building, which is chipped with bullet marks. Here is where Istvan Dobi, Hungarian president in '56 and still president, had been arrested by Zoltan Tildy, member of Nagy's government; he, along with Sandor Ronai, chairman of the national assembly, were escorted to the basement of the parliament building where they were to be shot—except, almost at the last moment, the Red Army troops arrived and put their would-be executioners to frantic flight.

When Janos Kadar set up the new Workers and Peasants Revolutionary government, during those tumultuous days, Tildy and Nagy decided to slip away unnoticed in the confusion, realizing, from the enormous response of the people to the new party and government, that the jig was up. They started out together, comrades-in-arms to the last; but somewhere en route to safety, Nagy, who had made previous private connections with the Yugoslavs, neatly ditched Tildy, who suddenly found himself plodding along the sidewalk toward he knew not where, accompanied only by his more-faithful spouse. Each sought his own hole: Cardinal Mindzenty dashed into the American embassy where to this day he makes life a hell for the American residents there.

So the counter-revolution, bloody and tragic enough, had episodes of low comedy in the Kerensky tradition. Tibor Dery had swaggered up to Nagy himself at one moment in the flow of events, and had dictated to Nagy an entirely new government of writers and intellectuals of his particular kidney who were to take over. A notorious Trotskyite, Deri had finally reached, or believed he had reached, the sweet peach of his dream: a 'socialist' government without Communists—or "Stalinists," as he would call them, with whom he would then fill the prisons or the graves—backed with American guns and money, somewhat in the Tito tradition. When Dery's dream collapsed, and he was sent to prison for six years, events moved so quickly that they outdistanced even his villainy. He was released long before his term was up and returned to Hungarian

life where, as far as the signs go, he is considered a supernumery. The counter-revolution had loomed large and had obscured the face of Hungary—the way one can obscure the sun by holding up a penny—but only for the moment.

DURING the entire fighting, I was told, around the Parliament building, the red star remained immaculately untouched and unreachable on the peak of the building, enraging those against whom Sean O'Casey saw in it the symbol of human hope. They fired bullets at it, tried to reach it by climbing: but it remained beyond reach; and I could see it now—still there. Not far from the Parliament, in the side streets, begin the monuments to the murdered. Little wreaths of flowers, faded and crisp, arranged around shining new bronze plaques on which new Hungarian names have now been engraved—men who had died on that spot shot by the "revolutionists," in 1956. What is perhaps ironic in the arrangement of these new plaques is that very often they appear against the same wall where other, older green-tinted bronze plaques also appear, also with faded flowers; but now the date of the murdered is 1943, 1944—and the murderers are Nazis, and once again the murdered are Communists. . . .

I go to visit the building of the Hungarian then-Communist Party, where a valiant band of Communists, headed by Papp, Mezo and Asztalos, held out against the counter-revolutionaries for a long time, vainly waiting for help from Nagy who, as far as they understood, now headed the Party and the government, both of which they were here defending. Nagy let them go to their fate: when they came forth, with a white flag, to negotiate an end to the fratricidal bloodshed, they were shot down in cold blood in the streets. Did that "freedom fighter," Jano Mesz, dance for the delight of the *Life* photographers over their corpses? "Peg-leg" Jano Mesz had been arrested during his life 16 times for stealing; the counter-revolution had freed him from prison. Why shouldn't he dance with glee over the corpses of Communists? The Free World needed him; he knew he was entering a world where robbery was the way of life, though perhaps not confined to his type of purse-snatching: the Dulles brothers stole whole countries.

Another "freedom fighter" was Illona Gizella Toth, an interne. She took to the streets, along with her gang, looking for any passerby on whom to exercise her peculiar concepts of freedom fighting. She and her bravos took hold of a worker, Istvan Kollar by name, who was unlucky enough to cross her path. She—an interne—put him to sleep with an injection of chloric ethyl, then injected benzine into his jugular vein. How-

ver, when this was bungled, Miss Toth had another "freedom fighter" ump on his neck, then she finished him off herself with a knife in his eart. She stood trial and confessed all this, with no apparent remorse, nd died a martyr's death by execution. She might have managed to flee Iungary in time and reach America, where, like other Hungarian refuees, she could have continued to exercise a sadism which obviously had othing to do with freedom. Cardinal Spellman wept for her; he shed ears, too, publicly one Christmas over a national TV hookup, for 14- nd 15-year-old boys who had been arrested, he claimed, by the governent for their part in the counter-revolution. The diabolical part of this, e claimed, was that they were being held in prison until they reached ie age of 18—and then they would be shot! Presumably every good atholic was supposed to believe the Cardinal, and no questions asked.

I meet several veterans of those October days and question them careully about what happened and their own role—mostly their state of iind—during that period. They understand my reasons for asking, and re patient with me, but, as for them, this is "all in the past." One told ie, for instance, that as a soldier of the Army, he had been sent to protect ie public buildings in down-town Budapest soon after the events beian. In the first two weeks, he said, there had been really no problem or most people: for him and his comrades everything was quite clear. Vhere socialism itself was being attacked with arms, as distinct from rotests or criticism, with which in any case he was sympathetic, one efended it: that was simple. As a Communist himself, with a father ho was a veteran of the first—1919—Hungarian socialist government, d by Bela Kun, and who had survived the White Terror that had folowed the bloody overthrow of the government, in which tens of thousands ere murdered in cold blood, he knew where he stood. But shortly after ie beginning of the first student and writers' demonstrations, confusion et in. One who has not been part of it can hardly understand the comlex nature of that confusion. Some idea of it, however,comes through ie words of Janos Kadar himself, when he spoke at the first meeting f the National Assembly on May 9, 1957:

> I voted for Imre Nagy as Prime Minister. I shall never deny this, because I did it in the conviction, in the faith that, despite his faults, Imre Nagy was after all an honest man and stood on the side of the workingclass. Later it became clear that this was not so.

He went on to state that the crux of the situation was not the conision among the people, the workingclass specifically, which knew

where it stood; the confusion emanated first of all from the leadership:

> The Imre Nagy faction knew, because what happened was partly their doing. It was not difficult, therefore, for them to know what was going on. Consequently, they knew also what they wanted and had the means to coerce the other half of the leadership, by all sorts of pressure, into going along with them for awhile in that situation of uncertainty Thus we reached a situation—and it reflects shame on the leadership and not on the people — in which we could not give the honest guidance which it is the duty of leaders to provide in such a situation, to the many thousands of people who all over the country were awaiting instructions and guidance from the centre, who were demanding arms, who saw better than we in the leadership what should be done. And so we reached a point in the flow of events when we realized that we could not continue on this path. And I was convinced, although the situation was not like it is now, the overwhelming mass of the Hungarian people would come to understand that we had to make a clean break and embark on the road of honest struggle.

Everyone I spoke to echoed that confusion which was inevitable in this equivocal situation in which there was a leader, presumably, of the Party and government, but on whose orders, not Communists, but unknown strangers, or known reactionaries like Bela Kiraly, were given authority and arms. The Hungarian army never fired on the Russians, and if they had been ordered to, the soldiers would have refused—I was firmly told; and that was why Nagy, through Kiraly, disarmed the soldiers and disbanded the army and sent the "unreliable" soldiers home. My friend told me how he, a soldier, stood "guarding" the government building in downtown Budapest with a gun—but no bullets! The counter-revolutionaries showed up with guns *and* bullets, contemptuously disarmed him and his comrades, and then debated before them whether to shoot them on the spot or not. In another instance they actually shot some guards for the amusement of the *Life* photographer—perhaps by arrangement, who will tell? My friend remembers a member of the counter-revolutionaries volubly demanding his death—a man still in Hungary. "Why don't you denounce him?" I asked. He shrugged. "He probably himself couldn't tell you why he acted that way then. We had been—if not friends—at least acquaintances. Obviously he disliked me, for some reason. . . ."

THIS type of confusion, and the attitude that bygones are better left bygones, I found everywhere. It was not accidental that when urgent calls to the authorities during the worst part of the counter-revolution

were met with silence—when workers, for instance, called for guns to defend their factories, and instead of getting guns from the government, armed riff-raff appeared, shooting the militant leaders and setting up "workers councils" with well-known Arrow Cross fascists, lately "home" (inside Red Cross trucks) from Austria, at the head. Even if a certain percentage of the workers were genuinely misled by events, including the promise of workers councils as self-governing workers' bodies, the basic cell of "workers democracy," a la Yugoslav, much of that was due to the greenness of the workers who had—to a large extent—only lately come out of the fields into the factories, and included "workers" made up of yesterday's proprietors of fortune-telling tea-rooms, gambling houses, bill collectors, landlords and other thousand-and-one parasitical trades or professions that flourished before 1945 and were eliminated afterwards. If in 1938, there were only 712,000 workers in Hungary, by 1958 there were 1,280,000, most of them coming into industry only in the last few years, retaining their peasant or small-trade psychology long after, though they were nominally workers. It must also be remembered that throughout the fascist Horthy regime the Social-Democratic party remained legal, "representing" the workers, and Anna Kethly, so voluble today against the socialist regime, had managed to live quite safely under the dictatorship. The conscious militant workers were dead—murdered by the Horthy Arrow Cross fascists; and as for the other conscious workers, the Rakosi government had plucked most of them out of the ranks of the workers and placed them in bureaucratic administrative positions, leaving the newly-enrolled workers at the mercy of whatever propagandists the counter-revolution sent among them in the mines, mills and factories. This error alone is enough to characterize the Rakosi line!

Some well-intentioned people express surprise that "after twelve years of socialism how could the workers turn against socialism?" The fact was that the workers did not turn against *socialism* at any time. They were against abuses and distortions; but when and wherever the counter-revolution nakedly revealed itself, they invariably turned against it. Almost no success was registered by the counter-revolution in the collectivized countryside, and collectivization maintained its essential stability, in spite of errors committed there too, throughout the events. Only a few farms left the collectives. When old landlords showed up to reclaim "their" land, even the dullest peasant understood what all the shooting was really about. For the return of the landlord meant that he would have to go back to sharecropping for him, or paying rent—back to the Hungary known throughout Europe as the land of "three million beggars."

In the cities, however, primarily Budapest, the counter-revolution revealed itself only by stages. It is worth noting that Radio Free Europe advised the "revolutionaries" not to denounce socialism, or move too quickly toward private ownership—not until they had all power in their hands, and not before the people were sufficiently disarmed and their resistance destroyed. It was left to Cardinal Mindzenty to commit the prime blunder. In his first broadcast after being freed from prison he declared that Hungary would return to private ownership again. This speech of Mindzenty, which only someone so hidebound, arrogant and blind as he could have made in the face of all the warnings, brought many "revolutionists" to their senses with a jolt. Rakosi to be cured by Mindzenty? One must remember that to the Hungarians, Mindzenty is not merely anti-Communist. He is anti-Semitic; he is also, with his church, a large landowner; he is anti-Republican, and traces the modern heresy back, not just to November, 1917 and the Bolsheviks, but back to the French Revolution, back to Darwin who, in his eyes, was perhaps the greatest heretic of all. He wished to expunge from the school-books of Hungary all references to the theory of evolution. His mind was in the 12th century. He was the living heir to the Inquisition.

What about the intellectuals? It is well-known that the writers gathered in the Petoefi Club had begun the action which, moving completely out of hand, ended in counter-revolution. What was their state of mind today?

I had a long talk with a leader in the cultural movement. It was true, he said, that the intellectuals in general were not real Marxists, but had been swept into the Communist Party after 1945 without actually meeting workingclass requirements for membership. The almost negligible standard for Party membership under Rakosi was, however, a general fault; for Hungary, with a population of only 10 millions, had a Communist Party of 900,000 (most of whom were new or ex-members of the Social-Democratic party)—almost one Party member for every 10 men, women and children. When everybody is a Communist, nobody is.

The writers, to a large extent, were under the influence of the eminent theoretician Gyorgy Lukacs, whose long-held non-Marxist views—going back to the famous Blum theses in the Twenties—criticized by Lenin himself— finally came to their logical conclusion in the streets, with himself as a minister in a cabinet of a government getting ready to hand Hungary over to counter-revolution! Lukacs had believed that Hungarian socialism was a waistcoat "badly buttoned up" and it was the duty of the intellectuals, led by himself and Nagy, to "rebutton" it. The "tailors"

started "rebuttoning" Hungarian socialism by hanging true socialists from lamp-posts!

Later, when they asked themselves from the depths of their consciences, what their role was to be in the new Hungary, the writers who had been most hostile to Rakosi were faced with a profound dilemma. Almost instinctively, they had resisted the call to emigrate. To have fled would have been to confess complete moral and intellectual bankruptcy. On the other hand, they could remain in Hungary and sink into silence, wait and see. The West declared that the writers had "gone on strike," and that Hungary had become a land of mute artists. But if there was any substance to this statement at all, the decision in September, 1957, to put the "Hungarian question" on the UN agenda, proved to be the catalyst that precipitated their basic patriotic beliefs into one solid protest. Some 217 Hungarian writers and intellectuals, many of them well-known as having led the demonstrations against the Rakosi government, signed the statement:

> Deeply conscious of the responsibility which falls on us, and of the role which we play in forming national public opinion, and also of our responsibility before humanity, we protest against bringing the events in Hungary before the United Nations as a subject for discussion. We would like our voices to reach those who say they are our friends—in the first place our colleagues, the writers of all nations. . . .
>
> We can act only with our people; we know all the vibrations of its soul. We know it and we assert it: the Hungarian people did not wish, and do not want counter-revolution. Only a small minority wants the return of the old order. Nevertheless, on the 23rd of Oct., 1956, following a tragic convergence of historic and social circumstances, there unfolded a series of events which neither public opinion, nor the honest intentions of the marjority of the original participants, could any longer control. The activities of hostile imperialism, intervening under its own command, played no small part in bringing to the surface residues of fascism, which for a few days created a situation recalling the White Terror of 1920.
>
> We represent the most diverse shades of Hungarian opinion and all literary tendencies. A whole series of specific details as well as some fundamental questions are still being discussed by us; but one fact already is clear for us today: the formation of the workers-peasants government and its appeal for aid to the Soviet forces saved our country from the danger of a bloody counter-revolution—a danger that was becoming ever greater. . . .
>
> The road of Hungarian writers united with the people has been bitterly difficult in the past; and today, also, it is not easy to assume our respon-

sibilities in a country which is creating a new social order. But we cannot accept any other destiny. We are certain that this destiny is as noble as it is difficult. Let him who has fled be silent because his voice can only be that of a renegade. . . .

LITERARY production did not flag after '56. On the contrary, in 1957 alone, some 330 literary works were published; and more were to come in 1958 and 1959. Several new magazines appeared. A number of significant movies and plays, dealing with the counter-revolution in all its complexity, without attempting to whitewash or rewrite history, also appeared. In fact, for the next 24 months or so, Hungarian writers seemed to be going over the weeks in 1956 and extracting from them—paradoxical as it might seem—their best writing. But it was not the *counter*-revolution which inspired them; it was the continuing power of the *revolution* throughout the events, and in spite of subjective intentions and objective errors, that made so profound an impression on them.

Few nations experience moments, tragic or heroic, when all the contradictory elements at work within them converge into a force that suddenly breaks to the surface and shows the entire nation what it is made of, what it was, and what it may be. Those few weeks in 1956 was such a period for the Hungarians. Everything in the nation began to move with accelerated speed, bringing to a climax tedencies that had taken years to develop. The contradictions inherited from fascism, from a shameful war against socialism, from feudalism and semi-colonialism broke against the new force that had come into Hungarian life—socialism. The events of 1956 were the last gasp of the Past against the Future. Those weeks burned out of Hungarian life forever the flaws and cracks which socialism had inherited, and towards which Rakosi had been insensitive and Nagy had been opportunistic. By drawing up to the very abyss, the Hungarian people were confronted with a clear choice, not wholly given to them in 1945: socialism or counter-revolution? And in those weeks, the Hungarian people matured overnight. They did not hesitate in their choice, and they did not need the Red Army to save them. The Red Army gained time for them. But without Western interference, they could have put down the resistance of internal fascism themselves; for events proved that the overwhelming majority of the people were ready to take up arms—cried for arms—to defend themselves—that is, to defend socialism. And when it became possible for them to make the choice, and that was when the Hungarian Workers Party, under the leadership of Janos Kadar, appearly firmly and clearly on the scene, they flocked to it in their hundreds of thousands. Mammoth mass rallies the

country over soon showed where the people's real loyalties lay. It was this enormous display of solidarity that goes to prove that the role of the Red Army was to gain time for them and to avert terrible bloodshed, at a crucial moment until they could reorient themselves, re-establish firm leadership and reform their ranks. There were less than 3,000 fatal casualties in the whole period. Time was essential before they could go ahead and win the undeclared civil war; for though the counter-revolution had been defeated with arms, it had to be defeated on another, the more decisive level—on the ideological level. The Russians could not win that war; the Hungarians themselves had to win it. And they have won it and with a minimum of repression. Those who say that if the Red Army departed, the government would collapse overnight, and there would be a spontaneous uprising, do not know Hungary. Hungary is not occupied by the Red Army as a conquering and subduing force; it is there as a force against outside interference, and no doubt will depart when international conditions permit—leaving behind as "occupiers of Hungarian soil" only the many graves where Soviet soldiers died to free Hungary from the Nazis.

KADAR successfully resisted what must have been a great temptation to swing back to an extreme position, replacing Rakosi's dogmatism with a new dogmatism. Instead, Kadar plucked the ideological weapons out of the hands of the country's enemies by a policy both wise and firm: a policy that did not glorify himself, nor gloss over the real problems facing the people. Kadar is very popular among the Hungarian masses today. This is to be felt, not by the number of pictures hung on the walls, but by the tenor of the discussions and the psychological confidence that one senses everywhere one goes. It is not unimportant to state that no underground of any substantial force exists today in Hungary and that the number of jailed counter-revolutionaries is minimal, and those serving terms have been convicted of proven crimes, not of political opposition alone.

Kadar's program placed before the people by the Socialist Workers Party tested the sincerity of those who claimed that they wanted only the abuses and distortions of the Hungarian socialism under Rakosi removed, not socialism itself eliminated. In the intellectual field, there is a policy of great flexibility—not to say even indulgence—combined with a stubborn struggle to maintain the purity of Marxist-Leninist ideas. Although many intellectuals have repudiated the ideas, and certainly the consequences of those ideas, which they held in 1956, this does not mean that they have necessarily moved all the way in the right direction, nor that they have

been able to solve their creative problems in the light of the past and of new developments. Some never will. They shot their bolt in '56; and after that all for them is anti-climax. They remain an ironic, somewhat detached group who turn in other directions and seek a mode of expression which is really a kind of limbo in which nothing much transpires. They have no hatred and no love: the truth is history has passed them by.

It is among the young writers who, not as intellectuals but as workers and peasants in those turbulent days, came on the scene with a different experience and destiny. If ever the words were true, the future belongs to them. The disease of much of the older generation of intellectuals is not shared by them. They are not burdened with old commitments, polemics, struggles. The Blum theses are ancient history to them; the so-called "populist" writers, writers who idealized peasant life and built an entire literary schemata on their rural origins, fade further into the past. If they had no chance to fight for socialism in Hungary before, this was due only to the accident of Time. Their chance is now before them, and there is every evidence that they have taken it.

On the shores of Lake Balaton, one comes upon the bust of Rabinadranth Tagore. With his own hands he had planted the tree under which his bust stands, and on the stone are carved the words he wrote for the occasion long years ago:

When I am no longer on this earth, my tree
Let the ever renewed leaves of this spring
Murmur to the wayfarer
The poet did love while he lived.

Only those who love their country and their people know how to write for them, defend them, live or die for them. Hungary seemed fresh and renewed to me, a wayfarer. Counter-revolution had been defeated. Now socialism would grow. Not defeat but victory had taken place; and Hungary's enemies—the enemies of the whole world—knew it.

ON UPDATING SHAKESPEARE: Part I

SIDNEY FINKELSTEIN

WHILE this writer has not yet attended any of the American Shakespeare Festival Theatre performances at Stratford, Connecticut, both the advance publicity and the critical reviews of the opening performance of *As You Like It* indicate that certain methods of misinterpreting the Elizabethan giant, seeing themselves as a fresh look or, to quote a *New York Times* article of June 4th, as "A New Contemporary Image for the Bard," will be repeated and compounded. Our times are not unique in such errors, of course. In the 19th century, the practice was to cut the plays heavily and reshuffle the scenes, so that a production became a vehicle for one or two star actors in the leading roles, the great speeches and monologues being read almost in the spirit of a singer doing a succession of operatic arias. Now we do less cutting, and preserve the original fast-moving sequence of short scenes, priding ourselves that we have come closer to the kind of production in Shakespeare's own Globe Theatre. But we—and this refers not only to American productions but English, like some at the Old Vic—make our own mistakes, even though they have the praiseworthy motive of revealing the meaning of Shakespeare's plays for our own time. Jack Landau, artistic director of the Stratford, Connecticut company, asks, "Why do Shakespeare unless it has a relationship to today?" The question is a noble one, but the answer is as absurd as it is simple. It throws the main job of interpreting the plays for today, over to the costume and scenery departments. The dramas are given a more contemporary setting. Thus the actors in *As You Like It* wear 20th century sweaters and dungarees. And the an-

nouncement states that the production of *Troilus and Cressida* "would remind audiences that America once had its own Civil War."

The commercial attractions of such a production are obvious, and from this point of view, Shakespeare may be considered fortunate, that he did not write novels instead of plays. When we translate Tolstoi's *War and Peace,* we still keep the setting in the Napoleonic wars, although nobody now presumably knows anything about them, instead of updating the setting to World War I, suggesting that the Tsar Alexander could be Woodrow Wilson, General Kutuzov could be General Pershirng, and Prince Andrei could be Sergeant York. And in a new edition of *Huckleberry Finn* we still do not decide that nobody rides a raft on the Mississippi these days, and so it would be better to give Huck an outboard motor, or even take him off the river altogether and give him a hot-rod motor car.

The trouble with updating the setting of Shakespeare's plays is that the very opposite is achieved from what is projected; namely, confusion instead of clarity. It is one thing to say that Shakespeare wrote "for all time." It is quite another thing to say that he could have written the same plays in any time or period. *As You Like It* or *Troilus and Cressida* could not have been written, as they stand, in the 19th or 20th century any more than *War and Peace* or *Huckleberry Finn* could have been written in 1600. It is not a matter simply of historical data. It is a matter of the all-over sensibility, the attitude towards life, the view of government, morality and human relations, the psychologies, the dilemmas, the questions unanswered as well as answered. The following may sound like an anomaly, but the fact is that Shakespeare has profound relevance to our own times precisely because he was able to create a live, real and convincing society of the past, and to show that the most personal and psychological problems he raised were engendered not from within the mind but by that society.

The society Shakespeare presents may not be historically accurate in detail. It could be argued today that Richard III was not the murderer that Shakespeare and his times thought the king to be. But what Shakespeare presents is an essentially true to life picture. He shows, for example, that people will murder to get a crown, and by personages like this, countries and nations are ruled. He reveals what the times are giving birth to in the mind. The times produce diverse characters. The same milieu, for example, may produce an Othello and a Iago. But we discover what kind of milieu produces such personages. To Shakespeare, a psychological portrait is also a social portrait. There is only mystification and loss when we tear the psychology and the society apart, by up-

dating the setting to a milieu which, even if it did engender similar problems, could not possibly give them the same psychological form and sensibility. Such updating only breaks the tie that Shakespeare discloses between the great events that move history and their repercussions in the mind, between outer conflict and inner conflict, between the demands that a changing society makes of human beings and the answers they give.

There are valid arguments for not following Shakespeare, so far as settings are concerned, into the distant past before his time. His ancient Romans and Greeks are Elizabethan minds. *Cymbeline* is set in Britain during the 1st century A.D., under the rule of Augustus Caesar, but it has a wholly Renaissance sensibility and belongs psychologically fifteen centuries later than his setting. But to move Shakespeare ahead of his time, to see him not as a penetrating observer of reality but as Nostradamus the prophet, only courts disaster. Let us consider two fairly well known examples of such "modernization." One, cited in the *Times* article above as a model for giving Shakespeare "contemporary meaning," is the production of *Julius Caesar* in New York, about two decades ago, in which Orson Welles costumed Caesar to resemble Mussolini. Caesar's followers gave the fascist salute, and the conspirators who assassinated him were dressed in trench coats with slouch hats pulled over their eyes, like a stereotype of "proletarian revolutionaries." The other is a production some three seasons ago of *Measure for Measure,* at Stratford, Connecticut, in costumes which updated 16th century Vienna to something like 19th century Vienna.

Julius Caesar tells of a revolt against a would-be ruler of a land, which succeeds in killing him but then falls apart. Its main psychological study is of the leaders of this revolt. And the first questions to ask are, what sort of revolt was this? What were its aims?

The Rome of Caesar was an oligarchic republic, ruled by the Senate, comprising largely the wealthy, patrician landowning families. The uneasy compromise that had once existed between the patricians and the common people, or plebeians, was now disrupted by great historical changes. There was a vast increase in slavery, sapping the morale of the common people, who came to regard work as fit only for slaves. In wars which likewise had decimated the common people, great possessions had been won, from which a stream of wealth poured into the hands of the rulers, with some of it filtering down to the common people. Instead of the old "citizen army," there were now armies of mercenaries and professional soldieres, following whatever general commanded them and gaining whatever spoils he could pass down to them. There had been great slave revolts, like that of Spartacus. Bitterness was increasing

among the plebeians. The old "city republic" institutions no longer worked. There was increasing clash between the administrators of the lucrative provinces and the old patricians. Shortly before the time of the drama itself, there had been bloody bids by military leaders for dictatorial power, one led by Sulla and another by Pompey. Both attempted to rule in the name of the Senate and patricians, crushing whatever rights the commoners still possessed. Pompey had been defeated by his fellow Consul and general, Julius Caesar. Now Caesar, with his own army behind him, was making a bid for power by moving to the other side of the social spectrum, appealing to the hatred felt by the common people for the Senators and patricians.

THE conspiracy which assassinated Caesar was not a popular or democratic movement, but the plot of a small group of the wealthy patricians, or aristocracy, to preserve their power in the state; a "palace revolt," so to speak, from the "right." In fact, any such move to change rule by assassination must generally be such an autocratic movement. It does not take cognizance of historical forces, but works against them. It does not mobilize the common people, or the exploited. It simply hopes to preserve the existing institutions and make them more reactionary, replacing whoever runs them with its own leadership. The "republican rights" and "freedoms" which the conspirators against Caesar called for, had nothing to do with democracy, or any rights for the common people. It had to do only with the traditional privileges and rights of the aristocracy, frightened at Caesar's popular backing.

And it is exactly as a "palace revolt" by a small group of the rich, or the aristocracy, that Plutarch, the Greek historian of Roman times, describes the conspiracy against Caesar. And it is exactly like this that Shakespeare, who followed Plutarch carefully, depicts it. This does not mean that Shakespeare had, or could have had, a real knowledge of the historical forces operating in ancient Rome. For one thing, the place of slavery in Roman society does not enter into his thinking. He interpreted the Roman situation with the mind of an Elizabethan. And both European history in general, and English history in particular, for the two centuries preceding his own time, including his own time, had presented exactly such a picture as he unfolded; a popular-backed movement to a unified state under a king, which was violently resisted by a feudal-minded nobility. This nobility was jealous of its rights and privileges, and with few exceptions had no love for the common people. It was trying to keep back the movement of history, which was the end of the feudal order, the formation of the unified national state. This does not

mean that Shakespeare looks upon the institution of monarchy with unalloyed admiration. In fact, a theme running through most of his mature dramas is that of how unfit most rulers are to rule. And he finds qualities to admire in individual members of the feudal nobility, like Hotspur, in *Henry IV Part I.* But he still looks upon the feudal nobles as a force leading to disruption, disunity, internal war and destruction. His viewpoint is from what is new and forward moving in history.

How different this situation is from the Rome of the 1920's. A democracy, and parliamentary rule, such as Shakespeare never conceived, had long been established in Europe and America. Italy, in its unification, had never become wholly a bourgeois democracy, being a parliamentary monarchy in which the mass of people, on land and in factory, were miserably oppressed. Unrest had mounted after the havoc of the First World War, intensified by the scurvy treatment of Italy by France and England, who had won Italy over to their side with great promises, and then treated it as a loser instead of victor. There was a powerful democratic and socialist movement among the working people, against the power of the king, the Church, the great industrialists and landowners, some of whom kept the people in a state of illiteracy and semi-serfdom. It was in the interests of crushing this popular movement that Mussolini came to power, backed by all the wealthy and reactionary forces in Italy, as well as by the bankers and capitalists of other countries . He broke the trade unions and the working class parties, murdered some popular leaders like the socialist Matteotti, and imprisoned others. The movement against Mussolini was a popular, working class, democratic movement, the opposite of the conspiracy depicted in *Julius Caesar.*

A crucial test of any interpretation of a Shakespeare drama is the extent to which it makes every element in the play, every character, every scene, significant, meaningful, and germane to the whole conception, playing an organic part in the drama as a work of art. (One of the most damaging weaknesses of the Freudian or psychoanalytic approach to criticism, for all the insight it may give to one or another psychological nuance, is the fact that it discards most of what happens in the drama as unimportant to its thesis). And it is only by seeing *Julius Caesar* in this historical light, as a study or a "palace" or aristocratic conspiracy, that every part of the drama takes on meaning and its main dramatic themes become clear.

There is no intention here to offer a detailed or comprehensive examination of the play, but only to indicate what these main themes are. They are two. One is the general framework of the drama, the social or "outer" contradiction. It presents two social forces; on the one hand,

the ruling figures or those seeking rule, the leaders of both factions, such as Caesar and Mark Anthony, Brutus and Cassius, the other conspirators and the senators; and on the other hand, the mass of people, the commoners. The second theme, running from the beginning to the end of the drama, is the contradiction, or conflict, between Brutus and Cassius. This latter provides the psychological heart of the drama. Typical of Shakespeare's genius, and a testament to his always social mind, is the fact that this psychological drama is always organically linked to the "outer" or social contradiction, which affects it in its decisive turns. We can trace this social situation not only in the scenes in which the common people figure, but in the way in which their presence enters the consciousness of the leading protagonists.

IN RESPECT to the common people, who might be, in character, something like the mechanics, artisans and shopkeepers of his own London, Shakespeare does not look on them with exalted admiration, nor does he think of them as highminded and fit to handle matters of state. One could hardly expect anything different in his age. He shows them as divided, petty-minded, and easily swayed; capable, in times of great tension, fear and excitement, of irrational violence, as in the attack upon Cinna the poet, who fruitlessly protests that he is not Cinna the conspirator. (This detail, like many others, came from Plutarch). But the important insight Shakespeare offers, one of the fine illuminations which art periodically casts upon history, is that the common people play a decisive role in events (just as in the scene before the battle of Agincourt, in *Henry V,* he indicates that it is the common soldiers whose morale wins the victories). And so the thought which emerges from *Julius Caesar,* not put in any direct word statement but developed artistically, engendering the drama itself, is that the leaders must run to the people. Shakespeare's own time gave him an example of a fruitless attempt at a palace revolt, that of the Earl of Essex, who had no popular backing that amounted to anything.

The common people figure in the very opening scene, which is always in the mature Shakespeare a significant scene so far as the development of the drama is concerned. And they are a powerful protagonist in the crucial, central scene about which the entire course of the drama hinges, the turning point of the play. This is not the scene of the assassination of Caesar, which a lesser or less social-minded dramatist might have made central, but the great scene in the Forum, when representatives of both factions address the common people and try to win them over. The subsequent events are determined not by who is the high-minded leader

and who is the selfish one, who is right and who is wrong, who is honest and who is a demagogue, but by who can win the people. Brutus, representing the conspirators, doesn't, and Antony, representing the party of the dead Caesar, does.

Let us turn now to Brutus and Cassius. First of all, Shakespeare makes it amply clear that they, and the conspirators as a body, are not the "proletarian" revolutionists suggested by the modernized version which made the play into an anti-Mussolini movement. They are as near as one could get in Roman society to noblemen, people of estates, accustomed to command armies. They are, with the exception of Brutus, disliked by the people. Cassius despises the crowd. Another conspirator, Casca, speaks like a typical aristocrat, of the "stinking breath" of the crowd. "I durst not laugh, for fear of opening my lips and receiving the bad air." They speak of Caesar as one of their own class, one of the ruling oligarchy of Rome, who now betrays their class by seeking popular support. He wants to rise above them, to trample on their cherished privileges and nobleman rights, and become a ruler above them. Cassius tells of the time when Caesar challenged him to swim the turbulent Tiber river, and how he then saved Caesar from drowning. His cry,

> this man
> Is now become a god: and Cassius is
> A wretched creature, and must bend his body
> If Caesar carelessly but nod on him

is that of a patrician fearing the loss of his standing. And this thought reaches a climax in the famous, much-quoted image:

> Why, man, he doth bestride the narrow world
> Like a Colossus; and we petty men
> Walk under his huge legs, and peep about
> To find ourselves dishonourable graves.

Only a nobleman in Shakespeare's time would feel this way. To the common people then, the bigness of a ruler, or his power, was not an issue, but only how he led them, and what he could do for them.

As for the conflict between Brutus and Cassius, it is commonly said that Brutus is the high-minded idealist, and consequently impractical, while Cassius is the shrewd, practical mind; that Brutus therefore ruins the cause by his starry-eyed mistakes. Thus it is Brutus who agrees, after the murder, to let Antony speak in the Forum, while Cassius warns

him against this. Again, in the great scene of argument between Brutus and Cassius, near the end of the play, it is Brutus who wants to march on to meet the army of Antony and Octavious Caesar at Philippi, while it is Cassius who advises a temporary retreat. Brutus gains his point, and the battle is lost. But to see these matters as simply accidents of judgment, or mental quirks of the unrealistic-minded Brutus, is to miss the point, and the whole aspect of historical inevitability which the social-minded Shakespeare gives to the drama. Men may decide their acts, but the results are shaped by larger forces than any one man.

Why do the conspirators need Brutus, if he is such a "difficult" person? They can certainly stab Caesar without his help. The answer lies again in the role of the mass of people in history. It is not enough just to kill Caesar. They must get some support. Cassius has no confidence that he can win any such backing, arouse faith in his public spirit (of which he has no iota), or convince people that he has killed Caesar for anything but reactionary reasons. Nor could a Casca, with his contempt for the crowd, win any such support. Brutus is the one member of their class who is known to have some consideration for the people, and a feeling for public matters, for the welfare of the nation as a whole. And so, they must have Brutus with them. He is a necessity for them. And they must take him as he is, public spirit and all. That the winning over of Brutus on such terms, which is the assurance of their success, also in the end assists their downfall, thus gives a kind of historical inevitability to the drama. It is the soical movement which in the long run becomes decisive.

THUS the psychological drama in the first part of the play is the struggle to win Brutus to the conspiracy, together with the internal conflict that takes place in Brutus' own mind. Part of the strategy for winning Brutus to the plot is the dropping of little anonymous notes in his home, to make him believe that there really is a public demand for him to lead the revolt. This happens to be another detail taken from Plutarch, but Shakespeare usually takes only the items he feels to be important or necessary, for historical verisimilitude or for the psychological drama. And in the monologue in which Brutus, fighting with himself, finally decides that Caesar must die—this is of course wholly Shakespeare's own—the fatal error is disclosed. The conspirators, playing precisely on Brutus' public spirit, have convinced him not only that Caesar wants to be king—this alone would not be decisive—but of what Caesar would certainly do when he became king. And so, Brutus decides to kill

Caesar, not for any evil he has done, but for some evil he might do in the future.

> and for my part
> I know no personal cause to spurn at him,
> But for the general. He would be crown'd:
> How that might change his nature, there's the question. . . .
>
> . . . Crown him? — that —
> And then I grant, we put a sting in him,
> That at his will be may do danger with. . . .
>
> . . . to speak of Caesar,
> I have not known when his affections sway'd
> More than his reason. But 'tis a common proof
> That lowliness is young ambition's ladder,
> Where to the climber-upward turns his face;
> But when he once attains the utmost round,
> He then unto the ladder turns his back
> Looks in the clouds, scorning the base degrees
> By which he did ascend. So Caesar may;
> Then, lest he may, prevent.

It will be, as Brutus discovers, very difficult to convince the people of this; that Caesar had to be killed, in order to prevent what he "may" do. Antony will tear the argument to tatters. Antony is of course a master demagogue, but Brutus' reason has a built-in weakness.

Let us now consider Brutus' "mistaken impracticality." Cassius suggests before the murder, that they do away with Mark Antony too. Brutus refuses, in an eloquent speech, but not out of any cloudy failure to cope with reality. He refuses for the same reasons that made the conspirators feel he was necessary to them. He has some feeling for the people, and acts for what he thinks is public welfare, not private gain.

> Our course will seem too bloody, Caius Cassius,
> To cut the head off, and then hack the limbs. . . .
>
> Let's be sacrificers, but not butchers, Caius. . . .
> . . . This shall make
> Our purposes necessary, and not envious:

Which so appearing to the common eyes,
We shall be called purgers, not murderers.

So it is when Antony asks permission to speak at Caesar's funeral, and Brutus, disregarding the warning by Cassius, permits it. Since Brutus has convinced himself that what he did was for the public welfare, he sees no reason why the public will not accept this, if he explains it to them. Without the public, he has no cause that could justify his own actions to himself. Above all, the conspirators must appear fair-minded. They must give Caesar's body "all true rites and lawful ceremonies." All that Antony must promise to do, is to tell the people that he speaks with the permission of those who killed Caesar. That will assure the people of the fairness of the killers. And if it does not work, the basic reason, granted Antony's forensic skill, is the weakness of the public motivation in the first place, that led to the killing. What Antony does in his speech is to restore the original appeal that Caesar had made to the common people, with their hatred and fear of the patricians and Senators.

When the poor have cried, Caesar hath wept;
Ambition should be made of sterner stuff.

Finally, let us consider the argument between Brutus and Cassius, near the play's end, and the great "mistake" about whether to do immediate battle. The clash is not one of quirks of private personality, or of practical judgment in respect to military tactics. Rather, here all the social issues which Shakespeare has laid down from the beginning of the drama, are explored in their human and psychological terms. To Brutus, the salvation of the entire movement lies in reaffirming its ties to the people's welfare. If now, faced with a harsh turn in fortunes, he must put this partly on a basis of personal pride, the consideration for the "poor" who "have cried" remains the principle on which he joined in the murder, and the reason that the conspiracy needed him. He first accuses Cassius of permitting his lieutenants to accept bribes, of selling offices, of having an "itching palm." He then berates Cassius for not sending him the necessary money to carry on. As for himself, Brutus, he will not squeeze the common people.

By heaven, I had rather coin my heart,
And drop my blood for drachmas, than to wring

From the hard hands of peasants their vile trash
By any indirection.

They are not merely leading an army to battle. They are commanding and administrating great and lucrative provinces. The fact that the actual, historical Brutus was as avid a plunderer as the others is not germane to the issue, any more than the slave-holding nature of the Roman economy. What Shakespeare didn't know, he didn't know. While his careful following of Plutarch, but for a certain amount of artistic concentration, indicates his interest in throwing light upon an actual, enlightening episode of history, he looked upon the situation, as he had to, in the light of the problems and personages of his own time. Cassius is not handled as a personification of evil. He has his personal, aristocratic pride, and his principles of conduct. Shakespeare is contrasting two types of noblemen, as he knows them in this period of transition from medieval feudalism to independent nation and the monarchic state; the old "warrior" school, proud of its courage, fiercely resenting anyone who tries to command or rule it, regarding the common people as dirt; and the new school, which can live with the nation, and recognize that the common people both are human and are a living part of it.

Thus it is with the question of whether to do immediate battle, at Philippi. Cassius advises a strategic retreat; his armies will rest, and the enemy will waste itself in pursuit. Brutus is more conscious of the temper of the people. He knows that the inhabitants of the province are not friendly. And so, with the passage of time, the support he and Cassius gets from them will drop away, while the enemy will gain recruits. This leads to the famous passage, "There is a tide in the affairs of men/ Which, taken at the flood. . . ." In context, this is no abstract philosophical generality but a statement that the carrying out of individual plans rests on historical forces larger than the individual; or in this case, on how the people move. The fact that Brutus' decision plays into the hands of the enemy, does not mean that in the long run, the strategy of Cassius would have had any better result.

This brief indication, of how closely Shakespeare ties the psychological problems and contradictions to the social ones, and of how this underlies the very artistic structure of the drama, shows, I think, that only confusion and artistic loss can result when the drama is transported to the Rome of Mussolini, King Victor Emanuel, Matteotti, and the trade unions. That *Julius Caesar* has great meaning, life, and applicability for today is certainly true. We can get this, however, only by seeing it as a profoundly illuminating picture of what helped make our times and what

helped make us what we are, not as a history or picture of our times themselves. That we must leave to our own playwrights, armed with the magnificent artistic tools which Shakespeare has given them, and with knowledge that he could not possibly have had. I remember vividly the production which had Julius Caesar act like Mussolini. Uncluttered by curtains and scenery, making a brilliant use of lighting, swift in movement (and also cutting the play drastically), it was exciting theatre which held a matinee audience, mostly of school children, on the edge of their seats. They were certainly convinced that Shakespeare was no bore. But had anybody, child or adult, been asked what the play was about, other than its melodramatically outlined plot, or what, if anything, they learned from it, or what was it that made Shakespeare so great a genius, I doubt that any satisfactory answer could have come out of what they saw.

A SOLDIER'S SONATA

ATLEE WASHINGTON

So many thoughts and emotions came to trouble the spirit . . . so many occurrences and objects in the physical world brought their burden into me . . .

There was happiness also: singing beauty of rain . . . life adding to life, as though a girl sat laughing on a grave . . . flashes of the one human spirit self-consciously finding itself broken into bits and given to each of us—broken and yet whole . . . and the sure faith that one dawn there will be a great day for us all—such a morning as you never thought to see, when the guns are still . . .

These were things, among others . . . they troubled the spirit: at length they made a music there.

SONNET

Now I, who lately cried for rest, return
my vision earthward in unquiet shame . . .
knowing no poet honoring the name
has peace on earth, until his flesh is borne
slowly and cold to the last citadel;
so I will mix in all the goodly fray

great forces now are shaping . . . the array
is mighty, and the struggle terrible.
With all have bled to help a fellowman,
the humble and the homeless ones: the throng
who are the least of these—all who are not
fearful of blood to work a better plan
of life . . . it is with these I cast my lot.

I

(Pearl Harbor Day, 1941)

The whistles blow again . . .
when last I heard them sound
tones so imperative,
I knew the guns were silent on the fields
and in the roads of France;
and (afterwards I learned) throughout the world
folks broke out in song and dance.

But in our little backwoods house
when whistles blew that day,
my mother knelt with us and said
gently, let us pray.
By the wide window there she spoke
her words of gratitude;
we listened soberly, although
we scarcely understood.

The whistles blow again,
but now I understand . . .
the golden snake has caught its prey,
the people and the land
will bleed . . . but this
inhuman sacrifice
will not be lost:
it is a fertile seed we sow.
I am filled with sorrow, but no fear
is in me while I stand to hear
the whistles blow.

II

Spring walks to me through February mornings . . .
I walk to spring:

under the ice
in deep-wandering roots
the fertile sap is stirring —
a living stream
warm as the milk
in the breast of a mother.

Spring talks to me through February mornings . . .
I talk to spring:

sounds of cracking ice . . .
the drip of water
from roofs . . . the high lonely
cry of the wind . . .
and my voice, heart-beats
against daybreak . . . a breath
caught suddenly on the moment
when I know I may never walk
again with you in springtime —
with you, beloved.

Spring comes to me through all this February . . .
I go to spring:

I know that leaves will gleam
in sunlight . . . ice
will melt to leaping water . . .
and these, the many voices of my heart
will find an answer.

Where I go I shall meet springtime
gladly . . . living
and sharing with innumerable comrades
all over earth, the task
to make for all men an enduring spring

where no bombs fall.

SECOND MOVEMENT

III

No, this is not glorious fight
against evil; this is red dust
and red mud . . . long endurance;
this is not night hung with dizzy flares . . .
nor nights alive with shellburst . . . nor clatter
of machine guns . . . nor ack-ack
spattered through long sinewy searchlight fingers
nor the lean sting of rifle fire . . .
nor the loud scream a bomb makes
falling.

This is silence waiting . . . day sky
blue as night sky against the moon . . .
skies howling with grey rain.

When the Big Dipper wheels low
under the North Star,
why does your heart not burst?

IV

You come slowly
at first through uncertainties
like a wood-wanderer
in underbrush, tangled,
green and living . . .
in the deeps you finger out
numberless secret ways
where thoughts beat slow cadence
against silence . . . beats
take life in sound,
and go skipping away into time —
jitterbugging in frantic rhyme.

V

No heroics . . .

I would rather be seeking out
the intimate secrets of your womanhood,
sharing the pulse of your blood,
pressing the goodness out . . .
I would rather from dusk to dawn
be lost to the searching shells,
lost in the dreamy smells
of flesh I am lying on . . .

to be with you in blue shadow —
forgetting the grey
death in the outer human world . . . to lie awake
in secret song until the day shall break
and the shadows flee away . . .

No heroics . . .

VI

The dream is not blue winter night
under the blankets soft and white
as snow;
the dream is not a wish (hung by a hair)
falling too soon into the darkness where
other dreams go;
this dream is that imperishable span
of life men know
when beauty chokes the inarticulate heart of man:
the dream is his intrinsic self
roguish with that tantalizing elf,
the ivory mischief . . .

THIRD MOVEMENT

VII

The world is at war, but most
of the world does not know:

only man in his prideful woe.
And the innocent children of men
are crushed out, like flowers
when the marching boots stamp over them
(The flowers know . . .
but sometimes from a trampled stem
blossoms laugh again.)

VIII

They have drowned us in a sea of tears
from our own eyes;
we will drown them in a sea of blood . . .
smashing their wise
conceit . . .
breaking their skins
and ours likewise:
but we will no more drown.

IX

I can tell you this: be sure
black men from Alabama
with the sun hot in their skins
are no longer strangers to the white
students from Oregon;
they are caught in the same trap,
and making the same fight
against loneliness . . . against
tears for the hometown's twilight lullaby,
for a night with the girl,
for the kid-sister's bright eye
where the jitterbugs whirl.

In the pangs of this upheaval,
through the flux of war,
truth sifts down slowly, like
raindrops, falling when the rain is over,
from the willow leaves . . .
so we learn to our dismay how small
the distance is between man and his brother —

how artificial is the wall —
how difficult to smother
are the germs of living.

X

This is the night of the full moon
where you walk among the hills . . .
where you stumble on the gutter . . . where you lie asleep . . .
where your rifle keeps guard against dawn;
a full moon laughs over the streets back home
on the woman who waits . . . on the one who cannot wait . . .
This is the night of the full moon
in the foxholes of New Guinea . . . in the sweat
a man gives to the jungle . . . in the blood
a man gives to a bullet:
the full moon
on your helmet is a thing the . . . Japs will love.

Do you, moon, remember Stalingrad
where the Nazis found no farther east—
death, but no farther east? — when the naked
spirit of man wrung with anguish and rage
at the raped land—the corpses answering the wind's
touch on the freezing willows . . . answering too
the mutilated stone-eyed skeletons
still walking in blasted woods, hoveling in earth,
but breathing no despair and no surrender . . .
when the Man saw the nature of the beast —
that defecation prowling in human form —
lightning of anger fired his soul . . . ten thousand
hammers of hatred beat magnificently:
(Cry, *Death to the invaders! — Blood of the blood*
that flows in us — and you, sad Little Homeland,
behind us the river sleeps — we yield no farther!)
— were you, old moon, up there above the city,
shining on that new-forged man of steel
whose homely love became relentless strength
to hate — whereby to lay aside all hope,
all tears and yesterdays, and all tomorrows . . .
to hold one stubborn inch of stony rubble,

hurling a stroke which shook the plunderers
to pause, and puzzle in bewilderment —
falter — and reel in wondershock of terror . . .
do you, moon, remember when the screams,
the howling and the thunder, the cries
fell suddenly into tired quiet there . . .
when bombs fell no more . . . when the sky
sifted stillness and the kindly snows
over the gutted city, resting now
to catch its breath, and spreading out
strong weary limbs against the frozen Volga?
. . . Well, we remember Stalingrad:
it is part of our heritage.
And the full moon is live now
on the roof-tops . . . on that roof under which
all the life my life has breathed when
two children breathe:
I pray for you each night . . .
I love you . . .
It was life the mail-call brought that time,
not just a letter done with baby fingers.

So laugh, full moon,
and for a moment I will laugh also,
then sleep the night away until
the bugles blow
daybreak . . .the grimy business . . .

XI

The black world about us now is filled
with misery on misery;
men have killed life,
which jumped so gladly in the veins;
comrades, it is our high destiny
to break the final link of Fascist chains.

The old world dies: we will not bring it back,
for we have learned the terror of our strength.
Against black,
tortured, unforgiven yesterdays

we nurtured seeds of fuller life . . . at length
the season comes: we plant the furrowed ways.
And no man living, no one yet to live
can hold us back . . .
whether he, with fellow blood-hound Nazis,
slaughter Lidice;
whether beneath polite purr-spoken phrases
he murder China;
whether he splash our blood across the wide
unresting Volga;
whether he be in Commons or in Congress,
we know him well;
we know him when he degenerates the eagle
into Jim Crow —
we know him when the proud and regal lion
assumes the jackal.

Be warned:
we know our enemies . . .
we are not fooled . . .
This war is indivisible . . . we
are indivisible: we are the multitudes
of earth, and the earth is ours — its fullness.

XII

Know ye, O men
who handle the guns,
you who sweat
in town or field —
and you courageous women, all
strong in strength that does not yield:

the lines are tightly drawn,
the old taboos must fall:
one freedom, full, complete,
the earth — that is the goal.

I, too, carry a gun!

THE VERY NAVEL OF THE STAR

PHILIP STEVENSON

"My God, Ixca, what *is* this country, where is it going, what can be done with it? . . . What do we have to do to understand it? Where does it begin, where does it end? Why is it satisfied with half solutions? . . . What happened to the Revolution?"

QUESTIONS like these, and the most varied replies, sound the thematic keynote of this extraordinary novel,* whose author plays an important role in the youthful Mexican literary renascence reported in *Mainstream* for November, 1960, in a review of Rosario Castellanos's *The Nine Guardians.*

Before considering this theme further, it might be useful to recall some aspects of the Mexican past that makes such questioning inevitable today.

Under the Aztecs Mexico never achieved a stable civilization or a national identity. Their "empire" rested upon a series of precarious tribal alliances. Metals were worked for aesthetic rather than productive purposes. The institution of slavery was applied to spectacular rituals by a priestly caste rather than to the creation of an economic surplus commensurate with the demands of civilized development. At that stage, the Spanish conquest shattered the land, the people, their culture and institutions, setting up on the ruins a colonial empire based on feudal relations.

After three hundred years Mexico achieved national independence . . . or did she? Presently she was robbed of one-third of her territory

* WHERE THE AIR IS CLEAR by Carlos Fuentes, translated by Sam Hileman; Ivan Obolensky, Inc.; New York, 1960; $4.95.

by the expanding capitalist nation to the north, and a bit later she found herself fighting once more to oust a foreign invader, Maximilian. Her successes in this under the Indian Juárez failed to end feudalism in Mexico. During the long dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz the landowning aristocracy flourished, and the country's rich resources (including the fourth largest oil field in the world) were parcelled out among as cruel and greedy a menagerie of foreign capitalists as ever crucified a gentle people. What price independence?

The agrarian revolution that began in 1910 achieved important constitutional and land reforms and kicked out many of the aristocrats, although it was not till 1938 under the presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas that Mexico recovered her railroads (unprofitable, hence easily relinquished by the capitalists) and her fabulous treasure of oil (fought for to the last ditch) and began actually to implement the redistribution of the land.

Given the numerical weakness and underdeveloped character (with shining exceptions) of the Mexican proletariat, and considering Mexico's proximity to the world's most powerful capitalist nation, it was not likely that the agrarian revolution could be transformed into a socialist revolution, though there were many intellectuals and working-class leaders who believed in the possibility and were cruelly disillusioned.

The Cárdenas regime marked the high point of the Mexican revolution. Today, under the "guidance" of cold-war America, and largely financed by northern capital, capitalist expansion and counterrevolution are in high gear. Cárdenas is Enemy Number One of Mexican ruling circles. Trade-union leaders by the score and intellectual critics of the government, including the world's foremost mural painter, David Alfaro Siqueiros, and the aged revolutionary hero Filomeno Mata, languish in jail without trial under the notorious McCarthyite "social dissolution law." Inflation enriches the rich and oppresses the poor. Corruption gnaws at the vitals of Mexican society; and it is cynically accepted by all levels that the true government has its seat in the Embassy of the United States. Tensions in Mexico today approach the point of blind explosive revulsion.

In short, Mexican history can be summarized as a process not quite completed in any of its necessary steps.

SINCE literature perforce reflects its time, we cannot expect it to produce works of clarity and confidence in such a social climate. Lacking the guidance of Marxist ideas (for these are suppressed along with the people's leaders), honest artists will venture few solutions;

their productions will be passionately critical and questioning, their answers tentative, groping, bemused or quasi-mystical. Such a production is *Where the Air Is Clear.*

Fuentes's novel exhibits such obvious shortcomings side by side with such inspired excellence that it poses a formidable problem to the conscientious reviewer. It would be easy—and stupid—to condemn it out of hand. The task is to understand it and the literary movement now in ferment in Mexico.

Where the Air Is Clear ranges widely over all sorts and and conditions of men among Mexico City's four million, and it re-creates in vivid figurative language the sights, sounds, smells and texture of hovel and mansion, muddy alley and spacious boulevard, ragged destitution and vulgar plutocracy. On the whole, however, it is the ruling class that dominates the book—its lowly origins, snobbery, corruption, aggression and conquest of power.

The central story, interwoven with a dozen lesser plot-threads, traces the claw-and-fang scramble to the pinnacle of power by banker-industrialist-speculator Federico Robles, who began life as a peon scratching a living in the cornfields of the aristocracy, and who rode the revolution to a place at the top; the parallel rise of his wife Norma from shabby beginnings to the acme of glamor and social position; and their abrupt plunge to oblivion.

The novel might be likened to a complex Rivera mural. It has that kind of ambition and breadth. As in some of Rivera's work, the grand design and basic simplicity tends to get blurred by excessive detail. But the scientific world-view that made significant every brushstroke on Rivera's wall is missing in Fuentes's richly allusive but too often obscure or incoherent prose.

CONNECTED with the Robles story—as relatives, dependents, hangers-on and victims—are such representative characters as the now-impoverished aristocrats whose daughter manages to marry into nouveau-riche circles; the poet and philosopher, Zamacona, the unrecognized illegitimate son of Robles; the social climber, Rodrigo Pola, son of a revolutionary hero, who wins cheap fame and security as a movie writer; a railroad workers' leader who is "shot trying to escape" at Robles's orders; the Regules family, rivals and eventually conquerors of the Robles financial empire; a worker in Robles's factory who is fired without compensation when his foot is mangled in the machinery; Robles's blind Indian mistress, his refuge from the seeing world; and a whole covey of cosmopolitan birds of plumage, ungifted apers of European

society, with their bleached skins and nicknames borrowed from foreign fashion, Juliette, Gus, Pierrot, Cuquis (Cookie), Pichi (Peachy), mingling Yanqui hep-talk with French epigrams, their bookshelves exhibiting side by side Rimbaud's *Illuminations* and the works of Mickey Spillane. Evidently Fuentes, the son of a diplomat, has lived among such folk and despises them as the fools and courtiers of the counter-revolution.

A host of lesser figures, less closely linked with the main story, take us into the less fragrant aspects of Mexican life, prostitution and the bullring, cheap cantinas and fashionable bistros, among gangsters and returned wetbacks, bribers and bribed, as well as among the hard-working poor, servants and taxi-drivers and their discouraged children planning to run away from it all.

What holds this profile of Mexico City together is not only the Robles story, important as that is, but rather the enigmatic figure of Ixca Cienfuegos, the omnipresent listener, evesdropper and meddler in the lives of others. It is Ixca who begins and ends the book with an invocation and an envoi to the city and its people, couched in rhapsodic prose; he who cunningly engineers the downfall of Robles and Norma.

Ixca is described as looking "like an eloquent idol" with "shining carved teeth," "a savage." Yet Ixca is identified as a feminine name; he wears his hair long, is handsome "like a gypsy," "shining because of the darkness he destroyed"; a mysterious vagrant who has no visible means of support, yet seems always to pick up the check. This adds up to a suggestion that Ixca may be regarded as a symbolic reincarnation of the ancient Mexican gods.

This impression is fortified when we meet Ixca's ancient mother, Teódula, who keeps the skeletons of her husband and children in rotting coffins in a crypt beneath her Mexico City shack, and wears a fortune in solid gold collars and jewelry reminiscent of the pre-Columbian treasure excavated at Monte Alban. To rooted old Teódula the modern world seems not so all-powerful or enduring as it does to those who are of it. To Ixca she says:

> All I know is what I tell you. Our gods walk abroad, invisible but alive. You'll see, you'll see. They always win. . . . We are coming near the parting of waters. They [the Robleses and their like] will die and we will be resurrected, fed by their deaths.

She never doubts that "we," the true people of Mexico, the Indians, are destined to inherit the Mexican earth manured by the blood of the conqueror.

Plainly the book is not a realistic novel. In feeling it seems rather a poem, a vast ode on Mexico and its people, their traditions, dreams, despairs, sufferings and aspirations, as heard and overhead, observed and interpreted by the ubiquitous Ixca. In the course of his invocation he chants:

> Fall with me on our moon-scar city . . . city of motionless pain, city of immense brevities, city of fixed sun, ashing city of slow fire, city to its neck in water, city of merry lethargy, city of twisted stinks, city rigid between air and worms, city ancient in light, old city cradled among birds of omen . . . bitch city, hungry city, sumptuous villa, leper city. . . . Eagle without wings. Here we bide. And what are we going to do about it? Where the air is clear.

And in the final chapter, as he wanders through the sleeping capital,

> . . . his eyes, living and light, absorbed homes and sidewalks and men and rose to the centre of night until he became, in his stone-eagle, air-serpent eyes, the city itself, its voices, sounds, memories, presentiments . . . above all, all voices . . .

voices out of the past, the voices of characters in the novel, "and at last his own voice" ranging in envoi over myth and history and the "twisted mass" of the people:

> . . . you who sell lottery tickets and fruit juices and hawk newspapers and sleep on the ground, you who wear charms around your forehead and you who bandage your head against the weight of your load . . . you who feel your children come into the world hollow-cheeked and black, you who scratch for food . . . who cannot speak your pain . . .

PERHAPS the reader has caught in these passages an echo of Walt Whitman and his catalogues. In fact, Fuentes's work evokes echoes often. Dostoievski is dimly heard in a long argument between Ixca and Rodrigo Pola on the nature of God and the necessity of sacrifice—but a wholly Mexican Dostoievski, for whom sacrifice has Aztec connotations:

> Tremble and feel the terror of sacrifice, yes, sacrifice. Come to be ours, smother the sun with your kisses, and the sun will seize your throat and devour your blood to let you be one with it.

At moments, figures like Robles and Regules seem like throwbacks to Balzac's financial titans; but, being Mexican, they are never further

than one banana-peel from disaster, so that the top of the heap seems but an aspect of the bottom.

What and why is Mexico? The question runs like an insistent refrain, explicit or implicit, throughout the book. To Robles, the answer is simplistic: Mexico is a lethargic mass that must be prodded awake and driven to change, progress, prosperity. "You intellectuals like to kick up the dust," he tells the poet Zamacona. "The choice is between wealth and poverty. And to attain wealth, we have to push on toward capitalism. . . . What do you want, friend? Shall we wear feathers and eat human flesh again?" Zamacona replies:

> That's exactly what I don't want, licenciado. . . . I want to understand what it means to wear feathers in order not to wear them and in order to be myself. I don't want us to take pleasure in mourning our past, but to penetrate the past and understand it, reduce it to reason, cancel what is dead, save what is living, and know at last what Mexico really is and what may be done with her. . . . I can't believe that the only concrete result of the Revolution had to be the rise of a new and privileged class, economic domination by the United States, and the paralyzing of all internal political life.

Zamacona is the only character who seems to recognize the unfinishedness of Mexican history, and his answer, although not expressed in scientific terms, comes closest to a realistic and coherent definition. In a colloquy with Ixca he points out that although Mexico "has had its redeemers, its anointed, its higher-being men . . . they succumbed."

> Mexico has never had a successful hero. To be heroes, they had to fail. Cuauhtémoc, Hidalgo, Madero, Zapata. The hero who triumphed, Cortés, is not accepted as such. This may be extended to the nation itself: has Mexico ever accepted itself as triumphant? No, we taste and take seriously only our defeats.

Nevertheless he finds reason for hope:

> What is a sense of inferiority? Only the awareness of a disguised superiority . . . of an excellence which others have not learned to apprehend . . . of high attainments which unfortunately do not as yet make themselves obvious and earn us respect abroad. . . . And yet . . . we need no different powers than we have and no point of view more basic than our present experience, to create from the root and in reality a new social structure and philosophy.

Again and again in the book it is recognized that Mexico can

only "wound herself" by aping foreign ways; so that it is strange to find Fuentes striving, with all his undeniable talent, to clothe uniquely Mexican material in forms borrowed from current European literary fashions—surrealism and existentialism and irrationality. The murder of Zamacona, for example, is absolutely unmotivated and meaningless (unless the meaning is that life itself is meaningless), and the death of the young wetback is scarcely less whimsical.

It seems to this reviewer that the novel is meant to stand or fall by the character and philosophy of Ixca Cienfuegos. He alone is involved in virtually everything that happens, and his reflections frame the book. Yet there is no seizable, uncontradictory expression of his faith. He seems haunted by "the beginning" (of the nation, of the individual) as the determinant of the end. On one of his dawn prowls through the streets, at the "hour of the moment before resurrection," he tries to puzzle out:

> What was Robles's true beginning? Ixca . . . knew that in some way it had to be something so simple that he, Ixca, would never understand it. . . . The use of power described by Librado Ibarra [one of Robles's victims] and also, in a different way, by Robles himself, was only a flight, which presupposed a form, from that same obscure beginning. And at the end of that beginning, Ixca felt now, there the battle would be fought, and one of them would win, either Robles, or Cienfuegos and Teódula. There, in the heart of thorns.

It is a different expression of Teódula's prophetic faith in the final triumph of Indian Mexico. Less philosophy than mysticism.

We have suggested that Ixca Cienfuegos is intended to be a kind of national archetype. If so, the whole book can be considered his portrait—in the same sense that Whitman intended *Leaves of Grass* to portray the great composite democratic individual. But whereas Whitman's archetype was definable as a dialectical unity of the "simple separate person" and the mass, Ixca is something more complicated and less comprehensible. It is as if the author, unable as yet to formulate a satisfactory answer to his thematic question, had left the Mexican archetype unfinished and undefined.

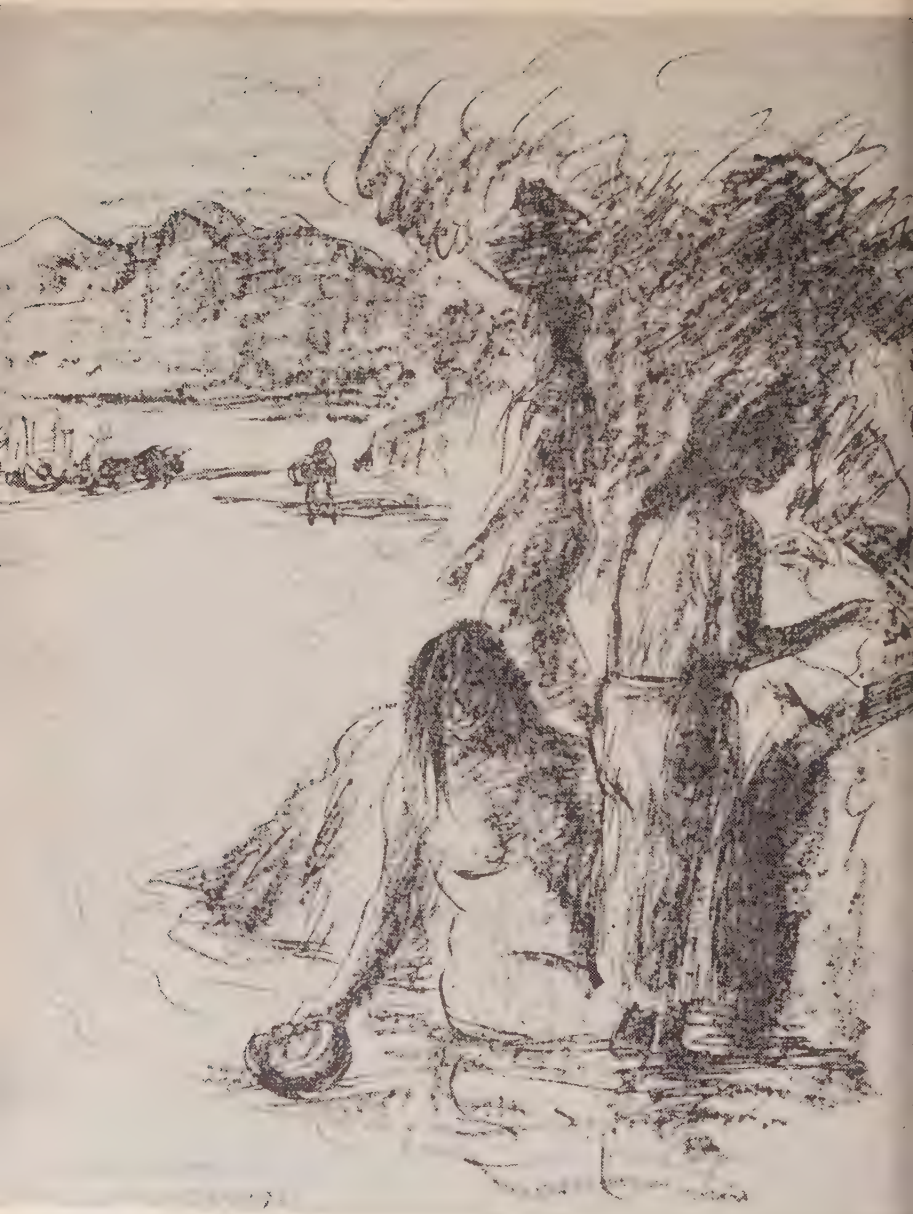
IXCA remains finally a paradox. His capacity for compassion blends ill with his Nietzschean arrogance and sexual sadism. Whenever he steps out of his role of listener and commentator to intervene in the lives of others, it is as an irritant to action, or as a destructive force, dedicated (in the most charitable interpretation) to wiping out the

painful past in order to prepare for a mystical resurrection. For his faith in the people is genuine. Describing Mexico as "a land where no person exists as an individual, but there is only air and blood and sun and tumult, one mass of twisted bones and thrones and rancor," he affirms that:

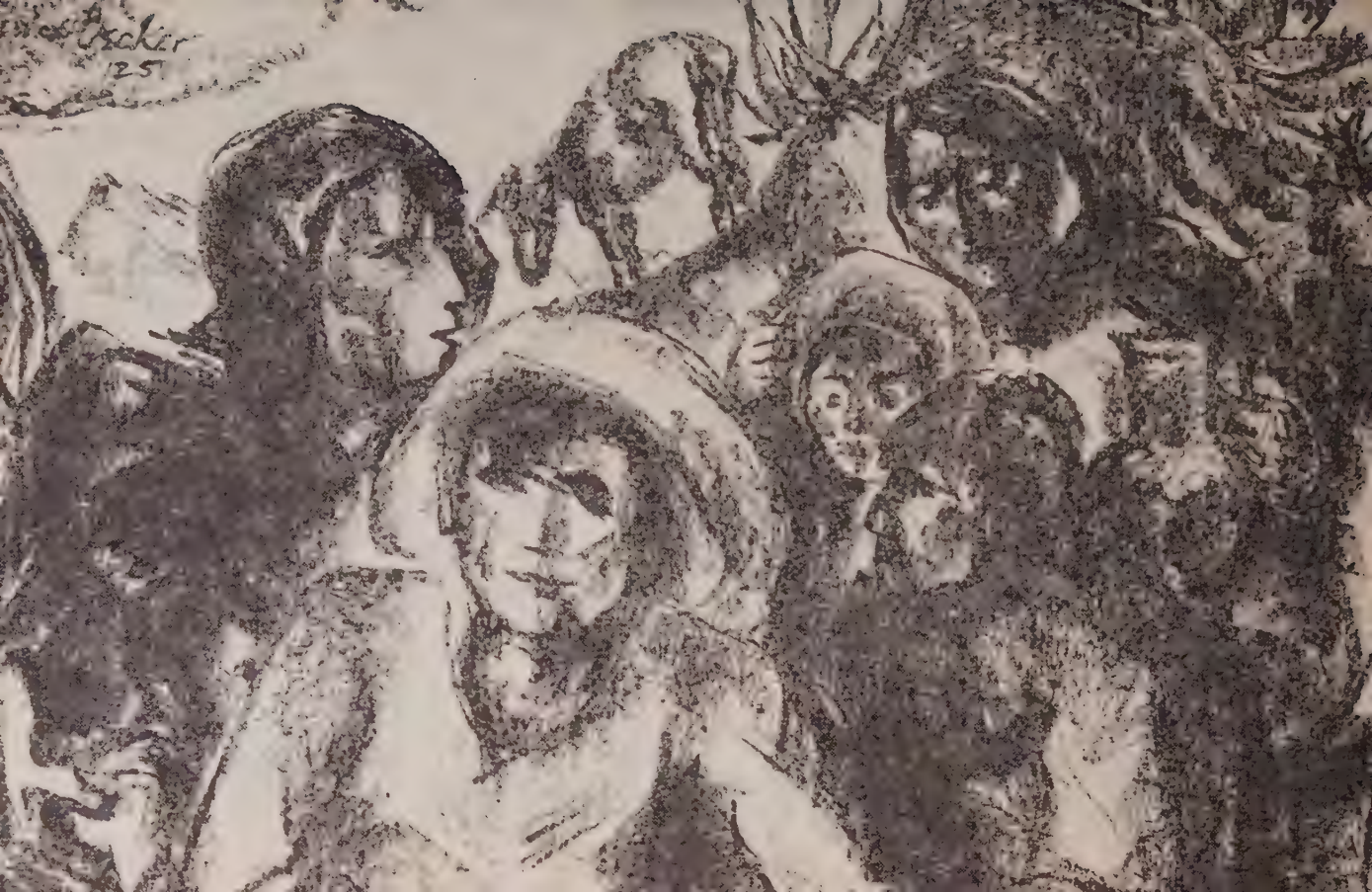
> Upon that twisted mass depends salvation for all of us. . . . Salvation for the whole world depends on this anonymous people who are at the world's centre, the very navel of the star. Mexico's people, the only people who are contemporaneous with the world itself, the only ones who live with their teeth biting into the aboriginal breast. The conglomeration of stink and chancre and scummy pulque and rotting bodies that putrefy in the mud, careless as to their origin. Everything else falls. Today is born of that very origin which, without knowing it, controls us, who have always lived within it.

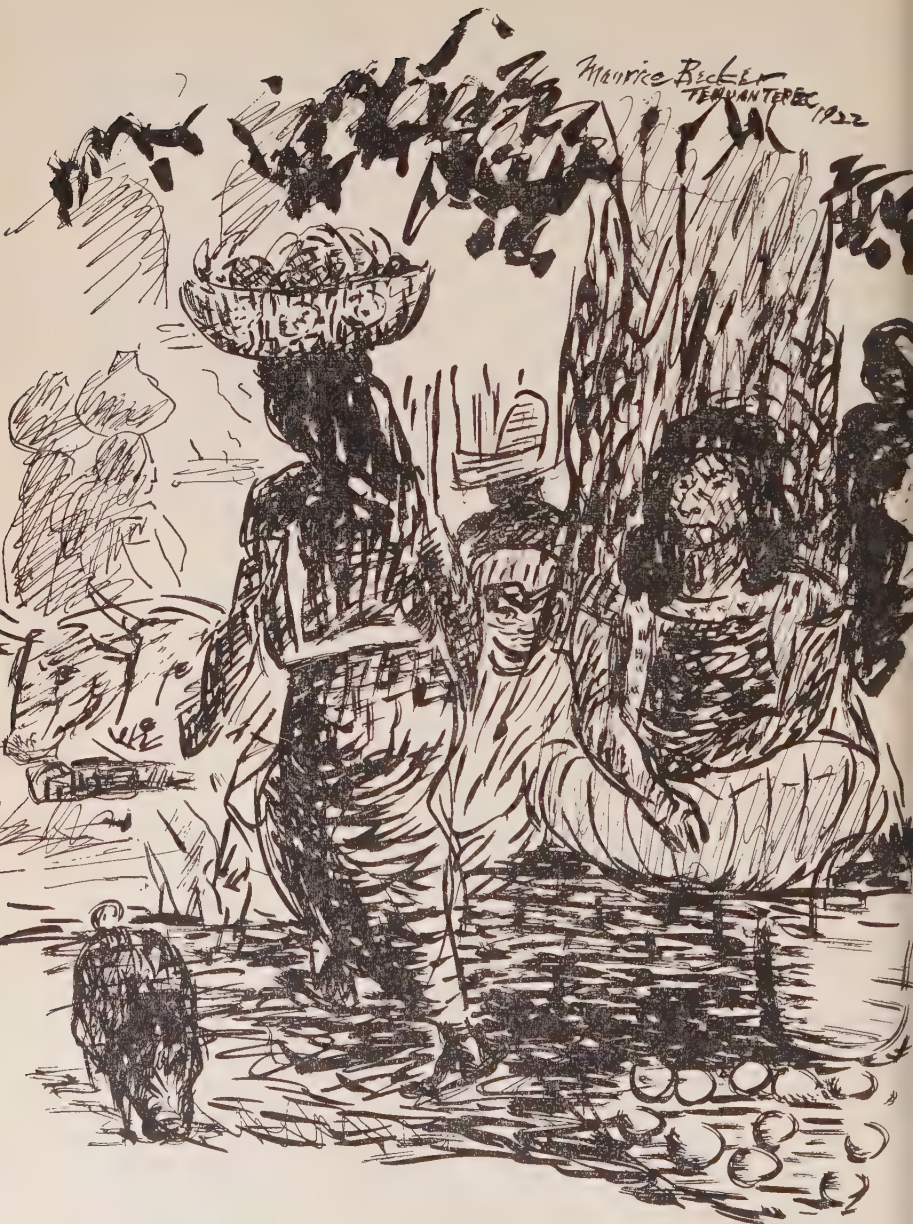
As Ixca leaves much to be desired as a national prototype, so Fuentes's novel leaves much to be desired as a hymn to Mexico and its people. The work, like its hero, remains basically an irritant and a goad to deeper probing and clearer answers.

Nevertheless, for the alert reader who wants a more intimate and searching contact with our Mexican neighbors than can be got by a brisk holiday in Acapulco or Oaxaca or Ajijic, *Where the Air Is Clear* is recommended reading despite its difficulty. It deserves the respectful attention of all American intellectuals, particularly of writers interested in problems of craftsmanship. Fuentes's outstanding talent and vigor, and his courage in tackling tough problems of content and design, are values that override his borrowings from alien literary fashion and the sometimes meaningless dazzle of his verbal trapeze-work. Commendable is his avoidance of both easy optimism and easy despair. In his attempt to penetrate the objective and subjective realities of a corrupt reactionary period in Mexican history, he stumbles often; but the overall moral bias that guides him is powerful—and heartening.



Maurice Becker





Maurice Becker

INTERVIEW WITH NICOLAS GUILLEN

IRENE PAULL

"THERE goes Nicolas!"

Whether he happens to be passing Havana University or the sugar workers' union, he is greeted by worker and intellectual alike with the same easy and spontaneous warmth. For one of the best known, best loved men in Cuba today is a poet.

Nicolas Guillen has been translated into at least a dozen languages. His reputation is world-wide from the Soviet Union where he won the Lenin Prize to all of Latin America where he is regarded with the same reverence as Pablo Neruda.

A brilliant Cuban woman, seeing a poor translation of one of his poems cried indignantly to us last week, "To translate an untranslatable poem of Nicolas Guillen is committing a crime against a great poet and against the revolution!"

A Negro worker who spent some time in the States explained in English Cuba's general feeling for him. "Nicolas does not care for money. He did not care if Batista put him in jail. He cares only for Cuba. We respect him because you can't buy him and you can't sell him. We love him because he's pure."

You will find notices of Guillen's appearances in the paper almost every night, in union halls, at the National Theatre, in mass meeings, in schools. He writes in a popular idiom and so many of his poems have been set to music and sung so often that some of his poetic expressions have come into colloquial use.

In the simple little apartment where he lives in an old section of working class Havana, we met Guillen. He is a personable man in his early fifties—warm, earthy, with quick, easy humor. His dark eyes are vibrantly alive under a thick mane of greying hair. He served us little

cups of sweet Cuban coffee and laughingly embarrassed his young grandson by trying to make him show off for us his knowledge of English. Guillen himself speaks no English.

Answering our question as to the reason for the popularity of his work in Cuba, he said:

"I try to write in clear and simple language in order to communicate with the people. I utilize the rhythms of folk music and popular song. At the same time I feel it is of utmost importance to retain the highest poetic and literary standards. I feel both can be achieved . . . clarity and simplicity combined with literary quality. To accomplish this a writer must work very hard. It is not easy to achieve both of these aims yet it must be done. That is why those poems which appear to be the simplest and most effortless cost me the most work."

We asked him what he thinks of the tendency toward obscurity in poetry that seems to be a general literary trend. He replied, "There is poetic value in obscure poetry as far as form and rhythm are concerned. But when the world cries out for eloquent voices in the cause of liberation and against imperialism how can poets devote themselves primarily to playing with words and attempting to discover delicate verbal balances? I do not feel that this is the time for balancing phrases. That doesn't mean a poet always has to write about social and political problems. He can write about life and death but in such a way that it is direct and human and comprehensible with meaning in the every day life of the people. The poet should be a witness to the great happenings of his time so he can be an inspiration to the people both present and future. He should be a figure in the struggle for human liberation from social evils."

WE noted that throughout Cuba there are numerous statues erected to the memories of martyr poets indicating that writers have played a revolutionary role in Cuba. Guillen agreed.

"At the beginning of the 19th century there was a great revolutionary poet involved in the fight against Spanish domination . . . Jose Maria Heredia. He was a romantic poet but still a revolutionary. One could say the first revolutionary poet of Cuba. Martí admired him greatly. Juan Clemente Zenea whose statue you saw on El Prado overlooking Morro Castle was also a martyr to the fight against Spain. A Negro poet of that time, Placido, was executed on the charge that he was trying to organize a Negro insurrection against Spain. Practically all important literary figures of the 19th century were involved in the fight against Spanish domination so you might say that in Cuba the revolutionary tradition is of very long standing.

"When the successful war of 1898 against Spain was interrupted by American intervention, this created in many writers and poets of the early part of the 20th century a very great feeling of frustration. But this frustration was quickly transformed into resistance to imperialism. The most outstanding poet of this period was Ruben Martinez Villena. He died in 1934. The poets of this period were involved in a never ending struggle against tyranny, first against Machado, then against Batista. They were constantly persecuted by the police and had to go into exile when they were not thrown into prison. You couldn't publish your works, of course, and poems were handwritten and passed from hand to hand. I spent time in prison as well as six years in exile."

We asked him when he became fully "socially conscious" as a poet. He replied, "As long as I can remember I have written, for instance, against the evils of racial inequality as I saw it in Cuba, but I was not fully aware of what was happening in the world and of my own role as a writer until I served as a correspondent in the Spanish Civil War. After watching the struggle of the Spanish people, I put my poetry on the side of the people forever."

"You mention racial inequality here in Cuba. Was this due to the influence of the United States?"

"Partly to that and partly to the fact that Negroes were brought here as slaves and there is a long history of slavery in Cuba. But on the other hand, racial discrimination in a country like Cuba is particularly absurd because we are a nation of mixed cultures. The Negro and white cultures have combined here to create something new—a Cuban culture. Cuban culture is an amalgamation of the cultures of both races."

IN parting we asked Guillen how he would address himself to American writers in relation to the Cuban revolution. With the same generosity of judgment as Cubans display everywhere in distinguishing between the American people and the American government, he said, "I would like to tell American writers that it is their responsibility to see the revolution in Cuba at first hand and to inform their people what is going on here. I do not blame the American people for their ignorance of Cuba. I know that it is very difficult for writers to come here. I know the propaganda being spread that people are killed on the streets and dying of hunger, etc. I know that even if writers come and see the truth it will be very hard for them to publish their work in the United States. Nevertheless, I issue an invitation to them to come and see and then spread the truth to the best of their ability. For as I said before, a writer must be a witness to his times and an inspiration to the people."

COMMUNICATIONS: on "One Week With Pay"

Dear Editors:

I have just read a story—"One Week With Pay" by Patricia Leonard—in the April *Mainstream.*

What a perfect story! Told with restraint, yet carrying a terrific impact. Rounded, complete, satisfying.

Of course it is partisan. Of course the subject material is "difficult." But isn't it about time the story of a Negro-white marriage involving a Communist Party functionary was told? And isn't this particular telling true to the last period?

Doesn't this story deepen one's sensibilities and understanding? Doesn't it create sympathy and awaken response? Doesn't it break with the prolix patterns of the current literary liberalism? There is here no soft seeking for soft words; no mysticism, no obscurantism.

Print more stories by Patricia Leonard, and let's see whether we have, as I believe we have, a top-flight writer for *Mainstream.* She has the classic simplicity and directness of Stephen Crane; the deft finality of Maupassant; and her realism is the sharp, lean, biting realism of the Gorki school.

Although her style has in it elements of O. Henry, the content is in a realm O. Henry was never able to touch. The charmingly flippant and unexpected twist, tender and warm, of O. Henry, dealing with characters of no political development, is not what is called for today. Today's world cries out for the degree of political grasp, combined with highest artistic skill, which "One Week With Pay" evidences.

Please do us all the favor of demanding more short stories from this very gifted talent.

Sincerely,

ROBERT GRAY

To the Editors:

Mainstream today represents the best continuing source of American writing to be found. I have gotten used to finding only the highest quality of fiction and non-fiction in its pages, and so I feel obligated to speak when something you publish does not measure up to that quality. The story 'One Week With Pay' by Patricia Leonard is not worthy of *Mainstream.*

It is impossible not to feel sympathy for the characters in this story—Pat, the writer, and Ray, her Negro husband—as they struggle on in spite of persecutions and ostracism, sticking to what they believe is right. But the sympathy the reader feels for them is almost in spite of, rather than because of the way this author has presented them.

The story is neither fiction nor non-fiction. It appears to be merely a mechanical recital of the trials of people who may and certainly could really exist, masquerading as fiction. It is true that each of the experiences narrated in the story could be an experience direct from life. These things happen in a society such as ours where conformity is the law of the land and freedom of opinion seldom tolerated, where those who oppose the status quo are hounded, insulted, and sometimes crucified. But a bald

statement that "this is the way things are" does not make fiction. Pat and Ray are not individuals living through all this. They never come alive. We never know anything about why they live as they do, why they are willing to endure such persecution, or even what their ideals really are. They remain a couple of wooden dummies upon whom these horrible experiences are pasted like signs on a bulletin board. For some unexplained reason they have chosen to live in this unusual way, and suffer accordingly.

Perhaps it is impossible for a person who has not endured it to fully understand the dilemma of a white woman married to a Negro man. Perhaps it is to be expected that such a woman must eventually come to feel a "hatred of white Americans" that burns like "a non-consuming flame." But such bitterness is only a stumbling block in the path of progress. In Pat's case it seems to have led her into an isolation more terrible than any society could impose from without—a self-isolation that adds mortar to the walls of ostracism and seals her in to such a point that when she and Ray find themselves in a climate where they are accepted, they remain completely aloof, apparently feeling no need for social contact, only a desire to be let alone. Pat seems to have grown such an enormous chip on her shoulder that she is practically incapable of communicating with people at all, especially with confused, ignorant white Americans. She has certainly not communicated with them in this story. If such people are merely to be hated and avoided, then the McCarthy's and the Goldwater's have won. Rather, I think they are the subject of our struggle, not to fight them, but to win them to the truth.

Perhaps this is what the author means by the closing lines: 'There was only one way to live: . . . go back home—and fight.' But if the reader doesn't know where to direct that fight he will be none the wiser after reading this story. In fact, he may come up with the notion that he must fight the whole world.

It is not inevitable that a woman like Pat must 'gag on her dream.' To make life as beautiful as it ought to be for Pat and Ray, we need to understand who it is we are going to 'go back home and fight.' Not the Americans who have swallowed the racist garbage of the American ruling class, but that class itself and the system that thrives upon the divisive nature of segregation and white chauvinism.

Sincerely,
A SOUTHERN READER

Dear Friend:

I was shocked to find in the April *Mainstream* a story one might expect to read in *Tan Confessions,* or perhaps in *Ebony* if the editor were looking for a "sensational" cover story. Had it appeared in these, or similar publications, I would have simply shrugged it off, but the appearance of *One Week With Pay* in a Marxist publication cannot be dismissed without protest.

Not only is the story lacking in understanding of the whole integration struggle, but it is completely devoid of any sensitivity toward human relationships. Politically, in a period when the entire movement for integration has been moved forward by the militant position of the Negro people, to pose in such terms the special and narrowly restricted problem of inter-racial marriage serves no worthwhile purpose. Further, to present the problem as a

marriage of Communists, and then to say "being a Communist or a fellow traveler in the land of the free was tough enough—but compared with being a Negro *or the white wife of a Negro,* (emphasis mine) being a Communist was a lead-pipe cinch," does a real disservice. What positive value can there be in such an approach when history is being made, not by white Communists who see themselves as martyrs to the cause of inter-racial marriage, but by young students sitting at lunch counters, standing at theater boxoffices and kneeling in churches?

As the white wife of a Negro, I strongly resent on both a personal and political level, the attitude of the author toward inter-racial marriage. Certainly no intelligent person, white or Negro, could survive such a marriage as the author describes. This poor struggling saviour of the working class, who is constantly fighting the Struggle and demonstrating how very militant she is, finally proves her devotion to The Cause by marrying a Negro and supporting him. For shame. Were I to have so insulted my husband (and myself) by making the shameful statements the protagonist did on the eve of my wedding, I can assure you I would still reside in single blessedness.

In addition, if Ray expects disappointment even from the white woman he has chosen as his wife, he then accuses all white people of being unable to overcome the white supremacist attitudes of capitalist society.

Back to our heroine; she couldn't stand the stares and insults directed at her when she went out with her husband. Too damn bad! Does she want to be canonized as a Saint of The Holy Mother Cause? What about the insults of discrimination in jobs, housing, schools, etc., that 20,000,000 bear every day of their lives? What about her own husband's problems as a Negro man in the United States? Or is Pat too busy being sorry for herself to concern herself with such problems?

Further, in the most chauvinistic manner, the leading lady of this sad tale insults her husband's understanding, and through him, the understanding of the Negro people, by her proposed shielding of him from racist insults. Where does she think he's been all his life?

But why go on? This story can be torn apart for another dozen pages. Perhaps it would be better all around if the author had let her heroine stay in Mexico with her problems.

This story (which I suspect is not entirely fiction) can serve only as an attack on inter-racial marriage. We who have approached our marriages as mature progressives, recognize that surely we have special problems, but that in sharing our experiences as men and women, husbands and wives, and most importantly as comrades with a Marxist outlook, we can build together toward happiness and freedom for all people. We will solve our problems as part of the bigger struggle, but in a humble way, knowing that our special situation can only give us greater understanding and does not earn us any medals for bravery. Rather, it is we who owe so much to those nameless heroes and heroines of the South, and to those named victims, white and Negro who go to jail for us . . . the sit-in students, Henry Winston, Carl Braden, Frank Wilkinson and all who work for a better world.

Sincerely,

B. J.

books in review

Interim Book

THE GRAND PARADE by Julian Mayfield, the Vanguard Press, New York $4.95.

THIS IS the third in a series of books by Julian Mayfield which might be described as a study in the dishonorable motives of men, black and white together, in an America which hardly merits saving or warrants better saviors than it gets in any case. Gainesboro is a more or less typical American city near enough to the South to reflect its bigotry and close enough to the North to reflect *its* particular bigotry. The characters that parade through the town in search of money, or sex, or status or kicks—or money once again—are to be distinguished not by any principle that they serve but by their self-interest to which they are completely bound and which, in any case, regardless of appearances or pretensions, is the only motivating force in their lives. In fact, it is the secret of their lives; it is what makes them move, and if their actions sometimes turn out to be decent, this is a coincidence— a kind of irony.

There is no hero in this book. Ever since it dawned on believing mankind that the bits of bone and slivers of wood peddled across the ages as coming direct from Jesus and down from Calvary were not really genuine, skepticism about the lofty motives of men serving a cause has eaten around the edges of Everyman's belief. The hero becomes rogue, becomes rascal, becomes lone brooding soul who fiddle-faddles while the world burns. No saint is genuine, no relics are real. Only the goad in one's flesh is real; only one's stomach is real, only one's gonads, and everything else is sham, falseface, delusion.

This is not to say that Mayfield is a cynic. He is anything but that. He is a Benjamin thrown into the pit by his brothers who strip him of his many-colored coat; and therefore love and trust have become even more dangerous than hatred and suspicion. And yet the world goes on, it moves, as old Galileo stubbornly muttered under his breath

(but not so quietly that the ages did not hear—or insisted that they heard); and one must take that fact into consideration. Mayfield hates oppression, hypocrisy, failure, black-or-white middle-class cant — but he doesn't believe that many other people hate them as much as he does; or that if they seem to, sooner or later events will dissolve their pretensions into the bitter acid of reality and reduce everything to the inbuilt treachery of their flesh or their class. Or—even if they are pure-souled —that, too, offers no hope; for in this world the pure-souled are soon crushed. They are reduced to impotence. They become sad jokes, like men in goat skins walking down Broadway.

Gainesboro is a city run by the usual cabal of respectable crooks, four-flushers, demagogues, and descendants of horse thieves. Douglas Taylor, Mayor of Gainesboro, a rich man from a rich family, has decided to run for U.S. Senate. He has the backing of the most powerful political boss, among other positive factors. But evidence is placed into his hands by an ambitious newspaper reporter whose ambition coincided with civic virtue for the moment, that his best friend, the man most responsible for launching his political career, had been involved in a huge plundering of the city's finances some years ago; and what should he do now? He decides to do the honest thing of course —the thing that will also promote his candidacy. But this action provokes a reaction in one of the partners of Angus Cleveland, who is the culprit; the reaction involves the whole race question in Gainesboro, which emerges now, part plot, part destiny, and sets into motion all the rotten elements of the city which conspire to destroy Douglas Taylor, whose fate becomes bound up with the struggle to integrate one of Gainesboro's Jim Crow schools. Mayfield seems to be saying that even when one's personal motives coincide with objective positive demands, this is still not enough to save one from the inevitable irony built into the very structure of American life which is an automatic deluding and frustrating force.

I SAID before there was no hero in this book. There is, however, a beaten hero: he is Lonnie Banks, an ex-Communist whose brother, Randolph, is a big wheel in Negro political circles. Lonnie Banks, disillusioned by the Khrushchev report at the 20th Congress in Moscow, is expelled from the Communist Party in New York because he espoused a position advocating the Americanization of the Communist Party. Though expelled, Lonnie does not become a renegade. Instead, true to a certain individual sense of honor, he resists the blandishments of a Federal agent to become an informer, even though great pressure is put on him, including pressure from his brother who is red-baited dangerously because of his relationship to Lonnie. There seems to be absolutely no reason why he stubbornly persists in refusing to turn on his former friends, and when he's challenged to explain this strange behavior this is what he says:

Let me try to explain . . . It's not just that I can't get a cup of coffee in most of the restaurants of this town, that I can't get a job for which I'm qualified, and that I can only live in certain areas. Maybe that'll change one day. But even if things were perfect, I wouldn't care to be a patriot and swear my loyalty to a government—any government. I am opposed to the Bureau, and am opposed to the Senators on that

yalty committee, and I will always
e opposed to them. It's something
ithin me, don't you see, to always have
say no when the whole world cries
s! So it's not just that I'm Lonnie
anks, third-class citizen, who would
el foolish pledging my allegiance to
ybody. It's that I am Lonnie Banks,
ssentially a free man! Once I was on
ne Communist bandwagon, but that's
ver, and there'll be no more band-
agons for me. If the world is on its
ay to hell, I suppose I must go, too,
ut I'll go alone, protesting all the way.

This sense of personal honor, of
ourse, is like a candle shining in a very
ark world. But, as a credo, political or
ist personal, it is as perishable as let-
ire in the hot sun. It skirts the edges
f existentialism—which is only a tem-
orary breathing place between pursuits.
he world has shriveled much too small
or any secure hiding place, even un-
erground beneath tons of concrete
unkers. A Negro in any case cannot
ide. To white oppressors he may be
ne invisible man—but only as a hu-
an being; as a Negro—as the object
f oppression and exploitation—he is
xtremely visible.

The characters who pass before the
eader's eyes—and that is how Mayfield
resents them: as images in a parade
—are sharply drawn, but never too
eeply; they speak often in a true racy
liom of our times and seldom does a
ord fall inexactly on the ear. But
he Grand Parade is an interim book;
is a bridge that has one abutment on
is known side of the river—but it's
spended in mid-air. Where will it
nd, on what side, on what rock or
ill it drop into the river? When May-
eld knows, we will all know: for we
e all involved in that structure of
ope.

PHILLIP BONOSKY

Revealing

The Health Hucksters, by Ralph Lee Smith. The Cornwall Press, Inc., Cornwall, N. Y. $3.95.

It's Cheaper to Die, by William Michelfelder. George Braziller, Inc., N. Y., N. Y. $3.50.

The Health Hucksters and *It's Cheaper to Die* are two more books to add to the growing list of intelligent attempts to deal with aspects of the health problems of Americans. These books document different aspects of the health scene; *The Health Hucksters* is described as "the shocking story of how food and drug advertising exploits your health" —and it tells the story very well. It deals with the extravagant claims made in advertising regarding the efficacy of vitamins and mineral supplements, refutes these claims, and cites in detail the problems that the Food and Drug Administration has in trying to curtail or correct such false advertising. The loopholes in the law and the time involved in legal action render such attempts at regulation virtually meaningless. In the same way specific case after case is recorded regarding dentrifices, cold remedies, reducing pills, arthritis pills, etc. In an excellent chapter entitled "Putting the Heat on Your Doctor—Ethical Drugs," Mr. Smith deals with prescription drugs and their manufacturers, and the campaign waged to assure that doctors prescribe by brand name. The results of effective advertising to 'the profession' are exorbitant profits to the manufacturer, excessive cost to the patient as well as potential harm to the patient in the case of drugs which are so 'promising' that they are rushed to the market before adequate clinical trials have been made, or drugs

whose dangerous side effects are known, but so soft pedaled that the prescribing physician hears nothing of them.

Another revealing section deals with cigarette advertising; part of the concluding paragraph speaks volumes: "The cigarette companies are apparently now taking a longer range view and heavy emphasis is being placed on encouraging younger persons to smoke. . . . [They] were caught off-guard by the cancer scare in 1953, and would like to establish a strong group of confirmed customers in the rising generation to provide a solid foundation for future growth."

The author's proposals for a remedy are presented in the final chapter: "Needed: A Consumer's Bill of Rights." His suggestions are for strengthening, enlarging, and increasing the efficiency of the federal regulatory agencies. He especially points out that poorly paid young lawyers in the legal department of the Federal Trade Commission can hardly compete with the experienced, high priced legal staffs that the defending companies retain, so that improvement of the law must be accompanied by increasing the incentives for those called upon to enforce it.

It's Cheaper to Die, as the title implies, documents what many if not most, Americans have already learned from experience: the cost of medical care—doctors, hospitals, nurses, drugs—has skyrocketed. Attempts to check these costs by insurance have been palliative, more or less so depending upon the particular insurance policy involved. For instance, Mr. Michelfelder cites the case of a surgeon who charged a father of a non-insured family $200 for a gall bladder operation on his wife, and one year later, after the father had joined Blue Shield, charged $375 for an appendectomy on his son—of which Blue Shield paid $150. Situations such as these have led many to conclude that no insurance is better than this kind and illustrate why the 'mushrooming' of health insurance coverage has not resulted in satisfied consumers. Mr. Michelfelder also analyzes the fee system and the prevalence of fee-splitting, and discusses the ethical drug industry. He has an excellent chapter analyzing the problems facing the hospitals, Blue Cross, and the hospitalized patient.

As to what should be done, Mr. Michelfelder seems to feel that since a large part of the blame for the present impossible situation lies with organized medicine, a change in its attitude (or a breaking away from the AMA 'leadership' by substantial numbers of doctors —a developing trend, he believes) can do a great deal to help by sponsoring group practice financed by pre-payment insurance. He cites the success of plans such as The Health Insurance Plan of Greater New York, and the Kaiser Permanent Group on the West Coast as models where comprehensive care is rendered and costs are reasonable. These independent physicians could also check the unethical practises of ethical (prescription) drug manufacturers by refusing ads for professional journals and refusing to receive 'detail' men (salesmen). They could even agree to advocate, sponsor, and agitate for the building of the 20 new medical schools needed to graduate the 3,100 more physicians per year that will be needed by 1975 if we are to maintain just the status quo.

But what is the deeper significance of the fact that Americans spend 500 million unnecessary dollars per year on vitamins? That they flock to Hoxie cancer clinics and really seem to believe

that this latest drug may be at last the one which will help them lose weight. We *know* from experience that we can't believe the ad man; even our children know from experience that Maypo is not *the* best tasting cereal to all, that 'Keds' sneakers do not make them run faster so that they win the race or the game. Why are we gullible?

The underlying basis for these phenomena is our tremendous insecurity. We do not know where the real truth lies, nor where to find it. We learn that the AMA Council on Food and Nutrition says that supplemental vitamins are unnecessary for the average person in average good health. We make up our minds to ignore the ads and take the advice of experts. And then we read that the AMA denies there is a physician shortage. Our own eyes tell as differently; is the AMA also wrong about the vitamins?

We are told that our foods are treated chemically to retard spoilage, for example—and they are. We are told that this allows us to have a more varied diet, and to eat products picked and preserved at the peak of ripeness, that hence our diet is healthier than ever and very unlikely to be deficient in any essential food ingredients and this makes sense; some of us have read *The Geography of Hunger* and remember the deficiency syndromes of 'hidden hungers.' But then we read *The Poisons in Your Food,* and learn that these additives-preservatives, bleachers, flavoring, emulsifiers, etc., are, or may be poisons, undermining our health, causing or leaving us susceptible to cancer. We know that food processing is a big business, that big business is after big profits, and we can believe that it doesn't care too much *what* goes into the products so long as they sell. We remember *The Jungle.* And we become afraid to eat; so we smoke.

We are told that American medicine leads the world in scientific achievements. We are inclined to believe this when we read of successful heart operations on 'blue' babies who would have been doomed a few years ago, or when we read that Salk vaccine has virtually licked polio. But then we learn that the Blue Cross premium is going up again; we visit a hospitalized friend and find him in the corridor of an overcrowded hospital, and learn that his medicine is not given on schedule, and occasionally omitted, or that his hospital stay is being prolonged because the pre-discharge X-ray was forgotten. We read that doctors have performed unnecessary surgery on insured patients, and we learn that fee-splitting is common. We find that groups of doctors gang up to refuse hospital privileges to other physicians whose only fault is that they belong to HIP. We note that different doctors disagree in their treatment of illness—a second physician will even state to a patient that the management to date by the first physician has been completely wrong. We go to our physician for a check-up, to be sure we aren't developing cancer or heart disease as the American Cancer Society and the American Heart Association advise us—and somehow feel, rightly so, that the five minute examination we usually get falls short of what is required.

So it all adds up to contradiction upon contradiction; confusion twice confounded. Which book shall we believe? Which doctor is right? What insurance is best? What diet is right?

The appearance of books such as these is important. In effect, they tell the people that they are being exploited

and victimized by capitalism in ways more indirect than the more obvious on-the-job or, out-of-a-job context. They call on the people to do something about it, specifically in the case of *The Health Hucksters,* to demand that the federal government intervene on behalf of the consumer. In the case of *It's Cheaper to Die,* the people are being told that their health is *their* business, not the private preserve of the physician, and that *they* must see to it that physicians render the kind and amount of medical care needed to all who need it. It is certainly worth while to fight for these goals; Marxists must lead these fights. But they must also fight for deeper understanding of the necessity for changing the entire underlying system of production for profit if the ultimate solution is to be achieved.

MARK DEAN, M.D.

One of the Giants

KEPLER, a biography by Max Caspar. Translated and edited by C. Doris Hellman. Abelard-Schuman. New York, 1960. 401 pp. $7.50.

ABOUT eighty years ago in *Dialectics of Nature* Engels described the Renaissance as "a time which called for giants and produced giants." Among Renaissance astronomers he hailed Copernicus, Newton and Kepler, describing Kepler as the man who "discovered the laws of planetary movement." (A few pages later he pays tribute to Galileo also.)

It is a praiseworthy thing that biographies are being written nowadays describing in factual detail the lives and struggles of these men, and showing not only their versatility, for which they are justly famous, but also their active participation in the critical battles of their time against dogma and bigotry. Among such books we can name *Sun, Stand Thou Still* by Angus Armitage (now a paperback under the title *The World of Copernicus*), which tells the story of the great Polish scientist and intellectual rebel, founder of modern astronomy. Other such biographies of a high order are being written, faithful to the times they describe.

No one can read *Kepler* without being moved by its heroism and its tragedies, and at the same time inspired by the man's indomitable passion for study and tireless determination to write, to publish, to maintain his views against all obstacles.

Kepler lived through the Reformation, the Counter-Reformation, and the Thirty Years' War, and never shirked controversy or avoided responsibility. He came out of poverty, and fought poverty all his life long. He showed his Renaissance manysidedness by his remarkable achievements in optics, in mathematics, in physics, and in astronomy, with sidelights on aesthetics and the arts. As quoted by Caspar, Kepler also dreamed of a world at peace: "that all people in the whole globe should live together in one city, and, already in this world far from every strife, have pleasure in one another, as we hope of the future."

KEPLER followed Copernicus, and was a contemporary of Galileo, with whom he corresponded. Kepler was twenty-eight when Copernicus died, and devoted himself to buttressing the Copernicus theory (that the earth revolves around the sun) as against the Ptolemaic theory (that the sun goes

round the earth). He is mainly famous in astronomy for his three planetary laws elaboraitng and establishing the Copernican theory, for founding what is known as celestial mechanics, and for discovering in 1604 what is called the "third supernova" (explosively bright super-star).

The human aspect of this biography is for many readers doubtless its most appealing quality. The relationship of Kepler to his first and second wives, his struggles to care for his children, his striving to pay the rent and buy food, his fight to save his mother from burning when she was tried as a witch, his refusal to back down on the religious problem of the Communion concerning which he disagreed with both Jesuits and Lutherans—all these problems and difficulties, an ever-present part of his life, go along in the background of his scientific work. Yet Kepler is constantly enthusiastic in his theoretical study: the beauty of the planetary pageantry, as he conceives it, "fills me (he says) with unbelievable rapture." And Caspar, describing the difficulties of plowing through Kepler's abstruse writings, comments: "Yet it is worth the trouble. The power of the logic which impels him forward is captivating, the ability with which he masters every difficulty is admirable, the rich flashes of ideas which stream in on him are pleasing, every new outlook which he opens up is enjoyable."

ONE of the intriguing sides of this history is the quantity of letters and diaries which managed to survive and enable the biographer to understand the man Kepler. Letters are extant between Kepler and other scientists all over Europe, including England. In his diaries Kepler observes and analyzes his own character, and evaluates himself with remarkable objectivity. At one point he notes his own tendency to speculate too much, to talk too quickly before thinking a problem through; at another time he notes: "I like to be on the side of the majority"; but nevertheless, at still another time, he declares, to both Catholic and Protestant, "I have not learned to play the hypocrite."

However, the book as a whole, written by one historian of astronomy and translated by another, gives its main and most detailed emphasis to Kepler's scientific work, and will probably appeal more to scholars than lay readers. It is supplied with an index and footnotes, and with an extensive bibliography.

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