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Translations from Baudelaire

DAVID JACKSON
The English Gardens (a story)

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London Letter

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Conversations in Warsaw

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MARCH-APRIL 1961 VOLUME XXVIII, NUMBER 2

CONTENTS

CHARACTERS IN FICTION, Mary McCarthy 171

TRANSLATIONS FROM BAUDELAIRE, Robert Lowell 192

THE ENGLISH GARDENS, David Jackson 201

DIGGING IT OUT (verse),John Hollander 245

LONDON LETTER, Dwight Macdonald 248

CONVERSATIONS IN WARSAW, Daniel Bell 260

BOOKS

COMING-OF-AGE, Richard Chase 280

THE WESTERN THEME: EXPLOITERS AND EXPLORERS, Robert B. Heilman 286

FICTION CHRONICLES, Irving Howe 297

Theodore Solotaroff 301

THE TRIUMPH AND FAILURE OF D. H. LAWRENCE, Edzia Weisberg 309

AN IMPOSSIBLE DOCTRINE, Francis Golffing 314

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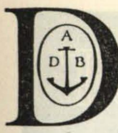

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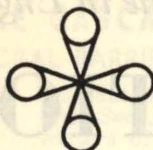

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Mary McCarthy

CHARACTERS IN FICTION

In Belgrade, the other day, an interviewer asked me what book I thought best represented the modern American woman. All I could think of to answer was: *Madame Bovary.* It occurred to me afterwards that I might have named *Main Street* or Henry James's *Portrait of a Lady.* What else? I tried to remember women in American books. Hester Prynne, Daisy Miller, Scott Fitzgerald's flappers and Daisy in *The Great Gatsby,* Temple Drake in *Sanctuary,* Dos Passos' career women, Ma Joad in *The Grapes of Wrath.* But since then? It was like leafing through a photograph album and coming, midway, on a sheaf of black, blank pages. Was it possible that for twenty-five years no American woman had had her likeness taken? "Submit a clear recent photo," as they say in job applications. But there was none, strange as it seemed considering the dominant role women are supposed to play in American life.

So I tried the experiment with men. The result was almost the same. Captain Ahab, Christopher Newman in *The American,* Caspar Goodwood, Adam Verver, the wicked Gilbert Osmond, Babbitt, Elmer Gantry, Gatsby, Mac and Charley Anderson in Dos Passos, Jason in *The Sound and the Fury,* Colonel Sutphen in *Absalom, Absalom,* Flem and Mink Snopes, Studs Lonigan. After that, nothing, no one, except the Catholic priests of J. F. Powers, the bugler Prewitt in *From Here to Eternity,* and Henderson in *Henderson the Rain King.*

Someone might see this as a proof of the conformity of modern American life; there are no people any more, it might be

claimed—only human vectors with acceleration and force. But in my experience this is simply not true. There are more people than ever before, at least in the sense of mutations in our national botany, and this is probably due to mobility—cross-fertilization. Take as an example a gangster who was in the slot-machine racket, decided to go straight and became a laundromat king, sent his daughter to Bennington, where she married a poet-in-residence or a professor of modern linguistic philosophy. There are three characters already sketched out in that sentence and all of them brand-new: the father, the daughter, and the son-in-law. Imagine what one of the old writers might have made of the wedding and the reception afterwards at "21." The laundromat king or his equivalent is easy to meet in America; there are hundreds of him. Try teaching in a progressive college and interviewing the students' parents. And do not pretend that the laundromat king has no "inner life"; he is probably a Sunday painter, who has studied with Hans Hofman in Provincetown. What, for that matter, was the inner life of Monsieur Homais in *Madame Bovary*? People speak of the lack of tradition or of manners as having a bad effect on the American novel, but the self-made man is a far richer figure, from the novelist's point of view, than the man of inherited wealth, who is likely to be a mannered shadow.

The relation between parents and children (Turgenev's great theme) has never been so curious as in America now, where primitivism heads into decadence before it has time to turn around. America is full of Bazarovs but only Turgenev has described them. Nobody, so far as I know, has described an "action" painter, yet nearly everyone has met one. Nobody has done justice to the psychoanalyst, yet nearly everyone has gone to one. And what a wealth of material there is in that virgin field, what variety: the orthodox Freudian, the Horneyite, the Reichian, the Sullivanite ("inter-personal relations"), all the different kinds of revisionists, the lay analyst, the specialist in group analysis, the psychiatric social worker. Social workers

themselves have become one of the major forces in American life, the real and absolute administrators of the lives of the poor, yet no one since Sinclair Lewis and Dos Passos has dared write of them, unless you count the young author, John Updike, in *The Poorhouse Fair,* who presents a single specimen and lays the story in the future. Imagine what Dickens would have done with this new army of Beadles and the Mrs. Pardiggles behind them or what he would have done with the modern architect as Pecksniff, with the cant formula "Less is more." No serious writer since Dos Passos, so far as I know, has had a go at the government official, and the government official has not only multiplied but changed (like the social worker) since Dos Passos' time, producing many sub-varieties. And what about the Foundation executive? Or the "behavioral scientist"? The fact is that the very forces and institutions that are the agents and promoters of conformity in America—bureaucracies public and private and the regimented "schools" and systems of healing and artistic creation—are themselves, through splits and cellular irritation, propagating an array of social types conforming to no previous standard, though when we look for names for them we are driven back, *faute de mieux,* on the old names: Pecksniff, Mrs. Gamp, Bazarov, Mrs. Pardiggle, Babbitt. When Peter Viereck, in a book of non-fiction, wanted to isolate a new kind of conformist intellectual he could think of nothing better to call him than "Babbitt Junior." It is as though a whole "culture" of plants and organisms had sprung into being and there were no scientists or latter-day Adams to name them.

This naming is very important, yet only two names in recent fiction have "stuck": Gulley Jimson (Joyce Cary) and Lucky Jim (Kingsley Amis). Some interest in character is still shown by writers in England, perhaps because it is an island and hence more conscious of itself. But even in England the great national portrait gallery that constituted the English novel is short of new acquisitions. The sense of character began to fade with D. H. Lawrence. After *Sons and Lovers,* we do not remem-

ber figures in Lawrence's books, except for a few short malicious sketches. There are hardly any people in Virginia Woolf (Mr. Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse* stands out) or in Forster or Elizabeth Bowen or Henry Green; they exist in Ivy Compton-Burnett but tend to blur together like her titles. Waugh has people, and so had Joyce Cary. You find them in the short stories of V. S. Pritchett and in the satires of Angus Wilson. But the last great creator of character in the English novel was Joyce. It is the same on the Continent. After Proust, a veil is drawn. You can speak of someone as a "regular Madame Verdurin" or a "Charlus," but from Gide, Sartre, Camus, no names emerge; the register is closed.

The meaning of this seems plain. The novel and the short story have lost interest in the social. Since the social has certainly not lost interest in itself (look at the popularity of such strange mirror-books as *The Lonely Crowd, The Organization Man, The Exurbanites, The Status Seekers*), what has happened must have occurred inside the novel and the short story—a technical or even technological crisis. An impasse has been reached within the art of fiction as a result of progress and experiment. You find a similar impasse in painting, where the portrait can no longer be painted and not because the artists do not know how to draw or get a likeness; they do. But they can no longer see a likeness as a work of art. In one sense, it is ridiculous to speak of progress in the arts (as though modern art were "better" than Rembrandt or Titian); in another sense, there *is* progress, an internal dynamic such as one finds in the processes of industry or in the biological process of aging. The arts have aged too, and it is impossible for them to "go back," just as it is impossible to recapture the youth or reinstitute a handicraft economy, like the one Ruskin dreamed of. These things are beyond our control and independent of our will. I, for instance, would like, more than anything else, to write like Tolstoy; I imagine that I still see something resembling the world Tolstoy saw. But my pen or my typewriter simply balks; it "sees" differently from me

and records what to me, as a person, are distortions and angularities. Anyone who has read my work will be at a loss to find any connection with Tolstoy; to Tolstoy himself both I and my work would be anathema. I myself might reform, but my work never could; it could never "go straight," even if I were much more gifted than I am. Most novelists today, I suspect, would like to "go straight"; we are conscious of being twisted when we write. This is the self-consciousness, the squirming, of the form we work in; we are stuck in the phylogenesis of the novel.

The fictional experiments of the twentieth century went in two directions: sensibility and sensation. To speak very broadly, the experiments in the recording of sensibility were made in England (Virginia Woolf, Katherine Mansfield, Dorothy Richardson, Elizabeth Bowen, Forster), and America was the laboratory of sensation (Hemingway and his imitators, Dos Passos, Farrell). The novel of sensibility was feminine, and the novel of sensation was masculine. In Paris, there was a certain meeting and merging: Gertrude Stein (a robust recorder of the data of sensibility) influenced and encouraged Hemingway; Joyce, who experimented in both directions, influenced nearly everyone. The sensibility tendency today is found chiefly in such minor English writers as Henry Green and William Sansom; in America, it is represented by Katharine Anne Porter, Eudora Welty, Jean Stafford, and Carson McCullers. The masculine novel of sensation, more admired always in Europe than at home, seems to have arrived at the Beat Generation, via Caldwell, Dashiell Hammett, James M. Cain, Raymond Chandler; its attraction toward violence propelled it naturally toward the crime story. The effect of these two tendencies on the subject matter of the novel was identical. Sensation and sensibility are the poles of each other, and both have the effect of abolishing the social. Sensibility, like violent action, annihilates the sense of character.

Beginning with our own. In violence, we forget who we are, just as we forget who we are when engaged in sheer perception. Immersed in a picture, an effect of light, or a landscape,

we forget ourselves; we are "taken out of ourselves"; in the same way, we forget ourselves in the dentist's chair. We are not conscious of our personality. In sensation, we are all more or less alike. Heat, cold, hunger, thirst, pain are experienced by man, not men. And sensibility is only a refinement of sensation; the sense of blue or green made on our retina is more finely discriminated in an art critic than it is in the average man or the color-blind person, but no useful division, humanly speaking, could be made between those, say, who saw turquoise as green and those who saw it as blue. The retina is not the seat of character. Nor are the sexual organs, even though they differ from person to person. Making love, we are all more alike than we are when we are talking or acting. In the climax of the sexual act, moreover, we forget ourselves; that is commonly felt to be one of its recommendations. Sex annihilates identity, and the space given to sex in contemporary novels is an avowal of the absence of character. There are no "people" in *Lady Chatterley's Lover,* unless possibly the husband, who is impotent. To cite the laundromat king again, the moment of orgasm would not be the best moment for the novelist to seize upon to show his salient traits; on the other hand, to show him in an orgone box (i.e., in the frame of an idea) would be a splendid notion. Similarly, the perambulating sensibility of Mrs. Dalloway, her quivering film of perception, cannot fix for us Mrs. Dalloway as a person; she remains a palpitant organ, like the heroine of a pornographic novel. The character I remember best from Virginia Woolf is Mr. Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse,* a man who lacks the fine perceptions of the others; i.e., from the point of view of sensibility he is impotent, without erectile aesthetic tissue.

Sensation and sensibility are at their height in the child; its thin, tender membrane of perception is constantly being stabbed by objects, words, and events that it does not understand. In lieu of understanding, the child "notices." Think of the first sections of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and of

Aunt Dante's hairbrushes (why was she called Dante?) and the quarrel about Parnell (who was Parnell?) at the Christmas dinner table. Or the beginning of *Dr. Zhivago,* where the child Yury, taken to his mother's funeral, looks out the window at the cabbages, wrinkled and blue with cold, in the winter fields. Yury, being a child, cannot comprehend the important event that has happened to him (death), but his eye takes in the shivering cabbages. Everyone experiences something like this in moments of intense grief or public solemnity, such as funerals; feelings, distracted from their real causes, attach themselves arbitrarily to sights, smells and sounds. But a child passes a good part of his life in this attentive state of detachment.

Now two characteristics of the child are that he cannot act (to any purpose) and he cannot talk (expressively); hence he is outside, dissociated. And it is just this state, of the dissociated outsider, that is at the center of modern literature of sensibility and sensation alike. Camus's *The Stranger* or *The Outsider* begins with the hero's going to his mother's death bed and being unable to summon up the appropriate emotions or phrases.

It is modern but it is not new. The inability to say the appropriate thing or to feel the appropriate thing, combined with a horrible faculty of *noticing,* is an almost clinical trait in the character of Julien Sorel and in most of the Stendhalian heroes. Tolstoy was a master of the tragi-comedy of inappropriate feelings, gestures, and sensations. Take the first chapter of *Anna Karenina,* where Stepan Oblonsky, who has been unfaithful to his wife with the French governess, finds a foolish smile spreading over his features when she taxes him with it—a *smile* of all things. He cannot forgive himself that awful, inadvertent smile (he ascribes it to a "reflex"), which causes her to shut herself up in her room and declare that all is over. Vronsky's toothache, near the end of *Anna Karenina,* as it were dunce-caps the climax; it is the distracted intrusion of the commonplace into a drama of tragic passion. Anna has killed

herself, and Vronsky is on the train, going off to the Serbo-Turkish war as an "heroic volunteer" with a squadron equipped at his own expense; his face is drawn with suffering—and with the ache in his big tooth, which makes it almost impossible for him to speak. But "all at once a different pain, not an ache but an inner trouble, that set his whole being in anguish, made him for an instant forget his toothache." He has "suddenly remembered *her,*" as he had last seen her mangled body exposed on a table in the railway shed. And he ceases to feel his toothache and begins to sob. At every station the train is seen off by patriotic society ladies with nosegays for the heroic volunteers, and these flowers, like the toothache, are ridiculous and painful—beside the point.

The point, however, is there, inescapably so (the corpse in the railway shed is more cruelly alive than the toothache), and this is the difference between Tolstoy (Stendhal too) and the fragmented impressionism of twentieth-century literature, where the real world is broken up into disparate painterly images out of focus and therefore hypnotic and trance-like. The world of twentieth-century sensibility, in contrast to that of Tolstoy, is a world in slow motion, a world which, however happy it may seem, is a world of paralyzed grief, in which little irrelevant things, things that do not belong, are noticed or registered on the film of consciousness, exactly as they are at a funeral service or by a bored child in church.

In the modern novel of sensibility the shimmer of consciousness occupies the whole field of vision. Happenings are broken down into tiny discrete sensory impressions, recalling pointillism or the treatment of light in Monet. The novel of sensation is less refined and seemingly more "factual": "It was hot"; "'Give me a drink,' I said." But these too are the *disjecta membra* of consciousness passing across a primitive perceptual screen. A child cannot talk, and the modern novel of sensation, like that of sensibility, is almost mute; these rolls of film are silent, with occasional terse flashes of dialogue, like subtitles.

The only form of action open to a child is to break something or strike someone, its mother or another child; it cannot cause things to happen in the world. This is precisely the situation of the hero of the novel of sensation; violence becomes a substitute for action. In the novel of sensibility, nothing happens; as people complain, there is no plot.

Once these discoveries had been made, however, in the recording of the perceptual field (i.e., of pure subjectivity), the novel could not ignore them; there was no turning back to the objectivity of Tolstoy or the rational demonstrations of Proust. The "objective" novel of Sarraute, Robbe-Grillet, and Butor is simply a factual treatment of the data of consciousness, which are presented like clues in a detective story to the events that the reader guesses are taking place. The very notion of character is ruled out. One way, however, remains open to the novelist who is interested in character (which means in human society)—a curious back door. That is the entry found by Joyce in *Ulysses,* where by a humorous stratagem character is shown, as it were, inside out, from behind the screen of consciousness. The interior monologue every human being conducts with himself, sotto voce, is used to create a dramatic portrait. There is no question but that Mr. Bloom and Molly are characters, quite as much as the characters of Dickens or any of the old novelists—not mere bundles of vagrant sensory impressions but articulated wholes. Their soliloquies are really half of a dialogue—a continuous argument with society, whose answers or objections can be inferred. Mr. Bloom and Molly are pathetically social, gregarious, worldly, and lonely: misunderstood. This sense of being the victim of a misunderstanding dominates *Finnegans Wake,* where the hero is Everybody—the race itself. Nothing could be more vocal than these books of Joyce: talk, talk, talk. *Finnegans Wake* is a real babel of voices, from the past, from literature, from the house next door and the street; even the river Liffey chatters. We would know Mr. Bloom anywhere by his voice, the inmost Mr. Bloom; the same with Molly. Joyce was

a master mimic of the voice of conscience, and Mr. Bloom and Molly are genuine imitations. This blind artist was the great ventriloquist of the novel. A sustained power of mimicry is the secret of all creators of character; Joyce had it while Virginia Woolf, say, did not. That is why Joyce was able to give shape and body—in short, singularity, definition—to the senseless data of consciousness.

The notion that life is senseless, a tale told by an idiot—the under-theme of twentieth-century literature—is affirmed again by Faulkner in *The Sound and the Fury.* Yet here, as in *Ulysses,* characters appear from the mists of their own reveries and sensations: the idiot Benjy, Jason, Dilsey the Negro cook. And a plot, even, is indicated for the reader to piece together from clues dropped here and there: the story of Caddy and the castration of Benjy and Quentin's suicide. The materialization of plot and character prove that there *is* being, after all, beyond the arbitrary flux of existence. Following Joyce and Faulkner, the imitation-from-within became almost standard practice for writers who were impatient with the fragmented impressionist novel and who had assimilated nonetheless some of its techniques. To use the technique of impressionism to create something quite different—a character study—seems the manifest intention of Joyce Cary in *The Horse's Mouth,* where the author, as it were, impersonates the eye of Gulley Jimson, an old reprobate painter down on his luck; the dancing, broken surface is only a means, like the muttering of an inner dialogue, to show the man in action, incessantly painting in his mind's eye as he boozily peregrinates the docks and streets. Something very similar is John Updike's *the Poorhouse Fair,* which is seen through the resentful hyperopic eye of an old man sitting on the porch of a county poorhouse. The sign of this kind of writing, the mark of its affiliation with the pure impressionist or stream-of-consciousness novel, is that when you start the book you do not know where you are. It takes you quite a few pages to get your bearings, just as if you were bumping along inside a sack

in some fairy story; then you awake to the fact that the consciousness you have been thrust into is named Benjy and is feeble-minded or is a criminal old painter with a passion for William Blake's poetry or a charity patient whose eyesight, owing to the failing muscles of old age, bends and distorts everything in the immediate foreground and can only focus clearly on what is far off. Once you know where you are, you can relax and study your surroundings, though you must watch out for sudden, disorienting jolts and jerks—an indication that the character is in movement, colliding or interacting with objective reality.

The reader, here, as in *Ulysses,* is restricted to a narrow field of vision or to several narrow fields in succession. Now something comparable happens in recent books that, on the surface, seem to owe very little to the stream-of-consciousness tradition and to take no interest in the mechanics of perception or the field of vision as such. I mean such books as *Augie March, Henderson the Rain King, The Catcher in the Rye, Lolita,* and two of my own novels, *The Groves of Academe* and *A Charmed Life.* These books are impersonations, ventriloquial acts; the author, like some prankster on the telephone, is speaking in an assumed voice—high or deep, hollow or falsetto, but in any case not his own. He is imitating the voice of Augie or of Holden Caulfield and the book is written in Augie's or Holden's "style." The style is the man (or the boy), and the author, pretending to be Augie or Holden or Humbert Humbert, remains "in character" throughout the book, unless he shifts to another style, that is, to another character. These books, in short, are dramatic monologues or series of dramatic monologues. The reader, tuned in, is left in no doubt as to where he is physically, and yet in many of these books he finds himself puzzled by the very vocal consciousness he has entered: is it good or bad, impartial or biased? Can it be trusted as Huck Finn or Marcel or David Copperfield could be trusted? He senses the author, cramped inside the character like a contortionist in a box, and suspects

(often rightly) some trick. In short, it is not all straight shooting, as it was with the old novelists.

This is not a defect, yet it points to the defects of the method, which can be summed up as a lack of straightforwardness. There is something burglarious about these silent entries into a private and alien consciousness. Or so I feel when I do it myself. It is exhilarating but not altogether honest to make believe I am a devious red-haired man professor with bad breath and bits of toilet paper on his face, to talk under my breath his sibilant, vindictive thought-language and draw his pale lips tightly across my teeth. "So *this* is how the world looks to a man like that!" I can say to myself, awestruck, and so, I expect, John Updike, twenty-five years old, must have felt when he discovered what it felt like to be an old pauper with loosened eye-muscles sitting on a poorhouse porch. But I cannot know, really, what it feels like to be a vindictive man professor, any more than a young man can know what it is to be an old man or Faulkner can know what it is to be a feeble-mind adult who has had his balls cut off. All fictions, of course, are impersonations, but it seems to me somehow less dubious to impersonate the outside of a person, says Mrs. Micawber with her mysterious "I will never leave Mr. Micawber," than to claim to know what it feels like to *be* Mrs. Micawber. These impersonations, moreover, are laborious; to come at a character circuitously, by a tour de force, means spending great and sometimes disproportionate pains on the method of entry. I read somewhere that Salinger spent ten years writing *The Catcher in the Rye*; that was eight years too long. Granted, the book is a feat, but it compels admiration more as a feat than as a novel, like the performance of a one-armed violinist or any other curiosity. This could not be said of *Huckleberry Finn*; Mark Twain's imitation of Huck's language is never, so to speak, the drawing-card. In the cases of Salinger, Updike, myself, one wonders whether the care expended on the mechanics of the imitation, on getting the right detail, vocabulary, and so on, does not

constitute a kind of advertisement for the author, eliciting such responses as "Think of the work that went into it!" or "Imagine a twenty-five-year-old being able to take off an old man like that!" One is reminded of certain young actors whose trademark is doing character parts, or, vice versa, of certain old actresses whose draw can be summed up in the sentence "You would never guess she was sixty."

Yet you might say that it was a fine thing for a well-paid writer in his twenties to know from the inside what it was like to be an aged charity patient. Very democratic. True, and this is a real incentive for the novelist of the twentieth century. The old authors identified with the hero or the heroine, a sympathetic figure whose dreams and desires resembled the author's own. *"Madame Bovary, c'est moi,"* said Flaubert, and no doubt there was quite a lot of Madame Bovary in him or of him in Madame Bovary. Allowing for the differences of circumstance and intellect, he could have been Emma Bovary; the stretch of imagination to encompass her circumstances and her intellect was a great step, of course, in the democratization of the novel, and the naturalists, English and French, pushed further in this direction, with their studies of servant girls, factory operatives, and of the submerged poor in general. Even James tried it with his poor little anarchist, Hyacinthe Robinson. Yet here, as in Flaubert, there is still the idea of a hero or a heroine—mute inglorious Cinderellas who never went to the ball; what separates the author from the hero or the heroine is fate or social destiny. Their souls are not alien. But for the writer today (the writer who has any interest in character) it has become almost obligatory not merely to traverse social barriers but to invade the privacy of a soul so foreign or so fetal as to seem beyond grasp. Take *Ulysses*. Molly Bloom is not a soulmate of Joyce's or a sister under the skin. She is as far removed from Joyce as you could get and still remain human—the antipodes. Mr. Bloom is closer, but he is not Joyce as he might have been if he were Jewish, an advertising canvasser, and married to Molly. He is

an independent, sovereign world to which Joyce has managed to gain access. There is no doctrine of "sympathies" or a-touch-of-nature-makes-the-whole-world-kin underlying *Ulysses.* Or underlying *The Sound and the Fury,* where Faulkner explores the inner life of the mental defective Benjy—his own, you might say, diametrical opposite. Much of modern literature might be defined as the search for one's own diametrical opposite, which is then used as the point-of-view. The parallel would be if Dickens had tried to write *David Copperfield* from within the sensibility of Uriah Heep or *Oliver Twist* through the impressions of Fagin.

Difficulty alone (though it always exercises a charm) does not explain the appeal of such enterprises for modern writers. There is something else—a desire to comprehend, which seems to be growing stronger as the world itself becomes more incomprehensible and dubious. The older writers, when they sought their characters from among the poor and the obscure, assumed that there was a common humanity and were concerned to show this. But it is that very assumption that is being tested, tried out, by the writers of today when they start examining their own opposites. I will give an illustration from my own work to show what I mean, rather than presume to speak for others.

When I first had the idea of the book called *The Groves of Academe,* it presented itself as a plot with a single character at the center. An unsavory but intelligent professor who teaches modern literature in an experimental college is told that his contract will not be renewed for reasons not specified but because in fact he is a trouble-maker; whereupon, he proceeds to demonstrate his ability to make trouble by launching a demagogic campaign for reappointment, claiming that he is being dismissed for having been a Communist and parading himself as the victim of a witch-hunt. This claim is totally false, but it is successful, for he has gauged very well the atmosphere of a liberal college during the period of anti-Communist hysteria that reached a climax in Senator McCarthy. No one in that liberal college stops

to inquire whether he has really been a Communist because everyone is too preoccupied with defending his right to have been one and still remain a teacher; even the college president, knowing (who better?) that politics has nothing to do with the professor's being dropped from the faculty, yields as a professional liberal to this blackmail. Now the normal way of telling this story would be from the outside or from the point of view of one of the professor's sympathizers. But I found I had no interest in telling it that way; to me, the interest lay in trying to see it from the professor's point of view and mouthing it in the cliches and the hissing jargon of his vocabulary. That is, I wanted to know just how it felt to be raging inside the skin of a Henry Mulcahy and to learn how, among other things, he arrived at a sense of self-justification and triumphant injury that allowed him, as though he had been issued a license, to use any means to promote his personal cause, how he manipulated and combined an awareness of his own undesirability with the modern myth of the superior man hated and envied by mediocrity. To do this, naturally, I had to use every bit of Mulcahy there was in me, and there was not very much: I am not a paranoid, nor a liar, nor consumed with hatred, nor a man, for that matter. But this very fact was the stimulus. If I could understand Mulcahy, if I could make myself *be* Mulcahy, it would get me closer to the mystery, say, of Hitler and of all the baleful demagogic figures of modern society whom I could not imagine being. There was no thought of "*Tout comprendre, c'est pardonner*" or of offering a masterkey to public events like *Darkness at Noon*. What I was after was something much more simple, naive, and childlike: the satisfaction of the curiosity we all feel when we read in the paper of some crime we cannot imagine committing, like the case of the man who insured his mother-in-law at the airport and then planted a bomb in the plane she was taking. Certain crimes, certain characters, in their impudence or awfulness, have the power of making us feel *bornés,* and in a sense I wanted to tiptoe into the interior of Mulcahy like a peasant coming into a

palace. The question was the same as between the peasant and the king: did we belong to the same species or not? The book is not an answer, but an experiment, an assaying.

There is an element of the private game, even of the private joke, in this kind of writing—a secret and comic relation between the author and his character. An arcane laughter, too infernal for the reader to hear, quietly shakes such books; the points, the palpable hits (inspired turns of phrase, *trouvailles* of vocabulary) may altogether escape the reader's notice. Indeed, it sometimes happens that the reader is quite unaware of what the author is doing and complains that the style is full of cliches, when that, precisely, is the point. Or the glee of the hidden author may produce uncanny noises, such as the giggle or whinny overheard sometimes in *Lolita* testifying to who-knows-what indecorous relations between the author and Humbert Humbert. Joyce salted his work with private jokes, hints, and references that no one but he could be expected to enjoy, yet with Joyce it added to the savor. Lesser writers (or at least I) find themselves constrained by the naturalistic requirements of the method, the duty to keep a straight face, stay in character, speak in an assumed voice, hollow or falsetto, as though in a game that has gone on too long and that no one knows how to stop. There are moments when one would like to drop the pretense of being Mulcahy and go on with the business of the novel.

To return to the question of character. What do we mean when we say there are "real people" in a book? If you examine the works of Jane Austen, who, everyone agrees, was a creator of characters, you will find that the "real people" in her books are not so often the heroes and heroines as the minor characters: Lady Catherine de Bourgh and Mr. Collins, Mr. and Mrs. Bennet, Lady Bertram, poor Miss Bates, Emma's friend Harriet, the timorous and valetudinarian Mr. Woodhouse. These beings are much more thoroughly and wonderfully themselves than the heroes and heroines are able to be; the reason for this is, I think, that they are comic.

Or turn to *Ulysses*. Who would deny that Stephen Dedalus, a straight character, seems less "real" than Mr. Bloom and Molly, less "real" than his father, Mr. Dedalus? In what does this "reality" consist? In the incorrigibility and changelessness of the figure. Villains may reform, heroes and heroines may learn their lesson, like Emma or Elizabeth or Mr. Darcy, or grow into the author, like Stephen Dedalus and David Copperfield, but a Lady Catherine de Bourgh or a Molly Bloom or a Mr. Dedalus, regardless of resolutions, cannot reform or change, cannot be other than they are. Falstaff is a species of eternity; that is why the Hostess's description of his death is so poignantly sad, far sadder than the pretty death of Ophelia, for Falstaff, according to the laws of his creation, should not die. This was Queen Elizabeth's opinion too when she demanded his resurrection and Shakespeare obliged with *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. "Mortal men, mortal men," Falstaff sighs speciously, but he himself is an immortal, an everlasting, like Mr. and Mrs. Micawber who, when last heard of, were still going strong in Australia. The same with Mrs. Gamp, Pecksniff, Stepan Oblonsky, Monsieur Homais, Stepan Trofimovitch, old Karamazov. Real characterization, I think, is seldom accomplished outside of comedy or without the fixative of comedy: the stubborn pride of Mr. Darcy, the prejudice of Elizabeth, the headstrongness of Emma. A comic character, contrary to accepted belief, is likely to be more complicated and enigmatic than a hero or a heroine, fuller of surprises and turnabouts; Mr. Micawber, for instance, can find the most unexpected ways of being himself; so can Mr. Woodhouse or the Master of the Marshalsea. It is a sort of resourcefulness.

What we recognize as reality in these figures is their implacable resistance to change; they are what perdures or remains—the monoliths or plinths of the world. Pierre in *War and Peace* seems more real than Levin, his opposite number in *Anna Karenina*. This is because Pierre is fat—fat and awkward and wears a funny-looking green civilian hat at the Battle of Borodino, like a sign of his irreducible innocent stoutness. Thanks to a streak

of cruelty or sarcastic sharpness in Tolstoy, most of his heroes and heroines are not spared a satirical glance that picks out their weak points: Vronsky's bald spot, Prince Andrei's small white hands, the heavy step of the Princess Marya. They live as characters because Tolstoy is always conscious of their limitations, just as he is with his comic figures; he does not forget that Anna is a society woman and Vronsky a smart cavalry officer—types that in real life he disapproved of and even detested.

The comic element is the incorrigible element in every human being; the capacity to learn, from experience or instruction, is what is forbidden to all comic creations and to what is comic in you and me. This capacity to learn is the prerogative of the hero or the heroine: Prince Hal as opposed to Falstaff. The principle of growth in human beings is as real, of course (though possibly not so common) as the principle of eternity or inertia represented by the comic; it is the subjective as opposed to the objective. When we identify ourselves with the hero of a story, we are following him with all our hopes, i.e., with our subjective conviction of human freedom; on the comic characters we look with despair, in which, though, there is a queer kind of admiration—we really, I believe, admire the comic characters *more* than we do the hero or the heroine, because of their obstinate power to do-it-again, combined with a total lack of self-consciousness or shame. But it is the hero or the heroine whose fate we feel suspense for, whom we blush for when they make a mistake; we put ourselves in their place from the very first pages, from the minute we make their acquaintance. We do not have to *know* the hero or the heroine to be on their side; not even a name is necessary. We are pulling for them if they are called "K." or "he." This mechanism of identification with the hero is very odd and seems to rest, almost, on *lack* of knowledge. If a book or story begins, "He took the train that night," we are surer that "he" is the hero (i.e., our temporary double) than if it begins, "Richard Cole took the five forty-five Thursday night." Or "Count Karenin seated himself in a first-class carriage on the

Moscow-Petersburg express." We would wait to hear more about this "Richard Cole" or "Count Karenin" before depositing our sympathies with him. This throws an interesting light on the question of character.

In the modern novel, characteristically, there is little suspense. No one reads *Ulysses* or *Finnegans Wake* or *The Sound and the Fury* or *Mrs. Dalloway* for the sake of the story, to find out what is going to happen to the hero or the heroine. The chief plot interest in these books is to try to find out what happened before the book started: what was in that letter the chicken scratched up? what had Earwicker done in Phoenix Park? why does Benjy get so excited every time he is taken near the golf course? what is biting Stephen ("agenbite of inwit")? who, really, has been Clarissa Dalloway? The absence of suspense means that the cord of identification between the reader and the hero has been deliberately cut. Or put it a different way: the reader, as I have said, wakes up in a foreign consciousness, a bundle of impressions, not knowing where he is. The first reaction is a mild panic, an attack of claustrophobia; far from the reader's identifying, say, with Stephen at the outset of *Ulysses,* his whole wish is to fight his way out of Stephen into the open world, in order to discover where Stephen is and what is going on. And even when these fears have been quieted (Stephen is in a tower; he lives with Buck Mulligan, a medical student; his mother has just died), new fears surge up and always of a locative character, so that the reader is put in the position of a perpetual outsider, hearing what Stephen hears, seeing what Stephen sees but failing to get the drift often, asking bewildered questions: "Where am I?" "Who is talking?" "What's up?" An anxiety about location (the prime clinical symptom in the reader of the modern novel) precludes interest in direction; in any case, the end is foreordained: nothing can happen to Stephen but to become Joyce. Stephen is neither subject nor object, neither hero nor comedian, but the bombarded center of a perceptual all-out attack; in this sense, *Ulysses* is a scientific study in the logistics of personality.

And in science the only hero can be the scientist; the rest is data. The difference can be felt by a comparison with Proust. Proust's Marcel is still a hero, followed by the reader with suspense, to learn what will happen with his grandmother, what will happen with Gilberte, what will happen with Albertine—something more *can* happen to him than to become Proust. Marcel is a pure subject, despite the attention he pays to studying and analyzing his reactions; if the book is, in part, a reconstruction of anterior events, it is Marcel himself, not just the reader, who is trying to find out what actually took place before the book started, and this quest for certainty is itself a hero's goal.

In the old novels, there was a continual fluctuating play between the hero and the "characters," that is, between the world as we feel it to be subjectively and the world as we know it as observers. As subjects, we all live in suspense, from day to day, from hour to hour; in other words, we are the hero of our own story. We cannot believe that it is finished, that we are "finished," even though we may say so; we expect another chapter, another installment, tomorrow or next week. In moments of despair, we look on ourselves leadenly as objects; we see ourselves, our lives, as someone else might see them and may even be driven to kill ourselves if the separation, the "knowledge," seems sufficiently final. Our view of others, on the contrary, cannot but be objective and therefore tinged with a sad sense of comedy. Others are to us like the "characters" of fiction, eternal and incorrigible; the surprises they give us turn out in the end to have been predictable—unexpected variations on the theme of being—themselves, of the *principio individuationis*. But it is just this principle that we cannot see in ourselves. What is happening in modern literature is a peculiar reversal of roles: we try to show the object as subject and the subject as object. That is, can I be inside Professor Mulcahy and outside me? The answer is I cannot; no one can. There can only be one subject, ourselves, one hero or heroine. The existentialist paradox—that we are subjects for ourselves and objects for others—cannot be resolved by

technical virtuosity. The best efforts, far from mastering the conundrum, merely result in the creation of characters—Benjy, Jason, Molly, Mr. Bloom, and so on—who are more or less "successful" in exactly the old sense, more or less "realized," concrete, objectively existent. Choirs of such characters make up the modern novel. What has been lost, however, in the continuing experiment is the power of the author to speak in his own voice or through the undisguised voice of an alter ego, the hero, at once a known and an unknown, a bearer of human freedom. It would seem, moreover, that there was a kind of symbiosis between the hero and the "characters," that you could not have the one without the others or the others without the one. The loss of the hero upset a balance of nature in the novel, and the languishing of the "characters" followed. Certainly the common world that lies between the contemporary reader and the contemporary author remains unexplored, almost undescribed, just as queer and empty a place as Dickens' world would be if he had spent eight years recording the impressions of Fagin or the sensory data received by Uriah Heep in the slithery course of a morning's walk.

Robert Lowell

TRANSLATIONS FROM BAUDELAIRE

TO THE READER

(*Au Lecteur*)

Infatuations, sadism, lust, avarice
possess our souls and drain the body's force;
we spoonfeed our adorable remorse,
like whores or beggars nourishing their lice.

Our sins are mulish, our confessions lies;
we play to the grandstand with our promises,
we pray for tears to wash our filthiness,
importantly pissing hogwash through our styes.

The devil, watching by our sickbeds, hissed
old smut and folk-songs to our soul, until
the soft and precious metal of our will
boiled off in vapor for this scientist.

Each day his flattery makes us eat a toad,
and each step forward is a step to hell,
unmoved, though previous corpses and their smell
asphyxiate our progress on this road.

Like the poor lush who cannot satisfy,
we try to force our sex with counterfeits,
die drooling on the deliquescent tits,
mouthing the rotten orange we suck dry.

Gangs of demons are boozing in our brain—
ranked, swarming, like a million warrior-ants,
they drown and choke the cistern of our wants;
each time we breathe, we tear our lungs with pain.

If poison, arson, sex, narcotics, knives
have not yet ruined us and stitched their quick,
loud patterns on the canvas of our lives,
it is because our souls are still too sick.

Among the vermin, jackals, panthers, lice,
gorillas and tarantulas that suck
and snatch and scratch and defecate and fuck
in the disorderly circus of our vice,

there's one more ugly and abortive birth.
It makes no gestures, never beats its breast,
yet it would murder for a moment's rest,
and willingly annihilate the earth.

It's BOREDOM. Tears have glued its eyes together.
You know him well, my Reader. This obscene
beast chain-smokes yawning for the guillotine—
you—hypocrite Reader—my double—my brother!

VOYAGE TO CYTHEREA

(*Voyage à Cythere*)

My heart, a seagull rocketed and spun
about the rigging, dipping joyfully;
our slow prow rocking under cloudless sky
was like an angel drunk with the live sun.

What's that out there? Those leagues of hovering sand?
"It's Cytherea, famous in the songs,
the old boys' El Dorado, it belongs
to legend. Look closely, it's a poor land."

Island of secret orgies none profess,
the august shade of Aphrodite plays
like clouds of incense over your blue bays,
and weights the heart with love and heaviness.

Island whose myrtle esplanades arouse
our nerves, here heart-sighs and the adoration
of every land and age and generation
ramble like coal-red roses on a house,

to the eternal cooing of the dove.
"No, Cytherea crumbles, cakes and dries,
a rocky desert troubled by shrill cries . . .
And yet I see one portent stretch above

us. Is it a temple where the pagan powers
hover in naked majesty to bless
the arbors, goldfish ponds and terraces,
and the young priestess is in love with flowers?

No, nosing through these shoals, and coming near
enough to scare the birds with our white sails,
we saw a man spread-eagled on the nails
of a cross hanging like a cypress there.

Ferocious vultures choking down thick blood
gutted the hanging man, already foul;
each smacked its beak like the flat of a trowel
into the private places of their food.

His eyes were holes and his important paunch
oozed lazy, looping innards down his hips;
those scavengers, licking sweetmeats from their lips,
had hung his pouch and penis on a branch.

Under his foot-soles, shoals of quadrupeds
with lifted muzzles nosed him round and guzzled;
a huge antediluvian reptile muscled
through them like an executioner with his aides.

Native of Cytherea, initiate,
how silently you hung and suffered insult
in retribution for your dirty cult
and orgasms only death could expiate.

Ridiculous hanged man, my sins confirm
your desecration; when I saw you seethe,
I felt my nausea mounting to my teeth,
the drying bile-stream of my wasted sperm.

Poor devil with sweet memories, your laws
are mine; before you, I too felt those jaws:
black panther, lancing crow, the Noah's Ark
that loved to chafe my flesh and leave their mark.

I'd lost my vision clinging to those shrouds,
I feared the matching blues of sky and sea;
all things were henceforth black with blood for me,
and plunged my heart in allegoric clouds . . .

Nothing stands upright in your land, oh Lust,
except my double, hanging at full length—
Oh God, give me the courage and the strength
to contemplate my body without disgust.

MY BEATRICE

(*La Béatrice*)

While I was walking in a pitted place,
crying aloud against the human race,
letting thoughts ramble here and there apart—
knives singing on the whetstone of my heart—
I saw a cloud descending on my head
in the full noon, a cloud inhabited
by black devils, sharp, humped, inquisitive
as dwarfs. They knew where I was sensitive,
now idling there, and looked me up and down,
as cool delinquents watch a madman clown.
I heard them laugh and snicker blasphemies,
while swapping signs and blinking with their eyes.

"Let's stop and watch this creature at our leisure—
all sighs and sweaty hair. We'll take his measure.
It's a great pity that this mountebank
and ghost of Hamlet strutting on his plank
should think he's such an artist at his role
he has to paralyse the butterflies and bees
with a peepshow of his indecencies—
and even we, who gave him his education,
must listen to his schoolboy declamation."

I would have liked (my pride was riding high
above the mountains and the devils' cry)
to have gone on as Hamlet and turned my back,
had I not seen among the filthy pack
(oh crime that should have made the sun drop dead!)
my heart's queen and the mistress of my bed
there purring with the rest at my distress,
and sometimes tossing them a stale caress.

THE SERVANT

(*La Servante*)

My old nurse and servant, whose seasoned heart
made you jealous, is dead and sleeps apart
from us. Shouldn't we bring her a few flowers?
The dead, the poor dead, they have their bad hours,
and when October, stripper of old trees,
poisons the turf and makes their marble freeze,
surely they find us worse than wolves or curs
for sleeping under mountainous warm furs. . .
These, eaten by the earth's black dream, lie dead,
without a wife or friend to warm their bed,
old skeletons sunk like shrubs in burlap bags.
They feel the ages trickle through their rags,
and have no heirs or relatives to chase
with children round their crosses and replace
the potted refuse, where they lie beneath
their final flower, the interment wreath.

The oak log sings and sputters in my chamber,
and in the cold blue half-light of December,
I see her tiptoe through my room and halt
humbly, as if she'd hurried from her vault
with blankets for the child her sleepless eye
had coaxed and mothered to maturity.
What can I say to her to calm her fears?
My nurse's hollow sockets fill with tears.

THE SWAN

(*La Cygne*)

I

Andromache, I think of you. Here men
move on, diminished, from those grander years,
when Racine's tirades scourged our greasy Seine,
this lying trickle swollen with your tears!

Some echo fertilized my magpie mind,
as I was crossing the new Carrousel.
Old Paris is done for. (Our cities find
new faces sooner than the heart.) Its shell

was all I noticed, when I strolled beneath
its barracks, heaps of roughed-out capitals,
stray apple carts, troughs, greening horses' teeth,
commercial gypsies clinking in their stalls.

A strolling circus had laid out its tent,
where I was dragging home through the dawn's red;
labor was rising, and a sprinkler spread
a hurricane to lay the sediment.

I saw a swan that had escaped its cage,
and struck its dry wings on the cobbled street,
and drenched the curbing with its fluffy plumage.
Beside a gritty gutter, it dabbed its feet,

and gobbled at the dust to stop its thirst.
Its heart was full of its blue lakes, and screamed:
"Water, when will you fall? When will you burst,
oh thunderclouds?" How often I have dreamed

I see this bird like Ovid exiled here
in Paris, its Black Sea—it spears and prods
its snake-head at our blue, ironic air,
as if it wanted to reproach the gods.

II

Paris changes; nothing in my melancholy
stirs . . . new mansards, arrondisements razed *en bloc,*
glass, scaffolding, slum wards—all allegory!
My memories are heavier than rock!

Here by the Louvre my symbol oppresses me:
I think of the great swan hurled from the blue,
heroic, silly—like a refugee
dogged by its griping angst—also of you,

Andromache, fallen from your great bridegroom,
and now the concubine and baggage of Pyrrhus—
you loiter wailing by the empty tomb,
Hector's widow and the last wife of Helenus!

I think of you, tubercular and sick,
blindly stamping through puddles, Jeanne Duval,
peering into the Paris fog's thick wall
for the lost coconuts of Mozambique.

I think of people who have lost the luck
they never find again, and waste their powers
like she-wolves giving grief a tit to suck,
or public orphans drying up like flowers;

and in this forest, on my downward drag,
my old sorrow lets out its lion's roar.
I think of Paris raising the white flag,
drowned sailors, fallen girls . . . and many more!

THE GAME

(*Le Jeu*)

Cheeks chalked, blacked lashes, eyes still terrible—
old bags glittering under chandeliers,
as they titter and make a waterfall
of stone and metal fall from their thin ears;

my hang-dog shadow joining in the queue,
as fixtures holding fifty candles light
the profiles of great men who used to write,
and here gasp out their ulcerous guts to screw;

crowding this gameboard, faces without lips,
lips white as teeth, false uppers without jaws,
bone fingers running through the youthful grips,
still fumbling emptied pockets and false bras . . .

This is the sort of tableau of my doom
self-love imagines for my terminus;
stuck in a corner of the waiting-room,
I see myself withdrawn and lecherous—

envying the war-horses' running sores,
this one's torn nerves, that one's arthritic grace,
the graveyard gaity of these old whores,
angling their flesh for traffic in my face—

envying those who scuttle character,
and crowd full sail into the blue abyss—
these drunk for blood, who in the end prefer
dishonor to death, and hell to nothingness.

David Jackson

THE ENGLISH GARDENS

Despite the shabby black tight suit, octagonal rimmed spectacles, and bent stove pipe hat, the fact remained that Meredith Wilder was a handsome young man.

As usual, his tallness, his fine light eyes under dark brows, a strength about him had made him welcome in every group of the crowded Munich *Fasching* party. He seldom had much to say. His voice being deep and pleasant made up for that. Everyone knew Meredith as an American poet, and his appearance, in the costume of Spitzweg's painting, "The Poor Poet," was sufficient indication to all the Germans there that he had wit—if of a concealed, American, Abraham Lincoln variety.

Suddenly, his quota of drinks reached, Meredith surprised them all—their standards perhaps lowered by alcohol—by throwing off his reserve, pulling a red drapery around him, and launching into Escamillo's *"Si tu m'aimes, Carmen, tu pourras tout à l'heure être fière de moi!"* Whereupon Munich's great mezzo, flinging herself into his arms, sang back, *"Ah je t'aime, et que je meure si j'ai jamais aimé quelqu'un autant que toi!"* And they were immediately surrounded by an admiring circle. Meredith flushed attractively with pleasure. Several hours later, the Princess von P. . . . , an editor and translator, rewarded him for his gallantries. She drew her lips from his, as they were saying goodnight, and echoed Carmen's words.

He started home, rosily, in the grey dawn of Ash Wednesday along Munich's Ludwigstrasse toward the arch of Siegestur. He hunched his shoulders under a black wool cape, for the

March air was wet and went straight to the bones. He twirled a bent umbrella. The glow of the party was still upon him. He made his way past the buildings of the University, the arch, and into Leopoldstrasse, that grand avenue of Munich's bohemia, Schwabing. He was heading for his pension on the edge of the famous English Gardens.

But block by block the bloom faded. Soberness came to sit on his black cape and bent hat. The moment was coming when he would have to face his conscience. It had done a lot for him. Without it, life might have been easier, but not so successful. Looks, health, and a natural laziness were always at work persuading him to treat his poetic talent even more lightly than he did. But no, his conscience had provoked him, far more than any ambition, to work and polish and finally be recognized—by authorities as vague as the *Times Literary Supplement* and as partisan as the publisher of his volumes of verse (three were serious, one was a children's book)—as one of the leading young American poets.

About himself, Meredith was modest. For every critic who called his poetry too often shallow and mocking, there were three who protested that he had managed the hardest of all things: to speak lightly of tragic affairs. Through all of this he pursued his own way. Unlike Paul Klee's defiant, "To hell with uncle, let's get on with our building," Meredith's retort, "I can only fly where I fly—and so the swallows always come back to Capistrano," hid his fear that, perhaps, those severer critics were right.

He had money, a small income left by his grandmother, and he had been through good eastern schools; teaching in one of them, now, but for this year when he was enjoying a leave of absence and a Guggenheim Fellowship. Ostensibly he was here in Munich in order to be near the source of nineteenth-century German poets—post-Schiller to pre-Rilke—about whom he was writing, a vague enterprise. To a few friends and himself he confessed that his greatest enthusiasm for these poets flowered when

he was composing his request for the grant. Actually, he wanted to live a little, particularly in Munich, a city he had first seen and grown to love at the end of the war when he had been a Private First Class and an interpreter at nearby Dachau. Neither the horrors of the concentration camp, nor the apparent unconsciousness of these horrors in neighboring Munich had damaged his affection for the city. His mind did not work that way. The Baroque, the Rococo, the high-flown nineteenth-century romance of painters and poets, the buildings of the Assam brothers, the palaces of Nymphenburg, the riches of Lembach and Caspar David Friedrich—these held his attention. He liked the size of the city, knew its opera stars and ballet dancers and celebrities like Erich Kästner. He had late morning coffees with them and got into theaters on their passes. And, what's more, he felt confident he was a favorite of theirs.

Now again, he started humming. A way of pacifying his conscience—without actually writing a poem—had come to him: he would send off that letter about Munich he had promised to his last serious love affair. She was back in New York busy, no doubt, with her own literary life; yet she was arranging a series of readings for him, next year. She kept urging him to write such a letter, for she claimed she could sell it, somewhere.

Thinking, humming, warming to the idea, he turned into the small streets and squares pressed up against the English Gardens. As he approached the pension walls he was as usual softly singing a song of Müller's—not quite as Schubert had set it.

His landlady, the Gräfin von Erlach, had rented him the library of the house. It was a big square tall room, four walls of books broken only by two windows onto the garden. The only door was backed by shelves and, when closed, disappeared into a section devoted to the journals of English tourists. He had the habit of picking up one of these on his way to his bath or the w.c. There was a fireplace which said, in deeply engraved gold-filled letters, *"Nihil Volo Nisi Ut Ardeat"*—I wish only to burn, a motto he now took to heart. He stripped off his poor poet's

clothes, stood there slapping the back of his neck, did some knee bends and stretched his shoulders and arms, and then pulled on a wartime flight mechanic's suit in which he liked to work. Rubbing his hands, he paced around the room as was his habit, circling his writing table at the windows like a tiger cornering its prey. The pension was quiet, they all still slept.

At last, he began: "Dear girl, the pension is quiet, they are all asleep, and I'm filled with the honor of working in the small hours and, finally, writing to you. Here will be the letter about Munich, do you think it is worthy of printers' ink? This removable preface contains my love; but it can be considered as stationary, if you would like to announce it to the world. And now to the subject:

"Munich is a vast imitation, and as such is fortifying. I find it, also, an important city. Walking up the Florentine Ludwigstrasse to the classical Roman Siegestur, into the Left Bank Leopoldstrasse, I am conscious of hoping some original of mine, one day, will be taken into the sleeping mind of Munich. In order that, ever after, dreamlike copies would emerge.

"A Munich rusticated palace is the dream of a Southern Renaissance; a pony-tail hair-do of a Munich Teenager is a dream of American Daring.

"The English Gardens, where we would walk in late Spring, is, of course, the dream of a dream. It is a landscaped Arcadia. Four miles long, one wide, the Gardens hold acres of trees, canals, lakes. At some exact moment of a sultry late Spring day, the Gardens proclaim their origins in that great painter of the nineteenth century, Böcklin. The city has vanished. There are bird cries straight from his brush. The sun slants across lawns, figures in dateless clothes trail along some way off, a column from the Golden Age (perhaps a smokestack) meets your gaze. The murmur of waves (traffic), a cry, and there sport Undine and dryads and jolly naked fat mermen looking like Wallace Beery.

"Of course, the illusion is forever being broken, but pleasantly so. For this is an arena of tourists and bohemian Schwab-

ing. And there is the old Schwabinger, the pre-Hitler, Expressionist veteran sitting around on nearly private benches. He, like his contemporaries, wears a collection of sweaters and scarves and carries what must be music or manuscripts or drawings. The rich Schwabingers take up tables on the two levels of terraces at the *Seehaus,* a vast restaurant on the edge of an artificial lake. They have dogs and cats, sometimes canes. But even on sunny days, late afternoon, a kind of mid-European fatalism prompts them to carry umbrellas. And, often enough, the sunset disappears into a rising of clouds and the rain falls. These old Schwabingers laugh and wave to friends off at other tables. 'That is Greta von Spielerin,' you will be told, 'a great actress in her time,' or 'He is Rudolph Kunstler—you must know his political cartoons of the 'twenties.' Everyone is familiar. Munich is a *Millionendorf*—a village of a million people."

Meredith had an illusion of the ease and pleasure of writing, this morning. Why hadn't he got up early, before? The pension usually took him over, took him into its intimacies. The maids lingered and giggled in his room after they cleaned. The Gräfin and he held long conversations of a literary turn, she in English, he in German. She told him stories of her father's friends, the poets Mörike and Keller. And Meredith was lazy and gregarious and liked having his work interrupted. Now, the words were rolling out:

"The Gardens are fine for you and me and the old Schwabinger. But Munich's Teenagers, the *Halbstärkern* (half-strongs), its delinquents, its young art and literary worlds have no time for the Gardens (although they are said to be handy for quick sex). Sitting around in espresso cafes along Leopold, or in the two to three basement bars near the University, they slouch, drink a lot of coffee, wear blue jeans which, after all these post-war years, finally have a true, worn, James Dean style. The girls wear tight sweaters and pale lips and messy Brigitte Bardot hair. They ignore each other and draw on menus. They come and go indifferently, dropping into chairs, dragging each other across

rooms and streets to drop down somewhere else. They smoke one cigarette after another and stump them out, moodily. With the intensity of their German natures they are imitating the current style. And this, I gather, is Beat. I am tempted to warn them of the outcome in a quatrain called, *The Digger*:

'I dig Jazz and James Joyce, man!
I dig Zen and Horse!' you rave.
That's nice. Dig everything you can.
You'll get around to your own grave.

But I would be wasting my time. They . . ." Abruptly, he stopped. The truth was he knew little about Beatniks. "Damn little," he told himself, drumming his fingers. But he was diverted by the pension garden coming up more clearly into light. He peered out, noting how wet and brown it was, seeing a snow bird tramp around under some leafless berry bushes. And the prospect of weeks more of greyness overwhelmed him. He began imagining The South. Italy. The Mediterranean. Next, he remembered his old friend and fellow-poet, Walter Norman, a resident of Venice. He pushed the typewriter aside and reached over for a postcard from a handy pile he kept on his desk. They were all reproductions from the Schack Gallery (with the exception of a dozen pornographic Rubens he had found at the Pinakothek). He wrote:

"Dear Walter, it's the old season of discontent, up here in Krautland. And we are all partied out. I imagine you in hip boots strolling around San Marco. Would you like a caller, namely me, Meredith?"

With a sense of accomplishment, he rose, took off his mechanic's suit, climbed under the quilts of his bed, and, in the middle of a new thought, went to sleep.

Approaching Venice by sea, at this time, was yet another poet, Nicolas Manas.

Unlike Meredith Wilder, Nicolas knew all about the Beat

Generation. It was a question, in fact, which was the creation of which.

Ten years ago, fresh from reform schools and jail (an experience that had rather strengthened his belief in the goodness of man), after an apprenticeship as a black-haired youth in the harsh trade of Getting Along With Fellow Cons, Nicolas emerged with an eye out for the easy thing and chanced upon the makings of a literary movement. This was happening in a bar and restaurant on MacDougal Street, down in Greenwich Village—where so many movements have seen the light of day. Cloaked in his fortune's smile, creased khaki pants, and a torn black shirt, Nicolas encountered some young men from New York and Columbia Universities. A few beers later these young men perceived in Nicolas's tough, optimistic, code-like utterances a New Talent. As the days passed Nicolas's new friends (mostly graduate students whose long, rather Spenserian verses had appeared in University magazines) were quoting to each other notes Nicolas was apt to leave in their various rooms. For example this one, in an upper West side rooming house:

Man, do you snore! A trumpet of angels! I'm going over to walk on the river. I'll be around.

Or this one left in a Village apartment:

You got sex on the brain. Let's f . . . k the stars, that's for poets.

His literary pronouncements were quoted, too:

"I walked in there, yesterday, and Manas's reading a book. He's all excited and yells at me, 'Hey, this Shelley's great!' "

"Shelley! . . ?" fondly but cautiously.

"Yeh, Shelley. Nicolas says Shelley's the Man of the Times."

A legend was beginning.

As Beatnik letters grew and Nicolas began to become a 'poet', both found simple candor a chief piece of equipment. In Nicolas it was more *over*-candor. Reaching for the heart of the matter, expressing the truth of his reactions to, say, jazz, cars, sex, or in describing his disgust with his listener, or his listener's

with *him,* he often seemed so close as to be behind the subject. "I heard ya laugh. I get it! Listen, I frighten you, you can't take this love I'm offerin." It dazzled, it intimidated. Above all—it provoked. Candor having produced this atmosphere, a quick switch to boyishness, to "yeah?" and "gee!" was usually enough to get what he wanted: a beer, a convert, a fix (marijuana, heroin, or opium), or at least a "connection," or money, or a place to stay—a "pad" in the new jazz language. From New York to San Francisco, Boston, Mexico, and points North and South, these pads became the footfalls of his nights.

Nicolas's other talent was toughness, a verbal persuasion when all else failed. "What d'ya mean you can't put me up for the night?" his loud voice was heard in many crowded rooms. "You too good for us around here?" Or from the platform he would interrupt his reading of a poem to ask the audience, "You people ever hear of this Alfred S . . . ? Well, the other night . . ." (and here *he* would be interrupted by a perfectly timed cry from a fellow Beatnik, "Read the poetry, get on with the poetry for Chrissake!") and whatever had been denied Nicolas was usually forthcoming. It was a kind of Action Blackmail and, as Nicolas and his movement rose to fame with the help of their favorite muse, Publicity, tracking them with her feet of column print, threats, personal charms and abuse, etc. were needed less and less. At last they could abandon former methods, former haunts, even former fads like Zen Buddhism, Chinese poets and things Eastern, or West American, and face that traditional theater where so many Americans in the arts find themselves, Europe.

But in these more celebrated times, Nicolas's profitable jail-bird past made getting an extended travel passport difficult; not as difficult as he imagined, for he had never entertained the idea of going to a lawyer or the State Department, yet it would have taken some doing to get his own passport. The Law, the State, Authority, its Consequences, were among Nicolas's deepest seated fears. Such fear accounted for some of his oddest lines:

Long hair, is that *against the law?*

and:

America, brush your teeth!

At the same time, such fear produced a petulance praised as anger in his poems. During the crisis of the passport he began confusing his fear with his creative activity and crying, "If they'd just let me write poems!" The outer fringes of his audiences imagined he meant The Muses or The Cruelties of Poverty. The inner circle understood well enough, but they were amazed when he explained to them the elaborate means he'd devised for securing a passport: "I got this cousin, looks like me, who'll apply. . . . Say, any you guys know if that ink really runs? Well, my cousin'll apply, oh, maybe over in Jersey—that'd throw 'em off the track—and . . ." To protests of why all that trouble and why didn't Nicolas just go down and inquire, he turned such a startled agonized face, covering it with his hands and shouting through them, "You don't *get* it!" that looks were exchanged and days of long discussion followed. There were telephone calls to law students, dimly known; runners returned carrying "the word," speeches were made, and it was even day-dreamed that Nicolas stood every chance of being the new Paul Robeson. This suggestion was reluctantly dropped when Nicolas, defiant and snarling, warned them, "One word about this to the papers" (a new phrase in Beatnik circles) "and you guys'll see the *end* of Manas, get it?"

At last, on the day a pre-war Venezuelan freighter was to sail, Nicolas, muffled to his ears in a great scarf, more than usually unshaven, crowded into a taxi with several glum friends and drove off to Brooklyn. One or two of them still had hopes a reporter might have got wind of it, but other things held the attention of the Press—Russia's ultimatum on Berlin, for example. So Nicolas's boarding and departure were like those of millions before him—long, cold, with feeble waves and spastic smiles from the rail. He headed down the harbor and off to sea.

Several days had passed since Nicolas's arrival in Venice.

His host, Walter Norman, was standing on the fringes of a crowd surrounding Nicolas's table at Ciro's bar. Though he couldn't see Nicolas, he knew his guest's expression, the tears on his face, by the loud declaiming he could hear:

"What do you bullshit prosers *feel?*"

Answer coming from a famous tough novelist who, ten years ago, had written an army life novel raising a row of sorts and then becoming a movie:

"What d'ya mean feel?"

"Hah! you don't even know. (Buy me a beer, big shot.) Look, it's like *I* either feel love or I jump in a canal! See?"

"Listen, poet, suicide's *the* homosexual act!"

At this Walter decided to leave. It was past four a.m. and he was out of lire, this week's and next's. Hearing Nicolas's shout, "You too cheap to buy me a beer even?" Walter threw open the swinging door and lunged into the Campo Larga 22 Marzo. Arms flailing, head down, Walter ambled along startling those late passersby who did not know him. He was a man full of unexpected fears and major courage. He was a familiar sight in Venice and given to loud, shouted retorts when taunted. "You may kiss the ass of——" (the name of the place where Mussolini was buried)—a Norman cry in a vast baritone had brought cheers and applause one evening from the cafes around the Morosini. Italians understood bravado. His fire-engine red suit, double breasted with red buttons, or his white suit, white buttons, brought Venetians to a standstill of respect as he passed along talking to himself or to a group of friends moving from a cocktail party someplace to a dinner someplace else.

Poetry and poets were the two chief concerns of Walter's life. Tonight, talking aloud, now and then raising his head to address the stars, he had temporarily put his problem with Nicolas out of his mind and was brooding about something that had occurred to him some hours before. "Everyone's a four letter poet, nowadays!" he was telling himself, crossing the bridge of the San Stefano, "Moss, Hall, Pack, Reid, Bagg, Gunn . . . my

God!" Amazed, he stopped still. "What does it mean?" he demanded, throwing out an arm, oblivious of the two staring gondoliers beneath him. He walked on. "Let's see . . . hmmm. The old five-letter ones, Eliot, Frost, Pound, Moore, Auden, we can safely put them in a group—poor Manas, out of his time. But what of the *six?* Old Wilder, *me!* Damn!" Striking his fist he stamped down the narrows into Morosini. As he crossed that large campo and the problem of Meredith Wilder had come back to mind he debated what to say on a card. It would not do for Manas and Wilder to meet. *"Impensabile!"* Walter announced. (Unseen, a couple in shadows nearby guiltily drew apart.) He knew that Nicolas went through all the mail coming into or going out of the apartment. "Impudence!" Walter cried, "but what can you do? Manas is one of the angels, we *all* are. Why shouldn't Wilder lend a hand?" Walter snickered. He remembered that Nicolas planned to stay several weeks, possibly months, in Venice. His snickers faded away. When depressed, Walter liked to sing a German song. Imitating Lotte Lenya singing *Moritäts Lied,* furtively looking around and putting his key in the lock of his door, he was actually thinking that, perhaps, Nicolas ought to be persuaded to see more of Europe. Maybe he should suggest Germany. Yet he felt vaguely ignoble planning to send Manas off, so soon, and knowing he was sending him to plague Wilder.

His postcard, which he took right out again and mailed, was a reproduction of Caravaggio's Chastisement of Love and it read: "Dear Meredith, I am at present up to my, uh, hips in fellow poets. Manas is here. And there are many Early Morning Scenes being played out. Do you know him? Otherwise I would say 'do come.' Lamely me, Walter."

Eight weeks later, Walter's mind was completely changed. His reluctance to impose Nicolas on Meredith was worn down by the unrelenting exploits and exploitation of his guest. Door after door in the city was being closed to the pair of them. The third week of May a new danger evolved in the young American girl, Mary Jane Lerner, who took to following them around. At first,

Walter was little more than bored with her and her rapt concentration on Nicolas. When he discovered that her husband was the tall, husky, frequently drunk man he had stayed clear of in several bars, the matter took on another light. This was all brought to a head one long night Mary Jane and Nicolas spent in Walter's *salone* drinking Walter's last bottle of gin and smoking two marijuana cigarettes. Walter heard it all from his bedroom where Nicolas had locked him, and they heard Walter crying to himself, "A scandal! Throw them out! Her husband is *over six feet tall!*"

"Listen, Norman," Nicolas called back, "you're not beautiful enough for us out here!" And then he went on to tell Mary Jane she must stop nursing her husband in his drinking and go forth with the saints and angels. Mary Jane, who had somehow supplied the cigarettes as the price of admission to an evening with her hero sighed, agreed, and listened. Walter sighed and listened, too, and as far as he could tell Nicolas's attentions were limited to advice and the improvisations of several long poems, but would Mary Jane's husband believe it? *"Poco probabile,"* he muttered before, near dawn, he fell into a troubled sleep. When he awoke he found his door unlocked and without hesitating rushed out, bought a train ticket to Munich and returned. After much shouting and threatening, Nicolas was put on the late afternoon train North. Walter also provided three ten dollar traveler's checks, an amount which happened to be all his ready cash as well as three dollars short of return fare.

You arrive in Munich on that train in the early morning. You have passed the mountains and towns of Austria in the night—although later Nicolas liked to say, "Man, there they were, those Alps, lookin like *Jederman* in *Lederhosen* and I yelled *'Guten Tag!'* out the window and they all looked at me on that train."

Actually, he spent the time dozing and flipping idly through the pages of a book on Greek myths, the margins of which he had used for memorandums of addresses and other useful in-

formation. Also he read an article on Munich which had been written by Meredith Wilder, and he narrowed his eyes when he came to a poem which was part of the article. "What a drag, man," he said to himself. And this he stored away, too.

He stepped from the train in the warm morning spring sunlight and glumly started for the exits. Soon old habits prevailed and within twenty paces his walk became a saunter and he looked around with his habitual speculative eye. He saw that *Toiletten Männer* was off to the right and decided to check that, later. Ahead he saw signs for exchange above brass framed windows set in a brown marble wall. He stood in front of the exchange rates sign as he searched in his pocket for a traveler's check. He seemed to remember that in dealing in tens you moved a decimal point and added a zero. Having done this in his mind, he moved over, straddling his canvas sack, and leaned on the counter. All during the transactions he kept one finger on the top edge of his passport, as the clerk copied from it, and craned to watch the computer machine—his sullen dark unshaved suspicion forced the clerk to use this machine. Nicolas had figured the amount to be forty marks and twenty-five pfgs (whatever they were); he was pleased, but straight-faced, to receive forty-*two* marks and thirty, "Forty-two marks and thirty pfennigs," the clerk explained," twenty pfennigs for exchange charge."

"Ja," Anthony answered in German, giving the clerk one last grave glance, and telling himself he would come back here unless this joker got fired in the meantime. He stuffed papers, money, and passport away and, picking up his sack, headed off for the first class restaurant. Imagining himself two marks plus to the good, he intended having a beer.

He chose a table next to three fellow Americans and listened while he drank his beer. He had just decided that they were only college students and that there was nothing to be had there when he heard:

Hank: How'd you make out, then?

Doug: Christ! I was down to my last five marks. So I took my sack out in the English Gardens.

Bill: The what?

Doug: This big park the other side of Munich. Dark as hell, take anything you want out there. Not a cop in a kilometer.

Hank: Now where?

Doug (on a note of formality): My mother and father are at the Königshof. They came in yesterday. How about you guys coming to lunch?

Bill: Free? Yes.

Looking over at them, appreciatively, Nicolas gave a loud laugh. But as he was not noticed he subsided and, finally, having finished his beer to the last drop, paid, left. That square article on the city had been confirmed in one point, The English Gardens. Meanwhile he made off toward the toilets. Any criminologist will tell you that public lavatories and parks provide fertile grounds for his species of study. They had often provided Nicolas with his "connections." Many an hour he had haunted one or the other in major cities in the United States, in Mexico City, Venice. A line from a long Manas poem proclaimed:

I'll tell you this, Unclesam, R.R. station johns have been better pals to me than the Travelers' Aid.

It was not yet ten o'clock and the toilets were empty. Philosophically, Nicolas turned away. No sense loitering when he knew what to check next. Nevertheless, Munich's worth had been damaged by a small part. It was becoming Square, in his mind, and it would soon stand for all of Germany.

Outside the tall exit was a man in a green uniform with white belt, cap, and gloves. Nicolas went up to him:

"The English Gardens?"

"Bitte?" The policeman studied him.

"The English Gardens," Nicolas repeated, slowly, louder.

"Ah! Englischer Gärten!" Understanding was followed by another long look and the question: *"Griechisch?"*

"Danke," Nicolas replied, using one of his five German words. And then in a tougher voice he repeated, "The English Gardens!"

A young German walked by wheeling a bicycle. He stopped, he smiled, "Are you an American?"

"Ja," Nicolas replied, looking him over.

"May I help you with your problem?"

"No problem, just wanna look at these English Gardens."

The student, for that's what he was, as Nicolas had expertly guessed before dismissing him as a possible connection, briefly explained to the policeman and then turned to Nicolas: "You get on that tram (do you say tram? oh) it is number fifteen, and you change to number seven, north. Tell the conductor *Sieben* . . . I had better write it."

Nicolas produced his copy of the Greek Myths. As the student searched for, found, and wrote in a blank margin he asked pleasantly, "You are a student?"

"You might say," Nicolas answered, but without the usual provocative undertone.

"Ah, splendid. You have a writer named Emerson who said. . ."

"Ja, ja, I know what he said," Nicolas cut in, taking the myth book back, "I'll see you around." With that, he walked over to the platform in the middle of the downtown street.

"Goodbye!" cried the student. But, ignored, he started off with his bicycle and a bewildered look. The policeman had watched the whole of it and now called, *"I* think he's a Greek!"

The sun came out as Nicolas was squinting down the track. He fished out a pair of dark glasses. In a few minutes, pushing past the others, he stood blocking the aisle by the conductor's stand of number fifteen. He showed the directions and a two-mark coin, took ticket and change and then deliberately surveyed the car. No one interesting, all seats taken. He moved himself perhaps a foot out of the way and stooped to see Munich's large uninteresting center move by. *Squaresville, man,* Nicolas com-

posed in his mind. He had better write a postcard to Walter. He opened the myth book again and there (along the margin next to Robert Graves' imaginative interpretation of the creation of the Dactyls from Rhea's fingertips) were the names of four Munich bars and Meredith Wilder's address. The bars were marked as Walter had marked them in a small black book kept in a nearly secret drawer. The code, which had probably something to do with sex or some other interest, Nicolas was determined to find out and put to use. A card to Walter would get him an introduction to this Meredith, and that might be good for something. Nicolas called on his muse, a line came back:

Squaresville, man, and all the palazzos *are crummy* Palasts.

That ought to draw a laugh, Nicolas reasoned, as he stored the line away on the wax tape that was his mind.

And, indeed, his postcard did draw from Walter a letter recommending his friend, the poet Nicolas Manas, to his friend Meredith Wilder. Five days later, on receiving it, Meredith sat drumming his dactyls on his writing table. Dammit! he inwardly cried.

His hand was large and square and heavily tanned. The voice crying in him was the voice of guilt. His four weeks in Italy had turned into nearer three months. He had returned to the pension a week ago. Now, he was just in the late poems of Hölderlin and therefore had most of the nineteenth century before him—plus next semester's class preparation. He was determined to spend an industrious summer. Well, maybe Manas wouldn't call. Meredith's fingers slowed and stopped over a line before him: *Sie lächeln, die Schwarzen Hexen.* The menace of Manas gradually faded as Meredith asked himself should he translate it, 'How the dark fates laughed'? or, more rhythmically, 'The swarthy witches are laughing'? And he missed the point that the swarthy witches might be laughing at him for hoping to escape Nicolas Manas.

But Nicolas, too, was being interrupted, that morning.

Not by the 11:00 sun which had spread a warmth around

his spot of grass in the English Gardens and sent him off to sleep; but by a blond girl in a sweater and skirt who stood a few yards off and tenderly regarded him. Should she wake him? She didn't have the heart. Her heart, her maternal feeling, in fact her . . . her being was too busy expressing itself, as quietly thrilled by this sight of her Nicolas curled asleep under a blanket, in a park like a scene from Poussin. She was just not able to break the spell. (Would she have been able to had she known that the blanket belonged to a young ballet dancer Nicolas had found his first night in one of Walter's marked bars? Nicolas: "Look, Nicolas doesn't go to bed with boys—no sex, see? So if all these beers was to get me in bed, man, you just spent a lot of money." Ballet dancer: Protests, tears, and "take what you want, Nicolas, I am a dancer, you are a poet, it is all beautiful." To this meek conjugation Nicolas had replied, "O.K. I can use this blanket. And when you get off this job tonight, well, you can gimme something to eat." And, as a matter of fact, Nicolas had slept in the park only part of one night, when he discovered that Munich's early mornings even in summer are laden with dew. He had always known how to find a bed, and on his own terms. He used the blanket for late morning naps when hosts of the night had gone off to jobs and proved reluctant to leave him in their small rooms with their few possessions. Mary Jane Lerner knew none of this.) Her Nicolas lay curled in the sun like a fawn, black hair falling over his eyes. She was telling herself that this might just be her reward at the end of a long meaningful search for truth. This was surely a reunion in art, it was all that poetry promised.

That long night with Nicolas and marijuana in Venice had opened her eyes. His advice, his voice saying his poems, the fact that he had not so much as touched her—on the contrary, he had put his head back and she had stroked *his* hair—this was all new. Her eyes had opened, she had caught a glimpse of a new faith.

The next day he was gone.

Mary Jane might not be the most intelligent woman, but she was one of the most determined. Even so, it took her several

days to force Walter to tell her Nicolas's whereabouts. Packing a small suitcase, informing her husband whom she found in Harry's Bar that she was taking a train to Germany to get away for a while, patting his arm, refusing a drink, getting on the train—all this had only taken her two hours. She had arrived this morning and come straight to the English Gardens. "Dear girl," Walter had finally said, "he writes me that he is sleeping in the English Gardens." "How like him!" Mary Jane had smilingly said. "His address," Walter added, "is that great foundling home, the American Express. And I will greatly appreciate it if you will not tell your husband. . . ." For the last half hour Mary Jane had criss-crossed half the length of the Gardens and, at last, come upon her knight. His presence there, asleep in the grass, confirmed all that Mary Jane believed it was in his power to teach her: freedom from the tedium of needs such as hotels, the meaning of nature, how to live, simply, with the angels.

She set down her suitcase. Should she wake him? No. Smiling, she sat down on the suitcase and waited and watched.

The sun grew hotter as it approached the midday. Nicolas was dreaming he had his head pressed against the dashboard of a speeding car. He began sweating. In his dream he cried, "Slow down, for Chrissake!" He half woke and rolled over with his face in the cooler grass. His nose was tickled. He sneezed. He blew his nose expertly between his fingers. He spit. He half sat up and scratched at the hair on his forehead and then, more vigorously, between his legs. He belched, he stretched.

Mary Jane got up, quietly, and walked away.

Twenty minutes later she was at the desk of the Gräfin's pension, her tears dried, signing a hotel form and asking for a bath.

Mary Jane belonged to a world acquainted with small attractive hotels and pensions in all the major and minor cities. She had retreated to this world. The Gräfin, who was charmed by her, told her, "Your sister who was here two years ago has

quite *dark* hair. Families are *very* interesting. Nevertheless, there is no bath. But a young American has a bath next to his room and I shall ask him if you might use it this once. And then we shall see. . . ." (The Gräfin was partial to the word 'shall'.)

Meredith was irritated when the Gräfin knocked at his door and told him, "She is a great beauty! Shall we allow her not to have a bath? Actually, she is a sad beauty, I believe. You shall see her at dinner." Rather erotically he listened to the bath water running; when it stopped he began busily typing, sitting up in a virtuous way. Before dinner, he shaved for the second time that day. A thing he did not like doing, generally. Singing into the mirror and his interested eyes, he was pleased to note, when he stripped for his own bath, that he still had the best part of his Italian sun tan. He flexed his muscles for several minutes, got into the tub, and then grew self-conscious of splashing as he washed.

In the small gallery used as the guests' dining room, Meredith sat down at his place and, as always, began teasing the young waitress. He was asking had it been she who left the love note in his sheets (she also served as maid) when he saw the Gräfin followed by a stately blond girl approaching his table. It would be literary license calculated to glamorize life to say that he, oh, dropped his napkin, so startled was he by Mary Jane's beauty. Yet he did drop his badinage with the ordinary country girl as much in deference to the Gräfin as acknowledgement that here, indeed, was something special. Mary Jane had made very little effort. Above a dark green skirt she wore a pale green cashmere sweater with, as he soon perceived, no brassiere beneath. Her white blond hair was clean and brushed long straight down to her shoulders. Perhaps her eyes were larger and more of a summer blue for all they had seen and wept that day. She had touched her face, truly a noble and pure face, only with a lip salve which made her lips glisten but no redder than usual. The result was grace and modesty. As she was rather tired this evening, her simple "Thank you for the use of your bath"—when

she sat down opposite him—spoken in a low voice, came across with coolnesses of intelligence and control. Meredith began falling in love.

Soup: "Only this morning"; veal cutlets: "Oh, I couldn't possibly eat all this!"; wine: "Then you were typing poems this afternoon?"; fruit compote: "If you think I would understand it"; a smile.

"What a beautiful room. Like . . . *as if* it were built of books."

Having opened the windows onto the terrace, lit the fire, translated the motto, Meredith grinned and took down a little triplet of books bound together in old calfskin. Opening these he brought out a schnapps bottle and small gold thimble-sized glasses hidden inside it. "I think the maids tipple in the afternoon."

"Those sweet girls? Oh . . . you're joking. It tastes a little like poppyseed. What's its name? *Steinhäger* . . ." She whispered *Steinhäger* to herself, several times, memorizing it. "Would you first read the poem aloud to me and then let me read it to myself?" Meredith's voice was always deep, with rough bass notes in it; in reading, on platforms, even in the large auditorium of the Y.M.H.A., Poetry Center nights, his voice was intimate, thoughtful, and a trifle shy. His new poem, a love poem, told of a young husband leading his wife upstairs to the bedroom when the lights in the house have failed. The husband points the steps out with his flashlight:

> *Its white stare filling her pale eyes*
> *To the blind brim with appetite,*
> *Bleaching her hands that grazed my thighs*
> *And sent us from the table in surprise*
> *To let the dishes soak all night,*

(Mary Jane asked herself if Meredith was blushing at this line, or was it the fire?) But he read on. In the bedroom before the husband and wife find their way to the bed, the lights go on:

In dull domestic radiance
I watch her staring face, still blind,
Start wincing in obedience
To dirty waters, counters, pots and pans,
Waiting below stairs, in her mind.

Mary Jane took the page from him and began reading it, moving her lips with the words. "Oh, it's that myth, about Orpheus and . . . What *is* her name? I can never pronounce it." She repeated "Eurydice." The third time rather urgently. But with her hand poem again. She raised her face and nodded, "It's sweet, and very sad." They discussed the way people never tell each other the things on their minds. They finished the small bottle of Steinhäger. She confessed she was unhappy, he asked was it her husband? She began to explain, "There was this poet, in Italy . . ." He interrupted, "Please don't judge all poets." They smiled.

At her door, two or three hours later, Mary Jane whispered, "Everyone is asleep." Kissing her he whispered, several times, "Eurydice." The third time rather urgently. But with her hand softly on his cheek for a last moment, she closed the door and he went back down the hall and into his bed excited, expectant, and finally faintly grinning with the feel of her hand against his mouth.

The next morning, promptly, when the American Express opened its glass doors, Nicolas appeared and demanded his mail. He was suspicious of the place because someone along the way had said, "Get your mail there but don't let them change your money." This kind of advice appealed to Nicolas and he followed it so faithfully he was hardly able to be civil to the girl behind the mail desk. He had a suspicion that they held mail back until they had an opportunity to check it with Authorities (nameless). He always examined it in front of the clerk, blocking others who were waiting, smiling in a knowing way as he studied the sealed flaps.

"Uh huh!" he would murmur, if there was any trace of smudge along the gummed edges.

As he'd figured, there was a letter from his publisher in New York—his rise in publicity had secured him a large hard-binding-type publishing house. The check enclosed was about a tenth of what he'd expected. (Had it been exactly what he had expected it would have been half what he expected when it arrived.) This check was so small he thought of tearing it up and mailing back the pieces. Insult to injury were a mass of feather-light proof pages he was asked to correct and return (with postage money from the check, no doubt, the bastards!). "Jesus!" he said aloud. But as no one waiting behind him asked what the matter was, he stepped to one side, seized an American Express pen and change of address form, scrawled on the back, "You got editors, *you* read these, N.M." By reaching over the counter to the clerk's table he got an American Express envelope, addressed it to his luckless publisher, stuffed in the proof sheets, and, as an afterthought, added, "You call that money?"

Other letters were from other Beatniks and there was one from Walter Norman: "I've written Wilder. Look him up. Now, that blonde muse left here to follow you. And I've been spending hours of my valuable time dodging her six foot husband who does not seem to believe I know nothing about it. Yes, look up Wilder. Why should he get off free? Or is there justice in that argument? No, I cannot send any money. As it is you left me begging crumbs. What do you think I am, the Doge?" Nicolas smiled to see how tough Norman could be, by mail. He composed: "Dogs and doges in Venice/Sniff around together," put it on a postcard (he always carried several, a habit he'd picked up from Walter) to mail off to his former host. He then turned his attention to his other letters, garnering bits of news from them (which for all their claims of innocence were surprisingly worldly): "You ought to find yourself in Athens around September. W . . . will be there and he's told L . . . that he thinks our stuff has something. And he's got the gold," and: "Heard

A . . .'s going to be in Venice in August. A connection, man," and: "we talked R . . . into an edition. Send some stuff. You getting any poems out of Germany?" Registering all this, Nicolas made a quick inventory. Yes, he could get out three poems, two he had in his head, one on paper. This, for kicks, had been conceived as a result of a German typewriter he had found in an apartment, two nights before. It was entitled, "Sputnik II passes Munich," and it began, *"The quick bröwn föx jumped över the möön"* and ended, *"Öld gaschambers are nöw making Völkswagens."* Its quick and foxy conception that night had much impressed the typewriter's owner and been good for a subsequent breakfast and two dinners, where he was widely introduced as America's most famous young poet.

Even so, and especially this morning, Nicolas was ready to kiss central Europe goodbye. Having used the myth book so often, he couldn't have helped glancing at some of its content and it had already occurred to him that a few poems, mailed from, say, some Greek village, would have an extra kick. Greek stuff was always hot. But the plans forming in his head always ran up against a wall of gold. With the twenty dollars left from Walter's checks, and this morning's check, minus postage—the Bastards! —he had about forty or so. Frowning, he looked up to study the crowd—you never knew. . .

Mary Jane, just then, walked in. He watched her go to the cashier's window and cash two checks (he'd have to warn her). He tried remembering her last name (damn Norman!). Perhaps she'd come over to the mail desk. Slightly turning, he leaned with his back close to the mail girl's window. His wish was granted, and he heard her say her name. He waited. She left, not noticing him, he followed.

He had not approached her at the desk because there were other Americans around, one of them might be a spy of her husband's. Patiently he followed along two blocks, boarded the same streetcar back to Schwabing. He paused while she found a table at a cafe and then made a casual approach, passing, as he

did, another table where some recently made fans hailed him, "Hey, Manas, you after something?" It was a sunny late morning and Mary Jane was opening her Paris *Herald,* asking for coffee, exposing her fair head to lightly swirl in the currents of air. She looked up.

"Hello, Nicolas, I saw you in the American Express."

For a moment he was stymied. He pondered swiftly and then remarked, "I followed you. How come you here?"

Mary Jane was too quick, she out-candored him, "*I* followed *you,* but changed my mind, yesterday."

By now he was sitting down, had ordered a beer to give himself time. She turned back to her paper. Anyway she might stand him a beer. He began gathering his wits.

"It was like a dream, that night, huh?"

She replied, "Yes."

"I been thinkin about you."

She smiled, "I thought about you, too—for nearly a week."

"Listen, thoughts cross each other. I believe that. It's a great feelin. . . ."

"Is it?"

"Look, I don't get you. . . ."

"You're right, there."

Although none of this made any sense to him, he instantly perceived a prize flapping away on dollar signs. Assuming his little boy face he looked up at her from under several locks of hair. "You going to be Nicolas's angel?"

Mary Jane was swayed. This assault had come quickly, and he did look ragged in that blue shirt and those pants, his eyes. . . She forced herself to think of her *new* poet. Yet only twenty seconds passed before she said, "No," once again. And as she said it she waved to the waitress.

Not listening to the No's, Nicolas had only heard the pause, seen the wave as a call for help, and he moved in, instantly:

"Lemme buy that coffee for you. Nicolas wants to give you something, see?"

It was a good stroke, it would have been felt by others; however, buying and giving were the creativeness of Mary Jane's life. They recalled the barterings in her marriage to a man almost as rich as herself. Had Nicolas asked her to buy him his beer, he might have laid a fresh claim. Instead she answered, "No, you save your money, Nicolas," in a kind voice. And to the waitress, who had responded quickly to her call, as did doormen, taxis, salespeople, (even telephones performed for Mary Jane to extricate her from situations, she was generous with tipping). *"Danke,"* she said, picked up purse and paper, patted Nicolas's hand, and left.

He watched her easily bringing a taxi to a halt, getting in, and disappearing up Leopoldstrasse. Although his thoughts were black, Nicolas registered nothing on his dark face which he turned toward the friends at the other table. They hailed him again and he took his beer over to them. A half hour later he left, a plan in mind, having added to his luster by writing something at the table telling them it was a poem inspired by the blonde. "I'll give it to her tonight." "The poem?" an acned student from Minnesota asked. Once again, Nicolas belabored them for only having sex on their minds, under cover of which he left, before they realized he had not paid for his beers.

Meredith had awakened about 10:00 a.m. As he was prowling around in his pre-coffee gloom, looking for clothes, feeling his face, he saw a slip of paper under his door:

"It's morning and I've gone to telegraph the outer world. Will I see you at lunch? Eurydice."

"Hm-m-mm" he muttered. Remembering, then, he brightened, smiling out at the sunny gardens. Two hours later, the maid brought yet another note:

"I'm outside at the door. Got a letter from Norman in Venice. Can I come in? Nicolas Manas."

"Damn!" cried Meredith to himself. Irritably, he followed the maid away from his work to receive his fellow poet. As they went out through the old house to the front he tried to recall any

lines of Manas's he might know. His memory was excellent. Failing that, he tried to remember the names of any of the poems. Failing that, he was reduced to remembering his own quatrain and, inaccurately, the title of a pamphlet of Manas's.

For each, the appearance of the other was a surprise.

Thinking he was going to meet an Older Poet, Nicolas had put on a clean open-neck white shirt and washed and shaved. Meredith's frank face and tall, athletic body came as a shock. As the image of Robert Frost receded, he asked himself, 'Why'd I use up a white shirt?' He began arranging his psyche to produce a youthfulness younger than his host's. Meredith saw, in the soft light in front of the Gräfin's desk, someone very young. Carravaggio came to mind and, thinking of Walter, Meredith understood the amusement Manas must provide him. There was something, Teenage Tempter? Puberty's Spokesman? something, of impertinent youth about this Manas. And when he heard Nicolas's tough voice asking the Gräfin, sarcastically, "Guess you lemme go in, now?" he was more amused, himself, than shocked.

The Gräfin shrugged, raised an eyebrow, returned to her ledgers. It was Meredith she was undecided about. She was fairly certain his relationship to Mary Jane might turn into something she could not tolerate in her house, if it hadn't already started. She could not bring herself to mention it. She was relying on a new coldness on her part to act as a warning.

Making their way back to Meredith's quarters, each was preparing himself: Nicolas, looking around, saying "Gosh!" every few steps, was creating a boyishness; Meredith, being made to feel expansive by this, was preparing an open mind.

They entered the large ex-library. Nicolas's cry, "Hey, man, this is *great*!" did much to warm Meredith. Monkey-like, Nicolas danced around the room stroking the bindings of the books, as if they were so many bananas. He went back to open and close the door and marvel at how it disappeared and became shelves. "Check that, man!" he cried. Meredith stood by the windows, smiling. "There are all kinds of gadgets. Look, these

bars on the window, they open out, like a shutter, see? And look . . ." he pointed to the fireplace with its motto. "What's it say, man?" When he had translated it, Nicolas told him:

"Yeh, man. Now that's the truth! We all gotta burn, burn bright! Like, you know, like real poets . . . right?" The accompanying looks, while strangely flirtatious, were flattering and respectful. At last they settled down, rather formally. One of them was less at a loss how to begin than the other. Nicolas, after a brief pause in which he studied Meredith's face with grave attention, said, "You know? We gonna be *friends.* I like you. I like how you look."

Meredith felt this was a straightforward speech, although it embarrassed him, somewhat. "Well, thank you," he replied.

"No, I *mean* it, friends! We all poets, right? We gotta love each other cause there's nothin but cold outside, right? What they know, they know how it is to burn? Like it says there on the fire. No, they do not." The final jump from the basic English of Louis Armstrong to the crispness of T. S. Eliot was of a virtuosity not lost on Meredith. It bemused him, further defenses fell. He found himself more and more pleased that Manas had come. This was not work, of course, but it was as lively a substitute for it as he had found in a long time. Nicolas continued: "Now if this was, say, *Greece,* in the Golden Times, we'd a embraced. How's it go? The kiss of brotherhood. Right?" His dark, keen eyes looked for a sign, for with several homosexual poets this sentiment had had a marked effect. But seeing only an open nodding face he hastened on, "We's all soldiers in the army of Poetry, right?"

Meredith cleared his throat and clenched his fists a few times, releasing temporary embarrassments and showing, he hoped, a fraternal frame of mind. Suddenly, he was inspired to ask, "How would you like a bottle of beer. I think I'll send for some. How about that?" (He wanted to say 'right?' but as yet he couldn't bring it out in his own tone of voice.)

"Great, man. No food around here, huh? I mean Nicolas

didn't eat much today. . . ." At once, Meredith became guilty and compassionate. Nicolas saying 'today' suggested hours of being abroad in the world, while he himself had slovenly slept. Next, he thought, 'My God! He's not eating regularly!' He leapt to his feet, grabbed the telephone and asked the Gräfin, "Please, would you send a few bottles of beer and are there, is there some cheese and cold meat, something for sandwiches? Thank you." His lunch appointment had slipped his mind.

"Say, that's great, man," Nicolas said, laying his hand on Meredith's arm as he passed. "How about it, when all that gets here, will you read me a poem? And then I'll say one of mine. You do that for Nicolas?"

"Why, sure . . . certainly. That's a fine idea, Manas." Meredith's first uneasiness occurred, now, when he found himself deploring what he thought was a pompous note in his own voice, and the wish for a more engaging manner, something more involved with their experience. Putting one leg aslant across the other, he leaned back. This left him at an odd angle, the Gräfin's library chairs were spacious, so to divert attention from himself he pointed towards Nicolas's pants pocket:

"Is that a book, there?"

Nicolas grinned, delighted. "Hey! How *about* that? You just like me! Nicolas always say, 'What's that book?' These just some myths . . ." and he held out the book and riffled its pages.

Meredith looked, noticed the title, saw many scribblings on the margins. "Are you working on myths?" he asked, pleased that he had an opening to introduce his new Orpheus poem, and to discover that Manas did do research work.

"Look, I dream of going to Greece. That's Nicolas's dream, Meredith . . . Uh, that O.K. I call you by your first name? Nobody calls me like Nick . . . but if you wanna, fine! That'd be *our* name. But usually not."

"Fine, Nicolas."

"O.K. Great. Now it's like Greece was right in the middle of my dreams. Theseus! There's a myth, man. This Theseus is a

bullfighter, see. I'm thinkin of a play, a play about love, and this play'll be all about this bullfight with Theseus and how you get hung on poetry and how it's really *love.* Get it? You and me we fight out a poem and its like everybody's lookin at us, but who's gettin hurt? I wanna feelin of blood and this Theseus and this big bull and it'll have a line like: *Crete, there's a lot of sun there/ And they yell 'Theseus, get in there!'/And . . .*" (At this point, the red-faced maid carried in the tray of food and beer bottles.) Nicolas looked, briefly, went on, *"And there's no hotdogs, no mustard/Nobody's selling anything. Just the big sound of Greeks!* . . . You get it?"

Meredith was fascinated. This kind of involvement, the immediacy Manas conveyed, made him at once grateful and a little envious. More than that, Manas calling on him now seemed to include him as a part of the vast action of poetry. For the moment, he could do no more than get to his feet and bustle around putting sandwiches together and snapping back the porcelain stoppers on the beer bottles. "You know, Nicolas," he said, as he worked, "it's a wonderful idea . . . Greece . . . I . . ."

"I'll just drink outa the bottle," Nicolas interjected.

"Oh, yes. Good idea."

Meredith went back to his sandwich making. As there was a silence beside him, he imagined perhaps there was awkwardness because Manas was hungry. He tried bridging this by saying, "Your poems, Nicolas, uh . . . 'Flybait'? I . . ."

" 'Jailbait', Meredith," Manas corrected him, through a large mouthful of cheese and ham, "Poems Out of Confinement —that's the way they described."

The following silence was extremely painful to Meredith until, looking up, he realized his guest was occupied eating, a bland look on his face. So he contented himself not explaining his mistake and merely sipped from his own bottle.

"Let's hear that poem you got up your sleeve, Meredith, and I'll tell you about my new book's coming out, *Hello Doom.* How's that for a title?"

Meredith sat and thought. Whenever his literary opinion was asked, he gave his answer hard thought, he always searched for an honest reaction. Finally he said, "Don't you think there's perhaps a little too much of the Françoise Sagan in it? I mean, you know, *Bonjour* . . ."

"Say, Franz . . . He's a German poet, right? I don't want anything Kraut about this."

"Well, no. Actually, you see it's a young girl, a French girl, she's written all these weird popular novels, and I just thought, perhaps . . ."

Tipping up his bottle, Nicolas had a worried look; swallowing, he said, angrily, "That title wasn't my idea at *all*. If that bastard's goin to get me classified . . . Well, I'll fix him. You watch. Now read me your poem. What's it about?

"As a matter of fact, Greek myth. The Orpheus-Eurydice myth, you know." Meredith found the poem and began reading it in his earnest voice. Nicolas chewed and swallowed and stared at him. He felt pretty sure he'd put himself across. On what grounds, he couldn't say, yet, but now he was relaxed and quite a bit more complacent about the hours ahead. The point was not to be too friendly. He started forming some words of reaction to the poem.

It was finished. He could tell because Meredith looked up at him. Nicolas nodded, "Say, I liked that sexy part in there. Now, you oughta . . . Wait a minute. Where's the can?"

"The . . ? Oh, it's right out here." Meredith took Manas to the hall and pointed up to the end at the toilet door marked 'OO'. He waited. And he waited, not realizing that Manas was several bottles of beer ahead. At last, he heard Manas calling, "Hey! Hey, man! Where are we!" Laughing, Meredith went out into the hall and said, "In here."

Through her door came their voices.

Mary Jane stopped writing in her journal. She raised her eyebrows, thoughtfully. Could he have followed her, *here?* Weariness and impatience, for a second or so, overcame her. Then her

natural resolve flooded back. Putting down her small gold pen, she took off the plain summer dress she wore and looked around for something more interesting. Next, she brushed her hair and sat down to work on her lips.

Meredith was rather depressed. They had not discussed his poem, on the contrary, Manas had launched into an analysis of Walter Norman, as man and poet, with considerable condescension. As a result Meredith was telling himself his poem was, indeed, slight, not worked enough, not worth discussion. He was always willing to believe the worst about his own work. And then he noticed the bookshelves of the door moving in. A soft voice asked, "Do I get any lunch?" And Mary Jane appeared.

The warm rose of her dress, the red of her lips, and her hair introduced a whole new element of light. He looked at her with renewed pleasure, as if reminded of the merits of a book he had put down unfinished.

Nicolas's first thought was, 'Geez' *She's* following *me!'* His first look was clearly suspicious. Then it became apparent she and Meredith knew each other. With that, his mind fell to work. Meanwhile, he had pushed to his feet, in imitation of Meredith, and stood half smiling, half smirking at her.

"Yes," she was saying, "we do know each other. In fact, we saw each other just this morning, getting our mail. What was in *your* mail, Nicolas?"

Now, Nicolas knew very little about small talk—unless personal questions, various forms of threat, innuendo, and streams of the subconscious constituted the New Small Talk—as a result, Mary Jane's question seemed to him almost insultingly pointless and he answered, stiffly, "I got these proofs from my publisher and some letters."

"Well, well," Meredith exclaimed, pulling up a chair for Mary Jane, "maybe you would let me read some poems from the proof sheets?"

More interested in watching Meredith's attentions to Mary

Jane than his own answer, Nicolas replied, "I sent 'em back, as was."

Meredith was amazed. He had always worked hard on his own proofs, making minute changes, reluctant to let them go. "You *did*?"

"Look, those jokers don't pay *me* nothin. So Nicolas don't do their work!"

"Well, I guess . . ."

"That's certainly *one* way of looking at it," Mary Jane put in. "Now how about lunch, Meredith?"

Such tricks were not new to Nicolas. He'd figure out why, later, Mary Jane wanted to be rid of him. The best thing now to do would be to put Meredith under obligation to him by leaving and making it clear he did not feel wanted. Even as he thought, he acted.

"Well, I guess Nicolas better be goin?" he announced to Meredith, in slightly hurt tones.

"We could maybe all meet, tonight," Meredith hastened to suggest, peering at Mary Jane who went right on smiling. "I know a place, it's perhaps a little odd, called '*Die Dritte*'—it's a bar, with music."

"Yeh, I know the place. O.K." Nicolas looked at Mary Jane, "You comin, too?"

"If Meredith likes it, I'll go," she said, looking at Meredith.

And, "Swell," *he* said, as if everything were solved, "we'll get there at, oh, 9:00? How's that?"

"Great," Nicolas stood his ground a moment longer, a sullen moment further muddying the air and allowing responsibility its lead. Meredith started hesitantly toward the door when Nicolas was blessed with one of his improvisations.

With a wink, he shook his head at Meredith. "Look, that Frau at the door bugs me. Nicolas'll just take off through here." He went to the window, slipped the hasp, opened the bars and scooted over the sill, dropping lightly to the terrace. "See you later," he called to Meredith, then sauntered off across the lawns

to the distant gate. There was a pathetic, jaunty look to the retreating figure, and a quiet in the room he had just left.

"He knows his way around," Mary Jane finally said.

"A friend of mine in Venice seems to have sent him to me."

"A *friend?*" she asked. But she quickly smiled and said, "What will it be today? More potato salad?" It took her a fraction of a second longer than she would have guessed to win him back, musing there, looking away over the sunlit lawns. In the end, she prevailed. Over the lunch table he had returned to her in force. In fact, it was Mary Jane who remembered their appointment at 9:00. "Oh," he sighed. "Well, it's across town. You needn't change, you are what we all will try to impress."

They were late.

Nicolas was discovered sitting with a group of five friends at a table for two, back by the small stand where an all German combo was playing *Sweet Georgia Brown* for the seventh time. One of the people Meredith knew, a young journalist. He was surprised for it was a talented young journalist. He waved. Nicolas got right up and came over to the door.

"Hey buddy! Say, you come on back and meet. . ."

Mary Jane said, "It looks crowded back there to me, and loud. Let's sit right over here and Nicolas, you bring one or two of your friends over here." She smiled up at Meredith as she said this and explained, "We'd all be squatting back there on our haunches."

Nicolas studied her. *"O.K."* he said.

Smiling, in all innocence, Meredith suggested, "Bring Christian over." Then, immediately, he had to turn and help Mary Jane in behind a small table.

Nicolas did return with Meredith's friend, Christian, and another of his table, and a fresh tactic. He took a chair next to Mary Jane. All affability, he urged her, "Let Nicolas get you a beer."

"We've ordered, Nicolas, there'll be time." She had out a cigarette and turned to Meredith who lit it.

The Germans were dazzled by Mary Jane. "Does she speak German?" asked Christian, in German.

"Ja," said Mary Jane, who had a German grandfather, from Munich, as a matter of fact. *"Aber der Manas, hier, spricht kein Wort."* And she waved a hand at Nicolas. "We will speak English then, for our Nicolas," Christian said. He believed Mary Jane was Nicolas's possession, and he hoped to win favor with her. Nicolas, of course, had so persuaded him.

"Gee," Nicolas murmured, "you speak this stuff, huh?" He gazed at her with admiring eyes. "She is full of surprises," he announced. Mary Jane merely smiled and blew smoke up in the air.

Soon, Meredith and the other two were talking about the new Berlin ultimatum and Nicolas turned, confidentially, to Mary Jane:

"You hate Nicolas, right?"

"No."

"Why the freeze?"

"I'm occupied, that's all."

"Yeh, I'll bet!" Nicolas laughed, imagining she would join him.

"You're a crude one, Nicolas," she told him.

His voice was suddenly low and fierce, "Look, don't cross Nicolas up."

"You'll do that for yourself." And, thinking it was too easy a contest, Mary Jane made the mistake of turning away from him to listen to the others.

Nicolas waited until there was a pause, after an order for another round of beers, and he laid his hand on Mary Jane's arm, saying, as if unaware anyone could hear, "Let's not fight, huh? We all oughta love each other, right?" This was the first time it had dawned on Meredith there had been a fight. He looked at Mary Jane. She lost her head, a moment, shook off Nicolas's hand, and said, "Oh, do stop it!"

"O.K., O.K. . . ." he replied, grinning at Meredith, shrugging, as if to say, 'These women . . .' Meredith's bewilderment

deepened. And the others, as they always do, began talking again. Nicolas pursued his course.

"You wanna dance with Nicolas? We dance fine, right? Come on!"

He leapt up and did a few steps, holding out his hands, smiling.

All those eyes on her were too much for Mary Jane. She wavered, she laughed, falsely, shook her head; reaching for Meredith's hand she tried to re-establish her identity. He cried, "Come on, Nicolas, you give us a dance!" Which Nicolas, at last in his element, did.

It was a dance mainly of rotating hips, crotch out, accompanied by cries to the ceiling, "Gimmie mewsik! Mew-ew-ew-*zik!*" The Germans loved it. In spite of himself, Meredith laughed, half embarrassed, half delighted. And at the end—it had been *Georgia Brown,* again—Nicolas fell back in his chair. They all went on applauding. He mopped his brow, black hair fell forward. At this point his modesty appeared, as it did when he knew indisputably all attention was his. He drank off his beer and cried, "Gimme time, hey, gimme time!" He had captured them all. Clapping her hands, smiling, Mary Jane stared at him; all the while realizing that she was indeed up against something she had better turn her mind to. "Next time you dance, too, O.K.?" Nicolas asked, in the easiest way rubbing his head against her shoulder and looking up to smile, then extending his smile all around.

"Oh, no, Nicolas, I could never do that!" she said, while asking herself, 'There must be something I *can* do, now what is it?'

Nicolas began talking across her to Meredith, explaining how you had to get *with* it, with music, with everything. "You gotta know what *now* is!" he cried, excited by his own words. Mary Jane could see that Meredith was taking it all in—she had herself, once. Watching Nicolas manage to make an exclusive thing of experience, a unique, patented item, she reacted as if

she were the magician's assistant eager to see the effect on the audience. But when she saw that this effect, on Meredith, was to minimize him she resented it, first as a fellow human being, next because she was womanly and, in Meredith, she wanted a man who would know who *he* was. It was as if, in considering the purchase of him, she did not want the goods tampered with.

The evening went right on being Nicolas's as glasses came, round after round. Eventually, her opportunity came. Meredith rose and excused himself, in a manner that proved how cowed he was. Nicolas's grin and remark, "Don't worry, man, we'll wait," seemed to imply that a Real Life Force Type would never bother with formalities if he had to go to the toilet. And so Meredith was more sent away than excused. Mary Jane was moved to action.

Ignoring the two others, she turned to Nicolas. They, seeming to expect this would happen as soon as Meredith left, did not listen.

"Look, Nicolas. Why don't you go back to Venice?"

Confident he had won, Nicolas settled back in his seat.

"Gold, baby. No gold."

"How much, Nicolas?"

"Two . . ." he looked at her, "three hundred."

"Two," she replied.

As a hundred and fifty would have done it, Nicolas shrugged.

"O.K. Two."

"I'll write them in the women's room," she told him, matter of factly, as if she did this every day. "And when will you leave?"

"Don't you worry, baby, I've *had* this place."

"Just remember, I can always claim these checks were stolen, if you don't. . ."

Meredith reappeared, coming across the floor, self-consciously, as if they were all watching him. Nicolas had just time to hiss, "Dollars, that is!" and Mary Jane to give him one small contemptuous stare, saying, "God!"

She left the table as Meredith came to sit down. So few women came to this bar that she had the women's room to herself. Traveler's checks signed, a quick inspection in the mirror, a decision to leave, right away, with Meredith, took five minutes. She came back to the table, passing the checks to Nicolas smoothly, as she took her place. Refusing the next round of drinks, she suggested to Meredith that she would like to go home. He was surprised. She said, firmly, "Yes, I think I'd like to get back."

"All right! Let me finish this beer." He was attempting to preserve some independence in front of his friends.

But Mary Jane's habit was that once a bargain had been completed, the price paid, she wanted things her way. She saw money as a clarifier. She never had stores send purchases, for example, she always carried them. "Of course," she told Meredith, "I can go alone."

"No, no. Come on," he said, gulping his beer.

"You goin?" Nicolas asked, showing surprise. Actually, he was anxious to have a look at the checks, just to make sure, and he was on his feet clearing the way even as he asked.

Meredith, always courteous, and in this case determined to make his exit his own, stepped behind Mary Jane, who only nodded and went off to the door. His farewells took a minute too long. Her impatience, shortening in a logarithmic curve, gave out. She was on the street and, with her usual good luck, getting into a taxi when he rushed out to find her.

"Hey!" was all that he managed before the black Mercedes moved away. He trotted a few steps, stopped, frowned, and stood there, irresolute.

Inside, the Germans speculated. They imagined that Mary Jane and Nicolas had made a later appointment. They told themselves that Meredith would come back in, alone. Almost instantly, they were proved correct.

Sitting down, deliberately indifferent, Meredith only said, "She took off."

"Man, that's a strange one," Nicolas informed him, looking up from something in his hands.

Now Nicolas expanded. He ordered more beers, Meredith was still there to pay. To insure this, he moved over into Mary Jane's chair to speak directly into Meredith's face, saying "You know, Meredith, I read that little poem of yours about my kind of poetry. No, look, Nicolas's not mad. I gotta say this, we gotta stick *together*, man. This is a lonely life. . . ." Almost anytime, Nicolas could move himself to tears thinking of how lonely and misunderstood he was. The truth being, of course, that he passed scarcely an hour of any day out of company. He would have told you, the shine of water on his cheeks, that none of *that mattered*. "You sit there, like at a table, and the black wall closes in, right, man? You feel that, man?" Meredith nodded, distractedly. He wanted to go, he was nervous about Mary Jane; but this stroke about his Beatnik quatrain half paralyzed his urge and he sat on. He talked to his friend Christian. Then, turning, he was aware that Nicolas had left the table. He rose, paid the bill, said goodbyes, and went off to the door. And he had just time to wave across the room to Nicolas before he went out. "See you around, man!" Nicolas called.

"Let me in."

"Tomorrow."

"Just for a few minutes."

"Please, tomorrow."

"I'll keep knocking."

"Well . . . Really, Meredith. I was asleep."

"Did you think *I* would sleep?"

The next twenty minutes were rather hard on Meredith. Mary Jane had begun her campaign. He was told she respected people who worked, realized their gifts, and depended on no one. Their parting was cool, but not final. He shut her door and started, rather dejectedly, for his own. 'I'll let him think awhile before I go in,' Mary Jane told herself.

When the door of the bar had closed on Meredith, Nicolas

realized he had missed an opportunity. He still wanted company, he had not been lying to Mary Jane when he told her he had *had* the company of Munich bars. Besides, there was the question of where to sleep. Nicolas convinced himself he had felt only a tentative rejection in Meredith's departure. An eternal optimism gripped him on days when things went well. This was certainly one of them. He believed in wringing such days dry. Seize the moment! he might have said (and he would be saying when he read and approved of Emerson). He stood there ignoring several people and reasoning that, yes, for her treatment of him he had been paid back by Mary Jane, but for this poem about Beatniks Meredith still owed him something. Next, he was outside the door of the bar and inside a crowded Volkswagen about to leave those parts and willing enough to have him along. He fell into the back seat and cried, "Let me off up there around Pfy-fey-fee-lish, how-the-hell-you-say-it Platz." That got a laugh. He got another laugh when he lay back on three sets of knees and said, "Keep your hands off Nicolas's *lunch!*" (One of them who had had a scholarship out in Wisconsin translated for the others.)

Twelve minutes later he was unlatching the bars at Meredith's window. Then he was in the dark room.

There was a vast silence in and around the Gräfin's pension, the past midnight silence of a house of the genteel poor. Some silences, such as this one, reduce even burglars to a nervous fumbling state. Hardened types, old timers, have complained that the worst feature of the trade is the darkness and silence—there is no way to train for it. Nicolas whispered, "Hey, man, hey, Meredith!" and nothing but the dark responded. He tried again, the same ominous silence replied. He panicked. He felt out for things. He touched a chair. He found the pleated paper lampshade but he failed to remember that European lamps have the switch on the cord. And then his hands, as once before, groped along the narrow coldnesses of books—this time he cursed them. He came to a corner, more books. The smooth forearm of a

leather chair brushed his thigh. And more books. Tears came into his eyes. He stepped into the fireplace, struck his head against its motto. He tried to remember. He stumbled against the bed and fell onto its silk comforter and lay there panting and listening. He wanted to get out but the night had so darkened he could not see the windows. Yet, he was about to try again when he heard a door close, somewhere not far away, and steps come softly down the hall. He remained on the bed, his knees drawn up. There was a sound of air as the thick door opened, a click as it closed. A voice said, "Damn!" There was a snap and then a flood of light. And then he was focusing on Meredith who had already taken off his tie.

"What the hell!" This sounded like a shout, but was actually only in Meredith's normal deep voice.

They stared a second or so at each other.

Nicolas: "I . . . uh. Look, I figured . . ."

"You figured *what?*"

"Look, you got this room. Let Nicolas . . . It's dark out there. I . . ."

"Yeah, yeah. I'm in no mood for jokes. You better get out, Manas."

"Who's jokin?" Nicolas had at last got hold of himself. In fast, near belligerent tones, he began stating his case: "You gonna let me stay here, tonight. This big place, all these books . . . Nicolas stay, read by the fire. We *poets,* man, and . . ."

As Meredith showed no signs of indecision, he hesitated. Realizing he had better try tougher tactics, he pivoted around and took a stand between the bed and the rear wall of books. There, with amazing speed, he got out of his clothes, throwing them, shirt, khakis, socks, shorts, toward Meredith as if he were making offerings. Then, naked, he got back on the bed and squatted facing Meredith.

Who, this while, had merely gaped at him. But now his jaw snapped shut and he took a step forward. Only Nicolas saw the

door opening behind Meredith's back and Mary Jane come into the room.

"Oh," she gasped, staring at them, her anger lost in her horror. "I just came . . ." she faltered in childlike accents, "to borrow one of your . . ." With desperate fingers she plucked from the nearest shelf *Romantic Reykjavik,* and made her escape before either of them could speak. Returning to her room she collected herself enough to decide she must go back to Venice, as soon as possible. Feeling chaste as well as virtuous, she told herself that true adventures, after all, were those of the mind.

Meanwhile, Meredith had started for the door, stopped, turned, and, as he strode across the room, resolutely, was yelling, "Out! Out!" He reached for Nicolas, perhaps to take him by the ears.

"Hey, hey, easy! Hey!" Nicolas fell back on an elbow, his other arm held out defensively. By this he was grasped and brought to his feet so fast he tottered there like one of those weighted toys. Next, shoulders gripped, he was hustled to the window and thrust through onto the terrace, without even realizing how much he had helped by bending his knees. Outside, he faced the lighted library window and, piece by piece, had his clothes flung at him. Meredith leaned out and in a lowered voice declared, "And don't come creeping around here again, creep." The bars were shut, the windows, too. Through these, Meredith could be seen pacing around with his hands to his head.

Standing out there, a shiver took Nicolas, and then rage, and then—revenge! He gathered wind, cupped his mouth, shouted: "Kraut-lover! Phoney! No good verse-maker!"

He went on a little longer, improvising, until a light—controlled in the Gräfin's quarters—lit up the whole front of the house, the terrace, Nicolas, and part of the lawn beyond. In it, Nicolas posed, defiantly, confronting three elderly country ladies, an ex-Wehrmacht general, a family of four Swiss, the patroness, and five serving girls.

At last, he faced about and marched across the lawn into

the shadows. The light, as if hospitably, faintly showed the way until he reached the gate. Having seen him there it clicked off and the scene was black. Meredith, at his desk, clutched his bowed head muttering to himself, "And tomorrow . . . ?" Mary Jane stopped listening and went on with her packing, intent on taking the first train out for Venice. All the others—but for the Gräfin—opened their bedroom doors, held their robes around them and peered at their neighbors up and down the hallways.

On the road, pausing only to get back into his clothes, pat his pockets to see if passport or money had been lost in the melee, Nicolas set off for an all night newstand where he left his traveling sack and his blanket. His spirits were remarkably unlowered. Soon he was under a chestnut tree in the English Gardens adjusting himself to the hollows around the roots. And he was asleep some time before the storm, descending from Alpine passes and valleys around the Tegernsee, had reached the city's southern suburbs. Shortly after, however, the thunder became Wagnerian, the lightning so operatic whole measures of an aria could have been sung from darkness to darkness.

The rain came down for about an hour, perhaps, without waking Nicolas. Only when his legs were drenched through blanket and pants did he sit up and stare around. He huddled there horrified, a solitary audience to this theater in the English Gardens. Trunks of trees appeared, vertical whitenesses, like a speeded-up movie, and left their imprint stuttering in his eyes. Curr-rr-*rash!* Bam! A panorama of trees and bushes in a long pale fright. Intense blackness. It was as terrifying as it was plotless.

"Gee-zuzz!" Nicolas whispered. It was as nearly a prayer as he had made in years. When he could move he was whimpering. In a series of jerks he made a sack of the blanket to hold his belongings. Time and again he jarred back against the chestnut, startled by a particularly vivid onslaught. Clenching his teeth against their chatter, he made a dash for the nearest path and

while he ran down it toward the distant street light he was protesting, "O.*K.! O.K.!*"

The rain tried to choke him as he ran. His course was a dotted one of doorways. He burst into the Schwabing station where a cleaning women watched him drip on her wet floors and, generously, offered him a large dirty cloth to mop his head. *"Schlechtes Wetter,"* she said. If not the words, he understood the gratuitousness of the remark and mumbled, *"Ja, ja."* He decided on the main station and got there, extravagantly, by taxi. The driver, incensed at his meager tip, complained about the wet seat left behind, wasted on Nicolas who only slammed the door.

There is almost a spiritual air to railroad stations at 4:30 in the mornings. He wandering through it, idly, stood for a while in front of a toilet mirror. At length, he sank down on a bench in the third class waiting room. He had the bemused air of a child who has been thoroughly punished. For the first time in a life of such public places at such an hour he was unaware of speculative eyes turned upon him. He did not see a policeman looking his way and talking to a janitor: "He is not an American. He is Greek. I have been watching him for some time." Then, under their stare, Nicolas gave a start. His hand reached into his breast pocket where he had a package of cigarettes in which he had put Mary Jane's checks. He was saying, "No . . . no . . . don't let 'em be . . ." Slowly he pulled them out—they were dry. He breathed.

He need not have had that particular anxiety. Life, toward little plots, is extremely permissive. All such small efforts are allowed. Limited demands you are granted. Life says, "All right, now what?" and sits back and watches.

Even his passport had not run. He relaxed against the bench. Seeing his nervous search, the policeman nodded, wisely. But with a burst of vehemence, the janitor said, "Those good-for-nothings!" and in disgust went back to his work.

At 9:00 that morning, the Gräfin was at her desk making

out Herr Wilder's bill. "There shall be no more of that," had been her words to Meredith, a half hour before, "I shall make out your bill." The others in the gallery dining room were waiting uselessly for him to appear. Outside, everywhere, the sun was radiant, picking out each detail with glistening edges. Regular walkers strode through the English Gardens and marveled at such freshness.

When it opened, Nicolas sent a telegram at the Post-Telegraf to Walter Norman: "Arrive tonight by train on my way to Greece meet me Nicolas," thereby using all his last marks.

At 9:05, the Venedig Express departed for the South. He was on it long before it left. He did not see Mary Jane boarding First Class. Nor could either of them know the kind of scene her husband would make upon their joint arrival, that evening, in Venice.

It would be interesting to relate, but people tell so many versions it is impossible to get at the truth.

DIGGING IT OUT

The icicle finger of death, aimed
At the heart always, melts in the sun
But here at night, now with the porchlight
Spilling over the steps, making snow
More marmoreal than the moon could,
It grows longer and, as it lengthens,
Sharpens. All along the street cars are
Swallowed up in the sarcophagous
Mounds, and digging out had better start
Now, before the impulse to work dies,
Frozen into neither terror nor
Indifference, but a cold longing
For sleep. After a few shovelfuls,
Chopped, pushed, then stuck in a hard white fudge,
Temples pound; the wind scrapes icily
Against the beard of sweat already
Forming underneath most of my face,
And halting for a moment's only
Faltering, never resting. There is
Only freezing here, no real melting
While the thickening silence slows up
The motion of the very smallest
Bits of feeling, even.

Getting back

To digging's easier than stopping.
Getting back to the unnerving snow
Seems safer than waiting while the rush
Of blood inside one somewhere, crazed by
The shapes one has allowed his life to
Take, throbs, throbs and threatens. If my heart
Attack itself here in the whitened
Street, would there be bugles and the sound

Of hoofbeats thumping on a hard-packed,
Shiny road of snow? Or is that great
Onset of silences itself a
Great white silence? The crunching of wet
Snow around my knees seems louder, now
That the noises of the fear and what the
Fear is of are louder too, and in
The presence of such sounding depths of
Terror, it is harder than ever
To believe what I have always heard:
That it feels at first like spasms of
Indigestion. The thought, as one shoves
Scrapingly at the snow that always
Seems to happen to things and places
That have been arranged just so, the thought
Of being able to wonder if
Something I'd eaten had disagreed
With me, the while waiting to die, is
Ridiculous. "Was it something I
felt?" "Something I knew?" "Something I was?"
Seem more the kind of thing that one might
Wonder about, smiling mildly, as
He fell gently no great distance to
The cushioning world that he had dug.
Silently—for to call out something
In this snow would be to bury it.
And heavily, for the weight of self
Is more, perhaps at the end, than can
Be borne.

No, it is only now, as
I urge the bending blade beneath a
Snow-packed tire for what I know can
Not be the last time that I whimper:
I hate having to own a car; I
Don't want to dig it out of senseless

Snow; I don't want to have to die, snow
Or no snow. As the wind blows up a
Little, fine, white powders are sprinkled
Across the clear windshield. Down along
The street a rustle of no leaves comes
From somewhere. And as I realize
What rest is, pause, and start in on a
New corner, I seem to know that there
Is no such thing as overtaxing,
That digging snow is a rhythm, like
Breathing, loving and waiting for night
To end or, much the same, to begin.

John Hollander

LONDON LETTER

Ever since I got here last fall I have had an odd sensation of watching the newsreel for the second time: the atmosphere in many ways is much like that of America in the 'thirties. Questions we used to worry about then but have not thought of for a generation—of means and ends, of engaged literature, of social realism, of revolutionary politics—these are now on the agenda in London.

The most extraordinary instance, of course, is the capture of last fall's Scarborough conference of the Labour Party by the advocates of unilateral nuclear disarmament. The conference demanded that Britain dismantle her nuclear installments and proclaim, regardless of what any other power does, that she would not use such weapons henceforth. The resolution was passed, over the opposition of the party leader Mr. Gaitskell, and most of the Labour members of Parliament, because a bloc of trade unions, led by Mr. Frank Cousins, swung in behind it. No one knows just what this vote means and, short of a Gallup poll, no one can say to what extent it represents the views of the Labour Party masses. (And even then . . .) Some put the proportion of unilateralists among the rank and file at 15% or less. Certainly there are many more unilateralists among the active party workers than among the ranks—unilateralism is here what Marxian socialism was in the States in the 'thirties, an ultimate absolute solution that appeals to intellectuals and the young more than to the man in the street. The Scarborough vote was also mixed up with the resentment of the old-line trade unionists against Mr. Gaitskell because of his efforts to modify the party's commitment to nationalization of industry. While I think he was right, I can see that this was taking away the one great dream left to the Labour Party; had he been able to propose some emotional substitute, equally sweeping and positive, he might have done better.

The Scarborough vote was the culmination of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, which mounted the Aldermaston March

and the great rally in Trafalgar Square. Success has already brought problems. The right wing of CND is politicking inside the Labour Party with all the danger of corruption and of watering down its principles that involves. The left wing, led by Bertrand Russell, has split off and formed a Committee of 100 which advocates civil disobedience. The Committee includes Lindsay Anderson, John Braine, Reg Butler, Shelagh Delaney, Augustus John, Christopher Logue, John Osborne, Michael Scott, and Arnold Wesker. It hopes to get at least 2,000 volunteers to pledge themselves to civil disobedience, and, at this writing, it plans to begin in February with a mass sit-down outside the Ministry of Defence. The whole spirit is idealistic, moral, and Utopian. But the problem is itself absolute, involving the possible end of life on this earth, and so a Utopian approach may be the appropriate one. Also The Authorities, Eastern or Western, have not come up with any solutions that inspire confidence—that recent episode in Colorado, when the radar signals indicated a nuclear attack and only the notion of the officer in charge that there may have been a mechanical failure prevented the dispatch of a counter-blow—this sort of thing doesn't make one feel easy about the practical arrangements of those in power.

An American girl married to an Englishman recently told me that what she missed at parties here was general discussion: "It's always either gossip or shop. They place each other too well. In America, we don't know who's who and so we have to make contact through ideas." (I would add that peculiar British suspicion of ideas, the heritage of centuries of empiricism, shopkeeping and muddling through.) I thought of this, and also of the American 'thirties, when I attended a discussion last fall at that center of anti-establishment drama called, Englishly enough, the Royal Court Theatre. The topic was "Political Theatre—Yes or No?" "Yes" was upheld by Lindsay Anderson, a prominent left wing stage director, and Arnold Wesker, author of *Roots* and other plays. Two other playwrights—John Mortimer and Robert Bolt—were supposed to say "No" but didn't quite make it; they kept edging over to the more fashionable "Yes" position. The chairman, who was Karel Reisz, a film director in the mode of Wesker's working-class realism,

began by ruling out "the Sartrean concepts of commitment and engagement" as non-empirical and non-English and wound up the evening by observing that all four speakers "seemed to be committed." The confusion of the intervening three hours was such that this *volte face* was scarcely noticed. The speakers either monologued with more or less charm or engaged in personal infighting, as when Mr. Wesker, after Mr. Bolt had been greeted with enthusiastic applause, began sourly, "I hardly know what to say after such an ovation." No one tried to define "political theatre" and no one seemed to have any clearcut views. Doubtless there is too much dialectical fancywork in similar discussions in Paris or New York, but here one longed for a few substantial hairs to be split.

The mood of the two leftwing participants was a mixture of arrogance and despair. Mr. Anderson began by complaining about "the stagnant intellectual atmosphere of London now" and proved his point by a talk that consisted mostly in denunciations of the critics for not having liked some recent Royal Court productions and of the present audience for frivolity in turning up for what (he alleged) they thought of as "merely a cultural evening"; there were shocked protests of "No!" but nobody asked what was wrong with a cultural evening. Mr. Wesker, the most seriously-taken dramatist over here since John Osborne—to me he seems a more honest and less talented Odets—boxed the compass, stating at one time or another, at least according to my notes: "It is difficult to have a political theatre in England because the tone is one of anti-commitment. . . . One reason revolutionaries never succeed here is that they are tolerated. . . . Somehow I feel that all our plays should SMASH things. But since our society tolerates the revolutionary, nothing can be done. There has been no revolution in the British theatre. The only way we can get one is if the government allocates five million pounds for this purpose. [Can my notes be right here?]. . . . My *Jerusalem* is a play with a lesson for all socialist members of parliament." The only consistent note of the evening was that *God Save The Queen* was not played at the end.

In the cinema, there have been three great *succes d'estime*: one American (Cassavetes' *Shadows*), one Italian (Antonioni's *L'Avventura,* which had a more mixed critical reception but which

won first prize at the London Film Festival), and one British (Reisz's *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning,* from Alan Sillitoe's novel—which was admired by every film critic in London except me). I can see why *L'Avventura* won the prize and why *Shadows* ran for months at the Academy Cinema, since I thought them the most exciting movies I've seen since *Hiroshima Mon Amour.* But the welcome to *Saturday Night* can only be explained sociologically. As cinema it was dull, talky and uninventive, but it did show, for the first time in the English cinema, a working-class milieu that was realistic (as against comic, sentimental or melodramatic) and a working-class hero who accepted his status as normal, without any ambition to "better himself" as, for instance, the hero of *Room at the Top.* In a country whose class structure is still as massively intact as England's is, despite all the recent chippings, this is a real achievement. But to an American, remembering Farrell and Dreiser, it is less sensational. In any case, social novelty has nothing to do with art. The big Midcult success has been Fellini's *La Dolce Vita,* which was received by the critics more respectfully than it should have been and which is now showing at two large first-run houses simultaneously. In the manner of its kind, it combines a serious theme with superficially advanced technique, but *L'Avventura* conveys the corruption of upper-class Italian life better in a short scene in the lobby of a luxury hotel than *Dolce Vita* does in two complete orgies, perhaps because the former uses cinematic devices while the latter relies on journalism.

The most that can be said for the theater season is that it is better than New York's. I have seen Durrenmatt's *The Visit,* starring the Lunts, Harold Pinter's *The Caretaker,* Waterhouse and Hall's *Billy Liar,* and Zeffirelli's production at the Old Vic of *Romeo and Juliet. The Visit,* another Midcult success, was pretentious and predictable; the Lunts have added no new items to the bag of tricks they unpacked thirty-five years ago and Mr. Durrenmatt is just another fellow-traveler on the express train of the New Symbolism. So is Mr. Pinter, though a more talented one; he is excellent when he is funny—many of his scenes echo those old burlesque routines we had in pre-LaGuardia New York when the straight man was maddened by the comic's fast-talking insistence on

the obvious reality of obvious unreality—but when he tries to be serious, as at the final curtain, he fails. Although *The Caretaker* has been playing to full houses for months and is the one play every one says you must see, and although its three actors are excellent, I thought it a pastiche of Beckett and Ionesco and am not surprised that it has been ill-received in Paris. So one might expect the citizens of Newcastle to react to the import of coal, and inferior coal at that. *Billy Liar* isn't a play at all but rather a series of episodes in the fantasy life of a young layabout. It is funny and moving because of the delicate and inspired pantomiming of Albert Finney in the title role; he also played the lead in the *Saturday Night* film and the things director Reisz didn't get out of him! The spirit of Chaplin hovered over *Billy Liar;* it was Jack Oakie's ghost in *Saturday Night.*

The most popular Shakespeare production the Old Vic has put on in years is Franco Zeffirelli's *Romeo and Juliet.* For once, the public is right. Mr. Zeffirelli, who was brought from Italy specially to stage the show, almost persuaded me that the modern theater can be as important an art form as the movies. Ever since I saw, *circa* 1926, Basil Sidney's plain-clothes *Hamlet,* and, ten years later, Orson Welles' *Julius Caesar,* I have thought the only way to do Shakespeare is in modern dress. Those trench coats and tuxedos, revolvers and cigarettes, far from being obtrusive (after the first ten minutes) make it possible to actually *hear* the lines undistracted by all those cloaks and halberds. But now Mr. Zeffirelli has performed the miracle of using period décor without losing emotional impact. His sets look like Italy as one knows it—chalky whites, golden browns, severe greys, all sunbleached and real and lovely and all not like something out of the Belasco warehouse; his costumes are at once harmonious and striking (how many styles of hats, all expressive, men rejoiced in then!); they recall Uccello or Gozzoli or Piero della Francesca rather than those nineteenth century academic paintings of "Renaissance subjects" which are usually the standard in Shakespearean productions.

The mystery of the season is the almost unanimous critical (and word of mouth) enthusiasm for Michael MacLiammoir's one-man recital, *The Importance of Being Oscar.* I found Mr. MacLiammoir's acting full of ham and the selections he gives from Wilde

full of corn. With unfaltering bad taste, he has gone light on the epigrams and comedy and heavy on the purple stuff—*Salome, De Profundis* (an embarrassing orgy of self-pity and special pleading), and *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* (which seemed to have 584 stanzas—after hearing them all you realize what a good poet Kipling was). He has even omitted what one might think the most dramatic of all Wilde's work—his testimony at the trials. Why then the raptures? I think for the same reason Hal Holbrook's similar pastiche, *Mark Twain Tonight,* recently enjoyed such success in the United States: because each evokes a national past which is of mythical potency today. The Civil War destroyed the frontier-agrarian-democratic golden age which our middle classes yearn back toward and the First World War destroyed the late Victorian and Edwardian period of empire and stable class relationships which still has such nostalgic attraction for theirs. That both Mr. Holbrook and Mr. MacLiammoir are admired for presenting the most vulgar and banal aspects of Twain and Wilde is one more illustration of the importance of being midcult.

But the best play of the season was *Regina v. Penguin Books* for publishing *Lady Chatterley's Lover.* It played to packed houses throughout its brief run at the Central Criminal Court. It was not only first-class theater but it also had a weight of social implication which no play since *Look Back in Anger* has achieved. It must be confessed that the Old Bailey is inadequate as a theater: the public is limited to a tiny balcony—the lucky fifty or sixty had queued up for hours, with that patience the British show in such matters, admirable or contemptible depending on one's mood—and we of the press were jammed in behind "the dock" (empty except for the corporate spirit of Penguin Books, Ltd.), a glass and wood monstrosity that muffled the voices and concealed all but the heads of the actors. But the effective costumes—those wigs and robes and dickeys!—and the subtle underplaying (when one could hear it) more than compensated. Also the fact that as heavy a pair of villains as ever strode the boards—I refer to the Attorney for the Crown, Mr. Mervyn Griffith-Jones, and his crony, Mr. Justice Byrne—got their comeuppance from the jury. Truth crushed to

earth rose again and one's faith in the jury system was at least momentarily revived.

The victory would have been impossible without the 1959 Obscene Publications Act—the work of a scholarly young Labour M.P. named Roy Jenkins—which, *inter alia,* provides that expert testimony may be introduced as to the qualities of a book. The defense used this privilege liberally, presenting no less than thirty-five witnesses including C. Day Lewis, E. M. Forster, Dame Rebecca West, the Bishop of Woolwich, Canon Theodore Richard (Master of the Temple), Raymond Williams (lecturer at Oxford and author of *Culture and Society*), Stephen Potter, Dr. Helen Gardner of Oxford, the King Alfred Professor of English Literature at Liverpool University, Sir Stanley Unwin of the publishing firm, Richard Hoggart (lecturer at Leicester University and author of *The Uses of Literacy*), the editors of *The Guardian* and *The Yorkshire Post,* Dr. Noel Annan (Provost of King's College, Cambridge), and Miss Sarah Beryl Jones, Classics Mistress and Senior Librarian at the Keighley Girls Grammar School in Yorkshire.

The prosecution called one witness—the policeman who had bought a test copy from the publishers. The explanation I heard was that this gave them last licks at the jury; if true this was one of the many mistakes they made, for sounder strategy would have led them to weaken rather than intensify the jury's memory of Mr. Griffith-Jones. But I think it more likely they called no competing experts because they couldn't get any to match the defense's line-up. I was told, for instance, that the prosecution asked T. S. Eliot to testify and that his response was to offer his services to the defense if they felt it crucial (which apparently they didn't).

This 35-0 lineup doesn't indicate the break-up of The Establishment but it does suggest there has been profound reshaping of that venerable organism. The claim of the *Times* still to speak for it, often challenged of late, was not strengthened by the agitated editorial it printed the next day, which concluded:

What makes *Lady Chatterley's Lover* unique is that all the details, circumstances and sensations of copulation are made explicit. Here, too, it may be argued that LAWRENCE [in caps in *Times*] is describing no more than what most adults, and nowadays many adolescents, have experienced. [One wonders about that "most." Does

the *Times* think a sizable proportion of adults have never "experienced" copulation? Or perhaps the editors are thinking only of the "Top People" who read their paper?] But the more reverently such an act is regarded the less it is talked about. A decent reticence has been the practice in all classes of society and much will be lost by the destruction of it. . . . A great shift in what is permissible legally has been made. But not morally. Yesterday's verdict is a challenge to society to resist the changes in its manners and conduct that may flow from it. It should not be taken as an invitation to succumb.

On November 7 and 8 last, the *Times* published 28 letters from readers about its editorial, all well written, as is usual over here. The letters supporting the verdict were not only more thoughtful and even more morally convinced than the others, but there were almost twice as many of them: the score was 18 to 10. Assuming the *Times* was not prejudiced in favor of hostile letters, a form of masochism not common in editorial offices, we may take it that the editorial was repudiated by two out of three of its more articulate readers. The Top People now dig Lady Chatterley.

The famous jury, whose verdict was unexpected to almost everybody who sat through the trial, looked bourgeois, respectable and, with two exceptions, not at all intellectual. They soon developed the usual jury look, one of stolid resistance to information and rhetoric, as of Strasbourg geese eyeing the man with the food. But underneath that unpromising exterior, what passions, what common sense! (It only took them three hours to acquit.) The prosecution's strategy, as simple as it was uninspired, must have helped. It was to have Mr. Griffith-Jones read out the juicier passages in a dry, upperclass voice and in effect dare the jury to find literary or moral worth in them. The effect was the reverse—it was Mr. Griffith-Jones, not Mr. Lawrence, who sounded coarse.

The first defense witness, Mr. Graham Hough, Lecturer in English and Fellow of Christ's College, Cambridge, raised a capital point: "No man in his senses is going to write a book of 330 pages for 30 pages of sexual matter." (So Trotsky, apropos of the charge in the Moscow Trials that he had led the October Revolution and commanded the Red Army as a cover for espionage for the British foreign office: "You don't erect a skyscraper to hide a dead mouse.") Mr. Griffith-Jones was, if possible, even more ineffective

on the non-sexual nine-tenths. He was disturbed by repetition—"Is that good writing, to repeat that one word over and over again?" He was several times assured it was; Mr. Hoggart noted that Shakespeare repeated "nothings" five times in one passage. He thought the book was not realistic: "The mirror it holds up to society is like a concave or convex mirror such as you see at a Battersea fun fair." "Novels often are that way," Mr. Hough explained.

I think the defense overdid the Lawrence-as-Puritan-Moralist line. He was indeed a moralist and never more so than in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*—the relentless preaching, in fact, is why it is one of his inferior works. But the Puritan morality was one of sexual repression while Lawrence's was the opposite. Also this line of defense, however effective as legal tactics by a publisher who stood to gain a lot by a paperback edition of *Lady Chatterley's Lover,* would almost surely have been repudiated by Lawrence himself, who wanted to emphasize his clash with conventional morality rather than to explain it away. It led to comic exchanges like that between the prosecutor and a young cleric: "Has the word 'phallic' always had a sacred connotation?" "Among Christians, yes." But the prosecution's notion of Lawrence's attitude toward sex was so primitive that it was unable to take advantage of such refinements.

The great moment of the trial, sex-wise, was Mr. Griffith-Jones's comment, after reading, with his usual dessicated relish, a passage in which the lovers undress: "Why introduce strip-tease? What is the point of taking off her nightdress?" According to the Kinsey Report, it is the lower classes in America who copulate with their clothes on. It must be different in the household of Mr. Mervyn Griffith-Jones, Q.C., of Eton, Cambridge and the Coldstream Guards.

But it was perhaps, England being what she is, class rather than sex that determined the issue. The Crown (and the judge) made the mistake of overestimating the jury socially and underrating them culturally.

They assumed that they would agree that a cheap paperback was much more damaging to "the public good" than a more costly edition because the lower classes could be corrupted by it ("is the young girl worker in the factory going to get any sociological education out of this passage?" asked Mr. Griffith-Jones) and also that,

as communicants of the Church of England, the jury would react strongly to an attack on the marriage contract. "This conduct between a married woman and a married man," huffed Mr. Griffith-Jones; "Is there really anything else in the book except adultery?" puffed Justice Byrne. There was even a suggestion that if Lady Chatterley had to sin, at least she needn't do it with the gamekeeper. (The secretary of the British Association of Gamekeepers wrote to the papers explaining that Mellors' behavior was *not* typical.)

The jury didn't respond to these class stimuli. And they may have been put off by the prosecution's constantly reminding them they were not intellectuals. They may not have been grateful to Mr. Griffith-Jones for explaining who Abelard was and they may have resented his description of them as "twelve men and women from ordinary life." (One suspects that The Average or Common Man thinks of himself—rightly—as peculiar and uncommon.) "You are not experts," said Justice Byrne in his summing up. "You are a cross section of the community." But perhaps the jury rather fancied themselves as experts.

"In deciding whether publication is for the public good," the judge said at another point, "you must consider not so much the student of literature who may read the book under the guidance of a tutor at a university, but the person who perhaps knows nothing about literature but who buys this book for 3s. 6d. and reads it during the lunch-time break at the factory. . . . I would repeat the observation of Mr. Griffith-Jones, who said, 'Keep your feet on the ground.' In other words, do not allow yourselves to get lost in the higher realms of literature, education, sociology and ethics." Fatal words! It is precisely in those higher realms that the Common Man now feels it is his democratic right to roam.

Justice Byrne's impeccably unilateral conduct of the trial may also have been a factor. Except that his costume and accent were more impressive, he was blood-brother to any Tammany magistrate who's gotten the word. His summing-up appealed to prejudice ("Is it rightly or is it wrongly said that in these days our moral standards have reached a low ebb?") and defied grammar: "It is for you to say is it or is it not described in the most lurid way and the whole sensuality and passion of the various occasions of sexual intercourse

is fully and completely described?" He showed himself a master of the British Reflexive Question, as: "Now we don't want any trouble, do we?" It takes a bit of doing to answer the wrong way. But the jury did it.

The novel provisions of the 1959 Obscene Publications Act were that expert testimony might be introduced and that the book must be taken as a whole in relation to "the public good." They were intended to be liberalizing but Justice Byrne converted them into restrictions, sneering at experts ("There is not a subject you could think of where there is not to be found an expert who will deal, or says he will be able to deal, with the situation.") and turning the second provision inside out. "If you think it is an obscene book," he instructed the jury, having violently nudged them in that direction, "then you must consider whether the defendants have established the probability that the merits of the novel are so great that they outbalance the obscenity." As Kenneth Tynan noted in *The Observer*: "For a few mad moments, it seemed as if the only point at issue were whether it would be 'for the public good' to publish books that tended to 'deprave and corrupt.'" The proposition to which the judge asked the jury to devote its mind was one that might stump a Sartre, namely, The Social Utility of Filth.

The spirit of the whole drama was caught by Penelope Gilliat in a skit in *The Spectator* entitled "The Case of the Three-Letter Word." Arnold Wesker is on the stand:

PROSECUTOR: Are you the author of a play called *The Kitchen?* Is that an example of dramatic merit, dragging the words "the kitchen" into the name of a play?

WESKER: I think it is, sir.

PROSECUTOR: And did you not write another play called [*spitting*] *Chicken Soup with Barley?* More of this socalled expert, artistic writing? Another title in the public good, I suppose?

WESKER: Yes.

PROSECUTOR: Mr. Wesker, I do not wish to be offensive but it is clear, is it not, that you are seeking to put food on a pedestal? In every one of your plays, there are bouts of eating of the most blatant kind. The expression "eat" occurs no less than 167 times, the expression "tea" 93 times, "gin" and "nip" 50 times apiece. . . .

WESKER: Sir, in my plays it has always been my intention to

present eating as though it were a perfectly natural activity.

JUDGE (*twitching*): Just a moment. I would like to write that down. [*Heavy sarcasm.*] A—*natural*. . .

DEFENDING COUNSEL: M'lud, my client has never depicted eating for eating's sake. He has always seen it as part of an abiding relationship. There is no eating outside the family.

PROSECUTOR: Ha! M'learned friend is not being serious. Can Mr. Wesker point to a single passage where it is not made all too clear that his characters *enjoy* food? There is a difference, is there not, between decent, secret eating, eating on a diet, and this—stuff—which ends time and again in *satisfaction?*

It only remains to be said that, naturally, the Lady Chatterley drama had already been put on in the USA and with the same essential plot line. But, although I didn't catch the American production, I can't imagine it was as interesting as the London one. Cultural lag has its advantages.

Dwight Macdonald

Daniel Bell

CONVERSATIONS IN WARSAW:
Excerpts from a Journal

Last summer, while I was in Berlin for a conference of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, an opportunity arose to motor to Warsaw. I had met by chance an old acquaintance, William Griffiths, a scholar at M.I.T., who was going to Warsaw to do further research on a book he was writing about the Polish "October" of 1956, the events that brought Gomulka back to power and led to the liberalization of the regime. I had never been to Poland, and spoke no Polish, but I had an intense desire to see at first hand the operation of a Communist society, and to find out whether the liberal reforms of the "revolution" were being maintained. (The language barrier, though I had feared it would be a problem, proved illusory: the literary people speak French, and the sociologists speak English—still another illustration of the "two cultures." The waiters spoke German!) Through introductions arranged by various friends, I was able to meet a large number of Polish intellectuals. I think these individuals represented many shades of opinion, except the Catholic. For reasons that should be clear, I cannot identify most of the persons I spoke to, and in some cases I have had to omit considerable detail. For the rest, I have tried to report fully and accurately what I saw and heard.

We arrived in Warsaw late in the evening, and after dinner Griffiths and I strolled down the Krakowskie Przedmiescie to the Stare Miasto, the "old city" of Warsaw. It was an extraordinary revelation. One entered the old city from a large open piazza dominated by a column. Along one side of the piazza ran a stone balustrade that looked out over the Vistula, and steps ran down from the piazza to a road below, which curved into a bridge that crossed the Vistula. Fronting the other side of the piazza was a large,

handsome palazzo with softly fluted pilasters and rounded pediments framing the windows. Alongside the palazzo there is a narrow old street that runs for fifty yards and emerges into the large market place of the Stare Miasto. Here was a wonderful old baroque city: a large town square with decorated façades, narrow streets with graceful scrollwork signs—a unity and proportion of jewel-like grace.

I was completely unprepared for this view, which no doubt added to my enchantment and delight. And my feelings were further heightened by the realization of the sacrifice and devotion that must have gone into the detailed reconstruction of this section. Over ninety-five percent of Warsaw proper had been razed by the Nazis after the 1944 insurrection. Section after section had been systematically demolished, leaving only fields of rubble. But so strong is the Polish sense of the past, of tradition, that despite the enormous cost and the obvious fact that the money and labor could more "usefully" have gone into the building of large blocks of flats, the authorities decided to reconstruct the old city, the adjacent "new city," and the medieval city wall precisely as they had stood two and three centuries ago. The job itself was possible, I learned later, only because of a "find" of old architectural plans in the Dresden Museum. The façades were reconstructed from some paintings of Canelleto, Bolleto and other Venetian painters of the seventeenth century who had visited Warsaw; the proportions and detail from old site drawings. With touching devotion, the old city had been rebuilt inch by inch. Yet to stand in the old city was more than being in a "museum." One sensed here—in the buildings, in the fact of their reconstruction—the deep link with Europe and its traditional Catholic culture that no transient politics could erase. The contrast with the drabness of East Berlin and even with the polished modernity of West Berlin, which I had left that morning, was striking. Some things, I know, are decided on first encounter: love of a woman, attachment to a city, the taste of food. I knew, immediately, I was in love with Warsaw.

To my great relief, the telephone system worked simply. I had feared, as is often the case in France, that one would have to give the number to the concierge and then wait. Luckily, each room

phone had a dial, and once I ascertained from the desk clerk that I could dial directly from the room, the only remaining difficulty—as happened in only a few cases, fortunately—was reaching someone at the other end of the line, usually a maid, who spoke only Polish and could not take a message. In quick order I was able to reach individuals and set up appointments for the next few days.

Since my first visitor was not due for another hour, I took the opportunity to walk to the Polish Airlines office, about half a mile away, to confirm my return flight to Berlin. Armed with a small map of the city that I obtained from the desk clerk, I made my way easily to Constitution Place. The section I walked through contained many official buildings and had been constructed in the heavy, pseudo-monumental type of the Stalinist period, much like what one saw along Stalinallee in East Berlin. The basic building material was stone, or stone facing over brick, and the heaviness of the building material was emphasized by the bastardized classic Eastern style: stone balconies with incised openings, heavy ornamental pediments over each window, stone louvers and square cornices, all of it combining to accentuate the pressed-down, squat feeling. Yet, much as this resembled the architecture of East Berlin, there was a difference: The streets were crowded with cars and cabs, and thronged with people. Open-air stalls and street markets, pushcarts and great mounds of cherries, grocery displays of sausages and canned goods gave it all the hum of a city. One had a sense of openness, of vibrancy. Especially past the University area—with its inner courtyards, small parks, and many statues—there was even a sense of gracefulness.

In my favor was the fact that it was brilliantly sunny and warm, and the ambiance of spring and early summer communicated itself through laughter of children, the sight of boys and girls holding hands, the quick steps of people on the move. If it had been rainy and grey (as happened a few days later), my first impressions might have been vastly different; on a grey day, one sees the shabby clothes, the worn shoes, the patched garments, the clogged sewers, the angry resentment of the crowds trying to push into crowded trams or make their way along narrow sidewalks. But it was sunny. One felt a gaiety in the air, and it deepened my attachment to the city. I bought some rolls in a bakery for two zlotys, some fruit from

a stand next door for a a few more, and contentedly munched my breakfast as I strolled back to the hotel.

A., a young sociologist, was already waiting in the lobby when I returned. We shook hands and sized each other up quickly. I liked him immediately. Tall, blond, open-faced, in his mid-thirties, A. was easy and informal in manner. He spoke English extremely well, and our first moments of conversation consisted of finding people we knew in common. A. had a car, and he offered to drive me around the city. We crossed the Vistula to Praga, so that I could see the skyline of Warsaw, particularly of the old city. The Vistula is a broad, lazy river, and the farther bank has a sand beach. On that warm summer day several hundred people were lying in the sun, and a few were swimming in the river. We stopped at a promontory on the other side, and I looked at Warsaw through the distance. In the foreground was the low line of the Stare Miasto, beyond it the spire of the Palace of Culture, that extraordinarily ugly wedding-cake building, thirty-two stories high, which the Russians had built and given as a gift to the Polish people. This was Warsaw old and new, and new and old—the old and new because the Stare Miasto represented the traditional past, and the spire the recent, brutal present; the new and old because the re-building of the old city was a gesture of affirmation to the future and because the sign of the foreign intruder was itself as old as the plains of Poland.

We drove through Praga, itself a city of contrasts. The northern part had wide boulevards fronted by huge housing developments, laid out in rectangular court patterns and built in heavy stone style. These had been put up during the Stalinist period, and were reserved primarily for middle-rank government functionaries. To the south was the old section, with a surprising number of wood-timbered buildings and log cabins along the narrow, smelly cobbled streets. This was the worker's slum, redolent—in sight, smell, and sound—of Marek Hlasko's angry novel *The Eighth Day of the Week*. While so much of Warsaw had been destroyed by shells and by fire, Praga had not. And as I stood there looking at Warsaw across the river, I realized that when the Red Army had halted outside Praga, when the Home Army had begun in 1944, it was within eyesight distance of the city. And Praga had watched Warsaw being destroyed while its own hovels remained.

We drove by the new sports stadium in Praga, and A. remarked that this was the first structure built after "October." "Notice," he said, "no columns." The structure was simple and functional, geometrical and abstract. It seemed to underscore an ironic point: that the Poles, or at least the intellectuals, disapproved of Marxism not because of differences about economic organization—most of them still thought of themselves as Socialists—but because of differences in taste, in culture. For the mass of people, the stumbling block between themselves and the regime was their Catholicism; for the intellectuals it was abstract art. In both cases, it was the past and the future that dominated the minds of the people, not the present. The Polish love for the symbols of the past is extraordinary. Not only was the old city rebuilt stone by stone but even the old palaces, the great houses of the Potocki and other ruling families, had also been rebuilt, exactly to specifications. The fiercest national debates, A. told me, had been not over the nature of the legal code or of economic policy but over the symbols of the past: whether the crown would remain over the eagle on Polish standards, and whether the Army would wear the traditional Polish rather than Russian uniforms. Legal codes, economic policy—these are "pieces of paper," but the crown and the uniform are visible and real.

In the late afternoon I met Griffiths and a young friend of his. The boy was almost a caricature of one's stock image of the new "Americanized" youths. A sharp dresser—tapered pants, narrow-lapeled jacket—he made an odd contrast to the double-breasted, heavily padded suits that one commonly saw on the streets. He used words like "chick" and "baby," whistled jazz tunes, and spoke knowingly of Dave Brubeck and Miles Davis. When I told him that the new jazz hero in the States was Ornette Coleman, who played "abstract" improvised jazz on his saxophone, I was "in" solid. He took great pleasure in showing us around, in taking us to meet his parents. His father, an official in one of the Ministries and a party member, lived in one of the new big developments in Praga that I had seen earlier that day. The building was drab, the walls in the lobby and corridors cracked and peeling. Although the house was seven years old, only now was a stone facing being put over the brick. The apartment itself was clean and large, though overstuffed with furniture. There were several bedrooms and a large room that,

in the East European style, was a combined living room-dining room, with a large table in the middle and a couch on the side. The boy had a room to himself, with a radio and record player. The apartment seemed like a caricature of petit-bourgeois taste fifty years ago—the heavy, veneered furniture, the antimacassars, the colored lithographs of forests and mountain springs.

Although the father was a party member, and apparently important enough to have a large apartment, he was extremely cordial, and his wife, a plump and pleasant woman, was even more so. She plied us with cakes and a homemade honey liqueur. Although she spoke only Polish, there was no mistaking the meaning of the sounds—"Eat, eat." They seemed proud of the fact that their son had American friends, and were eager to display their affluence—especially the television set, and the large radio-phonograph. They turned on the television set, and we watched it for about twenty minutes (with the mother smilingly insistent that I have more cake and mead). There seemed to be no regular programs, but a series of disconnected items of irregular length, like a badly edited magazine. We saw a demonstration of new domestic items for housewives; after a ten-minute mechanical parade of goods, there was a newsreel of some young, attractive boys and girls lying indolently on a beach. I assumed the program was proclaiming the beauty of Polish women or the joys of Polish vacations, but then a harsh voice interrupted the music, and the scene shifted to a studio where a girl in a bathing suit was doing body-building exercises with a hoop. As I surmised, and this was later confirmed by the student, the beachcombers were being reproached for just lying on the sand, and were being exhorted to eschew the older, "decadent" pleasures for exercise and activity instead. The next item was an interview between a Polish journalist and the North Korean ambassador, on the anniversary of the Korean War. The interview was incredibly stilted—the two men sat in chairs facing each other, and the camera remained in fixed position, neither shifting from one to the other nor moving in for closeups.

In the morning J., a sociologist, came to see me at the hotel. He is a tall, open-faced man with a pleasant manner. During the war he had fought in the Resistance, and after the war, because

he belonged to a Socialist study group, he had spent a year in prison. Despite his halting English, he had kept up with American empirical research. A short time before our meeting, J. had visited a Western friend to borrow some periodicals, and a few days later his housemaid had been questioned by the secret police. He felt that this renewed surveillance was only one sign of the general tightening of controls. I lunched with J. and an economist friend of his, R. People were tired of politics, they said, and were interested primarily in their own affairs. The big question now was how the people would respond to the changing state of affairs, especially the new economic plan, which aimed at cutting consumption and stepping up investments. In the universities, new ideological pressures were being felt. The Party had decided once again to introduce compulsory courses in Marxism, especially for students in the social sciences.

I asked R. to tell me about the workers' attitudes. He replied that the chief problem was the wage chaos existing in the plants. Wage differentials had collapsed, and because there was such a lack of consumer goods, the regime had been unable to come up with meaningful incentives. Because of this, many factories were plagued by wholesale thievery. During the war, stealing had been considered patriotic, a means of sabotaging the Nazis. Nor was there much opprobrium attached to the act now. Stealing went on partly as a gesture of hostility against the regime, partly because of low wages—it was a way of supplementing one's income. Everybody stole a little. Another growing problem was the unwillingness of young people to go into agriculture or industry. The attractions of white-collar work were enormous, and unskilled young workmen, with little reason to stick to a job for any length of time, would work for a bit and then knock off to bum around for a while. The youth problem was the most difficult one facing the regime, and the party seemed to have no real idea of how to handle it.

I asked J. to take me to the ghetto, and when we got there I gazed with tremulous feelings at the acres of rubble that were the remains. The entire area had been razed, and one saw only a flattened cemetery of broken brick, except for one upright post, about eight feet high, out of which jutted a steel beam topped with curved iron spikes and barbed wire. The beam, embedded in the post, had

been broken off, and the last curved spike, twisted ominously downward, was "threaded" with some barbed wire, which looked incongruously like an ivy creeper growing around the spike. On the stone facing of the post, which was chipped and cracked, revealing the brick underneath, someone had painted the word "PANIAK." A few feet away were the remnants of a stone wall. The post and the wall were the sole, mute evidence of what had once been the world of Warsaw Jewry.

Across from the rubbled ghetto, a new housing project was going up, and in its main square the government had erected a large memorial commemorating the Jewish uprising. It consisted of a raised stone platform about forty feet square. At the center was a light-grey marble backdrop, built up with alternating rectangular slabs and squares making a simple abstract pattern, and in front of it a bas-relief depicted figures crowded together in heroic poses. At either side of a small flight of steps going up to the platform were two stone menorahs supported by upright stone lions acting as caryatids. Clearly, the memorial had misfired. It was not just a matter of bad taste in design; the idea that *any* conventional memorial could serve as a gesture, or a communication, indicates the stilted emotional response to the meaning of the ghetto. The decision of the Berliners to leave the blackened ruins of the Gedächtniskirche in the center of the city as a reminder of the horrors of war was the only meaningful gesture possible. As for the ghetto, the "natural" ruin—the wall and the brick post with its jutting steel beam and barbed wire and spikes etched against the sky and the open space—was more compelling and agonizing than any artificial *Denkmal.* As Simmel has said, ruins becoming landscape are man's link with nature. Here the ruins are the sum total of human nature, its greatness and its horror, and there is nothing one can add, or subtract, from them.

In the evening, I had dinner with L., a young journalist who had left the party after October. He was a medium-sized man, about ten years younger than myself, I judged, his strikingly handsome face marred by a weak mouth and thin lips. He had been a deeply committed Communist in his youth, had attended party schools, but had then become increasingly disillusioned. Together with some friends, he had formed a revisionist group. (This much

I had known from E., a German journalist who had met L. in Berlin, and who had given me his address and a letter of introduction.) I liked L.—we could talk a common political language despite our political disagreements. He had an agility of mind that quickened the flow of debate and made me feel I was back twenty years in the alcoves of City College, arguing the question of the inevitability of oligarchy in radical-party politics.

L.'s name, I thought, was Jewish, and after a while, I asked him about this. His parents had been Jews, he replied, though he himself had had no religious or Jewish upbringing. I asked him whether he had been in Warsaw during the ghetto uprising, and he replied that he had grown up in Lemberg, but had escaped with his mother to Cracow. For a moment he was quiet, and I decided not to press him. But he continued, "In Cracow, we bought some forged papers from a priest, and managed to escape over the border into Hungary in 1943. We spent the rest of the war in an internment camp." He was lost in his thoughts, and then, in a toneless voice, as if starting off on another topic, he said, "I never really knew my father. He was a Communist Party member and a functionary, and he used to travel abroad on missions. In the late thirties he disappeared, and I was brought up by my mother, who was also a Communist. As Communists, they were both militant atheists, and opposed to religious Judaism, which they considered medieval. So you see, I was never circumcised. That was why I could cross the border."

This is how a Jew survives! This is how a remnant is saved.

"When did you break with the Party?" I asked. "Was it after Khrushchev's speech in '56?"

"No, the ideological break came much earlier," he replied. "It came after the death of Stalin, when people began coming back from Russia with stories of the doctors' plot, and the anti-Semitism, and the concentration camps."

"Did you know anyone who came back from Russia?" I asked.

"Yes," he said wryly, "my father. He had been in Siberia for more than fifteen years. He was arrested in the late 'thirties, and charged with being a member of Petlura's band."

And this was how a Jew suffers—to be charged with being a member of a Ukrainian anti-Semitic organization!

L. had left the party after a close friend of his was expelled for exposing corruption among provincial party officials. The corrupt party officials had influential protectors—L.'s friend had been accused of defaming the party, and was thrown out. Shortly after that, L. left the party. But he still considered himself a Marxist. He felt that both the United States and the Soviet Union were imperialist states, and was contemptuous of the new mass culture in Poland that the regime was unable to shape. Since the masses did not believe in Communism, their only aspirations were petit-bourgeois: they wanted to read stories about the old aristocracy, old romances, or about the shining appliances in America. Ironically, L. made his living as a free-lance journalist, writing pulp stuff for mass consumption. In his views on planning, he was changing his mind. Like many of his friends, he had favored decentralization and the creation of workers' councils. Now he was less sure, feeling that these had not worked, and that centralized planning was perhaps necessary after all. L. was still an intensely political person, but like many revisionists, he faced a dilemma that he himself was only dimly aware of. In a politically flexible society, he could join a dissident group and still continue to be political—or at least go through the motions. If he were an academic, he could take refuge in his work, and devote himself to scholarship or technique. But as a journalist, he was tied to the periphery of politics, and either had to make his way back, or bolt. Which would he do? Already, in his thinking about economics, he was beginning to accept the party's views; the rationalizations were obvious. In art, he was still a heretic. If the regime followed the policy of isolating art, and permitting it a certain autonomy, it too could easily neutralize the revisionists. Would the regime do so? Would L. go back to the party, as he tentatively seemed to be doing? Questions.

In the morning I walked over to one of the publishing houses and asked for M., a young woman who worked there. She was a friend of J., an émigré in Paris who wrote for *Kultura,* but she hadn't heard from him for a long time and was therefore surprised to see me. Fair, with soft round shoulders and a round bosom accented by a peasant blouse, she captivated me completely. We gossiped about J., his cats, a painter friend of his, and so on. She

was eager for news of French literary developments and French painting and theater. I told of the Mathieu exhibit I had seen in Paris, of the Nathalie Sarraute novel I was reading, and of the production of Genet's *Le Balcon,* which was the talk of my French friends in the spring. M. had not seen the play but had read it. In Warsaw, public performance of *Le Balcon* was forbidden, but a theater magazine, *Dialog,* had printed the text, and private readings had even been held! Again, a variant of the two cultures theme: one for the masses, and one for the elite—so long as it did not corrupt the masses! In answer to my question whether Western books were easily available, M. took me to a bookstore and reading room near her office. The reading room had the Paris edition of the *Herald Tribune,* and the London *Times,* the bookstore carried a small selection of English books, mostly Penguins, including a lot of Graham Greene and Evelyn Waugh. It was a lovely, warm day again, and I felt pleased to be walking down the street with M.—she was still another reason Warsaw was such an inviting place.

In the late afternoon, I met T., a friend of a journalist I knew in Berlin. A tubby, muscular character, he suggested we go to a club for a drink. I asked him if he wanted to walk or take a taxi, and he said he had his motorbike outside. Since I had never been on one in my life, he said that this would be a perfect occasion, and off we went over the cobbled streets of Warsaw for a wonderfully exhilarating ride. We sat in the garden of the club, a pleasant place, and drank vodka. Because he spoke no English, we conversed at first in French, but as he struggled with a message for our friend in Berlin, I found his accent difficult. I asked him to speak more slowly, and he looked at me slyly, and muttered, *"Ah, goyishe kopf."* I laughed, and answered, *"Wer hut der goyishe kopf?"* We both roared and began to talk volubly in Yiddish.

T. had been in the Soviet Union during the war, and had gone with the Polish Army units to the Middle East. After the war he lived in Palestine, but didn't find the place congenial. He returned to Europe, wandered about for several years and then decided to return to Poland. In every country, he said, everyone talked *"gelt."* Money was the criterion of success, money alone enabled a man to go to the theater, have books, and all the rest. In Warsaw, R. said,

people didn't judge only by money. There was a real sense of community, especially among the intelligentsia. "In every country I lived in, more than half a dozen, I felt lonely. Here I don't." Yet he was not a supporter of the regime, nor was he a revisionist. In a curious sense, he was apolitical. Although a Jew, he had no sense of Jewish identity. He was cynical about politics and about all political motivation. He puzzled me—I found it hard to accept his cynicism, and I felt it was a pose. Yet there was such ease about the man, such earthy good humor, such a complete naturalness that I felt him to be completely genuine. He reminded me strongly of Benya Krik, the laughing, robust Jewish gangster that Isaac Babel had created in his stories of raffish Jewish life on the Odessa waterfront. T.'s attitude was: This is the world, and there is little one can do about it; the important thing is to be true to one's friends, and have fun. And yet somewhere there was an undertone of seriousness to the man. It came out, oddly, just before we mounted his motorbike for the ride back to the hotel. "Look," he said quietly, "tell M. [the Berlin friend] that if he sends people to see me, they should not telephone from the hotel room. All the calls are recorded, and checks are made. It's easier to call from a street phone." We rode back in silence, and parted with an embrace.

That evening, I went with Griffiths to an informal dinner party at the apartment of a Western diplomat. There were about a dozen people there, and except for Mary McCarthy, who came in later, we were the only Americans present. Conversation bubbled in English, French, German and Polish. There was a forced gaiety that, combined with the hothouse atmosphere, made one feel rather as if one were on a *Zauberberg*. A strikingly beautiful Polish actress was there; several jazz musicians and their wives, one of whom flirted conspicuously with some of the other men; a novelist and his wife, who wrote about fashion for a popular weekly; and a literary critic. The last, a man with a rubbery face and frizzy hair, set out to be the clown of the party. Dressed in baggy, oversize pants, his buttoned jacket pulled out wide at the shoulders, he walked around on his heels, grinning idiotically, like Red Skelton.

The novelist, a small, bony man, with a quick smile and ready wit, was quite engaging. His novels, which dealt with the seamier side of Warsaw life, had been translated into several foreign lan-

guages, including Russian. I had read one of his novels in English and asked him if he had had any difficulty getting it published. Very little, he replied. While there are no private publishers in Poland, there are different houses: the state publishing house, those associated with different literary magazines, with coöperatives, and so on. Although each house was subject to political censorship, the managements were also eager to make money (a percentage of the profits was retained by each house, for extending their facilities, such as clubrooms, and even for housing). It's a matter of *Fingerspitzgefühl,* he said—of playing off one house against the other. His wife, a tall, handsome, dark-eyed woman, exquisitely dressed, was passionately interested in art. She was an ardent admirer of Picasso, and her magazine had run a series of articles about him, with color illustrations. One curious incident illustrated her intense Polish cultural nationalism. I asked her if she wanted some "vahdka," and she pointed out that in Polish it was pronounced "*vdka.*" Poles don't like to hear the word in its Russian pronunciation, which I had used. This started us off on language. She insisted that Russian was a harsh language and Polish more soft and liquid, and that Polish poetry was more beautiful than Russian poetry. She had learned Russian in school—it was compulsory—but had deliberately forgotten it because she didn't like the language.

The party lasted until quite late, with much drinking and gaiety, and was climaxed with a Russian kazatska performed by the actress and me. With everyone smiling at everyone else in high-spirited fellowship, we all went out into the morning air.

To lunch with Z., a tall, gaunt, moody man who had played an important role in the intellectual ferment of September and October, 1956. A pessimist, he insisted that the dissident impulse had run its course; nevertheless he did not feel that this was the reason the regime was moving, at that point, to install new controls. "There is no coordinated or carefully worked-out plan to tighten the society," he said. "The process is more complex. While Gomulka's power, as a final fact, is unchallenged, when it comes to the different areas of policy—farm, factory, ideology, for example —various commissions of the Central Committee are in charge. The balance of forces shifts constantly in these groups, and this often

reflects itself in the arbitrary shifts of policy in these different areas. In the economic field, some of the tough old Stalinist elements have returned. But with these elements gaining in one section of the party, those on the ideological commission are afraid of being thought too "soft," so they too begin to talk tough. This is why they propose having compulsory courses in Marxism-Leninism in the university, and have begun to change the quotas in order to reduce the number of students who come from old middle-class families." There is a new joke now, he added wryly. "Next year the Communist Party is going to issue a new calendar, with ten months in the year. No more September and no more October."

To dinner with Q., perhaps the most engaging and extraordinary of all the very likable people I met in Warsaw. He was young—in his mid-thirties—and chunky, with a broad, open face and high cheekbones, and sandy hair that kept falling down across his eyes. An infectious smile animated his face when he talked. He reminded me vividly of that remarkable actor Zgniebaw Cybulski, in the Polish film *Ashes and Diamonds.*[1] Q., I knew, had taken an active role in the insurrection, and led a street unit in the fighting.

1. This film, directed by Wajda, which I had seen the previous summer in London, was itself the most direct illustration of the meaning of October. The action of the film takes place within the span of one day, the day the Germans finally surrendered. The protagonists, sympathetically portrayed, are members of an underground unit of the Polish Home Army under orders to shoot the Secretary of the district Communist Party, who is coming to take over the city. In an earlier film of Wajda's, *A Generation,* the Polish Home Army underground forces are portrayed as malevolent bourgeois who, though unequivocally anti-German, are more fearful of the Polish workers. In *Ashes and Diamonds,* the fighters in the Home Army and the party officials are all sympathetic figures and their motives are equally patriotic, while the villains are the careerists, bourgeois *and* Communist, who are interested only in themselves. In one scene, a member of the Home Army terrorist unit is being interrogated by a Communist secret-police official who scornfully asks the captive, "And what were you doing during the war?" The boy replies fiercely, "Shooting Germans." The Communist policeman then shouts, "And now you are shooting Poles?" To which the boy retorts, "And what are you doing, shooting sparrows?" The policeman remains silent. The picture seems to be saying, Let the past be forgotten, let us recognize that there are honest men as well as crooks on both sides.

After the war, he had been imprisoned by the regime. "My crime," he said smilingly, "was to belong to a study circle that was interested in praxiology!" Ironically, if there was ever a subject that was at the furthest remove from politics it is praxiology, a branch of abstract logic, elaborated by the great Polish logician Kotarbinsky, which deals with the nature of rational choice. If one took, I suppose, the elements of utility theory, von Neumann game theory, and the mathematical models-of-organization theory, and tried to find some general class of logical thought that subsumed all three, one might have some notion of the abstract reaches of praxiology. Yet the very idea of studying logic and rational choice could be considered threatening, especially to a regime built on absurdity.

After October, Q. came out of isolation, and was able to obtain a small research job. He was not active politically, although he attended meetings at the Krzywe Kolo (the Crooked Circle), a discussion group organized by people who had met privately for political discussion during the Stalinist period and which later merged with the group at *Po Prostu,* the Communist youth newspaper, which had taken the initiative in spreading the idea of workers' councils. Q. felt that although Krzywe Kolo had once exerted considerable intellectual force, it was now impotent, and that the regime permitted it to continue in part as a means of "letting off steam" and in part as a means of keeping watch on dissident intellectuals. A wide range of topics was discussed at the Krzywe Kolo, from abstract art to foreign policy. The only time the government had openly interfered was when the club had scheduled a discussion on prewar Fascist tendencies in Poland, for this meant, as everyone knew, a public exposé of Boleslaw Piasecki and PAX, the controlled "Catholic" organization the regime sponsored as a rival to the Church. Piasecki, a leader of the prewar Falanga, a Polish Fascist organization, had been installed by the Communist regime as head of a government-controlled publishing house called PAX, and Piasecki had become a powerful political figure in Poland, running a whole series of enterprises from PAX. It was permitted to talk about Stalinism at the Krzywe Kolo, but not about Fascism. No wonder that a crooked circle was the only straight line in Poland.

Q. considered himself a Social Democrat, and was proud of the fact. He commented wryly, but without a trace of bitterness, that

intellectuals in Western countries had recently become intensely interested in the revisionists, reprinting their essays and seeking them out when coming to Poland, but that the Social Democrats, who had first voiced the criticisms of the regime that the revisionists had later adopted—who had, in fact, been attacked by the revisionists when the latter were serving the regime—were generally ignored or unknown. Q. mentioned several essays, analyzing the nature of bureaucracy, that he and his friends had written before October, and that had circulated clandestinely. This same group had also circulated translations of Max Weber, Karl Mannheim and other sociological writers whose works had been banned during the Stalinist period. Q. knew the philosophical leader of the revisionists, and liked him, but felt that Western attention concentrated too much on this man—to his own detriment—and thus distorted the nature of the intellectual ferment that had contributed to October.

After dinner, I met several of Q.'s friends and, with several bottles of vodka, we settled down to a long evening of talk, drink and song. They sang Polish workers' songs, and I responded with some old Wobbly tunes and some of the classic radical parodies like "The Lady with the Popular Front." One new joke was added to my fund of Polish stories: In World War III, Poland will be in the most favored position of any country in the world. Why? Well, what other country has such a large buffer state between itself and China? The evening lasted, with the vodka, until dawn.

The most memorable evening of my stay in Warsaw was an encounter with a Marxist philosopher who I shall call Urban. Urban occupied a curious position in the debates that had taken place in Poland. He was against the revisionists, and many considered him "orthodox," yet he was anti-Stalinist. I had been in correspondence with him as a result of a paper I had published in the *Journal of Philosophy* in November 1959, entitled "The 'Rediscovery' of Alienation: The Quest for the Historical Marx."

In the paper I had argued that the current preoccupation with the theme of alienation in Marx was both historically false to Marx and a poor crutch to use in debate against the "orthodox" spokesmen for Marxism. My argument was, first, that Marx had repudiated his earlier concern with "self" and with "moral imperatives," and in doing so had actually closed off some fruitful roads of in-

quiry that could have led to a broader, more humanistic Socialist philosophy; and, second, that this return to the "young Marx" was a stage "in the pilgrim's progress of those coming out of the Marxist forest." The concept of alienation, I said, was a radical, and today a necessary, tool of analysis, but it had to stand on its own feet, "without the crutch of Marx."

Urban had written me that he agreed in large part with my thesis, and added, wryly, that if published in Poland it would make the revisionists unhappy. I wrote back that I knew the "risk" I was running, but was lucky in that I did not have to conduct the debate on his terms, as the revisionists were forced to, within the Marxist framework.

This was the background, then, of the dinner and talk that evening. A stocky man, well-built, with a self-assured manner, Urban greeted me quite cordially. His English was fluent, and he was quick in his replies. The apartment was comfortable, but not showy, with a library full of books in English, Russian, and German, as well as Polish, and I noticed that many of the volumes were quite recent. Apparently Urban made it a point to be *au courant* with Western philosophical and sociological writings. The other dinner guest that evening was a journalist who I shall call Caplansky. He was thin-lipped and wore rimless glasses, which gave him a severe look; and in the discussion he was more ideological— or perhaps one should say more dogmatic—than our host.

Urban opened the conversation by telling Caplansky about my essay, and then said that the writings of the young Marx were confused and that the source of the confusion was Hegelianism. Marxist writing, he said, had to be purged of its Hegelian obscurities; what it needed was an infusion of Polish logic. I asked him for an example, and he replied, "Kotarbinsky"! I forbear commenting on the irony that students studying Kotarbinsky during the Stalinist period had been put in jail, and now the party's official ideologist was urging a marriage of Marxism with praxiology. A strange dialectic indeed.

Urban was apparently seeking to exemplify this new approach, for he told me that he was engaged in a study which would deal with logic, communication theory, linguistics and philology from a Marxist point of view. (From his description of the work, I could

foresee considerable philosophical difficulty. An "active" view of semantics involves a theory of mind and consciousness. One can propose either an idealist theory of mind or a behaviorist one based on the socio-biological approach of Dewey and George Herbert Mead. The orthodox Marxist view, as outlined in Lenin's work, is a "copy theory" of knowledge, in which thought "reflects" material movement. And this is extremely crude philosophy.) "What about Lenin's *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism?"* I asked Urban. "I ignore it," he replied. It was evident that, as he outlined them, his own views were close to pragmatism—the views, say, of Charles W. Morris. "What will you do if the Russian philosophers attack you as a pragmatist?" I asked. "Oh, that would be vulgar Marxism," he replied jocularly.

We went into the dining room, where we were joined by Mme. Urban, a small, pleasant-looking woman. Our conversation ranged over the American elections, the Berlin crisis and China. Caplansky had just finished Isaac Deutscher's most recent book, and expressed approval of it. He argued that Russia was moving into a new historical stage, in which the maturity of the working class would force changes in the social structure. I replied that domination does not always derive from an economic cause, that the new privileged groups in the Soviet Union would want to pass on their privileges to their children, and that the party would not easily relinquish its role as the arbiter of the country's policy.

The discussion of Deutscher led directly into a discussion of the Polish situation. I asked Urban to explain the increasing pressure against the intellectuals and the tightening of controls. "You are enough of a Marxist," he said, to "realize that these problems have an economic foundation." The initial reason, he said, is demographic. The economy wasn't moving fast enough to absorb the large number of young people, born after the end of the war, who would be coming into the labor market in the next few years. It is true, he said, answering a question I put to him, that there had been discussions in the party's economic commission about the desirability of introducing a larger measure of unemployment into the economy, in order to frighten the workers into increasing productivity. "I know what you are probably thinking," he said, "but the situation is not the same as in capitalist society. There, unemploy-

ment benefits the particular capitalist enterprises, which want to beat down wages; here, unemployment would become a social benefit." Besides, he continued, one cannot use any overt coercion against the workers; no one can go back to the Stalinist period. Nor does the regime have enough consumer goods to use as incentives. As a practical fact, a measure of unemployment might have to serve as a coercive device. His answer was a highly sophisticated one. It was, in fact, the answer of every ruling class that tries to justify economic growth through "primitive accumulation."

The economic situation, he continued, led directly to ideology. An increase in economic pressure was bound to create resistance and grumbling, and one had to take steps beforehand to minimize criticism, or at least constrict the areas of free discussion. "This is a Communist country," he said, "but only fifteen per cent of the professors are Communists; eighty-five per cent are non-Marxist. The government knows this, and cannot let it go on." There would be no retaliations. Even during the severest repressions, he said, only fifteen professors had not been allowed to teach, and they had continued to receive their university salaries throughout that entire period. But no one was killed. "In the Universities today," Schaff said, "a student can study sociology for five years and never read Marx. This will now change."

I told Urban that I was not as much of a Marxist as he, and that the Polish experience itself seemed to be the best particular disproof of Marxism. The intellectuals had accepted the economic foundations of Socialist society, I pointed out, but what repelled them was the "superstructure." Wasn't it precisely the difference in cultural taste—especially the unwillingness to accept Russian painting, literature and architecture—that produced the sense of revolt? Furthermore, Gomulka had missed a wonderful tactical advantage when he was trying to defend Poland's special solution against the Russians: after all, I pointed out, there is excellent historical precedent for upholding the idea of "Socialism in a single country." To these tongue-in-cheek paradoxes, Urban replied with a *mot*: The Yugoslavs say they are different from the Russians, but are the same; the Poles say they are the same as the Russians, but are different.

We returned to the library for coffee and brandy. Urban's

daughter, a pretty apple-cheeked girl, came in for a moment, and it was clear that her parents took great pride in her. Mother and daughter spoke in French (the girl knew only a little English, and Mme. Urban, whose English was better, preferred to speak French with me), and they discussed a forthcoming vacation in the Black Sea area in Russia. The girl was interested in mathematics and art, and between her and her mother, it seemed, there was intellectual conflict. To the mother's gentle dismay, the daughter had an intense love for Picasso; the mother's taste was more classical. Such is the dialectic of the generations.

It had been a remarkable evening, the exchanges quick and sharp. Urban had been frank about the growing intellectual restraints, and had not tried to deny or pettifog. Acknowledging the facts, he had justified the new course simply on the ground of necessity. At least I hadn't been subjected to slippery evasions. He had spoken, almost, like a "disenchanted cardinal." Yet in these strange, Brechtian days, disenchantment is a mask for belief.

BOOKS

COMING-OF-AGE

GROWING UP ABSURD. By Paul Goodman. Random House. $4.50.

In some ways Mr. Goodman's book is like the other works of social analysis and cultural self-examination that have been pouring out of American publishing houses in recent years. Predictably, he points out the stultifying effects of conformity, the mass society, and the Organized System. Like the others, his book is something of a jeremiad—"gloomy" he calls it, although gloom is far from my final impression of it. But unlike the other analysts of the Situation, Mr. Goodman looks at things from the point of view of the young, and this is what gives *Growing Up Absurd* its genuine originality and importance. It is also what gives the book not only its special poignance and depth but its special realism and relevance.

The great thing about *Growing Up Absurd* is that, wayward, aphoristic, alternately gauche, moving, and witty as it is, it gives one the sense of being firmly grounded in the contemporary world, and probably in the future. The book has a utopian tone, to be sure, yet one is led continually to reflect that the accurate, unadorned, unembarrassed, unideologized observation of simple contemporaneous fact has become so rare and difficult as to be in itself something of a utopian activity. This is because we live, Mr. Goodman would say, in a civilization which seems determined to remove as many of its citizens as possible as far as possible from the root conditions of life, and to keep our youth from growing up any way but "absurd," or worse.

Many of Goodman's fellow cultural analysts are equivocal in their answers (if they give any) to two basic questions. Are our troubles the inevitable result of history and of the material culture we live in? Do the traditional liberal-radical programs

still contain the vital possibility of fundamental reform? Goodman answers No to the first question and Yes to the second. The ills of our society are "by no means inherent in modern technological or ecological conditions." Indeed "they have followed precisely from the betrayal and neglect of the old liberal-radical program."

Mr. Goodman's indictment of our abundant society is that it is "lacking in enough man's work. It is lacking in honest public speech, and people are not taken seriously. It is lacking in the opportunity to be useful. It thwarts aptitude and creates stupidity. It corrupts ingenuous patriotism. It corrupts the fine arts. It shackles science. It dampens animal ardor. It discourages the religious convictions of Justification and Vocation and it dims the sense that there is a Creation. It has no Honor. It has no Community." Apart from its truth, I find this very refreshing indeed, because most of us are too sophisticated to have written it or thought it, at least in Goodman's words. And what other contemporary intellectual would come out unblushingly in favor of "excellence and manliness" or say that those who influence boys must be "knightly." We all believe and know these things, but we fear that to say them out loud would be to evoke the superior smile. Yet Mr. Goodman's way of expressing himself merely commands our assent.

As I have said, Mr. Goodman is out to discover the connections between two phenomena: "the Organized System of semimonopolies, government, advertisers, etc." and "the disaffection of the growing generation." He examines the mixed vitality and futility of the Beat and Angry young men, who are in reaction against the Organization but who preserve or rediscover certain possibilities of freedom, spontaneity, and flexibility. He examines, also, the ethos, the taboos, rules, and status symbols of the adolescent street gangs, who although, or perhaps *because,* they are in more rigid and desperate reaction to the Organized System live by codes strikingly analogous to the System's own kinds of conformity. Goodman easily disposes of the more facile prescriptions for improving the young. For example, he finds but a half truth in the familiar idea of pulpit moralists and police chiefs that "the family" must bear the blame for the delinquency of its young. The family should not and cannot bear the whole

burden of providing the young with a vibrant, meaningful, and humane culture. It can do this only if it is in turn supported by such a culture. Nor is the "acculturation" technique of public officialdom, well tutored by sociologists and psychologists, likely to help the young. Mr. Goodman quotes Governor Rockefeller, who was moved by juvenile violence and murder in the streets of New York to say: "We have to constantly devise new ways to bring about a challenge to these young folks and to provide an outlet for their energies and give them a sense of belonging." Goodman notes the mounting anxiety and final futility implied by the "constant" invention of "challenges," since meaningful challenges cannot be artificially devised but must be a natural and organic part of society itself. He notes that providing "an outlet" for energies and giving the young a sense of belonging may well mean in practice draining them of energy and making them into members of the respectable, instead of the delinquent or criminal, Organization. The culture itself, not just the family and the youth, is what needs to be changed, and Mr. Goodman finds the United States admirably equipped in every material way to change the culture. He does not suggest austerity or willful non-conformity. He is inspired by the abundance and even greater potential abundance of our society and only asks that it be put to better use. Here, as always, Goodman is remarkably free of ideological encumbrances. His plans for America are certainly utopian, but he is not vague and ignorant of history as other American utopians, like Edward Bellamy, have been. Goodman is the kind of thinker in whom the utopian proceeds directly from his common-sense knowledge of what human nature, especially young human nature, is and what it needs.

Like all men of common sense, Goodman believes that there *is* such a thing as human nature, that it is irreducible, that it makes certain perennial demands of its environment and has certain perennial aspirations. He would perhaps agree with Whitman's description of the Self, that "miracle of miracles, beyond statement, most spiritual and vaguest of earth's dreams, yet hardest basic fact, and only entrance to all facts." Mr. Goodman says that human nature is what, "when appealed to in the right circumstances, gives behavior that has force, grace, discrimination, intel-

lect, feeling." He notes the various ways in which the idea of human nature became associated with conservative doctrines during the nineteenth century and how in more recent times it seemed to be explained away in liberal thought on the supposition that human nature was whatever a particular culture made of it.

Since it is the nature of youth to grow, the worst feature of our present society is that it provides so few goals to grow toward—goals, that is, which seem adequate either to maturing boys or to the adult critical observer. "We live increasingly . . . in a system," Goodman says, "in which little direct attention is paid to the object, the function, the program, the task, the need; but immense attention to the role, procedure, prestige, profit." The young see their elders and often themselves more and more as actors and hypocrites ("fake-outs," is the usual word in my home), rather than as doers and makers. They may well see their father, organization man or not, as someone pretending to be something—a success, a popular PTA member, nay, a father! Boys, with their fierce sense of honor and fear of betrayal, are likely to have a sharper eye for pretense than their inured elders. And they know, as perhaps their elders do not, that a hollow life of role-playing is not what their animal energies and human aspirations want.

The moral significance of work and the relation of the worker to his materials and to his product concern Mr. Goodman, as they have concerned social commentators from Marx and Ruskin on down. When an adolescent boy looks at potential jobs in our civilization, he sees that the myriad forms of role-playing are handsomely rewarded, whereas work that is "hard, useful, and of public concern" (like farming, baking, or teaching) commands by definition a meager recompense and a dubious status. Without the traditional Protestant ethic of work (whose demise Goodman deplores) and without an adequate prospect of meaningful jobs, the youth faces a kind of void, and begins to develop that apathy and general ineptitude which everyone has observed. The origin of his book, Mr. Goodman tells us, was a conversation he had "with half a dozen young fellows" in Ontario who, when asked what they wanted to work at, replied in effect "nothing." Goodman reports that he turned away from this conversation because of "the uncontrollable burning tears in my eyes and constriction in

my chest" and because of his feeling of "frank dismay for the waste of our humanity." Mr. Goodman does not suppose it would be easy to provide millions of publicly useful and morally rewarding jobs. Certainly it cannot be done artificially, by inventing more and more jobs. The desirable situation could come about only if America should seriously decide to make herself over physically and spiritually. "The simple job plight of these adolescents," as he says, "could not be remedied without a social revolution." The direction of this possible revolution is suggested in the many fascinating proposals for radical changes in city and town planning advanced in Goodman's earlier book *Communitas* (written with his brother Percival). No traditional label, such as "socialism," can be attached to Mr. Goodman's "revolution." The ideology can come later, he seems to think. What matters immediately is the remaking of an increasingly abstract and inhuman environment into a world that nourishes in the young their sense of the concrete, the "on-going," the human, and the communal.

Goodman believes we have created another void for the young to stare into by allowing the sentiment of patriotism to decline. He is not talking about flag-waving, of course, but about the power of "country, community, place . . . to animate." Patriotism may be the emotional debauchery of aging Legionaires, but basically, as Mr. Goodman argues, it is "the culture of childhood and adolescence." And "without this first culture, we come with a fatal emptiness to the humane culture of science, art, humanity, and God." Certainly we have blurred the image of patriotism. When the young become accustomed to such phenomena as President Eisenhower sending a well-publicized message of condolence to Clark Gable after his heart attack, is it any wonder that, asked what living person they would most like to be, the boys at an Oklahoma High School named Pat Boone, Ricky Nelson, and President Eisenhower?

Leaving aside the Beats (of whom Mr. Goodman gives a sensitive and on the whole sympathetic account), we have, then, an organized system which is "an apparently closed room" containing the "rat race" of role-playing and status-seeking. It is characterized neither by the idea of progress nor by that of the class struggle, because both of these envisioned an open field of history, whereas

contemporary Americans seem to find it more and more difficult to imagine any alternatives to the values of the system as it is. But the alternatives are real. Although they might produce a new society, there is nothing novel about them. They have been proposed in the long series of modern revolutions Goodman lists in his concluding chapter, beginning with the Reformation itself and including such diverse advances as have affected the physical environment, economic and social life, politics and constitutional law, manners and morals, education and our attitude toward children, sex, and the family. Mr. Goodman's point is that all of these revolutions either failed of fruition entirely or were compromised. His axiom is that "a successful revolution establishes a new community. A missed revolution makes irrelevant the community that persists. And a compromised revolution tends to shatter the community that was, without an adequate substitute." This is a very heady proposition, and I hope that sometime Mr. Goodman will spell it out in detail and with historical examples. At any rate one can agree that the existence of our American non-community is not to be attributed simply to the nature of modern times, the abundant economy, the mass society, or whatever. The aging have little trouble in reconciling themselves to the idea that it is the way of the world or historical fate that revolutions should miss their goals or be compromised. Perhaps they do not even mind habitually employing a false rhetoric that imputes success to all the modern revolutions. But the young have reason to be severer judges; they have more at stake.

My book called *The Democratic Vista* was my contribution to the literature which has been studying the Situation. At the end of that book I muse for a moment over the prospects of "the rising republic"—a group of children singing around a fire. But my book is mostly retrospective and summary. I am grateful to Mr. Goodman for concentrating with so much force, clarity, and compassion upon contemporary realities and upon the future of the rising republic.

Richard Chase

THE WESTERN THEME: EXPLOITERS AND EXPLORERS

BUTCHER'S CROSSING. By John Williams. Macmillan. $3.95.

If western Kansas and eastern Colorado are not quite in the heart of the West, and if buffalo-hunting is only a third or fourth cousin to westering, nevertheless the scene and the foreground action of John Williams's *Butcher's Crossing* inevitably bring to mind the problems of the writer who would make literary art out of the history of the West. It has been the fate of the American West to beget the stereotypes that belong to pseudo art before it has yielded up the individualized types that belong to art proper. A natural history of stereotypes would reveal, I surmise, that they come into being in two opposed ways. One of these involves the familiar death-in-life paradox: the stereotype is the devitalization of a once strong life that naturally can be neither reproduced nor replaced and so drags on in pale likenesses. There were, for instance, the Pamelas that resisted men, the Tom Joneses that did not resist women, and the Yoricks that resisted no vibrations, however minute, of delight and pity—mechanical imitations that crowded through fiction until almost 1800. An innovator of genius (and genius may not always mean greatness) forms a taste, and camp-followers, mastering expected motions, gratify it. More recently we have the examples of Wells providing an image in science fiction, Doyle in detective fiction, and *Gone with the Wind* in the lusty-busty historical. If we think of "grades" of stereotype, an approach which may be fruitful, we can perhaps see an upper-level stereotype in what we call by the slightly less condescending name of "vogue" or even in what we call, a little more honorifically, a "style." Zola created a pattern with such limitations that it may come, with the modification of a particular sensibility, to seem a stereotype, and even as early as the present time the existentialists seem threatened with the same danger. When the innovator is not so much providing a re-illumination of constants as he is catching a particular note of his own time, the threat of the stereotype is soonest perceived.

The stereotypes of the West, however, do not represent a de-

cay or a degenerative hardening of what once was a living form, or a sterile mimicking of earlier creative acts. There are no reminiscences of a former greatness in the good and bad men, sheriffs and Indians, pioneers and profiteers, pardners and skunks, cowboys and emigrants, girls and gamblers, patriots and hold-up men, those quasi-human molds into which simulated life-fluid is habitually poured by practiced script-writers who never spill a drop that would mess up the neat little reception rooms in their readers' nervous systems. These standardized reductions of human variety have a contrary genesis: they spring into their non-vital life in response to large and striking real-life events that the mature imagination has not yet taken the measure of and assimilated. The first stereotype that I have identified has its origin in literary innovation, the second in historical "innovation." In literary innovation a creative mind, whose products may or may not turn out to be great, discovers a new style or a new method or a new emphasis for which an age is in some way "ready"; hence the strength of its impact, and hence the string of successors who repeat what he has done and feed it to those ever hungry for the repetitions. In historical innovation some crisis, some discovery, some great expansive movement, some surprising reconstitution of the known, some overturning of the accepted strikes its age like a blow; we are incapable of not making art of it, but equally incapable—perhaps for a century—of making art of it. Up spring the stereotypes, the simplest responses in terms of contemporary habits of feeling, to provide some substitute for that aesthetic experiencing and confrontation of newness in the world that we appear to seek instinctively. At present, for instance, we see newsstand magazines serving up "space fiction"; one can guess at the patterns, and one can conjecture that they will have an almost unlimited tour of duty. Granted, the service they perform will be for only a part of society, that part that needs an immediate mythical frame for the dizzying pictures of monstrous, siren space.

The historical innovation, be it breakthrough or breakdown, comes soonest to the embrace of adult art when it is primarily a phenomenon of human behavior, in the sense that it results from interactions within the human community rather than from the discovery and exploitation of things, objects, or nature. The great

wars of the twentieth century, for all of their novelties of magnitude and weapon and threat of global destruction, could be felt as rooted in human personality; hence, whatever their shock value, they have not had to be encountered by that application of handy formulae that is the surrogate for true artistic exploration. Sober and talented writers have dealt with both wars, and I will venture that there is an inverse proportion between the quantity of their work and the quantity of stereotype treatments of military themes. In the world of pulps there cannot help being an *Aviation Stories,* but there is probably not a *World War II Stories.*

Among innovations, it is things (objects, nature) that most readily evoke the formulae of pseudo art; formulae flourish when an adequate sense of human relevance is lacking, when objects do not impinge upon us as symbolizations of human motive and direction. The expansion of physical worlds is an affair of great things, of stages and properties so large that the human actor hardly seems significant at all. It becomes the business of journalism and of the conventions of melodramatic art. The actual history of New World conquests never became the material for a major work of European literature. Though in scores of works one can dig up stereotypes of noble and ignoble savages, pioneering heroism, exotic romance, and patriotic endeavor, the notes of greatness in some way traceable to Renaissance voyaging are infrequent: Panurge's voyage, Caliban, Robinson Crusoe, Gulliver (*The Lusiad* is unique in modern literature as an epic celebration of an explorer). The last phase of the great westward movement—crossing America to the Pacific, and conquering and domesticating the trans-Mississippi country—is another affair of things: of great distances, obstacles, and prizes, and it has hardly yet come under the humanizing imagination. But no other historical innovation has been so surrounded, walled in, thatched, trammeled, concealed, and buried by multitudinous layers of a few simple stereotypes that apparently afford their readers a sense of life and truth. The voluminousness of the trade in these stereotypes is doubtless due in part to the historical accident that they became available when mass-entertainment industries not only made extraordinary circulation possible but also helped prepare a very large public for notably uncomplicated versions of actuality.

In this situation the West and westering, considered as the raw materials of art, pose a considerable problem. The very prevalence of stereotypes tends to proliferate stereotypes. They have an automatic appeal to a kind of writer who seizes upon them and lies in wait, ready to garrote "new" material and make a killing. The West appears to be more than usually afflicted by that semi-underworld character, the commercial writer, who deals in printed matter precisely as he might in slot machines or panaceas or any other devices aimed at the quick buck. He haunts writers' conferences, the Apalachins of his tribe, in the fervid hope that there the representatives of publishers will betray secret recipes for next year's best sellers and perhaps make it possible for him to muscle in on the still lusher territories of television and movies. In his home town he has the ear of reporters, who describe his new works with the earnest enthusiasm accorded to symphony doings and market behavior, and who distinguish him from the "quality writer" only by liking him more. He himself will have nothing to do with literary men, even though they have names; he will not listen to them if they come to town to lecture, and he will not acknowledge their existence except by assuring you, with a matter-of-fact certainty, that they write for money too. Indeed, he rather likes to put on the vestments of the common man's defender against high-brows. This writer and the local status that he often achieves represent an odd melange of local pride, naive regional consciousness, belief in salvation by works that pay, democratic or socio-economic cliches, and an imagination stunted by a diet of stereotypes. As a westerner, he looks for western subjects, but he sees western history only through the formulae of popular art. True, he would like to go them one better. But his great dream is the discovery, not of a new insight, but of a new formula—a new angle, a terrific float in a historical pageant, a super-colossal.

This account would be excessive but for the prevalence of the commercial writer in the West, and his pre-emption of western themes. When the script-writer, as we may call him, has squatter's rights, the territory is not altogether inviting to a genuine literary explorer. The art-writer has not only to face the exacting task characteristic of his own work, that of probing the territory with his own imagination; even before that, he has to fight his way into

it through all the obstacles, traps, and distorting perspectives set up by the script-writer, through the camouflage of commonplaces that may effectively hide the existence of workable grounds. The art-writer may not want to use up energy in dispossessing the script-writer. Yet he does. In more than one age, indeed, we can find a historical pattern of development from initial, unskilled routines to distinction. Out of the banalities of Senecan imitations Shakespeare took the revenge tragedy into brilliance and profundity, and out of the Gothic mode in the eighteenth century, with its endless repetition of clumsy devices, there sprang the achievements of the romantic novel in the nineteenth century. This evolution, from conventional practices to gifted creation, is of course the antithesis of the movement we have already described: the decline from full-blown, successful innovation to the uninspired carrying-on of the new mode. Both patterns give useful clues to the history of generic forms.

The two activities of which we may speak as if they were independent—side-stepping, or passing through, the cliches of others and making one's own definition of the subject—do in one sense come together. Like all creative artists, the writer who is attracted by western themes must discover the form of the material. We might alter the last phrase thus: "the form proper to the material," or thus, "the form in the material." I introduce the familiar alternatives, not to attempt a resolution of the basic disharmony between the view of the imagination as constructive and the view of the imagination as imitative, but to focus attention upon a particular problem of western materials. Making a work of art is an ambiguous process: if it be considered as basically drawing upon some anterior reality, nevertheless the modifying power of the "making" is extraordinary; if it be considered essentially "creative," nevertheless its ties to pre-artistic models are unmistakable. Further, it is questionable whether any model, that is, any lump of material not yet transmuted into artistic form, is infinitely susceptible of being molded, re-shaped, or radically transformed. It is just possible, for instance, that western themes—all the events of westering—have inner limitations that in some way encourage stereotypes and, conversely, impede the individualizing, depth-seeking imagination. If this were true, the art-writer would have

to contend not only with the sterilities of the script-writer but also with a sterilizing force in the materials themselves.

On the face of it the western story offers hope and courage and endurance, some troubles and some failure, but overall an immense success. Though this may sound like rather a cornucopia for the artist, the fact is that the annals of triumph, especially of triumph that is mostly over things, are not easily conducive to greatness except perhaps in an epic mode that is not congenial to our habits of feeling; unless an artist could manage a heroic amplitude that would encompass all the erosion and waste inseparable from triumph, such annals are most likely to lead only to shallow waters beset by the dangers of self-congratulation. There is an excess of triumph. One is tempted to say, indeed, that western materials are simply defective in the tragic component, that they are too exclusively a melodrama of victory.

This needs qualification. To postulate an absence of the tragic in the western saga does not mean that one forgets the disasters of the last century. Those who are at all aware of the West will think quickly of such names as Custer, Donner, Sutter, and Whitman, and perhaps even of the unheroic end of Meriwether Lewis; or of fire and quake and the Mountain Meadows massacre. But there has been no major regional disaster, no all-encompassing tension and destruction and fight for physical and moral survival: no Civil War. Here, men have been extraordinarily lucky; they have not had to face the bitter enveloping crises that flow out of their own natures, out of conflicting passions, out of rifts in personality and struggles for power. It is these experiences of tragic cast that reveal depths and permit others to feel these depths; it is the presence of tragic splits that can break stereotypes, for stereotypes are the patterns of surface life from which true anguish is excluded. Without tragic suffering, stereotypes hang on more tenaciously.

If he is to do mature work, the artist must have the "right feeling" for his material. What I have been getting at is that some kinds of material encourage right feeling more than others. If the material does not of itself encourage the deeper penetration of human personality, the artist will have to have the larger soul, the greater transforming power. He will have to be more than a script-writer, though he need not be great, to move beyond the

cliches of conquest that the western theme easily encourages. These cliches may be recognized without genius. He will need a little more stature to move beyond the cliches of energy and variety (the limits of A. B. Guthrie's second, and inferior, book), for these are less detectable as cliches. He will need still more largeness to move beyond the cliches of endurance and heroism, for these, if the management of them passes to any degree beyond the mechanical, may not be spotted as cliches at all. But if his material provides him with large and palpable disasters, or most of all with tragic errors, he is the more likely to have the "right feeling" out of which, given adequate craftsmanship, may come adult and individual art. For now he is committed to the most inclusive and probing awareness of the human involvement: not only of the victory, but of the cost of victory, or of the failure in apparent victory; of the ambiguities of earning and learning; of the moral hazard, the moral doubleness; of the oblique motive or the evil deed in the very fabric of the pure intent, the struggle, the strenuous search. If something of all this is not evident in the "given," then indeed the artist must have the largeness to discover it, to remake the form of the seen by bringing the latent substance out of its obscurity.

Perhaps in a literary journal one should not take time to belabor the script-writers, as I have called them, for their form of procuring will doubtless always be with us. But if they have been too successful in taking over this virgin-territory for a profitable street-corner traffic in the cities, their monopoly is not complete. There is an occasional marriage of true mind and matter—of a talented writer with a western theme that he treats, not as an exploitable property, but with devotion and respect. In *The Big Sky* A. B. Guthrie interprets the West as milieu, so to speak; he provides, not a pictorial tour, but a re-creation of a chosen milieu in all its particularity, neither sentimentalized nor rejected: presented through a human figure neither stereotyped nor highly individualized, but with a somewhat flattened representativeness that so interacts with the scene as to aid in giving it a personality and dramatic vitality. In *Oxbow Incident* Walter Clark is also concerned with milieu, in the sense that what happens is inseparable from its place and cultural context; and these are well established.

But here milieu is less the focus of drama than a stage for character, which requires this stage but is not circumscribed by it. For on this stage is exhibited a range of human potentialities from murderousness that needs only a tempting occasion to infect a whole community; to all the ironic depths of doctrinaire masculinity and of timid recoil from killing; to the impulses that lead to maneuverings toward justice and against violence; to the modes of recognizing evil done— by flight from it, by self-punishment for it, or by the moral pragmatism of accepting, as people might accept a flood or holocaust, what can be neither undone nor properly expiated by community action.

John Williams belongs with Guthrie and Clark in that he has the same artistic conscience and the same basic tack of working stubbornly through the milieu. Even when he is using the old theme of survival against nature, he does not fall back on cliches of language and situation; any "western"-glutton who is beguiled into this book by the buffalo on the jacket will not last for twenty-five pages. But that remark is misleading, for it may imply that *Butcher's Crossing* brushes off or condescends to the regional scene and event of which it is born, whereas it does no such thing. It makes the most of western plateau and of alpine meadow in the Rockies, and of a frenetic-epic-grotesque buffalo kill, but without being bound to its places and subjects; it is not fulfilling rigid expectations or playing for automatic responses. There is a good deal of life in the ordinary sense, and there is constant movement. Williams has unostentatiously introduced, while keeping it always subordinate to human concerns, a quantity of trail lore, mountain lore, buffalo lore, blizzard lore, and finally even economic lore; all this is vivid, but it never gets drafty or cute or "educational." Williams keeps himself out of it; without showmanship he puts his characters through an extraordinary range of physical settings and threats—flat plain and an obscure, almost unclimbable mountain pass; extremes of summer heat and winter cold; autumn drought and spring flood; scarcely endurable blizzard and maniac arson. In this inclusiveness, as well as in the subordination of this outer world to the actions of men, it reminds one of Conrad's *Youth* (nowadays too easily disparaged). Such kinds of life, not to mention various peaks of suspense and, near the end, the ad-

mirably held mystery of a town's decay, should make this book accessible to many readers, and that is to the good; yet if many things in the book do not engage a mass audience, it is not that Williams ever slips into preciousness or snob appeal, any more than he slips into an easy final note of elegy or resolve.

He simply has a mature interest in the interplay between certain men, between these men and nature, and between the grandeur of plan and the grossness of fact. However, the West is not felt primarily as the school of character: the issue is not really the growth or change of character under the stresses of ambition, turmoil, and setback. Nor is it precisely the theater of character—the historic platform on which we see revealed the diversity of human responses as men seek certain ends and meet the unsought. True, it is that in part: we see the various motives that bring men together on a great hunting gamble, and the radically different impacts of disaster—death, deadness, mania, and new knowledge. In the most essential narrative the West acts, perhaps, as the mirror of character: the very novelty of set and action serve to clarify to Andrews, the newly arrived easterner, the lineaments of his own nature. What he has seen and has been a part of reflect to him the insubstantialness of the passions that have mainly determined his own course. In others he has seen "emptiness," "nothingness," "hollow glint," "open despair," and these, held together in an unobtrusively punning sequence, he identifies with his own "vanity"—literally "emptiness," as we are reminded by the recurrent terms of vacuity. Yet the futility which mirrors his own futility teaches him not to return to the East but to move on westward; if Butcher's Crossing is dust and ashes, and "nothing beside remains," the very catharsis of an earlier self, we take it, is the paradoxical beginning of new growth.

In telling the story of Andrews, the easterner who experiences a self-defining in Kansas and Colorado, Mr. Williams has chosen a convention quite familiar in our day—the convention of minimalized sentience, expressiveness, and reflectiveness. The playing down of overt feeling and thought in the protagonist is accompanied, in the earlier parts of the book, by a rather sparse use of sensory images. As a result there is a kind of flatness of texture that the author evidently intends; he appears to be strongly de-

termined on an "objective" presentation and on the avoidance of that inner flux of sensation, emotion, and consciousness which in the "psychological" tradition is made the center of reality. This may be either a self-imposed aesthetic discipline or a considered adaptation of style and method to the western theme, to a milieu of intransigent, often brutal, fact and happening in which men had better expend energy only in the primary physical activities of surviving and arriving. The method has certain disadvantages: human responses that seem inevitable are sometimes missing; the reduction of memory leaves us curious about the hero's past and its relation to the present; major choices are made in an apparently mechanical way that leaves a motive unclear, even though motive does not seem unimportant; and even the hero's final clarification is not entirely free of fuzziness. On the other hand, Williams makes the convention of the non-responsive and apparently analgesic man serve an excellent effect by discarding it at key moments and shifting to the convention of full sensibility; reality is no longer centered in impersonal muscular transactions with an external world of things, but shifts to the realm of feeling and thought. By this break in method, notably employed during the slaughter of the buffalo herd and at the final collapse of the buffalo hunter's world, Williams dramatizes as sharply as possible the emergence of understanding: character and reader are thrust simultaneously into moments of enlightenment, of the appraisal of external phenomena by the sentient observer newly revealed as the human reality behind the facade of the automaton-like adventurer. The world of outer scene and action itself gains a new intensity through a greater frequency of sensory images, just as we draw away from it into a new knowledge of it. The density of things is greatest when we turn to their significance; the novel opens out most widely as it moves inward into consciousness.

Williams's instinct for playing down meaning except at moments of epiphany serves him well in a different area: it contributes to a laudable reticence in the symbolic overtones that, in an age when writers can hardly help being highly self-conscious technicians, are likely to become much too assertive. Perhaps most open to view is the hero's involvement with both love and death: his progress from a shrinking diffidence to a knowing and yet

amateur participation, where custom and passion are oddly intermingled, and to an incipient maturity out of which, we assume, will develop better ways of coming to terms with both. Yet what he feels in himself is perhaps not the most profound source of what he knows; it is something of an echo of what he feels, perceives, recognizes in others to whom he is, for a time, bound. In the chief buffalo-hunter Andrews discovers, as inner truth, an obsession with process that can come to rest only upon exhaustion of the materials: he sees a kind of totality that tends to make extermination the only possible end. In this there are suggestions, though only the subtlest suggestions, of political symbolism. But the leader is also engaged in economic enterprise, and the story somehow recapitulates the entrepreneurial myth—from the initial union of talented half-possessed idea-man and venture capitalist and salaried technician in a grandiose dream of the ultimate killing, to the eternal irrationality of natural event, overriding passion, and human fickleness that, despite fantastic struggle and endurance, can bring the dream to nought. Yet this economic symbolism is barely hinted. Fortunately for the novel, its concern is with neither the political nor the economic cycles whose shadowy presence one may feel there, lurking in the narrative as a subtle increment, but with what is prior to these—the ways of the human psyche. What Williams has caught sight of is the capacity deep in man for paradoxically combining automation and frenzy, for achieving, at the very summit of vital and passionate energizing, an insensate reduction of life to thingship. He has discerned, in the classical gestures of production, a latent impulse to destruction that, when the manic absorption in operations whirls the dream into nightmare, becomes the whole truth.

This is what the reader learns. But he learns it through Andrews, whose learning of it is the first step in his own growth. If the great adventure, whose greatness is closely allied with its sickness, kills one participant and maims two, it leads a fourth toward knowledge. That Williams sees certain terrifying depths, and that he sees that seeing these may mean, not despair, but a saving sense of reality, is an index of his range in apprehending what man can do. His range embraces the complementary insights that the dream may become twisted into the nightmare, but that man may come

out of the nightmare and be the more capable of a decent working dream. This sense of possibility Williams reveals through a craftsmanship that justifies some examination. It is the craftsmanship of one who, working to make a familiar territory, the West, produce the best that it can, rejects the popular quick-profit single-crop system that requires only mechanical repetitions of familiar steps, and takes the hard way of surveying the land anew and exploring complex possibilities that are there only when they are seen.

Robert B. Heilman

FICTION CHRONICLES

THE LAST OF THE JUST. By André Schwarz-Bart. Atheneum. $4.95.
TEMPO DI ROMA. By Alexis Curvers. Meridian. $1.45.
THE MARQUISE OF O—. By Heinrich von Kleist. Criterion. $5.

A great success when it first appeared in France, André Schwarz-Bart's novel about the extermination of the Jews is another of those worthy books which makes every claim upon us except a literary one.

Mr. Schwarz-Bart begins with a series of vignettes based on the lovely Jewish legend of the *lamedvovniks,* the thirty-six obscure men whose devotion to the idea of justice allows the world to continue. Martyr after martyr is sketched, each of them a *lamedvovnik* who passes the hope of justice on to his son, until, in the bulk of the novel, there is a full-scale rendering of the agonies and destruction in the gas chambers of Ernie Levy, the last of the just. Mr. Schwarz-Bart's use of this legend to carry his central idea suggests the influence of recent Yiddish poetry, with which he is apparently familiar. This idea, most forcefully developed in the work of the Yiddish poet Glatstein, is that the killing of the six million irrevocably broke the tacit assumption which had made possible three thousand years of Jewish history—the assumption of a bond between the Jews and their God, resting on the promise or even the possibility of justice—and that now the very people who had once been closest to God must stand apart in abandonment, waiting for an answer to ques-

tions He cannot confront. It is an idea which transforms the traditional Jewish view of *galut* or exile from a condition of history into a stamp of fate.

Alas, if only the presence of such themes insured the quality of the work! For the simple truth is that, despite an occasional capacity to move us through a mere announcement of its subject, *The Last of the Just* is sentimental, rhetorical and parochial. When Mr. Schwarz-Bart tries to rise to the enormity of his material, he succumbs to melodrama; when he tries for effects of irony, he demonstrates a certain exposure to French literature.

Perhaps there are some experiences which do not permit a fictional treatment, if only because the power of the remembered fact is so great that the imagination stands paralyzed before it. I write the sentence, *six million innocent people were slaughtered,* and for a person of adequate sensibilities may it not be as affecting as an embodiment in a conventional narrative? The Yiddish poets have not made the mistake of trying to *represent* unspeakable horrors; they strike the subject glancingly, through invective, reflection or mourning. For all its notorious flexibility, the novel seems unable to cope with certain subjects, and Mr. Schwarz-Bart's book is further evidence that we have thrust too many burdens upon it, demanding that it do for us what we cannot do for ourselves.

Tempo di Roma is a beautiful minor work in which form and matter live together in a rare harmony. If in most novels the discovery of meanings is left to the reader or allowed to emerge at intervals in the narrative, here one finds an almost complete reversal of technique and purpose. The plot and characters stay well in the background, yet are more than a mere convenience for the flow of contemplation which is the dominant matter of the book; for it is the plot, in its simple curve of possible human failure, and the characters, in their modest representativeness, which provide the secure perimeter for the contemplative passages.

M. Curvers employs as his central figure one of those rootless young men, all eyes and little conviction, who have become so frequent in the modern novel. But his Jimmy is neither rebel nor psychopath, neither manic celebrant nor disconsolate alien; he is a man who accepts a certain detachment from common life as the price of his freedom, and then tries to employ this freedom in

behalf of an intense observation of common life. Things do, however, happen to him. Drifting to Rome, he holds a temporary job as a tourist guide, suffers a broken love affair, experiences the sadness of unfulfilled friendship. This novel, in its most attractive aspect, moves along as a murmur of reflection, but M. Curvers is enough of a craftsman to know that he must also provide occasional bits of incident. He then breaks the quiet surface of his prose and moves sharply into moments of contrast and significant behavior: a very funny and sad examination in which Jimmy, to hold his miserable job, must be tested on the history of Italian art; a grotesque and lurid masque enacted on the Appian Way, in which the implications of the novel are doubled and sharpened; and most impressive of all, scenes in which an English eccentric, Sir Craven, moves to the forefront, slowly to persuade us that generosity of spirit can survive in any body and through any mode of experience.

If I praise *Tempo di Roma* as a novel of sensibility, I must hasten to add that it is not at all the claustrophobic feminine kind of sensibility with which we have become familiar in recent fiction. The narrator—Jimmy-Curvers—seeks not to absorb the world as a datum of his perception, but to encounter it and then move back from it.

About *The Marquise of O—*there is so much to be said that a mere reviewer, harried for space, feels no obligation to try. The most important fact to note is that these remarkable stories are now available in English, carefully translated and introduced by Martin Greenberg.

Kleist's narratives are not really stories in the modern sense. They do not, as a rule, peg their entire implication on a single revelatory incident; they never seek to release meanings through an evocation of psychic or sensuous mood; they are usually sparing in the use of dialogue; and they seldom pretend to be dealing with familiar social existence. They are really tales or novellas which compress an enormous amount of narrative material, often sufficient for a full-length novel, into a short space. Characteristically, they seize upon some extraordinary event, some moment of the marvelous, by means of which Kleist can blend effects of the heroic and the fearful, the power of action and the uncertainty of value. Often this extraordinary event consists of some extreme catastrophe

which disrupts the natural or historical order, breaking past the settled assumptions of a society and into its underlying energies and frights. The Kleist tale thus becomes a climactic, sometimes even apocalyptic *act*, a plunging and inescapable journey, which dissolves the boundaries between control and chaos and which shows not human nature in its plasticity or human nature as it can be rationally apprehended—Kleist is quite free from the habit of psychology—but rather a sudden impetus toward heroism or disintegration, what might be called an acceleration of fatality, which comes to men when a familiar mode of life no longer proves tolerable.

The break-up of order and the consequent need for a desperate act occurs in "Michael Kohlhass," Kleist's masterpiece, as a result of the tyranny of the state, in "The Earthquake in Chile" as a result of an upheaval of nature, in "The Engagement in Santo Domingo" as a result of a revolution of slaves, and in "The Beggarwoman of Locarno," an extraordinary three-page story, as the punishment brought upon a man through an act of trivial meanness. It is in terms of this kind of apprehension, this implicit stress upon the condition of *Zerrissenheit*, that Kleist can be considered a modern writer or a forerunner of modernism. And, one supposes, it is because of such characteristics that Goethe regarded him with uneasiness, complaining—very perceptively—of Kleist's "confusion of affects." The terms in which one age complains, another praises, and thus Thomas Mann, in an essay reprinted here as a Preface, writes with evident approval about Kleist's fiction that "We are filled with anxiety and terror, shudder in the face of mystery, doubt in the power of reason, and indeed, in the power of God himself."

The pace of these tales is very rapid, with few stops for either talk or analysis, so that, in a sense, neither characters nor author are notably revealed. Everything is meant to be carried by the fable itself, by the inner momentum of the action; and we are invited not to "feel with" the characters or even about them—they hardly exist as particularized figures—but to follow or share in the rhythm of their fate. The prose itself is dry, cold, hard: Kleist cares very little for the assumptions of impressionism, he wishes to *tell*, not merely render. The sentences are often syntactically complex, packing quantities of information into subordinate clauses, and sometimes resembling an official report. Kleist's prose makes few con-

cessions to local effects, seldom calls attention to its own niceties or charms, and stakes everything on a transparent sequence of events.

That Kafka should have been fascinated by Kleist is entirely understandable, but I do not see much point in pursuing, as some critics do, the supposed similarities between the writers. What Kafka must have sensed in Kleist's stories was their surrender to the problematic, a surrender he himself pushed much farther than Kleist; but as writers, in terms of technique and tone, they really do not have much in common. Living in the period of romanticism, Kleist is still caught up by the idea of energy and the thrust of will, and this alone should be enough to differentiate his work from that of Kafka.

In any case, these remarks barely touch upon the power and interest of Kleist's tales. Now that they have been so well translated, they should become the possession of the literate American public, and Kleist himself should take his place beside such nineteenth-century figures as Büchner and Lermontov, concerning whom we can never quite decide whether they are far or near, alien or intimate.

Irving Howe

THE MANY COLORED COAT. By Morley Callaghan. Coward-McCann. $4.50.
THE GENERAL. By Alan Sillitoe. Alfred A. Knopf. $3.00.
AMONG THE DANGS. By George P. Elliott. Holt, Rinehart and Winston. $3.95.
THE GLASS BEES. By Ernst Juenger. Translated by Louise Bogan and Elizabeth Mayer. Noonday. $1.65.

Morley Callaghan's new novel is an abrupt ten foot drop from the level of professional competence that one remembers him sturdily maintaining in such work as *The Loved and the Lost* or the stories collected in *Now That April's Here*. With all due respect for Edmund Wilson's recent effort to restore Callaghan's reputation, I can't agree with his judgment about *The Many Colored Coat,* which I find to be simply one long cliche on the problem of personal integrity in our corrupt times, illustrated

by a group of characters who required no more imagination to invent and set in motion than it takes to write a script for Brigitte Bardot. There is Harry Lane, the dashing young public relations man, his beautiful, chaste, respectable sweetheart, and the sober bank manager, Scotty Bowman, who finds in Harry's soft and pleasant life all that he has missed, as the saying goes. There is also Mike Kon, an intelligent ex-pug turned gentlemen's tailor, who watches gloomily as his friend Scotty gets his head turned, a lovely tart named Annie Laurie whose heart is made of you-know-what, a Jewish whiskey distiller who affects English manners and wants nothing so much as to be accepted by the Gentiles, and an assorted group of journalists, promotors and men-about-town, who are also no better or worse than they should be. In a short time the bank manager implicates and betrays Harry by a well-intentioned bit of embezzlement. After Scotty commits suicide, the novel settles down to describing Harry's efforts to vindicate himself, largely by harassing the tailor who had testified against him at the trial. There is some complexity in the subsequent relations between these two self-righteous men and there is also Lane's ordeal of self-inflicted humiliation which has a certain topical interest. Even the very masculine, no-nonsense writers like O'Hara, Cozzens and Callaghan seem to have become a little superstitious about the value of suffering; and it is not only among the Jewish fictionists that failure and loss and humiliation are taken these days as the highroad to self-discovery and moral intelligence. However, Callaghan seems at the same time to accept pretty much at face value the brittle and frivolous social order in which he places his moral conflict (hence the unexamined cliches of which his characters and milieu are composed) and the novel ends up on the rocks of what are finally ambivalent and sentimental assumptions about modern society.

Alan Sillitoe's novel is a departure from the writing he has done till now and here too I have to say there is a distinct falling off—particularly from the clarity and power of *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*. In this first novel, Sillitoe delineated with remarkable concreteness and sensitivity the life of the English Midlands factory worker and was particularly impressive in rendering the slow, violent poetry of a young drill press operator's

way of living and thinking: the rhythms of constraint and release, the tension between his appetite for taking the world as it came and his lust for kicking it apart, all within the larger development of the process by which he comes to be hobbled to his ordinary station in life. What made Arthur Seaton memorable and what placed Sillitoe on his first try in the company of Dickens and Lawrence, was the depth of specification with which he detailed the deep-dyed nihilism of the English working class. In *The General* there is little of this solidity or authority of treatment; instead Sillitoe forces his imagination out of the social here and now to portray in a very vague way an episode in a future global war between the West and the East.

The best writing is in the beginning. A train is carrying a symphony orchestra on an improbable mission to entertain the Western soldiers at the front. Moving across the freshly scarred face of Central Europe, it abruptly enters the scene of a major battle and, seemingly out of control, continues to speed crazily on amid exploding shells and machine gun fire, before it is finally brought to a halt and captured by a group of barbaric-looking "Gorsheks"—the name for the enemy. This whole opening section with its various absurdities calmly linked one to the other as they pass through the lucid mind of the orchestra conductor, is both fantastic and convincing: the idea of a symphony orchestra carried madly through the midst of a battle seems sufficiently nightmarish to introduce a story about the next war. However, for the rest of the book, this war is described with all of the probable aspects of its horror completely left out. Though the Gorsheks have perfected their machine-ridden society to the extent that special computers do their thinking for them, they—like the West—are otherwise fighting with a minimum of military technology. As a result, the massive land engagement which has been going on for four years on a very narrow front, the reliance upon infantry and artillery and skillful tactics—all make this global war between the West and the East seem rather like World War I.

Against this insubstantial and implausible background, the issues of the coming war are posed by the situation of the Gorshek General who receives orders to kill the musicians immediately. The Gorsheks take no prisoners; it is part of the remorseless logic with

which they pursue their ends by the most efficient means possible. Until now, the General has been content to let the rational barbarism of the State, with its decision-making machines, do his thinking for him: "freedom" in this ideology is "the freedom to serve. The freedom to submit uncertain questions to those in authority above you." It goes without saying that he is cynical about Western values, but not much more so than is Evarts, the conductor, who acts as the spokesman of its dying humanism. In the long dialogues and interior monologues that make up much of the action, Evarts emerges as less the adversary of the General than as the disaffected critic of his own culture, opposed to its nationalism, its war-mongering, its own hypocritical masks of tyranny. To Evarts, both sides are equally despicable; he seeks a third way in some quasi-religious form, his battles, as he says to the General, are "mystical and hidden things that I often don't realize are taking place at the time." If the General's position is conventional enough, the conductor's is painfully vague, amounting to little more than the desire to contract out, to sit still in an evil time and await the saving moments of the spirit, to accept one's fate passively, even indifferently. Eventually, the conductor's position prevails, less through the influence of his argument than through the symphony his orchestra performs for the General, who eventually allows the musicians to escape and is afterward sent in disgrace to Siberia, armed now with Evart's ideas about consciousness and resignation.

All of which adds up to a wooden and unconvincing novel and a soft, vague tract for the times. More's the pity, for in this paragraph of description and in that passage of dialogue, Sillitoe goes on exhibiting his great promise. Without asking that he go back to writing the same books about the Midland factory class all over again, one hopes that he will go back to choosing subjects that he can handle with the solidity and significance of his earlier work.

Among the Dangs, George P. Elliott's first collection of stories, is, on the whole, a pleasure to read, the fiction of a writer who is consistently lucid and inventive, consistently intelligent, who makes his words stick to the page and his characters stick to a context of recognizable and "felt" experience. His stories here tend to be

more genial, less corrosive, than was *Parktilden Village.* Like Elliott's first novel, a number of them involve the hybrid relationships that develop and wither in the misty social atmosphere of the Bay Area, but the stories have a brightness that fades out of *Parktilden Village* when the adventure of an easy-going sociologist with a group of hot-rodders turns rather strangely into a bitter examination of original sin. It may be that "original sin" and its related attitudes toward life and society have about played themselves out in literature for a while; in any case, it is heartening to find that Elliott's religious interest—which continues to go hand-in-hand with his social one—is devoted less to the proposition that "the most important fact about a man is his capacity to do evil," than to finding in the relations between secularists and men of faith, between the impulses of the flesh and those of the spirit, the transcendent moments when a positive spiritual value is asserted.

Sex and spirit, skepticism and belief, decorum and license, individuality and class: these tend to be Elliott's main preoccupations and themes, usually set off by sharp contrasts that slowly converge toward a believable resolution. A cynical New York Jew comes to a California monastery to push through a recording of the monks' music and loses himself in their singing of fourteenth-century hymns, adapted by a melancholy ex-jazz clarinetist whose sin, as he candidly tells the shocked sensualist Goldfarb, was voluptuousness. Another story brings together an atheistic scientist who has lost his wife and a Catholic Brother who fears he has lost his faith. "The Sons of Ruth" explores the manners and morals of the children of a brave and vigorous reformer: one son is a chess-playing idler and the other is a shiftless young motorcycle addict, who brings one of the girls from his set home to dinner before he arrogantly takes her up to his room. These subtle patterns of comparison and contrast give Elliott's stories a high degree of coherence without compromising their naturalness and vitality.

There are three fantasies in the collection, which seem to me less successful than Elliott's realistic fiction. The title story involves the atavistic experiences of a Negro anthropologist who lives for three periods with a primitive tribe in the Andes and who reaches through the rites of the Dangs and the Passion story to

the roots of religious inspiration. Because they have so much less to start with, such stories require that much more solidity of specification to serve as a metaphor for human actualities or possibilities. So Conrad in *Heart of Darkness,* for example, builds up his world slowly and thickly. However, except for their savage but meaningful rites of marriage and prophecy, the culture of the Dangs is vague and so are the responses of the hero. His reactions are not a Negro's reactions but just reactions; except for his use of the Crucifixion to prophesy to the Dangs, his experiences in the two worlds become essentially disjunctive—that of an academic time-server and that of a great religious prophet. "The NRACP" raises finally even greater resistance in my mind by failing to do the work of making the mentality of a Negro Relocation Camp or the world of American culture outside sufficiently altered—sufficiently psychopathic—to explain the process by which in the interest of social planning all of America's Negroes are to be secretly killed and their flesh exported to the hungry nations. Presumably, Elliott wants us to believe that present-day tendencies in state planning and minority group segregation can be logically extended to provide a sufficient cause for such a policy. But can they? Once again, one comes back to the idea that the imagined context is too incomplete and insubstantial and abstract to serve as a valid and meaningful reference to contemporary or universal experience.

I raise these objections in some detail, for they also apply, I think, to a more sustained and intricate piece of recent fantasy, Ernst Juenger's novel *The Glass Bees.* Like *On The Marble Cliffs,* it is a slowly paced, philosophic novel in which the moral crisis of modern Central European history is presented through a mixture of fable and commentary. The hero is a retired Army officer, Captain Richard, whose allegiance to the traditional code of the professional officer has caused him to fall into disgrace in the service and to go hungry in the post-war world, after "having twice paid the piper for inefficient governments." Deciding that his code of honorable scruples is out of date in a time when "trust and faith no longer existed" and "discipline had vanished from the world," Richard agrees to apply for a morally dubious post with the scientific wizard Giacomo Zapparoni, whose manufacture of robots,

both for labor and for mass entertainment, has given him almost unlimited power in the state. After his interview with Zapparoni, a charming old man who quickly sorts out Richard's Liberal weaknesses, the captain is sent to wait in a garden, and there observes in the operation of a hive of mechanical bees, the success with which Zapparoni and his technicians have surpassed nature. Both fascinated and appalled by the bees and their mechanical supervisors, which begin to present themselves to his mind as prototypes of military gadgets to be employed in a global war, Richard also spots a collection of severed human ears floating on a pond in the garden. He soon overcomes this shock and reasons that the ears too are artificial, a trap set by his employer to test his nerves and his respect for artifice, and belonging to the world of Zapparoni's perfect life-size marionettes whose performances in movies had already extended the possibilities of art. Possessed of a vision of entering and living in a world where "marionettes became human and stepped into life," where his defeatism would be cured and a career of superhuman mastery would open to him, Richard fishes

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out one of the artificial ears to examine and admire. But in horror, then, he realizes the ear for what it is and the purpose it is intended to serve:

> In this place . . . a mind was at work to negate the image of a free and intact man. The same mind had devised this insult; it intended to rely on man power in the same way that it had relied on horsepower. It wanted units to be equal and divisible, and for that purpose man had to be destroyed as the horse had already been destroyed.

The fable is interspersed with Richard's comments on the decline of manliness and virtue and on other changes for the worse during his career, which dates from the period when wars were still fought by light cavalry with "decent weapons" to the time when "the abominable war-mongers contrived their murderous incendiaries." Students of Juenger's own career will find a good deal of thinly disguised autobiography in *The Glass Bees,* and in any case, there are allusions here and there (to "twice-destroyed cities," Panzer divisions, the intervention in the Spanish Civil War, and so forth), which make it clear that the fable is intended to refer to modern Germany. However, it is difficult to pin down Juenger's attitudes to any specific context and one ends up wondering which Germany he is, after all, writing about. Is Zapparoni's garden with its pool of severed ears the nightmare of the '30's, with its systematic denigration and degradation of the human, or is Richard, watching Zapparoni's robots on television, instead in the post-war world of the *Wirtschaftswunder?*

The sum effect is that *The Glass Bees* puzzles by its technique of steadily delimiting and generalizing its particulars, to the point of turning them into abstractions that could mean this or could mean that and producing eventually a type of moral sensationalism and sentimentalism. Once again there is the problem of the incomplete and essentially insubstantial context of the fantasy, in which the details fail to support the meaning being assigned to them. But in Juenger's case, this seems to be less a failure of technique, which is otherwise brilliant, than a failure of historical and moral response to the issues he is raising.

Theodore Solotaroff

THE TRIUMPH AND FAILURE OF D. H. LAWRENCE

D. H. LAWRENCE, THE FAILURE AND THE TRIUMPH OF ART. By Eliseo Vivas. Northwestern University Press. $4.75.

Having spent his adulthood in comparative isolation, D. H. Lawrence became after his death a prey to the clumsy dissections of every chance acquaintance. As a result, many of the critical works concerned with Lawrence have been written by people who were either carrying on posthumous romances with Lorenzo or who felt driven to release their hatred for him. By now, however, such extreme responses seem dated and irrelevant: Lawrence needs neither eulogy nor vituperation. By now, we can perhaps afford the luxury of giving him *qualified* admiration. And it is the particular merit of Eliseo Vivas's book that it does precisely that. Mr. Vivas is a critic who discusses Lawrence's novels without malice or enthusiasm; respectful both of the writer and the reader, he states his ideas with a pleasing diffidence. The great

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virtue of his book is that it is coolly detached from both Lawrence the personality and Lawrence the prophet, and deals instead with Lawrence the writer.

Though he begins his study with an acknowledgment of Lawrence's enormous gifts, Vivas quickly proceeds to wonder why he wrote so many bad novels. He separates Lawrence the artist from Lawrence the propagandist and, not unexpectedly, comes to the conclusion that the novels which are failures are those in which the pamphleteer triumphed over the writer. More than half of the book, then, is devoted to an examination of those novels which are artistic failures. According to Vivas, the novels written after *Women In Love* are mainly raw and undigested autobiographical material which Lawrence failed to transmute "into the informed substance of art." To lend credence to this thesis, the reader is invited to share in an exhaustive scrutiny of *Aaron's Rod, Kangaroo, The Plumed Serpent,* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover,* the novels that Vivas presents as the prime examples of Lawrence's failure. This analysis is always informed and intelligent, yet one cannot help wondering why so much space need be devoted to showing that obviously bad books are bad. Except for Middleton Murry, who for reasons all too transparent found *Aaron's Rod* "the greatest of Lawrence's novels," and F. R. Leavis, who for reasons almost as transparent is extremely indulgent toward the novel, no one has ever considered either *Aaron's Rod* or *Kangaroo* successful works of art. Now, surely, it is legitimate to discuss acknowledged failures if the discussion brings forth new evidence for the failure, or if it deals with ideas previously overlooked. If, for instance, *Aaron's Rod* is to be discussed at length, then it would seem that the theme of homosexuality has to be confronted. To be sure, this is a problem which appears not only in *Aaron's Rod;* it occurs in many of Lawrence's novels. But here it receives its most explicit treatment. Hence, the critic dealing with this work at length simply cannot behave as if the problem were trivial; it is much too important and recurs in Lawrence's writings with an annoying persistence. Rupert-Gerald; Lilly-Aaron; Somers-Callcott—these couplings have to be explained, because until we understand their significance we cannot know what Lawrence is really saying about sex and marriage.

Similarly, Vivas's chapter on *Kangaroo* might have considered the rather interesting problem of Somers' hypersensitivity to the medical examination. Somers curses the doctors with Biblical grandness and seriousness: "And because they had handled his private parts and looked into them, their eyes should burst and their hands should wither and their hearts should rot." Mr. Vivas's explanation of this response, *alienation,* and hatred of the war, will not account for its excess of feeling, since we find evidence of the same hypersensitivity elsewhere in Lawrence, notably in a poem called "Wedlock" where the poet objects to his beloved touching him. By now, we all know that Lawrence considered sex sacred, yet does not his frenzy point to an elementary confusion?

D. H. Lawrence's grand failure is, of course, *The Plumed Serpent* and Mr. Vivas rightly takes this novel as the *locus classicus* for Lawrence's pronouncements on sex. Here he performs a service of inestimable value. It is in this book that Kate Leslie painfully and unwillingly learns what Ursula Brangwen balked at: that in the ideal Laurentian marriage, the woman must both understand

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and concede that important though sex may be, it is the greater part of wisdom and virtue for her not to come to a climax. It is interesting, though I suppose useless, to speculate on the reasons why the cloud of incense burnt to celebrate Lawrence as the prophet of sex has been so thick as to obscure the nature of his prophecies. Though we are surely all on the side of Eros, we must acknowledge, as Mr. Vivas points out, that Lawrence confuses an "ethics of duty" with an "ethics of satisfaction." When he insists on the centrality of sex in life, Lawrence is neither silly nor wrong, but when he proscribes what *should* be sexually satisfying to a woman, some of us, at least, must take issue. Ursula may, in point of fact, be satisfied with "a full mystic knowledge of his [Birkin's] suave loins of darkness," and Kate may be glad of "the death in her of the Aphrodite of the foam," but for most women it will hardly do as a program.

Throughout the book, Lawrence's religious-political program is examined both seriously and critically. Without calling names, Mr. Vivas does say that "for all his contempt of Mussolini, Lawrence had a well developed streak of proto-fascism. He was not as one might expect a consistent proto-fascist. But the tendency is there and it is deep-rooted in a psychology incapable of love." It is this same incapacity for love, Vivas insists, which made for Lawrence's rejection of "Agape" in favor of "Eros." It is this deep-rooted alienation which makes the Laurentian heroes always cry "I want, I want," in bed as well as in politics. The point is worth making and Vivas makes it well.

In a short chapter entitled "Lawrence Imitates Lawrence," Mr. Vivas recognizes that perhaps more so than any other contemporary novelist Lawrence had one story to tell, and told and re-told it in not too many different guises. Eventually it became a formula. The hero, dark, short and soulful; the heroine, dissatisfied with ordinary men and willing to listen to the hero's philosophy and to experiment in living; a male friend who finally disappoints the hero and an unvarying cast of a half a dozen non-entitities. In *Women in Love* this cast gives a stellar performance. But, when Birkin degenerates into Somers, or into a horse, when Gerald becomes Rico, and Ursula, Lou Witt, the performance becomes as tedious as it is strange. Thus Vivas maintains, and with

justice, that all too often Lawrence tried and failed to repeat the formula which worked so brilliantly in *Women in Love*. Regardless of whether we agree with them, Ursula and Birkin are an *interesting* couple in a way that Kate and Cipriano are not—though this last pair is still to be preferred to Lou Witt and her horse.

The last hundred pages of *The Failure and the Triumph of Art* are devoted to an examination of the three novels which are Lawrence's acknowledged masterpieces: *Sons and Lovers, The Rainbow,* and *Women In Love*. The reason for their success lies, according to Vivas, in Lawrence's obedience to the Jamesian dictum: "Don't state—render." It is the ability to "render" rather than to "state" which makes Lawrence a great writer, and it is in these novels that he shows this power most strongly. In an effort to account for these triumphs, Mr. Vivas introduces a new critical term, "the constitutive symbol," the presence of which, he claims, enhances a work of fiction. In so far as I understand the term, it means that no given number of "interpretations" will exhaust the

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symbol "because that to which it refers is symbolized not only *through* it but *in* it."

Whatever its uses, this concept does not differ radically from those employed by other critics, and one fails to see how Mr. Vivas's "constitutive symbol" helps us any more than, say, F. R. Leavis's notion of a "charged scene." For apart from any reluctance to clutter further the already cluttered terminology of criticism, all that the "constitutive symbol" does is direct us to a particular scene without substantially illuminating the work as a whole.

His book has the defects of its virtues. Often right, rarely wrong, but just as rarely exciting or brilliant, *The Failure and the Triumph of Art* is an example of American criticism in its current phase of academic retrospection.

Edzia Weisberg

AN IMPOSSIBLE DOCTRINE

EPISTEMOLOGICAL PROBLEMS OF ECONOMICS. By Ludwig von Mises. Tr. by George Reisman. D. Van Nostrand and Co. $5.50.

Epistemological Problems of Economics is the English version of von Mises' first and most famous statement on praxeology (originally published in 1933), whose implications he later developed, at great length and with considerable stridency, in *Human Action* (1949). Since the author's line of reasoning has not appreciably changed during the past three decades, and since many of his arguments are put forward with greater force and clarity in the epistemological section of the larger work, my presentation of his economic philosophy will be based on both these texts. That procedure derives its authority from Professor von Mises himself, who in his new preface to *Epistemological Problems* writes: "They (these essays) represent, as it were, the necessary preliminary study for the thorough scrutiny of the problems involved such as I tried to provide in my book, *Human Action.*"

Economics is for von Mises the exemplary mode of action of men living in a free society. It is only in the open market that their powers (and essential limitations) can find significant expression.

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Production and consumption define, between them, man's fundamental experience, as they do for the Marxist. "Only the economic goods are the substratum of action." Yet unlike the Marxists von Mises assumes an unalterable basis for human action, and so for the social process. "The category of action," he writes, "is logically antecedent to any concrete act. The fact that man does not have the creative power to imagine categories at variance with the fundamental logical relations and the principles of causality and teleology enjoins upon us what may be called *methodological apriorism.*" Man, then, is free to act within the conditions of his nature, which is fixed. Part of that nature is his intelligence and purposefulness, which dictate the terms on which action—both its means and ends—is to be realized. But as praxeologist von Mises disclaims any interest in the substantive ends of action; to define these is the office of ethics or theology. What praxeology studies is the adjustment of means to ends; more precisely, the rational use of rational means to presumably rational ends. These ends are partly taken over from Utilitarianism and partly from Aristotle, but since they are irrelevant to his scheme von Mises never bothers to discuss, let alone justify, them. The closest he comes to a definition is the following statement, in his book on *Human Action*: "Strictly speaking, the end, goal, or aim of any action is always the relief from a felt uneasiness." This description, reminiscent both of Bentham's calculus of pleasure and pain and of Freud's pleasure principle, is rather negative and hence not very satisfactory, but it is as far as von Mises will go. That relief from uneasiness is not only a basic but also a reasonable stimulus to action nobody is likely to dispute.

Since his theory of action is neutral in terms of value, strictly operational, he has understandably little use for history. "History cannot teach us any general rule, principle or law. There is no means to abstract from a historical experience a posteriori any theories or theorems concerning human conduct and policies." That settles the matter and von Mises is left free to develop his philosophy of human action on an a priori basis.

It is obvious that such a "radical" position must invite trouble, and that trouble is not far to seek. Von Mises never examines present realities for what they are worth—cannot examine them, since they are not within the operational field—and though he allows

at one point that "praxeology deals (also) with states of affairs which, although not real in the present and past world, could possibly become real at some future date," I have found no sensible forecast of the future in any of his recent writings. In fact, the time dimension seems to be entirely absent from his speculations, which follow the "If this, then that" model of reasoning with ultra-scholastic punctilio. The fallacy in von Mises' Olympian position seems to me to reside in the fact that he does not realize that every conditional judgment of the if/then type entails, willy-nilly, certain substantive assumptions—if only to the extent that any practical contingency which the social scientist considers unsound is not presented by him even under the hypothetical mode. Since von Mises dismisses not only Utopianism but simple meliorism in economic matters as sheer lunacy, the range of his conditional exemplars turns out to be narrow indeed. Because his *ifs* never exceed the comfortable bounds of laissez faire economics, his consequents open up no new avenues to that economic understanding which (on his own admission) must be an aspect of man's understanding of

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human action at large. Yet how can a real understanding of human action be achieved under conditions of complete agnosticism such as von Mises advocates? It is one thing to claim for economics the humble role of a purely operational science, quite another to leave the question of ascertainable collective standards of conduct up in the air or—as von Mises more often, and more insidiously, suggests—to discredit it altogether.

Complete practicality or "realism" is always in danger of slipping across the line into cynicism. If economics is to be anchored heteronomously, i.e. in something other than itself, it hardly suffices to anchor it in individual will or an aggregate of such wills. By disclaiming any interest in normative standards of ethics, etc. von Mises seems to have cleared a path for the unobstructed analysis of the economic process, yet his triumph is spurious. For such an analysis cannot be carried on in terms of the status quo, cunningly extrapolated ad infinitum, and still make sense in global terms—as it should, if it is to be more than the analysis of a special tradition, i.e. the tradition of Western capitalism. Von Mises' system is an eloquent defense of that tradition, presented with shrewdness and much learning; the only trouble is that it parades as a science based on inexorable laws and binding for future generations as well as past. But a science anchored in supports that are not only invisible but openly declared to be indemonstrable—if not chimerical—can hardly be called a science at all, no matter its author's demonstrative brilliance and skill. It is, first and last, special pleading, operating with unstated yet transparent assumptions, and with every sophistical trick of innuendo and slander whenever one of von Mises' *bêtes noires*—e.g. Marx, Utopian Socialism, government planning—is touched upon. The man who speaks of Fourier as a poor imbecile may still have a lot to teach us, but in certain fundamental respects he is plainly unteachable.

To listen to a philosopher lecturing us on radical imperfection is stultifying, quite as stultifying as having his opposite number drone on about infinite perfectibility. Though von Mises never actually mentions radical imperfection it is quite obvious that his position is not only anti-Utopian but anti-progressivist. We can improve the means of production and the means by which wealth is distributed, but as our endowment as human beings is strictly

limited, so is the significance of our actions. Of course von Mises is not, as many liberals assume, a conscious advocate of the status quo: the status quo can have no meaning for him, since it is a temporal category, a mere *flatus vocis*. Material improvement, though real enough, happens in an evolutionary void; its locus is the perennial stage of human action, which has remained substantially the same ever since man outgrew his bestial phase. Since this crucial transition (or since that second one, from barter to a money economy) time has stood still. That this stillness is the stillness of death—or the frightening stillness one senses before a disaster—never seems to have entered the mind of our proud philosopher.

Bismarck has called politics the "doctrine of the possible." While Utopian Socialism may be viewed by its detractors as the "doctrine of the impossible," von Mises' praxeology offers us, quite simply, an impossible doctrine.

Francis Golffing

CORRECTION

In Kenneth Koch's *Poetry Chronicle,* which appeared in the January-February, 1961 issue, several lines were inadvertently dropped from the opening paragraph. Following is the corrected text:

Frank O'Hara's *Second Avenue* is a poem in eleven parts—about the length of *The Witch of Atlas*. Its chief persona is a sort of Whitmanian I, though other voices appear and disappear as they do for example in the *Cantos* and *Paterson*. The I is warmer and more urgently involved in the details of his surroundings than Whitman's I, the surroundings in this case being New York, but a New York that no one has described, a 1953 springtime New York of abstract expressionist painters, luncheonettes, movies, and dry cleaners. This New York is not viewed tragically or sociologically, but lyrically. Mr. O'Hara writes about it as though he knew it so well he didn't even have to look at it any more; its details are so naturally associated with his strongest feelings that they are constantly turning into symbols and back into surface again:

Shall I ever be able to avail myself of the service called
"Same Day Cleaning", and in what face have I fought the Host?

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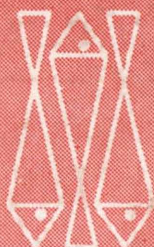

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