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PARTISAN REVIEW

JANUARY, 1950

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JAMES BURNHAM
The Suicidal Mania of American Business

ALFRED KAZIN
On Melville as Scripture

ISAAC BABEL
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CONTRIBUTORS

ARTHUR MIZENER, who is head of the English Department at Carleton College, has had access to hitherto unavailable material in preparing his biography of Scott-Fitzgerald. The book will be published this year.

ISAAC BABEL, the greatest literary talent of post-revolutionary Russia, disappeared in the Soviet purges of 1936-37.

JAMES BURNHAM is now in Washington in an advisory capacity with the State Department.

ALFRED KAZIN, author of "On Native Grounds," is completing a work dealing with themes in American literature.

MARGARET MARSHALL is the literary editor of **The Nation.** This is her first appearance in **Partisan Review.**

NICOLAS NABOKOV is a well-known composer and writer on music, who lives in New York City.

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FITZGERALD IN THE TWENTIES*

THE EARLY TWENTIES

Scott Fitzgerald spent the day *This Side of Paradise* was published in Princeton. Max Perkins had written him temptingly that "The pyramid we have made of it in our window [on Fifth Avenue] is striking"; in somewhat the same spirit Scribner's advertising department had run wild in the *Daily Princetonian* with a very small ad; *"The First Novel* of F. SCOTT FITZGERALD '17 . . . A Story about a Princeton Man," they asserted boldly. As an advertising man with a long experience in selling the services of the Muscatine, Iowa, Steam Laundry, Fitzgerald was disgusted by this conservative policy and complained bitterly. But there was something like a stampede in the Princeton University Store on March 26, 1920, just the same.

By this time plans for Fitzgerald's wedding to Zelda, which was to take place in New York, had reached the point where he wired her: "I HAVE TAKEN ROOMS AT THE BILTMORE AND WILL EXPECT YOU FRIDAY OR SATURDAY WIRE ME EXACTLY WHEN" (The plural "ROOMS" is a polite exaggeration). Then he added his usual conclusion to his love letters: "BOOK SELLING ALL MY LOVE." Two days later they were still arguing about the exact date for the wedding, but by announcing that he would "BE AWFULLY NERVOUS UNTIL IT IS OVER" and that the "FIRST EDITION OF THE BOOK IS SOLD OUT . . . LOVE," Fitzgerald prevailed on Zelda to arrive in New York in time to be married on Saturday, April 3. Perhaps Zelda's last-minute delaying tactics were based on fear. For all her established position in Alabama, she had had very little experience of a larger world, and the very fact that she valued that larger world highly must have increased its terror for her. Nor was it any exaggeration that Fitzgerald was nervous; he was frightened to death, in a hundred different ways, at the prospect of marriage and its responsibilities. For Zelda, setting out alone from

* Two chapters from a work in progress on F. Scott Fitzgerald.

familiar Montgomery and the Judge's protection must have taken considerable courage.

How unequipped she was to cope with New York was evident the moment she arrived; she got off the train at the Pennsylvania Station in white tennis shoes and a white sweater and skirt which set off by contrast her high southern rouging—an incongruous and brave figure. Fitzgerald, sensitive as always to such things, was appalled by her appearance and immediately called in an expert, his old St. Paul friend, Marie Hersey, who was in school in New York. "My God, Marie," he said to her in an anguish of social distress, "You've got to help me! Zelda wants to buy nothing but frills and furbelows and you can't go around New York in that kind of thing; you go shopping with her." So Marie went shopping with Zelda and tactfully guided her to a Patou suit. "There was a rippling sun along Fifth Avenue the day it was bought," Zelda remembered fifteen years later, "and it seemed very odd to be charging things to Scott Fitzgerald. The thing was to look like Justine Johnson at the time and it still seems a fine way to have looked. The shopper was two days out of Alabama. From the shop we went to tea in the Plaza Grill."

On April 3rd they were married in the rectory of St. Patrick's cathedral; Ludlow Fowler, one of Fitzgerald's college friends, and Zelda's sister Rosalind were the only others present. After the ceremony the priest said to them: "You be a good Episcopalian, Zelda, and, Scott, you be a good Catholic, and you'll get along fine." It was, Fitzgerald always remembered wryly, the last advice he ever had from a priest. During their honeymoon they lived in their "rooms" at the Biltmore. They went to *Enter Madame* "and the actors were cross because our tickets were in the front row and we laughed appreciatively at the wrong places and uproariously at the jokes we made up as the show went along." They went to the midnight roof and "thought the man was real who straggled into the show dressed like a student and very convincingly got himself thrown out." Ludlow Fowler had them to dinner and Zelda, who had never seen a house with a private elevator, asked him which floor his apartment was on.

There were many parties, and then, for the week-end of April 25, they went down to Princeton to chaperone the house-party at Cottage Club. It was a case of the halt leading the blind, and the halt got into the serious trouble—how much is not even yet entirely clear.

Fitzgerald began to amuse himself by introducing Zelda to everyone as his mistress. Since they appeared conspicuously dancing at all the clubs in a condition such that, as one observer remarked, a draft would have blown them down, the joke persuaded more people than it should have; there was "a rather gay party staged conspicuously in Harvey Firestone's car of robin's-egg blue" at which Fitzgerald acquired a very black eye; there was a dinner at Cottage at which Zelda became exceedingly gay.

The consequences of this spectacular display were not felt for some weeks. Then, on May 1st, *The Nassau Lit* scheduled a banquet of old editors at which they hoped to start an association of former contributors to assist the magazine. It was a beautiful spring day, and Stanley Dell, Bishop, Wilson, and Fitzgerald drove down from New York. They all got a little drunk on the way down, so that by the time they reached New Brunswick it seemed like a good idea to stop at a theatrical costumer's and rent a supply of gilt laurel wreaths, lyres, and pipes of Pan to celebrate the lovely spring. When they stopped for a moment outside Princeton on the old Lincoln Highway to satisfy the demands of nature, Fitzgerald, entering into the occasion with that kind of ecstasy of emotional response which was characteristic of him, began to dance around the car and shout the praises of the weather, Princeton, and his friends. In this state of mind they arrived in Princeton, where they caught sight of Dean Gauss on his front lawn and immediately got out and crowned him with a laurel wreath to the accompaniment of *ex tempore* verses on the occasion from Fitzgerald. They then separated to go to their various clubs until the banquet that night. The last anyone saw of Fitzgerald was when he went dancing up the walk to Cottage, a laurel wreath askew on his head and the pipes of Pan at his lips. It was, for all its innocence, altogether too precisely the image of him that was already in the mind's eye of every respectable member of his club. He was quickly approached by the president and told that he was suspended from membership. He went straight to the station and back to New York, as hurt as he had been when, as a child of six in Buffalo, he had approached a crowd of children and been told to go away, they did not want him around.

It is difficult not to sympathize with Fitzgerald's feeling that "the unctuousness and hypocrisy of the proceedings was exasperating," however much at fault he and Zelda had been on the earlier occasion.

Years later, when he himself was under attack for suppressing a vicious and motiveless undergraduate riot, Dean Gauss remembered this day and wrote Fitzgerald: "I remember with a good deal of feeling how a number of years ago a number of respectable evangelists in the cause of letters came down to Princeton crowned with laurels to reestablish the cult of Apollo and what a scandal this was to blue-nosed respectability. Yet the aim then in view was a worthy one. . . ."

Presently the Fitzgeralds moved from their honeymoon cottage at the Biltmore to the Commodore and settled down to another round of parties. The surprising thing is that the Commodore would have them; they began their residence there by spending half an hour with a group of friends whirling around in the revolving door. For by this time the twenties had begun to define themselves. "The uncertainties of 1919 were over—there seemed little doubt about what was going to happen—America was going on the greatest, gaudiest spree in history. . . . The whole golden boom was in the air—its splendid generosities, its outrageous corruptions and the tortuous death struggle of the old America in prohibition." Of this gaudy spree the people who were of an age with the century were casually determined to have their share. It was not that they lacked social generosity or even political idealism, as the Sacco-Vanzetti case was to show a little later. Even Iris March was capable of giving her hatred of the older generation a political turn, as when she says to Sir Maurice: "To you, it seems a worthy thing for a good man to make a success in the nasty arena of national strifes and international jealousies. To me, the world which thinks of itself in terms of puny, squalid, bickering little nations . . . is the highest indignity that can befall a good man, it is a world in which good men are shut up like gods in a lavatory." But for the most part we do not remember Iris March's attitude as a political one, any more than those who remember at all Ford Madox Ford's far more brilliant and neglected portrait of Sylvia Tietjins, remember how politically conscious her hatred of Christopher is. For the twenties, the situation did not define itself exclusively in political terms. " . . . In spite of the fact," wrote Fitzgerald in 1931, "that now we are all rummaging around in our trunks wondering where in hell we left the liberty cap—'I know I *had* it'—and the moujik blouse . . . it was characteristic of the Jazz Age that it had no interest in politics at all."

For what it was worth, Amory Blaine was a socialist. "We fan-

cied ourselves," said Joseph Freeman of the most earnest people of the twenties, "disinterested devotees of art, revolution and psychoanalysis. All these seemed indiscriminately to point the way to universal human freedom from external oppression and internal chaos." Max Eastman could pin his faith simultaneously on *The Masses* and *The Enjoyment of Poetry,* and Floyd Dell could write a Compton Mackenzie quest novel about the education of a middle-western socialist; the realities of the Russian revolution and the poetry of T. S. Eliot—both of which Max Eastman came to hate—were not yet evident. It took ten years for this split between Marxism and literature to mature, so that Fitzgerald could write, jokingly but revealingly, to Wilson: "[Alec] told me to my amazement that you had explained the fundamentals of Leninism, even Marxism the night before, and Dos tells me that it was only recently made plain thru the same agency to the *New Republic.* I little thought when I left politics to you and your gang in 1920 you would devote your time to cutting up Wilson's shrouds into blinders! Back to Mallarmé!"

For the most part, however, the attitude was less earnest than Josephson and Eastman's. For a moment after the war it looked as if the political strain this generation had inherited from Wells and Shaw would predominate over the aesthetic, as if the interest which would, in the thirties, produce *To the Finland Station* would anticipate the interest which would, in the twenties, produce *Axel's Castle.* The response to *Three Soldiers,* in 1921, showed the feelings which could have led to this result. Fitzgerald's own review of the book is typical. "The reader," he says, "will hear [in *Three Soldiers*] the Y.M.C.A. men with their high-pitched voices . . . he will see these same obnoxious prigs charging twenty cents for a cup of chocolate. . . . He will see the filth and pain, cruelty and hysteria and panic, in one long three-year nightmare and he will know that the war brought the use of these things . . . to himself and to his OWN son. . . . " At the same time, he speaks of the war in that tone which Mencken made stylish, as "The whole gorgeous farce of 1917-1918." "When the police rode down the demobilized country boys gaping at the orators in Madison Square [on May Day in 1919]," Fitzgerald recalled, "it was the sort of measure bound to alienate the more intelligent young men from the prevailing order. . . . If goose-livered businessmen had this effect on the government, then maybe we had gone to war for J. P. Morgan's

loans after all. But, because we were tired of Great Causes, there was no more than a short outbreak of moral indignation. . . ."

Instead of indignation there was a carefully cultivated air of amused indifference to the whole business of public affairs. In a general way you thought the socialists were right about our society, and you were sickened by the earnest hypocrisy of politicians and professional moralists, but public affairs seemed remote and insignificant, and, for the most part, quite hopelessly absurd: Mencken compared the superior intellectual in America to a man in a zoo. Fitzgerald documented this view in a characteristically smart passage in *The Beautiful and Damned*:

[Anthony] tried to imagine himself in Congress rooting around in the litter of that incredible pigsty with the narrow and porcine brows he saw pictured sometimes in the rotogravure sections of the Sunday newspapers, those glorified proletarians babbling blandly to the nation the ideas of high-school seniors! Little men with copy-book ambitions who by mediocrity had thought to emerge from mediocrity into the lustreless and unromantic heaven of a government by the people. . . .

"Life," as he recalled long afterwards, "was largely a personal matter," and this personal matter consisted mostly of an assertion, often deliberately extravagant and calculated to shock the old lady from Dubuque, of the virtues of hedonism which had been ignored and denied by her. Very few stopped to wonder, with Walter Lippmann, "Who knows, having read Mr. Mencken and Mr. Sinclair Lewis, what kind of a world will be left when all the boobs and yokels have crawled back into their holes and have died of shame?" As long as the boom lasted, as Malcolm Cowley has pointed out, it was possible to ignore American society as an obscure mess, to concentrate on the pleasant life. It was easy to think it was all *pour le sport* and that you were much too committed to doing what was fun or "interesting" ever to sink to earnestness about a career or society. "Suppose," said Cole Porter with devastating finality to the suggestion that he make a career of music, "I had to settle down on Broadway for three months just when I was planning to go to Antibes."

Carl Van Vechten's Campaspe, precisely because of her self-conscious smartness, probably fairly represents the model attitude which the period wanted to affect:

The tragedies of life, she reflected, were either ridiculous or sordid. The only way to get the sense of this absurd, contradictory, and perverse existence into a book was to withdraw entirely from reality. . . . *On n'apprend qu'en s'amusant,* according to Sylvestre Bonnard. . . . She mentally decided that Hilaire Belloc's *The Mercy of Allah* gave a better picture of a modern millionaire, because the book was good humored, . . . than the more solemn performances of W. L. George . . . and Theodore Dreiser. . . . It was this same lack of humor, this sentimental adherence to a rigid point of view which in her eyes spoiled Three Soldiers. . . . An attempt to trump up tears for the victims would always fail with a sophisticated audience, but when ridicule was aimed at the real offender, modern democracy or the church, a sense of tragic irony ensued. Something might even happen, although she was extremely dubious about this.

On n'apprend qu'en s'amusant; practically this meant for the twenties parties, and for a few years—until people began to say, like Dick Diver, "so much fun—so long ago"—life was for them a nearly continuous party. "Party," said "Topics of the Times," has "come to mean a gathering of persons who can have a 'good time' only when highly stimulated by strong waters" and suggested to its readers that they study "that remarkable book" *The Beautiful and Damned* if they wished to understand the nature of these affairs. And Zelda wrote later of this period:

"We're having some people," everybody said to everybody else, "and we want you to join us," and they said, "We'll telephone."

All over New York people telephoned. They telephoned from one hotel to another to people on other parties that they couldn't get there—that they were engaged. It was always tea-time or late at night.

. . . Up they went, humming the New Testament and Our Country's Constitution, riding the tide like triumphant islanders on a surf board. Nobody knew the words to "The Star-Spangled Banner."

At the middle of this whirl of parties, incredibly inexperienced, dazzled, and—incredibly too—dazzling, stood the Fitzgeralds. The boy from Minnesota who, as he said himself, "knew less of New York than any hall-room boy in a Ritz stag line," and the local beauty from Montgomery, Alabama, were key figures in New York. They lived in a world in which, they were naive enough to believe, the only worth-while possessions were romance and thrills—both of which could be bought on a roof-garden in New York if you just had enough money. "So I go in with my purse full of beauty and money and youth," says Rags Martin-Jones, "all prepared to buy. 'What have

you got for sale?' I ask [the merchant], and he rubs his hands together and says: 'Well, mademoiselle, to-day we have some perfectly be-oo-tiful love.' Sometimes he hasn't even got that in stock, but he sends out for it when he finds I have so much money to spend." So the hero of the story, a bright young executive, gives Rags an evening at a roof garden where he fools her into thinking she's met the Prince of Wales and she thanks him for "the second greatest thrill" of her life and marries him. Thus the exceedingly optimistic young man in Fitzgerald, who, though he was hardly more mature than the fifteen-year-old who invented "Thornton Hart alias 'The Shadow,' " the suave gentleman burglar, nonetheless guided Fitzgerald's life much of the time. What the spoiled priest was thinking of it all was another matter. A decade later he was to say in "Babylon Revisited" of the man who locked his wife out in the snow after a drunken quarrel: " . . . the snow of twenty-nine wasn't real snow. If you didn't want it to be snow you just paid some money."

With a kind of youthful naivety and gusto which led most people to forgive them almost anything, the Fitzgeralds went about New York "doing what they had always wanted to do." "The other evening at a dancing club," one observer wrote, "a young man in a gray suit, soft shirt, loosely tied scarf, shook his tousled yellow hair engagingly, introduced me to the beautiful lady with whom he was dancing and sat down. They were Mr. and Mrs. Scott Fitzgerald, and Scott seemed to have changed not one whit from the first time I met him at Princeton, when he was an eager undergraduate bent upon becoming a great author. He is still eager. He is still bent upon becoming a great author." They were as likely to be three hours late to a dinner party as on time and even more likely not to come at all. They went to parties, carefully greeted their hosts, and then sat quietly down in a corner and, like two children, went fast asleep. They rode down Fifth Avenue on the tops of taxis because it was hot or dove into the fountain at Union Square or tried to undress at the Scandals, or, in sheer delight at the splendor of New York, jumped, dead sober, into the Pulitzer fountain. Fitzgerald got in fights with waiters and Zelda danced, more or less clothed, on people's dinner tables. "When Zelda Sayre and I were young," said Fitzgerald toward the end of his life, "the war was in the sky," and with his incurable honesty he always remembered how optimistic and assured they all felt about life as they

actually lived it in the early twenties "when we drank wood alcohol and every day in every way grew better and better, and there was a first abortive shortening of the skirts, and girls all looked alike in sweater dresses, and people you didn't want to know said 'Yes, we have no bananas,' and it seemed only a question of a few years before the older people would step aside and let the world be run by those who saw things as they were."

They were beautiful and young and charming;

None had such promise then, and none
Your scapegrace wit or your disarming grace;
For you were bold as was Danaë's son,
Conceived like Perseus in a dream of gold

as John Peale Bishop wrote of Scott. They often enough got very drunk—for they were more or less drunk most of the time—and behaved sophomorically or downright badly, but they did almost everything with "an almost theatrical innocence" and very few people minded and many people loved them. Something of the almost childish sense of deviltry with which they took their own unconventionality can be seen in Zelda's report of how she fell on a bottle during a party: "[I] can't possibly sit on the three stitches in it now—the bottle was bath salts—I was boiled—The place was a tub somewhere —none of us can remember the exact locality." It was for them a time "when the fulfilled future and the wistful past were mingled in a single gorgeous moment" and so intense was their awareness of this quality that even experiences of this order seemed charming and entertaining. Fitzgerald had achieved his dream of writing a successful book, marrying Zelda, and "crashing New York society." For a moment the delights of anticipation remained to give a kind of fairy-story charm to the achievement. But with his sharp historian's sense of what was happening to him, Fitzgerald understood that anticipation could not survive achievement long; fulfillment, he knew, destroyed the dream; it was not by going Letheward but in the very temple of Delight that one found melancholy. In the middle of this achieved "orgiastic future," as he calls it in *The Great Gatsby,* he sat alone, riding through New York "between very tall buildings under a mauve and rosy sky," and "bawl[ed] because I had everything I wanted and knew I would never be so happy again." It was not simply that the orgiastic future which "year by year recedes before us" drove him

to "run faster, stretch out his arms farther" in a pursuit that he half understood was self-defeating even as he gave more and more of his time and energy to it; it was also that the man who wanted to "achieve . . . to be . . . wise, to be strong and self-controlled" stood always at the elbow of the man who wanted "to enjoy, to be prodigal and open-hearted . . . to miss nothing," reminding the former that he was marking time, that he was not doing anything except waste his gift and strain his resources writing commercial stories under terrible pressure—sometimes all night long—in order to pay for the party.

Moreover, in spite of the expensive party, they were lonely and confused; "Within a few months after our embarkation on the Metropolitan venture we scarcely knew any more who we were and we hadn't a notion what we were," he said. In the dazed confusion of this life Fitzgerald's old habit of falling into a mood of lofty assurance, in which he innocently advised all comers for their own good and talked endlessly about his importance, reasserted itself. He was axactly like Richard Carmel, who, in this respect, is half a portrait and half a gloomy prediction of his creator's future (Richard Carmel actually wrote the novel called *The Demon Lover* which Fitzgerald had projected the year before).

> The author, indeed, spent his days in a state of pleasant madness. The book was in his conversation three-fourths of the time—he wanted to know if one had heard "the latest"; he would go into a store and in a loud voice order books to be charged to him, in order to catch a chance morsel of recognition from clerk or customer. He knew to a town in what sections of the country it was selling best; he knew exactly what he cleared on each edition, and when he met any one who had not read it, or, as it happened only too often, had not heard of it, he succumbed to moody depression.

He read all the publicity about his being "the youngest writer for whom Scribner's have ever published a novel" and took it quite seriously. He was even persuaded to say that *This Side of Paradise* was "a novel about Flappers written for Philosophers." Heywood Broun, better than any critic in New York, put his finger on this brash quality in both the book and its author:

> We have just read F. Scott Fitzgerald's *This Side of Paradise* (Scribner's), and it makes us feel very old. According to the announcement of his publishers Mr. Fitzgerald is only twenty-three, but there were

times during our progress through the book when we suspected that this was an overstatement. Daisy Ashford is hardly more naive. . . . None of Fitzgerald's characters ever puts his hands down for a second. There is too much footwork and too much feinting for anything solid and substantial being accomplished. You can't expect to have blood drawn in any such exhibition as that.

" . . . for some days [after this attack]," Fitzgerald remembered, "I was notably poor company." Nonetheless he tried to meet Broun's onslaught by inviting him to lunch and, as he himself put it later, "in a kindly way [telling] him that it was too bad he had let his life slide away without accomplishing anything. He had just turned thirty. . . ." Broun's response to this well-meant advice was to print complete an interview Fitzgerald presently gave in which he told how he had become a great writer, and to remark at the end of it: "Having heard Mr. Fitzgerald, we are not entirely minded to abandon our notion that he is a rather complacent, somewhat pretentious and altogether self-conscious young man." Fitzgerald was not consoled by Perkins' tactful suggestion that "we consider all this sort of thing as advantageous." The boy who, full of dreams of the glories of prep-school life and of his own heroic role in it, had quickly made a bad name for himself at St. Paul Academy and at Newman had reappeared. So amused were Bishop and Wilson at this sudden excess of greatness that they sent Fitzgerald a list of items for a "Proposed exhibit of Fitzgeraldiania for Chas. Scribner's Sons." It included "Three double malted milks from Joe's [a popular undergraduate eating place in Princeton] . . . Overseas cap never worn overseas . . . 1 bottle of Oleaqua [a much-publicized hair tonic sold by Jack Honoré's barber shop in Princeton] . . . Entire Fitzgerald library consisting of seven books, one of them a notebook and two made up of press clippings . . . First yellow silk shirt worn by Fitzgerald at the begining of his great success . . . Mirror."

In May he and Zelda decided to achieve peace and to collect their souls in the country; to this end they began to investigate Westchester County and near-by Connecticut. Of course they needed a car, and "a man sold them"—the phrase is eloquent of what happened—"a fine but collapsible Marmon." Zelda did not improve it when she "drove it over a fire-plug and completely de-intestined it." "About once every five years," as Fitzgerald said, "some of the man-

ufacturers put out a Rolling Junk, and their salesmen come immediately to us because they know that we are the sort of people to whom Rolling Junks should be sold." Eventually they settled in Westport in a comfortable grey-shingled house known locally as the Burritt Wakeman place.

But somehow peace did not descend; it was rather week-end guests who descended, and the party went on. One night, out of some kind of boredom, Zelda put in a fire alarm and when the department arrived and asked where the fire was she struck her breast dramatically and said, "Here." "There were people in automobiles all along the Boston Post Road," Zelda wrote afterwards, "thinking everything was going to be all right while they got drunk and ran into fire-plugs and trucks and old stone walls. Policemen were too busy thinking everything was going to be all right to arrest them." Through May and June they saw many old and new friends, college friends of Scott's like John Biggs and Townsend Martin, new acquaintances like Charles Towne. George Jean Nathan came for a week-end and immediately announced that their Japanese butler, Tana, had whispered to him that his real name was Lieutenant Emile Tannenbaum and that he was a German Intelligence officer (Tana, like so much else from this period of the Fitzgerald's lives, turns up almost intact in *The Beautiful and Damned*). Nathan kept urging on them more parties which were hard to resist: "Can't we all have a party during the week? Mencken will be here and I should like to have you meet him. I have laid in three more cases of gin," he would write. He also made love to Zelda to the point of arousing Fitzgerald's jealous anger; it is possible he had a good deal of cooperation from Zelda. She loved crowds and admiration and flirtations, and much of her enjoyment of them came from the violence of Fitzgerald's jealousy. Though they were very much in love, still they were jealous of one another's success, for both of them were ambitious and loved to be the center of things; they quarreled as only such people can. "They love[d] each other . . . desperately, passionately. They [clung] to each other like barnacles cling to rocks, but they want[ed] to hurt each other all the time to test their feeling," says Simone of David and Rilda (who were contemporary portraits of the Fitzgeralds) in Van Vechten's *Parties*. This explanation is too simple, but it makes quite clear the impression the Fitzgerald's gave. Zelda's main recourse was to refuse to tell Fitz-

gerald how far her flirtations had gone, letting his suspicions tease him, and to tell him that if he were away she could sleep with another man without affecting her feelings for him at all. It was a remark that haunted Fitzgerald all his life.

Gradually, indeed, the division in his nature was being re-enforced by the life they were leading and by Zelda's delight in it and her ability to appeal both to his weakness for it and the old feeling, left over from his wooing, that her love required it. When Fitzgerald fell in love, his whole nature was involved. But he gradually discovered that the only side of it that found a full response in Zelda, in the first flush of enjoying all that her beauty and charm could win her, was the prodigal side.

> When I was your age [he wrote his daughter in 1938, speaking out of the other side of his nature] I lived with a great dream. The dream grew and I learned to speak of it and to make people listen. Then the dream divided one day when I decided to marry your mother after all, even though I knew she was spoiled and meant no good to me. I was sorry immediately I had married her, but being patient in those days, made the best of it and got to love her in another way. You came along and for a long time we made quite a lot of happiness out of our lives. But I was a man divided—she wanted me to work too much for her and not enough for my dream.

"The idyl passed," as he said in 1921. "But, knowing they had had the best of love, they clung to what remained. Love lingered—by way of long conversations at night . . . by way of deep and intimate kindnesses they developed toward each other, by way of their laughing at the same absurdities and thinking the same things noble and the same things sad." But those who worried about Fitzgerald's career worried about his working for Zelda. "Scott was extravagant," said Max Perkins, "but not like her; money went through her fingers like water; she wanted everything; she kept him writing for the magazines."

Thus, gradually, through the dazzle of New York and glamorous names and alcohol, Fitzgerald's conscience began to assert itself; what that conscience thought of Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald was to come out very clearly in his portrait of Anthony and Gloria Patch in his next novel. "My new novel," he wrote Mr. Scribner, "called 'The Flight of the Rocket' concerns the life of Anthony Patch between his

25th and 33rd years (1913-1921). He is one of those many with the tastes and weaknesses of an artist but with no actual creative inspiration. How he and his beautiful young wife are wrecked on the shoals of dissipation is told in the story." This description points up sharply the share which Fitzgerald's feelings about himself and Zelda played in *The Beautiful and Damned.* If you were carried away by the glamour of Gloria you could even say, as Grace Moore did, that "[Zelda] and Scott always seemed to me straight out of *The Beautiful and Damned.*"

There was some encouragement for this view, of course, especially in Zelda's amusing but highly personal review of the book.

> To begin with—she wrote—everyone must buy this book for the following aesthetic reasons: First, because I know where there is the cutest cloth of gold dress for only $300 in a store on Forty-second Street, and also if enough people buy it where there is a platinum ring with a complete circlet, and also if loads of people buy it my husband needs a new winter overcoat, although the one he has has done well enough for the last three years.

A little later she remarks: "It seems to me that on one page I recognize a portion of an old diary of mine which mysteriously disappeared shortly after my marriage, and also scraps of letters which, though considerably edited, sound to me vaguely familiar. In fact, Mr. Fitzgerald—I believe that is how he spells his name—seems to believe that plagiarism begins at home." The suggestion that the book is personal exposure was also encouraged by Hill's generalized but clearly recognizable portrait of the Fitzgeralds on the dust-wrapper. Fitzgerald was distressed by this wrapper, not, characteristically, because it exploited their private lives, but because he did not like the portrait of himself. He wrote Perkins one of his comically enraged letters about it: "The more I think of the picture on the jacket the more I fail to understand [Hill's] drawing that man. The girl is excellent of course—it looks somewhat like Zelda but the man, I suspect, is a sort of debauched edition of me. . . . " He went on to observe that though Anthony in the book is "just under six feet . . . here he looks about Gloria's height with ugly short legs" and that though Anthony is dark-haired, "This bar-tender on the cover is light-haired." This rage is of course partly motivated by the fact that Fitzgerald had always wanted to be dark-haired and had always been sensitive about his inadequate five feet

eight inches of height, which was mainly a matter of short legs. ("Perfection," he had noted in his sophomore year in college, "black hair, olive skin and tenor voice.") But there is some objective justification for complaint against Hill's portrait, too.

All this suggestion that the book had its scandalous side was of course encouraged by the newspaper paragraphers; "Readers may satisfy their curiosity . . . " and " . . . if there is so much smoke . . . " they said. But one had, perhaps, to be as simple-minded as Grace Moore, actually to know the Fitzgeralds and still be victimized by this idea. Gloria and Anthony were not the Fitzgeralds; they were what the spoiled priest in Fitzgerald thought the Fitzgeralds might become. "Gloria," he wrote his daughter, "was a much more trivial and vulgar person than your mother. I can't really say there was any resemblance except in the beauty and certain terms of expression she used, and also I naturally used many circumstantial events of our early married life. However the emphases were entirely different. We had a much better time than Anthony and Gloria did."

There was not, moreover, only his troubled conscience to disturb Fitzgerald; he also came up abruptly against the fact that he had no money. "It costs more," as Zelda remembered, "to ride on the tops of taxis . . . [and] Joseph Urban skies are expensive when they're real." He eventually made a joke of it, and insofar as the joke was on their financial innocence and irresponsibility it was deserved, even though the matter was more than a joke.

> . . . after we had been married for three months I found one day to my horror that I didn't have a dollar in the world. . . .
>
> I remember the mixed feelings with which I issued from the bank on hearing the news.
>
> "What's the matter?" demanded my wife anxiously, as I joined her on the sidewalk. "You look depressed."
>
> "I'm not depressed," I answered cheerfully; "I'm just surprised. We haven't got any money."
>
> "Haven't got any money," she repeated calmly, and we began to walk up the Avenue in a sort of trance. "Well, let's go to the movies," she suggested jovially.
>
> It all seemed so tranquil that I was not a bit cast down. The cashier had not even scowled at me. I had walked in and said to him, "How much money have I got?" And he had looked in a big book and answered, "None."
>
> That was all. There were no harsh words, no blows. And I knew

there was nothing to worry about. I was now a successful author, and when successful authors ran out of money all they had to do was to sign checks. I wasn't poor—they couldn't fool me.

But insofar as this was the first sign of the deadly and losing battle Fitzgerald was to fight all his life in order to get enough out of debt to write what he most wanted to instead of what would sell, there is nothing at all funny about it; and he was appalled by his early discovery that the minute he started a novel, or any piece of work that took any time, he sank over his ears in debt. Thus on December 31, 1920, he wrote Perkins:

> The bank this afternoon refused to lend me anything on the security of stock I hold—and I have been pacing the floor for an hour trying to decide what to do. Here, with the novel within two weeks of completion, am I with six hundred dollars worth of bills and owing Reynolds $650 for an advance on a story that I'm utterly unable to write. I've made half a dozen starts yesterday and today and I'll go mad if I have to do another debutante which is what they want.
>
> I hoped that at last being square with Scribner's I could remain so. But I'm at my wit's end. Isn't there some way you could regard this as an advance on the new novel rather than on the Xmas sale [of *This Side of Paradise*] which won't be due me till July? And at the same interest that it costs Scribner's to borrow? Or could you make it a month's loan from Scribner and Co. with my next ten books as security? I need $1600.00.
>
> Anxiously

When everything proper has been said about Fitzgerald's being in this mess after making over $18,000 in 1920 and about the transparent exaggeration that *The Beautiful and Damned* was two weeks from completion (it was not finished until the following April), this remains a touching letter: it is so obviously frantic and so shocked itself by the amount required that once the awful sum is mentioned it turns tail and runs. Nevertheless, if in the first year of their marriage they had already begun to live beyond their income to this extent, Fitzgerald's future attempts to write enough short stories to pay for the leisure to write a novel were likely to be labors of Sisyphus, as indeed they turned out to be.

This particular crisis was soon over. *This Side of Paradise* was at the peak of its sales and Scribner's were glad to make a little advance against royalties, and the movies came forward to buy two more stories and to pay $3,000 for an option on Fitzgerald's future output.

But this kind of rescue by fresh funds solved nothing permanently. It was not until the end of his life that Fitzgerald faced the fact that he had never been "any of the things a proper businessman should be," and recognized how "crippled . . . I am by my inability to handle money." The truth is that, paradoxical as it may sound, Fitzgerald did not care enough about money ever to take it seriously and handle it carefully. What he did care for was that vision of the good life which he had come, through a variety of circumstances, to feel was open only to those who commanded the appurtenances of wealth. Loving the life which he imagined they lived and which he tried, often so ludicrously, to imitate, he could find nothing to interest him in the means to that life; in fact, he had a deep-seated moral distrust of the whole process of money-making, and it is an image of this distrust that Gatsby, with his incorruptible dream of a life, achieves the means for it by all sorts of underworld activities. Fitzgerald never seriously condemns Gatsby's illegal business life; he even makes you sympathize with Gatsby when he defends it against Tom's condemnation. Fitzgerald could see no real distinction between bootlegging and dealing in stolen liberty bonds on the one hand and, on the other, the kind of transactions he suspected, after the Harding scandals, that most business men were a party to. He was not at all sure, a good deal of the time, that he could distinguish between these people and a writer with a great gift who wrote superficial stories for the commercial magazines. So, distrusting the methods by which money is acquired and disliking the money these methods produced, even though he loved the mobility and the opportunities for grace which he believed were available only to the rich, he salved his conscience by noticing the money itself as little as possible and refusing to live in awe of it. "All big men have spent freely," he wrote his mother in 1930 when she attempted to caution him. "I hate avarice or even caution."

This grand tone did not mean that he was careless about being in debt; that was quite another matter, a matter of his honor, his pride. All his life he was as scrupulous about monetary debts as he was about all other kinds, and when he could not meet an obligation he felt deeply humiliated. In 1920 a debt of $1600 was a very large one, and in his fright at discovering he was in so deep, he solemnly resolved to produce a novel and a play within the next nine months.

INNOCENTS ABROAD

The Fitzgeralds reached Paris early in May 1925 and presently rented an apartment for the rest of the year at 14 Rue de Tilsitt. By this time Perkins had been able to give Fitzgerald a report on *The Great Gatsby*. "Sales situation doubtful," he cabled. "Excellent reviews." It was an extremely accurate report, for the sales continued to be, by Fitzgerald's standards, very mediocre, whereas the reviews were much the best he had ever had. By the time *Gatsby* was published, he had built up his debt to Scribner's to something over $6,200. By October the book had sold just short of 20,000 copies, a sale slightly below what would have covered his debt; by February it had sold a few thousand copies more and was almost completely dead.

Fitzgerald was deeply disappointed by the book's financial career. In February he had written Bishop: "We want to come back but we want to come back with money saved and so far we haven't saved any." He had had the greatest hopes that *Gatsby* would sell on such a scale as to make him the kind of money he wanted. It was, in a way, a fantastic, assured expectation of the happily miraculous, but Fitzgerald was an optimistic young man and his experience had connived, by producing a series of near miracles, to convince him that if he did his best he would attain fame and fortune. Such an expectation was part of the pattern he had been brought up on, and if he had in some ways outgrown his background, he had by no means lost his conviction that money in large quantities was desirable. The combination of naivety and almost frightening clarity in his understanding of himself in this respect is very characteristic. From the day he announced that he would be satisfied with a sale of 20,000 copies of *This Side of Paradise* he had continued to assume that a novelist deserves a very large return for his work. "If," he wrote Perkins when the sales situation became clear, "[my next novel] will support me with no more intervals of trash I'll go on as a novelist. If not I'm going to quit, come home, go to Hollywood and learn the movie business . . . there's no point in trying to be an artist if you can't do your best." This would be a sensible enough statement—Fitzgerald knew what he could command in Hollywood—except that its basic idea, his no-

tion of support, is fantastic. By any reasonable standards his writing, even without the trash, had supported him more than adequately up to this time; omitting what he got for everything that might be thought trash, he had averaged somewhere between $16,000 and $17,000 a year. This calculation includes only his books and the six best short stories he had so far written; his total income for 1920 to 1924 inclusive was $112,934, an average of $22,500 a year. To argue that an income of this order does not constitute "support" is absurd, and in a way Fitzgerald knew it. "I can't stand this financial insecurity . . . I had my chance back in 1920 to start my life on a sensible scale and lost it and so I'll have to pay the penalty. . . . Yours in great depression." Again, objectively speaking, this is absurd. For one thing, a man who intends to be a serious writer in the contemporary world knows well enough that he will be lucky to average a quarter of Fitzgerald's income over a lifetime; for another, it is hard to believe anyone could be so enslaved by extravagance that he would have to sacrifice his whole serious career to it, especially when he is a man—as Fitzgerald was—powerfully driven to succeed in that career and at the same time tortured—as again Fitzgerald was—by debt.

The answer, such as it is, to this absurdity lies in Fitzgerald's deep-seated imaginative involvement with wealth and in the way Zelda's habitual extravagence and her devotion to "airing the desire for unadulterated gaiety"—always an expensive business—re-enforced its effect. It was difficulty enough that Fitzgerald's imagination drove him to try always to live like a man of inherited wealth and that Zelda's extravagance and their abysmal inefficiency always made such a life cost much more than it needed to. It was much worse that, until tragedy struck them, they sought restlessly for that ideal "orgiastic future" that haunted Gatsby's imagination. It made any financial solution whatever completely impossible that, whatever Fitzgerald's income, they always increased their scale of living in anticipation of it in such a way as to outrun it. Fitzgerald's imagination grasped the meaning of all these things with its usual completeness. No one will ever improve on Gatsby's attempt to imitate the life of inherited wealth or his devotion to the "orgiastic future" as a commentary on the Fitzgeralds' life. Fitzgerald saw their inefficiency as the newly rich quite as clearly and made a joke of it in "How to Live on $36,000 a Year." But his imagination could realize and evaluate

this attitude so successfully precisely because he himself was so completely committed to it in practice. His financial dilemma was much more than the penalty he paid for having failed to start his life on a sensible scale; it was the penalty he paid for the very theme of his finest work.

They spent the summer of 1925 in Paris making their financial and personal situation much worse. Fitzgerald himself described the period as one of "1,000 parties and no work"; they became famous or at least notorious figures among the thousands of Americans in Paris. What was worse, Fitzgerald's drinking began about this time to show the first serious signs of becoming chronic alcoholism. It was easy enough still to take it merely as a joke as Hemingway, of whom they were beginning to see a great deal, did in *The Torrents of Spring*: "It was at this point in the story, reader, that Mr. F. Scott Fitzgerald came to our home one afternoon, and after remaining for quite a while suddenly sat down in the fireplace and would not (or was it could not, reader?) get up and let the fire burn something else so as to keep the room warm." But there were ominous signs about it; Fitzgerald was beginning now to be drunk for periods of a week and ten days at a time during which he would draw a complete blank, so that he would, for instance, sober up in Brussels without any notion of how he got there or where he had been. Dean Gauss, who spent the summer of 1925 in Paris, remembers receiving a postal card from Brussels which gave this explanation for a failure on Fitzgerald's part to make a luncheon engagement. For two months the parties continued, with the Ritz Bar always as a kind of focus and Fitzgerald working his way to Montmartre, alone or with a few last stragglers, after the party had disintegrated. Something of the nightmare quality of the summer can be felt in "Babylon Revisited," and in *Our Type* he described one such evening in detail.

. . . then six of us, oh, the best the noblest relicts of the evening . . . were riding on top of thousands of carrots in a market wagon, the carrots smelling fragrant and sweet with earth in their beards—riding through the darkness to the Ritz Hotel and in and through the lobby—no, that couldn't have happened but we were in the lobby and the bought concierge had gone for a waiter for breakfast and champagne. We were making a waiter trap—what was it, something about a waiter trap, made of—I have forgotten, but I remember with almost the vivid-

ness and violence of his native plains, Mr. George T. Horseprotection.

He was a large brown splendidly-dressed oil-Indian—with many faults; he had been out all night and was coming home to bed but presently he was sitting with us, wide awake and trying to pay for the champagne. I was a little ashamed of him before Major Hengest but to my surprise Major Hengest was very impressed so I began, weakly, to like him too. It was quarter of five and Napoleon looked a little formidable on top of his column but we went on to the Grand Duc with him.

The Grand Duc had just begun its slow rattling gasp for life in the inertness of the weakest hour. Discernible near us through the yellow smoke of dawn were Josephine Baker, the Grand Duc Boris, Eskimo, Pepy, a manufacturer of dolls voices from Newark, Albert McKiscoe happily unable to walk and the King of Sweden. In the corner a huge American negro, with his arms around a lovely French tart, roared a song to her in a rich beautiful voice and suddenly Melarky's Tennessee instincts remembered and were aroused; . . . he began looking at everyone disagreeably and truculently. Dinah glanced at him and then suddenly got up to go.

She was a minute too late. As we were going another colored man was coming in—he had just finished playing in some night club orchestra for he carried a horn case, and was coming to meet his friends—the case swung against Francis' knee.

"God damn it, get out of my way!" said Francis savagely, "Or I'll push your black face in."

"You're not behaving like a gentleman should behave," said the colored man indignantly, "I cern'ly intended—"

"Put down that case!"

Then, before we could interfere it had happened—Francis hit him a smashing blow in the jaw and he crashed up against the door and down into the café—his legs disappearing slowly down the steps.

. . . At that moment Mr. John T. Horseprotection came rushing out and in a moment we were in a cab with him. Major Hengest with great presence of mind had gotten the two women into another taxi and called to me that he was taking them home.

"Now then," said John T. Horseprotection in character, "Ah'll take you gentlemen to the best place on the reservation."

Francis sat there with a haunted face, "God, what a son-of-a-bitch I am. He was a nice-looking fellow." Tears began to run out of his eyes, "Sort of dignified—just finished his work. Was Dinah gone?"

"Nobody saw. We're all sons-of bitches sometimes," I assured him generously. . . .

"Here we are," interrupted Mr. Horseprotection. "Now you see something—something really funny. They have to know you, but I guess they know me."

And then suddenly we were in a world of fairies—I never saw so many or such a variety together. There were tall gangling ones, and little pert ones with round thin shoulders, and great broad ones with the faces of Nero and Oscar Wilde, and fat ones with sly smiles that twisted into horrible leers, and nervous ones who hitched and jerked opening their eyes very wide. There were handsome, passive dumb ones who turned their profiles this way and that, noble-faced ones with the countenances of senators that dissolved suddenly into girlish fatuity; pimply stodgy ones with the most delicate gestures of all; raw ones with red lips and frail curly bodies, . . . self-conscious ones who looked with eager politeness toward every noise; English ones with great racial self-control, Balkan ones—a small cooing Japanese.

The others must have been looking around simultaneously, for we all said "Let's get out" together. After that we rode in the Bois I think. Then Francis and Abe and I, the last survivors went in to drink coffee in the Ritz Bar.

"But don't get up close," as Father Schwartz, the mad priest, who also longed for the world's fair, says, "because if you do you'll only feel the heat and the sweat and the life."

It was a summer Fitzgerald afterwards referred to as a time of "hysteria." This was a reasonable enough description, but the time was not all spent in hysteria and waste. There was a rather touching scheme according to which Fitzgerald and Hemingway and Dean Gauss met once a week for lunch and discussed some serious topic, setting the topic for the next week at the end of each session so as to be well prepared before it came up. There was also the satisfaction of the critical reception of *Gatsby*. There were, in addition to the handsome reviews, personal letters of obvious sincerity and great enthusiasm. "It is just four o'clock in the morning," Deems Taylor wrote him, "and I've got to be up at seven, and I've just finished *The Great Gatsby,* and it can't possibly be as good as I think it is." There were letters like this one from Woollcott and Nathan, from Cabell and Seldes, from Van Wyck Brooks and Paul Rosenfeld. Even better were the letters from Willa Cather and Mrs. Wharton and T. S. Eliot; these overwhelmed Fitzgerald, for with his almost childlike awe of those he thought distinguished writers, he could hardly believe in his own good fortune. When the letter came from Willa Cather, he hurried around to Dean Gauss's hotel at one in the morning and insisted on the Gausses' getting dressed and coming to his apartment to celebrate. The letter from Mrs. Wharton, with its modes-

ty and its obviously careful comments on the book, must have meant more than any of them to him, for Mrs. Wharton was a remote and awful figure to the young rebels of Paris.

When it turned out that Mrs. Wharton wanted them to come to the Pavillon Colombe for tea, Fitzgerald was flattered and ready to throw himself once more at the feet of the author of *Ethan Frome*. When the day arrived Zelda in her simpler and more consistent way said she was damned if she would go forty or fifty miles from Paris just to let an exceedingly proper and curious old lady stare at her and Scott and probably make them feel provincial and uncomfortable. Fitzgerald therefore went alone, full of trepidation and secretly, perhaps, suspecting Zelda might be right. All the way out he kept stopping to fortify himself, and bit by bit he became determined not to be put down. Doubtless all his feelings of inferiority as a middle westerner, as a product of the lower middle class, and as a member of the younger generation began to work. In any event, he was scarcely settled for tea with Mrs. Wharton and the few guests she had gathered to make the occasion easier, than he set out to show them all that he was not cowed; he must have been convinced that they were all in a conspiracy to snub him. The talk went something like this.

"Mrs. Wharton," Fitzgerald demanded, "do you know what's the matter with you?"

"No, Mr. Fitzgerald, I've often wondered about that. What is it?"

"You don't know anything about life," Fitzgerald roared, and then, determined to shock and impress them, "Why, when my wife and I first came to Paris we took a room in a bordello! And we lived there for two weeks!"

Instead, however, of the horrified responses he had expected, Fitzgerald suddenly realized, Mrs. Wharton and her guests were all looking at him with unfeigned and perfectly sincere interest. The bombshell had fizzled; he had lied outrageously, shocked himself, and succeeded only in bringing his audience to an alert and friendly attention. After a moment's pause Mrs. Wharton, seeming to realize from his expression how baffled and confused Fitzgerald was, tried to help him.

"But Mr. Fitzgerald," she said, "you haven't told us what they did in the bordello."

On this Fitzgerald simply turned and fled, making his way back to Paris, where he was to meet Zelda, as best he could. At first when she asked him how it had gone he assured her that he had been a great success, that they had liked him, he had bowled them over. But gradually the truth came out, until—after several drinks—Fitzgerald put his head on his arms and began to pound the table with his fists.

"They beat me," he said, "They beat me! They beat me! They *beat* me!" Nearly all of the Fitzgerald of this period, and a good deal of the history of two literary generations, is in that anecdote; it is fabulous.

In August they went to Antibes for the month. "There was no one at Antibes this summer," Fitzgerald wrote to Bishop, "except me, Zelda, the Valentinos, the Murphys, Mistinguet, Rex Ingram, Dos Passos, Alice Terry, the MacLeishes, Charles Brackett, Maude Kahn, Esther Murphy, Marguerite Namara, E. Phillips Openheim, Mannes the violinist, Floyd Dell, Max and Crystal Eastman, ex-Premier Orlando, Etienne de Beaumont—just a real place to rough it and escape from all the world. But we had a great time." For this year saw the beginning of that short period when a group of Americans were to make on the summer Riviera a brilliant social life. "The gay elements of society," said Fitzgerald, "had divided into two main streams, one flowing toward Palm Beach and Deauville, and the other, much smaller, toward the summer Riviera. One could get away with more on the summer Riviera, and whatever happened seemed to have something to do with art. From 1926 to 1929, the great years of the Cap d'Antibes, this corner of France was dominated by a group quite distinct from that American society which is dominated by Europeans." The Cap d'Antibes was remote enough to seem safe from the vulgar tourists the expatriates scorned: it was a long and uncomfortable overnight trip from Paris; and it was primitive enough to seem very French; the movie house operated only one night a week, the telephone service was shut down for two hours at noon and completely after seven at night. This happy situation did not, of course, last; already in 1925, as Fitzgerald's letter to Bishop shows, things were getting out of hand, and by 1927 the half mile of glorious beach was jammed with Americans, an apartment house was going up, and there were two American bars doing a flourishing business. By 1929 no one even swam off Eden Roc any more, except for a

hangover dip at noon; people spent their time in the bar instead discussing, as Fitzgerald said, each other.

But for a few years, even after others began to follow the Gerald Murphys and the few friends they had taken there with them as early as 1923, it was a gay, casual, and informal place. The men wore French workmen's shirts and striped bathing trunks and jockey caps. They painted the bath houses with black stripes like French sentry-boxes; they lived an easy, ostentatiously relaxed life between beach and villa and the blue-shuttered Hotel du Cap d'Antibes. The whole feeling of the place is in the opening chapters of *Tender Is the Night,* how remarkably is perhaps clear only when you compare Fitzgerald's account of it with some other description such as that in Charles Brackett's *American Colony.* The heart of the original group was the Murphys, Gerald and Sara, with their charm, their wealth, their great social skill. Fitzgerald drew on Gerald Murphy almost exclusively for these characteristics in Dick Diver. Murphy was always inventing amusing games for everyone, including even the children, for whom he once arranged a mock wedding between himself and Scottie which was carried out with perfect gravity. Often the Fitzgeralds were more than equal to the demands of a society of this kind. Once, for instance, Fitzgerald arranged a party game about the Crusades for the children; it involved enormously elaborate maneuvres with a famous set of lead soldiers. Nearly a decade later Robert Benchley wrote him, after reading *Tender Is the Night*: "Anyone who gets down on his stomach and crawls all afternoon around a yard playing tin-soldiers with a lot of kids, shouldn't be made unhappy. I cry a little every time I think of you that afternoon in Antibes." Like all skillful hosts the Murphys exercised their social gifts with a certain tyranny: people were expected to fall in with their schemes. Their parties were as carefully planned and, in an unobtrusive way, as beautifully managed as the Divers' party. Occasionally, of course, people failed to accept the place assigned them. The Fitzgeralds are said to have got drunk once when they were omitted from a Murphy party, and to have stood outside the garden where the guests were having their cocktails and thrown the contents of a garbage can over the wall at the party.

But with the Fitzgeralds it was something more than rebellion. They had reached a stage that was socially difficult for everyone and

dangerous for themselves, and like Dick Diver, they found themselves excluded not only from parties but from many hotels and other public places. They believed that life ought to provide them something wonderful and exciting to do. "We grew up," Zelda said ironically later, "founding our dreams on the infinite promise of American advertising. I *still* believe that one can learn to play the piano by mail and that mud will give you a perfect complexion." The only real conviction the twenties had was that you must do what you wanted to; it was a matter of your honor, of your "sincerity." To this doctrine the Fitzgeralds subscribed with an unequaled naivety. But as time went on and they satisfied the accumulated and relatively organized desires of their early years, doing what they wanted to became doing immediately whatever momentary impulse suggested. Less and less did they find any long-term desires to which they wanted to sacrifice their momentary inclinations; more and more they lived at the edge of consciousness, where all the obscure and confused impulses of their natures hovered. They were at the mercy of these impulses because they were striving, desperately now, to reach a kind of activity which would still seem unusual and exciting.

It led them to do outrageous things. One night at the Casino at Juan-les-Pins, very late in the evening, Zelda suddenly rose from the table and, holding her skirt high above her head, danced around the empty ballroom, seriously, with great dignity, appallingly. On another occasion, in Cannes, they passed a tiny old French woman who was offering for sale a basket of hazel nuts. It was evening and she had clearly been trying all day to sell them. As they passed her, Fitzgerald set himself for a moment and then, like a punter, kicked the basket out of her hand and high into the air.

Under the pressure of such impulses they became more and more irresponsible and unpredictable. One evening, with the Murphys, they found themselves at a table next to Isadora Duncan at a small inn in the mountains. It quickly became apparent that Fitzgerald was the man whom, according to her custom, she had selected to sleep with her that night. He went over to her table and sat at her feet, his eyes shining with excitement while she ran her hands through his hair and called him "her centurion." Presently she rose to go, telling Fitzgerald where she was staying in a loud, clear voice. At this Zelda, who out of some pride or principle never remonstrated with Fitzgerald and had

been ignoring the whole episode, stood up, leapt across their table, and plunged down a long flight of stone steps. When the Murphys reached her she was cut and bleeding but not seriously hurt. She offered no explanation or excuse; probably she knew none. But by now, though it was late in the evening, both Fitzgeralds felt they must go on to something exciting. Scott proposed—for want of better perhaps—that they put all the chickens they could find at the inn, some sixteen, on the spit in the great fireplace and cook them. But the Murphys, sure that the way to end this wild excitement was to remove the audience, insisted on going home. Within half an hour the Fitzgeralds followed them, but at a point on the road where it crossed a trolley line, they turned up the track and onto a trestle instead of following the road. Their car bumped over the open ties a few yards and stalled; they settled back in their seats and fell asleep, though they had been told many times that the trolley came around a blind curve onto the trestle at high speed and that even the crossing was very dangerous. They were found the next morning by a peasant, up early to take his vegetables to market, and carried to safety by him less then twenty minutes before the morning trolley crashed into their car and smashed it to pieces.

By an odd and characteristic turn of mind, it was while this "great time" at Antibes was in progress that Fitzgerald conceived the plan for *Our Type,* a novel on which he was to work for three years before giving up the entire plot and most of what he had actually written and starting afresh. *Our Type*—it was also called at one time or another *The Boy Who Killed His Mother* and *World's Fair*—is the story of a talented boy, Francis Melarky, who makes a success in Hollywood as a technician and then is brought to the Riviera by his mother for a vacation. His father is serving a long prison term, apparently for some crime of violence; there is a suggestion that Francis has inherited a murderous temper. Francis' mother is a commonplace and conventional woman distinguished only by her unscrupulous determination to retain possession of Francis; there is bad feeling between them from the beginning. It is quite clear that Fitzgerald intended to have Francis kill his mother—"Will you ask somebody," he wrote Perkins, "what is done if one American murders another in France. . . . In a certain sense my plot is not unlike Dreiser's in the American Tragedy." This idea of murder had been central from the

very moment of the novel's conception at Antibes; *"Our Type,"* he wrote Perkins at that time, "is about several things, one of which is an intellectual murder on the Leopold-Loeb idea. Incidentally it is about Zelda and me and the hysteria of last May and June in Paris." Some of this incidental element remains in the manuscript which has been preserved, though it is obvious that there was once much more of it and that, as he worked on the novel through the next two years and studied the Murphys and Antibes, he began to shift the background from Paris to the Riviera; the change can be seen taking place between the various versions of a given passage which sometimes remain in the manuscript (there are sometimes as many as three versions of the story preserved). Altogether Fitzgerald completed four long chapters, about twenty thousand words, before he gave up this story of matricide in 1929. It originally began with a chapter describing Francis' getting in a fight with the Italian police and being beaten up, as Fitzgerald had been, but this chapter was presently numbered VII and the second chapter made the beginning. This chapter was a description of the arrival of Francis and his mother on the Riviera and—except for the relation of Francis and his mother and a fine scene with Mary and Abe Grant (North)—is similar to the opening chapter of *Tender Is the Night.* There follow then the Pipers' (Divers') dinner party and the duel and, finally, a long chapter in which Francis accompanies the Pipers to Paris to see Abe Grant off to America. It is this chapter which uses "the hysteria of last May and June in Paris," most of which was eliminated in *Tender Is the Night* and replaced by the love affair between Dick and Rosemary.*

But though Fitzgerald sent Perkins an optimistic report of progress in September and was still trying to put a good face on things in October (" . . . progresses slow and carefully with much destroying and revision"), the fact was that he was doing almost no work at all. Instead there were parties, in Paris and—in November—in London. "[We] went," wrote Fitzgerald with his customary ambivalence about such things, "on some very high toned parties with Mountbattens and all that sort of thing. Very impressed, but not very, as I furnished most of the amusement myself." It was not a happy winter; they were tired of parties without seeming able to stop going to them

* This chapter was published, under the title "The World's Fair," in *The Kenyon Review,* Autumn, 1948.

and things had gone stale. " . . . If somebody would come along," says the heroine of *Save Me the Waltz* of this time, "to remind us about how we felt about things when we felt the way they remind us of, maybe it would refresh us." They quarreled with the Murphys and Fitzgerald had a nasty argument with Robert McAlmon, one of the minor expatriates. Their apartment in the Rue de Tilsitt, like nearly every place they ever lived, was uncomfortable; it "smelled of a church chancery because it was impossible to ventilate" and turned out to be "a perfect breeding place for the germs of bitterness they brought with them from the Riviera." In January, because Zelda was ill again, they went to Salies de Bearn in the Pyrenees.

In May they moved on to the Riviera, where they took a handsome house called the Villa St. Louis in Juan-les-Pins; in a moment of enthusiasm Fitzgerald told Perkins that they were "wonderfully situated in a big house on the shore with a beach and the Casino not 100 yds. away and every prospect of a marvelous summer." In June they went back to Paris to have "Zelda's appendix neatly removed," but otherwise they stayed on the Riviera until late autumn. It was a gay time; the Murphys were there to give their fine parties and sooner or later nearly everyone seemed to turn up on the Riviera. They dined with Grace Moore in Monte Carlo and were fascinated by the odd gentleman who was always around for dinner in a leopard skin; not even Fitzgerald and Charles MacArthur had thought of that trick, though they spent much of the summer thinking up similar stunts. Once they planned to saw a waiter in two (with a musical saw to "eliminate any sordidness") to see what was inside him, but Zelda told them it was not worth it, that they would only find old menus and tips and broken china and pencil stubs. Another time they lured the orchestra from the Hotel Provençal to the Villa St. Louis, locked them in a room with a bottle of whiskey, and settled down outside the door for an evening of listening to their old favorites. The orchestra grew weaker and weaker, but Fitzgerald and MacArthur did not, and the poor musicians did not escape till dawn.

Adding Ben Finney to their staff they wrote and photographed, on the grounds of the Hotel du Cap, a movie about a Princess Alluria, the wickedest woman in Europe. MacArthur wrote in an "incest theme" with the Japanese ambassador as what he called the "incestor," and they spent a good many of their evenings thinking up un-

printable titles to write on the walls of Grace Moore's villa so that they could be photographed. "I complained and scrubbed once or twice," she said, "but the new captions that then appeared were so much worse than the old that it seemed better to do with the four-letter words one knew than those one knew not of."

But if these elaborate practical jokes are in retrospect often entertaining, they were in fact frequently brutal and sometimes ominously and meaninglessly destructive. On one occasion they raided a small restaurant in Cannes, carried off all its silverware, and kidnapped the proprietors and waiter. These victims they tied up and carried to the edge of a cliff, full of dire threats of murder. They did not stop until they had exhausted every device of terrorization they could imagine. The impulse to destroy which is apparent in much of this practical joking is equally clear in many of Fitzgerald's social outrages, as when, at a formal dinner in the Murphys' garden, he suddenly rose and threw a ripe fig at the bare back of one of the guests. He seems, however, to have understood neither the extravagant inappropriateness of such tricks nor his own destructive hatred of the ordered mobility and grace of the Murphys, which was nearly as strong as his admiration of them. All the guests, including the victim, managed to ignore Fitzgerald's gesture completely; he was left standing alone and invisible, like a man in a nightmare. It must have been a positive relief to him when Gerald Murphy remonstrated with him afterwards and he could be crestfallen and repentant. Certainly a part of his intense hatred of the British, which comes out very strongly in *Tender Is the Night,* was the result of their habit of suavely ignoring him when he tried to apologize for his bad behavior; they simply refused to admit that he existed on such occasions, and he could not bear that. Partly, perhaps, he was compelled to these acts because he thought of them as innocent fun which misfired because he did not belong, as Gatsby's efforts to give "interesting" parties misfired and, inexplicably, offended Daisy.

There was little of the practical joker and none of the repentant in Zelda. She was now even more striking in appearance than she had been as a girl. Her hair had darkened; Fitzgerald compared its color to a chow's. Her whole face had matured, until even her mouth—"the cupid's bow of a magazine cover"—only intensified the almost hawk-like upper part of her face with its firm brow and nose and its re-

markable eyes. She talked little. Her habit was rather to emerge from her brooding and fiery silence to make some gesture, which, if often outrageous, was usually serious and symbolic. When Alexander Woollcott and Grace Moore's fiancé, "Chato" Elizaga, were leaving for Paris at the end of the summer, there was a dinner for them on the terrace at Eden Roc. After a considerable number of toasts, Zelda got up and said: "I have been so touched by all these kind words. But what are words? Nobody has offered our departing heroes any gifts to take with them. I'll start off." And she stepped out of her black lace panties and threw them toward Woollcott and Elizaga. Elizaga caught them and, announcing that he must perform an adequately heroic act in return for his lady's favor, leapt from the rocks into the Mediterranean. Everyone dashed down after him, and by the time something like order had been reestablished they suddenly became aware of Woollcott, completely naked, carefully donning his straw hat, lighting a cigarette, and walking slowly up the path to the hotel. They learned later that he had walked with great dignity but still naked through the hotel lobby, picked up his key at the desk, and gone quietly up to his room.

In all this confusion Fitzgerald got very little work done. When they had reached the Riviera he had had a moment of optimism. "My book is *wonderful,*" he wrote Perkins. "I don't think it will be interrupted again. I expect to reach New York about Dec. 10th with the ms. under my arm." Two weeks later he was still going strong: "The novel . . . now goes on apace. This is confidential but *Liberty,* with certain conditions, has offered me $35,000 sight unseen. I hope to have it done in January." (The "conditions" were that Fitzgerald was to give all the stories he wrote, up to a maximum of ten, to *Liberty* for $3,500 apiece.) But that was the end. There is no further mention of the novel until December when he answers a direct question from Perkins by saying: "My book [is] not nearly finished." He did not write a single story between February, 1926, when he wrote "Your Way and Mine" for *The Woman's Home Companion,* and June, 1927, when he wrote "Jacob's Ladder" for the *Post.* This failure, together with his failure to complete the novel, effectively abrogated the very profitable arrangement with *Liberty.* As always when he was not working, he was deeply depressed, now not simply by his failure to produce serious work or, indeed, any work at all, but

also by this clear realization that morally and physically he was steadily deteriorating. "I wish I were twenty-two again," he said, "with all my dramatic and feverishly enjoyed miseries. You remember I used to say I wanted to die at thirty—well, I am twenty-nine and the prospect is still welcome. My work is the only thing that makes me happy—except to be a little tight—and for these two indulgences I pay a big price in mental and physical hangovers." As if to demonstrate how persistent this mood was, he wrote Perkins an obviously drunken but revealing letter two months later: "If you see anyone I know tell 'em I hate 'em all, him especially. Never want to see 'em again. Why shouldn't I be crazy? My father is a moron and my mother is a neurotic, half insane with pathological nervous worry. Between them they haven't and never have had the brains of Calvin Coolidge. If I knew anything I'd be the best writer in America"—"which isn't saying a lot" he added when he recurred to this subject in another letter.

But if coming home, as he said, revolted him as much as the thought of remaining in France, they nonetheless made up their minds to return to America. The money from the play and the movie of *Gatsby* was running out, Zelda was ill again, and the situation was, so far as their morale in general was concerned, completely out of hand. As they so often did in these circumstances, they fled, sailing for America from Genoa on the Conte Biancamano on December 10. It was not a very happy return. They did not have the money they had planned, three years earlier, to save before they came home; the manuscript of Fitzgerald's novel was not under his arm. If he still appeared, at thirty, to be a "stocky, muscular, clear-skinned [young man] with wide, fresh, green-blue eyes" and blond hair, who announced boldly to the press on his arrival in New York that "he [had] nearly completed a novel . . . which deal[t] with Americans in Europe," he knew himself as a man who for over two years had done no serious work and very little work of any kind, who was leading a more and more self-indulgent life, who felt, precisely as Dick Diver did of himself, that "the change came a long way back—but at first it didn't show. The manner remains intact for some time after the morale cracks."

Isaac Babel

GUY DE MAUPASSANT

In the winter of 1916 I found myself in St. Petersburg with a forged passport and not a cent to my name. Alexei Kazantsev, a teacher of Russian literature, took me into his house.

He lived on a yellow, frozen, evil-smelling street in the Peski district. The miserable salary he received was padded out a bit by doing translations from the Spanish; Blasco Ibanez was just becoming famous at that time.

Kazantsev had never so much as passed through Spain but his love for that country filled his whole being. He knew every castle, every garden and every river in Spain. There were many other people huddling around Kazantsev, all of them, like myself, flung out of the round of ordinary life. We were half-starved. From time to time the yellow press would publish, in the smallest print, unimportant news items written by us.

I spent my mornings hanging around the morgues and police stations.

Kazantsev was happier than any of us, for he had a country of his own—Spain.

In November I was given the chance to become a clerk at the Obukhov Mills. It was a rather good position and would have exempted me from military service.

I refused to become a clerk.

Even in those days, when I was twenty years old, I had told myself: better to starve, go to jail, or become a bum than spend ten hours every day in an office behind a desk.

There was nothing particularly laudable in my resolve, but I have never broken it and I never will. The wisdom of my ancestors was firmly lodged in my head: we are born to enjoy our work, our fights, and our love; we are born for that and for nothing else.

Listening to my bragging Kazantsev ruffled the short yellow

fluff on the top of his head. The horror in his stare was mixed with admiration.

At Christmas-time we had luck. Benderski, the lawyer, who owned a publishing house called "Halcyon," decided to publish a new edition of Maupassant's works. His wife, Raissa, tried to do the translation but nothing came of her lofty ambition.

Kazantsev, who was known as a translator of Spanish, had been asked whether he could recommend someone to assist Raissa Mikhailovna. He told them of me.

The next day, in someone else's coat, I managed to carry myself to Benderski's. They lived at the corner of Nevsky and Moika, in a house of Finland granite, adorned with pink columns, cornices and coats-of-arms made of stone.

Bankers without a history and catapulted out of nowhere, converted Jews who had become rich selling materials to the army, put up these pretentious mansions in St. Petersburg before the war.

There was a red carpet on the stairs. On the landings, upon their hind legs, stood plush bears. Crystal lamps burned in their open mouths.

The Benderskis lived on the third floor. A high-breasted maid, with a white cap on her head, opened the door. She led me into a drawing room decorated in the old Slav style. Blue paintings by Roerich depicting prehistoric stones and monsters hung on the walls.

The high-breasted maid moved smoothly and majestically. She had an excellent figure, was near-sighted and rather haughty. In her open gray eyes one saw a petrified lewdness. She moved slowly. I thought—when she makes love she must move with unheard-of agility. The brocade portiere over the doorway suddenly rustled. A black-haired woman with pink eyes and a wide bosom entered the room. It was easy to recognize in Raissa Benderski one of those charming Jewesses who have come to us from Kiev and Poltava, from the opulent steppe towns full of chestnut trees and acacias. The money made by their clever husbands is transformed by these women into a pink layer of fat on the belly, the back of the neck, and the well-rounded shoulders. Their sleepy and subtle smiles drive officers from the local garrisons crazy.

"Maupassant," Raissa said to me, "is the only passion of my life."

Trying to restrain the sway of her big hips, she left the room and returned with a translation of "Miss Harriet." In her translation not even a trace was left of Maupassant's free flowing sentences, with their fragrance of passion. Raissa Benderski took pains to write correctly and precisely, and all that resulted was something lifeless and slightly distorted, as Jews wrote Russian in the old days.

I took the manuscript with me and in Kazantsev's attic, among my sleeping friends, I spent the night cutting my way like a woodsman through the tangled undergrowth of her prose. It is not such dull work as it might seem. A phrase is born into the world both good and bad at the same time. The secret lies in a slight, almost invisible twist. The lever should rest in your hand, getting warm, and you can only turn it once, not twice.

Next morning I brought back the corrected manuscript. Raissa wasn't lying when she told me that Maupassant was her sole passion. She sat motionless, her hands clasped together, as I read it to her. Her silky hands drooped to the floor, her forehead paled, and the lace between her crushed breasts danced and heaved.

"How did you do it?"

I began to speak of style, of the army of words, of the army in which all kinds of weapons may come into play. No iron can stab the human heart with such force as a period put just at the right place. She listened with her head down and her painted lips half open. In her hair, pressed smooth, divided by a part, and looking like patent leather, shone a dark gleam. Her legs in tight-fitting stockings, with strong, soft calves, were planted wide-apart on the carpet.

The maid, glancing to the side with her petrified wanton eyes, brought in the breakfast on a tray.

The glassy rays of the Petersburg sun lay on the pale and uneven carpet. Twenty-nine volumes of Maupassant stood on a shelf above the desk. The sun with its fingers of melting dissolution touched the morocco backs of the books—the magnificent grave of a human heart.

Coffee in blue cups was served and we began translating "Idyl." Everyone remembers the story of the youthful, hungry carpenter who sucked the breast of the stout nursing mother to relieve her of the milk with which she was over-laden. It happened in a train going from Nice to Marseilles, at noon on a very hot day, in the land of roses,

the birthplace of roses, where beds of flowers flow down to the seashore.

I left the Benderski's with a twenty-five rouble advance. That night our crowd at Peski got drunk as a flock of drugged geese. Between drinks we spooned up the best caviar, and then changed over to liver sausage. Half-soused, I began to berate Tolstoi.

"He turned yellow, your Count, he was afraid. His religion was all fear. . . . He was frightened by the cold, by old age, by death, and he made himself a warm coat out of his faith. . . ."

"Go on, go on," Kazantsev urged, swaying his bird-like head.

We fell asleep on the floor beside our beds. I dreamed of Katya, a forty-year-old washerwoman who lived a floor below us. We went to her every morning for our boiling water. I had never seen her face distinctly, but in my dream we did god-awful things together. We almost destroyed each other with kisses. The very next morning I couldn't restrain myself from going to her for boiling water.

I saw a wan woman, a shawl across her chest, with ash-grey hair and labor-worn, withered hands.

From then on I took my breakfast at the Benderski's every day. A new stove, herrings and chocolates appeared in our attic. Twice Raissa took me out in her carriage for drives to the islands. I couldn't prevent myself from telling her all about my childhood. To my amazement the story turned out to be very sordid. From under her moleskin cowl her gleaming, frightened eyes stared at me. The rusty fringe of her eyelashes quivered with pity.

I met Raissa's husband, a yellow-faced Jew with a bald skull and a flat, powerful body that seemed always poised obliquely, ready for flight.

There were rumors about his being close to Rasputin. The enormous profits he made from war supplies drove him almost crazy, giving him the expression of a person with a fixed hallucination. His eyes never remained still; it seemed that reality was lost to him forever. Raissa was embarrassed whenever she had to introduce him to new acquaintances. Because of my youth I noticed this a full week later than I should have.

After the New Year Raissa's two sisters arrived from Kiev. One day I brought the manuscript of "L'aveux" and, not finding Raissa at home, came back that evening. They were at dinner. Silvery,

neighing laughter and excited male voices came from the dining room. In rich houses without tradition dinners are always noisy. It was a Jewish noise, rolling and tripping and ending up on a melodious, singsong note. Raissa came out to me in evening dress, her back bare. Her feet stepped awkwardly in wobbling, patent leather slippers.

"I'm drunk, darling," she said, and held out her hands, loaded with chains of platinum and emerald stars.

Her body swayed like a snake's dancing to music. She tossed about her marcelled hair, and suddenly, with a tinkle of rings, slumped into a chair with ancient Russian carvings. Scars glowed on her powdered back.

Women's laughter again came from the dining room. Raissa's sisters, with delicate moustaches and as full-bosomed and round-bodied as Raissa herself, entered the room. Their busts jutted forward and rose to a point and their black hair shimmered in the air. Both of them had their own Benderskis for husbands. The room was filled with disjointed, chaotic feminine merriment, the merriment of ripe women. The husbands wrapped the sisters into their sealskin furs and Orenburg shawls, and shod them in black boots. From the snowy peaks of their shawls only painted, glowing cheeks, marble noses and eyes with their Jewish glitter could be seen. After having made some more happy noise, they left for the theater, where "Judith" was being sung by Chaliapin.

"I want to work," Raissa lisped, stretching her bare arms to me, "we've skipped a whole week."

She brought a bottle and two glasses from the dining room. Her breasts swung free beneath the sack-like gown; the nipples rose under the clinging silk.

"It's very valuable," said Raissa, pouring out the wine, "Muscatel '83. My husband will kill me when he finds out."

I had never drunk Muscatel of 1883 and tossed off three glasses one after the other without thinking. They carried me swiftly away into alleys where an orange flame danced and sounds of music could be heard.

"I'm drunk, darling. . . . What do we do today?"

"Today it's 'L'aveu.' . . . The sun is the hero of this story, *le soleil de France*. Molten drops of it pattering on the red-haired Celeste changed into freckles. The sun's direct rays and wine and

apple cider burnished the face of the coachman Polyte. Twice a week Celeste drove into town to sell cream, eggs and chickens. She gave Polyte ten sous for herself and four for her basket. And every time Polyte would wink at red-haired Celeste and ask: 'When are we going to have a bit of fun, *ma belle?*' 'What do you mean. Monsieur Polyte?' Jogging up and down on the box, the coachman explained, 'To have a bit of fun means . . . why, what the hell, to have a bit of fun. . . . A lad with a lass, no music necessary. . . . '

" 'I do not care for such jokes, M'sieur Polyte,' replied Celeste, moving farther away the skirts that hung over her mighty calves in red stockings.

"But that devil Polyte kept right on guffawing and coughing: 'Ah, but one day we shall have our bit of fun, *ma belle,*' while tears of delight rolled down a face the color of brick-red wine and blood."

I downed another glass of the rare muscatel. Raissa touched glasses with me. The maid with the stony eyes crossed the room and disappeared.

"Ce diable de Polyte. . . . In the course of two years Celeste had paid him forty-eight francs, that is, two francs short of fifty francs! At the end of the second year, when they were alone in the carriage, Polyte, who had had some cider before setting out, asked her his usual question: 'What about having some fun today, M'amselle Celeste?' And she replied, lowering her eyes, 'I am at your disposal, M'sieur Polyte.' "

Raissa flung herself down on the table, laughing. *"Ce diable de Polyte. . . ."*

"A white, spavined mare was harnessed to the carriage. The white hack, lips pink with age, went forward at a walking pace. The gay sun of France poured down on the ancient coach, screened off from the world by a weather-beaten hood. . . . A lad with a lass, no music necessary. . . . "

Raissa held out a glass to me. It was the fifth.

"Mon vieux, to Maupassant."

"And what about having some fun today, *ma belle."*

I reached over to Raissa and kissed her on the lips. They quivered and swelled.

"You're funny," she mumbled through her teeth, recoiling.

She pressed herself against the wall, stretching out her bare arms.

Spots began to glow on her arms and shoulders. Of all gods ever put on the crucifix, this was the most ravishing one.

"Be so kind as to sit down, M'sieur Polyte."

She pointed to an oblique blue armchair, done in Slavonic style. Its back was constructed of carved interlacing bands with colorful pendants. I groped my way to it, stumbling as I went.

Night had blocked the path of my famished youth with a bottle of '83 Muscatel and twenty-nine books, twenty-nine bombs stuffed with pity, genius and passion. . . . I sprang up, knocking over the chair and banging against the shelf. The twenty-nine volumes crashed onto the floor, their pages flew open, they fell on their edges . . . and the white mare of my fate went on at a walking pace.

"You are funny," growled Raissa.

I left the granite house on the Moika at twelve o'clock, before the sisters and the husband returned from the theater. I was sober and could have walked a chalk-line, but it was pleasanter to stagger, so I swayed from side to side, singing in a language I had just invented. Through the tunnels of the streets bounded by lines of street lights, the steamy fog billowed. A monster roared behind the boiling walls of the buildings. The roads amputated the legs of those walking on them.

Kazantsev was asleep when I got home. He slept sitting up, his thin legs extended in their felt boots. The canary fluff rose on his head. He had fallen asleep by the stove bending over a volume of *Don Quixote,* edition 1624. On the fly-leaf of the book was a dedication to the Duc de Broglio. I got into bed quietly, so as not to wake Kazantsev, moved the lamp close to me and began to read a book by Edouard de Menial on "The Life and Work of Guy de Maupassant."

That night I learned from Edouard de Menial that Maupassant was born in 1850, the child of a Normandy gentleman and Laure Lepoitevin, Flaubert's cousin. He was twenty-five when he was first attacked by hereditary syphilis. His productivity and joy of life withstood the development of the disease. At first he suffered from headaches and spasms of hypochondria. Then the spectre of blindness arose before him. His sight weakened. He became suspicious of everyone, unsociable and quarrelsome in a petty way. He struggled furiously, dashed about the Mediterranean in a yacht, fled to Tunis, Morocco, Central Africa . . . and wrote ceaselessly. He attained fame, and at

forty years of age cut his own throat, lost a great deal of blood yet lived through it. He was then put away in a mad-house. There he crawled about on his hands and knees and devoured his own excrement. The last line inscribed on his hospital report read: *Monsieur de Maupassant va s'animaliser.*

I read the book to the end and got up from bed. The fog came close to the window and the world was hidden away. My heart contracted as the foreboding of some essential truth touched me with light fingers.

(*Translated from the Russian by Raymond Rosenthal and Waclaw Solski.*)

James Burnham

THE SUICIDAL MANIA OF AMERICAN BUSINESS*

The American businessman is a genius in his kind. He is on the average remarkable, and from his ranks have come authentic individual geniuses in remarkable number. He has proved himself the master of the techniques of production. In the auxiliaries of production, in financing and distribution and sales, he is scarcely less astounding.

Within his own field, he is alert, inventive, keen, perceptive, quick to change and adapt. Confronted with a new process, a new machine, a new method, he drives quickly through cant to realities. And, in his field, he has a magnitude of vision which puts to shame the businessmen of other nations. Who else drives railroads two thousand miles into nowhere; thinks of pipelines in thousands instead of dozens of miles; puts up a thousand houses at once, as Levitt does, or creates whole towns in a year, as at the atomic projects; links every citizen, or nearly every one, with every telephone in the world; within a decade encases the female legs of half the world with a new chemical?

All this is true. But the American businessman, alas, suffers also, and most grievously, from a hypertrophy of occupational function. Within his arena so accomplished a performer, he often proves an oaf when he ventures, or is forced, outside. His alertness, vision, quickness, invention are somehow transformed into their opposites. In art, philosophy, and in political or social affairs of any but the crudest sort, he is likely to be drearily prejudiced, emptily pompous, narrowly unperceptive, hopelessly backward-looking, naively credulous. At his banquets, his conventions, his clubs, and in his family circle, he tirelessly repeats the most banal of ritualistic abstractions, without relevance, content, or style. It is as if his entire creative spirit were chan-

* This is a selection from *The Coming Defeat of Communism,* by James Burnham, scheduled for publication by The John Day Company in February of this year. Copyright 1950 by James Burnham.

neled into his special field, and for all else there remained only a paltry set of conditioned verbal reflexes. Ah, how infinitely wearisome a thing it is to listen to the after-dinner speech of "a leading businessman!"

Because this country has been so predominantly a land of business, and because businessmen are still so powerful a segment of the national community, we cannot lightly dismiss this extra-curricular ineptness of the typical businessman. Unfortunately, he is not a tamed domestic who can be chained within his corporate boundaries. His stupidities, as well as his genius, have their momentous effect on the national destinies. In relation to the struggle against world communism, there is grave question what effect that will turn out to be. I am inclined to believe that the attitude and actions of the businessmen are the factor in the struggle about which we must have the gravest doubts of all.

In relation to the struggle against communism, the American businessman is too ignorant, too greedy, too reactionary and, in a certain sense, too cowardly. I am not, of course, qualifying individual businessmen by these adjectives; I am referring rather to social or "class" characteristics of the businessman as a type. As individuals, businessmen are no more frequently ignorant or cowardly than individuals from any other social group. They are perhaps somewhat more often greedy and reactionary, but that is no doubt an unavoidable response to their social function. I want to specify my meaning with some care.

American businessmen seek, and often obtain, really enormous personal incomes for themselves, and colossal profits for the corporations which they own or manage. During these past few years, corporate profits in the hundreds of millions have not been extraordinary, and in one case (General Motors) a single year's profit has gone beyond half a billion dollars. In the published lists of the salaries of corporation executives, we read the names of hundreds of men who are being paid from one hundred to more than five hundred thousand dollars by a single company. These figures tell only a part, and sometimes a relatively small part, of the story. Each of these men, and their wives and children, have other sources of income—from other companies, from bonds and stocks and mortgages, from expense ac-

counts (which have expanded into a major racket) and trust funds—that boost the total figures as much as several hundred percent.

I am aware that the income tax takes a big slice of the personal incomes. That fact, however, seems to give less, rather than more excuse, for adding more hundreds of thousands in the upper brackets where only 15% or so is left. Besides, there are ways—expense accounts, capital gains, farms worked at a loss, pensions, tax-exempt securities, stream-lined gifts—for softening the edge of the income tax. I am aware also that most of the arguments of the labor leaders and their "labor economists" about corporate profits are the grossest demagogy (as if, in an economy like ours, wage-increases could "come out of profits" rather than be added to the cost base, as if in any case the spread of profits over the wages of all the workers would make in the long run any appreciable difference, other than to ensure an increased number of bankruptcies . . .). I also know that profits in the hundreds of millions can always be shown to be "very small" by altering the base to be used in calculating them: "total turnover" instead of invested capital; reproduction cost instead of original cost; profit per unit instead of total profit—the "business economists" are just as ingenious as the labor economists.

All these pseudo-economic rationalizations are beside today's point. That point is that these monstrous incomes and profits have an antagonizing and demoralizing effect upon the workers, and the rest of the poorly or normally paid members of society, in this country and throughout the world. These income statistics are emotional explosives handed gratuitously to the communist propaganda machine.

Even where they do not lead to conscious communist tendencies, they promote that "alienation of the proletariat" which Marx rightly believed to be so essential a condition for the victory of communism. They also, in themselves and by their psychological effect of justifying the most extreme trade union demands, stimulate inflationary processes and economic disharmony. Objectively considered, their direct economic impact is comparatively slight. Nevertheless, in the present condition of the world, their psychological, political and social impact is enormous. In a world where there is not only so much poverty and misery, but where more men than ever before are conscious of that misery, they call forth a moral rejection of the system that permits a few to be so blatantly and self-indulgently greedy.

I do not myself believe that American workers, and the American masses generally, are equalitarian in their social thinking. So far as I have been able to tell, they feel not only that some men inevitably do get greater material rewards than others, but that things ought to be so; and they are more often pleased than jealous when someone "gets up in the world." They show this attitude by the size of the salaries—and expense accounts—which they vote their own union leaders, or which they do not object seriously to when the leaders take them without a vote. But they, and most men in the world, think that the line ought to be drawn somewhere, and somewhere considerably short of the spot where the heads of the great American corporations are drawing it.

Let me turn to another business attitude, where we find a combination of greed, ignorance, and a kind of economic cowardice. The United States imposes a "protective" tariff on most imports at the same time that the rest of the world is groaning from a lack of dollars. All suggestions for radical reduction of the tariff are immediately fought by the lobbies of the industrialists, who want to block even a minor foreign competition in the home market. Even the mild and still high-tariff Hull "reciprocal trade treaty" program was initiated and continues only against the opposition of much of the business community. Nevertheless, the businessmen insist on their right to sell their own products anywhere in the world, and they complain at any measures of discrimination. They show their greed by wanting to exploit the home market to a maximum without any interference that might (though it would not necessarily) cut into volume and prices, while simultaneously wanting a hog's share in foreign markets at whatever detriment to the economies of other nations. They show their timidity—these same businessmen who lament so piously the "growth of statism"—by relying on the tariff-shield of the state to shelter their home monopoly. They show their ignorance in their failure to realize that the two parts of their program—to sell but not to buy—are contradictory. (That the world's principal creditor nation should operate its foreign trade on a virtual free-trade basis should be among the most elementary of economic lessons.) And they prove their lack of any vision of the fact that the present stage of industrial civilization demands a perspective of the development of the world economy as a whole.

More directly ominous is the mounting, though still partly hidden, pressure from the businessmen for "trade with the enemy." They are irked by the State Department's restrictions on exports to the Communist Empire. What does world policy matter when there are a few easy dollars to be made? As the signs of partial economic recession appeared in 1949, the longing for those dollars grew in intensity. Shabby schemes for evading the restrictions, by indirect sales through Holland, Belgium and other intermediary nations, were worked out with the usual ingenuity. As the communists swept south in China, the businessmen in the China trade bowed to the ground before them, and asked only for the privilege of supplying them with what they need to consolidate their conquest: but Mao Tze-tung is proving a rude host, even to suppliant businessmen.

In this instance, the greed (provoked, it is true, by economic compulsions) is manifest enough, but the ignorance is even more devastating. Though the British aid to German rearmament and the American sales of iron and oil to Japan are the freshest and most painful of examples, history, experience and common sense are fatuously disregarded. It would not, of course, be sensible to stop all trade with the Communist Empire. A small flow facilitates a certain desirable contact, permits some importation of needed supplies, and exercises a certain political leverage. But to trade on a big and unrestricted scale is to prepare suicide—or, rather, to build the guillotine for one's own executioner. The inability of the communists to solve their economic problem is probably their greatest weakness, and our greatest protection. Are we, then, going to solve it for them?

Businessmen are ignorant, abysmally ignorant, about what communism is, what communists are. Of course the businessmen are, almost all of them, in their own minds the staunchest of "anti-communists." But because they do not understand communism (and because they are greedy and short-sighted), they act frequently in ways that help communism. They really cannot believe that the communists mean what they say—just as they could not bring themselves to believe Hitler. They do not believe that the communists are serious when they declare that they are going to conquer the world. They cannot comprehend the certainty that, if the communists conquer, they themselves—these same businessmen flanked in their splendid offices by their corps of secretaries, relaxed in the expensive furnishings of

their suburban houses—will be shot like cattle, or driven to die more slowly and terribly in some Arctic or tropical wasteland. Mass rape may be possible, and recorded, in Berlin-Zehlendorf, but it is not even conceivable in Greenwich. Can the President of General Motors or U. S. Steel or the Chase National Bank, with whom an ordinary fellow-citizen cannot even make an appointment, be yanked from his chair by a common ruffian who has not even been announced? It is too absurd. The businessmen, for all their rhetoric, can think of the communists only as rivals or competitors of the same fundamental type as themselves. And every businessman knows that all businessmen have, in the last analysis, their price; that, no matter how hard the bargaining, it is always possible to make a deal if you want it badly enough.

Very many businessmen do not know the difference between a communist and an anarchist, democratic socialist, or mere eccentric dissident. They pick up a pompous phrase like "socialism is the half-way house to communism," and imagine that by repeating it they are being profoundly philosophical. I have had Minnesota businessmen tell me that Senator Humphrey—who drove the communists out of the Democratic-Farmer-Labor party in Minnesota—is a communist. Not a few Michigan businessmen look on the Reuther brothers as communist. I have even heard John L. Lewis called "a communist at heart." The social-democratic labor governments of Britain, Australia and Finland, all three of which in 1949 smashed major communist internal offensives (the London Dock strike, the Australian coal strike, the Finnish lumber and attempted general strike), are all "sort of communist" in many Rotary and Chamber of Commerce circles. Many businessmen have asked me about my colleague, Sidney Hook, one of the world's leading anti-communists, and also a democratic socialist and "radical": "He is a communist, isn't he?"

In the struggle against internal communism, these negative qualities of the American businessmen are discouragingly apparent. Some of the businessmen, plain and simple reactionaries, are absolutely anti-union. They would like literally to smash the trade unions. Since their likes become known, they too help to "alienate the proletariat" and to heap up grist for the communist propaganda mill. How modern mass industry could operate without trade unions they have never stopped to speculate. Others, from ignorance or greed or both,

act toward unions in such a way as to aid communist-led unions against anti-communist unions. I shall illustrate this particular stupidity by two specific examples.

In 1947, the anti-communist leader of the United Automobile workers, Walter Reuther, was in the midst of a bitter and gallant internal union fight against the faction led by the communists. His success in that fight had as one condition his ability to win a reasonably advantageous contract with General Motors. Though the majority of General Motors employees are members of the UAW, a considerable number (in the non-automotive divisions) are members of the United Electrical Workers (United Electrical, Radio and Machine-Workers Union), which is under communist control. In the midst of negotiations with Reuther, the General Motors management suddenly made a settlement with the United Electrical Workers, on terms which Reuther had publicly rejected. The General Motors management no doubt thought this a very smart trick whereby to cut the ground from under Reuther's feet. They were unaware that they were the dupes, not the instigators of the trick. The trap was in reality sprung by the communists: they—as so often sacrificing to party policy the interests of labor solidarity—offered the seductive settlement in order to weaken Reuther's position in relation to the company, and to force him, as they hoped, into public defeat which would undermine his position in his own union. Reuther, fortunately, was a better and a braver general than either the management or the communists. He got a good settlement with the company, and smashed the communists in the autumn convention. For the latter result—a major victory in the present war for the world—no thanks are to be given to the executives and directors of General Motors, those fulsome defenders of "the American Way."

On the Pacific Coast, the sailors and allied workers are organized in a group of unions led by the Sailors' Union of the Pacific, the leader of which is the militant and extremely anti-communist Harry Lundberg. The union of the Longshoremen, warehouse workers and others is under the control of the communists, represented most publicly by Harry Bridges. In the late summer of 1948, Bridges tied up all the principal Pacific ports. The shipowners fumed and blustered. Up and down the Coast, they declared that this time it was not a matter of wages and hours and working conditions; it was now a matter of

principle, American principle, to throw the "foreign, communist agent," Bridges, out of the labor movement. Never, never would they negotiate with Bridges! The time had come for a show-down. And so for a while it seemed. For more than three months, the ships were idle, the harbors empty. But lo and behold, suddenly at the beginning of winter, there were the photographs again of Bridges and the shipowners smiling at each other, and the happy announcement of a fine contract satisfactory to both parties, and ready to go into operation tomorrow. There was a little catch in the announcement. Harry Lundberg's sailors had, during the strike, also presented their demands to the shipowners. But somehow these demands had been lost sight of in the shipowners' get-together with the foreign communist agent. The ships were to sail tomorrow, but no contract had been signed with the Sailors' Union of the Pacific. But they did not sail. Fortunately for America, Lundberg, like Reuther, understands both communists and shipowners, and fears neither. His sailors blocked the sellout, and manned the ships only when their contract, too, was signed and delivered. I wonder whether the shipowners have reflected on how the greed, the ignorance and cowardice they displayed in this 1948 Pacific Coast deal with Bridges paid off in 1949, in Hawaii?

The American businessmen are ignorant, dangerously ignorant. Some among their great publishing houses have distributed millions of copies of propagandized books by communists and their fellow-travelers. In the case of China particularly, these books are weighty among the causes of the disaster that has taken place. With all the devotion in the world to free speech, could they not at least leave it to the communists to publish their own, instead of using the resources and ability of business to smear the country with this mental poison? In their million-copied magazines, they print articles skillfully advancing the communist line. While the *New Leader,* the finest anti-communist paper in the country, and a journal of real distinction, tilts permanently on the verge of bankruptcy, and keeps barely going only because of the goodwill of its first-rate but unpaid contributors and the enlightened backing of David Dubinsky, the businessmen write their checks to newspapers and magazines run by communist united fronts or hospitable to communist-line authors. How many communists and fellow-travelers, how many communist causes, have drunk deep of the many-millioned streams which Marshall Field has poured into

journalistic gutters! Funds from the great foundations are dispensed to communist-line writers, artists, teachers. The endowments of great Universities, supervised by businessmen trustees, maintain in the comfort to which they are accustomed notorious apologists for communist causes. How many pamphlets, books, speeches and reports pleasing to the Kremlin have appeared under the benign sanction of the Foreign Policy Association or the Institute of Pacific Relations, both recipients of such generous support from the suicidal statesmen of the business community! Whittaker Chambers is fired from his job ("allowed to resign," in the formal phrase) by the lord of streamlined business journalism; and Alger Hiss (whether he is legally guilty or not does not affect the contrast) is coddled by the businessmen trustees of the Carnegie Endowment. How strange that Hollywood and Broadway, which so readily and easily ground out pro-Soviet movies and plays during the War and immediate post-War period, seem so inhibited in their output of anti-communist productions—though they have never had a subject with half the potential drama of the communist struggle to destroy and conquer the world!

The communists have studied the American businessman with meticulous care. They have learned how to seduce him, while he remains unaware, through his greed and ignorance and lack of vision; and they have learned how easily, because of his political and moral timidity, he can be intellectually terrorized. During 1949 they opened a beautifully planned new front in their campaign for the demoralization of the American business community.

It began with the Jessup-Malik conversations at the United Nations, the lifting of the Berlin blockade, and much talk about "East-West trade." Then came a masterful thrust on the propaganda flank. From a source anonymous and obscure in its channels but unmistakeable in origin, an article appeared in the magazine, *United Nations World,* edited by Louis D'Olivet, and supported by a long list of our best citizens. This article was at once headlined as major news by the principal newspapers. With all the rhetoric of "inside stuff" and "most confidential," it "revealed" that Andrei Gromyko, during his stay in the United States, had held a series of private conversations with several dozen of the leading American businessmen. From these

conversations, Gromyko, so the article declared, underwent a change of heart and outlook. He became convinced that the businessmen were not such terrible imperialists as the communists had theretofore imagined, that they had not decided on a war to smash the Soviet state, and that they were anxious to get together with the Soviet Union on a constructive basis. Gromyko returned to the Soviet Union, so the story continued, an altered man with an altered mission. He told Stalin about his experiences in the United States, and about these conversations. Stalin, at first skeptical, finally saw the light under Gromyko's insistent guidance. With a sigh of relief, Stalin realized that here was his chance to liquidate the cold war (which, apparently, he never wanted in the first place, but was driven to by his fear of American imperialism), and to enter a period of world cooperation and reconstruction. Toward this happy consummation, Stalin then set his course.*

Shall we laugh or weep at the naiveté with which this sugared dose was swallowed? It is really humiliating to reflect on how easily the Kremlin propaganda directors can pull the stops of American public opinion and the American press. Today a fortissimo of war and revolution, tomorrow the throbbing Vox Humana of "the peaceful collaboration of capitalism and socialism," the deep pedals of fear and anxiety alternating with the treble chirps of the longed-for dove: and for total effect in the responsive audience, a chronic schizophrenic imbalance that paralyzes action, as the schizoid individual is paralyzed when his finger, following a string, reaches a point where the string splits into two branches.

I do not know who the author of this article (and its sequel) is, why he wrote it, or where he got (or was fed) his material. It is quite likely that Gromyko talked with leading American businessmen, and that he proved an affable conversationalist. But the picture of the junior errand-boy, Gromyko, acting on his own, getting bright new ideas, and then persuading Stalin to change *his* mind about the nature and intentions of American "finance-capitalist imperialism" is comically absurd. To the dewiest sophomore in communism—the businessmen are for the most part pre-freshmen—the Kremlin's play should be obvious. Gromyko, so far as there is anything to the story, acted, as

*** Two months later, a follow-up along the same lines was published in *United Nations World*.**

he always acts, under the instruction, precisely, of the Politburo and its chief, Stalin. (If he had not so acted, there would no longer be any Gromyko.) He visited his businessmen not at all to "sound them out" but to manipulate their greed and ignorance and timidity. Stalin, well pleased apparently by the response, did not "change his mind" in the least—as if, at this point in his career, he is going to go to school to Gromyko for first lessons in Marxism—but advanced the play a stage further, and secured for the game a world audience. He is simply holding up a big, juicy sugarplum before the eyes of the sweet-toothed political children of the business community: now you see it, now you don't. And what a chuckle for him and Gromyko as they watch the mouths water!

Just here is the danger, perhaps the greatest danger, for the entire world struggle against communism. The businessmen are shrewd in their own eyes, and fancy themselves shrewd bargainers. They believe that a deal can always be made, and they want a deal. What Stalin is doing is to encourage them to keep that belief and that hope. Communists, however, do not make deals; they make traps: an oath to an infidel does not bind. By such tricks as these articles (and whatever confidental discussions have accompanied them), the communists are tempting the businessmen to look upon the American "policy of containment" as a bargaining maneuver leading to a general deal, a "settlement," instead of as a bridge to the offensive. Come unto me, Stalin is calling, and you will have abundance of profits, and peace of political mind. In public he does not add: give me the time, the materials, and the lack of interference which I need, and you won't have to worry any longer about a "general settlement."

According to Marxism, these characteristics of businessmen upon which I have been commenting are, as they put it, "not accidental." The greed, ignorance, timidity and lack of vision—in short, the ineffectuality—are, in the Marxian analysis, "inevitable expressions of the decadence of capitalism." The actions of the business class, the "capitalists," are determined not by individual choice but by economic necessities.

Maybe so. Perhaps Marxism is right about the capitalists, or about most of them. If so, and if the businessmen are the predominant

influence in deciding American policy, then the outlook is not promising.

Marxism, however, like all closed monistic doctrines, is oversimplified. Whatever American businessmen have been and done in the past, it is possible for them to learn, and some of them have been learning. The American reality does not, in any case, conform to the crude Marxian scheme. The "businessmen" of the United States do not constitute a solid, socially coherent "capitalist class" or "bourgeoisie." As I pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, those whom we call "businessmen" include a considerable variety of classes and sub-classes. The economic compulsions which operate on a "capitalist" in the strict sense of the term (a legal owner of means of production which are labored on by others) are not the same as those which affect non-owning managers or engineers. Even if human actions were altogether determined economically, and if capitalists were, in the present period of history, prevented by economic interest from carrying out an adequate policy in the struggle against communism (neither of which suppositions is true), even then it would not follow that economic interest would affect in the same way the other, non-capitalist sections of the "business community." The differing social functions of the various sections permit, indeed promote, a differentiation in ideas and perspectives. There is no reason, yet, to despair of the "businessman" as such.

Still further: even if business as a whole, all the businessmen, are disqualified, it does not follow that the struggle against communism cannot be correctly conducted. From the second quarter of the nineteenth century—from the Civil War almost without challenge—until a decade or two ago, the businessmen (in the broader, vaguer sense) were in fact the dominant or ruling class of the United States. During the past generation, however, there has not only taken place a social differentiation within the business community. New groups from the population (some of them socially related to the managerial groups developed within business) have been rising to positions of influence and power. These prominently include: the leaders of the organized labor movement (or "labor managers"); the governmental administrators (operating the gigantic governmental machine which has become by far the chief single element in the national life); various professionals; and the soldiers, or rather the leaders of the soldiers.

The interests of these new, or newly powerful, groups, are not tied to old forms or old ideas. The new groups are in a position to be, and are proving to be, more flexible, more daring, more ready to try the new and abandon the old, than the businessmen have shown themselves.

During the past two decades, almost all of the major changes in the United States have been put through by these new groups, and against the initial opposition of the business community. It was they, for example, that launched the Tennessee Valley Authority, the great dams elsewhere for irrigation, power and flood control, the other vast measures for conservation, the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, the Export-Import Bank, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the Marshall Plan, the strengthening of Pan-American relations, the Atlantic Pact, and all the various structural reforms such as the Securities and Exchange Commission, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, and so on. It was they who declared that 50,000 airplanes could be produced a year, and they, to be frank, who carried us into the Second World War some time before it was formally declared. I do not wish to imply that I think that all of these and of the other major changes of this period have been "good." But most of them have been almost inescapable adaptations to the quickly changing world in which we are living. Moreover, these changes could not have been carried through, in most cases, without the cooperation, however reluctant, of the business community. Roosevelt could call for 50,000 planes, but it was the businessmen who built them. Marshall could announce his Plan, but the bankers and industrialists have had to implement it. It is, however, noteworthy that businessmen have almost never been the first to advocate any of these changes and actions, but have met them with sullen or bitter complaint. In the end, they have usually gone along, and have often, after the fact, not only accepted what has happened but found it to be of benefit to themselves.*

* Wendell Willkie made his public reputation as the representative of Commonwealth & Southern in battling TVA. I wonder how many stockholders of Commonwealth & Southern have reflected on the fact that their properties, almost insolvent at that time, are now paying dividends, and are immeasurably better off as a direct result of the area development brought about by TVA? Not many, apparently, to judge by the same dreary business opposition to the projects for Missouri Valley and Columbia River Authorities.

It is true that the greater flexibility of the new groups contains a danger of its own. Though the actions of the businessmen have often been of indirect aid to the communists—through omission or commission, the businessmen have seldom been seduced subjectively by communism. With only rare exceptions, the businessmen have proved to be ideologically immune to communism, as if the American business tradition had set up anti-bodies in their thought streams. This immunity has by no means extended to the new groups, perhaps just because they are not the product of any settled tradition. Many of the governmental administrators, professionals, and labor managers have been infected in varying degrees of intensity with the Bolshevik virus. The symptoms have ranged through innocent "fronting" to persistent fellow-traveling to full (though often secret) party membership to espionage service for the MVD and the Soviet Military Intelligence.

It would be wrong to minimize the danger from this susceptibility, the damage that these infected individuals have already worked, or the still greater damage that will perhaps be done in the still more perilous days that are yet to come. This particular danger, however, is not altogether a disadvantage. For almost all persons, communism is one of those phenomena like artistic creation or earthquakes or love, which must be experienced, lived through, in order to be fully understood. The congenital immunity of the normal businessman to communism is probably no more than an expression of his inability to understand communism. The members of the newer social groups are not, it is true, gifted with any innate understanding—communists are made, not born. But they are able to acquire an understanding by the very process of undergoing, and passing through, the communist or near-communist experience. The anti-communism of an individual who has successfully cured himself of communism is usually of a different order from the anti-communism of one who has not only not experienced communism but has never even felt its immense attraction to the disheveled modern soul. The latter is based very often on prejudice and ignorance; the former springs from knowledge and inner torment. Moreover, the immunity to communism acquired by having harbored and then thrown off the virus is far more absolute than the congenital immunity. It is my own belief that those who have been communists, or who have at

least wanted to be, are the best soldiers in the fight against communism; and that they will, and must, have a prominent and even leading part in the conduct of the fight.

John L. Lewis is a better anti-communist today because of his period of collaboration with the communists at the beginning of the CIO. Walter Reuther of the Automobile Workers and Philip Murray (both once in willing united fronts with the communists), Michael Quill of the Transport Workers and Joseph Curran of the National Maritime Union and so many other labor leaders who were once themselves Party members or close sympathizers, are better, and immensely more effective, anti-communists than Charles E. Wilson of General Motors or Thomas J. Watson of International Business Machines. When compared to the standard commercial writer (the businessman of letters), Arthur Koestler's books do not suffer in excellence or in anti-communist influence from the fact that he was for many years a Party member. Professors George Counts and Sidney Hook, both formerly very close to communism, get more as well as more enlightened results in the present struggle against it than their unsullied pompous colleagues who bleat so emptily about "American ideals." And among governmental administrators (both those now in and at present out of office: in this case names are best omitted), the group that has been through communism or once touched by it is not the least reliable.

To become a communist today, of course, is a very different thing from becoming a communist in the 'thirties or through the years of the Second World War. Then Hitler was felt by most men of good will to be the main enemy. Communism seemed a potential and, during the War, even an actual ally. A combination of ignorance, blindness, and utopian idealism could hide what communism was in fact doing, what the Soviet Union was like in truth, and what the great Purge Trials meant. Today, not merely is communism much more completely and publicly exposed (though the exposure can never be altogether complete), but, in the case of the United States above all, the world struggle with communism is already joined. Therefore, today, it requires a greater ignorance and blindness, a more utterly confused and sentimental idealism, or treachery, to become a communist. (I refer here to the "intellectualized" classes. Workers in

desperate conditions, members of minority groups, etc., can become communists even today for quite different, and more legitimate—though mistaken—reasons.) This means that a new generation is being deprived of the educational luxury of the direct communist experience: the luxury, at any rate, has become too expensive to be voluntarily permitted. But even without the direct experience, the members of these newly influential social groups, or some of them, show themselves better able than the businessmen to understand and combat communism.

This is conspicuously true of some members of the armed services. During these years since 1945, many officers, themselves never touched by communism, have been advancing remarkably in their understanding of communism. I think that the reason for this is that the soldiers *know* that both the future of the country and their own lives are at stake, whereas civilians, though it is true also for them, do not have this knowledge so directly and continually in mind. Furthermore, the soldiers, in their thoughts about communism, have to deal with the most concrete and inescapable problems of victory and defeat. This concreteness of the presented problems is also a stimulus to the labor leaders to seek the truth instead of phrases, as it is increasingly to the governmental administrators—even to lower levels of the ponderous bureaucracy which is an object of such distaste to business.

If businessmen in general continue to be as shortsighted and incompetent in the struggle against communism as they have been in the past, if they are incapable of leading that struggle, there are, then, other forces available to conduct it and to carry it through. These other forces, newly powerful in our society, with new men and new interests, together with newly developing sections of the business class itself, are in any case gradually pushing the old-line businessmen aside.* The businessmen of the United States, whatever their special views, are loyal. They are not like the capitalists of Russia, who, in 1905, were indifferent to the outcome of the Japanese war when not actively in favor of Japanese victory; or like the many French capitalists in 1939 who were ready to accept the organization of Europe by

* I have described this process, which is going on throughout the world, in *The Managerial Revolution* (John Day: 1941).

Hitler. The businessmen are still very influential in United States affairs. They can, by their stupidity and negation, block the timely adoption of an adequate policy, and thereby make the struggle more costly and more difficult. But they will not actively sabotage it. In the end they will go along, when they see more clearly what is the case: that this struggle cannot be absorbed in any deal, no matter how adroit; that, sooner or later, it must be decided.

Delmore Schwartz

I DID NOT KNOW THE SPOILS OF JOY

When that I was and a little tiny boy,
With a hey ho, the wind and the rain,
I did not know the truth of joy,
I thought all sadness strange and vain.

But when I came to thought and art,
Shame made my naive flowers wilt,
I glowed disgusted with my heart,
As cynicism salved my guilt.

When youthful hopes proved true and false,
As hard-earned riches fool or pall,
I thought the mind lied like a waltz
Which chants love as a brilliant ball.

And when I followed where sleep fled,
I woke amid the mixing dream,
My self or others hurt my head,
Making the silly Furies scream.

And when I left this damned estate,
I drove the quickest car to bliss,
With drunken fools I struck at fate,
Charmed at the falls of consciousness.

A great while ago the world began,
With a ho, ho, the fog and the mist,
The Pharaohs are enthroned again,
The endless wind and rain insist

Illusion and madness mock the years
(A Godforsaken farce, at best),
And yet through all these mounting fears
How I am glad that I exist!

How strange the truth appears at last!
I feel as old as outworn shoes,
I know what I have lost or missed,
Or certainly will some day lose,

And yet this knowledge, like the Jews,
Can make me glad that I exist!
with a hey ho, the foolish past,
and a ho ho and a ha ha at last.

THE WINTER TWILIGHT, GLOWING BLACK AND GOLD

That time of year you may in me behold
When Christmas trees are blazing on the walk,
Raging amid stale snow against the cold,
Stretched in the low sky, shapeless and chalk.
Hissing and ravenous the brilliant plant,
Rising like eagerness, a rushing pyre
(As when the *tutti* bursts forth, and the chant
Soars up—hurrahing!—from the Easter choir!)

But this is only true at four o'clock,
At noon the fifth year is once more abused,
I bring a distant girl apples and cake,
Pictures, secrets, lastly my swollen heart,
Now boxed and tied by what I know of art
—But as before accepted and refused.

ON A SENTENCE BY PASCAL

"True eloquence mocks eloquence."
　　Did that Frenchman mean
That heroes are hilarious
　　And orators obscene?

Eloquence laughs at rhetoric,
　　Being anxious in Zion,
And imitates the lucid lamb,
　　And snickers at the lion,

And smiles, being meticulous,
Because truth is ridiculous.

DUSK SHOWS US WHAT WE ARE AND HARDLY MEAN

O evening like a frieze, late light serene,
The city fades beneath your passing poise,
The heavy huddled buildings look like toys,
The silence murmurs in the trees' thick green.
The Square—Georgian façade, or that late French
Baroque dear to the victors in the Civil War—
Thins to a postcard's picayune décor,
As the racked traffic lurches in a trench.

This transience shall instruct us like a gift.
Secret and strong beneath the city lights
(Scattered like rice in evening's growth and drift),
Our being's sources like a myth arise
From depths like mothers or the starlight's heights,
Whence we shall sing beyond the city's lies.

Alfred Kazin

ON MELVILLE AS SCRIPTURE

Of all the recent studies of Melville I have seen, Richard Chase's* seems to me the most brilliant; and since it must be taken very seriously, the most frustrating. For while it is most clearly, and passionately, concerned with the moral significance of Melville's symbolism, and is surely the most affirmative statement ever made of Melville's distinction as a thinker, its conception of his art is static and even provincial. It is a devoted, combative book, with a richly felt sense of Melville's urgency; anyone who cares for Melville will recognize that it has started up from deep inside his thought. There are some very moving insights, and a power of hauntingly exact definition, that could have come only from great devotedness. But I do not really take in Mr. Chase's subsidiary aim, which is to present Melville as a supreme example, or moral imagination, for the "New Liberalism." And its critical method, especially on the works after *Moby-Dick,* seems to me astonishingly immature, and is so full of the most reckless guesses and assumptions, that I wonder if he has not simply turned in Melville the artist and the man, about whom we know so little, for the Messiah of the "New Liberalism"—a movement that seems to exist mostly in the minds of Mr. Chase and of Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., but to judge by the difference between the moral quality of this book and that of *The Vital Center,* can hardly be the same movement.

Mr. Chase's approach to literature is very modishly framed in myth and folklore; his book is built on personifications. Some are named after characters, like Ishmael and The Confidence Man; some after obvious prototypes, like The True Prometheus and The Handsome Sailor; some from symbolic incidence, like The Christ, The Maimed Man In The Glen, The False Prometheus. But they are all generic quantities with a meaning above Melville's works, and are applied freely to recurrent phases of his mind, and of American personality, folklore and politics as well. Moreover, the book is ad-

* Herman Melville: A Critical Study. Macmillan. $4.50.

dressed to a personified reader, The Chastened American Liberal Who Has Turned His Back On Stalinism And Progressivism—The New Liberal—and is an onslaught on The False Liberal, and less severely but firmly, on still another, The Ordealist Critic, or The Preacher of Alienation. So that in a very real sense the book is a morality play, in which The True Prometheus, The False Prometheus, The Confidence Man, The Ordealist Critic and The New Liberal vie with each other, in this period of intense political introspection, for the Soul of America the Alienated at the Mid-Century.

They are very large, these personifications; some are original, and all are provoking; they surely exist, to speak here only of the Melvillean ones, as those archetypal images of the self's divisions which are very real to anyone who has read through Melville. But they are applied with such finality to the American scene, move so autonomously across Melville's works, and are obviously so much more stimulating to Mr. Chase's mind than the concrete artistic experiences from which they have been taken, that Melville as man and practicing artist gets lost from sight, for he is always too diffusely and superhumanly in sight. Of all Mr. Chase's personifications, he is the mightiest—a kind of brooding Promethean intelligence, Our Tattooed Titan On Whose Skin May Be Deciphered The General Myths and The Local Folklore —the peak of the American ordeal, and its moral victory. He is now the Young American Wanderer, now the Maimed Man in the Glen, now Ishmael of course, but always Prometheus the Humanist—a figure often in suffering, but heroic; sometimes imperfect, but cumulatively glorious. He is a personification, in fact, in whom it is difficult to see the young roustabout, for here he is all the young men out in the world; or the harried husband and father who cried out in *Moby-Dick* for "Time, Strength, Cash and Patience," for here he turns up as the Successful Family Man; or the solitary who in those magnificent letters of the period (far better literature than several items on which Mr. Chase has trained his symbol-extracting machinery) proudly asked for Hawthorne's friendship, for to Mr. Chase's mind Melville's loneliness is somehow diminished if we show him immersed in native materials; but who does emerge, sometimes very movingly, as our Wisest Man of Sorrows, our Prometheus, our greatest Light-Bearer.

Now this Prometheus is a very appealing figure to us (our fathers

did not know his greatness, but we have seen his face); and Mr. Chase's many happy insights, his beautiful essay on the moral drama in *Moby-Dick,* are the richest instance I know of Melville's power to call out of Americans in this generation a kind of intense personal relatedness not felt now, in such numbers, for any other American writer—a claim on his uniqueness, I would add, that points up these "inner estrangements" in the American situation Mr. Chase is so afraid will keep us from having a "high culture." But this figure is expected also to consecrate The New Liberalism, and for purposes of our national self-criticism, to use the phrase with which Mr. Chase rounds out his hymn to *The Confidence Man,* "ought to be scripture." And since I do not identify the New Liberalism so complacently as Mr. Chase does, and indeed, find it hard to think of Melville as a Liberal, or as "scripture," for to me he is a very great, unstable, fiery daemonic artist, more akin to Blake and Rimbaud than to academic humanism, I can only say that I find much of Mr. Chase's exegesis irrelevant to Melville's marvellous force and energy, to his Ahab-like creative will, and to that style in which one hears the torrential rhythms of the creation.

If there is one thing I am sure about in "The New Liberalism," it is its infatuation with abstractions, its wish to believe names equal to things. This comes, I think, from its extreme self-consciousness as an educational élite, from its exasperated sense of urgency and protest against shallow views of human nature, from the academic tendency to see the artist as a corpus of knowledge rather than as a distinctly individual experience, and from some old alienation that still cuts deeper than its grateful affection for the American advantage in the struggle against totalitarianism. Thus we find Mr. Chase raging rather incoherently at the end against the old liberalism as the lover of all our estrangements, from "the divorce of parts" to "the hiatus between the sexes, the abyss that separates generations, the enmity between the terrified ego and the unconscious, between action and motive, between reason and myth, between father and son." Is The New Liberal to heal all this? Mr. Chase is trying to prove too much. Passionate as he is about Melville's thought, his point of view lacks emotional authenticity, for Bulkington in *Moby-Dick*—"wonderfully concise. . . . Man fully formed, fully human, fully wise,"—means more to him than does Ahab; *The Confidence Man* becomes Melville's

"second-best" book, and unable to say openly that *Clarel* is a stuffed and badly written poem, Mr. Chase tells us that if it were "mercilessly compressed, it would sound a great deal like T. S. Eliot's *Waste Land*"—a judgment that seems to me meaningless, for the poetic styles of the two works are antithetical, and works are not rendered alike by being reduced to common size.

Insofar as it exists in action, The New Liberalism is the intellectual wing of the party now in power, and to judge from Mr. Schlesinger's *The Vital Center,* sees nothing wrong with that master Confidence Man, F.D.R., admires Theodore Roosevelt, and scorns "utopians and wailers" who protest the abuses of power. But generally, its approach to life is through literature, for The New Liberal has usually not made his mind up about religion, knows little philosophy or science, and (almost always) is loftily superior to politics. Yet he does not present literature itself as an experience; he reduces the artist to his myths or ideologies or structural stratagems—that is, he rewrites the artist in his own favorite personification as Tiresias the Universal Savant, or the almighty critic, who is a little contemptuous of King Oedipus the artist for carrying on so, or what Mr. Chase at one point irritably calls Melville's "clumsy emotions." And if need be, he sacrifices the truth of his own experience, the experience with which he directly receives the artist's work, to the charms of a moral lesson or Personification. This is Mr. Chase, when he tells us that "*Clarel* is not a supremely contrived poem, but there is a certain order and felicity in the symbols." Or that "reading and rereading *Pierre,* we find that its meanings proliferate and its texture becomes rich." As this is put ("*and* its texture becomes rich"), one might infer that the texture of a work grows in proportion to the "meanings" we disengage from it. But obviously "meanings" in a work of art, or any other human experience, can be of different value. And even if they "proliferate" in the critic's mind, it is still his first responsibility to show whether, and how, they are actively felt in the developmental structure and stylistic vision of the book, and how deeply they are realized in the imagination of the writer and the reader. Art is hardly the whole of reality, but it is a form of love, or perfected communication, in which everything depends on what is given and received between one person and another. "Texture" is not a gross total of "meanings"; it is the intermediate sphere between the final aim of

the writer (which may be unknown to himself) and our readiness to apprehend and to share in a consciousness different from our own; it is the place in space our experience of art immediately occupies. Bulkington may be "Man fully formed, fully human, fully wise," but he is "wonderfully concise" only if one presumes that Melville calculated every stroke in advance, which is evidently untrue, and if one sees the book *only* as a morality, which belies the fact that the False Prometheus (Ahab) gets all the great lines, and the True Prometheus (Bulkington) gets praised (a shade hysterically). But then, Mr. Chase never permits much to an artist's spontaneity, or fancy, or caprice; even when he quotes from the beginning of *Billy Budd* Melville's rhapsody over the beauty of a Negro sailor who wore a Scotch Highland bonnet with a tartan band, he does so to connect us back to *Pierre*—"the emblem of Lucy Tartan enlightens the forehead of the Handsome Sailor as he emerges from the depths of Night into the consciousness of Day. . . . He moves as ponderously, but with as much strength and beauty . . . as revolutionary America itself, setting forth on the path of civilization." Is Melville never to be allowed a memory or a detail or a figure of speech that answers simply to his own exuberance? Does Mr. Chase think it Melville's distinction that he had as many symbols at his fingertips as James Joyce? He tells us, for example, that "a minor theme of *Pierre* is the theme of the keys. As in Joyce's *Ulysses,* the keys are those of St. Peter, whose name Melville's hero bears. The key symbolizes the secret of Pierre's paternity. In his earlier portrait, Pierre's father wears a seal and a key on his watch chain. . . . " Or: "etymologically, we perceive, Pierre Glendinning and Glendinning Stanly are the same name, since 'Stanly' comes from a Germanic word for 'stone' and 'Pierre' comes from a Greek word meaning the same." Or: "Mrs. Glendinning in her role as History has reached her state of perfection (false though it is) by giving birth to Pierre (America) and making him one true lover. . . . She is 'not far from her grand climacteric,' which, as a piece of symbolism, means that she is about to achieve the perfection of Society."

I mistrust Mr. Chase's understanding of how an artist operates; he is much too fond of showing that Melville was almost as wise as Arnold Toynbee. Yet when the works are not identified with their symbols, Melville is chided for a "deficiency of symbolization," or for

being "too little the continuously professional writer." Quoting Melville's very winning and characteristic exclamation in *Moby-Dick,* "I try all things; I achieve what I can," Mr. Chase assures us that "his plight as an epic writer was less desperate than his words might imply," though Melville was not necessarily thinking here of the epic form. He *did* try all things, often in a single work, and that is half his charm as an "unprofessional" author, as it helps to explain why he failed as a professional one. Much as he needed a public in order to make a living, he needed even more to spill over in every direction, to fit his new learning to his old wanderings, to act as reporter, prophet, wise man, and general mystic factotum to his "raw" countrymen —a very characteristic mark of the American writer from Whitman to Ezra Pound. But though he did become over-conscious of his symbols in proportion as he began to write purely for himself—a point Mr. Chase can never state explicitly because it is of the very argument of his book that Melville's interest in symbols was uniform —I still do not think that Melville ever sat down to write *about* symbols, which is the impression this book leaves. To Mr. Chase, Captain Vere in *Billy Budd* is Man, because *vir* is Latin for man; when Billy accidentally spills the soup in Claggart's path, Claggart feels insulted because "Billy has symbolically exposed himself to Claggart as the Host, the vessel from which issues 'virtue.' . . . The spilled soup has also exposed Claggart's guilt as an eater of the Host and, furthermore, Claggart's fear of his own unconscious desire to be like Billy; for the psychological content of Claggart's desire to share Billy's innocence is his desire to be the passive host." Did Melville sense all this? If I doubt it, it is not least because Mr. Chase never looks for an explanation in the human events nearest him. He has told us above, for example, that Pierre bears the name of St. Peter, who is in *Ulysses,* but not that a cousin of Melville's bore the name of Pierre. In any event, Mr. Chase does not say what Melville himself thought; but since his subject is a Personification of modern wisdom, it may be presumed that he thought of everything. A *writer,* however, particularly so spontaneous and airily half-learned a writer as Melville, is usually in a more limited state of intellectual grace, for art is so difficult that he must take the larger part of his "content" for granted. If Melville had been half as keen on symbols as Mr. Chase is, he would not have moved an inch, and he would certainly have lost the rich

personal coloring that comes from the juncture of unconscious symbols and the conscious word, to say nothing of that effect of fertility, from word to word, which is so peculiarly his own—even in so intellectualized a work as *Billy Budd.*

To Mr. Chase, *The Confidence Man* is the grand justification of his conception of Melville. Now this book is very plainly the product of a first-rate imagination; it has been unfairly neglected; and it may very well be almost as political as Mr. Chase says. He has read it far more patiently and lovingly than anyone else I know, and he has disentangled from its summary and difficult pages a whole tableau of native folklore. But it is significant that his argument is based on the politics of the book, which he interprets very piously, and on the incidence of folklore types and themes, without proving to us that the book was fully realized by Melville.

The presence of folklore elements does not of itself establish a book's value—witness so much of the antiquarian junk in the attic of American literature, and so, so much of Mark Twain. Mr. Chase has very understandably been influenced by Constance Rourke, whose delicate style is the happiest of any American cultural historian, and from whose harmonious spirit he would seem to have absorbed much of the economical force and pungency of his own writing here. But Constance Rourke worked as a reviver, to show the continuity in the American pattern; she was a historian of materials, who did not pass judgment on them, except as she showed the different inspirations. In his own enthusiasm on the subject of folklore, Mr. Chase gets so rapt proving Melville was an *echt Amerikaner* who worked "in the American grain," and that his alienation has been overstressed by the Ordealists, that he never asks himself *what* values are awakened in the artist by an interest in folklore, or of the different ways in which it can be applied. The raftmen's speech in *Life On The Mississippi-Huckleberry Finn* is one of the prime examples of "folklore" in American literature, but it is still bosh, Mark Twain's particular after-dinner performance; the first meeting of Huck and Tom in *Tom Sawyer* is incomparable, it truly incarnates a *national* literature, for it represents an upwelling, from local figures of speech, of all that is most charming, fresh and free in the nostalgia for the frontier and its legendary youth.

The critic who reduces a work to its elements of folklore or myth has the advantage over the social critic that he is always inside the

story; but he may have even less to say *about* it. In fact, it is the specialists in this field who are now farthest from the true spirit of criticism, for they make the fewest discriminations between good work and bad. The great weakness of the myth approach in criticism is that it freezes man to the universal, for by showing man everywhere to be the same, it reduces history to an illustration. The great weakness of the folklore approach is that it shows man only as a type or costume of his local culture. In the one, history becomes a figure of speech; in the other, man himself. Yet both these approaches are used by Mr. Chase throughout his book, for he conceives of Melville's works as an illustration of the specifically American pattern on the universal pattern of myth. Or as he puts it about *Moby-Dick,* "What he had to do was adduce the body of supporting mythology, clothe the skeleton with flesh and the habiliments of style." No wonder that he finds so many examples to his purpose in *The Confidence Man,* and can interpret it *ad libitum!* But *The Confidence Man* marks the full eruption of Melville's wrath against the American belief—liberal, conservative, and radical—that reality is always calculable, that things are never as desperate as they seem, that the world is a moral constant in the mind of History or God. It is a book which perhaps only European intellectuals who have passed through the concentration camps can fully understand, for the heart of it is anguish, an almost unbearable sense of betrayal before the inadequacy of the civil human gift to explain what men do feel when —in Bartleby's words—they know where they are. It is an attack on the spirit of consolation, for consolation justifies the most extreme violations against the living. It is an attack on the spirit of "moderation," on "the picked and prudent sentiments," as the Missourian calls them in his great attack on the Confidence Man. It is not a "compassionate" book; it is an embittered, tense, splintery book; it moves with the rapidities of anger. And it is not simply an attack on the naiveté of the old American liberalism, on the strut-and-brag of American commercialism, on the innocence of transcendentalism; it is a great cry against the deception appearance practices upon reality.

This is not a Melville Mr. Chase easily tolerates. Melville said of Matthew Arnold that he had "the prudential worldly element wherewithal [he] has conciliated the conventionalists," but this Mr. Chase finds "actively offensive," and notes that "Herman Melville might

have done better and been happier if he had not shied quite so readily from the ways of the world. . . . " Necessarily, Mr. Chase applies *The Confidence Man* against Henry Wallace and the fellow-travelers; but never on the "sweet voice" which crooned at the beginning of the Roosevelt era that our crisis was only economic, not spiritual; and at the end, had the atom bomb tested on eighty thousand human beings at Hiroshima. I do not find *The Confidence Man* so great a work as Mr. Chase does, for I find it too full of the "organic disorder," too blinding an excess of rage; it moves so quickly that it ends, literally, by putting out the light of the world. But if The New Liberalism wants to make scripture out of it, it will have to look below its "folklore" to Melville's unappeasable fury against the human situation.

Still, these are criticisms one raises only because Mr. Chase insists on bringing us Melville as scripture. For if it is lessons for a new liberal humanism we seek from literature, there are several writers rather more harmonious and dependable in this regard; and if it is "scripture," we shall have to make up our minds what our religion is, and what it is we do believe. The great advantage of myth to the liberal mind is that it presents so many gods, one need not believe in any one. It is the agnostic's theology. Melville is not an agnostic: he said that man's life was haunted by divinity, but that God could no longer cope with the human claim upon Him. Melville was not a liberal: he believed that reality was not susceptible to a political interpretation. Melville is not a reconciler: he did not try to weld appearances together; he pierces through. His love for the world was very uncertain; and in fact, love is hardly his strong point. But he is one of the few men in America who ever sounded, to the depths, the transcendental ache at the heart of being; and he has that peculiar gift—not necessarily the most valuable in literature, but distinctly his —which is concerned with the "soul" of man, not with his "heart"; with his attitude toward the creation, not with his relationship to other men. It is what Ezra Pound, in another connection, tried to convey when he spoke of "the raw cut out of concrete reality, combined with the tremendous energy, the contact with the natural force." Melville had that contact; and while it is not necessarily better than Liberalism, than scripture, than a "high culture," at least let us not sacrifice a unique experience to the abstracts of a moral lesson or ideology.

THEATER CHRONICLE

The Broadway season didn't really get started until the very end of October. Then, within a week, four celebrated American craftsmen, Lillian Hellman, Maxwell Anderson, Marc Blitzstein, and S. N. Behrman, served up four concoctions—all adaptations but all highly characteristic of the adapters in choice and treatment and all designed, it might seem fiendishly, to show up the drives and defects of four celebrated American craftsmen.

Lillian Hellman chose to adapt a French play, *Montserrat* by an Algerian, Emmanuel Roblés—and one is not surprised to learn that it has been found acceptable in Eastern Europe. It is set in Venezuela in 1812 during the Spanish Occupation, and the action consists of the attempt of a hard-bitten Spanish officer, Izquiredo, to force a young idealistic Spanish soldier, Montserrat, who has gone over to the people, to reveal the hiding place of Bolívar. Izquiredo has six people brought in from the public square and tells them that unless they can persuade Montserrat to tell his secret they will all be shot. The individuals picked up "at random" are a business man (the capitalist), a wood-carver (the artist), an actor (the hanger on), a mother (is there a mothers' class?) and a boy and girl (the proletariat). The first four feverishly try to persuade Montserrat to betray the leader; the last two urge him not to. In the end all of them are taken out and shot in the hearing if not in the sight of the audience.

The ostensible message of the play is that the end justifies the means, and on this level it conveys no conviction or belief, is intellectually stale and mechanically contrived. The real purport of the piece is quite different and, I am sure, quite unintended. *Montserrat* is a ruthless assault on the sensibilities and on humane values. Izquiredo is its hero, and its real message is not that cruelty is sometimes necessary for the achievement of a good end but that the power to inflict or withhold cruelty, and the wielders of such power, are fascinating and enviable. Emlyn Williams (Izquiredo) is an excellent actor while William Redfield (Montserrat) is not; but Williams' superior performance alone does not account for Izquiredo's glamour. His part is written that way—

there are even passages which explain and condone his cruelty—just as the part of Montserrat is so written as to make him out an ineffectual and rather tiresome victim of practical power. He has neither strength nor dignity and his refusal to yield is quite out of character.

Actually the play would make much more sense in terms of its unacknowledged but unmistakable emotional drives if the masterful Izquiredo were a high official of the MVD and Montserrat an unwitting "enemy of the state" who is being asked to tell a secret he doesn't know. But that would be too much even for the fellow-travelers of so grand an inquisitor as Vishinsky.

Maxwell Anderson has made a spectacle of Alan Paton's novel, *Cry, the Beloved Country,* and called it *Lost in the Stars.* Paton's book, which deals with the problem of colored people in South Africa, is a tract rather than literature. It is sentimental, the plot is conventional and pat, there is a happy ending; still, the story is basically authentic because Paton knows his subject, feels strongly about it, and is too intelligent to falsify the issue or put forward any easy solution. Only when he attempts to be literary, as he does in the prologue, does the false note ring out—in a pseudo-simple eloquence reminiscent of the Steinbeck-Hersey-Saroyan routine. It is easy to guess that this was the very element, plus the social significance, that appealed to Mr. Anderson, for though he has distorted the story, garbled the issue, revised the main character, and in general removed all traces of authenticity, the "singing prose" of the prologue, set to music, has been preserved intact and sets the tone of *Lost in the Stars.*

There is not much to choose between Roblés' and Hellman's hard "clarity" and Anderson's soft confusion, but, dramatically speaking, I must say that *Montserrat* is easier to take than *Lost in the Stars.*

The Little Foxes by Miss Hellman was a great deal easier to take than Marc Blitzstein's musical mish-mash of it called *Regina.* And if I were Miss Hellman, I'd consider suing Mr. Blitzstein for making the little foxes ridiculous. They were always too bad to be true, but Miss Hellman created an atmosphere in which they were, for the moment at least, convincing. By taking the money-mad Regina Hubbard out of the grim, dreary, airless house in which hers and her brothers' cruel plotting seemed believable, and putting her in a southern mansion where the rambler roses climb and there is sun on the porch, by introducing a jazz band, dancing, songs, and recitative, Blitzstein has completely dispelled the original necessary atmosphere and turned the Hubbards into caricatures. It's quite funny, this adaptation, when you think of all the angles.

I Know My Love is a confection whipped up by S. N. Behrman for Lynn Fontanne and Alfred Lunt. The base is a play by Marcel Achard, but I should judge that little is left of the original except an air of continental sophistication which merely adds another note of unreality to this "Boston Story" of a couple married for fifty years and looking back. One enjoys watching it, to shift the metaphor temporarily, as one might enjoy watching a show of toy dogs and noting their points (Miss Fontanne gets the blue ribbon; and you can imagine how *becoming* it is, my dear) but one wonders afterward why so much skill, effort and money should be wasted on a *petit four* and why S. N. Behrman should be content merely to be the pastry cook for two spoiled and self-indulgent "darlings of the theater."

There are only two plays on Broadway (as of early December) that qualify as serious, and they would rate as no more than interesting experiments if the Broadway theater were a lively art instead of a sickly survival corrupted more and more by the "values" of the entertainment industry and of the audiences that entertainment has conjured up. One is new—*The Browning Version* by Terence Rattigan, in which Maurice Evans and Edna Best play the leading roles. The other is old—August Strindberg's *The Father,* with Raymond Massey and Mady Christians. Both are highly contemporary in that they deal with the relation between male and female which is coming to be acknowledged—and I am not being facetious—as one of the significant battles of the century; and both attempt to deal with it on the adult level. *The Browning Version* is a one-act tour de force in which a master in a boys' school discovers that his wife's contemptuous opinion of him, with which she has beaten him down for years, is not necessarily the world's opinion, though she has tried to make it so to the point where he has lost his job. He turns upon her, makes common cause with her lover who knows how contemptible she is, and throws her out of his life. The play attempts too much in one act—but at least Rattigan knew what he was attempting and Evans and Best bring it off rather well.

The Father is a more ambitious experiment, not quite successful, but very interesting. In this case the wife, in order to get control of her child's future, sets out to drive her husband insane. But it is not nearly so simple as that. In fact *The Father* explores, however awkwardly, so many areas of emotion and idea that one finds oneself thinking about the play long after one has seen it—a rare experience these days. The wife succeeds in driving the husband, so to speak formally insane, by planting in his mind a doubt of their child's paternity, of any child's pater-

nity—a ramifying idea in itself—but one reflects later that her real drive is for power and that it is she, the "normal" mother who is actually insane. This inference may be my own. The point is that the play has depth. So has the performance of Mady Christians, an actress of power and persuasion who, unlike most, understands the art she professes and has the capacity and the discipline to *be* the character she is playing. Raymond Massey obviously respects the art but just as obviously lacks the capacity to be, rather than merely to represent, the character of the father. His failure, unfortunately, is crucial, especially since the acting of the important part of the nurse borders on caricature.

Margaret Marshall

FILM CHRONICLE

WARREN, FAULKNER, AND HOLLYWOOD

The producers of both *All the King's Men* and *Intruder in the Dust,* have meant, really, to create works of art. *All the King's Men* has some exciting runs of film journalism, *Intruder in the Dust* some richly chiaroscuroed shots of the Mississippi locale (though Yoknapatawpha County seems oddly deflated when placed on mere earth.) Neither film, however, absorbs the imagination of a serious spectator in the way a successful work of art should. Yet they are the best Hollywood can do—a fact that should be considered by those intellectuals who have recently discovered the cosmic potential of American culture.

Of the two films, *All the King's Men* is the more interesting; it raises complex problems about the relationship of a movie to the book on which it is based, and it provides an indirect commentary on the career of one of our more gifted writers. In *Night Rider* Robert Penn Warren restored to the American novel two rare qualities: a genuine sense of the dramatic and a concern with political ideas, or at least with the consequences of those ideas. *All the King's Men,* despite its immense vitality, represented a decline in his work, for it was marred by a confused intellectual conception and a style which, while frequently a thing of splendor, raised uneasy memories of Hollywood toughness. The film retains the vitality but enlarges the confusion. Hollywood seems to have an invariable gift, in its adaptations, for hitting at precisely the center of an author's weakness.

In the film Warren's hero, Jack Burden, is drawn to the plebeian demagogue, Willie Stark, because he seems a source of fresh energy; there is also the usual talk about building hospitals and roads, pitiful chatter in a work with serious pretensions. About the most serious objection that anyone in the film raises to Stark is that mid-way in his career he becomes egocentric and corrupt. Even at the film's end Burden, who is presumably to dedicate himself to the people, fails to understand that egocentricity and corruption are merely frills on the essential moral-political rottenness of a quasi-fascist like Stark. The film treats Burden's attachment to Stark as if it were a genuine moral problem to be taken seriously in its own terms, rather than a problem in the psychology of totalitarian affiliation. But Jack Burden is no Pietro Spina or Kyo whose wrestlings with a historical commitment involve even those who reject that commitment; he is just a poor befuddled newspaperman doing the dirty work for a cheap demagogue. His only real problem is that he is

morally, psychologically sick. But this the movie fails or refuses to understand; it takes Burden largely at his own valuation, as if he were faced with a problem of choice that is relevant to an adult intelligence.

Now the truth is that the film's simplistic view of Burden's relationship to Stark is not without *some* warrant in the novel. Burden's story is written in the first person singular, and the low ceiling of his mind too often limits the book's perceptions. That Burden may not have been wholly mistaken in his support of Stark is a conclusion at least possible when one reads the unfortunate line Warren gives to Stark after Stark's assassination: "If it hadn't happened, it might—have been different—even yet." But though this sort of sentimentality may slip through the net of Warren's intentions, there are clearly other things in his novel which suggest a more perceptive view of Burden's attachment to Stark; a hint that that attachment may be due to Burden's need for a new social-parental authority and to a history of sex-fright; a portrayal of Stark which, even if not quite clear, is not split into black-and-white extremes in the manner of the film; and, most important of all, Warren's own prose which often enforces irony and complication of meaning.

Now the producers of the film had a choice of how to read the book, and adhering to the iron law that Hollywood will always sink to the bottom, they read it as Warren's most harsh critics had insisted it had to be read. If the book were actually as intellectually vulgar as they seemed to think, they were guilty of adhering too faithfully to it. But in fact, of course, they quite missed its complexities and ambiguities of meaning.

When Burden, or Burden *vis-à-vis* Stark, is not the center of action, the film sometimes improves on the novel; it discards the tattered flashback device, allowing the story to flow out in a direct dramatic line, and it dispenses with Burden's banal philosophizing. Though its attempts to focus on intimate human relationships are merely trivial, the film becomes highly charged when the camera is permitted to watch Stark's rise to power. Here the novel's energy and mobility are realized in striking visual terms. Steadily and without tricky jugglings of perspective, the camera charges in to watch Willie as he orates, his listeners as they acknowledge his charisma, a procession of hill-billies come to help their friend Willie beat down the "politicians." There is one clever shot which freshens an old device: Willie's followers wait near the Capitol, they are shown in their internal fluidity and separateness, and then the camera suddenly stops dead before a loudspeaker which, in its impersonal arrogance, conveys Willie's dominance to his listeners, suddenly passive and homogeneous.

The picture, then, is at its best when not required to convey particularized or personal emotion. But energy without mind, even in so unratiocinative a medium as the film, must lead to a muddle. Broderick Crawford plays Stark with a sweaty sensual gusto, but his masculine force is no substitute for a clear conception of the ratio of guile to sincerity, or of the composition of their blend, in a demagogue like Stark. As for the other players, they are either stock or corrupted by the *Hollywood cum Hemingway* tone, Mercedes MacCambridge acting a tough girl with a soft soft heart as if she were Katherine Hepburn suffering from an hallucinatory identification with a Hemingway character.

What was alarming about the novel *Intruder in the Dust* was its suggestion that Faulkner might at last have arrived at the ordinary kind of sanity from which we all suffer, a condition which, as a writer, he is not particularly equipped to cope with. There seemed the possibility that he had exhausted the world of Yoknapatawpha and had returned to the same South other Southerners inhabit. Having lost touch with his mythic world and not caring to produce naturalistic novels, Faulkner wrote *Intruder in the Dust* as an interregnum novel, part melodramatic fable and part whodunit entertainment. The novel, I think, can be most profitably read as a modern version of the Huck Finn—Nigger Jim story, the conscience-stricken white boy Charles Mallison and the "intractable" Negro Lucas Beauchamp reenacting Twain's symbolic tale in the strained terms of the present.

Transferred to the screen, *Intruder in the Dust* could be effective only if handled with a certain non-whimsical but folklorish extravagance, a conscious attention to symbolic contours. In the novel that extravagance is furnished by Faulkner's rhetoric, but in the film there is only the camera, alternately neutral and arty. For once, it might have been effective, though very risky, to use a narrator with a script contrapuntal to the action, and thereby to pull the spectator's attention away from the minor problem of credibility to the major one of meaning. But director Clarence Brown has staked everything on a literalist treatment of the story and on arty photography, with the result that Faulkner's fable is almost obliterated and the whodunit, inherently a bit preposterous anyway, is greatly exaggerated. When the camera does not stop for a "lovely" shot, the characters stop to "explain" what is actually quite clear. Some of the photography is arresting: winding shots of country roads, gray looks into Negro cabins at night, flat brassy stares at a Mississippi town damaged by modernity but without its benefits. While such shots create the story's visual context, Brown has allowed his photographer to in-

dulge himself by composing charcoal drawings, "mood pictures" pretty enough to hang on your wall but which chop the film into static blocks. Consequently, a movie that should have been swift and exciting is merely slow and interesting.

Faulkner's absence from the picture might be tolerable if only his characters were present. But Lucas, as played by Juano Hernandez, is stubborn and passive rather than "intractable" and impervious; troubled rather than the kind of Negro who, in Mississippi, fails to Mister white folks. Hernandez' sincere but insufficiently forceful performance throws the picture off balance, for he is unable to make Lucas into the dominating center of action he actually is in the novel. Most miscast and misdirected is David Brian as Uncle Stevens, who in the book is Faulkner's mouthpiece for the odd blend of shrewdness and ignorance Faulkner takes to be Southern liberalism. The movie has left out most of the ignorance, but has replaced it with liberal clichés. Unlike everyone else in the film, Brian speaks without a Southern accent, which is baffling since he is supposed to represent a strand of Southern opinion. (Or did the producers think that a "liberal"Southerner talks with a Northern accent?)

Of Faulkner's inner meanings—that to survive, Nigger Jim has had to become the crotchety Lucas and that to remain just, Huck has had to become a boy in momentary opposition to white society—the movie suggests almost nothing. But to give due credit, the film does try twice to say some serious things about Negro-white relations. In a scene where Stevens, questioning Lucas in jail, instinctively assumes the Negro's guilt, the director has meant to convey the comparatively startling idea that even the best whites are full of ambiguous feelings toward the Negroes and hence are not wholly to be trusted by them. Unfortunately, this scene is spoiled by Hernandez' excessive rolling of white eyeballs and Brian's sheer embarrassment at being placed in such a peppery situation.

More successful, though less important, is a scene in which Lucas pays off Stevens for his services and demands a receipt, visible evidence of his triumph. But this is ruined by a sequel added by the producers, in which uncle and boy sententiously acknowledge Lucas to be their conscience. As doctrine this is pernicious, because the Negro's claims to equality must be honored not out of regard for the white man's conscience but out of regard for truth and justice. As movie-making, it is pernicious because the boy whom Faulkner had led us to imagine as a descendant of Huck Finn is here merely blood-kin of Huck's priggish friend Tom Sawyer.

Irving Howe

MUSIC CHRONICLE

PROKOFIEV'S THREE ORANGES

The New York City Opera Company deserves a good bit of praise for having refreshed our memories and renewed our acquaintance with Sergei Prokofiev's gay opera *The Love for Three Oranges.* At least the audience of its recent performance seemed to think so. It looked happy and gratified after having laughed itself out in the Moorish mausoleum of the City Center. Indeed, the enthusiastic applause and cheering at the final curtain were well merited by the company. The singing, acting, the playing of the orchestra and the conducting were exceptionally good, surpassed only by the skillful and imaginative production, or rather, conception of the opera devised by Mr. Fedor Komissarjevsky and realized by Mr. Vladimir Rosing. The décor and the costumes by Mr. Dobujinski were in good taste and quite suitable to the Commedia dell'Arte (via the Russian cabaret) conception of Prokofiev's musical comedy. One felt that everyone from the singers to the audience, including Mr. Halasz, the director-conductor of the company, who grinned throughout the performance, had had a fine time.

Prokofiev's *Love for Three Oranges* is now twenty-eight years old and is still as merry, boisterous and carefree as it appeared to its first audience in Chicago in 1921. Those who saw that first production say that the public then didn't laugh quite as much as it does now, but this is, I imagine, because the opera was performed in Chicago in a pigeon-French translation. Here it was given in an adequate, though not always correct, English version prepared by Mr. Victor Serov.

The Love for Three Oranges is the work of a young man green from Russia and its young revolution, a man full of freshness and talent, who wants to be free, have fun, poke fun and make fun. Untouched by the lyrical introspection of French post-impressionism and unconcerned with the many neuroses of Central Europe, Prokofiev's oranges roll around freely on the countryside of Russian fairy-tale opera and operetta. The music of the *Oranges* drives the listener across the fields and valleys made familiar by Messrs. Rimsky-Korsakov (*Tzar Saltan* and *The Golden Cockerel*) and Baliev, the cabaret entertainer, godfather of the late *Chauve Souris.* With Prokofiev, however, the drive is bumpier, rougher,

and the fun is far less cautious than in the time of Tzar Nicholas II, —his is more like a drive across freshly tilled fields in a Model T Ford.

True enough, the story is Italian and, more, a *cause célèbre* in the annals of literary squabbles of the 18th century. The *Fabia dell'amore delle tre malarancie* by Carlo Gozzi was a satire on the *Stile francese* comedies of Goldoni. First produced in Venice in 1761, its triumphal success all over Italy resulted in Goldoni's retirement, or rather, emigration to France. Gozzi stood for the traditional Italian fairy tale *Comedia dell'Arte* whereas Goldoni wanted to introduce to Italy the French genre of realist comedy.

Consequently, the point of Gozzi's comedy is a literary polemic whose real meaning has faded away and is utterly unintelligible to an audience of 1949 (as I suspect it was to Prokofiev). Having lost its sense, what remains is the dismembered carcass of a fairy tale which Prokofiev and his producers liven with much horseplay, travesty, magic, and stale but funny jokes. All this taken together saves the opera from being a moth-eaten bore like Gozzi's *Princess Turandot,* revived in many guises all over Europe in the 20's, or like most of the attempts (during the 20's) to revive the paraphernalia of masqued Pulcinellas, Arlechinos and the rest of the Venetian carnival gang.

Yet the *Oranges* has retained all the flavor of the Russian take-off (in this case, of fairy-tale opera) and is in many ways a full evening extension of those burlesque numbers which were a staple of the Russian so-called *art-cabaret* of 1915-1925.

The story of the *Love for Three Oranges* is all about a foolish king and his hypochondriac son who cannot laugh because of a seemingly incurable melancholia. (Apparently Prokofiev's idiot king and his idiot son burlesque Nicholas II and his heir.) The Prince is brought to laughter by the sight of a nasty old witch's underpants when she tumbles down in front of him (ha-ha-ha-ha, to the tune of the first four notes of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony). Suddenly he is obsessed with the fetishistic notion that he is in love with three oranges apparently unavailable in his father's kingdom. The oranges are guarded by a ferocious female-baritone cook who sings one of the three memorable pieces of the opera (this, the famous march, and the scherzo). (Curiously enough during those same years Stravinsky composed an opera, *Mavra,* where there is also a cook, female-impersonator.) But the Prince and his routine companion are protected by a routine sorcerer who easily helps them to gain possession of the three oranges despite the obstacles set in their way by the routine witch (the lady whose underpants made the Prince laugh in the first place) and when in the following scene the three man-

sized oranges are opened for the sake of quenching the Prince's companion's thirst, they yield three soprano-singing thirsty princesses, two of which die immediately with no love lost for them, while the third is prevented from dying by the timely appearance on stage of a New York City Fire Department bucket handed over by a gentleman of the chorus in a dinner jacket. From then on love for the remaining orange becomes the inevitable conclusion of the story and, in fact, after a number of episodes involving trap doors, thunderbolts, ascending and descending pigeons, the affair ends in a routine fairy-tale marriage *à la Russe.*

Prokofiev's music does not attempt to define any characters, nor give any symbolic significance to the story's horse-play. It is very direct, lucidly scored, lively and funny music of that charming period of Prokofiev's art, when he did not feel compressed into a nationalist corset and was not compelled to mete out his dissonances and jerky rhythms in accordance with the regulations of Russia's greatest aesthetician, Stalin. The context of the *Oranges* is full of amusing dissonances and rhythms which enliven Prokofiev's clear-cut tonal language and, although the score of the *Oranges* has a direct ideological relation to Rimsky-Korsakov's comic operas, it is pleasantly free from any obnoxious and folkloresque Russianisms. The music is, in effect, as urbane and, to use Muscovite jargon, as "passportlessly cosmopolitan and formalist" as are all the best compositions of our time. The trouble with the opera is, of course, that too much of it is built around too little. Its three charming and famous numbers would fit easily into a match-box. Yet how much fresher, more ingenious and sincere is that early Prokofiev than the Prokofiev of the *Ode to Stalin* or even of *Alexander Nevsky,* and how much sounder is the formal structure of his *Oranges,* now forbidden in Russia, than the amorphous patchwork of his patriotic opera *War and Peace.*

Nicolas Nabokov

BOOKS

FICTION CHRONICLE

AS A MAN GROWS OLDER. By Italo Svevo. New Directions. $3.00.
IN SICILY. By Elio Vittorini. New Directions. $2.50.
THE SHELTERING SKY. By Paul Bowles. New Directions. $2.75.
A LONG DAY'S DYING. By Frederick Buechner. Knopf. $3.00.

Emilio Brentani, the hero of *As a Man Grows Older,* an early novel by Italo Svevo, is, of course, literary—intelligence and imagination are necessary to practice self-deception and illusion in Emilio's grand manner, as if these things were a business in which he was determined to advance himself. Emilio is thirty-five, a poor clerk in Trieste, the author of one novel, unable to write more, much preoccupied with the fear that life is passing him by. To renew his dying vitality (the Italian title is *Senilità*) he falls in love with a dishonest trollop, Angiolina. A weary introvert, Emilio is nevertheless a desperate opponent of evidence—he is bent upon imagining Angiolina virtuous and upon denying everything his reason indicates to be undeniable. Suffocatingly idealistic, he hesitates at the seduction, wishing to believe himself alone responsible for Angiolina's downfall so that the love affair will add to his remorse and leave the girl blamelessly pure. Sensitive, humbled in his life and work, Emilio knows jealousy—the most suspect of the passions—better than any other emotion; only it can move him to his most natural activity in life—feverish suffering.

Angiolina, a prodigious but transparent liar, is much closer to the truth, at least of her own existence, than Emilio; her lies are an ignorant and ineffectual attempt to cope with the reality of her mean life. She is dishonest in self-defense. Self-defense has become unknown to Emilio because of his paralyzing self-consciousness. Shabby, lonely, egotistical, the burden of his useless sensibilities has degraded him; he is capable only of experiencing pain and escaping into illusions. Art, like facing the truth about an impossible love, is an assertive act which he no longer finds possible. He comes closest to life and art by a kind of dreaming, typical of the aged, which allows him, after Angiolina has run off with a bank robber, to remember her as the great love of his life and to transform her character. Angiolina, stupid and desperate in reality, becomes in Emilio's imagination the image of life at its highest—beautiful and strong, yet touched with the sadness and thoughtfulness of his dead sister, a poor, decent spinster.

Svevo's tone in *As a Man Grows Older* is almost impossible to de-

fine: simple, detached, there is a horrifying humor in Emilio's yearnings and sufferings. In his own life, Svevo seems to have thought of himself as a ridiculous figure who had "written a novel," or at least he *feared* that his literary ambitions were absurd. This fear, which is a social one,—the fear of presuming, displeasing, failing, looking foolish—may have kept him from realizing his greatest gifts, but it seems also to have been at the bottom of the perfection and originality of the work he was able to produce. He is a master of motive and fluctuating feeling because he was perhaps rather ashamed of his own vacillations and doubt; neither indignant nor wishing to arouse pity, the irony is tender—the sort we reserve for ourselves. In this way, *As a Man Grows Older* is the very opposite of Flaubert's *L'Education sentimentale,* a comparison suggested by the themes and characters in both books. Svevo's novel has none of the scope and detail of Flaubert's masterpiece and Frederic Moreau seems, by comparison with Emilio, a hero of action and experience. (Edouard Roditi, in an interesting and scholarly introduction, finds Svevo's real contemporaries in the Austrians, Musil and Schnitzler.)

For the most part, *As a Man Grows Older* is not a realistic novel at all, but an original sort of fairy tale, small, enclosed, even stifling, rather fantastic in its plot, but thoroughly persuasive in its meaning.

Vittorini's novel *In Sicily,* also tells us that worship of the abstract is dehumanizing. In Svevo's book you are drawn to reality and to life because the author has, in the character of Emilio, touched you with the hand of death. *In Sicily* urges more positively. A young man, "haunted by abstract furies," hopeless about the world, but lacking the will or love to do anything more than despair, returns to his childhood home in Sicily. He meets his mother again, an honest, direct, courageous woman, thinks of his father, a literary sort of man, who likes to dramatize himself and to posture aimlessly in moments of crisis, goes with his mother to visit the sick people in the little peasant village, etc.

According to Spender, Vittorini's "protest against Fascism is to lay his magnifying instrument against the chest of the victim of these times and show that the heart is beating. Yes, you gentlemen at Rome, you inventors of the atom bomb, you makers of peace treaties, the victim for whom you are preparing these graves is still alive. Listen to his heart. . . . For that is the subject of this book: humanity. The journey from a doubt in humanity towards realization of humanity."

Naturally, after that, I am ashamed to say *In Sicily* meant little to me. What the narrator rediscovers is birth, struggle, fidelity to the simple truths of existence, symbolized in an exuberant statue of a woman. It may be assumed, though little is known about him, that the young

man, after his childhood in Sicily, moved to a state of intellection and response more complex than anything in peasant life, a safe assumption in literature, when we have a "despairing" character, fed up with life, even bored with himself. Credulity and psychology are strained by attempting to believe in his renewal through peasant courage and honesty. But the most serious flaw in the book is the ready "discovery" of what one may doubt has ever been truly forgotten; namely, that it is better to be a living man than a corpse sacrificed to the "honor" of his country, that a husband ought to help his wife in labor and not stand around attitudinizing.

In Sicily makes its claim upon the emotions by many contrivances meant to suggest sincerity, but often suggesting the opposite. The endless repetition of insignificant dialogue, no doubt just as in life, does not let the reader forget for a moment that he is concerned with literature. The characterization of the mother is excellent, however, and her acceptance of the sexuality of her son, a man old enough to have both a wife and a mistress, will probably make American readers believe she is meant to be funny, like *Tobacco Road.*

The scholars who used to insist Shakespeare meant Hamlet to be considered insane obviously felt a need to annihilate a work that refused to confess its secret. Paul Bowles in *The Sheltering Sky,* by having his heroine sink into a gruesome hebephrenic state at the end of the novel, has violated a book that is written in a remarkably clear and suggestive style and which manages with its setting and minor characters to be enormously interesting. *The Sheltering Sky* is a peculiar blend of the ambition of *A Passage to India* and the mood of *The Sun Also Rises,* a combination perhaps doomed to war incessantly without reaching a decision. A young, post-war, New York couple, Port and Kit Moresby, take off for North Africa with their friend, Tunner. Port is impotent with his wife, a fact that indirectly dominates most of the book, but for which no explanation or attitude is offered. (The one certain advantage of the impotence may be to provide a "justification" for the scenes in Arab brothels and to make the role of the friend, Tunner, more exciting.) Port dies of typhoid in the desert and Kit goes into the degraded state already mentioned. One is repelled and annoyed, retroactively, that she should be a central character when it is clearly impossible to know what she is about or even what her actions have meant previously. Death, impotence, insanity—the major characters, almost completely without biography, have instead of personality only these violent, blank fates. They are drier and more barren than the desert;

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one could no more sympathize with them than with a dust storm, or blame them either.

Tristram Bone, a fat man who owns a monkey named Simon; Elizabeth Poor, who has a son named Leander; Mrs. Poor's mother, who is called Maroo; a novelist, George Motley, who is as tiny as Tristram Bone is large— these names in Frederick Buechner's novel, *A Long Day's Dying,* may suggest that we have to do with a comedy in the Waugh manner. No doubt that is what the book might better have been; as it is, the names do not signify satire, but only that the people are "characters," to use the word in the Broadway sense. The tone is uncertain, but certainly Jamesian:

"As soon as he saw them approaching him, down the broad foyer, through groups of people and luggage, Motley put aside all traces of his impatience as unthinkingly and easily as if they had been old toys that he now wished to exchange for new and arose to greet his friends with the curiously shy, tight-lipped grin that seemed always to gild him with a kind of boyishness intensified rather than altogether contradicted by the shrewdness of his small, florid countenance."

Not a witty book, *A Long Day's Dying* has a callow sophistication and the documentary interest of a questionnaire about what Youth is thinking. The latest thing, they tell us with a serene, idolatrous glance, is Good and Evil. Whereas previously characters met friends in a bar or an apartment, in *A Long Day's Dying* dramatic scenes take place at the Cloisters, where, in addition to conversation, Bone can cut his hand on the statue of a saint, and the prose can swell with the richness of the tapestries. In another scene at the Cloisters, the intention is even more blunt and trivial: Tristam Bone and a young man, Paul Steitler, foregather at the monastery to discuss the fact that Mrs. Poor, to cover up an indiscretion with Steitler, has accused the young man of being her son's homesexual lover.

The sophistication, the soft language ("In the garden about which the cloisters ran, pigeons flickered, and they distracted themselves by merely watching the birds scurry beside them, singly and in pairs, as a kind of escort"), the effort at religiosity ("If nothing else, he knew at least that, whoever the sinner, it was something like sin that had set the damaged, damaging machinery of complication in action. . . ."), make the book morally and dramatically specious. Rather nice is about all one can call the Good Maroo and Leander; the others are disagreeable pygmies.

"More light!" the old lady, Maroo, calls on her deathbed, thereby bringing Goethe into the cage with the monkey and the unicorn.

Elizabeth Hardwick

KOESTLER AND ISRAEL

PROMISE AND FULFILMENT. By Arthur Koestler. Macmillan. $4.00.

Perhaps the most important thing to be said about this book is that when one has finished it, he is left thinking about—Koestler. Its ostensible subject is, of course, Palestine, or more precisely, the process by which, in the past thirty-odd years, Palestine has become Israel; but what Jew can treat such a subject without treating also his own relationship, unique and typical, to the Land which is not only a social fact, but an actual metaphor of the vexed condition of being a Jew. To understand Palestine thoroughly might well be to be done with Jewishness as a problem, once and for all. So at least, Koestler would like to believe.

It is notable that he has returned twice to this same subject matter. In the past, he has been accustomed to deal, in that fever of contemporaneity that has annoyed some of his readers, with practically every major political crisis of our time. Spain, the Moscow Trials, the Fall of France —he has turned them before the headlines were dry indifferently into history or fiction; but to strike *twice* while the iron is hot, is this not the super-scoop! The essential response of Koestler is the journalist's response; and he is, perhaps, our most extraordinary journalist; but he is not satisfied ever with the flat, vivid particularity of reporting, and uneasily he reaches toward the rich generalizations of the novel or the historical account. In the case of Palestine, he has tried, as if compulsively, both strategies, first *Thieves in the Night* and now *Promise and Fulfilment.*

The latter book might easily be read as a superior example of a genre with which we are all familiar: the authoritative, summary work on an area by the veteran correspondent returned home with his notes and leisure enough to "tell all." Indeed, *Promise and Fulfilment* has the obvious faults and virtues of the kind. On the one hand, the intimate remembered scenes, the interview with the outlawed terrorist in the darkened room, the immediacy of little eye-witness epiphanies, the low-grade reality of events discussed at bars or over tables with fellow correspondents. And on the other hand, there is the flashy rhetoric: "while in the scorching light of the Judean hills, eternity looks on through the window of time"; the inside story, given without documentation, but with the certain air of someone "in on the know": the young Talmudists presumably being trained secretly in the rites of animal

sacrifice for service in the restored Temple, the real assassins of Bernadotte who will not be apprehended because "they are protected by a power outside the reach of Israel's police"; the generally slipshod handling of facts.

There is a reference back to his own speculative work *Insight and Outlook* in his classification of history as one of the "neutral arts"; and a definition of the "psychosomatic" approach to history, that is, the treating of historical events in terms, not of economic or social causes, but rather as results of dim and irrational predispositions buried deep in the psyche. The real success of the book arises, I think, out of Koestler's realization of the role in the events he surveys of certain myths: the King James Version vision of Zion that moved the framers of the Balfour Declaration; the myth of the Moslem Holy War and the British public servant's homosexual heroic image of the Arab out of T. E. Lawrence; but above all the mythic figure of the Jew—"Mr. Abramowitz . . . is folklore crystallized as a news item. If his image in the reader's eye could be X-rayed, it would reveal a modern likeness superimposed upon a faded portrait of Shylock; and underneath that would appear some even more shadowy mythological contours. . . . Each time you burn him alive, stick a knife into his stomach or pump gas into his lungs, he pops up like a jack-in-the-box, with a more horribly ingratiating smile, and offers you a second-hand suit or a share of real estate."

It is his special sensitivity to the archetypal response to the Jew, that makes Koestler capable of reporting with astonishing impact the senseless and ultimately brutal policy of the British in Palestine, without falling into the simple-minded interpretation of it all in terms of oil and Machiavellianism, with Bevin improbably cast as Machiavelli. Koestler *knows* Bevin to his last quivering nerve because he shares the same aboriginal antisemitic fury; but that empathy brings with it a complementary distortion. It is not, finally, the lapses from history to journalism that vitiate *Promise and Fulfilment,* but the passion, the *idée fixe,* the hatred of his own Jewishness, that turn Koestler hopelessly from the subject he pretends to pursue to recrimination and self-justification.

Koestler's ultimate position is (he uses the words of another correspondent, in a typical oblique device) pro-Zionist and anti-Jewish; pro-Zionist, indeed, just because he is anti-Jewish. He may find Palestine gray and depressing, its architecture mean and drab, its officials hectoring trade-union bureaucrats, its food impossible, its culture detestable, even its remade people, despite their beautiful blonde hair, dull and incapable of drinking and making love; but he is driven to applaud the

Zionist achievement, if only because it has destroyed "Mr. Abramowitz." The new Israelites are at least departures from that archetype that has haunted Europe—and Koestler. The "Jewish neurosis," with its "psychosomatic" manifestation, the Jewish face, has been the product of those trapped in a world that rejected them. Now, with someplace to go, things will be different—even for those who do not choose to go there. It is to this proposition that Koestler dedicates his book.

Those ex-Jews who prefer can now leave for the State of Israel; those who prefer to remain in the West may (indeed, *must,* if not for their own sake for that of their children) assimilate. The total meaning of Jewishness has been subsumed into a political fact, and to remain outside of Palestine still murmuring, "Next year in Jerusalem!" is sentimentalism, a lie. Koestler's position is made easy by his assumption that the Jewish religion, whose only function had become the fostering of the hope of Return, is now dead, except as an allegiance to the festering past and the abandoned ghetto—the one Rabbi with whom he reports a conversation, symbolically enough spoke Hebrew with so gross a Yiddish accent that Koestler needed an interpreter. What was worthwhile in Judaism has already been assimilated, he tells us, into the "Judaeo-Christian" tradition!

Even if one subscribes to the notion that the Jewish Religion is now only an elaborate system for legally outsmarting a set of meaningless ancient taboos—and this is the view of Koestler, though he reports with scorn Ben-Gurion's charge that he is ignorant of the Jewish tradition—it is difficult to believe that the Western Jew would be permitted now or in the foreseeable future to slough off his condition in a unilateral act. Koestler assumes that antisemitism is simply a Gentile response to the Jew's *willed* separateness, a separateness to which he had some right before a free Return was possible.

What, first of all, is the Jew to assimilate to? An anti-clerical Koestler cannot of course suggest a conversion to some Christian Church, merely a subscription to the "Judaeo-Christian tradition" as a Frenchman, American or Hungarian (in the form of Capitalism? Stalinism? De Gaullism?). But there seems evidence that the non-Christian Jew will in a Christian world be inevitably stigmatized. I find a corrective to Koestler's simplicity in the Jungian theory that the image of the Jew objectifies as the Other that element of the gentile unconscious which rejects the ego-system of Christianity.

At any rate, I am sure that the Jew in exile will be forced to maintain his negative Jewishness against Christian hostility; and I would hope further that the establishment of Israel might encourage him to create

out of a realized past a positive counter-tradition, capable of at least mitigating the pressures of the Stalinist and Capitalist ethos, between which we are being crushed. The "Judaeo-Christian tradition" needs, I fear, constant transfusions from a living Jewish body, not merely the initial impulse from a dead Savior and a Book. In the West there could be many such communities, and in Israel the attempt to embody the Jewish ethos in a total social structure.

To the latter idea Koestler subscribes no more than he does to the former. Even the Israelis have no right to be Jews, but must become "Hebrews," by which Koestler seems to understand Westerners transplanted. As he demands of the Jew in Exile individual assimilation, so he demands of the new State national assimilation to European culture. As if there were not already too many European states! To such people as Martin Buber, with their vision of a new kind of polity, he has never talked.

His program is simple: no religious laws, no emphasis on Jewish history at the expense of European, the gradual abolition of Jewish cooking and Ghetto manners, the creation of an architecture free from the influence of the Jewish suburb, and the extrication from Israeli social life of the Biblical and prophetic strain which has tempered it.

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The odd conjunction of trivial and profound is Koestler's own mixture.

He is confronted, in frustrated annoyance, with the *fait accompli* of Hebrew as a national language. The very medium of discourse embodies day by day the carefully kept heritage of the Jews and threatens always to betray them to the backward superstitions of the Scriptures written in that tongue. On the subject of the un-modernity of Hebrew, its unwieldiness, the impossibility of learning to read it when written without vowels (Koestler, at any rate, has never succeeded in doing so), he delivers himself with some fever and touching linguistic naiveté. At least, he insists, the ancient tongue should be written in Roman letters—and with this demand for alphabet reform, he tells us, he has scandalized the Rotary Club of Tel Aviv.

Oddly enough, this demand is one of the links between Koestler and Jabotinsky, and a clue to his over-estimation of the man and the Revisionist movement in general. There is in Koestler a love of violence (he is by all odds the best living exponent of the atrocity story), in part temperamental, and in part the product of conditioning in the Marxist movement with its vision of force as the orgasm of history. But quite aside from any commitment to violence, Koestler found, or thought he found in Jabotinsky alone among the Zionists a profound Western orientation. And so, despite parenthetical admissions of the strong anti-labor bias and the almost hysterical chauvinism of the Revisionists, he is prepared to claim their leading figure as more nearly a "great Nineteenth Century Liberal" than a "Fascist."

The flight from Jewishness arises compulsively out of the historical surfaces of Koestler's chronicle, distorting and finally consuming the theme of the Fulfilment of the Promise. The conventional methods of the journalist, by which only what is under the eye of the observer is made to seem important, until at last history seems to dance attendance on the purveyor of headlines, come aptly to hand. And at last the Covenant and the Exile, the struggle for the Land and the Return, shrink from events in a dim history on the margin of the actual and the mythical, to the context of an autobiography and an *apologia*.

Leslie A. Fiedler

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