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THE WAR BABY REVIEW

Published by
The Daily Cardinal

brée on sartre

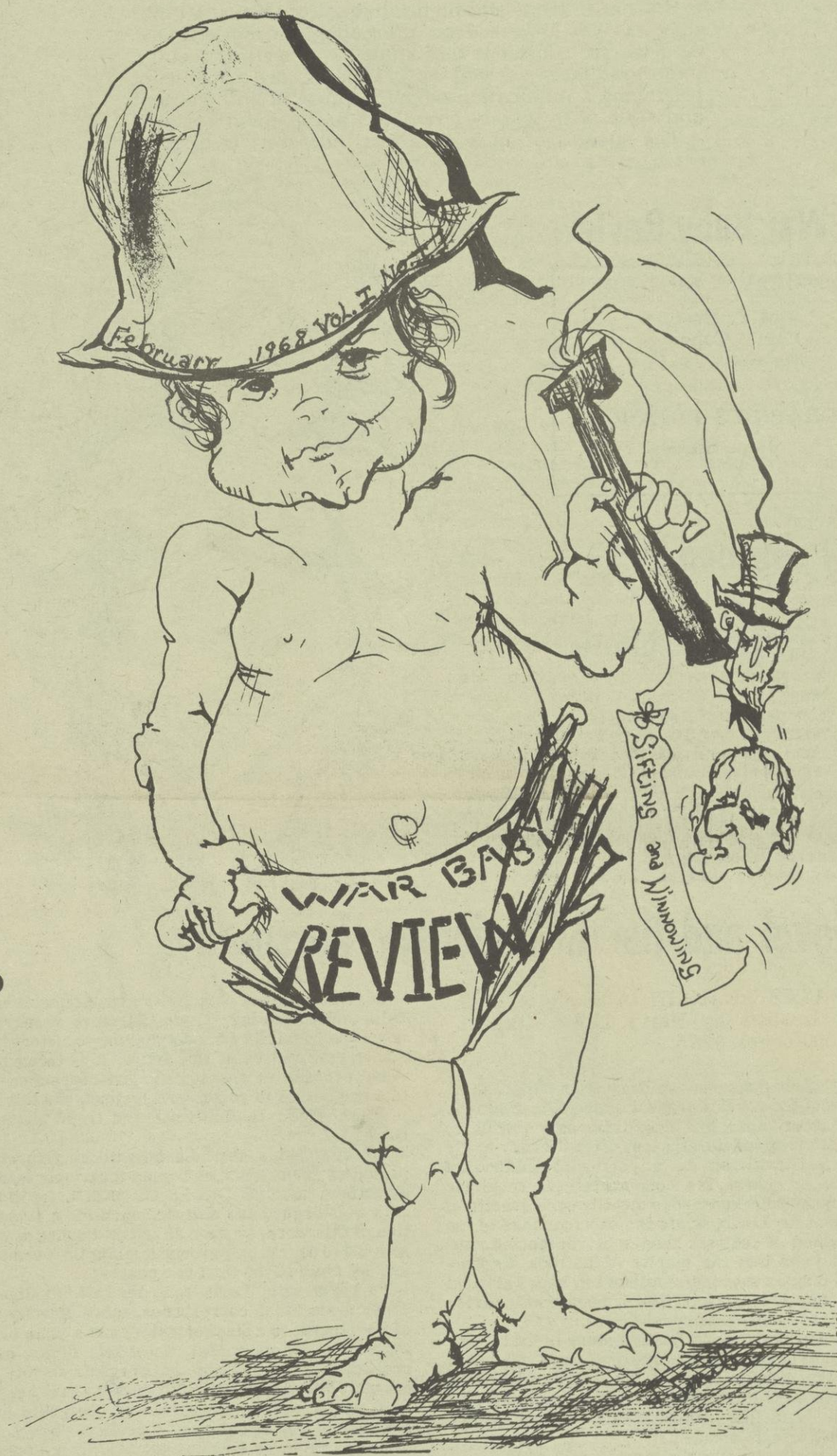
"A cursory glance at this English version of THE TROJAN WOMEN would give anyone a jolt. By what extravagant carelessness has the name Andromeda been substituted everywhere, excepting in the listing of the characters, for Andromache?"

williams: vietnam

"Reischauer's book is a record of how Establishment leaders of his intelligence, perception, and concern sidle-up to that issue and then sidle-away again. They cannot avoid the issue because the evidence of failure is so inescapable."

gross: end of history?

"The value of Ellul's book is not in its gloomy conclusions, but in its clear explanation of what is actually happening today. If it reads in part like science fiction, it is because most of us have not realized how far advanced technique has already become."



Also reviews on:

Mailer's WHY ARE WE IN VIETNAM?

Levin's GATES OF HORN

Roth's WHEN SHE WAS GOOD

Podhoretz's MAKING IT

THE WAR BABY REVIEW

This review aims to serve several purposes. Above all it is designed to fulfill a longstanding need as an outlet for student writing, too much of which, we feel, is overlooked for lack of an adequate forum.

The title The War Baby review is first of all a direction to supply that forum, but it is also an indication of our second objective: to capture the spirit of a generation which has come of age. This publication, for the most part, is edited by war babies, written by war babies, and focuses on the contemporary trends which war babies are helping to set.

While The War Baby is published under the auspices of The Daily Cardinal, it is an editorially autonomous magazine which affords a length, format, and tone distinct from even the most flexible daily newspapers. We have launched, in short, a literary review which is broader in scope and higher in quality than any other that has yet appeared on the collegiate marketplace. And we are confident that students as well as faculty, undergraduates as well as graduates, are capable of producing a publication which is equal in both content and style with widely circulated professional reviews.

The success of such an effort, however, is directly

proportional to the response it evokes from its readers. If it is to avoid the pitfalls of didacticism, boredom, and cliquishness that trap so many similar publications, The War Baby must tap the kind of writing that is done every day by students. If students are willing to make their writing available, our list of contributors can be broadened and our scope of subject-matter can become still more flexible.

In this our first issue we have two articles by faculty members and the remainder by students. This is the approximate balance we would like to maintain, but without giving hierarchical preferences of rank and reputation to anyone. In addition to reviews of fiction, literary criticism, foreign affairs, and sociology, we have graphics by Joan Smiles and Albert Norman—both students—and we hope that artists as well as writers will freely submit their work to The War Baby in care of The Daily Cardinal. Our graphics are not meant to be gratuitous, but explanatory and relevant to our topics.

Tentatively The War Baby will appear three times this semester, and then maintain a regular monthly schedule in the fall. The editors feel it has been a long time in coming.

a prospectus

The War Baby Review

ASSOCIATE EDITORS:

Joel F. Brenner
Larry Cohen
Matthew H. Fox

GRAPHICS EDITOR:

Joan Smiles

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Contributors

GERMAINE BREE of the University of Wisconsin Institute for Research in the Humanities is the author of critical studies of Gide, Proust, and Camus and had edited anthologies in both French and English.

JOEL F. BRENNER, a junior in history, is the editor-in-chief of The Daily Cardinal.

LARRY COHEN, a senior in English, is the fine arts editor of The Daily Cardinal.

DAVID GROSS, a graduate in history, is a frequent contributor to Connections.

WILLIAM APPLEMAN WILLIAMS, University professor of history, is the author of THE TRAGEDY OF AMERICAN DIPLOMACY, THE GREAT EVASION, CONTOURS OF AMERICAN HISTORY, THE UNITED STATES, CUBA, AND CASTRO, and THE SHAPING OF AMERICAN DIPLOMACY.

LESLIE SARETZKY, of The Daily Cardinal fine arts staff, is a senior.

JOAN SMILES, designer of the cover of this issue, is a senior in art.

The Novel and the Evolutionary Perspective

By JOEL F. BRENNER

THE GATES OF HORN: A Study of Five French Realists by Harry Levin. Oxford Press: 550 pages, \$2.75.

Whatever conclusions one can draw from THE GATES OF HORN about the novel's present state of decrepitude, or about its past or future, this book stands as a singularly impressive effort to redefine the task of the literary critic and to reorient criticism to a particular method of analysis. This, of course, is a monumental goal, requiring both the encyclopedic knowledge and the perspicacity of a scholar such as Levin. While the shortcomings of the resulting method of analysis need to be recognized, one nevertheless feels that the merits of the book, its provocative and largely successful attempt to seek a critical perspective, far outweigh its failings, many of which arise from a desire to be over-comprehensive.

A complimentary theme in Levin's study is the tracing of the historical development of realism, and in doing so, to discover the manner in which the novel reflects the society and the ways in which the society is influenced by the novel. It is in this context that Levin looks to the novel as an historical document.

Because he postulates that realism is inherently critical of current values and norms, and because his view depends not upon familiar literary categories but on the broader generalities of critical attitude, it is impossible for Levin to speak about realism without discussing the historical validity of the realistic novel as a social reflector.

Leaving aside for the moment considerations of literary or intellectual history, the validity of the novel as an historical document depends not only on the sharpness of the artist's perceptions, but on the scope of his vision, his choice of subject, and his treatment of that subject.

In this limited sense, then, a bad novel can be of more historical value than a good one, for the historian is forced to use a standard of values which goes far beyond considerations of style, unity, and integrity. Yet the historian who chooses to consider the novel as an historical document must find another reason for doing so, for the novel is a work of fiction; no matter how scrupulously it includes actual facts, it can never compete with the courthouse records or the newspaper morgue for accurate information about a time period. It is only with a certain view of reality, a dialectical view, that the novel can have any meaning as an historical document. If "objective" history is possible, then the novel clearly has no historical value, for the novel has a point of view.

In rejecting such objectivity as unattainable and artistically self-defeating, Levin therefore reserves for the novel the possibility of contributing to history through the social perspective of the artist. It is through this constant process of assessment and correction for error that one comes to understand history, and it is this same process which is the stock and trade of the realistic novelist.

To take issue with Levin without returning to the premises from which he begins invariably leads to petty objections to THE GATES OF HORN, for this book is both well-argued and well-documented. A proper evaluation of this work, or even an understanding of what Levin sets out to do, can only ground itself in the premises which are set forth in the first two chapters.

To begin with, Levin contends that "Realism is a literary mode which corresponds, more directly than most of the others, to a stage of history and a state of society." Moreover, he says that "Realistic fiction has been a characteristic expression of bourgeois society," which is not quite the same thing. To prove the first assertion one need only consider the values of bourgeois society and the values and techniques of realism, but to prove the second, one must examine all the other literary forms which have found expression in bourgeois society; not only fiction, but also theatre and poetry; not only realistic fiction, but also romantic fiction.

And this Levin does not do. It is one thing to recognize the social basis of art. It is quite another to maintain, as Levin does in quoting the Vicomte de Bonald, that "Literature is the expression of society, as speech is the expression of man," which implies that the novel directly reflects in mirror-like fashion bourgeois characters, a bourgeois plot, a bourgeois setting, and of course, a bourgeois author.

It is simply not a justified inference to hold that "If we find that the novel, like other products of our civilization, betrays its commercial background, the intention is not to discredit but to describe." Besides, why must description and defamation be mutually exclusive? In point of fact, they are not.

Literary forms are placed in a useful context by pointing out that the "Epic, romance, and novel are the representatives of three successive styles of life: military, courtly, and mercantile," and with some major exceptions, such as Irish fiction, this is largely true. But to hold that realism is the peculiar representative of the middle class is to maintain that the only novels worthy of our consideration are those which Levin classifies as realistic.

Levin even goes so far as to say that all fiction, in that it is "committed to a searching and scrupulous critique of life," is realistic. This, of course, excludes any possibility of the non-realist being an artist. Such a dictum is not only wholly untenable; it reduces the term "realism" to excess baggage in the critic's lexicon, for by reducing "realism" to the lowest common denominator of all art it sterilizes the word of any meaning. An understanding of the social and historical context in which a work of art is executed is a great aid to the critic in explicating the work. Yet it fails to explain the elusive quality of a book or painting that transcends this context, which to all but a handful of scholars is meaningless fifty or a hundred years later.

On the other hand, there is little doubt that the realistic novel was able to thrive because certain characteristics of bourgeois society were conducive to its development: the primacy of the property value, increased social mobility, the expansion of the middle class. But Levin systematically ignores other forms of fiction, such as the epic, that long antedate the novel and have survived through its heyday: Céline's JOURNEY TO THE END OF THE NIGHT, for example. One also wonders how Levin would treat the novels of Kafka. Further, if the novel is the peculiar representative of bourgeois society, how would he account for Shaw, Ibsen, and Yeats?

There are numerous factors other than social developments which can help account for the artists' disaffection with the novel form, and this disaffection, along with the fact that middle class society is far from dead in the western world, tends to weaken and not strengthen Levin's thesis. Just as it was not possible for even so great a poet as Keats to write an epic after Milton's "Paradise Lost," just as Elizabethan drama suffered after Shakespeare, so the novel has found itself in the shadow of Joyce and Proust. And why should we be surprised? The great peaks of literary history have always been followed by periods of darkness.

But the novelist today faces a new problem: he is in competition with supersonic media which cater, if not pander, to a public which is not only mobile but also whimsical and wealthy. No longer is the novel the great diversion of the masses, and no longer is the printed word the primary force of communication between peoples. Instead we have the radio, television, photography, movies, all of which take less time and, insofar as they are entertaining diversions for most people, less effort than the novel. Even among the artistically-minded, the cinema is coming into its own as the major new art form of the day.

(continued on page 8)

THE WAR BABY REVIEW

A Mistranslation of Sartre

THE TROJAN WOMEN, an adaptation of the play by Euripides by Jean-Paul Sartre. English version by Ronald Duncan. Alfred A. Knopf: 80 pages plus an introduction, \$4.50.

A cursory glance at this English version of THE TROJAN WOMEN would give anyone a jolt. By what extravagant carelessness has the name Andromeda been substituted everywhere, except in the listing of the characters, for Andromache? This could not have been true when Ronald Duncan produced the play at the 1966 Edinburgh festival.

But in his script there are other signs of haste, for instance a mere detail: Sartre's play comprises twelve scenes, Mr. Duncan follows this through to scene five; then he forgets all about it. In his brief foreword he informs us that he "has taken many liberties" with Sartre's text. No one will quarrel with him on that score. The liberties are all the more grievous because they show a fine unconcern for the consistency of the play itself. I am not suggesting that Mr. Duncan should be required to read Greek in the text; merely that since he reads French with some uncertainty and seems hardly familiar with the original play, he might have avoided some glaring errors had he consulted either Gilbert Murray or the recent version of the play by Neil Curry staged in 1964. As proof I shall merely list three examples of such errors.

1. Euripides' tragedy takes place immediately after the sack of Troy. The Greeks are leaving with the booty and rounding up the enslaved women whom they have shared out among themselves. As day dawns Hecuba bewails their fate, her eyes on the Greek ships making ready for departure. She recalls how these ships sailed away from Greece to seek Helen; the warriors they carried who sprang fully armed on the shores of Troy; the havoc wrought; now the captives they are about to carry into exile. In Mr. Duncan's version, though not in Sartre's, those Greek ships twice evoked have become the "ships of Troy" making nonsense of the whole passage.

2. Toward the end of the play, pleading her cause before Menelaus, Helen tells how, after the death of Paris, she attempted to seek refuge in the Greek camp. "Your own guards can prove it," Mr. Duncan has her say "because they always caught me." An absurd statement. What Greeks, capturing Helen, would have returned her to Troy? Even if Mr. Duncan did not know the context, Sartre's text is absolutely clear on that point, even inconsistent; a little common sense too would have helped.

3. Worse still, there is a crucial scene, at the heart of the play, in which Cassandra draws a dramatic contrast between the lot of the victorious Greeks and that of the defeated Trojans. Fortunate, the Trojans, she contends who died honorably defending their homeland in comparison to the Greeks who died in an inglorious senseless war on foreign soil, untended, abandoned, betrayed at home as Clytemnestra has betrayed Agamemnon. Overlooking the small matter of tenses Mr. Duncan, carried away no doubt by Cassandra's role as "seer," transfers the whole passage to the future tense: "some will fall outside Troy... They will die for nothing... etc."

He thereby misses the central issue of the play, the moral and political perspective peculiar to Euripides when he composed the play in the warlike Athens of 416-415 B.C. He missed the reason why this particular play had proved moving to contemporary audiences in both England and France, the reason why in the first place Sartre had adapted it for the Theatre National Populaire.

Mr. Duncan's lack of familiarity with Euripides is not helped by the vagueness in his reading of French. In the opening scene of the play, Poseidon looks out over the ruined city and sees Hecuba in her grief lying on the bare earth. "Cette femme, a plat ventre"—the woman, flat on the ground—becomes in the English version "That one over there with a fat belly," a printing error here (flat-fat) possibly compounding a mistranslation.

Such inaccuracy reaches hilarious proportions in the purported translation we are given of Sartre's preface

By GERMAINE BREE

where a "free" adaptation is hardly appropriate. This is unfortunate, since the preface is an example of Sartre's prose at its best.

Almost farcically garbled and fuzzy, the translation is stuffed with statements that appear nowhere in the original: "The play demonstrates this fact precisely: that war is a defeat of humanity"; "the message is that men should avoid war"; "In the prologue we see the goddess betray her own heavenly colleagues for so little that we are shocked by it. It is as if she had sold heaven for the price of a lipstick". Throughout his adaptation, furthermore, Mr. Duncan consistently loads the text, liberally sprinkling expressions such as "filthy gods," "bloody Greeks," "disgusting old slut," where none such appear in either French or Greek.

Inaccuracy and bias combined give startling results: "A woman is only an animal" Andromache rather surprisingly says, as she broods over her future as concubine to the son of Achilles, in curious contradiction to the Sartrean text more faithful to the Greek, "If you separate a mare from its mate, it will refuse to pull in harness. Yet it is only an animal." And what are we to make of lines such as the following attributed to Cassandra, with their pseudo-Shakespearean ring:

And grant that I, who was a virgin of the sun
Shall its full quietus make, as I lie beside the King.
"I am sure," Mr. Duncan remarks, "that Mr. Sartre, being a man of the theatre, does not object to the liberties I have taken." Sartre most certainly should. This so-called adaptation cannot be trusted on any count.

Sartre explains in his preface how he came to adapt this particular play and in what spirit. During the Algerian War he had seen a performance of THE TROJAN WOMAN in a careful, accurate translation, and had been struck by its emotional appeal to an audience deeply disturbed by the experience of World War II and its own collective involvement in Algeria. In 416-415 B.C., Euripides too seems to have been concerned by the increasingly brutal Peloponnesian War with Sparta, by Athens' wanton destruction of the peaceful population of Melos and by the belligerency that was to lead, two years later, to the disastrous Sicilian expedition.

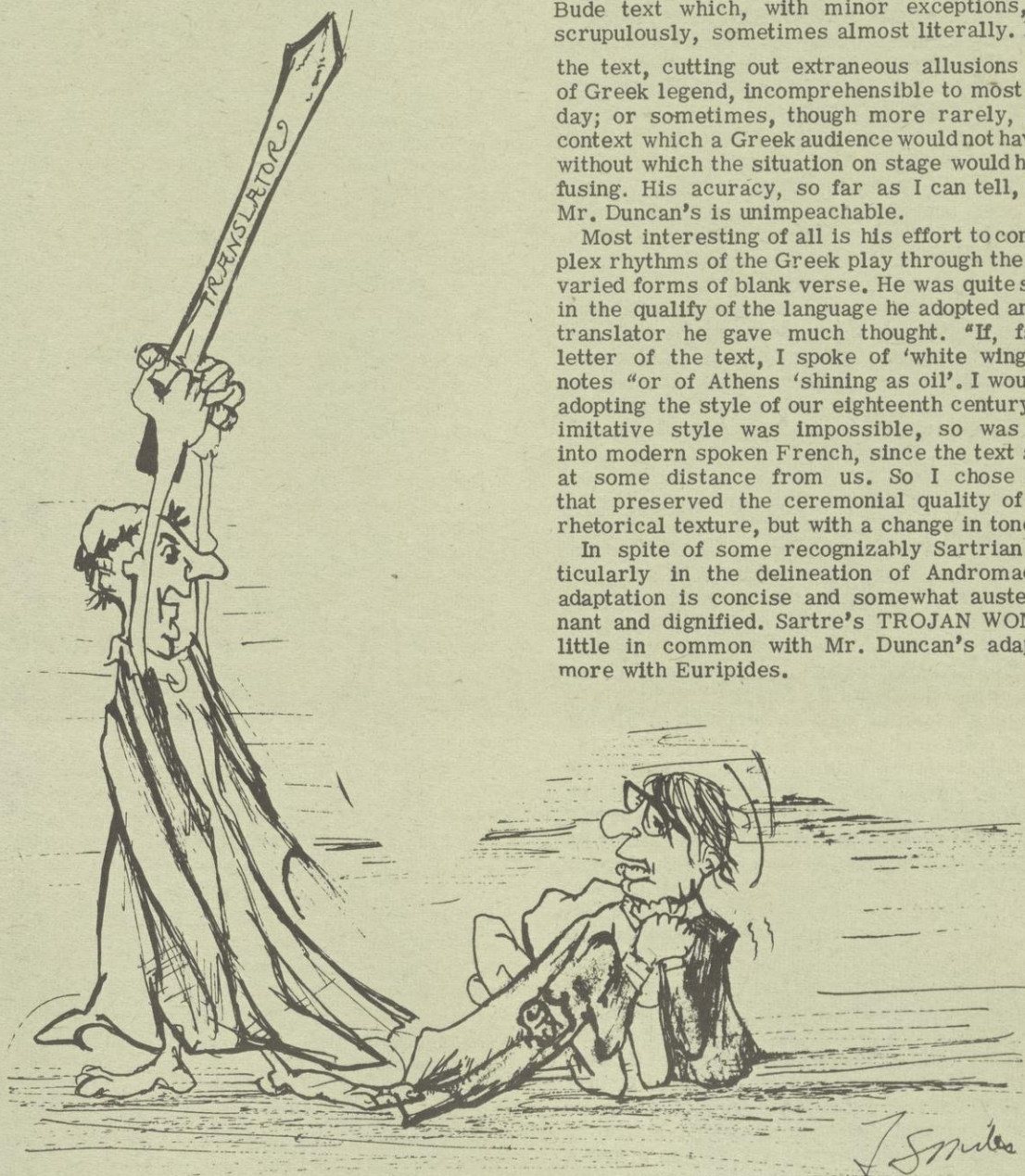
At the time Sartre's adaptation of the play was produced in Paris the Algerian war was over, Sartre was as bitterly concerned with our war in Vietnam as he had been at the time of the French involvement. But he did not attempt to push the analogy. What he emphasized he found in the Greek play: the demythification of military conquest as a form of national glory. It had always been Sartre's contention that it was the writer's task to transform the way his audience reacted to outworn inherited myths. That, in fact, was just what Euripides had done in his play with regard to the destruction of Troy. Sartre stressed the symbolic value of the play in terms of our own time. The closing lines in his play, spoken by Poseidon, are a prophesy of doom: war will destroy all mankind, by the fault of mankind. Euripides' insistence on human rather than divine responsibility easily took on a Sartrean coloring.

Sartre discusses at some length in his preface how he worked, as playwright, to make the play come fully to life for a French audience, in 1965, without destroying its integrity. He seems to have based his text on an accurate scholarly translation, the well-known Guillaume Bude text which, with minor exceptions, he followed scrupulously, sometimes almost literally. He simplified

the text, cutting out extraneous allusions to the corpus of Greek legend, incomprehensible to most audiences today; or sometimes, though more rarely, he provided a context which a Greek audience would not have needed, but without which the situation on stage would have been confusing. His accuracy, so far as I can tell, in contrast to Mr. Duncan's is unimpeachable.

Most interesting of all is his effort to convey the complex rhythms of the Greek play through the use of supple varied forms of blank verse. He was quite successful too in the quality of the language he adopted and to which as translator he gave much thought. "If, faithful to the letter of the text, I spoke of 'white winged dawn,'" he notes "or of Athens 'shining as oil'. I would seem to be adopting the style of our eighteenth century... A purely imitative style was impossible, so was transposition into modern spoken French, since the text should remain at some distance from us. So I chose a poetic style that preserved the ceremonial quality of the play, its rhetorical texture, but with a change in tone."

In spite of some recognizably Sartrean twists—particularly in the delineation of Andromache—Sartre's adaptation is concise and somewhat austere, but poignant and dignified. Sartre's TROJAN WOMEN has very little in common with Mr. Duncan's adaptation, much more with Euripides.



Goodness in the Middle West

WHEN SHE WAS GOOD by Philip Roth. Random House: 306 pages, \$5.95.

There is a tradition in contemporary American fiction which has been growing widely in popularity for the past decade: the ethnic novel. The writer, usually Jewish, cashes in on his familiarity with family customs, culture and the like. Witness the literary existence of Bernard Malamud, J. D. Salinger, Bruce Jay Friedman, Philip Roth, standing sure-footedly on ground they know well, and nailing down points of drama, interest and amusement with the hands of an expert craftsman.

Roth, up to this his latest book, has been standing neck-deep in crowded apartments, suburban opulence, and all other accoutrements of this writing school, yet maneuvering surprisingly well, often by imaginative means. He has won the National Book Award for his portrayal of the wacky New Jersey menage of the Patimkins, in GOODBYE COLUMBUS; his following work, LETTING GO carefully documented the trials of interreligious marriage.

Now Mr. Roth has stymied us, his reading public. For in his latest tale of love and life, he pulls us out of this cozy world we have begun to know so well, and places us solidly in the Midwest, surrounded by that particular brand of American known as the WASP.

Who is the WASP? His character has not been etched out as clearly as that of his counterparts the Jew and the Catholic, for where are the novels, the ethnic jokes, the seasoned culture, the mode of association? Perhaps this fellow is hiding out in Madison Avenue, inhabiting

By LESLIE SARETZKY

our advertising, smoking, shaving, washing, or is one of those nameless hordes the minority groups imagine swarming over the undefined innards of the United States.

In order to write this novel, Roth was faced with the problem of defining the undefinable, expressing in the form of a novel the ethnic character of a group which seems to lack one. In the end it seems that Roth seeks this lack, this very emptiness as the definition.

The form that the novel takes is a reflection of its purpose. Defying the experimentalism of form his counterparts have made a sign of the times, Roth chooses a melodramatic cradle-to-the-grave style which befits his characters' way of thinking and best expresses a life lived in a simple day-to-day fashioning despite impending tragedy.

Willard Carroll is just such a figure. Son of a northern trapper, he learned of tragedy at seven when he realized that even Indian magic could not save his little sister, permanently retarded by disease. His daughter marries an emasculated alcoholic, who sires Lucy Nelson, and when she was good, she was horrid.

Lucy is another of Roth's eternal female castrators, who fails in her attempt to reform her father and begets her own strain of the tragic in her marriage to the weakling Roy Bassart. She sets out to insure that her life will not be a repetition of her mother's, and in the quest, brings the fatal circle to a close.

Roth's characterizations are the best part of the book. The dimensions of his portrayals are molded by the flat, placid Midwestern environment of their birth and from

childhood to puberty and onward, they become enmeshed in this web of banality. The beauty of the book's fatalism is that any morbid strain seems so foreign to an area as home-spun and folksy as Wisconsin, which the book obviously mimes.

The question of imposing one's own morality upon the lives of others is the problem both Roth and his main character face simultaneously. Lucy Nelson wishes to see men take their responsibilities in hand and do good by their women and children. Roth faces the difficulty of Lutheran characters acting in strangely Jewish moral patterns, only more solidly, painstakingly and tirelessly. What would take a few weeks or months to accomplish in a GOODBYE COLUMBUS or in Friedman's A MOTHER'S KISSES takes a lifetime in the slowly paced world of the Middle West.

Hence, the almost dead literary form of following the character through high school, college, and upward, which seems to remain in second-rate love stories and teen-age magazines, is revived in a first-rate form. We are brought back to Main Street in the 1940's, but oddly enough it smacks of the sixties.

The dilemma of the modern woman, her powers, her aggressions, her helplessness are revealed in all their complexities in scenes that could challenge any late night movie. "Oh, Lucy, whatever we say, our suggestions, you refuse." "I refuse—I refuse to live your life again, Mother, that's what I refuse."

Despite the triviality of such dialogue which must be carefully stepped through like thorny undergrowth, the power of Roth's creation slowly unfolds. Unlike the jocular humor and undercuts of his past jaunts, this one is entirely serious and serious where such an attitude matters. The problem of the woman who would be dom-

ineering and in control and who also would be sheltered and protected runs its narrow course to the dead end.

And in its bleak, melodramatic texture, it reveals a side of this novelist which has remained hidden by the ethnicity of his past works. Roth has yet to perfect the new form he is embracing here; perhaps more than a form it is a different attitude. He seems to have sensed that his work would have become too inbred, too weak-blooded to have remained potent; he is now setting out anew.

He dissects the Middle Western mode of life with the same uncanny eye for detail his other works demonstrated. The attitudes, the posturings, the cloistered pretensions abound in all the characters, from Lucy's fragile piano-teaching mother, to her best friend, Ellie Sowerby (just the very name, Sowerby, which rolls upon the tongue, connotes rolling farmlands and fenced-in animals) who is banal, serious, high-minded and deadly boring.

What Roth is saying is that it may be well worth the effort to use one's powers to become less insular, less sophisticated in style and more curious about various

modes of thinking. The value in a novel such as this, aside from being highly readable and quite enjoyable, is in its potential for being as good a social document as any high-powered account of decadent urban centers in the 1960's.

Roth must be admired for his efforts in the direction of social realism; this is his best contribution, here, as it was in his previous books. His power of insight into people is often amazing, and he proves that he can accomplish it with a different milieu. Would it not be refreshing for a Saul Bellow to switch his focus for a while? This could certainly be an interesting test for many writers who seem to be feeding upon their own marrow and blood for their subject matter.

Where does that leave Lucy Nelson? She is as pathological a character as any who have inhabited the world of literature from the women of Henry James (with whom Roth himself is highly intrigued) onward. Her very power and gutsy intensity fire up a story which would have been as conventional as a corner drug store, yet this fire burns itself out. The powerless men seem to win in the end, their women suffer for it. The nutshell history of the working Middle West is here in

summary; unlike their counterparts in the frenzied cities, there is no outlet, no place for their intensity to be channeled. Lucy tries to be a Catholic but finds the calmness and helpless demeanor of the priest too

similar to the irresponsible softness of her father. What would Lucy have been like as a Jew? Is she Brenda Patinkin metamorphosed, or is she Libby Herz, Catholic turned Jew?

Regardless of her religion, she does seem to be a trademarked product of her home, a house doomed like that of Atreus to complete the cycle of death and destruction. Her restless and fierce motivation to do good and her endless results which are all bad are in the last analysis what makes the book run. Yet had it not been for its solid framework, its infinite detail, and its smooth and careful development, it might never have gone at all.

Happily for the reader of modern fiction, new ground has been covered. Hopefully this new strain, this new experimentation, will become as polished and perfected a literary form (or should I say resurrection) as its sophisticated counterparts.

Disc Jockey or Dr. Jekyll?

WHY ARE WE IN VIETNAM? by Norman Mailer. Putman: 208 pages, \$4.95.

Not quite buried at the end of one of Norman Mailer's best pieces in CANNIBALS AND CHRISTIANS (1966), is a speculation that has an alarming but characteristically hip and humorous impact. Vietnam might just be the folk-rock happening of the decade, muses Gadfly Norman in the land of Maillerrhea. "The massacre of strange people seems to relieve this plague" of ours, the war games serving to reinforce the domestic motto "from Lydia Pinkham to Vietnam in sixty years or bust."

Mailer has been hunting for the one, right form that could best contain his frequent outpourings ever since 1948 and THE NAKED AND THE DEAD. His recurrent battles with an elusive Muse have alternated between being a reason for celebration and annoyance, yet always a cause deeply committed to conveying sentiment without any of the falsifying seepage of sentimentality. Last month, the Colossus strode a new plateau, sweeping past the debris of novels, essays, plays and politics to make his debut in a new medium; "Wild 90," his first film made with the help of D. A. Pennebaker ("Don't Look Back") brought Mailer snapping and barking to the screen.

WHY ARE WE IN VIETNAM? is a sort of picaresque film scenario written in gulping mouthfuls called "chaps" and "intro beeps" in the confines of a book. It functions within the small page, large print tradition of a novella despite the book jacket claims that it is a novel, making it his first since AN AMERICAN DREAM (1965). Yet however it is labeled, Mailer's newest effort is a pop-fictional-essay, dramatically testing out its author's suspicions about a domestic mentality that has created a war which is an embarrassment and an atrocity to almost everyone concerned.

Mailer has long been the balding Peter Pan of battle-grounds. It's not so much that he is an internal chameleon, parasitically attaching himself to every movement that comes along, but rather, that he is concerned with communication and consequently, works with the vocabulary of the age. VIETNAM? is pretty hairy all the way through, raunchy and funny in its caricatures as always, but in sections, more extraordinary than anything he has done lately.

The well-publicized curiosity of the book is the omission of any reference to Vietnam until the final page, on which it is mentioned twice. In a book whose title sounds more like a political dissertation than a work of fiction, what does an author gain by restraining the literal firing-squad until the very last pop-pourri of energy? The answer that strikes most critics as obvious is that Mailer is defining the question of his book by the kind of an absence that reeks of an answer on every page; Mailer is lampooning the corporate mind and the "Dallasassian" sensibility that commit this country to a new war every few years so we can revitalize ourselves by spilling somebody else's blood.

That sort of an answer is not only slighting but simple-minded and partial. While Mailer did admit to writing what amounts to a long short-story in a phenomenal race of only four months, he has accomplished more than the time span battle between man and machine suggests. One envisions Mailer bellowing "I am the greatest," hunching over his typewriter and sparring a few rounds, bloody, but better off for having his masculinity massaged.

From the reception given to WHY ARE WE IN VIETNAM? by the book-reviewing press, the work emerged as a fixed match in Madison Square Garden—a lot of noise but a fraud posing as a serious work. Never one to inspire a mild reaction, Mailer was accused of cashing in on his politics, substituting his foaming-at-the-mouth opinions about L. B. J. for art. And his defenders called the book an erratic success; where it flopped, it served as a barometer for today's world.

The central characterization of D.J. is the feat to be lauded; the imaginative meeting between D.J.'s mother and a Jewish psychiatrist and the dissection of his corporate-minded father are gratuitous vaudeville sketches, by no means the measure by which the work falls or stands since they are only peripheral in their inclusion.

Since the caricatures of the narrator's parents have been dwelt on by other reviewers as evidence of Mailer's success or failure, let me devote a few words to each. Concentrating attention on them as determinants is a misdirection; at best they are clever, at worst facile—pointed but undeveloped.

The first "chap" in the book posits a smack in the middle of a conversation between Mrs. Alice Hallie Lee Jethroe, the narrator's mamma, and her analyst, the Texas Jew, Doc Leonard Levin Fichte Rothenberg. With the aid of Terry Southern, Henry Miller might have swung the same. But it's Mailer over-neath, for as we find out later, the dialogue is reflected in D.J.'s pre-

By LARRY COHEN



cocious little mind, a mirror that has refracted the polite comedy of manners through an army barracks vocabulary.

"She don't talk that way," D.J. tells us of his Southern lady of a mother, "she just thinks that way." An expose of this sort is pretty funny if not terribly profound. Society maintains itself through protective euphemisms; it takes the language of a D.J. to match the less genteel thoughts of the analyst and the WASP mother. Thoughts are concealed with plastic wrappers called "nice talk," and that's about the extent of the point.

Before proceeding to D.J.'s father, let me make an observation or two about the gamey language associated with Mailer. WHY ARE WE IN VIETNAM? does get a little hip-happy, triggering its volleys of four-letter word ammunition fairly constantly. But the inversion that Mailer has been heading toward has taken place; the obscenities are the nouns and the verbs, the rest of the words in the sentence diagrams serve as punctuation.

What this steady flushing of obscenities produces is less obvious than the mere fact that the reversal has occurred. Unquestionably, it tightens and quickens the pace, producing the impression of a steady, narcotic high stretched over 208 pages. And except for an infrequent stutter or a repetition when Mailer gets himself in a corner, the speed is sustained.

But there is also a functional reason for the inversion

and the predominance of subway-wall, gutter vocabulary. Content dictates form; the view of America that Mailer holds is couched in terms of malaise, a cancerous vampirism that has Vietnam as its most obvious symptom. If it's possible to escape contamination, one learns about health by dissecting disease.

D.J.'s father, Rusty Jethroe, is described as "the cream of corporation corporateness," "a high-breed crossing between Dwight D. Eisenhower and Henry Cabot Lodge." Again, that's about the extent of the explicit characterization, the remaining information being fed to us on the safari that Mailer (alias Tarzan the tourguide) leads us on in Alaska.

Once on the hunt, Mailer and his alter-ego spokesmen drop the engaging puppet-show that has proceeded. "You've had fun long enough," D.J. tells us as early as page 23, and in case we've missed the point, Mailer supplies Randal Jethroe, his 18-year-old Texas narrator with a split set of initials, Disc Jockey or Dr. Jekyll, product of Marshall McLuhan's electronic maze or Robert Louis Stevenson's Gothic nightmare?

If we were dealing with a neat author who breaks conventions in a conventional manner, Randal's initials would serve as a short, abbreviated coinage to endear us to him as readers, perhaps something like C.B. (DeMille). But Mailer's off and running on a different wave-length.

THE WAR BABY REVIEW

The ambivalence mirrored is that same vacillation that earmarks our society whose base is never static but always insane in the author's eyes.

The question is one of consciousness: are we being turned on and tuned in by a "white boy genius Texan in Alaska" or a "crazy ass broken legged Harlem Spade"? And the schizophrenia is not a clear-cut division. If Vietnam, everybody's favorite whipping boy, was reducible to a simple text-book case, it would simultaneously cease to be such a debilitating hang-over for hawks and doves alike.

Once off in Alaska, D.J. and friend Tex, father and corporate yes-men stooges, and catering guides are all on the battlefield. And in the wilderness, Mailer's talents as author come out of the corner of caricaturist where

they've been lurking all along.

Mailer's vision of America is closely aligned to a twitching valley of dry bones; feeling is becoming more and more of a simulated mechanism performed by freaked-out automotons. He has been searching in his writings and notoriously unprivate life to find the kind of experience that re-awakens our primal instincts if not our sensibilities. What this reduces us to is being explored in Alaska and by extension, Vietnam.

The twenty-one page "chap 8" is the best in the book if not the best piece of verbal style Mailer has come out with in a long time. D.J. and Rusty go off alone in search of a grizzly and in the course of the trip, father and son converse with each other, getting close enough to smother each other with love, and then, kill each other. Rusty tells

his son about the horror he felt after watching an eagle plucking the eyes out of a deer and then, the shame he felt when he remembered that the "most miserable of the scavengers, worse than crow" was the symbol of E Pluribus Unum.

Form and content match each other best here. There are remarkably few sentences and little punctuation of a literal sort; the sentences frequently last thirty lines. Yet what sustains them is Mailer's conviction that it is not a far cry from killing animals to killing people. Shooting a caribou and lusting after a bear in Vietnam on a simplified level; killing a faceless gook in a foreign country is an easy transition to make. D.J. is going off to war by page 208; the book ends with three expressive words: "Vietnam, hot damn."



Drawing by David Levine from SMET-ANA AND THE BEETLES by Albert E. Kahn. Use of illustration courtesy of Random House which published the book in 1967, \$2.95.

Diplomatic Squirrel Cage

BEYOND VIETNAM: THE U.S. AND ASIA by Edwin O. Reischauer. Alfred A. Knopf: 160 pages, \$4.95.

By WILLIAM APPLEMAN WILLIAMS

If you want to learn some important (and upsetting) truths about American foreign policy, about why we are at war in Vietnam, and about why we are not working overtime to get out of that miserable war, then you should take the time to read this book.

It will intrigue and fascinate you.

It will certainly disturb you, and may even scare you.

And it will force you to think about your present position on the war—whatever it is—very carefully.

Edwin O. Reischauer is a man graced with unusual native intelligence, sensitivity, and perception. He has been trained to an extraordinarily high degree in the active use of those natural advantages. He has had long and participating exposure to the process of making American foreign policy, and broad experience as one of the top agents of its execution as Ambassador to Japan.

His book is neither history nor policy. It is a document that helps us understand why American leaders persist in an approach that creates crises in the course of ostensibly solving problems. Thus we have the following estimates of what might have happened in Vietnam:

"It seems highly probable that Ho's Communist-dominated regime, if it had been allowed by us to take over all Vietnam at the end of the war, would have moved to a position with relation to China not unlike that of Tito's Yugoslavia toward the Soviet Union. Ho, like Tito, had had cordial wartime relations with us. He apparently expected our continued friendship and had more to hope for in economic aid from us than from China."

"Would such a Communist regime in all Vietnam have been a serious menace to its neighbors or to world peace? I doubt it."

Then, after that, we have this policy prescription: "My own guess, as of the present, is that the less costly course will prove to be to continue somewhat along the present lines, working toward reducing the scale of the war and ending it as soon as possible, but not resorting to either extreme—withdrawal or major escalation."

Reischauer fears and spurns withdrawal on the grounds that "grass-roots Americans" would "all too easily" turn to "the worst sort of racist isolationism, which might drastically reduce our usefulness to the less developed parts of the world and might also damage our relations with the advanced nations."

That reasoning reveals a very great deal, implicitly if not explicitly, about two important aspects of the thinking of Establishment leaders. First, it indicates a considerable lack of faith in the American people per se, and in the ability of the Establishment to use its vast powers to educate the people to a more restrained and balanced view of America's needs and purposes.

Second, it assumes that the consequences of a literal isolationism would be more damaging than the past and probable future costs of the present policy. He never discusses the very central question that he raises, namely: Would leaving the rest of the world very largely alone while we redefined the nature of our relationships with ourselves and the rest of the world result in a greater danger to the United States than its present course of action?

In a very real sense, however, Reischauer's book is a record of how Establishment leaders of his intelligence, perception, and concern sidle-up to that issue and then sidle-away again. They cannot avoid the issue because the evidence of failure is so inescapable. Reischauer makes that point unmistakably.

"If the Vietnam situation were a unique example of the United States stumbling unheeding into trouble in Asia, one might regard it simply as bad luck. But this sort of luck has come our way all too often to be just accident." "There is a distressing repetitiveness in this pattern." "The war there is simply the most recent and most painful symptom of an underlying malady."

Reischauer offers a near classic example of how men function after they have so deeply accepted and internalized one view of the world that it becomes an unconscious belief. One should not make the mistake, however, of concluding (or believing) that Establishment leaders are unique in this respect. All of us are prone to the resulting weaknesses and dangers if we do not remain endlessly and critically conscious of our own ideas. Perhaps the most dangerous consequence is that our belief becomes immune to our rational powers. We stop thinking about what our beliefs tell us we are trying to do. The result is high confusion.

Thus Reischauer says that Asia (excluding Japan) has little or no economic importance to us, "at least under present conditions." And he adds that Asia so defined poses "little immediate menace... to our security or vital national interests."

He argues instead that our interest in Asia arises because it is "a major part" of the "unitary world we are trying to help toward peace, stability, and prosperity." But he never discusses the great extent to which the Establishment's conception of "peace, stability, and prosperity" is defined by a certain kind of economic system (capitalism), or how concerned we are to project that system into the future (abroad as well as at home).

As a result, he never makes it clear that the Establishment is intervening in Vietnam (and many other places) that offer no immediate economic gain, and that pose no immediate threat, simply because it is intervening to prevent a possible future danger to an existing system.

To define security—or peace and prosperity and representative government—in that fashion is to define it as the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. It is to fight tomorrow's possible wars as today's very real and bloody wars.

The only way to get out of that squirrel cage is to stop spinning it. There is only one basis for working out a rational way of running in a squirrel cage. That is to be ignorant that one is in a squirrel cage. If one believed that the squirrel cage was the real world, then one could no doubt analyze its dynamics and program a computer to print-out the proper speed for surviving to the last possible moment.

That is the kind of basis that underlies contemporary American foreign policy. The Establishment is placing primary emphasis on a negative concern to survive rather than upon living more equitably, justly, and creatively. Reischauer's book is a significant document revealing that a number of able and honest men in the Establishment now sense the negative and very dangerous consequences of that attitude. But it is a document also revealing the great difficulty they have in breaking free of the patterns of thought and belief that produce those negative and dangerous results.

In the end, therefore, the reader is left with a very difficult question. All prime questions are difficult. How does one encourage and pressure such men to step out of the squirrel cage, while at the same time creating a movement capable of offering and implementing an alternate foreign policy? In my own view, at any rate, the best response to that challenge lies in creating a socialist movement that defines the problems of America as the problems of the here and now rather than as the possible problems of tomorrow.

If that is what Reischauer calls isolationism, then the time has come to make the most of it. The Establishment has been waging an increasingly intense and militant campaign against what its members call isolationism for almost half-a-century. Since isolationism is a policy that has never seriously been tried by this country, one begins to wonder why people are so concerned that it might be adopted. One of the principal reasons, I think, is that it is a policy that would force Americans to confront the nature of the existing system. And we all know, of course, that serious self-examination can lead to profound changes.

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The Technological Way of Death

By DAVID GROSS

THE TECHNOLOGICAL SOCIETY by Jacques Ellul. Translated from the French by John Wilkenson. Vintage paperback: 449 pages, \$2.45.

A few months ago when I reviewed a book by Marshall McLuhan (widely acclaimed the "oracle" of the electronic age), I was surprised to see that other reviewers heralded him as "the most important thinker since Newton, Darwin, Freud, Einstein and Pavlov." Needless to say, this is patently absurd.

In opening the first pages of Jacques Ellul's *THE TECHNOLOGICAL SOCIETY*, one finds an equally bold statement by the translator of the book. He asserts that the last work in Western philosophy which is comparable to Ellul's is Hegel's *PHENOMENOLOGY OF MIND*. This may be somewhat of an exaggeration, but there is more truth in it than some of the extravagant claims made on behalf of McLuhan.

Like Hegel, Ellul attempts a "phenomenology of mind," but it is the technical state of mind that interests him most. Again like Hegel, he offers a world-historical vision of the development from simple to more complex forms of social life, and he explains this process in terms of a demiurge called technique (more daemonic than Hegel's benevolent *Weltgeist*). But Ellul differs from his German predecessor in this: he is convinced that history has virtually come to an end. It can go no further because technique has become, or is quickly becoming, totalistic. Not only does it neutralize all possibilities of change, but it destroys the natural tendencies of growth and development which make life a living process, not merely an artificial construct. The technological society, in other words, is becoming one-dimensional. In many ways, Ellul is even closer to Marcuse than to Hegel, for both end on a note of deep pessimism concerning the future of society. Dialectical change, they think, is fast becoming only a remote possibility, and the future of human freedom seems to be bleak, indeed.

McLuhan, Hegel, Marcuse—but what of Ellul himself? Jacques Ellul is a French sociologist, who currently holds a position as professor of History and Contemporary Sociology at the University of Bordeaux. He grew up in the generation of Sartre and Camus, and during the Second World War became one of the leaders of the French resistance. When the war ended, the main existentialist thrust was the attempt to discover "authentic existence" and the possibilities of freedom in the modern world. Here Ellul diverged from the others: instead of exerting his energies in existential analysis, he attempted to discover the primary cause of depersonalization and "inauthentic" existence. This he found in the relentless encroachment of technique.

As Ellul uses the word, technique means the "complex of standardized means used for attaining a predetermined result." More generally it refers to a method of systematic rationalization which "converts spontaneous and unreflective behavior into behavior that is deliberate and rationalized." Whether used consciously or unconsciously, technique tends to spread out into every domain of life—work, leisure, education, religion, sports, politics. And since it always tends toward completeness, technique strives for nothing less than the mechanization of all existence.

This is bad enough, but according to Ellul things are even worse than they appear. Because man has not been very clear about the ends of his activities, he has preferred to concentrate on the means of achieving them. This oversight has caused technique to rise to preeminence and transform ends into means and means into ends. Ellul believes technique has not only gotten out of hand, but it has already become autonomous of man himself. A kind of technological imperative has come into play in that technique now proceeds to forge its own goals and to move towards them with the utmost efficiency.

Two questions might be raised at this point: What are the consequences of this ascendancy of technique, and what can be done about it?

It would be impossible to summarize all the consequences here, though some of the more important ones might be mentioned. Ellul maintains that when the logic of technique works itself out over the next few decades the final result will be: the total integration of all sectors of society; the near dictatorial rule of social technicians; technical efficiency as the exclusive rationale of life; the impossibility of democracy or social criticism; the disappearance of individual and unique life styles except where they do not interfere with technical efficiency; and

the maintenance of "order" as the pre-condition for the expansion of technique (administrative and police authority will be expanded to insure that the social order is not disturbed). Furthermore, the state will increase in power proportional to the multiplication of techniques since it will be the superstructure which guides them. The illusion of liberty and choice will be preserved but these will be carefully integrated into the exigencies of "mathematical reality."

If these statements have an air of unreality about them, it is because they have been distilled from the arguments Ellul uses to support them. Anyone reading them in context cannot help but think that technique will indeed bring us to such a pass.

What, then, can be done about it? On this point Ellul is extremely pessimistic. "It is vanity to pretend it (technique) can be checked or guided," he says; in reality "man finds there is 'no exit.'" He regards political action as unrealistic since to be effective it would have to implement techniques on a scale as vast as those already in existence. De-centralization is also a dream since it cannot be effected short of authoritarian measures—an ironic contradiction in terms.

Apparently the only check on technique would be a total re-valuation of all values, a dismantling of the whole apparatus, and a reversion to an ascetic or pastoral way of life. But Ellul feels this is the most unlikely of all since the "masses" are actually in the forefront of the clamor for more and better technique.



He ends on this despairing note: "Only two possibilities are left to the individual: either he remains what he was, in which case he becomes more and more unadapted, neurotic, and inefficient, loses his possibi-

ties of subsistence, and is at last tossed on the social rubbish heap, whatever his talents may be; or he adapts himself to the new sociological organism, which becomes his world, and he becomes unable to live except in a mass society."

In spite of his profound malaise, Ellul is not fatalistic. He indicates there is still a gleam of hope that men can somehow transcend his technological nightmare, though even this is being dimmed by the surrounding darkness.

The value of Ellul's book is not in its gloomy conclusions, but in its clear explanation of what is actually happening today. If it reads in part like science fiction, it is because most of us have not realized how far advanced technique has already become. Whoever perseveres through this book can no longer claim the bliss of ignorance.

However, there are some difficulties and dangers. Throughout the book one finds a number of unwarranted generalizations, examples that sometimes do not fit, and non sequitur arguments. More exasperating still is Ellul's tendency to abstractness. Rather than deal with problems in concrete terms, he often mystifies them and deals with them as concepts. At such a high level of abstraction, even the most absurd statements appear to be correct. For example, Ellul holds that there is no essential difference between capitalism and communism since both are in the grip of technique, and both are bent on pushing technological rationality to the breaking point. Of course this is too simplistic to be acceptable.

It is hard to know where to place Ellul in the political spectrum. He seems at times to be closest to the Far Right, especially with his critique of mechanization, his loathing of technological civilization, and his longing for the restoration of the spiritual side of life. But in other ways he seems more at home on the Left, particularly with his stress on dialectical thinking, his animosity against military and police power, and his opposition to the "globalization" of technique (i.e. imperialism). In fact, it could be argued that he has brought 19th century Marxism up to date by insisting that it is technique which alienates man today—not simply the machine or the division of labor.

Perhaps it is significant that one cannot quite tell whether Ellul is radical or reactionary, for in this book the two extremes meet. It may be that the Right and the Left have always had more in common than they knew. For instance, both have been born with an instinctive mistrust of the modern liberal, who in many ways is the harbinger and defender of the new technological order. As the state tends to grow and extend its control over all sectors of society; it is possible that the two poles could be pressed into an indefinite coalition. In fact, there have already been some overtures in this direction and there will certainly be more to come.

Ellul, because of his overbearing pessimism, could never be the intellectual hero of such a coalition, but his book *THE TECHNOLOGICAL SOCIETY* might at least provide a meeting ground for preliminary discussions between the two camps.

Son of Great Expectations

MAKING IT by Norman Podhoretz. Random House: 356 pages, \$6.95.

STARTING OUT IN THE THIRTIES by Alfred Kazin. 166 pages, Little Brown and Company: \$4.95.

Writers that are critics by profession ought first to play Hamlet and lie awake for several sleepless months before considering to tackle a book-length work. The transition from tabloid to hard cover is a tougher journey than mere book bindings and inflated prices suggest. No matter how rabid a book reviewer may be in his articles, no matter how deftly he wields his knife and makes his razor incisions, his opinions are largely forgotten a mere month or two later, accompanied by the yellowing and withering of the pages his words were printed on.

No so with books. To emerge in what is traditionally regarded as a more literary, permanent form is an event that is not as rapidly dismissed. A (usually) major publisher launches an advertising campaign that has all the attributes of a massive hemorrhage. And some horrifying day in the near future, long after contracts have been signed and the author has hopefully blown the country, the critic's critics have their day in court. Being present at a multiple execution is far more pleasant, even if you're unlucky enough to be the hangman and capital punishment is on its way out.

To insure the noose being pulled around his neck so he strangles before the execution, the writer can decide not to write a piece of fiction but instead, to express himself in the form of an autobiography or personal memoir. The blood of the Furies spouts out of their nostrils in anticipatory delight; every charge from egotism to phony humility is being prepared for the indictment. The reception guaranteed is not exactly conducive to future good nights' sleep.

Parenthesis: the two writers I'm going to talk about have disregarded all such commonsensical advice, the first playing right into the hands of the enemy. Yet both, I'm sure, were fully conscious of the rules of the game more than this apprentice advisor. Furthermore, both have turned out superb books of extraordinary value.

Way back in the 1860's, the narrator of GREAT EXPECTATIONS began by naming himself. "I called myself Pip," announced Charles Dickens' serial child of the Victorian age, "and came to be called Pip." His twentieth-century counterpart starts off his preface by means of an equally direct calling-card. "Let me introduce myself," he writes, "I am a man who at the precocious age of thirty-five experienced an astonishing revelation: it is better to be a success than a failure."

Pip as the successful, grown-up child is Norman Podhoretz, born in Brooklyn in 1930, fast on the heels of the depression. Thirty years later, the son of East European Jewish parents had truly made it, earning the editorship of COMMENTARY magazine and acceptance into the ranks of the "family"—the New York Literary Establishment. From Brownsville to Columbia and then Cambridge, to journals like PARTISAN REVIEW and THE NEW YORKER, from piddling origins to the defined pot at the end of the rainbow—that was Podhoretz's journey, an astonishing tour-de-force with nary a second wind between laps.

MAKING IT is Podhoretz's own account of the climb, a wryly humorous autobiography written for little Pip-squeaks who want an early glimpse of what his kind of success means. Like its 19th-century predecessor, the book reads like a series of fantasies from a prodigy's playpen; there are again adult prices to pay. He retraces the Dickensian base with contemporary points of reference, replacing Pip's monetary aspirations with his own, non-fictional climb for literary attention and fame. His expectations were only tangentially financial; Podhoretz's hierarchy of values was less tangible, but its rewards were nonetheless real and felt as they were doled out by an elite family circle.

In addition to being the Son of Great Expectations, Podhoretz made his bid for recognition as a book critic. "Taste is an overwhelmingly important sociological force, capable by itself of turning strangers into brothers and brothers into strangers," he writes. And reflecting on his notorious review of Saul Bellow's ADVENTURES OF AUGIE MARCH which (justly) slammed the author, "the family's White Hope, as it were," Podhoretz makes an additional speculation. "Differences of opinion over taste are very often the source of bitter hatreds."

As never before in history, today's audiences are super-touchy about art. As a critic, rejecting a film or a play is taken by many readers as a personal insult; condemning AUGIE MARCH as a fraud earned for Podhoretz the reputation of being a tarnished Launcelot who was eager to slap the verbal glove against chivalry's sensitivity. What he did propose was that the immunity of the artist is vulnerable and more importantly, that criticism itself ought to be a work of art, conceived with all the same integrity and perceptive awareness. Criticism has a bad name in this country because of so many non-critics; Podhoretz's hypothesis antagonized far more people than it charmed.

To sense this insane current of anti-criticism, one only has to read the reviews MAKING IT encountered upon publication. The critics had few kind words for the Critic once they had his head on the guillotine. "That he was every thing but abrasive, impatient, and scornful had not been revealed to me in his critical pieces, and I have to say that I find few signs of more amiable qualities in MAKING IT," admits Granville Hicks in "Saturday Review," the most modest slur I've read thus far. The other reviews drew blood, but they missed by a mile.

To repeat, Podhoretz is a critic. To have dissected his career into little pieces and then thrown it to the wolves who expected a juicy gossip expose, something along the line of a PEYTON PLACE of literary cocktail parties, was a calculated gamble. And Podhoretz was no Red Riding Hood; he was conscious that tidbits on Mary (McCarthy), Saul (the aforementioned Bellow), Susan (Sontag) or Dwight (Macdonald) would have played right into the hands of the mini-Madame Defarges.

He is after something far different and more difficult in his "confessional" work; it is also something far

By LARRY COHEN

more valuable as his style ought to indicate. His reviews are abrasive strips without any teasing gimmickry; hard-headed and opinionated, never murky, perceptive and controversial; his books reviews are expressive of a vital critic who is honestly concerned with the state of contemporary fiction. MAKING IT is about success in general, Podhoretz's career serving as springboard.

Accepting Podhoretz on the term he explicitly set up in the preface was an obvious impossibility for the reviewers assigned to handling the book, "the story of an education." To admire his accomplishment is to reflect and partially (dis) credit your own "achievement" as a critic or businessman and as a result, the ironies of self-awareness that went into writing MAKING IT have been largely ignored. At 38, Podhoretz's precocity is his ability to take his career seriously and still have a good laugh at himself in retrospect, the wisdom that separates him and his sober-minded critics.

Society fosters an ambivalent attitude toward success, he rightly proposes at the start. Success has replaced D. H. Lawrence's "dirty little secret"—sex—by fostering ambition and at the same time, structuring a comedy of manners in which the successful are expected to have contempt for their own accomplishment. In a sophisticated but nonetheless contradictory and corrupt sense, what other people think of you still has much to do with the way you look at yourself.

Like Pip, Podhoretz's introduction to another life came in the form of a woman. The combination of Miss Havisham and Estella was Mrs. K, his high school English teacher for whom "good manners... meant only one thing: conformity to a highly stylized set of surface habits and fashions which she took, quite as a matter of course, to be superior to all other styles of social behavior." In her feverish desire to have her Pip win a scholarship to Harvard, Mrs. K. proposed all the trivial alterations needed to set the 15-year-old Podhoretz on his "journey

self unashamedly into it in the hope of coming up again on the other side." It's not hard to understand why the critics had a ripping good time when Podhoretz was so intentionally vulnerable; as I said, they missed by a good mile.

STARTING OUT IN THE THIRTIES is an entirely different sort of book, a memoir along the lines of Hemingway's A MOVEABLE FEAST. If Podhoretz was ultra-personal and didn't say much about anyone else, Alfred Kazin provides a view of the depression and pre-World War II years that is expressive of a different sort of temperament and emphasis of values. Furthermore, MAKING IT covered considerably more years; Kazin's title indicates the ten-year period on which he focuses.

Also a member of the New York literati, Kazin is a generation before Podhoretz but refracts much of the same vision and experience. He, too, was from Brownsville and Jewish, yet had no Mrs. K. rooting for his snobbery on the sidelines. Unlike Podhoretz, Kazin's purpose is an attempt to capture an elusive relation between people and ideas, the spirit of the thirties as it affected him. There are remarkably few "I" sentences constructed; a decade is being bounced off his perceptive apparatus into the confines of a book, and the results are both warm and instructive.

Kazin excels in characterization, sizing up a literary figure and trying verbally to approximate the sense of him on a page. Otis Ferguson, James T. Farrell, William Saroyan, Malcolm Cowley; each has been memorized, stored up in the recesses of Kazin's mind, and then, sensitively recollected. Idiosyncrasies and mannerisms, intellect and emotions, their visions and speech patterns; he collected them all.

STARTING OUT IN THE THIRTIES accomplishes more than just good celebrity reportage; it catches the limbo of the men that lived THE GOD THAT FAILED, the flavor of the Stalinist trials and the mounting horror of Germany sensed as far away, as very far away as



in blindness" away from Brownsville.

In the best characterization of the book, Podhoretz described how Mrs. K. was trying to mold him into a gentleman, into the same converted form of gentility (as opposed to Jewishness) that was a form of criminality. By insisting on the etiquette of the restaurant milieu ("a very dry martini with lemon peel, please"), the proper dress and way of speaking, his mentor promoted Podhoretz's snobbery and the feeling that he was uncomfortable in his origins. It was a feeling that he and his family and friends were to oddly concur with, which made "the whole thing sadder but no less cruel."

The rest of the book focuses on Podhoretz as seen by Podhoretz on his way up. We read about him in England studying under F. R. Leavis, back in Westport, Connecticut with Lionel and Diana Trilling, at a party at the Philip Rahvs which he describes as the equivalent to his Bar Mitzvah. There is a superbly incisive chapter on his induction in the army, then back at COMMENTARY's offices under two Rosencrantz-and-Guildenstern-like editors whom he collectively terms the boss, and finally, as editor of COMMENTARY, considering a book on Norman Mailer. He rejected Mailer as a topic; hiding was no answer.

The purpose of all this is not sheer megalomania nor is it an altruistic portrait of the times and its sociopolitical temperament. Podhoretz is indeed focusing all attention on himself to the exclusion of other people, but only in the same sense that a scientist puts his thumb under the microscope thinking that it is simultaneously concrete and universal. He demonstrates a ruthless sort of self-analytic dissection, realizing that life at the so-called top is really just a new ghetto, one that transcends his personal experience. "Expectation was the first step to a betrayal of integrity," he says very late in the book.

And he ends his account of what it means to make it and keep it by a word or two on Mailer, his idol. "He was trying to prove that the best way for an American to deal with the ambition for worldly success—an ambition the American male can as easily escape as he can get away with not going to school—was to throw him-

America. His is a different view of what writing meant, a fiction that was grounded thirty-odd years ago in a total cultural fabric. The political-social-economic continuum was a united front reflected in literature, and the web (as it is in the Vietnam era of the sixties) was tightening its grip and eliminating gaps.

The last chapter is termed an "epilogue," dated 1945. It should have been called a post-mortem. Sitting in a movie theater, the dream palace where newsreels can seem more fictional than the main feature, Kazin quietly tells of the first films of Belsen as it appeared after just being liberated. It was a vision of human bodies that literally seemed black-and-white sticks, some "piled up like cordwood," some "hanging on the wire, looking at us." The final statement in the book is a breathtakingly acute piece of reportage: "It was unbearable. People coughed in embarrassment, and in embarrassment, many laughed."

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The Novel and the Evolutionary Perspective

(continued from page 2)

The injection of journalism's mythical objectivity into fiction, partially to satisfy an artistic yearning for absolute non-involvement following the tenseness of the "roman engagé," partially to satisfy the public fetish for facts-nothing-but-the-facts, has also contributed to the malaise of the novel. Levin's distaste for this trend, especially as manifested in such "new novelists" as Alain Robbe-Grillet, is both evident and well-founded.

It would seem, therefore, that Levin's thesis that the novel rose and fell with bourgeois society, while it is illuminating and to a large degree valid, is vastly overstated and needs to be qualified.

Levin's woeful prophecies about the future of the new novel and its so-called objectivity are traceable directly to the second premise of his study: art does not imitate life; art is in constant opposition to life. Because the artist must select, edit, arrange, and focus, art can never imitate nature, and objectivity, insofar as it has come to connote anything more than merely dealing strictly with objects, is a colossal hoax.

Further, every artist must work within the confines of a medium—even if he indulges in mixing his media. The novelist must use words, sentences, pages if we want to write a novel, a fact which holds true for even so aberrant a work as FINNEGAN'S WAKE. The painter is similarly confined by the paint and surface he chooses to work on. The poet is confined by the verse and the stanza, the musician by the tone scale and the range of the instruments.

To a degree all of this limitations can be circumvented by innovations such as Joyce's new vocabulary, Apollinaire's verse arrangements, or Varèse's expanded tone scale and electronic instruments, but old limitations are only exchanged for new ones—not the least of which may be the utter incapacity of the artist to communicate with even a limited audience.

"But Art must also differ from life for technical reasons: limitations of form, difficulties of expression. The artist, powerless to overcome these obstacles by himself, must have the assistance of his audience. They must agree to take certain formalities and presuppositions for granted, to take the word for the deed or shading for the shadow. The result of their unspoken agreement is a compromise between the possibilities of life and the exigencies of art."

refracts it" oftentimes creating an unreal picture in order to convey some "more real truth."

It is this essential difference between art and life which the artist, instead of protesting against, must exploit, either to create an ideal after the romantic fashion, or to create an illusion with the expressed intention of deflating it after the realistic fashion. The artist who understands not only his limitations but also the opportunities these limitations afford him, consciously employs the difference between life and art in his form as well as his content. For he so intertwines these two aspects as to make them inseparable and uses them both as a means of expression. "Content and form," Levin notes, "apart from such discussions, have no existence at all." Taken literally, this is quite true.

In a poem, for example, the words have no existence—except theoretically—apart from the form, and the form has no existence—except theoretically—apart from the words. Neither by itself can comprise a poem. The distinction needs to be made, however, between the application of this dictum as a practical artistic standard involving the conscious employment of form, where it has characterized the greatest novelists, and as a critical standard, where it is unreasonable if it is applied dogmatically.

It is simply not true that all novelists have combined content and form to the extent that, say, James, Gide, and Joyce have done. Certainly Balzac did not. And while it can be reasonably argued that a calculated formlessness is not formlessness at all, it is quite clear that a novel can be convincing and stylistically pleasing and yet be concerned with form to a minimal degree. The point that needs to be stressed is that form and content can be used together to create an illusion of reality and then, by underscoring the difference between art and nature, to shatter the illusion. In this way a criticism of art becomes a criticism of life.

The central thesis of THE GATES OF HORN is that this literary technique of systematic disillusionment, based on a view of the world which is essentially dialectic, is the only characteristic of a novel which determines whether or not it is to be lumped under the rubric of realistic. The novel, argues Levin, is so polymorphic, so "lawless," that Linnaeus-like classification is no longer of any critical value, and the novel "can therefore be distinguished not by uniformities of structure but by variations of growth, not by morphology but by physiology." Literary critics, Levin says,

"Without attempting to define reality... have assigned the unrealistic phenomena of literature to the sphere of romance, and have accepted the antithesis—which so many others have discussed in their own contexts—between romance and reality. We may consequently begin to think of realism as a synthesis: the imposition of reality upon romance, the transposition of reality into romance."

If a work tends to be iconoclastic or ironic, breaking images more effectively than it builds them up, Levin would call it realistic. Such a critical perspective, however, is limited in two important respects. First, THE GATES OF HORN is "A Study of Five French Realists," a subtitle which suggests that Stendhal, Balzac, Flaubert, Zola, and Proust all share a fundamental similarity. Levin has shown that similarity to be a "realistic technique" of disillusionment.

Quite obviously these writers also exemplify important differences: style, subject, point of view, degree of psychological sophistication, and method of characterization. Levin's method, precisely because it reduces "realism" to its common denominator, is largely incapable of dealing with these differences.

Realism, then, is no longer a term of much use to the critic in that it can make stylistic qualifications. It can, however, because of its insistence on breaking down traditional dichotomies, make other kinds of qualifications, such as the labeling of Dickens and Gogol as "romantic realists," which may well be more important than the ones we are used to making. Nevertheless, the need to make distinctions or mark similarities between authors continues to be felt.

There is perhaps a more important way in which Levin's critical analysis is limited. In stressing a methodology which depends to a large extent on examination of artistic intention, Levin has greatly overemphasized the unity of form and content, for he has completely begged the question of form—What is a novel?—altogether. This is especially curious since one of the things he has set out to prove is that the novel, not a particular point of view or critical attitude, is the peculiar representative of bourgeois society.

What he has really shown, however, is that the values of bourgeois society lend themselves particularly well to analysis through the critical temperament of the artist, and that if the critical artist is to remain true to his perceptions and maintain his integrity he cannot help but manifest an opposition to social values in his art. When the society finds itself in a state of flux and transition, when the concrete values which serve as a basis for dialogue between even the artist and society break down, the artist of course loses his frame of reference.

In such instances great art is not possible. We have seen this in societies that have long been dominated by the social, political, and religious values of a colonial power, as in Ireland, and we have seen it following the First World War. We are seeing it again now.

Today the writer's problem is further compounded by the fatigue of his medium; the novel is worn out. Not only must he reestablish a critical frame of reference, but he must also find a suitable medium in which to perform this task. Levin recognizes—even dwells upon—the pressing nature of this dilemma, which is very much a question of form, but he fails to deal with it directly. In stressing the similarity of Stendhal, Balzac, Flaubert, Zola, and Proust, Levin has overlooked differences which bear immediately on what it is perhaps the most important quandary facing the contemporary artist and the literary critic. Again, in circumventing the question he has overstated his case to the detriment of the method he attempts to define.

In many ways—and this is not said to demean—Levin has not used a method to study five great writers, but instead has used five great writers to study a method. As we have seen, the perspective which he forges is in some respects deficient, yet it must be said that on balance THE GATES OF HORN is a healthy development in literary criticism. It draws from a vast store of knowledge. It wipes away many outmoded concepts and useless approaches to literature. And it insists on an evolutionary method of analysis which cannot help but aid the critic in applying himself to one of his most urgent functions: the problems confronting the contemporary writer.

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