Mainstream

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MY LIFE IN BALLET

GALINA ULANOVA

I DID not really wish to be a ballet dancer. True, my first visit to the theater fired my imagination, but I was not swept off my feet by that strong impulse for a stage career which precipitated so many to the footlights.

The first performance I saw was, of course, a ballet. My father, régisseur of the ballet troupe at the Imperial Mariinsky Theater in St. Petersburg, took me to see *The Sleeping Beauty*. All would have gone off well if at the appearance of the Fairy of Lilacs I had not cried out at the top of my voice: "That's mama, my mama!" The general embarrassment was great and the people sitting in the actors' box were quite shocked —why I could not understand. Had I not spoken the truth? The Fairy of Lilacs *was* my mother. She looked so enchanting in her lovely dress, her movements were so graceful, that I could not restrain my childish delight. I longed for everyone to know that the illustrious fairy was my own mother, mine and no one else's.

Such was the theater's first impact on me, made through the being I knew and loved best. And so warm and lasting has been that impression that to this day I cannot think of *The Sleeping Beauty*, or even ballet in general, without calling to mind that early vision of the Fairy of Lilacs.

To my own performances in *The Sleeping Beauty* and other ballets lay a long road of years at school and years of artistic adolescence. I set out on that road when the greatest social revolution in history took place. And I remember well enough, though it was so long ago, the police search of our rooms in the summer of 1917; and afterwards the flaming banners of the Revolution and the first shots heralding freedom's birth.

The Revolution infused new life into art, setting new aims and new tasks before it, and it fell to our honor to have a share in the making of

the Soviet Theater and the new Soviet ballet. However, an awareness of the noble mission of the Soviet artist, and of his responsibility to the people came to me later—in my mature years. At the time of the Revolution I was barely seven. At that tender age I could have no understanding either of historical events or of my own true calling in life.

And perhaps because I lacked prevision in the matter of my calling I "wept bitterly for fear when I was taken a stranger to my new home"* —the Petrograd School of Choreography. I was taken there out of sheer necessity, and not only for educational reasons. The years following the Revolution were strenuous years and my parents were always busy; in addition to the ballet performances at the theater, they gave three recitals a night before film audiences. Free recitals at cinema houses had become a regular practice with the leading actors and dancers of the academic theaters in their endeavor to bring art nearer to the people. I remember how, frozen and sleepy, I was carried in my father's arms, from one of these recitals, through the bitter cold, snow-swept city. As there was nobody to look after me at home, my parents could do nothing but take me along with them.

There comes a picture to my mind of my mother changing into her ballet shoes from clumsy felt boots and tying the pink ribbons with stiff, numb fingers in a cold little cubby-hole behind the screen, I remember her adjusting her crisp, tarlatan *tutus* and coming out on the stage platform with a smile. But the smile did not deceive me; I saw clearly how fatigued Mother was and what strain it cost her to dance. Is it surprising then that upon being told that I would be taught to dance I should reply most emphatically: "I don't want to!" Yet I found myself soon enough studying and boarding at the ballet school, because under the circumstances it was the easiest way out for my parents.

However, at the very first lesson, I pleaded with my mother, who was our teacher, to take me home. This I did over and over again, until Mother promised to take me from the school at the New Year. I was delighted, and settled down to my lessons. But then shortly before the happy day I caught myself thinking that I was not so anxious to quit after all. I had made friends, among them Tanya Vecheslova and other girls. I was being taught by my own mother and many other good instructors. And though I had difficulty with the exercises at the *barre* I felt that I had learned something. A childish pride in my achievements awakened in me an appreciation and respect for what we were doing at school.

* This is quoted from Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin*.—*Tr.*

I was growing fond of the lessons, of the rhythmic movements, and the system we followed in the exercises. Moreover, I was flattered to be singled out, along with Tanya Vecheslova and a few other girls, from among the whole lot of Class-One pupils to dance in a real ballet at the Academic Opera and Ballet Theater. True, "dance" is hardly the word for the few "crawling movements" we performed as lady-birds in Drigo's *Caprices of a Butterfly*. All the same this "début" gave me my first sensation of the stage and my first experience of stage-fright as the dark chasm of the auditorium yawned before me. It also gave me my first joy at the thought that, thank goodness, I had made no slips, had followed the music and the count as I had been taught in class. Afterwards I got my first "role," that of a bird in Rimsky-Korsakov's *Snow Maiden*. We children had quite a clear idea of what the fairy-tale was about and what was happening on the stage. We clustered eagerly around beautiful Spring and the clear tinkling of the music seemed to bring to us the freshness of the morning and the first breath of warmth.

WE WERE children and it is with the psychology of children that we tackled the problems presented by our "roles." It was then quite easy for me to believe, or clearly imagine, that I was a lady-bird or a little spring bird. Children will let their imagination run away with them. What a pity that this childish credulity in the make-believe world of the stage, called for by Stanislavsky all his life, is so difficult to retain in later years, and that one must put in so much effort before one can really "live" a character, that is, believe in it so utterly, as to make the audience believe in it too. To a great measure, in my early "roles," I was merely a child at play, to whom the world of imagination was more real than life.

However, more than anything else, even in childhood, I regarded my performances as work with which I was charged and which I must do to the best of my ability. And to do my very best I *must* go through a daily grind. I must . . . the sense of obligation that went with these words had made me a hard plodder long before I had a real inclination to be a creative artist, long before I came to understand the problems inherent in each role.

For this deep-rooted sense of duty, fostered in me in early childhood, I am indebted to the Soviet ballet school and to the example, always before me, of my parents, indefatigable toilers of the ballet.

A dancer must be a hard plodder. Daily practice is his meat and drink and it must never cease, not even during summer holidays. I was still very young when I realized that airiness, beauty and inspiration in the dance can be achieved only through the greatest effort. I do not wish

to sound pompous—I have never cared for high-flown phrases which, I think, fall short of expressing the true essence of our thoughts—yet, if we must explain what makes for the mastery and excellence of an artist, it is best to recall Gorky's words: talent is work. That is what he said, I believe.

Konstantin Sergeyevich Stanislavsky practically said the same thing over thirty years ago when he addressed a group of young actors of the Moscow Art Theater before the opening night of *The Battle of Life.* "It may seem to the average spectator," he said, "that the prima ballerina's dancing in *Swan Lake* or *Don Quixote* is 'joy' rather than work. But little does he know how much attention, effort and actual *work* Yekaterina Geltser put in to *prepare* her famous *pas-de-deux* in these ballets, nor what she looks like in her dressing-room after the performance. Perspiration streams down her face and in her heart she reproaches herself for the least *nuance* she had failed to convey. . . . There is, of course, the 'joy of creation.' It does come to the real artist—but only after supreme effort in his chosen and dearly loved field when the *lofty aim* he sets himself is attained."

The words "lofty aim" (as well as a number of others) were underscored by Stanislavsky. To set oneself a lofty aim and to attain it—that is what gives meaning to art. However, at the same time I went to school it did not occur to anybody to discuss such matters with ballet dancers. Indeed, even after graduation we were left adrift where the more profound aspects of our art were concerned. Perform on the stage as you were taught at school! Work for technical excellence! Such was the simple credo of those days.

Of course, our work was not only physical—involving arms, legs and body. It was work of the intellect and heart as well. The intellect has its share in whatever the ballet dancer does. It is developed through the stimulation of not so much the theater, music, librettos and choreographers, as of the environment that surrounds one beginning with one's childhood and school-days. The dancer will think independently, and boldly, will have broadness of vision only as he assimilates life's experiences, and as he masters the greatest of all sciences—the science of life. Of this significance of the knowledge and experience of life I shall speak later, when describing what I call my "coming of age school." But now whenever I think of my apprentice years they appear to me as one long period of plodding, work of the arms, legs and body—an everlasting grind at the *barre.*

However, it would be wrong and self-deceiving to say that I never grudged the time I spent in my youth and in later years over my eternal

drills. I remember only too well the bright summer mornings during my holidays—I was then already grown-up and quite independent—when almost in tears I would approach the detested *barre.* I had a feeling as though a millstone were fixed about my neck. At that moment I hated the ballet, remembering with satisfaction that one of our poets had called it "that cruel art of ours." How I longed (especially if it was in summer and I lived on the shore of my beloved Lake Seliger) to drop what I was doing and follow my friends to the lake, climb into my canoe and paddle, paddle for all I was worth, over the shimmering expanse of the water, beneath the blue sky, and amid the rustling of the bulrushes. . . . But a hateful voice inside me kept whispering: "Work! Work! If you don't, you'll get nowhere, you'll be nothing but a *figurante.* . . . Work!"

Then a strange thing would happen. After only a few minutes of the drills I would feel the millstone lifting. A blessed relief would come over me. The thought that I had not shirked my duty, that I had resisted the temptation of going out and having a good time before my work was done, gave me a sense of satisfaction that bordered on vanity. And when the drills were done and I could call it a day I knew that I had earned my right to enjoy myself. It was good to get into the canoe, and catch up with my friends.

This deeply-ingrained sense of duty in regard to my profession and my strict keeping to routine helped me to form a lifelong habit of working for improvement, which in many respects is responsible for the successes that have fallen to my lot.

When I graduated from ballet school my technique was still more like a master holding the dancer in perpetual dread of making a slip, than a helpmate, never obtruding either on her or on the audience.

As I vaguely recall my graduation performance—I danced the lead in *Chopiniana*—and my *début* in the theatre as Princess Florina in the to-me-so-memorable *Sleeping Beauty,* I must admit that technically and otherwise my dancing fell short of my expectations.

When I came on the stage I was seized by stage-fright which I suppose every dancer experiences on his *début.* What seemed good at the rehearsals fell flat at the performance. I danced, trying my best, but was being wafted away somewhere. My mind was a complete blank. I felt nothing, nothing except fear and a frantic anxiety to do everything just as I had been taught.

Even the leading ballet parts, such as Odette-Odelia in Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake,* which I was given at the age of eighteen, four months after my *début,* I danced without deeply understanding the characters I im-

personated. This is true not just of my first year on the stage but for all of four or five years.

All those early years of my stage career were spent in falling into the swing of theater life, in ridding myself of the habits and rhythm of the apprentice, in growing stronger in body and in acquiring the plastic poise and confidence which are so essential to the ballet dancer.

IN discussing the plastic ideal which every artist must strive to attain, Stanislavsky wrote: "There are dancers and dramatic actors who have once and for all trained themselves to be plastic so that they need no longer think of that side of their physical movement. Plastic movement has become second nature with them. Such dancers and actors do not dance, do not act, but move as is natural to them, and they cannot help doing it plastically."

This is the ideal and one must strive energetically all one's life to approach it. And if, as a result, plastic movement does not become second nature, it will at least be organic and natural, an integral part of one's stage habits. I do not know of such ballerinas or dancers who "need no longer give thought to that side of physical movement," actually to the technique of the dance. If there are such darlings of Terpsichore, I, alas, am not one of them. Whenever I dance, no matter what the ballet is, I am conscious of every movement I make, and the more difficult the dance is the more mindful I am of the technical details. Dancing Juliet for the hundredth or even the five-hundredth time I shall still not be able to perform the very difficult steps of the *adagios* in the first and second acts without preparing inwardly for them.

What is essential (as it seems to me) is to command technique with sufficient freedom to enable you to express the principal idea of the dance: the boundlessness of the feeling in Juliet's heart, the tremulous transports of Odette's love. Moreover, technical perfection should be such that the public should never notice, never suspect that any movement costs the dancer the least strain. The dance must flow smoothly in clear-cut, finely traced lines, like those which stamp the work of great graphic artists.

And indeed, the beauty and humaneness of the ballet heroine's emotions cannot be expressed unless complete mastery of technique is achieved, not perhaps to the extent that the dancer "need no longer think of it," but at least so that her technique should not obtrude itself on the audience.

In speaking of technique I have in mind not only the line of the dance and the virtuosity of movement (which is generally implied by

a ballerina's "brilliant technique") but ballet technique in a broad sense. This includes the plastic molding of the forms of the dance, the contact of dancing partners, and the ability to perfectly express *the substance of the music* (not merely to capture the musical rhythm which any trained dancer can do). Only when the composer's music reaches into the very depths of the dancer's soul does her technique approach excellence, and her portrayals of character move the audience.

When, after five years of dancing in the theater, I was cast as the Swan in Vaganova's version of *Swan Lake,* this role acquired special significance in my development as a dancer.

Dancing this part for many years, I was able to invest it with new meaning after my work on Maria in Asafyev's *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai.* This ballet (of which I shall speak later on in greater detail) made me realize much more broadly my potentialities as a dancer. It brought so much that was new to my problems in the dance, making them so much more "human," that I could no longer perform any of my other parts in the old way.

Masha in *Nutcracker,* Aurora in *The Sleeping Beauty,* the Komsomol Girl in Shostakovich's *Golden Age,* Raymonde, Solveig in Grieg's *Ice-Maiden* and the Czar-Maiden in *The Hump-Backed Horse*—were the parts I had danced. Certainly, they were not insignificant, but most of them now appeared to me hopelessly flat and meaningless. The part of Odette-Odelia, on the other hand, I saw in a new light.

With the passage of years, I was not merely coming into my own professionally, I was storing up experiences of life, I was reflecting on the ballet, on symphony music and opera, particularly on Tchaikovsky's music! I was reading. All this led me to realize the deep meaning that lay behind the image of the Swan. The music itself now revealed a new significance to me. It was as though I were hearing it for the first time. I discovered in it new enchanting possibilities for the dance and was able to capture more fully its poetry. I benefited immensely by working with Vaganova, a hard taskmaster and a never-satisfied artist, who endeavored to give a new interpretation of *Swan Lake.* The debt I owe to Vagana is enormous, and for that alone (to say nothing of her other numberless services to our ballet) I shall ever retain grateful memories of her.

In this early period of my career, I was greatly influenced by my friendship with the Timme-Kachalovs—noble-minded, open-hearted people, artists in the fullest sense of the word.

We met in Yessentuki, in the Caucasus where I had gone for a cure. Yelizaveta Ivanovna Timme, an actress of the Leningrad Pushkin

Drama Theatre, and her engineer husband, Professor Kachalov invited me to spend the remaining weeks after the cure with them on Lake Seliger. Their infectious vitality, their cordiality and friendliness, were amazingly effective in bringing me back to health. There, on Lake Seliger, my new friends awakened in me a deeper appreciation of the beauty of nature; one of them even composed a mock poem to the effect that my canoe and I were as inseparable as sisters. I ate fresh bread and milk fresh from the cow, against the doctor's orders, and returned a new person, stronger in body, happier in mind, and more than ever eager for work.

After the theatre I would now often go straight to the Timme-Kachalovs', to find the house full of clever, witty people, always arguing about art. They loved art without self-conceit or affectation—as only those can love it for whom it is not a mere diversion but serious work to which they dedicate their entire lives. The place glowed with excitement and animation, and though the company invariably consisted of actors, painters and poets, there was not even a hint of Bohemian laxity, which, to my mind, only the hopelessly vulgar can couple with true art. The atmosphere in the cordial home of my friends was edifying, intellectual and chaste.

It was there that I made the acquaintance of some of our country's finest actors, writers and artists, among them Korchagina-Alexandrovskaya, Studentsov, Yuriev, Tolstoy, Pevtsov, Gorin-Goryainov and Vivien. Without the least air of superiority they taught me to appreciate more fully the beauty and import of the drama. And though there were no lengthy discourses on Stanislasky's "system," its essence was brought home to me and I realized that the theater's greatness hangs upon realistic and vivid acting.

"Do not fail to see it," my friends would often say to me of one or another play. And I would go docilely, knowing that I would be asked how it impressed me and why just so, and that from the ensuing conversation I would learn a great deal that would prove of benefit to me in my own field.

Yelizaveta Timme, herself an outstanding dramatic actress, was an ardent lover of the ballet. Some of my most cherished moments were those when I listened to her honest, well-meant criticism of my performances in which she noted very tactfully where I had failed and where I had succeeded.

THERE were many things I could not understand at first. The reason for this was perhaps a too great reverence for accepted choreographic

canons and rules. When I was told, "You should make your dancing more dramatic, more expressive," I would ask: "But how can I do it?" My friends would then proceed to tell me what went on in the soul of the Swan, describing shades of feeling I did not even suspect, or explaining why the last time I danced Giselle I had left the audience unmoved.

"I can't dance any other way," I would reply. "I don't know how to do what you ask of me. I wasn't taught to do it." The answer would be: "Neither do we know. You must find the way yourself. Watch the same emotions in the drama and think of how they can be translated into ballet."

At times things of this kind were said casually, and at times in the heat of general argument over scenic forms. And as I listened, eager to imbibe all that was said, or controvert it, if need be, it would seem to me that now at last I had grasped that which was most important to me as an artist. And indeed I was beginning to understand that there is but one great truth underlying all scenic art: like the actor the dancer must delve deeply into the character that is to be portrayed, capture its very substance, and subordinate everything else to that. I came to realize that no matter how perfect the outer delineation of the role, the portrait will be lifeless and trivial unless it is invested with inner meaning.

However, when it comes to characterization, the dramatic actor has an easier time of it; he has language at his disposal, often the text of a genius. We ballet dancers have nothing but the music and mute movement. Hence we must learn to translate thoughts into movement, and endow the dance with the force of spoken words.

How can it be done? Not a single book on the ballet, not a single dancer gives an answer to this question. There have indeed been dancers who succeeded in making their art as expressive as the spoken word. Alexander Pushkin in his *Eugene Onegin* immortalized the name of Yevdokia Istomina, surely not because "in mid-air she beats her feet together," but because this "Russian Terpsichore" shows the "soul's soaring flight," because she brought a deep significance to her dance.

Maria Taglioni, Anna Pavlova, as well as many of the Russian ballerinas whom I was fortunate enough to see on the stage, and whom I strove to emulate, were great because they were able to invest their dance with profound meaning and with noble sentiment, to capture the mood and beauty of the music. Their dance carried the appeal of great poetry. How were they able to achieve this, and how were we to achieve it?

No one could give me an answer to this question. There are no set rules for dancing of this kind, I am afraid. True, we have a stock of movements which may be likened to the letters of the alphabet. With

their help we form the "words" and "sentences" of our dance. However, the alphabet of real language may serve one to compose lovely poetry and another, doggerel. And just as there are no set rules for good poetry, so there are no set rules for imbuing the mute but sublime art of the dance with great and noble meaning, of making it vivid and lucid.

The poet, it goes without saying, must be a master of words; he must know their every *nuance,* their subtle power of suggestion. Likewise, the ballet artist must be well versed in the art of movement. However, for the poet, a perfect command of language is merely a preliminary conditon in his creative work; just so for the dancer a perfect command of dance technique, or dance "alphabet" is only a preliminary condition to that which turns the "routine" of dancing into an art, and what is that?

Many years afterwards, when I read the concluding lines of Stanislavsky's *The Actor Prepares,* this question was partly answered. "Singers must practice their scales," he wrote, "dancers their exercises, and actors train and drill according to the 'system.' Set your mind on this, make it a daily practice, learn to know your own nature, discipline it, and given talent, you shall develop into a great artist."

"Given talent. . . ." And talent is work. A vicious circle? I do not think so. Talent is work, true enough, but it is not only work as such, the actual performance of it, but the *ability* to work, plus an inordinate love for work, an *inner need* for it. Moreover, to this must be added the ability to feel, to think, to learn from books as well as from contact with people in all walks of life, to get to the bottom of people's characters, and perceive that which is essentially human and fine in them. To this must be added the ability to observe life, to accumulate life's experiences and draw on their store for one's art; and yet a something else for the explanation and definition of which we have not yet found the precise words but which nevertheless is tangible and exists objectively. Nor do I deplore the fact that this "something" evades us, and cannot be reduced to a mathematical formula. And if one day it is, it will not affect the number of talents in any way.

To me it seems every person has talent. It is only a matter of discovering that talent in time and guiding it in the proper way. . . . As time goes on more and more talents will come of their own in all spheres of endeavor, including the ballet, of course. Things are heading in that direction.

I do not think I am digressing from the main trend of my story from what had induced me to reflect on my art, to express it through

the media of thought and feeling. In the thirties, the period I am describing, I was still groping and the above ideas were still pretty vague in my mind. Yet it was precisely at that time, two decades ago, under the stimulating influence of the life around me—to which I was beginning to develop a more thoughtful and a more conscious approach—and under the influence of the Soviet art world, that I was acquiring the faculty of thinking over the meaning behind my parts. And it is this that helped me make my art worthy of the name.

THE fullness and versatility of Soviet life, the discussions and contacts I made at the Timme-Kachalovs', close association with great and exacting Soviet artists—everything together constituted what I term my "coming of age school," which brought me within range of the theater's broadest interests and profoundest ideals, the years I had spent in getting my choreographic training and the first five years in the theater I call my "apprenticeship." It was the best school an artist could wish for; life itself, the accomplishments I witnessed daily in the ballet and the drama, my friendships with really talented people enriched me beyond measure, suggesting a new interpretation of the Swan and Giselle, and preparing me to tackle the still more exacting tasks in the roles of Juliet and Tao Hoa.

In the early months of my acquaintance with the Timme-Kachalovs, I was rehearsing *Swan Lake,* and everything around me seemed colored by that work. Whatever I read, saw and heard came to me through the magic prism of that ballet and my problems connected with it. Odette occupied my thoughts. To me she was the essence of all that was feminine, tender and noble in woman. How could I best express these qualities?

It must be mentioned here that in the production I was rehearsing, the part of Odette-Odelia was separated into two roles: Odette, the fairy Swan, and Odelia, real and diabolical. I was to dance Odette. According to the new libretto as well as the choreographical concept, Odette was truly a swan, whom Siegfried imagined to be a maiden. Hence I needed to find movements suited, now to a real swan, now to an imaginary maid.

It was not so much a matter of the technique of these movements, though they were difficult enough. I wanted to make my Swan reveal the torments of her soul, the tremulousness, the half-realized raptures of first love, its sanctity, utter devotion and power. I doubt whether I would have succeeded in conveying this had it not been for the advantages of "my coming of age school," for all I had learned in the home of the Timme-Kachalovs, in the circle of friends who were heart and soul

in the life of the young Soviet theatrical culture, sharing in its successes, growth, joys and sorrows.

Soviet choreography, as it evolved, guided the ballet on towards greater depth and a wider range of themes. Our choreography and the great mass audience it now gained, an audience which was making the most exacting demands on the theater, imperiously called for portrayals of greater significance. We advanced through trial and error, through search and failure, from the ultra-revolutionary *Red Whirlwinds* and the ultra-industrial *Bolt* towards new poetic and realistic performances. For the first time great literature and new revolutionary themes found their way to the ballet stage—Pushkin's *Fountain of Bakhchisarai,* Balzac's *Lost Illusions, The Red Poppy,* and *Flame of Paris.* In my own case I cannot overestimate the importance of Pushkin and his *Fountain of Bakhchisarai.*

Before the appearance of the new Soviet ballets (I have in mind the best ones, of which there have been and are no small number, and of which there will be more in the future) ballet music, excepting the beautiful scores in many of the classic operas and ballets of Tchaikovsky, Glazunov and several West-European composers, was written with the sole object of helping the dancing and marking the rhythmic accents. It was required to be "dance music," easy to follow for the ballerina. No doubt, it is extremely important for ballet music to lend itself well to dancing. But if it is merely that, the ballet might as well abandon the idea of recreating the life of the human spirit on the stage. And to fail to do this would mean to strip of thought and inner emotion our ballet heroes and heroines, and to leave our Soviet audience unmoved. No matter how brilliant a performance is, if it is mere entertainment if it is devoid of ideas, it will never satisfy the Soviet spectator.

Thus, the beautiful elegant form of the classic dance had to be invested with new *content*—this is how we understood the demand of our audience. This became clear to us as far back as two decades ago when through a period of searchings, of failure and success, Soviet choreography came into its own.

In their earnest desire to realize the ballet's great possibilities, Soviet ballet-masters and dancers made music their starting-point. They discarded the old method of adapting the music to a stock of "dazzling" dances and began to proceed from the very idea of the music in molding the pattern of the dance. This in itself made for deeper content and put before the dancer serious problems arising from the musical characterizations.

Thus a new chapter opened in ballet music. In it was achieved

cohesion of action and thought, which made the dance not only dynamic but replete with meaning. Dances were no longer staged because the tune of a *waltz* or *gallop* was "charming" but to express music with a strong and significant appeal.

The new music could overstep the bounds of the world of fantasy and depict the world of real people and living passions. Boris Asafyev succeeded in doing this in his music for *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai.* With its clearly delineated musical portraits of Maria, Zarema and Khan Girei, its forceful score, profound and at the same time well adapted to dancing, this ballet struck a new note, showing the backdoor to nymphs and dryads—charming creatures, no doubt, but by no means thinking ones.

Although the old Russian classical ballet presented in the main fairies and princesses with their sparkling variations, it, of course, was not altogether devoid of thought, soul and idea. This is true particularly of ballets in which great dancers performed, who brought fame to our ballet not only by their peerless technique but by their highly inspired art as well. Still, it was the ballerina who was technically brilliant, who could "dazzle," that was the dominant figure in the old Imperial ballet. Nymphs and dryads, by their shallowness, helped to stifle thought and real human feeling on the ballet stage.

The Soviet era has made men and women take their rightful place as heroes and heroines of the ballet. This, of course, added immeasurably to the complexity of the choreographic problems. But cannot the same be said of the problems of our age, are they not exceedingly complex, profound and interesting?

The new ideas brought by the Soviet age were gaining a firm foothold in what is perhaps one of the most conservative arts. "Everything is in man and everything for man!"—this underlying idea of Soviet humanism, the idea of boundless faith in man, in his power, beauty and will to fight for happiness became the motto of the new Soviet ballet.

FORMERLY the idiom of the ballet was not only conventional (that it still is and will remain) but often utterly impotent; the dance itself as a rule was not able to express anything without the help of mime. There would be a constant varying of mime and dance to make clear the meaning of the ballet. I think it significant that it was by drawing on the realism of Pushkin, the singer of Man, that we managed to break with this routine more effectively than in our attempts to do so in the new productions of old ballets. And from this point of view, it seems to me, *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai,* produced in 1934

by the Leningrad Academic Theater of Opera and Ballet, was a landmark in the development of Soviet choreography.

When this ballet was rehearsed the choreographer, R. V. Zakharov, and we of the cast tried to get at the bottom of the relationships between the fascinating characters depicted in Pushkin's poem. Without doing this it would be utterly impossible to re-create them, and bring out the idea of the poem. Ballet dances of a general character that can be transplanted from one ballet to another, with nothing required but a change of costume, could never do for Pushkin. To interpret Pushkin the dance must be individualized, it must express only that which is intrinsically peculiar to the character of Maria or to Zarema, as the case may be, filled with gentle grief for the one, and with flaming jealousy for the other. The pattern may be woven of movements of flowing liquid grace, or flashing passion, depending on the character's state of mind at the moment.

In the "dialogue" between Maria and Zarema, the problem of "explaining" the feelings of the two women was thus solved without resorting to pantomime—the dance expressed everything. In the same way Maria's scene with Khan Girei, and the scenes in which she recalls her native land and her dear ones, as well as Zarema's dances, were all rendered comprehensive in the "action" of pure dance.

Maria is a part I keep working on all the time. This is also true of my other favorite roles. To the traits that I have found in the Swan and Giselle, Maria has added great humaneness and living texture. And whereas in my early portrayal of Maria an all-pervading grief was the dominant note, in later years the portrait changed, as though come to full-blown life. My pattern grew more intricate, brighter in color, revealing many new facets to the character. Thus, into the color scheme came tints of joy, youth, vivacity—in the dances of the first act. I love the part of Maria because the music and the dance express Pushkin's poetry so well, and as a result the ballet is subtle and stirring.

Pushkin's Maria, as I have already said, has made me revise a good deal in my previous roles. This is true, for example, of my Giselle. In Giselle I was faced with the problem of portraying love, hopeful and radiant in the first act, and tragic in the second, but in both acts so vital and powerful that it is able to conquer Myrta's evil will and even death itself. Therein lies the significance of *Giselle;* the ballet is not merely a repetition of the old story of a simple maid's seduction by a wealthy noble (those who think so err on the vulgar side).

In rehearsing *Giselle* I tried to conjure up the image of a "simple maid." I sought instinctively, as I had done in Maria and in all my

roles since, for that something, that "magic word," if you like, to turn me into Giselle, to make me live her tragedy, and believe in it so utterly as to make the public believe in it too.

The new significance which I read into my roles brought me closer to Juliet.

As in Maria, in Juliet I proceeded from the music. Soviet composers have made an invaluable contribution to the ballet—they have given it music with meaning and idea. And in molding the pattern of our dance in *Romeo and Juliet* we were guided by the melodies of the music which revealed the spiritual world of our characters.

Prokofiev's score in many places was abrupt, bewildering and "jarring." The frequent change of rhythm was a decided handicap to the dancer. I remember when after the first presentation of the ballet, the dancers and all responsible for the production, including the composer, gathered, I could not refrain from saying: "Never was a story of more woe than dancing to Prokofiev's music, oh!" However, this was merely a jest; what I earnestly thought was quite different: in *Romeo and Juliet,* more fully than in *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai,* there was harmony of thought and action, and despite the new modern note it struck, Prokofiev's music perfectly translated Shakespeare's tragedy. To my mind that accounts for the ballet's great success, for its undying loveliness.

When faced with the role of Juliet, fifteen years ago, I thought it beyond my powers to tackle. Indeed, the more I thought of the problems connected with the part, the more formidable they seemed to me. In Juliet I knew must be revealed an eternal human theme, a theme of all time which Dante expressed in the line: "Love, that denial takes from none beloved." The atmosphere and the period, the feud between the Capulets and the Montagues, were all of secondary importance, as compared to that great theme.

Among all nationalities we find extant legends and poems telling the sad story of true love in conflict with circumstances, which, yet, are powerless to crush and destroy it. Such are Romeo and Juliet, Farkhad and Shirin, Tristan and Isolde. The theme is the same. Our problem was to give it Shakespearean amplitude. Where were we to find the power to do this? In hard work.

Shakespeare's portrait of Juliet is extremely concrete; it was important that in the ballet she should lose none of her Shakespearean color. Shakespeare's text itself suggested to me the carefree gaiety of the early scenes, the flutter and agitation of the masque, the rapture of the balcony scene, the chastity of the marriage scene, the courageous overcoming of the fear of the tomb. . . . The outer image I sought in the

portraits of the Renaissance, notably is the women of Botticelli's *Primavera*—Spring—is not that Juliet herself?

Prokofiev's score, dramatic, sensitive, close to the modern heart and at the same time consonant with Shakespeare, was a real inspiration. We had but to follow it in every movement to mold our dance into plastic forms, provided we made the most of the ballet "alphabet," inadequate though it is. Lavrovsky, the choreographer, sought to express perfectly the music and with it the great content of Shakespeare's tragedy.

It was not without a good deal of experimenting, however, that *Romeo and Juliet* was produced. And I must say here that in recent years we had begun to realize more and more the ballet dancer's dramatic poentialities, and acquired valuable experience along these lines. This is to some measure responsible for our boldness in undertaking to translate into ballet what is one of Shakespeare's greatest plays.

A play of all time, it lives on the stage, expanding in significance, gaining in meaning with every age. Shakespeare is so profound that we are ever discovering new possibilities in him. Thus, when several years after the Leningrad production, I began to rehearse Juliet in the Bolshoi Theater in Moscow, where Prokofiev's ballet was being revived, I saw quite a different Juliet. I perceived her illumined by all of my life's experiences, by the years of war and victory.

More than ever Juliet appeared to me now as a character of strong will, ready to fight and die for happiness. This made me impart, for example, a new and more powerful dramatic quality to the scene in which Juliet defies her father and refuses to marry Paris whom she does not love; I tried to express in my dance Juliet's resolve, her defiant and courageous spirit. The new Juliet for me was possessed of such moral fibre which under different circumstances would make of her a heroine ready to die for a patriotic cause, one close to us in spirit. Our great idea was to imbue this tragedy written four hundred years ago with the force of a contemporary theme and make it ring new. In that sense *Romeo and Juliet* was a *new* ballet.

AND here I must make a reservation. While I favor greatly present-day themes, new ballet does not necessarily presuppose a contemporary setting and a modern theme. The modern theme in the ballet is a problem which we are tackling now; but it cannot be solved easily and simply. By new art, as well as by new ballet, we mean all that is consonant with our world outlook and our aspirations, all that assists us in our struggle and brings us closer to our great goals. That is why Pushkin, Beethoven, Shakespeare and Leonardo da Vinci are so near and

dear to us. That is why we claim that the range of themes and subjects for the ballet has broadened immensely: from the battles of the Civil War, and the gallantry of the young people who fought in it, to the revolt of Spartacus, the Roman gladiator, from the struggle for peace in Italy to the philosophic poems of Nizami. All this can now be rendered by the new choreography and is already being shown on our stage.

Thus when we were staging *Romeo and Juliet* in Moscow, for us, possessing the heightened sensibility that came of the war and its sufferings, it was a ballet steeped in our own age.

An actor lives, stores up impressions and experiences, little thinking that they may prove some day of great value in his work and even in some concrete role. But when he is given a role particularly suited to his temperament, in which he can best realize himself as an artist, he "suddenly" feels that the whole course of his previous existence was, as it were, one long preparation for that role. All his memories, encounters, conversations, and even his minor thoughts and observations, the books he has read, are thrown into sharp focus, sifted and crystallized, to shape that one role, which for the moment has blotted out everything else. This is what happened to me in regard to my Juliet, a new Juliet now, her character enhanced by my own experiences in the war years.

However, it was not a matter of any direct connection between my war-time experiences and my dancing. But it was that I felt more than ever drawn closer to the people, whose gallant performance on the home and battle fronts saved our honor, human dignity and possibility to work in our chosen fields, from being trampled in the dust. I saw how close-knit Soviet people were in their common cause. Their every deed spoke of their devotion to the Motherland. They were giving their all, spiritually and physically, to the war effort. The realization of all this led me to dance Juliet—my first post-war role—differently in the Moscow production. I now wished to put greater emphasis on such features in Juliet as moral courage and resolve.

During the war all Soviet artists tuned their life wholly to the life of the people, realizing the people's keen need for them.

The cannon roared but the muses were not silent. The theater continued to edify and delight the people by its art. From our fighting men we received daily corroboration of how dear the theater was to them. Like most actors and dancers, I was getting mail from the front. The men who wrote to me were strangers but they were dear as brothers because they were fighting gallantly and courageously to save our country, to save our culture and art.

Among my mail were letters from Leningrad's fighting men who

had seen me dance in that city before the war and remembered the ballets in which I appeared. There was one letter in particular that impressed me deeply. I received it in Molotov where the Kirov Theater carried on after evacuation. My correspondent, Alexei Dorogush, writing from a village just cleared of the fascists said: "In one of the cottages we found a picture of you as Odette in *Swan Lake.* The picture has a few bullet holes but all the same the boys took it to their quarters and while we're having a lull the orderly's standing assignment is to place fresh flowers in front of it every day."

Of course such marks of attention were pleasant and touching from those who fought and faced death every minute, and yet could think of art and of the theater. But there is another reason for my quoting the letter. It was one among many things that brought to me a greater awareness of the close ties existing between the Soviet artist and the people. It made me feel the great debt I owed to the Soviet fighting men, who were able to cherish the memory of a joy once received in the theater.

AT EVERY concert, at every performance, we actors and dancers witness an almost reverential attitude towards art on the part of our Soviet audience. This is to me an everlasting source of inspiration and delight. And it is clear how hard the Soviet dancer and actor must work to live up to this attitude.

During the war most of our spectators at the Bolshoi Theater were men in uniform. Even if they came to Moscow for no more than a day or two Soviet army men made it a point to go to the theater. This was indicative of our Soviet people's and our army's great impulse toward poetry and high culture, of the loftiness of the people's spirit. How could this not give the artist food for thought, not urge one to create new art, to broaden and deepen one's previous interpretations? In Molotov, whenever we performed to army audiences we got the warmest reception imaginable from a very packed house. I remember dancing in Leningrad in 1944, before an audience of wounded soldiers, on an improvised stage platform in the Anichkov Palace, and feeling greater elation than on the brilliantly illumined stage of the Bolshoi Theater in Moscow.

It is not with a mind to showing a direct influence of the events of the war on some paritcular role of mine that I speak at length of those stirring and unforgettable years. I merely wish to point out that a crucial period in our history was able to suggest much that enriched and ennobled our art.

In the days of the war, I pondered perhaps more than in other times over the essence of contemporary art and how it could best dedicate itself to expressing the aspirations of the people, of all who worked and fought.

Life was fostering in me an even greater devotion to my people.

When I first went abroad in 1945 and saw the deplorable state of theatrical art in Austria, I could not help admiring my own country for having preserved the theater and even added to its glory in the trying years of the war. In 1949 I attended a women's congress in defense of peace, held in Italy. I was horrified at the contrasts existing in that country of breath-taking scenery, at the destitution of the poor and the fabulous luxury of the hotels where the Amercans stayed. I saw men and women strikers, who refused to unload American guns, distributing the newspaper *Unità* despite the threat of severe reprisals. I was impressed by the trust and devotion with which hundreds and thousands of simple folk regarded us, Soviet citizens. A Soviet artist cannot remain indifferent to such things and they cannot but leave their imprint on his art.

Some time ago I was in China where I could see how the example of the Soviet people's constructive effort and labor heroism was being taken up by this great Eastern country, how sacred and indestructible was the friendship existing between the two mighty nations—China and the Soviet Union. And my soul, the soul of a Soviet citizen and a Soviet dancer, expanded.

Here, too, it would be wrong to speak of any direct effect of my impressions on my dancing; it is not that after visiting China I was dancing Tao Hoa, the heroine of Gliere's *Red Poppy* differently. I was not. But I understood and loved her people more warmly, and having observed some of their traits at first hand, was able to portray them on the stage with greater faithfulness as well as to broaden and render more colorful the character I represented.

It had long been my ambition to dance Tao Hoa—Red Poppy—the heroine from whom the ballet takes its name. Tao Hoa is a true daughter of her people and it is a role of a heroic order, requiring, together with lyricism, the expression of valor and great courage.

New problems and new difficulties confronted me in Tao Hoa. To show this brave heroine of fighting China, a tender-hearted and gallant Chinese girl, to our people, friend and brother of the Chinese people, was a responsible and difficult task indeed.

Spiritually I was prepared for Tao Hoa by my previous roles, notably by Juliet. But Tao Hoa dies for a future happiness, of which she has a clear vision and in which he believes. And although she lived in the

twenties I wanted to impart to her certain features of Chinese girls of our own day. Tao Hoa as a character grows before our eyes. I tried to make that growth convincing and to show its logical consummation in the great sacrifice Tao Hoa makes of her life—for the sake of the people's cause. From a dim realization that Ma Li-chen and his revolutionary friends are fighting for freedom, to a conscious struggle for free China—that is the road Tao Hoa travels. Tao Hoa dies with a smile on her lips, knowing that after her, her people will win happiness.

Naturally, after my visit to China, where I saw Chinese women and girls, as brave and valiant as Tao Hoa, after I came to know and appreciate her people better, my Chinese heroine became dearer and nearer to me.

Tao Hoa has made me want to attempt other heroic roles. I should like to test my powers as Joan of Arc, or our immortal war heroine Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya, as well as other strong women characters of classic and modern literature.

The very features that I sought for and found in the Swan, in Giselle, in Maria, in Juliet and Tao Hoa—poetry, chastity of spirit, courage, faith in man, in man's reason and will to do good—are inherent in the new person born of the Soviet age. A champion of peace and justice, the new Soviet citizen has a noble and big heart. He is modest and selflessly devoted to his Homeland. He is the new man we meet and see everywhere and the qualities he possesses must be portrayed in contemporary ballet if we wish to do justice to our age.

However, this is no easy matter. Ballet, in general, is hard work. So is producing anything—growing grain, making machines, writing poetry. There can be no art unless one gives it a lifetime of toil and devotion, even more, for if one possessed two lives—to paraphrase Pavlov, the eminent Russian physiologist—and gave them both wholly to art, one would still not be giving enough.

I think it is in this spirit that all Soviet artists work and it is in this spirit that the composer, the libretto writer, the choreographer and the ballet dancer are today earnestly cooperating and using all the means at their disposal to produce new ballets that will be a glory to the Soviet age.

—Translated from the Russian by S. Rosenberg.

TWO POEMS

THE ELECTROCUTED OF THE ATOM

They were seated on a throne of hate,
Over the dark chair of the lightning.
I have to say it because it burns my sleep
And enters through the temples and destroys me
Like blood with splintered glass.
It is the vapors of fear,
The conspiracy of the howling steppes,
The great blindfold falling over the faithful.
It is justice drenching the just
With an inflammable substance of high voltage.
It is a mother burning and nonetheless tranquil,
Her weeping is fire and rises to the smile
Of her sons, the day of consummation.
It is a man like a cathedral crumbling,
Alone, hurt on the inside with the scorn.
They are wolves, wolves,
And all of the humiliations,
Beginning with that of the cross.
This I sing filling my mouth with ashes,
But someone detains me:

"Don't write of these things,"
—He says with delicate cold hand—
"Make sonnets like fine furs,
Return to the untouched rose and the star."

I look at him without saying anything,
But the sorrow and the shame, together,
Drive my voice like a plow.

ALFREDO CARDONA PENA

(*Translation from the Spanish by Stanley Kurnik*)

OF MY TIME

For the Partisans of Cervignana, Italy

Giorgione gave this light a name.
In this evening light the awaited
Arrives like a god
From all directions at once.

In this evening light the awaited
Bears the weight of the scythes
Off the shoulders
Of those walking home from the hills.

In this evening light the awaited
Expects to find
On a wooden table
Wine the color of the moon.

In this evening light the awaited
Destroys all calculation
Time and Distance now no more
Than the stretching of desire.

In this evening light the awaited
Is reached
Like a bed in a prepared room
With a petal on the floor.

In this evening light the awaited
Will tell how in this same light
Men I would have loved
Were shot, their desires unmet.

JOHN BERGER

CHARLES DARWIN AND KARL MARX

HOWARD SELSAM

LAST year the scientific world observed the one hundredth anniversary of the first public announcement of the theory of evolution through natural selection. On July 1, 1858, the papers of Charles Robert Darwin and Alfred Russell Wallace were presented to a meeting of the Linnaean Society in London. Both men had independently arrived at the same theory —one as a result of a voyage around the world as "naturalist" on the British naval vessel, the *Beagle;* the other collecting specimens for years in the jungles of the Amazon and among the islands of Indonesia.

This year a far wider public is celebrating the publication of Darwin's great classic, *The Origin of Species.* It is barely noticed that 1959 is also the centenary of the publication of another epoch-making work by a scientific pioneer in a very different field. A second printing of Darwin's work was probably already under way when a one thousand copy edition of an obscure treatise was published in Germany by an emigré then living in London. It was Karl Marx's *Critique of Political Economy.* And just as Darwin's work put an end to the separate creation of species, Marx's put an end to the notion that bourgeois economy was the eternal and natural order of society.

Darwin's book ushered in a revolution in the natural sciences, radically changing and transforming man's conception of living things and their development. Marx's book initiated a revolution in the social sciences—uncovering laws of social movement and creating new possibilities for radical social transformation.

Interestingly, the very titles of the books indicated that their authors recognized they were pioneering in new areas and advancing radically new ideas. Marx's work bore the title, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy.* Darwin's original proposed title was *An Abstract of an Essay on The Origin of Species by Natural Selection.* Both authors be-

lieved themselves to be opening up new approaches, new subjects, and that their works were only outlines, abstracts, or introductions to what needed to be done.

Marx lived most of his life as an exile, among outcasts, all the time in poverty and debt, and often in bad health. Darwin never needed to earn a penny in his whole life and never had to ask for money from anyone except his father, who always gave it to him. He lived like a modest country squire on a small estate at Down, just about twenty miles from Marx's little flat in London. Like Marx he suffered from bad health all his adult life.

The two men never met. It is not even certain that they had any genuine mutual acquaintances. Yet there were several interesting exchanges and inter-connections that place them in the same world. The Curator of the London Zoological Garden, the eminent biologist, E. Ray Lankester, was one of the handful of friends present, along with such stalwart fighters as Engels, Liebknecht, and Lafargue when Marx was buried. Lankester corresponded with Darwin and was much admired by him. Marx's son-in-law, Edward Aveling, spent an afternoon with Darwin at Down in 1881. Aveling was struck by Darwin's combination of power and charm, which, in spite of his being tall and Marx short, made them seem to him so similar.

Marx and Darwin had one exchange. In 1873 Marx sent Darwin a copy of the second German edition of *Capital.* (There is an oft-repeated rumor that Marx asked Darwin's permission to allow *Capital* to be dedicated to him, but to the best of my knowledge there is no evidence for this and the story seems purely apocryphal. Its punch line was that Darwin declined the honor.) Darwin replied October 1, 1873 as follows:

> Dear Sir: I thank you for the honor which you have done me by sending me your great work on *Capital;* and I heartily wish that I were more worthy to receive it, by understanding more of the deep and important subject of political economy. Though our studies have been so different, I believe that we both earnestly desire the extension of knowledge; and this, in the long run, is sure to add to the happiness of mankind.

THIS LETTER, published by Aveling in his account of his visit with Darwin, is most unrevealing. From the general nature of Darwin's letters, and he wrote letters by the thousands, one judges it to be completely perfunctory. One cannot tell, without further evidence, whether he had heard of Marx and knew what *Capital* contained or not. He

would have found a number of references to himself but this was commonplace to him, especially in books from Germany and America. On the other hand, had he known who Marx was, and anything of his life-work, he would most likely have written in exactly the same way. Darwin was determined to do nothing that would interfere with the acceptance by the learned world of what he had worked so hard to achieve and was so profoundly convinced of, namely, the theory of evolution. He studiously avoided all religious pronouncements and controversies and would certainly not get involved with whatever he might have heard Marx and his friends from many nations were up to. The question, therefore, whether Darwin knew of Marx, or had any opinions concerning the direction of his thought and activities, thus far remains completely unanswered.

On the other hand, Marx was an enthusiastic Darwinian and is said to have read virtually all his many volumes. Wilhelm Liebknecht even said that Marx recognized the significance of Darwin before the publication of the *Origin of Species* in 1859, but gives no evidence to support this assertion.

Darwin died in 1882 and was buried with "pomp and circumstance," in Westminster Abbey alongside of England's greatest scientific, military and political leaders. Marx died a year later and was unostentatiously buried in his wife's grave in Highgate cemetery, London, without even a headstone to mark the spot.

Few would deny today either the contribution to our knowledge of the world of these two men or their enormous impact on our, and all future time. Yet there is a vast difference in how they are regarded. Darwin's theory of biological evolution has swept all opposition aside. Evolution is as unassailable as the Copernican astronomy. Species arise and perish through ascertainable natural laws as surely as the earth moves. Opposition, once intense and powerful, has dwindled to virtually nothing in scientific and scholarly circles. Darwinism is synonymous with evolution, and evolution has become an accepted fact.

Marx's theory is under constant attack. He is forever being belittled, refuted, or dismissed as irrelevant to the contemporary British and American form of capitalism. This is true except for the one-third of the world that has been revolutionized in fact by his theories, together with millions in the capitalist and colonial worlds who accept his teachings and a small number of scholars who are able to approach his thought objectively.

There is a good reason for this difference. Darwin completed the bourgeois revolution in man's world-outlook, the final overthrow

of ancient slave and medieval feudal views. He knocked the last prop out from under a God-centered universe made for man. His theory of evolution was welcomed by advanced bourgeois thinkers. It seemed to give capitalism its final blessing. To the clergy and idealist moralists it proclaimed "laissez-faire." They were henceforth to have no more place in human affairs than God had in natural ones. Species evolve, society develops in accordance with natural laws, not moral considerations. Capital appeared now as the *natural* system of society, involving as it did the principles of struggle, competition, survival of the fittest. (Marx and Engels had much to say on this, as we shall see later.) Marx's theories challenged the whole bourgeois order and still do. They called for an end of all class rule; called for competition and struggle not simply to survive but for a better life for all mankind.

Thus it was that these two giant thinkers in two different realms, exact contemporaries, experienced such different receptions. Both were revolutionaries in their thought. But one completed one revolution while the other laid the theoretical foundation and indeed the basic organizational principles of a new one.

It is significant that both evolutionary and socialist theories were much in the air when Marx and Darwin reached adult life. This fact provides interesting points of similarity in understanding the experience and thought of these two men.

First, current socialist theories were idealist. They were based on Utopian ideas of what ought to be, of disinterested people of good will, with no leverage in concrete reality. Evolutionary theories were similarly idealist, based on either animal desires and purposes or an over-all divine plan. Both Marx and Darwin rejected these, in their respective spheres, as totally inadequate.

Secondly, Marx and Darwin were led to their discoveries by long and deep personal experience. As editor of the *Rheinische Zeitung,* Marx saw the failure of bourgeois reformist theories. Then forced to move towards socialism he was buffeted for years by the varied labor-socialist-anarchist currents of Western Europe he worked among. Darwin set out on his voyage round the world innocently enough, but was led irrevocably, through his nearly five years of observation of the strange forms of plant and animal life, past and present, to seek a theory of evolution through purely natural means.

THROUGH these intensive experiences both men were led to break with traditional ideas. They were led to achieve new approaches

and hypotheses, and devoted the remainder of their lives to the quest for ever more data to justify and support their revolutionary theories. It is interesting how they were both to record their transition to their new ways of thinking as a rather sudden and vivid insight following a long period of searching for a solution to their respective problems. Darwin achieved his new theory in 1837 at the age of twenty-eight. Marx reports his transforming insight as occurring in 1844 when he was twenty-seven years old.

As in the case of all great scientific innovations, the thought of neither was born as complete or final. Both knew that what they had started would require ever further development. It is appropriate, therefore, that when we use the terms Darwinism or Marxism we do not mean systems of thought completed and finished once and for all by these two men. We mean, rather, fundamental directions, methods, approaches which they originated and which have been and always will have to be enriched, developed and qualified with changes in the objective world and new developments in knowledge. Needless to say, both men firmly believed and clearly understood that such developments and qualifications of their systems were natural and inevitable.

Marx and Engels wrote many passages expressing their appreciation of what Darwin achieved and its relationship to what they were doing. This was, unfortunately, strictly a one-way street. But one remark of Darwin, made in his mid-twenties at the end of his voyage on the *Beagle* strikingly indicates his awareness of the central problem Marx set out to solve.

Darwin hated slavery bitterly. He saw no justification in nature for it. He saw slavery as a purely arbitrary social relationship imposed and maintained by brute force. Indeed, in a passage first published in 1933, in his original *Diary* of the Voyage of the Beagle, Darwin had written under the date of July 3, 1832, a passage on the prospective struggle for liberation of Brazilian slaves, that has a ring suggestive of the liberation of the working class in the *Communist Manifesto.* But in discussing slavery at the end of his voyage he asks and answers the question whether the slaves are worse off than our own English poor. No! he answers decisively, the condition of the poor in the English factory towns does not make slavery any more palatable. And here Darwin takes the offensive and exclaims: "If the misery of our poor be caused not by the laws of nature, but by our institutions, great is our sin. . . ."

Darwin never returned to this question but Marx's life-work was devoted to proving that the poverty of the workers in the capitalist

countries was a product of man-made institutions, not of natural law. It was the very essence of Marxism, however, to take poverty amidst plenty out of the realm of "sin" by treating it scientifically, uncovering the historical causes from which it arose and the conditions necessary for its being overcome.

One other extraordinary social insight of Darwin's is worth mentioning. First confronted with the savages of Tierra del Fuego, he noted that the difference between savages and civilized men is even greater than that between wild and domesticated animals. In a letter to one of his sisters he expressed himself even more clearly than in the published *Journal.* To her he wrote: "The difference between a domesticated and wild animal is far more strikingly marked in man . . . with difficulty we see a fellow creature." Thus Darwin, for perhaps the first time in history not only equated the process of civilization with that of the domestication of animals, but saw man as the animal that, unlike all others, domesticated himself. This clearly foreshadows both the title and content of the late V. Gordon Childe's work, *Man Makes Himself.* Although, in general, inattentive to questions of social anthropology, Darwin suggested one of the principles that have become basic in modern scientific ethnology and pre-history.

DARWIN'S *Origin of Species* was an exciting book to Marx and Engels. Here was the most concrete scientific confirmation of dialectics they had yet seen. Nothing was fixed and unchangeable in organic nature any more than in society. Everything has a history; everything arises and perishes. As Engels was to write in his *Feuerbach* many years later, Darwin's discovery along with that of the cell and of the transformation of energy, put an end to all possible static or metaphysical world views. Furthermore, Darwin showed that development in nature occurs through struggle, through what Marx and Engels, following Hegel, called contradictions. When Marx first read the *Origin* in 1860 he wrote to Engels: "This is the book which contains the basis in natural history for our view." And a few weeks later he wrote to Lassalle: "Darwin's book is very important and serves me as a basis in natural science for the class struggle in history."

The fullest statement of what they believed to be the relation between Darwin's discovery and that of Marx was expressed by Engels at Marx's graveside some twenty-two years later. He said:

> Just as Darwin discovered the law of evolution in organic nature, so Marx discovered the law of evolution in human history; he discovered

> the simple fact, hitherto concealed by an overgrowth of ideology, that mankind must first of all eat and drink, have shelter and clothing, before it can pursue politics, science, religion, art, etc.; and that therefore the production of the immediate material means of subsistence and consequently the degree of economic development attained by a given people or during a given epoch, form the foundation upon which the state institutions, the legal conceptions, the art and even the religious ideas of the people concerned have been evolved, and in the light of which these things must therefore be explained, instead of *vice versa* as had hitherto been the case.
>
> *Selected Works,* I, p. 16.

In short, just as Darwin had explained the evolution of the non-human organic world without divine plan on one hand or the conscious purpose of the organisms concerned on the other, so did Marx explain the development of the institutions of human society and their successive forms on the basis of social laws, in conformity with which alone men can achieve their aims and fulfill their ideals.

Just as Darwin found that species develop or perish depending on their ability to solve their life problems, especially those of obtaining food, protecting themselves from predators and securing an adequate rate of reproduction, so Marx discovered that societies change, old forms die and new ones arise, depending on their ability to solve their problems, the most fundamental of which is that of the fullest utilization of the instruments of production through forms of social organization appropriate to them.

It has long been noted and already mentioned here that the acceptance and public success of Darwinism was influenced in part by its seeming to justify existing predatory society. What has come to be called "Social Darwinism" has two distinct sides. One was the attempt to establish the idea that the class struggle is a struggle between the more fit and the less fit. The other was the idea that the different races and peoples of mankind are on different levels of development from the lower animals, with the white peoples of Northern Europe the highest level in the evolutionary scale. The aim of the first of these propositions was to prove the superiority of the capitalist class over the working class; that of the second to justify the exploitation and even extermination of "savages" and what are today politely called the "underdeveloped" peoples of the world. Professor Richard Hofstadter has given an excellent account of these views and the struggles waged over them in his *Social Darwinism in American Thought.* Like other discerning students of Darwin and Darwinism, Hofstadter points

to Darwin's own shortcomings in these respects while emphasizing the fact that these were not characteristic of Darwin's moral sentiments which were based theoretically on the doctrine that human nature is securely founded in the social instincts.

Although, as we have seen earlier, Marx found in Darwin "a basis in natural science for the class struggle in history," he and Engels throughout the rest of their lives strongly opposed any attempt to explain human society and its evolution in terms of the biological "struggle for life." In a letter to Dr. Kugelmann, a German physician friend, Marx accused F. A. Lange, the idealist historian of materialist philosophy, of falsely trying to bring the whole of history under a single great natural law, "the struggle for life." He says that Lange "instead of analyzing the struggle for life as *represented historically in varying and definite forms of society,*" has done nothing but "translate every concrete struggle into the phrase, 'struggle for life,' and this phrase itself into the Malthusian population fantasy." (Italics mine.) This criticism gives us an excellent example of Marx's scientific empirical method. Human society constitutes a distinct level and cannot be explained by principles derived from the non-human world; neither can it be understood apart from its specific forms.

BUT Marx and Engels did more than oppose the application of Darwin's struggle for existence to the human world. They took the offensive by showing that the very attempt at such application was itself an indictment of capitalist society. Engels wrote: "Darwin did not know what a bitter satire he wrote on mankind and especially on his fellow-countrymen when he proved that free competition, the struggle for existence, which the economists prize as the greatest historical achievement, is the normal state of the *animal kingdom.*" Similarly Engels wrote elsewhere: "The standpoint of the animal in nature appears as the last word in human development." In other words, while the bourgeoisie had taken up Darwin so enthusiastically because he seemed to justify the dog-eat-dog ethics of capitalism, actually his theories showed that under capitalism mankind had not yet risen above the "law of the jungle" of the animal world. As Engels said elsewhere, "Nothing discredits modern bourgeois development so much" as this fact. In the light of this approach to Darwinism the criticism that Marxism seeks to reduce everything to economics becomes positively ludicrous. One should say rather that it is trying to raise economics from an animal to a truly human level: trying to gain human mastery over the economy so that man's mode of getting a living serves truly

human purposes instead of operating on the level of tooth and claw.

To begin to do justice to the relationship of Marxism and Darwinism, two special questions require further investigation. The first is that of the relationship of animal organs and their development to human tools and their development (nature's technology and man's technology). The second is whether there is any sense in which natural selection operates in or among human societies.

Marx, speaking in *Capital* of our need for a critical history of technology, says: "Darwin has interested us in the history of Nature's Technology, i.e., in the formation of the organs of plants and animals, which organs serve as instruments of production for sustaining life. Does not the history of the productive organs of man, of organs that are the material basis of all social organization, deserve equal attention?" (*Capital,* I, 406n.) Darwin raised to a scientific level the study of the role of the organs and limbs of animals in respect to their getting a living. Marx did the same with the tools and machines by which man lives. Darwin saw how the forms of getting a living—through burrowing, grazing, stalking; eating fruits, nuts or insects, etc.—are determined by the particular organs an animal has in relation to its environment, and in turn determine the life-pattern of the species. Marx established the principle that the economic structure of society corresponds to a definite stage in the material powers of production, that is, of the tools used by man to get his living (wood, stone, bronze, iron, machines, steam-power, etc.). He concluded, further, that these "relations of production" constitute "the real foundation on which rise legal and political superstructures and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production in material life determines the general character of the social, political and spiritual processes of life." (*Critique of Political Economy,* p. 11).

Exploration of the question of the similarities and differences between human tools and animal organs, together with the principles determining their development, poses many interesting problems, most important of which is that of the function of the human brain in the evolutionary process. To say this is in no way to question the importance of the hand in the evolution of man. All evidence points towards some complex interrelationship between the development of the hand and the brain. What we are concerned with now is the evolutionary process subsequent to the rise of both.

The questions of the origin and the function of the brain led to some fundamental conflicts between Darwin and Wallace. Though this came in later years to take the form of a struggle between a teleo-

logical approach on the part of Wallace, with some kind of divine guidance postulated, as against Darwin's determined agnosticism, it nevertheless reveals something of a dialectical versus a mechanical approach.

It is interesting to note that Wallace was a life-long socialist who began as an Owenite. He never forgot his experiences of the worst days of the Industrial Revolution and remained all his life a champion of working people and the poor generally. In 1888 Wallace brought out a volume entitled *Bad Times* which was an essay on the current depression and its causes in war expenditures, increase of speculation and of millionaires, and the depopulation of rural districts. In 1898 he published *The Wonderful Century: Its Successes and Its Failures.* The nineteenth century's successes lay in its development of the whole gamut of the natural sciences (in which he himself was a great pioneer figure), together with the application of science to production. The last three chapters, on its failures, contain an impassioned indictment of capitalism and conclude with these ringing and prophetic words:

> The flowing tide is with us. . . . And as this century has witnessed a material and intellectual advance wholly unprecedented in the history of human progress, so the coming century will reap the full fruition of that advance, in a moral and social upheaval of an equally new and unprecedented kind, and equally great in amount.

IN THE years after his first paper on evolution through natural selection Wallace was concerned with the problem of human evolution as opposed to the mechanisms he and Darwin had advanced to explain animal evolution. Dissatisfied with Darwin's rather mechanistic theory of evolution as applied to man biologically, and having no adequate answer, he fell back into teleology. Yet in his theory of the function of human tools in man's evolution as opposed to that of the bodily organs in animal evolution, and in his conception of the unique role of the brain in man's evolutionary process, Wallace came closer to Marxist historical materialism than Darwin ever did.

In a paper of 1864 Wallace expressed the new view that with the emergence of the human brain a creature had arisen who, for the first time in the history of life had escaped from the specialization of *parts* toward which evolution seemed always to progress. This process, he thought, ended with the rise of *homo sapiens.* In his brain man had developed an organ which enabled him to escape further biological

specialization. Man could increasingly assign to his clothing and tools the specific activities for which the animals had to develop their own specialized organs. In human society, therefore, specialization became a matter of technology. With man, mind becomes more important than mere bodily structures.

Wallace does not seem to have dealt with the question of the hand and it would be interesting to study his views on man's evolution at this point in his career with those of Engels in his article "The Part Played by Labor in the Transition from Ape to Man." It is possible that Wallace was a better Darwinian, and much farther from Lamarck than Engels was. In any case, he could not but have recognized the importance of the hand in his stress on the role of tools in man's evolution.

Man, Wallace believes, has taken away from nature the power of change she exercised over all other animals. Man meets changes in nature by changing his tools, clothing and habitation. "Man does this," he said, "by means of his intellect alone which enables him with an unchanged body still to keep in harmony with the changing universe." It is interesting to note how Wallace's view of man's "harmony with the changing universe" falls short of Marx's view of man's mind as enabling him to *change* the universe, purposefully and directionally. Darwin did write of his admiration for this "most striking and original paper," but does not seem to have given it any further thought.

In this same essay of 1864 on the action of natural selection on man, Wallace saw that with division of labor and mutual assistance natural selection in man is therefore checked. But he adds the suggestive thought that among primitive populations those which have the distinctly human qualities of acting in concert for protection and obtaining food, have foresight for the future, and so on, would have an advantage over others that lacked these qualities. The first would "have an advantage in the struggle for existence over other tribes" and in that way natural selection would operate.

All this suggests a connection between what Darwin did for the animal world and what Marx was doing for the understanding of the social laws of human development. Here Wallace seems to provide something of the "missing link."

This foray of Wallace into the realm of social evolution has already brought us to the second special question we set out to discuss: whether there is anything comparable to natural selection in human history. If there is any such thing it would, of course, be very different and properly better called "social selection," inasmuch as it operates

through the actions, ideas and purposes of men working within historically evolved forces of production and the institutions erected on those foundations. As has been emphasized by those hostile to the whole scientific trend in the modern world, the term "natural selection," as both Darwin and Wallace well knew, was a metaphor borrowed from the "artificial selection" of the plant and animal breeder. (See, for example, Jacques Barzun, *Marx, Darwin, Wagner.*) Yet, a concept may be no less valuable in science—in the seminal sense of enabling us to move towards a closer approximation to reality—for being metaphorical. The ancient idea of the "music of the spheres" helped to lead Kepler to the discovery of his third law of planetary motion.

ALTHOUGH Marx and Engels never speak explicitly of natural selection as operating in relation to classes and societies, the idea of a "law" governing the succession of one form of society over another permeates the whole of historical materialism. And this would certainly not be an impossible extension of the principle from one level of organization to another (with appropriate qualifications) if Professor J. D. Bernal can extend it to all forms of inanimate matter. ("The Origin of Life," *Mainstream,* April, 1958.) Marx and Engels always fought against mechanical transference of natural selection to society, especially when it took the form of "survival of the fittest." But we must be clear as to what they were opposing. It was the Spencerian or Social-Darwinian type of thought that made all social progress come about through the ruthless struggle of all against all. For this is a concept of no scientific validity whatsoever, inasmuch as it sees societies as *nothing but* individuals and never defines fitness in objective and socially meaningful terms. The mere command of wealth or power has no biological significance and the phrase is reduced to a complete tautology, from which it can escape only if it is given a moral connotation—those are on top who *ought* to be on top.

Marx and Engels worked throughout their lives with the two-pronged conviction that classes and social-economic systems survive, advance, or are eliminated by a process of social selection that is comparable to that of natural selection in the organic world. A class sinks into history, remaining only as an historical fact or perhaps as a living fossil, for the same reason a species does—that is, through its inability to adapt or adjust itself to changing conditions. Similarly with a society or a structure of economic relations, an economic system. Here two principles are believed to operate for all societies that are in movement; all societies that is, with the exception of those which in rela-

tive isolation achieve a degree of stability that can be disturbed only when the isolation is destroyed. Darwin's writings are full of this in the plant and animal world.

The first of these principles is that of struggle, either within a society or between societies; struggle that is essentially that of classes. The second is that the society with the more advanced technology and the ability to use it to its fullest (in stricter Marxist terms, the society with the higher mode of production), and the class that can advance technology, or the development and use of the forces of production, more than the existing dominant class, must eventually triumph.

Such are some general principles of Marxism as opposed to theories of the process of social revolution in any given place and time. It is interesting to apply them to the contemporary world situation in the period of the triumph of socialism in one-third of the world and the movement towards competitive coexistence of socialism and capitalism. A three-fold struggle is taking place, all in the framework of the struggle for survival of opposing social systems and opposing classes. This consists of the class struggle within the advanced capitalist world; the struggle between the capitalist and socialist worlds for increasing productivity, high living standards, better education, health and higher culture; and the struggle of the colonial and semi-colonial areas of the world for freedom and industrial development. Is it too much to say that in peace, or in war if that should happen, victory (if there is any) will go to the social form that has achieved the highest potential for the development of the tools that are man's organs and the ability to use them with the greatest effectiveness for the raising of the living standards and the educational and cultural level of all the people? This is the theoretical basis for the theory of peaceful and competitive coexistence of the world's two great social systems.

IT IS not the purpose of this article to go into the details of this projected peaceful struggle of these two systems. It is called frequently a battle for men's minds. It is, over all, the struggle to convince presently non-committed people and countries that one or the other system will give them a better life, fulfill their highest hopes and aspirations. As Wallace saw in his account of the relations of primitive tribes, moral as well as material values are involved. Individual rights and freedoms as well as the most effective democratic forms for the participation of all the people in the determination of the conditions of their lives and direction of their development are likewise an essential feature of this struggle.

It might well be said that this is the greatest experiment of all times—probably the greatest that ever will occur on our earth. Its progress can be objectively measured. It will not be won by mere slogans. In the end the masses of the earth's people will decide which system will better serve their purposes—planned social ownership for use or anarchic production for private profit. This is selection on a high social level, its outcome determined by the decision of men themselves. But while the decision will be human the process is no less natural in the sense of operating in accordance with knowable economic and social laws. Men make their history, as Engels was fond of saying, but they do not make it out of whole cloth. They make it blindly or intelligently, depending upon the extent of their knowledge of the laws of social development and their ability to use them. Animals evolve blindly. Men *can* evolve rationally.

It would hardly be too much to say that Darwin and Marx more completely represent the nineteenth century than any other of its great men. They mark a divide between all past science, natural and social, and all future thought. Both had ardent partisans and opponents. Both created great, broad, sweeping theories that opened up vast new vistas and that require endless development, modification, and qualification. One striking difference in the thought of these two giants is that Marxism embraces Darwinism, leaving to biologists the working out of the innumerable controversial details. Darwinism stands apart, seemingly separable from Marxism. Yet it is evident to any objective observer, as it was to Wallace, that a theory of social evolution is required by the theory of biological evolution. And if one takes Darwin's thoroughly materialist stand, such a social science must be solidly against all forms of teleology and idealism. It is a most plausible thesis that as time goes on Marx and Darwin will appear ever closer together to those who study them, because the difference and separateness is trifling compared to all they had in common. One can well change Engels' final words at Marx's grave to include both men: "Their names will live through the centuries and so also will their works."

THE EYE OF THE DEVIL

JANET ARO

NOW that we were about to leave, everything at home looked hateful and cold. The crooked walls, the shabbiness of each room revealed itself and I wondered how we had stood it this long. Tomorrow morning we would be out of it but first, tonight, my father and I had to make ready to meet trouble. I thought of the structure above our cellar apartment, each tenant came to mind, their wickedness, their trickery. I had taken our name out of the slot underneath the words "Ring here for Superintendent."

"I pity the next heir to our underground kingdom," my father said, tearing our name in half with a flourish.

My sister Janie watched us.

"I'm coming out too," she said.

My mother who is always tuned in for whispers rushed out of the kitchen.

"Janie, you stay right here. Bad enough Pete and your father have to do this. I want us all out in one piece tomorrow."

"But none of the tenants are going to——," Janie began and then she shut up. Lately Janie is always starting sentences and not finishing them.

I would have liked her to go with me, but not tonight. Other nights we would go to the park to escape the heat and to talk and no matter who called Janie she always stayed with me.

When the sky was completely black my father and I went to the park and picked up the stones we needed, larger than pebbles but small enough not to break a window—just to make a sudden frightening noise against the pane.

My father said, "Let them all take a good luck at us tomorrow. How's your aim, Pete?"

To show him, I wound up and threw a stone across the grass to hit a tree trunk smack in the middle. He put his arm around me.

"We're all set then."

My hand curled around the small stones as the wind blew us downhill, out of the park into the street. It was like being in the center of a spotlight. I could see only my father, his thin face in profile, the long straight nose, with the odd flaring nostrils, the stubborn chin, the wide angry mouth. His shirt sleeves were rolled above his elbows and his long thick arms swung restlessly. The people around us were like tall menacing shadows. I always walked in the center of the spotlight, close to him, although my arms are almost as big. Outside, past the blurry edges the colors were too vivid and the sounds too loud. My father hummed as he walked. I wished I could catch that tune.

We passed Ricci's bowling alley on the block before our house. My father stopped.

"Come on in and watch me beat you again," he said.

We played three games. His first was good but he muffed his second and gave up on his third after he guttered the first ball.

"I threw it away," he'd say as he missed so I'd think he didn't mind losing.

An old man in a dirty brown overcoat stood behind us.

"Did you see that guy?" my father asked. "Ruined my game watching. Did you see his eyes, the old devil."

Back home Janie had coffee and cake ready and the deck of cards out.

When I came in I noticed my mother had put on a clean white blouse. She looked like a young girl until she turned around. She had on high heels and her hair was blonder than yesterday.

We sat up very late playing casino. My father watched the door ready for the first tenant to come in to say goodbye, to ask us about the next super who was taking our place. I wouldn't like to be that tenant I thought, watching my father's hands. About one o'clock we heard footsteps in the hall. My father put down his cards and waited. His eyes flashed, his mouth grew big and sarcastic, about to burst with words. The footsteps continued past our door.

His face turned dull as he picked up his cards.

"Nobody's coming," my mother said. "They're all too scared."

There were dozens of things they had done to us. I had heard my father tell about them ever since I'd been old enough to listen. I could

still see our cat dead in the alley looking suddenly like an old mop someone had thrown out.

"After what they done they should be scared to come down," I shouted.

My father looked at me.

"They'll get theirs. I left a note for the next super naming names to warn him," he said softly, moistening his lips.

The table had been bare I thought, except for the cards, when I looked again I saw the pincushion doll sitting in the center.

Janie's breath sounded like a small frightened whisper.

My mother got up and locked the door.

There had been times in the past when this doll had looked like a woman tenant, tonight on the fourth floor, who was one of the worst. My mother's nose became pinched and cold looking, she drew a long hat pin from her apron pocket. The room seemed to contract with my father's hand. He took the pin from her slowly, almost casually. As he inserted it high in the pincushion doll's neck and twisted I heard someone off in the distance begin to scream. The doll tilted, then fell on its face. Janie sprang up, grating her chair like a piece of chalk on a blackboard.

"Anyone want a glass of water?" she cried, her back towards us on her way to the kitchen.

My father began to hum again.

"Whose turn? Come on, let's play."

The markings on my cards blurred. I thought I saw a speck of blood clinging to the green neck of the pincushion doll but it was only a red thread. Janie came back and we finished the game.

In the morning I climbed down from the top of the double decker I shared with Janie and went into the kitchen. My mother was up already, wearing her good hat, her pocketbook dangling from her arm because strangers were going to come into the apartment soon. The kitchen looked like a storage room cluttered with cardboard boxes and barrels. On the wall near the door I saw the marks she made to keep track of how fast Janie and I grew. The third mark table high—I remembered Janie and myself both dressed in pink—Aren't they sweet—no he isn't a girl, but don't they look just like twins? Table height, then tall as the top of the desk and only a month ago my fifteen year old mark an inch above Janie's even though she's a year older.

My mother said, "Go wake Janie up. Don't scare her now."

I went back into the bedroom and sat down on my sister's bed. The

blanket was off down to her waist so I pulled it up to her shoulders before I touched her cheek. I didn't want her to be angry the way she got sometimes when she opened her eyes and saw me sitting there looking at her. I bounced very softly up and down, the spring creaked and she sat up. Her face looked smooth and pink with a sleep mark on it where her hand had rested all night across her cheek, the back of her fingers touching her mouth. I could still see the tiny scar left under her chin where I had scratched her deeply when I was smaller at a birthday party because she hadn't picked me. I wondered if she ever touched it and felt mad at me.

"It doesn't show," I said, leaving the room.

"What doesn't?" she called after me.

It was still dark outside. The movers came at seven. Before she left with my father to watch in the street, my mother said, "Stay here till it's all out. Don't forget to sweep the floor so nobody can say we left them a dirty house."

Janie danced around the empty apartment.

I wish we could always have one empty room for Janie to dance in. She stooped down to pick up an earring that had rolled out from behind a bureau.

"I wondered where this disappeared to."

I swept the floor for her while she danced.

Janie put on more lipstick. Her eyes looked frightened but she didn't say a word about leaving the neighborhood or not graduating from high school with her class. Going down I took her arm and she let me till we reached the first floor. Janie's hair is light brown with some yellow streaks left from the beach where we went every day on our summer vacation. I could still see her sunburn, her dress straps are always slipping down and she never notices. Today I poked her.

"Hey, button up. The moving men are looking."

"So what," she said. But she fixed her dress.

We stood on the street till the van left. We didn't have to use the stones. Nobody looked out the window.

On the bus to the new super job we sat in the back, close around papa.

Janie said, "He must be a pretty nice landlord to give us a first floor apartment."

My mother raised her eyebrows. "If only I could have had a good long talk with the last super to find out about the tenants. This is like going in blind."

We got off the bus. My mother straightened Janie's blue scarf, pushed my hair back from my forehead. When she touched the feather on her hat and smoothed the small fur piece she wore I noticed suddenly that one eye was missing from the fox's head.

We turned the corner and we saw her then, a tall dark haired woman in a housedress and a coat held closed by one button nearly bursting off across the spot where her waistline should have been. She had a small sickly dog on a leash and she stood like a sentry in front of the door of our new place.

Mama said, "My God look at the size of her and those rowboat shoes."

"It's a tenant," papa cried, his lips curling. "She wants to be the first one to see what we move in with. She wants to get a good look."

Mama said, "Maybe she'll go away," and we walked slowly up the block, hoping.

But she remained, leaning against the side of the building, watching with small shrewd little black eyes till the van arrived and our assortment of furniture was exposed, the couch with the hole that I had burned in it with a cigarette, the mattress with its insides sticking out.

Just before all our furniture was out she lifted the dog up and held him shoulder high so that for a moment she seemed two-headed. She walked towards us to speak and we moved very fast away from her.

Upstairs mama pulled out a small handkerchief that smelled of cologne and wiped her forehead. She opened her pocketbook and dug down deep and she came up with the pincushion doll.

"It was too small to pack," she explained. "I didn't want to lose it."

She put it carefully on a small shelf above the sink.

"That's a funny place for it," Janie cried. "It'll get all wet." She walked over to take it away.

"Leave it alone," my father said.

"Let's see now," my mother cried, stepping between them. "If we put the double decker bed for Janie and Pete in the same room, we can make a living room out of the extra space out here."

Janie said, "It's OK with me if Pete can stand the creaking."

I didn't tell her that I didn't mind the creaking anymore the way I used to when we were kids. Sometimes, now in the morning I'd lower myself down after Janie got out of bed and if I heard the water running and knew she was taking a bath I'd fit myself into the soft warm hollow she'd made in the mattress and stay there till I heard her coming back.

I shrugged.

"Who cares. Whichever way you want. Just so you put my readi lamp up."

Mama smiled. She made us all hot chocolate with whipped crea on it. Later she fried liver and bacon for supper, the bacon separatel When she went to wash the pan my father said, "No, leave the bac fat in the pan and put it back on the stove. The fat will harden and we leave it there all night that's how we can tell if there are any mi in the house."

Papa bought four pair of white coveralls for himself and a whi cap that made him look more like the painter than the super. He whit washed the cellar and when he wasn't cleaning the entrance to t building he'd be cleaning the boiler room. Mama would bring him coff and cake down there every afternoon, she said it reminded her of ho she used to bring her brothers food when they worked in the fields Lithuania. I liked to sit in the boiler room after school and watch t fire dancing through the teeth of the stove. Papa was always worryi about the damper and the valves and the steam reaching the fifth flo tenants, they were always the worst, he would say. He was forev sending one of us to look at the water gauge, he was afraid someo would push the grate or change the pressure when he wasn't there.

In November he had Janie paint a sign for him to put up in t entrance of the house. The sign said, "If you would throw cigarette but on your living room carpet, then throw them on the stairs in th house."

Two weeks later papa had Janie make him another sign sayi "There is a bathroom in every apartment in this house. If anyone wan to use the back of the stairs for their children—as is being done—plea inform me and I will ask the landlord to put a toilet there."

Nobody informed him. Nobody stopped.

He drew up a work chart that first week, special days to take o newspaper and special days for old magazine disposal. But around t time of the first trouble with the tenants and Mrs. Balbo, the newspap began to pile up.

Janie and I explored the neighborhood. I always went along. You c never tell about guys. Especially the way Janie looks now—all of sudden she starts looking this way. I wonder if she knows.

We walked softly most of the time. Some days my father wou forget to bring in the garbage can covers and Janie and I would watch small boys play at being Roman soldiers, using the covers for shie But on other days, looming like a giant above us there would be M

Balbo, the tenant we had seen that first day. We were always surprised that the earth didn't roll and rattle as she came by.

She carried two large paper bags filled with groceries and she blocked our way into the house, balancing the bags somehow on her enormous stomach as she spoke. I was immediately afraid of what she could do to us.

"Well isn't that nice," she said. "Brother and sister keeping each other company."

She was like a huge elephant looping through the forest, tearing down our trees.

"You should have seen our last super," she said, capturing us. "Filthy. Cleaned the hall every two weeks with a mop dirtier than the inside of a trash can. But come two weeks before Christmas and up would go the clean white curtains on the entrance door and up goes the steam all day. Come January second and off the curtains went and we froze again."

Janie said, "Is there anything wrong in your apartment that you would like us to tell my father about?"

Mrs. Balbo said, "I'll be down to visit. Soon. In person."

She kept her promise. Steadily. In the middle of our supper. Late, late evening when we were ready to go to bed. Early Sunday mornings when we were rolling over for a second sleep. She came down with complaints and with soups, thick yellow soups swimming in fat.

"For your mama," she said to Janie, who opened the door halfway, we had strict instructions never to let Mrs. Balbo in.

"You tell your mama to drink it good and hot and it will help the cramps."

We never found out how Mrs. Balbo knew about mama's cramps. She had her own private grapevine that supplied her with the most intimate details about us—from the blinding headaches my father often got, to the boil under my arm that I was violently ashamed of.

She came down with a poultice.

"Here, try this. It's an old Hungarian remedy. You'll see how good it is."

But with our rejection of her ointments and health foods Mrs. Balbo's complaints increased. My father's face grew pale and haunted, he formed a habit of roaming the cellar late at night as if he expected Mrs. Balbo to be lurking behind every corner. And every evening now

at supper after he finished his coffee and his cigarette he played with the doll. Janie and I would start to get up.

"Sit, sit," he would say softly. "What's your hurry, don't go away."

He would fondle the doll, knock her over, lift her up, drop her again. His face would become gay looking, animated, his hands reminded me of a cat's paw darting out for a small moving object. He would remove a small pin from the doll's arm, examine it carefully as if it had special meaning for him. His manner at this point became slow and deliberate, he moved with precision. His tongue darted back and forth like a small serpent as he brought the pin closer to the doll. He frowned with the exertion of choosing a spot and then a small, thoughtful smile appeared on his face as he plunged the needle in, directly into the left kneecap.

My mother stood in the doorway.

"Get up so I can clear the table," she said.

Her voice made me gasp, the spotlight widened to take in the rest of the house. The room turned slightly making me sick. Mrs. Balbo had varicose veins and at the moment my father plunged the needle in I had seen a vein pop and blue liquid come running out. I slept badly and dreamed of a fat old bear limping wounded and bleeding over the snow.

After school I waited for Mrs. Balbo to come around the corner from the market. I watched her carefully. She was limping. I could swear I hadn't noticed her limping before. She stopped when she saw me and gave a great sigh.

"It's my legs," she said. "All of a sudden they hurt like needles and pins were sticking them."

I backed away and ran upstairs, shivering. My mother was ironing and my father sat reading the newspaper, the light shone on his soft silky brown hair, his eyes were mild and soft and I told myself I was crazy.

But afterwards, when my father went down to look at the stove I pulled the pins out of the doll's legs.

The complaints increased as the days grew colder. My mother began to get a worried look on her face but my father always smiled at Mrs. Balbo and said, "Certainly. I'll come right up and fix it."

I wonder if she noticed how his hand shook when he handed her her rent receipt.

We began to gather little tid-bits to tell each other about Mrs. Balbo. She became our favorite subject. How fat she was, how untidy, how he

stockings always sagged, the spots on her coat. How she looked out of the window all day so she wouldn't miss a thing that happened on the block. How one night when Janie and I came down from the roof we heard her talking to herself.

"How do you know she was alone?" Janie said.

We all turned and looked at her as if she was crazy because no one would ever come to visit Mrs. Balbo.

She came down one Sunday evening in the middle of our supper. She stood in the doorway trying to get further in. My father approached her cautiously, sideways as one would a dangerous animal.

She was panting and behind her the yellow long haired dog panted too. I noticed suddenly that their eyes were curiously alike even to the small pieces of dirt in each corner.

"The ceiling fell on me," she cried. "Look!"

My father and I hurried upstairs with her. The fallen ceiling turned out to be a small flake-off in the kitchen. We came back down. My father sat down and pulled his fingers till the knuckles snapped.

"She's going to tell the landlord a bunch of lies," he said. "She's going to tell him she never gets any steam or hot water and that I broke her window last week instead of fixing it."

"Did she say that?" Janie cried.

"Of course not. She wouldn't to my face," he shouted. "Everyplace we go we meet them."

He pounded his fist on the table and didn't stop. His eyes burned with a terrible grievance.

"Lock the doors, shut the windows tight—there's no place. . . ."

My mother went quickly for a cool wet towel and a small plate of ice cubes. She placed the towel around my father's head.

"She's a devil," my mother said, patting his shoulder, making small crooning sounds.

Janie went to the clothes closet and came out with her coat on.

"I'm going out," she said. "I have a date."

My father stopped pounding the table.

"Tonight you stay in. The way things are outside. I want you here."

My mother said, "If you go out Mrs. Balbo's going to grab ahold of you and start another fight."

"But I promised," Janie said. "He's waiting for me."

My mother began to cry.

"We have to stay close to each other that's all. You see what people can do to us, what they do to your father. But together we're safe. Please Janie. Just for tonight."

I said, "Mama's right. You shouldn't go out with this guy. Whoever he is."

"Then you go down and tell him I'm sick. You tell him."

"I'd be glad to," I said.

I hoped she wasn't going to cry, or if she was, that she'd do it while I was gone and be finished when I got back.

When I got downstairs Janie's date was in the front hall all spruced up like he was going to have a big night.

Not with Janie, I thought.

"Tell her I'm sory she's sick," he said as if he believed me.

When I got back Janie and my father were playing casino and mama had put the coffee up. All the windows were shut and after I came in my mother locked the door.

It became very hot in the room. We played knock rummy and my father won every game except one. By ten o'clock he had stopped frowning. My mother looked at Janie as if to say, there, you see.

Later we all talked, the way we hadn't since we moved here.

Mama told us about Lithuania where she was born. All of her sisters were tall and had large hands and feet; she was the only one in the family who was small and dainty. She talked about her father who had a long black beard and snow white hair. He walked down the village street and the children used to laugh and say, there goes old black and white, but he didn't mind at all.

"He was a very good natured man," she said, looking at my father with a small sigh.

My father put out his cigarette, lit another.

"I was thinking about the farm in New Jersey," he said. "About that first place we had. I can tell you, your mother and I prayed a lot that year."

"What happened," I asked. Though I knew, I always felt the pain in what he said, saw the catastrophe each time with the same big hurt, the same anger, felt a new kindness for him, a sadness.

"The crop had to be right, everything had to go smoothly if we were to survive. But it rained, damn it. It rained every other day I bet, that year. Never saw so much rain in my life. Turned the field into a swamp. We left that September. You and Janie were still little."

"I remember it," Janie said stubbornly.

Mama said, "You couldn't have. You were only four years old."

Janie shook her head.

"I remember coming over the bridge into the city. I wish we had stayed in New Jersey."

My father began to cough as if the smoke from his cigarette had gone down wrong.

"Impossible," he said. "It was mud, all mud and three feet deep."

Janie cried, "It would have dried up. Sooner or later. Whoever heard of a field that never . . ."

My mother walked over and slapped Janie very hard, and then stood there as if wondering why her hand had gone out so fast.

Janie faced her, a large patch growing on her face and mama burst into tears. Janie's face turned white around the red patch, she walked slowly over and put out her arms as if mama had received the blow instead of giving it. I wish Janie had cried too.

The next day Janie stayed home from school sick and I stayed home to keep her company. She sat up in bed in her slip. I sat on a chair next to her. Janie ran her hands through her hair.

"Hand me my brush, Pete. Over there."

"Let me do it."

"No."

"Please Janie."

"Well only because I'm sick."

I brushed her hair till it was smooth and shiny and I was gentle. I didn't want to hurt her.

"There. Take a look."

"Good, it's very good Pete."

She put the mirror down. She hadn't really looked in it.

"Don't you like to go out nights, Pete?"

"Sure, once in a while."

"What about Angela? She's nice, Pete. She likes you, she says you're the nicest looking fellow on the block."

I shook my head and took her hand.

"I like staying with . . ."

She pulled her hand away and rolled over and began to sob but she couldn't let me touch her or help her stop.

"What's the matter? Janie, tell me," but she kept on crying.

I thought, the virus makes her act like that. I sat there miserable, cold and crying inside too.

That night my father and I went up on the top floor to replace tilbs. I told him a joke I had heard in school and we walked down laughing. I loved to hear him laugh, his face got all crinkled and the laughing came out as if it had been all bottled up and just waiting for something funny to give it a chance. When we walked past Mrs. Balbo's

door the landlord was talking to her outside. They both stopped talkin when they saw us. My father stopped laughing.

I hurried after him into the house. He sat down at the table as all the strength had been knocked out of him.

"Did you see them?" he cried. "Now I know."

I ran into the kitchen to make him some coffee—it helped som times.

When I came back he held the doll tightly in his hand as if he w choking her.

"Let's play cards," I shouted. "I'll go get mama," but he didn't answe

He opened his hand. The doll fell and landed on her back and I sa the pins, one stuck in each eye. My father reached out for the coffe When he saw my face he took the doll and pulled her out of my reac My eyes burned, my head began to hurt. I went into the bathroom an saw my face flushed and shocked and worried staring back at me. A night long the thought of a blinded. Mrs. Balbo kept me awake. In th afternoon I got up enough courage to knock at her door. The was no answer. Listening against the door all I heard was the sou of a faucet dripping. She wasn't in the street in front of the house in the butcher shop on the block where she often sat talking with t old black shawled woman who owned the store. I circled the block, loo ing into stores and finally I walked through the park. I spotted her i mediately on a bench. Her coat was flung open, her flat flabby bo lay exposed to the sun. I stood trembling before her. Her forehead w creased and full of pain, her thick lips moved as if pleading and su denly I could imagine her eyes vacant and sightless under the clos lids. I had to see them. Sweat streamed down my back, my head beg to throb. I braced myself to run and I called out in a loud voice, "M Balbo."

She opened her eyes. They were sightless at first, as if she h returned from a bad dream and was unsure of where she was. She w Mrs. Balbo, and yet she wasn't, it was as if the sun had changed h She looked at me. I saw here eyes focus and I thought, she can s A tremendous, painful relief ran through me.

She's a devil, I thought, but as I looked a nightmare thing happen her eyes filled with tears and one tear, slowly sickeningly faltered the edge of her eye and fell over, splashed down her face on to her ch

I turned and ran from her. I thought once that I heard her call my name as I ran. She knows, she knows what we've been doing, we mu use the doll again, I thought. I wandered deep into the park, listen watching. On a rock some of the neighborhood crowd were having

picnic. I passed them quickly. Everyone was out, the day was large and grand and I had to tell them all at home about the good day. I had to tell my father that the eyes of the devil could cry and that we could go out of the house now and that no one could hurt him as much as he thought.

I ran into the house.

"Where's pa?"

"He's up in Mrs. Balbo's fixing a leak," my mother said.

I rushed upstairs to Mrs. Balbo's apartment and stood in the doorway watching him. He was bent down loosening a pipe under the sink, digging at it viciously. There was a small gurgling noise and when he stood up water was rapidly gathering at his feet from the hole he had just made.

I rushed to the landing where he couldn't see me. He walked out calmly and closed the door. There was a small unbelievable smile on his face. After he had gone I stood and listened to the sound of the water ruining Mrs. Balbo's apartment. I went downstairs. My mother was cooking and Janie was sitting by the window reading.

I started for the bedroom where my father had gone.

"Don't go in there," my mother said.

Her voice was high, but controlled.

"It's going to be another mess," I shouted, suddenly on to all the others as if the knowledge had been hiding all this time in my head.

"Unless he goes up right now and stops it and cleans it up. He made a flood. She'll come down and yell."

"So now she has something to yell about," my mother said.

I started for the door but she sprang toward it blocking me.

"Leave your father alone," she cried and in her voice was a kind of blindness and fear that made me sick. I started to push her aside and then I knew that if she wouldn't listen neither would be.

Something cracked inside of me. Goodbye, goodbye, I thought. I felt like crying and kneeling before her but instead I turned to Janie who hadn't said a word.

"Janie, listen, tell her," I began.

Janie shook her head. A look of unspeakable pity came on her face and I knew that she had found out about them for herself a long time ago and it was just a matter of time, that she was just being kind and doing it slow.

My mother said, "We have time for a game before supper. Pete, you can be Janie's partner. Get the cards."

I took the cards from the table drawer and threw them at the ceiling so that the air was filled with dying jacks and queens and aces. Janie

smiled sadly as if to say goodbye to me. And suddenly I saw the reddish brown hair of Angela and the dark blue eyes of Margaret who sat next to me in math but I couldn't see Janie's face anymore and the spotlight widened and became the whole world.

In the morning Janie wore her bathrobe and she buttoned it right up to her neck when she saw me. When she went to get my coffee my mother said in a loud scornful voice,

"Let him get his own now."

RiGhT FaCe

No Halo?

If doing good is the only certainly happy action of a man's life, John D. Rockefeller Jr. in reaching the age of 85 must look back through the years with much satisfaction. He would, in his modesty, utterly disclaim greatness. But there is a greatness that springs from goodness and this, it seems to us, is what has given his life meaning and character . . . we are happy to offer this tribute to one who asked nothing of the world except to be helpful, but gave so much in return.—*New York Times* editorial.

Everything Ship-shape

Loud praise echoed through the corridors of San Francisco libraries today.

The year-end grand jury report on libraries praised City Librarian Laurence Clarke and Frank A. Clarvoe, secretary of the library Commission, for "their ability to provide so adequately library service under the present handicaps."

The handicaps cited include lack of books, need for main library modernization, and not enough trained librarians.—San Francisco *Call-Bulletin.*

Impartial Observer

Tokyo. A Japanese writer who has been critical of the United States has expressed sympathy for America's efforts to solve the Negro problem. Ashihei Hino, a novelist just returned from a two-month trip to the United States, said he saw improvement in the status of Negroes in many places, including Little Rock. . . . Mr. Hino said that the Negro, "if he demands outright equality, without improving his own record for crime, ignorance and uncleanliness, is bound to fail. . . . I visited Little Rock,

Ark., with a preconception mixed with dread. I found out quickly my preconception was completely wrong. It was a quiet, beautiful city, where whites and colored people were living together in harmony. . . ."—The *New York Times.*

Anti-Fascist

Laborite member of Parliament Arthur Lewis complained today that the British frigate Flamingo, transferred recently to West Germany's navy, has been renamed the Graf Spee.

Mr. Lewis said he would ask in the House of Commons that Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd suggest to German authorities that they pick another name.

The pocket battleship called the Adm. Graf Spee sailed under Hitler's orders in World War II.—AP dispatch.

books in review

Portrait or Caricature?

THE IRONIC GERMAN: A STUDY OF THOMAS MANN, by Erich Heller. Little, Brown and Company. $6.50.

ONE closes this provocative and disturbing book with a sense of depression. It is almost as if we were being thrown back to another era, to another century. For Mr. Heller's study of Thomas Mann constitutes an attempt to reclaim him for the "conservaitve imagination," to peel off, one by one, the layers upon layers of profound experience that had accumulated around the writer between the publication of *Buddenbrooks* at the beginning of this centutry and *Doctor Faustus* at the end of the second World War.

The center of this book is occupied by a lengthy analysis of Mann's *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen—Reflections of an Unpolitical Man*—a volume of essays published in 1918.

It is unfortunate that this book is unavailable in English; for the unwary reader might easily be misled by Mr. Heller's assertion that it is actually not a political book. Thomas Mann himself, writing at a later date, is witness to the contrary; for during the Nazi era he spoke of his "shame" at remembering his "political folly" and the "polemical incomprehension" with which he had opposed democracy at a "certain period of my life."

But Mr. Heller will not accept Mann's serious and sincere repudiation; and sees in it nothing but a typical example of "his singing out of tune" to which Mann was prone "whenever the song was a political one."

It is, as a matter of fact, central to Heller's thesis that the German writer's character, and the character of his work, remained unchanged and essentially "conservative" throughout his career; that his reading of history was consistently "ironical"—that is, uncommitted—and even "tragical," and that Mann ever displayed the "utmost skepticism concerning all possibilities of politically engineering a higher degree of happiness and dignity." And it is also central to Heller's thesis that Mann never really departed from the "non-political" platform upon which he stood during the first World War; and that any apparent departure constituted merely a kind of tangential aberration, which had nothing to do with the essential man.

The chapter devoted to the *Betrachtungen*, entitled "The Conservative Imagination," is the longest in the book, the most closely reasoned, and the most impassioned; the "conservative imagination" is described as not "easily persuaded of the progressive

happiness of the human race," and its aesthetic philosophy as not concerned with "any meaning to be found beyond the labour of conscientious creation."

To recreate a Mann ever "above the battle," he must be analyzed, in Heller's words, as the artist who is "barred from any particular belief by that comprehensive vision, the passion for affirming whatever can be made to yield to the principle of form, and by that boundless justice which gives its assent to everyone who in the drama of the imagination speaks his own particular truth—'and be it the Devil himself'."

It may be recalled that the polemic of the *Betrachtungen* arose during the first World War and was principally directed by Thomas Mann against his Francophile and democratic brother, the novelist Heinrich Mann, who had for some time now been proclaiming his alliance with a militant liberalism. As a matter of fact, it is at once apparent that Thomas Mann was really addressing his own conscience, as he argued passionately and ponderously against writers who still adhered to the tenets of progress and civilization and democracy. Such writers Thomas Mann called contemptuously "Zivilisationsliteraten"—that is, committed, "radical litterateurs of the most recent type." Of course, his brother readily perceived that the notion that Thomas Mann was writing a "non-political" book was nonsense. "My brother," he wrote, "called himself non-political, just at the moment, when, for the first time in his life, he did become vigorously political-minded." But in Mr. Heller's eyes, the *Betrachtungen* is "an impassioned plea for individualistic privacy," and nothing more; though an even casual reading of the original volume proves the contrary. The book is, as Mann later stated, anti-liberal, anti-democratic; and bristles on almost every page with contempt for the progressive ideas of the age. We select one passage at random—not in order to discredit Mann, but rather to vindicate his later judgment. On page xxxii of the German edition of 1918 we read as follows: "If in these pages I assert that Democracy, that politics itself, is foreign to the German character and even poisonous; when I even question or deny Germany's vocation for politics . . . I do so with the conviction that the German people can never love political democracy, for the simple reason that they can never love politics, and that the much maligned authoritarian state is best suited to them. . . ."

This was spoken in 1918. Years later Thomas Mann was to come around to his brother's views, but after many bitter life experiences. But for Mr. Heller, 1918 is the stopping point of Mann's moral and aesthetic development. All works subsequent to that period are viewed from this particular vantage ground.

Every book of criticism, of course, tells us more about the critic than about the subject of his criticism. In Mr. Heller's case this is particularly true, because he argues from a metaphysical position which sharply separates the categories of "Being" and "Doing" (in favor of the former), raises the ironic and sceptical self to a position of "ideal wisdom"; identifies knowledge with "tragic" knowledge, and consciousness

with a fall from innocence," with "disease"; speaks mystically of a distinction between "mind" and "soul," without clarifying either; and thus raises Thomas Mann to a sort of Kierkegaardian existentialist heaven, where the "self" saves itself by constantly withdrawing from all serious commitments. . . .

In such a way is Thomas Mann turned into "pure idea." The human being who repudiated Nazism and Hitler, threw down the gauntlet to the most execrable political villainy of any century, who renounced all honors conferred on him by his country, and even refused to return to his native land after the peace, is in this book of Heller's screened behind a metaphysical mist and snow, which would do justice to Hans Castorp's experiences. The dialectic of Mann's intellectual development brought him from the pessimistic glorification of ancient burgherdom, from the rhapsodies on death and decay, from a profound Schopenhauerean pessimism, that saw no alternative to bourgeois "humanism" but "barbarism," toward a perception that the "antithesis of bourgeois culture" was "not barbarism, but collectivism." This development is passed over with nothing but a scornful word in Heller's book.

Now let us look at the reality. Against a Mann who is only concerned with the ethic of "being" rather than with that of "doing," who is ever against "the unregenerate believers in regeneration through revolutionary policies," set the writer who *moved* from the burgher philosophy of *Buddenbrooks,* and the still unresolved ambiguities of *The Magic Mountain* toward the new communal ideal of the *Joseph* epics, toward the final "Abrechnung"—a settling of accounts with Germany in *Doctor Faustus,* and finally to the essay on Chekhov, published in the March *Mainstream,* with its insistence on the saving grace of work.

Is all this "being," "becoming," or "doing"? one asks oneself—or perhaps in this account of Mann's fixed ironic vision there is scarcely time for detailing the history of Europe, Germany, and the world in those fateful years? True, Germany is described—but how? Not the Germany of *Doctor Faustus,* or of Heine's prophetic words—but a romantic, Hamlet-like, mystical, self-divided world, oscillating between "undisciplined ecstasies" and "unquestioning discipline"—a Germany that scarcely knows about Krupp, Thyssen, Goebbels, Kapp, Hindenburg, the Drang nach Osten, Hjadmar Schacht, or the camp at Belsen!

Unlike Thomas Mann, Mr. Heller still seems to be under the illusion that a Schopenhauerian pessimism is disinterested and stands above the battle; and he does not seem to recall Mann's too indulgent but ironic comment (written in 1928) on Schopenhauer, who in his cosmic compassion for human suffering, in the year 1848, "ostentatiously lent his 'goggles' to the officer who from Schopenhauer's house was reconnoitering the men on the barricades, that he might better direct the fire."

Need one labor the point? Heller's image of Thomas Mann is like that described by the German poet Platen, *"statt des Weltbildes, nur ein Bild des Bilds der Welt"*—only an image of an image. It must, however, be gratifying to Mr. Heller to learn that his chapter

on "The Conservative Imagination" has already appeared as a separate book in West Germany, where it is bound to form a prelude to a more official "rehabilitation" of a great but wayward German genius. FREDERIC EWEN

Puerto Rican New York

ISLAND IN THE CITY by Dan Wakefield, Houghton, Mifflin Co. $3.80.
UP FROM PUERTO RICO by Dr. Elena Padilla. Columbia University Press. $3.75.
THE PUERTO RICANS by Christopher Rand. Oxford University Press. $3.75.

NOTHING has been so dramatic as the tremendous influx of Puerto Ricans into New York City since the war. Inevitably, as with the Negroes before them, their appearance in such large numbers, with their accompanying demands for housing, jobs, and all the other necessities of living, has set all kinds of alarms and even panic going among certain sections of the press and population. And though they came to escape island poverty imposed on them by American economic interests, and though they are considered not colonials but fellow Americans, still, in both the serious and gutter press, they constitute a Problem. In fact, they are considered the most acute "problem" New York City faces today; and it is from the point of view of that "problem," with all its implications, that most of the books now appearing view them.

Of the three new books that have been published on the subject of the New York Puerto Ricans, Dan Wakefield's *Island in the City*, despite certain limitations, is by far the best. The author—who, by the way is still in his twenties—lived six months among the Puero Ricans in New York. His book is by no means the account of a slummer, however, and in fact is remarkable for the extent to which he manages to capture authentic aspects of Puerto Rican life.

He does a good job of describing the horrible housing conditions, the crowded, old and inefficient schools (with one exception) and the medieval treatment dealt out to the drug addicts in jails and hospitals as well as in the special hospital for drug addicts at Riverside. Mr. Wakefield introduces us to living people and through them to some of the real problems of life among the new and fantastically profitable ghettoes of New York City. If ever a people had the right to complain to the world about a long train of abuses visited upon them by an unfeeling exploiting class, it is the Puerto Ricans. Mr. Wakefield reports these abuses, but doesn't really seem to know where the exits are, though he does indicate some of the means and methods resorted to by various groups and agencies for help and self-help. He cites, for instance, the work of Rev. Norman Eddy and his "East Harlem Protestant Parish." He tells in some detail the story of a notorious youth gang who decided to reform themselves and re-establish their club upon an entirely different basis—from a gang ready to fight with real zip guns and even more lethal weapons smoking marihuana and sniffing even more deadly drugs, like cocaine, to a social club which held regular dances and other non-deadly activities.

Not least of all the injustices and indignities visited upon the Puerto Ricans is the insistence by certain newspapers and other sources of "public opin-

on" that they behave at all times according to the stereotypes worked out for them. For instance:

A photographer from a New York daily paper came to East 100th Street with an assignment to get a picture of 'the children playing in the garbage." It was Sunday morning, and the children were scrubbed and dressed up in their finest clothes—the smallest boys in suits and ties like their fathers', the girls in starched and lacey dresses with bright colored bows. None were playing in the garbage. The photographer went to a store-front church on the block and asked the minister to help him carry out his assignment. The minister explained that it was Sunday, and the children did not play in the garbage. The photographer, getting anxious now, said, "Look—there's some kids—over there. . . ." He ran to a garbage can, yanked off the lid, and motioned to the silent, staring children. "Hey kids—c'mere—over here! Let's play. . . ."

The most serious omission in Mr. Wakefield's account of the Puerto Ricans in New York is the story of the struggle of the Puerto Ricans themselves, led often by militant organizations, for their own salvation. One would get the impression from his book that the Puerto Ricans have never fought for their rights. But the facts are quite different.

Spanish Harlem of the Twenties rocked with struggle. This extended from the activities of the vociferous anarchist minority, with their paper, *Solidaridad,* to the huge mass meetings organized by the Ateneo Obrero Hispano and Alianza Obrera Puertorriquena. After that came the period of the "Puerto Rican Spanish League" in the heart of Spanish Harlem, perhaps the best organized Puerto Rican civic organization that ever existed.

The 1929 crisis brought the Left forces, primarily the Communist Party, among the Puerto Rican masses, and that period of tremendous mass demonstrations for food and jobs, which was absolutely new to people in those days, included thousands of Puerto Ricans. Nothing stirred the Puerto Ricans so profoundly as the attack upon Republican Spain by the Franco fascists in 1936, and tremendous demonstrations were held to aid the Spanish republic. Puerto Ricans joined the International Brigade. The Club Pasionaria, composed wholly of Spanish Puerto Ricans and other Latin American women, marched throughout Spanish Harlem in their colorful uniforms chanting: *"Pero a Madrid . . . No Pasaran. . . ."*

Thousands of dollars in money and clothing was collected by the Spanish Workers Club, with its Puerto Rican membership, located at 102nd Street and Madison Avenue. Hundreds of Puerto Rican women knitted sweaters and gloves for the soldiers of Republican Spain in the "Unidad Fraternal Hispana." Further hundreds of the 600 members of the "Mutualista Obrera Puertorriquena" at 103rd and Lexington, of which Manuel Medina was then president, knitted sweaters and saved silver foil for the benefit of the Loyalist cause in Spain.

Mr. Wakefield says nothing of all this. Nor does he mention the Harlem of Vito Marcantonio and his host of Puerto Rican captains getting together for a final check-up every night during the election campaigns in the Spanish Workers Club.

This is the Harlem that comes to mind of every Puerto Rican whether he is in Puerto Rico or New York. The Puerto Rican "jibara" nailed pictures of Marcantonio on his hut wall up

in the mountains far from New York. The Harlem, yes, of slums, cockroaches, rats, drug addiction and landlords—that exists; but also the Harlem that fought all these with the weapon of mass struggles and mobilizations with all the progressive forces united, from the reverend of the small pentecostal church to the Communist Party—that is more truly Spanish Harlem. It was the Harlem that made the American Labor Party the number one party in the 17th district and sent Oscar Garcia Rivera, the first Puerto Rican to the Assembly in Albany.

This is the Puerto Rican Harlem that is crying for a book to be written about it. But we still say that *Island in the City* is the best existing book on Puerto Rican Harlem, and Mr. Wakefield deserves full credit.

We cannot say as much about the other two books.

Dr. Padilla's study is an extension of her doctoral thesis and suffers from that fact. It is basically a study of twelve city blocks in a New York slum area inhabited mostly by Puerto Ricans. She calls this area by the fictitious title, Eastville.

Dr. Padilla's limitations are quickly evident. A study of a few blocks cannot be considered a study of a whole people. As usual, the sociological procedure of gathering information—door-to-door interviews, questionnaires, etc.—more often frustrates than reveals, teases rather than satisfies. A large number of facts are conscientiously collated by Dr. Padilla and her colleagues but they leave the subject almost as much in the air as when they began it. But the book is a sincere and earnest attempt to "understand" New York Puerto Ricans. It offers a great deal of first-hand information, no more an no less significant than most such so ciological surveys offer us, and th reader himself must know how to judg them.

Dr Padilla's work is certainly a honest one. That much cannot be sa about Christopher Rand's *The Puert Ricans*. This book—originally a seri of four articles in the *New Yorker*—has all the earmarks of a hurried, su perficial job.

Where Dr. Padilla, as a scientis refrained from personal opinions, M Rand feels no such squeamish inhibi tion. He admits that his "facts" we picked up on the run and were cut suit his own needs rather than the o jective situation. Most of the book based on casual conversations wi Puerto Ricans, the opinions and observa tions of social workers, and, as an i dication of Mr. Rand's peculiar turn mind, on the testimony of police of cers who, Mr. Rand claims, "bend bac ward" to please the Puerto Ricans!

Here are a few samples of M Rand's insights: "Usually passengers planes are subdued and silent, in r experience, but not these Puerto R cans." "Signs requesting quiet are fr quent in offices where Puerto Rica congregate." That other people, us ally immigrant, are "noisy" is no n charge—Jews, Negroes, Italians, et have, in their time, also been tagg with that particular label; they ha also been jeered at for liking thir op native foods in preference to Americ and to speaking their own langua rather than English (with apparen the alternative of keeping silent public if they didn't know English)

The Puerto Ricans "have no co sciousness of time." They "get ghe

mentality and never learn what New York has to offer." "When the Salk vaccine was first introduced in New York on a large scale, word went among the Puerto Ricans that it was a secret device for poisoning them." As if all this were not enough, the absence of organized crime among the adult population strikes Mr. Rand as suspicious: "The Puerto Ricans don't go into the systematic crime of the Al Capone or Murder, Inc., type, perhaps because they have not been around long enough to get organized that way."

And this impatience of Mr. Rand's for adult crime about sums up the importance of his book as a guide to an understanding of the Puerto Rican people.

These three books, with their varying reports, prove one thing at least—that the full story of the New York Puerto Ricans is still to be told, as indeed it is still to be lived. In any case, these "noisy," "ghetto-fond" people, who for some perverse reason refuse to become organized criminals, will yet write vivid and stirring chapters in the books to come.

JESUS COLON

Workers in Wartime

BRIGHT WEB IN THE DARKNESS by Alexander Saxton. St. Martin's Press. $3.95.

THE third novel by the author of *Grand Crossing* and *The Great Midland*, is a story of the struggle of Negro workers for union recognition during World War II. The action takes place in the main around a San Francisco shipyard, being presented from the point of view of three people: a young Negro woman, Joyce Allen, who works as a welder and dreams of becoming a concert pianist; Tom O'Regan a restless uncommitted seaman in love with Sally Kalela with whom Joyce comes to share an apartment; and the lawyer Walter Stone, most complex of the three, who is engaged in crippling self-conflict as he strives to defy a power-driven union boss and help the workers. His effort ends in the compromise of his integrity—a sell out.

Saxton writes of the rank and file workers—Negro and white—with a great deal of warmth but to me the most convincing aspect of the novel is the description of the shipyard at work, the streets of San Francisco, the bridges, the houses of the workers—and the pictures of the desert, the drab little town from which Joyce comes, the far vistas and lonely beauty of the hills.

In spite of great detail, the personal stories of the workers have the serious weakness of never really rising to the basic conflict: the struggle for equal status in the union. The characters who carry the narrative are those who cannot influence it in a telling way, while the two leaders, the Reverend Beezely and the "Sergeant" are peripheral. When they do win their fight and are admitted to the union we are simply told about it, it happens "off-stage." The threads are never quite pulled together; one is not certain—beyond the warmth of his feeling for the characters—what Saxton intended as the overall impression. In short, the book lacks both unity and clarity of theme. One is put off by the emphasis upon the lawyer Stone, who flounders constantly

in his vacillations and ambiguities. There is no genuine development of the three main characters. At the end of the novel Joyce Allen may have a greater sense of belonging with her people, but Tom O'Regan, far away and frightened, gropes toward his wife Sally because of his need of purposeful companionship rather than from any insight into her sturdy values; and we leave Walter Stone at the grave of his unhappy wife, wondering at the waste and misery of human life and the eternal capacity of man to hope! There is no one who like Pledger McAdams in *The Great Midland* wrestles "like Jacob for the knowledge that will set his people free."* The Reverend Beezeley is always the good shepherd with a clear sense of the path for his flock to take. And the "Sergeant" so hates the white bosses that even though he bows to the Reverend's judgment, he cannot bring himself to pay union dues, quitting to open a small business of his own. No basic change here.

A certain glibness in the writing prevents the novel from being as convincing (and interesting) as it would have been had Saxton explored beneath the surface of his easy detail. Reading a letter from Sally, Tom "smiled . . . tingling inside." Joyce Allen "had dreamed so much while so few of her dreams had come true. . . ." And Walter Stone ponders: "Oh, America . . . a paragraph in a schoolbook, a history carved on the headstones of country graveyards. And what remained of all this?"

What might have been a cogent story of the struggle against power is weakened by too many disparable elements, facile writing, and a failure to come to grips with its most dramat conflict.

ELLEN CARR

Underground to Canada

MAKE FREE, by William Breyfogl J. B. Lippincott Company. $4.50.

IT is significant that this book, a hi tory of the Underground Railroa was written by a Canadian. It has perspective and critical verve that o might expect of a son of that soil. the days of the Underground Railro Canada was truly the Land of the Fr Men and women, escaping from slave in the Deep South, frequently settl for a time in the Northeastern stat Ohio, Indiana, New England, but, pecially after the passage of the Fu tive Slave Act, they were really secu only when they had crossed the bord In one of the source books on whi Breyfogle has drawn, *The Undergrou Rail Road,* by William Still, publish in 1872, Mrs. Frances Ellen Watk Harper put it well. In the course brilliant and untiring work for people, Mrs. Harper had extended lecture tour in 1856 to Canada a wrote to a friend of the experien "Well, I have gazed for the first ti upon Free Land, and, would you beli it, tears sprang to my eyes and I we Oh, it was a glorious sight to gaze the first time on a land where a p slave flying from our glorious land liberty would in a moment find fetters broken, his shackles loosed, whatever he was in the land of W ington, beneath the shadow of Bun Hill Monument or even Plym

* See Charles Humboldt's article, *M stream,* July '49.

Lock, here he becomes a man and a brother."

Breyfogle surveys the history of slavery in the American South and the struggles against it with both clarity and concern. He presents tale after tale of incredible courage and resolution, building, from typical incidents, a composite picture of a movement that was essentially diverse and, even at the time it was under way, was glimpsed only fleetingly and in part even by those most intimately involved. The Underground Railroad was effectively organized; by its nature this meant secretly organized. It was never adequately .chronicled. Routes, incidents, the very identity of its operators and passengers had to be kept confidential at the time; after the war many details were forgotten and even remembered events had to be pulled, with great effort, from those scattered persons who remembered.

Some of the major participants of course were well known. Many were obscure. All were important and Breyfogle has an interest in them all, even in the few renegades who, for very little money, betrayed their fellow operators or the fugitives entrusted to them. He has some sharp words for the ostentatious piety of slave-owners, piety that went hand-in-hand with brutal disregard of simple human decency in their relations with their slaves. The heroes and heroines, both fugitives and operators, are drawn with the feeling for character and human differences that one finds in a good novelist. He sketches the many figures in his diffuse and intensely exciting drama with precision and candor, apparently glossing over no idiosyncracies even in persons widely admired. Whether one agrees or not with his estimates of such well-known leaders as John Brown and William Lloyd Garrison, the reader must be grateful for the color and frankness with which he presents them.

We can learn from Breyfogle. Such attention as his to detail, such close scrutiny as his of the men and women whose lives were touched by the struggles of a century ago, whose actions themselves constituted that struggle, such recognition of the potenital strength of quite ordinary people is in order today. Virginia's recent emergence from under the shadow of "massive resistance" was not a product of the courts alone. The people of Virginia, white and Negro, are having a hand in shaping her future. There is room now, in the South, for a Breyfogle to write, first hand, what he can see happening there.

GRETA CORSMAN

Not So Prosperous

THE AFFLUENT SOCIETY, by John Kenneth Galbraith. Houghton Mifflin Co. $5.00.

"NO one will think this an angry book," says Mr. Galbraith in the course of his introductory remarks. Since his thesis is that poverty is a thing of the past and so is economic inequality, why should he be angry?

Of course, Mr. Galbraith is only referring to the western world, "Western man has escaped for the moment the poverty which was for so long his all-embracing fate." Further, ". . . in the early years of the Industrial Revolution, the rewards of increased efficiency were distributed very unequally. . . . Those who owned the new factories . . . lived in mansions. . . . Their

workers lived in dark and noisome hovels. . . ."

Presumably this is a thing of the past particularly in the United States and Mr. Galbraith sees abundance and greater equality all over the country. He does not mean that there is no poverty at all; it is just that there are very few poor people and poverty is therefore not a social problem anymore. There are two kinds of poor people still in existence, "One can think of modern poverty as falling into two broad categories. . . . Case poverty and insular poverty," says Mr. Gailbraith. "Case poverty is commonly and properly related to some characteristic of the individuals so afflicted . . . mental deficiency, bad health, excessive procreation. . . ."

Insular poverty "manifests itself as an 'island' of poverty. In the island everyone or nearly everyone is poor." Ex-President Hoover was premature when he claimed in the Twenties that there was a chicken in every pot and a car in every garage.

It is the present state of abundance that prompted Mr. Galbraith to seclude himself in Switzerland for fifteen months where he critically examined what he calls "The Conventional Wisdom," by which he means all the theories of economists that have become outdated and do not correspond to the present day realty of capitalism. His criticism extends all across the rainbow from the 'ultra-violet to the infrared' from the ultra reactionaries to the Marxists.

". . . productivity, inequality, and insecurity—were the ancient preoccupations of economics," says Mr. Galbraith and in his opinion these are not im portant problems anymore in the fac of a ". . . mountainous rise in wel being."

Mr. Galbraith's contention tha poverty has in the main disappeare from the western world as an economi problem is not even borne out by th meager statistics that he uses. Fift percent of the population in the lowe income brackets receive only 23% all money income, while 3% of th highest bracket received 15.5%. Sure it is hard to claim that this represen equality. But even if this does n represent equality perhaps the incom of the lowest paid section of the pop lation is actually high enough to pr vide them with an adequate standar of living? Mr. Galbraith shows th this is not so: 16.7% of the lowe income group received less than 20 dollars a year in 1958 when th "Heller Budget" called for arou 5000 dollars a year for a family of fo to maintain a minimum decent standa of living. Sixteen-and-a-half percent the population is not a matter of 'ca poverty', because it involves nearly million people.

The wealth of the country has i creased since then and the cost of li ing gone up, so have productivity a wages; but the conditions of the wor ers has not improved because the ri in wages has not kept up with the r in the cost of living and now we ha over five million unemployed. Ho does one measure the income of une ployed workers after they have us up their unemployment insurance?

The prosperity period of the l twenty years, if one includes the w years, again created the illusion th

pitalism has at last found the means maintain prosperity indefinitely. The sult of these illusions is a series of ›oks like this one which claim to one gree or another that Marxism is out-ıted and has to be either revised or scarded altogether.

The only thing I can say in favor this book, is that it is not as dull some of the popular books that deal ith economic problems, while its ntents are just as meager.

MYER WEISE

etters

›ITORS: *Mainsteram*:

Admirers of the novel *Temptation* ll be saddened to learn that its thor, John Pen (nom de plume of hn Szekely), died recently in Berlin the age of 57. News of his death ›m lung cancer after a long illness me in a letter to me from his wife, rs. Erzi Szekely.

Temptation was first published in is country by Creatice Age Press in 46, reissued by Citadel and later in bowdlerized pocketbook edition by ›on; it sold more than 250,000 pies. A searching revelation of peas-t hunger and ruling-class decadence Hungary under the fascist Horthy tatorship, *Temptation* was highly ıised here and abroad as one of the ›st powerful social novels of our ne; its author was compared to ›rky, Zola, Anatole France, Nexo. earlier novel, *You Can't Do That Svoboda,* published by Dial Press in 43, strikingly evoked the mood of Czech town under Nazi occupation.

John Szekely was born in Hungary, but went to Germany in 1919 when Horthy, backed by the Allied powers, marched in. He became a leading film writer, making more than 40 pictures in Germany, England, France and Italy. Forced to flee the Nazi dictatorship, he came to the United States where he lived for years with his family (chiefly in New York) and became an American citizen. In 1913 he collaborated with Ernst Lubitsch in the making of "Desire"; subsequently under various noms de plume he wrote many successful films: one, "Arise, My Love," with an anti-fascist theme, won an Academy award in 1941.

From 1950 to 1955 Szekely lived in Mexico where he wrote a new and as yet unpublished novel. When he returned to New York he found himself blacklisted despite the fact that he had never engaged in political activity. To earn a living he, his wife and their American-born daughter went to the German Democratic Republic where Szekely resumed work for the movies. One week after his death a new film of his, "Geschwader Fledermaus" ("Squadron Bat") opened in Berlin and has proved a popular success.

John Szekely hoped to return to Hungary; while fighting his losing battle for life in the hospital he completed a book of poems, "Homeward Bound," expressing his yearning for his native land.

A bright counterpoint to Szekely's last tragic months in Berlin was the selection of his 17-year-old daughter, Kathie, to play Anne Frank in the Deutsches Theater production of "The Diary of Anne Frank."

A. B. MAGIL

Editor, *Mainstream*:

The Fund for Social Analysis, which has been recently established, is offering in 1959 a limited number of grants-in-aid for studies of problems posed by Marxist theory and its application. Projects for books and essays in all fields of social science, including social philosophy and the sociology of science, will be welcomed. Grants w ordinarily range from $500.00 $3,000.00, and may be requested f an entire project, or for any part, for assistance in research, editing publication. For information a further particulars, address the Cor sponding Secretary, The Fund for Soc Analysis, Room 2800, 165 Broadw New York 6, N. Y.

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