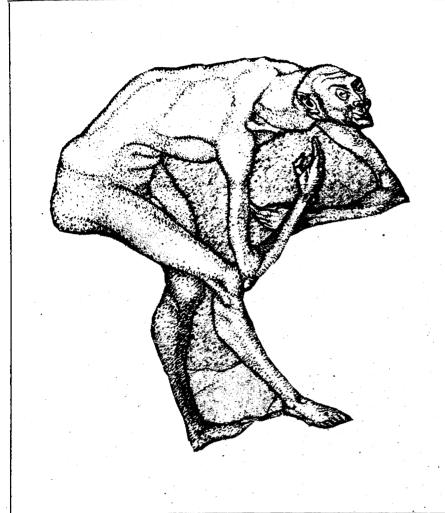
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OP Reviews

NOE GOLDWASSER Editor

JEFFREY YOUDELMAN
Associate Editor

OP Reviews is a supplement of Observation Post, a newspaper published and edited by students at City College.

OBSERVATION POST

KEN KESSLER Editor-in-Chief

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VOLUME XLIH — No. 12 FRIDAY, MARCH 29, 1968

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the professional victim

Beautiful Losers. Leonard Cohen. Viking Press, \$5.75, Bantam (paper-back), \$0.95.

By Ross Feld

"... Now is the child-period, in which all initiative has been removed from people, and they have been reduced literally to a childlike condition of tutelage of machinery. Daily the instances of this way of thinking or feeling multiply. Responsibility or personal will is, it seems, gladly repudiated; fresh theories are constantly put forward to encourage this attitude, or such as will encourage it. Discouragement of all exercise of will, or belief in individual power, that is a prevalent contemporary attitude, for better or for worse."

—Wyndham Lewis, in Time and Western Man, (1927).

Well, for better or for worse, the attitude that Lewis talked of, the politics of passivity, is still with us. What seemed to Lewis a breathtaking capitulation to a confused technology after the first world war is now expanded into a more comprehensive powerlessness before a highly developed and consuming mesh of control and destructive capability. It's a hard bone to get down, no doubt, and to suggest that we should not be concerned with our extraordinarily lonely position as men in 1968 is silly. Some of the best writing in America since the war and development of the atom bomb has been careful investigations of control, such as William Burroughs' Naked Lunch, or equally rigorous scrutinies of a single man's place in this mess, this America, so wonderfully done in the poetries of William Carlos Williams, Robert Duncan and Jack Spicer, among others. But in turmoil, as Dante teaches, people assume positions, figure, in which they deal with their lives.

Whether we are satisfied with our positions, our personal stances, or not, there is little chance of eluding them, for, even in rebellion, we assume *other* positions. One of the lessons of the poets mentioned above is that man accept his condition, accept his "field" and then set out to see what that condition is all about.

This is a very careful way to deal with the insanity which we find around us and hanging within us. Not only is it careful, but it might even seem stifling, a choking of rage, a Stoic squeeze against the bitter real. The exploration of condition seems heartless and, worse, impossible. The rebuttal to these charges and proof of the attitude's validity and necessity can be clearly shown just by contrasting its opposite, that is, the rejection of condition which either takes the form of suicide or self-pitying immersion within condition. And to really see the latter course, the soft-man in the hard-world, crying about it and loving every minute of it, vou ought to read Leonard Cohen's Beau-

The title says a lot, for in fact, the book is about losers and Mr. Cohen thinks they are beautiful. Of course, so did Dickens and James T. Farrell, who both saw the heart of gold behind the dirty faces of the down and out. But these men were dealing with the losers in the war of money. Mr. Cohen, on the other hand, has a bunch of spiritual derelicts to take care of and his response cannot be mere humanistic sympathy. They call for something more.

They are primarily three: a young man (poet maybe?) who, after his wife kills herself under an elevator, seeks the cool of arcane research on a beatified Iroquoise maiden to soothe his wounds; the wife, an Indian herself, a girl the young man met while she was a manicurist and

subsequently turned into a manic-depressive; and F., an old orphanage friend of the young man as well as part-time lover of both young man and wife. When we finally get to Mr. Cohen's house, the wife has thrown herself under the mean elevator and, as we stay, F. dies, syphilitic and mad in an asylum. We are left sitting with the hero (hero?), and we have grave doubts whether he will make it after we close the book at the end. Of course, none of these people are just folks, in any sense. They are special people, equipped with the special machinery of all real losers, the machinery which sends the whisper in and has it emerge as a shriek. They are people who have conversations like this:

—Did she ever say anything to you about my body?

-Plenty.

—Such as?

-She said you have an arrogant body.

—What the hell is that supposed to mean?

-Confess, my friend. Confess about Charles Axis. Confess your sin of pride.

—I have nothing to confess. Now turn around and I'll get dressed. It's too early for your cheap koans.

There is almost a throb beneath this sort of talk and it is an insistent throb at that. The beat is saying "look what we've come to that we have to speak this way." But it is not only the dialogue which follows this weary rhythm:

"I'm tired of facts, I'm tired of speculations, I want to be consumed by unreason. I want to be swept along. Right now I don't care what goes on under her blanket. I want to be covered with unspecific kisses. I want

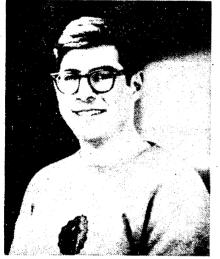
Nimrods Beat Redmen to Wrap Up League Title

Jerry Uretzky, coach of the College's rifle team was peering disinterestedly into a telescope on Friday night at Lewisohn Stadium, watching the targets of sophomore Myron Berdischewsky. This score would not be high enough to count in the crucial match that

had just taken place between the Beavers and St. John's to decide the team that would finish first in the Metropolitan Intercollegiate Rifle League (MIRL). Uretzky's thoughts were in the scorng room along with the targets of the team's top performers who had shot earlier in the evening.

The mood in the range as the targets were being scored was a dismal one. Uretzky knew the Lavender riflemen had done poorly, but wasn't sure of the St. John's results. In the visitor's locker room, the Redmen were quietly packing up their equipment. They had done poorly also, but not bad enough to lose, so they thought.

Competing in the meet were the holders of seven out of the best eight individual averages in the league. Paul Kanciruk held first place, Alan Feit was in



Alan Feit "We choked"

fourth, Yones in sixth and Frank Progl was in eighth for the College. St. John's had Hans Bosse and Greg Tomsen in second and third, respectively, as well as Butch Smith in fifth. At stake were the gold medals of first place in the MIRL, the trophy for the highest team average and the trophy for the highest individual average. All would be decided in the "shoulder-to-shoulder" competition.

Then the door to the scoring room opened, and one of the three scorers (one from each team competing - the College, St. John's, and Pratt) walked into the visitor's locker room.

"No. It can't be," said one St. John's rifleman in disbelief upon hearing that his team had lost by a score of 1069-1061. A wave of dejection swept over the room.

A few minutes later, Frank Yones, Beaver manager as well as one of the top marksmen, walked quietly out of the scoring room after double checking the figures, turned a corner and then dashed into the Beaver locker

"We won," he shouted and was immediately mobbed by the rest of the team. The relief in the room could be felt as the nimrods came out on top, although shooting one of their worst scores of the season.

"We won because they choked worse than we did," explained Feit with ready agreement from the rest of the team.

The meet was still not over yet. Tito Balestrieri, coach of the St. John's team, never a good loser, would not accept the loss lying down. He demanded that the targets be rechecked for errors in scoring.

RIFLE SUMMARIES							
Beavers (1069)							
	Prone	Kneel	Stand	Tot.			
Buchholz	99	91	82	272			
Yones	98	84	85				
Feit	76 98			267			
		88	79	265			
Kanciruk	97	83	85	265			
St. John's (1061)							
_	Prone	Kneel	Stand	Tot.			
Tomsen	87	92	80	269			
Bosse	96	94	78	268			
Smith	97	89	80	266			
Carroll	.92	89	77	258			
			,,	230			
Pratt (1039)							
	Prone	Kneel	Stand	Tot.			
Tully	97	91	78	. 266			
Kennedy	9 8	90	71	259			
Snyder	95	90	74	259			
Bover	92	89	74	255			
Mark Charles		٠,		F.33			
· · ·							

The targets each have a number on the back which corresponds to the name of the person shooting at it. When the three judges score a target they do not know whose target it is, let alone which team. Only after all the targets have been scored, are they turned over and attributed to the people who shot at them. Balestrieri was just hoping that his shooters had been the ones that got the bad scorings, although it could just as easily have been the College's riflemen who would get more points.

The atmosphere was still tense as Balestrieri and Uretzky sat under the bright lights used for scoring with the targets in front of them and half a dozen people at the door of the small room. But as the realization that Balestrieri couldn't change anything set in, the smiles began to appear on Beaver faces.

Lavender nimrod Frank Progl stopped at the door of the scoring room and motioned to Uretzky over the shoulder of the St. John's coach. "If the results had been the opposite, I would probably do the same thing," answered Uretzky with a straight face that seemed to be trying to hold back a

Finally with both sides satis-

fied that there were not enough grounds to protest, the defeat was conceded.

"I hate like hell to lose," Balestrieri said ,trying to act gracefully, "but congratulations." It was wait until next year for the Redmen, but for the Lavender next year had finally arrived.

The Beavers, with a 15-0 league record, just about clinched the league championship as only weak St. Peter's remains on their schedule. St. John's with one loss will be second.

Also kept alive was the nimrods streak of 109 consecutive league home victories which was extended to 111. This streak is not just a big number to the team, but something they are aware of. No one wants to be on the squad which ends the amazing streak. Ironically the last time the Beavers lost a league meet at Lewisohn was against St.



Mainstays of the rifle team (from left to right), Frank Yones, Paul Kanciruk, Nick Buchholz, and Alan Feit with Coach Jerry Uretzky

John's on November 1, 1958, by a margin of nine points.

The only Lavender shooter to keep up his average was Nick Buchholz who fired a score of 272. All the others fell far below their averages.

After the other teams had left.

Uretzky came out of the scoring room which also serves as his office, to speak to the team.

"I'd like to congratulate you guys," he said, "even though you don't deserve it." He then invited them to his house for a victory celebration.

Finest Beaverette Squad in College's History Closes Out Season With Loss to St. John's

The women's basketball team ended its season the same way it began it — with a loss — as they were defeated by St. John's, 57-52, Friday night at Park Gym in the championship game of a post season tournament.

Not content with ending their regular season with an 11-1 wonlost record, the Beaverettes, led by coach Roberta Cohen, tried to arrange a City University tournament. This fell through when the Queens and Hunter teams declined the invitation because they had finished their schedules a few weeks earlier. In their places the Beaverettes invited St. John's, Paterson State, and Brooklyn, three of the best teams in the

St. Johns defeated Paterson State in the opening game played on Thursday night at Park Gym by a score of 46-40.

In the second game, before an-

SCORES BY QUARTERS

BEAVERETTES 12 8 11 10—41 Brooklyn 0 7 9 13—29 Brooklyn 0 7 9 13—29 Beaverette scorers: Jean Ehret (16), Nina Sokol (6), Lil Montalbano (6), Cathy Co-lonnese (6), Marian Linder (4), Star Green-field (2), Lynn Bogash (1).

BEAVERETTES II 13 10 18—52 St. John's 12 12 21 12—57 Beaverette scorers: Jean Ehret (19), Nina Sokol (11), Lil Montalbano (11), Marian Linder (4), Ann Jacobs (4), Cathy Colon-Ü

other standing-room-only crowd. the Beaverettes easily vanquished Brooklyn, 41-29.

This brought about a game between St. John's with a 9-0 record and the Beaverettes with a

The first quarter ended as glose as expected with the Beaverettes trailing St. John's 12-11. The margin was this small mainly because of the eight points and generally outstanding play of Jean

St. John's managed to build up a six point lead towards the end of the second period, but a Beaverette rally quickly tied it up. Miss Ehret made a lay up shot. The Beaverettes then stole the ball and co-captain Nina Sokol made a bucket. Another score by co-captain Marian Linder on a fast break tied the score at 24-all

(Continued on Page 7)

Baseball Hopes Rest On Last Year's Sophs

(Second of Two Parts)

With the reversal rule in effect there is little doubt that the Baseballers will be moving up in the standings. Coach Sol Mishkin is not as believing in the rule though. He has his optimism resting in other areas.

Hopes for the spring are based on the maturing of last year's sophomores. Third baseman Steve Mazza, catcher Charlie Kolenik, and center fielder Bob Nanes, lead the list of hopefuls. Mazza went from a .160 batting average last spring to a .450 average in the fall. His fielding also improved enough for coach Mishkin to consider him the best third baseman he saw in the fall. Kolenik was a good field — no hit catcher in the spring, but jumped his average .150 points in the fall to bat over .300.

The most evident change in the Beaver lineup is the return of pitcher Ron Rizzi after a year off the mound. Rizzi won four



Captain Sam Rosenblum, bunting

games in the fall, allowing an average of less than one earned run per game in the process. Coach Mishkin says that he will follow his pitching policy of the fall, starting Rizzi every chance

The diamondmen's fall record is even more amazing considering that Nanes, the leading batter in the spring with a .345 average hit a poor .200 in the fall. with Nane's return to regular form, the team should be even more successful than in the fall.

This year the baseballers not only have the tough conference competition against them, but also the schedule. Their 17 games are squeezed into a brief one and a half month season, forcing games to be played every other day. This should heavily tax the small Beaver staff of starting pitchers, which is made up of Rizzi, Barry Poris, and Andy Sebor.

The top relievers will probably be Danny Collins, Bob Derector, Lee Hersh, and Tom Terlizzi. They should see a lot of action as the heavy schedule takes its toll on the starting pitchers.

The infield will start with Bernie Martin at first base, Fred Schiller at second, Mazza at third, and Steve Angel or Ray Weronick at shortstop. Mishkin considers Weronick a good enough fielder to win the job, but looks to the hitting of Angel.

The outfield will have Tom Richter in right field, and Nanes in center. Poris will play left field when he isn't pitching, while at other times captain Sam Rosenblum will take the position.

"I think Barry would be an allstar if he only played the outfield, but we need his pitching also. He'll have to do them both," Mishkin pointed out.

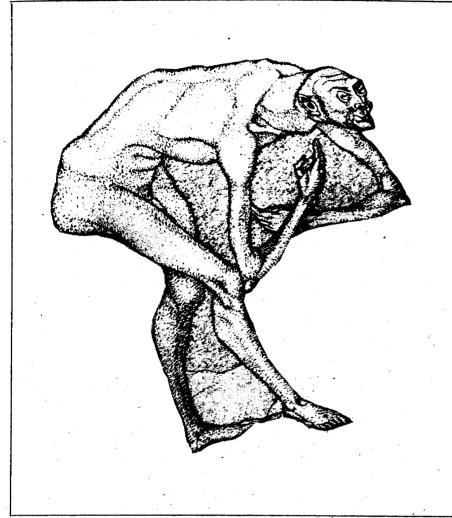
This is the Year

This year should be the year for baseball at the College. The team might not go to the College World Series in Omaha as Rizzi jokingly predicted in the fall, but it should be in contention for the league title, surprising a few powerhouses in the league along

The diamondmen will be playing a large part of their schedule at their home field on Babe Ruth Memorial Field at 161st Street and Jerome Avenue in the Bronx. Though close to the Yankees in distance, they will still be at opposite ends of the standings in their respective leagues.

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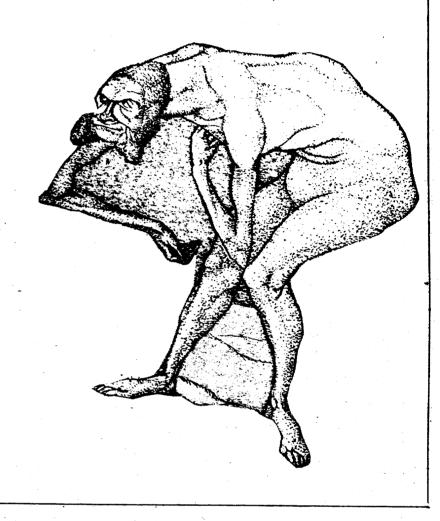


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By Ross Feld

"... Now is the child-period, in which all initiative has been removed from people, and they have been reduced literally to a childlike condition of tutelage of machinery. Daily the instances of this way of thinking or feeling multiply. Responsibility or personal will is, it seems, gladly repudiated; fresh theories are constantly put forward to encourage this attitude, or such as will encourage it. Discouragement of all exercise of will, or belief in individual power, that is a prevalent contemporary attitude, for better or for worse."

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Well, for better or for worse, the attitude that Lewis talked of, the politics of passivity, is still with us. What seemed to Lewis a breathtaking capitulation to a confused technology after the first world war is now expanded into a more comprehensive powerlessness before a highly developed and consuming mesh of control and destructive capability. It's a hard bone to get down, no doubt, and to suggest that we should not be concerned with our extraordinarily lonely position as men in 1968 is silly. Some of the best writing in America since the war and development of the atom bomb has been careful investigations of control, such as William Burroughs' Naked Lunch, or equally rigorous scrutinies of a single man's place in this mess, this America, so wonderfully done in the poetries of William Carlos Williams, Robert Duncan and Jack Spicer, among others. But in turmoil, as Dante teaches, people assume positions, figuri, in which they deal with their lives.

Whether we are satisfied with our positions, our personal stances, or not, there is little chance of eluding them, for, even in rebellion, we assume other positions. One of the lessons of the poets mentioned above is that man accept his condition, accept his "field" and then set out to see what that condition is all about.

This is a very careful way to deal with the insanity which we find around us and hanging within us. Not only is it careful, but it might even seem stifling, a choking of rage, a Stoic squeeze against the bitter real. The exploration of condition seems heartless and, worse, impossible. The rebuttal to these charges and proof of the attitude's validity and necessity can be clearly shown just by contrasting its opposite, that is, the rejection of condition which either takes the form of suicide or self-pitying immersion within condition. And to really see the latter course, the soft-man in the hard-world, crying about it and loving every minute of it, you ought to read Leonard Cohen's Beautiful Losers.

The title says a lot, for in fact, the book is about losers and Mr. Cohen thinks they are beautiful. Of course, so did Dickens and James T. Farrell, who both saw the heart of gold behind the dirty faces of the down and out. But these men were dealing with the losers in the war of money. Mr. Cohen, on the other hand, has a bunch of spiritual derelicts to take care of and his response cannot be mere humanistic sympathy. They call for something more.

They are primarily three: a young man (poet maybe?) who, after his wife kills herself under an elevator, seeks the cool of arcane research on a beatified Iroquoise maiden to soothe his wounds; the wife, an Indian herself, a girl the young man met while she was a manicurist and

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—Did she ever say anything to you about my body?

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There is almost a throb beneath this sort of talk and it is an insistent throb at that. The beat is saying "look what we've come to that we have to speak this way." But it is not only the dialogue which follows this weary rhythm:

"I'm tired of facts, I'm tired of speculations, I want to be consumed by unreason. I want to be swept along. Right now I don't care what goes on under her blanket. I want to be covered with unspecific kisses. I want

my pamphlets praised. Why is my work so lonely?

the narrative sighs. Who is there that can resist this sort of scab-picking, noserunning pity. We all feel it, no one is deferred. We must realize, however, that this sort of confusion, fear and desperation is our medium. Since Kant (someone Mr. Cohen mentions a number of times in the book), we know we live in a sagging world, a world of distemper and detumescence. Its shit is more comprehensible than its diamonds. The point is, though, that this doesn't say anything about shit or diamonds. It is simply our condition. It naturally asks for exploration, but questions of value arising from it demand more specific criteria.

When someone uses condition for an ethic, my first reaction is to run. History has a whole chow-line of those who extol the virtues of poverty and the exclusiveness of wealth, those who congratulate racial individuality and national virtue. Those who do this, who play with condition, whether they are conscious of it or not, are playing games with neutrality, altering it for their own purposes. Add the very nature of our age, the vulnerability, and the picture becomes doubly sharp. If John Doe were to get up tomorrow and on Huntly-Brinkley declare that the world should get moving again and do things for ourselves, and a little initiative there, and tote that barge and lift that bail, we (or at least I) would peg him, immediately, as a Facist. But

we are strangely blind to the other side of the coin, the side of this book, and it is just as important, if not more important, to see that perspective clearly.

Leonard Cohen is not about to do anything but weep over the world. It is alright to weep, who can keep from indulging in it, but don't stockpile the tears. The Talmud says that God counts a woman's tears and maybe the tears of us all. But that's God's work, not ours. Yet, Beautiful Losers is just that, a collection of tears, beautiful, lost tears. They are about as natural as Sonny and Cher. They collect in a corner of our lives which is most reassuring, most safe. We don't have enough energy to destroy conditions and refuse to have enough vision to explore it fully and so retreat to this sad and

warm corner, where we are free to tear our hair, beat our breasts and kvetch as long as we like. And to legitimize this whole sorry escape, it is called beautiful.

Beautiful Losers is, by all means, a skillful book. Mr. Cohen is a fair poet and can shuffle the goods pretty well. There's a lot of, what seems to me, Ginsbergian wash in the book, but I feel out of place talking about technics here. Because the point of this book is not what it specifically says, but how it says it. It is meant to be a vulnerable book, a conduct book for the well-acclimated sufferer, the professional victim.

Leonard Cohen is a very popular writer today. You can read his poetry and his novels and can hear his songs on the radio. He's a hot property. No wonder.

turning the screw: shamans for our time

The Crying of Lot 49. Thomas Pynchon. side of his head far enough to attain a J. P. Lippincott. 3.95. transcendent posture because each time he

A Clockwork Orange, Anthony Burges W. W. Norton & Co. 3.75.

Both available in paperback.

By Cory Greenspan

As education teaches us that literature is literature, experience shows us how literature becomes a part of our entire conception of things. The closer in time literary output is to us, the closer we are able to examine what will become art as a social phenomenon peculiar to the mass of our thought. The joy of reading contemporary novels is simply the sense of currency we find there. We may not be as analytical about Barth or as synthetic in our approaches to Burroughs as we are in our dealings with Victorians and Elizabethans; yet it is probable that the contemporary audience enjoys a superior knowledge and kinship — growing out of a lack of "historical" perspective. Theorem: you and me know better than anyone, the average 21st century Martian, for example, what Pynchon is talking about when he describes his hero as a human yoyo. Benny Profane riding the shuttle all day is unique to the period of the 42nd Street shuttle. QED.

Any understanding of a current novel has enormous significance in terms of the social field. The consolation of literature these days is to see society mocked, even if we are strangled in the process. Satiric and ironic formulations of the current scene are popular in the least jaded quarters; even a portrait of despair is bound to contain more than a twinge of humor, whether concerned with Benny, Bonny or the heroes of the "Dollars" trilogy. Because these and other forms of literature in our time are understood in terms of currency, literary dogma can easily be escaped. If our attitude consists of overview in which the contemporary scene sick and degenerate, encouraging an inbred mistrust and paranoia corresponding to the social and political atmosphere poisoning the public well, there is certainly enough of a literature to justify the attitude. And so on, from a view of the garrison state to a philosophy of exhaustion.

There is also a matter of social evolution. The cockroach, for example, never evolved into more complex a creature because it is by nature an uptight beast. Think of poor archy, the vers libre poet in one life come by transmigration to inhabit the body of a roach. It is humiliating indeed for so poor a beast to do more than exist, scrounging up another meal just to be able to wallow in farce for one more day. Archy's Beatrice, mehitabel, who lays claim to the soul of Cleopatra herself, reduced to being a courtesan of the alleys, but nevertheless indomitable. She, too, is caught in the tacky trap of survival. Think of the cosmic terror in which these beasts must survive, waiting on guard for the foot-crunch or a boot in the tail from some particular butler. Some playwrite may yet create a part for a weird tragic hero who can never bust outside of his head far enough to attain a transcendent posture because each time he starts, another truck will come to run him down. At the moment of impact existence is once more justified; terror has risen to its peak in both mind and body—unity. The hero is in an intense state of equilibrium, and a most horrible one. And, to mention it in passing, so are we.

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The contemporary novel in a social setting allows for the kind of understanding we have by looking around us. If we are able to understand the fact of America, no matter how unpleasant are the facts we deal with, we provide ourselves with insights into some of the more perceptive analysts of the age: Lenny Bruce, Pynclion, Joseph Heller, Donleavy and the rest of the crew. The most practical method of revealing the social climate is that of stripping down to the soul, cutting away at the idols and hypocrisies - the satire of the state. Pynchon concerns himself with an analytic search of American conscience. His heroine is a paranoid freak, her journey, one of discovery and ultimate breakdown, an emblem of the social trends. The setting of Pynchon's novel is California, emblematic of America changing; even more significant is the instability which characterizes the social and standard political changes of the state since WW II. America becomes an enormous freak show by the time the novel begins to realize its sinister intentions; it is a network of used car highways, psychiatric perversion, mass media, freeways. fanatic political plotting and deviant postal systems, ending in a black ruin of gay social clubs and a brown ruin of stamp auctions and life itself. The heroine, Oedipa Maas, undertakes a dark voyage and concludes by discovering America and the heritage which belongs to it. Pynchon consistently maintains that the American heritage is paranoia. A simple idea, yet carried through structurally in the novel, making of it a terrible perception of what lies dormant in the average American citizen (with a large enough urge to make a pattern of what goes on). Oedipa exhausts many of the possibilities of escape, among them the academy and its gurgly processes. Although she has been cloistered for many years in the academic system of hide-and-seek, she realizes the need to go beyond the confines of alleged reasons.

Pynchon has the kind of encyclopedic mind which selects particles of information to describe accurately a complete metaphor. His view of the American scene: secret postal service maintained within the underground channels of a government-contracted electronics firm, run by neo-fascists dedicated to keeping up a tradition of several centuries standing war against official postal services; academic methods of divining the roots of this postal service, the Thurn and Taxis movement, which may or may not be real; German war criminals posing as psychiatrists; Vivaldi played on a kazoo for Muzak programming; child actors growing old and paunchy, eager and respec-



table (the likes of the adorable Mrs. Black); a rock group, the Paranoids, composing and singing love songs to 11-yearold girls (similar to the Beach Boys' hymns to tattered jalopies); used car lots and super-expressways; the standard marriageturned-to-sawdust-and-despair (always a good literary index to the state of the nation being considered, especially when the information is accurate); clues and plots in fact and fiction; mass media, drugs, the graveyard past, casts of thousands and hosts of others. What begins for Oedipa as a harmless legal function, the execution of a will, becomes a descent into all these possibly connected parts, which soon begin to look as if a plot has been constructed against her. The pieces of Americana with which she must deal combine to destroy her sanity; a citizen in the en-

Pynchon deals in what is possible, the strange combination of things and events. Nothing leads Oedipa from this patchwork to what she can recognize as a reality; she searches for something absolute, inviolable, and falls flat on her face, nearly destroyed. Thus a picture of the American heritage and its grim alternatives: blissfull mindlessness, or the awareness which leads ultimately to a breakdown of body and soul. This is what surrounds us, personally and culturally. Pynchon's work belongs less to that unique entity, western literature, than to the audience which he describes.

The heroine of Pynchon's description exists in reality as well as in fiction: it is a type best called shaman (if the word is divorced from its strict anthropological connotation.) The shaman assimilates the characteristics of the tribe, living his life according to those characteristics, hampered by manifestations of tribal guilt and whatever else is part of the social makeup. The destruction of the shaman consequently redeems the tribe, and all is well. In this light, some obvious shamanic

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By Tom Dargan

heroes would be Jesus, Lenny Bruce, perhaps, in a limited sense, John Kennedy, or, more limited, Johnson. In the last case, only the future will tell. Bruce's biography, being the source of his routines, shows him living the insanity, guilt and hypocrisy that his routines expose. His life and his acts are as inextricable a relationship as that of his destruction and social decay. The equivalent pattern in the one and the all reveal the shaman. In this sense Oedipa Maas is a shamanic figure, her progress the emblem of a society. A hagiography, Shamans For Our Time, is the perpetual work-in-progress. Oedipa Maas, although her given name implies a certain kinship to a specific association of ideas, is in one sense unique as an emblem of the current poolpah (translated variously as "the wrath of God" or "shit storm").

Alex, hero of A Clockwork Orange, is another Shaman hero, a special case of violence and corruption.

Burgess delineates the poolpah in terms greater than the United States alone. As a British novelist it is natural that he see the current horrorshow in terms of the trans-Atlantic nervous tension cycle, with British life especially at the center of things. Alex, while every moment a victim of the time, differs from Oedipa in his sense of being; he is initially a correla-



tive of violence. He is equally at home chaining old ladies, raping little young things, stomping the candy store lady and snatching the false teeth out of an old professor-type's mouth. We recognize him as the motorcycle punk, or whatever the equivalent in gang warfare is these days. Alex is the kind of young man who might be very happy as a cop or a career officer in the army. Like the moderns. We all get a good laugh out of the anti-German or Japanese war movies, especially at the torture scenes. Har, har, har.

But Alex is what the time is. When the state evolves from a garrison corporation to a welfare unit, Alex is once again its victim. The welfare idealists start with a conception of how things ought to be; and go about making the dream a fact. As the ideal can make no room for Alex, how natural it is that they make him what he ought to be. For this there is the Ludovico treatment, a method of reform developed by the most technically advanced minds in the society. Shock-treatment and the like cure Alex of his violent ways; he is conditioned or programmed, to be a good citizen. How devilishly clever, how nice. A Forbesian tool.

Then there is a new phase in the social development, once more reflected in Alex. The press gets hold of what's been going on, how inhumane the whole thing is, and Alex is once more cured, restored to his old self again. How nice? This is what some people mean when they say the government (or any other law-dispensing entity) is fucking with us. What incredible togetherness.

Matthew Schabe, who died recently at the age of eighty, once listed the follies of modern man. "Not only does [modern and circumstances — the only alternatives

IN AND OUT WITH BOOKS

retreat - simple and still legal

African Genesis. Robert Ardrey. Dell Laurel, 95¢.

Karl Marx: Selected Writings in Sociology and Social Philosophy. London. Watts & Co. 1956.

The Origin of Species. Charles Darwin. Mentor, 95¢.

On Aggression. Konrad Lorenz. Bantam, \$1.25.

The Cheyennes, E. A. Hoebel; Gopalpur, A. R. Beals; The Swazi, Hilda Kuper. Case Studies in Cultural Anthropology, Holt, Rhinehart and Winston, \$1.95 each.

The Forest People. Colin Turnbull. Natural History Library, \$1.45.

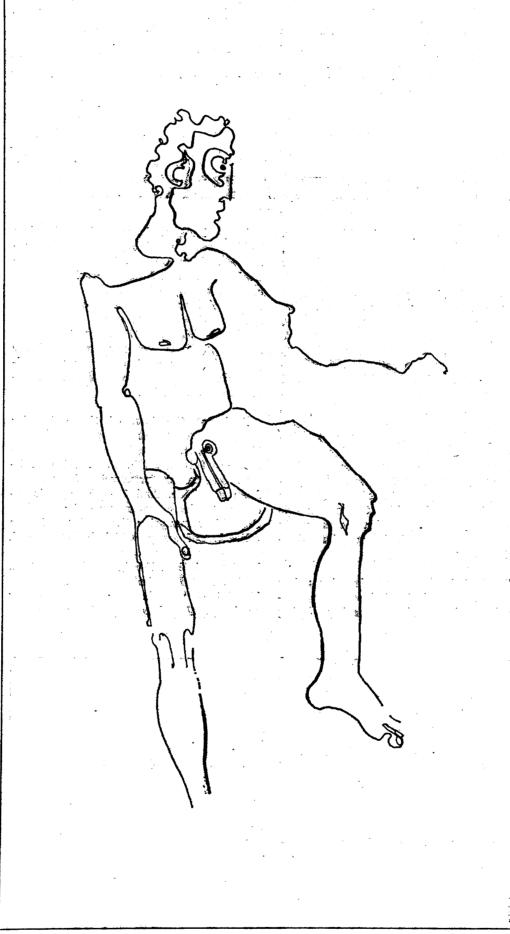


Maybe it started when I helped elect Ugly Bird. It was getting harder and harder to reconcile my feelings of responsibility with his apparent lunacy; harder to find meaningful amusement for which there was no prescribed jail term. He tried to solve my problem by declaring a new age of man, one in which The Truth had become something complicated and occult; something that "leaks." I hit on a book called African Genesis by Robert Ardrey that pointed to a literary order of natural science and anthropology, a retreat, both meaningful and legal, where whatever claimed to be the truth, however ingeniously it was discovered, declared itself with a very agreeable, unleaky, elegance and candor.

Ardrey is a playwright who was trained as a natural scientist, and his book is readable and seems reliable. African Genesis runs through some fascinating animals anecdotes to some astounding one-punch upsets of Freud, Darwin and Marx, but its main points are two: first, man is descended, not from some easygoing vegetarian missing link, but from a beast so mean that his only invention. and his only joy, was a skull-smashing club. Second, territoriality (with which Ardrey credibly lumps private property). "the drive to gain and defend a territory, even to live in undying hostility with one's neighbors," is no invention of man, but the general instinct of all animals. Evolution knows no competition of lusty males for the fittest mate; rather, evolution selects the male with the best territory, because the female will be attracted to the best territory, where she will initiate mating with whichever male occupies it.

In other words, man's nastiness, man's greed, and woman's, ah, practicality, are soundly based in instincts that reach far beyond the evolutionary advent of man. This, says Ardrey, is the real refutation of the "Romantic Fallacy," the idea that "human behavior results from causes lying within human experience," which is axiomatic to the conceit that one can responsibly embrace principles. Whether the "responsibility" is the old red-white-andblue morality, or some hipper psychological construct, the message is the same: men don't know what their doing, or why or where it comes from, and therefore they don't know how to stop doing it. It's an attractive point of view - a sort of cheery pessimism that lets you hope for the best while preparing you for the worse - and all you need do is abandon the vanity of responsibility.

A pleasant symptom of the irresponsibility syndrome is curiosity. First, you could check Ardrey's sources. The card catalog under Karl Marx is terrifying, with all the "works by" and "works about," yet a short, comprehensive first hand view of him can be had in T.B. Bottomore and Maximilien Rubel's Karl Marx: Selected Writings in Sociology and Social Philosophy. Some pack-rat swiped it from the school library, and the Jefferson Bookstore was surly and non-committal, so it can only be had at the 42nd St. Reading Room. And Marx did believe that man invented property, but this is certainly not the first puncture his ideas have received. I found him brilliant, humane, and very difficult, and his central vision, of society free of competition - where one "successful" man's self-love does not derive directly from ten or a hundred men's debasement - worth all the difficulty. Charles Darwin, in The Origin of Species did understand sexual selection as a "struggle between the individuals of one sex, generally the males, for the possession of the other sex." But it's still worth looking at, because it's good natural science, with that discipline's own special ingenuity; to report with great acuity



man] willingly believe the burecombe of the mountebanke;" he said, referring to the political idealism which keeps too many governments in business, "when he

dines on liberally offered mud, [but] he praises the good lords who have given it." Burgess, perhaps by birth, is more of a traditionalist than Pynchon, and probably subscribes to a view of history similar to that of Yeats, in which the continuum itself is most important. Both authors align themselves with the social consequences of contemporary political vibrations, however, and their novels offer predestined views of what we are coming to based on what we are. For ourselves, we begin to realize

the official lie, to understand that we are

locked in an unappetizing network of time

are dumb compliance, enlightened protest, breakdown and the raft of etc.

All of which is not to say that The Crying of Lot 49 or A Clockwork Orange will engulf you in despair (the fate of only great intellects and theologians, o my brothers). Irony, and that whore, Satire, seem to be the dominant traits of the time. The ironic art of these novels is to make you laugh up your guts while trying to hold them down at the same time: truth and stasis. While the social overview these novels maintain is consistently pessimistic, we can recognize appealing mockery and grim humor in their parts; the Nazi turned analyst is always deuce humor. A long laugh sometimes asks a

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the facts of life on this planet, with a minimum of dreary moralizing.

These facts of life are often instantly relevant to one's own life, not because of some inane reverse anthropomorphism, but because a natural scientist will only interpret his material functionally — not morally. So, if you come across some perception about animal behavior that seems to enlighten some aspect of man's behavior, you don't have to resolve the problem of degrees of soul between the animal and man. If it works, it's true.

Konrad Lorenz discusses animal behavior in On Aggression, and draws conclusions about human behavior. Lorenz sees what Ardrey called "undying hostility" (territoriality) as part of an instinctual intra-species aggressiveness that has a very admirable function, and that has natural safety checks — instinctual "inhibiting" gestures that show the loser wants to quit before he gets killed. Lorenz's idea is that man does his killing so

quickly and from such a remote point that the inhibiting mechanisms cannot operate. So the unthinkable is very possible — whether it's one button, or three keys, or the democratic decision of 200 million citizens — the chances are that man will "select against" himself anytime now.

In the meantime, read The Cheyennes, by E. Adamson Hoebel. Lorenz found the incidence of personal love (which he found, take it or leave it, in geese) directly proportional to the degree of aggressiveness manifested by the species. Moreover, he found that the expressions of aggressiveness and love were almost identical. In the Cheyenne monograph, aggressiveness and love are combined in an extreme manifestation (really, not ideally) of the chivalric values of courage. personal (romantic) love, loyalty, courtesy, chastity, generosity, gentleness with one's kind and ferocity with enemies. It is a remarkable thing to learn that real people at one time lived this life.

Incidentally, the Cheyenne were terrible

lovers, lest you think they had everything. They were notoriously repressive—the men would swear off their wives (only sexually) for seven or fourteen years to give their firstborn "good luck," or put away sex forever to join a prestigious warrior's fraternity, and their cruelty to a rare tribe whore was hairraising—it seems as though the very aggressiveness that sustained great spiritual love submerged any capacity for its direct physical assertion.

In the same Case Studies series is Gopalpur (an Indian village), by Alan R. Beals, and The Swazi (a west African tribe), by Hilda Kuper. The first is a marvelous picture of how absorbing, how real, life can be on the inside of what looks to us like the most wretched thirdworld squalor. The second lets you see the demon of aculturation that was so skillfully ommitted in The Cheyenne. Here all the unique dignity and meaningfulness of life as defined by the ancient Swazi culture is being undercut — not by regi-

ments of British soldiers, but by the charlatan tricks of the local (European) government, and by a few dozen mod-caricature adolescents with transistor radios.

Another anthropological scource of amazement is Colin Turnbull's book-length study of the Pygmies, The Forest People. In this extremely sensitive, almost boyish narrative, the writer shows an integrated way of living that we can intuit, but probably never experience. The extreme is polar to that of the Chevenne, but just as admirable. Turnbull finds the Pygmies on their border - the edge of their inhospitable rain forest - to be the despised buffoons and good-for-nothing Step'n Fetchits of their African and European neighbors. And once the anthropologist is accepted and initiated into the Pygmy society, he discovers that it is all a glorious fraud to keep the surly and clumsy fools from thinking they have a good thing going in their forest, and they do - it's simple, meaningful, and still legal.

academics in search of relevance

Critics of Society: Radical Thought in North America. T. B. Bottomore. Pantheon. 150 pp. \$4.95.

The Dissenting Academy. Theodore Roszak, ed. Pantheon. 304 pp. \$6.95.

By Leonard Kriegel

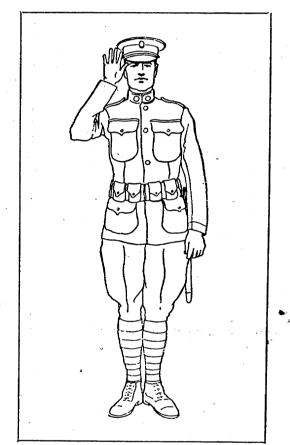
Several weeks ago, I took part in a debate intended to define the university's relationship to prospective job interviews on this campus. Three members of the teaching faculty spoke along with one representative of the College's placement service. The word "dialogue" has recently become very fashionable, but if what that audience heard was a dialogue, then it might just as well have been given in Medieval Latin. For while I and my two colleagues were speaking one language, the representative of the placement service was speaking another. His university exists solely to service this patched and peeling technological paradise, ours existed as a theoretically "independent source of knowledge, value, and criticism."

Now it is obvious self-deception to pre-

tend that any university in this country, much less the City College of New York, is an independent source of knowledge, or even that its chief role is to teach students. The representative of the placement service had a far more realistic idea of the university and its role. His view, certainly, is the view of this college's administration, as well as the view of probably every other college and university administration in this country. I teach Melville; he arranges for the representatives of Dow Chemical, Gallo Wines, and Harbinger Fertilizer to interview students on campus. In the recent anti-Dow demonstration, one stroller on the picket line had a sign which read, "Want a Job: Try Auschwitz." Given what passes for morality on American campuses today, I would like him to answer this question: How many students came up to ask him where Auschwitz was interview-

The fact is that my university exists only in the parched mind of some frustrated would-be professor earning a living writing Hollywood scenarios: William Holden as an up-tight young Ph.D. candidate basking in the reflections of Jeanne Craine's smile and the Socratic sunshine of some skinny old man with a pipe, who quotes Goethe and Aristotle. Still, Dow is Dow — napalm is napalm, Saran Wrap is Saran Wrap, and one per cent of Dow's profit is one per cent of Dow's profit. Anyway, as one of my more advanced students once scornfully noted, Socrates was a suicide.

And yet the idea of the university continues to attract the young, for the idea, at least, is predicated upon the possibility of intellect in the service of itself. One can derive a methodology even from a suicide. And I suppose, it is because I share so many of Theodore Roszak's assumption that I found in the collection of essays which he has edited, The Dissenting Academy ultimately disappointing. For in his demand for a rebirth of "the spirit of Socrates," which, he claims, "broods over the 'dissenting academy' this volume comprises," he seems



intent on destroying the very source of the Socratic university's strength - its committed but dispassionate inquiry into what was once called "truth" - in an effort to rid it of its weaknesses. Other than Noam Chomsky, whose "The Responsibility of Intellectuals" is reprinted as the concluding essay in the book, none of these writers seems to have a much better idea of what he means by a university than the man for whom the university is a means of servicing Dow Chemical. The difference is that Roszak and company merely wish to service a different segment of society. As a historian, he should be a bit less embarrased by Hegel: if Marx could stand Hegel on his head, then Roszak should be able at least to conceive of "The Idea." Political commitment is simply not enough: in itself, it may be just as constricting as the kind of intellectual bastardization which can claim with a straight face that the "freedom" of a university is served by permitting students to attend Dow Chemical interviews. "I may not agree with what you sell, but I will defend to the death your right to say it."

What seems conspicuous by its absence in Roszak's book is the dispassionate intellectual examination of what the scholar devotes himself to defending in his commitment to the idea of a university. For his commitment is inevitably a commitment to the idea. But the success of the service concept of the university, and the reason why the representative of the placement office had a far more accurate idea of this college and its function than I did, can be seen in most of the essays in this book. Louis Kampf's "The Scandal of Literary Scholarship" is sufficiently representative so that we can look at it



as a kind of intellectual synopsis of the other essays.

Kampf provides us with an excellent example of the committed intellectual's acceptance of the Dow Chemical university, for his essay is permeated with the idea of serviceable intellect. Now I would certainly not deny that what we speak of as the western literary tradition demands reexamination at this moment in history, but it seems to me just as obvious that such a reexamination must be carried out with exactly those tools of scholarship which Kampf appears so eager to discard. If anything, the critical scalpel must be honed even finer. Only in this way can we create a scholarship based upon values, ideas of right and wrong, of good and mediocre. Our question is not whether Twayne's English Authors series includes a book about a figure few Ph.D.'s in literature have ever heard of (the newgraffiti may evolve out of such puzzles as "Who is the real Henry Seton Merriman?") or even whether scholarship and criticism are served by our plethora of critical studies. A few of the books in the Twayne series are good; others are poor books about minor writers, So what? Professor Kampf can name hundreds of scholarly and critical works written during the past decade which are of great value and which perform the very function which Socrates asks the dispassionate scholar to perform. The question of whether or not scholarship and criticism should be used as measuring rods for promotion is something else again: here, I agree with him. One should be a scholar for the sake of the thing itself, not for the sake of one's career.

Kampf's academy is simply too pragmatic. Does it serve? seems to be the primary question to which he addresses himself. And his indictment of both literature and scholarship is much too breathy; there are times in this essay when he sounds like a young girl who has just lost her virginity trying to feel what her mother told her she was going to feel when it happened. In "Language and Silence," George Steiner does a better job of addressing himself to an examination of such questions as "Why is literature a good?" and "Why is its study required?" Those S. S. guards who tossed babies into ovens read Goethe and they were cheered on by Ezra Pound; the Russian troops who mercilessly destroyed the kulaks knew Pushkin by heart and they were cheered on by most of the western intellectual world: Kipling almost collapsed under "the white man's burden," and Celine wanted to burn every Jew in the world. So what? The day may even come when we get a black version of Kipling and a Jewish Celine. Again, so what? We study literature not to make ourselves better but simply to recognize selves.

I am quite certain that Professor Kampf knows all of this, which is why I am puzzled as to his reasons for exploring such well-trodden paths. In a rhetorical question, he writes, "And how can the man who loves Moby Dick be a capitalist hyena?" The question and the rhetoric are acceptable. But to go from this to the claim that "departments of literature are as deeply involved as departments of industrial management" as "servant[s] of the economy" is an example of the kind of rhetorical nonsense to which the academic world is so terribly prone. By definition, literature is subversive. The teaching of it is designed to make people far more uncomfortable than, for example, the teaching of physics. Plato knew what he was about when he barred poets from his earthly paradise. Physicists picket, but they also produce; poets picket even when they produce.

As Richard Elman noted in a recent issue of The New York Review of Books, Kampf wants it both ways: he demands a politically committed literary intellectual conscious of what is happening around him, but he strongly ridicules a seminar in Ken Kesey. I would never offer a seminar in Ken Kesey (he bores me), but I would welcome the opportunity to offer a seminar in the contemporary political

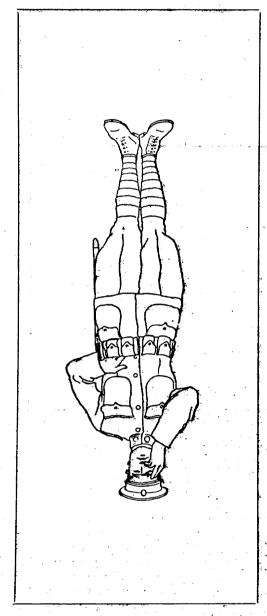
why call music a thing, anyway?

Four Lives in the Bebop Business. A. B. world where eras take just days to become pop history, oldies but goodies? The Au-

By Noe Goldwasser

This is the age of the fragment — fractured films, fragmented plots in novels, with a steady backbeat of fragmentation bombs. Some call it abstract, some anti- (substitute: anti-theater, -painting, -jazz), but the idea they're afraid to pin down is the switch art is pulling from the intransitive art-hangs-in-a-museum tradition to the active audience. Our society is possibly waking up to the fact that, after stuffing itself with kitsch, searching desperately for a tradition, tradition is all played out as a crutch.

How could any tradition remain in a



novel, a course which would examine the work of Heller and Pynchon, Mailer and Ellison, from the point of view of how they have succeeded or failed to succeed in subverting the very culture which The Dissenting Academy decries. What Kampf seems unable to recognize is that scholarship, as well as the materials it treats, can be both dynamic and honest. Let us join in his demand for a scholarship which is not devoid of values, which does not depend upon chronology alone for its sustenance; but let us do this in an attempt to define our boundaries, not ignore them.

The other essays in The Dissenting Academy address themselves to the inadequacies reflected in academic departments of economics, philosophy, political science, social science, anthropology and international relations. Many of the pieces are cogent, but most are inadequate to meet the challenge of the book's title. What many of these authors call for is the politicalization of the American university, and this, I confess, frightens me. I suppose I qualify as what Roszak terms "a socially engaged intellectual," but I remain almost as suspicious of that creature as I am of his academic brother for whom intellect is itself a form of gamesmanship (You bid, I knock). Engage is a lively word, dipped in the baptismal fount by Jean Paul himself. But it just may be that the intellectual is, by definiworld where eras take just days to become pop history, oldies but goodies? The Augustan age may have lasted fifty years, the Victorian maybe seventy-five, but Andy keeps the Warhol period going for more than a deuce because he has a good public relations head with silver hair on it. And because he might be doing something new.

We have become stylistically self-conscious; cliché is the nemesis, identification with an established style, anathema. Experts on what came before, we the audience, and we the creator don't have to restate it all the time. That's why plots are not important anymore — because they're understood. The novelist works with an unuttered storyline, the jazzman with his unseen bass-line, focussing on conflict of characters, ideas, chords, rhythms, colors.

The tradition, like the plot, has dropped out and we deal with its shadow. Art is more dynamic, involving the senses as well as the head. The creator is left free to revel in space, laying down fragments,

skipping around in and out of theme, letting us assemble the jigsaw. It's like a fragmentation bomb — the shrapnel hits you in different places and you know you're hit. Working together (union of artist and beholder, epiphany somewhere in between), we get it together.

We've really advanced. We let tradition (now read "stasis") Peter out, trying to be hip (read "subtle, knowledgeable"). But we end up being technicians anyway. Jeanne Phillips says it in A. B. Spellman's Four Lives in the Debs Business:

"All these cats with their electronic stuff — how the hell is a machine going to make music? No more than a washing machine does when it's operating. You hear sounds all day long, and unless they're incorporated correctly by men, there ain't no music."

Technical proficiency is valid if you have expression, the essence of American music. As Miss Phillips says, "America

(Continued on Next Page)

tion, an anarchist. Roszak ought to take another look.

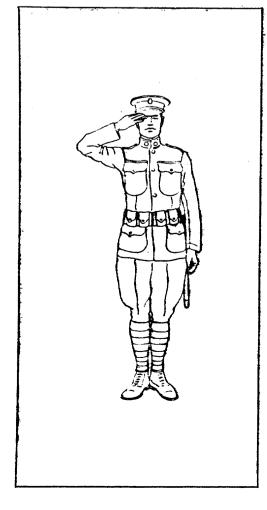
In her essay on modern anthropology, "World Revolution and the Science of Man," Professor Kathleen Gough speaks of students as our "best hope, As they insist on creating a space in which to think freely and grow in dignity," she writes, "they will shake the foundation of our academic institutions." I, too, would like to see this. But I sometimes wonder whether we are not even more apt to get students who, in their revolt against the more institutionalized aspects of the university, become apostles of mindlessness - just as many of their teachers have refused to permit the actualities of mind. "It is the responsibility of intellectuals to speak the truth and to expose lies," Noam Chomsky writes in his brilliant essay. As a definition of purpose, this is as simple as it is profound. When the intellectual encounters the pretensions of intellect, it can be a most painful responsibility - especially when the sentiments he is attacking are those with which he sympathizes. The Dissenting Academy is a beginning in the reevaluation of American universities and the function of American academicians: but it must be noted that, by and large, it is a beginning far more promising in its purpose than in its execution.

T. B. Bottomore's Critics of Society: Radical Thought in North America is a short book about "the connections between intellectual dissent and theories of society" by an eminent Canadian sociologist. In some respects, it is a remarkably incisive essay. Unfortunately, like most such brief surveys of the development of social thought, it is hampered by its author's need to simplify as well as his failure to take into account the complexities of American life and history. "The progressive era at the beginning of the century was followed by the Jazz Age; pleasure-seeking, light-hearted, at least on the surface, and relatively uninterested in politics." Sure. And the Green Bay Packers play football, too.

Despite such superficialities, Bottomore's book is interesting on a number of counts. For one thing, it contains an excellent chapter on Canadian thought and social conflict, which is bound to be of interest to any American. (In American universities, Canadian intellectual development is something we do not even conceive of as real.) For another, it calls into quention that very service station idea of intellectualism exemplified in our universities. For a third, while it does not offer

any answers it does manage to suggest where our search should be conducted.

Professor Bottomore is seeking "an ideology responsive to the doubts and complexities of our age and vet capable of directing action, with some hope of success, to plausible ends." Until now, we have not found it in the student movement: we have not found it in the peace movement; we have not found it in the black revolt; and we have not found it in the universities. But the formulation of such an ideology continues; hopefully, it will be made. It is a quest in which the function of the university will be to attack cant, hypocrisy, and rationalization, "to speak the truth and to expose lies." It is, after all, not only napalm which destroys life. At the beginning of this review, I mentioned a debate in which I took part. That night, I listened to my phonograph for the first time in several months. I kept on thinking of Dow Chemical and of the university which Dow Chemical has created in its own image. After a while, I left Mozart for Billio Holliday. Listening to her, I could not help but reflect that the bodies will not always be black and the breezes not always be southern.



doesn't have any other culture of its own, except what the Negro gave it and what it borrowed from Europe." What we borrowed from Europe is characterized by movements with Italian names, divisions and structures of stasis. American music, what has been called jazz, the most expressive of music, is moving, the transitive verb, not the noun.

Archie Shepp was working his horn in Buttenweiser Lounge, Monday. He sent it through the air, notes flying out and falling down in all the good places. Nobody there said anything about "new jazz" — he transmitted this motion, his body part of the whole thing. That's what the audience picked up. Spellman cites the difference between Petula Clark and James Brown. What can she convey by standing stiff and holding a conversation with the microphone? Uptightness. Brown is not merely a great showman — his moves are part of his music, a physical display of what's going on inside.

Jazz cannot be thought of as a building up of traditions. It is a continuum, moving from feet to head, from Africa and blues to Coltrane and Coleman, but always one music, not this music or that music. Expression. Even though modern jazz drummers play free time and notes, even though it is no longer necessary for bassists and drummers to function as metronomes, Spellman can tell us that "Ornette [Coleman] is a superior craftsman in the same sense that blues singer Lightin' Hopkins is;" because it's the head and feet of the same body, the same experience, told through the music. The late alto saxophonist Eric Dolphy is described in a liner note: "He makes you hurt with knowing how he felt inside that range, with listening to the faith he had in his bones and ligaments and muscles and breath." (Mack Thomas, notes for Here and There. Dec., 1956.)

The thing that keeps a people together for so many years, at least the expression of it. And today, a "sophisticated world," we have a thing called "The New Thing." But really the logical extension of the old thing. Jazz groups indulge in what are described as traffic jams, squeaks, bleats, honks, to the non-believer -we say that Cage and Stockhausen are approaching the same climax. But the American phenomenon, unlike the European copy, has expression. Still the same moving music, because, as Coleman has said on another album cover, "the emotion . . . liberates the rhythms and metres" into a three-dimensional liquid chorus. Spellman tells it through the voice of Tenorman Jackie McLean:

"It should just be music for the sake of music, and people listening to whatever music they thought was worthwhile listening to. Cats talk about the 'New Thing' so much, but the new thing comes out of the old

thing, and in a way they're part of the same thing. Take bebop, for example. First of all, I don't agree with the name. It's kind of typical, you know, you can imagine who probably thought to call it bebop. They took some of Dizzy's scat phrases, like 'oogliabopandbebop' and they stuck on to the bebop. But it was really a serious phase in music, man. It took a lot of time for people who name things to get on to bebop, but when they finally got on to it, they tried to divide it into cool bop, cool sounds, hard bop, and all that.

"It's the same way now. What was 'Trane playing when he was in Miles' band? Was it hard bop or cool bop or was it 'Trane? The same way with Ornette. They hung the 'New Thing' on 'Trane as well as Ornette, but is Ornette any newer than Charlie Parker? I don't think Ornette thinks so. And why would you call music a 'Thing' anyway?"

So jazz doesn't get hung up in things, in eras, traditions, cliches; it has always been a participation medium, and by definition an improvisation — if is its own history and works around itself. Natural.

A. B. Spellman is a poet and a jazz critic. He is a black man who, like Cecil Taylor, passed through college to "pay his dues" in the jazz world. Bebop Business is a perfect name for the book. Charlie Parker, the spirit of bebop, permeates this world, yet the four lives (Ornette Coleman, Herbie Nichols, Jackie Mc-Lean, and Cecil Taylor) have made their reputation in a jazz development that comes fifteen years later than belop. They were deemed intruders on the jazz scene just as "Bird" Parker fractured the world of swing and dixieland. And they, like Parker, are merely doing their do, extending the jazz continuum.

Spellman's book seems a lyrical extension of his life. He is is one with his biographical characters, so together that the transition between quotation and narrative is barely perceptible. Talking about life in the jazz world, all convey a sense of struggle - with club owners and recording execs who take most of their profits; critics who do not understand them; the fight in bars over their music (Ornette Coleman recalls his first teenage gigs, in beer halls where people were murdered on the dance floor. He links this with his music, the fantasy that his horn killed them). They live the labor theory of values. Cecil Taylor still takes dishwashing jobs to support himself. Alive and well. Conservatory-trained Taylor, having trouble with funk fans who think he's too far out, Ornette Coleman, stuck in Texas with a talent that came a decade too soon; Jackie McLean, a junkie in from the fifties, a link to the once-jumping Times Square scene — Fats, Tad, Bird, Diz's



big band, Johnny Hodges, the Black musicians blowing with their guts on 52nd Street, while white players get the big push in Down Beat and Metronome. The "Shadows" scene; and Herbie Nichols, who never made it out of the hole as others did later on, playing unwanted jobs in dixie bands . . . a wasted death. Spellman pulls out his whole bag, talking to sidemen, remembering.

Much good thinking in this book. Ornette Coleman reminds us that jazzin' is also a verb. Girls leave their phone numbers on the bandstand for the sweating musician who socked them with his instrument. A lot of musical energy is wasted in the inevitable sexual communication — a by-product of the jazz musician's feeling. If jazzmen were ascetics, their musical force might be imponderable, but it's close to that now. Coleman says it philosophically:

"When the musician goes out and plays for the public on a bandstand, ninety per cent of his audience in the nightclub is sexually oriented. It's like the guy will sit there, and if they're really digging you, he'll start feeling the girl, you know. Or if the girl digs you, he gets up and takes her away. Sometimes I say to myself, "Well, shit, if this is what its all about, we should all be standing up there with hard-ons and everybody should come to the club naked, and the musicians

should be standing up there naked. Then there wouldn't be any confusion about what's supposed to happen, and people wouldn't say they came to hear the music. I'm telling you, the whole sex thing has more of a negative effect on the music than drugs. I'm sure of it. So you see, the jazz scene hasn't really changed that much since it left the New Orleans whorehouses. The nightclub is still built on the same two-things: whiskey and fucking."

There is no Tanglewood for jazz musicians, no comfortable union that hands out pensions. Taylor and his milieu are accomplished composers (although Coleman doesn't like to write out his scores, they have a brilliance and emotion unheard of in European composers). The European are trying to do what our jazz artists have been doing for years. Talking of Stockhausen, Cecil Taylor says:

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"It's very funny how this German cat comes over here and tells the Americans, who have all the mechanical tools to do everything beyond them, what's happening .And like they [the Americans] go for it.

"Stockhausen had those cats improvising to get what he called 'realization.' What does that mean? Like, these cats showed me the scores, because they know I don't like them. See that death wish again? . . . They showed me the scores, and the scores said this: 'We are very pretty. Look how pretty we are.' And they are very pretty, all of them. It's like a painting. . . . They're only approximations, like guides to tell you what to do with your potential. . . .

"Jazz improvisation comes out of a human approach. Stockhausen's essentially like a meticulous, slow worker who knows each instrument, but he doesn't create any music. He's created, like, colors, but any music that's resulted from his creation has been accidental; not even incidental, but accidental."

It's starting to catch on, and some younger jazzmen are getting into a long-deserved recognition. Nichols is dead, but Shepp is pushing hard; Cecil returns from Europe to the same obscurity; Columbia Records rakes it in; Jackie McLean has a gig at the Dom this week. It's moved downtown — changes but is still the same . . . music. Charles Lloyd makes it with the rock generation, and the critics proclaim a merger, another new music. Ornette smiles, sadly: if you know, if you can see, dig it.

Contributor's Notes

JIM BROWN is the editor of Black on Black, the literary magazine of the Onyx Society at City College.

TOM DARGAN has rivaled Truman Capote by throwing a "fish party" (old native ritual). He has appeared in Promethean, and is presently writing an honors thesis on William Blake.

ROSS FELD, co-editor of Promethean, is a widely published poet. A collection of his poems has appeared under the title Winter Poems. A sequence, "Poems for Jack Spicer," will be coming out in Poetry magazine. On Thursday, he works on his novel.

NOE GOLDWASSER has published his poetry in Promethean and has written articles on film and epilepsy. He can whistle "Forest Flower" by heart and is currently writing an honors thesis on the gothic tradition.

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THEODORE GROSS, a member of the English faculty at City College, has written two critical studies and several essays. He is co-editor of The Development of Negro Literature in America (to be published next winter by Free Press). Presently he is at work on a study of idealism and authority in American literature.

LEONARD KRIEGEL is on the English faculty at City College. A recent article dealing with student protest at the College appeared in Commonweal. He has published an autobiography titled The Long Walk Home.

JEFFREY YOUDELMAN has published fiction and critical articles on literature and film. The subject of his honors thesis is William Burroughs. On Thursday, he contemplates working on his novel.

THE BLACK RENAISSANCE IN AMERICA LITERATURE

transcendental storefront gothic

By Theodore Gross

Any description of the Negro's contribution to American literature must inevitably account for the recurrent violence that we find in so many varied works: brooding sexuality in Jean Toomer's Canes; abrasive relations between Negroes and whites of the Caribbean in Eric Waldron's Trop'c Death, brutal murder in Richard Wright's Native Son; compulsive aggression in Chester Himnes's. If He Hollers Let Him Go; a culminating race riot in Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man; historic vengeance and suicide in James Baldwin's Another Country. Violence is purgative in these and other books by modern Negro writers; it releases hostility and announces the black man's existence in a convulsive, unpredictable manner; and, after the long, perforced silence of the Negro throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it tears aside the historical curtain and prepares us for a private drama of lives we can scarcely have imagined because they were only reflected in the fiction of white authors who usually had a case to plead, a civilization to protect.

These Negro writers, and they are merely representative, shed the mythologies that have been thrust upon them - not only the mythologies of the white man but those of their own family, too. They assume nothing; they question everything, including past injustices that their ancestors recognized but dared not or could not articulate; and, in most cases, they insist upon their simple, fundamental existence. "Negroes want to be threated like men," Baldwin protests in "Fifth Avenue, Uptown." "People who have mastered Kant, Hegel, Shakespeare, Marx, Freud, and the Bible find this statement utterly impenetrable. The idea seems to threaten profound, barely conscious assumptions." And what is true of Negroes in general is, of course, intensified and often raised to a lyric cry of pugnacious propaganda in the literature of Negro

Violence is a natural and expected feature of Negro writing, for in the absence of a coherent and usable literary tradition, the Negro author has remained very close to fact — his first significant artistic achievement was in the form of autobiography - and he has recorded his despair directly; but violence in itself is of little literary interest, and in the case of the Negro its meaning lies in what inspired the gesture and resulting works of art. Inspiration varies but the accomplished art of Negro authors is characterized by a pervasive idealism that seems paradoxical when one considers the frustration out of which it grows. Yet the one American who is most qualified to view the world as absurd refuses to do so; the one American who might understandably resort to "black humor" rejects that aesthetic — and ultimately moral — point of view; the one American who should inform his work with rejection seeks to find modes of acceptance. Behind the violence, sometimes indistinguishable from it, lies an idealism that is peculiarly and historically American and that suggests the reason for a great flowering of Negro literature.

Current, Negro writing is the first serious strain of idealism since transcendental thought helped to create an American renaissance. Like the transcendentalists, Negro writers derive many of their ideological attitudes, their dramatic manner, their moods, from the church; however much they may renounce the theology of

their parents - as indeed the transcendentalists renounce the religion of their ancestors — they have retained techniques of diction and tone and musical phraseology that shape their secular idealism. James Baldwin is perhaps the most obvious and best-known example. His work gains much of its strength from the oratory and ritual of the church which he learned as a child. His most recent essay, for instance, reads like a sermon on the necessity of idealism. "I know what I am asking is impossible," he concdudes in Th Fire Next Time. "But in our time, as in every time, the impossible is the least that one can demand — and

versal Being" or "truth" are always carefully placed within quotation marks, to indicate their archaic or special use, the religious feeling of the Negro undergoes many different manifestations and outward appearances. It expresses itself in music - note, for example, the significance of jazz in Negro funeral processions — or in drama — consider Baldwin's Blues for Mr. Charlie, which has strong similarities to the morality play - or in so many novels and short stories. Most notably, however, this theological reality - its outward trappings, at least - quickly surrenders to the political and social reality of the young Negro's world, and

"Digging for Rats"

one is, after all, emboldened by the spectacle of human history in general, and American Negro history in particular, for it testifies to nothing less than the perpetual achievement of the impossible."

The significance of the church — and specifically the protestant church — is central to any discussion of the pervasive idealism of Negro literature, as it must be considered a formative influence on the development of transcendentalism. Equally significant in both types of writing is the deep impact of oratory on the written language. But in our age, when words and expressions like "soul" or "moral reality" or "self-reliance" or "Uni-

the tensions that develop from that adjustment or repudiation produce a distinctively original, highly imaginative literature, as they produced a renaissance among the transcentalists in the mid-nineteenth century, or, more recently, among Southern writers in the nineteen thirties and nineteen forties, or among Jewish authors of the forties and fifties: the abrasive collision of the old and new ideologies, whether they be theological or philosophical or political, result, in each case, in remarkable works of art.

3.4

The Negro author of today is intensely aware of the political background and history of his particular dilemma — which

is th delemma of American history - and much of his literary authority develops from an intimate knowledge of his past. His reading of American history is not merely an academic exercise - as it is with most students who are unconscious, as Ralph Ellison has pointed out, of events hefore their own time, who have no real sense of historical continuity - but a way of calculating his losses, of measuring why he lives the way he does. History is crucial to a definition of himself, and it is no accident that the first Negro intellectuals were historians. Now that the artists are beginning to take account of their place in history we can expect an aesthetic criticism of American beliefs and ideologies that we have rarely experienced before.

Writers like Baldwin and Ellison are forever scrutinizing themselves as Americans; they are as self-conscious about their social and literary role in this country as Emerson was of America's position in the tradition of European culture. "What does American society mean when regarded out of my own eyes," Ellison asks in the introduction to his collection of essays, Shadow and Act, "when informed by my own sense of the past and viewed by my own complex sense of the present?" In their protestations that nobody knows their name and that they are invisible, Baldwin and Ellison assert themselves as virulently as the transcendentalists fo a century before; they too, confront a cultural tradition with their own humanity and offer works of art that are truly indigenous. Our early writers responded angrily to Sydney Smith's question, "In the four quarters of the globe, who reads an American book?" and produced a literature that made that question seem only ephemerally true if not indeed ill-informed. Baldwin and Ellison, among other Negro writers, are equally selfconscious of Negro life and art, they too, are defensive; and like the New Englanders they are creating a distinctively American literature.

In their examination of America, Negro authors reveal a complexity in American society not readily discovered in the work of white writers. We begin to sense this complexity in the blues, which, as Ellison has suggested, are our closest approximation to tragedy and "fall short of tragedy only in that they provide no solution, offer no scapegoat but the self." The writer of the blues has suffered but he has come to understand his suffering, and he expresses "the possibility of conquering it through sheer toughness of spirit." This specific art form now finds its formal expression in the writing of Negroes who have been given a more traditional, more academic training. It seems evident that Negro writers, because of the conditions of their life and the memories of their ancestors' lives, will continue in the Gothic tradition that has produced our greatest literature and that historically has proved to be a vehicle for the tragic vision. Negroes may want ,in Baldwin's words, to be treated like men, but the fact is that Negro authors have not yet created men, they have projected types; and though this tendency, which has crippled all American writing about Negroes, is a distinct artistic limitation in the work of Richard Wright it is not in the writing of the present generation, as novels like Go Tell It On The Mountain and Invisible Man clearly indicate. The enlargement of an individual by some idea or passion - far beyond his literal credibility as an individual — can produce great romantic literature, as Hawthorne and Melville, to cite only American authors, have demonstrated; and when writers, emerging from

a history of suppression and enforced silence, measure the society from their unique point of view, the results promise to be reawakening, disturbing, even threatening.

The reasons for the creation of types moral types, usually - are religious as well as political; and, once again, reference back to the nineteenth century is illuminating. Our earlier writers produced moral fables and allegories because they were tyrannized by a Calvinist tradition which ignored the individual and his fallible humanity. "Never to be sure where one stands with God," Edmund Wilson points out, "makes life extremely uncomfortable, and the constant obsession with infinite power makes it difficult to be interested in one's neighbor." Emerson, Thoreau, Alcott, and their disciples are, as scholars have frequently noted, interested in Man, not men, and their reservations about prose fiction are predictable; Hawthorne and Melville deal with people who have some fabulous or allegorical significance, and when they are most novelistic, as in The Blithedale Romance or Redburn, they are least effective. One can not draw so neat and narrow a formulation only in terms of American history - clearly Hawthorne and Melville were encouraged by European romanticism and by some of the great English poets; but native traditions and ideologies did operate strongly upon the imagination of our finest nineteenthcentury authors.

Negro writing has instinctively adopted the Gothic tradition of American literature and given its more supernatural and surrealistic characteristics a realistic basis, founded on actual lives often lived in the Gothic manner that is indeed terrifying: the nightmare world of Poe or Hawthorne

has become the every day world of the Negro author. Jean Toomer's Cane - that neglected collection of stories, published in 1923 - resembles in its macabre, impressionistic tone and mood George Washington Cable's Ole Creole Days and, more directly perhaps, Sherwood Anderson's Winesburg, Ohio; Richard Wright's stories in Eight Men - not to mention those in his earlier collection, Uncle Tom's Children, or the novels The Outsider and The Long Dream — describe the violent conflicts that arise when the Negro emerges from his underground, which may be the South or his own bedroom or literally a sewer; Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man, the most accomplished Negro work in this Gothic tradition, most skillfully uses traditional techniques - and though Ellison claims that his hero is "not a spook like those who haunted Edgard Allan Poe," the underground world that his victim inhabits is remarkably similar to Poe's, although closer to reality and thus, in its way, more frightening, more threatening. Baldwin's Another Country, as the most recent example of this type of fiction, announced the suicide of a Negro in a way that is actually difficult to believe but metaphorically compelling - in this case, one should note that the most successful portions of Another Country, as all of Baldwin's work, are the romantic rather than the novelistic.

The examination, and often rejection, of the religious and political past, as expressed in romantic and Gothic works of art, is given unique authority through the language of the Negro author. Just as Emerson called for a natural language that would reflect the reality of "the meal in the firkin, the milk in the pan, the ballad in the street," the Negro artist

seeks to make his experience organic by using a language that is the natural expression of the people: works in his fiction are the signs of natural facts. It is difficult to analyze completely or precisely the various characteristics of this language, although Norman Mailer offers a perceptive beginning in "The White Negro," and it is even more difficult to predict the uses to which the language will be put - one can only sense its fruitful and intricate possibilities in works like Invisible Man and Another Country; but it has an intensity and vigor that are. absent from much of our contemporary prose, and because of its specific quality, it makes the persistent, ever emerging strain of idealism less theoretical, less abstract: in contemporary Negro writing, idealism has developed from suffering, from the hard facts of existence.

There is no literary legacy that the transcendentalists have bequeathed to Negro authors; nor is there any substantive influence, with the possible exception of Emerson's relation to Ellison, of transcendental thought upon the Negro. Too much has occurred in literature and life in the intervening century for writers to have the same response to Nature, or to speak of self-reliance or God or the goodness present in the Universe so affirmatively and so dogmatically. And if American Negroes are deeply conscious of their national past, we must remember that they are also aware of cultural traditions in Europe: Jean Toomer has clearly absorbed many of the techniques of Joyce; Ellison owes as much to Dostoevsky as he does to the Gothic writers of American literature; and Baldwin has literary obligations to many French writers - it was, as he says, France that saved his life

from America.

But if there is no direct literary influence, there is a parallel phenomenon that suggests the meaning of current Negro writing and that reminds us of a sig nificant trend in American literature. The "blackness of black" that Melville so admired in Hawthorne's work, does indeed inform the work of some of our greatest authors, from Poe through Hawthorne and Twain and Faulkner; but there is an idealism that also characterizes the writings of Emerson and Thoreau, Whitman and James, Hemingway (the later Hemingway), Faulkner (the later Faulkner), and Salinger (the later Salinger). In Negro writing the two strands - the Gothic and the idealistic - are fused. Often the Gothic, as in the work of Richard Wright, seems to be a solitary feature, but upon closer inspection it is really a technique for conveying the author's idealism: out of all that darkness appears some light, however tentative it may be, and it is not the bleak dying light at the end of Melville's The Confidence Man but the hopeful daylight of the young Negro in Ellison's novel who has decided "that even an invisible man has a socially responsible role to play."

When we reconsider transcendentalism, not as a singular literary or religious movement in mid-nineteenth century America but as a recurrent manifestation of idealism that is a dominant aspect of American culture, we recognize that many of its characteristics — the religious fervor, the sense of history, the Romantic point of view, the deep concern with language — are precisely those characteristics that are helping to create what we can consider to be the genuine Negro renaissance in American literature.

135 st.westbaptist churchand voices straining upwith muscles in neck

and hands clapping salvation rocking back and forth screaming tambourine jiggling fat black women yelling lord salvation landlord deliverors jumping black boys white robed curling pink tongues for jesus in choir lines next to pounding piane keys running after jordan says the deacon passing the straw collection basket thru calloused hands to calloused hands just finished scrubbing kitchen floors and office windows the rhythm getting faster black faces popping up all over the place with sweat falling down and polishing the floor for kinky headed lost sons of bitches to moan on and praise the lord say all the voices at once making the sound stomp around the room pull at the walls and shake the building from side to side as God looks down

and says
NIGGERS!

-Jim Brown

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The Essential Lenny Bruce. John Cohen, ed. Ballentine books, \$0.95.

Why Are We in Vietnam? Norman Mailer, G.P. Putnam's Sons, \$4.95.

By Jeffrey Youdelman

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> Always that old doubleness in America. The future, as Fitzgerald concluded, year by year receding before us, because the fear of actually getting on with the business of living gets in the way. Life continually palliated by death, sexuality by the dread of impotence, talk by the fear of silence. Part of the problem is language—abstraction fogging the perceptual field. If I could just rob fifty words out of your head," said Lenny Bruce, "I could stop the war." Bruce hated the abstractions, the concepts that got in the way. Somehow he never hated the people who pernetuated them. He would open a monologue by saying: "Now I'm going to piss on you." Simple, shock technique. Word therapy, involving the audience in the manner of Baudelaire's apostrophe: "Hypocrite lecteur, mon semblable mon

Bruce's satire worked at stripping language to the gut, but more intensely at clearing way the mythic pictures in our head. Language is, of course, a kind of action, but reading Bruce's routines in chronological order ,the feeling arises that he was eventually left only with a language of gesture. It is hardly difficult to find Lenny Bruce in his art; he was right at the center. A very naked art with no personnae to hide behind. Lenny Bruce had a wonderful bag of voices, and they were all his. If he does a routine about Norman Thomas or Hitler or an outraged female, it is always Lenny Bruce projecting himself into their heads. Obective reality transmogrified by exaggeration. But finally the elaborately adlibbed scenes create another reality — a true mind tape. At his obscenity trial in New York, Bruce is thinking that the fitting curtain line would be for one of the three judges to turn to another saying, "See you later motherfucker." And in a way, that's how it is.

In Why Are We in Vietnam?, Mailer s presenting the Bruce routines in depth. The degree to which both succeed depends upon their ability to humanize the caricaures. Bruce usually does this by reducing the cosmic grotesqueries to the inability of two very ordinary people to get to-Mailer begins with the already pverworked situations and stock characters. The narrator, D. J., is disc jockey to America; only he himself is a receiving apparatus: Tex Hyde, son of a mortician and D. J.'s pal: Rusty Jethroe, D.J.'s father, the emblem of corporate competiive America. They are real Texas men hefty, horny, and hardy.

Clearly representative types. Early in the narrative, D.J. says::

The fact of the matter is that you're up tight with a mystery, me, and this mystery can't be solved because I'm the center of it and I don't comprehend...I could be traducing myself.

The sixteen year old D. J. functions as a mass mind, an articulator of a mass psythology. The rhythms of his speech are the container of violence: ". . . bonging the gong, blasting the ass, chewing the nilch, milking the chintz." Rhythm and found mean everything; language becomes form.

Mailer is pulling D.J.'s vocal cords, but not in order to execute a tour-de-force. Seeing the void in Rusty's corporate eyes, D. J. improvises a routine on Kierkegaard



and "Herr Dread." The talk, as elsewhere, is deliberately flippant; behind all that Texas machos, lies pure dread.

society has no victims. The society itself is the victim. The body politic is diseased, as it is destined to be by a general in-

The novel is structured like one of Bruce's monologues — play within the play stuff, almost effortless shifting from third person narration to first person persona. Mailer switches between raps, sketches, and full scenes. And it's all building to the charged final scene.

Mailer faces the problem of making things believable, yet of keeping up the cosmic aspect. He does it beautifully. They are all on a bear hunt in Alaska, and D. J. and Tex decide to go out alone unarmed. Suddenly Mailer is telling the story, putting them in perspective. The hip rhythm and syntax is dropped; the silence of the northern wildnerness intrudes. Finally they're up against the mystery and the dread:

For the lights were talking to them ... yeah, God was here, and He was real and no man was He, but a beast, some beast of giant jaw and cavernous mouth with a full cave's breath and fangs, and secret call: come to me.

It's cold and D.J., in an act of love, reaches for Tex under the blanket. The moment of epiphany in the wilderness, that which is really between them:

... now it was there, murder between them under all friendship, for God was a beast, not a man, and God said, "Go out and kill..." and they hung there on the knife of the divide in all conflict of lust to own the other yet in fear of being killed by the other.

And now they will never be near again as friends or lovers, but only as "killer brothers." At least they have entered the mystics' void and have seen what keeps the country going. Fear. Kill in fear of being killed, hate for fear of being loved. Eros and life firmly under the rule of Thanatos. The American doubleness unfolded.

The vision of the beast within, the voice of death in the wilderness, in part of an old story, an old mythology, but Mailer, writing with complete intensity, makes this more than just another moral allegory. He is writing an American tragedy, only

is the victim. The body politic is diseased, as it is destined to be, by a general infirmity of the psychic roots. Mailer is flashing the general mind tape across the rooftops and out into the sky. An old Mailer rap. The situation is that of the hip existentialist of the "White Negro" essay (D. J., incidentally, often throws out the lure that it might really be a "Har. lem Spade" who is narrating). The logic of life is governed by the mystical perception of the possibilities within death. The disturbing quality, as Mailer writes in the essay is, however, that "incompatibles have come to bed, the inner life and the violent life, the orgy and the dream of love the desire to murder and the deside to create." Mailer, like Lenny Bruce, is digging at the psychology behind the abstractions and the clichés. The doubleness of the national conscience is laid bare. and you take your look and understand why things are the way they are here.

Part of the battle, the battle of lan-

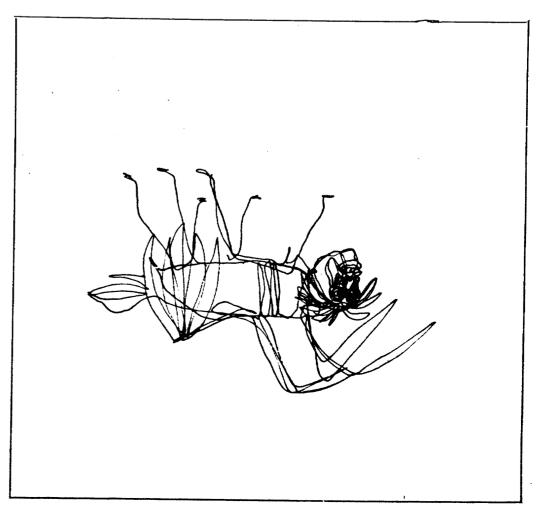
guage, involves dropping the old literary voice and replacing it with idiom. At times this is quite difficult for Norman Mailer to do. He seems to be straining, working too hard at being the ventriloquist. Nevertheless, it represents a noble attempt. There are too many solipsist odysseys in literature, too many protagonists as thinly veiled artists battling the elements. But Mailer is always bucking literary trends by refusing to add to a hermetic tradition. Like many politically anxious writers, he tries to push literature to the extremity of action. Perhaps literature just can't make it, yet Mailer dares. The dare is in his title.

Certainly, a major element of contemporary literature is the absense of sexuality, at least of that Lawrentian merging of souls business - the perfect enjoyment which comes after the violence. The problem is articulated everywhere -Burroughs' "can't reach flesh" motif, Dylan with his bittersweet irony saying, "I wanna be your lover baby / I don't wanna be your boy." And that's what the violence in America is about: the difficulty in touching because lives are filled up with just so many surrogates and objects. Instincts function more and more in the fantasy world, and art more and more in the realm of libidinal possibility. American possibility, the future year by year receding before us.

Similarly no sense of place; the sectional novel never really located reality. Ostensibly Mailer is writing about Texas, because we would like to believe that the violence is localized there — also that frustrated virility. But Mailer, like Bruce, is not simply assaulting the enemy camp. Violence is simply everywhere, violence within touching the violence outside.

In his routine on the art of performing comedy, Bruce hits upon a working definition of satire: "Satire is tragedy plus time." Means that, given time, even the most horrendous events read like comic strips, whereas if you draw out the comic absurdities of the immediate, you're likely to get busted real quick. Bruce, however, removes the time element and even most of the usual distancing devices. He is not out to to create a new mythology. Like Mailer, he is grabbing the old mythology by the throat, seeking a sense of reality which recognizes the instincts, even aggression in its place. Lenny Bruce is always essential.

The last thing that Salinger's Laughing Man does, after crushing the sustaining vial of eagle's blood, is to pull off his mask. The message which Mailer and Bruce have for America is to do that — before the end.



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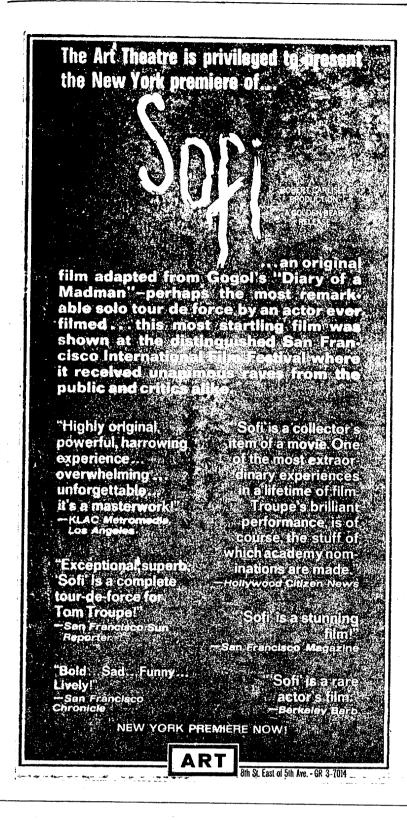
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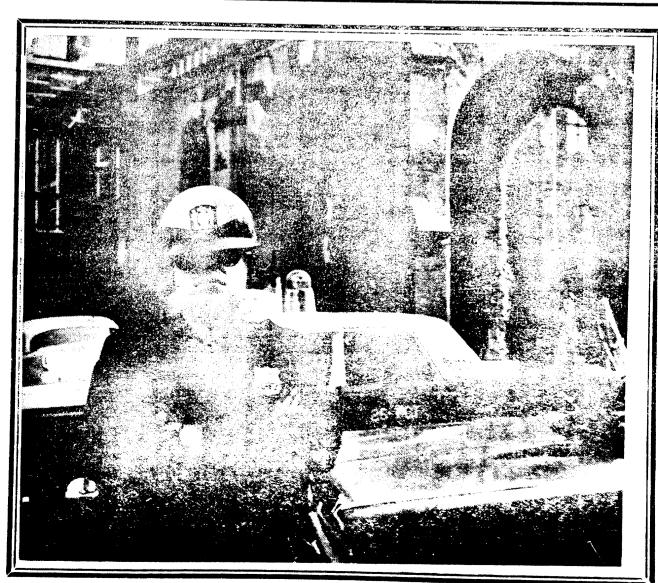
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