

Not science for money's sake; not science for personal glory's sake, but science for society's sake, which when properly pursued furthers the advancement of science itself—that is the whole moral of the novel; that is the sole motivation of all the positive characters in the book. Even Trubachevsky, at the end, sees the point, when he goes to the Dnieproströy in an effort to get closer to the masses of workers, in order to dissolve his exaggerated ego in the fervor of an heroic collective enterprise.

Of course, Kaverin is not "explicit" in his Marxism. He cites no verses and declaims no slogans—he is too subtle an artist for that. But that does not make his book any less revolutionary or any less Marxist. Hatred for everything that typifies the bourgeois, philistine, and decadent in Russia's past and present; love for everything that typifies culture and progress, boundless faith in the beneficent influence of Socialism on the destinies of the individual, permeate the novel. And this is of the very essence of revolutionary Marxism.

JOSHUA KUNITZ.

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THERE was once a chap called Simias of Rhodes, who flourished around the year 300 B.C. Of the poems he wrote, two or three have come down to us—one about axes, designed in the form of an axe; one about Cupid's wings, designed in the form of wings; and one, presumably by him, in the form of an egg. This last seems peculiarly to have pleased his fancy, for he refers to it lovingly as a "new weft," and to himself as the Dorian nightingale, its twittering mother. Following him was one Dosiadas, who made an altar poem in the shape of an altar; and very much later Vestinius, secretary to the emperor Hadrian, composed a similar piece. It was hard to be original in those days, and it has not been getting any easier.

Centuries from now, some such immortality may attend the memory of Mr. E. E. Cummings, who will be getting what he deserves. The man had certain basic qualifications that a poet needs—tenderness, a fair ear (about as subtle, for example, as Swinburne's), imagination, invention, and wit; what he lacked was control, balance. He did not know how to, or would not, exorcise his faults and exercise his virtues; and since, like Swinburne, he was also profuse, his bad tended to get worse and his good no better. In spite of occasional foppish neatness and elegance, he was, on the whole, a sloppy poet. Sensitive to the character of his time, and almost morbidly susceptible to its temptations, he accepted and asserted, even while berating, the "ideals" of his day. Thus the arts of advertisement and the insistence on difference led him into proclamations ex-



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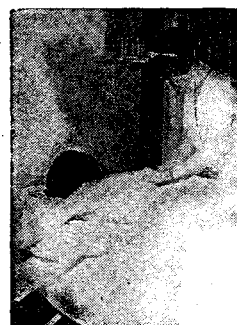
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cessive both in number and style, and in his frequent appearances as a curious poet, the poet was obscured by the curiosity and the curiosity deadened by repetition. The public, gradually becoming instructed to regard nouns as fact and adjectives as advertising, could not be indefinitely beguiled by his display of adverbs, parentheses, quotes and unquotes, however pyrotechnic; and his layouts tended to have interest mainly for the idle hour, the inferior imitator, and the more esoteric journals of the literary trade. A poet by no means freak or fool was put in the middle; the struggle between advertising man and anarchist was a tight squeeze.

For Cummings was also always an anarchist. His first book, *The Enormous Room*, indicated a philosophy from which he never fled: any kind of underdog was all right with him, any kind of government or authority impossible. He identified himself with children, beggars, and whores; and pooped all over Boston, Harvard, upper-class Americans, and clean, upstanding, well-dressed boys from Yale. He would write with sympathy and insight of a sleepless fellow at a window thinking it must be nice never to have no doubts about why he put the ring on his wife's finger, and really nice never to wonder whether the damn rent's going to be paid. He would write with almost sentimental admiration of the smiles and the (very) fine eyes of Communists when they were being outnumbered fifty to one and beaten up by the French gendarmes. But if it ever looked to him as though Communists might stand some chance of organizing the world, he would turn right around (though always fixed to the same base, like a weather-vane, or a revolving statue) and say that every kumrad (sic) was a bit of quite unmitigated hate, or that economic security was a curious excuse in use among purposive punks for putting the arse before the torse, or that if anybody don't know where his next meal's coming from I say to hell with that, or that Ever-Ever land was a place where everything's simple and known: and so on.

This kind of anarchic philosophy, though it can be occasionally turned to advantage by revolutionaries, is nothing for them to adopt; in its own essence it is a counter-revolutionary principle. The acid it employs is used only as long as institutions do not crumble under it; it has no real intention of destroying them. Moreover, its rule of thumb is entirely too simple; how is it supposed to work, for example, if the underdog is rabid? What if revolution triumphs over reaction, light over darkness, good over evil, life over death? Where the idea is that nothing triumphant can be good, it surely follows that nothing good can be triumphant. And since anarchy, in this sense, does inhibit life, it is bound to inhibit poetry. Where discipline is adventitious rather than essential, the poetic result is as apt to be the product of luck as of determination; but that is no true art which has its foundation in simple or complex caprice. (At the same time, aspirants to poetry should be warned that membership in a responsible and disciplined

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political organization by no means guarantees an automatic transfer of values, or renders them immune to the infections of anarchy when they invade the esthetic field. Still, it ought to help.)

This is getting pretty serious; it might be better to dismiss the subject with a selection from Cummings, not his most characteristic, but his most amusing derisive best—

my specialty is living said
a man (who could not earn his bread
because he would not sell his head)

squads right impatiently replied
two billion public lice inside
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