

A. B. MAGIL

Editor of NEW MASSES

Co-author with Henry Stevens of the new book:
"The Peril of Fascism: The Crisis of American
Democracy," will speak on

"The Crisis of American Democracy"

Detroit, Michigan at Fri. Oct. 14

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5 autographed copies of "The Peril of Fascism"
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STATEMENT OF THE OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, CIRCULATION, ETC., REQUIRED BY THE ACTS OF CONGRESS OF AUGUST 24, 1912, AND MARCH 3, 1933.

OF NEW MASSES, published weekly at New York, N. Y.,
for October 1, 1938.

State of New York } ss.
County of New York }

Before me, a Notary Public in and for the State and
county aforesaid, personally appeared George Willner, who,
having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says
that he is the Business Manager of the Weekly Masses
Co., Inc., publishers of New Masses, and that the follow-
ing is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true
statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the
aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above
caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, as
amended by the Act of March 3, 1933, embodied in section
537, Postal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse
of this form, to wit:

1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor,
managing editor, and business managers are:

Publishers, Weekly Masses Co., Inc., 31 East 27th Street,
N. Y. C. Editor, Herman Michelson, 31 East 27th Street,
N. Y. C. Managing Editor, Herman Michelson, 31 East
27th Street, N. Y. C. Business Manager, George Willner,
31 East 27th Street, N. Y. C.

2. That the owner is: Weekly Masses Co., Inc., 31 East
27th Street, N. Y. C.; George Willner, 31 East 27th Street,
New York City.

3. That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other
security holders owning or holding 1 per cent of total
amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are:
None.

4. That the two paragraphs next above, giving the
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if any, contain not only the list of stockholders and security
holders as they appear upon the books of the company but
also in cases where the stockholder or security holder
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in the said stock, bonds, or other securities than as so
stated by him.

GEORGE WILLNER,
Business Manager.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 28th day of
September, 1938.

Evelyn Cooper, Notary Public.

My commission expires March 30, 1939.

sis, osmosis, and, in extensive detail, to the
hydrocarbons.

The third part, entitled "The Conquest of
Power," contains 224 pages and 114 illustra-
tions. Of these, 140 pages and eighty illus-
trations are devoted to electricity and mag-
netism. The remainder deal with the steam
engine, the perfection of the thermometer,
various aspects of the weather, the utilization
of glass, the establishment of the mechanical
equivalent of heat, thermodynamics, and ki-
netic energy.

In Part Four Hogben is on his own home
ground but is the most chaotic. He calls
this section "The Conquest of Hunger and
Disease." It contains six chapters and 234
pages and eighty-six illustrations. It dis-
cusses plagues, sanitation, Harvey's great syn-
thesis and medicine (only thirty-three pages),
crop rotation, botany, biology, cytology, the
protozoa, Pasteur, fermentation, the overthrow
of the idea of spontaneous generation, im-
munization, the nitrogen cycle, plant growth,
carbon accumulation, human digestion, vita-
mins, evolution, geological succession, and
genetics. In that order.

The fifth and last part is entitled "The
Conquest of Behavior." It consists of only
sixty-one pages and thirteen illustrations. It
deals with the physiology of the nervous sys-
tem, reflex arcs, sensations, a little about the
learning process, and some sound remarks on
eugenics. The various schools of psychology
are not discussed.

Then comes the epilogue of fourteen pages
in which Hogben abjures Marxism and plugs
for Scientific Humanism.

In a work of such scope it is inevitable
that different readers will regret different
omissions. For my part I think Hogben should
have paid much more attention to atomic
physics, to radiation, aviation, photo-electric
effects and vacuum tubes, television, agro-
biology, endocrinology, and to medicine and
psychology.

It is difficult to appraise a book of this sort.
Most of the reviewers will avoid any attempt
to do so and will give the tin pan of the
publisher's ballyhoo a confirmatory whack.
The people who bought *Mathematics for the
Million* and never read it will buy again.
It is soothing to have such books around the
house, and there is always the chance that
a child will find them and have his whole
life changed thereby. But that *Science for
the Citizen* will more than cursorily affect
the scientific illiteracy of any considerable
section of the population is dubious. I ven-
ture to remark that this is largely due to
the political weakness of the author, and to
those personal foibles from which he would
be free did he not repudiate the inescapable
political corollary of his main thesis.

It is imperative to add, however, that
Science for the Citizen is a valuable com-
pendium of unusually useful information.
There is no person now living who cannot
learn something from it. I know of no other
book which assembles so many examples of
the social origin of scientific thought. To many

cultivated readers, who have been insensitive
to the effects of society upon themselves and
their ideas, it will undoubtedly reveal some
of the economic facts of life. Persons other
than Hogben must carry them on from there.

HENRY HART.

Revolutionary Artists

THE PAINTING OF THE FRENCH REVOLU-
TION, by Milton W. Brown, Critics Group
Series No. 8. 50 cents.

A MOST glorious page in cultural history
was written by the artists of the French
Revolution. They suffered the miseries of the
revolution and the wars of intervention; yet
not a single artist of merit followed his pa-
trons in their emigrations. Like the artists of
Spain today, they joyfully hailed the birth of
freedom, and undertook to preserve and make
public the great works of the past, to give
free art-instruction, and to devote their talents
towards making a weapon for the revolution
out of their art. David, Robespierre's friend,
was their indisputable leader. For too long
posterity has known him as an opportunist,
a coward, or a tyrant, but today we are
realizing that our revolutionary ancestors
either have been adopted by the reactionaries
for our own confoundment, or so blackened
that we ourselves have repudiated them. We
have had to snatch Jefferson from Tammany
Hall, Lincoln from the Liberty League,
Robespierre from the Devil, and now David
from the Academy.

Milton Brown, in his essay *The Painting
of the French Revolution*, introduces his sub-
ject by analyzing the various artistic tendencies
of the eighteenth century—rococo, *la grande
manière*, genre, and classicism—as expressions
of class tendencies. The body of his book is
devoted to several exciting chapters on the
position of the artist in the revolution, the
esthetics and criticism of the period, and the
character of the painting of the revolution.
This essay is a remarkable piece of work in
many respects: remarkable for its excellences,
its scholarship, its penetrating analyses, and its
richness, but also remarkable that it can be
so fine a piece of work in spite of its flaws.
There can be no question that the author
intends to present a Marxist analysis of his
study, yet too frequently he allows himself
luxuries in a field where he is not a master,
and wanders from the discipline of dialectic
materialism. There are frequent unnecessary
generalizations, such as "Doing, which is
essentially the materialization of thinking . . ."
which give his analyses an unfortunate ideal-
istic framework. These generalizations are
caused by a laudable desire to search out prime
factors. However, instead of appreciating them
as factors, the author makes independent
entities of them. In his last chapter, he states,
"The art of the French Revolution was a sort
of synchronization of the various social, eco-
nomic, cultural, and esthetic currents. . . ."

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Yet, I am certain, it is not his understanding that cultural and economic currents are independents to be synchronized with one another.

It would be a great mistake to lay undue emphasis upon Brown's idealistic errors. The entire conception of the study—an interpretation of art in terms of class forces—is Marxist. The author is a young scholar, and as he matures we can expect a deeper understanding of Marxism. In his *Marxist Approach to Art* (Dialectics, No. 2) written after the present work, there is a much more consistent Marxist approach.

Brown devotes much of his essay to a consideration of the esthetics of the period, and shows how the very foundations of bourgeois society prevent an adequate solution of the problems raised during the revolution. Liberty, the great slogan of the revolution, became a source of controversy. The active revolutionists found liberty in service to the revolution. To David there was no conflict between freedom and utility. To him, liberty meant furthering the revolution. To many, however, liberty meant freedom to paint as they chose. "The characteristic of genius is independence" and "artists are free in essence" was their position. This controversy of liberty versus utility can give us much insight into our own variation of art versus propaganda.

The great contributions to painting, it is important to know, were made by the revolutionary artists for whom this problem did not exist. David is slowly gaining recognition as the giant he really was during the revolutionary period. His *Oath of the Horatii*, the *Death of Marat*, the *Death of Lepelletier*, and the *La Maraichère* (probably also by David) are indisputable masterpieces which in their time were the cause of public demonstrations. No artist since has painted so powerful a figure as *La Maraichère*, the woman of the people. Here is a portrait filled with the assurance, the nobility, purposefulness, and ruggedness of the revolution. Here, in this simple portrait is expressed the strength of the revolution.

The great significance of this study of French Revolutionary painting is that it is the first study in English where an entire period in all its complexity is sincerely studied, with an effort at understanding the character of



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the period and its art. In practically every other lengthy study, the authors do violence to their subject in order to make it fit some preconceived notion of what a Marxist interpretation of the period should be. Brown, however, goes to the richness of the source material, studies the painting with the insight of the scholar and artist, and thus can make a most stimulating and valuable contribution to the understanding of an important period in history.

The book is well illustrated, and the Critics Group should be complimented for making it possible to obtain such a volume at so low a cost.
 MARGARET DUROC.

**London
 Tower**

THE MONUMENT, by Pamela Hansford Johnson. Carrick & Evans. \$2.50.

IT is heartening to see writers whose delicate talents would once have confined them to the portrayal of small psychological intricacies now attempting to move in a larger world. Increasingly, the sensitive mind turns not inward but outward. It is tortured not so much by personal conflict as by events in Spain and Czechoslovakia, and it has been forced to realize that inner problems are world disturbances seen through the wrong end of the telescope. I should say that a writer like Pamela Hansford Johnson would, ten years ago, have been smoothly turning out stories only a few levels above women's-magazine fiction. Now she has written two novels transcending her present ability in their honest recognition of the forces which mold and move her harried people.

In her former book, *World's End*, Miss Johnson wrote a sentimental but moving account of a young English working couple whose love was destroyed by fear and insecurity. In *The Monument*, she extends her scope, with an unfortunate loss of the poignancy which the very simpleness of *World's End* achieved. For while the author's emotional sympathies and convictions are wholly right and true, there is no gain in intellectual grasp to fit her for a larger field. *The Monument* is diffuse, often merely slick in its always competent narrative: it never gathers itself together to make a whole.

In the book are four people living in contemporary London. A wealthy Jew and his son, Rafael, refined dilettantes in living, desirous only of personal escape and peace, refuse to take sides, even as they see the tides of anti-Semitism sweeping upon them, for at the moment money can buy them aloofness from the battle. Contrasted to these is Albert, the clerk, for whom any private life at all is made impossible by harrowing economic responsibilities. There is Mrs. Sellars, a lifelong worker in the Labor Party, to whom a temporary release from insecurity means an opportunity for more devoted work in the move-

ment. And finally, Mary Captor, a successful young novelist, whose marriage to Rafael brings tired flight from the demands of a confused parlor Socialism.

While all these are clearly symbols of ideas, the ideas themselves fail to jell. The book deteriorates for pages on end into a finicking insistence on insignificant detail, into merely superficial story telling. On one hand is political emotion, on the other "human interest," and the two never quite fuse. It is as if clarity in social thinking were inimical to creation instead of its nourisher.

The reader cannot help feeling that the author is often in the same position she attributes to her novelist who abandons direct propaganda for a theme "sociological but non-political" with relief, for "she had not the knowledge and courage to plow further on towards the goal she had chosen." This fear of coming to grips with her own implications means that the writer cannot make her points within the framework of her story but is driven to such wooden devices as making them through a mystic voice from "the monument," the ivory tower, which at last decides that one must descend into the street and beat one's pen into a plowshare. But this transformation must be guided by rigorous thought as well as by a generalized good will which reiterates the axioms of progressive movements. Theory is also an instrument of passion, for without it such writing as this loses in impetus and warmth and is overwhelmed by the very mechanization the avoiders of theory fear.

MARJORIE BRACE.

★

Brief Review

DYNASTY OF DEATH, by Taylor Caldwell. Chas. Scribner's Sons. \$2.75.

This novel offers a realistic if not very new picture of the growth and operation of a munitions firm from 1837 to just before the World War. It is all there: the war propaganda, treason, international intrigue, buying of public opinion, business unscrupulousness, monopoly, labor oppression—everything, in short, that has been turned up in congressional investigations and publicized in books like *Merchants of Death*. And these particulars are presented credibly and, on the whole, forcefully.

The trouble is, the author has all but smothered his story with a "plot" fantasy involving some thirty-five members of the dynasty's families, practically all of whom marry their cousins. They wrangle continually: the cynics fight the idealists, the philistines battle the poets, and ambition triumphs over true love. They also clench their fists, turn white with anger (or jealousy or terror), utter death-bed curses, and slap faces, until you begin to wonder whether more aspirin isn't the best solution for the munitions problem.

Ernest Barbour, the ruler and genius of the firm, is built up from a fairly plausible figure into a bogymen at which children would more likely laugh than quake. It is a pity that the author, who shows he is aware of his capitalist villains' readiness not only to kill people in wartime but to shoot them down on the picket line and let them die from the diseases of poverty, still presents little better motivation for their actions than one finds in the born-cussedness theory of old-fashioned moral melodramas.

BARBARA GILES.