

again she loves a man; perhaps also because the man belongs to a country that, like Germany, was a former enemy, and because she is in Hiroshima, that monument to war's shame and horror.

Images of memory return—the roofs of Nevers in a morning mist—and briefly are superimposed on the bright, geometric pattern of modern Hiroshima. The man questions the woman. She tells him of her German lover; the confession brings the two closer together, permits the man to enter into an alien life. But to the woman the confession brings despair: “For the first time I am telling our story,” she says to the dead German soldier. “See how I am forgetting you.”

We forget the best and the worst. Happiness and pain sink into oblivion—into an oblivion more empty than death itself. All night long the Frenchwoman and the Japanese have weighed the possibility of sharing a new life together; but both are married, tied to their children; too many human beings are involved. The time draws near for her plane to take her back to France. This night spent together will be no more than an intermission. That, too, will be of no importance, since we forget even our first love, since men have forgotten even Hiroshima. “Oblivion starts in the eyes, and then you can hear it in the voice,” says the woman, and, holding in her hands the face of a lover whose name she does not even know, she says: “Hiroshima will be your name, Hiroshima *mon amour*.”

MUCH MORE could be said of this film, which so well accomplishes what it sets out to do: to remind us that we are both the victims and masters of war. Through its opening scenes in Hiroshima, Resnais deliberately brings back to our memory a catastrophe that deprives war of any morality. Without this preliminary step, moreover, no French director could have presented a story discrediting the vengeful acts performed by the French after the Liberation. The ultimate meaning of this difficult, bold, and technically interesting film is all in the title: Love must concern itself with its extreme opposite, the hatefulness of war.

ART

Does Picasso Still Exist?

HILTON KRAMER

THE TENDENCY to confer a mythical status on the protagonists of modern art has nowhere produced a more dazzling public image than in the personality of Pablo Picasso. His face, at once clownish and virile, with its brilliant dark eyes that fix a gaze of gaiety and fierceness in every encounter with the camera, looks out at us from a hundred magazines and movie screens. His off-the-cuff remarks are duly reported in the gossip columns as well as the serious art press, and there is no end to the publication of books about him: solemn monographs, silly picture books, quicky albums of color plates, books at every level of seriousness and frivolity.

Other painters, younger and still confined (as it were) to their private lives, have lately taken to dismissing Picasso as a “movie star.” Certainly it is true that his recent paintings belong less to the history of art than to the history of publicity. They continue to bring enormous prices on the art market, but as an influence on younger artists—which is to say, as a source of ideas—these paintings are of no importance. The younger generations in Paris and New York are plainly not interested in the work which now emerges from his studio. It passes directly from his plush villa in the South of France through the plush galleries of Paris and New York to the plushier apartments of the *nouveau riche* collectors who can afford it. At no point on this brisk commercial journey does Picasso's new work enter into the commerce of artistic ideas.

Coming upon a recent Picasso at some big international exhibition nowadays, one is struck by its lack of seriousness. At the huge Carnegie International in Pittsburgh last winter, the painting by which Picasso was represented was such a pathetic demonstration of academic modernism that scarcely a single critic felt

called upon to comment on it. Everyone recognized it as a token of the past, a painting which did not enter into the aesthetic issues of the exhibition as a whole. The rudiments were still handled with the ease of genius, but conceptually there was nothing to sustain one's attention. It was all too clear that this man, who had been for so long the most singular influence on the whole modern movement and whose earlier work is still the source of ideas for many younger artists the world over, had moved himself to the sidelines.

IN THE FACE of this situation, Mr. Roland Penrose's biography, *Picasso: His Life and Work* (Harper, \$6.00), is an especially welcome document. Mr. Penrose is an English writer and art collector, an organizer of the English surrealist group in the 1930's and now the fine-arts officer for the British Council in Paris. He has been an intimate of the Picasso circle for a quarter century, and he writes out of a deep concern for both the man and his work. The result is a biography in the traditional life-and-times manner, written with lucidity, intelligence, and careful attention to detail. It follows a year-by-year, often even a month-by-month and picture-by-picture chronology. It suffers perhaps from an unwillingness to face the critical task of discerning what in Picasso's *oeuvre* represents a real achievement and what, by the standards Picasso himself has laid down in his best work, is merely a brilliant dodge. This question becomes increasingly problematical as Mr. Penrose turns his attention to the period since the 1930's. Yet, unlike most commentators on Picasso, Mr. Penrose redeems his uncritical devotion to every phase of the artist's career by giving us a great deal of solid fact. Everyone interested in the actual history of mod-

ern art will be grateful for his painstaking documentation of Picasso's development.

The figure who emerges from Mr. Penrose's biography is, without doubt, one of the most supremely gifted artists of modern times. Born in Málaga in 1881, Picasso was the son of a teacher of painting in the Spanish academies. Doted upon by his family as a prodigy while still a child, he passed quickly from the tutelage of his father to the bohemian atmosphere of Barcelona in the 1890's. This was the milieu which Picasso frequented in his teens, a milieu in which Ibsen and Wagner, Nietzsche and Kropotkin, Ruskin and the Pre-Raphaelites and the rediscovery of El Greco formed the tastes and values of the painters, poets, and anarchist intellectuals who became his friends.

PICASSO made his first trip to Paris at nineteen, and settled there permanently four years later, in 1904. His outlook in this period, already formed by the anarchism and bohemian aestheticism of Barcelona, was strengthened by the literary and artistic ferment of Paris at the turn of the century. He took his place in this ferment with astonishing speed, and was very shortly an important figure in the circle which included the poets Apollinaire, Max Jacob, Alfred Jarry, Pierre Reverdy, André Salmon, the painters Braque, Derain, and Matisse, and the perspicacious Leo and Gertrude Stein. With the painting of *Les Femmes d'Alger* in 1907, scarcely three years after his arrival, Picasso became the undisputed master of the Parisian avant-garde.

As every schoolboy knows, the *Femmes d'Alger* was the prologue to the great adventure of Cubism, the most radical and profound revision of western painting since the Renaissance. And it is here that one confronts the first of the ironies in Picasso's great career. He was already in this early period a personality of marked individualism, intensely absorbed in his own ideas, gifted with an imperious wit, and altogether self-sufficient in his grasp of the artistic possibilities which lay before him. Yet, in what is generally agreed to be his supreme achievement, the creation of

Cubism, Picasso abandoned his individualism to engage in an intimate and historic collaboration with Georges Braque. It was a collaboration in every sense; Picasso himself called it a "marriage," and Braque later said that they had been working "rather like mountaineers roped together."

The style produced by this collaboration marked a break with naturalistic appearances. While Cubism never abandoned subject-matter as such, it transferred the problem of pictorial composition from the realm of direct visual perception to the more autonomous and uncharted realm of artistic conception. The impulse behind this



change had profound implications; Picasso and Braque had burdened the act of perception with such a multifarious awareness that a perceptual mode of depiction could no longer render it in a single composition.

During the years of their collaboration, 1909-1914, both Picasso and Braque attained a mastery of conception and execution in their painting which very few artists of our century have equaled. It was the war which interrupted this inspired "marriage." Braque was called to service, and thereafter each man went his own way.

With his circle of friends shattered by the war, and the old freedom and optimism of their outlook darkened by historical events, Picasso's life took a different turn. He got involved with Cocteau and the Russian Ballet, and had his first taste of that world of publicity, celebrity, and international high jinks from which, in a sense, he has never fully returned.

In the 1920's Picasso still produced work of great consequence, if less consistently than before the war. By the 1930's he was a "figure." The myth was beginning to take hold, while fame and a considerable fortune rapidly accumulated.

For a short period it looked as if his collaboration with the Spanish sculptor Julio Gonzalez would flower into a production as brilliant as his great Cubist period. It proved to be short-lived, but even so, Picasso's metal sculpture of the 1930's left a profound mark on the art of the next quarter century.

For myself, I find this sculpture far more significant than the work which brought Picasso his greatest fame at that time: the *Guernica* mural painted for the Spanish Pavilion of the International Exhibition of 1937. Though it is a powerful avowal of Picasso's agony at the historical tragedy that had overtaken his native country, it remains less a painting than a dazzling cartoon by a graphic artist of genius. The sculpture of this period is still the work of a pure sensibility, capable of focusing all his gifts with precision and force, whereas *Guernica*, for all its tragic aspiration, is the first of those publicity pictures which show Picasso to be completely taken in by his own public image. He was to produce more of them at the time of the Korean war.

THE LAST CHAPTERS of Mr. Penrose's biography make sad reading when we recall Picasso's early days. They scarcely seem to describe the same man who endured the poverty and ferment of the Bateau Lavoisier group—and of course they don't. For the man who now welcomes "dealers from all parts of the world, collectors, publishers, film stars, fashion experts, photographers, and architects" is another Picasso, the mythical Picasso, the Picasso who plays host to Gary Cooper and the editors of *L'Humanité* with the same good cheer, the Picasso who walked out on modern art sometime in the 1930's and hasn't been seen since.

Mr. Penrose tells one story which points up the pathos of this situation. In 1950 Picasso came to England to attend one of those innumerable "peace congresses," and Mr. Penrose met him at Victoria Station. "As soon as we met he explained that his friends, almost without exception, had been turned back from Dover as dangerous revolutionaries, 'and I,' he said with anxiety, 'what can I have done that they should allow me through?'"

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MUSIC

The Faces of Harry Belafonte

NAT HENTOFF

DEPENDING ON whom one reads and talks to, Harry Belafonte is several people. A recent widely publicized *American Weekly* article characterized him as arrogant and narcissistic and quoted his former wife as saying he wants to be white. This April in Washington, members of the Youth March for Integrated Schools presented him with a citation. A booking agent who dislikes his singing style nonetheless watches gleefully when Belafonte appears at the Waldorf-Astoria because "he not only crams those songs about Jim Crow down their throats, but he makes them pay so much to hear the truth."

Belafonte's mail similarly is sent to different images of him. There are protest letters, some psychotically violent. Belafonte files the latter in case anything should ever happen to his family. A recent letter from a girl in Mississippi asked if he'd sell her an autographed picture. She isn't allowed, she explained, to watch him or any other Negro on TV at home, and has to slip over to her friend's house to see him.

There are protests from Negroes. Just as older jazzmen were not allowed to play the blues in the parlors of upper-middle-class Negroes thirty and more years ago—and in many homes the blues are still not welcome—so Belafonte is criticized by some contemporary Negroes for singing of chain gangs, cotton picking, and other reminders of the times when the Negro was regarded as property.

"To some of them," Belafonte says sadly, "the supreme goal has come to mean not just equality with whites but total acceptance of white culture. Their own past is no good. They don't like my singing 'Cotton Fields,' for example. They want to forget all the pain of that life, but they don't see the history that's there. The cotton empire was built on the sweat, blood, and annihila-

tion of hundreds of thousands of Negroes. And in that very song, there are the lines

*Yes, I was over in Arkansas
When the sheriff asked me
What did you come here for?*

that are another indication of the pressure that was always on to contain the Negro. It's hardly a song that accepts those conditions."

OTHER Belafonte songs are blunter. He will not appear on television unless he has complete control of his part of a program. On his Steve Allen appearance a few months ago, he chose all the songs, including "Darlin' Cora":

*Wake up, wake up, Darlin' Cora,
I want to see you one more time
The sheriff and the hound dogs are
comin'
I got to move on down the line.*

*I don't know why, Darlin' Cora,
Don't know what the reason can be
I never yet found a single town
Where me and the boss agree.*

*I ain't a man to be played with
I ain't nobody's toy
Been workin' for my pay for a long,
long time
How come he still calls me boy...*

*I whopped that man, Darlin' Cora,
He fell down where he stood
Don't know if I was wrong, Darlin'
Cora,
But Lord, it shore felt good...*

Belafonte is careful, however, not to editorialize throughout a program on television, in a night club, or at a concert. "If there's no relief, they won't be entertained, and if they're not entertained, no message at all will get through. Also, whenever we're singing material that has protest in it, the audience must un-