



## Just Looking

MARYA MANNES

**F**IVE aspects of morality were treated, on the stage and on TV, during the last few weeks, each significant and valuable in its own way.

One was in *Shadow of Heroes*, the documentary play about the Hungarian revolution written by Robert Ardrey and performed in London in 1958. It has been put on here in a small upper East Side theater by Warner Le Roy, who directed it, and is played by an excellent starless cast amidst varied shapes of packing boxes variously used to represent buildings, podiums, alleys, rooms, and prisons.

Several critics paid it respectful attention yet complained that Mr. Ardrey's spare, narrative technique (Muni Seroff as the "author" describes the events and bridges the gaps) inhibited emotional response except in the more intimate scenes between Julia Rajk (Salome Jens) and her small son, her hero husband Lázló, or her comrade-betrayer Kadar. But I found the mere retelling of this great and ghastly tale a racking experience, wishing only that Mr. Ardrey could have sustained throughout the quality of dialogue—both tough and sensitive—that he used in Julia's confrontations with the Communist tyrants. It is not rhetoric one misses at moments but rather the elevation of speech that marks the poet.

What batters at the listener relentlessly is not only reminders of the incredible courage and agony of the fighting Hungarians but the irony of western impotence and inaction then and western action and impotence now in the Congo. In 1956 we stood apart while others died for what we claim to believe. Now we intervene in savage tribal wars where any compulsion to freedom and justice that may have existed on either side is beaten into the mud with rifle butts by both. It will be argued that the circumstances are so different as to make comparison invalid, yet this mind cannot reject it.

In any event, Mr. Ardrey's play does what it should do: fill one with rage and shame.

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Justice, if not freedom, is the preoccupation of Morris West in *Daughter of Silence*, a curious play that betrays contraction from the novel too plainly to make satisfactory theater. For one thing, though it is laid in postwar Italy, there is no



real feeling of Italy either in speech, scene, or character. A girl of nineteen shoots the mayor of a small town because ten years before she saw him rape and murder her mother in the violent partisan turmoil of the last war. Yet it need not have been in Italy, and neither the young lawyer who defends her (in a fine performance by Rip Torn) nor Emlyn Williams, eloquent as his legal master and father-in-law, really belongs in the Ascolini Villa. The stage seems full of interesting characters whose motives are unexplained and whose lives are unresolved: the missing chapters of Mr. West's book. That is why the real core of *Daugh-*

*ter of Silence* is the one long courtroom scene, in which he examines the wavering line where law and justice overlap and part; and here the play comes brilliantly alive.

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Most people wouldn't call *Sunday in New York* a morality play, and it's just as well for the box office that they don't. Certainly, the schoolteacher who hurried her girlish charges out of the theater when it played in Washington thought it quite the opposite. Alarmed by the gaiety, humor, and frankness of the sex talk and perhaps a short scuffle on the couch, she didn't wait to learn that the young man and woman involved were as honorable and decent and civilized as she herself could have wished them to be. The moral, in short, of this original and delightful comedy of young attraction is that sex depends upon who practices it. It is crass or sordid or smutty only when affection, restraint, or solicitude is absent. And it can be very funny even when it goes wrong, especially when the girl is Pat Stanley and the boy is Robert Redford. Those schoolgirls should have stayed.

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Before these three plays, Robert Bolt's *A Man for All Seasons* had established itself as the most distinguished contribution to theater for many seasons. Since I saw it in London in 1960 with the same cast, I will take the liberty of quoting from my own review in this magazine at that time: "*A Man for All Seasons*—the man being Sir Thomas More—is not only a passionate defense of conscience but of the majesty and clarity of language, and the writing is a joy to hear. . . . Paul Scofield, as the doomed chancellor of Henry VIII, manages to make this austere, incorruptible scholar a figure of great tenderness, whose martyrdom—as the author would have it—is less an act of history than a living choice."

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**T**ELEVISION struck a resounding blow for morality in "Biography of a Bookie Joint," on *CBS Reports*, in which producer Fred Friendly and reporters Walter Cronkite and Jay McMullen examined a small key shop on Massachusetts Avenue in

Boston where, in a back room, about twenty-five thousand dollars a week was changing hands in illegal betting. With lenses trained from a window across the street and a hidden mike on "customer" McMullen, the strange and ceaseless activities of the joint became plainly visible. Thousands of people entered the "key shop" during the week, among them a daily assortment of uniformed police. It is almost certain that the shop would be doing business as usual if this accurate and wholly damning report had not burst Boston wide open, infuriating the police, forcing long-delayed legal action, causing the governor of Massachusetts to demand the resignation of the police commissioner, scattering the bookies. Most remarkable of all, the program aroused the thunderous ire of Cardinal Cushing. In the prelate's view, it seems, there are two moralities—or immoralities. One is gambling, of which he said in a speech at the annual Boston Police Ball: "In my theology, gambling itself is not a sin any more than to take a glass of beer or of hard liquor is a sin." As the *New York Times* wrote, "Cardinal Cushing said he had not seen the program nor was he interested in seeing it. But he asserted that 'whoever is behind it owes an apology to the City of Boston,' which had been 'betrayed.'" This betrayal was the immorality.

If Cardinal Cushing had seen the film—which was not shown in Boston because of pending proceedings rising largely out of CBS evidence but which, of course, he could easily have had access to—he would have been faced with a vivid exploration of the mighty river of crime which these small bookie tributaries all over the country joined and swelled toward the corruption of society itself. One illicit fifty-cent bet might be a "glass of beer." Ten million such bets were the breakdown of law, of respect for law, and of adherence to law. Yet here was a religious leader extolling the very police who condoned this anarchy and soothing the conscience of the very people who contributed to it.

Apparently it is left for mass communications, those reporters who serve it best, and playwrights to awaken the public conscience.



## Folk Finds a Voice

NAT HENTOFF

**A**LTHOUGH the renaissance in folk music—both from the performing and the listening ends—continues to grow, the lines of division among the motley enthusiasts remain sternly drawn. On the one hand there is the mass audience which has settled for the hollow high spirits of Harry Belafonte, the Kingston Trio, the Brothers Four, and the Limeliters. Directly opposite in criteria is the minority of specialists which is contemptuous of all but authentic ethnic singers.

In between are the followers of the city-bred singers of folk songs, earnest apprentices who are trying to be musically honest while caught in an inevitable eclecticism. It is among these city-billies that most of the hope for re-energizing the tradition exists. But until recently the more musically sensitive in the audience for the urban folk have been troubled by the lack of substantial artistry among them.

Pete Seeger is widely honored in some circles, but more for his stand on public issues and his contagious

enthusiasm than for his stature as an artist. Richard Dyer-Bennet is now generally considered too dry and detached. The Weavers appear weary, and although there are younger, more rambunctious groups—notably the New Lost City Ramblers—no one had appeared who could hold an audience by musical excellence alone until the emergence of Joan Baez.

Now twenty, this exceedingly slim, stubborn girl has been seized upon by her admirers as a kind of folk-music Joan of Arc. Her first album for Vanguard (*Joan Baez*, VRS-9078; stereo, VSD-2077) was released toward the end of 1960 and has already sold more copies than the work of any other female folk singer in record history. A recent second collection (*Joan Baez*, Vol. 2, VRS-9094; stereo, VSD-2097) is following the ascent of the first. Miss Baez's total record sales are behind only those of Belafonte, the Kingston Trio, and the Weavers. Sales of the first Baez album, moreover, still increase each succeeding month.

Miss Baez's first extended tour this past fall resulted in large, hushed audiences with several sellouts. The tickets for a Chicago appearance were bought up more than three weeks in advance. The journey's climax came at Town Hall in November, with fifty seated on stage, fifty standees, and more than two hundred turned away. "Actually," the promoter mourned, "I could have filled a whole second house with no trouble."

At first appearance, Miss Baez, who accompanies herself on the guitar, does not make a particularly strong impression. ("Joan Baez, the superb folk singer," a hasty Boston columnist wrote, "should be heard and not

