

they turn on the tear ducts rather freely and without regard to logical consistency.

Mr. Brady, however, by no means repeats most current American stereotypes about the British Socialist "revolution by consent." Most American comment on the British experiment reproaches our allies for their abandonment of free enterprise, for their adoption of the planned welfare state. Mr. Brady, on the contrary, reproaches them for not being Socialist enough, above all for not planning nearly enough, at least at the level of grand national planning. He finds the British at bottom obstinately conservative, obstinately addicted to the old individualistic improvising, obstinately playing their disorderly rugby instead of a nice planned game, like our football.

He may well be right about the immediate future of Britain. But his book is at bottom a misleading analysis for it is based on a deceptively simple view of human society. Like all who have taken the Marxist stamp too completely, Mr. Brady seems to believe that the "means of production" of a given society form a consistent and unified whole. We have Detroit; the British need to make Birmingham into another Detroit or they perish. But you can't possibly make Birmingham into another Detroit—not, at any rate, very rapidly. Even machines have to be made and run by human beings. The Marxist, like more esthetic rebels, holds the unreal paradox that machines make and run men. If machines really did so, our intellectuals would have something much more serious than crisis in Britain to worry about. But neither machines nor economists writing about means of production actually "determine" the fate of any society. The determinants are many, varied, and in their totality as yet quite beyond human grasp. We cannot yet be quite as sure as Mr. Brady is that for Britain "the sands in the hourglass are running exceedingly low."

World Notes

THE SOVIET AIR FORCE, by Asker Lee. Harper. \$2.75. The denizen of Military Intelligence and the average reader alike will necessarily have to take most of Wing Commander Lee's assessment of the Soviet Air Force on faith—faith in the comprehensive accuracy of the Intelligence reports and observations that constitute his raw materials, and faith in his ability to render judgment. On the latter ground, there's excellent reason to respect the author: he did a profound

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Fiction. *The most interesting of the books reviewed this week is Robert Nathan's "The Married Look," a novel written with sympathy and compassion. Its theme is familiar to all older married people, the difficulty of recalling what they once saw in each other, the moment of illumination which was the first cause of love. In another thoughtful novel, "Afterwards," Elizabeth Fenwick explores the problems of divorce and the subtle complexities and pressures which may lead to the destruction of a family. The domestic scene is also the subject of Nancy Hale's "The Sign of Jonah," a somewhat cold-blooded investigation of a New England patriarch and dictator. In Gore Vidal's second novel of the year, "Dark Green, Bright Red," a South American revolution is filled with brutality and terror. Neurotics who construct their own hells fill an oddly titled volume of stories, "The Injustice Collectors," by Louis Auchincloss.*

The Will to Reform

THE SIGN OF JONAH. By Nancy Hale. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 413 pp. \$3.50.

By JOSEPHINE LAWRENCE

APPARENTLY the main distinction between Franco, Hitler, Mussolini, and Stalin, and Enoch Crocker, the patriarch, is that they've been labeled dictators whereas Nancy Hale files Enoch under the heading of reformer. The dictators, to be sure, have worked in larger fields, ruined a greater number of human lives, but, considering his limited opportunities, Grandfather Crocker didn't do too badly: he managed the spiritual demolition of his daughter and her three children, who had elevated him—whether voluntarily or with his benign consent is not quite clear—to the

place of God. Miss Hale believes that the will to reform is too often another phase of the will to power—more acceptable in analysis, perhaps, to the leader as well as the led.

Enoch was discovered, literally, by Sybil Crocker, his great-niece, a wealthy young New Yorker left lonely by her artist-father's death. Nothing had prepared Sybil for "Concord" or the Louisa Alcott atmosphere into which she and her companion, Harry Stokes, stepped at the conclusion of their trip south. Enoch, six feet tall, with white hair and beard and a bell-like voice; his middle-aged daughter, Elizabeth; her two lovely daughters: Hope, a stunning beauty; Felicity, pretty in her own way, and Edward, the girls' brother, handsome and moody—these vital, picturesque people pushed Elizabeth's husband, Arthur Buswell, far into the background.

Sybil learned that Enoch's life had been devoted to educating the Negro. Concord was a community enterprise conducted, as the Northern girl was intelligent enough to perceive, in the spirit of the past. Elizabeth hated the South; her father's work and teachings had alienated the white neighbors, and the fabric of the placid, devoted family life was wearing very thin.

Hope, who inherited her grandsire's magnificent health, excellent mind, and will to power, without his passion to serve humanity, was the first to get free. She accomplished her escape by becoming pregnant. Her cousin Sybil's beau, the wealthy Harry Stokes, appealed to her as a suitable husband, so she married him. This sharp, uncluttered behavior pattern was the basic one that Hope was to follow for the rest of her brilliant, exciting life.

Enoch's death, soon after Hope's



marriage, released his daughter Elizabeth, who promptly left her husband to farm Concord and moved, with Felicity and Edward, to New York. From this point on the Crocker-Buswell family became a legend in that section of New York society which furnishes material for the gossip columns and the more expensive magazines. One might think the law of averages would have permitted even a reformer one decent, honorable, healthy-minded descendant, but the Crocker blood stream was too thoroughly tainted. Whatever good Enoch did in his life span was permanently interred with his bones.

Hope—beautiful, dazzling, ruthless, fabulous—had the golden touch. Her family shared in the clouds of glory she trailed as she scored successively in the roles of social leader, famous playwright, and distinguished editor. Only when her second marriage, to a man she expected ultimately to establish her in the White House, blew up in her face, did she taste defeat. Characteristically, she turned to the one dramatic pose left untried—that of reformer.

This exhaustive study of human destinies (the enormous amount of ground covered by Miss Hale can not be indicated in a brief outline) adds up to an overly long book written with such expertness and intelligence that it seems illogical to protest because it leaves the reader so unmoved. Nevertheless, the conviction persists that cold curiosity is an artificial response to disintegration and decay. And, granted that the civilized, objective, sophisticated approach is the indication of a disciplined talent, why not acknowledge that a little warmth, a little pity, become the artist, too?



Nancy Hale—"cold curiosity."

Fighting Somebody Else's Revolution

DARK GREEN, BRIGHT RED. By Gore Vidal. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. 307 pp. \$3.

By JOHN BROOKS

THIS is the sixth novel in all and the second of the year by Gore Vidal, who is still in his twenties. This veritable one-man fiction factory here deals with a revolution in a Central American republic in a book which has the strength of containing some very skilful writing and the weakness of being somewhat undigested—as a result, one can only conclude, of Mr. Vidal's having gobbled his material too rapidly.

"Dark Green, Bright Red" tells of how General Jorge Alvarez Asturias, a fallen dictator, tries to regain power by force, with the unreliable aid of an American fruit company, a tatterdemalion army of Indians, a French secretary once a famous novelist, a Catholic priest, and a young American out of West Point. The American, in mysterious disgrace in the States as a result of a court-martial, is the story's protagonist. Dark green with closely observed tropical scenery, bright red with frighteningly well-described battle scenes, the novel ought to be a direct hit. Yet the impression left is more that of a near miss.

The thing that robs it of the impact that it rightfully deserves is, I think, a certain unevenness of narrative texture—a tendency to be several kinds of book rather than one kind. Instead of supplementing each other as they might in a much larger work, the textures tend to conflict.

First, "Dark Green, Bright Red" is in part a super-naturalistic war book, much in the Norman Mailer manner, but going beyond Mailer in nihilism. Nobody stands for anybody or anything except survival and power; the political Right is not really the Right nor the Left the Left; rape, loot, and gratuitous murder are so routine that they bore even the perpetrators; a torture scene finds the observer more concerned with his own tender sensibilities and digestion than with any desire to set the matter right. One would have thought that this sort of thing had already been done into the ground by a whole generation of war writers, but Mr. Vidal actually increases the shock by having the atrocities committed and observed by people who talk in phrases like "good heavens" and "why on earth."

Secondly, in illuminating his major characters Mr. Vidal resorts to the stream-of-consciousness reverie. He



Gore Vidal—"beyond Mailer."

uses this familiar technique persuasively, particularly in the case of Peter Nelson, the American *manqué*, who has come, for money, escape, and adventure, to fight in somebody else's revolution. Peter, incidentally, along with Hemingway's Colonel Cantwell, is surely a leading candidate for the honor of being the current novelistic military man most preoccupied with his own body. He is forever scratching his chest or looking at himself in the mirror. Such details, while not pretty, are convincing enough, and Peter, in a rather grubby way, lives.

Thirdly, as far as the General is concerned, "Dark Green, Bright Red" is comic opera: the pompous Latin military man, complete with a beautiful daughter engaged to the son of an American tycoon, gathering together his quaint forces for a final assault on the citadel of pride. At last we have him, broken in mind and spirit, pounding on the table for order and then waving his fist in the air in pain. Again, we have him shouting orders to the remains of his army, which consists solely of four Indians too drunk to move—comic and poignant to the last.

The use of these divergent textures, not woven together by any common thread, suggests a lack of conviction on Mr. Vidal's part as to just what he wants to do with his material. As a result his book must be recorded as an interesting failure. Still and all, it contains a spirited story and much brilliant writing, and there are few enough novels written and published that allow of being measured against artistic standards, as Mr. Vidal's work most certainly can be.