

loves, by Launcelot, whom he holds above all men in honor, and by his people, who become disillusioned by the court scandal, he dies bloodily at the hands of the treacherous Mordred, his world in ruins about him. Against this background of squalor and magnificence, of chivalry and violence, Mr. Borowsky's story builds up to a tremendous tension and to a striking and memorable book.

—SARA HENDERSON HAY.

TEMPTED MALE: The fellow carrying the burden of Thomas Gallagher's novel *"The Monogamist"* (Random House, \$3.50) is a solid, responsible fellow who is married, the father of grown children, and the hard-working owner of a parking garage in upper Manhattan. Slogging along the familiar road of daily habitude, he's not especially on the lookout for inviting bypaths. But then he meets a creature of fire and light in the person of a girl music student at Julliard who is young enough to be his daughter and who, unconcerned with the neat tenets of household morality, proceeds to lift him right out of himself. This rouses his wife from her vegetable torpor and our hero, whose name appropriately enough is Wisher, is buffeted between the pain of her pathetic attempts to reach through to him again and, on the other hand, the surging joy of his relationship with the girl. His very being pulses with the steady pump of the divided heart and, suddenly, in a crisis of indecision, he dies. A great deal of care has gone into the writing of *"The Monogamist"*: Mr. Gallagher has clearly pondered the desired effect of each of his scenes and his choice of language with which to convey it. If at times the story seems uncertain, even imprecise, it is perhaps because it deals with confused motives which are difficult to dramatize honestly and

with inchoate emotions which are difficult to articulate. And Mr. Gallagher, except in the oversimplified characterization of the girl, has not chosen to make things easy for himself—a decision for which discerning readers should be grateful.

—JEROME STONE.

GOOD GIRL AT THE FRENCH COURT: The true-life Cinderella of Pamela Hill's second novel, *"The Crown and the Shadow"* (Putnam, \$3.50) is one of the most astonishing characters in history. For Françoise d'Aubigne, who finally became the wife of Louis XIV, was born in prison, the child of a drunkard and debtor and of a mother who could scarcely feed herself. For a while Françoise was brought up by a beloved Huguenot aunt, but this happy period, tending turkeys and helping to cook, was short. Violent efforts were made to break her Huguenot training and bend her stubborn individuality, and these were finally successful. After periods of living in various convents, Françoise was married off to Paul Scarron, poet and buffoon, who was so crippled that their marriage was never actually consummated. But in his household she finally began to emerge. She met the *monde*, charmed the men with her looks, the women with her independence and integrity, and everyone with her intellect and wit. Some years later she was appointed governess to the King's illegitimate "princes of the blood," and later still, after the fall of the King's favorite mistress and the death of his queen, she became his wife. *"The Crown and the Shadow"* is a far better book than anyone has a right to expect of a young author who is studying in Glasgow to be a doctor. It calls attention to a very remarkable woman who was an incipient feminist and a brave do-gooder among the perfumed nonentities of the court. It offers history instead of histrionics.

—CHARLES LEE.

INTELLECTUALS' INTRIGUE: *"Children of Light"* (Farrar, Straus, \$3.50), Gerald Sykes's interesting third novel, assembles a gallery of Hogarthian portraits that seem as fictional as the faces on the covers of *Time*. There is the unfrocked editor of an avant-garde review who has to start all over again "with a rented typewriter and cotton handkerchiefs" after his wife expels him from her bed and board. There is the famous playwright Cairo Thornton, with his lizard eyes and elevator shoes. There is the political officeseeker who makes a heartrending defense (simulcast) against the charge of having too much money ("I live in a plain little

Pulitzer Prizes

THE 1955 Pulitzer Prizes for works in the arts were awarded to the following:

Fiction: *"A Fable,"* by William Faulkner (Random House).

History: *"Great River: The Rio Grande in North American History,"* by Paul Horgan (Rinehart).

Biography: *"The Taft Story,"* by William S. White (Harper).

Poetry: *"The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens"* (Alfred A. Knopf).

Drama: *"Cat on a Tin Roof,"* by Tennessee Williams.

Music: *"The Saint of Bleecker Street,"* by Gian-Carlo Menotti.

house . . . and drive a plain little car"). These reminiscent types and a gaggle of others are enmeshed in a canard to smear one John Trimble, a non-conforming professor-diplomat-geophysicist.

The tangled web that Mr. Sykes etches, while enhanced by his bitter caricatures, is just too involved and too diffuse to have the impact of reality. The focus of the novel is further blurred by the author's practice of having his children—both of darkness and light—indulge in such repetitive soul-searching that the book sometimes seems like a series of literate debates. Nonetheless *"Children of Light"* is rewarding reading—for its pliant style, its sharp satire, and its evidence of talent.

—MARTIN LEVIN.

EARLY MAURIAC: In the past few years François Mauriac's success with us has been such that publishers, having exhausted the list of his major novels, are now turning to his minor, early ones. Yet to all but highly trained eyes *"Flesh and Blood"* (translated by Gerald Hopkins; Farrar, Straus, \$3) might seem contemporaneous with *"L'Agneau,"* Mauriac's best seller of last summer in France. For the formula of his fiction was established from the outset of his career, and neither it nor the message it is designed to convey has been radically altered since that time. The setting of *"Flesh and Blood"* is Chateau de Lur, which a widower has bought to house his two adolescent children, Edward and May. They are joined by Claude, the bailiff's son, who, doubting his vocation, has returned from the seminary to help his father in the fields. Here we have assembled the three young actors that Mauriac habitually chooses to perform his dramas of Catholic spirituality and the

(Continued on page 43)



Gerald Sykes—"Hogarthian portraits."

"What Is this I Who Am Me . . . ?"

"The Self and the Dramas of History," by Reinhold Niebuhr (Charles Scribner's Sons. 246 pp. \$3.75), is an examination of the nature of the self and the tensions to which it is subjected today, by one of the foremost contemporary theologians. Here it is reviewed by Robert Bierstedt, chairman of the department of sociology at the City College of New York.

By Robert Bierstedt

IN the current theatre of intellectual inquiry no one owns a more respected name than Reinhold Niebuhr. Theologian, philosopher, and dialectician extraordinary, he regularly addresses himself to the most complex of all of the issues which confront the reflective imagination. While academic philosophers drearily dedicate themselves to the logical analysis of propositions and while sociologists cower behind the barriers of an over-strict methodology, Niebuhr, a proud theologian, speaks out on the more profound and pressing problems of human life and society. Obsessed with a sense of sin and history he examines, in his latest book, "The Self and the Dramas of History," as in his earlier Gifford Lectures, the predicaments of man.

The first of these predicaments concerns the nature of the self. What is this I who am me, this me who am I? Ignoring as too contemptible to mention the behavioristic notion that the self is merely a series of sensations, Niebuhr devotes his argument instead to a rejection of the notion that the self is equivalent to mind. The mind no more exhausts the self than does the body. For the self speaks to the mind as well as to the body, observes the dualism between them, and judges between the disparate claims of inclination and obligation. The self is thus transcendent and contains components of conscience and of will which have little to do with reason or with external experience.

On the question of conscience, for example, Niebuhr denies both the traditional view, that it is an autonomous moral entity, and the contemporary sociological view, that it is a reflection of community norms. Conscience is neither of these, but rather an awareness of the tension between them, an awareness of a community which both

frustrates and fulfils, and a tension from which all moral judgments arise. Niebuhr does not seem to notice, however, as he has on other pages, that the community which frustrates and the community which fulfils may be different communities and that an historical perspective which recognizes that the self may inhabit a multiplicity of communities in time and space can rescue the sociological view from his strictures. However this may be, Niebuhr's self communes not only with itself but also with other selves and with God and the persistence of these experiences gives it an extra, if still mysterious, dimension. An exploration of these dialogues of the self occupies the author throughout many of his erudite and exciting chapters.

A SECOND problem, too intricate to summarize here, concerns the "dialectical tension" between the Hebraic and the Hellenic elements in Western culture. In sentences packed with paradoxes Niebuhr exhibits the deficiencies of both of these approaches and suggests that Christianity has a key which can resolve their conflict. In this section he discusses in detail the inexorable process by which modern thought has moved toward "the understanding of nature and the misunderstanding of man," emphasizing that science, in its Darwinian phase, told a lot of little

truths in the interest of a big lie while religion, in the same period, told a lot of little lies in the interest of a big truth.

Niebuhr attends finally to the resources of the Christian faith "in a dynamic civilization and an expanding society." How has it happened that in our efforts to renounce an incredible heaven we have constructed instead an incredible earth? The question, of course, is loaded. It invites the theologian's reply that a more credible earth requires a credible heaven. The entire intellectual apparatus of a Protestant Christianity thus comes into play and provides a comprehensive answer.

Niebuhr's style is so incisive in reciting the errors of opposing views that one hesitates to challenge him. His addiction to paradox, however, leaves him little room to appreciate the difficulties in his own position, little opportunity to recognize that it contains contradictions which may be no less impervious to resolution. Indeed, Niebuhr's own doctrines, powerful as they are, and as powerfully preached, sustain a more serious paradox than those he so penetratingly exposes. It cannot escape our attention that his demolition of rationalism is a brilliantly rational performance. It may be true, as Immanuel Kant remarks in the immortal introductory sentence to the "Critique of Pure Reason," that reason is presented with questions it can neither answer nor ignore. In these circumstances faith may be the only solution—a faith which retains its independence of Niebuhr's rational solicitations and which, on the other hand, must steadily surrender to even the littlest of scientific truths.

Central Park Spring

By Sjanna Solum

THE DAY outdid itself in loveliness!

Real seemed unreal! Now, in the mind, again we try to clutch its transience, but confess such wonder but a brief mirage: gold rain of sunlight on ethereal air of spring, magnolia trees, fresh green as bright as flame, and birds that fairly burst their throats to sing of jubilation that has no earthly name!

In phantom atmosphere the park-bench faces significantly lifted to the sun what time irrevocably interlaces with deep experience, while not a one but bore imprints of peace, however briefly. It was as though the earth were born anew for everyone—not for young lovers, chiefly, who strolled through Eden, visiting the Zoo.