

## Uprooted Men

**"The Awakened,"** by **Zoe Oldenbourg** (translated by Edward Hyams. Pantheon. 493 pp. \$4.95), is about the tribulations, loves, and in some cases triumphs of a group of Russian and German refugees living in Paris before World War II.

By Ben Ray Redman

**PAUL VALÉRY**, in one of his most perspicacious moments, has told us that the social structure, which "seems as natural as nature," is actually "only held together by magic. Is it not, in reality," he asks, "an edifice built of spells, this system which is based on writings, on words obeyed, on promises kept, on effectual images, on observed habits and conventions—all of which are pure fiction?"

An affirmative answer to this rhetorical question would certainly be given by any one of the principal characters of Zoe Oldenbourg's new novel "The Awakened," for they have been fated to exist without benefit of the sustaining, order-creating magic of which Valéry speaks. Refugees from Stalin's Russia and from Hitler's Germany, living in Paris during the years just prior to the Second World War, they find themselves on shifting sands. They are on their own. As one of them, a young Russian who has never known Russia, puts it:

You see, so long as life continues normally, you can say to yourself: This is the traditional way and has been for centuries; it is a great concept—the land of

one's fathers. But when, like us, you're awakened from life, it's like being wild beasts in a cage, crowded one against the other—ugly, mortally ugly, a teeming animal life justified by—nothing.

André Lanskoi is in one of his blacker moods when he says this. Zoe Oldenbourg's uprooted, "awakened" characters do not permit themselves to be reduced to the level of beasts. They retain their human dignity, even nobility, in the most degrading, most oppressive circumstances. Leopold Lindberg, a German Jewish-Catholic philologist of international renown, the father of Stephanie, beloved of Ely Lanskoi, is the strongest and the proudest of them all; but none of them need be ashamed of his response to the trials he has to meet.

The heart of the novel is the love story of Ely and Stephanie. It is a story of ecstasy and torture, one of the most moving, most remarkable stories of love that I have read; a story of innocent, romantic, youthful love that matures, through agonies, before our eyes. It was a very difficult story to tell, and it has been told supremely well.

The whole of "The Awakened"—characters, scenes, events, dialogue—is worthy of its heart. The relationship of Stephanie and her father is no less beautifully realized, no less poignant, than that of Stephanie and her lover. We are made, by degrees, to feel at home in both the Lanskoi and Lindberg households. There is time for religion as well as philosophy. We can feel Paris around us, feel its very pulse, as we read. In "The Awakened" the author of "The World Is Not Enough" and "The Cornerstone" has turned away from medieval history to draw upon her own experience; and so doing she has won new laurels.



—Howard Coster.

Gabriel Fielding—"surgical precision."

## Of Ardor and Fear

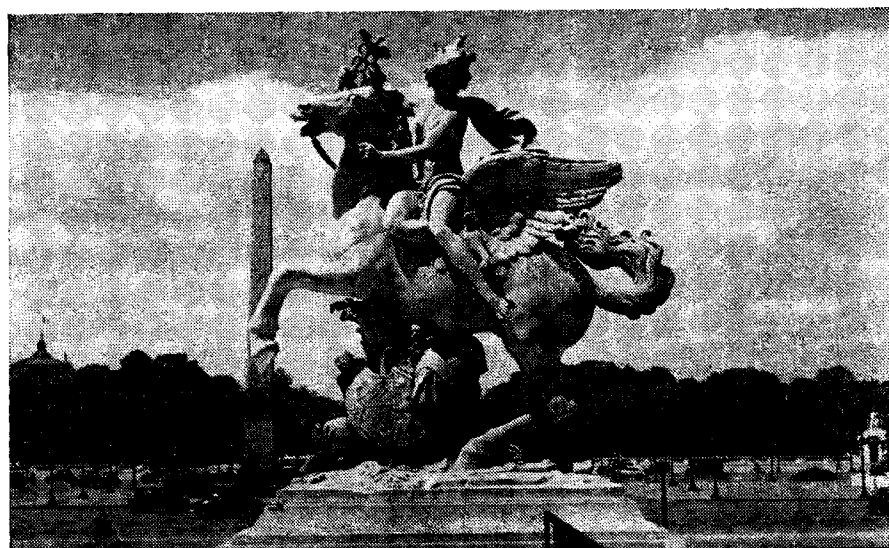
**"In the Time of Greenbloom,"** by **Gabriel Fielding** (Morrow. 407 pp. \$4.75), is the story of young John Blaydon, whose life was changed when he met Victoria Blount and of how he made up for her loss through friendship for a deformed little man and an airy Irish girl.

By Walter Havighurst

**GABRIEL FIELDING** is a physician as well as a man of letters and his probing, uncovering novel "In the Time of Greenbloom" shows a kind of surgical skill and precision. The story moves through childhood and youth in a schoolboy's England between the two world wars. Its world is varied and extensive, ranging from the moors of Northumberland to the quadrangles of Oxford, and at the same time it is intensive, being concerned with the painful experience of childhood in a violent and alien adult world.

Young John Blaydon is first shown at a tennis party at a country house. The aliveness in him is quickened when he meets Victoria Blount—generous, fearless, direct Vickie, who will haunt him for the rest of his life. On this day they are two innocent children, wholly alive and curious and quite misunderstood by their elders. Before the day was over the world was changed for John Blaydon, and he could never go back to what it had been.

The novel is an exploration of innocence and ardor, and also of vio-



—French Government Tourist Office.

Place de la Concorde—"on shifting sands."

lence and fear. When Vickie is murdered in a cave on the North Country moorside, John's loneliness intensifies. At school he is avoided and cut off and he goes on blindly until in Oxford he meets the deformed, electric, liberating Horab Greenbloom—"the little head jutted forward over the narrow shoulders with so great an impatience that it seemed about to disown the remainder of the body and fly off into space upon some urgent purpose of its own."

With Greenbloom, John feels the quickened understanding that came to him from Vickie. Greenbloom is an exotic, often preposterous, character, vividly realized in his dim rich Oxford lodgings, or in the midnight streets of London, or driving the dark roads of Oxfordshire, or in the Paris of the early existentialists. To John he was not preposterous; he was an education and a deliverance. Greenbloom, he felt, was a prophet who dwelt in a time and country of his own beyond the common imagining.

The latter part of the story sags when Greenbloom is off the scene. But he is there at the end, in a strange, exciting scene on the Welsh estate of an addled admiral, a scene less exciting in action than in the clash of minds and temperaments. In an electric atmosphere John finds that his despair is less important and less confiding that he had supposed. His deliverance seems assured when in

an airy Irish girl he finds the same quickness and ardor that he had met, years before, in the lost Victoria.

A richness of strangeness like summer lightning plays over Mr. Fielding's novel. It is a disturbing and at times a confusing book, charged with outer and inner violence, but its fitful brilliance lights up some obscure corners of human awareness.

**ESCAPADE IN THE LOWER DEPTHS:** In "Fowler's End" (Simon & Schuster, \$3.95), Gerald Kersh has scraped together a lineup of characters inhabiting a London substratum in the early years of the Depression. A "character," in the words of one of them, is "something dirty in a picturesque kind o' way"—and Mr. Kersh's roster certainly fills this particular bill.

Ripest of the specimens is one Sam Yudenow, owner of the Fowler's End Pantheon, a silent picture and variety theatre. Yudenow is an entrepreneur in whom ingenuity and cupidity are marvelously fused (he serves his patrons "greenburgers," an expansive mixture of war surplus dehydrated cauliflower and copper sulphate). To Sam's Pantheon comes Daniel Laverock, a public school boy down on his luck, whose craggy features—rearranged by a series of childhood accidents—give him the proper exterior for managing a grind house in the lower depths. In the course of pursuing his duties (bouncer, stage-

hand, electrician, candy butcher, and tout) Laverock can hardly avoid developing a profound dislike for his inventive employer—which culminates in a diabolical scheme to wound him in the pocketbook.

Mr. Kersh diagrams Laverock's adventures with great relish and with an infectious delight in the complete gaminess of the landscape. Though the author is sometimes so carried away by the sound of cockney that he overindulges in dialectal monologues, "Fowler's End" is a generally entertaining escapade that is fun to read.

—MARTIN LEVIN.

**VOODOO GINGERBREAD:** The schizophrenic nature of Alejo Carpentier's tiny piece of voodoo gingerbread called "The Kingdom of This World" (translated by Harriet de Onís; Knopf, \$3) is infectious.

A reviewer moves easily from a melancholic indifference to this warmed-over Vandercookery of the historic Haitian cruelties to a psychotic admiration for (as Dame Edith Sitwell puts it on the dust-jacket) the "sheer genius" of an author who is "most certainly one of the greatest writers alive at this time."

The publishers, lavishing an hallucinatory radiance on jacket, binding, and format, sometimes show an almost complete withdrawal from the text. Slovenly proofreading has produced such gems as "traitors to his casue" and the picture of a widowed Queen sadly slipping Christophe's amputated finger "in her boson." That this is no boatswain who gets slipped a finger is immediately made apparent when the finger slides downward to tickle the Queen's stomach.

The translator shifts gradually from a turbid, syntactically indefensible prose, to a highly ionized invisibility. Her first fly-blown paragraph has an even half-dozen gaucheries that would have tempted a merciless Ciardi whip to a defenseless school-girl's bare back. But when the narrative changes into something more than a warming-pan for a sadist, then Miss de Onís's firescreen is removed, and Carpentier's prose crackles in English, unhindered in its sometimes rocket-like bursts of brilliance and intuition.

The author of this grace note to Haitian history is an Afro-Cuban in spirit, of Franco-Russian parentage, who was born in Havana in 1904, was raised in Europe, and now lives in Caracas. This novella, the author's second venture into fiction, was first published in Mexico in 1949, but has awaited European recognition before making its difficult way into English.

(Continued on page 26)



## Your Literary I. Q.

Conducted by John T. Winterich

MIDDLE NAME, PLEASE?

Many writers give first-name-middle-initial-last-name on their title pages (as Frank R. Stockton). Here are twenty such, with the names for which the missing middle initials stand alphabetized in Column Two. Kindly assign the correct middle names to the correct authors. Confusion rectified on page 27.

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|----------------------|----------------|
| 1. Franklin Adams    | ( ) Augustus   |
| 2. Paul Angle        | ( ) Cassel     |
| 3. Albert Beveridge  | ( ) Dumaux     |
| 4. Claude Bowers     | ( ) Elizabeth  |
| 5. George Cable      | ( ) Gernade    |
| 6. Robert Chambers   | ( ) Good       |
| 7. Irvin Cobb        | ( ) Henry      |
| 8. Russell Conwell   | ( ) Herman     |
| 9. George Doran      | ( ) Jeremiah   |
| 10. Lloyd Douglas    | ( ) Johnson    |
| 11. Mignon Eberhart  | ( ) Laurence   |
| 12. Walter Edmonds   | ( ) Leopold    |
| 13. Morris Ernst     | ( ) McClelland |
| 14. James Farrell    | ( ) Phillips   |
| 15. Edgar Goodspeed  | ( ) Pierce     |
| 16. George Kaufman   | ( ) Shrewsbury |
| 17. Charles Lindberg | ( ) Simon      |
| 18. John Marquand    | ( ) Thomas     |
| 19. Laura Richards   | ( ) Washington |
| 20. William Shirer   | ( ) William    |