

man Mailer should willingly play patsy for the people and forces he despises most is one of those ironies that are more instructive than amusing. It would certainly be a lot more amusing if he were not gifted with what this column is looking for—the real thing.

Thomas Mann said, "In our time the destiny of man presents its meaning in political terms." To which Yeats answered,

How can I, that girl standing there,
My attention fix
On Roman or on Russian
Or on Spanish politics?

A fine poem, but in the context a Know-Nothing poem and a Copperhead poem. Mann did not say, "Let all writers cease to write, all lovers leave off love-making." He said that in this age the public life impinges on the private as never before, and, precisely for the sake of "that girl," Roman politics is become important. What is now less important than ever is being popular with the audience (which really means having access to publishers and booking agents) at the price of exhibiting one's quirks and crochets. The artist as sideshow freak is an invention of our era: unfortunately, the audience at a sideshow is usually a fairly depressing sample of the citizenry. Mr. Mailer, then, is ducking his political responsibility when he consents to play Wild Man of Borneo before their bumpkinships.

It is hard to tell whether the failure is one of intellect or of taste. A particularly puzzling case is Mr. Mailer's latest phase of religious mysticism—as it were, the Hassidic Manichaeism of the Harvard Yard—in which I swear and declare he really seems to be patronizing Jehovah, and a thoroughly putative and hypostatized one at that. When Pascal proposed, in the seventeenth century, to make book on the existence of God, the offer was theologically preposterous and morally offensive. Say what you will about the secularization of Western culture since that time, at least it has spared us the ingenuous hypocrisy of this kind of theological speculation. And now Mr. Mailer undertakes to revive it, in the pages of *Commentary*, no less. Forbid it, almighty God!

Here is a first-rate mind and talent trying out poses—as unbecoming and ill-assorted as those of the pugilist of letters, Rabbi Ben Ezra, and the king-maker of the New Frontier—for all the world like an adolescent trying to improve his personality. You'd never know he was a man of genius with serious work to do in the world. Take *The Presidential Papers* (Putnam, \$5). Their premise is that they concern

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BOOK IN THE NEWS

Straight from the Elephant's Mouth

***The Winning Side: The Case for Goldwater Republicanism*, by Ralph de Toledano (Putnam, 189 pp. \$3.95), traces the GOP's troubles to the "Eastern Liberals," who, the author charges, spread the idea that "a conservative can't win." A veteran political reporter and onetime Washington correspondent, Harold Lavine is now with Forbes Magazine.**

By HAROLD LAVINE

A SPECTER is haunting Ralph de Toledano, the specter of Robert A. Taft. "Mr. Republican" was the darling of the GOP rank-and-file; yet the leaders of the party four times rejected him for the Presidential nomination. As they did so, they wept; but, much as they loved the Senator from Ohio, they loved power more. And they were convinced that as a conservative, he could not win.

De Toledano clearly fears that a similar fate may befall the man he calls "Mr. Conservative," Barry Goldwater. That is his reason for writing this book—to prove that, no matter what anyone says, a conservative candidate for the Presidency can, too, win.

Now, it's quite possible to make a convincing if not a compelling case for the idea that Goldwater *could* defeat John F. Kennedy in 1964, given a break or two. Richard Nixon almost defeated him in 1960. Moreover, the South now hates Kennedy as the South used to hate That Man's wife, Eleanor. And there is widespread resentment against President Kennedy's civil-rights program in the North as well as the South.

Though business is good, unemployment remains troublesome. And Cuba not only remains Communist; it's still only ninety miles from Florida, as Republican geographers never weary of reminding us. The Alliance for Progress, designed to strengthen relations with Latin America, is hardly a success, and the outlook for the Western Alliance scarcely a cause for rejoicing.

Unfortunately, de Toledano is not content merely with saying this. For some weird reason, he seems impelled to prove that not only can Goldwater win in 1964 but that Taft could have won in '40, in '44, in '48, and in '52. Nixon could have won in '60, he de-

clares, except for one thing: he betrayed conservatism in the midst of the campaign to mouth the mealy phrases of the "Eastern Liberals." The United States is, basically, a conservative country, de Toledano argues; it's the me-tooer who can't win; the true-blue Republican conservative can always win, barring an unfortunate phenomenon like the Great Depression.

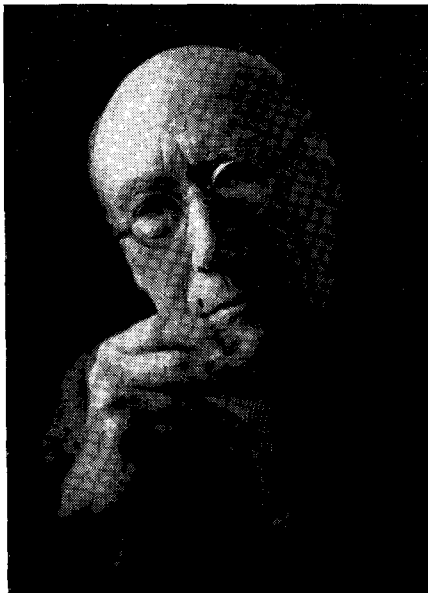
The "Eastern Liberals" are the villains of Toledano's book. It was they who spread the big lie that "a conservative can't win"; it was they, he complains, who convinced Nixon to make like a New Dealer. Goldwater once suggested that if the Eastern seaboard could be sawed off from the rest of the United States and left adrift this would be a much happier place to live. De Toledano feels the same way about the "Eastern Liberals." The party's troubles all began when those dreadful "Eastern Liberals" grabbed control, he says. As long as the Midwest dominated the party, it remained in power, because the Midwest, unlike the East, is conservative.

THIS, of course, is fantasy, not history. In the days of Republican power it was the East that controlled the party, and for a simple reason: that's where both the votes and the money were. De Toledano's beloved "conservative Midwest" actually was the stronghold of Republican insurgency. Just name the insurgents: Norris, La Follette, Borah, McNary. Not a single one came from the sidewalks of New York, and all were considered "liberals." In 1948 it was the "conservative Midwest" that gave Harry S. Truman his margin of victory.

In his fantasy de Toledano at times becomes preposterous. Discussing Warren G. Harding, the greatest vacuum in the history of the Presidency, a man who devoted himself almost exclusively to poker and a teen-age girl, while members of his Cabinet robbed the country blind, de Toledano says: "He had a simplistic view of the Presidency which he carried too far but which should have recommended itself to some of those who followed him in the Thirties and Forties."

Again, de Toledano describes John C. Calhoun as "Republican." It's too bad Abraham Lincoln isn't alive today. He always loved a joke. He would have loved de Toledano's book.

Strait Was the Gate to Art



—Bettmann Archive.

André Gide: "A book is a method of acting on oneself."

The Youth of André Gide, by Jean Delay, translated and abridged by June Guicharnaud (University of Chicago Press. 498 pp. \$7.95), and **Gide**, by Germaine Brée (Rutgers University Press. 302 pp. \$6), show how the writer projected his self of a given moment into each work of fiction and the facts that emerge from their explication. Laurent LeSage is a professor of French literature at Pennsylvania State College.

By LAURENT LESAGE

ANDRÉ GIDE'S exhortation that his work should be viewed only from the esthetic angle has not been well heeded. The public, not unusually, more interested in what a writer says than how he says it, has, in the case of Gide, pushed right through the work to get to the man behind it. No writer has aroused more curiosity or controversy as a human being. And Gide intended it so, for no writer has, in spite of his demand to be regarded only as an artist, more provocatively drawn attention to himself as a person. That Gide lived in his art cannot be doubted, but the stuff of his art was his life, and the reason his artistic vocation was so strong is that art exteriorized his problems—as it were, liberated his demons, who

henceforth capered shamelessly under the public gaze.

Art as therapy might indeed be the subtitle for Jean Delay's psycho-biography of Gide. The eminent French psychiatrist shows how in each piece of his writing young Gide projected his self of a given moment, and drove it to the limit; although his literary *golem* might by his excesses perish, Gide himself escaped to fashion another. André Walter, ill-starred hero of Gide's first book, is the double of André Gide's adolescent ego; Narcissus is the young poet stifling André Walter's Huguenot anxiety in the perfumes of Symbolist esthetics; Urien is the disillusioned Narcissus whose spiritual quest has led him to nothing; Luc is the disappointed experimenter with material fulfillment; Tityrus is the composite caricature of them all, former selves of Gide destroyed to make way for Menalcas. Since Dr. Delay's book (two volumes totaling almost 1300 pages in the original) stops here, we can only assume that he could have shown Gide's later works to be successive portraits of the older writer, created to objectivize his tensions and conflicts. Gide's own words support Delay's thesis: "A book is a method of acting on oneself."

As facts, the subjective nature of Gide's writing and the self-cathartic value of art are pretty obvious, and one may wonder why anyone should write so voluminously to prove them. The author would doubtless say that his aim was not to prove but to demonstrate, to study specific instances in the case of André Gide where neuroses were resolved into art. And psychoanalysis is poky business. Dr. Delay painstakingly goes over the ground of Gide's mixed heredity, his Puritanical background, his sex problems, aided by a wealth of documents to which no other biographers have had access. Diagnosing Gide's maladies in terms of mother image, angelism, overcompensation, etc., the doctor draws our eyes to Gide's well-meaning mother, whose maternal solicitude turned her son into a neurotic and whose code of moral virtue arrested the normal development of his libido. Presented clinically here, the story of Gide's relationship with his mother and with his cousin, who was to become his wife, loses nothing of its pathetic appeal. Yet the value of Delay's work is less in telling this story more fully than ever before or in es-

Opportunity

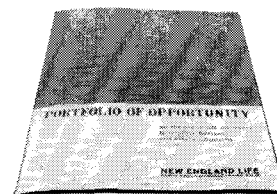
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