



Edited by Martin Levin

A Bard in Videoland
(In which the Poet, his set having failed, learns resignation.)

When, in disgrace with fortune and my pals,
I all alone berate that corpselike cathode,
And trouble dead channels with my bootless scowls,
And peer into the tube that lately glowed,
Wishing it like one of greater use,
Featur'd like it, like it more rich in juice,
Desiring this man's console, or portable at any rate,
For what I once enjoyed I now must castigate;
Yet thus eclips'd, o'er-Nielsen'd as I am,
I do not, in fact, really give a damn.
Though audio and video both should fail to play,
I reflect with jubilation on my maxim for the day:
Let nothing henceforth issue from the innards of that set—
If silence be golden, darkness is better yet.

—JAMES F. FIXX.

**The Critic Who
Came in From the Cold**

LOOMIS looked up the book. It was listed. In this game anything could happen. He wrote his cover name on the call slip in a spidery hand: "Stephen Peabody, 37-23 92nd Ave., Bayside, Queens." Handing in his slip, he received a card, Number 42. "South Reading Room," said the librarian. Round-shouldered; bald spot; wart on chin; reliable organization man. He went to the North Reading Room.

In the doorway an elderly, bewildered-looking man accosted him. "Beg pardon, Mister." His accent was flat and Midwestern. "Can you tell me how to get to the Empire State Building from this place?"

Loomis turned quickly, went downstairs, walked to the subway, caught a Flushing train to Times Square, took a crosstown bus to Second Avenue, and took a taxi back to the library. When he returned to the North Reading Room, the man was gone.

He sat down at the indicator and waited for 42 to appear. He was panting; he felt dizzy. Years ago, when new on the paper, he'd reviewed a spate of Eric Ambler books. They'd given him a recurrent dream: that he was riding the Ambler spy-train, the Istanbul-to-Cairo express. Marlene Dietrich and Madeleine Carroll were always in his compartment; Alfred Hitchcock was the conductor. Today, Loomis knew, spies no longer took the train; they jetted. The exotic old Istanbul-Cairo run, he was sure, had become decrepit and prosy, like the 5:48 to Stamford. But now, in his giddiness, he imagined himself again in the swaying coach, click-clacking with intrigue and counterplot. He dozed. When he awoke, 42 still hadn't appeared on the indicator. He realized that the board contained only odd numbers.

As he hurried out, a guard appeared. "Are you lost, Mister? I've noticed you been wandering around. . ." The flat of Loomis's hand caught the man on the back of the neck. Simultaneously his open fist landed in the pit of the stomach. This had no effect whatever. The man had him by the arm; he heard confused voices.

"We're used to nervous exhaustion here. I'll call a doctor." The director was tall and stooped. So this is where it ends, thought Loomis; the intricate complex of call slips and pneumatic tubes ends here.

Ann hurried into the office. "I was afraid this would happen. . ."

"Do you know this man?"

"Leave her out of this. She's my wife." Loomis felt a sinking sensation; the feeling of having read those words in print too often.

"He's a book reviewer. They make him read four or five spy stories, every single week. He's exhausted. Every man has a breaking point. And he's reached his." Once Ann had bitten into a cliché, she was never one to let go.

"Surprising it doesn't happen more often. You need a vacation, Mr. Peabody," said the Director.

"A vacation? I can't afford a . . ." Suddenly, with terrible clarity, he understood the whole ghastly deception. "It's Sunday. My blasted editor. He sent me here. He knew I'd go to pieces in this bloody place. Now the damned paper has an excuse to get rid of me."

"I don't understand." When Ann was bewildered, she looked less attractive than ever.

"It's painfully obvious. Being devious was too direct for him. Yet, if he told me the truth, he knew I'd assume he was lying. So he pretended to make me think he was lying, knowing I'd disbelieve him, because the truth, in its very simplicity, was too complex to understand. *Don't you see?*"

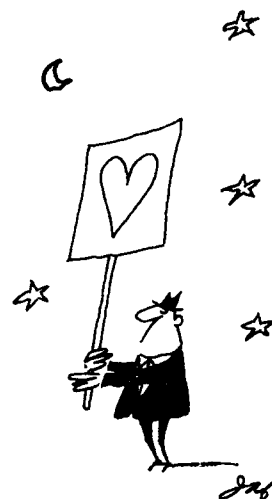
"No."

"Oh, for God's sake." Loomis knew he had to confront Sunday at once. A showdown might save his job. Otherwise . . . the little literary monthlies were full of men like him. Burned out. Space rated.

Out of the Director's office he ran, through the lobby, out the front door and down the steps. Far below, he saw an empty taxi. But the steps were slippery after the rain. He heard voices: "Careful, Mister," "Watch your step, pal." As he tumbled down, arms and legs flying, he saw himself on the spy-train, hurtling between Cairo and Istanbul. —ARNOLD M. AUERBACH.

**You Can't Tell an Author
By His Cover**

FOR a long time people have been saying Shakespeare couldn't possibly have looked like that. Sir John Squire called the folio engraving that has stared out at four centuries of high school English classes "the pudding-faced effigy of Dreshout," and Professor J. Dover Wilson observed disgustedly that the bust at Stratford that served as Dreshout's



model looked like "an affluent and retired butcher, but does gross wrong to the dead poet."

In 1907 something called the "Grafton Portrait," a picture of a wistful but unidentified young man, was found in a place called Winston-on-Tees. Fastidious Shakespeareans have been pointing to it ever since as the true likeness of the Bard. Their point seems to be that Shakespeare could not have written plays unless he looked like Truman Capote.

Personally, I don't think it's possible to tell the difference between a satisfied author and a pensive butcher just by looking at their pictures. If it were, Samuel Johnson and Bertolt Brecht could have easily qualified for cards in the meat-cutter's union, and the Bursstiner brothers, my butchers, would be hailed as successors to John Keats and Percy Bysshe Shelley.

If Shakespeare didn't look much like a playwright, neither did Molière or Ibsen. In pictures I've seen of Molière, he seems to be leaning on the back of his barber chair, calling "Next." Ibsen, who could have used a good barber, is the image of a District Director of Norwegian Internal Revenue. In our own day, I'd hate to sit down to a friendly game of cards with Tennessee Williams,

if he didn't show me proper identification first.

People who think authors ought to look a certain way should study the backs of book jackets. They might conclude that Conrad Aiken is board chairman of General Motors, Vladimir Nabokov the operator of a pizza palace, and John O'Hara out of work.

Few writers look delicate, possessed, drunk, or whatever it is they're supposed to look. Norman Mailer has the bemused air and sartorial elegance of a production singer in a burlesque house, John Updike smiles as though he had just been promoted to the auditing department, and Gore Vidal looks as if his collar's on too tight.

Among our poets, two such disparate talents as Allen Ginsberg and John Ciardi have in common their unpoetical appearance. Ginsberg looks as if he's still sore at not having been picked Prime Minister of India, and Ciardi could be type-cast as a washed-up prizefighter who's been passed by three weeks running at the waterfront shape-up.

To support his Shakespeare-the-Butcher thesis, Dover Wilson cites the "vapid expression," the eyes set "too close together," the nose "too small for the face," the "extraordinary upper lip,



the hanging lower lip, and general air of stupid and self-complacent prosperity" of the Stratford bust. If he thinks *those* are unliterary features, it's a good thing Dover Wilson never went to Breadloaf.

Some authors, however, are something special. There's Ayn Rand, who looks like Barry Goldwater, and J. D. Salinger, who looks just as he did twenty years ago, though only his butcher knows for sure. —LOU D'ANGELO.

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EXPERIMENT IN INDIA

An American ambassador discovers the value of books in diplomacy

By JOHN KENNETH GALBRAITH

IN THE winter of 1961, before I left for India to become ambassador, the Ford Foundation made me a grant of \$15,000 for books. This was on my petition. My plea was for an experiment to see what a liberal and (hopefully) imaginative use of books might do to win respect, friendship, and good will for the United States, or otherwise facilitate diplomatic tasks. India seemed to be an admirable testing ground. The literate community speaks and reads English; there is active curiosity about the American intellectual scene. From earlier visits I knew that books and authors that are actively under discussion in the United States—and hence in Indian journals and press—are usually unavailable in the bookstores. The Indian government, though always short of foreign exchange, has been generous in the past in licensing the import of books. But distance and time are great. The books that are wanted soon disappear; only the others remain in adequate supply. My suggestion was that the American ambassador should have at his command a wide selection of books of current interest. Judiciously employed, they would also help influential institutions and individuals to keep abreast of American ideas and thought.

The mechanics of the arrangement were simple. The funds were appropriated to the American Council of Learned Societies. A committee consisting of Francis Brown of the *New York Times*, Thomas Wilson of the Harvard University Press, and Dan Lacy of the American Book Publishers Council was chosen to select the books. They had the advice and guidance of Frederick Burkhardt, the president of the ACLS. The committee bought on its own motion and also in response to my requests. It did its work very well; I am most grateful for the enlightened service of the members.

The United States Information Agency and the Department of State helped in the shipment and receipt of the books.

I learned on my arrival in India what doubtless I should have known before: that the United States already had a small book presentation program. I became rather closely familiar with this offering during the first several weeks of my tenure, for it was used to fill the empty bookcases in the embassy residence. In odd moments of insomnia or idleness, I used it for my own reading. It was not seriously in conflict with the new experiment.

Perhaps a third of the books were on Communism; all, you will be relieved to know, were opposed to it. Some were alarming. All were unread. The selection ranged from the works of the Overstreets, J. Edgar Hoover, and Victor Kravchenko (there were some even more searing warnings about what the deceitful rascals had in mind) to the worthy institutional studies of Communism and the Soviet Union financed by the foundations. This part of the collection reflected the tendency of American foreign policy during the immediately preceding period (on which Herman Finer has commented in *Dulles Over Suez*) to be almost totally preoccupied with Communism and the Soviet Union. It is a simplification for which a certain number of our people still yearn. It reduces everything to two easily mastered elements: Them and Us.

THE remainder of this offering dealt cautiously with the classics, geography, free enterprise, and large-type picture-book history. Lincoln's speeches were available in full; so was Sandburg on Lincoln. There was a fairly complete collection of the work of Nathaniel Hawthorne. Hemingway was the most recent novelist and almost the only one. *Profiles in Courage* was on the list. However, this tolerance did not extend to the works

of Schlesinger, Galbraith, or Chester Bowles. Some time after my arrival my books were added; it gave me great pleasure to continue for a reasonable time the caution as regards Professor Schlesinger.

In general this list reflected the deep conviction of people who do not read concerning the persuasive power of books on those who do. Most often this manifests itself in an effort to have books suppressed—or otherwise kept out of the hands of the presumably susceptible. But it also has its affirmative side. This is the distribution of unreadable books to people who will never read them in the belief that the capacity of the wrong books for unlimited danger is matched by the capacity of the right books for unlimited good.

One should also, I thought, have some doubt about any exercise in international enlightenment that devoted so much of its energy to telling of the sins of other countries while being so inordinately careful in speaking about itself. However, I am commenting on things as they were at the beginning of 1961. I do not think that any of the men appointed by President Kennedy had such a prompt and profound effect on the institution that he headed as did Edward R. Murrow. He was not interested in automated anti-Communism; he saw his agency as a showcase where all the wares of the United States should be displayed. Month by month, under his management, one could see the change. That was not everywhere the case. In the State Department, however, Murrow's more rational view of these matters was ably seconded by that of Assistant Secretary Lucius D. Battle.

Let me return to the Ford books, as they came to be called. In the autumn of 1961 they began to arrive. As the fruit of a different enterprise we also obtained a handsome collection of paintings from the International Council of