

half a dozen novels from England, and by all odds the best was William Golding's *The Spire*. Few novelists are asking such profound questions about man and the world as Golding has asked in all five of his novels, and his answers, tentative as they always are, are unsettling and memorable. I also thought well of Doris Lessing's *Children of Violence*, made up of two novels that tell the story of a young woman in Africa. As in *The Golden Notebook*, Miss Lessing shows the making of a free woman.

Anthony Powell and C. P. Snow each added a volume to his series on contemporary British life. Powell's *The Valley of Bones* not only measured up to the standard of earlier volumes but introduced a new and somewhat more serious note. Snow's *Corridors of Power*, on the other hand, was at least a mild disappointment. In this, Snow has reached almost to the highest level of the power structure, and what he has to say is often interesting enough in a sociological way, but there isn't much of the kind of human insight that has given the earlier novels in the series a more than historical interest. Perhaps Sir Charles will be remembered as a statesman rather than as a novelist.

A British novel that I didn't review but did read and like is Iris Murdoch's *The Italian Girl*. This is perhaps the most fascinating and the most amusing of Miss Murdoch's novels. Like its immediate predecessor, *The Unicorn*, it is something of a mystery story, but the turns and twists are even more startling and the situations even more bizarre. At the same time the author is, as usual, capable of complete seriousness, and parts of the novel are downright grim.

I have limited myself to fiction because that is all there is room for, but I should mention several collections of essays on both literary and political themes: Ralph Ellison's *Shadow and Act*, Diana Trilling's *Claremont Essays*, and Norman Podhoretz's *Doings and Undoings*. And I should at least allude to Ernest Samuels's *Henry Adams: The Major Phase*. —GRANVILLE HICKS.

Epitaph for My Ego

By Walter Lowenfels

IT'S a rock
I'm holding on to
that's a sponge
I'm falling through
in the middle of an ocean
that's a sieve drowning
on the Continental shelf
of somebody else.

The European Literary Scene

Can our tastes in literature, like our tastes in clothing, really change radically in a span of twenty years? When Camus wrote his play *Le Malentendu* two decades ago, it was hooted by many. The plot was incongruous. It strained belief that a predatory mother and daughter, innkeeping in Moravia, should unwittingly murder the old woman's own son among other rich travelers who happened into their trap. One was not sure what Camus intended by this philosophically labored *Arsenic and Old Lace*. True, he had already given us an advance clue to the meaning which he read into his tragic plot by having Meursault ponder it in *The Stranger*. Says this ill-starred outsider within his prison: "In one way the story is farfetched. In another it is perfectly natural. In any case, I found that the traveler deserved what he got. You can't play games." The son's game in *Malentendu* was concealing his identity, and what he got was death in a chill mountain stream.

Camus's play has reopened to enthusiastic crowds at the Gramont Theater in Paris, and the critic Jacques Lenormand loftily explains the difference in the present attitude: "What people then could scarcely forgive in Camus was to have discovered the true fountainheads of tragedy, those which had sustained the Greek tragedians and whose location had been pointed out by Nietzsche. The author of *Malentendu* wanted us to drink of them, and only now is succeeding."

It would seem, more simply, that twenty years of attending the Theater of the Absurd has softened up the public for an easier acceptance of Camus's particular version of the Absurd.

Identity has become as important an ingredient of the modern novel as has the flow of time. A successful manipulator of this theme is Max Frisch, who started his literary career jotting notes while guarding the borders of his native Switzerland, and saw his identity change to that of writer when the notes were successfully published. Frisch's first novel to be concerned with the nature of self was *I'm Not Stiller*, the study—possibly influenced by Pirandello's *Mattia Pascal*—of a man who forges a passport and thereby assumes a new identity. A smashing success, Frisch's latest novel, *Let My Name Be Gantenbein* (*Mein Name sei Gantenbein*), carries his fascination with identity to bewildering extremes. In this anti-novel the narrator

switches unannounced from one personage to another, characters shed and recapture identities with protean rapidity, and the plot never really emerges. That his narrative is as elusive as a St. Elmo's Fire does not bother Frisch: "*Ich probiere Geschichten an wie Kleider*" ("I try on plots like clothes").

Lila, an actress—no, she has now metamorphosed into an Italian countess—is loved by three men, including Theo Gantenbein, who must occasionally slip into the role of blind man to hold her affection. Jealousy is the theme most easily traced. It is a painful emotion, not for the usual reasons, but only because through jealousy one discovers that he has misunderstood the nature of his partner, that the world is not identical with that partner.

For an author who has written plays—albeit highly symbolic ones—on such concrete and specific problems as Nazi crimes (*Nun singen sie wieder*), the atom bomb (*Die Chinesische Mauer*), and the rise of totalitarianism (*Biedermann*), Frisch would seem to have drastically altered his wardrobe.

Hucksters and publicity methods enliven two popular novels this year, the *Littératron* of France's Robert Escarpit and the *Tigre domestica* of Italy's Giancarlo Buzzi. Yet no novelist seems to have mastered the subject so fully as Holland's Jan Cremer, an unhidden persuader at the Frankfurt Book Fair. His publisher obligingly crowned a stand



—Pictorial Parade.

Max Frisch—an altered wardrobe.

with a huge photograph of Cremer, who daily haunted the display clad in a variety of conspicuous costumes. Under the blown-up portrait one read: "Jan Cremer, Inc. Post Box 1061, Amsterdam. Phone 66097." His book? *Ik, Jan Cremer*. The dedicatee? Jan Cremer. This self-confidence so impressed publishers from twelve countries that they contracted for the book on the spot. Not knowing Dutch, where did they learn of the book's qualities? From Jan Cremer.

Mary McCarthy in *Arts* has administered a resounding spanking to Simone de Beauvoir for the latter's constant misrepresentations of America and Americans. It was time someone did so, and the timing was perfect, for Miss McCarthy's prestige has been much enhanced by her current best-seller (*The Group*) in Germany, Italy, Denmark, and Holland, as well as France. She finds Mlle. de Beauvoir's *Travel Notes* yet another proof that the French writer's Marxist preconceptions prevent her from seeing America as other than "a land of Oz peopled by robots, a vision corresponding to no reality in the U.S. or anywhere else. . . . She is a petrification of a fear widespread in Europe today, fear of the future." Some of us who met Simone de Beauvoir back when she was writing such statements as "*le danger stalinien est une invention américaine*," and did not wish on brief acquaintance to take issue with her, have been waiting for an American to make the reply Miss McCarthy has expressed so articulately. However, Mlle. de Beauvoir can be counted on, in Vol. III of her memoirs, for the last word in response to her erstwhile rival for Sartre's affections.

This year Europeans strove harder than ever to assess the meaning and purpose of poetry in the Western world. One of the key agenda at the October PEN Congress in Budapest was to seek answers to such basic questions as: What are the new aspirations of poetry? Is poetry headed toward order or chaos? And so on. Even before, major poets of four continents had gathered in the Kongresshalle of Berlin to debate these matters. One journalist called the Berlin sessions a "UNO of the spirit." Such top practitioners as Pierre Emmanuel, Stephen Spender, Günther Grass, and Giuseppe Ungaretti represented Europe, while Aimé Césaire, increasingly prominent creator of the concept of "negritude," headed the African delegation.

Obviously the attempt to define poetry's role in contemporary society was made more difficult by the variety of viewpoints. There was agreement that poetry required new forms and needed to explore unsuspected areas of experience. It was agreed that the poet can no

longer withdraw from society and become what Leopardi called the "solitary sparrow," even if, as Heidegger once put it, it is poets who risk the most in periods of distress. There was general curiosity about seeking the "verbal equivalents to the visual," with Emmanuel exhibiting his *court métrage*, *Spain*, and illustrating therewith how hard it is to set documentary films to verse.

In the One World of poetry, however, the Africans found obstacles to being understood. The translation of African poetry presents more than the usual frustrations and deterrents. The black South African Ezekiel Mphahlele pointed out that the oral tradition of native poetry requires meaningful gestures which cannot be incorporated in a translation.

Meanwhile, back on the Rive Gauche, the Parisian poet Jean L'Anselme found in marriage with another medium his own nostrum for the poet's malaise. As he stated it, "You know that we poets are published in runs of no more than 500 copies. We send 200 to the critics and we sell 100. Poetry in book form is outmoded. We are heading toward a poetry which will be expressed on discs, in song. . . . If necessary, we'll put out verse to music of the twist."

If the role of the poet is still unresolved in the West, he has an even more uncertain visa in the East. This past spring Yosip Brodski of Leningrad was sentenced as a "social malingerer" to forced labor in Archangel. His plight became a *cause célèbre*, occupying almost as many news columns as Sartre's refusal of the Nobel Prize. The principal issue was whether a free-lance poet and translator, even a young one of promise, still qualified as a "worker" in the Soviet hierarchy. Although the early Marxists embraced writers and intellectuals as workers, now it appeared that seldom-published poets and independent translators "without contracts enough to live on" were guilty of "refusing to work for the common good." Brodski has since been freed, but the moral condemnation has not been reversed.

Hungary entertains similar doubts about poets. This year Ferenc Baranyi was attacked widely for his poem "Ballad of the Pampered Youth," written in 1963. This is a rather anodyne piece complaining about the smugness of the older generation of Communists and pleading for better housing and work opportunities for the young. A youthful technician of the Csepel Iron Works read this ballad in a factory contest and was, as a result, barred from admission to the university. Baranyi expressed in writing his "impotent rage" that not only poets, but their readers, must suffer at the hands of the KISZ (Communist Youth Organization).

The balance sheet for 1964 does not

seem to show much gain for young poets who wish to break their own trails.

In retrospect, the year did better by the manuscript hunters, and especially by Professor Vittor Branca of Padua, who identified an autograph copy of Boccaccio's *Decameron* as well as the manuscript of the last work of Politian, the famed Renaissance poet and humanist (once curiously the subject of a *New Yorker* "profile"). Other unusual manuscripts uncovered during the year were a letter of Petrarch to Bernabò Visconti, a hundred pages of Chateaubriand's *Mémoires d'Outre-tombe*, six new letters of Conrad to Emilie Briquet, several epistles of Alain-Fournier to Mme. Simone, and the supposed-lost original of Dostoevsky's *Writer's Diary*, auctioned off in Marburg. Oh, I almost forgot. There was that dignified but disconsolate letter of John Cleland, written while he was being prosecuted for his *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*.

The year saw a continuing flood of letters to the London *Times Literary Supplement* from college instructors all over America, who have replaced retired officers of His Majesty's India Service in volume of correspondence to that august journal. Sir Bruce Richmond, editor of *TLS* who died early in October, must have felt an amused indulgence toward assistant professors in the remoter U.S. schools who had discovered that it was not difficult to appear in the columns of *TLS* alongside Sir Herbert Read and Dame Edith Sitwell. Around Siwash this was the equivalent of, or perhaps even better than, a small article in an American professional quarterly.

—ROBERT J. CLEMENTS.

FRAZER YOUNG'S LITERARY CRYPT NO. 1116

A cryptogram is writing in cipher.
Every letter is part of a code that
remains constant throughout the puzzle.
Answer No. 1116 will be found
in the next issue.

BXGXZP NZT WET CTTCP NAC

PQSSTZFALP XS GFLEW.

LXTWET

Answer to Literary Crypt No. 1115

Force is only a desire for flight: it
lives by violence and dies from liberty.
—DA VINCI.