

tofore, for he probes every element of the chess world, from the psychology and theory of the game to its very paraphernalia: chess clocks, pocket sets, tournament rules, and so on. Nabokov is an able chess student as well as an able lepidopterist.

Unfortunately, he keeps hinting that his novel is structured on an actual chess game. ("My story was difficult to compose, but I greatly enjoyed taking advantage of this or that image and scene to introduce a total pattern into Luzhin's life and to endow the description of a garden, a journey, a sequence of humdrum events with the semblance of a game of skill and especially in the final chapters, with that of a regular chess attack demolishing the innermost elements of the poor fellow's sanity.") There is even an implicit challenge for us to "replay the moves of the plot." Such an intriguing prospect is however, an empty one, as it also proves to be in Beckett's *Endgame*.

Indeed, the goal of converting an actual chess game into fiction has almost never been achieved. In Rabelais's Fifth

Book there appears a highly dramatized chess ballet (cribbed from an Italian source) with a minimum of clues for partial replaying. Middleton's *Game at Chess* (1624) is an allegory of English-Spanish diplomacy, with kings, queens, and courtiers representing actual pieces. But no actual game is involved. To my knowledge the only authors other than Rabelais, and to some extent S. S. Van Dine in *The Bishop Murder Case*, who have created fiction out of actual games are Paul Anderson in his story "The Immortal Game" and Lewis Carroll, who gave us a madcap chess game in *Through the Looking Glass*. This game (see page 45) was worked out through sixty-six moves in 1910 by Donald Liddell.

Nabokov takes a delight in spoofing critics ("hack reviewers") and even his general readers ("people who move their lips when reading"). He was again spoofing when he promised us that chess game of life in *The Defense*. Readers starting out to play through the moves of Luzhin's Defense are falling right into a Fool's Mate.

He is subsequently impressed into the French Foreign Legion, where his morbid experiences, especially his shooting of defenseless prisoners, virtually wreck Alcides's mind. After his discharge he kills a man on slight provocation and is sent to prison.

The structure of the work is perfectly suited to its substance. At the beginning we meet Alcides in the prison, where he tells his life story to another prisoner, an intellectual who happens to come from Alcides's home town. Most of the book is ostensibly written by this man, who reads each chapter to Alcides as soon as it is finished. About two-thirds of the way through the book, however, Alcides becomes angrily dissatisfied with his fellow prisoner's way of telling the story and thereupon undertakes the narration directly in the first person, with consequent intensification of its dramatic quality, a change strikingly appropriate to the developments in his life from that point on.

By interrupting the story line from time to time and reverting to Alcides in prison, Redol forces us to see all the aspects of his protagonist's life, even the picaresque, the comic, and the idyllic, in tragic long-term perspective. The effect is almost that of a chorus telling us to connect the beginning with the end, the matron with the murderer. "She wasn't to blame for everything, —nobody ever is to blame for everything, and they're all to blame for something. But I remember it was her I thought about the first time I fired a shot in that war in Morocco." In Alcides's bucolic interval, when things are going comparatively well, we are reminded that fate will still bring disaster. But this is not fate in the classic sense, for the author implies that in a better society the tragedy could have been avoided. He sees in Alcides's history "a world of interrogations to which men have to give replies."

The translation ranges from excellent in some places to shoddy and even misleading in others.

A Camp in Erewhon: The shadowy world of the Greenwich Village homosexual would hardly appear, at first blush, to be the most fertile ground for a humorous novel. But *The Day We Were Mostly Butterflies*, by Louise King (Doubleday, \$3.95), actually a collection of four related short stories that take place in exactly such a setting, is not only humorous but downright comic.

The narrator clearly identifies himself early in the game as Maurice Soulé Calhoun, an interior decorator and technically male; it would be impossible to discern from the diction whether the story is being told by a man or a woman. And that seems to be exactly what

The Making of a Murderer

***The Man with Seven Names*, by Alves Redol, translated from the Portuguese by Linton Lomas Barrett (Knopf, 382 pp. \$5.95), portrays an orphanage alumnus whom circumstances turn into a vicious killer. William L. Grossman is on the faculty of New York University.**

By WILLIAM L. GROSSMAN

WITH this translation of one of his recent works, Alves Redol (born 1911), the founder of "neo-realism" in Portuguese fiction and a popular writer in this tradition, makes his American debut. Although there is controversy about the true nature of their movement, the Portuguese neo-realists appear, in general, to be concerned with the lives and problems of poor people, to imply an adverse criticism of the Establishment, and to prefer plain narrative statement to literary adornment.

These characteristics apply to Redol in *The Man with Seven Names*. The major part of the book is the biography of Alcides, a bit of human flotsam whom circumstances turn into a vicious killer. We follow him through his miserable childhood in an orphan asylum, where he is beaten fiercely and repeatedly by

the matron. Once, he takes the matron's pigeon out of its cage and is petting it when he hears her footsteps in the hall; he runs into the bathroom and strangles the bird. "All my life since then I've been suffering the punishment for that killing."

In adolescence Alcides seems to overcome his difficulties. He works as a farrier's assistant, plays harmonica at country dances, and becomes, at least superficially, a healthy-minded young person. The death of his best friend in a threshing-machine accident ends this phase of his life and reawakens his latent feelings of loneliness and rage.



Alves Redol—in neo-realism
"a world of interrogations."



Louise King—"highly original."

the author intended. In addition to Calhoun, *The Day We Were Mostly Butterflies* introduces Miss Moppet, a scatterbrained blonde who brims over with sex appeal—for both sexes; Lillian, a muscular, truckdriver-type lady who drinks; Emma Hamlet Woodhouse, a turtle, named for Miss Moppet's favorite literary works; Butchy, a horned toad; Scotty Heiffitz, who works for NBC and leads a perplexing, diversified social life, and assorted other inhabitants of a fanciful Erewhon that, at least in Miss King's engaging telling of it, is not so much shadowy as cheerfully lunatic.

At the hands of the characters who populate this exotic world, the simplest incidents—an escaped turtle, a lost key, an outing to the beach—instantly mushroom into outlandish adventures. If the stories provide a clue to what makes these people tick, it would seem to lie in their lack of a sense of proportion, their inability to distinguish between the large and the small, the important and the petty, the slap in the face and the imagined slight.

But the author skims quickly over such matters, concentrating, for the most part effectively, on the farcical aspects of her characters' activities. This is a first novel, and, while the character-probing may fall short, the technique does not. The sum total is a highly original and arresting piece of work.

—JOEL KANE.

Coming October 3

SR's Fall Book Number

SR's Check List of the Week's New Books

Anthologies

THE ADIRONDACK READER. Edited by Paul F. Jamieson. Macmillan. \$10.

BRAUDE'S TREASURY OF WIT AND HUMOR. By Jacob M. Braude. Prentice-Hall. \$5.95.

CHUANG TZU: Basic Writings. Edited by Burton Watson. Columbia Univ. Press. Paperback, \$1.75.

IDEAS AND DIPLOMACY: Readings in the Intellectual Tradition of American Foreign Policy. Edited by Norman A. Graebner. Oxford Univ. Press. \$12.50.

Art

MANNERISM: The Painting and Style of the Late Renaissance. By Jacques Bousquet. Braziller. \$20.

Current Affairs

THE CHANGING STRUCTURE OF INTERNATIONAL LAW. By Wolfgang Friedmann. Columbia Univ. Press. \$8.75.

THE CIVIL SERVICE OF PAKISTAN: Bureaucracy in a New Nation. By Henry Frank Goodnow. Yale Univ. Press. \$7.50.

THE DEMOCRATIC CIVILIZATION. By Leslie Lipson. Oxford Univ. Press. \$10.

FEDERALISM AND CIVIL RIGHTS. By Burke Marshall. Columbia Univ. Press. \$3.50.

THE MANAGEMENT OF DEFENSE: Organization and Control of the U.S. Armed Forces. By John C. Ries. Johns Hopkins. \$6.50.

THE MANAGEMENT OF SCIENTISTS. Edited by Karl Hill. Beacon. \$4.95.

Essays

ON THE CONTRARY. By Sydney Harris. Houghton Mifflin. \$4.95.

Fiction

ANYONE GOT A MATCH? By Max Shulman. Harper & Row. \$4.95.

BENJAMIN AND HIS FATHERS. By Herbert Heckmann. Knopf. \$5.95.

BIRCH INTERVAL. By Joanna Crawford. Houghton Mifflin. \$3.95.

FARNHAM'S FREEHOLD. By Robert Heinlein. Putnam. \$4.95.

THE HAWK IS HUMMING. By George Mendoza. Bobbs-Merrill. \$3.95.

THE HOSTAGES. By Elizabeth Ann Cooper. Doubleday. \$4.95.

THE INNER ROOM. By Vera Randal. Knopf. \$3.95.

KATHERINE WENTWORTH. By D. E. Stevenson. Holt, Rinehart & Winston. \$4.95.

THE LAMP POST. By Martin Gregor-Dalín. Knopf. \$4.95.

MEET MY MAKER THE MAD MOLECULE. By J. P. Donleavy. Atlantic-Little, Brown. \$4.75.

NOTHING LIKE THE SUN. By Anthony Burgess. Norton. \$3.95.

THE OVERSEER. By Loys Masson. Knopf. \$3.95.

THE SHORT THROAT, THE TENDER MOUTH. By Doris Grumbach. Doubleday. \$3.95.

A SONG OF SIXPENCE. By A. J. Cronin. Little, Brown. \$4.95.

TOMORROW'S FIRE. By Jay Williams. Atheneum. \$5.95.

TREE OF ARROWS. By Louis A. Brennan. Macmillan. \$5.95.

THE WIND'S WILL. By Gerald Warner Brace. Norton. \$4.50.

History

THE ARABS. By Anthony Nutting. Clarkson N. Potter. \$6.

CHURCHILL AND IRELAND. By Mary C. Bromage. Univ. of Notre Dame Press. \$5.

DREAM OF EMPIRE: German Colonialism, 1919-1945. By Wolfe W. Schmokel. Yale Univ. Press. \$6.

THE EARLY DYNASTIC PERIOD IN EGYPT. By I.E.S. Edwards. Cambridge Univ. Press. Paperback, \$1.75.

EGYPT IN COLOR. By Margaret Drower. McGraw-Hill. \$25.

ELIZABETHAN PRIVATEERING: English Privateering During the Spanish War, 1585-1603. By Kenneth R. Andrews. Cambridge Univ. Press. \$7.50.

GREAT MILITARY BATTLES. Edited by Cyril Falls. Macmillan. \$19.95 to Dec. 31; \$25 thereafter.

MCGRAW-HILL ILLUSTRATED WORLD HISTORY. Edited by Esmond Wright and Kenneth Stampp. McGraw-Hill. \$17.50.

REGIONAL ECONOMIC GROWTH AND MATURITY IN THE UNITED STATES. By George H. Borts and Jerome L. Stein. Columbia Univ. Press. \$7.50.

THE SECRET HISTORY OF THE MONGOLS AND OTHER PIECES. By Arthur Waley. Barnes & Noble. \$6.50.

THE SOCIAL INTERPRETATION OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION. By Alfred Cobban. Cambridge Univ. Press. \$3.95.

SOURCES OF INDIAN TRADITION. Edited by William Theodore De Bary and Ainslie T. Embree. Columbia Univ. Press. Paperback. Vol. I, \$3.25. Vol. II, \$2.75.

UPTON AND THE ARMY. By Stephen E. Ambrose. Louisiana State Univ. Press. \$5.

VISTAS OF HISTORY. By Samuel Eliot Morison. Knopf. \$4.

Literary Criticism

THE EDUCATED IMAGINATION. By Northrop Frye. Indiana Univ. Press. \$4.50.

THE ENGLISH MIND: Studies in the English Moralists. Edited by Hugh Sykes Davies and George Watson. Cambridge Univ. Press. \$6.

THE ENGLISH MORALISTS. By Basil Willey. Norton. \$6.95.

MR. W. H. By Leslie Hotson. Knopf. \$6.95.

NATURE AND ART IN RENAISSANCE LITERATURE. By Edward W. Tayler. Columbia Univ. Press. \$5.

A STUDY OF ELIZABETHAN AND JACOBAN TRAGEDY. By T. B. Tomlinson. Cambridge Univ. Press. \$6.

Miscellany

ALONE THROUGH THE DARK SEA. By Thomas Whiteside. Braziller. \$5.

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