

mistaken. We have chosen nothing except to go on living. . . ."

Yet the last word is given to the committed. Jones has died, as we were told in the first paragraph, died bravely and in a good cause, but still without recognizable commitment. At his funeral a young priest says, "The Church condemns violence, but it condemns indifference more harshly." And Doctor Magiot, before being killed by Duvalier's agents, has written Brown: "Catholics and Communists have committed great crimes, but at least they have not stood aside, like an established society, and been indifferent. I would rather have blood on my hands than water like Pilate."

The story is told with all of Greene's skill—and there is no more skilful novelist alive today. As always, he renders brilliantly the scene of the novel, and he writes with sustained wit. When, for instance, early in the story, Mr. Smith appears without Mrs. Smith, Brown remarks that "he looked unnaturally detached, like one of the figures in a weather-house without the other." Again, Brown says of himself, "As other boys fought with the demon of masturbation, I fought with faith." In discussing the boasts of the Duvalier régime, he observes, "Hurricane Hazel in '54 had eliminated a great deal of illiteracy in the interior."

What seems to me new in the novel is the breadth of sympathy that Greene shows. If he holds up the committed for our particular admiration, he makes a case for Smith and Jones and even Brown. He seems to recognize, as he has not in most of his books, that, though evil is evil, there are many kinds of good.

—GRANVILLE HICKS.

# FRASER YOUNG'S LITERARY CRYPT No. 1173

A cryptogram is writing in cipher. Every letter is part of a code that remains constant throughout the puzzle. Answer No. 1173 will be found in the next issue.

UBY XMYGUYDU LA AGNQUD,

W DBLNQZ DGF, WD UL KY

HLCDHWLND LA CLCY.

—HGMQFQY

# Answer to Literary Crypt No. 1172

A hen is only an egg's way of making another egg. —SAMUEL BUTLER.

## European Literary Scene

T. S. Eliot's final say on criticism, a posthumous volume entitled *To Criticize the Critic* (Faber and Faber), proves that as a speculator in literature he remained to the end as brilliant and elusive as ever. One thinks of the typical concluding disclaimer of his early essay on "The Function of Criticism": "If anyone complains that I have not defined truth, or fact, or reality, I can only say apologetically that it was no part of my purpose to do so, but only to find a scheme into which, whatever they are, they will fit, if they exist." Even this last sentence was written tongue in cheek, for in eleven pages Mr. Eliot had neither articulated the schema mentioned nor really defined the function announced in his title. Americans got a taste of the will-o'-the-wisp intellectuality of Eliot when he taught at Chicago and could unsettle students by declaring that two contradictory summations or evaluations of a literary work were each correct. This was considerably after the time he had abandoned "the extreme position that the only critics worth reading were the critics who practiced, and practiced well, the art of which they wrote." Students, and some men of letters as well, began to feel that Eliot himself was a prime example justifying such abandonment.

*To Criticize the Critic*, a collection of essays composed late in his life, is provoking many of the old objections to Eliot as critic. The reviewer in the *Times Literary Supplement* is most unhappy: "Bored with the fashions which sprang up as a result of unthinking deference to his prestige, irritated by the academic ossification of his living insights, he seems to have lost interest in criticism and allowed it to become merely an exercise in diplomacy." He even charges Eliot with rudeness for the following witticism: "I do not know whether Auden is to be considered an English or American poet; his career has been useful to me in providing me with an answer to the same question when asked about myself, for I can say, 'Whichever Auden is, I suppose I must be the other.'" To find rudeness in these words is as nonsensical as finding it in Hemingway's comment when someone found objective correlatives in his prose: "Mr. Eliot works his side of the street and I work mine."

What critics and students alike overlook about this magnificent poet who dabbled brilliantly in criticism is that



his head was not always in the clouds. Editor friends of mine at Ginn and Company, London, always respected him as a practical competitor during his many years as a director of Faber and Faber.

Thanks to Peter Weiss, Heinar Kipphardt, and Felix Lützkendorf, the political theater brews heatedly in Germany. Two of these are again concerned with what the dramatist Nelly Sachs entitled *Das Leiden Israels*.

*Theatre Heute's* annual supplement summarizing 1965 whetted our appetites by including extracts of Weiss's *Die Ermittlung* (*The Inquest*), a stage report on the Auschwitz trials that dragged on in Frankfurt from 1963 to the end of last summer. Weiss, who is turning out to be more articulate about his work than most playwrights, calls it an "oratorio in eleven numbers." It dramatizes the trial of the guards, administrators, and doctors of Auschwitz. The first performance was presented just before the year's end simultaneously in sixteen theaters of the Federal Republic. Such large-scale staging necessitated its being presented in a few cases merely as a dramatic reading. Again stealing a march on us, the English (the Royal Shakespeare Company) have already launched it as *The Investigation* at the Aldwych Theater. Author and publisher (Suhrkamp, Frankfurt) have both announced that they will donate all proceeds to a fund for the victims of the Nazis.

*Die Ermittlung* is treated as "living theater" in the traditional Piscator manner; that is, Weiss makes very few alterations in the trial records. Similar attempts were made most recently in

Vilar's French and Kipphardt's German versions of the Oppenheimer hearings. As the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* explains, "Weiss pieces together a picture of the camp and what happened there from the questions and answers of the trial. The form of an 'oratorio' was chosen to show that speakers on the stage are not enacting a real interrogation from the Frankfurt trial, but to present this very important event as a criticism, reminder, and warning." Not a play within a play, like *Marat/Sade*, but a trial within an oratorio. Let us hope that we shall not have to wait so long for this play as we did for *Marat/Sade*, first summarized in this column in October 1964.

Weiss is not the only dramatist producing political shockers in Germany this season. Heinar Kipphardt's play *Joel Brand* recalls the 1944 attempt of the Gestapo to barter a million Hungarian Jews for 10,000 English trucks. A final topical play, by Felix Lützendorf, gives away its content by its title: *Dallas, 22 November*. The protagonist is Lee Harvey Oswald, whose career is traced through its successive stages: Marine Corps, Moscow (where Oswald wishes to renounce his citizenship), Minsk (where he works and meets Marina), and, finally, Texas. Even though the Aachen production met with mixed reviews, the play may help lay to rest some of the more fantastic European theories about James Bond-like conspiracies behind the assassination.

**New books about Vietnam** appearing in Europe do not seem to be improving the American image. Naturally, the French, having fought on the same plains and hills, are the most attentive. Flammarion has published *Les Américains face au Vietcong: qui sont les barbares?*, by the Swiss writer Fernand Gigon. M. Gigon tries to be objective and ends up pessimistic. He does not blame America for its interest, but holds that the pretext for our intervention was unjustifiable. Millions of bombs cannot win the war, he feels; at best America can hold some of the urban areas; China will never let the war come to an end. When Gigon suggests that the barbarians mentioned in his subtitle are really the Americans, who hang dying men, Victor Buarde of *Nouvelles littéraires* is moved to object: "Has he forgotten the most recent history experienced by the civilized peoples of the European West?"

Jean Lartéguy's *Un Million de Dollars le Viet* (Solar) expresses the nostalgia of a veteran who was once a centurion in Indo-China, who loves the country and the people. He is sure that America, with her great striking power, cannot succeed where France failed, and that the war threatens to go on forever. Gallimard has published the Australian

Wilfred Burchett's *La seconde résistance: Vietnam 1965*. The book is strongly pro-Viet Cong, and, as the reviewer Dominique Jamet puts it, Burchett's commitment as combatant (he actually shot at American helicopters) signifies the abdication of his role as reporter.

**Two of the hardest comedies** of the Renaissance refuse to stay confined to the pages of literary histories. One is Machiavelli's *Mandrake* (*Mandragola*), the most cynical and bawdy play from that rich period when Italy not only had a theater, but everyone from churchmen to cobblers was a Sunday playwright. The Italians perform *Mandragola* at regular intervals. I last saw it in Rome in the al fresco theater atop the Palatine Hill, year before last. With the heightened censorship in Italy that followed the appearance of Lollobrigida's *Le Bambole* (*The Dolls*) and is being countered by placards on the walls proclaiming that art and literature cannot subsist unless free, one would hardly expect the daring youngish producers at this point to film the most anticlerical comedy of Medicean Florence. This is, however, what Alberto Lattuada has just done. He has conscientiously preserved the authenticity of the original, a point made by Luciano Codignola in the *Fiera letteraria* (Rome): "Everything of Machiavelli's masterwork is found here: an authentic Florence (even if some of the outside shots were filmed at Urbino); costumes that could carry the signature of Piero della Francesca; the entire sinister plot is here, even including details which Machiavelli left between the lines."

The action, as you remember, involves the concerted seduction of the chaste wife of a stupid old man, thanks to the conniving of a young gallant, a greedy priest, a gullible mother, and even the cuckolded husband. Because Machiavelli is a major political theorist, it has been fashionable lately to see the whole as an allegory of innocent Florence caught between an impotent city manager (Soderini) and an adventurer

(Lorenzo de' Medici). Indeed, the youth in the play impersonates a medico. Even if this elaborate thesis of allegory were true, one does not need it to enjoy the splendid dialogue and *lazzi* (stage pranks). But, please, when it comes to America let not the importers who prey on European culture put the magnificent Renaissance dialogue into Brooklynese. Not only in comedy of improvisation but in most Renaissance comedy the original voice is not expendable.

The other play that is often brought back to the boards is Cervantes's *Numancia*, on the resistance of an ancient Spanish town besieged by Roman legions. The Théâtre Antoine appropriately revived it in 1937 when guns still encircled Madrid. Now at the Odéon, with music by José Berghmans, costumes and masks by André Masson, and staged by Jean-Louis Barrault, one finds again the drama of a Spanish village that chose collective death over slavery. Perhaps the diuturnity of this play is explained by the fact that during almost any given year of the world's history, since the Troy described by Euripides, some people somewhere have been fighting the sort of battle Cervantes wrote about so eloquently.

**Last June, writing from Leningrad**, I noted the moralistic attitudes of Russian literary acquaintances who assured me that Joyce, Genet, and Henry Miller would never be introduced into the USSR. Recently Tamara Motyleva commented in *Soviet Literature* on an essay by the American critic Leon Edel deploping the empty sexuality of so many modern novels. She explains the Russian coolness to such best-sellers as Mary McCarthy's *The Group*:

"I wish to be understood correctly. Russian literature has never been marked by sanctimoniousness or extreme timidity in treating risqué themes. Soviet youth invariably reads Tolstoy's *Resurrection* and Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*. The characters of the best Soviet novels are by no means marked by a puritan sense of shame—one has only to remember Aksinya in Sholokhov's *And Quiet Flows the Don*. One of the best Soviet translators recently produced a new, completely Russian translation of *Gargantua and Pantagruel* . . . But the immoderate attraction of some writers to sex in its basest manifestations becomes a barrier that bars the way for their books to the Soviet (and is it only the Soviet?) reading public."

Without taking issue, I would merely footnote that the example of Rabelais is the least convincing of all. Communists have always found compensating values in this Renaissance mocker of wars, church, and government. Indeed, Communist China has put him on a postage stamp.

—ROBERT J. CLEMENTS.

