

against them, of which the simplest was not reading their letters, while in cases of threatened incursion he might flee to a cabin in the woods. Other measures failing, he was known to retreat behind an impenetrable wall of drunkenness.

The intruders he feared were not the plain people of the town and countryside: hunters, carpenters, small farmers, black or white tenants, bootleggers, and deputy sheriffs; these offered no menace to his kingdom, and indeed they served to enrich its resources by the stories they told around campfires or sitting on the gallery of a crossroads store. There were many other people he was glad to see, for it is to be noted that one of his aims—besides that of protecting his imagined world—was living in the real world as a private person closely attached to family and friends. But that sort of private and professional life, with days to be spent alone, could be preserved only by building walls against the world.

The strangers he feared were the infiltrators who tried to climb over the walls—the correspondents, interviewers, aspiring novelists, literary ladies, and society people (unless they knew a lot about horses) generally speaking, all those who were trying to use him or to make him over in their images. Sometimes he was rude to the wrong persons; I think of Ehrenburg, whom he would have found stimulating if they could have established communication, and there were many others. But the gifted people he snubbed might remember that for all their good intentions, the part they might have played in Faulkner's days was that of persons from Porlock.

And Faulkner himself: did he find the right answers to his problems in life and in the continued production of his works? There are no completely right answers. It had better be said that his later books, in general, had not the freshness and power of the early ones. That is the common fate of imaginative writers (except for a few poets); some original force goes out of them. The books they write after the age of fifty most often lose in genius what they may possibly gain in talent.

Faulkner lost substantially less than others. Though none of his later books was on a level with *The Sound and the Fury* or *Go Down, Moses*, none of them made concessions to other people's tastes. One hears a person speaking in each of them, not an institution, and a person with reserves of power who may surprise us on any page. Some of Faulkner's best writing is in passages of *Requiem for a Nun*, and *Intruder in the Dust*, and especially—almost at the end—in the Mink Snopes chapters of *The Mansion*. In retrospect I should judge that he solved the problem of keeping alive his genius better than any other American novelist of our century.

## SR-ANISFIELD-WOLF AWARDS

# Books that Change Men's Minds

By JAMES F. FIXX

**H**OW MANY of the books published each year in the United States make a significant contribution toward improving men's relationships with each other? No one knows the exact number, of course, nor can anyone even begin to guess the myriad ways in which a book can penetrate and change a reader's mind. By at least one standard, however, there is evidence that an increasing number of authors are finding themselves moved to write about what is sometimes referred to as inter-group relations.

That standard is the SR-Anisfield-Wolf Awards, which are presented each year to books that have made a distinguished contribution to such relationships. The awards have seemed in recent years to be a gauge to something of a literary change for the simple reason that the awards committee—headed by anthropologist Ashley Montagu—has found the task of narrowing down its choices increasingly difficult. Customarily two books are selected as winners. In one recent year, however, the committee finally felt obliged to throw up its hands and name three winners ("In view of their quality," wrote Professor Montagu at the time, "the committee found it impossible to decide otherwise"). This year's judging, just completed, proved to be an even more agonizing experience, and the results show it: There are four winners.

Those that came out on top are *Manchild in the Promised Land*, by Claude Brown (Macmillan, \$5.95); *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (Grove Press, \$7.50); *Your Heredity and Environment*, by Amram Scheinfeld (Lippincott, \$12.50); and *The Unity of Mankind in Greek Thought*, by H. C. Baldry (Cambridge, \$7.50).

Each winning author receives a \$750 award. The awards, first presented in 1935, were provided by the late Mrs. Edith Anisfield-Wolf in memory of her father and her husband.

What is the special quality in each of the 1966 winners that moved the judges to give it an award?

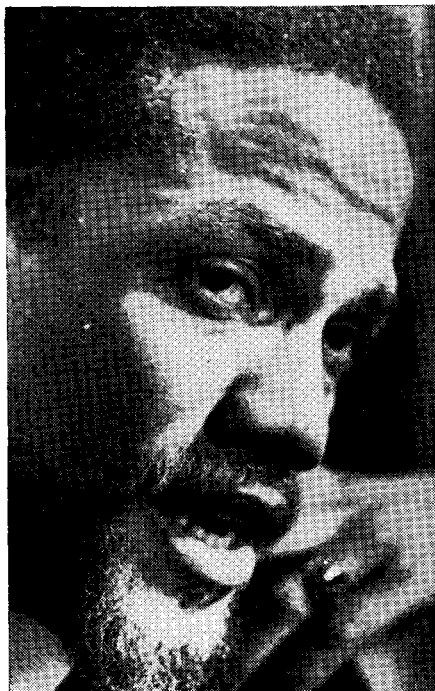
*Manchild in the Promised Land* is the autobiography of a nineteen-year-old Negro who was born in Harlem and bred in its street gangs and its squalor—"crowded into a dirty, stinky, uncared-

for closet-size section of a great city." Young Claude Brown was quick to learn the ways of the street. By the time he was nine he was a member of the Buccaneers, a streetfighting gang, and of the Forty Thieves, the Buccaneers' elite stealing arm. At eleven he was sent to a school for emotionally disturbed and deprived boys where he stayed for two years. Released, he soon found himself in reform school for the first of three such commitments. He was still only fourteen.

**W**ITHIN the next few years, however, something startling happened to Claude Brown, and he ultimately graduated from Howard University and at last report, a few months ago, was making plans to enter law school. It is the story of the struggle to create for himself a decent life, always against the vast and vastly menacing odds of his Harlem background, that provides much of the stark drama in *Manchild in the Promised Land*. And that drama is wondrously and often movingly heightened by a style that is swift, sure, and unmistakably a reflection of the life it describes. A sample: "Mama's favorite question was, 'Boy, why you so bad?' I tried many times to explain to Mama that I wasn't 'so bad.' I tried to make her understand that it was trying to be good that generally got me into trouble. I remember telling her I played hooky to avoid getting into trouble in school... When I stole things, it was only to save the family money and avoid arguments or scoldings whenever I asked for money." The book is full of such insights.

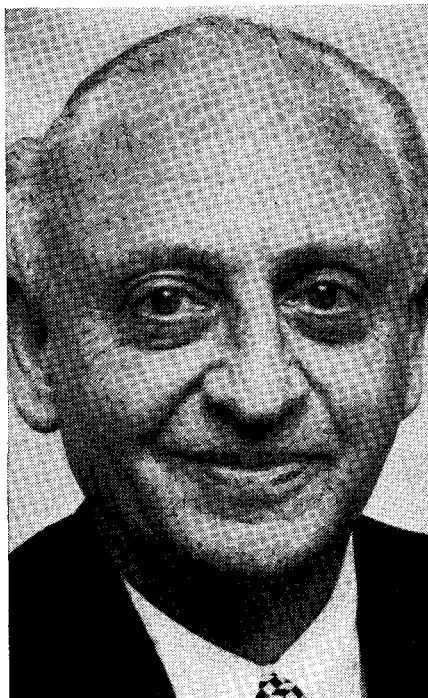
*The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, written with the assistance of veteran magazine writer Alex Haley, is the posthumously published story of a Negro leader who once called himself "the angriest black man in America." A leader of the Black Muslims, Malcolm X was ultimately slain by assassins in a Harlem ballroom, but before his death he was able to complete this graphic piece of testimony to what it means to grow up as a Negro in America. "The American white man," he says in discussing the Black Muslim cause, "has so thoroughly brainwashed the black man to see himself as only a domestic 'civil rights' problem that it will probably take longer than I live before the Negro sees that the struggle of the American black

## Among the Winners



Malcolm X

—Wide World.



Amram Scheinfeld

—Politikens Presse Foto.



Claude Brown

—Leroy McLucas.

man is international." Malcolm X saw the goal of the black man, wherever he might be, as necessarily international rather than merely national, because "it is as this collective mass of black people that we have been deprived not only of our civil rights, but even of our human rights, the right to human dignity." His autobiography is the story of how he arrived at that view, and where it led him.

The third of the prize-winning books, *Your Heredity and Environment*, is a revision of an earlier edition of Amram Scheinfeld's lucid and precise description of the forces that make a person what he is. Updated to take account of such things as DNA and the so-called genetic code, it views both individual men and mankind as something a great deal different from mere mechanical and chemical objects acted on by meaningless instrumentalities. "Human genetics, as I have viewed it and am seeking to present it," says the author, "is far more than a limited scientific specialty dealing with the mechanism of human heredity. . . . Rather, I have regarded human genetics as an introspective personal, all-embracing science which can reveal people in the round and help us to see why we as individuals and groups are what we are, and what our inborn capacities might enable us to be for the better."

Finally, *The Unity of Mankind in*

*Greek Thought* traces the birth and early growth of a concept that has come to have enormous practical significance in the twentieth-century world. The author, H. C. Baldry, a professor of classics at the University of Southampton in England, starts at the beginning of this "long and complicated chain of development" and shows the roles played by Alexander the Great, Zeno, Plato, Aristotle, and others in laying the frail, tentative groundwork for our own age, a time when, as Professor Baldry put it, "most of us draw the inference that between all [the] representatives of Homo sapiens there is some sort of kinship or fellowship which should influence their be-

havior toward each other." In the days of the early Greeks, however, as he makes clear, there was no such automatic inference. "Although modern civilization owes them much," Professor Baldry writes, "the United Nations Assembly and the disarmament conference are not part of the debt."

Professor Baldry's book, a work of scholarship that in other hands might have become a work fit only for a library's dustiest, remotest stacks, glows with understanding and a sense of involvement with the people who are its subjects. It is, of course, no accident that those same qualities are shared by the other three winners of the 1966 awards.

THE ANNUAL SR-ANISFIELD-WOLF Awards, which date from 1935, were at first given to single works on intergroup relations, *e.g.*, *We Europeans*, by Julian Huxley and A. C. Haddon, *The Negro Family in the United States*, by E. Franklin Frazier, and *From Many Lands*, by Louis Adamie. But since 1940 there has been such an outpouring of books with intergroup themes that, as the accompanying article points out, the judges have felt compelled, in fairness, to split the award among two, three, and—this year and last—four titles. This development would have pleased Mrs. Edith Anisfield-Wolf, who initiated the awards under SR's sponsorship in the hope that they would encourage the writing of more books on intergroup relations. No one can say for sure how effective the awards have been, but the happy fact is that in the thirty-odd years since their founding, books dealing with intergroup themes have become a major feature of the literary landscape. So much so that the judges will be hard pressed to keep the winners from escalating to five in 1967.



# Stendhal's "The Red and the Black"

By KENNETH REXROTH

"I ROSE AND FELL with Napoleon," said Henri Beyle, who called himself Stendhal. He wrote *The Red and The Black*, the story of an inglorious Napoleon, a man of energy without a chance. Stendhal's hero, Julien Sorel, is the revolutionary adventurer trapped in the Restoration, as, of course was Stendhal himself.

The novelist differs from his character in insight. He is always aware that he, in his youth, had been liberated from the mediocrity that oppressed him. *Philosophes* and Jacobins had hoped to make the middle class intelligent and heroic. Stendhal had given up that hope. Again and again he spoke of his work as a lottery ticket that would pay off in fifty or a hundred years.

No one ever wrote more masculine novels than Stendhal's. He knew that they would be read in his time mostly by idle women, spoiled duchesses and disappointed wives of business men—exactly the women who destroy his hero Julien. So the violent arrogance of *The Red and The Black* is a kind of seduction, an assault on the spurious chastity of its public.

For fifty years, only such women and the few intellectuals who shared his sensuous scorn read him. Then his reputation began to grow. He took his place easily with the radical critics of modern life at the end of the century. By the hundredth anniversary of the publication of *The Red and The Black* he was acknowledged by many as the greatest of French novelists.

Hypertrophied or dissociated, the style he invented is still dominant in French fiction. Popular writers as diverse as Mrs. Voynich and Simenon have modeled themselves directly on him. More significantly, *The Red and The Black* established the type and fixed the pattern of the novel as black comedy.

In youth Stendhal longed to be the Molière of the nineteenth century, a great comic poet. He couldn't write proper French verse, so he thought he had failed. He had not. *The Red and The Black* is the first modern overturned tragedy, the first black comedy. Julien Sorel is a comic Napoleon, a Bonaparte with frayed cuffs and patched shoes, mocked in Bartholomew Fair. To the immature readers of the last century his story was a tragedy. To men of the world who read it in the twentieth, it

is a comedy, but of the grimmest sort. "The world is a tragedy to those who feel, a comedy to those who think."

Hardly a man of letters has been as much a man of the world as Stendhal. Henri Beyle, dragoon; grocer; Napoleon's governor of Brunswick; commissary officer on the retreat from Moscow; consul in Civitavecchia, the port of Rome, wit of the salons of the Empire and terror of those of the Restoration; lover of actresses, courtesans, and noblewomen—this is a man to whom words were always instruments of action. So to his hero Julien Sorel ideas are a backwash of blocked action. He struggles to act and expresses his frustration in thought. His interior monologues are designed by Stendhal to ironically illuminate action, like the speeches of Thucydides, and never to impede it. Julien's thoughts are Stendhal's irony. His own are expressed in Julien's acts. This is what gives his narrative its extraordinary pace and intensity, unique in its time and rare in any.

Everybody acts out in *The Red and The Black*—Julien, the hero of the armed will; Mathilde, the tragic Renaissance princess; Mme. Renal, the helpless victim of a grand passion. Stendhal is very explicit in underlining their self-dramatizations. They are not, though they think they are, forced on by tragic necessity. On the contrary, their acts, including those of the final scene, are gratuitous indulgences from which at any time they can withdraw. Their adventures are certainly sensational, but Stendhal preserves, in the face of the unbridled Romanticism of his characters, a more than classicist imperturbability—Dumas in an iron mask. He is never the victim of his characters, never overthrown by the passions he creates. His is the armed will.

In its sharp definition, breathless pace, crowded frames, melodrama, *The Red and The Black* anticipates the methods of the cinema. But its characters are like those of so many modern people whose disasters are spread on the newspapers; they seem to have seen too many movies. As the novel progresses their actions acquire an ever increasing, ever more

agonizing ridiculousness. Finally everything explodes in the black comedy of Julien's pistol shots, which, like Uncle Vanya's, kill nobody, and the novel ends in a denouement, a merciless crescendo, followed by a sarcastic anticlimax—the last role-playing of the Renaissance princess. The mercilessness is not that of tragedy, but of the deepest comedy.

Julien Sorel is destroyed by the mean unreality of the world in which his Napoleonic campaigns of sex and ambition are planned. But he is destroyed before he starts. His battles must be fought, not with armies, but with the limitless fraud of organized society. Stendhal keeps the fraudulent character of all his engagements steadily in view; this is the touchstone of all moral evaluation. *The Red and The Black*, and his other great novel, *The Charterhouse of Parma*, are dramas of gamesmanship on a crooked table, one lost, the other won. "Molière," said young Stendhal, "ridiculed the vices which corrupt society. Today we must attack the vice of the spirit of society itself."

Fraud empties motive of content. As we follow the story and try to analyze the relationships of the characters, they recede from us, and become masks which conceal appetites for power. The emptiness of their desires is the measure of their absurdity.

Stendhal could look back to the outburst of primitivism, the hour of revolt, the actual street fighting, and he identified himself with Napoleon, whose purported principles of intellectual integrity, rational imperative, honor, and the "career open to all the talents" were a freebooters' ethic, not a class one, least of all either bourgeois or aristocratic. Bonapartism is the religion of the New Man who rose from nothing to the greatest heights in history. A generation later, Julien Sorel is only an upstart, who carries his revolution about with him as Pascal did his abyss. This does not make him a tragic figure, but his reflection, backwards into history, makes Napoleon a comic one.

*The Red and The Black* is far more than a charade of a philosophy of history or a sociological theory. It is first of all one of the most perfectly constructed and told novels. It establishes the novel securely in the place of the dramatic poem. It is further a great personal utterance. It is not only a judgment of the history Stendhal had lived through, but a subtle and ruthless judgment of himself. "I am Julien," he said. Like a Russian Nihilist, Julien seeks pure act and embraces the guillotine. As a man of ego and will he struggles toward liberation from the principle of individuality. Stendhal called a term to action in the sensuous audacity of a life of planned moderation. His liberation was precisely his individuality.

