

does not dissolve the practical problems confronting a non-Indian reader who attempts to savor these tales. Their qualities are fast receding from the Western literary consciousness and perhaps can never be entirely recovered; it has become too easy to mistake plainness for flimsiness. But few readers, of whatever critical persuasion, will forget the dog in Narayan's "The Blind Dog" or the simple goodness of Zaman Khan in Chandar's "The Soldier"; and they may even remember the Ardhanari story that begins so "unpromisingly" with the excerpt quoted above.

Nine of these tales appeared origi-

nally in English, and the remaining eleven have been translated from Bengali, Hindi, Malayalam, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, and Urdu. I am quite willing to postulate the general accuracy of the various translators (they are sometimes identified and sometimes not). Moreover, I readily concede that fiction, almost as much as poetry, must suffer when percolated from one language into another. At the same time, however, it seems to me that the present versions have exceeded the most liberal allowance of spelling mistakes, confused diction, wrong tenses, muddled punctuation, fractured syntax, and off-key idioms.

Struggle for Identity

The Boss, by Goffredo Parise, translated from the Italian by William Weaver (Knopf, 246 pp. \$4.95), morosely records the "thingification" of man by industry. Warrington Winters teaches a course in the contemporary American and European novel at the Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn.

By WARRINGTON WINTERS

BORN under Mussolini, scarred in the slums of Vicenza during the war, the young Goffredo Parise made his fame with five books written during the Fifties. For six years thereafter he flourished in Milan as journalist, movie-maker, and editor. Now he is back in the fiction world with *The Boss*.

This is the third time that Parise has come to us in English. *The Dead Boy and the Comets* (inspired surrealism) and *Don Gastone and the Ladies* (what you might call uninspired surnaturalism) show the tragic search of the boy for a father. *The Boss* (symbolic expressionism verging on pop) raises the same theme to an international level: we observe, in short, the assimilation of the son by the paternalistic corporation.

Being nameless, the protagonist is Everyman—Dick Whittington, Candide, Winston Smith. Leaving his family and fiancée in his hometown (Vicenza?), he comes to the big city (Milan?) to seek his fortune. In a vast commercial enterprise, he is soon the beloved property of his boss, Dottor Max. Indeed so close is he to Max that his office is Max's converted bathroom. Well, this is all to the good, we should say. But when the boss actually pushes him to marry a Mongoloid imbecile, our hero rebels. Heeding his existentialistic father ("React! Re-

act!"), he desperately strives one last time to preserve his identity. He even contemplates murdering Max, or—more shocking still—searching for another job. But it's all too late: "No father, no mother," says Max, "can help you. The solution will come of itself." And so in the end—in this computerized age of the "thingification" of people—Mr. Everyman makes his peace with the boss, marries the Mongoloid, settles for "a wife, a house, a refrigerator, a washing machine: everything necessary to live in society." One thing he will not need is justice: "It isn't a question of just or unjust," he tells his father. "Those are problems nobody raises any more." Nor will he need to be a man. "As long as you're a man," says Dottor Max, "in the sense of having a human personality, there will never be room for you in a firm." He and his wife are now "the prototype of the ideal family which Dottor Max means to create in the future, the masterpiece of absolute property."

Now where did we hear all this before? It was exactly eighteen years ago, in Orwell's 1984. The last lines were:

O cruel, needless misunderstanding!
O stubborn, self-willed exile from the
loving breast! Two gin-scented tears
trickled down the sides of his nose.
But it was all right, everything was
all right, the struggle was finished. He
had won the victory over himself. He
loved Big Brother.

Parise here (with the deft assistance of William Weaver) is fluent, orderly, bitter. But if he must say again what Orwell said way back in 1948—and indeed he must, and so must we all—he ought to shout it, not faintly from inside the whale itself, but rather over the roof-tops of the world.

Negro Folksong

Jubilee, by Margaret Walker (Houghton Mifflin, 497 pp. \$5.95), views the plantation South, Civil War, and Reconstruction through the eyes of Negro slaves. Abraham Chapman has compiled a bibliography of literature by and about Negro Americans, to be published later this fall.

By ABRAHAM CHAPMAN

IN ITS evocation of the folk experience and folk attitudes of Southern Negroes on the plantations when slavery seemed to be a permanent institution, during the Civil War and the Reconstruction years, this Houghton Mifflin Literary Fellowship Award novel adds something distinctively different to the Civil War novel. Each of the fifty-eight chapters opens with lines from a spiritual or popular song of the day, and each chapter has its own title—devices which establish a broader framework and wider point of view than that of the novel's concealed, unidentified narrator. Some of the chapter headings suggest folk ways of thinking or folk wisdom: "Death is a mystery that only the squinch owl knows"; "This pot is boiling over and the fat is in the fire"; "Mister Lincoln is our Moses." Other headings suggest folk experiences: That for a chapter relating the efforts of a slave to escape to freedom is entitled "Put on men's clothes and a man's old cap"; others are headed "Seventy-five lashes on her naked back" and "They made us sing 'Dixie.'"

To appreciate the extent of innovation *Jubilee* brings to a thoroughly quarried, frequently hackneyed genre of writing, it is only necessary to recall that the Civil War novel has been the source of some of the crudest stereotypes of Negro characters in American fiction. As Robert A. Lively pointed out in *Fiction Fights the Civil War*: "the Negro is rarely a central figure in Civil War novels—he only hovers near the white heroes and heroines, to whom space and interest is given." Margaret Walker has reversed the picture completely. With a fidelity to fact and detail, she presents the little-known everyday life of the slaves, their modes of behavior, patterns and rhythms of speech, emotions, frustrations, and aspirations. Never done on such a scale before, this is the strength of her novel. As it unfolds one sees plantation life as it was seen by Negro slaves, feels the texture of American history as it was felt by Negro slaves: the Civil War with the hopes it aroused, its sordid and grim realities; the participation of the Negroes in the fight against slavery; the ugly and frus-

trating rise of the Ku Klux Klan; the postwar waves of terror in the South to keep the Negro down and prevent emancipation from becoming a reality.

The author is so intent on presenting her historical data as accurately as possible, on correcting the distortions which have crept into so many Civil War novels, that at times she fails to transform her raw material into accomplished literary form. There are passages of very pedestrian prose. Fortunately, the colorful and musical speech of the Negro characters in the novel transcends the stilted prose of the narrator. The slave preacher, Brother Ezekiel, on his knees beside the bed of a dying slave in the slave cabin, prays: "Way down here in this here rain-washed world, kneelin here by this bed of affliction pain, your humble servant is a-knockin, and askin for your lovin mercy, and your tender love. This here sister is tired a-sufferin, Lord, and she wants to come on home."

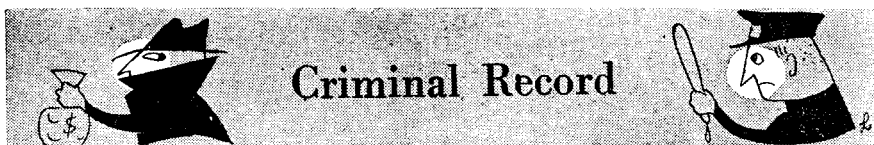
There is Mammy Sukey, thinking out loud as she brings the daughter of the plantation master to the big house to start serving as the slave of her white sister, under the jealous rule of the mistress of the plantation: "Ain't make a speck of difference nohow. Politeness and cleanness and sweet ways ain't make no difference nohow. She [the mistress] gone stomp her and tromp her and beat her and mighty nigh kill her anyhow."

And there is Vyry, the heroine of the novel, who distills out of her life as a slave, and the trials of the Civil War, and the frustrated hopes of the Reconstruction years, a hard realism, a fierce spiritual force and hope: "We both needs each other. White folks need what black folks got just as much as black folks need what white folks is got, and we's all got to stay here mongst each other and git along, that's what."

ALMOST a quarter of a century has passed since, with the publication of her volume of verse, *For My People*, in the Yale Series of Younger Poets, Margaret Walker established her reputation as one of the important modern Negro poets. In this, her first novel, she has with seeming deliberation held in abeyance the indirection and compact suggestiveness of the poet in order to concentrate on presenting to the fiction of the Civil War an authentic Negro point of view.

LITERARY I. Q. ANSWERS

1. Corot. 2. Chardin. 3. Géricault. 4. Fragonard. 5. Ingres. 6. Renoir. 7. Audubon. 8. Turner. 9. Caravaggio. 10. Modigliani. 11. Toulouse-Lautrec. 12. Gauguin. 13. Delacroix. 14. Degas. 15. Velásquez. 16. Goya.



The Trial of Steven Truscott. By Isabel de Bourdais. Lippincott. \$4.95. Seven years ago a fourteen-year-old Ontario boy was sentenced to be hanged for the rape and murder of a twelve-year-old girl schoolmate; the sentence was commuted to life imprisonment. A Toronto journalist examines the case in graphic and dramatic detail and finds justice wanting.

The Trail of the Poppy: Behind the Mask of the Mafia. By Charles Siragusa as told to Robert Wiedrich. Prentice-Hall. \$4.95. Ex-Federal Bureau of Narcotics trouble-shooter (now executive director of Illinois State Crime Commission) presents high points of his twenty-two-year tour of duty as a drug-chaser in twenty-nine countries, USA very much included. Exciting, informative, authoritative.

At Bertram's Hotel. By Agatha Christie. Dodd, Mead. \$4.50. Miss Jane Marple, peeper by inclination, runs into prime crime wave while holidaying in posh London caravansary. One of author's very best productions, with splendid pace, bright lines.

Death of a Doxy. By Rex Stout. Viking. \$3.75. Archie Goodwin makes shocking discovery that puts one of Nero Wolfe's hired hands behind bars as a material witness; sugar daddy strives to preserve good name (if any). As for the big guy, he's still batting .400.

The Asking Price. By Henry Cecil. Harper & Row. \$4.50. Seventeen-year-old English miss jolts fifty-two-year-old bachelor by proposing marriage; evasive tactics fail (or don't they?). Wit and wiles abound in this tragicomedy.

The Cold War Swap. By Ross Thomas. Morrow. \$3.95. Spies, doublespies, triplespies dot these sanguinary pages (we make it seventeen dead); Berlin wall breached; Rhine journey tops Siegfried's. A real snorter, superbly told.

Killer Dolphin. By Ngaio Marsh. Little, Brown. \$4.95. Violent death in London theater tizzies cast of hit play based on Shakespeare's life; Supt. Allenby, himself a Grade A Bardolater, takes over. You'll need a scorecard, and (hooray!) there is one.

The Christmas Egg. By Mary Kelly. Holt, Rinehart & Winston. \$3.95. Death of senile Russian princess in London slum sets Inspector Nightingale and

Sgt. Beddoes on trail of missing jewels. Sounds corny but isn't.

The Shamir of Dachau. By Christopher Davis. New American Library. \$4.50. Echoes of concentration camp days are heard in this moving, nicely detailed story of contemporary life in Frankfurt-am-Main; war criminal is sought, animal hospital visited. Has power and depth.

Blind Spot. By Joseph Harrington. Lippincott. \$3.95. Lt. F. X. Kerrigan of Manhattan D.A.'s office scores again with another sound doorbell-ringing job that aims to free a woman doing twenty years to life.

Out of the Depths. By Leonard Holton. Dodd, Mead. \$3.50. Father Bredder, peeper-priest, and his friend Lt. Minardi of L.A. look below the surface to snag triple killers. Will delight scuba fans.

Moscow Coach. By Philip McCutchan. John Day. \$4.50. Cmdr. Esmonde Shaw, British Intelligence superace, enters Russia with touring bus party on desperate mission; meets U.S. lady op. who says "guess" eighteen times. Hair-breadth scapes abound.

Going, Going, Gone. By Phoebe Atwood Taylor. Norton. \$3.95. Asey Mayo, self-made Cape Cod peeper, calls the shots when corpse turns up at rural auction. This is eleventh unit in reissue of series that made grandpa forget the Depression.

The Playboy Book of Crime and Suspense. Selected by the editors of *Playboy*. Trident. \$5.95. Star billing here goes to Ian Fleming, whose novel-ette "The Hildebrand Rarity" was his first contribution to *Playboy* (1960); twenty-five other name authors contributed the twenty-eight remaining stories. Choice collection.

Best Detective Stories of the Year. Edited by Anthony Boucher. Dutton. \$4.50. This twenty-first annual compilation maintains the high standard set by its predecessors; seventeen previously serialized units make up the contents.

Ellery Queen's Crime Carousel. Edited by Ellery Queen. New American Library. \$5.50. Twenty-one stories from *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*, varying from 1,000 to 20,000 words, comprise the twenty-first issue of this hardy perennial.
—SERGEANT CUFF.