

Literary Horizons

Granville Hicks

I can imagine a present-day Scott Fitzgerald saying, "The very young are different from us," and a hard-boiled Hemingway replying, "Yes, they aren't so old." At most periods in history this might be an adequate answer, but at the moment I think it falls short. I feel in my bones that the generation gap is becoming an abyss. If this is true, it is because of something that is happening to Western civilization, not because the young are particularly wicked or stupid or perverse.

There are many young men and women who are eager to tell us just what the younger generation is up to, but most of them seem to me to clarify nothing. I realize that this may be my fault, but I don't really think so. These would-be writers fail to make me believe in their characters, probably because they don't believe in them themselves. But there are a few writers who have been able to make me believe that their characters, no matter how bizarre their ideas or how outrageous their behavior, are real people. Thomas Rogers, in *The Pursuit of Happiness*, is one, and Marilyn Hoff, in *Rose*, is another. And now there is Jonathan Strong, whose *Tike and Five Stories* (Atlantic-Little, Brown, \$5.75) has hit me very hard indeed.

Tike, the hero of the novella, is twenty-one years old, has dropped out of

college, and has taken a room of his own. His mother and father are open-minded, gentle people who are eager to understand and help him, and it might have been better for him if they had been stupid, conventional tyrants, for then he would at least have had something definite to revolt against. After being in a mental institution for a while, he is working in a college library shelving books. As the story begins he is miserably lonely, but there are other young people in his boarding house, and soon he becomes acquainted with them.

Strong writes for the most part in short declarative sentences, and this becomes tiresome at times; but the device helps Strong, as it helped Hemingway, to emphasize the specific detail. By writing about things rather than emotions he avoids phoniness. He has also learned from Hemingway that what is left out of a story can be more important than what is put in. Tike represents himself as being cool as an iceberg, yet what the reader feels between the lines is bewilderment and despair.

The five short stories aren't about Tike, but they are about boys who are very much like him. One of them, "Quilty," describes a boy of fifteen or sixteen who is involved in a family celebration of the Fourth of July. He is a nice boy and has a nice family, and he is only beginning to realize how much of life lies outside the family circle. Two stories touch delicately on the problem of homosexuality, "Supperburger" and "Sayin Goodbye to Tom." In the former we are never sure what has gone on between the boy and an older man, a composer, but we see how it has changed their lives. The latter portrays a boyhood friendship that is on the edge of a deeper involvement. "Suburban Life" presents a boy and girl who are shacking up and are having a good time in spite of the girl's broken leg. In "Tike" the boy has an affair for which he is really not ready, and he is hurt. In "Suburban Life" both the boy and girl are enjoying the new sexual freedom, and that is fine, but one sees the problems that lie ahead for them.

I began *What I'm Going to Do, I Think*, by L. Woiwode (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, \$5.95), because it also deals with the problems, sexual and marital, of the young. (Believe it or not, the publishers say that the author's name is pronounced "Why-wood-ee," with the accent on the first syllable.) His young couple are a little older than the boy and girl in *Tike*:

Christofer Van Eenanam, a graduate student in science, has just won a fellowship; Ellen Strohe, who was a student at the University of Wisconsin when he first met her, was brought up by stern grandparents, against whom she is ineffectually in revolt.

The story opens as Chris and Ellen are beginning their honeymoon in the grandparents' summer home. We learn that Ellen had become pregnant and that they have had to choose between abortion and marriage. Chris, who, as the title indicates, is an indecisive young man, finally came out for marriage, but he has recurring doubts about the future. Ellen has her doubts, too, but mostly she worries about his doubts. What happens between them is, of course, the theme of the story.

Like Jonathan Strong, Woiwode is fond of specific details, but he is not so skillful as Strong in selecting those that will do most for him. There is, for instance, a long account of an interview Chris and Ellen have with the minister they have selected to marry them. This is a good piece of realistic reporting, but so far as contributing to our understanding of Ellen and Chris is concerned, Woiwode could have got the same effect in a fifth of the space. For another example: A neighboring farmer asks Chris to help him with a day's haying. After Chris has worked himself to exhaustion, the farmer doesn't even give him a decent day's pay. Woiwode is surely describing Chris's ordeal out of his own experience, and the reader's muscles almost ache in sympathy, but fewer words would have done as well.

The problems of Chris and Ellen recur in every generation in many varieties, and haven't much to do with the dilemmas that seem to be peculiarly modern. That, of course, is nothing against the novel. The trouble is that Woiwode has brought so little to his theme that might illuminate it. In the first part, as I have said, there is a clutter of details. In the second part the reader does feel the tension between the two, but even here there are distractions, and the passages intended to hint at a violent ending seem contrived. Everywhere one misses the sureness of touch that Strong seems to have come by naturally.

Woiwode's novel does remind us that the really radical young people, the ones who are furthest out, the ones who seem not to understand the language we older people speak, are in the minority. Chris and Ellen may have had their wild moments, but if they are able to settle down at all, it will be in Squaresville. That's all right too, but they interest me less than Tike does. Tike may crack up, but for the moment he is living his own life. His is a new way of looking at the world, and Strong is artist enough to make us see at least part of what Tike sees.



—Arthur Richardson.

Jonathan Strong—"avoids phoniness."

European Literary Scene

Robert J. Clements

English writers, editors, and publishers, like their confrères on the Continent, are a bit uneasy about the UNESCO discussions on revising the Berne (1886) and Geneva (1952) conventions on international copyright. Yet this question is at the moment overshadowed by their irritation over the behavior of certain American reprint publishers. This source of potential vexation, by the way, dates back to the unauthorized reprinting, without royalties, by an American firm of the works of Charles Dickens, an incident that heightened the anti-Americanism of that fearsome novelist.

A few American reprint houses, working technically within the existing U.S. copyright laws, feel free to issue facsimile editions without informing, consulting, or remunerating the English publisher—who might be planning to issue a revised edition. Copyrights here expire after twenty-eight years (one renewal of another twenty-eight years is permitted) whereas in the U.K. copyright remains in effect for fifty years after the author's death. An ethical problem is thus created.

The London *Times Literary Supplement* has vigorously attacked an American reprint of the 1929 *Bibliography of Jane Austen*, published originally by Sir Geoffrey Keynes's firm. When Sir Geoffrey complained that he did not wish to have the work reprinted without updating (any scholar could understand this), the American publisher replied that "he had no duty to consult [the author and original publisher] since consultation took time and a rival firm might meanwhile step in and 'steal the show.'" He enclosed a check for \$200 which Keynes refused to accept "as conscience money."

The *TLS* gives the impression that such behavior on the part of American publishers is widespread. A token poll of New York reprint houses fortunately belies this. Despite a very few who "grab first and pay later, if necessary," the majority make prior arrangements with the U.K. publishers, finding that the approximate two-month period required for consultation by air mail is hardly excessive. Most pay advances to the London firms. Typical of such operations is the agreement between Octagon Books and John Murray, publisher of the important thirteen-volume *Works of Lord Byron*. This mutually advantageous contract gave Murray a 10-per-cent royalty on 600 sets at a list price of \$160, all adding up to a service to scholars, a boon to both publishers, and a model of co-

operation. The British publishers have only one way to protect themselves against the few reprinters who do not follow such a procedure: to provide for maximum continuing copyright under American law and issue a revised edition every fifty years or so thereafter, in anticipation of copyright expiration in America.

Possibly encouraged by the current revival of Jean-Paul Sartre's wordy 1951 hit, *Le Diable et le bon Dieu*, Jean Mercurie has staged at the Théâtre de la Ville an old and virtually unknown drama by the existentialist playwright, *L'Engrenage* (Gears). This study of a socialist strong man enmeshed in the mechanism of his office was written in 1948, and reminds one of Sartre's *Mains sales* of the previous year. Apparently no one has ever staged *L'Engrenage* except Piscator in Germany and Strehler in Italy. Reminiscent of Hoederer in *Mains sales*, boss Jean dips his hands in the blood and dirt of politics for the good of the socialist cause. Most of the play is taken up with Jean's trial before a people's court, where he tries to justify his conduct as leader. Flashbacks transport us to crucial moments in his political career. The long speeches on democracy, justice, use of power, etc., constitute most of the dialogue and the plot. Critics are not sure this old script should have been taken out of its trunk; some feel

that by now Sartre has lost his preaching license.

In 1948 Sartre had not yet become disenchanted with Stalinism, and his old lip-service to that brand of communism is remembered by the French New Left. Communism and socialism now have much more reliable and authoritative interpreters, including such firsthand witnesses as Solzhenitsyn and Bulgakov. Indeed, the soap-box rhetoric in *L'Engrenage*, which reduces its dramatic strength and forces Jean's fellow-actors into uncomfortable indolence on the stage, reminds many of us of the noble rhetoric of Castro on trial for his life, words about liberty, justice, and human dignity that did not prevent him from setting up kangaroo courts shortly afterwards. The French no longer accept Sartre as their militant intellectual. We are nearing the day predicted by Manuel de Diéguez when "posterity will look back curiously at this somewhat lugubrious doctor of the Ideal City, and remain astonished at the strange forms assumed by the man-made religion of the twentieth century."

One of the interesting features of the monthly *Soviet Literature* is its surveys of the fortunes of foreign authors in the USSR. The choice of American writers for discussion offers few surprises. Erskine Caldwell, with his interest in American Negroes, hillbillies, farmers, and slum-dwellers, was read in Russia as early as 1936; first his short stories were translated, followed by *Tobacco Road* and *Trouble in July*. Soviet affection for Mr. Caldwell was reciprocated.

The Georgia-born novelist was touring Russia at the time of the Nazi attack,

Your Literary I. Q.

Conducted by David M. Glixon

SLEUTHONYMS

The ten detectives in Column 1 are the creations of the four authors in Column 3, who use the eight pseudonyms in Column 2. According to Jan Blomstrom of Albuquerque, two of the detectives appear in books written under the authors' real names. Don't get rattled—first assign the eight pseudonyms to their respective detectives, then match the four authors to their own pseudonyms and to the remaining detectives. Help yourself to a silver badge if you understand this quiz, a gold badge if you solve it. The getaway car is on page 33.

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| 1. John Mannering () | A. Simon Harvester () | a. John Creasey |
| 2. Inspector MacDonald () | B. Lesley Egan () | |
| 3. Dorian Silk () | C. J. J. Marric () | |
| 4. Luis Mendoza () | | b. Henry Gibbs |
| 5. George Gideon () | D. Gorden Ashe () | |
| 6. Vic Varallo () | E. Carol Carnac () | |
| 7. Julian Rivers () | | c. Edith Rivett |
| 8. Ivor Maddox () | F. Dell Shannon () | |
| 9. Patrick Dawlish () | G. Anthony Morton () | |
| 10. Roger West () | H. E. C. R. Lorac () | d. Elizabeth Linington |