

meant to sell out by studding one's work with enough variety of appeal for the whole family. Shakespeare, too, was guilty of such variety. McCarthy was right; her own career has since proved that success need not be a dirty word, for, like Williams, she has stood the test of time.

Still, no short-story writer can live off his stories; he must supplement his income with professorships, film scenarios, talk shows. Exceptionally, Tennessee need no longer resort to these outlets. As another Williams was a poet who lived as a doctor, so Tennessee Williams is a storyteller who lives as a dramatist; his late plays are leaden, but surely the early ones bring in enough silver to permit him to focus more on the mining of his fiction talent and to bring up the gold that will balance the scales. □

## New Books

### Fact & Comment

by Malcolm S. Forbes  
Knopf, 295 pp., \$7.95

When Zsa Zsa Gabor's cosmetics firm went bust a few years ago, *Forbes* magazine noted dryly, "Miss Gabor once described her expensive cosmetics line as using 'some old family secrets' from Hungary. The formula must obviously involve large quantities of that prevalent chemical formula—abbreviated as B.S."

Zingers like this one abound, as business insiders know, in "Fact and Comment," the up-front section of *Forbes* where editor-president Malcolm S. Forbes notes down his feisty reactions to the passing scene. (Yes, he's the same Forbes who flies balloons cross-country.)

In this entertaining selection from a quarter-century of "Fact and Comment," Forbes is at his freewheeling, high-hearted, Republican best. His likes and dislikes are massive: George Romney is "Gorgeous George . . . the white-topped Rambler." Eugene McCarthy is "the pied poet . . . a sour soul soothed only by an outsized ego." And Congressman Wilbur Mills is "the greatest . . . the best thing that's happened to Capitol Hill since Robert Taft."

Forbes is *for* gun curbs, Earth Day, Dylan Thomas, reading the footnotes in corporate reports, Britain's Prince Philip, and a big U.S. troop pullout in Europe. He is *against* weight-loss diets, the SST, the four-day week (they tried it at *Forbes* and it bombed), people who

mumble "y'know" and "I mean," the U.S. trade imbalance, and Watergate ("the rights of a free people . . . got ripped off").

And so it goes, minor but arresting items alternating with deep-reaching comments on business and world affairs. Throughout, Forbes is terse, lively, and true to the ideal of thinking like the philosophers while talking like the common man.

Unfortunately, Forbes's penchant for the vernacular sometimes verges on ickiness—language becomes "lingo," money is "dough" and "bucks," and people "stir their stumps" and "take look-sees."

But such trifles aside, both businessman and general reader will find *Fact & Comment* a highly diverting account of one free spirit's reactions to a quarter-century of great and small happenings.

HALLOWELL BOWSER

### My Petition for More Space

by John Hersey  
Knopf, 182 pp., \$5.95

Since well before dawn Sam Poynter has been waiting, just waiting, in a jam-packed line that stretches four abreast for three-quarters of a mile. And for the duration of John Hersey's latest, futuristic novel, Sam inches along an overcrowded New Haven street toward a Kafkaesque government office building where, if he ever gets there, he will put in his petition for more living space.

It is an outrageous petition for anyone to file in this not-too-distant future, when maximum living space for a single person is eight feet by twelve, when "every square inch of concrete and asphalt is taken up" at rush hour. By his very presence on the line, Sam is cutting down on the chances of the others—people who want to change jobs, have a child, buy cigars, get more food—to gain permission for their basic requests.

Combining an Orwellian vision and the absurdist techniques of Beckett, Hersey has vividly portrayed the horrors of overpopulation and the deathly fear, hostility, and terror that rage through those who must mutely wait. In Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* Winston Smith fights for the right to have a personality. Similarly, Hersey's Sam Poynter is fighting for the right to have more space. And the reader soon realizes that like the characters of Beckett, who wait for someone (like Godot) who does not come, Hersey's characters wait to present a petition that will not be granted.

It is a novel in which, essentially, nothing happens. Yet its mounting tension sustains the action of the novel and compels you to keep turning the pages.

This portrait of human uncertainty, of empty, anguished waiting, is ultimately ambiguous. While it is obviously pessimistic about the inevitability of overcrowding, frustration, and the indefinite postponement of gratification, it is also informed by a certain obstinate hope. Hersey's is a vision that belongs, dreadfully, to our time; its greatest power is, simply, that it is unbearably close to being true.

SUSAN HEATH

### Kiss Hollywood Good-by

by Anita Loos  
Viking, 213 pp., \$8.95

Anita Loos was never at a loss for words during the 18 years she turned out comedies and "unadulterated soap operas" for M.G.M., in the days when M.G.M. released a movie a week—and every one a success. The tiny brunette creator of *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* was M.G.M.'s top dialogue writer. She concocted zany new plots and beefed up old pallid ones, by injecting into them her own refreshing impudence.

*Kiss Hollywood Good-by* is Miss Loos's rosy reminiscence of Hollywood when movies were learning to talk. This rather self-effacing "unschooled little American" balances spontaneity and naïveté with a penetrating insight into the follies of romantic pursuit. Her hilarious recollections bare the souls of movie magnates and their paramours, and the "maverick" writers and intellectuals with whom Miss Loos cavorted. There is an antic slant on everything and a ribbing for everyone—Irring Thalberg, Tallulah Bankhead, Jean Harlow, Clark Gable—but her juiciest target is, not surprisingly, her late husband and occasional collaborator, director John Emerson, a man given to flirtations, hysterical ailments, and bravado. He kept his fingers on "Nita's" purse strings, while she, in return, carried "a smouldering torch" for him. Their collaboration was in most respects like that of Colette and her husband, Willi. And no one knew that better than Miss Loos, who grasped the pathos of the situation but could appreciate its comic side as well: "I am reminded of a vaudeville act in which a pompous comedian used to play the William Tell Overture on a xylophone unaware that, behind him, Gypsy Rose Lee was doing

a striptease. As audiences went wild acclaiming Gypsy, the stupid old xylophonist kept taking bows." Such is the entertainment served up in this punchy, enormously readable memoir, which does justice to an era whose measure America has still not fully taken. S.H.

### United Nations Journal: A Delegate's Odyssey

by William F. Buckley, Jr.  
Putnam, 280 pp., \$7.95

In 1973, William F. Buckley, Jr., served as a U.S. delegate to the 28th General Assembly of the United Nations, where he represented the United States on the Third Committee, which deals with questions of human rights. *United Nations Journal* examines the sorts of things that Mr. Buckley came to conclude regularly go on at the United Nations. Among other things, he notes that the past several years have seen an "erosion" of American influence in the United Nations and cites, as the probable cause, our official policy of bearing with passivity and all but the mildest demurrals the strutting hypocrisies indulged in by representatives of Communist countries, and our intensifying reluctance, regardless of the provocation, to ruffle the feathers of those whom Americans used to recognize as their enemies. Throughout, Mr. Buckley stresses that through its absorption in diplomatic grandstanding and maneuvering, the General Assembly has vitiated its effectiveness as an agency that might promulgate the professed ideals of the United Nations itself.

Although *United Nations Journal* tends at times to resemble too closely an informal diary not intended for eventual publication, it is for the most part executed with considerable cogency, grace, and wit. Mr. Buckley's point—that the "sovietization of American life" is an evil to be guarded against, and that the United States undermines both itself and the United Nations when it permits slanders against America and lies about the realities of life in totalitarian countries to go unchallenged—is well made and well taken. In an elegant and civilized way, *United Nations Journal* expresses the high value its author attaches to the concept of human rights and his outrage that so great a percentage of the world's population is in no position to exercise them. Whether or not one comes, eventually, to agree with either its formulations or its conclusions, *United Nations Journal*

raises hard and serious questions that deserve the most thoughtful scrutiny and consideration.

JANE LARKIN CRAIN

### A Small Personal Voice

by Doris Lessing  
Knopf, 192 pp., \$6.95

Doris Lessing is probably best known for *The Golden Notebook*, an autobiographical novel published in 1962 and subsequently picked up and sanctified by members and fellow travelers of the women's liberation movement. *A Small Personal Voice* (the title is taken from an essay she first published in 1957) is a collection of her essays and book reviews, and of interviews she has given—all of which have appeared previously in various journals and books.

Mrs. Lessing is a stalwart of the Old Left, and the pieces in this collection (which include speculations and pronouncements on matters literary, political, and sociological) reflect to one degree or another the kind of querulousness that overcomes the utopian mentality when it turns its gaze on things as they are. Then, too, Mrs. Lessing's most en-

compassing concern is with Mrs. Lessing; this lends to her perspectives and assumptions a quirkiness, or privacy, that gives her writing a rather distorted focus, making the terms in which she couches her discussions largely idiosyncratic. Still, there are things Mrs. Lessing does rather well: there is a very good portrait of her father in this collection; when she is not launched on sophomoric political fussings and fumings, much of what she has to say about South Africa (where she grew up) is engaging and finely drawn; and certain of her theorizings about the novel form are thought-provoking.

In his introduction to *A Small Personal Voice*, Paul Schlueter explains that this collection has come into being largely in response to those scholars "around the world" who have been requesting materials for work they are doing on Doris Lessing. Such devotees, and others among Mrs. Lessing's popular following, may find in her occasional writings something that will reward the reading and justify the publication of them. The uninitiated, however, are apt to find the whole business obscure and sparse indeed.

J.L.C.

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