

the past half-century had Czernowitz never come to pass. Yet that literature might well have been far less significant, for a Czernowitz somewhere was necessary to effect two major results without which the very concept of a modern literature in a modern Yiddish language could never have been formulated: the vindication of the dignity of Yiddish as a language and the proclamation of a rationale for a Yiddish literature in its relation to Jewish life.

Yiddish had come to Czernowitz as the speech of the masses. Its status had fallen victim to the scorn of German *Maskilim* urging enlightenment on the East European Jewish world, whose medievalism they saw symbolized by its Jewish dress, sustained by its Jewish orthodoxy, expressed in its Judeo-German patois, and flaunted by the fanatically pietistic Hasidic sect, which perversely found exaltation in that very dress and orthodoxy and speech. This "bastard jargon," which stained the respectability of Hebrew in Gentile eyes, needed to be ridiculed out of existence. And *Maskilic* efforts made "jargon" a synonym for "Yiddish."

Yet, though the label stuck, it lost its sting; it was, in fact, elevated by the thing it was intended to degrade, so that in time a Sholem Aleichem could without self-denigration refer to himself as a *zhargonisher shrayber*. But even that Cinderella transformation of the epithet could not be grounds for its further toleration, and Yiddish emerged from Czernowitz not, indeed, as "the national language" of the Jews, as its most ardent advocates had urged, but as "a national language," an honor the speech of the people was now to share (not without bitter challenge) with Hebrew, the language that intellectuals could—and sometimes did—speak and write. After Czernowitz no one could speak of a *zhargonishe literatur*. After Czernowitz no intellectual found it

necessary to hide behind a pseudonym as Mendele and Sholem Aleichem had done.

If Czernowitz proclaimed the dignity of the Yiddish language, it also clarified and reasserted the role of Yiddish creativity as both an expression and an instrument of the cultural rebirth and modern transformation of a people. At Czernowitz Yitskhok Leybush Peretz emerged, even more strikingly than before, as the ideological leader and guide of that cultural renaissance, a role he had increasingly filled during the years when his home in Warsaw at Ceglana #1 had become the most famous address in Yiddish literary history. And at Czernowitz was struck that spring whose flow sustained the heroic generation that wrote books in Yiddish and built schools and published periodicals and carried on research and boldly dreamed of a true modernization of Jewish life—not modernization through assimilation which was the danger and the direction of the German Haskalah, but the transition to a modern cultural nationality which would include religious and non-religious alike within the compass of Jewish being; which would foster the secular creativity of a world-wide people; and which would move a Jewish people bound by cultural and historic loyalties into the twentieth century.

"Secularism is the will of God," remarked Horace Kallen in another connection. For the generation that was young at Czernowitz, it was, indeed, an act of secular piety, a profoundly felt fulfillment of national *mitzvahs* to participate in the great venture of Jewish renewal. It was to be another renewal in the history of a people whose resurgences after catastrophe or crisis extend from Sinai to Israel. As the enclave of orthodoxy crumbled under the impact of emerging capitalism and Western ideas, as its self-sufficiency and self-containment were assaulted by persecution, pov-

erty and emigration, modern Yiddish literature arose both as a symptom of the major upheaval in Jewish life and as a salvation, however brief.

Sixty years have passed since Czernowitz, years during which bitter controversies between Yiddishists and Hebraists erupted and raged and finally, with increasingly rare exceptions, died away. Czernowitz as a linguistic, literary, and cultural event of the first magnitude, as an ideological symbol of the national importance of Yiddish and Yiddish literature, is now not an issue but a fact to be seen in the historical perspective of sixty years. And during these sixty years, both the language and the literature have grown in depth and subtlety and scope. If Jewish creativity in Spain gained for that period of Jewish history the designation of a golden age, how shall we denominate the achievements of the Age of Yiddish and of the literature in Yiddish? Of its writers in prose, whose contributions to world literature have been substantial, and of its even greater, if less widely recognized, successes in poetry? Surely, one would have thought, the history of that writing would have been a twice-told tale.

Yet it is an astonishing fact that no history of Yiddish literature has ever been written in Yiddish. Periods and persons have been intensively studied, but no survey from the earliest writers of Yiddish to the present has been done in Yiddish. A history of Yiddish literature by Meyer Pines did appear in 1911, but it was a translation of his French doctoral dissertation at the Sorbonne. Older Yiddish writing has been the subject of comprehensive surveys such as those by Max Erik (Zalmen Merkin) and Nokhum Shtif and is, of course, covered in the monumental multi-volumed history of Jewish literature, *Di Geshikhte fun Literatur bay Yidn*, by Israel Zinberg, but Yiddish literature of the twentieth century, the years of its



maturity, is not included in any of these. The primary resource for the past half-century must still remain the Zalmen Reisen biographical dictionary, *Leksikon fun der Yidisher Literatur* and the work which brings Reisen up to date, the Congress for Jewish Culture *Leksikon fun der Nayer Yidisher Literatur*, of which the eighth and final volume is soon to appear.

In English, of course, efforts to deal extensively with Yiddish literature have been extremely few. Leo Wiener's pioneer *Yiddish Literature in the XIX Century* (1899) was followed by A. A. Roback's cursory *The Story of Yiddish Literature* (1935). Sol Liptzin's selective *The Flowering of Yiddish Literature* (1963) completes the list.

It is in this perspective, then, that Madison's book should properly be seen: it is the first effort either in Yiddish or in English to put together a substantial survey of Yiddish writing from the beginnings in the fourteenth century to the present. If the result is not a "comprehensive history"—and the disclaimer is Madison's—it is still the most substantial repository of information of its kind available. Charles Madison is himself a venerable figure in the history of Yiddish studies in the United States. After Leo Wiener he was, along with Isaac Goldberg, among the most persistent of those who sought to bring Yiddish letters to the attention of the American reader. The studies of Yiddish writers which Madison contributed to *Poet Lore* during the 1920's seem to have been the nucleus for the present volume.

Those early essays have grown into a book which consists of chapters on fourteen major writers from Mendeleyev to Bashevis Singer, introduced by a survey of Yiddish writing before Mendeleyev and interspersed with chapters on Yiddish literature in Soviet Russia, in the United States, and in Israel. Facts, dates,

even summaries of works not yet translated into English are all available, along with two bibliographies, one a substantial if incomplete bibliography of Yiddish writings in English translation and the other of critical and historical studies (which, most regrettably, does not indicate which are in Yiddish and which in English). The result is a volume which, despite its faults, should prove enormously useful as an introduction to Yiddish literature.

In addition, it lays the groundwork for the more ambitious work

which remains to be done. There is, of course, much that Madison finds it necessary to omit and much that he does not undertake. He does not, for example, undertake to convey a sense of the continuity of a literature in its relationships and interactions within itself and with other literatures.

When the larger critical history of Yiddish literature is written, its method and its judgments will certainly be different from Madison's; but whoever does it will be grateful to this substantial volume.

## The Genius of Isaac Babel

Isidore Haiblum

The round face looks out at us from the dust jacket; there is a half smile on the full lips, the eyes are partially obscured by the oval, steel-rimmed spectacles, but one is certain the eyes must convey an all-knowing worldliness, an all-inclusive intelligence.\*

Irving Howe has said, "Babel is one of the literary masters of our century . . . a genius."

And we can't help feeling he must have been a delightful person too. His letters are full of humor, humanity, concern for people, devotion to art. The snapshots in the 1964 volume of letters show a Babel radiating good humor, warmth and wisdom. They come at us with an immediacy that wipes away the years.

And there is the art itself—those glowing stories that seem to have a life of their own—and the legends that have developed around it: legends of a Jew who rode with Cossacks, who kept a diary on horseback, who put it all down, left nothing out. Budyonny, the Cossack Commander, was later to dispute Babel's veracity, but today when we wish to under-

stand those turbulent and bloody times we turn to Babel.

Yet his stories are no mere histories. Babel's art could only have come out of the Russian soil, a synthesis of Jewish and Russian roots. Yet it appears to transcend time and place; it speaks of the human condition. The scenes depicted on Babel's pages seem, in many instances, never to have been recorded before. This is work of the highest order and it belongs to all the ages.

The facts of Babel's life are often obscure. He was a secretive man who played his cards close to the vest. Humor often veiled his true intentions. By the mid-thirties his reticence was no longer a laughing matter. This was the time of the great repression; by 1939 Babel was to be one of its victims. The Soviet government itself, therefore, has been somewhat reluctant to bring to light all the details at its disposal.

Babel was born in 1894 in Odessa in the Moldavanka district. His father owned a warehouse. Until he was sixteen, Babel studied Hebrew, the Bible and Talmud; he knew Yiddish well (an important point, as we shall see), and later, English,

\* *You Must Know Everything*. By Isaac Babel. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. \$5.95.



French and German. He attended the Nicholas I Commercial School of Odessa and remembered it as "gay, rowdy, noisy and multilingual." The Jewish quota excluded Babel from the friendly neighborhood university; instead he went to the Kiev Institute of Financial and Business Studies. It was in Kiev that Babel met his future wife Evgenia. Nathalie, Babel's daughter, writes, "This was an era of social unrest and intellectual exaltation; my parents were determined to live heroically. My mother refused to wear the furs and pretty dresses her parents gave her. My father, to harden himself, would walk bareheaded in the dead of winter without an overcoat, dressed only in a jacket."

Babel graduated, went on to Petersburg in 1915. He says of this time, "I didn't have a residence permit and had to avoid the police, living on Pushkin Street in a cellar rented from a bedraggled, drunken waiter. Also . . . I began to take my writing around to editorial offices, but I was always thrown out. All the editors tried to persuade me to get a job in a store, but I didn't listen to them. Then at the end of 1916 I happened to meet Gorky." Gorky published Babel's first stories and advised him to go out in the world. Babel did just that. He volunteered for the army in 1917, served on the Rumanian front until 1918 when he contracted malaria. That ended the first phase of his military career.

**B**ack in Odessa, in 1919, Babel married Evgenia. But this was the period of the civil war, Babel believed in the Soviet dream, and in 1920 reenlisted in the army. He was assigned to Budyonny's cavalry—as a supply officer—and also held down the job of correspondent for ROSTA (later to become TASS). Nathalie tells us, "At the end of the year he was reported dead, but ultimately returned, completely exhausted, covered with vermin, and suffering from acute asthma."

Recovery took time. The asthma was to plague him the rest of his life. 1923 finds him taking a cure in the mountains and beginning work on the Red Cavalry stories. He had already completed the Odessa cycle, those incredible tales of Benya Krik and the Odessa Jewish underworld.

Babel hit the jackpot with Red Cavalry. In 1924 he moved to Moscow. By 1925 Konstantin Fedin was writing, "Babel is the rage of Moscow. Everyone is mad about him." Nathalie Babel adds, "The City was at his feet, the women included."

1925 was also the year Babel's sister, wife and mother respectively left the U.S.S.R. They were not to return and from that time onward Babel was only to see them on his occasional trips abroad.

By the 1930's it had all begun to turn sour. Darkness was spreading over Russia: the purges, the mass deportations, the witch hunts and executions. Babel kept writing, but few of his works were published—they didn't conform to the party line. Money problems loomed large. He was out of the country in 1932 and again in 1935; but both times chose to return. Why?

"His life centered on writing," Nathalie Babel tells us in her introduction to "The Lonely Years," "and it can be said without exaggeration that he sacrificed everything to his art, including his relationship with his family, his liberty, and finally even his life . . . Babel was convinced that a writer mutilates himself and his work when he leaves his native country . . ."

There were other ways, perhaps, that Babel could have saved himself. The Soviet authorities kept after him to produce the standard obsequious works called Socialist Realism; they didn't think it was asking too much. But Babel did. He writes in a 1935 letter, "And then my literary endowment is such that I can only handle ideas that I have thoroughly worked out, ideas that, on top of that, must be original, other-

wise they don't interest me, and even if my own life depended on it or my child was dying before my eyes, I would be unable to get results by trying to force myself."

There is no doubt that Babel knew the score only too well. Once he whispered to Ilya Ehrenburg, "Yezhov (head of the NKVD during the '36-'38 terror) is only the instrument." Ehrenburg goes on to say, "This is the only piece of good sense I remember hearing during the whole of that time. Babel saw and understood what was going on better than any of us." Nathalie Babel writes of those last years, "He lived in silence and secrecy. Only a few people knew of his terrible anxiety, of his certainty that he would eventually be destroyed like the others."

Babel was arrested in May, 1939. He is reported to have said, "I was not given time to finish (Ne dali konchit)." His unpublished manuscripts—a trunk full—were confiscated. What that trunk contained is a matter of speculation. Babel had been experimenting with longer forms; he had been aiming at a new objectivity. There may have been novels, certainly a great many short stories, a number of plays. They all went up in smoke—virtually his entire output of the thirties, a time when he was at the height of his artistic powers. As the Germans converged on Moscow in December of 1941, the archives of the secret police were fed into the furnaces; Babel's manuscripts were part of those archives. By that time, Babel himself was probably dead.

Apparently no clear record of what his "crimes" might have been has reached the West. In those days it was enough to be a man of honor, an independent artist. That he was a Jew probably added to the offense. Ehrenburg calls the accusations against Babel "absurd." The Soviets have tried to make amends. Babel's "rehabilitation" document states, "The sentence . . . is revoked on the basis of newly discovered circum-



stances and the case against him is terminated in the absence of elements of crime." Babel's name has gone back into the encyclopedias; his collected works have appeared in Soviet editions (although not all the stories have made it into the canonized fold); some stray works have turned up in Russian journals.

**S**o we only possess a part of Babel's output, and if we wish to understand his greatness we must go to these surviving works. Babel was a word master. His stories are ablaze with sparkling metaphors and similes; there is an element of constant surprise in their appearance; they seem to come from nowhere—bursting like strings of firecrackers. Some of the images remind us of Chagall: "His high hat sways above us like a little black tower," or "Gedali and I walked up the main street. White churches gleamed in the distance like buckwheat fields. The wheel of a gun carriage groaned around the corner. Two pregnant Ukrainian women came out of a gateway, their coin necklaces jingling, and sat down on a bench. A shy star began to gleam on the sunset's orange battlefield, and peace, Sabbath peace, rested upon the crooked roofs of the Zhitomir ghetto."

The words seem to flow effortlessly, as if by some enchantment. But Babel sweated for his effects. He rewrote endlessly, polished constantly; it took him months. Twenty-six drafts of a story seems to have been a commonplace. "No steel can pierce the human heart so chillingly as a period at the right moment," Babel had said. He set himself fantastic limits: none of his stories were to exceed twelve pages. The longest work that has come down to us is the beginning of the unfinished novel, "The Jewess." The English text is sixteen pages.

His conciseness is astounding. Complexity is never sold short; the experience is rendered in all its richness—it comes at us like a clap of

thunder. But it's all done in a handful of paragraphs. Babel said, "The point is that Tolstoy was able to describe what happened to him minute by minute, he remembered it all, whereas I evidently, only have it in me to describe the most interesting five minutes I've experienced in twenty-four hours." Given, in part, to allay bureaucratic suspicions concerning his sparse productivity at this time, there is still enough truth in this statement to illuminate Babel's craft.

**T**he theme of Jewishness is central to Babel. He brings the gift of Yiddishkeit to Russian literature: its humor, its irony, its laughter, its very speech. Babel's Benya Krik stories, the childhood reminiscences, the Jewish encounters in *Red Cavalry*, are imbued with this spirit. He was no stranger to Yiddish literature, its folk tales. Always his own man, everything he touched was transformed, polished and purified, by his inner vision. But the spirit of Yiddish—its idiom and syntax—glows with a special lustre in Babel's work.

He straddled two worlds: the Jewish and the Russian. Like a master card sharp he'd shuffle the deck, mixing humanism and lustiness, and could come up with a hand that balanced both.

And there is nostalgia and wistfulness in parts of Babel, a bitter lyricism:

"... Do you remember Zhitomir, Vasily? Do you remember the Teterov, Vasily, and that evening when the Sabbath the young Sabbath tripped stealthily along the sunset, her little red heels treading on the stars?"

The slender horn of the moon bathed its arrows in the black waters of the Teterov. Funny little Gedali, founder of the Fourth International, was taking us to Rabbi Motel Bratzlavsky's for evening service. Funny little Gedali swayed the cock's feathers of his high hat in the red haze of the evening. The candles in

the Rabbi's room blinked their predatory eyes. Bent over prayer books, brawny Jews were moaning in muffled voices, and the old buffoon of the zaddiks of Chernobyl jingled coppers in his torn pocket. . . ."

It goes on this way, one of the *Red Cavalry* stories—it's called "The Rabbi's Son" and the splendid translation used here is by Avrahm Yarmolinsky.

None of the above quotations will be found in Isaac Babel's *You Must Know Everything*, stories 1915-1937. This volume is made up of twenty-five stories invaluable annotated by Nathalie Babel, a Babel interview circa 1937 and four reminiscences by Soviet authors. Max Hayward is responsible for the excellent translation.

With the publication of this book the bottom of the barrel has been scraped. It will probably, barring some miracle, be the last "new" Babel collection to turn up.

**T**his collection is not the best way to make Babel's acquaintance, but for those who already know his work the appearance of any new material, no matter how slight, must be a cause for joy.

Some of these stories are first rate. "You Must Know Everything," the title story, is Babel's earliest known work of fiction. It belongs to the childhood cycle, tells of his laborious schooling under grandma's watchful eye and his longings for release. The depiction of the boy and his grandmother are two rings in the chain of Jewish continuity: the times change and while the generations change with them, they are still recognizable within the framework of a broad and meaningful tradition. Less complex than later Babel, the spirit of Shalom Aleichem permeates this tale. Yet the touches of Babel's own particular magic are already there.

"Shabas Nahamu" is uncharacteristic Babel, but kind of fun anyhow. It is the author's only Hershele Ostropoler tale, and there are more than a few laughs in it. Nathalie Babel tells



us in her notes, "Between 1918 and 1923, Hershele, the folk character, was ousted by Benya Krik the Jewish gangster."

Speaking of Benya, he appears again in the 1924-25 story, "Sunset" (later to become a play). Some of the flamboyance is gone, as Nathalie Babel points out, but the story seems as "richly textured as anything he ever wrote."

"The Jewess," more objective in style than previous works, is sixteen opening pages of a novel that may or may not have been completed elsewhere. All we have are the sixteen pages. Again, it deals with the problems of continuity and change. Boris, a Soviet hero, has missed his father's funeral, due to state business. He returns to the Shtetl of his birth—which he sees as stagnant, a dead end—in order to bring his mother and sister back with him to Moscow.

But will there be a place for what is best in the Jewish tradition in the new Soviet society? The unfinished manuscript gives no answer. . . .

The rest of the short pieces vary in quality—but none are without some interest or value—depicting, as they do, Babel's artistic growth, or highlighting episodes of Soviet history.

The Babel oeuvre in English translation consists of five volumes. These things are a matter of taste, of course, but in my view the Avrahm Yarmolinsky translation of some of the author's most important stories, tops them all. Originally published in 1948 by Schocken Books as *Benya Krik, the Gangster and Other Stories*, the book is soon to be reissued in an expanded paperback version. Yarmolinsky has the knack, and the reappearance of his translations is good news for Babel devotees.

## A Variety of Art Books

Alfred Werner

I WOULD LIKE TO DRAW ATTENTION here to several new art books that, for a variety of reasons, are not likely to be reviewed adequately in the daily press or in the mass media. Among them, I must single out *My Life, My Art*, by Reuven Rubin (Funk & Wagnalls, \$25.00). Rubin is now the dean of Israeli artists. But what a hard road it was for the gifted yet underprivileged youngster Reuven Zelicovici from the ghetto of Galatz, Roumania, to establish himself as a painter and to receive recognition in the cultural centers of the world. It was a very long, arduous *aliyah*, indeed. Yet the septuagenarian writes with wit and humor, about his early hardships, about Jerusalem's Bezalel School where, instead of getting any real art instruction, he learned to carve ivory boxes for sale to tourists, and about his difficult journey to Paris.

The fascinating life story is brought up to the period of the Six-Day War, when Rubin's son David,

a soldier in the Israeli army, opens the Bible at random to put his finger on a passage that reads, "And ye shall chase your enemies. . . ." The book contains numerous fine illustrations, some in color, of Rubin's works.

The American artist, Raphael Soyer who, with his twin brother, Moses, will shortly celebrate his seventieth birthday, offers us, in *Self Revelation* (Random House, \$12.50), a medley of short pieces—reminiscences, thoughts on art, and excerpts from a travel journal. Soyer looks at the world around him in a mood of cheerful resignation. For him, as an artist, the human figure is the alpha and omega. The nonfigurative, non-representational art that has dominated the scene for at least twenty years is irritating to him, and when he walked through the collection of contemporary art at London's Tate Gallery, he could not help recalling a statement he made as a participant in a symposium, "Alienation of the

Modern Artist," which he reprints in full. He said, among other things: "Our society no longer calls upon the artist to paint man's image, to depict historical events, to record the life of his time . . . What is left for the artist to do?"

But Soyer stubbornly, and very wisely, remains himself, and, as the illustrations demonstrate, achieves stunning results in depicting nude models, portraits of family and friends, and vistas of cities, using his skills in a warm, tender spirit of humanistic comprehension of the Universe. He continues to be thrilled by the art treasures of Europe, and seeks out all Rembrandts wherever he goes. He was enchanted by Jerusalem whose Old City reminded him of El Greco's Toledo; in Tel Aviv, he had a heated discussion with a much younger colleague, Naftali Bezem, who leans to Symbolism and feels that "realistic art is powerless to describe such events as the Nazi extermination of the Jews or the atomic destruction of Hiroshima." While the narrative is rambling and lacks organization, many acute observations are interspersed in it, and the writer's sincerity and frankness have a definite charm.

H. H. ARNASON'S *Jacques Lipschitz: Sketches in Bronze* (Praeger, \$16.50) contains a brief foreword by the artist who expresses his pleasure over having—in good photos by James Moore—all his surviving sculpture sketches assembled: "It is the first time in my life that the work is all together and presented chronologically, showing the total stream of my thoughts, ideas, and encounters."

In his text, Mr. Arnason, who was formerly a museum director and has known and admired Lipschitz for many years, surveys the artist's development from the academic classicism of his student days in Paris to the very free, very daring shapes of recent years. The collected *maquettes* are important for our understanding of Lipschitz' intentions: the original terra cotta sketches "which have the germ of a larger idea" were only recently cast in bronze to insure their preservation (there also exists a set of plaster casts, intended for a Lipschitz museum that is still a dream). It is fascinating to see how a tiny sketch, only eight inches high, served as a point of departure for the gigantic *Prometheus and the Vulture*, which is probably Lipschitz'



best known work. Going over these more than one hundred and sixty photographs is like accompanying the artist on his six-decade journey and watching what he calls "my first inspirations and encounters." His spontaneity, his inventiveness, his skill made him become a top-ranking sculptor of our time.

MAX J. FRIEDLAENDER (1867-1957) was not an artist, but one of Germany's greatest art historians. For several years, prior to the Nazis' takeover, he held the much-coveted position of Director at Berlin's Kaiser Friedrich Museum. Nazism forced his emigration to Amsterdam where the old gentleman miraculously survived while most of his coreligionists were shipped to the death camps in Eastern Europe. In the slim volume, *Reminiscence and Reflections* (New York Graphic Society, \$4.50), Friedlaender speaks about two great colleagues in Berlin, Wilhelm von Bode, who appointed him as an assistant, and Friedrich Lippmann, director of the Berlin museum's print collection, who favored Friedlaender because he shared his interest in German art.

Friedlaender notes, with uncoined irony, that in Berlin it was the Jews who occupied themselves with German art as researchers and collectors, while the "Aryans" were predominantly interested in the Italian Renaissance. In a note on Berlin art collectors he remarks that one prosperous Jew there had learned from the Rothschilds that "the only respectable way to show increasing wealth was in the form of precious works of art."

EVEN A man as deeply involved in German cultural life as Privy Councillor Friedlaender was constantly aware of a gap between him and his non-Jewish surroundings, long before Hitler had managed to isolate and finally annihilate the Jews. In North America, however, Jewish residents did not feel, nor were ever made to feel, that they were outsiders who did not "belong." This is what can be gathered from *Portraits of Jews*, by Hannah R. London (Charles S. Tuttle Company, \$12.50). Even before the establishment of the United States, well-to-do Jews in Newport, New York, Norfolk, Savannah, Charleston, New Orleans and other cities were fully accepted by their Christian neighbors and commis-

sioned the services of the foremost portraitists without any misgivings or afterthoughts. The best known of these American artists of the Colonial and Federal periods, and the 19th century were Robert Feke, Chester P. Harding, G.P.A. Healy, Henry Inman, John Wesley Jarvis, several members of the Peale family, Gilbert Stuart, and Thomas Sully. Also included in the book are paintings by a great Englishman, Sir Joshua Reynolds—portraits of two members of the famous Franks family. In many cases, the sitter is known, while the artist's name has been lost. Many of the sitters played important roles in the political and cultural life of the Colonies and, later on, the young Republic. The Seixas, Gratz and Touru families are well represented. Jarvis painted Mordecai M. Noah, editor, publisher and U.S. consul in Tunis, who wanted to found a Jewish colony at Grand Island on the Niagara River; the portrait of Uriah P. Levy—who, as Commodore, was the highest ranking officer in the U.S. Navy at the time of his death in 1862—has been attributed to Thomas B. Reed.

Of the artists included in the book only one was Jewish: Jacob H. Lazarus (1822-1891), a pupil of Henry Inman. Strangely, the text makes no mention of this. Apart from this omission, *Portraits of Jews* is a most valuable contribution to the cultural history of the U.S. and its Jewish citizens. It is noteworthy that the Jews of Newport were the earliest patrons of Gilbert Stuart.

FOR ITS seriousness of approach, I must also recommend *Secular Art with Sacred Themes*, by Jane Dillinger (Abingdon Press, \$7.50). Unlike Miss London's book, it deals mainly with 20th century art, in particular with works on religious themes by André Derain, Marc Chagall, Giacomo Manzú, Pablo Picasso and the American, Barnett Newman. The author, however, also makes references to Thomas Eakins' *Crucifixion* of 1880. She deplores the fact that this great picture landed, not in a church, but in a museum, and she indicts the churches of this country as having been "indifferent or hostile to the gifts of their artists." She also states, with sadness, that hardly any fine modern works of art can be found in either synagogues or churches, and believes that this state of affairs has considerably contrib-

uted to the alienation and insecurity of our metaphysically inclined practitioners of the arts. It is in consequence of this that "the secular world, rather than the synagogue or the church, has been the milieu in which the artist pursued the truths he perceived."

Personally, I cannot get enthusiastic about Newman's series of fourteen paintings, entitled "Stations of the Cross." To me, they are more or less mechanical applications of black and white pigments on a vast scale, and I wonder how, without the provocative title, anyone, whether Christian or, like the painter, Jewish, could have grasped the meaning of these rectangles that differ from each other only through the occasional addition of a detail such as an extra vertical line. But Chagall's "Calvary" and "White Crucifixion" should be deeply moving to anyone, whether believer or agnostic, Christian or Jew. Miss Dillinger tries to explain and explore these, and the other pictures in the book, with a nimble and subtle mind.

TO MANY of us, social action has taken the place originally occupied by religious service. Others think that through religious fervor, coupled with social consciousness, quite a few of the ills of society can be eliminated. Be that as it may, for the past several hundred years Western artists have often used religious subject matter to convey their anger at prevailing social conditions. This can be gathered from the scholarly and lavishly illustrated book, *The Indignant Eye*, by Ralph E. Shikes (Beacon Press, \$12.50). Hieronymus Bosch, through his pictures, denounced the corruption of the church and the evil ways of the clergy. More recently, Georges Rouault, in his prints, made use of the story of Christ to criticize sharply man's inhumanity to man.

In this very important book, the United States is well represented by more than forty artists. John Biggers is a Negro; his very touching drawing, "Cradle" shows a dejected black mother holding three small children. Many pages are devoted to Ben Shahn, who died last March (a memorial exhibition is currently held at New York's Kennedy Galleries). In the book, Shahn is characterized as one who used his broad satire and sharp wit "to attack those who would crush the human spirit."