

Gentlemen: You Are Mad!

LEWIS MUMFORD

WE in America are living among madmen. Madmen govern our affairs in the name of order and security. The chief madmen claim the titles of general, admiral, senator, scientist, administrator, Secretary of State, even President. And the fatal symptom of their madness is this: they have been carrying through a series of acts which will lead eventually to the destruction of mankind, under the solemn conviction that they are normal responsible people, living sane lives, and working for reasonable ends.

Soberly, day after day, the madmen continue to go through the undeviating motions of madness: motions so stereotyped, so commonplace, that they seem the normal motions of normal men, not the mass compulsions of people bent on total death. Without a public mandate of any kind, the madmen have taken it upon themselves to lead us by gradual stages to that final act of madness which will corrupt the face of the earth and blot out the nations of men, possibly put an end to all life on the planet itself.

These madmen have a comet by the tail, but they think to prove their sanity by treating it as if it were a child's skyrocket. They play with it; they experiment with it; they dream of swifter and brighter comets. Their teachers have handed them down no rules for controlling comets; so they take only the usual precautions of children permitted to set off firecrackers. Without asking for anyone's permission, they have decided to play a little further with this cosmic force, merely to see what will happen at sea in a war that must never come.

Why do we let the madmen go on with their game without raising our voices? Why do we keep our glassy calm in the face of this danger? There is a reason: we are madmen, too. We view the madness of our leaders as if it expressed a traditional wisdom and a common sense: we view them placidly, as a doped policeman might view with a blank, tolerant leer the robbery of a bank or the barehanded killing of a child or the setting of an infernal machine in a railroad station. Our failure to act is the measure of our madness. We look at the madmen and pass by.

Truly, those are infernal machines that our elected and appointed madmen are setting. When the machines go off, the cities will explode, one after another, like a string of firecrackers, burning and blasting every vestige of life to a crisp. We know that the madmen are still making these machines, and we do not even ask them for what reason, still less do we bring their work to a halt. So we, too, are madmen: madmen living among madmen: unmoved by the horror that moves swiftly toward us. We are

thinking only of the next hour, the next day, the next week, and that is further proof that we are mad; for if we go on in this fashion, tomorrow will be more heavy with death than a mortuary.

Why has this madness seized us? Do not ask now; it is here. Have we then no sanity left that will give us strength to cry out against the madmen and contend with them? Have we not the power to stifle the infernal machines they have created and to baffle their preparations for the casual suicide of the human race? Has no one raised a hand to halt the madmen? Yes: here and there, in the gutters, on the rooftops, pushed through a grating, or slipped under a door by a silent hand, are the scrawls of a message, a frantic series of messages, addressed to all of us. These messages have been written by the greatest of the madmen, the men who invented the super-infernal machine itself; the men who, in the final throes of their dementia, were shocked back into sanity.

The shocked ones, the awakened ones, are the only people who show a normal awareness of danger, and the proof of this fact is that their frantic signals are dismissed as madness. The louder they shout to us, the more inaudible their voices become. The moment they awakened to the cosmic evil they had brought about, the awakened ones were bound over to silence by the watchful agents of the uniformed madmen. So they send us their messages in scattered fragments, or they whisper it to private ears in passing, since their keepers will not permit them to speak aloud in such a fashion that every man, woman, and child would understand their story and act for self-preservation.

The ruling madmen do not dare to let us read the whole message of the imprisoned ones, lest we be suddenly jolted into sanity. The President, the generals, the admirals, the administrators are afraid that their own madness might become more evident if the scattered words the awakened ones send us were to be put together and read as a single sentence. For the President, the generals, the admirals, and the administrators have lied to us about their infernal machine: they have lied by their statements and even more they have lied by their silences. They lie because it is no longer an infernal machine, but hundreds of infernal machines: presently no longer hundreds but thousands: these unrestrained madmen will soon have enough power to disembowel, with a push-button command, all the living spaces of mankind. Day by day the stockpiles of chaos grow larger.

The power that the madmen hold is power of an order that the sane alone know that they are not sane enough to use. But the madmen do not want



—Fitzpatrick in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch
If We Don't Invent a Lasting Peace.

us to know that this power is too absolute, too godlike, to be placed in any human hands: for the madmen dandle the infernal machine jauntily in their laps and their hands eagerly tremble to push the button. They smile at us, these madmen: they pose for fresh photographs, still smiling: they say, being madmen, "We are as optimistic as ever," and their insane grin is prophetic of the catastrophe that awaits us.

Lying to us about the secret that is no secret, the madmen also lie to themselves, to give their lie the further appearance of truth, and their madness the outward garb of sanity. Not knowing any other use for their machine but destruction, they multiply our capacities for destruction. Their every act is an act of madness; even now, in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, they plan a further madness, with a monkey-like curiosity to discover a new secret that is no secret. One mad act has led to a second mad act, the second to a third: and the end will be a morbid compulsion to achieve the last irretrievable act of world-madness—in the interests of security, peace, and truth.

THE madmen act as if nothing were happening, as if nothing were going to happen: they are taking the madman's usual precautions with the madman's usual confidence. But the awakened ones, those who are still the madmen's prisoners, know better than this. The pleading words they have guardedly sent us have been lying around for months, and only our paralyzed bodies and our dead minds have kept us from picking the fragments up and piecing them together. Let us read their plain message: it is the only warning we will ever have.

Here is the message of the awakened ones:

"The madmen are planning the end of the world. What they call continued progress in atomic warfare means universal extermination, and what they call national security is organized suicide. There is only one duty for the moment: every other task is a dream and a mockery. Stop the atomic bomb. Stop making the bomb. Abandon the bomb completely. Dismantle every existing bomb. Cancel every plan for the bomb's use; for these clever plans are based on stark madness. Either dethrone the madmen immediately or raise such a shout of protest as will shock them into sanity. We have seen the infernal machine in action, and we hold that this action is not for man to invoke.

"We know there is no quick way out of this madness, for the coöperation of mankind cannot be purchased cheaply by terror; but the first step, the only effective preliminary step, is



to put an end to the atomic bomb. You cannot talk like sane men around a peace table while the atomic bomb itself is ticking beneath it. Do not treat the atomic bomb as a weapon of offense: do not treat it as a weapon of retaliation: do not treat it as an instrument of the police. Treat the bomb for what it actually is: the visible insanity of a civilization that has ceased to worship life and obey the laws of life. Say that as men we are too proud to will the rest of mankind's destruction even if that madness could for a few meaningless extra moments save ourselves. Say that we are too wise to imagine that our life would have value or purpose, security or continuity, in a world blasted by terror or paralyzed by the threat of terror."

So reads the message of the awakened ones.

While the whole world writhes in a spasm of madness, let us in America be mad with a method, mad with a purpose. Let us say No to the atomic bomb rather than say No to life

River

By Edith Warner Johnson

MAN toils on the banks of death
Knowing he must embark
At last on that alien tide
For the distant dark.

Unceasingly he calls
Across the waters of night,
Scanning the wan horizon,
Seeking a light.

Like a singing wave thrown back
From some mysterious shore,
He hears an answering echo,
Veiled and obscure.

Is it his own voice calling,
Or another's searching cry
Bridging the silent flood
In strange reply.

itself. Let us awaken the sleeping sanity of the peoples of the world by calling them together and showing them our guilty hands, our hands already stained with a madman's blood, still clenched in a madman's purpose, and then let us say these plain words:

"We have awakened. We are men once more. You have nothing to fear from us. We will dismantle our atomic bombs and allow you to put a guard over our stockpiles: America's sanity today shall be the world's sanity tomorrow. Whoever seeks to be sure as to our good intentions, let him come into our country, go where he pleases, and examine the most secret laboratories and factories. We have nothing to hide, except that which only madmen would continue to hide. With this act of faith, we have awakened from the nightmare of the infernal machine and our sleepwalking progress toward annihilation. Wake up! men and brothers on every continent. Let us all cease thinking that the cosmic power we hold is only a child's skyrocket. The atomic bomb is not for any of us to use—ever. Let us put it aside, as if it were unconceived and inconceivable. For we have nothing to fear from each other but our normal madness: the madness of those who would calmly bring the world to an end simply by dotting their i's and crossing their t's as they have always done. On any other terms but this common faith in our common cause, mankind is doomed."

MEANWHILE, the clockwork in the infernal machine ticks and the final day draws near. The time has come for action: the compulsive automatic motions of the madmen must be sternly halted. Let the awakened ones be ungagged, and let one of them be placed at the elbow of every man holding high public office, as the priest was once at the elbow of the king, to whisper the words "Humanity" and "One World" in the leader's ear, when he slips into the dead language of tribal isolation. The secret that is no secret must be laid open: the security that is no security must be yielded up: the power that is annihilation must give way to the power that is birth.

The first move toward sanity lies with us. Abandon the Atomic Bomb! Give it up! Stop it now! That is the only order of the day. When we have performed this duty the next step will be visible, and the next duty will add a new safeguard against the smooth automatism of the madmen. But we must be quick to overcome our own madness. Already the clockwork is ticking faster, and the end—unless we act with the awakened ones—is closer than anyone yet dares to think.

The Secret of the Universe

STAR OF THE UNBORN By Franz Werfel. New York: The Viking Press. 1946. 645 pp. \$3.

Reviewed by HARRISON SMITH

IN the Fourth Earth Month of the Seven Hundred and Forty-second Sun-Week of the Third Evolution in the Eleventh Cosmic Capital Year of Virgo or, in the simple numerals of primitive man of today, in the year 101,945 A. D., a man whose initials were H. W. found himself walking rapidly under a glaring sun across an interminable flat landscape of gray turf accompanied by a twentieth-century friend who was oddly attired in a silken replica of a soldier of World War I. In this strange manner the reader enters into Franz Werfel's last great adventure, the "travel" book into time and space on which he had been working for years in this country as a Jewish exile who is supposed to have later adopted the Catholic faith.

Franz Werfel died in August 1945. During the period spent in rewriting "Star of the Unborn," he lived under sentence of death, in the full knowledge that this was to be his last work. He must, therefore, have regarded this work as his monument to posterity, a biography of his mind and a cry of warning and despair addressed to incorrigible humanity. This is a heavy burden for any book of fiction to carry, and the reader must judge for himself whether it bears the marks of a work of genius that will endure into the future or whether it is an elaborate literary "curiosity," filled with worthless pseudo-scientific speculation and murky philosophy. That it reveals unbounded imagination, lightning flashes of insight, and vast stores of knowledge cannot be denied.

But does it deserve a place, as its publisher states, "alongside the giants of literature," comparable to "Don Quixote" or "The Divine Comedy"?

Only in recent years could a book like this have been written, though there have been many imaginative explorations of the future. Even Edward Bellamy's "Looking Backward," written as late as 1888, has nothing to say of the atom, the airplane, the radio, or the hundred other miracles which are today commonplace and which have brought science into the realm of fiction, or vice-versa, and have provided a large market for the literature of scientific tales. To the readers of the many pulp magazines dealing with space

ships, atomic power, voyages into time and space, trips to the stars or to the center of the earth, most of Mr. Werfel's book might be comprehensible enough. They can take in their stride a sentence like this: "I only visited planets and ascended with the lowest grade in school, instead of venturing into the higher and highest Intermundia with the Starrovers, Marvelers, and Foreignfeelers." The words Transshadowdisentegators, Uranographers, Chonosophers, Mutarians, Mentalobes, Catabolites, Astromentalists, Arachnodrones, may not be a stumbling block to the *afficionado* of this kind of out-of-the-earth literature, but the average reader of "Star of the Unborn" will find himself constantly tripping and falling flat on his astronomical face of his transglobal rear.

This epic voyage of the reconstructed body of Franz Werfel into the



year 101,945 has a plan, an idea, the magnificence of which slowly stupefies the reader. It confirms the truth of the oldest and deepest wisdom of the Catholic faith. Its central secret is that the universe is roughly shaped in man's image, that the small planet Earth is the heart of God's grandiose conception, in defiance of Galileo and his poor telescope. There is a hell under the earth's skin, created when the moon erupted from its parent body, into which mankind descends to be disintegrated; there is a heaven where the hierarchy of angels and cherubim play like shooting stars amongst the heavenly bodies. In fact, Mr. Werfel is rescued by an archangel from shipwreck on the planet Mercury, now renamed, as are all the planets, for one of the apostles or the saints. The Church still reigns over most of the astromentals who live in luxurious burrows under the gray sod.

We have left H. W. walking across the empty landscape and a recital of his adventurous three days in the hundred thousandth century is necessary. He has been brought back to earth to attend a wedding of Io-Do and Io-La in the elegant underground

home of Io-Fagor. You must know that the astromentals live about two hundred years and that Io-Rasta, the great-great-grandmother of the bride, is present as naked and as bald as the rest of the family, and also a gentleman who bears the title of "Permanent Guest." All of these hairless folk appear to be no older than the beautiful bride, though if you look into ancestress Io-Fagor's eyes, you are apt to get a severe shock. No one has any work to do, everything is manufactured for them by the Worker and his aides by means of astral rays, and there are various magical contraptions, "mental wallpaper," the familiar Mentalobole, a small device that everyone carries about which moves to you the spot on the earth you wish to reach with the speed of light, and a daily "newspaper" which is printed by the stars every night. The entire life of these people is devoted to small courtesies, elegant conversation, and the avoidance of trouble. An occasional child is born after a marriage, which is truly a sacrament.

The wedding guest from man's earliest days arrives among these elegant people, attired in the spotted old dress suit in which he was buried, with a dirty handkerchief in his pocket. It is a difficult moment in the history of the Astromentals. Over the centuries an occasional Recidivist has been born with hair on his head and bad old thoughts in his brain. These have fled to places known as jungles, where there are still mountains and marshes and good green trees. There they have bred and erected towns and villages astonishingly like those of the twentieth century. They have plotted revolution against the Astromentals in spite of the death rays and other super-atomic devices of their enemies. After inspecting the workshops, the schools, the prodigious man-made, vitreous mountain under which the Starrovers and Foreignfeelers are trained to dart through the universe, H. W. takes a first flight with a group of schoolboys among the planets, thus furnishing the most exciting and marvelous chapter in the book.

There follows next a long philosophical and religious section in which H. W. converses at length with the Grand Bishop and with Minionman, the Jew of the Era, for there are only two religions left, that of Israel and that of Rome. Not one Astromental Baptist or Congregationalist remains on the earth, we regret to say. The Jews, you will be interested to know, live as well as their neighbors, but their houses or burrows are fronted by the slums of a European Ghetto, a conception which furnishes