

Forties, Fifties, and Sixties, deteriorating all the while, her family and friends deteriorate with her in their peculiar and special ways.

Mr. Canby's prose is flat and dry, glinting now and then with satiric, disenchanting humor. The book's method is that of remembered gossip, told in monotone, but not monotonously. Little in the way of sympathy is allowed any of the characters—so careful is the author in keeping any sentiment or unseemly emotion from coloring the tale. All incidents of the past, he seems to be saying, have the same weight in memory, whether it be a failed movie actress who takes her life or a jaded Frenchman who suffers the embarrassment of a dog's suddenly urinating against his leg. The text might have been taken from Ecclesiastes: All is vanity. Yet Daisianna, caught in off-hand glimpses that add up to a portrait, emerges as memorable, as does an aspect of America that no longer knows where it is going. Mr. Canby doesn't reach for very much with his first novel, but what he gives us is done with professional care and an amused appreciation of the not always lovable quirkiness of his characters.

HOLLIS ALPERT

Life Among the Playwrights

by John F. Wharton

Quadrangle, 336 pp., \$15

John Wharton's first case as a young lawyer involved an actor being sued by a motion-picture studio for spending \$3,000 of the studio's money for "a night" with the then-popular starlet, Jeanne Eagles. From then on, Wharton's legal career was dominated by show-business clients, first in Hollywood, then in New York. Fortunately for theater buffs, he has decided to confine himself, in *Life Among the Playwrights*, to reminiscences of his years as legal counsel, script-reader, critic, general adviser, and friend to The Playwrights Producing Company.

Formed in 1938 by Robert Sherwood, Maxwell Anderson, S. N. Behrman, Sidney Howard, and Elmer Rice, the company was designed to produce their plays and the work of other writers they considered innovative, giving the playwrights more control over their own productions and freeing them from manipulation by ruthless, profit-motivated producers.

Life Among the Playwrights is primarily valuable as a document of the times, from the late Thirties through the

McCarthy era and up to June 1960, when the company was dissolved. Wharton's memories read like a *Who's Who* of theater: He reminisces about Ingrid Bergman, Kurt Weill, Lotte Lenya, Garson Kanin, Helen Hayes, Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne, Audrey Hepburn—the list seems to go on forever. Wharton recalls the appearance, in Behrman's *No Time for Comedy*, of a little-known actor named Olivier and the discovery of another virtually unknown young talent—Marlon Brando—in Maxwell Anderson's *Truckline Cafe*. He re-creates George M. Cohan's embarrassing, ad-libbed exit at a posthumous production of Sidney Howard's *Madam, Will You Walk?*, when Cohan pulled an American flag out of his pocket and danced off the stage, utterly out of character. And he remembers an extraordinary performance of Sherwood's *The Rugged Path*, starring Spencer Tracy, when the audience swarmed down to the first row instead of back to the lobby during intermission, in order

to ogle a fellow spectator, Katharine Hepburn.

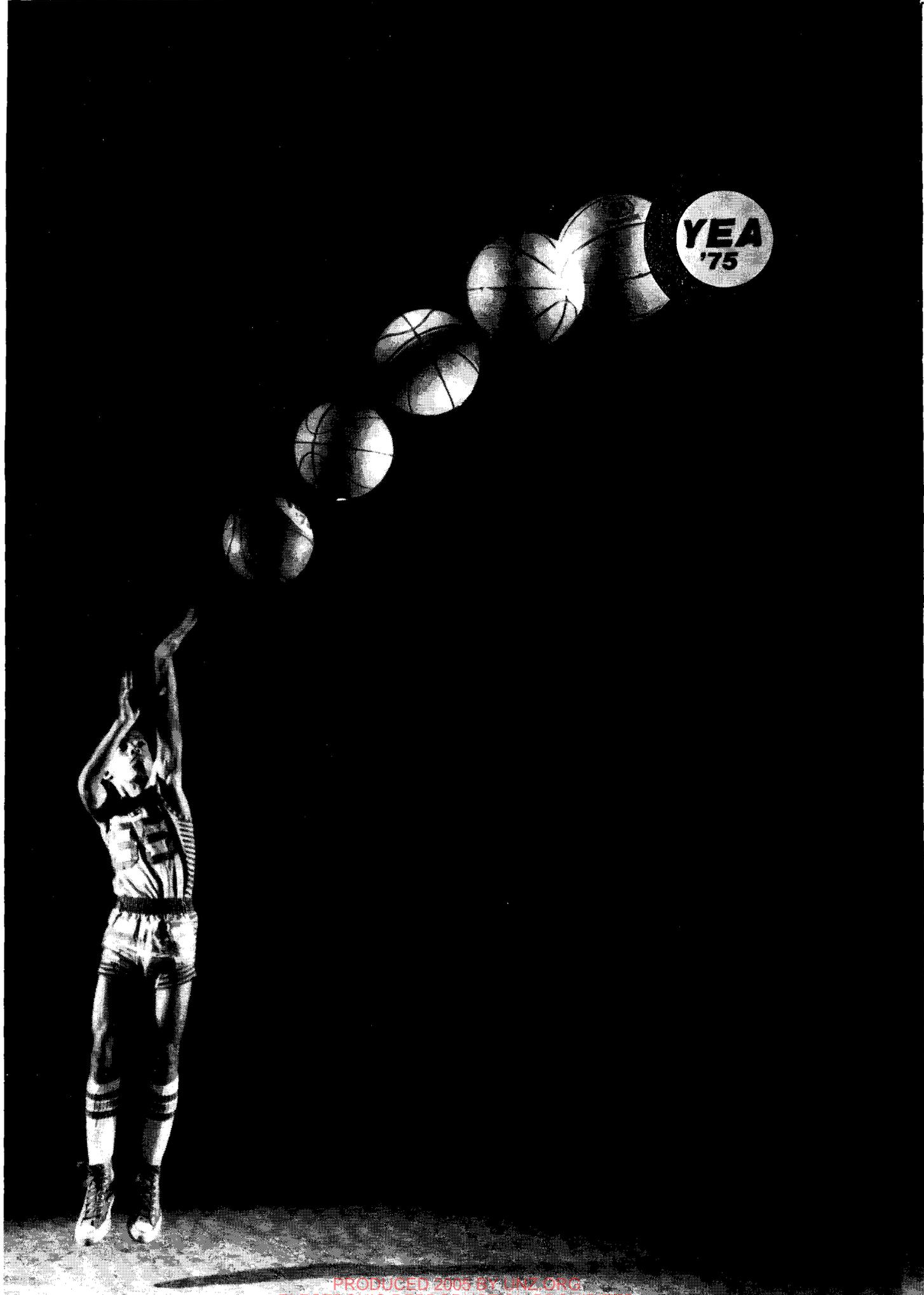
In his description of The Playwrights Performing Company, Wharton reveals a good deal about the personalities and off-stage wit of the writers with whom he worked. A typical business letter from S. N. Behrman, for instance, reads: "Next to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern there is no one that I would rather deal with than the Shuberts. They are charming." One might only wish that Wharton had included more information of a personal sort about the company's members.

Yet the glimpses he does give of the playwrights' concern for one another, their ability to overcome personal differences and to offer one another support and constructive criticism for so many years, suggest that The Playwrights Performing Company was a rare example of human cooperation among extraordinary individuals, as well as a unique experiment in theatrical collaboration.

BARBARA MACKAY



"Herb, what are we now—middle class or upper middle class?"



YEA
'75

Year of Energy Action

Must a good job be a long shot, too?

He's just a kid having fun, shooting from the outside.

But he wants to be on the *inside* when he grows up. Where the good jobs are.

In a high-paying trade or profession.

Until recently, the outlook for jobs for minority groups was slowly improving. But then came all those layoffs because the economy stopped growing.

The same thing is happening to other social progress. In a sagging economy, it stops.

Which is why every person of conscience has a stake in seeing 1975 become the Year of Energy Action. Because energy problems are pivotal in America's economic troubles.

This country depends too heavily on oil from abroad. From countries that quadrupled their prices in just one year.

What's needed is to develop more energy right here at home. That means cutting the red tape that's been tying up offshore drilling for oil and gas, mining of America's abundant coal, and construction of nuclear power plants.

Some of these actions may require setting back environmental timetables a little. But what's the alternative? As the government's Project Independence report points out, cutting energy waste cannot by itself resolve America's energy problems. Only by developing new U.S. energy supplies can this country get growing again.

And resume the march toward social progress. Toward better shots at the good jobs.

Mobil®

Trade Winds

by William Cole

Secondborn

Louise Glück, our only umlaut poet, is an attractive 31-year-old woman who lives in Vermont when she is not teaching at the University of Virginia. Her earlier book, *Firstborn*, made quite a stir when it appeared in 1968. Now here's her second, *The House on Marshland* (Ecco Press/Viking, March 1, \$6.95). She's generally of a gloomy disposition regarding human affairs but has an intimate alliance with nature. A poem, "Here Are My Black Clothes":

I think now it is better to love no one than to love you. Here are my black clothes, the tired nightgowns and robes fraying in many places. Why should they hang useless as though I were going naked? You liked me well enough in black; I make you a gift of these objects. You will want to touch them with your mouth, run your fingers through the thin tender underthings and I will not need them in my new life.

First Simenon

Among the many, many things I've never done is read a book by Georges Simenon; I've turned my back on detective stories except for Raymond Chandler, Dashiell Hammett, and Michael Innes, who give you a little something along with their puzzles. But a new Simenon came in, and why not be a well-rounded man? It's *Maigret and the Loner* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich/Wolff, March 5, \$5.95), and I spent a pleasant two hours with it. Murder of a mysterious derelict in Paris, and the great chief superintendent of criminal police gets on the trail. You learn a lot

about police methods and get to like Maigret, who is not above sneaking a beer or two more than the allotment given him by his doctor, and who is beautifully fed by Mme. Maigret: "They had leg of lamb, which was pink and juicy, with the merest bead of blood forming on the bone." Very much like a good American *policier*, except for things like "[Inspector] Janvier was the only one whom he regularly addressed with the familiar *tu* . . ." and "He would have claimed that it was a *crime passionnel* and gotten off with a light sentence." The translation by Eileen Ellenbogen reads like cream, but I wonder what is the original French for "it knocked me for a loop."

Beat, Beat, Beat

The beats are back! Here, out of Jack Kerouac and Neal Cassady, with overtones of Nelson Algren, comes *The Frisco Kid*, by Jerry Kamstra (Harper & Row, April 23, \$7.95), a long novel about "kerouacking" around San Francisco's North Beach in the late Fifties and early Sixties. Mr. Kamstra's multitudinous characters are colorful as hell, but they're all losers: pushers and users, petty thieves and immoralists. What little money they make comes from selling dope, unloading produce trucks, and, interestingly, poaching abalone. They just can't get it together. Mr. Kamstra is in love with his city: "On top of Nob Hill we strolled hand in hand, looking at the city below. After midnight San Francisco looks like a bed of coals burning softly in a grate. The black perimeter of the bay defines the

city and warmth emanates up from the lights." But, goodness! The language they use, the buggy places they live in, and the sexual goings-on! Kind of interesting. Here's some arcane information:

The minute I walked in, Groovy whipped out a joint. He took a swift toke and handed it to me. I've never seen a guy so fast on the draw. If North Beach were the Old West and joints were Colt .44s, Groovy would put Shane to shame. As it is, he can sniff out, grade, score, manicure, roll, and smoke a joint faster than any other ten cats on the set. Groovy's specialty is rolling tight little numbers the diameter of a needle (part of his New York scarce-grass legacy) that if you suck too hard on will slip down your throat. More than once I'd dropped a Groovy joint and spent an hour trying to fish it out of a floor crack. Groovy's proud of his rolling ability, though, and even when he has weed to spare he always rolls his Harlem Toothpicks, he calls them. Next to Patrick Cassidy, who was born and bred in a weed patch and who rolls joints the size of small whale turds, Groovy's are the most famous joints on the set. Show me a head's joint and I'll tell you who he is.

Paper Pleasures: Brand and Bright

The Bicentennial (yawn) is fast approaching, and, as the phrase goes, "what more fitting" than to have a book of the earliest American ballads, *Songs of '76*, subtitled *A Folksinger's History of the Revolution* (M. Evans, March 14, \$4.95), put together by the indefatigable Oscar Brand, who isn't tired yet after 55 LPs, 75 industrial films, and thousands of radio and TV programs. Lyrics, melody line, guitar accompaniment, and learned notes to 60 songs, the only universally familiar one being "Yankee Doodle," given, authentically here, as "Yankee Doodle Doodle Doo." By now Mr. Brand has forgiven the British, and he has songs from both sides, some with such catchy titles as "Come Shake Your Dull Noodles," "Begone, Pernicious Tea," and "You Simple Bostonians."

Speaking as one who could never find his way through Providence, R.I., on Route 1, I am frightened by *Maze Book: Puzzles for Everyone*, by Greg Bright (Pantheon, April 1, \$2.50). Mr. Bright, a young Englishman, took a year digging a maze in a field near Glastonbury and is currently making a hedge maze with bridges and underpasses for one Lord Weymouth at Longleat. He's drawn 34 mazes for the book, all hard, some of which resemble plates of spaghetti, others knitting instructions, and yet others the more pernicious forms of modern art. If you like being frustrated, this is for you. *Mazel tov*, Mr. Bright. □

Which came first—intelligence or brain?

Intelligence CAME FIRST

A Study of Man & His Mind, E. Lester Smith, ed.

■ A panel of British scientists, led by Dr. Smith, F.R.S., tackles the question of precedence and this new book is their answer. Throughout evolution, function has preceded development of a specialized organ to exercise the function. Was

intelligence an exception? In deciding not—and why—the panel has produced a challenging, even startling book that may help explain some of man's incredible behavior. 200pp. Cloth \$8.50. Softbound \$2.95.

A NEW QUEST BOOK . . . FROM ALL BOOKSTORES

or postpaid promptly from Quest Books Dept. SR, 306 West Geneva Road, Wheaton, IL 60187
The Theosophical Publishing House WHEATON, IL LONDON MADRAS