

it were, and help along in the fulfillment of social and political goals, he faded away into publishing oblivion although he continued to write "for the drawer." During the purges in the late thirties he was sent to a concentration camp, where he was liquidated in 1941. For a long time he remained an "unperson" and his work was not published again until after Stalin's death. But during the sixties interest in him grew in volume, both at home and abroad—predictably, more abroad than at home. In the last few years his works have been published again in the Soviet Union and there have been many articles and a few books on him.

Of all the critical material on Babel, James E. Falen's *Isaac Babel, Russian Master of the Short Story* is the most extensive and scholarly work to date. It is a combination of a biography and literary analysis, because, as the author says, he has "found it both impossible and undesirable to separate the account of Babel's life from that of his works." By tracing the stages in Babel's life Falen shows how much they have influenced him, especially the childhood experiences in the Jewish community in Odessa and his participation in the Russian Civil War. These are the two main sources from which he drew throughout his career. However, Falen does not limit his examination to the autobiographical element in Babel's writings, and rightly so, for Babel was able to transmute his personal experiences into artistic expressions. The author was particularly interested in examining the depth and the interaction of the two sources of cultural influence upon Babel—his Jewishness and the surrounding Christianity—which, although not exactly vying for his allegiance, nevertheless made him move constantly between those two poles.

Perhaps even more significant is Falen's fine analysis of some of Babel's most important stories, especially those from *Red Cavalry*, his masterpiece. For, no discussion of the cultural background alone, no matter how thorough, is adequate to explain the mastery of Babel's art. It is in the middle five chapters that Falen's book attains its sharpest edge and makes its most important contribution to the growing Babeliana.

This book is not a definitive work on Babel because it leaves out, by design, a detailed discussion of the other important

component of his writing—his plays. In addition, no writer of Babel's stature can be exhausted in one book. But restricted as this study is, it definitely represents the most serious and successful attempt at analyzing and appreciating the beauties of Babel's art and at unravelling some of the mysteries that have accompanied this fascinating writer for decades.

Vasa D. Mihailovich

TERESINHA ALVES PEREIRA  
*Peligro: los ángeles se caen*  
México: Editorial Samo, 1973. Pp. 102.

*Peligro: los ángeles se caen* is a collection of thirteen short stories which represents the latest effort of the young Brazilian writer Teresinha Alves Pereira. All these stories, with the possible exception of "La dulce Europa," which is a loose adaptation of the classical rape of Europa by Jupiter, deal with human relationships and behavior.

Thematically, they can be placed in seven categories. In the first category is "Hetaira," which reveals the sexual problems and fantasies of a man so completely dominated by his mother that she accompanies him to his appointment with a prostitute, in the same way she did when, as a child, he visited the dentist. This prostitute, at the end of the story, becomes the symbol of his freedom from his mother.

Four stories make up the next group, which explores interpersonal sexual involvement. "Heroína del poema," the only story written in verse, exposes the tortured mind of a woman caught in a love triangle, who finds solace in the fact that the man she desires excuses the love she feels for the other man. In "G. amaba en silencio como planta fértil" and its epilogue, "Epilogo," the possibility of a meaningful physical relationship is discussed. The victim of a modern-day don Juan seeks to warn his future victims in "Hombre pequeño." As indicated before, perhaps "La dulce Europa" should be included in this group since it tells of the ability of Europa, the rancher's wife, to persuade Jupiter, the bull, to return to his heifers.

Loneliness is the subject of the next group which includes "Soledad" and "Carta y telegrama." Closely related to these is "Cuando les digo que quizá esté muerta . . ." which focuses on the trauma brought about by the death of a close friend.

The unpredictability and impetuosity of human behavior are brought out in the stories "Carta a un negro extranjero," in which a black revolutionary kills some of his fellow-activists to protect a white reporter he had intended to violate, and "Charlie Pass, 812, 8400" in which two strangers meet on the highway and make an appointment neither will keep.

"Peligro: los ángeles se caen," which gave its name to the collection, represents another group. Here, by making use of a group of visiting students from Brazil, the erosion of the old values of the Church both spiritually and physically is revealed. (The title is a sign set up in a decrepit shrine). The remaining story "El cuento" shows the plight of a young writer.

Underlying all of these stories, some of which do contain autobiographical elements, is the expression of the human need for stability and security.

The narrative attitude of the majority of these stories is first person narration. This is employed in twelve, four of which are in epistolary form, and in one, "La dulce Europa," it is combined with third person narration. In "Hombre pequeño" for example, first person narration creates an atmosphere of intimacy and strengthens the impression of the hurt that has transformed the protagonist into a destructive force ". . . lo romperé todo!"

The effectiveness of second person narration is seen in "El cuento." Here the reader hears only one side of the conversation between the writer and the publisher; this serves to emphasize the power and lack of consideration on the part of the publisher whose voice is the one heard.

In "Hetaira," third person narration is skilfully used to merge the author's point of view with that of the protagonist. By skilful alternation and mingling, the two points of view become one. Another type of merging is employed in "Soledad" where the dog bearing the same name becomes the personification of the protagonist's loneliness.

Throughout the stories the author avails herself of a colloquial language which is deceptive in that it is used to subtly veil serious comments: in "Hetaira" it is the effect of a domineering mother; in "Peligro . . ." the growing commercialism of the Church, to cite two examples.

All in all, Teresinha Alves Pereira in *Peligro: los ángeles se caen* has revealed great potential for short story writing, although her choice of subject matter and treatment of theme are at times a trifle too obvious.

Dexter J. Noël

## ALEX ZWERDLING

### *Orwell and the Left*

New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974. Pp. 215. \$10.00.

More than one critic has pointed out that Orwell was in some sense more successful as a human being than as an artist. The reader of his novels remembers less particular scenes or images or characters, less any specifically literary quality, than he does the narrator's tone of voice. It is curious that so self-effacing a writer as Orwell always survives in our minds as the principal character in all his own works. The persona, the gentle, decent, slightly cranky socialist gaffly with what he himself described as "a capacity to face unpleasant facts," is what lives for us. This is the Orwell who has become in the years since his death a kind of twentieth century literary and political saint.

What was admirable about Orwell was his power of discrimination, his refusal to see the world around him in moral blacks and whites, and what Professor Zwerdling attempts to make us understand is the precise character of Orwell's response to an historical period that expected of the political writer unqualified ideological commitments.

In strict adherence to the principle that movements tend to seek self-definition through conflict with the rivals that most resemble them, the Left of Orwell's time was fragmented into a series of competing orthodoxies, each expecting its adherents to accept its own teachings as final truth, to be blind to its errors and inconsistencies, and to regard its competitors with suspicion and