

Two names recur throughout the different episodes: Vanadé and David. The former is a mythological goddess whose temple is one of the earliest ruins on the site. David is first introduced as Vanadé's male counterpart, actually a hermaphrodite responsible for the fertilization of a race of women. In other episodes David is the "incestuous and fratricidal" twin of Vanessa (a variation on the name Vanadé). David is also the name of a biblical king, a twentieth-century photographer and the subject of two dramas described within the novel. In the Coda, Vanadé-Vanessa becomes the variety of butterfly: vanesse.

Topologie d'une cité fantôme is more difficult and less fascinating than its predecessor, *Projet pour une révolution à New York*. The many divisions of the text are a distraction and break down the cohesiveness of the novel. And the novel's descriptions never seem to attain the vividness and poetic strangeness of the earlier work. One section which strikes the reader with its freshness is the series of interior monologues of one or several young female prisoners who stare at themselves in a mirror and dream of an erotic escape with their other selves. The dedicated reader of Robbe-Grillet who has learned to expect from each new novel or film familiar images and techniques accompanied by a renewal of subject and style will not however be disappointed by *Topologie* which marks another important step in the continuing development of the *nouveau roman*.

Paul J. Schwartz

HUGH GARNER

The Intruders

Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1976. Pp. 328.

Whether or not its author so intended, *The Intruders* forms the last part of a trilogy written over twenty-six years on the lives of the residents of "Cabbagetown," a slum district now suffering under an urban development scheme in Toronto. As a novelist (cum journalist) Garner's mission (like Joyce's) is to forge the conscience of a race—that is, to create a mythology,

an aim more accurately achieved for Mississippi by Faulkner whose novels focusing intensively upon carefully selected characters enlarges them, and so creates a mythic structure in which their environment, their *agon*, acquires profound meaning. A comparison of *The Intruders* with *The Sound and the Fury*, for instance, is salutary in identifying how sociological realism respectively ought not be and can properly be handled in fiction. Both novels deal explicitly with the sufferings of people congenitally a part of a traditional culture and society whose bases shift under the pressure of economic change and the intrusion of a new and foreign population. Unlike Garner's, Faulkner's novel succeeds both as narrative and as a humanistic document in that the environment and situation explored in the work find their proper place in relation to the author's more central concern with the mystery of his characters—that is, assimilated into their common struggles on the one hand, and made symbols of their individual mentality on the other. Conversely, the worst fault in Garner's writing—and one by no means present in the finer and more tightly knit, sensitively focused, craft embodied in many of his short stories and in the 1962 novel *Silence on the Shore*—is his synoptic view of his wasteland, a stance that precludes anything but a cursory descent into the inner lives of his characters (they come in multitudes), and so palliates the intensity of his labyrinthine urban vision making it automatic, nonhuman.

The failure of *The Intruders* as a novel is, then, a failure of vision, of form and of point of view. A quotation from one of the twenty-five or so main characters moving throughout the book will illustrate: "Everybody deserves to get away from down here! Just leave it to the Bohemian-cum-hippies-cum arty types-cum dissident middle-class!" "What brought on that rhetoric?" The question almost devastates its author. "Rhetoric" rather than differentiating patterns of language and thought is what builds up the longer speeches (many of them are sociological treatises) of more than a dozen protagonists in this novel. True, Syd Tedland (a printer) and Elsie Dales (chairwoman of Cabbagetown's community association) emerge as two members of the slum's varied citizenry with finely moulded personalities and clear voices of their own, scatalogical and direct. But they alone are not enough to transfigure the novel's sprawling action into a significant human form and thus to give Garner's

message about the dispossessed and misunderstood of Canada's population a real pathos and meaning. Nevertheless, if Garner's material fails to organize itself into the larger structure of a novel per se, there is much in *The Intruders* that is skillfully written—especially those sections delineating the movements of the Donhaven gang and its victims, the tenderly drawn portrait of Jenny Croydon and the chapter developing the grisly death of her mother, Lil. Individual chapters form neatly constructed short stories of their own, i.e. no. 4 in which the Cabbagetown Association strips away the mask of a city-hall official, and no. 18 wherein the homes of two socially divided characters in the slum are sold respectively to two kinds of "intruders": homosexuals and theosophists.

What Garner manages to tell us (at the price of constantly intruding his third-person narrator into the mouths of characters who ought to have been allowed unique voices and visions) is that in spite of momentary intrusions of the educated middle-class (artists, lawyers, businessmen) into the tougher, more resilient but less advantaged body of "slum" society the life of the proletarian instinctual man goes on unchanged; that Matthew Arnold's division of society into Barbarian, Philistine, and Populace (a quotation from *Culture and Anarchy* forms the epigraph of *The Intruders*) remains fundamentally sound. "Nothing really changes but the seasons" concludes printer Tedland on the novel's last page. It is the intruders who, initially threatening the integrity of Cabbagetown's culture, are inevitably expelled, the slum's inmates offered as morally sound. Like Faulkner's—though not with the same integrity and power—Garner's Populace endures.

Allen Bentley

MIGUEL ANGEL ASTURIAS

Men of Maize

Translated from the Spanish
by Gerald Martin

New York: Delacorte Press, 1975.
Pp. 337. \$10.

By the time of his death in 1974, Nobel prize winner Miguel Angel Asturias had already established himself as one of the leading novelists in the world. His novels

have so far been translated into fourteen languages and one of his later works, *Mulatta*, went into several popular paperback reprints in English. But his main novel, *Hombres de maíz* ("Men of Maize") had never received an English version, undoubtedly because of the problem involved in translating a semi-Baroque Spanish text, analogous to an Indian language borrowed from the *Popol Vuh*, the Bible of the Mayas.

Hombres de maíz depicts the struggles between Indians of the Guatemalan highlands and white men, intent on the commercial exploitation of maize, a crop sacred to the old Mayas. Using his knowledge of pre-Columbian myth and literature, Asturias recreates the story of the oppressed Indians, the loss of their lands to the greedy landholders, and the moral and spiritual destruction of the Indians. There are in the book six chapters, each with the story of different Indian characters, but at the end most of them are reunited in prison, having lost their lands, freedom, and identity.

In the standard Twayne monograph of Miguel Angel Asturias it is said that *Hombres de maíz* "is a novel so rich and so full as to appear confusing" and it is called "a calculated work of art" (p. 53). The English version, *Men of Maize*, translated by Gerald Martin, is faithful to the Spanish original and is of high quality. This is a good book, in which artistically retold Mayan myths are interwoven with modern Latin American social and political conflicts, and all conveyed through an almost hallucinating language and atmosphere.

Evelio Echevarría

TERESINKA ALVES PEREIRA

Help, I'm Drowning

Translated from the Spanish

by Angela de Hoyos

Chicago: Palos Heights Press,
1975. Pp. 18.

Help, I'm Drowning is a translation by Angela de Hoyos of five short stories written by Teresinka Alves Pereira. Two of these ("Solitude" and "Letter and Telegram") deal with the problem of loneliness, while the other three ("The train and the flowers," "Help I'm Drowning," and "Little man") explore the question