

native and foreign literary traditions, the thirst for the forbidden, and the uprootedness—both physical and spiritual.

Ewa Thompson gives us an insight into Gombrowicz's art and life in a concise but thorough way. Her analysis of a very difficult work is invariably helpful, and therefore to be welcomed and recommended.

Peter Petro

MANUEL SCORZA
La tumba del relámpago
Mexico City: Siglo XXI Editores,
1979. Pp. 280.

Manuel Scorza, a Peruvian self-exiled in Mexico, has seen his works translated into no less than 22 different languages (see *IFR*, 5, No. 2 [1978], 169). The importance of *La tumba del relámpago*, his latest work, lies in the fact that it is one of the few *indigenista* novels written lately in Latin America. At the same time, it is the closing part of a cycle of five novels in which Scorza purported to describe the struggle of the Indians of Central Peru to defend or to regain from the oligarchy their ancestral lands. The title, "The Tomb of the Lightning," betrays the pessimistic outlook that characterizes this work. The "lightning" is a great but fugacious Indian triumph, soon to be suppressed by the right-wing dictatorship. The story—set during the Prado administration in the late fifties—follows the same pattern as most Spanish American novels of social protest; an exposition of grievances, an uprising, and the final imprisonment or massacre of the revolutionaries. But the book also exposes new views: the ever-present influence of the Cuban Revolution on the Latin American mind, the theory that at least in Peru the farmers, and not the factory workers, are the revolutionary vanguard, and the view of the proletariat as the only vital force in the subcontinent. Artistic resources from the writer's pen are varied: interior monologues, translation of Indian metaphors into Spanish, a wealth of Indian sayings

and folklore, and the introduction of living persons—including the author himself—as characters. The end of the novel reinforces the hopelessness of the Indian cause. But through the entire cycle of five novels a progression can be detected: in each, every uprising has grown bigger, to reach in the fifth and last part an almost national scale.

Evelio Echevarría

LES MURRAY
The Peasant Mandarin: Prose Pieces
Queensland: University of
Queensland Press, 1978. Pp. 269.

Many of the farcical peculiarities of common Australian speech have become known around the world thanks to Digger troop movements in various wars, to a tourist exodus from Australia by both culturally-cringing and cheerfully philistine Strines, and most recently to the authentic sound-tracks of our movies released for overseas distribution. Less well known to the world at large, however, is that in the sixties and seventies Australian poets, novelists, and dramatists have added vital new dimensions to our native speech as Australian literature moves with increasing confidence towards international recognition. Les Murray, poet and essayist, fights in the vanguard of this movement. In Europe he would be termed an "enfant terrible." In Australia he is a "sabre-toothed wombat" who was wont to emerge unpredictably from his lonely Boeotian lair in the northern mountain ranges of New South Wales to amble down to our cultural metropolises and there cheerfully savage the Establishment, the academic literati and the conservative booboisie. He writes aggressive, witty prose that matches his forthright, eccentric ideas. His satiric anger against both the wilful and the unwitting corruption of language by his lesser contemporaries in Australia is as devastating as that of Karl Kraus for German-speaking central Europe and H. L. Mencken for the U.S.A. earlier in this century. Murray deplores the "ugly jargon words of modern educated speech, snaggy plywood terms like periodicity and refractory" and lam-

basts "large gas-balloon phrases like 'the century's despair'" (p. 202). His pet hatreds include the false culture-vultures on the governmental committees who in one year spent \$14 million on the Sydney Opera House but only \$10,000 on feeding hungry poets like himself. In particular he is offended by "people who don't know what Poetry is" and "people who don't like poetry." On this subject he pontificates, "Both disabilities are common, of course, and nowhere more so than in the universities" (p. 196). For universities are not for Mr. Murray venerable bastions of light and truth, but the privileged palaces of parasitic urban mandarins (read professors of literature) who run their humanities departments like anaemic draculas sucking the lifeblood out of the living word and perverting the young with pompous jargon. Inspired by a fine Celtic rage and a not unreasonable grievance at the grossly disparate income earned by poets and scholars of literature, Mr. Murray fires his outrageous slings and arrows at universities because "they demand more self-consciousness and justificatory self-theorizing than may be healthy for any artist, but also because many of them shelter Marxist cadres" (p. 34). And so Mr. Murray fights the good fight of the pastoral, poetic wombats who are closer to nature, to life, and to spirit against the academic fat-cats who are corrupted by their specious intellectuality and their materialistic wealth. Thus he says: "Poetry has frequently been a courtier art, but no despot of the past ever made us perform contortions half as severe as those demanded by the kings of our new academic cities-of-refuge" (p. 197).

But I perceive that I am doing Mr. Murray the injustice of presenting him as "a Bohemian, a licensed buffoon, a disruptive element expected by Platonists of all persuasions to threaten the public order, usually pretty harmlessly, and to generate new styles of behaviour and adornment" (p. 182). This is according to Mr. Murray an Athenian image of the artist on which he frowns. To this urban, intellectual satirist, Mr. Murray opposes the rural Boeotian poetic "craftsman with some remnant of priestly dignity" (p. 182). I think it would be a fair judgement to say that Mr. Murray is an Athenian when he writes prose and a Boeotian when he writes poetry. The prose pieces collected in this volume *The Peasant Mandarin* are composed of an astonishing variety of reviews written in his capacity as "Sydney Morning Herald Queer Books

Man" (p. viii) and some longer essays for Australian intellectual journals on such radical themes as the ethical right of contemporary Australian poets to public financial support, and the failure of Australia to proclaim itself a republic. The excellent features of Mr. Murray's book-reviews are that he has the talent to approach the most arcane of subjects with contagious cultural enthusiasm and that without forcing the issue he is able to perceive problems from diverse cultures in challenging contemporary contexts. Writing on modern Indonesian poetry in translation or Egyptian drama of religious ritual dating from 1200 B.C., on Ezra Pound, PSI, or the whiskies of Scotland, Les Murray unites his diverse themes into a *Weltanschauung* that constitutes a cogent revolt against the arrogance and greed of techno-industrial society and a crusade for a spiritual renaissance to be found in poetic and religious sensibility, especially when this sensibility is stimulated by Scotch whisky.

David A. Myers

DELMORE SCHWARTZ

In Dreams Begin Responsibilities and Other Stories

Ed. James Atlas

New York: New Directions, 1978.

Pp. 202. \$10.95.

In the "Foreword" of *In Dreams Begin Responsibilities*, Irving Howe credits Schwartz with providing "both voice and metaphor for our own Jewish-American clausal-but intense experience" (p. ix). James Atlas, editor of the collection, suggests that Schwartz was "the great commentator" on the Jewish immigrant experience: "His family's claustrophobic milieu, constricted by longing for assimilation in conflict with an ineradicable sense of estrangement from the dominant values of American life, has never been written about with such imaginative force" (pp. xix-xx).

These and similar judgments suggest the principle of selection underlying *In Dreams Begin Responsibilities*. With the exception of