
PAPERBOUNDS

GIMPEL THE FOOL and Other Stories. By Isaac Bashevis Singer. Farrar, 1957, republished 1978. 205 pp. \$4.95 (cloth, \$9.95)

Two years before the 1978 Nobel Prize for Literature was awarded to Isaac Bashevis Singer, 74, the Polish-born American writer told a reporter, "I don't think I am famous but if you say so, who am I to say no?" Deliberate or not, the echo of *Gimpel the Fool*, one of the writer's most unforgettable creations, could not escape any devoted Singer fan (*Gimpel*, for instance, told by the townspeople that the moon had come down in Turbeen, asking plaintively, "What was I to do? I believed them"). For years, Singer's publishers have been steadily making paperback editions of his novels, short stories, fables, and allegories available to an ever growing public. In addition to *Gimpel's* title story, crisply translated by Saul Bellow, there are 11 vivid village tales—of marriage beds and deathbeds, of saintly rabbis and evil *dybbuks*, of four generations of industrious little shoemakers, and of a man called Pelte the Wife Killer, who had four wives "and, may it not be held against him . . . sent them all off to the other side." Most were first published in Yiddish in New York City's *Jewish Daily Forward*.

TO FEED THIS WORLD: The Challenge and the Strategy. By Sterling Wortman and Ralph W. Cummings, Jr. Johns Hopkins, 1978. 454 pp. \$6.95 (cloth, \$25)

The Rockefeller Foundation's Wortman and Cummings are more optimistic than most recent writers on global hunger. They argue that techniques are emerging to help farmers feed an even more crowded world of the future—and quote chapter and verse, theory and statistics, to support their case. Some examples of

recent successful drives to accelerate food production: comprehensive national efforts in Taiwan, Mexico, India, China; special commodity programs (maize in Kenya, wheat in Turkey, rice in Colombia and the Philippines); and "defined-area" projects in Bangladesh and elsewhere. One major success came in Mexico's state of Puebla. There, with the use of local maize instead of new hybrids, and without irrigation, small farmers' average crop yields increased by 30 percent between 1968 and 1972. This was accomplished, essentially, through direct technical assistance and involved use of more fertilizers, better crop management, and provision of credit. In addition to analyzing the world food situation in words the non-agronomist can cope with, Wortman and Cummings provide a useful review of the most important literature on their subject, from Malthus to the National Academy of Sciences' reassuring 1977 report on nutrition research.

KINSHIP IN BALI. By Hildred Geertz and Clifford Geertz. Univ. of Chicago reprint, 1978. 226 pp. \$3.95

This tightly woven piece of scholarship is not for everyone. But it is interesting and important in its field. Time was, note the Princeton-based authors, when all anthropologists agreed that every people possess a vital "kinship system" that can be identified, described, analyzed, and classified. Nine months of fieldwork in 1957-58 on the densely populated island of Bali off the coast of Java led the Geertzes to a different conclusion: "Whatever may be the case in West Africa, or Australia, Balinese society is in no way dominated by the institutions of kinship." Are there substitutes? Religion, they say, to a degree. Also, the concept of "origin-point," with distinctions between "core and peripheral

houseyards" or "founding" and "way-station" temples. "Impersonal role designations" enforce a "systematic genealogical amnesia" among both gentry and commoners (one such title, *anak jero*, literally "insider," refers to persons who dwell within palace walls). Most important of all is a social institution peculiar to Bali called the *dadia*. This untranslatable word can mean a group of people who serve a certain temple, or who are members of a particular irrigation society, or who share some other kind of togetherness important to the "delicate," "tremulous" Balinese culture.

THE FIRE AND THE SUN: Why Plato Banished the Artists. By Iris Murdoch. Oxford reprint, 1978. 89 pp. \$2.95

Artists are meddlers, independent and irresponsible critics, Plato thought. In his *Republic*, he writes that literary genres affect societies and new styles of architecture bring changes of heart. England's distinguished philosopher, Iris Murdoch, muses on these and other Platonic prejudices in her dense but remarkably readable little book, based upon the Romanes Lecture she gave at Oxford in 1976. Discussing Plato's distrust of artists, she takes up the case of a painter making a picture of a bed. "God" (according to Plato) "creates the original Form or Idea of bed. . . . The carpenter makes the bed we sleep upon. The painter copies this bed from one point of view. He is thus at three removes from reality. He does not understand the bed, he does not measure it, he could not make it. He evades the apparent and the real, which stirs the mind toward philosophy." But Plato, Murdoch goes on to note, was himself a great artist, master of such metaphors as that of the shadow world of the Cave, in which the artist-copyist's fire imitates the sun: "He wanted . . . immortality through art; he felt and indulged the artist's desire

to produce unified, separable, formal, durable objects." This paradox intrigues Murdoch, known for her own masterful use of metaphor in such novels as *The Sacred and Profane Love Machine* (1974), *Henry and Cato* (1976), and *The Sea, the Sea* (1978).

THE POLITICS OF UNREASON: Right-Wing Extremism in America, 1790-1977. By Seymour Lipset and Earl Raab. Univ. of Chicago, 2nd ed., 1978. 605 pp. \$7.95

In this updated edition of their noted text in political sociology, first published nearly a decade ago, authors Lipset and Raab conclude that the history of the 1970s "gives us good cause for satisfaction about the viability of the American polity, but no reason to feel that we can let down our vigilance." The ultimate test of democratic restraint and "prophylactic American political institutions" may await "more dire and comprehensive circumstances." Among its several virtues, this book serves as a sobering reminder of the scare tactics of Wallacites and Watergaters—and of the long line of extremists on the right who have gone before. The authors see a continuity down the years, from the first full-fledged conspiracy theory introduced in the 1790s, which had the Illuminati, a secret Masonic society in Bavaria who opposed the Jesuits, plotting with the Jesuits themselves against Protestants. (In the excitement, Yale's President Timothy Dwight delivered a Fourth of July speech in which he asked, "Shall our sons become the disciples of Voltaire, and the dragoons of Marat; or our daughters the concubines of the Illuminati?") As recently as 1957, efforts were made by the John Birch Society and other rightists to link Senator Joseph McCarthy's death to the Illuminati, who by then were said to control world Communism.