

caught my eye. The uniform jacket design displayed the expected photos of black students engaging in scholarly pursuits—but also, high above all the rest, a long and sleek Mercedes car. Were the Evans people offering this contemporary African power symbol as an incentive for high schoolers? If you study hard, you too can become a high-living businessman or politico, reminding everyone you are a cut above the common crowd? The thought saddened me. Buma Kor's shop also sold tennis and ping-pong balls.

When my friend, the poet Ernest Allma, arrived, he pointed out some of the notables. The man in the blue suit was vice-chancellor of the university and behind him the minister of post and telecommunications. Also on hand were the minister of state for territorial administration and the vice-minister of culture and information. A skeptic might have concluded that with all the government emphasis on promoting bilingualism and with the dedication to that doctrine shown by the powerful ("strong-arm" to some) Cameroonian president, Ahmadou Ahidjo, big-wigs considered this a good place to be seen. But I like to think that these government types, and the professors and writers, came simply to wish Buma Kor well as he started out in the book business in their city. They came to tell him they were behind him in his vending and publishing ventures, that they felt his work would help the country develop something besides the usual line of military hardware and cash crops for export.

The guests assembled on the street below the front steps, where a microphone and speakers had been set up. They didn't work. The speakers of the record shop across the street were working, though, and I feared the ceremonies would be competing with congas, electric guitars, and rock singers wailing in Ewondo and other local dialects. But suddenly there was silence.

The dedication speech was given by an assistant director of the Regional Book Promotion Center of Africa, an organization funded by several black African countries. (Actually, Buma Kor works for the center and, as he told me, would be tending to his duties as head of Buma Kor & Co. mostly during the evenings.) The man spoke in French and couldn't be heard too well. Beside him, waiting patiently, was a pretty little girl of ten or so dressed up in a red frock, her hair intricately braided. She held a pair of long scissors on a plate.

The speaker noted that Buma Kor was certainly well qualified, though he prudently cautioned that one shouldn't expect success too soon. Then he quoted the slogan "Buma Kor was using for his publishing house—"Our literature is not dead" (an observation originally applied specifically to the literature of Anglophone Cameroon, Buma Kor had earlier explained to me). The little girl in red handed over the scissors, the satiny yellow band dropped in two, and Buma Kor announced, smiling, "We can now enter, and watch" . . . he hesitated . . . "and buy." Laughter and cheers of approval. I knew then that, yes, Buma Kor was going to make it.

How like a cocktail party for literati anywhere were the goings-on afterward. The champagne went first and fast, then the good Gold Harp brewed at the local Guinness plant, then the not-so-good Cameroonian beer, then the orange Fanta soda, then the not-so-good Cameroonian brand. The guests sipped and chatted in Equatorial sunlight so bright and strong you could almost touch it. The breeze died down. A young novelist, whose first book had recently come out under the GLE imprint, complained that the publisher had not given him a second look at the proofs. No, he said, he couldn't really explain what his novel was about. The university sort talking with us spot-

ted a lithe actress from the national theatre group and politely (and rapidly) excused himself. A man in sunglasses, a floor-length powder-blue boo-boo and fez made sure I knew he was the *director* of the Regional Book Promotion Center and would have delivered the dedication speech had it not been for another *important* engagement. A fellow lugging a suitcase-sized "portable" radio-tape outfit wandered over from the other side of the street and, with the graceful cheek of the determined crasher, tried to talk his way into a free drink. He had no luck and settled for a beer at La Pirouge next door.

That evening and all day Sunday the national radio (Cameroon has no TV yet) broadcast news of the opening, and when the national daily newspaper came out on Monday, it carried stories and photos. In a small country like Cameroon even the opening of a bookshop rates headlines, but no one can deny that the event had cultural significance for the nation. And it had been a delightful afternoon.

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EXCURSUS 2

Barry B. Levine on TAKING CUBAN LEAVE

Toward the end of Reinaldo Arenas's novel *Hallucinations* (Harper & Row) the plot takes an unexpected turn: the hero escapes from Havana's La Cabaña prison and makes for the sea where, "swept along by the unending chains of cyclones that are forever rising out of these unquiet waters," he "finally end[s] up on the Florida coast."

Arenas wrote *Hallucinations (El mundo alucinante)* in 1966. Eight years later he was in Havana's La Cabaña prison; fourteen years later he was on the "unquiet waters" between Cuba and Florida, one of the thousands to leave the island via the Mariel Harbor ragtag flotilla. Once again life has imitated art.

After Fidel Castro got himself caught up in the Peruvian Embassy mess—eleven thousand Cubans crowded into the embassy in search of political asylum—he needed to show the world that these people were misfits, the dregs of Cuban society. To do this he made it short-term policy to put on the boats to Key West not only those from the embassy but others he considered of the same ilk: the mentally ill, prostitutes, homosexuals, criminals, religious fanatics.

One of the unintended consequences of this action was to establish models of behavior to be copied by anyone wanting to leave Cuba. The irony of the process is wonderfully captured in a joke that has been circulating here: A young boy goes into a police station and claims, "I am a homosexual, my brothers are homosexuals, and my father is a homosexual."

"But how can that be," replies the official, "isn't there anyone in your family who likes women?"

"Oh, yes, my mother does—you better deport us all!"

Reportedly, officials were promised pieces of furniture left behind should the person ship out or were paid to write on the required forms something indicating deviance. Official identities were exchanged between known criminals who intended to remain and noncriminals who

Hans J. Morgenthau (1904-1980)

For Hans J. Morgenthau life was an unending search for truth about man, politics, and human destiny. He set out alone in a hostile social environment moving across uncharted ground. His goal, as he defined it, was discovering "ultimate reality beyond illusion." He took no comfort from oracles nor any of the world's grand simplifiers. His vision expressed itself in the "searching mind, conscious of itself and of the world, seeing, hearing, feeling, thinking and speaking"—seeking for light until the end.

He grappled with the most intractable problems: the dilemmas of politics and of conflict. It was his postulate that the harsh realities of the body politic, like physical diseases, yield only to tough-minded analysis and clear-cut diagnosis. Prescription depends on the statesman-physician's understanding of human nature and of the inescapable rivalries among men and nations. Interest and power were his roadmaps, not fanciful notions about political man early transcending himself through reason, virtue, or reform. As nostrums followed panaceas in rapid succession in the postwar pursuit of peace, he was the first to measure them against political experience. Although he remained outside the corridors of power, he spoke more truth about selfish pride and the ambiguities of power than multitudes of practicing politicians in governments and universities who pursued raw power with self-deceit. By prodigious labors, he left a vast and abundant heritage of principles that we have only begun to fathom and to make integral to American foreign policy.

The core of that legacy can be found in rigorous criticism of prevailing national moods and trends which Morgenthau insisted crippled the nation's ability to cope with its most urgent problems. In his earliest writings he challenged not individuals (something he resisted) but popular trends and movements of thought which exalted illusions

such as the belief that science and technology could save us. Rationalism, as the handmaiden of science, looked to reason and technical knowledge to produce easy harmonies of interest. Yet politics was the realm of contingency and incongruity, of the best under the circumstances. From the viewpoint of practical wisdom, the rationally right, the ethically good, and the politically possible were not readily equated. The statesman shapes society *not* by "appeals to reason pure and simple" but by "that intricate combination of moral and material pressures which his art creates and maintains."

If Morgenthau's legacy had been no more than a coherent framework for relating morality and politics and rethinking foreign policy, his contribution would have been enormous. Yet for those of us who were students, friends, and admirers, his heritage is more profoundly personal than philosophical or intellectual. As a teacher, he never rested in the demands he laid on us to try, as the British would say, to get things right. How often a retort like, "a good speech, but you misquoted Cromwell"! By moral example, he taught those he inspired to live with uncertainty, contradictions, and tragedy, remembering the text: "For He makes the sun rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the just and the unjust."

After everything has been said, there remains an element of mystery about his greatness. At the close of a conference in the 1960s Walter Lippmann turned to Hans and said: "How curious you are misunderstood. You are the most moral thinker I know." To that we would add, yes, and forever the example of a courageous and compassionate friend.

Kenneth W. Thompson

wanted out. Within this climate there arose a strange reversal of values whereby deviance earned official reward.

Now thirty-seven, Arenas has published five books; only his first, *Celestino Before the Sunrise*, was published in Cuba. *Hallucinations*, like *Celestino*, won a second-place prize from Cuba's Union of Writers and Artists. Apparently, however, some critics thought passages ridiculed Castro and so it was never published there. Arenas argues that he does not attack the system directly; since he questions everything, nothing remains sacred.

In July, 1974, Arenas had his clothes and a briefcase filled with his writings stolen while he was at the beach. Reporting this to the police, he was told that he had created a public scandal. Later his lawyer informed him that he was being charged not only with the scandal but with having written antirevolutionary works and publishing outside Cuba without permission. Arenas began to think of ways to leave, but was arrested and put in jail.

His arrest was for the scandal and not any political activity. Consequently, he was sentenced to only thirteen months and put in La Cabaña among other "troublemakers" rather than among political prisoners, whose status and behavior would have been more appealing to him. The noise and violence made life difficult, yet still Arenas created and memorized poetry, stories, and the structure of future novels—all without pen and paper.

Once out of jail, Arenas could find no work. He moved from place to place until a friend found for him an uncomfortable room in old Havana. "I am no longer a writer but an individual who lives roving from place to place, no one can figure out how I live, I don't belong to any group, I am not integrated into the revolution, I am alone, scum."

To get permission to leave Cuba one had to sign a sworn statement indicating that one was "the world's worst." For Arenas it was easy.

All Cubans are required to carry an identity card detailing their history. Arenas's card stated that he did not work and that he had a prison record. Further, the card made no mention of his integration in the revolution. As he puts it: "I was the ideal candidate to get out. I didn't need any special proof—my *carnet* spoke for itself. My *carnet*, which before had been so harmful to me...became my safe conduct pass....In that mass of people trying to get out nobody knew me as a writer. The fact that I was beaten up by the system or just simply forgotten by it became the possibility for my getting out. They may have not wanted me to leave but then ended up authorizing it." On May 9, 1980, Reinaldo Arenas landed in Key West aboard the yacht *San Lazaro*.

Arenas's first and third books are part of a pentology that he hopes will articulate the stages of his life as well as that of Cuban society. *Celestino* in part recounts his life in the country; *The Palace of the Whitest Skunks* (1975) takes place just before the revolution. The next in the five-part series deals with the beginnings of the revolution. It was written clandestinely and sent out of Cuba ("In Cuba, if you haven't gotten the book out of the country, you haven't finished it yet"). Arenas hopes to reconstruct it now. The fourth will deal with the present time. And as to the fifth, he says, "*imagine*...just imagine...."

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