

the nation (like Janowitz, Anderson says little about what specifically distinguishes the nation from other forms of political organization) what is imagined is a form of organization that is "limited," "sovereign," and a "community," i.e., a focus of "comradeship" and "fraternity." Since these are the elements of a commitment to national life, patriotism, for Anderson, is to be understood psychologically and historically before any significant claim can be made for its value. What has produced the powerful varieties of national consciousness, and what causes have sustained them?—these are the questions he poses. His response sets out from the premise that nationalism is less an ideology than a form of cultural expression—closer to the phenomena of kinship and religion than to such political doctrines as liberalism or fascism.

This is an important distinction; it moves to "naturalize" nationalism, suggesting, against most accounts, that nationalism has both an inside and an outside and that we need to take account of it in the imagination as well as in its external causes.

The line of explanation that Anderson follows is at once eccentric and enlightening. In a number of places, to be sure, he acknowledges the standard explanations of nationalism as related to changes in the patterns of commerce and economic development. His own emphasis, however, is on language, literacy, and the wide-ranging effects of the printing press. These features of social history may seem altogether remote from questions of political organization, but it is precisely those whose abstract views of historical change assume the irrelevance of these factors that Anderson means to dispute. He thus argues persuasively, it seems to me, for the causal relation, singly and then together, of the failing dominance of Latin, the development of vernacular languages to replace it, and—most important—the spread of "print capitalism" as agents in the "imagining" that led people eventually to identify themselves and others in terms of national affiliation. The evidence he cites for this complex thesis is itself complex, moving beyond the standard examples of modern European history to the nationalist movements toward independence that accompanied the colonization of South and North America and then to recent developments in Southeast Asia, the area of his own special interest.

It would be unlikely that any single hypothesis could fully cover such a diversity of cultures and periods. And indeed there are loose ends to Anderson's analysis—for example, the need to account for divergent nationalisms within such single-language

A WORLD OF MANY FICTIONS



Robert Powell

MACUNAIMA

by Mario de Andrade

translated by E. A. Goodland

(Random House; 192 pp.; \$14.95)

Philip Sicker

It is now almost fifteen years since the translation of Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* awakened in English-speaking readers a still-growing fascination for Latin American literature. Today, works by such contemporary fabulists as Julio Cortázar, Carlos Fuentes, and Jorge Amado appear almost weekly in newly translated paperback editions and are displayed on bookstore shelves like rows of exotic fruit. The sudden popularity of a fiction heretofore unknown has engendered the prevailing misconception that the literary tradition of an entire continent begins and ends with these more recent works. Hence the irony that Mario de Andrade's 1928 Brazilian fantasy will strike many North American readers as a footnote to Márquez. Random House, publisher of the first English translation, contributes to this misapprehension by describing the work as "a matchless example of magical realism." Magical this blend of folklore, allegory, and rhapsody surely is, but it is no more a work of realism than is "Rumpelstiltskin" and no more a novel than Petronius' *Satyricon*. Rather, *Macunaima* stands as the centerpiece of a more circumscribed tradition—Brazilian modernism.

Unlike the modernist movement of Spanish-speaking Latin America, which began in the 1890s under the influence of the French Symbolists and fin de siècle decadence in Europe, the modernism of Portuguese-speaking Brazil was a nationalistic response to class realignment, incipient industrialism, and economic growth in the country before and during World War I. Far from holding to the doctrine of art for art's sake prevalent in Mexico and Argentina, Andrade sought nothing less than to define the vastly complex national character of his homeland and to present a symbolic history of Brazil. Drawing upon his studies in anthropology, Andrade located the roots and structures of Brazilian national life in the myths of its almost extinct Indian population. But Macunaima, the titular hero, is not merely an atavistic noble savage. Born of a Tapanhuma Indian in "the virgin forest of the Uraricoera River," his skin is not tawny but "black as calcined ivory." Later, after washing in the magical waters of St. Thomas's footprint, he becomes as white as the missionaries and conquistadors who began to infiltrate the country in the sixteenth century. Picaro, magician, and quester, he is, in Andrade's words, "a hero without

their pay.

The righteous malaise of Muslims like al-Hajj Muhammad is so pervasive in today's Islamic countries that skillful politicians cannot fail to use it as a powerful weapon of political mobilization. Although the Hajj has never read the works of Ayatollah Khomeini or kindred Arab fundamentalist theorists, his worldview epitomizes the Zealotism of Khomeini and his "Party of God." The Hajj himself is no political activist; in order to get a passport to travel and work in Europe, he served as a ward worker for several political parties after Moroccan independence—an experience that proved more dangerous than rewarding. He now says that "anyone with a brain in his head does not get involved in politics in Morocco." Still, it is certain that the Islamic revolution in Iran has excited many fundamentalists who share the Hajj's piety and his worldview—in Morocco and elsewhere in the Islamic world.

One of the virtues of *The House of Si Abd Allah* is that it gives life to what remains to most Westerners a cultural abstraction. The Hajj is a complex and most entertaining man, whose cultural milieu, material conditions, and personal experiences clearly inform his political perspective. But al-Hajj is only one of Munson's two narrators. There is also Fatima Zohra, a younger cousin of the Hajj, who went to the American School in Tangier and has lived in the United States. Her narrative shows that Westernized Muslims still prize their Islamic heritage as a vital component of their political and cultural identity, even as they criticize it and express their political views in a relatively secular idiom. Fatima Zohra dismisses the Zealotism of her cousin as nonsense but feels an equally bitter resentment of foreign domination and social injustice, which she expresses in terms that echo the writings of Franz Fanon and contemporary Arab feminists. Indeed, the Hajj sees her opinions and the behavior they justify as the unfortunate fulfillment of a prophecy he made many years ago: "I told [Fatima Zohra's father] that if he sent his daughters to a Christian school, they would become Christians."

By recording the words of al-Hajj Muhammad and Fatima Zohra as they talk about themselves and their kin, Henry Munson has made a valuable contribution to contemporary Islamic studies. Quite apart from the political issues that he treats sensitively in an excellent introductory essay, his book has much to say about the travails of rural indigence and urban migration, the problems and the joys of marriage and child-bearing, and the trauma of modernization

character," or, more precisely, a hero who incorporates all races, all national traits, all epochs of Brazilian life. His comic odyssey to retrieve a green amulet given him by his lover, Ci, Mother of the Forest, proceeds both geographically and historically, taking him from the cannibal-infested jungles of the Amazon to the boulevards of Rio to the backwater shanties of miasmatic São Paulo. Making love furiously from page to page and outwitting such antagonists as Piaiman, Eater of Men, and Oibe, the Terrible Giant Worm, Macunaima dies twice and is restored before finding the amulet, losing it again, and gaining his final apotheosis as a constellation in the heavens.

As this synopsis suggests, the dynamic energy of Andrade's work lies in its perpetual transformations. Leaf-cutter ants and termite queens advise the hero: a butterfly that soars from a wolf's gullet is the soul of a man; body parts in a cannibal's stew coalesce and walk away; storks become airplanes; cats become motor cars; and the hero's brother doubles as a telephone. Not surprisingly, the language of these remarkable fairy tales is as polyglot as the nation itself. Fabricating his narrative from a blend of contemporary slang, formal eighteenth-century Portuguese, African and Indian dialects, and tribal lyrics, Andrade sought to make his style an objective correlative to the national character. Insisting upon the cultural unity and independence of Brazil, he wished to demonstrate that the Portuguese of the Brazilian writer could and should be identical with the language of the people. Regrettably, this source of the work's greatest originality and vitality presents the greatest problems for readers of E. A. Goodland's English translation. Instead of the musical lilt and sassy irreverence of Brazilian slang, we encounter such anachronistic clichés as "Hell's bells, he thinks that I really am a French tart," "altogether she looked spiffy," and "the hero did flabbergasting things" even when he was "down in the dumps."

To some degree these shortcomings are unavoidable. So idiomatic is Andrade's language that, at the end of the book, he creates a myth of his own to account for it. While traversing a deserted forest one day, the author explains, he heard a parrot speaking of Macunaima's flamboyant adventures in a vanished tribal tongue that is itself polylingual. Musical and sweet, "it had the lovely fickle flavor of unknown forest fruits." Learning the rudiments of this language, Andrade "rescued from oblivion" both the ancient tongue and the deeds of its hero. Thus we discover in Macunaima's quest for the god-given talisman Andrade's own search for the deep structures of his nation's language and character. Like his hero who, after manifold incarnations, finally "decided to take to himself the conscience of a Latin American, put it inside his head and shaped himself into that mold," Andrade saw his art as an act of cultural integration. No less than Joyce's Stephen Dedalus, he wished to be both creator of and spokesman for the conscience of his race.

As a moralist, Andrade finds the barrier to national self-discovery not in Brazil's ethnic variety but in its accelerated plunge into twentieth-century industrialism. São Paulo is a vertiginous world of smoke wreaths, deafening noise, and ubiquitous "contraptions." Acting on his vitalist impulses, Macunaima yearns to make love to the "goddess of the Machine," but he soon discovers that "the Machine had become a god out of man's control, simply because it was not made in the form of a beautiful enchantress" but in the image of an economic principle that was "hardly a reality in the world."

Andrade feared that in becoming as mechanized as their European cousins, modern Brazilians were forgetting not only the invigorating myths of their past but the creative energy that produced them. But the populace still yearns for this power: Macunaima holds his listeners spellbound as he explains that the Southern Cross is not a hemispheric "symbol" but a crested curassow and her battalion of fireflies, and that the automobile originated with a jaguar who fastened on some wheels one day to escape a puma. At such moments, one would be tempted to classify Andrade as merely a charming primitivist, but for Macunaima's repeated motto:

With fewer ants and better health
Brazil would lead the world in wealth.

As in many of the legends themselves, the political implications here are

rality play: Not only does she narrate others' frailties, she reminds us of how much they and we have in common. To some extent power corrupts, but obstinacy, overreaction, the prideful refusal to admit error that compounds error, self-delusion—a failure of reason—are no one's monopoly. Folly may be a child of power, but so are we all prone to folly. On the other hand, the true morality play also holds out hope. Humans have not only created prodigies of technology, art, medicine, and theoretical physics but have also produced models of the modest and intelligent statesman who creates effective government: Solon, the Antonine emperors, Charlemagne, Maria Theresa, the Jeffersonian generation. When power is wedded to humility, responsibility is its child. **WV**

**THE UNRAVELING OF AMERICA:
A HISTORY OF LIBERALISM
IN THE 1960s**

by **Allen J. Matusow**

(Harper & Row; 542 pp.; \$22.95)

Larry Tool

Today the turbulent '60s beg for historical focus. The passions of the period are spent, its issues are muddled, its partisans hoarse. Firebrands have become fathers, communards have become landlords, ex-students scramble for university tenure. Even the bright mirror of nostalgia has grown dim from constant use. For those of us who shaped or were shaped by the '60s the time has come to entrust our memories to the historians, who will edit and interpret them for posterity. "Where have all the flowers gone?" Gone to textbooks every one.

One does not envy these historians. Who among that cautious fraternity will prove bold enough to pass judgment on a whole generation of quarrelsome critics—at least while that generation is still on the scene? Memoirs and diaries have appeared; institutional histories have been assembled from bulging files; surprisingly good biographies (Lyndon Johnson, Martin Luther King, Jr.) have begun to accumulate. But the Class of '88 wants to know what the '60s were really about, and no provocative general interpretation has yet been offered. *The Unraveling of America* does not quite take this bull by the horns, but Allen Matusow has at least stepped into the arena. Two cheers.

For Matusow the essence of the '60s is the ordeal of liberalism. His account is woven from three kinds of narrative: The

ambiguous. Did Andrade, the first director of São Paulo's Department of Culture, wish merely to preserve the past within Brazil's social revolution, or was he parodying the capitalist conception of progress in the Third World? We may find a partial answer in yet another of the book's transformations. Just before his transfiguration, Macunaima modifies the second line of his slogan to "Brazil *will* be a place of wealth." The change implies both a prophecy and a redefinition. Wealth is now no longer judged by the standard of international economics, but, perhaps, by the rich resources of the people and by the cultural heritage that Andrade has brought to light. **WV**

THE UNBEARABLE LIGHTNESS OF BEING

by **Milan Kundera**

translated by **Michael Henry Helm**

(Harper & Row; 314 pp.; \$15.95)

Gerald Freund

If Kundera had set out to write a love story, he might have had better success, but he would have written a far less interesting book. This new novel by the celebrated Czech author, who now makes his home in Paris, is an incisive, compelling, and mostly despairing political work. The political pattern is delicate, but pervasive.

It requires considerable ingenuity for a writer to engross a reader in his own deep concerns without their becoming crude interruptions in an interesting and often psychologically fascinating work of fiction. Kundera has that talent. Nevertheless, because he is a totally involved political intellectual, Kundera tends to force rather than lead his reader, who participates in none of the critical choices and decisions. Little is entrusted to the readers's independent thought or imagination. There are no silences, none of the pregnant pauses so important to the works of Kundera's favorite composer, Beethoven, whose imperative "*Es muss sein!*" he quotes again and again to glittering literary effect. But then Kundera is not an organist listening for cathedral reverberations. The only echo he wants is that of his own voice. Perhaps he wants to drown out the cacaphony of political sloganeering and torture-chamber screams.

Whatever the reasons, we are not, finally, unsympathetic with his impatience. It is an understandable flaw when one considers that Kundera reveals himself through his protagonist, Tomas, as an exile with no possibility of finding a cultural "home." He is in an enforced state of painful loneliness and taken up by his guilt for having escaped the bitter fate—in many cases death—of his Central European intellectual friends who chose not to flee Russian domination. Kundera's cry of pain and ambivalence is understood through the experience of the fictional Tomas. A surgeon, he initially escapes Czechoslovakia to a good hospital position in Switzerland after the Russian invasion of 1968. But then he follows his lover, Tereza, back to Czechoslovakia and to ignominious humiliations. Among his many conquests, Tereza is the only woman Tomas loves. For Kundera, she represents the singular muse he tries to follow. Unlike Tomas, he did not follow her "home," for he would no more have found his "home" in Czechoslovakia than he had anywhere else. Still, Kundera cannot help wondering what might have been his fate; and Tomas, his invention, wanders purgatively until he finally finds a level of existence with Tereza in which he can live a truly loving and self-reconciled life. Through Tomas, Kundera finds an imagined state of grace. But there is still no way "home" for Kundera, for while his present life allows freedom of expression, he speaks in a cultural wasteland—different, but in the end the same as life under the heel of the Russian conqueror.

Tomas's odyssey is fictionalized as a succession of erotic encounters, described with a strange lack of eroticism. In each encounter Tomas seeks to find "the millionth part dissimilarity," the unpredictable individuality he desperately needs for his creative as well as political life. He exults in the differences he discovers en route to and in intercourse—different nuances of