

a Chinese-box—of Julian's inexorable course toward martyrdom, and his gradual understanding of what Miss Alice represents, is worked out by Albee with elements of *grand guignol* and *Alice in Wonderland* interspersed with high comedy, and some of the most literate and lively dialogue written for the American stage. Dramatically uneven, and not altogether successful in its aims (especially in its last act), *Tiny Alice* nevertheless reinforces Albee's position—since *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*—as the leading American playwright of the post-Williams-and-Miller generation.

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✱ H. E. Bates. *A Moment in Time*. New York. Farrar, Strauss. 1964. 248 pages. \$4.50.

H. E. Bates is known primarily as a writer of war stories and as a stylist. Yet he uses practically no symbolism in his recent novel except for the opening pages describing the swans swimming in the center of the icebound lake "imprisoned by their dark ring of water." Bates uses this symbol three times later in the novel, once when Elizabeth, the nineteen year old narrator of the wartime story, after the death of her husband, speaks of herself as "securely imprisoned in my sudden bond of bitterness as the swans had been imprisoned by their dark ring of water." Anyone familiar with Elizabeth Bowen's *The Death of the Heart* cannot help comparing Bowen's delicate and apt symbol of the coldness of the Quayne family and the swanlike heart of Portia with Bates's somewhat clumsy use of the swan symbol. It seems to the reader of *A Moment in Time* that his symbol should not be of cold and delicacy but of the fires of war and ravage. There is nothing delicate about Bates's novel or the people in it. They are all sturdy, courageous English characters and Elizabeth's language takes on a decided vulgarity. Bates himself was an R.A.F. Squadron Leader and this novel has an authentic ring in his depiction of the lives and loves of the young flyers stationed near the British coast line. *A Moment in Time* begins in 1940, before the officers requisition the Cartwright mansion and move Elizabeth, her grandmother, and her uncle into the bailiff's house. The reader gets a stirring picture of the change in the lives of these civilians during the artillery fire and bombings. The rich girl becomes a plum and apple picker. She is not even allowed a night with her bridegroom immediately after the wedding. The novel is essentially a love story, the story of an

innocent girl's growing into experience with unusual rapidity. However, instead of projecting himself into the mind of a nineteen year old girl, Bates might better have told the story in the third person.

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✱ Saul Bellow. *Herzog*. New York. Viking. 1964. 341 pages. \$5.75.

The English novelist and critic, V. S. Pritchett, has said recently that Saul Bellow is the finest novelist now writing in English. *Herzog* proves Pritchett's point. The hero of the book, Moses Herzog, in his own fantastic twentieth-century Dickensian way is beginning to assume a Micawber-like reality. Herzog, however, is a proper contemporary grotesque: he is a former college professor, who at one time set the academic world on fire, writing characteristically on such questions as "the history of Romanticism as the form taken by plebeian envy and ambition in modern Europe," and uncharacteristically, attacking as leading "straight to cultural fascism" the idea that "the deterioration of language and its debasement was tantamount to dehumanization."

When the novel opens, Moses is on the edge of sanity. Moses begins to manipulate time through letters he never mails—a brilliant device allowing the author to present necessary past information and to reveal through flashbacks the state of Moses's nerves and even of the world as Moses pushes backward and forward and makes a jumble of time: present, past, and future, historical, personal, and prophetic. Bellow's technique has surrealist overtones. The letter-writing by his protagonist, however, has therapeutic effect: it helps Moses keep sane as he writes to past presidents, philosophers, his wife's lover, his own academic rivals, etc. His letters fly off into imaginary haunts as Moses cries, pleads, argues, and criticizes. Existential one moment, academic the next, the pleading, rejected husband filled with self-pity soon after, Moses writes on and on until saved, it would seem, by the epistle (a plague on psychiatry!). This auto-analysis works and Moses is able to enjoy "fresh woods, and pastures new"—in American parlance, Vermont, U. S. A.

Bellow's comedy is never far from tears ("O Lord!" he concluded, "forgive all these trespasses. Lead me not into Penn Station."), yet even with his anti-hero suffering from a deep hysteria, the novelist seems to write out of some kind of affirmation: "We must get it out of our heads that this is a doomed time," he