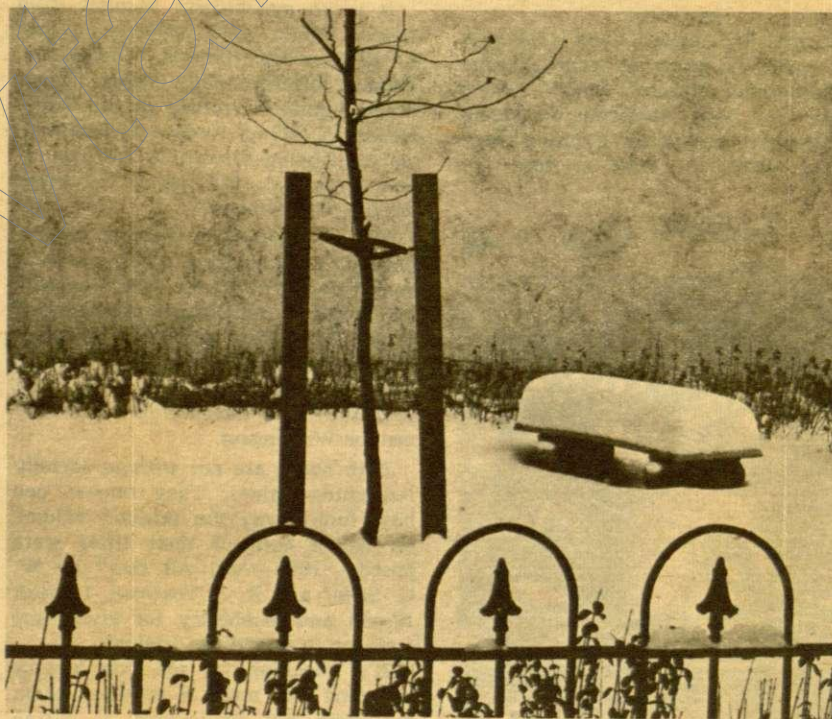
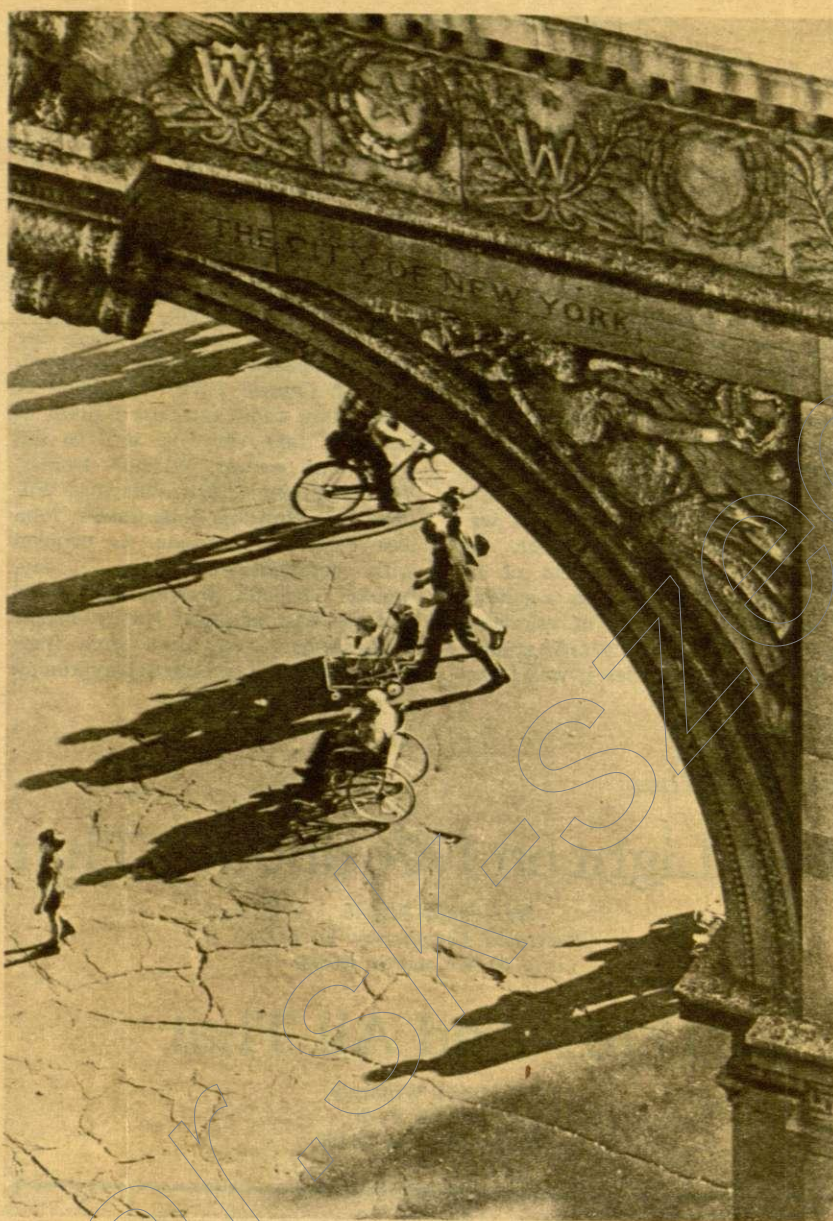


sion is dissonance." How, then, can a piece of 12-tone music, in which all dissonance becomes meaningless, retain any expressive content? Mr. Rosen, who has an ingenious answer, contends that "Schoenberg's music is among the most expressive ever written," even though "the sense of dissonance and resolution cannot properly be drawn out of serialism but must be imposed on it." Schoenberg, in Mr. Rosen's view, never renounced a conception of form in which the expressive motif or melody took the central role. "Serial technique was invented to sustain this expressivity when tonality had grown so weak and so diffuse that it could produce only melodic lines as flaccid and as accommodating as those of Rachmaninoff, Pfitzner and Fauré." It was this attempt "to create melodies against the grain of serialism" that restored the necessary tension that had gone out of highly chromatic but still tonal music. "By its toughness, serialism restored expressivity at first—literally by being so difficult to use for that purpose." So runs the Rosen argument, and it is an alluringly logical one, if faintly Procrustean.

Nevertheless, the failure of a large audience to embrace Schoenberg's later music (works predating 1921 such as "Verklärte Nacht," "Pierrot lunaire" and even "Gurrelieder" have a foothold in the repertory) or to accept his esthetic as a necessary revolution must be faced. Mr. Rosen faces it, in an excellent chapter that discusses Vienna's famous though short-lived Society for the Private Performance of Music. Founded by Schoenberg in 1918, it existed for three years. The stated aim was to withdraw new music from the commercial arena and let it be played by and for an élite, free of the pressures of the music business and cultural fashion. But Mr. Rosen contends that the implicit idea was that, by insuring competent performances of new music, composers could make their product acceptable to a large public, and he believes this was misguided.

"The crisis brought on by conceiving of music as a salable commodity is not solved by making it more easily sold or by turning the public into educated buyers," he argues. "Schoenberg's Society was a solution of despair, but it was (and is) necessary to maintain the ideal that music is performed because musicians wish to write and play it. Better performances do not make difficult music popular, but they keep music alive." But the question remains: alive for whom, and why? Mr. Rosen seems to be rejecting the possibility of public acceptance of Schoenberg's later music, but if so why bother to keep on promoting

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Photographs by André Kertész from "Washington Square."

## Visiting Photographer

By BRENDAN GILL

André Kertész was born in Budapest in 1894, moved to Paris in 1925, and came to New York in 1936. Like so many visitors to the New World in the thirties, he and his wife Elizabeth expected their stay in the States to be a temporary one; their plans, and the subsequent course of their lives, were radically altered by the outbreak of the Second World War. Intensely European, they were yet able to make themselves at home in New York, and this may have been in part because they were also intensely urban: however different from one another the countries of the world may be, great cities tend to have much in common—much to which the energetic exile can learn to accommodate himself.

For Kertész, with his witty, pattern-setting, story-inventing eye, the city is the most challenging and sympathetic of subjects. The parks and squares of Budapest in his youth, the parks and squares of Paris in his early manhood, and the parks and squares of New York in his middle and late years have furnished his art with a continuous, sufficient nourishment. Though his camera celebrates the stillnesses and collisions of ordinary daily street life, he has never felt himself at a distance from nature. In the midst of the steel and stone gridirons of cities, hints of *rus in urbe* delight him at every turn, be they only in the form of a pennant of forsythia unfurling along a wall or the feather of a pigeon's wing drifting in spirals downward into some sooty backyard.

In Paris Kertész recorded the happy marriage of city and nature in the Tuileries and the Luxembourg gardens. In New York he has presided over and affectionately documented a similar marriage in Washington Square. For almost a quarter of a century the Kertészes have occupied a charming twelfth-floor apartment directly overlooking that eight-acre rectangle of trees, paved walks, and dusty, scruffy grass. The little cantilevered balcony of the Kertész apartment hangs in space like the crow's nest

Brendan Gill is author of "Here at The New Yorker." The above is the introduction, copyright ©1975 by Brendan Gill, from "Washington Square," by André Kertész. Crossman Publishers, paper, \$5.95.

of some impossibly high-masted barkentine; all the year round, winds blow fiercely across it, in summer the sun bedazzles it, in winter the snow silently doubles and redoubles the thickness of its railing. One is close to the elements up there and feels the force and hazard of them; at the same time, one becomes part of an immense cityscape of gleaming towers, tarred roofs, and zigzag, bonneted chimney pots. Far off to the south, beyond the rude twin phalli of the World Trade Center, lie the Narrows and the Lower Bay. They are not to be seen from the Kertész eyrie, but one senses their presence and is reminded that vast-seeming Manhattan is but a tiny island awash in the second-greatest of oceans.

As an old mariner might arm himself with a sextant to shoot the stars,

so Kertész on his balcony arms himself with camera and bulky zoom lens to shoot the many lives of the Square, of the narrow streets that bound it, and of the nearby roof gardens and terraces. Now and again he descends to encounter his fellow creatures—men, women, dogs, cats, and birds—on *terra firma*, eye to eye. Washington Square is hard-used; it is not the Luxembourg, or even Central Park. Nevertheless, it is a palimpsest well worth an artist's careful reading, well worth recording a thousand likenesses of by day and night and in all weathers. In the eighteenth century it was a swampy potter's field; later, one or another of the sturdiest of its trees was made to serve as a gallows for the public hanging of criminals. Later still, it became a parade ground. In the eighteen-twenties it was trans-

formed into an aristocratic park, well fenced, with pretty flower beds and decorous, graveled walkways for the use of the fashionable ladies and gentlemen who built and occupied the red-faced brick houses upon its perimeter. As the decades passed, the ladies and gentlemen made their way up Fifth Avenue, to where the Avenue touched on the grander greenness of Central Park. The poor of Little Italy came into the Square to rest and take the sun, and so did artists and writers. Winslow Homer, Walt Whitman, Edith Wharton, William Dean Howells, Willa Cather, John Dos Passos—the Square is peopled with distinguished ghosts. Today, bronze Garibaldi drawing his sword and the bust of stolid Holley, maker of Bessemer steel, stare from their plinths upon a turbulent playground,

whose air is alive with song, aglitter with bicycle wheels, ashiver with frisbees. Young and old cram the little park to bursting, and dustily, raucously, amorously, dangerously the little park survives.

Kertész, observing it all, preserves it all, for he is one of those upon whom, in a phrase of Henry James of Washington Square, "nothing is lost." His subject matter is ever before him, his eye and hand are at the ready. He scans his chosen domain with joy. The light of afternoon falls benignly athwart the Square. Surely something is about to happen; a squirrel leaping from bench top to bench top, a girl and boy passing through the Washington Arch, an old man crumpled in sleep against a tree—likenesses modest and precious, about to put on immortality. ■

## Washington never told a lie, or a joke either

By MARVIN KITMAN

The humor in Bissell's book is only fo fo.

The author, for example, reports the following frange conversation took place in 1775 at Cambridge, when the hero Col. Henry Knox returned to the front with fome cannon he fchlepped all the way from Fort Ticonderoga:

"General, I have brought you a noble train of artillery," he said.

"Bodacious work, sir!" replied Washington.

"Oh Henry" cried Lucy [Mrs. Knox] "Oh Henry!"

"Say, you know what?" Washington remarked thoughtfully. "That would make a great name for a candy bar!"

If this weren't a free country, I would have a man fhot for writing fuch piffle. Every fchool boy knows General Washington never told a lie or a joke either.

Later, Biffell fays this about another great moment in American hifstory: "Burgoyne sent 1500 men to Bennington, Vermont, to scare up some food, cattle, Granola, grits, and Tory recruits. Twenty-three Bennington Girls from the college came out and read their Honors Theses at the approaching British troops. 200 soldiers fell down dead, 700 were captured, and the rest retreated in disorder suffering brain fever."

Any good hifstoryan worth his falt will tell you they were Fmth girls.

But a more ferious question arises: could this be the fame Richard Biffell

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## New Light on 1776 and All That

By Richard Bissell.

Illustrated. 174 pp. New York: Little, Brown and Co. \$6.95.

### 1776—And All That

By Leonard Wibberley.

96 pp. New York: William Morrow. \$5.95.

who wrote the laugh riot "7½ Cents"? Fo it fays on the jacket.

Leonard Wibberley's book is likewise not quite as funny as your average "Bicentennial Minute" on TV, which is the way most Americans are steeping themselves in history during these trying times. At least it does not

pretend to be solid reporting.

It is an eye-witness account from Heaven about what happens on July 4, 1776, when General Washington, Thomas Jefferson, King George III and other dignitaries return to the White House to attend a costume Bicentennial Ball being thrown by the incumbent President. His name, Wibberley says, is "Williamson."

One of Wibberley's previous contributions to American culture was a book titled "The Mouse That Roared," which led to a nickname for Howard Cossel. Wibberley may be on to something here again. With all the violence on the streets these days, by next year the Chief Executive's name may well be Williamson.

Both books are not without socially redeeming values. They remind one how funny was the original volume on which both of their titles were based—"1066—And All that" by W. C. Sellar and R. J. Yeatman. I thank Bissell and Wibberley for giving me a reason to reread the original.

It's shocking to see our history ridiculed and made a mockery of at any time, but particularly so during a Bicentennial. It is the only history

we've got. And it did take over 200 years to write, regardless of its inadequacies.

Still it is funny to read again how the founding fathers of the "And All That" school of writing (ca. 1931) dealt with the Revolutionary period: 25 lines, mostly about tea. The first President is passed off as somebody named "Whittington."

Perhaps the reason it is somewhat difficult to make United States history work as humor today is that it's too early to joke about it. It took almost 800 years before the original "1066—And All That" could put down the British heritage. A people must be really vague about their ancestors before it becomes funny to summarize a century in a line or two, a dynasty in a parenthetical statement, as did "1066—And All That." It may be we know too much about our history to get a good laugh. For sheer ignorance of the past, nobody can match the British public. They have so many kings to remember.

Bissell's book is the one I most recommend for putting in a time capsule and marking: "DO NOT OPEN FOR 600 YEARS." It may improve with age. Wibberley's book is superior in the sense that it makes some important satirical points on the meaning of the Revolution. In Heaven, King George III tells our George the First: "The Republican form merely set up a thousand tyrants where previously there had been at most but one; that a man might petition a king for redress, but how was he to petition a Congress?"

Wibberley to his eternal credit suggests that King George III was not such a scoundrel. It's about time the media stopped kicking George around. ■



Illustration by Ron Carreiro for "New Light on 1776."

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