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THE PATH TO THE NEST OF SPIDERS

by Italo Calvino

Edited by The Ecco Press

Eliane Luz Bayer\*

Italo Calvino writes in his preface to The Path to the Nest of Spiders that the novel answers to the "ripeness of the time" since he wrote it after wartime, a period when everyone had a tale to tell. He tells us that this is a story in which nobody is a hero and nobody has the class consciousness necessary to unify them in the struggle.

Calvino acknowledges that it was difficult to conciliate his experiences with the postwar literary movement which he calls Neo-expressionism, a term which, he thinks, describes better Italian Neo-realism. This is a book with a full realistic depiction of the incongruousness of the whole situation, showing human beings driven by loneliness, aggressiveness, unfulfilment and failure to meet, their nerves frayed by the War. It reveals human beings in their weaknesses, subjected to deterministic fates changing roles according to circumstances. Partisans shift to the Nazi side and inform on their former allies and vice-versa, being later chased in revenge. The novel has as its setting Italy under Fascism and under German occupation, the Italian people being divided between the fascists of the "Black Brigade" and the "Partisans" who belonged to the Resistance.

Although this is a political book, it has universal appeal. At the same time that it livens up historical facts about the period, it moves our feelings. Calvino's book is about World War II as it is viewed and felt by a small outcast, Pin, who makes considerable efforts to be accepted and understood by adults. In his daily life Pin suffers the consequences of the war. His aggressive disposition reflects the environment which he has been brought up in: since he was born, his country has been at war. Besides that, his only sister is a whore, whom he hates and despises. His boasting of "The Dark Girl of Long Alley"

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responds to his desire to avenge himself on that sort of life. With growing curiosity, Pin watches his sister and the German in her bedroom. Urged to steal the German's PM - 38, he does so and runs away with it. For him, love - as he knows it by watching his sister's bedroom - and war - as he suffers its consequence - have similar characteristics, since he cannot separate one from the other. Love for him, except when he is forced to part company with the detachment of outcasts, is something filthy.

In fact, there is a whole brigade of outcasts, whose behaviour help to bring about all the incongruencies and uncertainties of that war. The psycho-social implications of this group's behaviour conveys to the reader a feeling that war is a chancy thing because these men do not seem to realize what they are fighting for. In spite of that, there is the possibility of redemption since they are fighting on the right side, against Fascism.

Even for Pin, there is the possibility of redemption through friendship, which was his greatest desire. In the end he has someone whom he trusts to show him the place where the spiders make their nests.

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Maria Cristina S. de Borba\*

Pig Iron is a semiannual magazine dedicated to the visual arts in general (photographs, collages, watercolors, prints, etc.) and to literature (mainly poems). The particular issue which I intend to comment is the special woman issue which is, of course, thematically oriented towards womanish topics.

Unlike many publications dedicated to women the special woman issue of Pig Iron does not fall in that common place of using Art to criticise the "macho" society. On the other way around it uses Art as a tool to expose the reader to a variety of typically womanish features. The criticism of the male society, if there is any, is inserted in the heart of the experience the artists portray and is present in the magazine as a part of this whole. In this way, the special woman issue of Pig Iron has the virtue of picturing the female experience through poems, fictions, drama, photos and pictures without radicalisms of any kind.

The PI woman issue has specially good pieces of writing. The introduction by Betty Fasnach is an interesting and gracefully written discussion about the woman's place within the American dream. The satire present in those pages will be a constant in most fictions of the magazine; a sign of the artists' intelligent perception of reality. The mailroom section is another example of intelligent satirical writing but it also combines bits of comicity in its imaginative submissions. It is a miscellany written in such a light and good humoured tone that laughter is inevitable. Another humorous section which cannot be left without mention is "Famous Man Magazine", a section which combines cartoons and literature in the telling of Mr Good Guy's and Mr. Bad Guy's stories. Nevertheless, a satirical

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