once to expressions, concepts, images that are clearly later, American acquisitions. Some of these usages seem jarring almost, coming as they do in exquisitely rendered immersions in a remembered moment; but they are also inevitable, calling attention to an adult consciousness that is not simply the more reflective voice of the one-time child but a different, transplanted, reinvented self. Indeed, she confesses at the end of her story that "when I talk to myself now, I talk in English. . . . In Polish, whole provinces of adult experience are missing. I don't know Polish words for 'microchips,' or 'pathetic fallacy,' or The Importance of Being Earnest. If I tried talking to myself in my native tongue, it would be a stumbling conversation." And yet, like all bilingual speakers and writers, she also knows that certain words in the native tongue will always resonate with deeper meaning; they will touch you and pull you back.

Eva Hoffman's obsession with words has paid off handsomely: Her language is crisp and precise when summing up essential experience, and richly evocative when lingering on detail. She guides her narrative with the sure hand of a complete writer, alternating between essayistic meditations, recollection and sharply etched description. And because she now has the words, she can dazzle. Behind the bold summations, the clinched arguments, the many bravura passages, one senses the precocious, eager student one assumes she always was—the student who dares to reach for the arch metaphor, the recherché term. Still, abstract ruminations always yield in time to down-to-earth narration or crucial abstract ruminations always yield in time to metaphor, the recherché term. Still, abdent one assumes she always was—the essential experience, and richly evocative ousness of Hoffman's endeavor that utions. Some that are clearly later, American acquisi-

importance.

Being Earnest. The New York Times Book Review,
perfectly the potential pitfalls of Federal industrial policy-making. Holland, a contributing editor to The Nation, chronicles the decline of Burgmaster, a California machine tool company bought by the Houdaille conglomerate, so he can demonstrate that incompetent corporate bureaucrats—not Japanese officials—are primarily to blame for America's competitive failures. What's needed, Holland argues, is not protection for poorly run businesses but improvements in their operations, not special interest policy-making but an end to financial deregulation and excessive military spending. It's a compelling argument.

Burmaster, where Holland's father worked as a machinist, began as a small, family-run business. Its founder, Fred Burg, was a practical machinist who knew the needs of the trade and had the engineering ingenuity to find new ways of meeting them. Starting up in 1944 with a few thousand dollars, Burg, his son and son-in-law built a successful little company whose innovative machine-making products were used by some of the nation's best-known manufacturers.

Burmaster was a well-run entrepreneurial manufacturing concern. Its owners knew their customers' requirements and weren't afraid to get their nails dirty investigating problems on the shop floor. Although the firm wasn't able to match the wages paid by nearby defense contractors, it was able to attract and retain skilled craftsmen because it made it possible for employees to take pride in their work, to learn new skills, to feel a sense of participation in the enterprise. Burgmaster's owners plowed their profits back into the business, expanding operations, designing new products—and always taking risks. Burgmaster tools had a reputation for quality, the firm's engineers customized jobs to win new orders and suppliers were paid promptly and fully.

All this made Burgmaster indistinguishable from dozens of well-run and successful manufacturers; the firm gained distinction and notoriety only after it was acquired by the Houdaille conglomerate in 1965. At first, the move seemed to make sense; Fred Burg was getting old, and the firm needed money for expansion. Houdaille had a reputation for treating the managers of firms it acquired well, and it poured a lot of money into modernizing Burgmaster's physical plant. Nevertheless, under conglomerate management, Burgmaster began to decline.

Houdaille's management from afar stripped Burgmaster of the qualities that had made it successful in the first place. Corporate decision-makers didn't know much about their customers' needs; plant managers were more concerned with providing the home office with accurate forecasts than with developing products; the new shop supervisors treated workers as drones. In a few years, Burmaster lost its technological leadership; equally important, as the firm became more bureaucratic, it could no longer keep its highly skilled machinists. By the late 1970s, Burgmaster and Houdaille were in trouble.

In 1979, the investment banking firm Kohlberg, Kravis and Roberts showed Houdaille management that recent changes in the tax code meant that the best way to keep the firm under its current management while raising new funds was to undertake a leveraged buy-out. Houdaille's equity was converted into a massive debt; K.K.R. took a majority position on the firm's board of directors and Houdaille gambled desperately that it would generate enough money to pay the debt off. Unfortunately, the recessions of 1979 and 1982 ate up the projected cash flow until the machines at Burgmaster stopped forever.

Closely comparing Holland's treatment of the Houdaille case with Prestowitz's, one cannot fail to be impressed with Holland's analysis. First, Burmaster and Houdaille were faltering for reasons that had little to do with the Japanese. Second, Houdaille's decision to burden itself with a mountain of debt just before the bottom fell out undoubtedly doomed Burmaster regardless of what toolmakers in Japan did. Holland also deflates some of the most convincing Japan-bashing rhetoric. While Houdaille, and Prestowitz, charged that the Japanese government had funneled hundreds of millions of dollars of subsidies to the machine tool industry to foster its development, Holland shows that this sum went to support a large array of machinery industries, including steel, auto and electronics, while the machine tool companies got an insignificant sum. He charges that Houdaille executives as well as Prestowitz knew that the subsidy issue was a red herring and used it anyway. Finally, Holland scores important points by telling the story of a Japanese machine tool firm that took away Burmaster's business by adhering to the very practices Burmaster abandoned after it was taken over by Houdaille.

There can be no doubt of the cogency of Holland's cautionary tale. In a nation dominated by corporate interests, Feder-
al trade laws are prone to abuse by incompetent managers trying to shield themselves from the consequences of their own folly. But this is not the whole story. Between 1974 and 1983, misguided and sometimes incredibly stupid Federal policies sapped the vitality of well-managed American businesses as well as poorly managed ones. High interest rates, the strong dollar, lax enforcement of trade laws and restrictive fiscal and monetary policies all worked against domestic manufacturers.

Take the machine tool industry. While Houdaille created a lot of its own problems, other American machine toolmakers had good reason to complain about Federal policies. Holland's case study approach causes him to ignore the way government indifference hurt two of the machine makers' prime customers, the steel and auto industries. In addition, Federal complacency about surging U.S. imports of oil from the Middle East reduced orders from the domestic energy industry. Japan's restriction of its manufacturing imports further limited demand for American machines. Throw in high interest rates, the strong dollar and the twin recessions of 1979 and 1982 and it's little wonder that even well-managed machine toolmakers suffered severely.

And so we come to a dilemma. America needs industrial and trade policies to promote economic efficiency and create skilled, high-paying jobs. What America is likely to get is pork-barrel, special interest legislation disguised as patriotism. With conservatives in power, perhaps the best we can hope for is a debate which clarifies the difference between the needs of America's working people and the self-serving power grabs of the corporate apologists. Max Holland's finely crafted When the Machine Stopped is an important contribution to that debate.

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**THEATER.**

**MOIRA HODGSON**

Peer Gynt
The Member of the Wedding

O n the rare occasions when it is performed, Henrik Ibsen's Peer Gynt is almost always severely cut (it is over five hours long). But Mark Lamos, artistic director of the Hartford Stage Company in Connecticut, has plunged in and produced a full-length version, shown in two parts. Peer Gynt has been a challenge to scholars and critics since it was first published in 1867. The play concerns one man's epic journey through life and self-discovery. Gynt is a perpetual adolescent, a dreamer, a chronic liar, a charmer and a fool. He tells outrageous lies to his mother, Ase, who alternately worships and nags him; he goes to a wedding and runs off with the bride. He is seduced by a troll and fathers a monster. He makes his fortune nineteenth-century-style, trading slaves and idols. After a spell in a madhouse, he ends up in a shipwreck. But his muse, Solveig, the ideal beloved, remains faithfully waiting for him throughout the years of his odyssey.

Lamos is an enormously talented director who has made a name for himself with his reinterpretations of the classics. Making these plays relevant for contemporary audiences is a tricky task, but after viewing his flawed but fascinating Measure for Measure recently at New York's Lincoln Center I was curious to see what he would make of Ibsen's play. I found the production imaginative and interesting but full of movement that seemed ultimately to be lacking in destination.

As Gynt, Richard Thomas gives an energetic performance and delivers each line of poetry as if it were a challenge. He plays throughout as if he were Henry V rallying his troops at the battle of Agincourt. You see less a man gradually becoming aware of his potential self than an impetuous youngster rushing headlong into trouble. The dramatic tension of this play (or poem to be precise, for Ibsen had not originally intended it for the stage) springs from the struggles within the central character. Nothing really registers with Gynt, but he remains, in the words of Rolf Fjelde, "the pilot model of the hollow man of our own time, rendered perplexed and anxious by problems of identity and direction." Thomas as never ages physically, but continues to lead the troops, real or imaginary, right to the end. The role needs a subtlety and shading that this production doesn't provide, and to keep Gynt forever young while others grow old around him is a mistake.

Thomas is not helped by the translation. Nabokov, talking about Pushkin, pointed out the dangers of translating poetry into rhyming verse. Gerry Bamman and Irene B. Berman have gone for a slangy contemporary version that has to stretch itself to rhyme "emperor" with "temper" and comes up with such pearls as He's a milquetoast, he's a scarecrow.

Well, now he's his inamorato.

John Conklin's set design on the other hand is inventive and entertaining. Toys are used throughout in clever ways, beginning in Gynt's nursery and reappearing later in various guises. Little wooden houses spread out on a green silk cloth form the set for the village wedding. White silk becomes the snowy mountains, yellow silk dotted with purple palm trees the beach where Gynt drinks wine and smokes cigars with his capitalist cronies. He mounts a huge toy pig with the Woman in Green, the troll with whom he fathers a child, and he rides off into the desert on a blown-up version of the hobbyhorse of his childhood, away from the monkeys who pelt him with little balls of excrement.

Such Brechtian staging is fragile and quickly spoiled by the intrusion of the literal. The trolls enter to the strains of the Beatles' Magical Mystery Tour. Is this the music with which to introduce the monsters that live in the dark side of our imagination? In fact, it is the grossly comic troll scene that points up the main flaw in this often engaging production. The trolls, with their Miss Piggy snouts and long thick gray tails, are more droll than troll. Their King (Stephen Rowe) does a brilliant takeoff on Al Pacino in Scarface, walking in a dislocated strut, blowing out his paunch and snarling in a gravelly Mafia-chief voice—but it produces laughter that wasn't Ibsen's intention. The bowl of mead Gynt drinks at his initiation by the trolls here becomes a bowl of urine noisily provided by the Woman in Green—again, stretching into broad comedy. And the troll baby, who should be an object of horror, is comic, limping along behind his mother with a large milk bottle in his mouth, twisting his tail behind him.

The trolls stand for the terrors of the
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