THE BRITISH IMAGINATION

FROM

THE TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY ARTHUR CROOK

A BRILLIANT, PROVOCATIVE SURVEY OF BRITISH CREATIVITY IN THE ARTS, RELIGION, SCIENCES, ADVERTISING AND MASS MEDIA

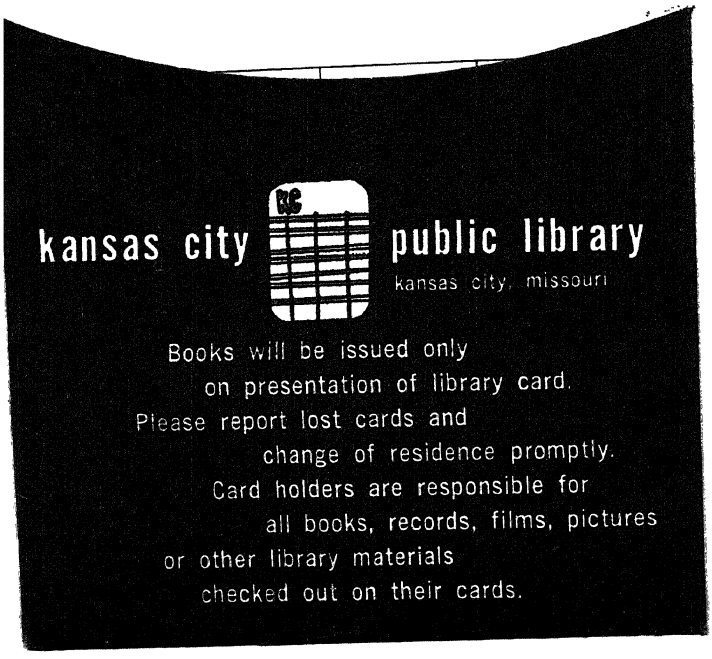
ATHENEUM PUBLISHERS

This collection of essays was first published as a special number of The London *Times Literary Supplement*. As a careful and trenchant survey of the British cultural scene it is currently unrivalled. It is here presented with an introduction by the editor of the *Supplement*, Arthur Crook, and forms an invaluable companion volume to *The American Imagination*, the *Supplement's* critical examination of the arts in America, which was published in 1960.

From autobiography through advertising, the essays deal wisely and entertainingly with every aspect of the current cultural scene; thus the multifarious activities in the fields of fiction, poetry, theatre, radio, television, music, ballet, art, philosophy, psychology, and science come in for balanced treatment. There are also essays which deal with the less central but equally intriguing subjects of snobbery, the universities, museums, and publishing and printing. Finally, an essay on women ('The Lady Vanishes, but What's Become of Her Daughters') poses questions of more than usual interest.

The essays in this book are of the highest quality, and, more than in many books by one hand, show a coherent whole. In the tradition of the *Supplement*, the many authors are anonymous.

942 T583b 61-15763
The Times, London. Literary
Supplement. $4.50
The British imagination



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A Critical Survey
from
The Times Literary Supplement

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
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New York ATHENEUM *Publishers*

1961

First published in this edition 1961

Printed in Great Britain by
Cox & Wyman Limited, London, Reading and Fakenham

AN INTRODUCTION

BY

ARTHUR CROOK

The British Imagination

Some years ago *The Times Literary Supplement* noticed Henry de Montherlant's *Les Célibataires* in the original French version. The reviewer was expansively appreciative of the book's excellences, but thought that it might well have been called *Lament for the Death of an Upper Class*. Several years later an English translation appeared. Again it was noticed at length in the *T.L.S.*, and again the review was favourable. It was emphatic in its disapproval of the title, which was 'rather absurd'. The title was *Lament for the Death of an Upper Class*.

Besides stressing the truism that there is no pleasing all of the people (particularly literary critics?) all of the time, this little incident reflects some of the pitfalls which may attend any attempt to find a common critical denominator amidst a welter of typically British characteristics and differences.

Possibly some of the chapters in this symposium would have been quite different had they been written by Mr. X or Mr. Y; but it was *not* conceived as a nosegay to the distinguished departed, as yet another contribution to the Coleridgean discussion of the nature of imagination, but as an attempt to show, to people overseas as well as at home, the British Imagination operating (well or badly) in practice today. And since in this context books cannot usefully be separated from other forms of self-expression, it was decided to take the wide view, to look at as many areas of creative thought and artistic expression as possible.

Here, then, was an opportunity to see ourselves in relation to the rest of the world; to test our originality—and our borrowings. Clearly too much must not be made of this grafting of one culture on to another. One of the chapters on the visual arts notes that a whole group of young British painters have been profoundly influenced by the scale,

space, gesture and imagery of American painting ('Their work is not derivative, but it is clearly orientated towards New York and not towards Paris, unlike most British *avant-garde* art during the past eighty years'); another insists that the native tradition is as powerful as ever. In this kind of self-scrutiny there can be differences in interpretation, just as there can be—for a time at least—prophets without too much honour in their own country.

The time lag between the emergence of ideas and their adoption and execution has to be bridged. If at the war's end ideas and high hopes seemingly abounded, since that time there has been a good deal of talk about the silent revolution and a decline of British culture running parallel with a decline of British political influence. And certainly the changing forms of British society offer a most compelling challenge to the imagination. The chapters here on the novel, for instance, indicate that the particularly distinguishing British mark in this sphere is its new treatments of class and its attitudes towards comedy. Changes in theatrical style have enabled a younger generation of playwrights to open up some hitherto neglected social territory. Television has unearthed an increasing number of writers with the gift of popular imagination—a gift which, it is claimed, 'enables them to address a mass audience without any sacrifice of integrity'. Such architectural enterprises as town design, the building of modern schools and the grouping together of disparate buildings for purposes like universities underline that the present generation of British architects cannot be isolated from social developments; and occasions like the Battersea open air exhibitions of sculpture have given an extra fillip to the inventiveness and vigour of that art's practitioners.

These are a few of the more immediate responses to the challenge; is it absurdly optimistic to see the present as only an interval between the acts, a pause before renewal?

Arthur Crook

Contents

The inside of an Englishman's head can be very fairly compared to a Murray's Guide: a great many facts, but few ideas; a great deal of exact and useful information, statistics, figures, reliable and detailed maps, short and dry historical notes, useful and moral tips by way of preface, no all-inclusive vision, and no relish of good writing. It is a collection of good, reliable documents, a convenient body of memoranda to get a man through his journey without help.

. . . By way of all these channels . . . positive information flows into the English brain as into a reservoir. Yet there is something more, a slope, as it were, which determines the flow of waters, the innate bent of the race, to wit their taste for facts and their fondness for experimental demonstration, the instinct for inductive reasoning and their need for certainty. Whoever has studied their literature and philosophy, from Shakespeare and Bacon down to the present day, knows that this inclination is hereditary in the English, that it belongs to the very shape of their minds, that it is part of their very way of understanding truth.

H. A. TAINE: *Notes sur l'Angleterre* (1871)
translated by Edward Hyams

The Whole Man

The British have a name for reticence. In the teeth of all evidence they are expected by foreigners to travel through life with rigid self-control, protected by umbrella, moustache, extinct pipe, shyness, and a gift for self-expression strictly monoglot, against any but minimal contacts with other members of the human race. It might be held that their common urge to express themselves in writing was a piece of supporting evidence. Autobiography belongs to that category of statement at which we naturally excel; like the sermon—another national art-form—it allows of no riposte. What we are bad at is the rapid give-and-take of ideas which alone frightens us into silence.

In fact, however, it is not clear that our writers write about themselves in order to be spared the difficulty of talking. More probably they write in order to engender love, not understanding. They write more often to amuse than to instruct. That is why, taken in the round, British autobiographical writing is the most entertaining in the world.

It is not unusual for us to trace the root of some representative British art or skill back to a foreign source, and so—in searching for the beginnings of autobiographical writing in English—we come inevitably to Montaigne. A blend of the didactic and the picturesque; a wish to please salted with a slight tang of superiority: that became, as soon as our habit of self-examination had borne fruit, the stamp of a typical apologia. Since personality as such was not considered of much interest until comparatively recent times, the imagination, when it sought to express a truth about some personal matter, wrapped it up in an essay. Neither Bacon nor Addison, Johnson nor

Pope, would have thought it seemly to write explicitly about themselves: yet through their prose or their verse the beat of a human heart can be detected—beating to a different rhythm in each case.

An essential fact had already been established by the end of the eighteenth century: that it is not the events of a human life which make good autobiography but the distillation of human spirit gathered from the mere passing of time. It was quite natural for Pepys to set down the evidence against himself in cipher. To write frankly about the peccadilloes of a single person—and that person oneself—was in the highest degree unseemly. What could be asserted from the pulpit against all humanity was perfectly proper, since humanity was known to be sinful and wretched. To use the same accusing voice against oneself was unthinkable; it required a code and an exculpatory tenderness towards vices which must somehow be presented—even though the writer were the only audience—as charming weaknesses. It is only nowadays that the blacker the picture of a lifetime the louder the applause with which it is likely to be acclaimed.

The discretion, then, of the Augustans, following the struggle to survive of the Renaissance, kept the British imagination strictly under control until the end of the eighteenth century. There was too much on hand for close introspection. The class structure of the country was changing as abruptly as its religion; and nobody was encouraged to linger over any single aspect of the individual in society. It might even be dangerous to do so. A civilization in full flush, or in the iridescence of decay, is far more likely to stimulate an introspective imagination than one which is climbing briskly towards its zenith. One would not expect, for instance, to find Turgenev's *A Sportsman's Sketches* being written in Soviet Russia. And this not because of their theme, their leisurely liberalism, but because societies which are thrusting forward have small time for individuals, unless the individual exactly represents the point of view of the crowd.

With the rise of the Romantics this discretion was abruptly broken. Again, perhaps, it was a foreign source which nourished a totally new manner of writing about the personal life: this time, Goethe's *Dichtung und Wahrheit.* It was a manner which produced at least one masterpiece in English, Ruskin's *Praeterita.* And it marks the end of objectivity in autobiographical writing.

For a distinction was still very clear between an autobiography and a

diary. Things could be noted in a private journal which were still impractical in print. A published book set out to impose a *persona* on the public: something not too wide of the mark—but, please Heaven, not too close either. Inevitably every autobiography is an essay in omission; but until the past thirty years the rules of the game were at any rate discernible: it was right to say not as much as a writer dared but as little. He could set the lights so as to show his own profile as advantageously as possible; he could linger over some improving reflections; he could digress into anecdote a little way only. The rest had to be noted down in secret: hence the existence of Southey's Commonplace Books or such *curiosa* as the unpublished journal of John Addington Symonds. Either too diffuse or too painfully particular for the *persona* to acknowledge, they kept their satisfactions purely for private use.

This had the somewhat paradoxical effect that writers were likely to be much more effective as biographers than as autobiographers. For already a thirst for information about human beings was abroad. Readers were barely content with a *persona*; they wanted the full man. And that was something from which the imagination flinched. A good example is the difference between Sir Edward Marsh's picture of himself as a lively Edwardian in *A Number of People* and Mr. Christopher Hassall's evaluation of the same evidence from without. Marsh, writing in his own person, does little more than put together a stirabout of little stories from which no precise image of a human being can be extracted. From the same material, however, Mr. Hassall has painted a careful portrait. The difference is that Marsh belonged in spirit to an age which could not unfetter the imagination when it came to self-portraiture, whereas Mr. Hassall is of a generation which has not only been allowed but compelled to speak out.

The turning point came after the First World War. Such books as *Goodbye to All That* and *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man* may seem less frank today than they did thirty years ago, but at least they put forward no *persona*: they set down a personal vision in exact terms of remembered reality. It may be that a world still free but profoundly shaken perceived for the first time—even if only half-consciously—that the concept of freedom was inseparable from the concept of the individual. Whatever gave an individual his identity therefore acquired a new value, even if it broke through accustomed standards of reticence.

We were learning from Viennese *savants* that the human race is very rum indeed; and ordinary observation readily confirmed their findings. Those writers who tried to stand aside from the quiddity of their fellows came to seem both false and dull. That is why the memoirs of public men—generals, politicians, and the like—strike the imagination so flaccidly. Alone among writers they still try to put forward a *persona* instead of a human being, so that interest is limited exclusively to the events which they describe, and never (or hardly ever) to the writer himself.

There is, however, one rider to this. All too often the events of public life are interesting, while the reactions of the private individual are not. There is thus a real danger that the subjective maundering of a trained and sensitive writer may be over-praised only because he has a certain gift for evocation. In varying degrees this is a quality which flaws, by its smooth facility, many of the autobiographies of contemporary writers. Almost alone Mr. William Plomer has escaped. His two volumes, *Double Lives* and *At Home*, stand out above a level plain of other poets' attractive and sympathetic prose because he wears the armour of his own discretion so supply and naturally. Others have been less wise. Either, like Mr. John Lehmann in *The Whispering Gallery* and *I am my Brother*, they have, as it were, folded away their personality and laid it in clean tissue paper, so that all we see is a neat package, uncreased, white, and crisp, from which the dust and wear of humanity have been excluded; or, like Mr. Stephen Spender, in *World within World*, they offer us tantalizing glimpses of a personal reality so deeply enclosed in general reflections that it never shines through entire; or, like Mr. Cecil Day Lewis, in *The Buried Day*, they submerge their own identity under a golden sense of the past. In each case what we get is all amber, and no fly.

A possible reason for this is the modes of social change through which Great Britain has been passing in the past forty years. They may have been benign, but they have been deeply confusing to the middle ranges of society from which writers are chiefly drawn. For, in spite of all prognostications, the final result of these changes—operated in cross-rhythms and at speeds so different that no timetable has ever been established—has been to leave the extremities of society much where they were in 1918: the very poor are far less numerous, but those who survive are still very poor; and as much can be said of the

very fortunate, either through birth or money. In between, however, the relative positions of the ordinary citizen have changed with bewildering rapidity: a fact in itself sufficient to account for the high content of nostalgia in the air. Those who see the past through a soft haze—like the background of a portrait by the Edwardian photographer, Alice Hughes—cannot bear to part with it, even though they are unable to pass it on to their children.

It is significant that perhaps the most exquisite of all nostalgic autobiographies, Mr. Sacheverell Sitwell's *All Summer in a Day*, was written at a slightly earlier period, when nostalgia could still be purely aesthetic. Nowadays the kind of past conjured up in those pages would need explanation and comment: a fact clearly perceived by Sir Osbert Sitwell when he came to write his own monumental *Left Hand, Right Hand*, which covers, in part, the same ground. By comparison with *All Summer in a Day*, Mr. Julian Fane's delightful *Morning*, written many years later, seems much more remote, only because it is composed out of a tower which, if still feudal, is now made of ivory.

Not unnaturally a sharp eye and a pointed nib accord with our brittle modern world. Writers with a biting edge to them have written good autobiographies because they had no special wish to establish their own identity: what amused them was to touch off a few Bengal lights, in order to throw a rare glow on the circumstances round them. Mr. Maclaren-Ross is a good example: also Mr. Arthur Calder-Marshall. If good nature constantly breaks through, there is a welcome note of satire in such books, as in E. M. Butler's *Paper Boats*.

It is not, however, the purpose here to make a list of names and book-titles, but rather to seek a thread which may guide us through the complexities of an age which loves to observe itself but has little sense of focus. For one thing the distinction between an autobiography and a journal is now erased: elsewhere more cavalierly than in England. We have as yet no Maurice Sachs, no Malaparte; but already the demarcation between fact and fancy is blurred among those of our writers who write of themselves. We understand both too much and too little about ourselves to write in tranquillity. Since we can look knowing over Kilvert or Augustus Hare, pinning a label here or there, we dare not run the risks they took unwittingly. And so something from the diary is dredged up to give spice to the autobiography; but

in the end there is always a reserve; and the work of art suffers accordingly.

It may be that people tend to write such books too soon. Certainly the elders, like Mr. Somerset Maugham or Gwen Raverat, have been more successful than their juniors in saying what they wished to say and no more. Their autobiographical writing leaves no sense of something left unsaid. Likewise some very young men have managed to convey a natural innocence combined with a keenness of scent in the hunt after life, which promised the highest satisfactions had they only been spared to finish their work: Alun Lewis, Dylan Thomas, Denton Welch, among them: each pursued by an unhappy fatality. Since they died young, their names have been surrounded by a romantic glow; but under the romanticism there is a solid weight of achievement. In particular, the work of Denton Welch deserves more acclaim than it has received in the years since his death; for no one better than he has managed to blend the intimacy of a diary with the detachment of an analyst.

The weakness of much modern autobiography in this country is, nevertheless, inseparable from work such as this. It amounts to a strain of cosiness, of excessive sensibility. Here again the fault lies with our society rather than with the individuals of which it is composed. We have been told by Jimmy Porter that there are no causes left to fight for, and although this is at best a half-truth there is a painful disparity between the personal scope of a modern writer and the immense problems by which he is threatened, along with the rest of civilization. Into the bargain, British life *is* undeniably cosy. It does not favour adventures either of the body or the mind. The kind of intellectual clash which made possible Newman's *Apologia pro Vita Sua* seldom recurs; and the political tensions which might have led to fascinating personal statements have in fact been resolved by other means. Mr. Philip Toynbee has given some account of himself in relation to his friends, and occasionally a writer of the right or the left—mainly the former—has interpolated his own recollections into what is primarily an essay or a relation of fact. But we have no Julien Benda, no autobiographer chiefly interested in the analysis of ideas. Our memories are cluttered with nannies, teas under the limes, the sound of bat on ball, and witty Oxford conversation.

We have not even an effective Alfred Kazin or Samuel Chotzinoff

to offset this by describing life on the wrong side of the tracks, since the circumstances of poverty in Great Britain are likely to be grey and good-tempered—two conditions which make for small liveliness. Mr. Colin Wilson, it is true, has written better of himself than of any other theme, and may well one day sum up a lifetime in a first-rate autobiography; in any case, the kind of book he might embark on is one which is at present to seek: not cosy, not too comfortably meditative, not nostalgic, but positive and frank, and unembarrassed. What we have, meantime, is at least of high entertainment value, since autobiography, in some form, creeps into every kind of book—from travel-writing to political manifestos. And we can at least be grateful for being entertained.

The Reticent Faith

Mr. Kernan added:

—The service of the Irish church, used in Mount Jerome, is simpler, more impressive, I must say.

Mr. Bloom gave prudent assent. The language of course was another thing.

Mr. Kernan said with solemnity:

—*I am the resurrection and the life.* That touches a man's inmost heart.

—It does, Mr. Bloom said

So much turns on Bloom's reservation—on whether the words of the Anglican liturgy are indeed another thing, or whether the web of language and life is single and seamless. Bloom appeases his teased Roman conscience by isolating the aesthetic experience; he goes on silently to wonder how the words can touch 'the fellow in the six feet by two with his toes to the daisies'. He is not one of those for whom phrases like *the kindly fruits of the earth* are features of an inner landscape, scarcely verbal, certainly not quoted words, not words in inverted commas.

Bloom coaxes forward for our inspection that strangely simple continuity of feeling in which *I am the resurrection and the life* has been found at once beautiful and true; he exposes a fact of English literature (as of English life) which works in hidden ways and is often misinterpreted. The individual who feels the received verbal form to be sufficient will naturally rest upon it, and this reclining is easily taken for complacency; while the absence of overt preoccupation with religion points, apparently, to a national and rather gross indifference.

English reticence about religion since the seventeenth century is not,

even so, a straightforward affair of the Authorized Version and the Book of Common Prayer. The problem of a dead patch in sensibility cannot be merely swept aside; there are real embarrassments; there is the religious inanity of our greatest novelist. Dickens never voiced a thought about religion that was not coarse or crass or religiose. Or (to be fair) critical: his destructive energy is impressive; the cold church in *Dombey*, the ritual humbug following Mrs. Gargery's death, the compelled, uncomprehending children. Mr. Chadband will do—but not the Christmasy people. Not the exclamation. Not the canny *vox humana* of dying to the Lord's Prayer.

And so with Thackeray's criticism. Is there a neater or juster touch in all his fiction than the pause for refreshment by the undertaker's men after Pitt Crawley's funeral? Their sitting at ease, pewter pots flashing in the sun, unites a rare and welcome economy with the tart joy of Thackeray at full strength and stretch. But on the positive side one can only say that Thackeray is seldom Christmasy. In fact, and to generalize, there is very little to be learnt about religious emotion in the English novel, except from the women writers.

More than other people, perhaps, we have suffered a self-alienating bewilderment through the Reformation, a loss of touch which makes a stranger of the past. Matthew Arnold's reasons for thinking that Chaucer lacked high seriousness were not just Victorian and transient. (What would Chaucer have said about the eternal not-ourselves that makes for righteousness?) And more than other people we have admitted a cramping censorship, often self-censorship. If Doctor Johnson had built a poem out of the thought that we shall receive no letters in the grave, our religious literature would be richer than it is. His reasons for thinking that a man ought not to give written expression (unless in Latin) to such doubts and fears as his friends used to find him entertaining alone before the fire, were Augustan, of course, but more widely English too.

The English Romantic poets, especially Wordsworth in his youth, caused the idea of Christian nature poetry to appear quite unnecessarily paradoxical. To say that we find our joy here, on this green earth, or not at all, was a terrific heresy which the textbooks, peacemakers that they are, do their best to minimize, but which some distinguished Christian writers have felt keenly and with a distressing sense of separation from great imaginative discoveries; too much of what the

Romantics said was beautifully false, and writing about the natural object under their shadow has often meant the management of an uncomfortable love-hate relationship. Only Christina Rossetti and Hopkins have been very memorably undismayed.

Mr. Eliot, like Messrs. Bloom and Kernan, has surveyed the English religious scene from outside—before he decided to come along in. The advantage conferred by this two-eyed stance of his can scarcely be exaggerated. It is relatively easy for him, once inside, not to sound parochial; while he also escapes a subtler and connected danger, which is that the contemporary statement made pointedly from within the Church of England may find, without meaning to, two audiences. Consider the double response to Mr. Betjeman. To those outside—and it must have been largely to them that his collected poems were selling a thousand copies a week not long ago—his talent strikes altogether happy; they go to him for period charm and the flavour of harmless, outlandish practices.

But those within find the characteristic evocations next door too sad:

> How warm the many candles shine
> On SAMUEL DOWBIGGIN'S design
> For this interior neat,
> These high box pews of Georgian days
> Which screen us from the public gaze
> When we make answer meet;
> How gracefully their shadow falls
> On bold pilasters down the walls
> And on the pulpit high.
> The chandeliers would twinkle gold
> As pre-Tractarian sermons roll'd
> Doctrinal, sound and dry.

For them, the questions artfully delayed until the final stanza are importunate throughout:

> And must that plaintive bell in vain
> Plead loud along the dripping lane?
> And must the building fall?

Finding the money to restore the Church of St. Katherine, Chisel-

hampton, Oxon (the occasion of this poem), is, as Mr. Betjeman might say, no joke; the situation is at odds with his spry verses, as happens so often in his work. And to nurse the memory of better days proves a painful exercise of the historical sense—painful and perhaps ill-omened, a sign of failing old age, like the advertisements which are appearing at this moment to tell the drinkers at home, the television-watchers, what nice, traditional places pubs are, how worth supporting.

Mr. Eliot's apprehension of Anglicanism is a complex triumph, in which we are concerned to isolate the simple authority of foreignness. To say that an Englishman born could not have written *Four Quartets* is to do more than to make an obvious point about literary stature in our time; for while Mr. Eliot's pronouncing upon the tradition would have failed absurdly were he not a major poet, the pronouncement itself, his manner of defining this task and of addressing himself to it, proceeds from a careful, prolonged scrutiny, initially *ab extra*, of a society and a civilization. The observant stranger is in evidence here as he is (to compare great things with small) in Mr. Eliot's quaintly lucid elevation of the rite of Music Hall.

It is also true that his way of speaking advisedly, his grapplings with a stated religious theme, set him over against a dominant English contentment with half-knowledge—against Hamlet's 'Let be' and the absence of intellectual forcing which, while it largely determines the central and characteristic within Shakespeare's variety, also makes him our most English writer. National genius, as well as national prejudice, sustains Keats's outburst against poetry which has a design on us; and this helps to explain why the attempt to separate for discussion a religious strand in the English imagination is likely to succeed only when success is not very important.

Here is one way in which our contemporary literature is constantly being misvalued. The foreign students who press forward at university summer schools with observations and questions about the religion of 'Gram Grin' seldom allow themselves to wonder whether the Catholic dilemma which Mr. Greene manages so expertly and so often is really the most interesting thing about his fiction. They have their hands round the theme which he has poked out in front of his narrative, and they will not be cheated of what ought to be, internationally, a most serious valuation. But when the authentic voice sounds through the twaddle of *Pericles* with 'A terrible childbed hast

thou had, my dear', there can be no distinguishing (any more than there can be denying) of religious fear and reverence within the humanity that contemplates this single fate. Nor are the frequent critical dissections justified when—in *Macbeth*, say—the working of an instructed Christian conscience is apparent throughout: Shakespeare's religion is still not a subject.

The problem of inextricability is primarily but not solely Shakespearian; indeed we meet it once in the twentieth century. D. H. Lawrence thought of himself as a religious man, which has less to do with a youth of hymn-singing and chapel-going than with the mood and the mature achievement of his speaking up for life. Out of context this is vague, of course. But so is:

> And for all this, nature is never spent;
> There lives the dearest freshness deep down things

which becomes intimate, in the work of art, with the Christian precision of the great Jesuit poet. The result of discussing Lawrence's speaking up for life would be to expose the fact of stature, and so to bring him closer to Hopkins and farther from the best of his contemporaries, Virginia Woolf and Mr. Forster. The end, then, is silence, for a critical address which does its best to square up to religion will fail for lack of relevant documentation in the work of living creative writers. We distinguish Mr. Eliot; but Mr. Eliot, we say, is a special case, as he is a special Englishman.

The Workaday World that the Novelist Never Enters

In his essay on Dickens, George Orwell remarks casually that 'in Dickens's novels anything in the nature of work happens off-stage', and he might have gone on to say that what is true of Dickens is true in a lesser degree of almost all British novelists. From Trollope to Thackeray, Hardy to Huxley, Wells to Waugh our novelists have been conspicuously reticent in showing their characters at work, particularly when that work was in the nature of manual labour. They have, of course, told us that they were working: that is quite another thing. The difference can be pointed neatly by considering the range of occupations followed by Augie March in Saul Bellow's novel. Newspaper boy, Christmas extra in a toy department, flower shop assistant, agent and companion to a paralysed estate agent and pool-room owner, salesman for women's shoes, model for riding habits in a saddle shop, trade union organizer, trainer of eagles: we are not yet half-way through, and what is remarkable is that Mr. Bellow does not stop at telling us that Augie March followed these occupations, but shows him working at them, with all the conviction of apparent knowledge.

The truth is that most English novelists are educated in a way that precludes any wide range of practical experience. They do not work their way through public schools, as many Americans work their way through college. Many of them never do a day's work in their lives (except in wartime) which brings them into close touch with people of a class outside their own; and those novelists who come from the

working class emancipate themselves from it as quickly as possible, using their youthful experiences only as material for comment or recollection, never transcribing them in the direct unsentimental way of Mr. Bellow and half a dozen other American novelists. The idea of class distinctions remains the most important single factor in the modern English novel, and even those who imagine themselves unaffected by its subtleties make assumptions about the nature of society that would seem strange to the people of any other country. The myth of the gamekeeper and Lady Chatterley, of earthy virility and upper-class sexual unfulfilment runs, in some way or another, through a great deal of modern English fiction. Work is something of which our novelists are ignorant, or which they do not choose to write about, so that books like Mr. Nigel Balchin's *The Small Back Room* or Mr. Roy Fuller's *Image of a Society*, which show in detail the operations of a wartime scientific unit and of a building society, are honourable rarities. The things our novelists know about are the grades and subtleties and shifts of society. They tend to see their own natures, and all human relationships, in this context, with a special emphasis on childhood which leads them towards fantasies of guilt and innocence.

The two outstanding fictional achievements of the past few years, not merely in their bulk but in their nature, have been the series of novels associated with the names of C. P. Snow and Anthony Powell. Both are primarily interesting as examinations of English social structure, although this may have been no more than a part of the novelists' intentions. In an explanatory preface to *The Conscience of the Rich* C. P. Snow says:

> Obviously, through the entire work there is an attempt to give some insights into society: those have been better understood than I expected when I began. Nevertheless, the inner design has always lain elsewhere—at any rate for me, and I cannot speak for anyone else. It consists of a resonance between what Lewis Eliot sees and what he feels . . . Lewis in *The Conscience of the Rich* observes both the love of power and the renunciation of power. He observes these again, at various levels, in *The Masters*, *The Light and the Dark* and *The New Men*. In *Time of Hope*, *Homecomings*, and a later book he goes through those experiences himself.

One is safe in saying that only a small percentage of C. P. Snow's readers have apprehended this central design, and that only a fraction

of this small percentage find it significant. The prime importance of the *Strangers and Brothers* series is surely its loving concern with bureaucratic man. The plots of *The Masters* and *The Affair* deal with the decisions to be taken by dons at a Cambridge college about, in the first case the election of a new Master and in the second the expulsion of a Fellow; *The New Men* is much concerned with departmental argument and internecine warfare between the scientists working on the development of the atomic bomb and the administrators handling the project; similar problems appear in the background of other books. It is plain that the whole atmosphere and procedure of jockeying for power holds a fascination for Snow. His lobbyists are always calculating votes and possibilities. 'Nightingale can't cross over again . . . you're also counting on Gay, but I set him off against Pilbrow'. *The New Men*, and part of *Time of Hope*, show the dangers of generalization, for the first gives a brilliant picture of the attempts to make the atomic pile work, and the second suggests admirably the atmosphere of life in a barrister's chambers. Here, undoubtedly, is an English novelist writing from the inside of men at work, but they are in both cases technicians, of science and the law, and they do not really provide exceptions to the rule that our novelists never deal from the inside with ordinary working-class occupations.

The five volumes so far published of Mr. Powell's *The Music of Time* examine with the most delicate care a small section of upper-class and Bohemian society (C. P. Snow's characters are as limited as Mr. Powell's, rarely ranging far outside civil servants, dons and scientists) in the years between the wars. The pleasure that English writers take in recollections of childhood and youth has already been mentioned, and the first volume in the series, *A Question of Upbringing*, looked on its publication deceptively like a dozen other books about public school life. Mr. Powell's purpose, like C. P. Snow's, was only gradually shown, and perhaps has not even yet been fully revealed. The sort of pleasure found by English readers in these books is probably not fully communicable to those unsoaked in the *mores* of our social life. As nearly as one can convey this pleasure, it rests in our enjoyment of the skill with which Mr. Powell conveys the strict limits of class feeling in society, and at the same time suggests the ways in which those limits are continually being extended and flouted. The incursion of a Widmerpool into the lives of the Stringhams and the Gorings and the

Walpole-Wilsons, for example, is wonderfully significant of the changing form of society, and also a portent of the Widmerpudlian wrath to come. . . . But explanations are altogether inadequate and Mr. Powell, even more than C. P. Snow, is likely to remain primarily a writer for English readers.

Social distinctions, childhood, fantasy: these are the things that make most of our novelists put pen to paper. Among them one includes our women novelists, and it is a sad truth that we have no women writers comparable in wit and intelligence with Miss Mary McCarthy, or in real sensibility with Miss Carson McCullers. What one seems to see in looking at a dozen known and respected figures is one quintessential lady novelist, who tricks out an unvarying sentimentality of approach with all sorts of emotional ingenuities, so that a work by nature destined for the glossy magazines receives instead, or also, the accolade of the Book Society. From this general stricture the novels of Miss Compton-Burnett must certainly be excepted; but, witty and delightful as these extraordinary books are, they do appear to be rather too much like one another. 'I do not feel that I have any real or organic knowledge of life later than 1910,' Miss Compton-Burnett has said herself, and it sometimes seems that she has been content to stop at an even earlier point in time than that, and at that point to write over and over again her book about the skeleton of murder or adultery or incest in the family cupboard.

Among those who have most successfully explored our national concern with childhood and fantasy is Mr. William Golding. *Lord of the Flies*, his first book, blended the two: children are shipwrecked on an island, and what begins as Stevensonian romance ends as a tale of horror. This is the sort of thing that we have always been good at. George Orwell's *Animal Farm* also takes as its starting point a vision of innocence and shows the slow corruption of that innocence by human wickedness and social circumstance; and Orwell's social and moral fable, like Mr. Golding's, is perfectly contained within a story so simple that it seems really to be written for children. (And in fact children who know nothing of the Soviet Union have wept at the fate of Boxer.) *Lord of the Flies* was a perfect book in its way, certainly one of the most successful pieces of imaginative fiction in recent years. In his later books, *Pincher Martin* and *Free Fall*, theme and moral are not so happily fused: but Mr. Golding is a writer truly obsessed by moral problems, one of

the very few contemporary novelists who seem capable of producing a work of greatness rather than of talent.

The sort of innocent release that Orwell looked for in the world of childhood (Winston Smith's dream of rebellion in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is finally destroyed by a nursery rhyme) has been the distantly seen objective of several other writers. Childhood is not only a time of innocence but also of unblunted sensibility, and it is this sensibility that many recent novelists have found interesting. It would be wrong to think of this as merely escapism, although it must be considered as a denial or a by-passing of the 'real' world in which most people go out of a small box in the morning into another box where they work all day before returning to their box-home in the evening, there to watch, many of them, a fantasy life being pursued in a box smaller still. Most of our novelists are reluctant to write about this world, whether in realistic terms or symbolically and they criticize it only in the sense that an escaping prisoner is criticizing the penal system.

Childhood and fantasy are refugees, undoubtedly—for Mr. L. P. Hartley in his best books, for Mr. William Sansom in his comic and terrifying stories, for Mr. Mervyn Peake in his very curious Gormenghast books, and at times for Miss Olivia Manning, Miss Elizabeth Bowen, Mr. P. H. Newby, Mr. Rex Warner: but they are also, of course, consciously used as the material for creating works of art. Such an art may be exquisite, but it must be also, except in the hands of a really great artist, very limited. Those who look for some approach to the problems of our time more direct than that made by our fantasists and recallers of childhood, and less narrow than those made by C. P. Snow or Anthony Powell, some native equivalent of Augie March, will be disappointed. Our novelists do indeed make a social approach to comedy, but it is not of this kind, and probably the only living British novelists who set out to present a realistic picture of the world we are living in are Mr. Angus Wilson and one or two crime novelists, in particular Mr. Graham Greene.

It is with no disobliging ironical intention that one puts Graham Greene among writers of crime novels, but, rather to indicate the way in which the 'crime novel' and the 'novel proper' have tended to merge together in the past decade, and to suggest that, so far as any distinction between them should now be made, the violence of the 'crime novel' has a peculiar appropriateness to the contemporary world. It is

true, of course, that the novelist must *feel* this violence—it must be emotionally important to him, not a mere detail of the plot: and it is in this sense that one calls Mr. Greene a crime novelist, as one calls Dostoevsky a crime novelist. Books like *The Confidential Agent*, *Brighton Rock*, *The Ministry of Fear*, *The Quiet American*, *Our Man in Havana*, are using the apparatus of the crime novel or the thriller for serious purposes, and even such a book as *The Power and the Glory* employs that classical technique of hunter and hunted which has been one of the features of the crime story since Godwin. The fact that all Mr. Greene's books are entertaining and that he calls some of them entertainments should not blind anybody to the seriousness that is always showing through. What Graham Greene has done is to carry out in fiction that precept of Mr. Eliot's in relation to poetic drama that it should take place on two levels.

> The indispensable merit of a verse play is that it shall be interesting, that it shall hold the audience all the time. And it will not do that if the audience is expected to do too much of the work. . . . The interest should be one interest throughout, not merely a succession of interests, or of momentary surprises. The play should have form: it needs more form than an ordinary conversation piece; it must have 'dramatic form' and also the *musical pattern* which can be obtained only by verse; and the two forms must be one.

What Mr. Greene has done is analogous to what is suggested here. He is, like Mr. Eliot, a writer with several messages to deliver: about Roman Catholicism, about the forms of society and the nature of man. How can one convey a message about the truths of Catholicism in ways that will interest non-Catholics? The form of the crime novel has provided an answer that all who run may read. The best of his books have the excitement of those written by, say, Mr. Eric Ambler, and they may be read simply upon this level: but interwoven with the excitement are the truths that Mr. Greene has it in him to utter, and the interest is 'one interest throughout'.

Mr. Angus Wilson, by contrast, approaches the novel with the realism that one might expect from an admirer of Zola, a realism of which he is the only serious exponent, now that Mr. Alex Comfort has been silent as a novelist for so long that one regretfully supposes the silence permanent. Mr. Wilson's best novel remains his first, *Hemlock and After*, a powerful unorderly novel about the moral fragmentation

of post-war society, exemplified by the collapse of a literary pillar who has become a homosexual. Chaotic, and even at times ridiculous—as in the portraits of the working-class homosexuals and of the procuress Mrs. Curry—the book is nevertheless, like the later *Anglo-Saxon Attitudes*, extraordinarily impressive as a whole. The intention is realistic, the result often wildly exaggerated, rather as though Zola's realism had been rolled up with the melodrama of Dickens, and the whole thing given a strange gamey flavour of Mr. Wilson's own.

One ends where one began, with regret that our novelists find it so difficult to show convincingly the details of ordinary lives. In a sense all our writers evade this, and the reality they picture is the sum of such evasions. It would be too puritanical, too much like a call for the dreariest sort of social realism, to leave it at that, but it is certainly true that the subject-matter of our best novelists in recent years, and their attitude towards it, has been too narrowly literary. It seems likely that Mr. Greene and Mr. Wilson, rather than the other writers mentioned here, are guides towards the novel's future development in this country. It is likely to be inclusive rather than exclusive, to welcome the new features of society rather than to ignore them. Not less art, but more life, is what the novel chiefly needs today.

The Uses of Comic Vision

It is, and has been for a long time, the most prized of our national possessions: a sense of humour. How much and how often we congratulate ourselves upon it: what a stay it has been to us throughout two wars, how it alleviated the coming of rationing and the dropping of bombs, how since the war it has enabled us to look with tolerance on the diminishment of Empire and the encroachments of the welfare state. A modern educated Briton will be ready to smile at the description of him as a colonialist or a has-been, a communist or a reactionary, and he is likely to remain complacent under the suggestion that the nation he belongs to is a second-class power: but it will be unwise to suggest to him that he lacks a sense of humour. Those are fighting words.

Such a national characteristic is bound to spill over into literature, and the most striking difference between the British and the American novel over the past half-century is the comic approach (including satire and irony within the category) made by British novelists, compared with their American counterparts. Compare H. G. Wells, Aldous Huxley, Graham Greene—all of them writers using the form of the novel to convey a message about society—with Dreiser, Sinclair Lewis, Norman Mailer, and it is immediately apparent that for the Americans humour is superimposed, where for the British writer it is a natural medium of expression. By and large (with important exceptions like D. H. Lawrence, George Orwell and C. P. Snow), it is through humour, using the word in the broad sense that we employ when congratulating ourselves on the depth and variety of our own sense of humour, that the British imagination has found its character-

istic form in the modern novel. It is this vehicle of humour that many of our novelists have chosen through the past half-century to express their social feelings, or their attitude towards a moral situation.

What a distance there is, on the face of it, between the humour of Wells and that of Huxley. Wells was a nineteenth-century liberal who knew that the ideas he believed in must inevitably triumph: who charted for us, as though the maps seen in his mind's eye were reality, that world of asepsis and universal birth control in which progressive scientists worked to create a world state run by enlightened men very much like H. G. Wells. The humour of *Kipps*, *Mr. Polly*, *Tono-Bungay*, and the other books of Wells's finest period, sprang from love and optimism. Wells had no doubt that the descendants of the lower middle class from which he sprang, and which he viewed with such a lovingly humorous eye, were destined to inherit the world state. Such an attitude could not, for the young, survive the First World War, and, as Orwell said, after 1920 Wells did not really understand the sort of world he was living in, but 'squandered his talents in killing paper dragons'. Nothing wears worse than humour which is too perfectly of its time, and the faintly self-congratulatory air with which Wells viewed his Little Man heroes has seemed to later generations uncommonly near to smugness. Perhaps a certain sort of smugness is inseparable from optimism.

It is commonly said that Aldous Huxley's early novels are satires, and on the evidence of *Antic Hay* and *Those Barren Leaves* G. K. Chesterton compared Huxley to Swift. Yet what Huxley has to offer us in these books is not the moral indignation of one who feels himself detached from the attitudes he is describing but an ironical view of the nature of man and the end of human aspiration, in which the narrator is himself involved. The characters who move in the beautifully stylized world of *Antic Hay* and *Those Barren Leaves*, Gumbril and Mrs. Viveash, Lypiatt and Mercaptan, Calamy and Chelifer and Cardan, are viewed as part of a wry, sad human comedy. In place of Wells's insistent optimism Mr. Huxley puts an almost equally rigid pessimism. Yet beneath the surface differences Wells and Huxley have something important in common. In a sense both of these writers *use* humour in much the same way, as an alleviation of a social message which might otherwise seem either boring or too plainly parsonical. The use of humour in this way is a particularly British habit, so deep-seated that

we hardly notice it as unusual. An American novelist wishing to criticize advertising, for instance, does so head-on, with moralistic violence. How different is the approach made by Mr. Huxley, when Mr. Boldero talks to Theodore Gumbril about the best way of advertising Gumbril's Patent Small-Clothes:

> 'We must make the bank clerk and the civil servant feel proud of being what they are and at the same time feel ashamed that, being such splendid people, they should have to submit to the indignity of having blistered hindquarters. In modern advertising you must flatter your public—not in the oily, abject, tradesman-like style of the old advertisers, crawling before clients who were their social superiors; that's all over now. It's we who are the social superiors—because we've got more money than the bank clerks and the civil servants. Our modern flattery must be manly, straightforward, sincere, the admiration of equal for equal—all the more flattering as we aren't equals.' Mr. Boldero laid a finger to his nose. 'They're dirt and we're capitalists. . . .' He laughed.

It would be difficult, again, to think of a sort of humour more obviously removed from Huxley's over-civilized irony than that of Wyndham Lewis's 'soldier of humour', Ker-Orr:

> I am a large blond clown, ever so vaguely reminiscent (in person) of William Blake, and some great American boxer whose name I forget. I have large strong teeth which I gnash and flash when I laugh. . . . I am aware that I am a barbarian. By rights I should be paddling about in a coracle. My body is large, white and savage. But all the fierceness has become transformed into *laughter*. It still looks like a visi-gothic fighting-machine, but it is in reality a laughing machine. . . . I simply cannot help converting everything into burlesque patterns. And I admit that I am disposed to forget that people are real—that they are, that is, not subjective patterns belonging specifically to me, in the course of this joke-life which indeed has for its very principle a denial of the accepted actual.

For the purpose of rough definition it can be said that Ker-Orr is Lewis himself, who, when launching a full-scale attack on the many social forces of which he disapproved, did so primarily through the medium of humour. The men and women who jerk puppet-like through *The Apes of God*, *Tarr* and the other novels, are intended by the barbarian showman first of all to be funny: and it is this, after all,

that joins Lewis to Huxley, as it joined Huxley and Wells, this belief that the natural way of conveying social attitudes is through humour.

Perhaps it may be objected that the work even of professional humorists, of Jerome K. Jerome, say, or George and Weedon Grossmith, has always some social intention, if we look hard enough for it: but the point being made here is that modern British novelists express through the use of humour not merely a vague social intention but a whole philosophy of life. Changes of social and philosophical stance which affect a whole generation are often indicated by changes in a novelist's attitude towards his hero. *Lucky Jim* was recognized immediately as a very funny book, but it was seen also to be one of those novels which, regardless of their absolute importance, set a tone of feeling for a whole decade. It is not fanciful to see in Jim Dixon a descendant of Kipps or Mr. Polly or George Ponderevo. Like them he is lower middle class and, in a way, proud of it, like them he feels that this lower middle class contains the seeds of social virtue: but to suggest the similarities is to see at once the yawning differences. George Ponderevo's nice observation of the gradations of society at Bladesover House would have seemed to Jim Dixon mere acquiescence in an established order, and that famous passage at the end of *Tono-Bungay* might almost have qualified for attack in a fellow-lecture to the one Dixon gave on Merrie England:

> We tear into the great spaces of the future and the turbines fall to talking in unfamiliar tongues. Out to the open we go, to windy freedom and trackless ways. Light after light goes down. England and the Kingdom, Britain and the Empire, the old prides and the old devotions, glide abeam, astern, sink down upon the horizon, pass—pass. The river passes—London passes, England passes. . . .

Mr. Amis's lower-middle-class anti-hero has no use either for George Ponderevo's sort of revolt against the powers of Bladesover (the chalking of a rude word below that 'colossal group of departed Drews as sylvan deities, scantily clad' in the saloon would have been more in his line) or for his later sentimental socialism. Jim Dixon's purpose in life is the preservation of his own integrity. He refuses to be taken in by the deceits of social eminence or hard cash, and his clownish, destructive energy is devoted wholly to the maintenance of his own equilibrium. He regards all social idealism as self-evidently suspect or

absurd. The contrast can be pointed further. Wells had no real doubt that his lower middle-class heroes were unique. 'I don't suppose there ever was a chap quite like me before,' Kipps reflects at the end of the book that bears his name: but Jim Dixon is aware of his own weakness, aware that his attempts to assert 'independence' are mostly secret or furtive, matters of voices imitated on the telephone or faces pulled in front of the mirror. Jim Dixon's virtues are all negative; he is not a money-worm or a culture-grub, he may be trodden down by authority but he will never be deceived.

Many American, and other foreign, readers are baffled by the importance attached here to *Lucky Jim*, which they regard as nothing more than a fairly engaging bustling farce: and it is a book which perfectly exemplifies the insularity of English humour, and its intense concern with class. For that matter, it may be true that a good many readers in this country will find it difficult to recognize through such a comparison of Amis and Wells the *Lucky Jim* they have enjoyed; and it must be confessed that the idea of several critics immediately after the book's publication that Jim Dixon was, so to speak, Mr. Amis's Ker-Orr, a vehicle for showing up the frauds and hypocrisies of post-war cultural Britain and posing against them deliberately the virtues of an aggressive nihilism, will not quite stand up to examination. Mr. Amis's later books, *That Uncertain Feeling* and *I Like It Here*, show him as a much more amiable person, and a much less serious writer, than his first novel suggested. It was, as it seems now, by chance sympathy rather than artistic design that *Lucky Jim* struck prophetically the true note of the 1950s: a genial philistinism both apparent and real, a firm distrust of all sorts of merits.

The sort of thing that was expected from Mr. Amis after *Lucky Jim* has in fact been offered, perhaps, only by Mr. Alan Sillitoe in his novel *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* and his collection of short stories, *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner*. The hero of the remarkable title story in that collection is a Borstal boy who knows that he can easily win the Borstal Cross Country race, but deliberately refuses to do so, because victory would put him on the 'wrong' side:

> The pop-eyed potbellied governor said to a pop-eyed potbellied Member of Parliament who sat next to his pop-eyed potbellied whore of a wife that I was his only hope for getting the Borstal Blue Ribbon Prize Cup For

> Long Distance Cross Country Running (All England), which I was, and it set me laughing to myself inside, and I didn't say a word to any potbellied pop-eyed bastard that might give them real hope, though I knew the governor anyway took my quietness to mean he'd got that cup already stuck on the bookshelf in his office among the few other mildewed trophies.

It is the part of honesty, as the hero of this story feels it, to show how easily he could have won the race and then to stop deliberately. As he expects, he is punished. 'The governor . . . didn't respect my honesty at all; not that I expected him to, or tried to explain it to him, but if he's supposed to be educated then he should have more or less twigged it'. It is this sort of opposition between nihilistic individuals and any sort of organized society, between *us* at the bottom and any kind of *them* at the top, that Mr. Sillitoe observes: and if there is to be a writer who will express in literature the 'Leave us Alone' philosophy of young people at the beginning of the 1960s, Mr. Sillitoe seems at the moment the most likely one to do it.

Humour in English prose writers is, in fact, never 'pure' as the humour of Thurber and Perelman may be called pure; it is always making social points. The only purely humorous novel written by Evelyn Waugh is his first book, *Decline and Fall*. In all the other books after that wonderful burst of high spirits humour is deliberately employed in the service of Mr. Waugh's conception of social and religious order. *The Loved One* contains in its few pages a damaging criticism of American civilization, done wholly through savage comedy; *Put Out More Flags* is implicitly much more than a good joke about the war.

Or consider such a short story as Angus Wilson's 'Such Darling Dodos', in which Tony, an ageing dandyish Catholic homosexual, comes after the war's end to visit his wonderfully progressive cousins Robin and Priscilla. For years they have triumphed over him emotionally, secure in their Basque Relief Funds and Popular Fronts and Child Psychiatry Clinics, happy in their sympathy with the young. Now Robin is dying of cancer, and the two young people who come in for a drink after lunch prove to be utterly hostile to his ideas, saying that the organization of a rally to feed the Hunger Marchers was rather a theatrical approach to a national problem, and that party politics is a dirty game anyway. Suddenly Tony realizes that he is, at last, on the

side of youth, and he pronounces sentence. 'Poor Robin and Priscilla are extinct, I'm afraid. They're dodos really, but such darling dodos.' In this unrelievedly bitter story we are spared nothing. Tony is a painted clown, the undergraduates are cloddishly obtuse, Robin and Priscilla are seen in the full horror of their leather-sandalled, open-neck-shirted, cocoa-drinking, high principled tedium. Yet the tone of the whole thing, if one disentangles it from the bitterness of the message, is undeniably comic.

Mr. Anthony Powell's fine series of novels called *The Music of Time* is discussed elsewhere in these pages, but it is impossible to end an essay about humour in the modern English novel without mentioning these books. Mr. Powell's early novels owed a great deal to Mr. Evelyn Waugh, and it is deeply interesting to see how the Powell comic style has developed quite away from this early influence, so that in *The Music of Time* series every incident is treated as though it were part of a slow-motion film. The famous passage involving the pouring of sugar over Widmerpool's head takes almost four pages in the telling, and produces on the reader a curious impression of actually watching the whole thing happen. It is the extraordinary variety of English social comedy, covering as it does this slow-motion technique of Anthony Powell's and the more obvious cinematic glitter of Graham Greene, the acidity of Angus Wilson and the elegance of Evelyn Waugh, the exaggerative comedy of Wyndham Lewis and the self-involved irony of Aldous Huxley, the roughneck knockabout of Kingsley Amis and John Wain, that gives one confidence in the future use of comedy as a principal medium for expressing the British moral and social imagination.

Evaluation in Practice

Over the past few years a number of more or less new lines of thought, or points of view, have emerged in current literary criticism. Dr. Davie has underlined the interest of syntax, Dr. Holloway that of narrative as central to form. Mr. Hough has challenged the concept of poetic logic as in radical contrast with prose. Mr. Bateson and Miss Helen Gardner have both argued for the relevance of historical and scholarly knowledge to analysis or comprehension of poetry. Professor Kermode has called in question the view that a 'dissociation of sensibility' dominated the seventeenth century, and Professor Kathleen Tillotson (she must share the distinction with Professor Duncan of America) has demonstrated that Donne was by no means rescued from universal oblivion or disparagement by Mr. Eliot, but had a settled and significant place in the Victorian literary vision.

Again, the first three critics mentioned above have all, though from differing standpoints, argued that the period of Pound, Eliot, Joyce and the later Yeats is one that has now decisively closed. Two new critical periodicals have recently been founded (the *Critical Quarterly* and the *Review of English Literature*), and each has indicated its intention to move with the times or to be distinct from its predecessors. All in all, it is easy to amass evidence that an important critical regrouping has taken place, and that a new movement in criticism is under way.

Such evidence, though, does not convince; less because critics today are (like Byron's Whigs in *Don Juan*) 'exactly where they were', than because the true movements in recent criticism have not been abrupt and striking, but have operated beneath the surface, and been sustained

over a period. That and no other, indeed, is the kind of change which ought now to be looked for. Three times in our history, in the periods of Dryden, of Wordsworth and Coleridge, and of Eliot and Pound, there have been developments in criticism with the appearance of an abrupt transition, a comparatively new start. In each case the abrupt transition has been elicited by something sharply, even defiantly, new in literature itself. But today we do not have that defiant new start in literature, and ought not to expect it in criticism.

At this point, a lead forward may be found in an article on 'Practical Criticism', by Mr. Rodway and Mr. Roberts, to which the editor of *Essays in Criticism* gave pride of place in January of 1960. Wholeheartedly in defence of 'practical criticism' as it was, the first interest of this piece is that it supports the view just now put forward. There is no break, criticism still takes its lead from Dr. Richards's work forty, or Dr. Leavis's thirty, years ago.

This is confirmed over again when the two authors write: 'Practical criticism amounts to nothing more than reading literature carefully and without bias'. To speak thus of one's preference is to feel oneself going with a broad tide, and to have lost sight of the alternatives; for who will accept a title of champion for carelessness and bias? The argument must be pressed a little farther, to the point of asking what kind of care it is which is being deemed appropriate to the reading of poetry, and what preconception about the object or the outcome of careful reading (for there will doubtless prove to be one) is not being called 'bias', because it is not thought to deserve blame.

Answers to these questions begin to emerge when the writers inquire why there should be hostility to practical criticism and reply: 'Perhaps archetypal fears of murdering to dissect still haunt the minds of critics subconsciously swayed by the Romantic claim that poetry gives access to a Higher Reality.' Here may be seen at work one of the paradoxical reversals in thought of which history seems fond. If we follow the idea of poetic analysis, and of the ideal of poetry which makes poetry invite analysis, back into history, it is to this very idea of a 'Higher Reality', and not to its antithesis, that we come. We have a hint of this even in Mr. Eliot's 1920 essay on Massinger: 'Words perpetually juxtaposed in new and sudden combinations' indicated not merely a style of composition, but an unrivalled awareness of the world, something which 'evidences a very high development of the senses . . . a

period when the intellect was at the tips of the senses'. Murry's *Problem of Style* of 1921, has a fine account of the metaphorical complexity which invites poetic analysis, but this goes with a conviction (explicitly from Baudelaire) that such a complexity serves 'the deep significance of life'. In Yeats's *Symbolism of Poetry* of 1900, the manifold inter-relatedness and fusion of verse 'evoke indefinable and yet precise emotions, or, as I prefer to think, call down among us certain disembodied powers, whose footsteps over our hearts we call emotions'. Mr. Eliot's own progenitors (like Murry's and Yeats's too) were French: Gourmont (whose views were not unlike Murry's), Mallarmé, with his occultist and Platonist leanings, and ultimately Rimbaud, for whom the language of poetry, a vehicle of incomparable intricacy and inter-relatedness, served 'Higher Reality' indeed:

> trouver une langue . . . cette langue sera de l'âme pour l'âme, résumant tout, parfums, sons, couleurs, da la pensée accrochant la pensée et tirant. Le poète définirait la quantité d'inconnués' éveillant en son temps dans l'âme universelle.

This historical retrospect serves its purpose, if the completeness and symmetry of the movement it reveals bring out how distinctive is today's emphasis, where it is thought that there is no emphasis at all, merely the plain findings of the unbiased mind. 'Practical criticism' today has a strong bias, though it may indeed be a legitimate one. Its bias is towards approving tight organization, shrewdly maintained vernacular, sustained decorum, metaphors whose distinction is to be exact and telling; and reproving whatever seems vague, strained or mystical. 'Over-ingenious symbol-hunting' was the only excess which Mr. Rodway and Mr. Roberts felt it necessary to condemn. For Mr. Fuller, one of the best of our current reviewer-critics of poetry, 'looseness' is among the worst of faults, and 'no poetry can survive unless it is grounded in concrete meaning'. (*The London Magazine*, June 1959.) The same tendency, salutary and perhaps a little cramping, is plain enough.

These opinions have interest for their distinctiveness: not at all for their erroneousness, which is not at issue. What is at issue is the emphasis which criticism now enjoys; and from the discussion so far no one will find it surprising that practical criticism today takes up what look like slips more readily than it explores depths, and condemns more often than it enthuses. Again, in view of this, no one will be surprised

that Mr. Rodway and Mr. Roberts repeatedly lay stress on how the edge of practical criticism turns itself readily, and notably, against 'all forms of debased literature, advertisement, newspapers, etc. . . . the method of practical criticism . . . is particularly devastating when applied to the speeches of politicians and other dignitaries'. These claims are just, and the devastation of dignitaries is something to which all will warm, at least at times. But that the careful reading of great poetry and of them are activities closely related, is a distinctive point of view, and a quality of much critical thought in our time.

Such a movement in practical criticism (away from Yeats's sense of complexity, towards and beyond that of Richards) issues from the other main preoccupation of the critic today. This may be stated in the words of Mr. Lerner, in an article printed in the *Critical Quarterly* of the spring of 1960: 'Literature is a moral concern'. What is sometimes overlooked is that this is no innovation, and also no rediscovery after a long night of neglect. Throughout the nineteenth century, not merely in Arnold but in Carlyle, Ruskin, Patmore, Leslie Stephen, James and a succession of others, it was the central and guiding conviction. In so far as the Aesthetic Movement took another course, it was a transient quirk, profoundly alien to what is most rooted in our culture; and it has been taken, ever since, as a target for shocked and disgusted recrimination. Wilde, in saying 'All art is quite immoral', was not rejecting the tradition, but endorsing it. The artist, in his view, showed the '*true* ethical import' of the facts of life, as against what was 'moral' in a blindly conventional and therefore sham sense. Even so, the reaction was rapid and vigorous. The key figure in it was A. R. Orage, editor of *The New Age* from 1908. The rugged honesty and independence of his work, its sustained conviction of the extent of modern decadence, the importance of tradition and free intelligence, and the prevalence of literary charlatanism, together with its acid, mischievous but endearing irony, make *The New Age* the grandfather of *Scrutiny*; and the key idea through Orage's thought was also central in that work: to subject style to 'analysis' is nothing other than the critic's answer to 'moral decadence' in the writer. A continuity stands clearly forth from Arnold's sense of literature as indicating 'how to live', through Orage's word 'instructive', right on to Mr. Lerner's qualmless use of 'didactic'. That 'literature is a moral concern' is the fruit of a long tradition.

Yet to have precision, this maxim must be taken within a whole landscape of critical thought; and to register the main features of this landscape is again to see something distinctive. This is the convergence, today, of the critic and the educationist—not simply the teacher of literature, but the man preoccupied with education and the value of education. There is nothing surprising in this, if one recalls the professions of Matthew Arnold, Dr. Richards, and Dr. Leavis; or the growth of higher education in general and the study of literature in particular; or the urgent need of a new class of readers to come to terms with the serious problems of a rapidly changing society. Nor is it meant for disparagement: this is the criticism of a society strenuously responding to what threatens its health, and drawing upon its inherited resources in a concentrated effort to do so.

But it means that criticism today wears a characteristic look. It preoccupies itself with diagnosing what will help to sustain civilized values, or what may contribute to their decay; or what, more directly still, can contribute to the work of the teacher. In any list of recent and representative critical books, those of Mr. Raymond Williams, Mr. Richard Hoggart, and Professor William Walsh would necessarily be prominent; and they all bear in this direction. By contrast, of advanced literary scholarship such as bears upon criticism, there has in recent years been notably little. It is difficult to point to anything in British writing quite like the work of Professor Abrams, Professor Curtius, Professor Hagstrum, Professor Martz or Professor Tuve in America. Literary scholarship, needless to say, exists; but by comparison it does not have this seminal quality, this intricate and learned aptness for the critic.

That this may be a weakness, but not a disabling one, is a fact too obvious to warrant amplification. It is better to distinguish how, over the decades, a dual conception of the instructiveness, educativeness, indeed morality of literature has operated to confuse and also perhaps to fertilize criticism. Morality means no one thing, but anything on a scale from the do's and don'ts of conventional propriety at one extreme, to the deepest sense of life and reality at the other. Education may mean the crudest imparting of knowledge, or the crucial awakening of that vital sense. These extremes construct a paradigm for criticism. On the whole, Richards's *Principles* pointed towards a sense of the moral utility of literature which saw moral health as (though at a high level) integration, social normality and conformity. 'The most valuable states

of mind are those which involve the widest and most comprehensive co-ordination of activities, and the least curtailment, conflict, starvation and restriction.' Organization, systematization, the avoidance of waste, are ideas central to the book. This, in its turn, leads to an idea of 'maturity' (that key word for those whose concern with literature is a moral one) such as is widely relied on in critical discussion today; one that Dr. Daiches, for example, employed in a recent and much-discussed broadcast on Barrie: the maturity of the average completed man, a maturity in essence social, normal, conformist.

There is another point of view. When Lawrence (in *Morality and the Novel*) wrote: 'morality is that delicate, for ever trembling and changing balance between me and my circumambient universe . . . by life, we mean something that gleams, that has the fourth-dimensional quality', he was expressing a vaguer but richer sense of morality. It is this sense on which Dr. Leavis drew in his essay on Bunyan, where he uses 'mature' in the context of the suggestive and far from obvious word 'exultation'; and writes of the close of Part II of *The Pilgrim's Progress* in a way which endorses Bunyan's sense of a truer life behind and beyond everyday life, and makes ribbons of a critic who treated the passage as mere celebration of social union.

This distinction between what has been called the 'closed' and the 'open' in morality, education, maturity (Bergson and St. Paul before him have elucidated it) underlies contemporary criticism as its gamut. No critic, certainly not those mentioned above, has an unvarying place on this scale. But when we read (these quotations are all from recent articles) that 'social analysis' is attempted in *Timon*, or that the 'final impression of aridness and waste' in *Coriolanus* 'might well be considered *a warning* against that petrification of humanity which occurs when people think only in terms of parties and movements and manifestoes', or that 'what Shakespeare is saying in the tragedies is . . . as follows: there is a natural order which must not be violated'—when we read these we know that the critic, perhaps with justice in the case before him, is far along towards the closed end. On the other hand Professor Knights, in his recent book on Shakespeare, says of *King Lear*: 'questioning, disturbance, the absence of demonstrable answers, form an essential part of a meaning that lies not in a detachable moral but in the activity and wholeness of the imagination.' Here we surely see the words of a critic whose original idea of the moral import of

literature may indeed have been one for which the concept of 'meaning' seemed adequate, but who has been driven by his genuine and first-hand response to the work in a direction where ultimately it is not adequate. Disturbance, activity and wholeness in imagining, are so clearly disparate in nature from a 'meaning' in what is imagined, that a new start needs to be made, and a new term, to replace 'meaning' found.

Again, Professor Walsh so far confirms the claim that critic and educationist have come together as almost to identify the purpose of the great creative writer, and the 'good or ideal teacher'. The undertaking of the former, he lays down, is 'the tactful and intelligible communication of life'. Here one may sense a pressure of thought almost the opposite of that in Professor Knights's observation. In the idea of a 'tactful and intelligible' communication of nothing less than 'life' there is a certain anomaly and tension. If Lawrence's own 'gleam', his fourth dimension, his delicate, for ever trembling and changing balance between self and universe are called to mind, then that a writer, big with realities of this order, should first and foremost be 'tactful and intelligible' in the communication of them, is not what most obviously suggests itself. Such terms look as if they belong rather to a less evocative, pregnant and powerful kind of communication, and a more limited one. They would be most naturally germane to the writer who communicates analysis, warnings, something which may even be summarized after an 'as follows'. Professor Walsh is generally inclined to a Lawrentian sense of the great writer's task and opportunity; but in this passage it seems as if one can detect an incipient movement, or at least a proneness to movement, in the other direction.

In the end, to see this distinction between the closed and the open, and to sense its operation through our criticism today, is to know that at some stage or other a choice has to be made. One conception of the relevance of literature to morals must in the end be given primacy, even if (since every great work offers many things) the other is not thereby repudiated out and out. The decisive fact is this: if our deepest conviction about the greatest literature is that it is an original force, a great vitalizer of life operating at the profoundest level, we must in the end recognize a fundamental inadequacy in the whole current diction of question and answer, analysis and discrimination, statement

and meaning. No thinking in such categories, however qualified, however intensified, will bring thought to a point where it embodies the truth that demands embodiment first. To say this, however, is merely to throw out a hint; the problem, which remains unsolved, is perhaps the major challenge to those preoccupied with criticism today.

Signs of an All Too Correct Compassion

Mr. William Plomer, who looks like a successful business man, once let his hair grow a little too long. His barber gently reproved him: 'You don't want to look like a poet, sir!' Mr. Plomer was half tempted to tell the man that he *was* a poet, and to give him a little lecture. He would say that poetry is what the English do best, and so they ought to be more respectful about the people who produce it; but, on second thoughts, he refrained. The Englishman who is forced, in a strange company, to admit that he is a poet, or to claim that he is a poet, will find himself overcome by a strange mixed emotion, angry pride blended with awkward shame. The roots of the anger and the pride are obvious: the poet is the voice of the tribe, and it is infuriating when the tribe think it strange that anybody, other than the politician and the journalist, should want to give them a voice. The awkward shame comes from the fact that nobody who says he is a poet can ever be quite sure that this is true.

To say that one is a poet is to say that one has written some poems, not to say that one has any certainty that one will ever write another poem. But can one be sure that one has written some poems? A young poet is sure that he has written a poem because, while writing it, he felt a great and exhilarating excitement. But the excitement guaranteed only the strength and sincerity of his emotions, not the poetic validity of the words he got down on the page. The older poet, like any older writer, can shape words with the skill born of practice. He feels, often, no excitement; he sees the emotions for which he is creating an equivalent in words, rather than feels them. He can trust only

that the words have the sincerity of something that comes, calmly, from a deep source.

To say that one is a poet is a little like saying that one is a good man; saying it casts doubts on it; it is for other people to say. Perhaps all men who think of themselves as poets are sometimes tormented by the thought that they may have sacrificed much plain happiness and peace of mind that life seemed to offer to the cultivation of a gift that may, in the end, turn out to have been illusory. And, even if it is a real gift, to how many people does it matter? A British poet once gave two lectures on the human importance of poetry at a day continuation college, the first to office girls, the second to police cadets. They listened attentively, but at the end the office girls said that poetry seemed to be a very round-about way of saying things; the police cadets asked how much money there was in it.

The English tribe, today, is in a divided and puzzled condition, and that division and puzzlement reflects itself in current English poetry. The state of poetry is never what it should be (the Muse is always an interesting invalid), but the doctors always disagree about what the illness is. A young American poet, Mr. Donald Hall, who has recently been living in England and casting an eye on the English poetic scene, diagnoses the disease of current English poetry as a self-defensive provincialism or insularity.

English poets, he thinks, and English critics of poetry also have over the past ten years relapsed into a state of backward-looking introversion. They do not properly appreciate, or try to learn lessons from, major American poets like Wallace Stevens or Mr. Ezra Pound. They admire Mr. T. S. Eliot, but have ceased to find any relevance to their own problems in his poetic practice. They turn their backs on Europe, and on the revolution in poetic language which Mr. Eliot and Mr. Pound brought about partly by injecting shots of Laforgue, Dante, Cavalcanti, the imagism of the Japanese *haiku*, Baudelaire's awareness of the City, into the inert and torpid dying body of post-Victorian English verse. They are (Mr. Pound also thought this when he lived in England) incurably amateurish, One of the great show-poems in England of the last ten years is Mr. Philip Larkin's *Church Going*; Mr. Donald Hall thinks that if Mr. Larkin were as technically adroit as an American poet of about the same age, Mr. Richard Wilbur, he would have tightened and sharpened the construction of this poem, cut in

length by about a third. Youngish English poets, compared to youngish American poets, are, perhaps, not properly 'professional'.

There is something in this diagnosis, though one wonders whether it is really a diagnosis of an illness, or rather of a state of convalescence. The surprising best-seller among English poets in the last year or two has been Mr. John Betjeman. In the 1930s, Mr. Betjeman was a special taste; Mr. Auden admired him, but many of the admirers of Mr. Auden had never heard of him. He certainly owes nothing (though he admires Mr. Eliot's mastery, in *The Waste Land*, of the topography of London) to Mr. Eliot or Mr. Pound or Wallace Stevens or the late Yeats, or 'modernism' in poetry generally.

Modernism was partly a reaction, a violent, savage, and successful one, against what can broadly be called Victorianism (allowing that Mr. Pound, the primeval 'modernist', came, in his earlier poems, straight out of Rossetti, William Morris, Swinburne, and Browning). Mr. Betjeman is as nostalgically Victorian, or late Edwardian, as could be. His blank verse, as Mr. John Sparrow has noted, is Tennysonian. His stanza forms owe a lot to minor and major Victorian poets, from 'Father Prout' to Hardy. He is Victorian in his wistful piety, in his unashamed delight both in facetiousness and sentiment, in his affection for the quaint and the grotesque. Yet the wide circle of his admirers ranges from obviously fastidious judges, like Mr. Auden and Mr. Philip Larkin, to people who have seen him on television or have heard Miss Joyce Grenfell recite his more broadly comic poems in revues.

At a highbrow level he appeals to people who enjoy Dr. Pevsner's books on the buildings of England or his lectures on *The Englishness of English Art*; at other levels he appeals to simple piety, readiness to giggle, and to a nostalgia for a (no doubt largely imaginary) pre-1914 English Paradise shared also by such different writers as George Orwell and Mr. John Osborne. Mr. Hall, one thinks, could certainly call him insular but would hardly dub him 'unprofessional'. Yet it is probably true that his poetry, with its wealth of local allusion and local sentiment, its high-pitched English titter, does shut a door in the face of American or European visitors. It is a special English thing. Nobody certainly could be more insular, more passionately local.

It is true, also, that many of the poets most admired in Great Britain in recent years seem, in a sense, to have sidestepped the influence of 'modernism'. If any voices can be heard behind Edwin Muir's very

dignified and individual voice, they are those perhaps of Vaughan, of Wordsworth, of Heine, of the Border ballads. He made his own voice by being true to his vision and by ignoring, as irrelevant to his purposes, the 'modernist' revolution in language. His purpose was not to shock and surprise but to soothe, guide, console.

Mr. Robert Graves, again, is an English poet who has always been admired but whose general reputation stands higher today than it ever did. Mr. A. Alvarez, who in his book on modern poetry, *The Shaping Spirit*, had dismissed Mr. Graves in a footnote as an interesting case of shell-shock, nobly recanted when reviewing the most recent edition of Mr. Graves's *Collected Poems*. A poet who lives in Majorca, and who is a notable mythographer and classical scholar, can scarcely be said to have turned his back on Europe, but certainly a quality that attracts Mr. Graves's admirers to his poems is a dogged and surly Englishness.

Mr. Philip Larkin, too, and Mr. Ted Hughes, not at all like each other in other ways, are alike in seeming to draw more on Hardy, Edward Thomas, Wilfred Owen than on Mr. Pound or Mr. Eliot or the late Yeats or the 'modern movement' generally. Even a poet like Mr. Empson, who has rivalled Mr. Graves in his direct influence on young English poets over the last ten years, is not, for all the range of his learning, for all his sympathy with Buddhism and his travels in Japan and China, a cosmopolitan type; his tone of voice, elaborately off-hand or snarlingly grandiose, is, like Mr. Graves's, that of Milor Rosbif.

The English poetry that has been written, and the English poetry that has influenced younger writers, over the past ten years or so, has been alarmingly, almost aggressively, English. That impeachment must be admitted. Young Scottish and Irish poets, Anglo-Welsh poets also, often find themselves just as indignant that the English should begin to find themselves more interesting than other people as Mr. Hall does.

The English themselves have, however, their own complaints about the state of English poetry. The most common one (and, ironically, it is usually poets who make it) is that there are too many poets. Certainly, a reader of annual English collections of current poetry, like the P.E.N. or Guinness anthologies, will sometimes feel, so even is the level and so similar the general tone, that he is reading not the work of

thirty or forty different writers but of one composite contemporary English poet.

This composite poet has learnt from Mr. Graves that it is better to write a modestly good poem than to blow oneself up to a false, distorted size in an attempt to write a great one. He prefers, on the whole, traditional metres and stanza forms to formal experiment. His diction is that of spoken speech, perhaps a little distanced and formalized, rather than that of song, oratory, or tragic harangue. He confronts difficult emotional situations with a technique of controlled relaxation. He likes to pursue an argument through a poem. He will often tell a little anecdote with an implicit moral. He likes domestic episodes and snapshot views. He distrusts the picturesque. He is more interested in depicting types than individuals. His strong lines are those which express a cogent generalization rather than those which isolate a particular perception. He is rather weak, on the whole, on visual imagery, a townsman rather than a countryman. He has often a touch of humour or wit, but it is subdued and subacid rather than boisterous or exuberant.

There is a Puritan streak in him, and a poem is often used to chasten a vague, romantic attitude or a silly sentimental impulse. He does not appear to be a 'committed' poet very often. In religion he is respectfully or evasively agnostic; in politics and morals he is a worried liberal; his social attitudes are those of a man of realistic vision and sensitive good will, depressingly aware of the isolation of even the most commonsensical poet in an inorganic society.

Or something like this was true three or four years ago in the heyday of what was called 'The Movement'. Today, young poets like Mr. Ted Hughes or Mr. Peter Redgrove are more ready to let themselves go, emotionally; though there is often an odd air of deliberateness or purposiveness rather than spontaneity in the way they let themselves go. It is as if violent feelings that had been deliberately leashed were now deliberately let out for a run. The feeling of the poet deliberately manipulating a tricky psychological situation remains. The feeling that he wrote a poem because he *had* to write it is rare.

One might say that the composite young English poet of the 1950s was rather anxious not to look *like* a poet; he might have had Mr. Plomer's barber in mind. There are signs among the youngest English poets of discontent with a too sane, too deflated, too prosaic image of

the poet. In an admirable Cambridge undergraduate magazine, *Delta*, there was recently this fighting editorial:

> Criticism has suffered much recently from a general failure to appreciate the proper function of poetry, to understand what poetry—as against the novel, the film, or anything else—could and ought to do. Poems continue to be written, but too much from force of habit rather than any conscious determination to present experience in a new way, to alter people's habits of thought and feeling. What one misses, in looking through the latest Guinness anthology—certainly a very fair cross-section—is any sense of elevation from the loose, casual language of everyday prose; there may be sensitivity, there may be wit, there may even be high spirits, but there is no tension, no insistent personal rhythm forcing upon us a living imagination. The 'esemplastic' power is what is conspicuously absent, and it may well be that this is precisely because the creation—the *poiesis*—of an imaginative —and not merely conceptual—synthesis of experience now requires a degree of conscious application of intelligence far beyond the reach of *l'homme moyen sensitive*. Despite some recent appeals to learn from America, it's not simply a Little England rut; our life is horribly verbalized and poetry undoubtedly suffers when the strength of language is sapped by doing duty for other media of expression.

The article goes on to suggest that poets might benefit by studying the techniques of films, of music, of painting, and so learning to escape from the supposition, into which we all tend to be conditioned, that 'words are the only language'. The whole piece slightly recalls Warton's essay on Pope, eight years after Pope's death, in which he denied Pope a place among the highest class of poets. Pope was a 'wit', a man of sense, a clever, intelligent man, but the true muscles of poetry, its real strength, lay, for Warton, in the sublime and the pathetic; just as for Arnold, a hundred or so years later, they lay in elevation and intensity, and Pope, for all his gifts, was a 'classic of our prose'.

Modern defenders of Pope have not so much controverted Warton's and Arnold's principles as questioned their appreciation of Pope; it is surely easy enough to discover the sublime and the pathetic, elevation and intensity, in the climax of *The Dunciad* or throughout the *Epistle to Arbuthnot*. But there was another side to Pope, and where the editorial writer in *Delta* complains of 'the present plethora of the barely competent', he is like Cowper complaining of Pope's imitators, 'Every warbler has his tune by heart'. It looks as if there is a feeling among the

youngest poets at least that sensitivity is not enough. We may find in the next ten years that we have a thinner crop of new poets than in the 1950s; but that the language of those who survive will be, if less conversable than that of the young poets of the current mode, more tense, wrought, individual, and memorable.

Breathing Words into the Ear of an Unliterary Era

A man in his middle forties, looking around him in the England of today, can suddenly realize with astonishment that over the past ten years he has seen cultural changes more radical, almost, than the social and political changes he saw between 1930 and 1950, those momentous years when he grew from adolescence to manhood. The cultural changes are not like Munich, or Dunkirk, or V-Day, or the Labour Party victory at the end of the Second World War. They do not even tie up very closely with deep emotional divisions in the country, about Suez, about nuclear disarmament, or about whether a democrat can be a liberal, let alone a gentleman. They partly come, as all large cultural changes come, with time and its erosions.

The historical memory of the mass of the people, even in a reasonably highly educated industrial democracy like Great Britain, has a backward stretch of about five years. What lies in time before that is the good or bad old days, legend or vague history, a few names and dates not held in any sharp perspective. To a writer in his twenties today the 1930s are as far back in time, and perhaps farther back in their impact on the imagination, than the 1890s will have been, say, in 1920 to Mr. Robert Graves or Mr. Aldous Huxley. The Second World War to a schoolboy in his teens is paperback escape stories, as to a schoolboy in his teens in 1930 the First World War was perhaps John Buchan or Sapper. In subtler ways, the flavour is different, too. Even five years ago the 'pub' and the pint of bitter were the symbol, in novels like *Lucky Jim*, for democratic conviviality, getting together. People under thirty are not so often seen in an English 'pub' today. The young people are in the coffee-bars and dance-halls. London used to suggest steak-houses, tea-rooms, Cockney humour. Scattered all over

with gay little restaurants, Italian, Pakistani, Chinese, it now suggests some cosmopolitan atmosphere, Cairo, Alexandria.

London, too, offers visual changes. In Knightsbridge or in Paddington great high cellular structures, great oblong honeycombs, new hotels, or blocks of offices and flats, dwarf their surroundings and give the spectator a sense of having shrunk in size and importance. They also cut themselves off in time. They are not a continuation, the next thing to do, but a kind of intrusion from elsewhere. They make the historical city spreading around them look like something preserved in a museum. And any person in early middle age who has to teach the young, in day continuation classes, art schools, provincial universities, must often also have that sense of being something preserved in a museum. To the candid eyes and ears of the young the teachers' respectable dark suit and his carefully lucid sentences obviously seem, often, as quaint and old-world as a *Punch* drawing by John Leech. The quality of the talk and writing of the new generation of students is a kind of fresh and honest ineloquence, an unwillingness to make anything smooth or slick. It is a kind of honourable anti-style.

Students in Great Britain today seem neither shy nor forward. They are not frustrated, tormented, or even ambitious. They are self-contained. They are rather conformist, but to their own, not adult, norms. They have no wish to be individually conspicuous. They are unemotional, but also straightforwardly hopeful and idealistic. It is difficult to get them to appreciate devices like irony, or the notion of literature as performance. Words of critical praise they use are 'simple' and 'sincere'; a word of critical disparagement is 'irony'. Yet in a way they may be more mature than their teachers were at the same age. A first-year university student will say that he cannot get on with Yeats, because Yeats is so unlike Crabbe; and his tutor is momentarily baffled because, of course, yes, if there were not so much else to say, there is so much more plain sense about human life in Crabbe.

It is important to notice also that young people, even if they are studying literature for a degree, do not read today much more than they have to. And they care much less about words, about the shape and feel and look and sound of sentences, than students of about the same range of intelligence did twenty, perhaps even ten, years ago. Television no doubt partly explains this. A skilled sound broadcaster, trying out television for the first time, makes the humiliating discovery

that there is no point in polishing his phrases; he must know the gist of what he has to say, tie it on to somebody else's gist, and let the words tumble out as quickly as possible. Ten or fifteen years ago. regional patriots in England used sometimes to complain that sound radio was ironing out local accents. As television supplants sound radio, local accents are coming back thick and fast again.

An elegant handling of the spoken and written word used to be a primary social weapon in England. Today an observer who covers enough ground can watch the English language being steadily democratized, as perhaps the American language is already; airs and graces, little flourishes, little niceties are being ironed out for the sake of direct communication. A way of speaking or writing is ceasing to be, except in an old-fashioned and growingly rather absurd way, an assumption of, or a claim for, status. Thus, in the appreciation of poetry and in attempts to write poetry among younger people in Great Britain over the next few years, we must expect less and less attention to be paid to the artificial, the formal, the purely 'literary' qualities of poetry; we must expect a growing attention to be paid to a quality of raw directness, of speakability. Left to himself, a provincial undergraduate might read D. H. Lawrence's *Pansies* for pleasure; he would not read 'Lycidas'.

And in the poems young people themselves attempt to write this quality of speech-gesture, of spoken spontaneity, is likely in future to be more and more highly valued. An acute young English critic, Mr. Alan Brownjohn, in an Anglo-American 'little magazine' of verse and comment, *Migrant*, had a most interesting comparison partly from this point of view, between two short poems, one by an English poet, Mr. Philip Larkin, the other by an American poet, Mr. Robert Creeley. Part of his point was that the apparent spoken spontaneity of the English poem began to look 'literary' again when set beside the direct speech-gesture of the American poem. The two short poems are on a broadly identical theme. This is Mr. Larkin's:

DAYS

What are days for?
Days are where we live.
They come, they wake us
Time and time over.
They are to be happy in:
What can we live but days?

Ah, solving that question
Brings the priest and the doctor
In their long coats
Running over the fields.

Mr. Creeley's poem is this:

I KNOW A MAN

As I sd to my
friend, because I am
always talking.—John, I
sd, which was not his
name, the darkness sur-
rounds us, what
can we do against
it, or else, shall we &
why not, buy a goddam big car,
drive, he sd, for
christ's sake, look
out where yr going.

Mr. Larkin's poem, Mr. Brownjohn points out, is a poem asking questions about concepts and giving, at least by implication, an answer. If we ask what the purpose of time and change is, the only sane practical answer is that in time and change we have to shape, and as far as possible fulfil, our lives. If we get metaphysically worried about this, it is a sign that we are ill or perhaps dying; the priest, to look after the soul, the doctor, to look after mind and body, come scampering across the fields as to a motor accident. Better, the implication is, therefore to put off that kind of metaphysical worrying as long as possible. If Mr. Larkin's poem looks 'literary' in comparison to Mr. Creeley's in its neat handling of concepts, it also begins to look 'literary' in its handling of metre; we notice the artifice that makes us stress, not quite according to the rhythms of natural speech, just two key words in each line:

What are *days* for?
Days are *where* we live.
They *come*, they *wake* us
Time and time *over* . . .

There is a kind of self-containment, also, in each line even where it is not end-stopped.

All Mr. Creeley's lines are, on the other hand, artificially breath-stopped (the reader is forced to pause where semantically he would not pause) and yet they are not self-contained. The purpose of the abbreviations is to warn us not to give isolated resonance, a traditional 'musical' or 'poetic' resonance, to any individual word. What the pauses at the end of the line do is artificially slow down a statement that otherwise could be printed as rather everyday prose. The poem uses what artifice it has to produce an imitation of somebody speaking inartificially, jerkily, spontaneously. There seem at first to be no concepts but only a rather trivial anecdote. But then we reflect that the friend whose name is not John might be Christ (introduced tactfully in the apparently cheaply blasphemous 'for/christ's sake'), that the talking would therefore be praying, that the darkness is not only that of the road but that of the future and man's destiny, that the temptation to buy 'a goddam big car' is like the temptation to build up a purely technological society or a great military machine, and that the friend's advice to look out where one is going is like Mr. Auden's advice, in a Christian poem addressed to undergraduates, to take short views and trust in God. Where Mr. Larkin, Mr. Brownjohn notes, gives us 'a distant, impersonal speculation' Mr. Creeley involves us in a 'violent encounter'. Mr. Brownjohn feels that young English poets could learn a lesson from Mr. Creeley's 'immediacy, fidelity to momentary experience'. What is technically specially interesting is that this is composition by breath-units, for the voice, not composition for the page. It seems probable that quite a lot of English poetry by younger writers may find itself going this way.

If English poetry were to develop over the next few years on deliberately non-literary lines of this sort, that, of course, would fit in with what young writers like Mr. Arnold Wesker and Miss Shelagh Delaney are doing with plays, perhaps with what Mr. Alan Sillitoe is doing with short stories. The non-literary poet, dramatist or story-teller seeks not to purify the dialect of the tribe but to project it in all its rawness and hesitation, in all its apparent sentimentality and lack of logic and taste, its repetitions and its tailings away.

Non-literary writing in this rather technical sense can, of course, have considerable value as literature; some precursors in the mode are

Joel Chandler Harris of the *Uncle Remus* stories, Mark Twain, Gertrude Stein in a book like *Three Lives*, Mr. Hemingway, Mr. Salinger, in the drama perhaps Mr. Sean O'Casey; some aspects of Blake might fit in, in poetry, and the English folk songs, often wandering and incoherent, recently collected in unexpurgated versions by Mr. James Reeves, are also relevant. In drama, perhaps the modern classics in a non-literary vein are the first three or four plays of Mr. Sean O'Casey. What defines non-literary literature is not crudity, or a lack of the sense of value, but that such literature cuts itself very largely from, is not a logical development of, the book-literature of its time; it separates itself from that rather as these new large oblong honey-comb buildings in London seem to separate themselves, rawly, from their surroundings. Of course, if it is any good, it will itself become part of the book-literature of a later age.

Even for 'literary' poets and lovers of poetry in England, however, the book is perhaps becoming less centrally important than it once was and the enjoyment of poetry is becoming, in consequence, a less solitary occupation. On a long-playing gramophone record we can today contrast, for instance, the boom and burr of Yeats's incantations with the coolly separative way—separating words and syllables, separating the poet from the emotions involved in writing the poem—in which Mr. Auden reads his elegy for Yeats. We can contrast the manner in which Dylan Thomas, reading a poem, pulls out all the stops with the way in which Mr. Robert Graves's old-fashioned officer's-and-gentleman's voice stands, as it were, at attention, well back from the poem. Such readings give us a closer sense of what might be called the body of a poem, the relationship between a poet's physical organism and his word patterns, than all but a few readers with rather exceptional gifts for aural empathy can have enjoyed in the past.

Mr. Francis Berry, a poet and critic, has, in fact, been working for some years on a theory that the inexplicable antipathies which most of us feel to poems that other people enjoy come from a failure, as it were, to tune into the poet's voice; thus Shelley's speaking voice was shrill and thin and in his verse it still grates on many ears; and the voice of Milton in *Paradise Lost* is heavier, deeper, slower, less delicate in its shifts of pitch, than the voice of Milton in *Comus*.

We are going to see, in the next ten or twenty years in England, a society even at its most intellectual level, less interested in solitary

reading, more interested in looking, in listening, in co-operative response, than English intellectual society has been in the past. These fairly new mediums, the tape-recorder, the long-playing gramophone record, the poetry broadcast or television programme, have therefore a great importance for the future of English poetry, both in relation to the audience and in relation to the ways in which poetry is composed. Educated people have learnt, in a world in which there is an increasing yearly range of information for them to keep up with, to skim over a page as Macaulay did, to tear the heart out of, say, a weekly paper in half an hour. They know the sort of thing that is going to be said, and how it is going to be said; they stop, they read carefully, only when they come on a fact or an argument that surprises them or a piece of writing, perhaps a paragraph, perhaps only a sentence in a long article, that seems to have an unusually individual note. They have learnt to cut off resonance; and, alas, a practised reader soon finds that he is capable at a glance of classifying, rather than of absorbing and responding to, poems that appear in weekly or monthly journals. It is very difficult to teach schoolchildren and university students that poetry deserves more, not less, careful and intensive reading than prose. And the art of rapid reading, which we all have to learn, may be indeed slowly killing the sense of tone in prose, as well as in poetry. All these are reasons why the idea of poetry as something that need not exist primarily on or for the page is growingly important.

What is perhaps equally important is the idea of poetry as neither primarily an art nor primarily a craft, but primarily a gesture of response to life; and as not necessarily a romantically solitary but often fruitfully a socially co-operative activity. Mr. Boris Ford recently published an anthology of poems by schoolchildren which suggested the existence in most children, at least up to the cloudier stages of adolescence, of a pure and genuine poetic spirit. The results can go wrong; there are the dangers, as indeed with adult poets, of imitation and self-consciousness, of polishing away life for the fear of rawness. But good teachers have often found that encouraging children to try to write poetry is the best way of leading them on to read it with enjoyment. There are groups of young poets also, in London and elsewhere, who want, of course, to get their work published, but whose centrally enjoyable activity in connexion with it is gathering with groups of friends, who are provided with cyclostyled copies of their

poems, to have the poems read, analysed, criticized; and these discussions, if they sometimes lead to quarrels, sometimes also lead to improvement of the poems.

It is in this diffused, intelligent, alive interest in poetry, an interest growingly divorced from the traditional egotism of the poet, that we must rest our immediate hopes for the future of English poetry in a society subtly and yet drastically changing in many ways. The idea of the 'traditional' has to be given a sharper and more immediately contemporary relevance than it had in a society in which the book was the main medium of cultural communication.

Is Lallans a Unique Phenomenon?

There are two possible explanations of the origin of the recent revival of Lallans or Lowland Scots by modern Scottish poets. The first of these alternatives would seek to trace the development back through indigenous Scottish sources to the work of Burns and, even more importantly, of Dunbar and Henryson. Those who believe in this line of descent, like Mr. Tom Scott, are preoccupied with problems of diction and are determined to bring back the full aureate flow of the Golden period of Scottish letters.

The other, and perhaps more generally accepted thesis, would trace the recrudescence of Lallans back, not to anything peculiarly Scottish but rather to the experiments with other vulgar dialects made at the beginning of the present century by poets as different from one another as Rudyard Kipling and John Davidson. Particularly Davidson, for not only had he the advantage of being Scots but also his recourse to Cockney English was inspired by a conscious desire to extend the limits of English poetry, which is not true of Kipling or his followers such as the present Poet Laureate. Thus, in his key poem, 'Thirty Bob a Week', he writes:

> I ain't blaspheming, Mr. Silver Tongue;
> I'm saying things a bit beyond your art:
> Of all the rummy starts you ever sprung,
> Thirty bob a week's the rummiest start!

It was because Davidson was 'saying things a bit beyond' the art of the *fin-de-siècle* silver tongued schools that he originally appealed to the arch-innovator, one could almost say inventor, of modern Lallans,

Mr. Hugh MacDiarmid, and so earned himself one of the most moving elegies in twentieth-century verse:

> I remember one death in my boyhood
> That next my father's, and darker, endures,
> Not Queen Victoria's, but Davidson, yours.

Seen in this way Lallans ceases to be a peculiarly Scottish phenomenon and can be found among the ranks of all the European linguistic experiments of the present century which have had as their aim the resuscitation of languages buried beneath the weight of their own abstractions. It can be found alongside the efforts of Joyce and Pound to revive English, with Proust's and Beckett's attempts to put new vigour into French, Marinetti's to jolt Italian into action, Czechowicz's to instil peasant vitality into Polish, and so on.

Undoubtedly it is this latter view of the matter which is held by Mr. MacDiarmid who has demonstrated in his translations from such writers as Rilke and Blok his sympathy with European culture as a whole. Indeed, in recent years he has gone far beyond the European heritage, drawing on such varied resources as Zulu incantations, South American poetry and Chinese ideograms. But this broadening of his interests coincided with his abandonment of Lallans and we may therefore look on Lallans as an attempt to meet the peculiar linguistic conditions which have prevailed in Europe during the present century.

There are few writers of English who would disagree with Mr. MacDiarmid's statement that:

> Those who are vitally concerned with the English language know that it has vastly outgrown itself and is becoming more and more useless for creative purposes.

This was written as long ago as 1934 and there has been no reason to change its applications in the intervening years. Rather the position has still further deteriorated as science goes on evolving new linguistic methods to deal with problems which, though apparently esoteric, yet affect the lives of all of us. More and more experience is being cut off each year from the mainstream of the colloquial language so that the artist, whose duty it is to try to cover every aspect of experience, has the alternatives of missing these areas completely or of introducing

technical terms into his creations at the expense of their general intelligibility.

Now there is one way out of this dilemma, and that is to treat experience as it comes, tied to the microscopic details of locality. By doing this the artist can undercut the whole paraphernalia of the conceptual world and get down to the effects these conceptions have on a single human being. This was the method of Joyce and it is the method of Mr. MacDiarmid in his Lallans verse. Indeed it is the one respect in which all the major writers of our time can be found to agree, writers as different as D. H. Lawrence and Henry James, W. B. Yeats and Ezra Pound; all have a keen sense of the specific situation as shaped by the accidents of time and place, which are our equivalent of the Greek concept of destiny.

This is what originally gave Lallans its functional point, for the Scottish experience is too widely separated from the English to be represented in all its intense individuality in the same language, or at least Mr. MacDiarmid's Scottish experience was too different. Mr. MacDiarmid would go further and suggest that there is a basic antagonism between the English way of looking at things and the Scottish. Any extract from the *Scottish National Dictionary*, at present being edited by Mr. David Murison, tends to confirm this suggestion. There is a palpable asymmetry between the well-mannered definitions in the English and the couthy illustrative quotations from the Scots. Thus, we find the word *fleech* defined as 'to coax, wheedle, flatter; to beseech, entreat, importune' and its use illustrated by, among other things, a quotation from Galt's *Entail*: 'I only say, mother, that I'll no sign ony paper whatsomever, . . .—so ye need na try to fleetch me.' If one tries to substitute any of the English terms given for that one Scots word one recognizes immediately that there is a peculiar genius at work in the Scots tongue and that, whatever else it may be, it is no friend to the English.

This hostility, not limited to matters of language, to all things English, gives rise to many of the more absurd aspects of Mr. MacDiarmid's work and life. Yet, though it has its absurd side, this antagonism to England was one of the motive forces behind the emergence of Lallans and just how powerful a force it was may be judged by the gradual attenuation of Lallans which has followed Mr. MacDiarmid's original impetus. Deprived of any genuine dislike of things English,

writers like Mr. Robert Garioch, Mr. Tom Scott and Mr. A. D. Mackie lapse into Lallans for purely personal reasons which they would find it hard to justify in terms of world literature. Their work, as a result, lacks the compulsive force of the master's and we are really back in the kailyard, for all the pretentiousness of their linguistic mannerisms.

This process of attenuation can be seen in the development of a single poet, Mr. Sydney Goodsir Smith. At the height of his power Mr. Smith could write such verse as the following:

> . . . The wind that drave his ships, rank on rank o them,
> Sun on the flichteran-featherie oars, the faem,
> Spindrift, spume, landbrist and speed,
> Sea-gaean wolves, a pack, wild geese owre the emerant spase,
> Their pennards bricht like tongues i the wind, swan-wings spreid,
> The greinan outraxed craigs o swans
> Drinkan the wind for Italie, Aeneas fleet
> Speedin awa frae Carthagie and Afric's burnan queen.

Yet his latest book, *Figs and Thistles*, contains little of distinction, except for two translations, one from the French of Tristan Corbière, the other from the Russian of Alexander Blok.

And, indeed, it is noticeable that most of the best recent productions in Lallans have been translations of one sort or another. Mr. Douglas Young has weighed in with two versions from the Greek of Aristophanes. Mr. Tom Scott has attempted Villon and Dante. And Mr. R. G. Sutherland has recently published a version of George Buchanan's play, *Jephthah* and *The Baptist*. This would seem to suggest that, after the initial creativity of Mr. MacDiarmid's early verse, Lallans is settling down into a kind of respectability and trying to forge itself into a more complete literary vehicle before it takes the plunge into a new and different kind of creation. But, before congratulating these poets on their attempts to strengthen Lallans, we would do well to remember the words of Mr. MacDiarmid himself:

> Any language, real or artificial, serves if a creative artist finds his medium in it. In other words, it does not depend on any other consideration, but wholly upon that *rara avis*, the creative artist himself.

Entrepreneur, Gambler and Missionary

Every publisher will tell you that his first duty is to his author, but few, if any, regard this prior obligation as an exclusive one. There is also society, and the publisher likes to think that he has a place in society not merely as one of its components but also as a contributor and fashioner. He has in fact three active functions to perform: to entertain, to educate, and—to use a single word which will have to be expanded—to propel, that is to say, to help to carry the mind forward into new aesthetic and intellectual territory. It is with the third function, the vaguest and quantitatively much the slightest, that this essay is concerned. What is the publisher's service to Literature and to Thought?

The publisher is essentially an entrepreneur and he suffers some of the disdain and complexes of that necessary, if inadequately admired, station. Somebody (was it Mr. John Betjeman?) once implied that the man who takes to publishing books is the man who cannot write them, a remark that has the ring of half-truth about it (especially if poetry and memoirs are allowed to constitute exceptions as sporadic or elderly activities, though that still leaves author-publishers like Mr. Raleigh Trevelyan, Mr. Jocelyn Baines and Mr. Rayner Unwin to dispute the slighting imputation). But the publisher, if he must accept a less creative role in society than the author whom he serves, can still claim a more stimulating one than the author's target, since without a publisher the author cannot make his mark. This is obvious enough and it is the middleman's perennial justification, but what is not always sufficiently realized is that the publisher, who serves Literature as well

as authors at some risk to himself, requires certain qualities which are not a necessary part of the make-up of other middlemen.

The first of these qualities is the gambling spirit and the second is the missionary spirit, and it is difficult to think of any other vocation where these two inclinations are combined. The publisher who confines himself to his two first functions as entertainer and educator needs competence and experience rather than the hankering to venture and to propagate, but as soon as he embarks on the third task of giving currency to new art and new ideas he must both take chances and push his wares, since he is trying to find readers for something that is by definition exceptional and novel. He is out to give people what they have not had before and to create the taste for it. In this pursuit the publisher must be withdrawn but yet not too far withdrawn. If publishing is something more than the issuing of books of predictable content and appearance, then it cannot be done in a bustle. But the publisher must also be in the swim. His senses must be active upon the literary scene and he must keep his discrimination sharpened upon something more than his own ruminations. The capacity for standing apart in a crowd is the third characteristic of the whole publisher.

Does this clutch of attributes—entrepreneur, gambler, and missionary, semi-detachedness—predicate anything else? Almost certainly it means that this composite character, the publisher, must be a youngish man. Some old men, it is true, remain young, so that they (and their friends) have the best of both worlds, but the law of nature which makes most men waste in spirit as they advance in years is more stultifying in a publisher's office than in almost any other business enterprise. To accept new insights and to put across new ideas it is necessary not only to appreciate them but also to get excited about them. This is a young man's assignment and the publishing firm which does not recruit the young is doomed to fall out of the literary scene, though it may go on entertaining and educating with profit to its authors, its readers and itself.

University tutors and publishers themselves can testify that young people are attracted to publishing as a career. They see something stirring, rewarding and glamorous about it, especially in the more famous literary houses, and these firms would not have the slightest difficulty in getting new blood for their businesses if it were not for

two disturbing factors which are sapping the strength and attenuating the quality of the whole profession: pay is low and progress to the top is not open to talent. The young man or girl coming down from a university will start at about £500 a year. Many of his friends will be doing better than that, but perhaps he will not mind too much, for his enthusiasm, his vocation and (after all) the genuine interest of the job will smother any slight feeling of disquiet or grievance. More worrying in a few years' time is his inability to see how he can ever get beyond a certain point. He has been impressed with the personal flavour of much of a publisher's business but he cannot reach a position of real personal authority, a position where he makes the important decisions and choices, unless he has money.

Obversely the publisher who is looking for a 'likely' successor is most often restricted in his search because he owns a valuable stake in his firm and wishes to sell it on his retirement to somebody who can pay full value for it. In theory this difficulty does not assail a large concern where ownership and control have become divorced, but quite apart from objections to such a divorce in publishing—in effect the substitution of the salaried entrepreneur for the automotive entrepreneur—there are few publishing businesses where it has in fact happened. In most the retiring partner must either sell to a moneyed successor or else make a gift of his share to a son or other relative or a stranger.

Financially, publishing does not offer great rewards, and if by skill and perseverance a publisher does make his pile, he finds some difficulty in realizing it at the end of the day. He is therefore either tempted to assume that the end of the day is not yet and to carry on in defiance of the laws of nature: or he must, in all but exceptionally lucky circumstances, choose between a personal successor with more money than acumen and an impersonal successor without necessarily any special knowledge of publishing or compulsive love of books who will operate the business through a bailiff. The moneyed man and the bailiff may turn out to be excellent, but so long as the unmoneyed man who does not happen to be appointed bailiff is kept out, the state of publishing is unhealthy and its future obscure. A structural revolution is vaguely in the offing and until it is carried through the business will be starved of talent and preoccupied with basic material worries to the detriment of its cultural mission. The various amalgamations

which take place from time to time on both sides of the Atlantic (sometimes with gusto and sometimes with nostalgia) are evidence of this insecurity but no answer in the long run to the question how the independent publisher can survive as something more than a book wholesaler.

This may seem an unduly gloomy view to take of an industry where the leaders are undoubtedly prosperous and the lone wolf can still break in and reach in a few years the point of giving authors lunch at the Ritz. Moreover, a revolution in printing techniques and costs could alter the picture overnight and restore to the publisher the amplitude (in common parlance, the margin of profit) which he needs in order to fulfil all three of the functions in society which were outlined at the beginning of this essay. But for the time being the wise publisher annexes his literary ambitions to a sound business in school texts or ephemeral fiction. Nor indeed has he much choice in the matter, for the enduring works of literature are few and publishers' seasonal lists are long (far longer, for instance, than the average German publisher's list, which would be regarded as impracticably small in this country). In this valued field, therefore, too many publishers are chasing too few writers; although the 'great work' is not necessarily the most profitable kind of book to publish (or at any rate not the most immediately profitable), there is more rejoicing in a publisher's breast over one such catch than over ninety and nine more ordinary turnover builders. The result is sharp competition with the familiar attendant advantages and vices of this state of affairs.

And here we may observe a paradox. The likeliest stable for the appearance of a new Proust or a new Freud is the firm with a reputation for literary and intellectual discernment established by past achievements, but there is a sense in which the successful publisher of twenty or thirty years ago is also positively at a disadvantage, for the more distinguished his back list the greater his need to strain after new writing to match the stars of the past, under pain of seeming to belong to yesterday rather than today. His newer rivals will be unstinting in their admiration of his contributions to culture but they will contrive to cast their praise in the past tense. The implication is obvious and the riposte is easy and frequent: the new men lack resources, professional standing, the ability to provide the full range of services, etc. The snapping is kept within bounds because publishers are on the

whole agreeable and busy people, but the jealousy is there and it is further accentuated by the intervention of yet a third class of publisher.

Besides the new boys (mostly small, almost one man, shows) and the quality firms (mostly medium in size) there are the big boys. These are no less famous than anybody else in the trade and their lists include many first magnitude stars, but the most obvious thing about them is their size; they tend to regard size as a reproach and they fear the onset of one of the natural consequences of size, namely, the development of their imprint into a stereotype. They have money to spare, and when they turn their attention to the publisher's cultural mission the sharp competition in this field sometimes begins to take on an air of sharp practice. Authors and publishers commonly enter into contracts which cover more than one book and it is therefore normal for an author to have current contractual obligations to his publisher. But this knowledge does not always stop a piratically minded publisher from making advances to an author who may be presumed to have promised his next book elsewhere, and the ordinary publisher's ignorance of the law is such that he seems unaware that the procuring of a breach of contract is an actionable wrong for which he could sue his enterprising but peccant colleague; or if he does know this, he does nothing about it partly because he finds moral indignation less cumbersome and less improper than threatening the law and partly because he is perhaps not entirely happy about option clauses.

Within the profession he prefers to treat poaching as the infraction of a moral code rather than the invasion of a legal right (an attitude which leaves the poacher free to get on with his poaching), and although he can make out a good case for options—that is, for doing business with an author over more than a single book—he has a sneaking suspicion that authors and public are unwilling to concede the logic of his case. So, with choler or stoicism, he condones malpractice. Meanwhile, be it observed, the author gains and it is not for the community to grudge him the fat cheque which he puts in his pocket because his fame and skill have caused rich Messrs. X to solicit him for 100,000 words at a shilling apiece.

Are these half-hidden morbidities any concern of the outside world? The publisher is expected to give, and holds himself out as giving, and

does in fact give, some social service. It is therefore a pity—to put it no higher—that he is operating today in less favourable circumstances than his predecessors and that there are certain debilitating and corrosive tendencies in his trade. The relationship between author and publisher, a relationship which can be of great value to the young author and often continues so for a lifetime, is an asset of price to the community. But it exists upon conditions, chief among them that the publisher should be intelligent enough and sensitive enough to talk with the author on equal terms, that he should have the financial elbow-room to take risks with new writers, and that he should not have so many authors that he has time to spare for none. If he is dull or poor or remote, he can contribute nothing positive to the fostering of talent, and when all publishers are either dull or poor or remote something will have been lost. A threat exists because the best recruits now hesitate to join a profession that pays ill and puts too many hazards in the way of promotion to the top; because all but the biggest publishers have reduced financial margins and therefore gamble less often; and because large firms which do comparatively little to discover talent are nevertheless efficiently geared to exploit it and do so at the expense of the successful author's first publisher.

It is a curious and unremarked fact that the original publisher has no continuing interest in the profits which another publisher derives from an author's work, even though the first publisher may have done a great deal to establish the author without making much of a profit (if any) from his early work. While the author should clearly be entitled to all that any publisher will pay him for his work and should not be shackled to any one publisher there is a case for saying that in certain circumstances (admittedly difficult to define) a publisher who annexes a specially valuable author should be required to pay a levy to that author's original publisher. This is a revolutionary thought which publishers will find somewhat indigestible, but, however difficult the application, they can hardly reject the principle and at the same time continue with logic to decry the activities of their more predatory brethren. As things are at present the publisher tries to protect himself by imposing legal restrictions or moral inhibitions on the author, but these are dubiously justifiable in theory and imperfectly effective in practice; they can even rub the author-publisher relationship which they are designed to maintain the wrong way.

More difficult still to circumvent than the threat to this relationship are the barriers to the advancement within the trade of the independent publisher without private means. This is a problem which is not peculiar to publishing, though its implications in publishing may have deeper social implications than elsewhere. The desire to smooth the path of the best man to the top regardless of means conflicts, moreover, with the proposition that in publishing the best man is a man who, among other things, takes financial risks, which will hurt him if they go wrong. But does venturing necessarily involve taking risks of this sort? Is it possible to venture in the way a good publisher should venture without the element of personal financial involvement? How independent must the independent publisher be? The completely independent publisher must clearly have money. The ambition of the good man without money is today restricted to becoming a bailiff for absentee owners, and in practice the absentee owners have proved remarkably liberal and have left their chosen bailiffs free to get on with the job. But it is far from certain that this will always be so. The new owners who have invaded the publishing scene have been able in this generation to pick bailiffs who have already proved themselves in the world of independent publishing and are personalities who are not lightly to be tampered with. How the pattern will develop in the next generation nobody knows.

Meanwhile, between the completely independent owner-publishers and the absentee owners' bailiff there is a possible third type who may be about to nose his way on to the stage. He has already appeared in Fleet Street in circumstances very similar to those which call for new avenues in publishing. He is the nominee of trustees who are without personal financial interests and may be described as eunuch-owners, since they have power to appoint and (sometimes) power to dismiss but no power, or very little power, to interfere between the appointment and disappearance of their chosen executive who is to all intents and purposes independent of them. There are in Fleet Street many variations on this comparatively modern scheme, but something of the sort applies to the most valuable organs of the press, and the most coveted and useful editorships are won by talent within this framework; the editor is independent but not at personal risk. To meet the decline of the privateer and the challenge of the big brash barons a new man had to be invented and new channels opened for his progress. It

has been a significant piece of social engineering which, like all the best adaptations, has added variety without suppressing any part of the existing apparatus. It has enriched journalism and could do as much for publishing.

Pages Designed to Please

The concept of the publisher's typographer as an expert with professional standing is fairly new in this country, where professionals, as opposed to amateurs, used to be regarded with slight condescension. As in other fields, designers for print have had—and still have—to struggle against indifference and against the suspicion which, perhaps as a Puritan inheritance, is only too often brought to bear on anybody with a serious concern for aesthetics. Outside a small circle of enthusiasts book designers have remained largely anonymous, and those who use their talents have given them no more than somewhat grudging recognition.

If these opening remarks sound a little jaundiced they are nevertheless facts which should be taken into account when trying to define where British book design stands today and in assessing its virtues and weaknesses. 'Tradition ist Schlamperei', said Gustav Mahler in a different context, but his dictum can point a lesson when one compares British book design since the last war with the work done by a small group of devotees during the period of the typographic revival—the 1920s and 1930s. It is impossible to come away from a visit to a bookshop with the impression that all is well with British typography and book design. Formulas that were fresh thirty years ago are being endlessly repeated and thus have grown stale. Too often we miss the polish and attention to detail which would at least redeem them as pieces of good workmanship if not as inspired examples of design.

The outward appearance is often deceptive, for, obedient to the general trend towards more and more elaborate packaging, the dustjackets are colourful and often ingenious. Sometimes they are signed

by artists of considerable stature as painters who were evidently given a completely free hand in the approach to their task. The wealth of modern display type-faces is occasionally used with skill, more rarely with brilliance, and there are a few designers with a flair for fine lettering which has its roots in the past but flowers freely in the present. This having been said, it must at once be pointed out that the hand-lettering on hundreds of jackets, year in, year out, is lamentably inept—laborious imitations of type-faces abound, and much pretentious and tasteless *Kitsch* is served up. Foreign visitors to Britain often remark on the quality of our lettering on buildings and shop fronts and imply that we have an inborn feeling for such things. What is displayed on book jackets would seem to prove that we are credited with something owned by only a handful of letterers whose work stands out among a plethora of mediocrity.

Casting a sidelong glance at paperbacks, at present proliferating with vigour, we may perceive that in spite of the blatant vulgarity of many pictorial designs the problem of covers is at last being tackled seriously by some publishers. Few, as yet, can rival the remarkable sophistication and creative skill that has been applied to the covers of American egghead paperbacks in recent years, though a new genus of cover, neither rigidly typographic nor luridly pictorial but of a forthright graphic quality, is beginning to emerge. Evidently their publishers are aware of the need for a certain sharpness and immediacy in this field of impulse-buying. It is here rather than among conventional book jackets that we may look for the most striking developments. It will be interesting to see whether, as in the United States, the craze for brightness and gloss will overreach itself. For the moment, alas, plain matt surfaces are out and varnish or lamination in, with little regard for the comfort of the reader.

Both in the materials used and in their design and execution bindings suffer because of the need to spend so much money on jackets and yet prevent the price of books rising beyond what it is thought the public will tolerate. True, the British book, compared with its equivalent in America, Germany, or Italy, is still cheap, but only because of its generally austere, utilitarian form of dress. Simplicity as such is no fault; indeed it suits the national temperament and can be in welcome contrast to much that is perhaps a little garish and ostentatious elsewhere. Yet the greater the simplicity—and this applies particularly to

publishers' bindings—the greater the need for refinement in the choice of lettering, type sizes, spacing, and placing. This, however, is lacking more often than not, and one is left with an impression of shoddiness and indifference. Certain proprietary materials other than bookcloth, perfectly adequate in themselves, are now in such common use that it is high time they ceased to be embossed in imitation of cloth. It is not suggested that anybody is really deceived; but is cloth-grained paper any more defensible than walls painted to look like wood or concrete grooved like stone? Honesty in the use of materials is fundamental to all good design, and the cased binding is no exception. Some publishers take no part in this mild form of pretence and instead are experimenting with decoration in ink or foils that owes little to tradition. A few, moreover, treat lettering with the respect it deserves, and resist the temptation to cheesepare by refusing to use imitation gold foil on books of a price where the resultant saving on production costs is insignificantly small.

Tools and materials *influence*, though we have come to learn that they do not *govern*, design. The typographer's principal tool will always be good type. A truism perhaps; but how can he carry out his task with poorly designed type? No amount of ingenuity can overcome such a handicap, for 'aesthetics make a difference', whatever may be said by psychologists on the many complex factors that have a bearing on legibility. These are not vintage years in British book design—a fact which makes it all the more gratifying to be able to record that no country can rival Britain in the wealth of fine type-faces—historical revivals and new designs—that have been put at the printer's and publisher's disposal during the past forty years. Indeed, the rest of the world using the roman alphabet is heavily in our debt, or, to be more exact, in the debt of one man, Mr. Stanley Morison, under whose inspired and inspiring guidance this transformation of the printed page has taken place. No apology is made for mentioning his name in a survey which is concerned with the general rather than the specific.

At once it must be admitted that this splendid array of type-faces is not often put to the best use. The house styles of many publishers seem to have congealed so long ago that they take no account of what later precept has taught us. Good typography is made up of minutiae. The best type is spoilt by excessive spacing before colons, semicolons, exclamation and question marks; after opening quotes and before

closing ones; and after full stops. The potential beauty of the title-page is endangered by carelessly uneven letter-spacing, by unduly large word-spacing, and by leading which not only offends against aesthetic principles but often also those of simple logic. If this sounds schoolmasterly and pedantic, we can learn from a study of books in some countries on the Continent that these things are ordered better over there. To trace the reasons for this discrepancy is not easy. It may be that German or Swiss printers have not yet turned themselves quite so much into contractors who take little interest in, and do not endeavour to influence, the style of what they produce. Even more important, by contrast with the countries mentioned, there are too few heads of British publishing firms who care passionately for the finer details of good typography and who, though they themselves may not have the time or equipment to deal with such matters, take determined steps to employ well-trained and talented typographers.

If first editions of novels should perhaps be looked at tolerantly, the collected works of established authors must bear sterner examination. A few of them, for instance Proust and Aldous Huxley, are fortunate in that they have received sympathetic treatment. But the standard editions of many others—Dostoevsky, Maugham, E. M. Forster, Kipling, D. H. Lawrence among them—belie the respect and admiration their writers command and show a strange lack of discrimination by publishers and collectors alike. Definitive editions, intended for sale over many years, deserve the highest level of typography. They should be an obligation, and a yardstick by which the great mass of day-to-day publishing can be measured.

It is in the field of scholarly printing that British book production can point to achievements on a broad front not easily matched anywhere else. The two great University Presses have grafted on to their ancient traditions of learning the branch of fine typography. Though the types may only occasionally be those brought from the Low Countries to Oxford by Bishop Fell, or those of Baskerville, who was associated with Cambridge, they characterize the individual style of the two Presses. Oxford leans towards masculine vigour, apparent in design as well as presswork, while Cambridge excels by its light touch, its clarity, and the elegance with which it can endow even the most complicated scientific treatise. Nothing could be more enlightening than a comparison of their two versions of the *Order of Service* for the

Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953; and it is difficult to see how the design of Bibles, and other ecclesiastical printing, which calls for a rare combination of typographic scholarship and aesthetic perception, could be in better hands.

There are two fairly recent developments which make an appraisal of typographic style in this country increasingly difficult. One is the frequency with which books originally produced in America are now reprinted here by offset-lithography, with only minor changes which are often done in a rather haphazard manner. The other is the growth of international art-book publishing which often results in volumes whose components were printed in two or three different countries and allows no certainty about who should be credited with the overall control of design and layout. Even those puzzled by the phenomenon of the boom in art books will admit that such works more than anything else exploit the full scope of modern production techniques and the freedom of design thus made possible. As in architecture, a style has begun to develop which knows no national boundaries and in which, at its best, the *Neue Sachlichkeit* first postulated by members of the Bauhaus group is combined with a heightened sense for dramatic juxtaposition and dynamic layout.

There are some gifted graphic designers of the new school, mostly still in their twenties or thirties, whose work can be seen over the imprint of a few publishers of books particularly on art and architecture, with strongly held views on what twentieth-century typography should be like. It can be expected that this young generation, which has a clear preference for working on a free-lance rather than a salaried basis, will be given increasing opportunities for applying its talents and technical acumen to the latent task of transforming the text-book, the popular book on science—in short all that mass of informative literature, often more image than word—which will be one of the features of the next decades. It may well be that the ebullient paperback will pioneer such developments. Already it has shown that, owing to its very different costing structure (layout and design being *fixed* charges which become less significant the larger the edition printed), it can afford to give at least as much attention to questions of typography and design as its elder, the bound book.

The printing industry seems to be on the brink of changes which may rival, in ultimate effect, the invention of printing itself. The

printed book, to begin with, was patently modelled on the work of the scribes, but within a short time had developed its own canons. Those remained virtually unchallenged for nearly 500 years, but a challenge may now be imminent and British imagination will have to prove itself equal to it.

The Large Youthful Appetite for Magic and Fantasy

The past ten or fifteen years have shown a prodigious increase in the number and range of published books for the young—but to look for any easy parallel between adult and children's literature over this period would be rash indeed. To be sure, there is a shelf of science-fiction at the junior library, and another, rapidly growing, of biography. Non-fiction of all kinds is admirably represented. But these are deliberate matters, designed in a publisher's office; we must look further to find where the natural course of invention still—however fitfully and erratically—flows.

Certainly the odd conditions of children's writing must affect the work of all but the real originals. For one thing, the very field in which adult novels find their richest material—the field of human relationships with all the attendant emotions—appears to be closed to modern juvenile fiction. For another, there can be no real *avant garde* among readers. The advanced and sophisticated simply move earlier to the adult shelves. Very likely, the most audacious experiments in text and pictures are to be found in the youngest nursery books; here conventions are not yet fixed; moreover, the three or four-year-old infant, not yet purged of its natural surrealism, still has most of its contacts with the adult world rather than with that of its illiberal fellow child. But with these, no less, the peculiar situation prevails. Children's books are *read* by the young, but are *written* (and published, reviewed and bought) by the adult. What a strange product it is, that the writers (generally speaking) are unable to read, and the readers (generally speaking) unable to write!

Yet it is clear that, between child-reader and adult narrator a relationship must exist. It does, and it is on its shifting, uneasy balance that the mood of fiction depends. A hundred years ago, to take a convenient date, when there were fewer pleasurable 'escape' alternatives to books, a storyteller of quality needed to make no concessions in vocabulary; pious, didactic or personally tendentious material could freely run through the plot. *The Water Babies*, surviving today for all its extraordinary crotchets, is a valuable example to study. In our own time, by contrast, the average, not very gifted professional writer surrenders at every point. Language, especially, must be simplified; authority of idea must not in any way be hinted at. The reader must be tempted with what he desires—but what is that? Does even the reader know?

It is true that sophistication comes earlier in modern conditions, but children as children really change very little from age to age. They are, however, extremely suggestible, and will readily shift their standards and demands when the chance occurs. What many timorous adults forget is that a writer, like a popular comedian, creates his audience; the audience adapts itself to the performer's idiosyncrasy. This by no means applies only at the highest imaginative levels. Dipping into the lower fictional waters, we may gaze for a moment at an absurdity such as the Billy Bunter saga. Monstrous as most non-addicts must find it, it is at least the author's personal conception, language and all; and to the hammering insistence of this it surely owes its success. The moral is that a basically readable book is far more likely to survive if it has been written to please the author than to meet the limited tastes of an imagined readership.

In the ordinary run of children's fiction—holiday adventure and such—that lesson has not been very well realized during the past decade or two. Depressed observers may note that at least one blown-out 'popular' reputation is actually based on the negative and conciliatory qualities of the author's work. A further glance will show, however, that in this same period a number of really notable books have appeared that seem to be unaware of all the current conventions and taboos. The classics of our own, as of earlier, times belong to the old eccentric English tradition, inclining to magic and fantasy: often (as for instance with Carroll) involving the acrobatics of language. High in this queer impressive contemporary list is J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* (which

later led to his extraordinary piece of invented mythology *The Lord of the Rings*), a saga of dwarfs, elves and kindred subterranean creatures. C. S. Lewis's *Narnia* stories—journeys of modern children in a vast allegorical fairyland—are already among the classics. Mr. Lewis, in particular, stops short at nothing: love, hate, evil, fear, religion, violence, death.

Another exceptional work is T. H. White's *The Sword in the Stone*, a brilliant and audacious retelling of the Arthurian legend. On a smaller scale, Mary Norton's invented domestic myth, *The Borrowers*, should be mentioned—a chronicle of miniature household creatures made and behaving in the household human image. *Tom's Midnight Garden* by Philippa Pearce tells, with a strange quality of tension, of a boy transported, night by night, to the childhood time of an old lady's recollection. *The Eagle of the Ninth*, perhaps the best of Rosemary Sutcliff's remarkable historical novels, recounts the search, in Roman Britain, for the tracks of a vanished legion. *The Fair to Middling*, by Arthur Calder-Marshall, is allegory again: here orphanage children are faced with the wrestle of good and evil at a fair. *A Swarm in May* by William Mayne is about singing boys at a cathedral choir school, and the personal decision of one. It has to be noted, of course, that almost all these books are, in setting at least, outside the contemporary day-to-day world. Many of them could have been written at any other time than our own.

A further look might be taken at William Mayne, the last name on the list. He is the only writer so far mentioned whose imagination seems fulfilled without history or fantasy. And yet, in a way his themes are as traditional as any. Mr. Mayne is a mannered writer, and even when his moves are familiar the performance is still very well worth watching. He is a stylist; a reader needs a fairly agile attention to follow both talk and tale. A few assorted children and an adult or two in a village or country town are his usual persons; the plot is almost always a variation on the time-honoured treasure-hunt theme: but the quest may be for the meaning of a legend, for a hidden spring of water or evidence of history, some tracing into the roots of the past which has an intention for today. *The Member for the Marsh*, *The Rolling Season*, *The Thumbstick* are excellent instances both of his manner and mannerisms; how he cuts across the usual age divisions (big boys, little girls, farmers, parents—all have a share in the tale); how skilfully he adapts

the old feudal machinery for the plot, while changing its implications; how irritating, too, his elliptical dialogue can sometimes be. But he does bring back significance to writing itself; he does show too (most pointedly in *A Swarm in May*) how plot may arise from character and is, essentially, contained in it.

Poetry itself—that is, poetry designed for the young—is rarely attempted today. The very idea is an anomaly after all; where conscious receiving limits are set the result can hardly be anything else than pastiche, or versified prose. But in all these possible classics of our time, in the work of White and Lewis and Mayne and others, there is a latent poetry—the quality that ensures that a book will be read again, and something new discovered in it. Sometimes this is held in a situation, a scene, a face, a passage of dialogue; always in the use of the words themselves. And if the old heroic note of the ballad never sounds in verse, it can still be heard, a little less simple, a little less clear in sound, perhaps, in the historical novel.

This—the historical novel—is, indeed, the one field where the line between adult and childish fiction can thin to nothing. Anguish, battle and death, ancient injustices and human dilemmas, these can hardly be excluded; nor, in the modern historical terms, the questions of tyranny and oppression behind the splendour. Even the bravado of heroics now rarely appears as an end in itself. This is a new move, of course, arising out of the almost moral compulsion today towards scholarship, facts and analysis of causes; sometimes, instead of running counter to that lazy and conservative romanticism which lurks at all times in the native imagination, it seems to unite with it. But the change is important. Until no more than thirty years ago the French Revolution, the Jacobite rising and our own Civil War provided a continual fictional battleground in which only one side had a case. Bonnie Charlie's cause has even now a tenacious fictional life.

Geoffrey Trease's *Bows Against the Barons* (1934) marks a turning point in the presentation of history. Writers today no longer dismiss the motives of rebellion; the peasant, French or English, is allowed at last his say—at least, in the better books of the genre. These authors, moreover, are boldly leaving the usual costume-periods for less charted country. In *The Hills of Varna* and *The Crown of Violet* Geoffrey Trease turns to Ancient Greece. Cynthia Harnett's *The Load of Unicorn* reanimates the problems of Caxton and the scriveners. Henry Treece

sails grimly along with the Vikings. The most inspired of all the modern historical writers is probably Rosemary Sutcliff, who passionately transports herself into a chosen period and presents it with unsparing vividness. Roman and Saxon Britain are her particular fields today (after more conventional beginnings) and in her forceful, compelling books there is clearly no tempering of facts and language for an imagined reader.

One advantage of the bygone time is that it seems to offer a wilder, richer, less limited action than the routines of our current daily life. But approach too near to the present day and the privilège goes. Stories set in Regency or Victorian England have often an oddly artificial air; while a medieval narrative, like Hilda Lewis's recent and excellent *Here Comes Harry*, seems perfectly convincing. On the other hand, Barbara Ker Wilson's sociological novels about *near*-history—anything in the past fifty years or so—open a new and promising field. Her latest *The Lovely Summer*, touches the suffragette movement and the First World War. Perhaps it does not belong in this section at all, but an unexpectedly triumphant experiment in *domestic* Victorian fiction—a thing almost impossible to do without the boring effect of pastiche—is Gillian Avery's *The Warden's Niece*, with its sequel *James without Thomas*. The attraction of these witty and ingenious tales lies partly in the plot but still more in the verve of the writing itself. But they are admittedly for an educated taste.

New patterns of fiction continue to start and grow: we continue to look at them hopefully. A good deal of narrative energy is used on the 'career' novel, for instance—a post-war genre with an almost ritual pattern, describing a boy's or girl's initiation, by way of training or apprenticeship, into a chosen profession. The theme of work, in its daily detail, has inspired some of the greatest of novelists. But, alas, the material that animated Zola (or, indeed, Charlotte Brontë) produces little in any way memorable or original. One is always conscious, of course, of the shadow of 'policy' hovering overhead—still, it is hard not to wonder why almost all of these plentiful books fall short of the living quality. As for the old-time school story, that purely English fantasy has dwindled almost to nothing. In spite of its formalized jargon and situations, this quaint and ardent genre had a certain virtue: it was the last repository of the emotional situation. Jealousy, hope, betrayal, loyalty, love and doubt—these ever raged in the miniature

world behind the mullioned windows. The more formidable writers seem never to have touched the genre. What might not Miss Sutcliff, turning aside from her loyalty-torn Roman exiles, her gashed warriors and chain-galled slaves, have made of it?

The most significant fictional move might seem an obvious one. We have already noted the attempt to break away from the feudal dream in novels of history. Now, however creakingly done, a vigorous effort is being made to shift the social centre of *modern* fictional life. Only *now*? a non-reader of children's books might well remark, astonished to learn that the ancestral Grange, with priest-hole, lost will and hidden jewel-hoard still makes an annual appearance. In adult novels the proletarian setting is firmly enough established; the typical young (adult) novelist today is far more often an Alan Sillitoe than an L. P. Hartley or an Anthony Powell. The child's world moves more slowly. Feudal conditions do provide certain obvious narrative tensions and a comforting atmosphere: an uninventive writer is not inclined to part with them in a hurry. Change the ordered traditional concepts and the whole emphasis of the tales must change as well. Of course, a win in the Pools could replace the sudden inheritance, but fictionally it is no substitute. The tempo, for one thing, is wrong. It is the quest, not the anti-climax of spending that provides the conventional drama. The ritual weekly filling of forms might interest one of our current symbolic playwrights, but the drama is too static for juveniles.

In the unidealized setting of daily life, with its busy, grating, ignoble problems, the fictional hero has to begin again. The chance is here, at least, for the interest to return to the characters themselves, and this has happened, up to a point, in the best of the day-school stories (written by professionals such as Geoffrey Trease, Fielden Hughes, and Stephen Tring). No one—except Mr. Mayne, perhaps—has yet reached the quality of *The Fifth Form at St. Dominic's* in the matter of personalities; but the writer's own uncertainty about his audience is partly, as usual, to blame. Still, it is interesting to see that the most cherished of Anglo-Saxon attitudes, the old imperial and military heroics, for instance, do not die so hard after all. But there are other traditional attitudes which remain, and comedy is one. E. W. Hildick's lively annals of working-class boys, the *Jim Starling* series, are among the most successful attempts to offer a supposedly rough and reluctant reader, the secondary modern

schoolboy, a new set of fictional values, placed wholly in the social level he knows. The reliance, inevitably, is on brisk incident and comic exchange, and the publishers do the useful and practical author no service in suggesting that 'Jim Starling and his friends may be Britain's answer to *Huckleberry Finn*'. Why? The question has already been answered in this essay.

Sometimes an unusually imaginative tale is struck out, using the same personnel more perceptively: Anne Barrett's *Songberd's Grove* comes to mind. *A Man o' the House* by Allan McLean strikingly uses the farming-fishing world of the Western Isles. Meanwhile the number of Secondary Modern boys and girls who join the contemporary fictional cast continues to grow. Sometimes the home background leads to a revival of the family story, a genre which requires some effort, maybe, in writing but which almost invariably pleases. Noel Streatfield's *The Bell Family* (vicarage children: poor but well-bred) at present leads in this field. But muffled as they are in this attractive saga, the feudal echoes still sound. One early (1937) and isolated working-class tale, *The Family from One-End Street*, has long had a sentimental popularity; there are signs now that authors will work again on this characteristic mood. Homely emotional comedy—that's an idea! And so production goes on. It should be said that the French (Paul Berna for instance) can move to these social levels more naturally and with no loss of style.

What is the picture, then? Uneven, shifting, paradoxical: a conflict of intention and desire. The youthful reader's imagination rejects the vague and whimsical but is readily fired (in fiction or out) by *fact*—the working detail of history, science, aeronautics, zoology, archaeology, criminal law and various forms of sport. Good. But writing itself, the power of using the word, has declined, which is bad. And nothing has replaced the old-time ballast of ethics and ideas. At the same time, fantasy (ranging from witchcraft to space-travel) maintains the traditional hold it has had in this country since *Beowulf* and the earliest Celtic myths. This need not be thought inconsistent: magic, it can be argued, is also a science of its kind. Where the average professional writer fails is in courting the reader too anxiously; he can please for the moment, but nothing he writes in this spirit is likely to last. However startling the story, is any novel using only a timid and conciliatory (though 'popular',) vocabulary expressing only timid and conciliatory

(though 'popular') judgments ever read more than once? The genuinely gifted writers succeed by—or in spite of—breaking all the fashionable rules, both in the range of words and in the dangerous matter of thought.

A stranger might reasonably ask if the leading English poets and novelists turn their attention at all to children's fiction. They do or do not: it hardly matters. For unless they are truly equipped for the task, the result has all too often a condescending or falsely jovial air, which an adult may find amusing, but a sensible child will resent. The few great children's writers, whether of yesterday or today, turn to the genre because it is natural for them to do so. In almost every case they have, preserved in them, a secret obstinate streak of resistance to adult life. They may (like Nesbit and Andersen) resent the reputation they acquire. They may have little real contact with children. A particular child is often the apparent occasion for a tale (*The Wind in the Willows*, *Treasure Island*, *Alice*, *The Water Babies*), but even this means little. Nothing except mechanical stuff is ever really written *to*, only *from*. It is no proof of quality that the manuscript tale was enjoyed when read to the reader's family at home. Children at the listening stage will accept almost any spoken offering with enjoyment, partly for the incantatory sound, partly for the flattery of personal address. The greatest writers for children often have not, intrinsically, cared for children at all. Barrie was ill at ease with girls—they are terribly castigated as matron-images in his books; Carroll could rarely tolerate boys. Even with the congenial gender, each had exact and limiting views about age and class. Andersen rejected a statue in which children were shown clustering around his shoulders; E. Nesbit, though a frequent parent, had (her own daughters relate) a very uncertain talent for the role. She wrote not for the young who came after her but looking back, as all of them do who touch the level of genius, for the persistent and unappeased childhood spirit lodged in her adult self. Writers for children today, whose biographies are still unwritten, may take this as they will: they should remember, though, that beneath the level of genius the conditions no longer obtain.

The Screen Holds the Eye

'The British cinema has always been, and still is, conformist and class-bound to a degree. This means that it is practically impossible to extend the range of British films beyond the limits of what is, to the middle-class mind, orthodox, respectable and "nice".' Thus wrote last year Mr. Lindsay Anderson, who holds strong views on the function of films and on the importance of being 'committed'.

Before, however, joining in and enlarging on Mr. Anderson's attack, the critic, however anxious to be up and at 'em, will, if he is fair-minded, pause and ask himself to what degree British films should be held responsible for reflecting national characteristics: for being, in fact, what they cannot help being. The strong strain of revolutionary instinct that runs through the British character is seldom recognized for what it is simply because, although the ends it attains represent changes which are violent indeed, the means by which it achieves them are not. To proclaim that the cutting off of Charles I's head was un-English is not to make a joke but to proclaim a profound and important truth. It was indeed so un-English that it shocked us out of any inclination ever to do such a thing again, and, when the time came for the Stuarts finally to go, another means was found.

The post-war revolution and the creation of the state as it is today were actions just as radical as those which convulsed France at the end of the eighteenth century, the difference being that the work was carried through by the ballot box instead of the guillotine. All this is, of course, trite and obvious enough, but it needs to be said when the expression of the English—or, for the purpose of convenience, although

the two are by no means the same, the British—character, as it manifests itself through the medium of the arts, is attacked. Again, it is the custom of the British artist to make his attacks on the Establishment and on established values from within rather than without. The savagery of the assaults of Dickens on the social evils of his time is not so dramatic as, for instance, the self-consciously theatrical stand taken by Zola in the Dreyfus case. Dickens was a novelist the middle-class mind had accepted, and this contrived to make him seem 'orthodox, respectable and "nice" '. Perhaps his novels were, on close analysis, none of those things, but they were so contrived—and the whole make-up of the man, in many ways a typical Englishman, so devised it—that the shocks they gave to the conformist, class-bound mind were a part of the general delight. It accepted from him what it would have rejected from a self-proclaimed rebel. Yet Dickens is as great a social reformer as Zola ever was.

Then, nearly forty years ago, Mr. E. M. Forster wrote in *A Passage to India* an oblique and ironic comment on British rule in India. It was not a direct attack yet it had all the implications of one, and, once again, it was written from within, from within the walls that shelter those who like art and life to be orthodox, respectable and nice. No one would have then and no one would today equate *A Passage to India* with a revolutionary pamphlet, but it was nevertheless evidence enough of that non-conforming, questioning, ironic, radical inclination which runs through the country from the highest to the lowest and is to be found in the baronial hall as well as in the workers' institute.

If the genius of the British race is for the oblique approach, for a middle-class way of achieving revolutionary ends, how can its films be blamed for following the course dictated by the national character? And then there is another aspect of the matter that deserves attention. The cinema is a new invention and its first flickerings are part of the memories of multitudes who are still on the right side of old age. Further, that small span of life must be cut in half, for in its earliest years it was, and, indeed, it considered itself to be, little more than a toy, a 'turn', as it were, and not an important one, in a music-hall programme. Films on the level of *Rescued by Rover* made no claim to reflect or represent anything under the sun, and it is necessary to take a big jump forward in time before a British film that had any other purpose than to amuse is encountered.

And, even so, it would be absurd to claim too much for *The Private Life of Henry VIII.* It was a highly commercial work, made for commercial ends, but there was a hint of a finer purpose about it. For those whose idea of history was a procession of kings and queens in their ceremonial robes, it gave the unfamiliar notion that they were, after all, men and women with human appetites and failings. The film was not history, yet it made history seem something other than severe books never to be read and faded memories of tables of dates.

The war, of course, gave our directors the chance to show what they could do with the semi-documentary technique, but that is an old story now, as is the success of Ealing Studios in giving expression to that vein of whimsicality which runs through the English character and which we, if not others, find endearing. In general, however, the history of British films since the war has not been either an interesting or an eventful one, and we have not been able to plead that we lacked the actors and actresses to put flesh and bone on to our scripts. Our players were there—those that were not in Hollywood, that is. The scripts were the weakness.

Lately—in the past year or so, that is—there have been signs of a change towards a more healthy state of affairs, and for this a number of factors would seem to be responsible. In the first place, television has made the population as a whole more familiar with, and interested in, the sort of social problems which, so film producers had always argued, were not the kind of material out of which commercial entertainment could profitably be made. Perhaps the television talks, debates, quizzes and so on into matters which affect the man in the factory, the mines or the office, are superficial and only scratch the surface of their subjects, but at least that man is brought to recognize, and perhaps for the first time, that 'entertainment' can be something other than a succession of stale jokes or the playing of popular music.

There is no greater fallacy than that which holds that the talking of 'shop' is boring. It is, on the contrary, often the most stimulating and revealing of talk, and a man who knows all there is to know about, say, process-welding is very much more worth listening to when he is on that subject than the person of sketchy general education holding forth on the American Presidential election when he could not, for the life of him, explain what a 'primary' is.

It was a knowledge of this that inspired the production of such films as *I'm All Right, Jack* and *The Angry Silence*, and, if the films themselves were not masterpieces, it took courage and vision to make them. They brought into the business of British film making that element of social comment and satire—as distinct from music-hall burlesque—which has always been such a stranger to it, and at the same time, it presented the 'working' classes, i.e., the class which works with its hands, as recognizable people rather than quaint theatrical types. And this, in its turn, leads on to another consideration and to further evidence that the British film is at last widening its scope and its horizons. Class-consciousness is an abiding, dominating feature in the English landscape, and things, as Mr. Kingsley Amis for one has demonstrated, have not changed since the founding of the welfare state. In some ways, indeed, quite the contrary, and so the appearance on the screen of *Look Back in Anger* and *Room at the Top* again had an importance that was greater than the sum of the merits of the films themselves.

Not that those merits are inconsiderable. The fact that Mr. John Osborne is a highly articulate writer is too often overlooked by those prepared to discuss him in only the loosest of generalizations, and it was this articulateness which won the film its popularity and acclaim. Mr. Osborne and Mr. Brain are writers, and while, of course, their directors did their share and did it very well, the films were writers' films and, as such, they conquered.

It is here that a new hope opens out for British films and the signposts to the future are clear to read. For a long time, until indeed the coming of the wide screen, Cinemascope and all the rest of it, those who most loved the cinema were the most suspicious of the spoken word. They looked back to the days of the silent film as the time when the cinema was 'pure' and had the right to consider itself an art. When sound came there had to be someone—and that someone often turned out to be a gaggle of highly paid and well-known authors who lived lives of incredible frustration and fantasy—to write the lines the 'stars' had to speak, but those lines were treated as of little account and all that mattered was the director and his cast. Cinemascope, however, imposed limits on the director and, with the camera forced for long periods of time into inactivity, words began to assume an added importance—it is something of a paradox that the extremes of the sizes of the screen, the monsters of the modern cinema and the little

rectangle of the television box, should both have played their part in raising the status of the author.

The 'new wave' in the French cinema has its impulse in the work and ideas of writers, and now Britain herself is to experience something of the same sort, but within the framework of our own traditions. An article in a recent number of *Sight and Sound* gave impressive evidence of the way our film producers are looking to contemporary literary talent for material. Mr. Osborne, who had a hand in the film script of *The Entertainer*, has planned an original screen play, while Mr. Alan Sillitoe has finished his adaptation for the screen of *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*. Mr. Arnold Wesker is, it is reported, planning a love story on 'the impossibility of the ivory tower situation', while a version of *Lord of the Flies*, by Mr. William Golding, who is one of our most exciting novelists, is to be directed by Mr. Peter Brook.

Here, then, is a sample of the kind of films that British companies are to make and British audiences to see, and it is a programme which would not be possible unless there was a change in the general climate of opinion. Two considerations, although they are generally subjects for abuse, must here not be neglected. Distributors seem a little more adventurous and less suspicious in their attitude, and then there is the influence that critics exercise. There is a formidable amount of nonsense talked—and written—on this particular subject. At one extreme stand those who profess to believe that critics can, and frequently do, 'kill' films and, as often as not, out of pique; at the other are massed the upholders of the doctrine that they are little more than publicists in the pay of various companies and that what they write is not of any importance anyway.

It is doubtful, to say the least of it, whether critics, whatever their motives, could 'kill' any film, although the critics in the national newspapers may influence the fate of films during their West End run. What is, perhaps, beginning to happen is that a critical acclaim for films with intelligent themes made against the grain, as it were, of the prejudices of those moneyed interests in the industry which tend automatically to underrate the tastes of the public, can put heart into those who believe that a flourishing cinema need not be a cinema geared to the lowest common denominator. Independent companies formed by men who have something to say are encouraged by generous criticism,

and not only is that criticism forthcoming but it, in its turn, is becoming more and more respected.

The old gibe that critics are those who have failed to create still has its point, but that 'word of mouth', grapevine, drums-in-the-jungle kind of comment which is so important in the theatre is now at work in the cinema—and often enough it has its origins in what the critics have written. It is—and a good thing too—no longer always true that all publicity is good publicity and that abuse is the best of all. That may still apply to the kind of film that courts an 'X' certificate and hopes for a brush with the censor, but not to the respectable film that wants only to be judged by a fair and objective jury—and that today is the kind of jury it gets—a jury which, if it has a bias, inclines towards over rather than under-praising.

The climate, then, is favourable to legitimate risks being taken in the cause of a cinema that will find its material in the current social scene and in the literature that is being written about it. The theatre is finding the trend to be away from the kind of inconsequent, light-hearted comedy typified by *The Reluctant Debutante* and, while that is not necessarily a good thing—inconsequent light comedy frequently proving to be the product of a highly civilized society—it does give those more interested in substance than in style their chance. 'It [the theatre] is the only art that expresses the moment for the common people, many of whom are not highly trained enough to appreciate the most extreme modern music or painting.' Thus Dame Sybil Thorndike a little time ago, and she might well have qualified that 'only art' by including the cinema. It, too, can express the moment for the common people.

One more factor must be considered, and that is the censorship. Although defending that institution is seldom either popular or rewarding work, it has done well enough in the past and is by no means so narrow and bigoted as is popularly thought. The cinema, however, is growing up. Even the British cinema is growing up to the point when it can treat the story of Oscar Wilde in its proper terms and make a more or less faithful rendering of *Sons and Lovers*, and this process calls for a sympathetic response on the part of the censor. Sex is not the only sin, although sometimes the perverted popular slant on things seems, hypocritically, to make it out to be, and a liberal attitude towards the problems it inspires might well go hand in hand with a stricter

determination to keep an eye on violence. The world would not have been a poorer place had *Never Let Go*, the thug film in which Mr. Peter Sellers was misguided enough to appear, been refused a licence.

The cinema at once creates and reflects an image, and when it comes to insisting that the world in which we live today is one of crime and violence it is doing its best to perform the first of those functions. It is a mistaken policy, the more mistaken since it is flying in the face of the evidence to the contrary. Of course there is crime; of course there is violence; of course youth is difficult and intolerant; yet the men and women in the changing and dangerous society of our times have other concerns that seem more real and immediate to them. The British cinema is showing signs that it is contemplating coming to what may pass for grips with them, although obstructionism still exists and disappointments may be in store. May it succeed—it has, to adapt the words of that old jingoish song, it has the actors, it has the writers, and it may get the money. The news, however, that Hollywood is to pour £7,000,000 into British film production is ominous. The gesture may be generous, but foreign money, however tactfully used, is generally fatal to the development of a healthy, native art.

A Growing Discrimination among Those Who Sit and Stare?

As things are at present one could argue strongly that television's most valuable service to the community is in acting as the sump of the entertainment industries, draining off the stagnant routines of the stage and cinema and creating a situation in which the senior institutions must either improve or perish. Television in any society could scarcely evade this menial role altogether, for in every respect its qualifications are ideal. Technically it is more versatile than any other means of communication: its insatiable consumption of new material forces programme organizers to pad out their yawning schedules with indifferent work; and its existence is far less precarious than that of newspapers or the theatre—audience ratings are certainly important, but their influence is not to be compared with that of box-office returns. And, considering the size of the audience, competition between two channels can hardly be called a cut-throat fight for survival. Survival is guaranteed, no matter to what hitherto uncharted depths the programmes may sink.

Anyone relying on printed comment as a guide to the total output of the various networks would form an impression that English television consisted principally of interviews with the great, sociological inquiries, and revivals of established stage works. The commentators are not to be blamed for giving so incomplete a picture. The bulk of the programmes—panel games, quiz shows, situation comedies, standardized hour-length playlets—lies outside the scope of criticism. They are the bread and butter of television, as much a part of modern life as the post and the morning milk: they fulfil the human need to waste time, and nothing is to be gained by fulminating against it.

But there is one drawback. Television exists in a sealed continuum and snares large numbers of its audience into doing likewise. This makes discrimination difficult. Spot advertisements, news bulletins, variety shows, and plays are dovetailed together in such a way that the distinctions between them are obscured. It is significant that the dramatized documentary, one of the few forms originated by television, lends its assistance to blurring the edges between illusion and reality. The effect need not be exaggerated: not even the most abandoned addict is in any danger of mistaking a Western gun-battle for a news reel: the panic and indignation Associated-Rediffusion touched off two years ago by starting a play with a bogus news flash about a satellite over London only serves to demonstrate the rarity of such confusion. Less spectacular, the real trouble is television's insidious function as a snug bolt-hole into which the public can retire, less to be instructed or entertained than to have their senses deadened. The practice of internal parody, the intrusion of advertisements, the absence of marked transitions between programmes, the unchanging façade of soothing reassurance with which the service maintains its role as a dispenser of well-being—these, and other audience-trapping devices, intensify the hot-house atmosphere, creating a bubble world, neither real nor imaginary, in which incompatibilities vanish and all things are equal.

Those who succumb to the siren song have only themselves to blame, for the instrument itself cannot avoid inducing a state of semi-hypnosis in the passive spectator, and it is not to be expected that the rival networks will put up much of a struggle against something that works so much to their advantage. Their greatest weakness is that they themselves still fall under its spell, fascinated by the means of communication and indifferent to the matter. It is somewhat late in the day for television to exercise its once potent ju-ju as a technical marvel, and nowadays one could as easily make out a case for the telephone as an art form. All the same, the idea of the 'new medium' dies hard, and periodically—for instance, in the threadbare variety show marking the completion of the B.B.C.'s Television Centre—the studios relapse into the narcissistic faith that their real claim on the public is their possession of a box of tricks. In fact, it has been demonstrated again and again that when productions go out of their way to 'exploit the medium's resources', bristling with examples of electronic inlay and overlay, back projection, and the other illusionist devices that figure

so prominently in the industry's public relations literature, they break the spectator's comprehension and stifle imagination.

The unequal tug-of-war between the artist and the industry is perennial, and the foregoing views on the subject make no claim to novelty. Restating them, however, may serve as a useful reminder. When television was launched in Britain after the war the fashionable attitude towards it was one of contempt. We have now swung over to the opposite extreme. Without going into the reasons (principally sociological) for the change, it is fair to say that it is now the smart thing to approve of television: to make a gesture of classlessness by wholeheartedly accepting the routine trash and cheerfully declaring oneself a slave to the 'telly'; to claim that television journalism excels that of serious newspapers, and that television plays outclass anything to be seen in the West End. The conditions of the industry make such attitudes nonsensical, and no one except the medium's most chauvinistic partisans really believes in them—they are part of the equipment of self-disparagement and modest philistinism with which the British middle classes (intellectuals more than most) confront the world. But the unanimous chorus of the plain man's point of view, from all quarters of opinion, cushions the television services from the kind of criticism they need and exposes them to types of disingenuous abuse they could well do without.

Two examples of this are worth mentioning. Well aware both of the need for experiment and of the taboo that hedges in the word, the B.B.C. set up an organization called the Langham Group whose purpose—never explicitly stated—was to foster experimental drama. Their last production, a free adaptation of Thomas Mann's story *Mario and the Magician*, ventured far off the beaten track in its use of improvisation and camera techniques. Dramatically it was a failure, but for anyone seriously interested in television production it opened exciting perspectives. But one would not have suspected this from reading the comments of the press: a howl of derision went up, fiercer than the most lavishly worthless variety show would have provoked. A similar greeting was reserved for the premiere of Sir Arthur Bliss's opera, *Tobias and the Angel*, television and music critics jointly slamming the door on a work which, at the lowest estimate, represented the determined attempt of a good composer to make contact with a popular audience. In this situation, with the spokesmen of enlightened opinion

lining up with the tycoons and the rule of the ratings, it is no wonder that imaginative enterprise is a rarity: that when the better radio writers contribute scripts to television (a hopeful source of new drama, one would have supposed) they tend to jettison originality and turn out a standard commercial product.

A few years ago there were signs—both among practitioners and critics—that the shaky aesthetics of television were on the point of hardening into a narrow, premature orthodoxy based on such ideas as 'intimacy' (because of the small screen), and 'realism' (because of the camera's reputation as an infallible lie-detector). Apprised of the fact that screens were liable to outgrow their present dimensions, and faced with the undeniable effectiveness of certain programmes that, by no extension of meaning, could be called intimate or realistic (e.g., the *Quatermass* serials, and Mr. Rudolph Cartier's productions of large-scale opera), the aestheticians lost their self-confidence, and generalizations about the 'range of the medium' went into a decline. At the time this was all to the good, for it let in some fresh air and gave television a better chance to expand in its own way. But as things stand now, with no consistent opponent of the 'damned liberal majority', no persistent gadfly (such as the Sound Broadcasting Society) to make a fuss in public and sting the networks out of their placid contentment, one would be only too glad to see the re-emergence of a tough-minded group determined to show that television can do more than act as a popular soporific.

It is individual talent, of course, not changes of policy, that is needed to bring this about. All the same, policy can help—as one may see by narrowing the discussion to the drama output of the B.B.C. and the independent networks over the past year.

In the field of revivals, Granada unearthed the Manchester playwrights and presented their work in such a way that it acquired a sharp immediacy, progressively accumulating into something as substantially illuminating as a well-planned retrospective exhibition. The B.B.C., on the other hand, embarked on a broader series under the title 'Twentieth Century Theatre' which, in spite of its initially stated aim of giving a complete 'picture of the time', turned out to be no more than a pretext for reviving a miscellaneous selection of the past sixty years' drama: some of the plays were well chosen, others (*Glorious Morning*, Norman MacOwan's tantrum against Nazi Germany, for instance) would have been better left on the shelf.

New drama lies less within the planner's scope, for he is not responsible for the quality of work submitted to him. Nevertheless a marked divergence in policy still appears. The B.B.C.'s departures from harmless family entertainment were infrequent; and those promising newcomers who did manage to get a showing without paying their respects to the corporation brand image rarely manage to perform this feat a second time. What has become of Mr. Troy Kennedy Martin, author of the extremely accomplished *Incident at Echo Six* two years ago? Or of Mr. John McGrath, who stirred up some excitement at last year's Edinburgh Festival with his play *Why the Chicken?*

The independent networks, not withstanding their unpredictability and fondness for sensational material and production styles, seem to have a more tenacious instinct for recognizing and holding on to new talent. A.B.C. and Granada share a corps of young writers who have the rare gift of popular imagination which enables them to address a mass audience without any sacrifice of integrity. In the plays of Mr. Clive Exton, Mr. Peter Draper, Mr. Alun Owen and Mr. Peter Nichols, one discerns the beginning of a tradition in English television drama. It is conspicuously lacking in self-assertive protest. Its prevailing note is one of level-headed compassion, and its concern is more with understanding people than with judging them. What political sympathies it does contain stem from the left, but there is no sense of partisanship, explicit or suppressed. Its basic idiom is realism (Mr. Owen works by improvising dialogue into a tape recorder); and from this foundation it is capable of such astonishing exploits of the imagination as Mr. Exton's battlefield duologue between the dying, *Hold My Hand, Soldier.*

Work of this quality will never be plentiful, and it is anything but characteristic of Channel 9's day-to-day output. What one hopes is that the companies will recognize that the big audiences are capable of telling the difference between a canned slugging match imported from America and a piece of writing that sets out to add something to their lives. There is evidence for this. Besides the fact that nowadays one can discuss a production of *Man and Superman* or *Blood Wedding* with people who in the past would never have spared a thought for Shaw or Lorca, there is the startling success A.B.C. achieved this year with their production of *A Night Out*, by Mr. Harold Pinter—the last dramatist one would have thought likely to win over the big public;

and yet it set up a record for drama by coming first in the T.A.M. list of the 'Top Ten'.

Drama is not alone in proving the public's capacity for discrimination. The lesson of the past few years has been that the barrier between prestige and popularity is largely a chimera, and may even turn out to be bad for business. No doubt, from the companies' point of view, there is nothing to pick between *Wagon Train* and *Hancock's Half Hour* if they attract audiences of the same size. But when the Hancock series is billed opposite *The Army Game* it becomes apparent from the ratings that the public are perfectly able to distinguish between creative comedy rooted in human experience and a competent knock-about designed to keep the admass tuned in.

The credit for this discovery belongs to those practitioners who have had enough respect for their audience to reject both the abstract idea of the 'average viewer' and the more subtly insulting conception of broadcasting as an instrument of education for people who will never learn anything. One such pioneer is Mr. Denis Mitchell, whose severely objective documentary films for the B.B.C. (*In Prison*, *Morning in the Streets*, *The Winds of Change*), have restored a Chekhovian quality to realism. Mr. Mitchell has rare abilities as an interviewer; he can make sympathetic contact with a cosh boy, a debutante, or an old lag, and persuade them to reveal themselves spontaneously. His shooting-scripts are based on conversation, the camera acting as a means of orchestrating the recorded speech. First-person commentary is cut to a bare factual minimum, and the material is shaped so as to speak for itself: the films owe their authenticity and artistic discipline to an internal manipulation of reality. What emerges from them is an intensely personal human sympathy, and a refusal to judge people as good or bad. There is a striking parallel between Mr. Mitchell's documentaries and the television plays discussed earlier in this article. The affinity also appears in their approach to language which stems from a conviction that there is better English to be found in the streets than in any region of modern culture.

This meeting-point between drama and documentary indicates the lines on which English television might develop—undermining class prejudice, strengthening the connexion between culture and experience, and recognizing that people cannot be limitlessly debauched. The sacrifice of the bubble world would be a small price to pay for this.

A Time for Transmission

Among the thousands of pages of duplicated trivia which issue each day from private companies and national corporations, in the cause of 'public relations' presumably, every now and then one comes across a statement of interest not so much for what it says, which will generally be negligible, but for what it does not say. A whole world of ideas can spring unbidden from what information offices and press departments take so much for granted as to think it not worth remarking on. For instance, quite recently the B.B.C. put out this bulletin:

> It was with a short play for radio, *The Dock Brief*, first broadcast in the Third Programme in May, 1957, that John Mortimer made the play-writing reputation that he has since consolidated and developed on radio, stage and television. In the Third Programme . . . another brief play by John Mortimer will have its first broadcast. Unlike *The Dock Brief*, *Lunch Hour* has not been specially written for radio: its author has adapted it from his stage play, which had already had several productions and is earmarked for future B.B.C. television production.

The statement gives food for thought in several ways. It is only three years since we discovered Mr. Mortimer as a radio dramatist. In *The Dock Brief* and *I Spy* he showed himself as a writer with a remarkable grasp of the medium, able to write plays which were completely 'radio'—precise, concentrated and intimate in their use of words, free yet disciplined in their form, and calling for a careful and sympathetic production, certainly, but no extraneous tricks of presentation to get across to the listener. We did not need to see Fowle and Morgenhall,

or Mr. Frute and Mrs. Morgan: indeed, so subtle but pervasive was Mr. Mortimer's rearrangement and heightening of natural speech to make his effect entirely through the ear that perhaps if we had seen them as well as heard them we might have found the effect, so unobtrusively right in sound alone, uncomfortably artificial and overwritten (in fact, one did have something of this feeling with *I Spy* on television and *The Dock Brief* on stage, especially compared with *David and Broccoli* and *What Shall We Tell Caroline?*, Mr. Mortimer's original creations for the respective media, both of which carefully arrange things to achieve a more satisfactory balance between the aural and the visual).

Two or three months ago, Mr. Mortimer was asked about his plans for the future. He said that he was giving up novel writing entirely, and hoped instead to write 'one stage play and two television plays a year'. Radio was not mentioned, and though presumably, as in the case of *Lunch Hour*, he may adapt plays for other media to the radio, it seems unlikely that radio will ever again be an important part of his life as a dramatist.

Well, why not? one might ask, and obviously there is no reason at all why a writer should not turn wherever he feels most at home and finds the most appreciative audience. Arguably *What Shall We Tell Caroline?* is his finest work in any medium, and undeniably the theatre and television can do with more writers of such eloquence and imagination. The pity is that radio should appear to be taken, even by its own exponents, as the lesser medium, the training ground from which one moves on, and presumably up. This is not, one is sure, the way that Mr. Mortimer or others like him see it—too much love and understanding of the radio's trials and wonders have gone into their work for that—but perhaps, after all, they are only facing the inevitable when they move on from radio to other things, just as even those who believed most passionately in the art of the silent film had nevertheless to give in to the talkie or be left behind rallying pointlessly to a lost cause.

And has not radio already served its purpose anyway? The silent film trained our eyes to see things in a new way, to understand drama constructed in a new form, but once it had done so it left the field clear for a new and fuller art, able to do with ease what the silent film had frequently done, if at all, only with the greatest difficulty. Admittedly, there might be one or two things the silent film could do better than

the talkie, but taken all in all, the change was for the better. In the same way, perhaps, television is the natural replacement for radio: as the silent film had to stand on its head sometimes to convey things without resort to sound, it cannot be denied that often sound radio has the greatest difficulty in managing perfectly simple matters, like scene-setting and conveying the sort of emotion which can be made clear by a movement of the hand or a flicker of the eyelid, without recourse to vision. Does not television take away these difficulties automatically and offer more than adequate compensation for any incidental losses in the transition?

Radio has changed our way of hearing things (now that plays are being written and films made by the first generation to come to radio in their childhood as one of the normal amenities of life, one has only to listen to the sound-track of a *nouvelle vague* film or listen to the dialogue of Mr. Harold Pinter, Mr. Clive Exton and Mr. Alun Owen, with its precise notation of the way people here and now really speak, to understand something of the revolution this single fact has brought about); but now this is done perhaps it can be tidied away with the pianola and the hansom cab to wherever honoured, outdated contraptions of the sort find a last resting-place.

Even for the most purely practical, businesslike argument against such a hasty dismissal, we do not have to look very far. Radio is in most fields obviously cheaper than television, so that for things which in theory they can do equally well, or even that television can do fractionally better, it will still generally be radio which wins the day. In many interviews and almost all discussions ('Brains Trust', 'Any Questions', and so on) the visual side of the television presentation is extraneous: it may do no harm, but it certainly does little good at the best of times, and many politicians, for instance, have no doubt come to rue the day party political broadcasts ever left the relative security of the elder medium. Music is undeniably much more at home on radio than on television, where the sort of camera movements devised to impart visual interest to a concert which of necessity is intended overwhelmingly for the ear alone, or the elaborately contrived gyrations brought in to illustrate the popular hit records of the moment, distract without illuminating.

Instructional programmes can be fairly divided between the two media: a scientific demonstration or a lecture on art gains from visual

presentation, while a philosophical dissertation or an historical reconstruction for schools would only suffer from the irrelevance of visuals to the one, and their inevitable insufficiency for the other. Radio can obviously fulfil the valuable function of providing a 'national repertory theatre of the air' much more economically and efficiently than television because, apart from anything else, the sheer cost of staging and costuming complete revivals of, say, Jacobean and Restoration tragedies, or presenting whole seasons of works by Ibsen or Betti or Shaw, would be so crippling for television that it would be almost as impracticable as doing the same in the commercial theatre.

One could go on elaborating arguments of this sort, pointing to comedians, like Mr. Eric Barker with 'Just Fancy', who have evolved a perfectly individual type of 'radio humour' which does not transfer satisfactorily to any other medium; speakers like Sir Arthur Grimble or Sir Max Beerbohm who had the precise measure of that curiously beguiling formal-informality which is radio's peculiar contribution to the art of addressing an audience—all giving evidence of radio's special advantages as a means of communication, and its rights to survival as such. As a business, as a public service, radio needs these arguments, and it as as well they come so easily and justifiably to hand, but they have little or nothing to do with the medium's right to survival as an independent art form, still worthy of the literary and dramatic artist's attention and able to make its own contribution to our imaginative life by exploring areas of human experience which are not comfortably within the province of any other form. Can it do so? Is it more than a rudimentary and incomplete medium, awaiting the completion of visuals before it can be regarded as worthy of serious attention?

To answer these questions we must go back for a moment to our earlier comparison of radio's situation *vis-à-vis* television to that of the silent cinema at the coming of sound. It is tempting to make a parallel here, but to do so ignores one vital distinction: that silent and sound films had several important things in common so far as their approach to dramatic expression was concerned. Neither was purely visual (that film theorist's delight, the silent film without titles, approaching in its language nearer to the ballet, perhaps, than to anything else, constitutes only a very occasional exception to this rule). Both involved an externalization of emotion and state of mind by the actors, a distillation of emotion into visible action, with usually at least a minimum of

verbal commentary, whether by written titles or through spoken dialogue: they both covered, with the most marginal differences, the same fields of possible dramatic experience.

Now this is not at all the case with radio and television: they are not, of course, mutually exclusive in the material they can handle efficiently, but they must, of necessity, come to what they hold in common from different directions, and after all the possibilities of television have been accounted for, there still remains much which radio drama (dramatic feature, play for radio, poem in sound—call it what you will) alone can do, and can do, indeed, better than any other dramatic form. The word 'dramatic' here, and what we mean by it, are crucial. When we talk of something being 'undramatic', we usually mean simply that it is untheatrical, that it does not resolve thought into action sufficiently to satisfy the eyes—in theatre or cinema, or even television studio—as well as the ears. This has been said, fairly enough, about Shaw, Betti, Racine, and several other dramatists; it can be said with equal fairness of almost any dramatization of a novel of ideas. But on the radio a different conception of what is and what is not dramatic applies: it is not necessary for the dramatist to externalize his characters' thoughts; instead he can take us on a guided tour inside their brains. Action in the theatrical sense does not matter—indeed, too much can be an embarrassment: instead of resolving thought into action, it is usually necessary rather to trace action back into the thought which produced it. In short, radio is in many respects nearer to the novel than to the stage play: it combines certain advantages of the novel with others of the drama to produce something different from either, with its own weaknesses and, undeniably, its own remarkable strengths.

Admittedly this is all an optimistic description of most that one hears on radio today: it could hardly be otherwise. But in talking about radio art we are not required to consider 'Mrs. Dale's Diary' or every mechanical adaptation for Saturday Night Theatre, any more than to assess the modern novel we must read *True Love Romances* or even every volume issued by a popular book club. There is a band of writers, still growing, who have mastered the specialized art of the radio play, and it is in their works that one can find some real indication of what radio already is and what it may become. Some examples are well known: we are not yet beyond the stage of taking a special interest in original radio works by people who already have names to

play with in contemporary literature, so that Dylan Thomas's *Under Milk Wood* and Samuel Beckett's *All That Fall* and *Embers* have automatically achieved more general fame than many other works of comparable merit (similarly, the success of *The Wrong Side of the Park* and *The Caretaker* has engendered a retrospective interest in the earlier radio plays of John Mortimer and Harold Pinter considerably greater than that they first encountered a year or two ago).

But perhaps even more significant than these works by distinguished visitors are those by writers who have made radio their main form of dramatic expression: Louis MacNeice, Henry Reed, Giles Cooper and others who have worked long and scrupulously at perfecting their grasp of the medium. All three mentioned have produced classics of radio, conceivably only in terms of radio: how else could one embody so successfully the 'clothed allegory' of *The Dark Tower* than in radio, with its ability to strip a story of picturesque irrelevances, to keep its characters suspended between the literal and the fantasticated, and to present them, disembodied voices as they are, both as people and as ideas without the one getting in the way of the other? In what other form of drama could one mirror the life of an era through one man's mind and reactions, as in Mr. Reed's *Return to Naples*, or through a many-layered pattern of experience, from that of the professor to that of a lizard on a hot stone, as in his *The Streets of Pompeii*? How else could one hope to picture in three-quarters of an hour a man's whole life in microcosm as various trains of thought bring it to his mind in his morning bath, as in Mr. Cooper's *Under the Loofah Tree*, or pin down with such terrifying matter-of-factness the surrealistic horror-fantasy of his school story *Unman, Wittering and Zigo*? Where else could one hope to enter the patient's mind during an intricate eye operation which must be performed while he is conscious, as in R. C. Scriven's *A Single Taper*; capture the metaphysical complexities of *Moby Dick* within the confines of dramatic form, as Henry Reed's radio version so triumphantly did; or give proper scope to those interior-exterior thought-conversations, so dramatic, so untheatrical, which cry out from the pages of Miss Compton-Burnett to be spoken?

If we seek the art of the radio it is to these writers and others like them that we must look, for they understand the medium's special requirements and the special benefits it offers the writer in return. And while writers like these continue to take radio seriously, to grow with

it as it grows through them, we may perhaps account ourselves not unduly optimistic in supposing that when all the shouting about television has died down, as it must any time now, radio will turn out to be surviving quite happily, as the legitimate theatre has for many years, with an audience no doubt reduced, shorn of it casual, floating support, but for that very reason more discriminating and ready to appreciate the occasional exploratory work of art as well as the solid, reliable and never less than honourable everyday fare.

Stark Attitudes in the West End Theatre

The triumphant assertion that the great middle-class stranglehold on the English play is as good as broken may lead to misunderstanding abroad. It should not be taken to imply that the middle classes stand aghast at the revolution of dramatic values that has taken place in the last few years and are in imminent danger of being left without a theatre to call their own. If this were true West End managers would have good reason to shake in their shoes. All that writers who advance the claim intend to convey is that the conventions of the London theatre have made a sudden notable gain in flexibility and perhaps in depth, and that the new conventions have enabled a few young playwrights to open up hitherto unexplored social territory. The importance of the revolution is that it is a revolution in the taste of the middle-class audiences who found themselves increasingly drawn to plays which formerly they would have ignored as *avant garde*, wildcat and vaguely reprehensible.

This fact in itself is sufficiently striking. It indicates that a change of theatrical style which has been a long time in process of evolution has begun to win the provisional approval of a large body of playgoers. This approval as yet is no more than provisional. That is simply because none of the new young playwrights, not Mr. Arnold Wesker, not Mr. Harold Pinter, not Mr. Brendan Behan, not even Mr. John Osborne—whose Jimmy Porter was the first to reveal with a surprising degree of general acceptance the younger generation's blistering contempt for the so-called benefits of a welfare state—has yet managed to write the play which would firmly close an old era and open a new one. It may

be said that most of the new dramatists are too young for mature drama to be reasonably expected of them.

That, after all, is their own affair. Till they have produced some their hold on middle-class audiences will remain uncertain, and if they take too long about the business they may easily find that their sort of drama has itself dwindled into a familiar convention and lost its present freshness. For much of this drama represents the speech and feelings of working-class characters. It represents them in a way that makes the time-worn stereotype invented by middle-class writers look shockingly antediluvian. The impression given is that in these characters is reflected something of the raw new ideas that are stirring contemporary England, and the general public seems willing to study these ideas with curiosity, but with a curiosity which still remains a little wary.

Many of the playwrights in this school are themselves working-class in origin, but they are not writing for working-class audiences and their work, in so far as it flourishes, flourishes only by grace of middle-class patronage. Miss Joan Littlewood's Theatre Royal is in the East End of London, and the local authorities think highly enough of its value to the district to provide an annual subsidy. But Stratford is a very respectable part of the East End, and certainly at first nights the audience is predominantly middle-class, many obviously having come to get an early view of a show likely later to be brought to the West End. The new playwrights have a following of keen partisans, but even at the Royal Court Theatre they are finally dependent on the verdict of the stalls. When *Sergeant Musgrave's Dance* was put on there it was hailed by the partisans as a work of startling significance, but the theatre's middle-class supporters quietly decided that it was a bad play and the financial loss was considerable.

We seem to have arrived at a time when a growing and already substantial body of uncommitted playgoers are ready to give a friendly hearing to many different kinds of drama. They do not seem to mind how aggressively anti-Establishment the theme may be. They will take on occasion extremes of unrealism or surrealism without batting an eyelid. It may be that, fundamentally, all satisfying drama is Aristotelian, but this new audience is ready to do without a story which makes them wonder how it is all going to end. They seem to be as well satisfied with one which is intensely concerned with human beings and, without troubling to relate them in an inevitable action, can yet make

the talk sound spontaneous and direct. If such a play happens to stick in memory it will probably stick there not in virtue of the story told but rather by one or two of the characters that figured in it and at odd moments struck memorable attitudes.

Insistence that the theatre is not less dependent than ever it was on middle-class patronage, may itself create a wrong impression if it should conjure up a picture of the stalls glossy with opulence and all comfortably of one mind on fundamental social issues. The first night audience, which is sometimes socially and nearly always theatrically distinguished, may indeed suggest a theatre still touched by a lingering gleam of Edwardian elegance. The gleam is swift to fade out on subsequent nights. In the welfare state the number of those who can afford to take the expensive seats has sensibly increased, and the middle-class, so far as the theatre is concerned, has been extended to include many who fall into the lower income brackets. They mostly live in outer-London and have no time to change between leaving their offices and meeting their wives in the foyer.

They seem to be drawn to the West End theatre in the hope of seeing ideas of contemporary immediacy expressed rather arrestingly than of being lulled by conventional comedies in which the complete absence of ideas is disguised by brilliant acting and adroit direction. The discovery of the drama by the young and enthusiastic who, in this age as in every other, rather like to hitch their enthusiasm to a particular cause, has been one of the most reassuring things to happen in the last few years to London theatrical life. The newcomers to the stalls have perhaps more in common with these youthful partisans than with the Old Guard of playgoers who are still dreaming of the romantic theatre of their youth, Tree, Alexander and all that.

Yet no attempt to explain in social and economic terms the liberalizing of middle-class theatrical taste carries conviction. The change has been going on haltingly for a couple of decades. The causes are in part artistic, in part intellectual and, in the last analysis, spiritual. We may perhaps find the first stirrings of change in the war-time theatre. It was readily assumed in 1939 that the only thing warranted to relieve war-strain was light frivolity. Against all precedent, audiences were found looking for serious entertainment. The unexpected need was met largely by reviving the classics. On fine and various drama of the past, on language of authentic richness and intensity, the art of the actor

flourished. And so did the art of watching drama. It soon became evident that war-time audiences were developing an extraordinary capacity for responding sympathetically to anything considered good of its kind. London at the end of the war astonished and enchanted foreign visitors with its acting brilliance and the range of its plays. They were mostly old plays, but they gave the impression that the theatre was showing itself to have a purpose beyond that of merely amusing; for once it could be clearly identified with the art of drama. It was a Halcyon time, but practical men forced to look ahead realized that it must in the nature of things soon come to an end. Rich as our English dramatic heritage was, it could not continue to support audiences and actors indefinitely. Without the discovery of some serious modern drama the new-found catholicity of taste in audiences would have nothing to exercise itself upon and in all probability would turn to other forms of art.

The struggle in the early post-war years to find these plays was not very successful. James Bridie, who was interested in ideas not in play technique, for which indeed he professed a humorous contempt, was always writing good plays spoiled by inconclusiveness. Mr. Priestley was obviously uneasy in the fetters of realism but was never able to contrive an effective breakaway. Those who wanted a good story usually got what they wanted from Mr. Rattigan. Those who wanted the theatre to be theatrical occasionally got what they wanted from Mr. Peter Ustinov. Three novelists—Mr. Greene, Charles Morgan and Mr. Wynyard Browne—entered the field working with varying degrees of success in the convention of pure realism. But all these playwrights must have had the feeling that they were subtly out of touch with the public they were trying to reach. Middle-class audiences seemed mysteriously to be getting a little bored with their own problems as realism represented them. The time was ripe for restoring verse drama to the stage.

A movement led by Mr. Eliot and Mr. Fry seemed for a while to stand in the mid-stream of theatrical necessity. There was a happy period when it was possible without too much self-deception to dream up the nativity of a new dramatic age in which poetry would be again the natural language of English playwrights. Alas, no theatrical trend can be trusted until it is cut and dried into history and no longer matters. The verse of Mr. Eliot turned out to be not very poetic and the poetry

of Mr. Fry not very dramatic, and the movement to restore verse to the stage which only yesterday seemed of the highest importance is today quite dead. The public all through these years seemed to hanker after some obscure satisfaction which dramatists, however mildly acceptable in their different ways, did not somehow contrive to give them.

They were inclined to look abroad. There were odd signs that their unconscious need corresponded more closely to the frustrated mood of a war-ravaged Continent than would have been conceivable after the 1914 war. Mr. Arthur Miller and Mr. Tennessee Williams provided them with some exciting plays, but it is doubtful if either of them, or any other American dramatist, had anything like the seeping influence that has been exercised over English audiences in the last few years by the French pessimists. Both Mr. Miller and Mr. Williams can be described as pessimists, but their pessimism seems to be robustly rooted in an instinctive faith in the American way of life. They are fiercely sceptical about that way of life, but their scepticism has not yet extended to life itself. The poor, guilt-driven outcasts of society depicted by O'Neill in his last days strike us as closer to European pessimism than the Willy Lomans and Blanche DuBoises who aspire pathetically to a place in the system which works relentlessly against them.

Neither the existentialist savageries of Sartre nor the cynicism of Anouilh appeared to make any notable impression when their work was shown in London. Collectively, nevertheless, they helped with other like-minded plays from Paris to create an atmosphere. The readiness of English middle-class audiences to share in the European cult of *Waiting for Godot* would hardly have come about if there had not been a public already mentally adjusted to its message of despair. This piece admittedly offered remarkable scope for acting and imaginative direction. *Endgame*, even more uncompromising in its gloom, did not. In so far as it had any influence on the mind of the general public it reached them, not directly but indirectly, through young dramatists eager to repeat the Beckett effects. English playwrights of the immediate post-war years dimly perceived that the public was blindly groping for something which they themselves were, from established habits of thought, not equipped to supply. Beckett and his followers and after him Ionesco and his followers supplied the English public with at least something for which they felt a need. Conscious of moving into a

world of terrifying scientific inventions among dangerous doctrines with whole peoples regimented behind them, they found that the theatre of Beckett could by exacting from them a look at the worst conceivable produce in them a new kind of catharsis. And they also found that the anti-theatre of Ionesco enabled a writer who is deeply convinced that the world does not make sense to express his feeling by writing about it in terms of non-sense. And after experiencing the delight in this theatre of abandoning all logic there is the further delight of discovering that underlying the nonsense there is a truth of possibly universal validity, disconcerting though the 'truth' may be.

This is the audience—still in all probability unsatisfied—who find nothing incongruous in patronizing one night *The Amorous Prawn*, a somewhat old-fashioned piece of inconsequentiality, and the next the latest specimen of the anti-Establishment drama. They meet with all sorts of delicious surprises. If Mr. John Osborne is no longer the acknowledged leader of the new dramatists his place has been taken by Mr. Arnold Wesker, and those who go for the first time to *Roots*, unquestionably his best play, discover that the rising hope of the movement is a photographic realist of the old Manchester school. His play is not the worse for that. It is a touching study of a girl who returns to her family of Norfolk farm labourers and tries to make them understand what she herself has tried to learn from her lover, clearly a showy London intellectual, that the fruits of civilization are being rejected by the masses because they are too lazy-minded to acquire a taste for them. The attempts to make her relatives think for themselves break down on their indurated stupidity.

They witness in the end the humiliation she has dreaded. The man she loves and has lived with for three years discards her in a brief letter. To deaden her heartache she launches into a bitter tirade against the complacent ignorance of her servile family. She is strangely comforted, so much is the tirade in the style of her faithless lover. 'I can do it', she cries in triumph. 'I can stand on my own feet.' But does Mr. Wesker really suppose that she can? Her claim makes a touchingly effective curtain, but all that the girl has done is to reveal that she mistakes the gift of the gab for the capacity to get happiness out of life.

There is nothing in Mr. Wesker's organization of his excellent material to show that the heroine is any nearer salvation at the end than she was in the beginning. But the two other plays which form a trilogy

are definitely inferior. *Chicken Soup with Barley* describes the impact of Communism upon a working-class Jewish family. It is a sincere and warm-hearted little piece about real people. Mr. Wesker has a good ear for dialogue. His weakness as a dramatist is not that he is under the illusion that the working-class is more interesting intrinsically than any other class but that in his anxiety to make everything about his characters authentic he is inclined to overdo the detail and consequently to slip into an effect of triviality. But the point of the play comes clearly and excitingly through the insufficiently simplified domestic detail and the sometimes too involved ideological chatter. It is simply that existence is a struggle and to give up caring is to die. There is altogether too much talk in *I'm Talking About Jerusalem*, the weakest of the three.

Mr. Harold Pinter also is a genuine dramatist, though his first full play, *The Birthday Party*, most ingeniously and carefully obscured the fact. In *The Caretaker* he makes things a little easier for us. His method is to create characters which come vividly alive on the stage and then to withhold the sort of information about them that audiences expect to be given as a matter of course. The hoped-for effect is that the characters, though their sayings and doings may be quite commonplace, will take on themselves a teasing air of mystery. The two brothers in *The Caretaker* who befriend a tramp are really very simple fellows, but by withholding information about them Mr. Pinter makes the older one seem unutterably sinister and the younger and more laconic almost inexplicable. Late in the evening the elder describes very movingly, if not altogether plausibly, the horror of the operation carried out on him in hospital to save him from complete insanity. This explains the strange slowness of his speech that has puzzled us. Between the two brothers is an understanding that is never put into words, and on this implicit understanding the tramp, who is not in the least grateful for anything that the casually compassionate youths do for him, is cast adrift. But the tramp in a sense is the play. He moves from bouts of ineffectual rage to grovelling misery. He has been so conditioned by life that he cannot help biting the hand that is trying to feed him. We are perhaps to understand that there are some people who cannot be helped. Is that a reflection on human society or on human nature itself.

Mr. Brendan Behan is the sort of man an old English king might well have appointed his court jester. *The Hostage* is a rollicking extravaganza

which swings a bladder at all the Irish parties past and present, and reserves its fiercest insults for the English. It made a great success in the West End, for everyone could see that the ebullient author has the warmest of hearts and an overriding sense of rough justice. Miss Shelagh Delaney has written only one play, but with a little scene of tender observation that gave real promise of development.

The new dramatists have not much to show as yet to warrant the interest they have aroused, but beyond cavil they have managed to stir a pool that was getting rather stagnant. The way to success in the London theatre is conspicuously easier than it was before the war. The young dramatist had then to woo the great public from a distance. He now finds a group of theatres—the Royal Court, Theatre Workshop in Stratford East, the Belgrade at Coventry—which he can use as ladders leading him with any luck straight on to the West End stage. Some say that the movement would have grown stronger if it had been given time to mature in comparative obscurity. That is a rather fanciful supposition and anyway what would the West End stage have done while it was maturing?

An Island Full of Strange Noises

Vaughan Williams and Britten as Heirs of English Music

The opening of the seventh decade of the twentieth century finds the art of music operating everywhere so far as composition is concerned in a sudden vacuum. The only major composer surviving from the first part of the century, when modern music was young, is Stravinsky. That controversial figure still strives to keep abreast of an *avant garde* that is heading in two different directions at once. What he writes always sounds like Stravinsky and no one else in its texture and orchestral timbre, but his melodic invention, never his strongest endowment, is more short of breath than ever and his flirtation with the dodecaphonic techniques has led only to one more change of style in his restless career.

The twelve-note serial technique, the creation of Schönberg which is now half a century old, is obeying nature's law about vacuums, and though it makes no headway with the public it has strongly engaged the interest of composers of every nation. A product of pre-1914 Vienna, it was tried here in the inter-war years and found wanting, only to return after the Second World War as a seminal force all over the world. Though Austrian in origin it is international in its currency, and composers who adopt it seem to lose their nationality thereby. The other *avant garde* tendency is towards fragmentation—no motif lasts longer than five notes, queer startled noises hop across divided orchestras, bits and pieces follow one another either at random or in a calculated disarray. This stems from Webern and has its most prominent advocates in the Frenchman Boulez and the German Stockhausen;

it has one or two disciples in Britain among the youngest generation.

There are one or two English composers who practise the serial technique, of whom the most prominent are Elisabeth Lutyens and Humphrey Searle. But on the whole English music of the twentieth century has rejected it and remained national. It is true that there has only been one conscious nationalist among English composers comparable to the Russian Five, the Czech, Hungarian, Spanish and Scandinavian pioneers of nationalist movements of the nineteenth century, and he died in 1958, Ralph Vaughan Williams. It is the removal of that massive figure, a great man as well as a distinctive composer, who combined a radical mind with a strong feeling for tradition, that has increased the feeling of a European vacuum. Strauss and Elgar, late romantics, had gone and no one outside England was prolonging the romantic sunset—here indeed. Bliss and Walton, who had both had short careers as *enfants terribles*, were seen to be fundamentally romantic and to use the language of the late romantics. In Russia Prokofiev, another *enfant terrible* but also a neo-classical composer of a strong and distinctive talent, died in 1953, leaving Shostakovitch and Katachurian as belated nationalists but not offering any focus of attachment for a rising generation of composers outside Russia. In Germany the consequences of the Nazi blight put an end to the long German hegemony and only now are the names of middle-aged composers beginning to emerge, Blacher, Orff and Henze. In Italy Dallapiccola, who has a very real talent, has embraced the serial ideology, and in France only Poulenc survives of the older generation, so that there is no one anywhere now to give a lead to the younger generation in the formation of a style, such as the Austrians did in the eighteenth century and the nationalists in the nineteenth. Unless, indeed, the serialism, which seems to non-believers to rest on unsound psychology, should prove, as is being strongly advocated in some influential and vocal quarters, to be the music of the century.

But here in England after Vaughan William's consolidation of the English musical imagination—he truly spoke for England in song, symphony, choral and occasional music and nearly but not quite successfully in dramatic music—we are left with Bliss and Walton as romantics but not naturally conscious romantics, Rawsthorne as a sturdy independent—was he not born in Lancashire?—neither national nor cosmopolitan, and Britten, whose feeling for the English language is

as keen as Purcell's or Parry's, and is, on any reckoning, above all others the representative voice of English music today. Tippett, slightly his senior, is another Rawsthorne in his individualism but rather more rooted in Englishry. Two women, Elizabeth Maconchy, who writes good string quartets, and Phyllis Tate whose nimble-witted talent has put on weight and character, are hardly conceivable as other than English, though their music has no marked folk song or madrigalian (but perhaps some Purcellian) affinities. Neoacademics of the oldest generation, George Dyson, Herbert Howells, Gordon Jacob, Edmund Rubbra, with Howard Ferguson and Geoffrey Bush following in their wake, write an English music most suited to and much valued for home consumption but not for export. Lennox Berkeley, with English roots but Gallic training and sympathies, represents a different strain in the English tradition, more commonly found in literature, and painting than in music.

Young composers just out of their student state are better off than their predecessors in means for getting their work heard. More will certainly be heard of some of them, but they do not yet speak for their country, for a tradition, or for anyone but themselves. It is the middle-aged and elderly on whom the duty of speaking to the world about England, of writing English songs and operas, of proclaiming anything we think to be valuable in our musical life, devolves. And before their work is computed it might be well to look at the final reckoning of Vaughan William's contribution which was added up in 1958, when he died at the age of eighty-five.

He began as a follower of the two main English traditions, those of solo song and of choral singing. His *Songs of Travel*, settings of Stevenson which belong to the first decade of the century, declared a new voice in English music, which was reinforced by the Whitmanesque cantata, *Toward the Unknown Region*, produced at the Leeds Festival of 1905. But it is as a symphonist with a tally of nine that he finishes in critical esteem. These symphonies cover a vast range of human experience but do not explore, as Beethoven mainly did, intra-subjective states of mind. 'The Sea', 'London', 'Pastoral' are the designations of the first three. The seventh bears the title 'Antartica'; numbers four and six are at bottom political and pose the issue of force in human affairs; number five is near-religious, having its primary source in Bunyan; number eight is more abstract and of smaller dimensions;

number nine is an old man's testament of despair, all the more remarkable in coming from the pen of one who thoughout life had looked forward and been an explorer of unknown regions. Number four, at first thought to be uncharacteristic, is the one most commonly played abroad. Of his other works the Tallis Fantasia for strings is also widely played. The ballet *Job* is perhaps the perfect summary of his work and is trebly rooted in English soil, the old Testament of the Authorized Version, Blake's engravings and his own brand of English melody. For more than half a century he wrote a music founded on English folk-song, English hymnody, English madrigalian counterpoint, but instantly recognizable as the distinctive voice of one individual, himself and none other. Elgar may be said to have put England back on the map of Europe by being our first orchestral composer, but Vaughan Williams's was the voice of England—foreign critics have said as much.

So complete was the emancipation he and Holst together achieved from the dominance of Germany and Italy that no nationalist movement developed. E. J. Moeran, a composer of secondary rank who wrote mostly vocal but some orchestral and chamber works inspired by nature and scenery, is virtually the only follower of Vaughan Williams in founding his style on folk-songs and the Elizabethans. The main strains in his heredity and musical influences are topographical, though it would be absurd to say that he wrote local Norfolk and Irish music. But he belongs to the pastoral tradition and is a nationalist. No one else but these two can properly be described as nationalists in the nineteenth-century European sense, though folk-song said something to Gerald Finzi and the madrigals a good deal to Edmund Rubbra. Finzi is a miniaturist excelling in songs, Rubbra a contrapuntal thinker, whether in liturgical or symphonic music; both are unmistakably English. Britten has made many settings of folk-songs but has never been immersed in them as Vaughan Williams was. Still, he finds them congenial and he made his own edition of that corpus of English melody, *The Beggar's Opera.*

Operatic activity, together with parallel developments in the ballet consequent upon the formation of what is now the Royal Ballet, has indeed been the principal change in the musical life of the country in the past generation. The old aesthetic opposition to it as an art-form has been dissolved and with the emergence of Britten as an opera composer —it is a phenomenon of which the significance cannot be exaggerated

that *Peter Grimes* went round the world's opera houses—the prospects have been transformed. The ballet produced a number of excellent scores from Lambert, from Bliss, whose *Checkmate* shows his talent for drama and character at its strongest, and from Malcolm Arnold; and Walton's *Troilus and Cressida* proved to be an opera in the grand manner. Britten has produced no fewer than ten stage works.

In Britten the chief stylistic influence is Purcell, whose *Dido and Aeneas* and *Orpheus Britannicus* songs he had edited with modern realizations of the *basso continuo*. But, as with Purcell, his Englishness is rooted in the English language. His instrumental compositions are few for so prolific a composer and his inspiration is primarily verbal—indeed he has set both French (*Les Illuminations*) and Italian (*Michelangelo Sonnets*), as well as English prose and poetry. To set prose he has even invented a new form, a declamatory scena which he calls a canticle—'Abraham and Isaac' is the best known of the three so far composed.

From early student days he showed most exceptional talent and it has become clear by now that for sheer musical ability he is in the class of Purcell, Mozart and Strauss. His facility is matched by his fertility—another mark of the great composer. He has been called clever ever since his name emerged into the public ken in the early 1930s, with the implication that word has for English people who mistrust intellectual ability as though it was a flaw of character, that he lacked heart. His cleverness has just been demonstrated in its dazzling mastery in his *Cantata Academica*, in which he exploits every technical device even to the extent of writing a dashing fugue whose entries are in the order of a twelve-note tone row. His heart beats predominantly with the emotion of compassion, as shown in his choice of subject for his operas, *Peter Grimes* (the outcast), *The Rape of Lucretia* (the outraged), *Billy Budd* (the victim). But he commands the more joyful emotions, as shown in *The Spring Symphony* and *Saint Nicolas*. There is no doubt now, if there was fifteen years ago, that beyond skill there is feeling, that his instant response to words betrays a ready sympathy, and that his music has increased in depth.

The faculty that makes an artist out of a technician with a heart is the imagination, that ultimately mysterious power which converts impressions into images and images into expression. It is Britten's sheer imagination which now inspires wonder. His new opera, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, is the latest, the most mature, the most universal

demonstration of imaginative power, which matches Shakespeare's own. A new humanity has emerged in that the opera is not concerned with pathological types, or recondite emotions. What made Vaughan Williams a great composer was a quasi-moral factor, his broad sympathy with humanity. Britten, as he approaches the age of fifty, is developing a similar comprehension of the world we live in. There are many English musical people who find the same sort of spiritual satisfaction in Vaughan Williams as they find in Bach. If such a comparison between the eighteenth and twentieth century is permissible, Britten is a modern Mozart to Vaughan Williams's Bach. And they both speak for England.

'Is Mr. Britten an Englishman?' said an Italian lady to the writer, overhearing his English conversation at the first performance of *The Turn of the Screw* at the Fenice, in Venice, 'Indeed, of course he is,' was the reply. 'But', she continued, 'the English do not believe in ghosts,' only the Welsh and the Irish.' Even an Englishman may suspend his disbelief in ghosts while reading Henry James and remain an Englishman. Mr. Britten, born at Lowestoft, educated at Holt and the Royal College of Music, is not only an Englishman but he is today the incarnation of the English imagination as it manifests itself in the art of music.

Spontaneity of a Jazz Community

Can something so deeply and exclusively rooted in the United States as jazz be considered part of the 'British imagination'? The obvious answer is no. Like football, jazz has been diffused throughout the urban world from a single national centre. Unlike football, jazz has never emancipated itself from its home country, either by equalling or surpassing the American achievement, or by making original contributions of significance to it. Like the French literature written by foreigners in the eighteenth century, the jazz played by foreigners in the twentieth is not merely derivative but frankly imitative. Nor do British jazz enthusiasts (playing or non-playing) seek to conceal or palliate this unquestioned American supremacy. Our most daring nationalists will merely claim that some British musicians play better than some Americans, and that several, if given the chance to complete their education in the United States, would play as well as all but the very best Americans. Our least nationalist fans—a more numerous group—may, in the heat of discussion, actually deny that anyone except an American Negro will ever be able to play jazz. At first sight it may therefore appear absurd to consider jazz as a specifically British phenomenon, and a highly original one.

Nevertheless British jazz is in many respects unique. In the first place, jazz is almost certainly more widely practised and appreciated, as a self-conscious form of music distinct from jazz-tinged commercial music, in Britain than anywhere else, including the United States. Thus, the weekly *Melody Maker*, which used also to function as an international jazz information journal for the rest of Europe, has a circulation several times that of its (younger) American equivalent. Britain pro-

bably maintains a greater number of specialized jazz periodicals with a greater aggregate circulation than the United States, and certainly a much larger and more enthusiastic public for books about jazz. At a rough guess something like fifty books on the subject have been published here in the past five years, the majority written by British authors.

The most significant thing about this abnormally large British jazz community is not its size but its social character, and the nature of its cultural influence. It is a cultural minority—jazz is almost defined by its minority status, i.e., by *not* being commercial music or mere entertainment—but a highly peculiar one. The customary *avant garde* is one of intellectuals and artists, and its influence makes its way from the upper reaches of society or education downwards; notably so in our hierarchic and snobbish country. There were balletomanes in country houses before shorthand typists flocked to the Sadler's Wells. Cambridge rooms were decorated with Matisse reproductions when East Sheen rooms were still with the Medici Society and Hanley rooms with Millais. The American and Continental jazz minorities broadly conform to this pattern.

Not so the British. The centre of gravity of jazz in this country has always been somewhere near the border zone which divides or joins the upper working-class and the lower middle-class. From there it has made its way upwards as an *avant garde* taste, and downwards or sideways as an original British form of popular (and therefore rapidly commercialized) dance and song. The jazz-lovers have felt flattered by the one conquest and deeply put out by the other, but at the risk of irritating them it must be said that Messrs. Chris Barber, Acker Bilk and Lonnie Donegan who reach the 'Top Ten' (while still considering themselves as cultural crusaders) are at least as significant consequences of minority devotion as the jazz backgrounds to *Look Back In Anger* and the jazz-cum-poetry performances at the Royal Court. Indeed they are more significant. The increasingly frequent liaisons between jazz and the worlds of fashion and the orthodox arts are not peculiar to Britain. The creation of a unique kind of cultural public and of a unique innovation in popular music—the transplantation of a chunk of alien folk-art—are so far unparalleled elsewhere.

Both reflect a remarkable democratic revolt in the field of culture. Mr. Kingsley Amis and his team of provincial graduates, who made

jazz one of their many battle-cries against the upper-class cultural establishment, may have created the impression that it was the product of the early 1950s, but it is older than that. In the 1920s, admittedly, jazz was little more than a word (generally attached to any music played with saxophones and persistent syncopation), a few individual enthusiasts, and a sort of dumb underground movement among professional dance-band musicians, a strictly working-class group, in favour of a music which was both interesting to play and independent of educational orthodoxy. The British jazz fan as a type emerged in the 1930s. He was characteristically suburban or provincial, educated at the public library rather than the university, and by profession something like a young clerk, draughtsman, accountant, a musician, commercial artist or technician. Jazz appealed to him not simply because he liked the sound, as he liked science fiction (another taste which has spread socially upwards from the corner newsagents with their stock of pulp magazines), but because it was *his* discovery, which owed nothing to cultural orthodoxy, and above all because it was *serious*. He did not merely enjoy jazz; he regarded it as a branch of adult education: its graduates are today scattered all over the land as discographers of monumental erudition, experts on the stylistic differences and chronologies of obscure bands, and semi-Marxist specialists in the social history of the American Negro.

Such enthusiasts did not dance, but discussed. Most of them were on the political Left, an orientation which British jazz (if only because of its built-in hatred of racialism) has never quite lost. If interested in other aspects of culture, they were likely to approach classical music via Duke Ellington and Debussy, and to show a well-chosen passion for Shaw and Wells, to whose world they visibly belonged. Their missionary zeal was unparalleled. They recognized no greater insult than the suggestion that jazz was 'light' or 'commercial', and constantly tended to split into at least two feuding groups, each claiming to represent the uncorrupted, the pure, the only *real* jazz. Since the war they have been somewhat obscured from view by the new jazz recruits who take their music less intellectually, and of course the advance of education has made such self-made intellectuals rarer than they were. However, young men of essentially this type still form the core of the 'serious' jazz public, certainly the reading public, though many of them are today at redbrick universities.

From this stratum the fashion for jazz has percolated into more culturally established circles. But the major achievement of the 'serious' jazz fans is elsewhere. It is astonishing enough. They have turned a noise which, twenty years ago, was virtually unknown except to a few collectors of musical antiquities into the standard dance-music of the British adolescent, who now dances (or rather 'jives') to 'traditional' New Orleans jazz and listens to commercially debased versions of Negro folk and gospel song. The triumph of New Orleans owes nothing whatever to commercialism, and everything to the bands of young men who, towards the end of the war, began their devoted antiquarian music-making in the back rooms of pubs. The vogue for debased blues and gospel song (under such trade names as rock and roll) is frankly commercial, and fortunately on the wane. Nevertheless in Britain its first short-lived phase ('skiffle') was clearly a spontaneous outgrowth of the New Orleans revival. Commercialization came later. Any student of folk-song will appreciate the stupendous nature of this achievement, for until now the folk have rarely actually adopted the folk music which the small groups of zealots have attempted to propagate among them. (Though they have attempted to use the jazz revivalists movement, the official British folk music enthusiasts—a group on the friendliest terms with the revivalists—have had only slight success.) What nationalist governments and teachers have generally failed to do, the jazz fans, lacking any institutional support, have achieved.

Indeed, it is extremely likely that they have succeeded *because* they lacked such support. For the studious apprentice electronic engineers or clerks share three things with the simpler dancing and record-playing masses: a revolt against upper-class culture, against commercialism, and above all against the older generation. (Admittedly a mass public cannot revolt against commercialism for more than a moment, for its very size creates it; at most it can choose 'its' kind of commercialism against older established ones, and develop an aggressive cynicism about all of them.) Jazz succeeded because it is rebellious, demotic and youthful music. The *avant garde* discovered it, but because what it discovered was *not avant garde* music but one of the rare examples of twentieth-century urban folk-art the masses followed its lead, even to the point of attempting for a short while—and with very indifferent success—to make rather than merely to absorb it. For this achievement

alone jazz deserves its place in any survey of the British imagination in the middle third of the twentieth century. Few things, for better or worse, have stimulated more youthful British imaginations than the New Orleans street parade and the twelve-bar blues.

Should a Ballet Tell a Story?

Nowadays it is only half true to say that the English School of Ballet descends from the Mariinsky school in St. Petersburg, which descends in turn from French and Italian ballet. Fully to understand the character of the English school—and therefore of its dancers and ballets—one has to balance its technical ancestry against the long history of ballet in England lately brought to light by Mr. Philip Richardson, Miss Melusine Wood, Mr. Ivor Guest and other writers.

A sense of a national history is something new to British ballet. It appeared more strongly in 1960 than before because September 24 marked the two-hundredth anniversary of the death of John Weaver, England's first choreographer. The English Weaver, these writers tell us, not the French Noverre or the Austrian Hilferding or anyone else, was the first to develop the ballet without words, the *ballet d'action*, which was the turning point in ballet history. The more these writers research the more the art of ballet is shown to be mingled inseparably with the imaginative past of England, and the more this past comes forward to give stability and national direction to an art which we have learnt from others but which we have possessed since Tudor days.

Three times after its boisterous beginnings in the Tudor masque the English lyric theatre had the talent to found a national ballet. It failed at the early Stuart court, at the time of Weaver in the reign of George I, and at the time of the Romantic Ballet 120 years ago for lack of adequate patronage.

The English court, limited in wealth and authority by the political compromises of 1660 and 1688, could not summon the resources with

which the courts of St. Petersburg, Paris, Vienna, Stockholm, and even little Stuttgart fostered the lyric theatre as part of the royal image. As a result the lyric theatre today is reasonably endowed everywhere in Europe except in Britain. Britain, instead, possesses the first national ballet in the world born outside royal patronage, the first ballet born of popular support.

True, its dancer-godparents endowed it with the aristocratic vocabulary of the court ballets of France, Italy and Russia, but its other godparents were the intelligent British public created by the Education Acts on 1870 onwards. Without this public, which grew in numbers under the stimulus of war and post-war social changes and the success of English dancers during the 1930s, there would be no national ballet today. Popular taste exerted a decisive influence over the character and content of early British ballet, while public interest encouraged teachers and choreographers to translate into English with astonishing speed a language of movements which seemed, even in the 1920s, to be exclusively French, Russian or Italian.

Yet the image of Britain projected by our national ballet is still not completely national. It could not be in the thirty years since the Ballet Rambert, our oldest company, first showed what English dancers could do. For one thing we are only just becoming aware of our balletic past. For another we are only now realizing the need to study seriously our folk dance tradition.

'Certain folk dance and folk lore ballets are necessary in every national ballet company,' said Dame Ninette de Valois to the Royal Society of Arts three years ago. 'They should be fostered if only to develop the special characteristics of the native dancer. Such works are a sure means of expressing a country's national form of musicality.'

Therefore the inclusion of English folk dances by the Royal Ballet School in the annual gala programme of the Royal Ballet in March 1960 (the first time, so far as we can discover, that English folk dances have been danced on the stage of the English Opera House) ought to have been noted as significant in the development of our ballet. Curiously, most critics missed the point or ignored it altogether.

The event, however, proclaimed the direction of British ballet in the 1960s. By now classicism has in the main been absorbed. *Giselle*, *Coppelia* and the classical ballets of Tchaikovsky, together enshrining

the classical tradition, have their fixed place in the repertoire and in the affections of ballet audiences. These works are a nursery and a yardstick for dancers and choreographers.

In the same way the neo-romantic tradition of Fokine and the neo-classicism of later Diaghilev choreographers have been absorbed. *Les Sylphides, Petrouchka, The Firebird, The Three-Cornered Hat* and other productions from the past are so many foundation-stones for the structure of English choreography.

The structure, of course, began to be built long before the foundation was complete. In the 1930s and 1940s pioneer English choreographers like Dame Ninette de Valois, Mr. Frederick Ashton, Mr. Antony Tudor, Mr. Robert Helpmann and Miss Andrée Howard established almost all the genres which English choreography is exploring today.

Collectively, these genres showed how the English imagination in a democratic age was fumbling to adapt an aristocratic medium to its needs. The ballet was quick to reflect the literary talent through which we, as a nation, most often express ourselves, and the narrative influence of artists like Blake and Hogarth who inspired two of the first classics of English ballet in Dame Ninette's *Job* and *The Rake's Progress.*

From the Sitwells Mr. Frederick Ashton drew *Façade* and *Rio Grande* and from Gertrude Stein *A Wedding Bouquet.* Mr. Robert Helpmann turned to Milton for *Comus* and to Shakespeare for *Hamlet.* From the novel by David Garnett Miss Andrée Howard created *Lady into Fox,* while almost all our choreographers turned at one time or another (sometimes too often) to the literature of mythology.

This association of ballet with literature has continued in the work of younger choreographers. Mr. John Cranko's *Harlequin in April* is inspired by lines in Mr. T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land,* and his *Pineapple Poll* translates a Bab Ballad by W. S. Gilbert. Mr. Kenneth MacMillan's *House of Birds* comes from a Grimm fairy-tale; Mr. Alfred Rodrigues's *Blood Wedding* is based on the Lorca play.

But it cannot be said honestly that our ballet has made full use of British literary resources, or that choreographers have often sought original scenarios from living poets. Rather, the poetic element, which is so strong a part of the British imagination, has found expression in the ideas of choreographers themselves. Of the three types of ballet, narrative, mood and abstract, which Diaghilev handed down to us,

Britain has developed the mood ballet most fully. This, for example, has allowed Mr. Frederick Ashton to realize best the lyrical-romantic vision of 'beauty' which has been his main preoccupation in choreography. *Les Rendezvous*, *Les Patineurs*, *Symphonic Variations* and *Homage to the Queen* for the Sadler's Wells Ballet are expressions of this vision.

At the Ballet Club before the war Mr. Anthony Tudor carried the mood ballet into psychology and into the everyday conflicts of real life characters through *Lilac Garden*, *Dark Elegies* and other works. Since the war Mr. Cranko and Mr. MacMillan at Covent Garden have continued this exploration of the mind, penetrating farther into psychology and matching their discoveries with a more complex choreography than Mr. Tudor's.

All these ballets have been self-contained one-act pieces. The one-act, short-story ballet evolved by Fokine has been the basis of our school and the principal form through which we have expressed ourselves. Through this form we have experimented, extending the imagery of classical ballet by adding other idioms of movement. Influences of the central European vocabulary can be seen in most ballets by Dame Ninette and Mr. Tudor, elements of jazz dancing mingle continuously in Mr. MacMillan's work, elements of folk dancing and movements far removed from dancing reflect the eclectic inquiries of Mr. Cranko.

By now, therefore, a complex structure of British choreography has been created, almost of Commonwealth choreography, so much are we indebted to Commonwealth talent in all our companies. It catches and reflects aspects of our life like a moving mirror always with invention and originality, but lacking in some ways clarity and depth of character, especially national character.

The next stage, then, is to see that this national character is strengthened. The ways in which this will be done provide the tasks of British ballet during the 1960s and the 1970s. The development of what Dame Ninette de Valois has called a 'more truly national choreography', a choreography more directly inspired by our folk dance traditions, is one way. Another is the creation of our 'own interpretation of established traditional classical ballets of international fame and usage'. A third is the development of teaching methods to produce dancers whose technique and histrionic ability extend their national qualities. A fourth

way, looking at the other side of the theatrical curtain, is the development of a national school of ballet criticism.

The Royal Ballet and Ballet Rambert, no doubt, will play the principal parts in fulfilling these tasks since creation has been centred in them throughout the past thirty years. 'If we say the Royal Ballet is our National Gallery of Dancing,' said Madame Rambert in a famous television interview, 'I would like to be modestly the Tate Gallery.'

These two companies have been the power house of English ballet for a generation. Born of the national revival of dancing, which nourished equally the folk dance and the ballroom in the first half of this century, they have trained the artists and provided the inspiration which make ballet so much more part of the popular imagination today that neither the visual arts, cinema and television, nor fashion and education, nor even the training of athletes can escape its influence.

Of the two, the Ballet Rambert has the stronger dramatic tradition and develops its artists within a less rigid framework. But the burden of the future really rests with the Royal Ballet. The future, perhaps, will say that in the 1940s and 1950s our national resources became unbalanced, our choreographers tended to outdo our designers and composers. Although the wealth of British choreography derives in part from the catholic musical foundation bequeathed to it by Constant Lambert we need today the inspiration of a musical talent as intent on developing national character in music as Dame Ninette is in choreography. Since Constant Lambert died British ballet has not had an outstanding musical director any more than it has had an outstanding ballet designer since the death of Sophie Fedorovitch.

We lack, too, in many of our productions a dramatic sense as strong as our dancing sense. Were it otherwise we should not merit so richly the American jibe which M. Tony Mayer quotes at us in *La Vie Anglaise*: 'English balletomanes want their ballet polite. How can dancing be polite?'

Our search for academic perfection, laudable in a young school establishing its traditions, sometimes leads us to develop too far a certain reserve in our imaginative make-up. We need more passion about our dancing as well as more national character.

This is as much a matter of schooling as choreographic demand. The

English character is not as cold as other peoples think or, if it is, Mr. Ashton's *La Fille Mal Gardée* and Mr. Cranko's *Antigone* provide a remarkable degree of heating. In these recent successes English dancers appear as comic and dramatic artists in the strongest traditions of the English spoken theatre. Such a thing has happened before, of course—in *The Rake's Progress*, say, and in Mr. Tudor's *Gala Performance*—but not on the same scale. It is scale which matters today. The implication of 'a more truly national choreography' lies not only in a closer regard for folk traditions but in three-act ballets to balance one act works, the novel to balance the short story, and this, the shape of the future, requires actor-dancers, not just dancers.

If we can be glad, then, that *La Fille Mal Gardée* and *Antigone* reveal the virtuosity of our dancers and the choreographic breadth of our school from the classicism of Ashton to the catholicism of Cranko we should be still more glad of the dramatic revelation. Although the clog dance in *La Fille Mal Gardée* is the only genuflexion these ballets make to folk traditions they still begin handsomely to solve the tasks of the 1960s.

How far will these tasks be helped or hindered by the critics? Dame Ninette de Valois reckoned in 1957 that it would be fifteen years before a worthwhile school of ballet criticism could be developed in Britain on the basis of what has been begun by Mr. Arnold Haskell, Mr. Cyril Beaumont and one or two other writers.

If anything she is optimistic. Good critics are more difficult to develop than good historians. Ballet criticism in Britain has none of the tradition of British literary or dramatic criticism, none of the background which French and Russian ballet criticism can claim. What is more, editorial space is short and the universities, unlike universities in Europe, America and South Africa, do very little to help. A few encourage public appreciation of ballet through extra-mural lectures; none is prepared to advance criticism of the art by systematic study within its walls.

The news, therefore, that Oxford University extension lectures committee had decided to sponsor a course of lectures on ballet during the 1960 Michaelmas term actually *inside* Oxford seemed almost equivalent to breaking the sound barrier. It gave a particularly promising end to an anniversary year which already had been a vintage one for English ballet. The lecturers included Dame Ninette de Valois,

Madame Rambert and Mr. Arnold Haskell, which was as it should be because an art of the theatre can create a truthful national image only in so far as support is mixed with understanding on both sides of the footlights.

Singular Saxon Attitudes

We must not be complacent, and to claim snobbery as a specifically English attitude would be insulting to the patriarchs of Charleston, the traditionalists of New South Wales, many a nostalgic Chinese, many a high-flown Beduin seigneur. The word, though, is ours, born out of slang and Anglo-Saxon, unconvincingly adapted to *snobisme* and *snobismo*, and buttressed by an unapproachable variety of derivatives: snobbish, snobby, snobbism, snobling, even snobocracy. It is a poor thing indeed, but we have made it all our own.

Snobbery in England is more than a joke or a frame of mind, more even than a relic of dying orders. It is a phenomenon of such complexity and force that nearly all our lives are affected by it, and the essence of the state is spiced with its pungency. When the president of the American women's club, crossing her knees fastidiously upon her Heppelwhite sofa, mistily recalls the splendours of her pedigree—'Sir Hawkins, you know, and his wife the seventh Countess, who had such a lovely *lovely* old place not a stone's throw from Blenheim'—when the foreigner tries a hand at the game, the English connoisseur smiles a faint superior smile: across the water most snobbery seems simple stuff, provincial, amateurish, impotent. Nobody really believes in Sir Hawkins, not even the president of the women's club, and nobody much cares anyway. Elsewhere snobbery is, at its worst, merely pathetic, but in England it sometimes descends to tragedy.

For England is still an aristocracy—not just a place where breeding counts, but a society still run by a series of consciously formed élites. A

carefully chosen, meticulously trained élite sprang out of Haileybury, in the heyday of the Raj, to administer the Queen's India. An élite of different traits but similar exclusiveness still runs Lloyd's of London. Certain regiments of the Army, certain schools, certain professions, even certain newspapers have long enjoyed a preferential status, a superiority of privilege that is tacitly accepted by the common weal, and has become part of that queer web of custom and inanity that the English, with a mystical smile, like to call tradition.

This manner of thought puts a premium on snobbery: and since the glory of the English system is its flexibility, the elasticity that makes the class-gulfs bridgeable and the stately homes change hands, English snobbery is more aspiration than contempt. It is a constructive energy, for good as well as evil. The intelligent and persistent snob, aping and envying the manners of his social superiors, can readily improve his condition—if not in his own generation, at least in his son's (this is the age of hustle, and the old tag that it takes three generations to make a gentleman has long been outmoded). A snob is usually a man on the move, and the original meaning of the word was not a person who scorned his inferiors, but a lout with yearnings.

In England we are mostly snobs, but the nature of our yearnings varies immensely from class to class, generally richening in subtlety and perception as the social level rises, until at last you reach the kind of paradoxical inversion that has produced the Mayfair Cockneys of the 1930s, the Orwellian working-men, and the Eton individualists of today who often like to shroud their magnificent background in an open-necked, off the-peg, tasteless, colour-less, almost faceless social anonymity. So corrosive is the acid of snobbery in England, and so sensitive are amateurs to its nuances, that even the anti-snob feels snobbish, and the idealist trying his best to evade the class-conflict altogether becomes a special kind of snob himself.

It signifies least among the working people, mostly townsmen nowadays, who have such horny instincts and ancient roots of their own, and whose horizons are (to be blunt) still so limited, that they have little time for mimicry, and even less for social climbing. Generations of observers have noticed the aristocratic self-sufficiency of the English working man. Spared the degradations of peasanthood and the uncertainties of migration, he long ago settled into a mould of tolerant, slow-moving, sometimes pig-headed, usually good-humoured common

sense. If the English maintain their genius for compromise, it is strongest today at the bottom.

This does not make for snobbery. The English working man has always laughed at social pretensions, but not often with malice. Fifty years ago the Toff was an essential comic figure of Cockney lore, guyed incessantly but usually affectionately. Today few English comedians are more popular than Mr. Terry-Thomas, whose attitude is one of foppish but always appealing toffdom, expressed in languid loose-jointed postures, ludicrous cigarette holders and a drawl of monstrous superiority. English working people are sometimes blind and sometimes irresponsible, but seldom petulantly envious. They share with the upper classes a taste for racing, good living, fun with a touch of bawdy; they love to shed a sentimental tear over the pangs and pomps of royalty; and ingrained among their attitudes, after all these years of egalitarianism, there lingers an innate respect for the ruling élites, and an acceptance of the harsh truth that in this world of imperfections some are more equal than others.

Presently, though, as the citizen advances, and climbs out of the proletariat into the lower middle-classes, there does sink into his consciousness a glimmering of snobbery: snobbery in its crude infancy, such as you may find in communities of comparable development the world over. Whether our neighbours are Joneses or Rileys, Ivanovs or Schmidts, keeping up with them soon becomes a queer compulsive urge, like the frenzies of lemmings in the snow.

At this level of society England ploughs in an American wake, and the snobbery of our newly prosperous bourgeoisie conforms to an American pattern. Not so long ago we used to scoff comfortably at the American success symbols, the philosophies of the status seekers, the petty prides of materialism. Today the laugh has faded. 'You're really *someone*', says the English advertisements, too, when you drive a you-know-what: or 'Everyone in Town Will Envy You' if you choose a something else. The extremes of English society are still inalienably English, but much in the middle is half American, and the lower reaches of English snobbery flow to a universal rhythm. It is the vulgarity of a newly prosperous class. Our forebears laughed at it in the *nouveaux riches* of the Industrial Revolution, flashing their diamonds and flaunting their feathers in a thousand caustic pages of *Punch*. Today, in an England that has never had it so good, an England at once

enlivened and tainted by Americanism, it characterizes half the nation.

It is usually harmless enough, and human enough, and often even beneficial, for here as in America it forces standards upwards and gives an evolving society new confidence and self-esteem. The moralist may quiver, but the student of snobs will pass condescendingly by. They are learning, they are learning, he will murmur with a smile, observing with satisfaction that Mrs. Brown has left the sitting-room curtains open, to let the neighbours see the silver.

Ah, but when this harmless pride of progress bumps into the older English complexes, then there can be real suffering. A stage up in the middle classes, and English snobbery becomes a national handicap and sometimes a personal tragedy. Now for the first time we encounter the snobbery of speech, the most dreadful of English attitudes. In this country (as Shaw pointed out) the phonologist or even the psychologist can sum up a man the moment he opens his mouth, and this dreary circumstance has had a profoundly retarding effect upon our people. Half the population of England is constantly engaged in trying to talk more grandly than its parents did. Hideous are the distortions of vowel and syntax that stem from this ambition, the flattening of syllables, the clipping of consonants, even the shrill shifting of timbre. It is painful to experience. It is like forcing a left-handed child to use his right.

The poor old B.B.C. works away at a sensible standard English, pure and unpretentious, but few Englishmen indeed, not born or raised to this particular dialect, manage to achieve it, for it takes high dramatic or mimical powers to master the tongue. Mr. Sammy Davis Jr., a performer of kaleidoscopic talent, can reproduce the Queen's English almost flawlessly: but attempts by lesser artists are usually excruciatingly inept. A lifetime of diplomatic distinction, half a century of Oxford life, a gallery of honours, a clutch of directorships—often nothing on earth can remove from an Englishman's speech the taint of humbler origins, keeping his diphthongs just short of perfection, or infusing all his charm and learning with a perceptible tang of the provinces.

It does not matter two twopenny hoots. It will not, in fact, hamper his career or besmirch his reputation, except among a madcap remnant of third-rate diehards. But from the knowledge of it all true miseries can stem, and heavy are the sacrifices the English middle-classes will

often make to release their children from the shackles of accent. Mr. C. S. Forester, in *The General*, has brilliantly shown how the spectre of mixed origins can haunt a successful Englishman through life—not as a professional handicap but as a cruel personal embarrassment. To lift their children out of the paternal standards, to avoid the contagion of a simpler past, English families will all but dedicate their lives to giving their children a public school education; the fees are enormous, the teaching is sometimes inferior, the school is, as often as not, a forlorn imitation of older and wiser establishments: but in the social hinterland of England snobbery calls.

Here in the middle reaches the Two Nations still live. Here the dictates of class powerfully influenced politics, industry, religion, the way people live, the things they say, the clothes they wear. Here, between the shopkeeper and the barrister, the Englishman is at his most self-conscious and conservative, for his ideals are those of the old upper classes forty or fifty years back, and he is aiming at targets that have long since faded and frayed. The Old School Tie, faithfully though some Americans associate it with dukes and earls and Sir Hawkins, is today a middle-class standard, and woven into its multi-coloured silks are many threads of sacrifice, anxiety and sham.

So to the world of 'U', which lies, for all Miss Mitford's noble ancestry a little below the social summit, on an elegant plateau of its own. This is the comfortable territory of the upper middle-classes, who have been gentlemen for generations and can afford to dabble in the sweet subtleties of snobbery. Here you will encounter no agonies of enunciation, but you will find little that is reckless or unseemly, either. Proper conduct here is still governed, contrary to the general belief, by the ideals of Beau Brummel, who was far from an outrageous dandy, but abhorred all eccentricity and sponsored new standards of fastidiousness, restraint and conformity.

In an officer's mess of the smarter kind the interrogative 'Pardon?' will still send a spasm of distaste down through the majors and the careful young captains, to eddy a little artificially among the subalterns. At this level of society words like 'phone' and 'cycle' really are proscribed, and the English ideal of unobtrusive formal tailoring is still fiercely honoured. The totems and shibboleths are often esoteric, but known to one and all: the cartoonist Pont, for example, is fervently admired, and so are the novels of Mr. Anthony Powell; bowler hats

are seldom curly, moustaches should be close-clipped, pearls are worn with twin-sets, 'hi-fi' is something it is rather vulgar to understand. Calculated but never exactly blatant, is the name-dropping of this class, and everyone knows which county regiments are mysteriously approved, and which are just a bunch of hicks.

It is changing, of course, as the world changes, as values blur and tastes shift: but this is, for the connoisseur, the most fascinating kind of snobbery. The upper middle-classes are not generally 'on the make', pushing for their room at the top. They possess the assurance of security, and their snobbery is allusive, condescending, wry and intimate. With its undertones of loyalty, culture and confidence, it has helped to make England great. It is the attitude of the trained elites, the real ruling class, ready to accept promising new members, but only on its own terms: its own style, its own tongue, its own turn of phrase, its own degree of sentiment, its own makes of motorcar. Even Mr. Sammy Davis, Jr., though he can capture its jargon to a nicety, could spend half a lifetime among it before he mastered the intricacies of its snobbery.

Two images only remain in this survey of our English snobs: the men beyond class, the men outside class. Beyond stand the great noble families of England, unpredictable and undefinable, conforming to no norm, honouring no common style, their old hauteur crumbling into eccentricity or burgeoning into commercialism, some stuffy, some racy, some gorgeous, some squalid, some soda-siphon playboys, some scholars of infinite sensibility. Snobbery among the real noblemen is either so lofty as to be inoffensive, like the heat of distant galaxies, or so idiosyncratic as to be meaningless, like the angry dancing of speckled spiders.

And the man outside class? He does not exist. He is a fraud or an imposter. The class distinctions of England have long been hazed or mangled by history, and across their lines men and women are constantly moving, blurring the outlines further. But they exist still, irremovably, arrogant upon the surface or mysteriously beneath it, like the foundations of old forts beneath a cornfield. However toneless your accent and anonymous your clothes, blameless your religion and indefinable your opinions—your school forgotten and your parents abroad, the make of your car a happy medium, the paper you read a compromise, the cut of your suit a self-effacement, your mayonnaise

a mean between the plebeian and the exquisite—however warily, modestly, gently you tread, some snob or other will find a category for you, and drop you into your class like a wayward pea returned to the pod.

Even worse may happen: for pre-occupied as you may be with the meaning of snobbery, and vulnerable always to its spell, you may succumb too to the fascination of it all, become a reluctant amateur of styles and intonations, think in arrant generalizations of class and society, shudder to a half-baked affectation, squirm before an R.A.F. moustache, respond as starry-eyed as any Carolina matron to the inspiration of the Real Thing. And one swart Friday morning you may even mature into the dictionary's last derivative, the Snobographer (*sb.: a writer on, a describer of, snobs*).

Travelling Images—Orientations Towards New York

Artists who command serious international attention in their own time are rare in the history of British art. So rare indeed that the fact that several prominent British painters (not to mention sculptors) now sell the greater part of their production abroad has gone largely unremarked, and no one has questioned whether one should rejoice that at last British art can hold its own in international competition, or regret that so much is being exported and lost to the country.

The unprecedented demand does not necessarily mean that British painting is better than it has ever been. This may in fact be the case, and it is certainly true that the provincialism and sense of inherent inferiority that has dogged British painting for a century now seems to be disappearing. What is much more relevant however is the progressive internationalization of art during the present century. Ease of travel and communication, and the widespread circulation of paintings, reproductions, and art magazines, have produced a situation in which a painter can virtually disregard national frontiers. For, in the words of Jackson Pollock, 'the basic problems of contemporary painting are independent of any country'.

If one wishes to know what British art is most acceptable abroad one cannot do better than look at the catalogue of the 1959 Documenta exhibition at Kassel. This was intended to present a comprehensive picture of art since 1945; the selection, made by a relatively unprejudiced German committee, was by general agreement a reasonable one, although no doubt it erred on the side of the fashionable.

Ten British painters had their work shown at Kassel. The eldest, Mr.

Ben Nicholson, was represented by five paintings, prominently hung in the main gallery of the exhibition. The others each had two or three pictures on view; they were, in age order, Graham Sutherland, Victor Pasmore, Francis Bacon, Roger Hilton, William Scott, Bryan Wynter, Sidney Nolan, Peter Lanyon, and Alan Davie. This is not an homogenous group (and there are some notable omissions), but it does represent an informed foreigner's view of painting in England in 1959, and as such warrants closer examination. Apart from Mr. Nolan, who as an Australian is a special case, the nine painters may be divided up into surrealists (Mr. Bacon and Mr. Sutherland), constructivists (Mr. Nicholson and Mr. Pasmore), and abstract expressionists (the five younger painters, who were all born 1911–20). Such generalizations are inevitably misleading, but so is almost every label in art, and they will serve for the present.

It is an interesting if not particularly surprising fact that the older painters all have their artistic roots firmly planted in the 1930s. At this time *avant garde* British art was divided between surrealism and geometric, or constructivist, abstraction, and this faithfully reflected the international situation. Mr. Nicholson was an active member of the abstract art movements in England and abroad; his work from 1934 until 1940 was at its purest and most rigorous. Mr. Bacon on the other hand was, like Mr. Ceri Richards (omitted from the Kassel list), profoundly affected by surrealism, and among the jungle of styles used by the surrealists he had already established his individual manner. His remarkable consistency up to the present day may be seen from the Crucifixion of 1933 which Sir Herbert Read reproduced in *Art Now*.

Mr. Sutherland and Mr. Pasmore were, at the end of the 1930s, not committed to the rival *avant-garde* styles of surrealism and geometric abstraction, but their more recent work links up with precisely this phase of English modern art. At the time they were instead about to emerge as leading representatives of the two isolationist tendencies which dominated the 1940s: neo-romanticism and Euston Road realism respectively. During the war the younger painters turned to native models, Samuel Palmer and Sickert, for example, and internationalism was in eclipse.

In the disruption of war the abstract painters found themselves physically isolated. Mr. Nicholson left London in 1939 for St. Ives with

his wife, Miss Barbara Hepworth, and with Mr. Naum Gabo, the constructivist sculptor, who remained in Cornwall until he moved to the United States in 1946. Mondrain, too, might have joined them had it been possible for him to contemplate living in the country, but he insisted on remaining in London until the bombing forced him to take refuge in New York. The climate in England was definitely against abstraction, and Mr. Nicholson's work became much less geometric. He reintroduced landscape and still-life elements into his painting, and felt free to range at will between figurative and non-figurative. He was perhaps the first artist anywhere to make it plain that one does not have to choose for or against abstract art.

Mr. Nicholson's presence led to St. Ives becoming a centre of modern art in England, second only to London. His own work was permeated by the light and colour and forms of West Cornwall, and most of the younger St. Ives artists may be called landscape painters, however far their pictures may be taken towards abstraction. This is most evident in the work of Mr. Peter Lanyon, who, starting from Mr. Nicholson and Mr. Gabo, has evolved a post-cubist, post-constructivist landscape style of increasing painterly freedom.

In London, however, neo-romanticism remained a powerful force right into the late 1940s, though many of the younger painters were affected by the exhibitions of work by Matisse, Picasso and Klee that were held immediately after the war, and their dependence on native sources grew less marked. The first move against the romantic tide came with Mr. Victor Pasmore's adoption of abstract art in 1947 when at the height of his reputation as a realist painter. Although it now appears a perfectly logical step in Mr. Pasmore's development, it could hardly have been a more provocative assertion of the renewed vigour of values accepted internationally in the 1930s. Mr. Pasmore's 'conversion' was followed by others, and he was soon leader of a militant group of anti-romantic, anti-expressionist abstract painters. They refused to give their work any quasi-mystical justification, and sought to explore the relationship between art and mathematics and science. This led Mr. Pasmore and some of his associates (Mr. Kenneth and Mrs. Mary Martin, Mr. Anthony Hill) to the making of relief constructions of painted wood and of new materials, especially plastics, and to experiments with fully three-dimensional constructions. Other members of the group (Mr. Terry Frost and Mr. Adrian Heath) have

remained painters, but their work is more dynamic and expressive today than it was in the early 1950s.

For Mr. Sutherland quick success and a changing artistic situation brought its own problems. At the end of the war he was the undisputed *chef d'école* of the neo-romantics, among whom may be named John Minton, Keith Vaughan, John Craxton and Michael Ayrton. He was also the first modern British painter to win a big international reputation, notably in the United States and Germany. As it became increasingly obvious, however, that romanticism was for the time being a spent force in British painting, Mr. Sutherland had to find new bearings. He seems to have successfully taken up a position close to that of Mr. Francis Bacon, whose loose allegiance to pre-war surrealism has already been remarked upon. There was in fact a subtle connexion between the wartime isolationist movements of neo-romanticism and Euston Road realism and the surrealist and abstract art that both preceded and succeeded them. Mr. Sutherland now seems rather isolated from the younger painters who prefer Mr. Bacon because of his more vigorous handling of paint; the art of both men is, however, too individual to be imitated, as those who tried have discovered.

Two of the painters chosen at Kassel, Mr. Scott and Mr. Hilton, fit into none of the categories already mentioned. They had both studied and worked in France before 1939, and after the war tried to re-establish contact with what was going on in Paris. They were not so much influenced by French artists as interested in what they were trying to do. Thus the idea of evolving a more painterly, non-geometrical kind of abstract (or semi-abstract) art out of the late works of Bonnard has been as much Mr. Scott's concern as it was that of the group of French painters around M. Manessier and his teacher L. M. Bissière (who was also Mr. Hilton's master).

Sir Herbert Read could write in the 1947 Epilogue to *Art Now* that France 'in spite of wars and economic catastrophes still retains the undisputed leadership in modern art', but that leadership was soon to be challenged, with revolutionary consequences, certainly so far as British painting is concerned. The last School of Paris painters to make a deep impression here were the Russian, Nicolas de Stael, and the American, Sam Francis. The rich impasto and wedges of colour of Stael's 1951–54 pictures were widely imitated in Britain in the mid-1950s, but this

kind of painting, for all its unquestionable quality, now seems to belong to the end of an epoch, whereas Mr. Francis heralded something new.

Mr. Sam Francis, born in California in 1923, had settled in Paris in 1950, and the diaphanous clouds of paint that float over the surfaces of his pictures remained one of Monet's Nymphéas series and the late watercolours of Cézanne. His work was first shown in London in 1953 at an I.C.A. exhibition called 'Opposing Forces', along with that of Jackson Pollock, Riopelle and Mathieu, and this was the beginning of a wave of American influence that reached its peak a few years later. By 1960 the long ascendancy of Paris over modern English art was at an end; it would not be untrue to say that the younger painters today (those born after 1915) were far more interested in what is happening in New York than across the Channel.

The shift of allegiance, if it can be called this, has been made with surprising ease. There are some good reasons for this. Flourishing schools of painting are often associated with economic prosperity, and one might be justified in expecting a period of particular brilliance in the United States today. The war had made the artistic climate in New York more international, not less so as in London, because of the many European artists who settled there as refugees—Léger, Masson, Mirò, Tanguy, Mondrian among them. And, finally, the chauvinism of the French towards any foreign painter who does not live in Paris was compared unfavourably with the lively interest Americans had for some time been showing in modern British art. When they were invited to visit and exhibit in New York, British painters found at once that they had a great deal in common with American artists, who were more likely to accept them as equals than the French had ever been. Even in the visual arts a common language helps. It also means that American art magazines like *Art News*, *Arts*, *It Is*, and the writings of American critics like Mr. Clement Greenberg and Mr. Harold Rosenberg are easily available to British painters.

So far as London is concerned the impact of American painting can be traced with some exactitude, and because of its importance some dates are worth recording. In January 1956 an exhibition of 'Modern Art in the United States', selected from the collections of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, was shown at the Tate Gallery. In the last rooms was a group of enormous abstract pictures by artists who have been variously called action painters, abstract expressionists and,

best of all, perhaps, as there is little stylistic coherence, the New York School. On view were works by Pollock, Kline, Rothko, Still, De Kooning, Gorky, Motherwell, Guston, Tomlin and Tobey. The impudent boldness of these pictures was too much for most visitors to the exhibition, but when some reappeared at the Tate in February 1959, in an exhibition devoted exclusively to 'The New American Painting', it was generally agreed that the New York painters represented the most exciting new art for many years. In the later exhibition seventeen artists showed eighty-one pictures; all the above-named were included, together with Brooks, Francis, Gottlieb and Newman. Other exhibitions, of which by far the most important was the Pollock retrospective at the Whitechapel Gallery in November 1958, have helped fill out the picture.

Not every British painter needed these exhibitions to discover American painting. One of the first to recognize the importance of the new American school was Mr. Alan Davie, who saw work by Pollock and Motherwell in Peggy Guggenheim's collection in Venice as early as 1948. Pollock was a painter who moved rapidly through several distinct phases, and Mr. Davie saw not the drip paintings of 1949–50 (probably the peak of Pollock's achievement) but the surrealist-expressionist pictures of the 1942–45 period, in which imagery emerges from the turbulent paint. Mr. Davie has developed this kind of imagistic painting with considerable success, and his work in the late 1950s has an authority that has made him one of the most influential painters among the younger generation.

Mr. Davie's early direct contact with American painting was exceptional, and the general move towards a more informal style, with a much more expressive handling of paint, apparent in painters like Lanyon, Scott and Hilton, is all part of an international trend in the 1950s. In 1956, however, immediately after the first American exhibition in London, there was another bout of conversions to abstract painting, but this time to a more expressionist kind of abstraction than hitherto.

In certain cases the conversions were not unprepared for. The change in Mr. Rodrigo Moynihan's work was as dramatic as that in Mr. Pasmore's, but he had for a time in 1943 painted what were called 'objective abstractions' in a very informal style, and could be said to be reverting to an earlier manner. Mr. Moynihan's new course was per-

haps not directly attributable to American influence, but two St. Ives painters were decisively affected. Mr. Bryan Wynter, once a neo-romantic landscape painter, reshaped his style under the influence of Mr. Tomlin and Mr. Tobey (who visited St. Ives in 1955); and Mr. Patrick Heron abandoned a figurative manner dependent on Braque for a more lyrical, entirely abstract style related to Mr. Francis and Mr. Rothko. A whole group of younger painters, not long out of art school, were all profoundly influenced by the scale, space, gesture and imagery of American painting. Their work is not derivative, but it is clearly orientated towards New York, and not towards Paris, unlike most British *avant-garde* art during the past eighty years.

It would be unwise to speculate too much on the developments of the past year or two. There does seem to be an increasing interest in imagery, sometimes given a deliberate appeal to the unconscious, and this has again blurred the distinction between what is abstract and what is not. At the same time there has been a reaction against too sloppy painting which has resulted in a burst of pictures with hard edges and large flat areas of saturated colour. What this is all leading to is hard to foretell: one cannot single out the events of major importance until there has been time for their repercussions to be observed.

The Indigenous Romantic Temper

So much has happened in British life, as in British art, during the past two decades that any assessment of the range of the contemporary school is exceedingly hard. The impact of the war years, the separation from the Continent which then occurred and the subsequent renewal of ties have made their mark. Above all, it is the speed of life which counts.

In the modern era nothing is taken for granted. In the rapidly evolving, ever changing and highly competitive realm of artistic fashions, where pressures of new and even alarming types abound, movements wax and wane. All the time novel solutions for artistic salvation are being propounded; some break through, securing a solid and perhaps permanent hold on the attention, others just peter out.

The art lover looks over his shoulder. He never knows if, at any given moment, an explosion is being quietly prepared, underground, literally as well as metaphorically, in one of those small obscure galleries of which more than ever emerge in this country. A bomb may be detonated which may make nonsense of much that is said and relegate to the basements of the museums some of the prized trophies of the contemporary scene.

In the welter of ideas and techniques, proffered on all sides and with equal insistence, are there still to be discovered any consistent and constant elements that link the modern vision with that of the past? The artist's means and methods may have changed radically but are there some attitudes or moods pointing, for instance, to the survival of a national tradition?

Whether we like it or not, national cultural traditions are to be

discerned. International styles have always held sway but the alternatives proposed to their general character possess, more often than not, a local flavour. In this connexion one has only to turn back to the seventeenth century when the Dutch exponents of the Caravaggesque movement, now so much in fashion, whether working in Rome or back home, betrayed their national affiliations. Their outlook on light, on composition, on sex, was essentially Dutch.

What of the Romantics in the nineteenth century? The fascinating exhibition on this subject held in 1959 at the Tate Gallery underlined that certain themes dazzled artists all over Europe. But it also stressed that their treatment of common sources was different; Turner or Caspar David Friedrich found their solace and inspiration in nature, but who would hesitate to dub one English, the other German?

Certain artistic conflicts seem permanent. The struggle between the protagonists of *colore* and *disegno* which raged in the seventeenth century may seem distant. Yet it still takes place, though in different ways. At the start of the present century the rival attractions of Fauvism and Cubism offered variants to this battle. Today, the cult of the informal in art, with its emphasis on a fluent colourism, and the rearguard action fought by the supporters of a mechanistic abstraction continues the same fight. Whether or not this conflict can be simplified and interpreted as one between romanticism and classicism is another matter. To do so is certainly tempting.

The use of such terms, as hardly requires emphasis, is ever perilous. They are no more than shorthand signs which conveniently indicate a broad division in artistic outlook; stragglers and turncoats are found in both camps. All the same one can surely maintain that the romantic attitude has remained a constant feature of artistic endeavour. Romanticism itself is perhaps endemic to the arts, especially when practised by youthful hands.

Usually and properly the young are opposed to conventions, to society, to parents, and to received ideas in general. Few, like Max Beerbohm, are born middle-aged. No—the romantic state is part of human nature. And many a classical or neo-classical artist has to blush for a romantic past; think only of those early terracottas by Canova that leap ahead to Géricault. Even a painter like Nicolas Poussin, so often hailed as a pillar of classical rectitude, enjoyed a romantic phase, flushed with Venetian colour; indeed, his final period,

when the classical and romantic elements in his temperament were fused, represented a victory for the romantic temperment. He had to break rules in order to secure his achievement.

The very nature of artistic experiment in the first part of the present century stimulated a delight in freedom. The reign of the Academy was over. Mr. Augustus John's love of gypsies and his panache were as romantic as his paintings of Dorelia; from a technical point of view, his refined linearism, tinged with a residue of Puvis de Chavannes's idealism, was vivified by a shot of Fauve exuberance. He offered entrance to a world that was fancy free; idealistic or romantic, call it what you will. No less romantic, in the sense that nature provided a spur, was Wilson Steer's interpretation, wispy but personal, of Chepstow and the River Wye.

Temperamentally the British artist does not lend himself to formal discipline. His pragmatism is too embracing for that. The attempts to join in the researches into the nature of form that obtained here in the 1920s and 1930s were often sterile. French painting was frequently a snare. Certain artists, a Mathew Smith or a Duncan Grant, could coast close to Paris but their frank and robust colourism saved them from plagiarism. Mathew Smith, for instance, was activated by a vein of expressionist vigour that never deserted him.

Smith's passion for colour helped to keep alive a tradition that was well-nigh submerged during the 1930s, the grey days of Baldwinian Britain. This, after all, was a time of violent social conflicts; Spain Austria, Germany, Nazism, Fascism, and Communism were topics that intrigued painter and writer alike; the poet could well feel that he had to fulfil the role of an acknowledged legislator. The supporters of the Euston Road School considered themselves as the champions of realism. Such was the intention; but the result was not always in accordance with these terms of reference: Mr. Victor Pasmore's gentle canvases provided wistful paraphrases of French intimism.

How British painting has changed since the pre-war days! It has become the subject of propaganda, a prime favourite of international exhibitions, and its artists, headed by Mr. Henry Moore, have won distinguished prizes. Looking back, one can perceive that the war was a catalytic force. It threw artists on their own resources; it made them conscious of a national heritage; and it provided a number of enthralling themes. This state of affairs enabled the other side of British paint-

ing—the neo-romantic consciousness—to come to the fore. That this was so was partly due to dissatisfaction with Roger Fry's doctrines. Mr. Robin Ironside made the point in a short but valuable booklet, *Painting since 1939*, published in 1945, that:

> The mixed emotional undercurrents of recent British painting, nourished as they have been by the springs of Continental surrealism and by the dews and storms of English Romantic art in the early nineteenth century, are also the signs of a natural strong reaction against the aesthetic purism of Fry's critical doctrines.

Numerous were the artists of quality who had expressed a neo-romantic vision in the inter-war period—Stanley Spencer, David Jones, Ivon Hitchins, and Frances Hodgkins among others. But they never quite received their due. Sometimes their work was symbolical or religious; at others, it was concerned with a purely lyrical appreciation of nature. They also responded to abstraction and surrealism; John Tunnard and Paul Nash, for instance, were enriched by their exploration of the unconscious, and in both cases their findings were closely related to their love of landscape.

Paul Nash was surely one of the most distinguished minor European artists of his generation. An intellectual as well as a painter, he was by no means averse to experiment, and his inquiry into ways and means imparted discipline to his work; thereby the luxuriance of his imagination was tinged by a welcome and astringent austerity. His colours are perhaps a trifle wan for modern taste but they are not less fascinating for that; they corresponded to his intentions. His concern with symbolism and mysticism, evident since the start, received an additional fillip when in 1932 he was commissioned to execute illustrations for Sir Thomas Browne's *Urne Buriall*. Then, too, he began to elaborate his ideas concerning the relationship between the moon and the stone sphere. It was during the war years, when fascinated by aerial combat, that his art crystallized. His account (in *Picture History*) of his last sequence of pictures, the 'Sunflower and Sun' series which unfortunately was left uncompleted at his death, reveals his complex imagery.

> This is the second of a series of paintings of the same conception. The idea behind the design is the mystical association of two objects which inhabit

different elements and have no apparent relation in life. In the first picture, called *Pillar and Man*, the pale stone sphere on top of a ruined pillar faces its counterpart the moon, cold and pale and solid as stone. No legend or history attaches to such a picture; its drama is inherent in the scene. Its appeal is purely evocatory. That is to say, its power, if power it has, is to call up memories and stir emotions in the spectator, rather than to impose a particular idea upon him. Even so the animation of such a picture lies in its ruling design. Not only does this dictate the nature of the drama, it also expresses by its forms and colours the nature of its mystery.

This final phase in his career underlines that for him, at any rate, the concentration on an emotional response to nature and its symbolism could engender statements in which intensity was heightened rather than diminished by restraint.

For the majority of British painters, now as in the past, nature, a traditional subject for the romantic artist, has formed the principal attraction. It was significant of this persistent tendency that in the 1930s, while many of his colleagues were primarily concerned with social questions, Mr. Graham Sutherland should have found inspiration in Pembrokeshire, there he began to evolve his personal style. As he declared later (*Horizon*, April 1942):

It was in this country that I began to learn painting. It seemed impossible here for me to sit down and make finished paintings 'from nature'. Indeed, there were no 'ready made' subjects to paint. The space and concentrations of this clearly constructed land were stuff for storing in the mind. Their essence was intellectual and emotional, if I may say so. I found that I could express what I felt only by paraphrasing what I saw. Moreover, such country did not seem to make man appear little as does some country of the grander sort. I felt just as much part of the earth as my features were part of me. I did not feel that my imagination was in conflict with the real, but that reality was a dispersed and disintegrated form of imagination.

Mr. Sutherland's identification of himself with nature is characteristically romantic; and it provides a clue to the personality of one of the most secretive of British painters. His early works, especially his prints, revealed his interest in Samuel Palmer's paintings and watercolours, especially of the Shoreham period. (The revival of this artist was another indication of the neo-romantic phase that marked the war-

time and the immediate post-war era and his influence may be noted in Mr. Alan Reynolds.)

For Mr. Sutherland the tormented aspects of Nature—trees, tangled underwoods and thorn structures—offered the inspiration that he required. Yet he has not remained constant to this love; he has tried out his hand, successfully, at religious painting. His subsequent development, as portraitist, as a recorder of Venice and as a landscape painter, has brought out that side of his art, which previously could only be glimpsed. He has shown himself as a *fin de siècle* mannerist and a descendant of that 'Horrific Romantic' style that prevailed at the close of the eighteenth century.

The historian, indeed, may well reflect upon the existence of this strain at the present time. And no doubt a Mario Praz of the future will have much to say about the romantic agony of our own generation. That there is one is certain. Mr. Sutherland's own love for blacks, glittering golds and almost surrealist images is shared by Mr. Francis Bacon. This artist's tortured physiognomies, his use of silver and grey and his dramatic and anguished expressiveness link him up with the fevered and neurotic world of a Fuseli and a Haydon. Mr. Nolan, that Australian expatriate who has aroused such interest in London, is to be connected with the same school.

Comparisons with the past, though frequently misleading, are often seductive. The picturesque, as William Gilpin's theories indicated, foreshadowed the romantic movement itself. In our own era Mr. John Piper's quest for the unusual building (the quaint little chapel, for instance) as well as his antiquarianism are as picturesque as Mr. John Betjeman's verse; a little arch but charming none the less. How brilliant of their sort are his watercolours of Windsor Castle which were commissioned by the Queen (now the Queen Mother) in 1941 and as Mr. Ironside has declared:

> The charm of the subject must be sufficiently adventitious to the ordinary intelligent eye, but Piper's responsive interpretation has succeeded in imposing upon the useless battlements and turrets, with his dark skies and flashes of yellow light, an almost Spenserian magic.

That Mr. Piper should have painted in this way during the war was significant. The high tide of the neo-romantic movement occurred then, when personal consciousness was impelled by feverish energy, as is

attested by Mr. Henry Moore's impressive shelter drawings. Has the neo-romantic attitude gone under since then, like so much else from this era? This is a large question difficult of solution while the fray is still on. New forms, new approaches—social realism and action painting among them—have come to the fore; yet that old romantic urge is still to be detected.

Take only the case of Mr. Ceri Richards, whose work has substantiated the current relevance of the romantic style, though in his case it is couched in a semi-abstract manner. His series of pictures on the theme of *La Cathédrale engloutie*, with their musical implications, are rich in evocative memories: delicate hints too. Among the younger generation, Mr. Hamilton Fraser with his Turneresque voluntaries or Mr. Peter Lanyon, that explosive poet of the Cornish scene, are just as much a part of the neo-romantic movement as a David Jones or a Paul Nash. Their impulses are related, even if the means employed are different. Moreover, Mr. Edward Middleditch, once a white hope of realism, has now turned to poetical paraphrases of nature while Mr. James Howie, a new recruit from Scotland, has invested his cavernous compositions with a dreamy, fanciful note.

Action painting itself, one of the dominating and most influential styles of the present day, is essentially romantic. It relies on a personal reaction which brooks no rules and it diverges from the norm. Its practitioners here are supporters of *colore* rather than *disegno*. How sprightly their attack on the canvas can prove is shown by the vivid impasto favoured by Mr. Frank Avray Wilson or Mr. Denis Bowen. Theirs is that delight in the sketchy quality of paint which in the 1820s Hazlitt found so characteristic of the British school as compared to the French.

Whatever the subsequent rulings on contemporary British art may be, one can hardly deny that our painters, varied and energetic, now revel in a new freedom. No longer a prey to inferiority in respect of their Continental colleagues, they are prepared to be themselves and to flaunt an allegiance to colour, an old allegiance, one might add. That this is so is largely due to the persistence of the romantic vision.

Sculptural Satisfactions

Since the war British artists have given a lead to modern movements in sculpture throughout the world. There are two reasons: we have a group of gifted artists, and an enlightened and forward-looking policy in official, civic and private patronage of the arts.

In the 1940s the government institutions designed to promote culture crystallized after the war into national buying and distributing units such as the Arts Council and the British Council. Both developed a courageous programme of backing modern movements in sculpture as well as painting and thus struck a balance with the more conservative and traditional approach of the Royal Academy, the Royal Society of British Sculptors and other longer established groups. It must be remembered that, even such a short time ago as 1950, 'modern'—as it was then termed—sculpture had far less general acceptance than 'modern' painting.

All the more remarkable was the balanced and catholic selection of the first Battersea Open Air Exhibition of Sculpture put on by the Arts Council and the London County Council in 1948. This experiment and the subsequent exhibitions had great influence not only at home but throughout the world. The example has since been copied in many countries. The importance of Battersea lay not only in the fact of an exhibition of sculpture shown in a relatively new setting, at least so far as the mass of the people were concerned, but also in the fact that sculpture was shown in its own right and not as lesser sister to painting or as ancillary to architecture.

In Britain there were also further developments, such as the ill-fated but extremely interesting competition of the 'Unknown Political

Prisoner', or the commissions given to artists for the 1951 Festival of Britain. Commissions from local authorities for schools, housing estates and the New Towns expanded. Circulating collections, such as those put out by the Arts Council and British Council, the Contemporary Arts Society or the Circulation Department of the Victoria and Albert Museum made a significant contribution. This movement has led to the return of a public sympathy towards sculpture, a sympathy which had been prejudiced between the wars by the demands of economy and the general tendency towards simplicity. It has also done much to remove the earlier prejudice against 'modern' sculpture as a stylistic development. While there has been nothing comparable to the American zest for contemporary art (and a majority of the people may not prefer modern to traditional sculpture), more and more, especially among the young, do appreciate what is of their own time and are prepared to look on any manifestation without prejudice, liking or disliking on a sensible basis of reasoned personal taste.

Private patronage of course lacks the ample houses and ample incomes it enjoyed before 1914 when elaborate monuments to the dead or elaborate 'statuary' in the home were still fashionable. Nevertheless there are still a few notable collectors as selective and critical as the best of the earlier generations, and today, if there are few large private commissions, bronzes and sculptures of merit by modern artists that can be placed in contemporary homes seldom lack a purchaser. In addition to this patronage intelligent critics, art dealers and generous individuals deserved credit that sculpture is in a reasonably flourishing state, for without them many a promising young artist, now established, might have given up long ago.

On the other hand, a certain amount of indifferent sculpture is to be found all over the country. Whether academic or modern, this may arise from sheer bad taste or from mistaken charity or mistaken enthusiasm on the part of individuals or committees more eager to give employment to a local artist, an old student or even 'a nice chap' out of a job than to acquire the best available piece of sculpture. Whatever their motives, the dissemination of second-rate work may do more to kill the growing appreciation for sculpture than having none at all.

The same problem besets patronage by the Church, by business and by industry. There have been a few notably successful commissions

but often artistic excellence has been sacrificed to other considerations. Interesting in this context is the fact that the 'twenties' movement, which sought a return to the intimate traditional association between sculpture and architecture, seems to find no widespread response in the modern idiom, apart from occasional reliefs. Sculpture may be introduced as an independent element in a larger complex or planted on a building, as with the Hepworth at Holborn, or the Cavendish Square Epstein. But, whatever the reason, architects are more attracted to a two-dimensional painterly alliance, whether of simple colour or murals or mosaics, than to any such integral association with sculpture as in the St. James's Park station or even in Moore's post-war work on the Time and Life building.

If artists, like man, cannot live by bread alone, they certainly cannot live without it. We have accorded a certain amount of space to note some aspects of patronage and distribution for modern sculpture in Britain because these have played an all-important part in its contemporary development. Recent commissions in the larger centres are encouraging and the best talent cannot complain of a total lack of support. If the best examples were followed throughout the country the difficulty might be to find sufficient talent deserving of public recognition and display.

An important issue for any national art at any time is the problem of the next generation. This concerns not only training but provision for the postgraduate stage when the student is thrown out on the world to develop his personality as an artist and find his market. The great artists who dominate the scene are born and not made—though even genius needs to eat while pursuing its natural development. Nevertheless, as the Middle Ages proved so well, a reasonable amount of good talent can always be found and made by training and by the prospect of a living afterwards.

For the first stages of training contemporary British sculpture is well provided and even pampered. The intermediate stage is less satisfactory and many a promising student is faced on leaving art school with a cessation of all grants and support but with no real chance of making a living. In 1960 we really would seem to have achieved that stage at which no youth, male or female, with serious talent and intentions need be thwarted by lack of money to train. The potentialities are probably better in the larger towns but some facilities are available

almost anywhere, while partial or total grants for advanced training are numerous and adequate.

Furthermore, public support for training in art has undergone a considerable change of heart as well as of purse. Officially as well as privately the pursuit of art is no longer regarded as a sign of decadence and idleness only to be tolerated by well-integrated persons when the artist has become a marked financial success in later life.

The problems of the contemporary art school arise rather from the circumstances of modern life. Spiritually, the bewildering range of books, exhibitions, photographs and even films subject the student of today at an early age to many individual, national and international influences. Also in Great Britain the later school-leaving age, and until recently military service, tended to present the more advanced institutions with a student body technically and physically more adult than hitherto and perhaps for that reason also less ready to accept a formal academic discipline. All these factors, combined with reasonable economic freedom, create a very different situation from that where an impoverished and probably untravelled student in his early teens sat at the feet of his master acquiring and accepting a time-honoured academic training and background.

Colleges have become hesitant to interfere with the individual, and the training period comes to be regarded largely as an opportunity to work with professional and technical instruction if required. This is no doubt right; the comment is not intended as a criticism; but it is necessary to underline the circumstances which make for the extraordinary range of contemporary styles to be found in English sculpture today. If no Battersea exhibition is afraid of harbouring everything from the extremest academic to the most advanced member of the last splinter group there can be few art schools which will not do the same.

As has been suggested, a gap in the ideal patronage is the lack of any provision for the really promising art student after leaving school—except for the questionably useful job of teaching. Even when patrons buy generously there is almost inevitably a period of some years from the time a student leaves college until he develops technically and spiritually into an artist who can command sufficient money to live simply by his work. Certainly this is the case with sculpture where all the technical needs and materials are expensive. It seems quixotic that

a state which provides generously for training should fail to provide sufficiently at least for the cream of its trainees to mature into good and useful artists, which was the purpose of spending money on them when young. Indeed if the results of larger competitions are any guide, it might possibly be an advantage if a less generous distribution was made to any teenager with an urge for art and the savings put to use as post-graduate support for those who really matter.

Against this background, what of the protagonists? Though neither the Academics nor the Moderns much like to admit the other's existence as serious and important to British sculpture, the layman who cares to look will find a reasonable cross-section from extreme left to fairly extreme right. He would probably also find that almost every artist was prepared to admit that so far as British sculpture and the world are concerned two figures stand apart as the most distinguished exponents: that of the late Sir Jacob Epstein as the grand old man getting perhaps a little traditional with the passage of time, and that of Henry Moore.

This is no slight to other sculptors and both the Academy and the left can put a reputable team into the field. It may be significant of the new respect for sculpture that the Royal Academy selected a sculptor for its President. In any event from among the members of that body alone we have Charoux, Dobson, Lambert, Nimptsch, Skeaping and Wheeler. For the moderns, quite apart from Moore, we can choose for the senior team of over forties among Adams, Armitage, Butler, Chadwick, Hepworth, Meadows, Macwilliam—who seems to belong here in spite of his Academy associations—Pasmore and others; while the colts can offer a very encouraging group from whom to pick, including Brown, Caro, Clarke, Clatworthy, Dalwood, Frink, Hoskins, Paolozzi, Thornton, Wall, Young and so on. But here we should stop the recital of names, for there are many other artists of repute both among the traditionalists as well as the moderns, including portraitists and animal carvers. At least these serve to show that wide range of contemporary work which is the keynote of today.

Is there any particularly English quality common to some or to all of these artists to set them apart from those of other countries? As a whole most of the older sculptors, whether to the right or left, do show a definable, reticent, lyrical, even slightly melancholy quality that follows an English tradition. Among most of the younger artists the

international influences have taken over, and though it may be possible to suggest a stylistic ancestry for one or another, it will usually be purely personal to some individual artist, but not to any national movement or national characteristic. If we were to compare, for example, a Henry Moore reclining figure with an English Romanesque or Gothic carving there would appear to be qualities in common. The restraint to which we referred, the sense of controlled inner conflict, the rather solid earthbound personality, like the broad simplicity of the handling, would seem to arise from an English tradition of balance and understatement. The same fundamental characteristics might be held to soften the points and edges of a Chadwick or even the ferocity of a Clatworthy bull in contrast, say, to a Rozsak or a Lipchitz. On the other hand, it would not be surprising to find a Thornton, a Clarke, or a Paolozzi under any national flag.

It has been suggested that the geographical distribution of British sculptors, many of whom live outside London, leads to a greater individuality in their work, as against the dominance of Paris, for example, with its school influence. Certainly it is often difficult and even unwise to attempt to classify British artists strictly under group headings. Although one or another of the current categories may be applicable one year there is no reason why it may not change the next. If former Moderns have become today's Academicians, yesterday's abstract may well be tomorrow's figurative. The first we see in the case of Dobson, Durst or Skeaping, for example, whose simplification of detail and stylization of form were *avant garde* in the 1920s. With their more marked anatomical deviations, Macwilliam's figure sculptures might be held to belong in the same tradition, yet this year in Battersea he exhibits a successful mass form of an entirely different approach.

Many sculptors, like Miss Barbara Hepworth, have retained a fairly consistent preoccupation with pure form or form and space, as opposed to the figurative or narrative. This is true of many of the younger 'iron boys' who are variously engaged on different aspects of the same problem—whether it be static forms existing in their own right and placed in a space to which they have no intimate relation, or active linear forms which may enclose space or burst through it but which are intimately connected with the space around them. Occasionally some narrative element creeps in—if only in the title—but it is really

secondary. It is interesting here to notice that the mobiles and linear abstractions in wire and metal seem to be losing ground in favour of more concrete, if not directly figurative, statements.

In the same way, the baroquely sensual productions of Mr. Reg Butler and the *art brut* followers of a year or two ago seem to be fining down, whether figurative or not. The former's virtually recognizable sections of a body hurtling through a space of linear forms offer an interesting combination of sculptural approaches. Certainly they show a marked interest in movement, with which many of the younger artists are deeply concerned although it has generally tended to be out of favour since the narrative sculptors of the earlier part of the century. The changeover was noticeable in the architectural trend of many memorials of the First World War. Their reticence in comparison with the dramatic statements of the French examples is striking. The static approach was continued by most of the artists of the late 1920s and 1930s, particularly those who conceived of sculpture as contained essentially within the block of its own material. Like Giacometti or the abstract sculptors abroad the younger generation at home have revived the pursuit of movement both as a contributory quality and even for its own sake.

What stand out clearly are the vigour and inventiveness of contemporary British sculpture, at least among the moderns. Whether it be Moore himself or the youngest entry, every year or two shows the artist with a new style, a new interest, a new approach and often a new medium. Like Moore, with his reclining figures, artists may return to a favourite theme, but it is likely to be only a few months before they set out on another voyage of exploration. To choose at random, we have but to consider the work of Chadwick or Butler, Dalwood, Meadows or Macwilliam over the past few years to feel the vitality and urgency within the movement as a whole. It is also fair to look upon this restlessness as a positive forward-looking exploration comparable to that of modern science, rather than as the desperate search for something new that may attack an old and jaded palate.

The Architect's Ideas Begin to Take Shape

In architecture, much more than in the other arts, there is a marked time-lag between the emergence of ideas and their application in the shape of completed buildings. This is because architecture depends on the patron or client as well as on the designer, who must work within the limitations, aesthetic and programmatic, that the character of the client imposes.

The buildings going up at any given moment therefore give only a partial view of the ideas present in architects' minds. Buildings are the only proper evidence of the state of architecture, and judged by current British buildings as a whole the state of architecture in Britain is confused—though not so confused as ten years ago—and the proportion of poor-quality buildings that seems to be found acceptable by the client, the public and by many architects is depressingly large.

But since buildings are erected for all sorts of reasons that have nothing to do with the imagination—they are a response to a demand like any other commercial product, and there is always someone willing to satisfy every demand—it is not unfair, when seeking to analyse the creative forces behind British architecture, to discount the many buildings designed by second-rate architects and those which are the result of a total lack of interest in the visual outcome of a building enterprise. Attention need be paid only to that small part of the country's architectural output that can be described as being impelled by any imaginative force.

British architecture is still dominated by the conditions created at the end of the war, when, as a matter of Government policy, the task of meeting the enormous need for new buildings was put almost wholly

in the hands of public authorities; then, and for several years afterwards, stringent restrictions were placed on privately financed building. This meant that the bulk of architectural design was carried out by architects in public employ, either in the offices of county and city councils or of specially set up bodies like the development corporations of the new towns.

Architecture became essentially a team effort, a matter of close co-operation with other groups of officials—educationists, housing specialists, town-planners and the like—whose first aim was to seek out the architectural opportunities latent in the new town-planning legislation, the new Education Act and so on. Architecture having become but one manifestation of a new social programme, the leaders of architectural thought and practice were administrators rather than designers. As a result, in post-war Britain the phenomenon of the celebrity architect, whom the younger and less ambitious members of the profession reverence and look up to as a creative artist, has ceased to exist. The answer to the popular question—who are the outstanding architects in Britain today?—is that there are none. The best work being done is anonymous group work.

This preoccupation with architecture as a social service, with the setting of standards and with the establishment of functional norms, has led to the emergence of a somewhat impersonal style, in which the architect's imagination has been strictly controlled by the economics of space and structure. Typical of this style are the hundreds of new school buildings which represent, on the whole, Britain's most distinguished contribution to architecture since the war. Their unassuming, anonymous quality, and the fact that no one example is outstanding, expresses the interest taken by their designers in achieving the greatest possible integration between architecture, its social ends and its technical means, rather than in the creation of architectural monuments in their own right. This opportunity arose from the fact that in the post-war years educational methods as well as architectural ideas were in the melting pot, which meant that both the architects and their clients were in a mood to experiment.

Pioneered in Hertfordshire and subsequently taken up by official and private architects all over the country, this new idiom of school building attracted so much attention abroad because, perhaps for the first time on a scale that allowed ideas to be developed and corrected

during the course of a long-term programme of work, the industrialization of building methods and the prefabrication of components had been allowed to play the dominant part assigned to them in the theories about the nature of modern architecture current for many years past; also because the idiom proved flexible enough to be adaptable to variations of siting and accommodation, thus allaying the fear that a highly mechanized building process might produce a too rigidly standardized end-product.

Architectural enterprise in the field of housing, which was similarly inspired by the challenge of new social (and in this case also town-planning) programmes, has been largely restricted since the war to high-density housing in the centres, or in a few places on the fringes, of large cities. Small-scale housing in the shape of suburban-style two-storey developments has followed traditional patterns, not from any lack of interest in the problem these present on the part of the more progressive architects but because the experiments and ideas on the subject of prefabrication in housing, with which such architects were closely concerned at the end of the war and which promised to revolutionize the basic conception of house design, evaporated in the face of the house building industry's unwillingness to adapt itself to mechanization. The technique of house building remained tied to the industry's craft-based traditions.

The only type of dwelling that can be said to have fully recognized the implications of prefabrication and mass-production—the caravan—is produced outside the building industry and without the participation of the architectural profession, and is not subject to housing by-laws or town-planning regulations. The caravan could have been the link between established architectural methods and the young architects' interest in the impact of scientific engineering on design and production.

Another reason why small-scale housing has failed to provide modern architecture with the inspiration the importance of the housing programme deserved is the conventional types of layout to which house-designers have been bound, especially in local authority developments and in the new towns, by the need to follow the prejudices and predilections of non-professional committees. Town-planning in Britain, though in advance of the rest of the world as regards its general legislative framework and system of land-use controls, suffers

from being negative rather than positive and, being a local government activity, is operated by politicians who have little of the creative sense, and little of the visual discrimination, that architects could bring to it.

Architects have in such ways been too frustrated by technical and planning limitations to make any very positive contribution in the field of housing, except where high land-costs or shortage of sites have necessitated building to high densities and making full use of modern structural techniques. On such occasions it is notable that the most interesting British work still derives many of its qualities directly from the social programme. For example, in the design of high blocks of dwellings a typically British contribution is the exterior based on a double-storey unit which results from a preference for the maisonnette rather than the flat all on one level—that is, for the dwelling in which the bed rooms are above the living rooms and are reached by an internal stair. This has done much to humanize the scale, and counteract the repetitive monotony, of the large residential block.

Similarly in the case of urban housing layouts the social desirability of providing a wide range of dwelling types in any one neighbourhood has led to many experiments in mixed development, in which tall blocks are contrasted with lower blocks and terraces of small houses—a kind of development found also in Scandinavia but not commonly elsewhere. Layouts of this kind, for example in the London County Council's new housing estates at Roehampton, have provided opportunities to exploit the British sympathy with picturesque rather than formal qualities of design, which has persisted since the eighteenth century but might have been thought incompatible with the rationalist basis of modern architecture. In this kind of planning, in much recent British town design and in the grouping together of disparate buildings for purposes like universities, an instinct for romanticism, a preference for the informal and an ability to exploit accidents of siting, point the direction in which the British imagination tends to stray away from the internationally accepted norms of modern architecture.

If one of the central beliefs of the present generation of British architects is that they cannot isolate themselves from current human and social developments, another is that still less can their work be isolated from the phenomenon that dominates all contemporary life: the forward march of science. The most important task of architecture in

our day is to come to terms with the new resources in the way of techniques and materials that science has put at its disposal, both functionally and aesthetically. There have been times in the past when the limits of architectural achievement have been set by what can and what cannot be done technically, but nowadays there is very little that cannot be done. Architects are confronted by infinite and bewildering possibilities, and the process of deploying them efficiently and evolving some order out of them is always lagging behind the invention of still newer technical devices.

The contemporary architect is continually aware, consciously or unconsciously, of the pressure of scientific evolution. His awareness takes several forms. One is a kind of architectural death-wish, in which he sees architecture, as he knows it at present, swallowed up by the increasing domination of science, and is prepared to accept changes that would involve a wholly new conception of architecture—one in which the imaginative content is totally changed and is recast to bring it into line with the part already played by imagination in experimental science. Aesthetic values based on humanist judgments he regards with suspicion, and this questioning of established methods leads naturally to new thinking about the relationship between architects, engineers and builders. The expectation of changes in such relationships leads in turn to a reconsideration of the basis of architectural education.

Strangely enough, parallel with this almost nihilist attitude to architecture as it has hitherto existed, is a new interest in architectural history. Instead of being regarded as relevant only to students of the past, history has begun to be looked upon as contiguous to the present. Young architects are conscious of, and influenced by, recent modes of expression that would have been ignored and despised a generation ago, just because they were so recent. This does not imply the imitation of work done a generation ago; it takes the form of a continuous probing into earlier motives and beliefs and an apparent need to return to already trodden ground almost as though each generation, in the face of the confused situation created by the impact of science, had to solve every problem from the beginning instead of building steadily on the foundations laid for it by previous generations.

Another reaction to the dominating role of science is to adopt its natural idiom—that of an anonymous perfectionism—and relate the aesthetic ideals of modern architecture exclusively to it. Hence the

respect paid to Professor Mies van der Rohe, whose work represents the ultimate development of a style based on industrialized building techniques. Professor Mies's own standards, in terms of craftsmanship and aesthetics, are still beyond British capacities in spite of the predominance of curtain-wall and similar structures in British cities, but admiration for them continues, perhaps, however, accompanied by a growing realization that the very perfectionism they depend on could lead architecture into a dead end.

A contrast, and a sign of the confusion of purpose that still obtains in British architecture, is the equal reverence paid to M. Le Corbusier. Usually a great man's influence waxes and wanes, and each generation reacts against whatever its predecessor admired. But M. Le Corbusier's influence has never abated. He repeatedly shows his ability to shake himself free from the bonds of architectural dogma, of which the English, with their preference for the particular over the general, are perennially suspicious, and perhaps the younger architects find something reassuring in the startling lack of consistency between his own theoretical pronouncements and his practices. It is against dogmas he helped to establish that M. Le Corbusier seems often to be reacting.

Whatever the explanation, the plastic inventiveness to be seen in his church at Ronchamp and his vigorous use of concrete in the raw in the high court and secretariat at Chandigarh (and, on a smaller scale, in the Jaoul houses) seem to have anticipated the desires of British architects more closely than those of architects elsewhere. They have had a violent impact on the younger generation's thinking, and even the clichés employed to give style to the work of those who have not yet evolved a style of their own are taken from M. Le Corbusier.

A search for a richer vocabulary of forms—a vocabulary no longer limited by the rectilinear forms of post and beam construction—no doubt explains the variety of stylistic trends that have enlivened aesthetic argument in Britain in recent years. But they also reflect the fact that the imagination is better stimulated by the pursuit of idiosyncrasy than of conformity. Such trends include the so-called 'brutalism', the placing of a special emphasis on the qualities of materials 'as found' and the exploitation of the plastic, as distinct from the linear, qualities inherent in modern architecture's most significant material, reinforced concrete; hence the attention paid in Britain to the experiments in the

use of shell concrete conducted in Italy by Professor Pier Luigi Nervi, in Spain by Señor Torroja and in Mexico by Señor Candela.

Brutalism is not, as its name might suggest, a cult of the ugly but an attempt to extract the essential qualities of materials and structures by eschewing any extraneous finishes or treatments that would soften or modify the impact of those qualities. It implies, at the same time, a rejection of the artificial elegances by means of which a machine-age architecture is given the character of yet another sophisticated style.

None of these aesthetic trends, passionately and sometimes rather perversely pursued, amounts, it should be emphasized, to a retreat from the basic principles of modern architecture—the principles formulated by C.I.A.M. (the Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne) which provided the leadership, and codified the beliefs, of the architectural revolution of the 1920s and the 1930s. These principles are accepted in Britain as elsewhere—along with the need to relate means to needs as closely as possible and to base every work of architecture not on pictorial preconceptions but on a functional analysis of the building programme.

For in spite of subsequent developments and diversities, the most striking thing about modern architecture is that it is still international. This article ought to conclude by defining what is peculiarly British about the trends it has tried to isolate. But in fact modern British architecture, except perhaps in its occasional deviation towards the picturesque, is related to no national characteristics. The problems it is trying to face are common to many countries, and the differences found in Britain are explained either by circumstances—such as the more advanced planning legislation or educational organization—allowing British architects to progress faster along certain common paths, or by other circumstances having made them less adept at handling certain technical problems. Differences are differences of degree of achievement; hardly at all of kind.

It may be that a specifically British attitude to architecture, linked with a typically British exercise of the imagination, is due to emerge. But a conscious effort to create something British is at present quite foreign to the direction of British architects' thinking.

Housing and Showing our Treasures

Kings, and other great persons, have always had treasure-houses where they accumulated, indiscriminately, mere bullion and jewels and *objets d'art*. It was as if the Treasury (in its modern sense), the Bank of England and the British and Victoria and Albert Museums should all be housed under one roof. It is plain that the Kings of Judah, for example, regarded even the temple plate as a national asset to be melted down in time of war. Gradually there came to be a distinction between national and royal property and between mere commerical value and aesthetic value. The royal palace became a museum of beautiful things, and perhaps the ideal museum even today is the abandoned palace of a prince who reigned for not too long a period: a period which coincided with one of the great epochs of the world's art.

It was only in the eighteenth century that museums began to be looked upon as public institutions and only in the nineteenth that the move to establish them gathered momentum. Now museums are everywhere, and they range from the great national institutions to the little room in the village hall with half a dozen stuffed birds, a shelf of flint arrowheads and a few bits of Indian brassware brought back by the local bigwig from his tour of the East.

Museology, the scientific approach to the problems of museums, has only recently begun to receive the attention it deserves. What should a museum be, how should it be organized? What should it collect, and, more important still, what should it not collect? These are problems of almost infinite complexity, varying in the most perplexing fashion with national history and local conditions. The very growth of

museums, once a source of natural satisfaction, has now become the most pressing problem of museum directors. There is no limit to the possible accumulation of objects, for even if there is no money for purchase, gifts and bequests will soon tax the capacity of the museum building to the utmost.

Too often, such gifts and bequests are the death of the usefulness of a museum. There are too heterogeneous, the sole connecting link being a personal relationship which has no meaning once the collection has passed out of private hands. But even in the best-organized museums which rigidly confine themselves to one particular line, the danger of overcrowding is increasingly acute. Our sense of historical period, now so sharply developed, our unwillingness to destroy (with the unfortunate exception of architecture, which of all the arts is the most difficult to replace), mean that in a few hundred years' time the whole world will be in danger of becoming one vast museum.

In China, in primitive times, whenever there was a change of dynasty the edict went forth to destroy all the tombs existing at that particular time. Only so could the soil of China be preserved from the ever-encroaching acreage of the graveyard. Museums are graveyards unless some central purpose, some controlling impulse, can be found to give them life. Museums or mausoleums? That is the question; and in the answer to that question can be found the solution of the difficulties of organizing a successful museum.

The problem is enormously complicated once the aesthetic criterion enters into the question, and is most acute in museums of decorative art. It was the hope of the founders of such institutions that the artists of the future would be able to come and study in them, to see the best of what had been done in previous ages, and to model their style upon that. The danger of this is that the prestige of the antique sterilizes the inventive effort of the modern artist to such a degree that the world today is full of period copies. Modern creative work is dogged by the shadow of the past.

There is another difficulty, not clearly foreseen by those who hoped to find in the museum the solution of aesthetic problems. Let us, they said, only collect what is good. In theory it is simple enough; in practice nothing is more difficult. For taste, the theory of what is good in the work of the past, varies from age to age. Ruskin's detestation of the 'baroque' is not shared by many people today. The sham-Gothic

which resulted from his teaching is prized, if at all, only as an amusing trifle like a valentine, or an inlaid mother-of-pearl table. There is a gap in appreciation which makes it impossible for any age to appreciate the work of its immediate predecessor. We all tend to destroy the works of our fathers and preserve those of our grandfathers; and perhaps this is, after all, a good thing, as, otherwise, the world would be cluttered up with an innumerable quantity of miscellaneous *objets d'art*.

If we reject the idea of a museum as a mere collection of 'curios' and also the notion that 'beauty' (which means, in practice, contemporary fashion) can ever be a safe guide, what criterion is left? Historical sequence, perhaps, but even this raises some fundamental problems. There can be no such thing as a museum of universal history; such a museum would be as extensive as the earth itself. There must be some kind of selection, some kind of strong central thread on which the beads can be strung.

It is rightly admitted that the museum of *natural* history was made possible only by the general acceptance of the Darwinian Theory. It is only when Nature is envisaged as one that the multitudinous objects in a natural history museum fall into place; what was a heap of curiosities becomes a scheme of life. In 'history', *tout court*, however, the matter is not so simple.

No Darwin has yet arisen to provide us with a central thread, although, no doubt, some will think that Karl Marx came near to doing so. The historical museums of Russia were at one time reorganized in accordance with Marxian principles and they certainly had a unity and a central thread denied to those whose notions of history are less rigid and doctrinaire. Perhaps that is why in most countries the national museum of history is beyond realization. Before we can arrange a collection of actual objects in accordance with the fundamental lines of our history, we must be agreed what those fundamental lines are. A hundred years ago, when the study of history was still dominated by Macaulay and the Whig School, when people saw English history in terms of a successful struggle against the tyranny of a unifying monarch, and in freedom slowly broadening down from precedent to precedent, it would perhaps have seemed less difficult than it does today.

A distinction is often made between museums and picture galleries and even if this is not entirely valid, the problems presented by each are

not quite the same. A picture gallery is (or should be) easier to arrange, once some kind of historical sequence has been accepted. Pictures can be grouped in 'schools' and most people would probably agree that this kind of arrangement adds enormously to the pleasure and instruction of the visitor.

The arrangement of objects of applied art (a detestable if convenient phrase) is more difficult and good arrangement is itself a work of art, a creative act. The 'museum exhibit' has to be created. The idea in the mind is the important thing; and ideas are not merely impressions of specimens and relics, but the values that the visitor and student carry away. The objects shown are merely tools in the visualization of ideas.

Some enthusiasts for this new approach may seem to push this principle too far, even to the point of saying that a good museum need not necessarily possess a single antique or relic, desirable as these may be. This is exaggeration, but it is exaggeration on the right side. Much may be done with models and it is surely better, for example, to exhibit a careful model of a building now demolished than an actual stone from its foundations. The important thing is to dramatize, to seize the imagination, and if some of the devices adopted to this end smack more of the window of a departmental store, or a waxwork show, than of the learned institution, museum curators should consider without prejudice whether museums as a body would not be the better for a little of the showmanship of the window-dresser.

Certainly museums in Great Britain have made considerable advances in this direction during the past thirty years, and if we may take the Victoria and Albert Museum as an example of what can be done by enlightened management and imaginative display, we shall find a marked change for (as most people would think) the better. For purposes of administration and scholarship the museum is divided into various departments of specialists: the Department of Metalwork, the Department of Textiles, the Department of Ceramics and so on. But there is no need to arrange the exhibits in accordance with this system, as was formerly the case.

The new method is to divide the contents of the museum into 'Primary Collections' and 'Study Collections'. The former are grouped chronologically, so far as possible, and they are shown, when this is feasible, against an appropriate background. The ideal background is, of course, the 'period room', and the Victoria and Albert Museum is

fortunate in having a whole series of these from the time of the early Tudors. It is possible to 'walk through' more than three centuries of English interior decoration, panelling, furniture, metalwork, textiles and ceramics seen throughout in their proper surroundings.

But however ingenious a curator may be in arranging objects in such a manner, he will find that he has a great many over. Some of these will have to be shown in cases and some will be relegated to the 'study collections' which may or may not be open to the general public. The important thing is that the cases for public display should not be too crowded, that the objects shown should tell some coherent story and that they should be properly labelled.

Labels are extremely important and their proper preparation raises problems which can be solved only by a full appreciation of the combined claims of learning and publicity: using 'learning' for conveying information, and 'publicity' in the sense of attracting attention. Much can be done by the use of different sizes of type: the essential description of an object should be visible at a glance, while further descriptive matter may be added in smaller type. Yet the label must not be so prominent as to distract attention from the object itself. Who has not watched visitors to a picture gallery moving, bent double, from one label to the other, and never looking at the pictures at all?

Some of these problems do not arise in quite so acute a form in the smaller, local museum, but most of these have benefited by the example of the great national institutions. There was a time when the very word museum stank of dust and neglect, but this is no longer true. And within recent years a whole new category of museums has been added to those formerly available. These are the 'houses open to the public'. The best of them are what might almost be called 'natural' museums. Their main structure and their furnishings belong in general to one particular period, and so one of the major problems of display is automatically solved. A house like Holkham, for example, is filled with furniture designed by the man who built the house. But whether the visitor goes to see private houses or public galleries, it is safe to say that he will find, all over the country, admirable examples of what has been learnt in the last generation in the art of showing our treasures.

The Lady Vanishes, but What's Become of her Daughters?

It would be perfectly possible, though dispiriting, to argue that in England the price women have paid for even partial emancipation —the process is far from complete—has been the powerful control they once exercised over the imagination of poets, novelists, lyric-writers, painters, sculptors, playwrights and the men who put a lot of time and trouble into satirical woodcarving in the choir-stalls. So long as the majority of women accepted a purely domestic function in life, the artists paid them heavily by permitting them to dominate nineteenth-century fiction, loom ominously and obsessively through Jacobean theatre, hold evenly matched cards with God in metaphysical poetry, and in the whole of Elizabethan literature give way to no one but the Queen herself (who was, though cynics now question it, a woman too). Indeed, you have only to think of sixteenth-century English writing, woman-obsessed to a point where it is not easy to tell where literary convention ends and individual attitudes begin, to realize to what an extent woman—a fairly steady theme since Chaucer —has lately turned into the Vanishing Lady.

The briefest list of some of the masterpieces that have been inescapably titled by a woman's name reminds one sadly that all the authors are either dead or foreign, often both: Electra, Phèdre, The Duchess of Malfi, Tess of the D'Urbevilles, Hedda Gabler, Madame Bovary, Anna Karenina, Emma, Jane Eyre. The liveliest post-war trend in English fiction has probably been the investigation of values in a provincial setting—a theme with as much social as literary interest—and in this

entire seam of fiction the anti-hero has all the best tunes and the women flit uneasily in and out, often facelessly and forgettably, carrying cups of cocoa and reproaches and functioning as angled mirrors, or status symbols, or ladders-to-success, for the hero. (Mr. Kingsley Amis and Mr. Keith Waterhouse, it must be said at once, have the nerve and skill to look their women squarely in the eye. It is in the paler, greyer 'regional' novels that the female characters make one think of the girl who has been running very fast through all the Crazy Gang shows for a good many years now without giving anyone time to take a closer look at her face.)

C. P. Snow and Mr. Anthony Powell are both engaged in massive reconstructions of society-patterns, which necessarily include women, since even in England society is considered to be incomplete without them. But in both these novel-sequences it is impossible not to notice that it is the men who matter. Mr. Henry Green, who seemed concerned with women and liked having them around in his books, has not written a novel since *Doting*. There have been some notable women in the work of Mr. Graham Greene, but even they are frequently required to play dual roles, as themselves and as signposts along the hero's road to redemption. Miss Compton-Burnett has provided a line of poison-tongued, monstrously articulate Clytemnestra-figures all her own, but she is nothing if not a law to herself and her women are so ominously alike that one must conclude it is the malevolent pattern of English home life which is her main concern, not the detailed distinguishing of one female personality from another.

The enormous exception in fiction is, of course, Mr. Durrell, who has the natural advantages of being an Irishman and living abroad. Justine, Melissa, Clea, Leila, and Liza Pursewarden rampage all over the four volumes of the Alexandria quartet, larger than life if you like, but at least Mr. Durrell is furiously committed to them and preoccupied with them, even to the extent of using their names for two titles. They are enormously, complicatedly alive, often appallingly so. To read Mr. Durrell is to be persuaded without any doubt that women do in fact exist; though it must be noted, to keep the argument honest, that he is writing about Alexandria not England, and that there is an uneasy underground movement in progress to establish him as a distinctly foreign writer, possibly by now French.

The present mainstream of English theatre is more concerned with

patterns of society (so was Ibsen, but he had time for fiend-women too) and the deadend of non-communication than with the business of explaining something about women. (In 1960 the north and south poles of contemporary local theatre were represented by Mr. Pinter's *The Caretaker* and Mr. Rattigan's *Ross*, and the only thing they had in common was the total absence of women from both.) Mr. Fry used to write sizable roles for actresses, but even he has now turned to the universal hero, Thomas Becket. It is interesting to remember that of our present not unremarkable collection of actresses few would be in regular employment were it not for the works of Shakespeare, Tennessee Williams, Ibsen, or Anouilh (dead or foreign, as one might expect). Dame Peggy Ashcroft went from Ibsen to Stratford this summer, Dame Edith Evans appeared on television in a splendid but hardly new classic by Mr. Noël Coward, Miss Pamela Brown and Miss Irene Worth are more often than not in America, Miss Tutin is at Stratford, and Miss Leighton came up with the only recent English play with a thumping part for an actress. Mr. John Mortimer's *The Wrong Side of the Park*. The only actress to have found a comfortable home in the new kind of theatre is Miss Joan Plowright, and so far it is hard to see that even she has been provided with anything to do on the scale of Hedda, or of just one of the sisters lavished three at a time on one play by Chekhov in a manner that would now be considered spendthrift.

Women have long since stopped occurring to poets in the manner in which they preoccupied Browning, not to mention more distant writers such as Donne, Marvell, Byron, Herrick and Sidney. Two points are worth noting: first, one of the most impressive new young English poets is Mr. Ted Hughes, who writes mostly about animals and birds, and, second, Mr. Laurie Lee recently stamped a delicate and marvellous image of his mother into the minds of a large number of readers, but did so in prose. (The most memorable recent poems to have been addressed directly to a female person are the remarkable Mr. Snodgrass's poems to his daughter, but then they come from America.)

Abstraction finally did to death any idea of women recorded in paint simply as a cheerful part of the pleasure-principle, and except for Mr. Bratby, whose tone of voice sometimes seems faintly equivocal, painters show no urge for making pleasurable documents of their wives.

The only recorded female portrait by Mr. Sutherland is of Miss Helena Rubinstein, and though Mr. Lucian Freud has made some sharp and coldly eloquent female portraits, it is hard to remember more than one (a lyrical portrait of his second wife) that speaks with tenderness and warmth.

When Mr. Reg Butler began to sculpt girls struggling out of their slips there was a great shout of amazement and enthusiasm from a public on a starvation diet of birdmen, armed warriors and abstract sculpture put together from fierce pieces of scrap metal—very fine in their way, but nothing to do with women, who have in their way been a popular theme for sculptors until now. One of the most fantastically successful one-man exhibitions in recent years has been Mr. Nolan's last show, which consisted almost wholly of a thoroughly recognizable woman—Leda—involved in the myth that produced Helen. (But then Mr. Nolan is Australian.)

Emma Hamilton, who worked out some good Attitudes but was not necessarily a first-class actress, was painted so often she must at times have been involved in perpetual sittings. Dame Margot Fonteyn, who must surely be one of the world's most beautiful and remarkable women, has been painted, so far as the public record shows, only once full-scale, by Signor Annigoni.

What is particularly interesting in the present situation is that never before have women been such an overt and respected—at least financially respected—power in the community. As they disappeared from the arts, so they took over popular folk-art, in the form of journalism, women's magazines, and the endless controversy expressed in print and spoken discussions which can be roughly called Should Women (have careers, pursue careers after marriage, hold opinions, join the Cabinet, make their own jam, have more than four children, become call-girls, diet, wear bikinis, and almost anything else you like to think of).

Most popular fiction, whether in women's magazines or in books of the romantic Regency-romp kind, is about women and for women, and by now they claim a considerable quantity of newspaper space with Women's Section printed boldly at the top so that no one can miss the point. Nevertheless, there are remarkably few roles of any possible interest for actresses in British films (a good one came up in *Room at the Top* and was instantly and magnificently secured by Mlle. Simone

Signoret). It is also not without interest to remember that where America has Miss Monroe and France Mlle. Bardot, England—now that time has surprised Miss Lockwood and Miss Dors has gone into the memoir business—has only Miss Julie Andrews, who is nice and as pretty as a picture but is something altogether different (and ultimately owes her English fame, through some mysterious irony, to Bernard Shaw, who wrote big roles for British women).

It would perhaps be impertinent and over-ambitious to wish we had an indigenous Colette to people current English fiction with one or two full-scale, articulate, feeling, motivated, fully understood and compassionately created women. M. Anouilh provides ample material for France, and even Mlle. Sagan, though she has never again done as well as *Bonjour Tristesse*, can still sketch an immediately recognizable, tenaciously French type of woman who does very well at a brief passing glance. And curiously—though perhaps this is still too early to congratulate ourselves on our stern, imperishable Puritan conscience—the new little family of Zazie and Lolita appears to be passing English novelists by.

Women in England obsess the imagination of sociologists, advertising executives, journalists and editors, photographers, bank managers, dressmakers and cosmetic manufacturers, but not to anything like the same extent those occupied with the arts. Our best painters may well look at women closely, but do not apparently like the news to get about. Mr. Henry Moore sculpts them but in a deeply symbolic and abstracted way. Epstein used to make portrait-busts of them and Mr. John used to paint them all the time, but that is talking about past history. (Thousands who never heard Suggia must know her from the big John portrait. There's a sad lesson to be drawn from the fact that record-sleeves now perform the same function, but not quite.) Fiction is heavily involved with the anti-hero, and our finest contemporary opera is *Peter Grimes*.

It is perfectly possible, though one hopes it may be avoided, that the archetypal female figure of England in recent years may be taken to be Mrs. Jimmy Porter, a non-speaking role for long stretches of at least Act I, patiently ironing and weeping and representing something more or less halfway between a status symbol and a class symbol with just more than a dash of sex-warfare love-hate to reduce her even farther into an abstract figure. Some months ago Mr. Cliff Richards was

singing a not particularly joyful but popular song about a livin' doll. Though no generalization can be more than partly true, it is doubtful whether there is in England today any such person, if you are going to take the artist's word for it.

The Post-Linguistic Thaw

An Australian philosopher, returning in 1960 to the centre of English philosophy after an absence of more than a decade, remarked on, and regretted, the change he found. He had left a revolutionary situation in which every new move was delightfully subversive and liberating. He returned to find that, though the subject appeared still to be confidently and energetically cultivated, the revolutionary ferment had quite subsided. Where there had been, it seemed to him, a general and triumphant movement in one direction, there were now a number of individuals and groups pursuing divergent interests and ends, often in a relatively traditional manner.

His picture was a little over-simplified; but not grossly so. There did develop, in the late 1940s and the early 1950s, a new method, a new idea, in English philosophy which captured the imaginations of many of those who entered the field for the first time or returned to it after six years of an enforced intellectual sterility. In a curious way it combined, this new idea, magnitude of claim with modesty of pretension. The results it promised were to be achieved not by the inspiration of genius but by the careful and co-operative labours of men of sense.

Yet the results themselves were to be great. Foreseeably near were the total dissolution of ancient problems and the final extinction both of the avowedly metaphysical doctrines whose end had too often been announced before and of that traditional empiricism which had opposed to them the name of natural science and the reality of a weak metaphysics of its own. This clearing of ancient rubbish was to be acompanied by the delivery of the authentic treasure: the revelation, that is, of a whole world of infinite subtlety and diversity with its own

fine and complex structure, a world which had always lain about us to be observed as soon as we ceased straining our eyes towards imaginary grandeurs and simplicities.

The means of both dissolution and revelation was a refined, thorough and, above all, a realistic awareness of the meanings of words. For the purposes of ordinary and of specialized discourse reasonably instructed adults had all mastered, had all *had* to master, a set of instruments of great subtlety, flexibility and power. The thorough and unprejudiced study of the use which we actually made of these linguistic instruments in the course of our business with one another and the world would at last make it possible for us to understand the detailed structure of our actual conception of the world, and thereby free us from the philosophical fantasies or perplexities engendered by a reflection which was incomplete, uncontrolled or obsessive.

Looked at in this cool and even light, much of the philosophy of the immediate and remoter past did indeed seem to consist of huge, bizarre mistakes, fantastic muddles, over-simplifications of an unbelievable grossness and crudity. Traditional problems shrivelled, traditional theories crumbled and 'linguistic' philosophers, treading a sure path, could pick their way—if they were careful and thorough—through swamps of controversy in which their perhaps more powerful but certainly less enlightened predecessors had become hopelessly and ridiculously bogged. A traditional Theory of Truth could scarcely survive a careful examination of the actual employment of the word 'true'; a traditionally conceived Problem of Knowledge looked like sheer misunderstanding by the side of a sufficiently thorough study of the use of the verb 'to know'. Error and misunderstanding could be regarded as finally disposed of when they were not only shown to be such but their very sources were, by the same operation, fully and clearly exposed.

The devastations wrought by the method were such as to inspire a kind of awe as well as an intense satisfaction. They also inspired a kind of hope which was not, at the time, absurd. It was possible to speculate about how long it would take to 'finish off' traditional philosophy; and a lecturer could conclude his lectures on the moral philosophy of the sophisticated Hume by remarking: 'Had Hume shown the same acumen in logic (i.e., epistemology) as he showed in morals . . . philosophy . . . would have been over . . . sooner.'

It is by no means as easy as is sometimes supposed to trace the sources of this captivating and, up to a point, brilliantly successful movement. Undeniably it had something in common with, and owed something to, Logical Positivism. There was a community of attitude to many traditional problems and solutions. But the Logical Positivists moved to the assault rather lightly equipped with an over-simple theory of meaning, and operated, at least in England, from the flimsy base of an eighteenth-century empiricist ontology. No very elaborate exercises in the study of language actually at work were necessary to demonstrate the inadequacy of the first and the absurdity of the second.

And here the great figure of Wittgenstein comes to mind; for it was precisely in the name of the need to 'bring words back to their use in the language which is their original home' that he conducted his own exhausting battles against the belief in the adequacy of the Humean apparatus of impressions and ideas. Yet the direct influence of Wittgenstein on the development of linguistic philosophy after the war appears to have been small. His writings were known to few; and those not at that time the most active. Austin, who most clearly stated and most effectively vindicated the claims of the linguistic idea, owed no traceable debt to Wittgenstein; and the *idées maîtresses* which Professor Ryle handled with such brilliance of imagery and force of phrase seemed to derive, if from anywhere, then very distantly from Aristotle.

Nor was the atmosphere in which Professors Ryle and Austin conducted their researches the atmosphere of Wittgensteinian anguish ('Philosophy is hell'). Philosophy, rather, was complicated and fascinating; it was even allowed to be amusing. The publication of the *Philosophical Investigations* in 1953 revealed Wittgenstein clearly and generally as a philosopher of genius, many of whose thoughts, spoken in Cambridge, had somehow become assimilated to the very different style of Oxford; but it was impossible to say quite how. For though many had learnt much from the wartime and pre-war work of Professor Wisdom, who had constantly acknowledged his debt to Wittgenstein, it was now clear also how much Professor Wisdom's note was his own.

Whatever the sources of linguistic philosophy, its claims and methods could reasonably be expected to excite suspicion and hostility both from

outside the world of academic philosophy and from within it. The reaction was a little belated. Many of the serious-minded were still reproaching academic philosophers, vaguely thought of as logical positivists, for excessive preoccupation with esoteric technicalities of logic at a time when it was the non-esoteric non-technicalities of ordinary speech which were actually absorbing their attention; and by the time the target was more accurately located, the scene was already changing in the way noted by the returning Australian.

Ultimately the full tide of denunciation rolled in. The linguistic philosophers were charged with dullness, triviality, pedantry, abdication, evasion, frivolity, complacency, conservatism and obscurity. It remained an odd fact, discouraging to its critics, that a movement with these marked deficiencies was capable of exerting such an enormous attractive power wherever English was the language of philosophy, particularly in Australia and the United States of America. The influx from abroad of young students and established teachers of philosophy into Oxford, the home of dullness, continued at an unprecedented rate throughout the post-war period; and Oxford philosophers were invited in increasing numbers to export their product in person to the United States.

Neither the hostility nor the enthusiasm which the movement excited was in the least surprising. The atmosphere of particular and informal clarities in which the movement lived caused genuine bafflement and uneasiness in many whose conception of philosophy was more elevated than definite. What was clear seemed obscure to those whose unconscious demand was for obscurity, and the study of the familiar seemed contemptuously esoteric in a region where everything was expected to be strange. But to the genuine student of the subject, accustomed but not reconciled to pseudo-precise terminology and stale controversy, the new movement offered an unparalleled freshness of approach, and a real hope of replacing forever collapsing theories with actually ascertainable truths. This was sufficient reason for its appeal.

The self-conscious employment of the linguistic method produced brilliant and often amusing results. It destroyed much and revealed much. It should continue to play a great part in philosophy, acting as an indispensable control on extravagance, absurdity and over-simplification; revealing more and more of the fascinating sub-structure of our

thinking. But it no longer appears that it can, by itself, satisfy all the demands of philosophical inquiry. Above all, it cannot, by itself, satisfy the persistent philosophical craving for generality, for the discovery of unifying pattern or structure in our conception of the world.

That craving has often enough been nourished with illusion; and the generalizing philosopher of today is less likely than his predecessors to claim final or exclusive correctness for the pattern of connexions he presents. Yet there seems no reason why it should not be possible from time to time to sketch out, in the style of the day, a fundamental order of conceptual connexions discernible in human thinking, or to illuminate different particular areas of thought in a more systematic way than the linguistic method was able to promise by itself. In any case, the desire for generality is ineliminable from philosophy. Temporarily overlaid in some minds by the successes of the linguistic method, the desire inevitably re-asserted itself. One result, among others, was a more sympathetic understanding of the history of the subject. What had appeared in that first dazzling light simply as an array of crude mistakes could sometimes, after all, be sympathetically viewed as an attempt, not wholly unsuccessful, to establish a general structure such as the refinements of the new method were powerless to reveal by themselves.

Even in the heyday of the linguistic movement it is doubtful whether it numbered among its adherents or semi-adherents more than a substantial minority of British philosophers. It was associated primarily with one place—Oxford—and there it centred on one man—Austin, its most explicit advocate and most acute and whole-hearted practitioner. Its heyday was short. When a revolutionary movement begins to write its own history, something at least of its revolutionary impetus has been lost; and in the appearance of *The Revolution in Philosophy* (1956) and of Mr. G. J. Warnock's *English Philosophy since 1900* (1958) there were signs that eyes were were being lifted from the immediate task, indications of pause and change.

Indeed, the pull of generality was felt by Austin himself, who, before he died, was beginning to work out a general classificatory theory of acts of linguistic communication. It is still too early to say what definite directions change will take. In spite of the work of Professor Ayer, who never attached value to the linguistic idea, and who, in his most recent book, *The Problem of Knowledge* (1956), continued to uphold

a traditional empiricism with unfailing elegance and skill, it seems unlikely that he or others will work much longer in that vein.

There are portents, however, of a very different kind. One is the appearance of a persuasive study entitled *Hegel: A Re-examination* (1958) by Professor J. N. Findlay. Professor Stuart Hampshire's *Thought and Action* (1959), with its linking of epistemology, philosophy of mind and moral philosophy, is highly indicative of a trend from piecemeal studies towards bolder syntheses; it shows how the results of recent discussions can be utilized in a construction with both Hegelian and Spinozistic affinities. Mr. P. F. Strawson's *Individuals* (1959) suggests a scaled-down Kantianism, pared of idealism on the one hand and a particular conception of physical science on the other. The philosophy of logic and language takes on a tauter line and a more formal tone in the work of logicians who derive their inspiration mainly from Frege. Finally, some of the most successful work of the period has been in the philosophy of mind; and it seems reasonable to suppose that further studies will follow upon Professor Ryle's *Concept of Mind* (1949), Wittgenstein's *Investigations* (1953) and Miss Anscombe's *Intention* (1957), and that, in them, Ryle's explicit and Wittgenstein's implicit suggestions of systematization will be refined and reassessed.

The Australian philospher had reason enough to claim that he found a changed situation. When knowledge of this fact of change finally filters through to those who habitually comment on the state of philosophy without any significant first-hand acquaintance with it, reactions of complacency may be expected. In the anticipated face of these it is worth re-affirming that the gains and advances made in the dozen years which followed the war were probably as great as any which have been made in an equivalent period in the history of the subject.

A new level of refinement and accuracy in conceptual awareness has been reached, and an addition to philosophical method has been established which will, or should, be permanent. It is not only within the sphere of concerns peculiar to the philosopher that the results of these advances show themselves. The province of jurisprudence offers an almost ideal ground for the application of a critical technique of which the essence is an accurate surveying of the actual operation of concepts. Professor Hart and Mr. Honoré have achieved one striking success in this field with the publication of *Causation in the Law* (1959); and in a brilliant series of lectures to be published under the title of

The Concept of Law Professor Hart illuminates with the same clarity and accuracy the most general issues of jurisprudence.

There is no reason why philosophical prose should be more ugly and turgid than other prose; and the best philosophical writing in England has always had a place among the best writing in England. This tradition is maintained, in a variety of individual modes: in Professor Ayer's Augustan elegance; in Austin's wit and sharp lucidity; in Professor Wisdom's strange, persuasive cadence; in the graceful and ironic urbanity of Mr. Warnock; above all, perhaps, in Professor Ryle's masterly handling of a vivid and wide-ranging vocabulary and a taut and balanced sentence structure. These and others who have thought clearly and written well include some who belonged, some who half-belonged, and some who did not belong at all, to the linguistic movement. There are enough of the first to make it clear that one kind of sensitivity to the use of words need not exclude another.

Dons and the Point of No Expansion

No other institution in the world looks more like the embodiment of an idea than the ancient English university.

There they sit every evening, the members of the college: *commensales* eating together, the young men on their benches on the stone floor of the hall, the seniors six inches higher on their wooden platform, and all around them the portraits of their predecessors. There they sit every week, tutor and pupil alone together, still in their distinctive dress, talking, persuading each other, convincing themselves that the pursuit of knowledge is a conversation, a conversation between the followers of every art and of all the sciences, a conversation between the generations. The flower of English youth is gathered up with infinite care and gently placed upon the dais, to live for a while with the ablest of the English teachers, and then to go away and take responsibility for the life of their country. Of each successive bevy of youthful faces, one or two will remain behind, to pursue scholarship themselves.

A Platonic idea it seems to be, not so far from the common meals and communal life prescribed in the *Laws* for the wardens and overseers of the country, or from More's *Utopia*, Bacon's *New Atlantis*. An idea, moreover, which has added to utopia the subtlety and complication of life itself.

For we find at Oxford not one but a score of such communities each of them independent and effectively endowed, each of them as old as the United States and many of them older, yet all of them contained within a larger society, the university itself, which is a community of quite a different sort. The insitution then, is infinitely

extensible, yet always intimate in scale. It can make a place for laboratories and libraries, research institutes, women's colleges and scholarly foundations of every sort, and yet remain a company of masters and pupils, living a communal life.

It is a communal life more intricate even than its institutional framework. These permanent organizations exist within a galaxy of societies of a less substantial sort, founded by the students themselves for every intellectual, aesthetic, political and religious purpose.

The dramatic and athletic coterie, the Union debating society, the club for members of parties, of nationalities or of churches, these are typical of students wherever they are found, but the more academic societies come closer to the English idea of a university, At Cambridge, for example, there is a university history club and a history club in at least ten of the colleges—a dozen societies where historian and learners meet, outside the university lecture hall, apart from the college supervision hour. The don may find himself more exercised by these tiny bands of serious and able men than by all the rest of his duties. For he meets them as an invited guest, in their society, in the rooms of one of their members, called upon to give an account of himself, to add his contribution to their discussion.

To have brought into being such an ideal type is indeed a triumph of the British imagination, its genius for the creation of institutions. Born, let us say, in Tudor times, like the modern House of Commons, it descended likewise from a long medieval ancestry. Brought to maturity under the Stuarts by the same influences which moulded that other uniquely British intellectual institution, the Royal Society, the English university under Queen Victoria entered into its empire over the intellectual imagination of the world. The buildings themselves, superbly suited to their intellectual and educative purpose, speak clearly of the Tudor and Jacobean bishops and gentlemen who fashioned them, the strenuous Victorians who adapted the model to early industrial society.

Up to our own day the ancient English university has been stupendously successful, and it is easy to see why the institution itself and its architectural form have been imitated to infinity. And yet in 1960 the urgent question to ask about British universities and scholarship is simply this. Is it true that Oxford and Cambridge are of any use at all in deciding the model for the modern university? Is not our present

problem that the British imagination, having created this one thing, has ceased to be creative at all, has responded to the challenge of twentieth-century university education with a sigh?

In 1904 George Bernard Shaw wrote this for the Fabian Society:

> Our ancient and famous universities are too venerable for reform. Any attempt to adapt Oxford and Cambridge to modern industrial needs would be an act of Vandalism comparable to the turning of Westminster Abbey into a railway station. They are the only two institutions of their kind in the world, and though it is conceivable that in the future their undergraduates and dons may be represented by wax figures, and admission regulated by a turnstile, no real change is likely to be tolerated.

Shaw was wrong if he meant to imply that scientific inspiration had already forsaken the cloisters for the industrial establishment, the state laboratory. Rutherford and J. J. Thomson face Newton and Bacon across the hall of Trinity, the jet engine was developed at Cambridge and we are told that a technical revolution in transport by water was begun there in the 1950s. He went a little too far in his forecast about resistance to change, though even after the Royal Commission of the 1920s, even after the wholesale intrusion of state-supported students in the 1940s, there can be no doubt that Oxford and Cambridge have altered less since 1904 than any other English institutions.

But that is not quite the point. What he did not, perhaps could not, foresee at the opening of the twentieth century was that the British imagination would be transfixed with its achievement, and look at all university development from this one point of view. Even in the year 1960, it would seem, we are still unwilling to admit that the idea of the ancient English university is unsuited to conditions which differ at all from the special historical and social circumstances which gave rise to it. The truth may be that it is not imitable, not even to any great extent adaptable, not after all an idea of a university, but an incidental, accidental feature of the developing shape of English society.

To say this is not necessarily to say that Oxford and Cambridge should be radically altered so as to bring them in line with the different social conditions which now prevail. This might effectively abolish that excellence we now have, when there is nothing new of excellence to put in its place. We may also be restrained from this by an influence which has nothing to do with the contemporary challenge to educate more

and more people at our universities, an influence much more easily seen from outside than from in.

The two ancient English universities belong not to England but to Britain as a whole, to the English speaking world and to Western civilization. The particular genius of the English, we all know, is the preservation of the past in compromise with the present, so that the first country to be industrialized retains more of the pre-industrial world than most others.

The immense size of the English speaking community and the relegation of Britain to a position of intellectual, spiritual or even sentimental leadership has created a formidable pressure upon us to stay just as we are, where we are. Preserved in amber, an object of elegance and immense antiquity, nothing more: this is the feeling about himself that an Oxford visitor may have on an American campus.

In fact, of course, we have gone to great lengths to give intellectual and even political superiority to Oxford and Cambridge, so that social change does not remove their pre-eminence. The effect of promising public support to any candidate who can reach university entrance standard is that all of them try to get to the two magical places; hence a greater monopoly of talent there than ever before. As we extend our scattered seats of higher learning into a university network and invent a whole new vocabulary to describe it (with words like 'Oxbridge', and 'civic' or 'Redbrick' for other universities), we are merely elaborating a classic example of a prestige system.

Even the United States suffers from the tendency for the university teacher to establish his self-esteem by exaggerating the reputation of his own institution, and to drop everything directly there is a chance to join an institution of greater reputation still. But Harvard, Yale and the others are conscious of their metropolitan responsibilities; they have graduate schools which are organized for the purpose of training professors for their sisters in the academic world. Here the two great universities seem to pride themselves on their provincialism, on their complete unwillingness to accept any relationship with other British universities. Almost every academic conference of literary, social or political faculties is badly attended by Oxford and Cambridge men: sometimes one of them will have no representative at all.

No representative of the best and most famous academic institutions in the world, which is how we like to think of them. This is an essay

on the imagination of our country and its point is that we have been unable to imagine a university institution suited to the challenge of the twentieth century, a century which does confront us with a dilemma of the imagination, the institution-makers' imagination. To insist on it we may have sounded unfair to the younger universities and to the University Grants Committee. Since its birth in 1919 this has been universally praised as an example of British institution-making for university purposes. With that recently established tendency to praise everything we have simply because it is British, we praise this committee because it seems to have solved the problem of allowing our universities to accept nearly all their money from the state, and yet to preserve their academic independence. We praise it for other things too, and perhaps we are right to do so. But it certainly cannot be said that successive Grants Committees have thought in terms of any model other than the Oxford and Cambridge college.

It is they who have helped to plant everywhere the 'hall of residence', an expensive and unsatisfactory substitute for the college. In one university this over-elaborate students' hostel has tables on the floor for forty or fifty girls, and a high table where the warden sits alone. This one middle-aged lady serves as a token for the absent community of fellows. Perhaps also as a fatal reminder that the hall of residence is not really a college, that the university is perhaps not really a university, since there are only two of these in England. This may not be the ordinary mood of the teachers in British universities, but it too often is when they think of themselves as an institution. Certainly it is difficult to imagine a professor looking up from his morning paper in the common room and saying ingenuously how glad he is that this university was set up on an entirely different principal from the ancient universities, new, adventurous, satisfactory.

At Keele, near Stoke-on-Trent, at the newest and the smallest university institution in Britain, we hope that sometimes this sense of exciting novelty does manifest itself. It may be that this community can be looked upon as a new venture of the British Imagination. For it does tackle fairly and squarely the education of the whole mind, in arts as well as science, in science as well as arts; it does admit to itself the teacher's family as well as the teacher; it grants that four years may be necessary for all that the modern university has to do for its students.

But Mr. Kingsley Amis has recently expressed himself on the

disadvantages of the new syllabus at Keele. He it was who helped to set in motion that literary swirl we call by the (wrong) name, the angry young men, and whose portrait of the provincial university fits this argument tightly enough. Nor can it be said that the Keele model is likely to shape our new foundations, change our old ones. A cynic might claim that it was simply the demonstration in this matter of the British twentieth-century tendency: too little and too late.

We live in a country which began about 500 years ago to associate scholarship with social and political superiority. In England the intelligentsia was enfolded in the ruling class, and this in shorthand was what made possible the historical importance, and the historical reputation, of our ancient universities, and distinguished them from all the others. It was a costly business, and we in the twentieth century are wrong to complain that we cannot afford to do things as our Tudor and Stuart ancestors did.

In 1575, in a country with perhaps a tenth of the population and perhaps a thousandth of the economic resources, there were probably something like 5,000 people at Oxford and Cambridge. Our total university population now is stated to be about 100,000; we have only succeeded in doubling the proportion of students to the country as a whole. Building for building and book for book, the university libraries of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries certainly used up very, very much more available capital than they do today, when even relative expenditure in comparison with America is exceedingly uncomfortable to contemplate. These calculations are unreal, and the evidence unreliable, but it is difficult to believe that the amount we now spend on higher education, laboratories, technical colleges, free maintenance and all, is anything but considerably less than it was in the world which gave us our ancient universities.

Since 1900 we have seen the London literary and intellectual world, the world of the clubs and the independent author, languish and begin to die away. British scholarly writing has now to depend on university patronage almost exclusively, and the university is called upon to perform many of the other functions that used to be catered for in other ways. The challenge of British universities to the British imagination is perhaps the most urgent of all.

Subject Mind Explores Object Mind

If psychology in Britain can be said to have had a founder, a strong claimant to the title is Sir Francis Galton. Unlike Wundt, the doughty 'father of experimental psychology' in Germany, Galton never regarded himself as a psychologist and would no doubt have indignantly repudiated the suggestion that he founded anything whatsoever. Yet it is characteristic of British psychology—at all events until quite recently—that the men who contributed the most owned formal allegiance to other disciplines. Ward and Stout were philosophers, Sherrington and Lord Adrian physiologists, Myers and McDougall physicians. Rivers, who did more perhaps than any to establish psychology in Britain, is claimed by both the natural and the social sciences. Some of our early psychologists, indeed, had decidedly strange antecedents. Lloyd Morgan was trained as a mining engineer and Spearman quite literally won his spurs as a cavalry officer. In spite of the strident professional note of modern British psychology, it may yet prove true that the subject is better served by Gentlemen than by Players.

Francis Galton, who was a cousin of Charles Darwin, was born in 1822 and won early repute as an African explorer. He then turned to meteorology and is reliably said to have originated the theory of anticyclones. It was only comparatively late in life that Galton directed his versatile mind to psychology, bringing to a subject heavily shrouded in academic dust a much needed breath of empirical fresh air. *Hereditary Genius*, which appeared in 1869, did much to extend Darwinian thinking into the sphere of social problems and to draw attention to the important role of heredity in regard to human variability. Indeed this

inquiry almost certainly directed Galton's mind to those issues which were eventually to form him into a stalwart champion of eugenics. For psychology, however, his later volume entitled *Inquiries into Human Faculty* (1883) has proved very much more influential. This celebrated little book is concerned with topics as diverse as colour blindness, composite portraiture, mental imagery and the efficacy of prayer. Yet in spite of the range and diversity of its subject-matter, the *Inquiries* did much to stamp British psychology with its characteristic outlook. As the American historian E. G. Boring has well remarked, in psychology as in so much else both fertile and futile, Galton was first.

In what does Galton's outlook consist? In the first place, it is a rationalist outlook, or—as we should perhaps say today—a humanist outlook: Man is an animal and the study of man is a branch of biological science. Galton's whole outlook rests on a belief in the continuity of evolution from animals to man and in the biological origin of even the most exalted human faculties. Although biology and religion today seem less irreconcilable than in Galton's time, his conviction that the study of man should be a branch of natural science has become firmly embedded in contemporary thought.

In the second place, Galton was an empiricist, concerned to establish the study of human faculty upon a firm basis of observation. Unlike Wundt, who was mainly concerned with psychological experiment as a buttress to preconceived theory, Galton fully believed in the primacy of observed fact. In place of weaving theories of memory, for example, Galton devised methods to ascertain how individual people actually remember specific events. (He showed, incidentally, that even Fellows of the Royal Society display a singular frailty when required to recollect their own breakfast tables.) Although the early development of psychology in Britain owes more perhaps to Wundt than to Galton, there is every reason to believe that the Galtonian tradition will prove the more enduring.

In the third place, modern psychology has learnt from Galton to appreciate the importance of individual differences, in mental endowment. The fact of human variability, he supposed, constrains the psychologist to concern himself no less with the nature and distribution of individual differences than with the formulation of laws governing mind in general. To Galton, therefore, we owe the origins of the technique of mental measurement, which in the hands of Charles

Spearman, Godfrey Thomson and Sir Cyril Burt, has furnished so noteworthy a contribution to contemporary psychological inquiry.

Galton, then, was the forerunner of much that is best in the British psychological tradition. He impressed on his successors their manifest duty to study origins and to take a genetic point of view. He had much to do with the early growth of statistical method and its application to the problems of human variability. Above all, he was the first in Britain to extricate psychology from its philosophical antecedents and to set it fairly on the road of empirical science.

Galton was a Cambridge man and it is perhaps not wholly surprising that the idea of empirical psychology, linked with the biological sciences rather than with philosophy, took root sooner at Cambridge than in other British universities. As early as 1877 James Ward, a philosopher with strong biological leanings, pleaded for the establishment in Cambridge of a laboratory devoted to psychological studies. Alas, his plea was in vain—largely, it is related, on account of the objections of a mathematician to whom the whole idea smacked of a distasteful materialism. The idea, however, remained firmly in Ward's mind and was eventually implemented around the turn of the century.

Although the accommodation for psychology was officially described as 'dark, damp and ill-ventilated', it none the less provided the setting for work of real importance. (It is odd, by the way, how often the quality of scientific work has proved to be inversely proportional to the splendour of its home.) At all events, it was in this damp cottage that William McDougall, who later became widely known through his writings on instinct, served his apprenticeship. Here, too, W. H. R. Rivers, psychologist, physician and ethnologist, directed the work of a gallant little band of early experimental psychologists. One of his pupils was C. S. Myers, who was later to succeed him as director of a larger and much more adequately equipped laboratory. To these men psychology in Britain owes a high debt. Not only did they lay the foundation of psychology as a natural science but their level-headedness did much to disarm suspicion of a subject still regarded as but one step removed from the occult.

In more recent times the contribution of Cambridge to the structure of modern psychology has won high repute. Sir Frederic Bartlett, who became the first Professor of Experimental Psychology in the University, is widely known for his studies of memory (delightfully in the

Galtonian vein) and for the important work on the measurement of human skill which he has conceived and directed.

During the war Sir Frederic Bartlett built up an outstanding team of young research workers, eager to apply to wartime problems the controlled techniques of the psychological laboratory. Thanks largely to the brilliance of K. J. W. Craik, a young Scots graduate of exceptional talent, this endeavour was crowned with remarkable success. Although Craik himself failed to survive the war, the ideas opened up by his work continue to influence psychological inquiry in Cambridge and farther afield.

Psychology at Oxford got off to a slower start. William McDougall, it is true, established a small laboratory during his tenure of the Wilde Readership in Mental Philosophy in spite of the fact that experimental psychology was specifically precluded under the terms of his Readership. Among Oxford men of the period who trained with McDougall and who subsequently won distinction elsewhere were J. C. Flugel, who is remembered as a scholarly writer on psychoanalysis and kindred topics, and Sir Cyril Burt, who later became Professor of Psychology in the University of London. Mention, too, should be made of Professor George Humphrey, who was to return to Oxford many years later as the first Professor of Psychology in the University. Professor Humphrey's book on *The Nature of Learning*, published in 1933, remains one of the major contributions of a British-born psychologist to the development of contemporary behaviour theory. It was not, however, until 1947 that psychology became accepted in Oxford as deserving of its own Honours School. Although the link with philosophy remains closer than at Cambridge, Oxford psychology shows every sign of developing as a vigorous scientific discipline.

Many other universities have played their part in the growth of British psychology. In Bristol C. Lloyd Morgan carried the Darwinian tradition farther and together with Thorndike in America created the experimental study of animal behaviour. At Glasgow H. J. Watt, trained at Würzburg, carried out important studies of the human senses. At Manchester the lively fancy of Professor T. H. Pear has illumined many odd and fascinating psychological by-ways. In Edinburgh James Drever built up a solid laboratory in the dour Scottish tradition. Most important of all, Charles Spearman, Grote Professor of Mind and Logic at University College, London, devoted

his not inconsiderable mathematical talents over many years to the problems of mental measurement. What has come to be called the factorial analysis of human ability—which we owe principally to Spearman—has done much to place the vexed issue of intelligence testing on a reputable scientific foundation.

Although nourished by the universities, British psychologists have seldom remained wholly aloof from the wider world of affairs and the challenge of contemporary social issues. As early as 1921 C. S. Myers turned his back on Cambridge to found the National Institute of Industrial Psychology, a pioneer institution of its kind. Much of the early work on time and motion study, accident research and vocational selection was carried out under its auspices. More recently the development of applied experimental psychology in Britain has owed much to the Medical Research Council and the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, both of which bodies have fostered important studies on industrial fatigue, the design of equipment and training methods. Although some have been alarmed at the extent to which research in psychology has become subordinated to immediate practical ends, the current trend at least imposes upon psychologists some awareness of their social responsibility. In Britain, at least, psychology stands in little danger of academic petrifaction.

Rivers, Myers and McDougall were physicians as well as psychologists and all made contributions of lasting value to the growth of psychological medicine, Rivers, in particular, was one of the first Englishmen to see clearly the importance of Freud, and both he and Myers drew inspiration from psychoanalysis in their work on 'shell shock' and allied conditions in the First World War. At this time, it will be borne in mind, 'shell shock' was generally thought to have a physical basis and it was most difficult to gain acceptance for the view that emotional conflict plays a vital part in its origin. In consequence Rivers and his colleagues were accorded scant sympathy by the medical orthodoxy of their time. The whole frustrating storywas told many years later by Myers in a frank little book on *Shell Shock in France 1914–18.*

Fortunately the climate of psychological medicine in Britain underwent a decided change between the wars and the outbreak of the Second World War found doctors much better prepared for dealing with psychiatric casualties. Further, a real effort was made to apply

modern psychological knowledge in the selection of personnel and in relation to problems of training and morale. In the Army, especially, a devoted team of psychiatrists and psychologists under the direction of Brigadier J. R. Rees did much to improve the selection of officers and to achieve the best possible allocation of our limited manpower.

Since the war psychologists have been active on an increasing scale in the clinical field and have developed methods of some value in connexion with psychiatric diagnosis and the training of the mentally subnormal. The work of Professor H. J. Eysenck at the Maudsley Hospital in London is widely held to give promise of a more genuinely objective approach to the problem of personality and its disorders.

What, then, is the British contribution to psychology? No British psychologist has made a major discovery but—with the possible exception of Freud—this is true of psychologists everywhere. British psychology has, perhaps, been distinguished less by its content than by its point of view. Less systematic than German psychology, it has none the less laid the foundations of an outlook decisively linked to biological issues. This outlook, moreover, is less fact-bound than American psychology, yet at the same time less under the domination of systematic theory. Further, in spite of becoming increasingly professional, psychology in Britain still offers scope to the interested amateur. Indeed, as has already been suggested, it is to the Gentlemen rather than the Players that British psychology owes its distinctive contribution.

Darwin and Galton, Sherrington and Lloyd Morgan, Rivers and Myers—these are the names that must receive pride of place in any formal history of British psychology. But what of the future? Scientists today operate on a front very much narrower than was the case sixty years ago and one may indeed wonder whether pyschology still stands to gain so directly from the findings of allied disciplines. On the other hand, we are witnessing today a new interpenetration of the biological sciences. In the study of animal behaviour, for example, psychologists and zoologists are increasingly concerned to hammer out a unified approach to their common problems. In the study of the nervous system, physiologists are making common cause with experimental psychologists in the gradual elucidation of the function of the brain. It is noteworthy that even engineers have been stimulated to seek parallels between the principles embodied in man-made machines

and the operation of living organisms. Some psychologists, in fact, have rallied enthusiastically to Norbert Wiener's timely alliance of science and technology which has come to be known as cybernetics. It is perhaps in these new affiliations, in this new coalescence of disciplines, that the future of British psychology is taking shape.

The Stranger at the Feast

A scientist invited to a symposium of men of letters on British Imagination enters with a friendly diffidence; his brow is clouded with doubt and dissent. There is nothing new in feeling that he is an outsider. Our world is full of people eager to point out that art is one thing, science another, that the artist and the scientist are disparate creatures. This may be only another round of the familiar knockabout. If so, let the outsider begin by explaining his outsiderness.

Consider then sex, which can hardly fail to arise on the artistic side of this discussion. The sexual relations of men and women occur in every part of the world. It is probable that more words have been written about them than about any other subject; and certain that in one way or another it colours the whole range of the arts. But sexual love is essentially different in different parts of the world. Thus a British artist in any medium who chooses this passion as his material will express himself differently from a Frenchman because he has observed a particular pattern of love-making and is himself a member of the society that practises it. And if there is a quality in his work that can be isolated as imagination, it should be different from that of the Frenchman. Arguing from sex to the whole body of the artist's material, it is clearly sensible to analyse British imagination, as distinct from any other national variety.

But the scientist's professional concern with sex is entirely different. His primary interest is in its mechanism, the structure of cells by means of which reproduction is achieved. Sex as his working material is not only worldwide, it is also basically the same the world over, and the tools he uses to accomplish his work have no geographical boundaries.

Romeo and Juliet and Mendel's experiments on heredity are both about sex and are both works of genius. We like to think, and perhaps it is true, that Shakespeare's poetry could have flowered nowhere but in Elizabeth's England. But if there is something in Mendel's work that can be recognized as scientific imagination, there is nothing in it that is specifically French. It could have happened anywhere, and in fact scientific work of this order is apt to turn up in any part of the world where there is a climate of science. Thus it seems that scientific imagination, if it exists, will turn out to be stateless.

Imagination shows itself if at all in the actual grapple of a scientist with one of his problems. Let us watch what happens in a fairly typical situation, when he investigates a novel property of a lump of matter, for example, a mass of a certain gas. He is going to look into this matter in a very literal sense. At first he has nothing but a muddle of apparently unrelated and perhaps contradictory facts. His lump has a number of well-known characteristics—its temperature, its pressure, and so on. When these are changed its behaviour changes. What is the particular combination of these known features that produces the phenomenon he is studying? Many lines of thought, many different experiments are open to him. His work is a process of selection and rejection among a number of relations between physical quantities. Whether or not he uses them consciously, *only connect* are words that haunt his midnight oil.

If he is on the right lines there is a moment when he exclaims, 'Of course, it must be that. Why didn't I spot it before?' It is the moment of insight, the intimation of light and order in darkness and disarray. Insight describes more modestly and exactly than imagination the power that has visited him. He has done a research, a searching again; he has looked into a problem; the problem has come out. The investigation itself may be narrow and specialized. At the other end of the scale of insight it may tower into a generalization of the utmost grandeur. Newton's apple was any lump of matter. His laws of gravitation and of motion armed men to erect a majestic dynamic order out of the chaotic movements of the physical world; only on the threshold of the atom was his power abated.

This hasty shot at a definition of scientific imagination would no doubt get rough handling in a symposium of scientists. It may still point significantly enough in the right direction through the essentials

of a good scientist's make-up to pass muster in this context. What it indicates is a capacity for intellectual awareness and penetration of a special kind, which is worlds away from the imagination of the artist.

Even if its statelessness be granted it might still be true that scientific imagination occupies the separate fields of science in a statewise way. All the best physicists might be German, the best chemists American, and so forth. The world would be neater and duller if this were so. But nothing of the sort occurs. If the great masters of science are lined up according to nationality, nothing like a league table emerges, and we are no luckier if the classification is broken down into separate fields. On the contrary, it seems that pre-eminence in any subject flares up in different parts of the world as time passes.

Occasionally there is an immense conflagration: the second half of the nineteenth century, with Kelvin, Clark Maxwell, Darwin and Huxley at work, was a brilliant epoch for British physics and biology. There are, of course, centres like the Cavendish at Cambridge which enjoy a peculiar prestige and embody perhaps a particular tradition. But is the Cavendish tradition a distinctively British one? We should be sparing in waving the flag over the schools of thought it has fostered. When Rutherford began to bombard the atom the men he inspired and who followed him did their work not because they were British nor because the Cavendish was in Cambridge, but because Rutherford was Rutherford—and Rutherford was a New Zealander.

We are therefore left with a rather bleak proposition. Scientific imagination is a specific intellectual power that is latent in every population that has learnt to be curious about the mechanisms governing the behaviour of the physical world of animate and inanimate matter. Little is known about what controls its emergence into action and great achievement. Its apparently random distribution may be a confession of ignorance; it is itself a phenomenon on which some insight might be directed. Many practical questions bound up with it lack an answer. For example, what happens when you double the number of scientists in a population? Do you double the scientific imagination at your disposal? The answer must depend on how, and for what purpose, you double the workers.

With this question we come at length to the situation of science today. Since the beginning of this century science has become the courted hireling of powerful states, the source from which their war

potential has been built up and their industrial wealth increased. This expansion has brought the scientific world immensely more of every material thing, money, training schools, equipment, organization; and surrounded it with its transformer, the vast machine for taking over scientific discoveries and putting them to work, which we call technology. We have seen that scientific imagination is a personal thing. It is perhaps also a private one, a flower of the mind that opens to magnificence only when solitary, or when two or three are gathered together. What is happening to it now, when ten scientists grow where one grew before, when the unit of research is the large, highly organized team, when the pace of experimental work can only be maintained by feeding it with ever larger packets of energy, often at astronomical cost?

The prime mover in this expansion has been war. Consider some examples of its direct effect. So many words have been written and wasted about its most menacing instance that few need be added. Twenty years ago the pace of thermo-nuclear research, upon which scientific imagination of the highest order had been at work for many years, was suddenly accelerated. In consequence, our world crouches under the threat of the hydrogen bomb, whereas, had it been better ordered, it might now be moving slowly but more confidently forward to the peaceful energy stored in the nuclear reactor.

Again, the young science of aeronautics has climbed into the air on the backs of two wars. The airliner is what it is today because the bomber succeeded in being what it was yesterday; and jet propulsion is here to remind us what the ballistic missile will do if shot in anger tomorrow. Concurrently the scientific signallers, with their radar technique, were making their mark in wartime space. In principle, guiding a sputnik to the moon has much in common with guiding a missile to its target; and the same electronic principles are involved in designing instruments to measure physical quantities *en route* and to signal the results back to earth. Thus the main elements necessary for the exploration of space have been assembled by the wartime impulse to survive.

Driven by such ruthless pressures, there is now quantitatively plenty of science, though never anything like enough. The vital problem is qualitative; to make sure that the leaven of creative thought continues to quicken the growing lump. Two elements of this situation are

notable. One affects equally every agglomeration of scientific effort. The other discriminates between different nations.

The first is a straight, though hardly a straightforward, problem of administration. There is a scale effect that plagues strong expansion of any activity. It has to be directed, but what may be good for its growth when it is small may only succeed in grinding its vital parts to a halt when it becomes very large. The danger for large numbers of men at work is the appearance of a large numbers of men to tell them what to do. This apparition in science invites the observations of Professor Parkinson, but one comment can be made. Large-scale administration is proceeding on traditional lines, by the promotion of senior scientists to administrative jobs which are more and more involved in politics. This is not the only course that could be taken: whether it will ultimately pay off is uncertain. We may suspect that Newton would have been much incommoded by the Director of Research with his overloaded programmes and his exhaustive network of committees. And many a minuscule Newton now at work in a Civil Service is inclined to express his frustration at official channels in the derisive equation,

$$\text{scientist} + \text{politician} = 0$$

This goes too far, but it implies a serious doubt, whether the present system can really conserve imaginative energy.

The second feature of our scientific prospect is that some nations have more money to spend on science than others. Britain is the poor relation of the U.K.-U.S.A.-U.S.S.R. triangle. Can she find solid comfort in the poor relation's observation that high thinking goes with plain living? British scientists often throw a quizzical friendly glance across the Atlantic—'With their resources they can always bull-doze for their answers. They're lucky to be able to try everything once. We can't. We've got to look around very hard for a good buy, and make sure we buy it.' Sour grapes are mixed with sweet sense in the mouth of this speaker. The atmosphere breathed by the large team with expensive equipment and no worries about expansion is certainly an *alternative* to that in which scientific insight seems most native. Even automation—the do-it-yourself regimentation of our machines—may return on the scientist like a boomerang. True, many current problems are insoluable without the aid of the mathematician's automatic machine, the high-speed computer. With its help he can get from the

input data A to the answer B with blessed speed. But the process is blind, the way of the plodder.

Something is missing, the connexion between A and B, and it can only be reached by analysis, the product of physical insight and mathematical skill. So, too, in purely experimental work. In many fields, notably those most subject to national prestige, immense elaboration and expense is now the only way through. The string-and-sealing-wax experiment will soon perhaps be only a nostalgic memory. The real danger is that the strict thought that had to go with the shoestring experiment may become only a memory, too. The British scientist who reflects in this way may be only whistling to keep his spirits up. All the same, while the wealthy man never really wants to change places with his poor relation, the converse is often not only most healthily true, but also a saving grace.

Looking at Britain's place on the present frontiers of science, there are two major mysteries whose solution will depend much more on great scientific insight than on capital resources. The basic structure of the living cell is a problem whose complexity can be judged by reference to the difficult exploration of the structure of the atom. What the atomic nucleus is to the ninety-two elements, so, it may dimly be discerned, must be the nucleus of the living cell to the indescribably greater diversity of our world of living forms. Work at Cambridge and elsewhere on the threshold of this problem has produced intricate models of the cellular process which at least confirm that the difficulties ahead are of an order of magnitude greater than those the nuclear physicists faced.

In the other mystery whose threshold we now approach, man at last proposes to look inward on himself. It may be that the problems of consciousness and personality, of thought, memory and emotion are locked against the tools of the scientist. Many of those best qualified to judge would stoutly maintain that this is so. It is popularly supposed that electronic experts, with their computers that can perform so many amazing tricks, are on the way to the construction of a machine that can think the way a man thinks. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Every such advance exposes more clearly the gap between the manipulation of matter and the working of the most primitive mind. Yet if there is a material key to these mysteries, it must be found in the conduction of electric impulses along the formidable complex network

of the nerve cells of the brain. Some of these processes can now be probed by delicate apparatus; the central difficulty is to bring them to bear with continuously experimental control on the working of a healthy brain. Thus we have to build up our meagre knowledge of the normal process by studying what happens to the subject when the brain is damaged. It is in cerebral pathology that the most significant advances will probably continue to be made.

And finally, what of space research? Anything written on this subject is certain to be dismissed as nonsense by some, for among British scientists it produces arguments more barren, and more bedevilled by a confusion of values, than any other topic. Yet it is the one scientific project about which all the members of this symposium might find themselves united. For space research is too narrow a description. It is an exploration, a supremely human adventure which should engage the whole man; Shakespeare's imagination and Mendel's should have equal scope and authority here. It may, as we say, cost the earth, in which case its organization should be on a global scale chargeable to our globe's resources. This would happen in a well ordered world. It is not likely to happen in ours, whose very anarchy has provided the means to launch it. A Swift would see in its initial development the bawling of rival gangs of urchins up and down Space Street, using their freedom to spy more efficiently into one another's homes. It may be that as we go farther out to meet the grandeurs of the universe we shall be shocked into sanity. We do not know.

The Advertising Go-Between

Imagination operates always within restrictions. Sometimes it is able to use those restrictions; sometimes it is tamed by them; sometimes it persists in spite of them. The language of an art is itself restricting—'I gotta use words when I talk to you'. Writers are restricted to words, painters to paint, composers to certain musical instruments and a system of conventional notation. If an artist's imagination bursts too far out of the restricting medium it becomes incomprehensible to others until some critic takes over from the artist to find—often to impose—a form of some sort and to make the incomprehensible again comprehensible; to explain Action Painting or provide the key to *Finnegan's Wake*.

Advertising is only a sort of bastard art, and there are more restrictions on it than on art itself. It is impossible to understand how imagination can operate in advertising without knowing what the most important of the restrictions are.

First is this one: That all the *données* in advertising are imposed from outside. Henry James might select from the dross of others' conversation the single anecdote he found himself able to use, but the man who 'creates' an advertisement is stuffed, like a Strasbourg goose, with what he *must* use. Before he begins, it has already been decided (perhaps he may have had a part in the decision) what his advertisement will offer, and to whom, and what form he will use—a Press advertisement or poster of a certain size, a television commercial of a certain length. As for that form, though it is as rigid as a sonnet, it will only rarely have been chosen because of its suitability to the particular message it is to contain. More usually the amount of money available and the

audience to be reached are the most important factors in the decision to use, say, eleven-inch triples in the *News of the World* or thirty seconds on television.

Next remember that advertisements are not usually created by single imaginations but by committees. What the public actually sees is almost invariably the result of a compromise, first within an agency, then between an agency and its client. The words of an advertisement will have been written by one hand, amended by many others. The pictures, in Press or on posters, will have undergone even further revision. First the copywriter has asked for a certain sort of illustration to his idea. Then the art director has interpreted that request in his own way, and his interpretation has suffered amendment, first within the agency, then by the client. Thereafter, the art director himself does not execute what has been agreed; a commercial photographer or artist does that, under direction. Imagination, in such circumstances, is only too likely to drip away between the cracks.

What robs the imagination of most force, however, is something that at first might be thought to give freedom. *Nobody knows when or why an advertisement is successful.* The aim of an advertisement is to persuade people to buy a particular product. There is no aesthetic flummery about an advertisement's being an object which is 'true to itself'. It is a means to an end; the end is to sell the product advertised.

But how does one effectively fashion such a means when there is no way of telling whether the end is achieved or not? The sale of any product is governed by too many variables. At the most fundamental level, advertising cannot sell a product which, at some level of their consciousness, people do not want, nor can it sell even a product people do want unless adequate quantitites of that product are already in the shops for them to buy, and on display so that they can see them to buy them. And there are so many other things affecting sales—a discount offer from the competition, the position of a product on a retailer's shelves or in the window, tied public houses, supermarkets which have made private agreements with particular manufacturers, the weather, the Bank rate, sudden shifts in public taste or morality. However much an agency may spend in research in an attempt to cut down the variables, it is never enough to allow it to isolate the effectiveness of a particular advertising campaign. Furthermore, since all advertisements, being compromises of some sort, are made up of a

number of different elements, even when a spectacular rise in sales is thought to be in response to advertising, nobody can decide which of those elements most caused the success.

Imagination in advertising, then, is first compressed into forms and set to express messages which it does not itself choose, then driven to justify and compromise what it has produced, and lastly, having been given a task, is told that it will never know whether it has succeeded in that task. We cannot be surprised that the stereotype of the 'Agency Man' is either apathetic or alcoholic or both.

From what has been said so far, advertising may seem an unattractive and cramping profession in comparison with the many other careers in business and industry open to young people of talent and imagination nowadays. Yet, as university Appointments Boards are discovering, more young men and women with good arts degrees are choosing advertising than the profession can accommodate—expanding as it is. Certainly anyone who has been concerned with hiring copywriters must have grown used to interviewing a great many young applicants, graduates with literary or pseudo-literary ambitions, all of whom appear to believe that advertising will be not only a congenial occupation in itself, but will allow them to 'express themselves'.

In the 1930s, one gathers, advertising was neither intellectually nor socially respectable. Nowadays agencies can command debutantes as secretaries and the sons of peers as 'contact men.' Psychologists, statisticians and 'brilliant young economists' go into agencies' marketing and research departments. There are Members of Parliament from the agencies, and one holds junior office. In the women's magazines the attractive advertising executive with the unruly lock of dark hair falling over his forehead and the blue eyes, wrinkling at the corners, has taken over from the painter and the journalist as a favourite fictional hero.

At the same time the agency man has become a villain to the left, where before nobody bothered to consider him. (Most of an agency's 'creative' people usually will be of the left, but this is like being a journalist for Kennedy working on a Republican newspaper, and makes the whole set-up even more morally dubious.) Even to some of the more old-fashioned Tories, or at least to those on the right who think seriously about moral issues at all, there is something morally uncomfortable about advertising.

The jump in social status, the increasing shrillness of the attacks, and the popularity of advertising as a profession among young intelligent graduates are all aspects of the same central situation. More and more money has been spent on advertising since the war (there are obvious economic reasons for this), and it is becoming known as a profession in which one can get rich quickly. But its attraction to people of talent and imagination is greater than that. It depends—and knows it depends—on such people, and it offers—or seems to offer—power. Every new *Hidden Persuaders* which is published, every scare that first President Eisenhower and then Mr. Macmillan have been put into office by an electorate gulled by advertising, makes that offer seem more real.

In fact the offer is a delusion; the restrictions are too great; the effective practical power of advertisements is small and ill-directed; the Law of Human Inefficiency begins to operate long before we can all be turned into zombies. Nevertheless, just as no man is an expression of the ideal, yet every man has within him the possibility of the ideal, so there is, behind the compromise and waste, an 'ideal' way of devising advertisements. Most agencies recognize it, and some think they operate it. It demands imagination in the highest degree—'perverted', if you will, to the selling of confectionery or politicians—but imagination anyway. But because it is an ideal, and men of whatever talent, are not ideal (only reflecting its possibility), it does not often operate in practice, and then only imperfectly. The first part of this article has described what *does* happen. Here is what *should* happen.

The system can be expressed visually as an 'X'. At the top, over a wide area, information is gathered. Information about the product to be advertised and its competitors, information about the sort of people who use it, who use other products like it, who would not ever use such products, who do not use such products now but might be persuaded to do so. Information in width about the buying habits of a large sample of people, information in depth about the motives which impel such people to buy. Information about the distribution of the product and its competitors in shops, and what the shopkeepers themselves think about it. All this information and more is gathered and funnelled down to a single person, and at the centre of the X, an imaginative experience occurs. The *données* are digested, and are trans-

muted not into a novel, a poem or a play but into what is called 'an advertising idea'.

Difficult to describe this idea in words. Essentially it is a relationship between people and the product. It may be contained in a situation—an ostrich swallows its keeper's glass of Guinness, a woman's irritability threatens her husband's career or her children's happiness. However it is expressed, the formulation of the idea is the flashpoint within the funnel; the elements have combined, and made something new. Thereafter the X widens out again as different people, using different techniques, turn the idea into actual advertisements.

The person at the centre of the X, the man who gets the information, creates the idea, and controls its execution, is someone who in most agencies is called a Group Head. He must be able to think in words and in pictures, in space (press and posters) and in time (television), to be sensitive to sociological change and psychological stress; he must grow constantly, but never old; he must have a novelist's empathy, a dramatist's ear for the rhythms of common speech, a poet's ability to concentrate meaning into a single phrase, a politician's enjoyment in managing committees. He must be without anything important of his own to say, and hold, as far as it is possible for a human being to do so, an a-moral view of life. He does not, so far as we know, exist, and we may be glad of that.

Imagination in its purest sense may be defined as the power which appreciates connexions where none was appreciable before. In advertising it is a rare but necessary quality. Our Group Heads must have it, but it may also crop up elsewhere in an agency—one of the best known success stories of advertising in this country since the war is that of Babycham, which is an instance of marketing imagination.

We need not expect, however, to find imagination of that sort among agency art directors or television directors, or from those they commission. The art director is part illustrator, part entrepreneur. He is responsible for the illustration and design of an advertising campaign up to the point at which it is shown to the client. If the client should approve the conception, the art director must then find and instruct an artist or photographer to turn his suggested illustrations into finished 'art work', and must thereafter supervise the making of the blocks from the originals.

Obviously what is wanted from any painter or draughtsman commissioned under these conditions is not imagination but skill, except on those comparatively rare occasions when the decision is made to commission an artist whose price and reputation are high enough for him to be able to impose his own conception on agency and client alike; one does not expect that Mr. Ronald Searle, for instance, is held to a tight brief. The same is true of the film directors hired by the agency to prepare commercials already scripted, the emotional 'line' already imposed. Mr. Alexander Mackendrick and Miss Wendy Toye, both of whom have directed commercials, have the reputation which would allow them to put a personal stamp on work of this kind, but in general those who direct commercials are as confined as the instructed artists who produce the pictures for the Press advertisements.

Perhaps we may make an exception for photographers, who, taking many pictures of which one is chosen, have a far greater liberty to experiment, and certainly we should do so for those who devise television cartoons. Once the decision to use cartoon at all has been made, the film company's artist and the agency's copywriter begin to work closely in partnership to create a character as 'original' as the Sunblest Bread children or the 'Mother' of Mother's Pride.

This may seem to denigrate the imaginative contribution of agency art directors, so it may be as well here to make a point about their work which is not often remembered. Copywriters are sometimes accused of corrupting the language, though in fact, skilful *pasticheurs* as they should be, they will more usually adapt the style of their advertisements to the editorial style of the media in which they appear. Art directors, it may be said, have a positively beneficial effect on popular taste. These people, after all, have spent their years under instruction at Britain's various art schools, and have been exposed to developments in painting and design over the past seventy-five years. They are not experimentalists, most of them: if they were, they would not be employed in an agency. But they have acquired a way of looking, and this is reflected usually in the advertisements they illustrate, and, being so general in its diffusion, finds a public acceptance which is not even thought about, but provides a basic vocabulary which will help original artists to make a kind of contact.

Even so seemingly small a thing as what is being worn, what furniture is in a house, what glass is used for drinking in an advertise-

ment can have a large effect. Women watching television are encouraged in the commericals to identify (and do to a certain extent do so) with the attractive young mother who feeds jelly to her children, meat extract to her husband. Whatever the particular effect of the commercials on the sales of meat extract or jelly, a general effect is that more and more people in this country are coming to appreciate what is clean and elegant in design, and the overstuffed, the over-glazed, the various hideosities of cheap popular taste are less and less bought by younger people.

Much as been said so far about imagination and about advertising; only the word 'British' has been absent. There are obvious reasons for this. Even in its execution advertising is often international. British television commercials have sometimes been made in France or Holland; an Italian artist may illustrate the advertisement that sells a British shampoo.

As for the inspiration of our advertising, when, riding up on the escalator at Piccadilly Underground, we pass a poster that reads, 'I dreamed I scampered through a field of corn in my Maidenform Bra', or observe on our television screens the surprise and delight with which yet another housewife discovers that she has picked the pile of laundry washed in Daz, we do not think of these as in any way national. Instead, we know that another American campaign is being run in Britain. How can this not be so when so many of the articles of mass consumption in this country are manufactured by firms with parents in the United States?

Even when manufactures are not American-owned, transatlantic influence on British advertising is bound to be strong. More money is spent on advertising in the United States than anywhere else in the world, and consequently research and marketing techniques are more developed there; British advertisers sensibly borrow them. Most of what we have learnt about television commercials comes from America where experience of commercial television is longer. Earlier in this article there was a mention of the 'Mother' in Mother's Pride. She is a sterling Lancashire lady, but surely she owes something to America's 'Emily Tipp', just as those rugged cartoon confectioners, Messrs. Callard & Bowser, share many of the characteristics of the American beer-making Brothers Piel.

There *is* a British advertising tradition. There are two, one of which

is pernicious. This is the 'whimsical' tradition, most common during the 1930s, but still to be found. It is self-indulgent advertising—a kind of middle-class private joke, apparently designed to amuse the advertiser and his client, but not seeming to have much behind it in the way of a marketing policy.

The other British tradition is more respectable; it is the tradition of telling a story when there is a story to tell. It is solid, and a little dull. It may be distrusted by the Americans (who are better at telling a story when there *isn't* a story to tell) and despised by the French, but it is still the best way to advertise proprietary medicines—Lloyd's Adrenalin Cream, T.C.P. or even Kellogg's All Bran.

Moreover, since the war it has grown in strength and respectability with the rise in the number of what are called 'prestige' advertisements. Here the aim is not to sell groceries, but to induce the public—particularly, perhaps, the investing public, and, where questions of nationalization are concerned, the voting public—to look with favour on the activities of an industrial company or group of companies. The quasi-journalistic copy of many of these advertisements, and the quality of the photography are expressions of the national scene in a national tradition of which we may decently be proud.

Advertising is always said to be a young man's profession, and, as we have seen, in spite of the restrictions it places on the exercise of imagination, the quality of its recruits has risen since the war. More intelligence is being applied now to the gathering of information and to the direction and composition of advertisements. Puns are rarer in headlines; Gerald and Hawkins have disappeared from the Rose's Lime Juice advertisments; advertising in Britain is growing up. The new school of British advertisers has shown a decided disposition to learn from America.

Now it may be time to consider again. Even if one accepts—as one must accept—that basic human motivations are universal, and that women in Dallas, in Newton Abbot, in Beauvais and in Tokyo will all fear disease, need sexual fufilment and the love of their children and respect from their neighbours, it does not necessarily follow that the same advertisement will do for all of them. Advertising ignores individual differences, because it has to, but communities are larger than individuals. Effective advertising should be based on certain universal similarities, certainly, but it may do well to express them in distinc-

tively national terms. There may be such a thing as a British style in advertising—a documentary style (you may have glimpsed something like it in the commercials Mackendrick made for Horlicks) and, if we can get rid of the Schweppeshire Guide in us, we may yet be able to develop it.

It is difficult to talk to you about my impressions—it takes a great deal of space to generalize; and (when one is talking of London) it takes even more to specify! I am afraid also, in truth, that I am living here too long to be an observer—I am sinking into dull British acceptance and conformity.

The other day I was talking to a very clever foreigner—a German (if you can admit the 'clever')—who had lived a long time in England, and of whom I had asked some opinion. 'Oh, I know nothing of the English,' he said, 'I have lived here too long—twenty years. The first year I really knew a great deal. But I have lost it!'

That is getting to be my state of mind and I am sometimes really appalled at the matter of course way of looking at the indigenous life and manners into which I am gradually dropping! I am losing my standard—my charming little standard that I used to think so high; my standard of wit, of grace, of good manners, of vivacity, of urbanity, of intelligence, of what makes an easy and natural style of intercourse! And this in consequence of my having dined out during the past winter 107 times! When I come home you will think me a sad barbarian—I may not even, just at first, appreciate your fine points! You must take that speech about my standard with a grain of salt—but excuse me; I am treating you—a proof of the accusation I have brought against myself—as if you were also a dull-eyed Briton.

The truth is I am so fond of London that I can afford to abuse it—and London is on the whole such a fine thing that it can afford to be abused! It has all sorts of superior qualities, but it has also, and English life generally, and the English character have, a certain number of great plump flourishing uglinesses and drearinesses which offer themselves irresistibly as pin-cushions to criticism and and irony. The British mind is so totally un-ironical in relation to itself that this is a perpetual temptation. You will know the things I mean—you will remember them —let that suffice.

HENRY JAMES in a letter of 1879 to Grace Norton

ALSO AVAILABLE
THE AMERICAN IMAGINATION

This collection of essays was first published as a special number of the London *Times Literary Supplement,* and attracted so much attention on both sides of the Atlantic that in America it was sold out in ten days and later received the unique (for a British periodical) accolade of a George Polk Award for outstanding journalism. But this survey of the American imagination also has permanent value, so it has been rearranged in book form and given an introduction by Alan Pryce-Jones, noted British critic and editor.

Here is a lively survey of what—and how—Americans create: in literature, music, painting, scholarship, movies, theater, ballet, architecture, television, religion, advertising. In each of these fields, the American imagination is shown at work and the specially American qualities are discussed. As an English writer says: "The flowering of the American imagination has been the chief event in the sphere of living art since the end of the First World War." That flowering is described in this book, whose many authors are anonymous—that being the tradition of *The Times Literary Supplement*—but transparently of the highest intellectual and literary quality—also the tradition of the TLS.