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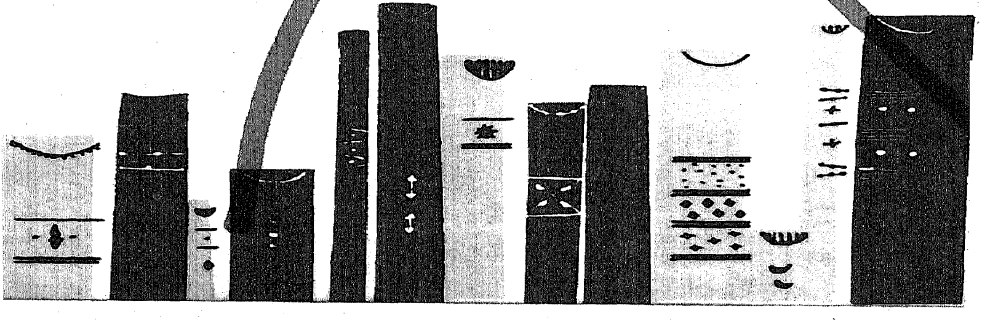

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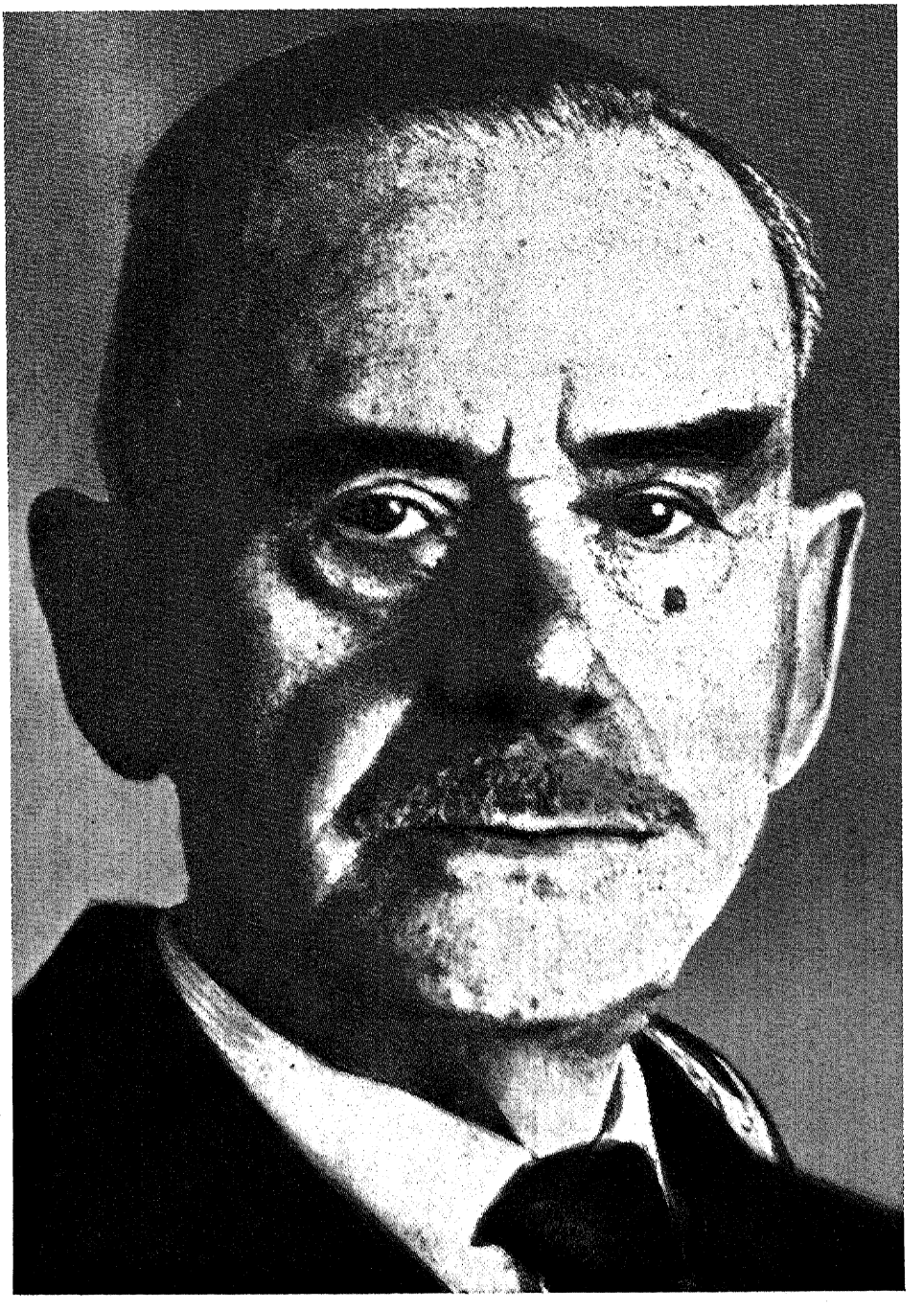

Thomas Mann 1875–1955

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INTRODUCTION

John Wain

THIS book is intended for readers who want to know what is happening in the world of letters—taking the term 'world' as literally as possible. Obviously it is not practicable to survey the entire globe in one volume, and from the point of view of completeness the Annual will hardly be judged until it has been coming out for a few years: each volume will try to correct some of the deficiencies, or prune the exuberances, of the others.

Within these limits, our 'coverage' will, I hope, be found reasonably complete. But of course completeness is an impossible ideal, and, moreover, not the most important one. For the important thing in considering the literature of one's own time, or any time, is not so much to extend one's list as to keep up a genuine standard of quality. For if a book is not 'good'—genuine, serious, accomplished—it cannot be 'important', however many people have heard of it.

Literary reputation, like all reputation, goes in strata. First, there is the mere process by which a name becomes known. It may be known as the name of a charlatan, or an aggressive thug, but it is known. In an age like ours, when the urge for publicity has invaded every corner of life, we are in danger of over-estimating the importance of this first stage.

And yet, of the layers that make up a reputation, this initial one of mere notoriety *is* the least important. Having claimed his share of attention, the aspirant must then go ahead and do something. This is not to deny the existence of a section of the public that enjoys nothing better than a circus-act; for them it will be enough if he goes on performing the kind of routine that got him on to the stage in the first place. But these, fortunately, are not yet the whole public. There is a body of responsible literary opinion which will continue to judge a writer by serious standards. Sometimes I feel that this body is potential rather

than actual; that it is present, but in an unorganised state. The task of criticism, and of everything that pertains to criticism (such as the making of Annuals), is harder now than it was two hundred years ago, because now, apart from straightforward literary discussion, there is the task of mobilising the kind of opinion to which the critic tries to appeal. That 'common reader' with whom Dr Johnson 'rejoiced to concur' about the quality of Gray's *Elegy* would today be not so common. If a modern Gray arose, and produced a new Elegy, it would not be the 'common reader' who would acclaim him, and establish a firm basis of approbation with which a critic need only 'concur'.

So much by way of indicating our more austere side. I believe that every author, every 'trend' or 'movement', discussed in these pages is discussed *critically*. The assumption, both of editor and contributors, was that the reader would enjoy discriminating comment rather than mere reckless inclusiveness: for who, lacking discrimination or the will towards it, would be reading a Literary Annual?

Finally, a practical word or two on how to find your way about the book. The sections should be fairly self-explanatory: I, 'The Writer and the World', is devoted to those topics that naturally arise when the imaginative writer looks out at the 'larger' world of action, politics, social attitudes. Naturally, this cluster of topics cannot be neatly fenced off, and there is a good deal of overflowing and merging between this section and Section III, 'Ideas and Decisions'. The difference is one of emphasis; Messrs Robbe-Grillet, Pearson, Kermode and Hamburger are concerned with the imaginative and intellectual strategies of the writer confronting his material—which embraces, naturally, both his own inner world and the larger world of public event.

Section IV, 'Ways and Means', fills in the picture by giving some details of the actual procedures which writers adopt to get their work done, and also of the world of communications which has to be brought into action once the work *is* done. (Mr McLuhan's article looks into the future that faces us all, readers and writers.)

The other sections need no explanation, nor do we find ourselves inclined to apologise for ending with Miss West's charming little anecdote, which offers a moment of relaxation from the book's more weighty concerns. It is impossible to blend information, comment and entertainment in such a way as to suit *everyone's* taste; but it may be that the efforts of our collaborators will help the reader to find a greater pleasure and significance in the books that come his way.

COMMITMENT AND THE WRITER

ROBERT CONQUEST

QUITE a lot has been said lately in England, though not often by writers themselves, about a supposed need for political 'commitment' in literature. It is conceded on all sides of the argument that English writers are not at present very concerned with politics. The sort of attitude they usually take may be seen from certain recent questionnaires and pamphlets, and correspondence in periodicals.

In a Fabian Society pamphlet (*Socialism and the Intellectuals*) published last year, Mr Kingsley Amis, admitting to very slight enthusiasm for politics, says 'The decline in political activity . . . is particularly noticeable among our younger novelists and poets'. He adds significantly: 'Anyway, by his station in society the member of the intelligentsia really has no political interests to defend, except the very general one (the one he most often forgets) of not finding himself bossed around by a totalitarian government.'

In the *London Magazine* in May and June 1957 a number of other writers answered a questionnaire which was basically on the question of commitment. Mr William Golding wrote: 'A writer is a citizen with a vote, access to his M.P., access to the correspondence columns of magazines, newspapers and the B.B.C., —a citizen with the right to speak in Hyde Park if he wants to or feels he ought. Surely that gives him enough opportunities for non-professional engagement in current affairs? . . .' Mr Philip Larkin wrote: 'If I found a novel or poem . . . gripping, original, honest and so on I should be much too grateful to take up a quarrel with its author over motives or material' and, again, 'Imagination is not the servant of these things [the intellect and the social conscience] and may even be at variance with them.' Mr Thom Gunn wrote: 'Any good writer is "committed". He is committed to his subject and he is committed to himself.

But his subject is finally going to be one that Chaucer or Stendhal wrote about and it is not very important whether his approach is political or not' and, again, 'We do not feel inclined to treat political beliefs as geiger counters by which we can measure the significance of events as they occur.'

These writers seem to me to be representative of the cream of the cream of modern novelists and poets, but if your taste differs you will still probably find that your own favourites have the same attitude. What is particularly interesting is that politically speaking the views of the four men quoted vary, to the best of my knowledge, from apathy with a very slight hint of conservatism to fairly vigorous support for the left wing of the Labour Party. Their unanimity is not so much on political belief, as on the relative importance of such belief, both in general and in particular as applied to literature.

The leading modern dramatist to have expressed an opinion, Mr John Osborne, struck a discordant note. It is not, indeed, that he speaks in terms of any very ideological sort of political commitment: 'If you are surrounded by inertia at home it is not so easy to get all steamed up about what is going on in Central Europe or America.' And in strictly emotional and non-analytical language he makes it clear that what he objects to is this 'inertia', and that his social conscience is aroused only, or mainly, by the ruining of the working class through television. He is committed, in fact, only in the sense that he is excited.

It is easy to make fun of Mr Osborne's remarks, taken at their face value. But this is not quite fair. It is true that they are irrational and intemperate. Yet in a way that is to their credit. They present a strong feeling raw, with no (or scarcely any) rationalisation. The true commitment type clearly has much the same compulsions, but tidies them up and makes them respectable by expressing them in intellectual terms. Mr Osborne is not that stupid. He sees people behaving in a way he doesn't happen to like in all parties and states, and he is not prepared to forgive one lot on the grounds that it is at least against the other. So what we get from him is little more than a scream of protest. Nor can anyone say that this scream means nothing. It is the representation, as seems clear from such things as Mr Osborne's own popularity, of a perfectly genuine and natural phenomenon —the aggressions of adolescence. In a society with Causes these aggressions have respectable or fairly respectable outlets—or at least outlets society takes seriously. Nowadays (in the Soviet bloc as much as in the West), there is no obvious channel but juvenile delinquency or general thwarted malaise. To complain about a lack of causes, to try to manufacture new or inflate inadequate ones, is indeed

a footling solution, and one much canvassed on the grounds that a Cause is a good thing in itself—as in Blefuscu. Just the same the emotions and the drives exist, and it would be equally unreal to deny them: for they form the real basis of the wish for 'commitment'.

The writer's treatment of the theme (if he chooses to treat it) is another thing. The mere 'expression' of such moods can hardly be more than the most minor art. To enter into and transcend them, to see them from both inside and out, is, as always, the full creative method. For this reason, to the large extent that they are comparable on this point, the poems of Mr Thom Gunn seem to me to be on a higher level altogether than Mr Osborne's plays.

A certain amount of extra confusion is caused by such people as a correspondent in a controversy in the *Times Literary Supplement* who extended the term 'commitment' to cover, virtually, any writer who showed any interest in anything connected with human beings. He gave Yeats as a grand example. There is not much point bothering with this. Yeats on the prospect of the destruction of his home town by aerial bombardment: 'I have heard that hysterical women say' that poets should turn their attention to such issues. There are always plenty of hysterical women around in circumstances of danger. There are also people who judge the depth of anyone's concern with human problems by the loudness of their outcries about them. There are others who assume that anyone who does not share their views is quite conscienceless. Such people appear more influential than they are because of their eagerness for publicity, sometimes for the best of motives. But in fact they are not very influential, in Britain at any rate, even among intellectuals. To judge from the reaction of most people they do their own causes harm rather than good, on the whole. But this is a point that seldom enters into their calculations. They assume absolutely that noise is valuable.

What is to our purpose is that they apply this to art. It seems to me perfectly possible that there is a minority who share their views, but not their theories of expressing them, and who might, for all one knows, produce a committed literature of some readability. But in the present circumstances their task is hopeless. The currency has been devalued; no one wants to read anything as a political lesson. And the very quietness and good sense of such a hypothetical writer would mean that he would not even be appreciated by those keenest on commitment, technically speaking his own side.

It is almost invariably the case that any problem of which one knows a good deal is far more complex than it appears to the superficial glance. There are two

approaches to complex matters. One is to cut them to suit preconceptions. The other is to study them and let any conclusions emerge naturally. The first is the method of the political journalist: he will swan round the Far East in three weeks and present a cut-and-dried analysis of all that is going on, in accord with opinions held before he went. The other is the writer's: he will live in a town for ten years and eventually produce a novel in which an accumulation of hard-won insights leads, perhaps, to some implied and tentative attitudes about the condition of man.

These two quite different types are often confused for the purpose of argument about the 'intelligentsia'. The writer proper on the whole is likely to have, or so one hopes, at least some trace of creative talent. The political intellectual can often get by on nothing much more than a love of power and a certain glibness with words and ideas. His Archimedean lever for moving the world is—the *New Statesman*. This periodical long ago did male and female a good turn by transferring the double standard from their affairs to those of the Soviet Union and the United States. And, although it often has flashes of good sense, it carries enough of this stuff still to justify one saying:

> 'In the matter of treatment there's not much choice
> For the symptoms admit no doubt:
> It won't get that snuffle out of its voice
> Till it has its paranoids out.'

In theory the man who knows more and can think more clearly should be more often right. But it is old psychological experience that the irrational is often far more systematised—rationalised—than the sensible. And the intellectual's advantages are more than balanced by his unfortunate special susceptibility to what Mr Crawshay Williams has called 'the mental comforts of unifying formulae'. Yet, in an article in the *New Statesman* knocking Mr Kingsley Amis' Fabian pamphlet we find asserted flatly, as a 'self-evident proposition': 'It is demonstrably untrue that an intellectual is more likely to be wrong on a given issue than the ordinary voter, if only for the simple reason that he is likely to be in more complete possession of the facts about it . . . an educated voter is likely to be more responsible than an uneducated voter . . . intelligence is an important political asset.'

This might be compared with Orwell's remark, 'I have heard it confidently stated, for instance, that American troops had been brought to Europe not to fight the Germans but to crush an English revolution. One has to belong to the

intelligentsia to believe things like that: no ordinary man could be such a fool'.

Surely one is not saying anything very new if one points out that the ability to 'reason logically' is worse than valueless by itself? Minds of the highest analytical power once devoted themselves to discussion of how many angels could sit on a pin or to justifying the slaughter of the Albigensians. They still do similar things.

In the 'thirties the mood among very many of the younger writers in particular was one of straight political commitment. The issues appeared, and actually were, clear-cut in two major political fields—resistance to Fascism and economic crisis. In adopting positions on these issues the writers were inclined to accept the formulae laid down by political intellectuals, which at the time appeared to apply precisely to the real conditions. But in the result it became plain that the formulae were thoroughly defective. Unemployment was cured in England by political and economic measures which had nothing in common with the Marxist-capitalist dichotomy insisted on by the theorists. Nor did Russia, which on paper it should have been impossible to fault since it was the quintessential centre of anti-Capitalism *and* anti-Fascism, turn out to be tolerable after all.

Ideology did not fit the facts. As a result the rather shaky partnership soon dissolved. The political intellectuals went along with the ideology, while the writers opted for the facts.

It seems to me that this reflects credit on the sagacity of writers. It shows that they have learnt from the experience of the last twenty-five years that political problems are not necessarily reducible to easy formulae, and do not, in any case, normally form a suitable dominating obsession in works of art. On the other hand this has not led to the simple reaction into know-nothing lack of interest which commitment fans are inclined to allege. Commitment, not to party or formula but to truth and humanity, provides a better standpoint for judging events, and when these criteria lead to a definite judgment and complete condemnation that judgment and that condemnation are not withheld. But, more important still, as far as the writer is concerned, they form a deeper and sounder basis for his art. (I am not, of course, saying that there are not other things even worse for writing than over-attention to politics. The advanced theatregoer of the 'thirties may have wasted his time waiting for Lefty, but at least he wasn't waiting for Godot.)

Still, as Paul Valéry once wrote: 'None of the available programmes ever fits precisely the needs of our temperament or the nature of our interests. By the

mere fact of choosing one of them we gradually become the kind of man who fits the one particular set of proposals and the one particular party.' It is equally true that a lot of 'committed' people were a bit queer to start with. In fact it is a psychological problem rather than an intellectual one. Keats noted (as a weakness) the type of mind which feels it must have settled opinions about everything.

It is not, of course, that writers are indifferent to the prospect of annihilation in a hydrogen bomb war—as is sometimes impudently asserted by people who cannot believe that conscience or responsibility may exist except in hysteric form. But there are two things to be said. The first is the obvious one—that the question is extremely intractable, and most of the *simpliste* solutions look if anything more dangerous even than those put forward by statesmen. In a way, for the writer, the second is more important: the possibility of race suicide, perhaps only just round the corner, does not have much immediate effect on the lives and feelings of the ordinary people or even of ordinary writers, at least in Britain. This has nothing to do with whether it ought to have such an effect or ought not. Yet it may also be urged that though everyone dies death is not, or is not often, the central preoccupation of either life or art. It is true that there have been cultures in which the idea of death has had a very much greater influence. But it seems doubtful if anyone would maintain that those cultures were superior even to our own.

Political intellectuals, and indeed people who wrap themselves in other types of comforting formulae too, seem specially motivated by fear of death. And they go in for crude all-or-none reactions to death (as to other emotive matters) as a writer scarcely can, at least in his writing. A line of Auden's, 'We must love one another or die', was quoted more than almost anything he had written, in these circles. In his collected poems he omitted the passage, perhaps reflecting that we must all of us die if we love one another or not. (Nor is this a point against love.) Commitment (like aestheticism if it comes to that) seems to be a substitute for genuine life. And, as always, death is more terrifying to those whose idea of life is inadequate.

It is sometimes said of certain writers that they 'grapple with great public events' in their poetry or what-have-you. And this is represented as their showing a boldness and breadth on which other writers are too weak-kneed to venture. But what great English writer of this century can be said to have attempted this sort of theme? Only Kipling.

Kipling was willing to tackle these matters because the views he held formed a highly simplified myth. In those days such over-simplification was a property of the Right, and it was on the Left that qualities of criticism, reservation and getting down to the facts mainly rested. Nowadays there are few people, let alone writers, of Right-wing opinions (outside the closely guarded purdahs of Kensington or Cheltenham) who can feel at ease with generalisations which have been shot to pieces so insistently and so accurately over such a period. On the whole it is on the Left that grand over-simplifications have now emerged—even though only among a minority. The few writers who 'grapple with great public issues'—i.e. who present intolerable over-generalisations instead of realities—are mainly either near-Communists or people who regard everything of which they disapprove as the results of a vast social conspiracy—not to put too fine a point on it, crackpots.

The train of thought in political commitment is as follows: (1) I am against injustice, (2) therefore I am a 'socialist'; (3) because 'socialism' is the way to prevent oppression any action to preserve it is justified, (4) including injustice.

This is also to state that no one who does not accept one certain sociological concept has any concern for humanity. To state it as clearly as this is to refute it. And particular exceptions will occur to many readers. But one can go further. To hold a sociological concept (in this case the class struggle) to be so overwhelmingly important leads to the sacrifice of humanity to the concept. Many instances of this will also occur to everybody.

The Polish poet Adam Wazyk, in his terrific *Poem for Adults*, has two interesting comments on this sort of mania in action *after* the 'socialist' intellectual is in power:

> 'The dreamer Fourier beautifully prophesied
> That the sea would flow with lemonade.
> —And doesn't it?
> —They drink sea-water
> And cry
> Lemonade!'

and again:

> 'They ran to us shouting:
> Under socialism
> A cut finger does not hurt.
>
> They cut their finger.
> They felt pain.
> They lost faith.'

As an awful warning it is also worth referring to the logical end-product of 'commitment' as applied to writing—the thesis of 'socialist realism' created by Zhdanov on the basis of some ill-considered ideas of Maxim Gorky's. Although it is difficult to think of anybody who is actually writing according to these notions in the Western countries, there are one or two critics and such who rather go in for them. The head of the Polish Writers' Union, Antoni Slonimski (defining socialist realism as 'a precision tool for destroying art'), gives one sample of its absurdities. 'It was taught that only progressive work can be beautiful. There could always be found a magician to prove that Notre Dame was not beautiful or, if more convenient, that it was progressive.' In 1956 the leading writers of Hungary and Poland felt themselves—in spite of, and in fact rather against, their previous political convictions—compelled as writers to act, through their writers' organisations and in the literary papers, as the spearhead of the attack on the practices of their régimes. Nor is it likely that many English writers would disagree with them. There are circumstances in which writers seem compelled to undertake political action. A look at the circumstances in Hungary and Poland may show the difference between conditions in which most writers find such action unavoidable and conditions (as in England now) when they see no call for it.

The oppression of the régimes struck massively at the whole population. Even though the writers themselves were economically cushioned, they could hardly move around the capitals for half an hour without receiving the full impact of the truth in a dozen different ways. The issues were overpoweringly presented. They were also quite clear cut. In Poland, where it was later stated in the Central Committee of the Party that 'everybody knew' that murder and torture were taking place daily in the main prison, where alcoholism and hooliganism were rife, and where hunger and misery were widespread, the writers could not fail to notice these things. At the same time they were required by the régime to produce works describing an imaginary state of affairs in which everything in Poland was democratic and prosperous. Similarly in Hungary. Clearly they were faced with a crisis of both the conscience and the intelligence. They were required to do violence to both truth and humanity. In all the countries of Eastern Europe many writers simply lapsed into silence, and were denounced for it. When the slight political relaxations came others spoke up. The point they made was clear. They were not against Communism, or the professed principles of the Party. They simply found it difficult to ignore, and impossible actively to mis-

represent, the pervasive stink of lies and brutality, so well described in Gyula Illyes' *One Sentence on Tyranny* as being 'in everything'.

It will be seen at once that the commitment of the writers of Eastern Europe is exactly the opposite of that urged by the politically obsessed in Britain. Here we are advised to support a particular party or political theory as automatically embodying all the principles of justice and right; moreover we are asked to devote ourselves rather to the party and its theory than to the original principles. In Eastern Europe the opposite was the case. The writers saw unmistakably that trusting simply to a party theory or a method of social organisation to produce the good society was to make an unjustified assumption. It was necessary to return from party and ideological loyalties to basic humanist principles. Moreover, it was obvious that it was necessary to keep a keen critical eye *particularly* on those political groups which claimed to incarnate the good principles. The creatures of commitment in the West wish writers to abandon life and truth in favour of theory and propaganda. Those of the Soviet bloc have done the opposite.

Moreover, in the circumstances of Eastern Europe, the protest of the writers, when it came, was politically effective. For there was literally no one else to speak. Just as in the time of Metternich, the poets and authors were faced not only with an unignorable issue but with the fact that they alone could make any protest. In these circumstances, so different from those of the West, it did not ring in the least false when the Czechoslovak poet, Kana, said that the writer should be 'the conscience of my people'. Nor did the Party leadership fail to take it seriously and denounce it hotly. In Poland Wazyk's great ode of truth and revulsion was the first blow which finally led to the crumbling of the régime. In Hungary the Petoefi circle of Communist writers were the first to speak, and were later accused of major responsibility for the revolution.

The events in Hungary and other things made ineluctably obvious to the West the distinction between socialism in any of its usual senses and the practices described by the same name in the Soviet bloc. The very few recent English recruits to a Kremlinophil attitude (as against the almost equally few old hands left over, like limpets irretrievably stuck to their delusions, from the tides of the 'thirties) are the sort of unashamed terror addicts who would have become fascists had any fascism been available. The pro-Communist poets of the 'thirties wrote of clarity, order and freedom. The only pro-Communist poet I can think of now in England (stretching the word poet a bit) intersperses sentimental ballads

with disorderly rant about the blood—'A young man howling in the night, And with no language but a howl', as I expect they say in San Francisco.

On most political questions within Western society most writers, whether favouring one party or another, are not inclined to do so in a truly 'committed' way. They are more likely to feel that there are several sides to a problem, and that there is a case for the other position, than to see a clear-cut barricade. And this, naturally, goes with a certain comparative apathy even over the issues themselves. For these no longer produce fanaticism, nor do they appear central to life.

Nor is this attitude confined to England. France is a country where writers have, or (which in this context amounts to much the same thing) believe they have, great political influence. After the war the attitude of many of them was that their responsibilities in the matter of making political judgments, were extremely high. Sartre's changes of political line were announced with all the solemnity of a rather unusually self-important pope issuing a major bull. And for a number of years these pronouncements were actually taken seriously, by the intellectual population of Paris at least.

This no longer seems to be the case. Of those who speak of the writer's treatment of politics the attitudes most admired are now said to be those of, especially, Camus. Camus's strength has been precisely that he has given none of this sense of being omniscient and infallible which was so notable in Sartre. Nor has he appeared to ignore the real human implications, and simply to be justifying, by complicated arguments, some scholastic formula arrived at with the aid of a mirror. Nor does he ordinarily think it the duty of the writer of novels and plays to provide leadership in political matters in which he may or may not be particularly competent. Yet he is not for a moment urging political quietism. He says, 'It would be better for the intellectual not to spend all his time talking. In the first place, it will wear him out—and especially it will prevent him from thinking. He should create. . . . But in certain exceptional circumstances . . . he should permit no ambiguity about which side he has chosen'.

For a few political events *have* appeared to be entirely clear-cut. Even minds trained to be suspicious of simple formulae saw that in the Hungarian Revolution the rights and wrongs were absolutely plain. In the case of writers, it may be that this was strengthened by the central part played by their Hungarian colleagues. Camus's summing up of the writer's position is probably the most adequate: 'Intellectual groups can, in certain cases—particularly when the liberty of

peoples and of thought is mortally menaced—constitute a force and carry out an action: the Hungarian intellectuals have just proved it.'

No doubt there are very many exceptions to any possible generalisations that can be made about the writers of England, let alone those of Europe or of the world. All the same most writers worth bothering about do not seem to be much affected by the appeals of ideological recruiting sergeants. They see that they must write about what strikes their whole imagination. They are not taken in by the inflation of minor abuses, like rubber horses on a beach, to represent the demon steeds of the apocalypse. They are suspicious of the cries of 'wolf' which announce every passing fieldmouse. But this means that they are more, and not less, capable of recognising a wolf, if one comes. Meanwhile, they write —which is something, after all.

TILL ROME BURNS

K. W. GRANSDEN

At a party I was at recently, a young Anglo-French writer was holding forth (in English) on the need for the writer to be committed, concerned to try and say something about the human condition in our time: the orthodox Left-wing humanitarian argument. He looked at our world, at Russia and America and Algeria and South Africa and the Middle East and the arms race, and asked, in the classic revolutionary phrase, 'What is to be done?'

He asked, but he did not answer: his voice died away, puzzled, anxious. He felt impelled by his political beliefs to ask the question, but the ardour, the sense of power, which by itself takes you, or at least seems to take you, half-way to answering such questions, was missing. And missing not only in himself: less, indeed, in himself than in his English colleagues, and in the damp, discouraging English air around him.

In reply to all this an English political writer who was present answered, in effect, that nothing was to be done, least of all by the 'literary man'. And not only, he argued, was there nothing to be done, but this was as it should be: it was the normal position, and nothing in our present situation, outside the imaginary guilt and anxiety of intellectuals, existed to make us wish it otherwise. The French writer thought the intellectual had a responsibility as a man to men (in the existentialist phrase) to try and do something to help a world divided and deadlocked. The Englishman maintained that the present problems of the world—in so far as they could be defined at all and were not just vague abstractions—were technical problems belonging strictly to the closed professional world of power-politics, to be solved, if indeed any 'solution' was either possible or desirable, only by the people whose job it is, and who have the necessary information and technique. For a writer, or any other non-political person for that

matter, to imagine he could contribute anything of value to such highly specialised difficulties was sheer old-fashioned, discredited idealism, romantic absurdity.

But the Frenchman would not accept that orthodox Right-wing empirical argument. To him, it was defeatism, surrender of the rights of the individual thinking man. He could not for a moment contemplate the idea of keeping silent. Not to declare oneself was treason.

The implications of those opposed viewpoints lie behind a good deal of the literature of recent times. On the one hand there is the total or general statement (the 'what is to be done?' argument) and on the other the limited and specific viewpoint (the 'nothing is to be done' argument). The former is by no means confined to the European intellectual. To take just one example from the last year, J. B. Priestley's *Thoughts in the Wilderness* represents an immensely authoritative expression of the totalist argument. Priestley, an English radical of the old-fashioned liberal school, finds the insanity of our modern world and the apparent impotence of the private thinking man as much on his conscience (as a man and as an artist) as any Continental existentialist. So he uses all his considerable literary power, a lifetime's popular success—I stress this because so often the totalist viewpoint is thought of as the prerogative of young 'highbrow' writers—to make the kind of hammering general statements which the do-nothingite dismisses as head-in-clouds idealism.

The whole point of such writing is that it expresses a total concern about the whole human predicament, not any limited part of it; it is concerned with strategy, not with tactics. And the reason is obvious: it is precisely tactics which he is discrediting, the professional tricks of the politician through whom we have got into, and remain in, our present predicament. Moreover, the particular local evils of a generation ago have largely disappeared. If the radical writer is to remain in artistically effective opposition, he is bound to feel that nothing less than a total change of heart is needed. It is no use tinkering with the day-to-day mechanism of public affairs. Hence such writing, though political in the wide sense, is not political in the specific limited professional sense in which politics is the files shifted by a senior civil servant in a day. And of course, on the general total level politics isn't just politics at all: it is everything—history, morality, psychology, religion, and, not least important, the personal need of the writer to keep his work alive and kicking, to go on feeling significant, to keep inferiority and triviality at bay in a background of monolithic indifference to individual nonconformity. When the Englishman at the party sneered at the Left-wing

idealist for interfering in matters of which he had no knowledge, he was missing the point, leaving out one side of the story: the committed writer isn't just obtruding a dissatisfied personality into a specialist world: he is also trying to widen his own world, and to narrow the gaps between all the different limited worlds, because he feels that if he does not succeed in widening his world he will be condemning himself to the platitudinous sterility of the orthodox politician, and tacitly underwriting the latter's view of the world as a series of little separate departments. By leaving a small pond and striking out into the big sea, he runs the risk of drowning: but the other way there is the certainty that his pond will be ignored as a Rolls-Royce ignores a puddle; or that it will just, one fine day, dry up.

So we are not concerned with the writer who tries to teach the politician his own business, to snatch the files, as it were, out of his hand. The radical English writer has on occasion attacked specific evils with practical suggestions, and sometimes the evils have later been remedied: though not necessarily in the way the writer suggested or, necessarily, as a direct result of his intervention. On the whole the radical writer has generally seemed to take so wide a field of human conduct for his wilderness that it has never occurred to the administrators to take him seriously, in his own lifetime, as a prophet or reformer. He has exploded with a transcendental bang not only into politics but into psychology, conduct, the most general conceivable context in which man can operate. The committed writer, in fact, cannot confine himself to attacking specific evils, to which he may not have any answer, except as part of a general attack on the whole way of the world, for which, call it ridiculous or call it sublime, he has an answer: we must love one another or die, etc. (An example of what I mean is the humanitarian feeling against the South African government's *apartheid* policy, which for most people outside South Africa is much more a part of a vague feeling about the brotherhood of man than a specific crusade.) The answers of Orwell, Lawrence, Blake, the wild men, are the answers of men incapable of writing well unless they write totally: men who feel their work, if it falls short of totality, will be meaningless and trivial and bad.

So on the one hand you have the committed writers, the voices crying in the wilderness. What are they committed to? Everything. Nothing. It makes, as their opponents point out, no practical difference. It is the attitude, the generalised nature of the protest they feel impelled to make, which is significant.

On the other hand you have the 'realistic' writer, the one who shrinks from the

undefined emotional committedness of the totalist viewpoint, and would rather stick pins into a limited closely-observed target than fire off arrows into the blue. To avoid confusion of terms, I must quickly say that this sort of realism—let's call it empiricism—has little in common with the documentary social realism of the 'thirties (revived after the last war by the Italian film industry). That realism was poetic, it deliberately tried to engage the reader or viewer on behalf of humanity: it was committed, it belonged to the other side, to the opposition. Empiricism, though it may attack the *status quo* at specific points, is not in any general opposition.

This is, I think, an interesting literary contrast. I don't want to go over all the old ground of Auden and co. versus the 'Movement', etc. Instead, I should like to take a different example. C. P. Snow is today the great mandarin, the professional writer *par excellence*, the Galsworthy of the self-made men, the explorer of the actual corridors of power. In the 'thirties he wrote a novel called *The Search*, not part of the sequence he is at present engaged on. It is the story, obviously autobiographical, of a poor young man who wants to become a scientist. He is never in any doubt that this is what he wants to do, or that he will succeed. We are left in no doubt, indeed, that the hero is a born manager. His tutor says to him, when he tells him he has decided to do scientific research, 'Won't you think it over before you decide? You could do most things, you know. You could be a success'. (An interesting sidelight, that, on the less exalted view taken of academic life in those days.) But the hero is a single-minded individualist. He replies, 'I know what I want to do more than anything else in the world, and I'm going to do it'.

In its certainty, its desire to embrace the world, that is a Wellsian decision. In its sense of dedication, its rejection of alternatives, it is Joycean: one may compare the scene in *Ulysses* when Dedalus hands in his resignation as a teacher to Mr Deasy, who says, 'You were not born to be a teacher, I think'. 'A learner rather', replies Stephen with typical arrogant humility: it is the answer of a man who has already made up his mind, and whose decision has sufficient validity to last him a lifetime, wherever it leads him.

The heroes of those novels meet opposition: alternatives are suggested that are safer and, it is hinted, more lucrative. But the hero has made up his mind. He has defined and limited his world, but the definition is not one that will frustrate him later: on the contrary, it will allow him to express all his personality and use all his talent. He will 'succeed', not necessarily by the standards of his unsuccessful

teachers, but by his own standards, the new standards he himself is going to bring into the world. To a large extent he will create, as all successful men do, whether in literature or in life, the world in which his success will be possible.

The hero of the Wellsian tradition may have a practical goal, but it remains a goal to which only his own will can take him: and the faith this needs implies an underlying idealism, a sense of purpose wider than the particular sphere of immediate activity to which he commits himself. The sense of purpose found in the pre-1939 world, and still more in the pre-1914 one, was idealistic in that it allowed itself the widest possible terms of reference: Wellsian scientific rationalism, for instance, involved a whole new code of sexual and personal freedom, a total assault on society (see his novel *Ann Veronica*, for instance); again, the goal of the left-wing intellectuals of the 'thirties wasn't merely political, it involved a whole new international and economic order for humanity.

What is to be done? The answers of Wells, Joyce, Lawrence, are not only specific solutions for the writers themselves, they are also something more, something beyond the particular limited individual solution. They are gestures towards totality, suggestions for the whole of humanity. They may be prophetic, angry claims, as Lawrence's were: a tremendous 'or else', a fist shaken in the face of conformity. (The great radicals are the great teachers of humanity—a humanity which makes bad pupils.) And at the same time they may also be expressions of an individual sense of purpose which may be relevant to society as a whole only because the exemplifier becomes influential in society's sense of that word. Wells, for example, genuinely believed for many years that the scientific rationalism he stood for could really affect the history of his time. But, as Orwell pointed out, it had no effect on Hitler: in the context of history the Wellsian sense of purpose turned out useless, but that doesn't make Wells anything less than a great writer. And Orwell himself, the radical rebel, died disenchanted with all the political solutions, all the claims of the ideal, for which he had at one time fought and written. He had done, in his time, all the opposition stuff, all the opting out: in the end there was only a worse mess than ever.

THE RECENT GERMAN NOVEL: SOME THEMES AND DIRECTIONS

H. M. WAIDSON

In a letter from Berlin of March 28th, 1945, Friedo Lampe wrote: 'What times these are! I try more and more to regard this age and its terrible happenings as a process of purification. We should say goodbye to everything, be bound no longer to what is earthly, and should look at life as if we had already died. We should learn to conquer fear of life as of death. The hope of a sensible and happier life is surely very slight. The whole of Germany is after all a heap of rubble. Continuity with the past has been destroyed. None of this can be made good again. No, we may not think further along these lines. We must learn to think on other lines, but that is very painful and difficult, especially for people like myself who live through sense impressions. Right at the end may be seen beckoning a freedom and happiness, a feeling of being separated from all that is material, and an insight into the infirmity and transience of earthly things which earlier generations have experienced only in rare comparable moments.' Shock, bewilderment, a sense of loss and a yearning to be made clean are expressed here. The author of these lines, which were penned no doubt in distracted haste and anguish, is remembered for a few delightfully written short stories comparable in manner to those of Katherine Mansfield or L. P. Hartley; essentially a minor writer, unimportant enough to be left alone by the Third Reich, his work has only become at all widely known since his death. For he was shot by Russian troops on May 2nd, 1945, through a misunderstanding in the first days after the Russian occupation of Berlin.

The extent to which novelists within Germany during the war years were allowed freedom to express themselves has been discussed by H. Boeschenstein in

his book *The German Novel 1939-1944* (1949). There was a continued output of competent and, for the most part, though not entirely, undistinguished fiction which carefully avoided discussion of political and topical themes. The occasional references to political tyranny were seldom as telling as in Ernst Junger's *Auf den Marmorklippen* ('On the Marble Cliffs', 1939). The regional realism which had borne fine fruit in the nineteenth century was temporarily distorted into a vehicle for the doctrines of blood and soil. Unless one was prepared to write on behalf of the régime, it was safer to avoid all reference to the contemporary social scene and to withdraw into non-committal themes. Experimentation with language and narrative techniques was forbidden as a manifestation of 'decadent art'. Apart from the writers who had left Germany as refugees, numerous others were forbidden to publish or else themselves chose not to publish during the twelve years of National Socialism. Referring to the novels of the war period, Professor Boeschenstein writes: 'In contrast with the style of American fiction, German fiction, too often a fabric of clichés, looks faded, washed out. This condition of tepid listlessness cannot possibly be attributed to accident . . . It is not the absence of personal linguistic virtuosity which is to be deplored, but the lack of contact with lively language. Such language is never the creation of one man only, or of a few men; it develops from a healthy emotional, intellectual and occupational group life, from a richly integrated society that is free to air all its concerns frankly.'

After the collapse of Hitler's régime the way became clear for the open discussion of social, political and religious themes. Gradually voices from Switzerland and from emigration could be heard again in Germany. Austria became separate from Germany once more, and conflicting interests and loyalties soon became evident in the tension between East and West. For the first three years or so after the end of the war there seemed to be little fiction of quality emerging from within Germany, but since the currency reform of 1948 the output of writing of an intellectually ambitious nature has greatly increased. Much of this work is in strong reaction against the tendencies in fiction which had developed under Nazism, often in the shape of documentary reporting, of satire at the expense of the Third Reich, or of testimonies of faith based on personal experience; formal experimentation has been favoured by many authors. There has been commitment to a much more obvious degree than in the post-war English novel. The tendency to use literature for didactic purposes has always been strong in Germany, and since 1945 young and old authors have availed

themselves of their renewed opportunities to protest, debunk, harangue and philosophise. If preoccupation with the contemporary German and international situation and with the perennial problems of the good and meaningful life were necessarily synonymous with the creation of great literature, then the last decade would indeed have been a rich one in the history of German literature. No such automatic corollation can be assumed, of course, but at least one can find variety and vitality in much recent German writing, and one may expect more of it to remain of literary interest than has been the case with the work of those who enjoyed the favour of the Nazi régime. The raw material of life in the last twenty-five years has offered challenges which have been taken up with vigour. Apart from work with aspirations to literary value, there has been volume upon volume of autobiography, memoirs, diaries, spy stories, escape stories, medical stories and routine writing in general, poured out to meet the public demand for any novelty claiming to throw light on Central European conditions in the recent past. A visit to a British Railways bookstall any time within the last three years will have shown that German war-books have a large following in Britain too. The immediacy of this literature of confession, indictment and documentation with regard to the Nazi period has by now probably passed its peak. Apart from the older generation who followed the lead of Thomas Mann in passing judgment on Hitler's régime, younger writers too have expressed their feeling of antagonism to the German leadership of 1933-1945. A negative commitment of protest against National Socialism has remained through nearly all serious novels published in Germany or Austria since the war.

Thomas Mann (1875-1955) took the initiative in this type of debate with his essay *Deutschland und die Deutschen* ('Germany and the Germans', 1945), which anticipated the thesis of the long novel *Doktor Faustus* (1947). As a supporter of social democracy and an admirer of Franklin D. Roosevelt, Thomas Mann's championship of reason and hostility to irrational, demonic forces went back to the early years of the Weimar Republic. Reason and the spirit, we are told by Thomas Mann in an essay on *Nietzsches Philosophie im Lichte unserer Erfahrung* ('Nietzsche's Philosophy in the Light of our Experience', 1948), are a weak little flame alwasy threatened by the blind ruthlessness of instinct. Thomas Mann's modern counterpart of Faust is a musician whose failure and collapse in general paralysis of the insane are pointedly parallel to the fate of Germany under Hitler. In the essay 'Germany and the Germans' Mann had written: 'If Faust were to be the representative of the German soul, he would have to be musical; for the

German's relation to the world is abstract and mystical, that is musical—the relationship of a professor with a touch of the demonic, clumsy and at the same time filled with arrogant consciousness of being superior to the rest of the world in "depth".' This type of argument can hardly be reckoned as a balanced contribution to political thought, for its sweeping generalisations will not bear the examination of a second reading. The main theses of *Doktor Faustus* are of a polemical nature, but the construction and style of the novel are elaborate and there are lengthy interpolations of an encyclopaedic character on music. In spite of all this, Mann holds the reader's interest in his narrative; he remains a past master of his craft. The characterisation is not wholly convincing; although the narrator, the humanist Zeitblom, is credible and sympathetic, the central figure Adrian Leverkühn lacks the stature demanded of the figure of a Faust, and few of the other characters are fully rounded. Mann has described *Doktor Faustus* as the book which cost him most and which stirred him up most strongly while it was being written. It is an unsparing and ardent work, laying bare its author's feelings with a directness that is seldom encountered in his other fiction.

Mann's two subsequent works of fiction are slighter and more oblique in their topical criticism. *Der Erwählte* ('The Chosen One'; title of English translation, 'The Holy Sinner', 1951) retells parodistically a medieval legend upon the theme of salvation. Gregory, himself conceived in incest, unwittingly marries his mother, repents of this action on finding out the facts, and after a period of penance is elevated to the papacy. This may well be a veiled attack on the quick rehabilitation of Western Germany under Adenauer's government, to which the translation of Gregory to supreme ecclesiastical authority may be compared. To those readers who had complained that Faust, and therefore Germany, had been offered such slender chances of salvation, Thomas Mann replied in 'The Chosen One' with a burlesque of the whole conception of repentance and salvation. The shorter tale *Die Betrogene* ('The Deceived One'; title of English translation, 'The Black Swan', 1953) is bitingly satirical in its treatment of a Western Germany dependent on American political and economic backing. A middle-aged German woman becomes infatuated with a young American man, but what she believes to be the symptom of renewed fertility reveals itself as a sudden and fatal onslaught of cancer of the womb. If Thomas Mann's last fiction had stopped after these three primarily political allegories, he might have come to be known in the post-war phase of his writing as the angry old man of German literature. Happily his last work *Die Bekenntnisse des Hochstaplers Felix Krull* ('The Confessions of

Felix Krull, Confidence Man', 1954) more than compensates for the disappointing quality of the two preceding works, and by returning to a theme that had accompanied him for many years and which is for the most part non-political in character, Thomas Mann was able to write a really great comic novel.

Many older authors have essayed to point their interpretation of the moral of recent history by reconstructing in *romans-fleuve* the public happenings of the twentieth century. Mann's *Doktor Faustus* largely reconstructs the Munich of its author's youth. Two officially representative authors of Eastern Germany use the chronicle-novel in order to make points such as these: that pre-1914 German society was little different in spirit from that of Hitler's dictatorship; and that the classless Marxist state is to be regarded as the only solution for Germany's future. Johannes R. Becher's (born 1891) *Abschied* ('Parting', 1948) is subtitled 'a German tragedy: 1900-1914'. It traces episodes in a boy's development in a conventional middle-class home and his conflict with his ambitious and irritable father (a well-worn theme in expressionist literature), which is resolved by the boy's embracing revolutionary socialism. Anna Seghers (born 1900) is a successful exponent of naturalism in the service of political Communism. *Die Toten bleiben jung* ('The Dead Stay Young', 1949) takes a broad canvas and deploys a multiplicity of events and personages. Opening with the revolutionary movement in Berlin in 1918 and concluding with the entry of the Russians into that city in 1945, this work reflects the principal political and social tendencies of the period obliquely through the private lives of the contrasting groups of characters, working-class, peasantry and industrialist and military bourgeoisie. A woman who loses her husband in 1918 and whose only son is killed in action in the Russian campaign of the second world war remains faithful to the Communist cause and is rewarded by the arrival of the Russians in Berlin in 1945. The novel achieves a dramatic climax of some power in the final sections describing the Russian advance westward. The same author's three tales *Die Linie* ('The Line', 1950), published with a birthday greeting to Stalin, are much cruder stuff.

Gertrud von Le Fort's Catholicism is not far removed from the non-clerical idealism of a writer like Ernst Wiechert, in its emphasis of the need for forgiveness and charity in dealing with problems of war-guilt. Her short essay *Unser Weg durch die Nacht* ('Our Way through the Night', 1949) is a reply from a Christian point of view to Thomas Mann's 'Germany and the Germans'. She protests against the mass-conception of 'the Germans', insisting that every people remains a collection of individuals, and that Germans were capable both of

crimes and of devoted humane helpfulness during the period when normal civilisation had broken down. Human weakness, she goes on, may not be glossed over, but neither may it be condemned out of hand; however questionable and sinful a man's behaviour may have been, it nevertheless remains a Christian's duty to love that man. Hans Carossa's autobiographical volume *Ungleiche Welten* ('Unequal Worlds', 1951) takes a similar point of view to the events of the Nazi period, though not from a specifically religious approach. 'The German man of letters in the totalitarian state had become a suspect figure', he wrote. 'He was compelled either to be silent or at least to pass over in silence very essential phenomena of the contemporary world. Whichever attitude he assumed, from the non-German point of view he appeared either as provincially limited or as false.' Carossa notes with disapproval that soon after the end of the war voices could be heard hoping that a third world war between Russia and America and Britain would come about, so that Germany might profit from it; or that the persecution of the Jews would soon be forgotten, or shrugged off as something admittedly terrible, but surely no worse than the cruelties of other nations and periods. Carossa's retrospection upon the Nazi period does not offer simple solutions to political problems, but like Gertrud von Le Fort, Wiechert and others this author thought in terms of a 'great lifting of the hearts' without which 'no bread grows in the fields. Let each man be reconciled with himself; a time will come when he will be alone with his own soul'.

Gertrud von Le Fort began publishing in 1923, but since the war her creative power has augmented and developed in a remarkable way, so that her more recent tales are making a much more immediate impact upon German readers than did her earlier work when it was first published. In her seventy-seventh year she published the two tales *Gelöschte Kerzen* ('Extinguished Candles', 1953) which bring moral conflicts of the contemporary post-war period as a framework to two inset stories referring to the time of the seventeenth century, and which show as fine a grasp of present-day themes as any writing by younger authors. The story *Am Tor des Himmels* ('At Heaven's Gate', 1954) follows in its technique the manner of *Gelöschte Kerzen;* the arrest of Galileo by the Inquisition and his recantation of his astronomical discoveries are narrated from an old manuscript by a young doctor to a middle-aged woman as they are sheltering in a cellar during an air-raid in Germany in the last war. Galileo's recantation is interpreted as an act, not of fear and trembling, but of ironical defiance; if the Church refuses to face his facts, he too will be cynical. The temptation to abuse authority

is here pervading and corrupting the Church. The conflict between totalitarian authority and religious principle is for Gertrud von Le Fort more clear-cut in the twentieth century than it was in the time of Galileo. The seventeenth century, with its burning preoccupation with religious belief, in terms of oppression and warfare as well as of piety and mysticism, has long fascinated Gertrud von Le Fort. Galileo's new interpretation of the cosmos is shown as having a significance for the seventeenth century which the discovery of nuclear fission has for our own time. *Die Frau des Pilatus* ('Pilate's Wife', 1955) is a shorter tale illuminating the struggle between worldly and spiritual forces in the imagined relationship between Pontius Pilate and his wife after the former had been confronted with the momentous responsibility of allowing the crucifixion of Christ.

Although there was criticism of the abuse of absolute power in his novel *Der Grosstyrann und das Gericht* ('The Tyrant and the Court of Justice'; English translation, 'A Matter of Conscience', 1935), the recent writing of Werner Bergengruen (born 1892), one of the older Catholic writers, has shown little overt commitment to political or religious themes. He continues to be one of the most inventive of contemporary German authors in the varied plots of his tales. Two recent volumes of short stories and *Novellen*, *Der letzte Rittmeister* ('The Last Captain of Horse', 1952) and *Die Flamme im Säulenholz* ('The Flame in the Timber', 1955) show his conservatism, his yearning for the past, especially for the social customs of the Baltic provinces in Czarist times.

Hermann Broch, who died in America in 1951, was an admirer of James Joyce and an exponent of the monumental, encyclopaedic novel. His early trilogy *Die Schlafwandler* ('The Sleepwalkers', 1931-2) is a social panorama of Germany concluding with the year 1918. This work is more satisfying than *Die Schuldlosen* (1950), a rather hastily compiled narrative which aims to point out that the bankruptcy of outlook of the Weimar Republic was largely responsible for the rise of Hitler. The 'Innocent Ones' are ironically so called by Broch who maintains here that standing aside from public events and not attempting to do what little one can to counter totalitarian development are a form of guilt. *Der Tod des Vergil* ('The Death of Virgil', 1945), Broch's most difficult and original work, shows the poet on his death-bed wanting to destroy the manuscript of his *Aeneid*; art is not enough, and moreover his has been an art that has allowed itself to be exploited for the political purposes of a vainglorious nationalism by the Emperor whom he likes to think of as his friend, but whom he suspects of using him as a tool in his insatiable craving for power. However, Virgil finally presents his epic

as a gift to Augustus from altruistic motives of friendship. There are political implications in Broch's posthumous novel *Der Versucher* ('The Tempter', 1953), which depicts life in a quiet and simple Austrian village community in the period between the wars. The torpor of this society is disturbed and transformed by the advent of a fanatic of unscrupulous and violent mentality who for a time gains hypnotic sway over the villagers.

Heimito von Doderer has been publishing fiction since 1930, but it was not until 1956, at the age of sixty, that he became widely known and could be heralded as the greatest living Austrian writer. *Die Strudlhofstiege* ('The Strudlhof Steps', 1951) established his reputation within a relatively small circle. This was not obviously the work of a committed author, but was a psychological study of a large group of characters against a minutely precise Viennese background. The narrative linked two main periods of time, before and after the first world war, and its main character was an Austrian army officer and civil servant who was too hesitant and simple to be fully at home in his sophisticated upper-class background. Doderer's *Die Dämonen* ('The Demons', 1956), the book that has now made him more widely known, is almost as long as his fellow-countryman Robert Musil's *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* ('The Man without Qualities', 1930-42), although Doderer has been able to complete his vast edifice and to tie up neatly the hundreds of loose ends that seem inevitable when one is half-way through reading the book. The author's method is to take a fairly short space of time, the nine months before the burning of the Palace of Justice in Vienna in July 1927, and to deploy a large number of characters who cross in and out of each other's field of vision; it is a form of *unanimisme*, but pursued with more discipline than Jules Romains' *Les hommes de bonne volonté*. *Die Dämonen* starts where *Die Strudlhofstiege* left off. The author takes sides for or against his characters, allows himself impartial omniscience into all that is going on, lets the reader peep coyly into the future at one time and keeps him in the dark about the present at another. His technique is disingenuously old-fashioned, often witty and always polished; this is an extremely meaty and clever book. The main characters, 'Die Unsrigen', 'our lot', are upper-class, one-time feudal intellectuals and their friends who dislike business and capitalism as represented by the shady financier Levielle and his minion Cornel Lasch. They have little interest in the Church, the Republic or the broad generality of the population, and in many ways are on the defensive against the world they live in. The chief narrator Geyrenkoff, however, surveys this world with an intelligent and kindly interest. Among the

numerous other characters who are outside this group may be mentioned Leonhard Kakabsa, the factory-worker who is uneasy about the trade union movement, listens appreciatively to accounts of cavalry battles from the first world war, and who spends much of his time learning Latin and Greek. There is careful description of life in the border-province of Burgenland, where a Hungarian Fascist organisation is waging sporadic warfare with cells of the Left-wing movement. Perhaps we are intended to regard with suspicion and superciliousness both extreme right and extreme left ('Aryans' and 'Prolet-Aryans' somebody in the novel says) as demagogic mass-movements which are undermining the fabric of European civilisation. The general impression, however, is that 'our lot' will probably be more sympathetic to reaction than to revolution. Doderer is a very clever and talented writer, and even if this novel seems far too long and complicated for any normal novel-reader ever to absorb directly, it may well prove influential as well as symptomatic in Central Europe. It has an astonishing range of character delineations and narrative incident.

Political thought has been expressed in recent German literature often in allegorical, non-realistic form. The rediscovery of Kafka by a new generation since 1945 has led to considerable imitation of his blending of realism and fantasy, although not always successfully, for Kafka remains unique. Utopian fiction has enjoyed a vogue; the description of life in the future has long been a convenient method of criticising present-day society. Hesse's *Das Glasperlenspiel* ('The Game of Glass Beads'; English translation, 'Magister Ludi', 1943) is a rarefied description of an academic, monastic community which is in danger of losing contact with the not very unusual middle-class reality of A.D. 2400; the flowing and limpid German style allows this novel to retain its freshness and appeal. Franz Werfel's *Stern der Ungeborenen* ('Star of the Unborn', 1945), wordy and loosely written, forecasts the overthrow of an effete, aesthetic civilisation by a rebellion of primitive twentieth-century 'jungle' types. Hermann Kasack's *Die Stadt hinter dem Strom* ('The City beyond the River', 1947) is a pantheistic vision of life after death, and like the lighter, delicately written fantasies of Ernst Kreuder (*Die Unauffindbaren*, 'The Undiscoverables', 1948; *Herein ohne anzuklopfen*, 'Come In Without Knocking', 1954), there is a yearning for a new philosophical start under the discipleship of oriental mysticism. Arno Schmidt's biting sketch *Schwarze Spiegel* ('Black Mirrors'; in the volume *Brand's Haide*, 1951) shows a Europe decimated by World War Three, where only one man and one woman survive; this post-nuclear prophecy is forecast for 1962.

Ernst Jünger (born 1895) has for a long time, since the appearance of his books on his experiences during the first world war, been concerned with problems of man and society. Aloof and solitary, he has gone his own way through the vicissitudes of the last forty years in Germany with fair consistency of outlook and reactions, hesitating to associate himself with any organised movements, political or religious. Coldly and analytically he has dwelt on situations involving pain, violence and death. His diagnoses on the lot of modern man may be motivated by an ultimate desire to help and to heal, but he is reluctant to make any such motives at all obvious, and one need have few regrets that he has never been let loose to operate on the patient. His four fictional works, all translations of contemporary problems into a fantasy-world setting, are interesting primarily for the stylistic details of their prose and for the dry, clever presentation of ideas, rather than for their characterisation or narrative; the backgrounds too are implausible, even if described with meticulous care. *Auf den Marmorklippen* ('On the Marble Cliffs', 1939) and *Heliopolis* (1949) have in common the theme of a fight between a minority of aristocratic intellectuals and the cunningly organised forces of a ruthless dictator. The two brothers in 'On the Marble Cliffs' are forced out of their studious seclusion by the insidious encroachments of the Chief Forester and align themselves with Braquemart who, icy and full of hate, sees mankind in two classes, noble supermen and slaves, and wishes to overthrow the Chief Forester because of his plebeian threat to the aristocracy's independence as much as on account of the cruelties of his concentration camp. *Heliopolis*, the longest of Jünger's fictional works, is set in the remote future. In spite of space travel, humanity is still frozen in the same gestures of conflict. Lucius de Geer, the forty-year-old hero, belongs to the military élite of Mauritanians, a hierarchical semi-secret society which is at war with the totalitarian 'bailiff', Messer Grande. The Parsees are persecuted by the Bailiff as the Jews were in the twentieth century. Lucius is thus on the side of the cultured few with Platonic ideals who wish to preserve the world from the extension of the Bailiff's ruthlessly efficient collective state. As in 'On the Marble Cliffs', the action culminates in an attack on the dictator's prison-stronghold, followed by a retreat to areas beyond the dictator's reach.

Besuch auf Godenholm ('Visit to Godenholm', 1952) and *Gläserne Bienen* ('Glass Bees', 1957) do not describe a world in conflict, but a post-war situation as seen by ex-soldiers who are resentful of the loss of prestige and meaning in their lives caused by defeat and the redundancy of their military training. The two

protagonists of 'Visit to Godenholm' are to be rescued from the nihilism which has assailed them in post-war Germany by a visit to a Norwegian island where blind submission to a sage-magician, whose demonic personality is rooted obscurely in Germanic mythology, provides them with a hidden power which is to restore meaning to their lives. 'Glass Bees' uses the same skeleton action, this time in order to attack the all-pervasive seeping of commercialised monopoly-controlled technology into modern life. Richard, an ex-cavalry officer, has an obsessive nostalgia for horses and a distrust of working men from Manchester and Sheffield; on his uppers after the defeat of Germany in 1918, he asks an old crony to find him a job with good money in order to prevent him from succumbing to what he regards as degrading routine. After being given a breakfast which includes toast, ham and eggs, tea and port wine, Richard is sent off with a fifty-pound note to the organisation of Zapparoni, a tycoon and grey eminence whose children's films and mechanical toys assure him mass popularity and create an aura of harmlessness about scientific inventions which may at the same time be used as weapons of mass destruction. Zapparoni has built his streamlined industrial premises around an old Cistercian monastery, where in the centre of his organisation he may enclose himself in a carefully constructed atmosphere of traditional culture. The great man arouses in Richard the longing to abase himself and to obey him implicitly, but the protagonist has misgivings and the suspicion that the ease and pleasures that he will be able to buy will be acquired at the price of slavery to an unscrupulous nihilism. Zapparoni's inventions are 'the cowardly triumph of calculating brains over courage and life'. Richard is left alone in the midday warmth of a garden where he is startled out of a nap to discover that the bees around him are robots and that an ornamental pool is afloat with human ears which, however, subsequently turn out to be synthetic. Jünger's botanising, which recurs frequently in his writings, here takes on a surrealist tone. Although he realises that this ordeal is a test of his suitability for the work, Richard expresses his revulsion and prepares to defy Zapparoni. The latter, however, is not easy to offend, and offers him not the important job he had in mind for him, but a less impressive one. Richard accepts—he has a wife to support—and thus his gesture of defiance is transformed into a reluctant but inevitable acceptance of the smug mediocrity of mechanised conformity. 'Glass Bees' is a curious and startling book, undeniably topical in its social criticism. Human perfection and technological virtuosity are irreconcilable, the hero reflects. 'An uncanny but also fascinating brilliance lights up perfect mechanisms.

They arouse fear, but also a titanic pride which can be brought low not by insight but only by catastrophe.' The satire is not altogether negative, and there is a longing for moral standards, a rule to live by: 'We are all burningly concerned with the thought that after all there may still be a hope.'

The post-war writing of Stefan Andres (born 1906) is much concerned for the translation of Catholic religious beliefs into practical social terms. His best-known tale *Wir sind Utopia* ('We are Utopia', 1942), forbidden under Hitler, shows a conflict of conscience between two men involved in opposing loyalties during the Spanish Civil War. *Die Hochzeit der Feinde* ('The Marriage of the Enemies', 1947) treats the problem of Franco-German relations with sympathy, if on a rather facile level. *Ritter der Gerechtigkeit* ('Knights of Justice', 1948) is the story of a father-and-son conflict at the time of the fall of Mussolini. For a number of years now Andres has been writing a vast trilogy, *Die Sintflut* ('The Flood'), of which two volumes have appeared. This is laid out as a monumental satire on Hitler, a description of the Flood of our time. Andres avoids the topical contemporary setting in order to allow his vivid imagination free play and to create comedy of his own choosing. Alois Moosthaler, Andres' archetypal dictator, gives up a career in the Church to become leader of his own political party. The account of the antics of the dictator and his henchmen during the early days of the movement in Italy is very amusing; the second volume, with its account of the plight of political undesirables after the tyrant has taken over power, is slower and less interesting. One wonders if the energy spent by Andres and other writers on large-scale political satires has been altogether rewarded. The disasters of 1945 are no longer as fresh in people's minds as they were ten years ago, and so much has been written and discussed in Germany on the moral issues aroused by Hitler and the war, that by now it is inevitable that the public should think that there is little that is fresh to be said on the subject.

The march of events can play wry tricks on the writer who takes his time in compiling a long-term documentary novel. Theodor Plievier (1892-1955) and his trilogy about the war in Russia is a case in point. *Stalingrad* (1946) surveys the events leading to the defeat of the Germans in that city in January 1943. Its sequel *Moskau* (1952) takes as its starting-point the first days of the German invasion of Russia in June 1941, and culminates in the approach of the fateful Russian winter as the Germans stand before Moscow. Plievier had unique facilities for collecting the material for this work; as a refugee from Germany in 1933, he made his way to Russia and was allowed to observe the scene and to

sift the documents of this piece of recent history. *Berlin* (1954), the longest of the three parts of the trilogy, brings the work to its conclusion. As an imaginative work it is the most satisfactory part of the whole, for Plievier brings to life the city of Berlin and the surrounding Eastern Zone with a vigour and variety of treatment that make fascinating reading. Plievier himself came back to Berlin in 1945 with the Russians, and was a cultural official in the Democratic Republic until 1947, when he fled from the East as a refugee to Western Germany. There is much that must be autobiographical in this novel which traces the fortunes of Berlin from the last days of Hitler in April 1945 through the early days of Russian occupation until it concludes with the abortive rising of June 1953. The later part of the book, which shows for the most part the struggles of a politician who tries to administer just government in the Eastern Zone and the life of German prisoners of war in Russian hands, deflects the author's virulence from Hitlerism to the Communist order. A work which began under the auspices of Russian patronage ends as a direct attack upon the East German régime under Russian occupation.

The literature of German Switzerland has been less concerned with topical issues and loyalties than writing in Germany and Austria. Alfred Kübler's long three-volume novel of individual development, *Öppi* ('Someone', 1943-1951), has its setting in Switzerland more than forty years ago. The loss of his mother when he is twelve (the year is 1902) is the psychological bruise which is to affect the development of the boy Öppi from this time onwards. He is one of a large family, and his father, innkeeper and timber-merchant in a small village, goes about his own busy and upright life content to leave the youngest child alone, provided he does not get in his father's way. But the boy feels starved of affection, without fully realising that this is the case and without being able to find a satisfactory alternative to the maternal warmth he misses. Through this he is alienated from his family, and when he goes to the grammar school to embark on a classical education he is further separated from the non-intellectual community life of the village. He has risen above his family and village by taking up an academic education, but always remains defiantly mistrustful of much that middle-class urban education stands for. Caught in this social dilemma, he responds by identifying himself with village activities and seeking, for instance, in the local gymnastic club a sense of community which he fails to find in the town school. Through his slow and hesitant approach he spends long periods of study of geology and then art, only to turn away in order to seek a career as an actor. The war of 1914 comes, but it need not

concern him. Still hesitating as the novel ends, Öppi has achieved little or nothing in the way of outward success. Nothing spectacular happens to him, and the background to his life is stable and ordinary: it is accepted as a matter of course as the norm.

Max Frisch's *Stiller* (1954) regards the Swiss tradition more coolly and satirically. For the central figure of this novel the unshakeable middle-class normality of life around him in Zürich is a threat to his independence of personality, choking the passion within him for freedom to choose his own way of life. The conventions of a society which knows that it is reasoned, sensible, economically sound and traditionally democratic make Stiller rebel against the prearranged pattern of career and family. But he is not Promethean in his defiance. As a sculptor he was undistinguished, and he has no inclination to exploit his talents for commercial success. His preliminary breaking-loose as a volunteer in the Spanish Civil War has led to a further lack of faith in himself as well as in the cause which he wished to defend. His marriage to a promising ballerina leads to misunderstandings and jealousy of her success; when she becomes ill with tuberculosis, he is indifferent and unfaithful. He disappears to America, where he lives for six years, nomadic and at times near to suicide, but at least, the implication is, in places where life can be raw and unpredictable. While travelling through Switzerland on a forged American passport, Stiller is arrested by police authorities who conscientiously set about proving that he is the person whose identity he rejects. His dentist can prove his identity from the state of his teeth, the army authorities deplore the shocking state of his military equipment after six years' neglect, while there is the suspicion that he has had connections with Russian espionage. Stiller argues that freedom is a problem, not a Swiss monopoly, and that the French and British are human because they know their countries may one day go under; but his arguments fail to be convincing. The court of inquiry decides that he is Stiller, whether he likes it or not, and makes him pay a carefully and fairly calculated fine to cover the expense and trouble that he has caused the Swiss authorities. The comedy of the opening sections of the novel is hardly consistent with the long-drawn-out account of Stiller's alcoholic inertia and depression after the death of his wife, with whom he effects a reconciliation after the court of inquiry is concluded.

Another Zürich author, Kurt Guggenheim (born 1896), has tackled the psychological problems brought about by life in a small, stable community which has little room for outsiders. His recent novel *Der Friede des Herzens* ('Peace of Heart', 1956) takes as its hero a middle-aged man who has always been painstaking

and quietly conscientious in the routine of the insurance office which fills up his working hours, and devoted in his leisure time to his wife, daughter and respectable flat. Like Frisch's Stiller, though in a less flamboyant way, he attempts to break through the frustrations of the planned prosperity which encloses him on all sides, but fails. His rebellion brings disaster to the woman who becomes his mistress, while he himself, even if only obliquely hurt, has inner conflicts to wrestle with before he finally becomes reconciled to the outward sameness of his life.

German authors have written about war and defeat, and have argued the problems of their responsibility for Hitler and his era; at times they have had dark, apocalyptic visions of more disaster to come. Meanwhile, material daily life has become settled and prosperous. A younger generation is growing up to whom the political issues of ten years earlier are no more than history, to whom Adolf Hitler is no more real as a personality than Kaiser Wilhelm II. Some of the older generation may be eager to leap back from the present, with eyes tightly closed to Nazism, the Weimar Republic and the two world wars, in order to effect a return to a glossy reconstruction of the good old days. Younger authors tend to be suspicious of this type of fantasy world, and concern themselves above all with their own experiences as the starting-point. Heinrich Böll (born 1917) satirises this type of spurious 'restoration' in his tale *Nicht nur zur Weihnachtszeit* ('Not Only at Christmas Time', 1952), where the conventional Christmas celebrations become the object of a middle-aged woman's obsessive craving. Böll has many varied gifts, including a lively sense of the topical. His earlier work included two war-novels which lashed out at the waste and stupidity of the war on the Eastern front: *Der Zug war pünktlich* ('The Train Was on Time', 1949) and *Wo warst du, Adam* ('Where Were You, Adam', 1951). Two novels of contemporary family life, *Und sagte kein einziges Wort* ('And Never Said a Word'; English translation 'Acquainted With the Night', 1953) and *Haus ohne Hüter* ('House Without a Head', 1954), emphasise the psychological dissonances caused by war-time experiences which have not been resolved, but only further exacerbated, by an over-facile assumption of normality. Böll's characters are working-class or suburban, and their fundamental human decency and good faith cannot comprehend the grandiose complexities of more pretentious folk. Often he depicts adolescents for whose shortcomings he lays the responsibility on parents, teachers or social environment generally; these youngsters, he implies, are incapable of understanding what the issues of the 'thirties or 'forties were about, but are dogged at every turn by the

consequences of those years. *Das Brot der frühen Jahre* ('The Bread of Early Years', 1955) tells of a young man whose memories of the years 1945-8 consist predominantly of an obsessive hunger for bread and of the petty dishonesty and meanness which want engendered. As a successful mechanic, he services washing-machines, saves money and runs a *Volkswagen*; but the earlier memories have still to be fitted in to make a sensible pattern in his life. *Im Tal der donnernden Hufe* ('In the Valley of the Thundering Hoofs', 1957) centres upon two fifteen-year-old boys and a girl who are alienated from the smug prosperity of the Rhineland town where they live. The behaviour of visitors and local inhabitants at the seasonal wine-festivals fills them with nausea at the whole prospect of conforming to any adult code. A girl and her mother are ostracised by the community because of former Communist connections, although they have long lost faith in this political movement. The boys' teacher devotes his afternoons to the study of Tirpitz, while the boys steal a revolver which the father of one of them has kept hidden and cherished since the end of the war. In this tale, as elsewhere, Böll is quick to point out the cracks in the surface of the civilisation he is describing. In his *Irisches Tagebuch* ('Irish Diary', 1957) he points the contrast between the easy-going poverty of Ireland and what he sees as the hectic prosperity of Western Germany. A number of other writers have satirised the West German business world and criticised the new, sudden prosperity: Heinz Risse in *Dann kam der Tag* ('Then the Day Came', 1953), Hans Erich Nossack in *Spätestens im November* ('At Latest in November', 1955) and Stefan Andres in *Die Reise nach Portiuncula* ('The Journey to Portiuncula', 1954).

Albrecht Goes (born 1908) has written two widely read *Novellen* which look at contemporary issues from the point of view of a Protestant pastor. *Unruhige Nacht* ('Restless Night'; English translation 'Arrow to the Heart', 1950) is about an army chaplain and a condemned soldier somewhere in Russia during the war. *Das Brandopfer* ('The Burnt Offering', 1954) tackles the problem of the responsibility felt by men of good will in face of the persecution of the Jews under Hitler. As a story it loses by the irrelevant fussiness of its framework, but its statement of the moral problem as presented by the butcher's wife is succinct and illuminating.

Gerd Gaiser (born 1908), like Heinrich Böll, has established for himself a firm reputation with the full-length novels and short stories which have been appearing since his first published book of stories in 1949 (*Zwischenland*, 'Land in Between'); like Albrecht Goes, he has affinities of social and religious background—his father was a Protestant pastor in a Württemberg country parish. His delineation of

contemporary life is less satirical and sharp than that of Böll; if it loses thereby in quicksilver brilliance, it gains in emotional depth. He is interested less in topical issues for their own sake than in the problems of human relations which arise when people are faced with situations of crisis or social abnormality. His first novel, *Eine Stimme hebt an* ('A Voice is Raised', 1950), concerns a homecoming soldier who gradually regains a constructive outlook on life through the example of someone whose fortitude and patience in face of more overwhelming adversities impresses him. *Die sterbende Jagd* ('The Dying Chase'; English translation 'The Falling Leaf', 1953) is about the German air force in Norway. There is a certain muted resignation in Gaiser's narratives; events are something given, unalterable and therefore hardly worth questioning, but what is important is the response of the human spirit to the impact of the outside world. Similarly Gaiser's short stories, in the collection *Einmal und oft* ('Once and Often', 1957), have less sprightliness and vividness of contour than those of Böll, but a wider range of emotional undertones. *Gianna aus dem Schatten* ('Gianna from the Shadows'), the longest tale in this volume, describes the retribution that befalls a man who on revisiting Italy chances to meet again a woman who, as a partisan in the resistance movement during the war, has an old score to settle with this German ex-soldier. He is driven as if inevitably into a situation which exposes him to her power; but in the immediate reaction of grief which assails her after she has shot him, the wronged woman discovers that the repayment of wrong by revenge has brought no satisfaction, but only arid emptiness. Gaiser sometimes makes use of the interior monologue, and overlays everyday reality with symbolism, with considerable effect in the short story *Iche warte auf Ness* ('I Am Waiting for Ness'); here a man recalls how a girl companion once saved him as a twelve-year-old boy from drowning in an icy pool, and how this episode, pushed into the background of his mind for many years, comes to be the one meaningful centre in his life. Gaiser's characters, for instance the narrator of *Vorspiel* ('Prelude'), suffer from the realisation of the presence of so much evil in the world, both in man and nature, but are buoyed up by the conviction of the reality of goodness as revealed in the strong instinct to sympathise and help which human beings show.

Hans Bender (born 1919) returned from Russia in 1949, where he had been a prisoner of war, and he writes poetry and fiction with a cool, lyrical approach. The title of his volume of collected short stories, *Wölfe und Tauben* ('Wolves and Doves', 1957), indicates something of his attitude to his characters, who are seen as wolves or doves, aggressive or suffering, cruel or fearful. He is careful to give the

appearance that he is the factual recorder of moods and impressions picked up with apparent casualness and described with delicacy and punctiliousness of language. The stories reflecting experiences in Russia and afterwards avoid direct statement of attitude or value-judgment, but depict limited horizons and psychological reactions. A German officer deceives a Russian woman about the possibility of securing her son's return home and is then shot by partisans. Or a shepherd in a German village cannot bring himself to slaughter his sheep, as he has been ordered by American occupation authority. *Die Wölfe kommen zurück* ('The Wolves Come Back') tells of some German prisoners of war during the first days of their life under the charge of the Starost of a remote Russian village. The Russian's rifle is revealed to be useless—there is no ammunition—either for guarding prisoners or for shooting at packs of predatory wolves. But the return of the wolves from the east is an indication that the war is over, and that Germans and Russians can live together here without weapons between them. Although not directly forceful, these tales have their own quiet fascination.

Since 1945 German fiction has shown an openness to experimentation in various directions. The traditional German forms of the *Bildungsroman*, the long autobiographical narrative of a young man's development, and of the *Novelle*, the long-short story with economy and tautness of plot, have continued, while being supplemented by influences from America, Britain, France and elsewhere; for the demand for translations of international authors, few of whom were readily available from 1933 to 1945, has been keen. Contemporary issues and contemporary backgrounds have been required of the German novelist by his readers today to a degree scarcely known earlier in the century, except perhaps during the heyday of Expressionism. Whether this emphasis on topical themes makes a great deal of difference to the permanent artistic value of books such as those that have been discussed here is a question that may be left unanswered at this point. But there is much that is heartening in the openness of present-day German writers to stimuli from many directions and in their desire to grasp directly and honestly so many issues of their own time.

For further information and bibliography about contemporary German fiction, reference may be made to other publications of mine: *Experiment and Tradition: Some German Fiction since 1945.* German Life and Letters (Oxford), New Series, Vol. VII, Nos. 2 and 4, 1954. *Zeitgenössische deutsche Literatur in englischer Übersetzung. Pädagogische Blätter* (Berlin), 7. Jahrgang, Nr. 21/22, 1956. *German Short Stories 1945-1955,* Cambridge, 1957. *Der moderne Roman in England und Deutschland. Wirkendes Wort* (Düsseldorf), 7. Jahrgang, 3. Heft, 1957. *Heimito von Doderer's Demons.* German Life and Letters (Oxford), New Series, Vol. XI, No. 3, 1958.

HAVE YOU ANYTHING TO DECLARE?

or

ANGRY YOUNG MEN : FACTS AND FICTIONS

W. J. HARVEY

THE myth of the Angry Young Men has developed, flourished and decayed in a remarkably short time. Decadence, for my purposes, sets in when the literary historians take over and this has already begun in an amateurish way. Although the full complications of the case must probably await the diagnosis of some future Ph.D. student on the prowl, letter-writers to the *Daily Telegraph*, for instance, have recently argued the origins of the myth; Leslie Paul writes in from time to time pointing out that he was first in the field—at least eponymously—with a book called *Angry Young Man;* John Wain tells us that Woodrow Wyatt was so entitled by a Sunday newspaper while the publicity attending *Look Back In Anger* has been advanced as another myth-making claimant. The main documents in the case can quickly be picked out—Somerset Maugham's farrago of prejudice and ignorance in *The Sunday Times*, John Wain's article in *The Twentieth Century* (March, 1957) and, most recently, the collection of essays called *Declaration* (MacGibbon & Kee).

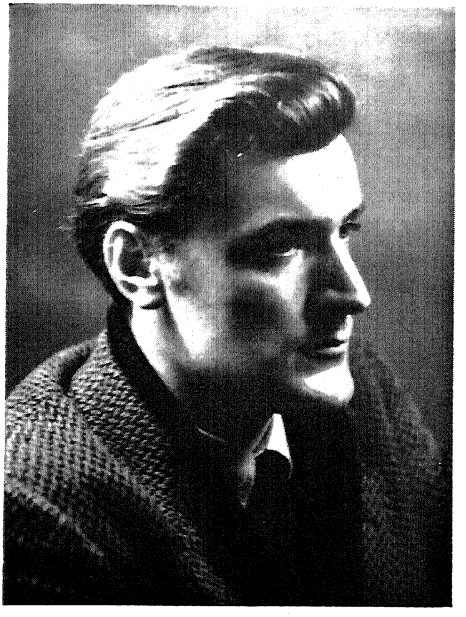
This last volume is a good microcosm of the whole muddled story. Kingsley Amis refused to have anything to do with the cult while a number of contributors protest at its fatuity and underline their protest by quarrelling with one another in print. Very roughly, the book falls into two. There are the humanists, mostly Left-wing, and there are the quasi-religious types. Of the latter I shall say nothing; their style is remarkably opaque and where one can penetrate to the thought it seems either honestly muddled or simply pretentious. Colin Wilson constantly protests that he wishes to be judged not as a sage but as a creative writer; I

suppose we must be charitable enough to await the results. Meanwhile, he and his fellows appear to me writers who make their puddles muddy in order that they may be thought deep. By contrast the plain sense of Mrs Lessing and Wain, the astringencies of Tynan and Osborne, the urgency of Lindsay Anderson can only appear as refreshing. Nevertheless, one feels that even elementary discriminations are of little use; indeed, the very diversity of attitude points the underlying paradox of the whole book. While most of its contributors explicitly declare that there is no such animal as the Angry Young Man or that if there is they, at any rate, do not belong to the species, nevertheless the effect of the book as a whole is likely to give a boost to the myth. The declarations will be read as manifestoes; Mrs Lessing's 'small personal voice' will be misheard proclaiming the attitudes of a generation.

Granted this confusion, I want, by way of compensation, to concentrate mainly on Osborne's plays and on the novels of Wain and Amis. It may, however, be useful to sort out very roughly some of the accretions to a myth which has flourished largely because of its vagueness and flexibility and, therefore, its capacity to assimilate very disparate elements; the label of Angry Young Man can be tagged easily on to any number of trends, personalities and controversies.

One such controversy spluttered sporadically in the columns of the literary weeklies; this was the antithesis of Redbrick and the ancient universities or, in a variant form, the opposition of the provinces and London as literary centres. This part of the myth was undoubtedly given impetus by the location of *Lucky Jim* in a provincial university. Somewhere along this line the quarrel of Dr Leavis with the genteel tradition of literary criticism was dragged in although, one suspects, Dr Leavis would hardly wish to claim any angry young men as his literary offspring. Such a habit of literary genealogy (with alternative references back to the eighteenth-century picaresque novel, to the early Aldous Huxley or to George Orwell) is, however, a harmless academic pastime compared with the genetic fallacy of relating the novels, poems or plays to their supposed biographical origins. I will say more of this later, for the moment we need only note that both Wain and Amis were products of Oxford, that Wain taught for a time at Reading University while Amis still teaches at Swansea and that Osborne has never been to a university.

This initial antithesis has tended to develop in two ways. One way lays the stress on the 'new provincialism', the word 'provincial' in itself being fruitful of ambiguity. If we mean simply that the subject matter and the locations of the

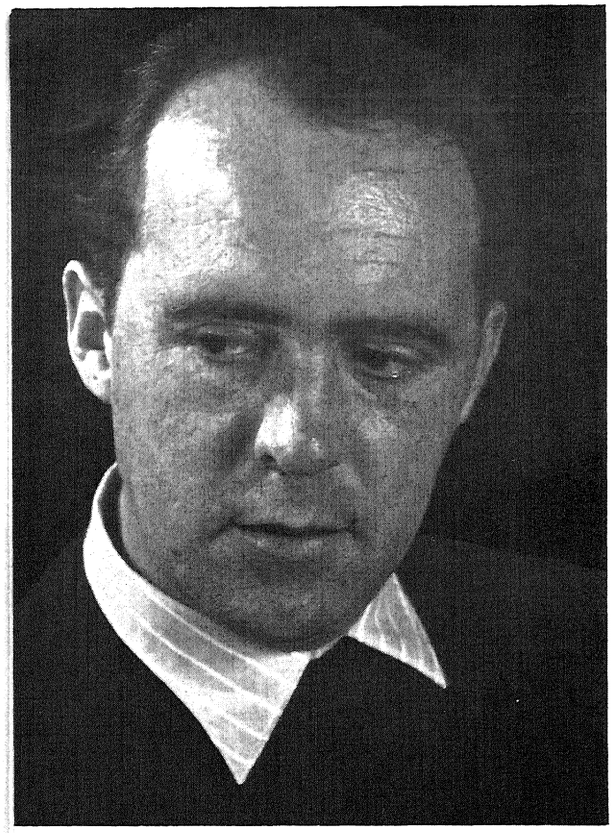


Ted Hughes — *poet*

Philip Larkin — *poet*

Doris Lessing — *novelist and playwright*

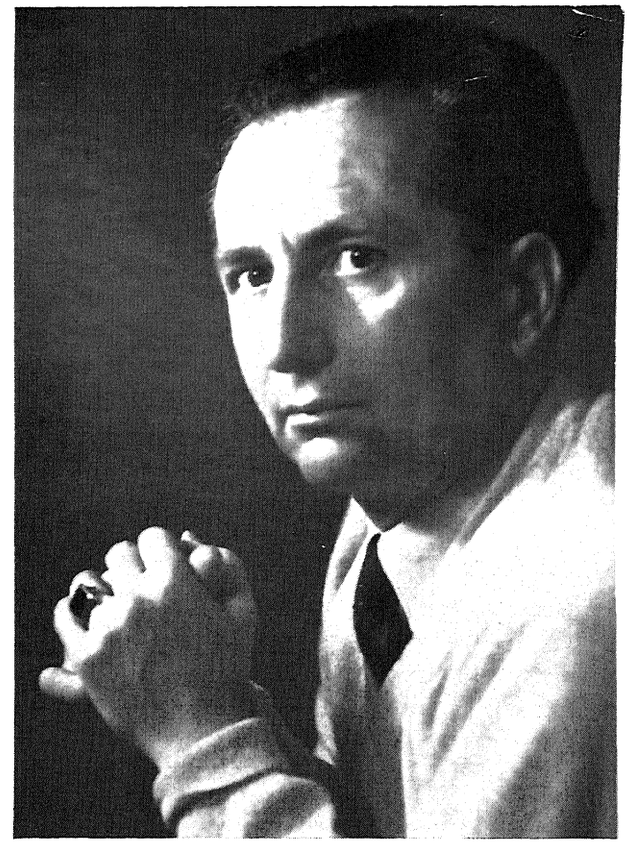
Brian Glanville — *novelist*

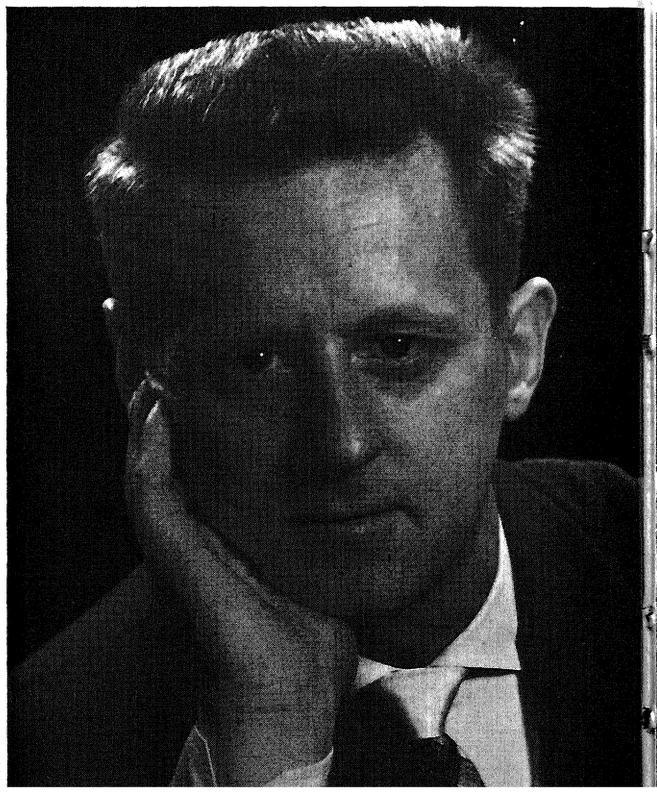


Heinrich Böll

SOME CONTEMPORARY GERMAN WRITERS

Gerd Gaiser





Hans Bender

Stefan Andres

Probably the last photograph of Frieda Lawrence, taken by A. Alvarez at New Mexico in 1956

relevant works are provincial the implications are harmless but lead nowhere; in any case large exceptions must be made to this rule. Wain's *Hurry on Down* rushes all over the place, *Living in the Present* has a London-Switzerland-London movement while *The Contenders* develops out of a tension between London and the Potteries. But critics have gone beyond this simple statement of fact and have alleged that there exists some special provincial ethos, raw, aggressive and strident. One can only appeal against this by pointing to the diversity of the actual products. An even larger jump was made by Mrs Lessing when she wrote in her *Declaration* essay that, 'Above all, current British literature is provincial . . . I do not mean by provincial that they come from or write about the provinces, I mean that their horizons are bounded by their immediate experience of British life and standards'. One's immediate reaction is to ask what more Mrs Lessing expects. What need be wrong with provincialism in this sense? The good writer must know and work within the limits of his experience which can hardly be expanded by determination or good will. Take, for example, Roy Fuller's *Image of a Society*, one of the finest contemporary British novels and one not caught up in the Angry Young Man net. Its strength, its intensity, certainty of touch and range of implication lie in its thorough-going provincialism. Mrs Lessing goes on to illustrate her point by comparing John Braine's *Room at the Top* with Stendhal. But apart from the loading of the dice here (compare Stendhal and George Eliot and Mrs Lessing's point becomes much less tenable), one simply doesn't criticise *Room at the Top* in her terms. One surely says, rather, that it is a skilful but essentially synthetic piece of work with the right doses of sex and violence injected into the story at the appropriate points; put thus, the moral limitations of the work have nothing at all to do with the issue of provincialism. I suspect in Mrs Lessing's diagnosis the lingering remnants of some form—no doubt, highly sophisticated—of socialist realism.

The other way in which our initial antithesis has developed is through a stress on Redbrick and its allegedly typical student, the scholarship boy who by educating himself out of his working-class or lower-middle class background uproots himself and ends up as a *déclassé* and disaffected intellectual. This widens out into another variety of genetic explanation, into the relation of novel or play to the social changes of contemporary England, with particular reference to the impact of the Welfare State. This variety of explanation is more plausible; amateur sociology is probably easier than amateur psychology, though if one did a Namier on the Angry Young Men one would probably find that their back-

grounds and careers are hopelessly diverse. Certainly there is more substance in the works themselves to support this thesis—the comments on the Welfare State in *The Entertainer*, for instance, or if we are concerned with the uprooted hero a passage like this from *Hurry on Down* (although we should note that Charles Lumley is hardly an intellectual and that we have no detailed information about his family background):

> Though they could not have put it into words, their objection to him was that he did not wear a uniform. If he had worn the uniform of a prosperous middle-class tradesman, like Robert, they would have approved of him. If, on the other hand, he had seriously adopted the chic disorder of the Chelsea Bohemian, they would at least have understood what he was at. . . . But Charles seemed not to realise the sacred duty of dressing the part.

But a vital distinction must be drawn here between social concern as part of the novelist's subject matter and sociological explanations of the novelist's invention or attitude. Certainly these writers are concerned with contemporary society, otherwise they might be vulnerable to Mrs Lessing's charge of provincialism but this is not to say that they in particular, much less an abstraction like the Angry Young Men in general, can be wholly or ever adequately placed by reference to a social context. Connections of this kind are always subtle and difficult to make; attempts to place the Angry Young Men have, by and large, been crude and slapdash.

Without more ado let us turn to the works themselves and see what can be made of them by the literary critic as distinct from the journalist, psychologist, sociologist or myth-maker. I start with the plays of John Osborne. The most obvious characteristic of *Look Back In Anger* is its nagging intensity, enforced by the claustrophobic unity of setting, by the repetition of incidents or of character relationships and by the dialogue which, through its apparent inconsequentiality, returns obsessively to pick at the same themes, same ideas, same emotions. This circling movement is reflected in the characters who are vividly caught in moments of time but who do not really develop; the end is where we came in; this is, as Cliff Lewis says, 'a very narrow strip of plain hell'. This intensity poses considerable problems for the dramatist and we must take care to distinguish between what the play discloses to a leisured examination and the immediate impact it makes upon an audience in the hurly-burly of the theatre. There is, moreover, a distinction to be made between the effect probably intended and this impact; between, say, the enclosed, trapped monotony of the world we are shown and the monotonous effect it actually produces. For the play *is*, ultimately,

monotonous; it drills away at our emotional teeth with no letting-up—the wisecracks and the slapstick acts reinforce and do not relieve. In other words, the intensity of the play is achieved at perhaps too great a cost; it excludes too much. The area of feeling dealt with is very narrow and when Osborne attempts to extend this area his control of language, so brilliantly sure in invective and wisecrack, becomes uncertain; we feel that the language and the emotion have somehow drifted apart. This, for example:

> All that feverish failure of a man had to listen to him was a small, frightened boy. I spent hour upon hour in that tiny bedroom. He would talk to me for hours, pouring out all that was left of his life to one, lonely, bewildered little boy, who could barely understand half of what he said. All he could feel was the despair and the bitterness, the sweet, sickly smell of a dying man. You see, I learnt at an early age what it was to be angry—angry and helpless. And I can never forget it. I knew more about—love . . . betrayal . . . and death, when I was ten years old than you will probably ever know all your life.

This can, of course, be justified by reading such a passage as being in character; the slightly theatrical ring of the language then becomes the correlative of a false note in Jimmy's personality. But such critical rationalisation is alien to the mode of the play; we are not allowed to stand back and view it in an intellectual perspective, so urgently does it solicit us; we are immersed and kept immersed in the controlled violence of its emotional tides.

Another way of approaching the same point is through the character of Jimmy Porter. Blended with the intensity is a certain diffusion; as Osborne puts it, 'To be as vehement as he is is to be almost non-committal'. He is on the surface no angry young man raging in a void; on the contrary, he is given a plenitude of motives. For example:

(*a*) The unhappy childhood—illustrated in the quotation above.

(*b*) Class upheaval—too pervasive to need quotation.

(*c*) Sex-antagonism. 'Oh, it's not that she hasn't her own kind of passion. She has the passion of a python. She just devours me whole every time, as if I were some over-large rabbit, etc.'

(*d*) The rebel-without-a-cause motif. 'I suppose people of our generation aren't able to die for good causes any longer. We had all that done for us in the 'thirties and the 'forties, when we were still kids. There aren't any good, brave causes left.'

But this very profusion of motives defeats itself; we come to feel that they are not so much motives as symptoms, points of reference which characterise but do not explain. There is, consequently, a gap at the heart of the play; this gap may be a necessary part of Jimmy's character but one would like the play as a whole to

fill it in more adequately or, at least, to define its nature and boundaries more clearly.

The Entertainer is in many ways an advance on *Look Back In Anger*. Its defects are structural; the third act is incoherent and too crowded; complications like Archie's plan to remarry and the sacrifice of Billy Rice are introduced too late; the result is a kind of theatrical shorthand, notes for a play rather than the play itself. But this apart, the play reveals an extension of range in dealing with human relationships and a greater freedom in handling the ebb and flow of feeling. Osborne has brilliantly succeeded in controlling the tendency to theatricality which sometimes obtrudes in *Look Back In Anger* by making his characters 'really' theatrical so that the attitudes of the stage carry over into real life. At the same time the real human issues are reflected and commented on by the vaudeville acts which suddenly cut across the family scenes. This is a *tour de force*—it is Shakespeare's solution in *Richard II*. But it cannot be a permanent solution; the problem of reconciling intensity with inclusiveness, or depth with range, still remains. Meanwhile the intensity is in itself something to be grateful for.

So much has been written about Amis and especially about *Lucky Jim* that I shall say little here. My own feeling is that his second novel, *That Uncertain Feeling*, is the better book although formally it is less successful. It stands in relation to *Lucky Jim* as *The Entertainer* does to *Look Back In Anger*; it attempts more, promises more. One thing it promises is that Amis has in him the makings of a good, straight, realistic novelist. (One might add here that *Lucky Jim* is much less fantastic than most people took it to be. Funnier and more improbable things have happened at universities—Amis is, if anything, at times underplaying his hand.) Part of the reason for the success of *Lucky Jim* lies in the fact that a university is in many ways an enclosed, artificial society; granted this, the opportunities for satire and farce are more easily taken. But the society and the human relationships in *That Uncertain Feeling* are more complex; consequently the very presence of farce which acts as a unifying agent in *Lucky Jim* tends here to disrupt the novel. I am thinking particularly of the scene in which the hero escapes dressed up as a Welsh peasant woman; this is very funny in itself but it is discontinuous with the rest of the novel; one feels that Amis is simply doing what his audience, having applauded *Lucky Jim*, will expect of him.

While the attack on different forms of sham and humbug is shared by the two novels, *That Uncertain Feeling* scores by a closer and more loving attention to detail, a greater human warmth and by the greater possibilities opened up by the

characters. If one compares Gore-Urquhart, for instance, who is little more than a benevolent in *Lucky Jim*, with Gruffydd-Williams in *That Uncertain Feeling*, one sees the development. Gruffydd-Williams is delicately ambiguous; we are given one arc of his character and led to infer the rest of the circle; behind the simplicities of farce there lie other, darker and richer possibilities. Amis's concern with the aesthetics of power is, then, one promising line into the future. So, too, if we compare the heroes of the two books. John Lewis is much more interesting than Jim Dixon, he develops more and I am not using a cant phrase if I call this new interest a moral concern. For it is a new kind of moral complexity, over and above the simple satiric positives of good sense, decency and bluntness, which adds another dimension to Lewis so that the novel rightly and movingly culminates in his self-recognition:

> Then I thought of what I was going to do. Since I seemed to have piloted myself into the position of being immoral and moral at the same time, the thing was to keep on trying not to be immoral, and then to keep trying might turn into a habit. I was always, at least until I reached the climacteric, going to get pulled two ways, and keeping the pull from going the wrong way, would have to take the place, for me, of stability and consistency. Not giving up was the important thing.

This is the real conclusion of the novel; the last chapter is unfortunate and superfluous since we already know all that we need to know about John Lewis.

If Amis is a potentially serious writer, Wain, working also within the comic mode, has always displayed a more overt moral interest. The problem, therefore, of relating a comic circumference to a serious centre is for him more immediate and acute. The aims and methods of his first two books are best explained in his *Declaration* essay, in a passage which also reveals a critical awareness of his own limitations and suggests a possible way out:

> The technical problem most insistently present to my mind is that of tragi-comedy. In my first two novels, I made a fairly rough-and-ready attempt at the preservation of serious issues through the medium of very broad comedy, not to say outright farce. There was no attempt at delicate shading from one mood to another; on the contrary, it was the violent juxtaposition that made the effect, as far as I was concerned. The justification of this method, I thought, was its realism; 'life' is, notoriously, like that, always mingling the grotesquely comic with the sombre or even tragic. I am not sorry that I made these two attempts, but in future I want to achieve more of a compound, rather than a mixture, of elements. I still think that the novel, to get in a wide enough sweep of life, needs comic as well as sombre ingredients, but I find myself increasingly inclined to doubt whether art can afford to imitate life as directly as that; because our raw experience comes to us in unsorted lots, doesn't mean that when we come to interpret it imaginatively we should still keep it in the same jumble.

But it is not simply the problem of reconciling comedy and seriousness or farce and realism that faces him; one feels that in his first two books he has not completely identified for himself the centre of his moral interest. Thus the centre of *Hurry on Down* does not, to my mind, lie in its overt theme, Charles Lumley's efforts to achieve what he calls neutrality, but in a subsidiary passage which occurs when Lumley is about to leave Rosa:

> 'You sinned against me', her expression and stance told him. 'You injured me in the one way that can never be forgiven. Because, ultimately, you were committing the one great offence against a fellow-creature: you tried to use me. Not to give, not to combine, but to use me.'

At any rate, it is this theme which emerges centrally and triumphantly in his latest book, *The Contenders*. Another symptom of the same problem in his first two books is perhaps an over-explicitness in the way in which the protagonists recognise their own moral dilemma. Thus Charles Lumley:

> As ever, the serious point had emerged through the machinery of the ludicrous. His life was a dialogue, full of deep and tragic truths, expressed in hoarse shouts by red-nosed music-hall comics.

And thus Edgar Banks in *Living In The Present* (a passage which again expresses the moral centre of that book, revealing the basic oppositions upon which it is built):

> 'I have been reminded of a responsibility towards life', he wrote. 'Formerly aware of the responsibility of hatred. Now of the responsibility of good will.'
>
> Underlining this, he went on immediately: 'Dislike of Philipson-Smith (embodies evil) balanced by liking for Tom Straw (embodies good). Responsibility extending both ways?'

This schematic approach may in both cases be in character but one feels that this is a signpost for the reader as much as for the protagonists. Of the two books, *Living In The Present* is the less successful for several reasons. Its hero is a trickier and more extreme case to handle, the comic invention flags and the pace of the book is less interesting than that of *Hurry on Down* which combines an overall rapidity with some neatly arranged variations of tempo.

I have said nothing of Amis's third novel, *I Like It Here* and perhaps the less said the better. It is a lightweight, inferior piece of work, the result perhaps of the author keeping his hand in while preparing for better things. By contrast, Wain's third novel, *The Contenders*, is by far his best. It represents as great an advance over his earlier work as *The Great Gatsby*, say, does over Fitzgerald's first two novels. Moreover the advance is achieved in much the same way as in *The Great*

Gatsby, by the use of a narrator at once implicated in and detached from the main action. Like Nick Carraway, Joe Shaw serves as the entirely adequate instrument for focusing the moral issues of the book and like Nick, too, he develops while he observes so that we are prepared for his assumption of the central role at the end of the novel. It is easily the funniest of Wain's novels but the comedy is now perfectly integrated with the rest of the book. If one had to criticise, one might say that the balance between the two contenders is not as equal as it might be; the business man is not as solidly realised as the artist. But this is really a quibble; the book rings sound in its construction and in its maintained sureness of touch.

One conclusion that I hope emerges from this brief survey is that the diversity of talent, aims and methods exemplified by these three writers preclude any of the easy generalisations that have gone to make up the myth of the Angry Young Men. What they have in common is basic to all literature—a primary concern with human relationships. Perhaps this can be taken a little further; it is a concern for establishing and preserving genuine human relationships in a society twisted by humbug, petrified convention and fake values, a society in which people are used and exploited. It is the problem which confronts Mirabell and Millament in the fourth act of *The Way of The World* and while the façade of cant can be demolished by laughter it is not so easy to deal, simultaneously and in depth, with human relationships within the comic mode. This is perhaps why the human warmth of Osborne's plays is slightly at odds with the brilliance of the invective and why we may read the conclusions of, say, *Lucky Jim* and *Living In The Present* as simple and conventional happy endings. They are that but they also paradoxically represent a victory for the personal and the genuine in a world of convention, a world in uniform.

The myth of the Angry Young Man is part of this world; it has arisen, primarily I think, because of a confusion between the character of the writer and the nature of his personae. Because Wain actually does come from the Potteries, because John Osborne tells us all about his family in his *Declaration* essay, because Amis can in fact pull funny faces and is continually stalking various sacred cows through the groves of Academe, it would be naïve to assert any crude equivalence between the author and his work. Yet such a relationship is commonly asserted by people who should know better. In so far as these novels or plays are successful they are autonomous. To enlist them in the service of catch phrases, literary jargon or mythical abstractions is simply to be deaf to what they are really saying.

POETRY OF THE 'FIFTIES: IN AMERICA

CAROLYN KIZER

1. ELDERS AND BETTERS

First of all, imagine yourself multi-lingual: able to comprehend, short of difficulties with local dialects and the like, the poetry of eight or nine European countries; or, failing that, equipped with a kind of built-in U.N. instantaneous translating device which enabled you to leap from the Portuguese poet-laureate to the works of the leading Lithuanian man of letters, be-medalled for his latest epic on egg production. Then you sit down to write a survey of all this, conscientious as all get-out, but knowing, none the less, that a dozen people, at least as well-equipped as yourself, could write surveys of their own, employing casts of characters which would differ wildly from yours. (Though you would all use more or less the same leading men and ladies.) And they all might have equal importance and validity. Then you will have some idea of the difficulties involved in writing about American poetry. It is—as de Tocqueville noted—a big country.

And within this continent are many countries of the mind, and divers accents. There is New England, where God speaks only to Lowells, or so it sometimes seems. There is the country of Chicago-and-environs, sprawling away from the smoke-belt of the capital city to include the American version of pastoral. There is the Southland which, like Ireland, is deserted by its more sensitive inhabitants, who occupy Rome and Paris on their Fulbrights and Guggenheims. And the country of New York, small but populous, some of whose citizens have limited themselves to an underground, or subway, vocabulary almost incomprehensible outside the state; full of refugees from the intellectual aridity of the great open spaces who somehow manage to keep their own cadence in an alien land; and—as you may have heard—the country of San Francisco, full of bearded barbarians who stage shock raids on the countries of Chicago and New York. The tongue they

bellow is strange and unpleasant to the ears of sophisticates in these other states, but often their adolescent children seem to understand it perfectly, responding in rhythmic gutterals and bodily wiggles which shock their parents profoundly. There is a narrow but articulate state of poetry on the Northwest Pacific Coast, bordering on the barbarians, whose inhabitants speak a highly developed language, and regard the barbarians with some contempt, but no fear. And between most of these countries are vast stretches of nothing-in-particular, which serve only to make communication and comprehension even more difficult than it is already.

It would be nice if I could talk about the established American poets with whom you are familiar, in the way that one chatty cousin would write to another, catching them up on the family gossip:

'. . . Grandfather Frost is being most grandfatherly these days. He's not just a local institution any more, but an international one, *so* pleased about the simultaneous tributes from Oxford and Cambridge. Of course he is the one member of the family (perhaps excepting Aunt Marianne Moore) whom *everyone* can safely admire. But sometimes I feel that he has become too preoccupied with playing The Wise Old Man, New England version, and that he is in some danger of becoming his own mask. (You remember that Uncle Willie Yeats, of the Irish branch, used to warn us about that.) Of course, Grandfather Frost is still influential, but, on the whole, most of us feel that our other Grandfather, Wallace Stevens, whom we have lost, is really more of a living presence among us and our work.

'Dear Uncle "Doc" Williams has retired from the practice of medicine and isn't delivering babies any more. But he's "at home" to all his children and grandchildren, nieces and nephews, in Rutherford, New Jersey (not far from Paterson, and an easy bus-ride from New York). But most of us think of the Doctor as one of the young generation of poets, only more innocent, wiser and more kind than any of us have learned to be. So that I'll tell you more about him and his latest work a little later on . . . Uncle Ezra has been released from St. Elizabeth's Hospital, the U.S. Government relinquishing the Pound of flesh it exacted as payment for his war-time treason. It is ironic that a Jewish lawyer is partially responsible for having "sprung" this bird who sings in ideograms from his gilded cage. When you went to see him, it was sometimes difficult to tell The Coterie that huddled around him, from the other inmates. In fact, one wonders if his fans haven't done his reputation more harm than good . . .' I shall have to leave my letter, which has ceased being chatty, and is rushing headlong towards

polemic. But I cannot forbear to quote from one of Pound's offspring, who shall be mercifully nameless, who says that Ezra's adherence to Fascism is a 'moral blindness' that gives the *Pisan Cantos* 'tragic stature'. 'One thinks, for example, of Œdipus, Creon, or King Lear . . .' This silly spiritual child of Ez doesn't let himself see the distinction between 'moral blindness' in Shakespeare or Sophocles and 'moral blindness' in one of their creations. He goes on to say that Pound's fascist attitude is becoming more and more attenuated in the *Cantos*, and then remarks that the glorification of '"il Capo" (Mussolini?)' and '"Vidkun" (Quisling?)' in *Canto LXXIV* 'is therefore the more puzzling'. What is really puzzling is that drivel like the foregoing is printed with monotonous regularity in America's leading literary quarterlies.

Perhaps it's best not to try to return to my letter. Additional references, to 'Aunt Léonie' and 'Aunt Louise', might prove puzzling to some. Besides, we come, chronologically, to the poet, 'H.D.', who would, no doubt, indignantly disclaim any relationship to anybody, so that I can't very well make an honorary aunt out of her. Hilda Doolittle, born in 1886, whose *Selected Poems* appeared last year, after long silence, stands outside the main stream of American poetry. But this is not to denigrate her spare accomplishment, 'her spark of laurel', 'the Greekness of her song'—to paraphrase Stanley Kunitz. She demonstrates, even as Rolfe Humphries, the long resilience of the purely lyric. And I quote from 'Epitaph', the final poem in her collection:

So I may say,
'I died of living,
having lived one hour' . . .

so you may say,
'Greek flower; Greek ecstasy
reclaims forever

one who died
following
intricate song's lost measure'.

Continuing chronologically, we come to Marianne Moore, born a year later, our high priestess of pastiche. England has Edith Sitwell, her Delphic utterance and her wimple; we have Marianne Moore with her paste-up poem and her three-cornered hat. Both are overrated, and for similar reasons. Miss Moore, like Dame Edith, is a power in the world of letters. Her latest book, *Like a Bulwark*, was published in 1956. It consisted of eleven poems and eight pages of notes on the poems; and contains, like a glass case in the private museum of a sensitive

monomaniac, a number of interesting specimens. Take, for example, her poem on seeing *The Magic Flute* on television (according to a typical note, which is rather more exhaustive than the poetry): here we find Miss Moore at her best, and worst. Best first:

> . . . Near Life and Time
> in their peculiar catacomb,
> abalonean gloom
> and an intrusive hum
> pervaded the mammoth cast's
> small audience room.
> Then out of doors
> where interlacing pairs
> of skaters raced from rink
> to ramp, a demon roared
> as if down flights of marble stairs . . .

In spite of the capitalised words in the first line, which irresistibly suggest the Luce Publications of the same name, and the cliché of 'mammoth cast' (50 Beautiful Girls, Count 'em! 50!), this passage has the hallmark of her peculiar felicity: 'abalonean gloom' for example.

> . . . Banish sloth,
> fetter-feigning uncouth
> fraud. Trapper Love with noble
> noise, the magic sleuth,
> as bird-notes prove—
> first telecolor-trove—
> illogically wove
> what logic can't unweave:
> you need not shoulder, need not shove.

This is about as difficult to read as one of those juvenile tongue-twisters of the 'she sells sea-shells' variety including the last line, which almost impels the reader to say, 'you need not shoulder, need not *shave*', adding a wildly inappropriate note of masculinity to the stanza.

Most of the poems display Miss Moore's morality—religious, political and social—to good advantage. Of her famous poem about a race-horse, 'Tom Fool at Jamaica', she says, in the notes: '(I) got on with it (the poem) a little way, then realised that I had just received an award from Youth United for a Better Tomorrow and was worried indeed. I deplore gambling and had never seen a race . . .' But then she tells us that she read an interview with an announcer at Belmont Park, who said that the racing didn't make him nervous because, 'I'm relaxed, I'm confident and *I don't bet*'. (Italics mine.) So Miss Moore promptly installed the corpus of this sentiment in her poem. Morality wins by a nose! In

'Blessed is the Man' she distinguishes herself by being the only major poet now living who could incorporate some of President Eisenhower's prose in a poem while keeping a straight face. In the same poem, she says, 'Blessed, the unaccommodating man', which seems inappropriate in juxtaposition with the President, that symbol of the supremely accommodating man.

To sum up then: her metrical originality is undoubted, though the music of the metrics may be questioned. (She has said, 'I see no reason for calling my work poetry except that there is no other category in which to put it'.) Her vocabulary has the originality of a vigorous scholarship, but beyond these elegant specifics lurk the generalisations of a conventional mind. Her ideas have seemed original only because they are so unique in a poet. Poets usually resign themselves to, or from, the middle class; but Miss Moore is perfectly at home in it, as she browses on the plains of Madison and Pennsylvania Avenues, picking platitudes for thoughts.

Archibald MacLeish, five years younger than Miss Moore, has been a Public Man and a writer of propaganda (Librarian of Congress, Assistant Director of the Office of War Information, Assistant Secretary of State, etc.), but somehow not an accommodating man. At any rate, he has angered the fellowship of poets, in his time, by his belief that there are periods—particularly when the civilised values which have nourished the poet are threatened by intolerance or war—when the poet owes his first allegiance, not to his work, but to his world. His latest work, following a rather undistinguished book of poems, is the verse-play, *J.B.* (the Biblical Job), published this year, which John Ciardi, in *The Saturday Review*, has saluted as 'great poetry' and 'great drama'. This praise sounds like generous overstatement, from one poet deeply concerned with the human predicament, to another. Ciardi is too close to the play—and the play itself needs time, space, and a stage to reveal its quality. I shall quote a couple of passages from the Prologue, which seem to me to display the writing to its best advantage. Mr Nickles, a circus vendor, who assumes the mask of the Devil later in the Prologue while another vendor wears the mask of God (as Divine observers of Job's troubles, in a play-within-the-play), is speaking:

> *Dost thou know the time of the wild goats?*
> What human face knows time like that time?
> You'd need a face of fur to know it.
> Human faces know too much too little . . .

(Mr Zuss, the other vendor, says: 'It's God the Father I play—not/God the boiling point of water!')

Nevertheless the mask is imperative.
If God should laugh
The mare would calf
The cow would foal:
Diddle my soul . . .

This is a bit like Theodore Roethke ('A sneeze can't sleep./Diddle we care/ Couldly'), but as it seems certain that Roethke will never write a play, perhaps it is all to the good to have some of his techniques utilised by others.

In *The Atlantic Monthly* for January of this year, MacLeish writes on 'The Isolation of the American Artist'. He sees this isolation as largely self-imposed, the result of a revulsion from the political art of the 'thirties; but he emphasises his belief that the motives of the artist are aesthetic, rather than political. He stretches to overlook the withdrawal symptoms of writers and intellectuals during the reign of King McCarthy, in order to belabour the attitude that Art is 'a minor divinity which must have no traffic with one entire aspect of life', the political. I regard this as an attempt to justify the long sacrifice of his talents to various causes.

Earlier, MacLeish says that Europeans have a distorted view of American writers, who appear to them to live in a kind of domestic exile: 'There are . . . no American Goethes. There is not even an American Sartre. There are merely—or so it looks from overseas—a number of more or less isolated individuals living quite out of the stream of American life on an island somewhere or in a foreign country or a provincial town or even an insane asylum while the great republic speaks of itself to the world through its bankers and oilmen and corporation lawyers and generals.' If this is indeed the European's picture of the American intellectual, I am afraid it is closer to the truth than Mr MacLeish would have us believe. And —parenthetically—did you nod wisely at that reference to writers and insane asylums, and say to yourself, 'Ah yes, Uncle Ezra'? It is far worse than that. Many of our bravest and our best, whose lives are untarnished by the fascism and racism which make this, our Ezra, mad, go out of their lovely minds—or further into them—beyond the reach of our political society.

I shall not quarrel with MacLeish, but only remark that, during the last few decades, we have had tragic examples of the total or partial aphasia which descends on writers who have taken a public position on something or other—including the reduction of their theories about literature to a canon, which they then fired off in several directions—only to find that the Muse had gone on strike because she felt neglected. These strikes have been known to last for a generation, while the writer lives on, like Mr Forster, pitied and revered by his spiritual heirs.

One cannot blame writers who have observed these risks for not wanting to take them, and for believing that the writer's first responsibility to society is to write as well as he can. In this post-Freudian era, he may have to mutter such remarks to himself at regular intervals to quell his conscience, while knowing that his conscience can be wrong.

The foregoing remarks apply, in part, to the work of John Crowe Ransom—and how I wish they did not!—like Forster, one of the most distinguished of living artists, whose latest poem in his *Poems and Essays*, appeared almost 15 years ago. (Ransom is four years older than MacLeish, but I placed him here, for obvious reasons.) The body of his verse—or the verse for which he wishes to be remembered—consists of 44 poems dating from 1924. Still, one discusses Ransom in a piece on American poetry of the 'fifties because he is so highly influential as a poet, mentor, editor (of the *Kenyon Review*, which he is now quitting, to our sorrow) and critic. A sample of his influence—and samples are legion—is found in a recent poem of thirty-five-year-old Louis Simpson, highly praised: 'The True Weather for Women', part of which I quote:

> Young women in their April moodiness
> Complain of showers, for they cannot go
> Swimming, or to the courts to play tennis.
> But if they suffer from a gentle blow,
> What will the storm, the terror of saints, do?
> If April presses their green tenderness
> How will they stand the full weight of the snow?

This poem could hardly have been written if John Crowe Ransom had not existed:

> Practice your beauty, blue girls, before it fail;
> And I will cry with my loud lips and publish
> Beauty which all our power shall never establish,
> It is so frail.

Close by Ransom, I want to speak of John Peale Bishop, born in the same year as MacLeish; Phelps Putnam, born two years later; and Hart Crane and Allen Tate, both five years younger than Putnam, born within a few months of each other, in 1899. Of these, the first three are dead: Bishop of a heart attack in 1944 ('It is not too much to say that the war hastened his death'—Allen Tate); Putnam of a stroke in 1948, brought on by the asthma which laid him waste, and the alcohol he mistakenly used to alleviate his suffering ('In a new post-war America which seemed to be forgetting with terrifying rapidity the necessity of holding to the conception of "one world", if there were to be any world at all, Putnam felt that rebellion was no longer a function of the individual alone . . . he began to

speak of himself as a communist'—F. O. Matthiessen, a contemporary who committed suicide in 1950); Hart Crane, as is well known, died a suicide in 1932, by leaping into the Caribbean from the deck of a steamer ('Suicide was the sole act of will left to him . . . Crane was one of those men whom every age seems to select as the spokesmen of its spiritual life; they give the age away'—Allen Tate); Tate has written little poetry in recent years ('*More Sonnets at Christmas* continues his debate with himself, and expresses more compellingly than his directly political poems his misgivings as to the international role we are likely to play so long as we are complacently superior and possessed with "a faith not personal/As follows: The American people fully armed/With assurance policies, righteous and harmed,/ Battle the world of which they're not at all".'—F. O. Matthiessen).

This is a melancholy record, yet to American poets, a curiously exhilarating one, in many ways. All these men sustained wounds—mortal or nearly mortal—from our society. They fought back, sometimes with misplaced gallantry, in their poems and prose. A poem, or a whole career, might be as aborted as their struggle. Yet every man of them is a deep and continuing—sometimes subterranean, as in the case of Putnam—influence on American poetry today.

We are the men who died
Of self-inflicted woe,
Lovers whose stratagem
Led to their suicide.
I touched my sanguine hair
And felt it drip above
Their brother who, like them
Was maimed and did not bear
The living wound of love.

(The quotation is from Allen Tate's 'Seasons of the Soul', dedicated to the memory of John Peale Bishop.)

Death greets us all without civility
And every color of the sea is cold,
Even as now, when sensual greens advance
Under the contrary waves' propensity,
Toward desirable blues. The sea is old,
Severe and cold, secret as antiquity
Under the scud of time. And the sea rants,
Storm-crossed, thunder-tossed,
Yet has a poetry so profound
That none but the unwaxed ear to the mast bound
Should hear it, or it may be the lost
Long-listening bodies of the drowned.

(From 'A Subject of Sea Change', by John Peale Bishop.)

. . . Out of some subway scuttle, cell or loft
A bedlamite speeds to thy parapets,
Tilting there momently, shrill shirt ballooning,
A jest falls from the speechless caravan.

Down wall, from girder into street noon leaks,
A rip-tooth of the sky's acetylene;
All afternoon the cloud-flown derricks turn.
Thy cables breathe the North Atlantic still . . .

Again the traffic lights that skim thy swift
Unfractioned idiom, immaculate sigh of stars,
Beading thy path—condense eternity:
And we have seen night lifted in thine arms.

Under thy shadows by the piers I waited;
Only in darkness is thy shadow clear.
The City's fiery parcels all undone,
Already snow submerges an iron year . . .

(Lines from 'To Brooklyn Bridge', by Hart Crane.) Of these three quotations, the first might be familiar to readers of poetry, the second less so, and the third, of course, the most familiar of all. But the works of Phelps Putnam: ten poems contained in *The Five Seasons*, published in 1931, never re-issued, un-anthologised, and unobtainable, remain a secret weapon in the hands of a few of the best poets of our day: Theodore Roethke and Richard Wilbur are two of them. 'Words of an Old Woman', the first poem in the book, has marked the four poems, 'Meditations of an Old Woman', Roethke's most recently published work. Horace Gregory pointed out Putnam's influence on Wilbur's 'A Voice From Under the Table', which marks a turning-point in Wilbur's work, although I find it difficult to tell whether the influence is Putnam, or Putnam via Roethke. I wish I could quote in full Putnam's two best poems, 'Bill Gets Burned', and 'Hasbrouck and the Rose', both to ensure their wider reading, and to obtain printed copies for myself. But I will quote only from the beginning and ending of both poems:

Bill Williams was in Hell without a guide
And wandering around alone and cold,
Hoping for fires, for he said, 'The name
of Hell is not enough to keep the old
Place dignified without a flame'.
Bill was a hero, so he wandered on . . .
. . . And Bill had found some fires in Hell;
His brain was scorched and all his flesh
Was cowardly with burns. And now
The female moon appeared, whose calendar
Is marked with blood, and lighted him away . . .
(He) took a taxi to the city where
He had a room engaged by telegraph,

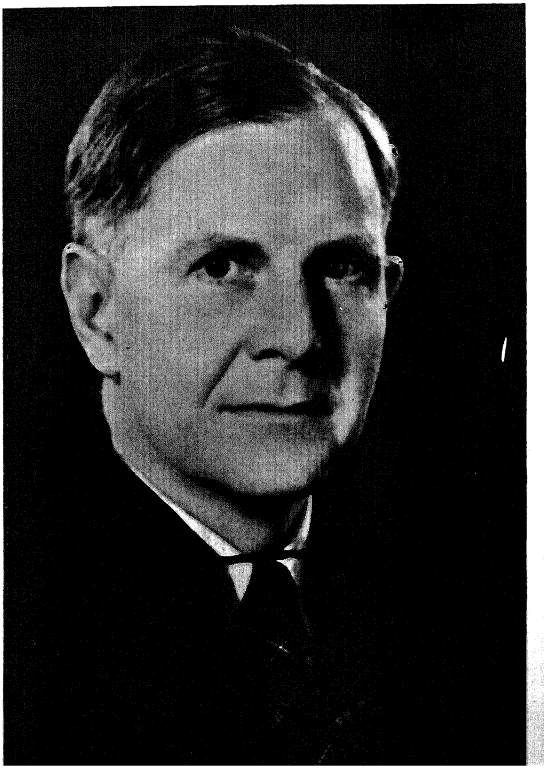
AMERICAN

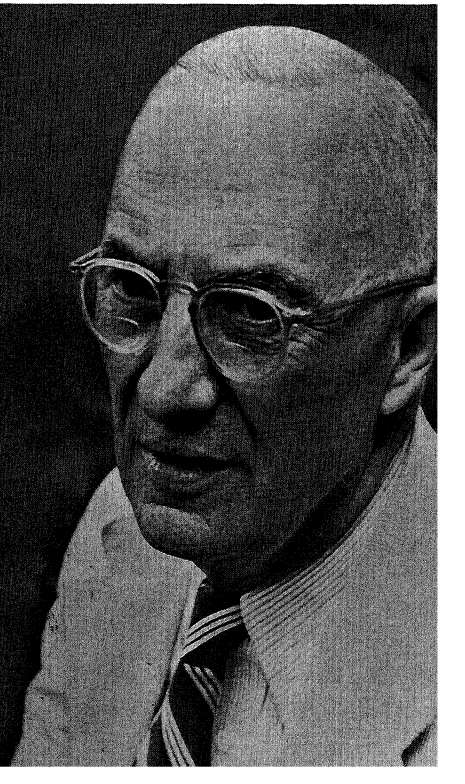
POETS

on this and the

following three pages

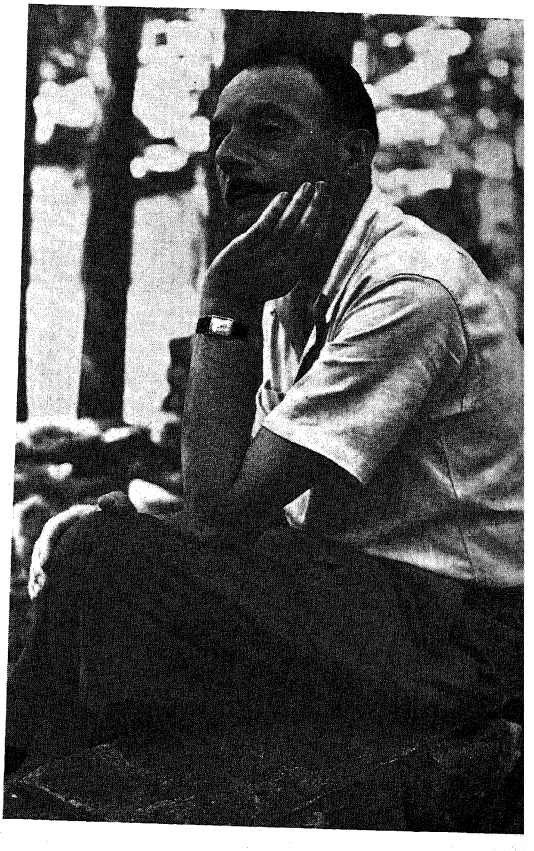
LEFT: Marianne Moore
BOTTOM LEFT: John Crowe Ransom
BELOW: William Carlos Williams

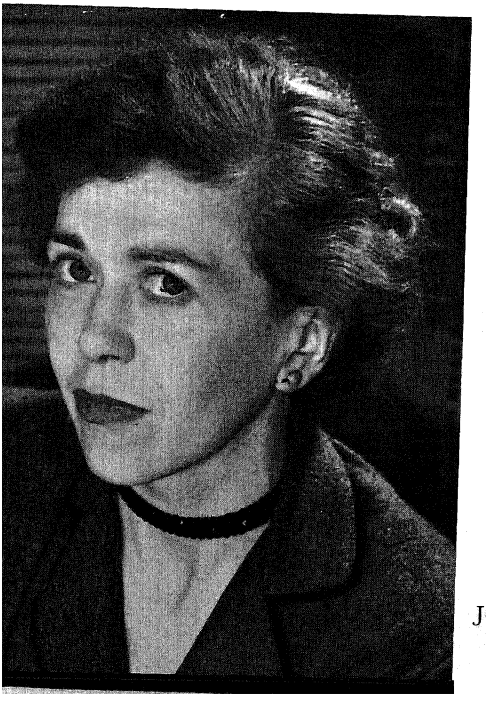




Isabella Gardner

Stanley Kuni



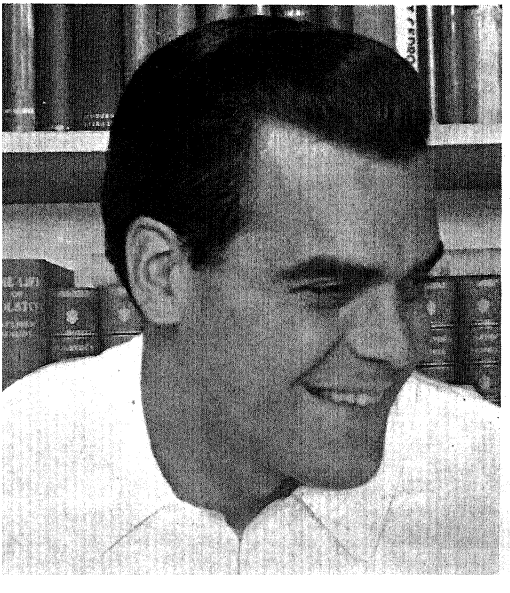


Jean Garrigue

William E. Stafford

Robert Lowell

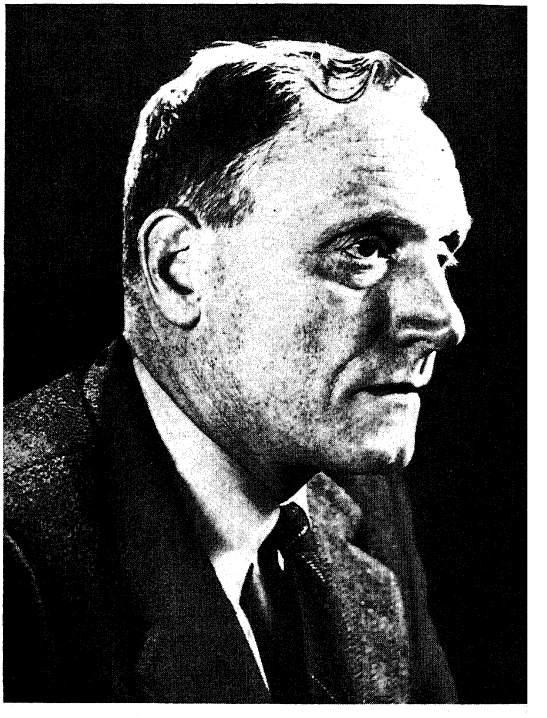
David Wagoner

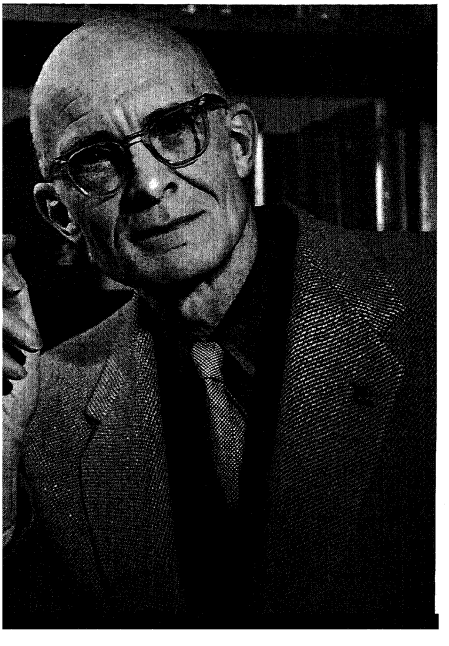


Richard Wilbur

Theodore Roethke

Robert Penn Warren





Rolfe Humphries

And lay awake all night and suffered there.
('Bill Gets Burned')
Hasbrouck was there and so were Bill
And Smollet Smith the poet, and Ames was there.
After his thirteenth drink, the burning Smith
Raising his fourteenth trembling in the air,
Said, 'Drink with me, Bill, drink up to the Rose' . . .

There is an argument between Smith and Hasbrouck, and Hasbrouck finally says:

'In Springfield, Massachusetts, I devoured
The mystic, the improbable, the Rose.
For two nights and a day, rose and rosette,
And petal after petal and the heart,
I had my banquet by the beams
Of four electric stars which shone
Weakly into my room, for there,
Drowning their light and gleaming at my side,
Was the incarnate star
Whose body bore the stigma of the Rose.
And that is all I know about the flower;
I have eaten it—it has disappeared.
There is no Rose.'
Young Smollet Smith let fall his glass; he said
'Oh Jesus, Hasbrouck, am I drunk or dead?'
('Hasbrouck and the Rose')

The marvellous toughness of this verse invariably sends chills up poets who read it for the first time. Though such writing is rare always—by toughness, I don't mean vulgarity, profanity, or slang, though they may help to express it, but a kind of intellectual rigour, hard-boiled but at the same time compassionate: the direct confrontation of ugliness, or death, without flinching—there are, I believe, more examples of it in American poetry than in English poetry. Only Louis MacNeice to my knowledge has the quality I'm attempting to describe. But there are poems by Rolfe Humphries, Louise Bogan and Yvor Winters—all of whom will soon be up to bat—that have this quality in every line.

e. e. cummings, born in the same year as Putnam, probably thinks he is tougher than he is. He can be merely vulgar, profane or slangy, with a soft centre, like—to use one of his favourite words—candy. He must believe that it is 'tough' to be anti-Semitic, or he would drop the pose. (cummings, though he has expressed his horror of totalitarianism, and Catholicism, has something in common with Roy Campbell, who thought that his admiration of Franco made him more of a he-man.) cummings is a kind of Archipenko of poets; like the sculptor, he demonstrated revolutionary theories about his art in the 'twenties, and had a shattering

impact; but ultimately, his art is more valuable for what it has taught others than for its own sake. cummings has been his own dead end: unable to escape his own influence, he has gone on repeating himself, with increasing monotony, for a number of years. The poets who have profited most from cummings have been those who have utilised his stream-of-consciousness technique, the wild juxtapositions based on verbal associations, without adopting either his aesthetics or his metrics. But this has struck me as being true of most apprenticeships: obviously the slavish disciples don't get very far, while the poet who is true to his own ear and his own ideal can absorb liberal doses of other poets to enlarge his vocabulary and enrich his work.

II. BROTHERS AND SISTERS

So much for the accepted idols. Now we come to a cluster of poets, none of whom is better known than he should be. Most of them deserve their laurels, and would wear them with an air, but do not repine while waiting for the Zeitgeist to catch up with them: they are a productive lot, on the whole. Though their Selected and Collected works are not large, Yvor Winters, Louise Bogan and Léonie Adams are such scrupulous craftsmen that they no doubt withhold poems that other poets would cheerfully print, and spend the time it takes to write five poems in perfecting one. But so much of their work has a richness of texture—by which I do not mean the lavish use of multiple adjectives, but the choice of the reverberating, or even detonating, word—and an emotional density that makes their poetic output seem larger than it is.

Rolfe Humphries, poet and classical scholar, has published six volumes of poetry; and his collected poems include another volume's worth of new work. His translations, of Ovid, Virgil and Lorca, are poetic re-creations of the same high order as the translations of Richmond Lattimore. He is one of the finest prosodists alive, and moves in the verbal maze of classical Welsh metres (as in *Green Armor on Green Ground*, his latest book of poems) without hesitation and without strain. Like Auden, he has an ebullient mastery of the range of poetic discipline; he absorbs conventional technical difficulties, and then throws in a few more of his own, just for the fun of it. But rather than display his classic form, I choose to show him cantering in the American idiom—in the best American tradition, he is nourished both by his European past and his country of birth. (Humphries, as a devotee of the race-track, ought to like that horsy metaphor.) These are lines

from 'Variations on a Theme by e. e. cummings':

'What becomes of those who are not artists?'
'Nothing becomes of them. They don't become.'
Blind to the motion of the dancing atoms,
Deaf to the music of the spheres. And dumb.

What becomes of lugubrious neurotics?
Nothing. They scream in their cages, day and night,
Expressing themselves like parrots or hyenas,
Rattle the bars, and want to get out and bite . . .

What becomes of the hypocrites and cowards
Afraid to face the enemy within?
Nothing. They go to the wars, and come home pious
Community bores, who perish in their sin.

What becomes of all of the jerks and phonies?
Nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing at all.
Fame's incorruptible silence passes over
Their bandaged eyes, and their backs against the wall . . .

In my paean to toughness, I had forgotten that Humphries defines its values beautifully in his poem, 'Green Mountain Seminary'. The poem begins with a lyric-ironic description of a school for young ladies who are protected from masculinity: 'Where only humble males/Tend car and furnace' . . . The young girls are lying in the grass:

Europa's innocence,
That heat of Pasiphae's
Dispelled in thoughtful speech,
Gone, to the wide air given.

Yard where no snow-white bull,
With swollen dewlap, goes
Meekly over the green,
Garlanded, bright of horn:
O Majesty! O Love! . . .
Safe in their good behaviour . . .

Pity. Reject. And praise
The parlor by the track,
The simple fuchsia grown
Beneath the shade half-down;
And praise the railroad yard,
And praise the railroad whores:
Praise ugliness for once,
All that is barren, real,
All that is tough and hard.

From this, I will move immediately to Louise Bogan's 'Several Voices Out of a Cloud':

Come, drunks and drug-takers; come, perverts unnerved!
Receive the laurel, given, though late, on merit; to whom
and wherever deserved.

Parochial punks, trimmers, nice people, joiners true-blue,
Get the hell out of the way of the laurel. It is deathless
And it isn't for you.

And this, the beginning of her 'Single Sonnet':

Now, you great stanza, you heroic mould,
Bend to my will, for I must give you love:
The weight in the heart that breathes, but cannot move,
Which to endure flesh only makes so bold . . .

And this, from 'Kept':

Time for the wood, the clay,
The trumpery dolls, the toys
Now to be put away:
We are not girls and boys.

What are these rags we twist
Our hearts upon, or clutch
Hard in the sweating fist?
They are not worth so much . . .

The dreadful painted bisque
Becomes our very cheek.
A doll's heart, faint at risk,
Within our breast grows weak.
Our hand the doll's, our tongue.

Time for the pretty clay,
Time for the straw, the wood.
The playthings of the young
Get broken in the play,
Get broken, as they should.

I know of no living poet who speaks for herself so well, or needs so little assistance from critics and enthusiasts. All that is necessary is to read the work. But in spite of the fact that her *Collected Poems: 1923-1953* shared the Bollingen Prize with Léonie Adams's *Poems*, in 1954, too many people know her name without knowing her work. They know she is the poetry critic for *The New Yorker*; they know that she is distinguished and respected, but they haven't really read her, or comprehended the magnitude of her achievement. Perhaps she has simply been overlooked, in a time when noise-makers and self-advertisers tend to dominate the systems of communication. But history—if we go on affording the luxury of having it—will be kind and fair to her, as she has been to other poets, the neglected, and the young.

'Yvor Winters . . . has held to unpopular modes of expression in poetry and criticism for a long time. He has clung to what often seemed crotchets, in a time particularly unfriendly . . . to displays of determined individuality. His poetry,

which at the start adhered to the severest tenets of Imagism, refused to break up and deliquesce when Imagism went into a decline. It turned back, instead, to the stylistic severities of the seventeenth century.' That passage is from *Selected Criticism* (published in 1955), by Louise Bogan. She adds that Winters' continuing to exist as a poet, and persisting in his way of writing, is proof that 'as a people we can produce untouchable probity and distilled power in the most unlikely times'. But times change, or at least time passes, and on the publication of Winters' *Collected Poems*, even critics who thought they disliked his work found themselves praising it. However, it is only fair to note—as I dread the dull thud of the reader who returns to my maculate prose—that some of the resistance to Mr Winters' poetry has resulted from certain cavils at his critical pronouncements. As Arnold Stein remarked, 'Winters has the kind of mind that thinks it can bestow passing or failing grades on other poets'. He is famous for his check-lists of nonentities who are candidates for his regal laureateships, for ignoring greater men, or shoving them, pell-mell into the gnarled, Procrustean framework of his theory.

And many of his disciples are no credit to him—but how often that is the case! —ponderous, academic, picayune, and metrically uninteresting. But to illustrate the truth that the master may lay down the law to his disciples, and then break it himself while they remain bound, let me quote from a new poem which shows that Winters, too, can be tough, gamy and realistic. These are the last stanzas of 'A Dream Vision' which just appeared in the *Hudson Review*:

I had grown away from youth,
Shedding error where I could;
I was now essential wood,
Concentrating into truth;
What I did was small but good.

Orchard tree beside the road,
Bare to core, but living still!
Moving little was my skill.
I could hear the farting toad
Shifting to observe the kill,

Spotted sparrow, spawn of dung,
Mumbling on a horse's turd,
Bullfinch, wren, or mockingbird
Screaming with a pointed tongue
Objurgation without word.

Let us hope his disciples catch up with him. But even so, they may perform a function as repositories of tradition, in the way of the medieval monks. Perhaps

they may think of themselves as dams protecting the cultivated land from the overflowing drains of the San Francisco poets.

Léonie Adams is about the same age as Winters, and her work is also related to seventeenth-century lyricism, but her virtues are very much her own. Nature is usually the springboard for her metaphysical leaps. Her dramatisations of the struggles between flesh and spirit, or spirit and ego, belong to an earlier dialectic:

> Never taste that fruit with the soul
> Whereof the body may not eat,
> Lest flesh at length lay waste the soul
> In its sick heat.

In 'Bird and Bosom—Apocalyptic', the spirit, 'Turning within the body', said:

> 'The swan, they say,
> An earthly bird,
> Dies all upon a golden breath,
> But here is heard
> Only the body's rattle against death.'
> And cried, 'No way, no way!'
> And beat this way and that upon the flesh.

The thudding of that line, like the thud of the spirit bird against its case, has haunted me for a long time. Though not wholly in sympathy with the conceptual either-or of the poem, I can only admire the way in which the words do the work they were intended to do.

J. V. Cunningham, the Shakespearean scholar, has not published a book recently, and has not written a great deal at any time. But he should be mentioned, if only because he is so often overlooked by critics and anthologists. Not by poets. I quote from the last stanza of his poem, 'The Metaphysical Amorist':

> Plato! you shall not plague my life.
> I married a terrestrial wife.
> And Hume! she is not mere sensation
> In sequence of observed relation.
> She has two forms—ah, thank you, Duns!—,
> I know her in both ways at once.
> I knew her, yes, before I knew her,
> And by both means I must construe her,
> And none among you shall undo her.

Elizabeth Bishop, who is Cunningham's age, was born in Nova Scotia and lives in Latin America, but is unmistakably American for all that. Unlike Cunningham, she has been praised by a chorus of critics, 'singing, cheek to cheek'—to quote Theodore Roethke (who happened to be praising his wife, not Miss Bishop). Her two best-known poems, 'The Fish', and 'Roosters', appear so frequently in recent anthologies that I forbear to quote them. Instead, I will give a sample of 'Invita-

tion to Miss Marianne Moore'—the invitations have obviously been wingingin both directions, as Miss Moore is an acknowledged influence, though Bishop at her most musical is more so than Moore:

> From Brooklyn, over the Brooklyn Bridge, on this fine morning,
> please come flying . . .
> Come with the pointed toe of each black shoe
> trailing a sapphire highlight,
> with a black capeful of butterfly wings and bon-mots,
> with heaven knows how many angels all riding
> on the broad black brim of your hat,
> please come flying.
>
> Bearing a musical inaudible abacus,
> a slight censorious frown, and blue ribbons,
> please come flying.
> Facts and skyscrapers glint in the tide; Manhattan
> is all awash with morals this fine morning,
> so please come flying.
>
> Mounting the sky with natural heroism,
> above the accidents, above the malignant movies,
> the taxicabs and injustices at large,
> while horns are resounding in your beautiful ears
> that simultaneously listen to
> a soft uninvented music, fit for the musk deer,
> please come flying . . .
>
> We can sit down and weep; we can go shopping,
> or play at a game of constantly being wrong
> with a priceless set of vocabularies,
> or we can bravely deplore, but please
> please come flying . . .

This gives you an idea of her metrical originality, her—as she says—priceless vocabulary, and the always fresh and sometimes breezy quality of her language. It is also a marvellously loving, exact and gently ironic Portrait of the Artist, herself as well as Miss Moore.

I shall wind up this section by discussing Robert Fitzgerald as the last in a fairly long line of what might be called 'impeccable poets': Humphries, Bogan, Winters, Adams, Cunningham, Bishop; and then touch briefly on three unimpeccable ones, T. H. Ferril, Winfield Townley Scott, and John Holmes. They don't really belong here, but, frankly, I have no other place to put them, and they deserve attention: they belong in this age-group, they have the authentic American, and regional accent, and all three have a warm, affirmative vitality that is sometimes lacking in their marmoreal peers. But first, Fitzgerald:

He is, like Rolfe Humphries, a classical scholar: his recent book, *In the Rose of Time*, includes translations of Virgil, Horace, Catullus, Villon; and there is, of course, his translation, with Dudley Fitts, of the Œdipus cycle. Again, like Humphries—though he is sixteen years younger, and the oversight is less appalling in his case—he is not represented in many anthologies. The poem, 'Mementoes', is a long, lyric farewell to an earlier America, its sights, sounds and odours, by a man who has all his senses about him. Part I is a reminiscence of 'inland cities on the rivers', 'mustachioed/Entrepreneurs with golden fobs/Brisk on the cobbles'; moves to locomotive smoke, 'Trainmen and rangeriders', 'the silent noon of desert towns', the badman 'Out of the badlands, wiping his mouth'; and the purely descriptive becomes mixed with literature and sub-literature, and the folk-myth:

Goodbye, you fast thumbs on the six-gun,
Knee-ers and rabbit-punchers, dusty
Bastards in from the plains with pay;
Goodbye Belle and Jenny and Mister
LaPorte from St. Louis with yellow vests;
Goodbye to buckboards and Winchesters,
To the hobbled ponies, the trading post.
Cody pray for us; Wister, bless us;
So long, strangers, so long.

Part II shifts immediately to 'Patent leathers and white kid gloves', the elegant, upper-class world of Henry James' novels, from the vitality, reek and bustle of the raw American industrial city and western frontier; and the abruptness is justified by the real and deep split in American consciousness: Whitman versus Poe, Twain against James, the energy of the American mass as opposed to the elegance of a tiny, cultivated but naïve would-be American upper class:

Milly and Daisy and Henrietta
And Isabel, beauties, pray for us
In your fresh heaven, on those lawns
By Thames under the copper beaches,
Behind the iron gates in ducal
Shadow: ambassadors! At Venice
Where the old and weary and splendid
Spiders of the world devoured you . . .
. . . you masks
At operas and marriages,
Matriarchs with knobby canes,
Goodbye, goodbye gentlewomen.

And I had wondered how to make the transition from Fitzgerald to Ferril! It is made. Thomas Hornsby Ferril comes as close to belonging to the American frontier as Fitzgerald does to the disciplines and classicism of James. He lives in Denver, edits, with his wife, *The Rocky Mountain Herald*, a unique newspaper which

maintains the chatty, 'it's all in the family' tone of much American journalism in the previous century. When the paper receives ecstatic notices in national publications, Ferril is flooded with subscriptions from the 'outside', and is forced to turn them down, not being able to afford the expense of running an international journal. In spite of the sour wit who wrote, 'Thomas Hornsby Ferril/Should go over Niagara Falls without a barrel', he has written some fine poems, permeated with the qualities of the Western landscape. He has also just won $10,000 for the best play 'based on the discovery of gold in America', which is in blank verse. It concerns Silverheels, a dance-hall girl who helped the Colorado miners during a smallpox epidemic. So he ought to be able to overlook a good deal of destructive criticism.

John Holmes, born in 1904, is eight years younger than Ferril, and his colloquialisms are of the Eastern rather than the Western seaboard. His poetry has grown steadily, but appreciation of his work has lagged far behind its growth. His chief limitation: a faulty ear which betrays him into flatness, and an unexciting vocabulary. His chief virtues: a persistent love for human beings and the human drama, which is a part of his emotional maturity, a nice, spare original way of looking at things, and a cool, realistic yet affectionate appraisal of himself and his limitations. Instead of quoting an entire poem, I'll give some lines from 'The Modern Poet', and 'Interruption', to give you an idea of his qualities:

I hear five thousand miles, but travel
One square mile of good and evil
At any time, barefoot on gravel . . .

I'm from a long line of small heroes, rage
Bites me, contempt and hope, and I bite back.
In my country the imperfect is always with us,
The impatient learning patience, the middle-aged
With night coming and the intended work not done . . .

Winfield Townley Scott, like Holmes, was born in New England, educated in New England, and has lived there most of his life. Like Holmes, he is living evidence that stuffiness is not always the end-product of this environment. (Evidence to the contrary is not going to be made apparent in this review.) This is part of his poem, 'Mrs Severin':

Mrs Severin came home from the Methodist Encampment,
Climbed naked to the dining room table and lay down.
She was alone at the time but naturally told of it afterward.
'Lord! Lord!' she had called out. 'Thou seest me. Wherein
is my fault?'
When she heard of it, second-hand, Mrs Bashfield laughed till she cried,
'My God!' she said, 'I'd like to've watched her getting up there!'

For Mrs Severin, you see, was a very stout old lady,
A spilling mass by buttons, shawls, pins and ribboned eyeglasses
held together . . .
The husband long gone who wasted her inheritance; the irritable
children
Who hated to have her now; the friends who took her in
now and again: gone.
Here in her false hair and hand-me-downs, patiently talking—
talking:
Old Mrs Severin who once, brave on a dining-room table,
naked confronted her unanswering Lord.

The poets so far discussed: (1) have been highly influential at one time, but are less so now, or (2) have influenced, and will continue to influence, each other, or (3) are out of the main stream, but represent certain values too important to overlook. Here I expect the influential dead, like Crane and Stevens in a broad sense, and Putnam in a narrow one. The next section deals with poets who are influencing their juniors, and who will, I believe, affect the coming generation of poets, and a few very recent poems by very recent poets, who are the Influenced.

III. TWO WORLDS AND THEIR WAYS

So far, this account has been roughly chronological: I omitted William Carlos Williams from *Elders and Betters* because he is Younger and Better. I omitted Stanley Kunitz (born 1905), Robert Penn Warren (1905), Richmond Lattimore (1906) and Theodore Roethke (1908) from *Brothers and Sisters*. Now I add two ladies, born some time later: Jean Garrigue and Isabella Gardner; three men: John Berryman, Robert Lowell and Richard Wilbur who are the prize-winners, the laurel-gatherers, of today; and two young poets whom I pick as winners of tomorrow, David Wagoner and William Stafford.

Dr Williams, who is 75 this year, has been publishing poetry for fifty years. In 1954 and 1955, *The Desert Music and Other Poems* and *Journey to Love* were published, a real break-through in style: Williams's concept of 'the variable foot' developed in *Paterson, Book II*, is brought to its fullest, most limpid form in the poem 'Asphodel, that greeny flower'. For Dr Williams, 1957 was a vintage year: it saw the publication of his *Selected Letters* and sixty-one of his *Lost Poems*. This year, he has a small book, a jewel in content, format, type and jacket design: *I Wanted to Write a Poem*. It is based on a unique idea, which might be called autobiographical bibliography, if that weren't such a mouthful: Dr Williams and the editor of the book, Edith Heal, simply carried on a conversation about every one of his pub-

lished works, taking each book from the shelf in chronological order (from his wife's collection, the only complete one in existence). Dr Williams's comments on a lifetime of work are printed in full, with his wife's asides in smaller type. I hope that this plan—which seems to me to verge on genius—will be carried out with other writers (or even painters).

Dr Williams has won just about every American literary prize available except the Pulitzer. One hopes it will come in time.

Stanley Kunitz might, in a sense, be called one of the twice-born. His first book, *Intellectual Things* (1930), and his second, *Passport to the War* (1944), are almost collectors' items. Both received the most discriminating kind of critical acclaim: 'Stanley Kunitz now enters the small group of the very best poets writing in America'—Mark Schorer; '(Kunitz's) poems are still among the few things done in my generation which stay alive in my mind . . . a couple of things by Tate, a couple by Crane, a few more by Louise Bogan and by J. V. Cunningham, and you would have my list'—Yvor Winters (no nonentities here). But praise was followed by almost a decade of silence. Then, within the last few years, Kunitz's dense, beautiful, passionate poems, with their tragic sensibility and their Renaissance intellectuality, began to appear once more in America's leading literary magazines, along with articles and reviews. Small references to him crop up in articles about other people, letters to editors, and correspondence between poets. It almost seems as if there has been some significant shift in taste since the end of the war which is creating a climate more hospitable to Kunitz and his poetry. For, except for the critic's approval, his second book—fully equal in quality to his first—was largely ignored and quickly remaindered. His poems have always made strenuous demands—both intellectual and emotional—on the reader, and perhaps the reader wasn't up to it. That war-time slogan, 'Give Till it Hurts!' —well, a great many did give a good deal, at least in terms of psychic energy, and they *did* get hurt. But the post-war weariness has merged gradually with the newer tensions of time, space and atoms. A poet of apocalypse like Kunitz may be coming into his own. His *Selected Poems* are being published simultaneously in America and Britain this fall. I commend the book to you.

Words for the Wind, Theodore Roethke's selected poems, appeared in England late last year, and received uniformly serious, if not wholly favourable, attention. The book is appearing in the United States this year; and I expect that there will be a good deal more hat-tossing and loud cheering on our side of the Atlantic. Roethke is a poet who should not be reviewed by people as unfamiliar with his

poetic development as many of the English reviewers seemed to be. And it is probably safe to say that there is hardly a competent critic in the United States who is not thoroughly cognizant of his attainments over the years. My own opinion, which is shared by many of them, is that Roethke has made the most significant contribution to the form and content of poetic language since Yeats and Joyce. Superficial readers of Roethke may misinterpret this remark: I am not referring to Roethke's adaptation of some Yeatsian rhythms—which he freely acknowledges: 'I take this cadence from a man named Yeats;/I take it, and I give it back again'—but that he has pushed forward, beyond Yeats, to pioneer and lay claim to areas of sensibility unexplored by previous poets. Roethke has been a poet in pursuit of essences, rooting towards the origins of the human species, in love with, and identifying towards the animal-vegetable-mineral world, the ambience of growing forms, the groping, the blind, the mute. He is the supremely sensual man, full of lust of the eye and spirit. Much of his poetry becomes metaphysical, in the literal interpretation of that word: like St. Augustine, it is his intense, extreme and elaborate awareness of the physical-sensual world that enables him, finally, to transcend it. Like Joyce, he can use the primitive vocabulary of the unconscious, the verbal tricks of dream, and the wild, revealing associative processes of early childhood. (I should probably say here that Roethke has not read Joyce or Jung; and that, in 1952, after all his long poems exploring a child's history of consciousness had appeared, he was discovered in a Morris chair by a friend, with a copy of Freud's *Basic Writings* on one arm, his book, *Praise to the End!*, on the other, and his notebook on his lap, checking references, and chortling to himself, 'I was right! I was right!') But he always exerts conscious and formal control over the material from the unconscious, calculating his effects and disciplining his energies.

In his late work, the poems move from childhood into love (Roethke married in 1953, when he was forty-five years old, and there is a five-year honeymoon of poems to show for it), thus returning to a more formal mode. A section of the new work is devoted to 'Voices and Creatures'; a section is written 'In Memoriam: W. B. Yeats'; and the final part contains the 'Meditations of an Old Woman', which was written as a memorial to his mother, under circumstances of deep emotional stress, and may lack the sureness and compression of other work, though it contains passages as marvellous as anything he has written. But the love poetry is a supreme accomplishment. As I feel sure that Stanley Kunitz's 'Open the Gates' is the best brief lyric written by an American, I am convinced

that Roethke's title poem, 'Words for the Wind', is the finest love poem written in the twentieth century.

Robert Penn Warren, whose book, *Promises, Poems 1954-1956*, has just won the National Book Award, and is likely to win the Pulitzer Prize,* is a former disciple of the Fugitive group, to whom I referred earlier, though not by that name, because I wished to emphasise a cluster of poets united by friendship, mutual influence, and the post-mortem loyalties called forth by neglected talent, social pressure, and premature death. Ransom was the leader of the Fugitives who flourished in Nashville in the early twenties. Tate was the oldest disciple, and Warren, six years Tate's junior, seems to be the longest lasting. Warren's first book did not appear until 1935, when he was forty (Roethke's first book, *Open House*, came out when he was thirty-three), followed by his *Selected Poems, 1923-1943*, published in 1944. During these years he was also producing distinguished novels, *Night Rider, At Heaven's Gate, All the King's Men, World Enough and Time* and *Band of Angels*, as well as a collection of brilliant short stories called *Circus in the Attic*. Thus Warren is the only mature American poet of high quality who is also an important novelist. I suppose parallels with Robert Graves might be made, but I'm inclined to think that Warren takes his novels more seriously, and his poetry less seriously, than Graves.

There are a few young people coming along—novelists who write poems, poets who write novels, poets who write books which are called novels, and so on—for example, Randall Jarrell, whose *Pictures from an Institution* (1954), an alleged novel, was in fact a brilliant, epigrammatic series of flash-backs on his experience teaching in a women's college. But his poetry seems to have dwindled, both in quantity and quality, though his criticism maintains the high level established in *Poetry and the Age*. Howard Nemerov, whose book of poems, *Mirrors and Windows*, is also being published this year, produced a novel in 1957 called *The Homecoming Game*, about a professor and a football player. It was well received on the whole, but I found it trivial and pedestrian. Here again, much of his criticism is superb. David Wagoner, who is serious about poetry, and is becoming serious about his novels, published his second book of poems, *A Place to Stand*, in June, followed, in August, by his third novel, *Rock*. He doesn't write criticism. His new poems have power, intensity and range; his ear is exceptional, his formal problems are well under control, and there would seem to be a lot more poems where these came

* Since this article was written Robert Penn Warren *has* won the Pulitzer Prize for poetry. The Pulitzer Prize for fiction was also won by a poet, the late James Agee, for his novel, *A Death in the Family*.

from. He looks like the most likely candidate for a turn on the high wire after Warren, balancing a stack of poems in one hand and a pile of novels in the other. James B. Hall writes rather sensitive short fiction in close-to-poetic language, but his actual poetic output is small. There must be a lesson here somewhere.

Richmond Lattimore is another classical scholar who doubles in poetry. He is probably the most accomplished and creative translator in America. I wouldn't be surprised if he were the best alive, excepting that quiet genius, Arthur Waley. Among his verse translations are *The Odes of Pindar*, *The Iliad*, and Aeschylus's *Oresteia*. However, unlike Humphries and Fitzgerald, he comes late to his own poetry: his first book, *Poems*, came out last year, when he was 51. Mr Lattimore is a beautiful poet. There is nothing thin, academic or pedestrian about his work. Obviously, he was never one of those wistful men who became translators by default, furtively scribbling anaemic little verses in the margins of their texts. His superb translations exist because he was a good poet all the time.

John Berryman's *Homage to Mistress Bradstreet* (1956) has been the most highly praised long poem in many years. It has been criticised, as was Hart Crane's *The Bridge*, for failures in structure, and it also has been called the design for an important poem, incompletely sketched. Stanly Kunitz has pointed out that the two poets' intentions were similar: to relate themselves 'to the American past through the discovery of a viable myth', and to create 'a grand and exalted language, a language of transfiguration'. 'His failure . . . like Crane's, is worth more than most successes.' Berryman's language is energetic, even violent, rapturous, flaming to incandescence. For all the imbalance between language and structure, between protagonist and author (Anne Bradstreet, America's first woman poet—her *The Tenth Muse, Lately Sprung up in America*, was published in England over three centuries ago—wasn't a very good versifier: thin, polite and tentative). Berryman's poem is a landmark in the 'fifties.

Fifteen years ago, Jean Garrigue's poems were appearing in the leading reviews and anthologies; she took her first solo flight in 1947 with *The Ego and the Centaur*, which was greeted with nothing but enthusiasm, as I remember; and her second book, *The Monument Rose* (1953), simply made the reviewers raise their voices a decibel or two. Her poetry is handsome, spirited, richly coloured, springing with metaphor and highly charged—which sounds like an ad-man's description of a good sparkling Burgundy (metaphor-inducing, at least) or almost any man's description of Miss Garrigue. If Anne Bradstreet had written like her, Mr Berryman might have leaped into the Dante-Milton class.

Isabella Gardner, who is, I would guess, about Miss Garrigue's age, waited until 1955 for her first book, *Birthdays From the Ocean*. Like Elizabeth Bishop, her output is not great. Her book, which might have seemed a bit rarefied and special with its highly personal idiom and its strange little epigraphs, with many words divided between lines, was enthusiastically praised also. Miss Garrigue's poetry has the radiance of woman-as-sensualist. (Dissimilar as they are, Roethke and Garrigue are both, in William Arrowsmith's phrase, having 'a lover's quarrel with Process' though Roethke keeps hugging Process like a voyeur investigating the body of a new beloved.) Miss Gardner has the radiance of woman-as-sensibility, a fainter glow, perhaps. Both women are on the point of producing another book.

Robert Lowell, who is now 40—and has reached that stage of old-youngness when he writes, in a new poem, of having a baby daughter who is young enough to be his granddaughter—is solidly established in the front rank of American poets by virtue of an extremely solid achievement. Richard Wilbur's accomplishment and recognition are equally firm, but might seem slightly less so, because he writes a more limpid, musical line. It seems unnecessary to review their published works: both have received the Pulitzer Prize at an ungodly early age. Wilbur's reviewers, when not openly activated by jealousy, have a slightly wistful air. Lowell's tend to go in more for hearty, breast-beating praise: 'We sang well tonight!' like an opera singer's mother. Wilbur's reviewers, finding nothing to condemn, fall back—when they have run fresh out of laudatory adjectives—on dark hints that Wilbur's poetry is *too* elegant, *too* technically proficient, *too* good; and no good can come of being too good! Lowell's critics tend to discuss his clotted lines in the terminology of poetic exegesis that makes him seem crystalline by comparison: Lowell's poems are sprinkled with proper names like plums in a Christmas pudding, and John Brooks Horner, the noted critic, can put in his thumb and pull out a Renaissance lady or two, a couple of Squares in Boston, and a few trade names of advertised products, chew them a bit, and say, 'What a good boy am I!'.

William Stafford is a young poet who has not published a book, although from the way his poems appear in magazines in groups of seven to ten, he surely has enough work for a book with an amazing range of styles: the near-apocalyptic; the western-colloquial, studded with sagebrush and Indian names; and—best of all—good, direct, simple writing 'in the American grain' as Dr Williams has called it, tinged with irony and the sense of the ridiculous, compassionate, yet detached.

I chose this name for Section III because I wanted to hitch a few of these poets in double-harness, and see how they run. One of the tests of a fine poem is to see how it stands up to another fine poem: it gets more interesting when you establish a working dialectic, with two quite different kinds of poems, and observe how they respond to the tensions pulling them towards another world, as well as the currents that flow out from each poem's own world.

Williams and Roethke first: the poets must have something in common. They do. They are both dealing with love; or rather, love is dealing with them and they are submitting to it. But each of them comes to love from a different end of the spectrum; Roethke on the warm side because, though middle-aged, he is going into love; and Dr Williams on the cold side, because he moves, quite consciously, from love towards death. But what of the coldness of a long egotism not yet softened in the fire? And the warmth of love's long afternoon that lasts into the dark? So there is a shifting, and a shimmer within the spectrum.

I met her as a blossom on a stem
Before she ever breathed, and in that dream
The mind remembers from a deeper sleep:
Eye learned from eye, cold lip from sensual lip . . .

She came toward me in the flowing air,
A shape of change, encircled by its fire . . .
She held her body steady in the wind;
Our shadows met, and slowly swung around;
She turned the field into a glittering sea;
I played in flame and water like a boy
And I swayed out beyond the white seafoam;
Like a wet log, I sang within a flame.
In that last while, eternity's confine,
I came to love, I came into my own.

. . . .

Of asphodel, that greeny flower,
like a buttercup
upon its branching stem—
save that it's green and wooden—
I come, my sweet,
to sing to you.
We lived long together
a life filled,
if you will,
with flowers. So that
I was cheered
when I came first to know
that there were flowers also
in hell . . .

There is something
something urgent
I have to say to you
and you alone
but it must wait
while I drink in
the joy of your approach,
perhaps for the last time . . .
. . . .
Passion's enough to give
Shape to a random joy:
I cry delight: I know
The root, the core of a cry.
Swan-heart, arbutus-calm,
She moves when time is shy:
Love has a thing to do . . .
I smile, no mineral man;
I bear, but not alone,
The burden of this joy.

I believe that the variations and interrelations of the theme—death-in-love and love-in-death—are apparent without further comment, except to say that Yeats' concept of the spiral—the return to a previously felt experience, on a higher plane of intuition—is operating here, in the work of both men. So far as the metrics are concerned, I believe that the two men point up, in comparison to each other, that Roethke's stanza, so boxed and forthright on the page, has an infinite flexibility; while Williams's looser line, streaking across the page like a quiverful of arrows released at different intervals, is infinitely more controlled than it appears to be. In fact, reading his poem which begins, 'The descent beckons/as the ascent beckoned./Memory is a kind/of accomplishment,/a sort of renewal', I was struck by not only the thematic, but the metrical similarities to Eliot, against whom Williams has carried on a life-long war, showing that the spiral operates here as well! (The quotations are from (1) Roethke's 'The Dream', (2) Williams's 'Asphodel, that greeny flower' and (3) Roethke's 'Words for the Wind'.)

Kunitz and Warren:

Oh, what brings her out in the dark and night?
She has mislaid something, just what she can't say,
But something to do with the bureau, all right.
Then why in God's name, does she polish so much, and not look
in a drawer right away?
Every night, in God's name, she does look there,
But finds only a Book of Common Prayer,
A ribbon-tied lock of gold hair,
A bundle of letters, some contraceptives, and an orris-root sachet.

Well, what is the old fool hunting for?
Oh, nothing, oh, nothing that's in the top drawer,
For that's left by late owners who had their own grief to withstand,
And she tries to squinch and frown
As she peers at the Prayer Book upside down,
And the contraceptives are something she can't understand,
And oh, how bitter the tears she sheds, with some stranger's
old letters in hand!
. . . your grandmother whines like a dog in the dark and shade,
For she's hunting somebody to give
Her the life they had promised her she would live,
And I shudder to think what a stink and stir will be made
When some summer night she opens the drawer and finds that
poor self she'd mislaid.

. . . .

She wept, she railed, she spurned the meat
Men toss into a muslin cage
To make their spineless doxy bleat
For pleasure and for patronage,
As if she had no choice but eat
The lewd bait of a squalid age.
That moment when the lights go out
The years shape to the sprawling thing,
A marmoset with bloodied clout,
A pampered flank that learns to sing,
Without the grace, she cried, to doubt
The postures of the underling.
I thought of Judith in her tent,
Of Helen by the crackling wall,
Of Cressida, her bone-lust spent,
Of Catharine on the holy wheel:
I heard their woman-dust lament
The golden wound that does not heal.

Here I'm afraid that Kunitz's metrics, even though I deliberately placed them second, show up a certain flaccid quality in Mr Warren's line. And if you noticed any similarity between Kunitz's tense and dense and measured stanza and that of Roethke's, remember that the influence goes the other way: Kunitz, like Putnam, is one of the subterranean influences in Roethke's work—as certain critics babble of Pound (whom neither man admires), and even W. S. Graham, for heaven's sake!

But, to be fair to Warren, it often seems that he deliberately chooses an awkward form in which to work. I don't feel that he himself was terribly interested in many of the poems in his book: the one I quote from, 'Keepsakes', which is Part 2 of the seven-part *Ballad of a Sweet Dream of Peace*, seems to engage his attention more fully than many of the others. He was having a good time with this poem. It is, at least

in part, an experiment. One senses Warren as a fantasy-builder, blowing his poem up and up and up, into a kind of Kafka balloon. He's both sensible and loony—and looniness is a rare enough commodity. Let's not knock it.

Kunitz, on the other hand, keeps his experiments in his notebook. Nearly all of his poems have that kind of solidity which develops not only from the poet's respect for his talents, but from a genius for revision and the tenacity of perfectionism.

Garrigue and Lattimore: they are neat examples of the born poet and the made poet. This is not to denigrate Lattimore by any means; nor do I insinuate that Miss Garrigue is flopping around in a steam-bath of her natural endowments. She is a disciplined poet, with an elaborate system of prosody: she can afford to leave her emotions on a loose rein, because she knows just when to tug. And she knows the difference between true and false intuition—unlike some of the younger American poets like May Swenson, who seem unable to distinguish between sensibility and hysteria. It would seem clear, however, that Lattimore has hammered out his poetry on the translator's forge. His lovely sense of balance and proportion gives the maximum play to his intuitions: even a tiny impulse is a fulfilled poem.

> Not in one of its furies, but with absent care,
> the slaty tide sucks bones of wood, spits them dry
> on the sand; plasters a shell here, there
> one derelict claw; brown weed ribbons (sea hair
> waving submerged); pebble stuff, piled high.
> Is it this thoughtful arranger, patting (now) a small splash
> on sand, whose January angers boiled in whale-
> battering shipless heaves of water, tall
> in the gray gull-blown wind, to climb and crash
> like a wet axe, and clobber and bruise our littoral?
> Log it to commonplace that the sculpture of coast,
> what sleeves and shapes the blue barrier either side,
> is wild winter days blown monstrous, shaken slammed and lost;
> with spelled calms, held water, carving slow and leaving uppermost
> a decor of sea bones, shell spar net, displayed beyond high tide.

What a sensitive and tidy compendium of effects from—yes—Hart Crane, Hopkins, cummings: the careful unpunctuation, the suspended stresses, the artful parentheses! Yet the poem ('Sea Changes') has its own character: 'climb and crash like a wet axe', for example. Lattimore is the master of these elements, not the other way around. Sweet are the uses of intelligence.

> Hearing that you would come who by my love
> Have dreamed me into your head these lost long days
> I have caught birds and freed their essential blaze

For still I am as always my heart's hungering slave
And thus but dream life into its beat form
Singing up voices out of the wine-gay blood.

Water and wine being the elements
I was big with cliffs and water wracking rocks
And huger than I my heart hearing your own
Racing thus to come nearest home with cloud
under its rain-bearing leaves that were your name
Meaning waif of the tribe of cloud and rain,
Hearing that you would come, blood climbed on bone.

These are the first two stanzas of Miss Garrigue's new 'Incantatory Poem'. I separated it from Lattimore so that he wouldn't get singed. Miss Garrigue is intelligent too, but for her, intelligence is a luxury, not a necessity. Part of the excitement of her poetry is that the intelligence-emotion quotients are both so high. This gives her work certain resemblances to Kunitz's, especially in her most exacting and sustained attempts.

Berryman and Gardner: I quote the last two stanzas of *Homage to Mistress Bradstreet*, when the poet takes his leave of Anne. (Simon Bradstreet was her elderly husband, the father of her eight children, Governor of Massachusetts Bay Company. Kunitz has pointed out that perhaps the varied eight-line stanza is derived from 'The Wreck of the Deutschland'.)

I must pretend to leave you. Only you draw off
a benevolent phantom. I say you seem to me
drowned towns off England,
Featureless as those myriads
who what bequeathed save fire-ash, fossils, burled
in the open river-drifts of the Old World?
Simon lived on for years.

I renounce not even ragged glances, small teeth, nothing,
O all your ages at the mercy of my loves
together lie at once forever or
so long as I happen.
In the rain of pain and departure, still
Love has no body and presides the sun,
and elves from silence melody. I run.
Hover, utter, still,
a sourcing whom my lost candle like the firefly loves.

I will quote from Miss Gardner's new poem 'Mea Culpa?', about a deaf surgeon on an aeroplane who is weeping because he, who is expected to be 'God Almighty's cousin', has had his flight cancelled, and will probably not even arrive in time 'to patch the almost dead alive':

. . . 'Yes, I am a surgeon', he said
softly, 'but I had rather peddle used
cars to buy my beer. I am tired I
am tired of this frightful trust when I
confront and cut a bleeding carcass.'
Touching his hand I blared
That the very *fact* he cared . . .
'Care care', he said as tears still slid
from his eyes, 'can't you see I am not there?'
Abruptly he pulled a silver pill box
from his pocket, and showing me his hands
and how they shook, he said, 'I take a pill
at intervals to make my hand belong
and if I time the taking perfectly
these hands behave; they are golden, lady,
not one qualm or quiver in these
fingers, in these wrists, this heart,
or any other part' . . .

Here we have what are, in essence, two soliloquies. The first almost desperately rhetorical: the subject is love: the love of the poet for Anne Bradstreet. In the second, we find an affectionate description of desperation. I would call the first an intensely masculine approach, and the second an essentially feminine one.

Lowell and Wilbur, the choleric man and the sanguine man: and first the last four stanzas of Lowell's new poem 'Skunk Hour':

. . . One dark night
my Tudor Ford climbed the hill's skull;
I watched for love-cars. Lights turned down,
they lay together, hull to hull,
where the graveyard shelves on the town . . .
My mind's not right——

A car radio bleats
'Love, O careless Love . . .' I hear
my ill-spirit sob in each blood cell,
as if my hand were at its throat . . .
I myself am hell;
Nobody's here——

Only skunks, that search
In the moonlight for a bite to eat.
They march on their soles up Main Street:
White stripes, moonstruck eyes' red fire
under the chalk-dry and spar spire
of the Trinitarian Church.

I stand on top
of our back steps and breathe the rich air—
a mother skunk with her column of kittens swills the [garbage pail.
She jabs her wedge-head in a cup

of sour cream, drops her ostrich tail,
and will not scare.

I hope I shall be forgiven, by the author and his readers, for quoting only the first and last stanzas of Richard Wilbur's 'A Voice From Under the Table':

How shall the wine be drunk, or the woman known?
I take this world for better or for worse.
But seeing rose carafes conceive the sun
My thirst conceives a fierier universe:
And then I toast the birds in the burning trees
That chant their holy lucid drunkenness;
I swallowed all the phosphorus of the seas
Before I fell into this low distress . . .

God keep me a damned fool, nor charitably
Receive me into his shapely resignations.
I am a sort of martyr, as you see,
A horizontal monument to patience.
The calves of waitresses parade about
My helpless head upon this sodden floor.
Well, I am down again, but not yet out.
O sweet frustration, I shall be back for more.

I don't think that anything final can be said about either of these poems: both of them represent departures in style from previous work. Lowell's line is not as jam-packed as it was. The symbols of the Renaissance and Catholicism are missing here: we still have the authentic fixtures of New England in decline; we still have Boston and Mother (in the rest of the series of which this is one section). Lowell may be too involved in the emotional content of the poems for them to be fully resolved. However, I think these are the authentic accents of desperation. Wilbur's philosophic anarchy, beautifully wrought though his pentameter may be (except for the sagging next-to-last line) appears slightly synthetic. Significantly enough, both poems carry the accents of Roethke: Lowell in the lines 'I myself am hell;/ Nobody's here'; and Wilbur's opening pentameter couplet, as well as echoes in 'My thirst conceives a fierier universe', and the following line.

Both of them, in their individual ways, seem to be trying to open up their poetry: Lowell by untying a few knots in his line, and attempting a more direct statement of emotional content. One feels that perhaps Wilbur finds something missing in his poetry so far: the emotional content too shallow, or maybe the opposite: buried too deep by an over-active control mechanism. At any rate, in both poets, controls are loosening. Lowell states his feelings baldly. Wilbur would like to, and is trying, and—if his past record means anything—will probably succeed.

Stafford and Wagoner:

I do tricks in order to know:
careless I dance,
then turn to see
the mark to turn God left for me.

Making my home in vertigo
I pray with my screams
and think with my hair
prehensile in the dark with fear . . .

And by night like this I turn and come
to this possible house
which I open, and see
myself at work with this crowbar key.

This is William Stafford's first manner. The American accent in the following is unmistakable—a poem about the loyalty oath required of all teachers in the sunshine State of California—and here is your political poem, Mr MacLeish:

A star hit in the hills behind our house
up where the grass turns brown touching the sky.
. . . few saw, but many felt the shock.
The State of California owns that land
(and out from shore three miles), and any stars
that come will be roped off and viewed on weekdays 8 to 5.

A guard who took the oath of loyalty and denied
any police record told me this:
'If you don't have a police record yet
you could take the oath and get a job
if California should be hit by another star.'

'I'd promise to be loyal to California
And to guard any stars that hit it', I said,
'or any place three miles out from shore,
unless the star was bigger than the state—
in which case I'd be loyal to *it*.'

But he said no exceptions were allowed,
and he leaned against the state-owned meteor
so calm and puffed a cork-tip cigarette
that I looked down and traced with my foot in the dust
and thought again and said, 'Ok—any star'.

I love a garden that's political, but surely the purest poetry is that in which outward experience sets off reverberations in the psyche: those resonances which indicate the relation between the present experience and earlier ones which the artist may not even remember. Then the actual event which touched off the poem may be almost submerged in the finished work. David Wagoner's 'The Migration' was an outgrowth of the abortive Hungarian uprising in the winter of 1956; this is now fused into a poem which operates on levels of historic truth, contemporary neurosis, and the personal sense of horror:

This is the trail. Or this.
Who made it? Animals.
Won't someone go to sleep?
Or must I be the first,
I who have eaten stones
Yet sung through the aimless miles?
Though children in the trees
Once glistened like ripe fruit,
Now each one climbs to hang.
Look, not even the mist
Around us will lie down.

. . . Those rags wearing the men,
All standing nose to nose
In the whitening air like sheep,
Have they decided? No.
Then I say somebody must:
Do we sleep, rot, or go?
I ask, but I'll decide.
Remember when we said
Let's put a freak in charge?
We didn't. But we shall.

I am that madman now,
Streaked in the face, one lip
Ruling the other lip,
And the left eye grown huge . . .
We'll follow water down,
Drink it and be it, grow
Lengthy, till we reach
Exhaustion in the dark
Where the dismembered beasts
Before us melted and fell.
This, this is the trail.

Though in a different context, this final sentence seems an appropriate closing to a survey of what Karl Shapiro has called 'the flowering of American poetry, which comes, not in the nineteenth century, but in the twentieth': 'This, this is the trail.'

POETRY OF THE 'FIFTIES: IN ENGLAND

A. ALVAREZ

HAD I been writing this article two or three years ago, there would have been every reason to be gloomy. There was, of course, plenty of verse being written and, with more or less heat, discussed. But even the stage managers of the dominant style found they could define it only by negatives. Here, for example, is Mr Robert Conquest, introducing his anthology *New Lines*:

> If one had briefly to distinguish this poetry of the 'fifties from its predecessors, I believe the most important general point would be that it submits to no great systems of theoretical contracts nor agglomerations of unconscious commands. It is free from both mystical and logical compulsions and—like modern philosophy—is empirical in its attitude to all that comes. This reverence for the real person or event is, indeed, a part of the general intellectual ambience . . . of our time. . . . On the more technical side, though of course related to all this, we see a refusal to abandon a rational structure and comprehensive language, even when the verse is most highly charged with sensuous or emotional intent. . . . What (these poets) do have in common is, perhaps, at its lowest little more than a negative determination to avoid bad principles. By itself that cannot guarantee good poetry. Still, it is a good deal. . . .

This, then, was 'The Movement' (that is the last time inverted commas will be needed for the name), a group of writers united by the negative determination to avoid bad habits. On one side of them was the rather esoteric University intellectualism represented best by William Empson's poetry. On the other was the deliberate Philistinism of Kingsley Amis's novels and light verse. No wonder the poetry often appeared a little wan and, in the effort to avoid wild emotional gestures, ended sometimes with cramp. It was a poetry of reaction, or, as John Wain once described it, of consolidation.

Why? Why this determination to underplay every hand? What was the Movement moving from? And what was it moving towards? It seemed as though the period and the poetry would be more likely to interest future literary

historians than literary critics. So perhaps a little rough literary history might be useful.

The Movement's point of departure was, I think, the war. During the 'thirties, Auden used to describe the gathering political crisis in the intense, muffled language of neurosis. The more Europe split and crumbled, always just below the surface, the larger the neurotic fantasies loomed. So when the war finally broke out, poetry lurched into a kind of nervous breakdown. That is, it lurched into a world uncontrolled, overwhelming and private. I say 'poetry', not 'the poets', deliberately. For the peculiar thing about the work of this period was, for all the emotionalism, its sameness and unreality, much as Freud said that all cases are unique and alike. It reads as though Orwell's electronic poetry-making machine in *1984* had suddenly short-circuited; all the traditionally dramatic, and melodramatic, ingredients of verse—blood, guts, limbs, God, angels, stars, jewels, rocks, trees, flowers, the elements, storms, love, death, etc., etc.—were jostled together in hopeless confusion.

Not that the principle was necessarily wrong; every poet has to commit a certain violence upon language in order to make it take the exact form and pressure of his own sensibility. What mattered was the lack of principle. For all the words, words, words, and the occasional, inert fragments of unconscious symbolism, there was never any sign of a creative intelligence, ordering and judging and modulating the mass. In fact, with the exception of a few poets like F. T. Prince, Alun Lewis and Henry Reed, what was missing from the poetry of the 'forties was simply a voice, distinct, alive and humanly, reasonably speaking. Everyone was always shouting. It was all very portentous in its strained, bardic way, but what it portended never became clear. Behind these poets, of course, was Dylan Thomas; but what came naturally and powerfully to a Welsh spell-binder sounded, in his followers, about as convincing as *How Green Was My Valley* in repertory.

The Movement, then, was the reaction to this nervous breakdown. Its first aim was sanity (variously called 'common sense', 'honesty' and 'discipline'). Its second was to restore some of the status of the poet. For when the poets resigned their obligations to intelligence, the educated public responded by dismissing them from any serious consideration. They encouraged them in their various acts (Dylan Thomas was finally sacrificed to his) but they accorded no more than pitying tolerance to the monotonous attempts to dress hackneyed emotions in an elaborate verbiage, much as *Les Précieuses* were said to dress the legs of their

tables in trousers for fear the vulgar truth should be seen. The poets of the Movement tried to have done with this by showing that poetry could be written by intelligent, educated people who respected both the intelligibility of their subjects and their audience's ability to read. It was a movement, in fact, back to those standards Eliot had demanded ('The only method', he once wrote, 'is to be very intelligent') and the whole movement of modern criticism substantiated. But it was to be done without any of the earlier experimentation; traditional means seemed, for the moment, safer. Hence the new reverence for the poems of Robert Graves and William Empson which combined this tough-minded intellectual discipline with a certain traditional regularity. That few of the Movement poets managed to live up to these standards is, for the moment, beside the point.

I have been using the past tense because the Movement has now ended and its poets have gone off on their separate ways. The convalescence after the breakdown, with its wanness and fear of exertion, is over. First sanity, then strength returns. And in this the Movement, for all its limitations and negatives, was immensely valuable. For at least it demanded that its poets should be able to do the elementary things: make sense and be technically adept. The standard of competence and the sense of responsibility in poetry are higher now than they were ten years ago. And that is something.

Rather belatedly, I should point out that, apart from these generalisations I am not trying to write an inclusive survey of recent poetry. A disproportionate number of volumes of verse is published each year and disproportionately few real poems come out of them. As for the real poets: even at the best of times, there are not likely to be more than two or three. A large survey of the more or less interesting poets, with a brief comment on each, would be at best invidious. Anyway, that is what the weekly reviews and the publishers' hand-outs are for. Instead, I want to talk about two of the younger poets who seem to me in their different ways to be significant. They are Philip Larkin and Thom Gunn. Mr Larkin's book, *The Less Deceived* (The Marvell Press), first appeared in 1955, but, because of the gang-warfare raging at that time, has hardly been written about in cold blood. I want to try to do so now because his poetry represents everything that was best in the Movement and at the same time shows what was finally lacking. Mr Gunn's first volume, *Fighting Terms* (Fantasy Press), came out in 1954, his second, *The Sense of Movement* (Faber & Faber), in 1957. Though he started from the Movement, Mr Gunn is now free of it and moving, I think, towards something new.

Mr Larkin is one of those poets continually needed by literature to preserve the standards for the rest. He is a poet, that is, of above all great technical accomplishment. His accomplishment, like De La Mare's, Graves's, or that of the rest of the Movement, is not specifically 'modern'. He takes the traditional forms of English verse and refines them to his own use, helped by but never overstepping their bounds of elegant clarity:

Lots of folk live up lanes
With fires in a bucket,
Eat windfalls and tinned sardines—
They seem to like it.

Their nippers have got bare feet,
Their unspeakable wives
Are skinny as whippets—and yet
No one actually *starves*.

Ah, were I courageous enough
To shout *Stuff your pension!*
But I know, all too well, that's the stuff
That dreams are made on.

('Toads')

An enormous amount of skill has gone into making the verse sound as easy as that. The effect depends on the way the half-rhymes at once check and stress the colloquialism; in the same way, in the last stanza, the pun plays off the slang against the fine literary yearning. Mr Larkin is not often as witty as this, but the personal note of his best work is always a matter of this kind of ironic nostalgia, at once elegant and off-hand.

His constant theme is that of opportunities lost and modest proposals never made. It is a poetry of disappointment, forever celebrating those multitudinous denials needed if one is determined never to overstep any mark. In other words, it is a poetry of conformity. Not that Mr Larkin is pleased with his lot; on the contrary, it saddens him, even makes him, at times, mildly indignant. And this, apart from his skill and originality, is what makes him a poet of quite another colour from, say, Mr John Betjeman. He is pink not blue. Mr Betjeman, that is, is a great fan of the comfortable middle classes; and he loves them all the more because their lapses allow him to patronise them even as he sings his little hymns of praise. Mr Larkin, on the other hand, is so far from being a snob that he is constantly blaming himself for his least wavering from a kind of enlightened middle-class socialism. He writes as though he had been voluntarily nationalised.

That is, as though he *sees* that a benignant Welfare State is a necessary and reasonable thing and uses all his intelligence to reconcile himself to the cosy anonymity that goes with it. But he is uneasy because, despite all his efforts, he can't quite manage the reconciliation. Take another look at that last stanza I quoted above; or at this, the end of a poem on passing through the town he was born in:

> 'You look as if you wished the place in Hell',
> My friend said, 'judging from your face.' 'Oh well,
> I suppose it's not the place's fault', I said.
> 'Nothing, like something, happens anywhere.'
> ('I Remember, I Remember')

No, it's not the place's fault, it's his own. This is quite the opposite of the 'forties' conceit: 'I write verse. Therefore I am a genius. Therefore I do not have to make myself understood.' Mr Larkin is always accusing himself of a necessary timidity of one kind or another: emotional (the girls he might have proposed to), moral (the things he might have done and said), even physical (the places he might have gone to had he not liked his comforts). His reasonable intelligence, affirming he must make the best of what his timidity has brought him, pulls one way, his poetic intelligence, whispering of all the chances missed, pulls the other. Perhaps that is why he makes his poetry so difficult technically; it solaces his poetic intelligence.

Perhaps, too, this is why Mr Larkin becomes a little sentimental when he sets out to affirm things wholeheartedly. He often settles, I mean, for feelings that are too large, too easy and too vague. For example, in 'Lines on a Young Lady's Photograph Album', 'Maiden Name', 'Born Yesterday' and 'At Grass' he needs all his wry charm in order not to sound uncomfortably like Rupert Brooke. Even in his best poem, 'Church Going', he has to go through certain ritual motions before he can say his say. It is an ambitious poem that works up to a climax that satisfies all the ambitions:

> A serious house on serious earth it is,
> In whose blent air all our compulsions meet,
> Are recognised, and robed as destinies.
> And that much never can be obsolete,
> Since someone will forever be surprising
> A hunger in himself to be more serious,
> And gravitating with it to this ground,
> Which, he once heard, was proper to grow wise in,
> If only that so many dead lie round.

He is saying something original and serious with serenity, control and conviction. But before doing so, he has bent over backwards so as not to appear out of the ordinary. With that final stanza in mind, now read the beginning:

> Once I'm sure there's nothing going on
> I step inside, letting the door thud shut.
> Another church: matting, seats and stone,
> And little books; sprawlings of flowers, cut
> For Sunday, brownish now; some brass and stuff
> Up at the holy end; the small neat organ;
> And a tense, musty, unignorable silence,
> Brewed God knows how long. Hatless, I take off
> My cycle-clips in awkward reverence,
>
> Move forward, run my hand around the font.
> From where I stand, the roof looks almost new—
> Cleaned, or restored? Someone would know: I don't.
> Mounting the lectern, I peruse a few
> Hectoring large-scale verses, and pronounce
> 'Here endeth' much more loudly than I'd meant.
> The echoes snigger briefly. Back at the door
> I sign the book, donate an Irish sixpence,
> Reflect the place was not worth stopping for.

There are two things about this which, considering the assurance with which the poem ends, I find tiresome. First, there is Mr Larkin's insistence that he is an ordinary, agnostic chap like the rest of us ordinary, agnostic chaps:

> Once I'm sure there's nothing going on . . .
> . . . Hatless, I take off
> My cycle-clips in awkward reverence . . .
> . . . Someone would know: I don't. . . .

Second, there is the element of good, clean fun: the business about 'Here endeth', or 'some brass and stuff (the crucifix?) Up at the holy end', or, alas, that 'Irish sixpence' (Mr Kingsley Amis would have used the traditional currency, a flybutton). But what kind of good, clean fun is this? In the introduction to *New Lines* that I quoted earlier, Mr Conquest invoked the influence of 'George Orwell, with his principle of real, rather than ideological honesty'. I suggest that Mr Larkin has Orwell in mind when he goes through these motions. But not Orwell's honesty. Instead, it is the thread that runs through all Orwell's work without ever becoming dominant: that element in him of the clear-eyed, candid, noncomformist schoolboy. Even in this otherwise excellent poem, Mr Larkin seems embarrassed to be caught taking anything seriously. So he has to assure us

that he is not taken in before he can go on to affirm so beautifully what there is to be taken in by.

It is precisely because Mr Larkin has made such a constant and unpretentious effort to mould the difficulties of living with this seriousness and this embarrassment into a polished control, that he has been able to make real poetry out of the restrictions and deliberate ordinariness of the Movement. Whereas the other members having tried it therapeutically for a time have either given up verse altogether or gone on to write in some other way.

When a poet is committed to making sense but not quite such common sense as the cult of the ordinary chap demands, then he has to make a further kind of poetic effort. In other words, if the Movement was going in the right direction but did not go far enough, what is the next stage? What is far enough? I would suggest that the direction now may be vertical, not horizontal.

When, for example, the poems of Mr Thom Gunn first appeared, the author was cast headlong into the Movement with everyone else those days. But that was only to make it easy for the fashion writers. The resemblances were, in fact, superficial. Mr Gunn's poems *were* intelligent, tough and clear; he sometimes used literature for his own ends; and never was he 'poetical' in the wild, choking manner of the Dylan Thomists. But there the similarity between Mr Gunn and the other members of the Movement ended. His rhythms, for instance, never fell into that steady neo-Empsonian thump that put paid with its monotony to the incipient life of so much verse. Nor did he ever play the game of Correspondences —think of a myth, parallel it in English literature, and apply the whole to the modern situation—which, though it certainly exercised the writer's ingenuity and reading, was barely much more than a high-class intellectual game. (Empson's ironic comment about the crossword puzzle interest of his own poetry fathered a remarkable amount of pedantry.)

When Mr Gunn went to myth and other literature he emerged with something unmistakably personal:

> The huge wound in my head began to heal
> About the beginning of the seventh week.
> Its valleys darkened, its villages became still:
> For joy I did not move and dared not speak,
> Not doctors would cure it, but time, its patient skill.
>
> And constantly my mind returned to Troy.
> After I sailed the seas I fought in turn
> On both sides, sharing even Helen's joy

Of place, and growing up—to see Troy burn—
As Neoptolemus, that stubborn boy.

I lay and rested as prescription said.
Manœuvred with the Greeks, or sallied out
Each day with Hector. Finally my bed
Became Achilles' tent, to which the lout
Thersites came reporting numbers dead.

I was myself: subject to no man's breath:
My own commander was my enemy.
And while my belt hung up, sword in the sheath,
Thersites shambled in and breathlessly
Cackled about my friend Patroclus' death.

I called for armour, rose, and did not reel.
But, when I thought, rage at his noble pain
Flew to my head, and turning I could feel
My wound break open wide. Over again
I had to let those storm-lit valleys heal.

('The Wound')

The difference between this and the regulation Movement pieces is that between poetry with a subject and a kind of *poésie à thèse*. In the latter the references and so forth are there merely to clinch an impersonal point. In Mr Gunn's poem the *Iliad* and *Troilus and Cressida* are, like the wound itself, only ways of presenting a profound inner disturbance. I say the poem has a subject, but I would be hard-pressed to say what it is, other than the releasing of the reserves of power in the first line. But it is precisely because the thing can't be defined thesis-wise that the poem works as a poem. The subject is a complex tangle of feelings which, having fixed itself first in one vivid metaphor, is then dramatised. By this I do not mean 'worked up'. I mean that the feelings are given sides and the 'meaning' is acted out between them; so that they become at once alive and inevitable. Reading *poésie à thèse* one has the uneasy feeling that, despite its neatness and cunning, the thing is essentially arbitrary: why these metaphors rather than those? In comparison, Mr Gunn *appears* merely to be improvising from the opening image and then forcing clarity on his material by the assertive, direct movement. But in fact he begins with an act of intuitive honesty by which he senses the full depth of his subject and then resolves the tangle by bringing it out into daylight. So instead of intellectual trickery forcing the poem to an elegant but spurious conclusion, there is the more difficult effort of creative intelligence: that of getting the elements of the poem true to themselves, so that they can reach their own conclusion.

I have said that Mr Gunn appears to force his material and that his rhythms are often assertive. The truth is that they are sometimes downright aggressive. This means that though his doubts and troubles do take on an independent life, this life is often questionable: crude, at times, and wasteful. Even in his second volume, *The Sense of Movement*, which is a good deal more polished than *Fighting Terms*, and even in the best poem in the book, 'On the Move', there is still a strong element of the 'butch': motor bikes, leather jackets and glory. No doubt Mr Gunn has a penchant for these things; if so, it is not likely to be permanent. But the underlying sense of violence is not, I think, wilful idiosyncrasy. Instead, it is a way of counter-balancing the abstraction of the Movement poetry. By this I do not mean the abstract intellectual games; these were unimportant. I mean the abstraction of the 'Ordinary Chap', who is not a living person as much as a social idea. Mr Gunn's violence, then, is not sensationalism, nor is it a mere assertion of his independence; it is instead an attempt to define his own identity in terms of his most powerful responses. For, despite all my talk of violence and tangled feelings, the whole movement of his poetry has been towards control. One can see this, for example, even in the themes: that of the first volume was doubt, that of the second, choice. So in his best poetry the violence exists only in the presence of its opposite, control. This, for instance, from 'On the Move':

> The blue jay scuffling in the bushes follows
> Some hidden purpose, and the gust of birds
> That spurts across the field, the wheeling swallows,
> Have nested in the trees and undergrowth.
> Seeking their instinct, or their poise, or both,
> One moves with an uncertain violence
> Under the dust thrown by a baffled sense
> Or the dull thunder of approximate words.
>
> On motorcycles, up the road, they come:
> Small, black, as flies hanging in heat, the Boys,
> Until the distance throws them forth, their hum
> Bugles to thunder held by calf and thigh.
> In goggles, donned impersonality,
> In gleaming jackets trophied with the dust,
> They strap in doubt—by hiding it, robust—
> And almost hear a meaning in their noise. . . .
>
> It is a part solution, after all.
> One is not necessarily discord
> On earth; or damned because, half animal,
> One lacks direct instinct, because one wakes
> Afloat on movement that divides and breaks.

One joins the movement in a valueless world,
Choosing it, till, both hurler and the hurled,
One moves as well, always toward, toward.

A minute holds them, who have come to go:
The self-defined, astride the created will
They burst away; the towns they travel through
Are home for neither bird nor holiness,
For birds and saints complete their purposes.
At worst, one is in motion; and at best,
Reaching no absolute, in which to rest,
One is always nearer by not keeping still.

The difference between this and the earlier poems lies in the assurance and sense of purpose. The violence is there as a theme, presented and judged, not as a deliberately ugly violation of the poetry itself. Consequently the poet's embroilment in his subject and his technical skill set each other off. And it is in this quickening control of deep, unobvious and often unpleasant responses that I think the most significant artistic work is likely to be done in the next few years.[1]

None of this, I should add, has anything to do with literary gang-warfare. (Both Mr Gunn and Mr Hughes are Englishmen who live at present in America and are therefore not involved in the fighting; and I am sure they have no mutual programme, if, indeed, they even know each other.) But it may have something to do with the peculiar tension of the 'fifties: I mean the accident by which a standard of general domestic comfort and enlightened welfare higher than ever before and a national dullness more stupefying than ever before should coincide with the continual threat of violent, total annihilation. These two opposites are so extreme that they can be apprehended only in terms of confusion or abstraction. Each gives the other the lie. It is reasonable then that the writers should have given up trying to offer large solutions for the ills of the time (after all, the 'thirties' poets were warning enough against that habit) and have concentrated on their own gardens; not, however, on their shut-in private gardens where they sedulously cultivated the confusion, but on a public and fully intelligent effort to recognise, bring out into the light and control their real instincts and motives. In short, however sketchy the actual achievement may be, the direction is towards the kind of psychological realism that the major novelists have attempted at least since Dostoievsky. (It is, incidentally, significant that D. H. Lawrence's

[1] There is the same impulse in the very interesting, though rather spotty, poems of Mr Ted Hughes, *The Hawk in the Rain* (Faber & Faber). But Mr Hughes' talent is for fixing the impulse as a physical sensation. See, for example, 'The Thought Fox', which is a kind of dramatic representation of the act of poetry. It seems from this that Mr Hughes apprehends the unwritten poem not as an idea or a feeling or a form, but as an ominous physical shock.

are the only *Collected Poems*, out of a number of such volumes recently, which have not been an anticlimax, or needed special pleading.) And after all, it is Dostoievsky who seems to have summed up the 'fifties best:

> Why, we don't even know what living means now, what it is, and what it is called. Leave us alone without books and we'll be lost and in confusion at once. We'll not know what to join to, what to cling to, what to love and what to hate, what to respect and what to despise. We are oppressed at being men—men with real individual flesh and blood, we are ashamed of it, we think it a disgrace and try to contrive to be some sort of impossible generalised man. We are still-born, and for generations past have been begotten not by living fathers, and that suits us more and more. We are developing a taste for it. Soon we shall contrive to be born from an idea somehow.

POETRY SECTION

An annual of this kind cannot attempt to offer samples of the writing it discusses; but in the case of poetry, whose concentrated nature permits a fairly extensive display within a small showcase, it has been found possible to disobey this rule.

Below, we give samples of the work of five poets from three English-speaking countries: R. A. Simpson from Australia, Carolyn Kizer and Harvey Breit from America, and A. Alvarez, Edward Lucie-Smith and Josephine Brocklesby from England.

R. A. SIMPSON

AT LUNA PARK

Here children meet warped images that laugh
As round as caves, then move to oval dwarfs
With faces squeezed like crumpled balls of paper—

And when they see their giants cramped in frames
They do not know that men must walk on legs
Much taller than the moment stems in glass.

Each mind has mirrors like this laughing hall
Where wandering, faceless eyes may see the self
Upon its fragile stilts; the clumsy essence
Of the pride that lets us move above a crowd.

CAROLYN KIZER

THE SUBURBANS:
MIRROR, SEAGULL, CAT AND CEMETERY

Forgetting sounds that we no longer hear—
Nightingale, silent for a century:
How touch that bubbling throat, let it touch us

In cardboard-sided suburbs, where the glades
And birds gave way to lawns, fake weathervanes
Topping antennae, or a wrought-iron rooster
Mutely presiding over third class mail?—
We live on ironed land resembling cemeteries,
Those famous levellers of human contours.

But cemeteries are a green relief;
Used-car and drive-in movie lots alike
Enaisle and regulate the gaudy junk
That runs us, in a 'Park' that is no park.
Our greens kept up for doomed Executives;
Though golf embalms its land, as libraries
Preserve an acre for the mind to play
When, laboring at its trash, the trapped eye leaps,
Beholding greensward, or the written word.

What common symbols dominate our work?
'Perpetual Care'; the library steps with lions
More free than moving kinsmen in the zoos;
The seagull is our bird, who eats our loot,
Adores our garbage, but can rise above it—
Clean scavenger, picks clean, gets clean away!—
Past bays and rivers of industrial waste,
Infected oysters, fish-bloat, belly up
In sloughs of sewage, to the open sea.

So much for Nature, carved and animate!
Step in, a minute . . . But our ankles, brushed
With that swift, intimate electric shock,
Signal the muse: the passing of a cat—
All that remains of tygers, mystery,
Eye-gleam at night, synecdoche for jungle;
We catch her ancient freedom in a cage
Of tidy rhyme. Page the anthologies!
A bridge between our Nature and our Time.

Easily she moves from outer life to inner,
While we, nailed to our domesticity
Like Van Gogh to the wall, wild in his frame,
Double in mirrors, that the sinister self
Who moves along with us may own at least
His own reverses, duck behind his molding
When our phones jerk us on a leash of noise.
Hence mirror poems, Alice, The Looking Glass,
Those dull and partial couplings with ourselves.

Our gold-fish gazes, our transparent nerves!
As we weave above these little colored stones—
Fish-furniture—bob up for dusty food:
'Just heat and serve'; our empty pear-shaped tones!
Home is a picture window, and our globes

Are mirrors too: We see ourselves outside.
Afraid to become our neighbors, we revolt
In verse: 'This proves I'm not the average man.'
Only the average poet, which is worse.

The drooping nineteenth-century bard in weeds
On his stone bench, beside a weedy grave,
Might attitudinise, but his tears were free
And easy. He heard authentic birds.
Nobody hid recordings in his woods,
Or draped his waterfalls with neon gauze.
No sign disturbed his orisons, commanding,
'Go to Church this Sunday!' or be damned!
He was comfortably damned when he was born.

But we are saved, from the boring Hell of Churches;
We run to graves for picnics or for peace:
Beer cans on headstones, eggshells in the grass,
'Deposit Trash in Baskets.' For release
From hells of public and domestic noise,
We sprawl, although we neither pose nor pray,
Compose our stanzas here, like that dead bard,
But writing poems on poems; gravely gay,
Our limited salvation is the word.

EDWARD LUCIE-SMITH

THE PORTRAIT

Ranked on their shelves your motley *lares* stand;
Your curtains shudder softly in the breeze
That comes with dawn; your shoulders and your hair
Gleam by the single lamp, as does the hand
I stretch to touch your nape laid on my knees,
And by that gesture bring us strangely near
In solitude, and weariness, despair.

I'm sad the hour should find us so allied
By such a bond, after such answer given;
You asked me whom I'd loved as if the game
Was played in the same spirit on each side,
And did not hold the risk of friendship riven,
As if I had no thought but to be tame:
Then I was truthful, gave you your own name.

That is the word I will not have unsaid!
Muttering and sullen, now the gas-fire burns
Yet lower, yet more blue, and darkly stares
Down from the shadowy frame above my head
Your sixteenth-century man; indifferent, turns
A sensual gaze on our remote affairs,
While something in us that indifference shares.

THE POLO-PLAYER

Man-sweat and pony-sweat in the fierce sun;
The broken action of a horse gone lame,
And dip and wheel of horses in the game;
A watchful child who cannot see the fun,

Sulker in corners; childhood rebegun
By thinking of some chestnut gelding's name:
Yet here's a snapshot, yellowing in its frame,
To say my father's dead, his polo done.

It is so little I can now recall
Of what occurred before my present lack,
Too much of years and distance lies between

My senses and that fragmentary scene—
My father's image blurs, and what comes back?
This whirl of horsemen, riding for a fall.

JOSEPHINE BROCKLESBY

ANNE WAINWRIGHT'S CHILDREN

I found her picture in his book,
My father's first gay love.
In every feature of her face
A lost child strove.

Resentful ghosts besiege me now
Creeping into my brain.
'I should have been his child', they say
'And known your joy and pain.'

'And you'd have been an unborn soul
Lost in the wild wind's ways'
And still they claim by blood and name
Besieging all my days.

POEM FOR MY MOTHER

Now, when the sun has hardly set, and the sky
Still holds a light of its own, pale blue
Or violet against the orange lights,
I walk as I have walked before
On other gentle nights.

Now when the rain is almost gone, and the leaves
On the wet pavement give off heavy scent,

I think of your eager swift far-walking feet,
And how your country mind would mock
An orange-gleaming street.

Now I can pity blind eyes, deaf ears and hands
That death has taken. Now for you I mourn
My seventeen-years dead mother, you were kind,
Those evenings were your gift although
Your face is lost to mind.

I seek it in stories told of you. A friend
Said in the natural growth of plants he saw
An image of your unaffected ways.
Still I have questioned, questioned but not found
Your picture in their praise.

'A war-like pacifist whose indignation
Struck terror through a Quaker mission station',
An uncle says of you; but I recall
The way you wrapped hurt limbs and made
Night's terrors seem so small.

And the last story: on your father's farm
You cleared St. John's wort from a huge down field,
That speed and energy was all to hide
A horror which made courage wince:
The death-pain in your side.

You were called tender, serious and strong,
Playful and active, thoughtful and most brave.
But who, in a darkened world, can tell of one
Who lives in tales, as in these lights
Lives the deep-vanished sun?

A. ALVAREZ

A CEMETERY IN NEW MEXICO

To Alfred Alvarez, dead, 1957

Softly the dead stir, call, through the afternoon.
The soil lies too light upon them and the wind
Blows through the earth as though the earth were pines.

My own blood in a heavy northern death
Sleeps with the rain and clay and dark, thick shrubs,
Where the spirit fights for movement as for breath.

But among these pines the crosses grow like ferns,
Frail sprouting wood and mottled, slender stones,
And the wind moves, through shadows moves the sun.

Delicate the light, the air, a breathing
Joins mourners to the dead in one light sleep:
I watch as I would watch a blind man sleeping,

And remember the day the creaking ropes let slip
My grandfather's heavy body into his grave,
And the rain came down as we shovelled the earth on the lid.

The clods fell final and flat as a blow in the wind
While the mourners patiently hunched against the rain.
There were Hebrew prayers I didn't understand.

In Willesden Cemetery, honoured, wealthy, prone,
Unyielding and remote, he bides his time.
And carved above his head is my own name.

Over and over again the thing begins:
My son at night now frets us with his cries
When dark above his crib the same face leans.

And even here in this clear afternoon
The dead are moving like wind among the pines;
They touch my mouth, they curl along my spine.
Since it's begun, why should it ever end?

HARVEY BREIT

ON THE SINKING OF SHIPS

Winding arms in winded waves the child deceives:
A ship, in fever, falters, slips to its knees,
And loses forever. The rest side seesaw in the seas.

A slum's park, the sea is thronged by lives: miniatures
That waves caressed; passersby held stiff as if by knives,
Yet ritual and gaily dressed. Swell of women on the waves!

Shadow of salt upon the feet! Astonished seas are drowned by groves
Of women who are sweet. And men are gone.
Their shirted arms swim after they are done.

Winded arms in winding waves (this ocean opened everywhere,
Then locked) the child deceives. Oceans are heads that rear
And arms that swim when no one looked.

Ships are absolved as the vine and the lemon, as the vine and the lemon.

REFLECTIONS ON SOME ASPECTS OF THE TRADITIONAL NOVEL

ALAIN ROBBE-GRILLET

Translated by David Moore

TRADITIONAL criticism has its own vocabulary. Although its exponents are at great pains not to pronounce any systematic judgments on literature—claiming, on the contrary, to admire such-and-such a work 'freely' on the basis of 'natural' criteria (good sense, feeling, etc.)—it is enough for us to study their reviews with a little attention to become immediately aware of the presence of a host of key-words, which fairly betray the existence of a system.

But we are so accustomed to reading about 'characters', 'atmosphere', 'form' and 'content', 'classical style', and the 'narrative gift' of the 'true novelist', that it requires an effort on our part to escape from this spider's-web and to understand that it represents a *concept* of the novel (a *ready-made* concept, which everyone accepts without discussion, and so a *dead* concept), and not at all that pretended 'essence' of the novel in which we are asked to believe.

The 'Character'

We have heard much from the critics on the subject of the 'character', and we seem likely, alas, to hear a great deal more. For fifty years now he has been a sick man, proof of his death has been furnished time and again by the most reputable essayists—but no one has yet succeeded in toppling him from the pedestal on which the nineteenth century placed him. He is a mummy now, but a mummy that still enjoys a proud, though spurious, pre-eminence among the values that traditional criticism reveres. Indeed, it is by his sense of these values that the 'true' novelist is known: 'He creates characters. . . .'

To justify this attitude the critics in question have recourse to the usual argument: Balzac has given us Père Goriot, Dostoievsky has created the brothers Karamazov—therefore novel-writing today can only be a question of adding a few modern figures to the portrait-gallery which literary history comprises.

Everybody knows what the word 'character' signifies. A character is not just any 'he', anonymous and transparent, a character is not simply the author of the action expressed by the verb. A character must have a name of his own—if possible two: a Christian name and a surname. He must have relations and the traits peculiar to his family. He must have an occupation. If he is a man of substance, so much the better. Finally, and most important of all, he must have a distinctive personality, with a face that reflects it and a past that has moulded both. His personal characteristics will dictate his actions, will make him react in a particular way to each new circumstance. They will enable the reader to judge him, to love him or to hate him. It is thanks to them that he will one day bequeath his name to a *human type*, who, one would say, will have been awaiting the vindication of this baptism.

For it is essential that the character should be at once 'unique' and susceptible of classification. He must have enough individuality to be exceptional—'unforgettable', as they say—and enough broad humanity to remain comprehensible.

For the sake of a little variety, to give himself some sense of freedom, the author may choose a hero who seems to transgress one of these rules: a foundling, a waster, a maniac—a man whose unstable character makes it possible to prepare an occasional little surprise for the reader. . . . He will not, however, go too far along this road, for it is the road to perdition.

Of course, it is not enough to apply formulas. Art being by nature magical, it is necessary to take into account the 'mystery of creation'. The character, if he is effectively portrayed, will finish up by leading an independent existence: he will escape from his creator. As Nathalie Sarraute writes in her very pertinent analysis, *L'Ère du Soupçon*:* 'This is the well-known moment in the experience of some "true novelists" when—such is the intensity of the author's belief and interest in him—the character suddenly begins, like a table at a spiritualistic *séance*, to move of his own accord, as though animated by some mysterious fluid. . . .' The promise of such a miracle is designed to remove our last remaining fears. If the character *lives*, it means that the novel of character is not dead. . . .

* Many of the opinions defended here were expressed by Nathalie Sarraute in articles published in Paris magazines between 1950–55 and collected in the book of essays *L'Ère du Soupçon*. (Gallimard, 1956.)

The one thing that critics forget is that all great contemporary novels prove exactly the opposite. How many readers remember the names of the narrators of *La Nausée* and *L'Etranger*? Are they human types? Would it not be, on the contrary, the height of absurdity to regard these books as studies of character? And does *Voyage au bout de la nuit* describe a 'character'? Does anyone believe, for that matter, that these three novels are written in the first person by accident? Beckett alters the name and the appearance of his hero in the course of a single story. Faulkner deliberately bestows the same name on two different characters. As for the K. of *The Castle*, he is content to be identified by an initial, he possesses nothing, he has no family, no personality. It is even probable that he is not a surveyor at all.

One could multiply examples at will. In point of fact, the creators of characters, in the traditional sense of the word, are no longer capable of offering us anything but puppets in which they themselves have ceased to believe. The novel of character belongs wholly to the past. It symbolises an age—the age that marked the heyday of the *individual*.

It may not be a sign of progress, but it is certainly a fact, that the present age is rather that of the identity-card, the official number. The fate of the world has ceased in our time to be identified with the rise and fall of a few individuals, a few families. The world itself is no longer that sort of private estate, hereditary and possessing a cash value, that species of commodity, which mankind used to be concerned less with 'explaining' than with acquiring. A family name was undoubtedly very important in the time of the *bourgeoisie* so vividly portrayed by Balzac. Personality was important too—the more so as it represented to a far greater extent than today the decisive weapon in a free-for-all struggle for self-advancement, the key to material success, and the means whereby a man might hope to establish an ascendancy over his fellows. An air of authority counted for much in a world in which everyone was intent on feathering his own nest and the weakest went to the wall.

Our modern world is less sure of itself, more modest, perhaps, since it no longer believes in the omnipotence of the individual, but more ambitious too, since it probes deeper. The exclusive cult of 'humanity' has given place to a vaster, less anthropocentric consciousness. The novel seems to be reeling, having lost its former mainstay, the hero. If it fails to recover itself, the reason will be that its existence was bound up with that of a society now dead. If it succeeds, however, a new life will open up before it, in which it may once more take its place as a major art.

The Story

For the majority of readers—and critics—a novel is first and foremost a 'story'. The true novelist is he who knows how to 'tell a story'. His enthusiasm for the task sustains him from beginning to end of his book, even as the air sustains a bird in its flight. It is at once his element, his happiness, and his justification.

So it is that reviewing a novel often means in effect summarising the story, more or less briefly according as one disposes of six columns or two, dwelling to a greater or lesser extent on the essential passages, on the ravelling and unravelling of the plot. The judgment passed on the book will consist above all of an appreciation of its coherence, of its plausibility, of the moments of suspense or the surprises that it holds in store for the breathless reader. A break in the narrative, an ill-constructed episode, a slackening of interest, a slowing down of the action, will represent the work's major faults, vivacity and symmetry its highest qualities.

The question of style will never arise. The novelist will earn praise merely for writing correctly, in a pleasing, vivid, evocative fashion. Thus, style will be no more than a means, a manner. The 'substance' of the book, its essence, its 'content', will consist solely in the story it tells.

However, 'serious' people, those for whom literature is something more than an empty distraction, demand of the story a special quality. It is not enough for it to be amusing or extraordinary, it must also be 'true'. For them truth, in any sphere, always has an edifying quality, spiritually uplifting and irreplaceable. The truth of a novel consists in its humanity. The incidents are invented, perhaps, like the characters, but the conduct of the latter in face of the former must have a spontaneity, an *élan*, a naturalness that immediately capture the reader's interest. And the incidents themselves, however improbable they may seem, must at the same time be appropriate to the characters, must harmonise, as it were, with their thoughts and actions.

The main thing, then, is to tell a story. But the 'great' writer will be the one with the ability to invent a *true* story. A whole literature, embracing romance, adventure and crime, testifies to the wilful neglect of this principle. It is none the less successful with the public on that account; but it places itself automatically in an inferior category, and the reader who devours it does so with a bad conscience, if he has any culture: he knows that he is wasting his time, that he is not feeding his mind.

Becoming more scrupulous yet, he begins to look with suspicion even on those books with white covers which we associate with our best publishers. Many stories

that come under the heading of 'true' literature now seem to him suspect. Having succeeded in escaping from the flood of novels that has engulfed him, he begins to ask himself whether their authors have not been 'telling him stories'.

And now, suddenly, this phrase, which for so long had epitomised the pleasure that he derived from his reading, appears to him in all its horror. The tension that has carried him from page to page, the neat tying up of the plot, the professional *élan* of his favourite author—of a sudden he seems to discern in these things all the signs of a gigantic hoax. He fears he has been led into a trap. All this pretended 'human truth' was just a sham, just 'literature'. . . .

That is why we find enlightened readers turning away from fiction in ever-growing numbers. The real-life story—the personal document or 'testament'—in effect offers guarantees far superior to those of the invented story. To be sure, its style is more rugged, but that is no longer the point. Quite the reverse, in fact, for enlightened readers no longer put any trust in 'polite' literature. And the more mature among them go about declaring in patronising tones: 'I no longer read novels, I'm past the age. They're all right for women who have nothing to do, but I prefer reality. . . .'—and similar nonsense.

As for the poor novelist, he is obliged to fall back upon didactic literature. In that field at least he may hope to regain the initiative. Reality is too baffling, too ambiguous, for everyone to be able to draw a moral from it. When it is a question of proving something (whether the object is to demonstrate the wretchedness of man without God, to explain the workings of the feminine heart, or to stimulate the reader's social conscience), the invented story reasserts itself. It is so much more convincing!

Or should be. Unfortunately, however, it no longer convinces anyone. Since the imaginative novel is now suspect, it would be in danger, on the contrary, of bringing discredit on psychology, socialist ethics, religion. If anyone is interested in these disciplines he will read essays, which are more reliable. And so, once again, pure literature finds itself relegated to the category of the trivial. The novel with a message has become, in fact, the most despised of literary *genres*. . . .

Is it, then, no longer possible for the novelist to avoid incurring a charge either of gratuitousness or of didacticism? To tell a story in order to amuse is futile, to do so in order to convince is disingenuous, to do so in order to enlighten is even worse. Is there no solution to the problem?

There is one, though few today are willing to recognise it. If the age of romantic fiction is really past, and if at the same time the novel is destined in spite of every-

thing to survive, it will clearly do so in the form of a novel stripped of romantic elements. What we must repudiate henceforth is the old definition: 'To write a novel is to tell a story.' It is not certain that the story as such is destined to disappear completely (in any case, that is scarcely possible), but, like the character, it will gradually lose its importance, will come to fill a less and less prominent role.

This tendency first manifested itself several decades ago, and it can only continue to increase. The exigencies of the plot undoubtedly impose fewer limitations on Proust than on Balzac, on Faulkner than on Proust, on Beckett than on Faulkner. . . . The author of today has other preoccupations. Proust still used to tell an occasional story, but he was not afraid to wrap it up, to water it down. When Faulkner seizes upon a story he often does so in order to destroy it, never in order to tell it. As for Beckett, he no longer uses narrative except with a satirical purpose. And so the process continues.

'You're going to kill the novel', declare the critics. But they are wrong. The truth is that the novel itself has lost the faith which it once had in its story: the latter is no longer capable of sustaining it. If it is to survive, it will certainly have to look for some other means of support.

Form and Content

Since—in the current view—the story is the most important thing in a novel, since the 'good' novelist is the one who invents pleasing stories or who can tell a tale better than his rivals, and since, finally, the epithet 'great' is applicable only to the novel whose significance extends beyond the story to embrace a 'profound human truth', an ethical or metaphysical reality, it is natural that our critics should regard 'formalism' as one of the most heinous of crimes. Once again, whatever they may say to the contrary, their choice of a word implies a 'systematic' approach to the novel; and once again, beneath its air of 'naturalness', the system in question is found to conceal the most airy abstractions—not to say absurdities. One can, moreover, discern in it a certain contempt for literature, unexpressed yet flagrant, which, coming from the latter's official champions, is a source of astonishment.

What exactly do they mean by 'formalism'? The answer is clear: they mean an excessive preoccupation with form—or, more specifically, with the technique of novel-writing—at the expense of content, that is to say of the story and its meaning. The old scholastic opposition is accordingly still rife, the old shibboleth of form and content has not yet been consigned to limbo.

One would be inclined to say, indeed, that the very opposite is the case, that this traditional heresy is today more prevalent than ever. The charge of formalism is made as often in the writings of the most fervent believers in an 'uncommitted' literature—let us say, of all our amateurs of *belles-lettres*—as in the sacred texts of Zhdanovian criticism. Such unanimity among the most irreconcilable of enemies is surely not fortuitous: it shows that they are really at one in their unwillingness to recognise the autonomy of art. The members of the first group ask of literature that it should above all express that vague humanism which was the glory of a society now in its decline, of which they are the last defenders. Those of the second would regard it as just another weapon placed at the service of the socialist revolution.

Both groups seek to ascribe to the novel a meaning that is alien to it, to make of it the key to some value that lies outside its scope, to some spiritual or earthly 'beyond', to a future Bliss or an eternal Truth: whereas, if Art is anything, it is *everything*; in which case it must be self-sufficient, and there can be nothing beyond it.

Everyone knows the Russian satirical cartoon which shows a hippopotamus in the African bush pointing out a zebra to another hippopotamus and exclaiming: 'There you are! That's formalism!' The existence of a work of art, its significance, are not at the mercy of a blue-print to which it may or may not conform. A work of art, like the world, is a living form: it *is*, it needs no justification. The zebra is real—to deny the fact would be unreasonable—even though its stripes are devoid of meaning. It is the same with a symphony, a painting, a novel: their reality lies in their form.

Thus, to speak of the 'content' of a novel is quite simply to remove the entire *genre* from the domain of Art. For Art contains nothing, expresses nothing. It subordinates itself to no ultimate aim; it conforms to no pre-existent scheme. It creates its own equilibrium and its own meaning. It stands on its own feet, like the zebra; or else it falls.

If we pursue our inquiry further, we find our road barred by yet another of the *clichés* of traditional criticism: 'So-and-so has something to say, and he says it effectively.' Could it not be argued, on the contrary, that the true writer has *nothing* to say? His task is to create a world, but out of nothing, out of dust. . . .

Let us reply at once to another charge, that of gratuitousness. This charge is hurled at the novelist as soon as he mentions the word 'autonomy'. The doctrine of 'Art for art's sake' has a bad press: it suggests insincerity, legerdemain,

dilettantism. But the *necessity* whereby a work compels recognition as such has nothing to do with utility. It is a wholly internal necessity, but must obviously assume the guise of gratuitousness when the criterion is imposed from without. By comparison with the French Revolution, for example, the sublimest art may well appear of secondary, not to say of trivial importance.

Herein lies the difficulty—one is tempted to say the impossibility—of creation: the work must compel recognition as something that is *necessary*. But necessary for what? Answer: *for nothing*.

All these propositions ought, once again, to be self-evident. If they seem paradoxical, that is due as always to the gigantic conspiracy to which each one of us is more often than not a party. As a corrective, it is essential that we should not be afraid to express ourselves emphatically and without equivocation.

The word 'formalism', if it has a meaning, can only be used apropos of novelists who are too concerned about their 'content' and who, to make it more readily intelligible, deliberately eschew every literary device that might offend or shock the reader: novelists who, more specifically, adopt a *form* which has proved itself, but which has lost all force, all life. They are formalists because they have accepted a ready-made, petrified form that is now no more than a formula, they are formalists because they cling to this putrid corpse.

The public is apt to confuse concern for form with frigidity. The confusion is no longer permissible once it is established that the form in question is original and not stereotyped. And frigidity, like formalism, is all for respecting abstract rules.

Finally, one is bound to admit—for everything points to this conclusion—that Art is only a Form; but (and we must ignore the less salutary implications of the expression) it is probably the *form of the world*.

THE HEROISM OF THOMAS MANN

GABRIEL PEARSON

It must be said at once that I do not read German. This is of course a drawback in discussing a writer who clearly handles language so individually. But an even greater drawback, perhaps, is ignorance of the history and specific forms of German culture. All this has to be said by way of prologue, rather than apology. This ignorance seems fairly widespread. But Thomas Mann is too large a cultural fact to leave to the experts. There he is, solidly resident on all the shelves of our highbrow bookshops. True, many of us are at the mercy of H. T. Lowe-Porter's long labour of love and translation. And those in the know will always be at hand to hint at how much we are missing. Perhaps we can take comfort in the legend that at one time the literary sophisticates of Paris read their Proust in English.

Proust is a great, modern novelist who is now part of our consciousness. And this is due, to a considerable extent, to his translator. The same ought to be true of Mann; but clearly it is not. There is no cast-iron way of proving this. One just has to take soundings among acquaintances. Here, it appears that he is read but somehow not responded to. While those who do respond, treat him to a high austere dedication. This is usually a bad sign. It points to small islands of enthusiasm amid a waste of indifference. In the weekly reviews, on the other hand, one is always stumbling against Proust. He is now a ready and frequent prop to analogy and contrast. Mann is obviously not at the finger-tips of the literary journalists. It seems that he has just not been domesticated.

This is a pity. Mann, I believe, has more to teach us about the problems of the modern artist than any other novelist of equal stature. He faced these problems with astonishing heroism; and we need examples of heroism in literature. This is why Yeats has been such a source of inspiration to successive generations of poets. He had the courage to take his literary career in both hands and twist it into quite

a new shape. And this, when he was well on into middle age. He did not just change with the times; he transformed his times by transforming his art. The same is true of Thomas Mann. And it is perhaps this aspect of his career that the critic who does not read German can most readily grasp. Deep acquaintance with Germany's artistic and cultural agony might focus too exclusively on what is historically conditioned in Mann's art. It is of course necessary to have some idea of the external conditions that shape a work of art. But ultimately that shape is unique. And criticism has to concentrate on the area of freedom a work of art creates for itself. This area is defined by history; but within it moral judgments are enacted.

In fact, most of us will have, if only sketchily, the historical equipment with which to tackle Mann. What is much more important is that we should understand the predicament of the artist in modern society. Mann's work helps us to understand, but it is also shaped by this predicament. It is true that the cultural history of Germany is a special case. Due to the asphyxiation of political energy in Bismarck's power-State, much of German history *is* cultural history. Goethe, Wagner and Nietzche may seem to us part of the formidable and pedantic apparatus that Mann seems to deploy, just to make things difficult. But to a German, they are necessarily part of his political history, as important to them as Peterloo or Bloody Sunday to us. And more important, perhaps, even than Frederick the Great, Bismarck or Hitler. By invoking Goethe in *Lotte in Weimar* and Goethe and Nietzche in *Doctor Faustus*, Mann is re-enacting German history. Much of this comes over from the novels and stories themselves. Much, the English reader probably loses. But this fact of German history has its effect. It illustrates the condition of the artist completely and stridently. The result is that we become much more aware of our own cultural history. This is perhaps, in the novel, the specific contribution of Germany to European literature.

It is, however, because of the suspicion that Mann is too difficult and German, that his influence in England and America is comparatively slight. And difficult, moreover, not in a modish way. He seems overloaded with too much intellectual freight. There is some truth in this. We are a little afraid of this solid pedagogic German with his elephantine ironies. His fat forefinger seems perpetually chiding us for our cultural deficiencies. He is easy to dismiss as yet another in the long line of heavy teutonic bores. And our purveyors of culture seem to have acquiesced timidly. In England only two of Mann's novels have been published in paperbacks. These are *Buddenbrooks* and *Death in Venice*. One can be smuggled by as a highbrow *Forsyte Saga*; the other, as a study of perverse love, the least bit *risqué*.

But just to read Thomas Mann in the light of the period between *Buddenbrooks* and *Death in Venice* is to miss the heroic significance of his career. It was in just this light that D. H. Lawrence read him; and, in his review of *Death in Venice*, he discussed Mann's work in terms of a late development of Flaubertian technique, devoted to a study of decay and disintegration. Actually, Lawrence's critique is based on so sensitive an awareness of what is going on in Mann's work that it implicitly allows for the later development. In a generous and controlled summing-up, he remarks:

> It is absolutely, almost intentionally, unwholesome. The man is sick, body and soul. He portrays himself as he is, with wonderful skill and art, portrays his sickness. And since any genuine portrait is valuable, this book has its place. It portrays one man, one atmosphere, one sick vision. It claims to do no more. But we know it is unwholesome—it does not strike me as being morbid for all that, it is too well done—and we give it its place as such.

And in the last sentence—a curious logical jump from 'one man, one atmosphere, one sick vision'—he suddenly declares:

> But Thomas Mann is old—and we are young. Germany does not feel very young to me.

In fact, he has allowed the symptomatic value of Mann's work—and realised that it is in some way closely bound up with the fate of Germany itself. And there is a sense in which while Lawrence's newly discovered England was young in 1913, it was no longer so in 1919. Victory had somehow aged England; and Lawrence himself was in exile. Germany however had been raped. What Lucacs has called her 'power-protected inwardness' had been burst open; and the possibilities of a slow, sane recovery or a dangerous relapse into barbarism been revealed. It was to this new situation that Mann discovered the moral courage to react. The writer who was old to D. H. Lawrence's youth in 1913 survived him. He lived on to explore on an epic scale the inner meaning of the next cataclysm but one, seventeen years after Lawrence's death.

The analogy with Yeats's career is again helpful. Yeats's maturity was preceded by his decadence. The period of pre-Raphaelite and Celtic twilight was a kind of fluid medium in which the hard, jagged lines of his maturity were precipitated. And that early period is now transformed by the knowledge of the Yeats which it gave birth to. It helps us to understand what it was that Yeats had to revolt against. At the same time we see it as something that had to be lived, not only survived. For decadence is part of modern history. And it is precisely that Yeats had once conformed to a contemporary though degenerate mode of feeling

that saves him from being a crank. What made Yeats our greatest modern poet was his moral stamina. He had the courage to step out from the Ireland of his dreams into the Ireland of reality—the land of outrage and civil war. The temporal parallelism of the two careers may be just a coincidence; the mechanism of heroic recovery seems, however, to have been the same.

Yeats's recovery involved a reconstruction of the prevailing mode of poetic feeling. Similarly, Mann's new vision of reality forced on him a new conception of the novel. It is at this point perhaps that ignorance of the specific forms of German literature may lead the critic astray. What looks like something radically new in England may be just a stale rehash for the German. Lawrence's insistence on the Flaubertian aspect of Mann's art however points to its generally European character. Matthew Arnold was able to attempt a critique of Tolstoy without knowing anything of Gogol or Schredin. And besides, *Buddenbrooks* does give us a point of reference. In one sense it *is* like the *Forsyte Saga*; while to Barset-addicts the town and activities of the *Buddenbrooks* would not be unfamiliar. Mann started with a conception of the novel not very different from that traditional in England. He was trying to validate individual experience through the life of a community; and this is an effort common to Jane Austen and Tolstoy. It could, very broadly, be described as the realistic tradition.

This tradition depends for its vitality on the assumption of a community that can somehow give meaning to the individual's quest for self-discovery. And in the end, such a community must actually exist. In the palmy days of the Buddenbrook family, early in the last century, it did exist. The town poet can dine with the leading business man. The idea of community is still operative in society. Mann's first complete novel is an illustration of the decline of community. There comes a time when the complex life of the individual is no longer sanctioned by civic life. Historically this process is conditioned by the transformation of the older civic life into mere units of the German Empire. And economically, by the decline of the older, genial mercantilism, with its roots in the medieval commune, into the more ruthless commercialism of modern capitalist economy.

This process of decline Mann plotted with an almost clinical fidelity. And where the values of the realistic tradition of the novel are called in question by the decline of the ideal of community, the assurance and flexibility of technique (under good conditions not really separable as technique at all) is lost. It is replaced by a corresponding attention to naturalistic and psychological reality. The prophet of the decline of realism was Flaubert. At this stage something

happens to the status of the hero. The values which he seeks to embody become increasingly personal, until personality itself comes to have an absolute value. The experience of the individual is no longer part of more general experience worked out in social terms; but stands opposed to it. In the end, standing apart becomes the only valid experience; and the history of the novel in our century has been almost completely concerned with the process of the discovery of the self through separation, rather than the reintegration of self into a community. This is the real theme of the modern novel—as much of *Remembrance of Things Past* as of *Lucky Jim*. The self seeks to preserve its absolute experience from a society that is hostile to it. This accounts for a number of novels concerned with the solitude of the artist—the most obvious example of the man who makes a virtue of his separateness and uniqueness.

Much of Mann's work has, as its hero, the artist. In *Tonio Kröger*—which Lawrence also considered along with *Death in Venice*—the statement of the artist's predicament is fully, though conventionally, stated. Indeed, there is something like an attempt to construct a metaphysic of the artist's predicament. Tonio, with his mixed birth, half Italian and half German, his dreaming dark eyes, his refinement of feature, is shown as the type of the artist. He is doomed to perpetual separation from the blond, healthy bourgeois people who enjoy all the life which the artist, in order to depict, must also renounce. It is very much a twentieth-century version of the Byronic view of the artist. It is worked out in sensitive detail; bringing into the picture the conditioning factors of early environment and heredity. What makes *Tonio Kröger* more than just an exposition of the conventional idea of the 'difficult' artistic temperament, is that this situation is not glamourised; and that full weight is given to the value of the normative life from which Tonio is excluded. Mann's clinical, Flaubertian technique keeps him cool and distanced from the objects of his scrutiny. Clinical is in more senses than one the right word. Disease becomes his constant metaphor for the human condition in the twentieth century. Through this metaphor he is able to articulate his sense of the ambiguity of a dying society. On the one hand, it has corrupted itself by its departure from the ideal of community. But that corruption has a unique quality. Through its workings, discoveries are made about the nature of man—discoveries that could be made in no other way. This is, of course, an historical judgment. And as such, it has to be dispassionate. Hence a frequent source of complaint—that Mann is really indifferent to the creatures of his imagination; and uses them and abuses them without respect. But he does have respect for

something that vitally matters—the use to which man puts his creativity, not as an individual, but in society.

The ambiguity of a decadent society is only tentatively touched on in *Tonio Kröger*. In *Death in Venice*, it is much more deeply explored. Lawrence remarked on the curious lack of morbidity in a tale so entirely unwholesome. He does not explain why, against all appearances, it ends by stimulating and not disgusting. The reason is, I think, that it is so objective. Lawrence finds value in the actual fidelity of the portraiture. But much more, it lies in the mode of representation—not quite the same thing. Aschenbach does not engage our sympathy in the way that the realistic hero does. He is essentially a special case, very much a case-history in fact. But he is not allowed just to put his own case. He is there to demonstrate—yet the story is not just embodied didacticism either. Mann's sense of the complexity of his situation is too strong for that. In fact, he is distanced all the time by a characteristic irony. This irony is not like the savage compassion of Flaubert. It is concerned to reveal the reality about Aschenbach that Aschenbach himself could never understand. A case in point—as Aschenbach crosses to Venice on the boat, he sees a company of youths laughing and fooling. Among them is one who is fooling harder than the rest. Suddenly, Aschenbach realises that he is a hideous old man, tricked out and bedaubed to represent youth. In the closing pages of the story, Aschenbach courts from afar the beautiful Polish boy he has fallen in love with. To make himself more attractive, he too bedaubs himself with cosmetics. Suddenly, the reader realises that Aschenbach is also a hideous old man, dressed up. But the effect is more than merely shocking. Because Aschenbach is an almost monastically dedicated writer sworn to an austere classic art, we are made to understand something about that art—that it is senile and corrupt, although garishly painted. But this would seem the usual kind of Marxist moralising. The general sense of Aschenbach's story is that the high dedication of art, because it has cut itself off from community, is very close to barbarism. This is why Aschenbach daydreams of lush, steaming, tropical forests. And the parallelism with the plague in Venice, so carefully hushed up by the authorities, shows art also to be allied to social corruption. Yet Aschenbach is given his view. His dedication is not the less a reality to him for being the product of a life-denying society. His last sight, as he sits on the beach, dying of plague, is of the beautiful boy standing out in the sea. And this 'shot' contains the ambiguity of Aschenbach's life. Torn between the false claims of art and life, he has abandoned one for the other. But his art was his life; and he cannot escape from it back into life. Through

the image of the boy in the sea, in the moment before death, his lost unity, as an artist, is restored. The boy, the aesthetic, Apollonian principle, stands in unity with the sea, the uncontrollable, life-giving Dionysian principle. It is such suddenly caught visions of human unity that make radical and disturbing what might have been merely morbid. And it is Mann's irony—and ironic maltreatment of his characters—that produces the effect. The moral heroism lies in not succumbing with Aschenbach. In at once seeing Aschenbach as a victim, a cause and a creator. The irony is really a flanking attack against reality. It attempts to restore balance and objectivity. And above all, it attempts to indicate the normative in a thoroughly abnormal world.

Death in Venice contains in embryo the method that, with much modification, Mann was to deploy against an increasingly hostile reality. Lawrence was not able to see this in 1913; and we can only see it in the retrospect of the three great masterpieces—*The Magic Mountain, Joseph and His Brethren* and *Doctor Faustus.* As the situation in Germany became more and more ugly, so Mann's ironic method became more elaborate. But its elaboration is responsive to the pressure of reality, not—as it is, to some extent, with James—an almost abstract evolution of form and attitude. In *The Magic Mountain,* the metaphor of disease is fully explored. Through the allegory, or symbol or metaphor—and it is all of these at once—the pre-cataclysmic, 'power-protected inwardness' of Germany is exposed. The sanatorium as such would be only an image of the disease—and the attempts to find false ways to health. But Hans Castorp, the hero, has here almost the traditional responsibility of the realistic hero. The difference is, that he cannot really act. All he can do is learn and experience. This of course is connected with a traditional and uniquely German form of fiction—the novel of Education. But, again, acquaintance with the history of that form does not seem to me essential to an understanding of *The Magic Mountain.* The important thing is that Hans Castorp survives his experience of it. In a sense, he is a kind of essence of the human stock—engaged (through his love for the diseased Madame Chauchat), curious, and impressionable; yet, in the end, keeping a part of himself healthily uncommitted; retaining a wise capacity to accept, without fatally involving himself with the extremes of an idealistic or nihilistic world-view. He embodies something of Keats's 'negative capability'. Our last view of Castorp is of a young solder, any soldier, charging through the field of battle. In a sense he is young Germany itself—the Germany that, as he indicated in his support for the weak and tentative Weimar Republic, Mann hoped might yet be born. That is why, when he is lost high up in the snows, Castorp has a

delirious vision of what the human race, and Germany in particular, might alternatively become. It is a vision of an earthly paradise balanced against a scene of hideous human sacrifice. This is an example of Mann's historical imagination at its most prophetic. Castorp survives this vision. A similar image is used by Lawrence at the end of *Women in Love*. Here, Gerald, the heir of an industrial empire, perishes in the snow. But Gerald, in however distorted a form, does represent the idea of community; and Lawrence can see no other way but to kill him off. Birkin, the other hero of the novel, stands for the fully realised individual life. With Gerald's death, however, all chance of establishing Birkin's individuality through community evaporates. Thereafter, it seems to me, Lawrence's vision slackens, because the tension between the individual and his community is dissipated. It is from Gerald's death that I would date the crankiness and one-sidedness of Lawrence's last period. Ironically enough, it was the enervated Mann who had the stamina to go on, while Lawrence dissipated his sense of reality through self-exile and a private metaphysic of the glory of self-hood. This is one of the supreme ironies of literary histories.

The survival of Hans Castorp opens the way for Mann's heroic exploration of the meaning of Fascism. In *Joseph and His Brethren*, he attempted to reconstruct an early, more normal culture, and relive it. This massive, synthetic work marks the height of Mann's ironic technique enormously elaborated. It has also been responsible for Mann's forbidding reputation for pedagogy. But in fact this irony is really very simple. For what it does is to explore a myth in depth. The actuality of the myth is fully demonstrated. At the same time, it is presented as a monument of historical endeavour—a society and synthesis actually achieved, and hence pointing to the humanly possible.

But Mann's full moral stature was only really demonstrated in *Doctor Faustus*. In my view, Mann has proved the only creative writer to have been able to treat Fascism on the heroic scale. And his oblique method strikes one as the only possible approach. Other writers, those for example re-creating the degeneracy of Communism, have made a frontal attack by attempting a direct confrontation between an individual and the system—Winston Smith and Rubashov, for example. In the end, their account of their experiences fails to be convincing because it is merely an account of one man, and one set of circumstances. Adrian Leverkühn is a hero, of course—but his experience is never taken as conclusive. Through the complex, many-levelled symbolic structure the idea of community is re-created. The unity of culture and the political and economic movements of

society is reasserted through the novel, though it has been disjointed in life. But this assertion is not dogmatic. Leverkühn's artistic quest is a genuine one. If he is corrupted it is part of a price he pays for his ambiguous, though genuine, achievement. The corruption and the achievement are suggested at all levels. On the level of disease, the syphilis that produces a remarkable and fatal brilliance; on the level of German society itself, slowly lapsing into barbarism; and above all through music, reduced from its proper relation with society as servant and inspirer, into a mode of expression at once inhuman and tragic. The tragedy of Adrian Leverkühn is that his art, because not socially validated, can be nothing more than a cry for validity. It is inhuman, because it is produced by a death-directed society. And yet, by virtue of the artistic and moral effort that goes into it, Leverkühn's music stands in defiance of death. To do this great work anything like justice would demand another chapter. I can only plead that it should be read as the culmination of the kind of heroic effort I have suggested. Mann's career demonstrates very fully the immense difficulty that faces the realistic tradition in our day and age. To compass the aims of realism, he has gone outside it and beyond it into symbolism and the creation of vast synthetic structures. I am not suggesting that we can learn anything from Mann that will help us in the technique of writing novels. Why I want to see him read is that he is one of the great encouraging facts in contemporary literature. His work stands for the values of the realistic tradition—the values of community and individuality. And he has demonstrated that in the face of catastrophe these values can still hold. I find this more admirable, in the last analysis, than that other heroic travail in the cork-lined room.

T. S. ELIOT ON POETRY

FRANK KERMODE

[*On Poetry and Poets* by T. S. Eliot*]

THIS book has already provoked mild disappointment. Weigh it against the *Selected Essays* of 1932, it is said, and the new book quick flies up and kicks the beam. And certainly this collection will start no revolution. No phrase from it will gain the universal currency of some of the old ones. (I have just read an Italian critic on *l'elliotesco correlativo oggettivo*.) I think it will have no spectacular effect on young poets, and provoke no drastic revision of the history of poetry. But are we silly enough to expect this? Mr Eliot is not a professional heresiarch. And when we are over this childish disappointment we'll see something more interesting: it is this. In an age which prides itself on its critical achievement, this book confirms beyond dispute that of all living critics Mr Eliot is easily the chief. Among those who work for 'the elucidation of works of art and the correction of taste' there should perhaps be 'no competition'; but there is, all the same, a difference between major and minor. Minor criticism we have a lot of, some of it very good, but all of it, by comparison, very shallow. For what one glimpses, reading through this considerable body of work, is that Mr Eliot's individual efforts, however remote from each other the topics may be, all grow from one massive root, the nature and dimensions of which become ever clearer. One senses the organic relation between all his opinions, whether they are apparently paradoxical, astonishing by their originality; or apparently ordinary. We see, perhaps sadly, how deep the roots of enduring criticism have to be.

We even understand more fully those famous early formulations, concerning, for example, tradition and sensibility, by understanding better what they grew from. We may still think them false, but we cannot think them rootless. Mr Eliot

* Faber & Faber.

is a little inclined to tease us for the attention we've given them. In fact, his detached way of talking about his past writings encourages people to speak of a major alteration in his critical preoccupations, to treat this later work as of a different kind as well as of a different, perhaps lower, order. This is wrong. Take a trivial case: the essay on Kipling, here reprinted, has been cited as evidence of his being no longer 'so closely engaged'—lacking that self-interest that animated his early work. But this essay is really very close to Mr Eliot's profoundest concerns. He first wrote on Kipling in 1919, the period of *The Sacred Wood*; and Kipling interests him for good reasons, both technical, and, in the widest sense, historical. It is of high importance that we should recognise our great writers as such; and Kipling has the skill and originality of a great writer. Like Virgil, he spoke sometimes more than he knew. His work resembles that of the greatest in that it forms a whole greater than its parts. Technically he is 'ambidextrous' in prose and verse; and, like Mr Eliot, his themes sometimes require exposition in both. Above all, Kipling had, like Dante, the *imperial imagination*; and like Virgil, the *historical imagination*. He profoundly understood the contemporaneity of the past. I needn't say how many issues of high importance to Mr Eliot are involved, and that obviously it was important to get Kipling sorted out. Twenty years ago this essay would have been startling enough for anybody; and it comes from the same mind.

It is wrong, then, to speak of disengagement. Indeed, familiar topics constantly recur: the organic relation between a poet's diction and the common speech, and his relation to his times and the homogeneity of his culture; his linguistic responsibilities; his need to avoid provincialism; the old quadrille of feeling, emotion, thought, sensibility. They recur, and they are re-examined. A new view of Milton means a change in the doctrine of dissociation of sensibility; the old dictum, 'Dante and Shakespeare divide the modern world between them; there is no third', is revised. There *is* a third—Goethe. But when I speak of our new and fuller understanding I mean something more than this recognition of old themes new-handled. Mr Eliot is the same critic, and the same poet; but what we see now is the shape of a mind that exactly fits neither category—that comes nearer, in fact, to his own categories of 'classic' and 'great European'.

I will try to explain this by answering, too briefly, one particular question. Mr Eliot has always had, to speak loosely, a concern for history. The question is, how do we understand this better than before, with the 'Tradition' essay and others to guide us? Note how many of Mr Eliot's own questions are historical:

'What is a classic?', as he sees it, involves very complex historical issues; so even does 'What is Minor Poetry?'; and his most famous hypothesis, the dissociation of sensibility, is historical. In fact all these questions refer in the end to *our* place in history, to the cultivated man's *duty* to history. But the historical issue that dominates this book is the status of Virgil; and a word about that, and about Virgil's association with Dante as Mr Eliot sees it, will be the answer to my question.

This association haunts Mr Eliot, and it is a sort of key to his historical imagination; it explains the relation of his art to his religion, the place he gives poetry in his view of the universe as a whole; and much else. Who can forget the moving climax of his treatment of the *Paradiso* in the superb essay on Dante:

> O quanto è corto il dire e come fioco
> al mio concetto!

How scant the speech, how feeble compared with my conception!

Now the speech labours after the conception. Dante is a classic, a master of the common style, who must always be present to our minds; and much more. But the central classic is his master, *l'altissimo poeta*: Virgil. Without Rome we are, in our culture, provincial, cut off from Greece as well as Rome; and Rome historically prepared the Christian world whose poet is Dante. And Virgil is 'the consciousness of Rome and the supreme voice of her language'. But he is more than the embodiment of the best in Rome, more than a criterion by which to judge our modern fragmentariness. His Aeneas, a man loaded with destiny, figures the historical destiny of Rome—the endless empire; and prefigures the Christian world and the Christian life. His happiness, like that of St. Augustine's Christian, is in hope, not in fact, in *spe* not *re*. 'The Roman Empire and the Latin language were not any empire and any language, but an empire and a language with a unique destiny in relation to ourselves; and the poet in whom that Empire and that language came to consciousness and expression is a poet of unique destiny.' As the Middle Ages saw, Virgil is the knot that binds our world together.

One could accurately call this a new Augustinianism, were it not for two things: first, far from putting Virgil by with regret, Mr Eliot makes him an indispensable unifying agent; secondly, Dante taught him this, who understood the true relation of the pagan to the Christian culture, the pagan to the Christian poet; understood, in every sphere, the true relation of the two cities.

It seems quite beside the point to say that this is an aspect of late Romantic medievalism in Mr Eliot. What we have, in this historical view of Virgil and

Dante, is a sign of the enormous consistency of his opinions, scarcely separable into religious, critical, and so on. For the moment it doesn't matter if one accepts them. The point is that they are all—the disaster to modern sensibility, the relation of 'culture' to religion, of great poetry to religion, of every poet to every successor—inextricably related to this cardinal doctrine of historical unity. So is his poetry. This is the past that must bear immediately on our consciousness in a present of division, of agnosticism in one sphere and divided sensibility in another. 'Only through time time is conquered.' If we grasp the formidable, patient wisdom brought to each act of criticism in this book, or merely think of what he says about Virgil and Dante, we can re-read that over-familiar essay on 'Tradition'—and understand it better.

Somehow we have lost the passion that animated Mr Eliot and his friends, the passion for wholeness, unity, that we see in Pound and Joyce and even Wyndham Lewis. The devotion that was needed to make the mind whole was gigantic. Such a mind may be too big for us, some of its manifestations may move our disagreement. But as the poet, and historian of division in a divided world, Mr Eliot will not expect much informed agreement. What we can all see is the profound seriousness, the interrelatedness, of his thought. And there is his patience: characteristically the patience of one who in art and religion alike would 'redeem the time'. He is of the classics; not our Dante, perhaps, so much as our Virgil: his qualities the Virgilian gravity, Virgil's *labor*, *pietas*, his sense of destiny. It is appropriate that his own reward, as a poet, has been sometimes to make the common speech glow with the luminous clarity of Dante.

PUERILE UTOPIA AND BRUTAL MIRAGE

Notes on Baudelaire and the History of a Dilemma

MICHAEL HAMBURGER

I

In a book published in 1951, Professor Henri Peyre undertook a brief survey of what he regarded as the more outstanding contributions to the study of Baudelaire; he dealt with some 350 books and articles. This glut of tributes, biographies and analyses has been further increased by the recent centenary of the first publication of *Les Fleurs du Mal*, as well as by the regular industry of another six years. The importance of Baudelaire, then, can be taken for granted here; both as the father of modern poetry—'*le premier voyant, roi des poètes, un vrai Dieu*',[1] to quote Rimbaud's deification—and as the prototype of the modern poet whose vision is both sharpened and limited by a high degree of critical self-awareness. 'With Baudelaire', Paul Valéry wrote, 'French poetry has at last transcended national frontiers. It has found readers everywhere; it has established itself as the very poetry of modern times.'[2] But Baudelaire was also the author of the last book of poems to become an international best-seller;[3] that this success was posthumous is as relevant to the history of literature as to Baudelaire's life, its wretchedness and its peculiar heroism. A childless man with little interest in the future, Baudelaire derived no comfort from the knowledge of his post-dated success. To write for those unborn was like writing for the dead. Baudelaire's heroism was one of deliberate self-containment; with perfect honesty he could say that 'he would be content to write only for the dead'.[4]

[1] 'the first of seers, king of poets, a true God'. Letter 15/5/1871.
[2] In *Variété II* (1930), p. 142.
[3] This point is made by Walter Benjamin, to whose important essay on Baudelaire (*Schriften*, 1955) I am greatly indebted.
[4] '*volontiers je n'écrirais que pour les morts*'. Dedication to *Les Paradis Artificiels* (1860).

Even Baudelaire's dilemma has been probed from almost every possible angle—artistic, social, psychological, existential and theological. In an earlier essay called *Baudelaire: A Study in Contradiction,*[1] I examined a few of the contradictory judgments to which his self-contradictions have given rise. I return to the subject only as to a springboard for a different concern; because it seems to me that Baudelaire bequeathed not only his poetry, but his dilemma, to generations of later poets and critics.

In studying any recent movement in European poetry, or the work of any individual poet later than Baudelaire who has made some striking innovation, we are almost sure to be faced with problems which may not be intrinsic to the poetry itself, but which determine the nature of our approach to it and divide the judgments of its critics. The private reader can avoid them; the teacher of modern literature cannot. These problems can be traced back to Baudelaire's dilemma; they can be traced back considerably further still, but Baudelaire was the poet who lingered at the crossroads of modernity. His critical works show the same momentous hesitations as his poetry; momentous, because he knew the allurements of every direction which later poets were to take, not excluding headlong retreat; and so does the life of this Romantic-Classical-Symbolist poet, conservative pariah, dandy and spokesman of the underworld, solitary and 'man of crowds', blasphemer and Christian apologist. Both his theory and practice reveal a conflict between two radically different, if not incompatible, conceptions of the nature and functions of poetry. This conflict corresponds to a crisis which is not confined to literature or the arts; to a greater or lesser extent it has come to affect every activity that involves public or cultural values. Basically it may be the old question of ends and means; but at a time when few people agree as to what are the ultimate ends of human activity, every art, science and craft that was once considered a means tends to assume the character and importance of an ultimate end.

Baudelaire was one of the earlier exponents of the doctrine that the writing of poetry is an autonomous and autotelic activity. '*La poésie*', he wrote in 1859, '*ne peut pas, sous peine de mort ou de déchéance s'assimiler à la science ou à la morale; elle n'a pas la Vérité pour objet, elle n'a qu'Elle-même.*'[2] It might be objected that this statement occurs in an essay on Gautier, the originator of the French school of 'Art for Art's sake'; and that Baudelaire was the kind of sympathetic and

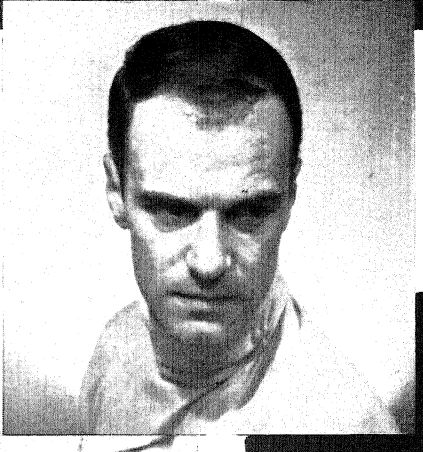
[1] *The Month,* Vol. V, No. 1, Jan. 1951.

[2] 'Under pain of death or deposition, poetry must not adapt itself to science or morality; the object of poetry is not Truth, the object of poetry is Poetry itself.'

TOP LEFT: Alain Robbe-Grillet
TOP RIGHT: Claude Simon

CENTRE: Robert Pinget

BOTTOM LEFT: Michel Butor
BOTTOM RIGHT: Nathalie Sarraute



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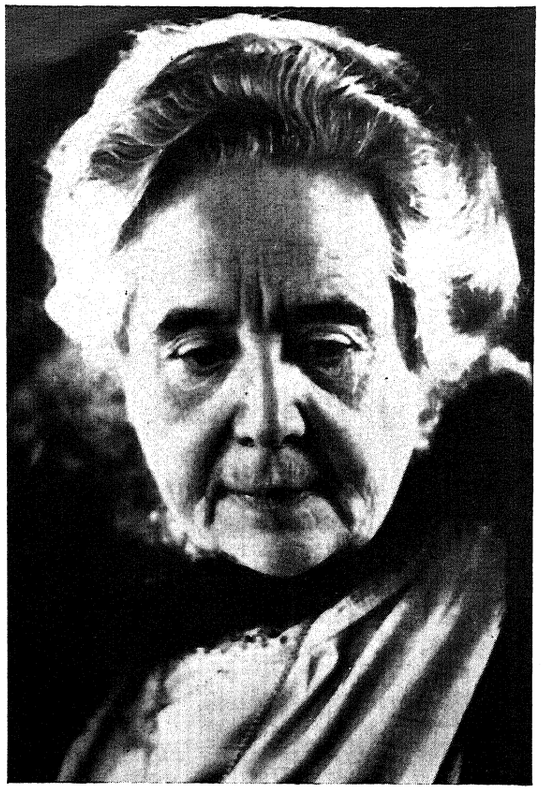
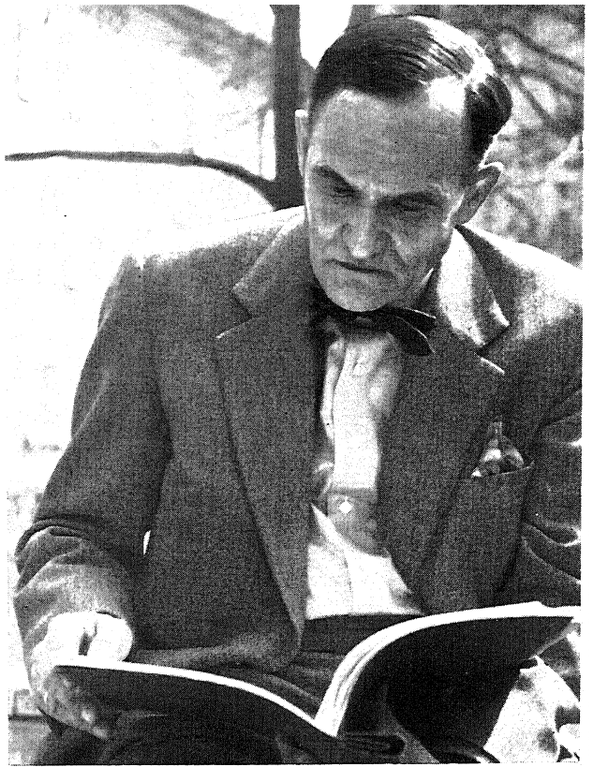


Gertrud von Le Fort

SOME CONTEMPORARY GERMAN WRITERS



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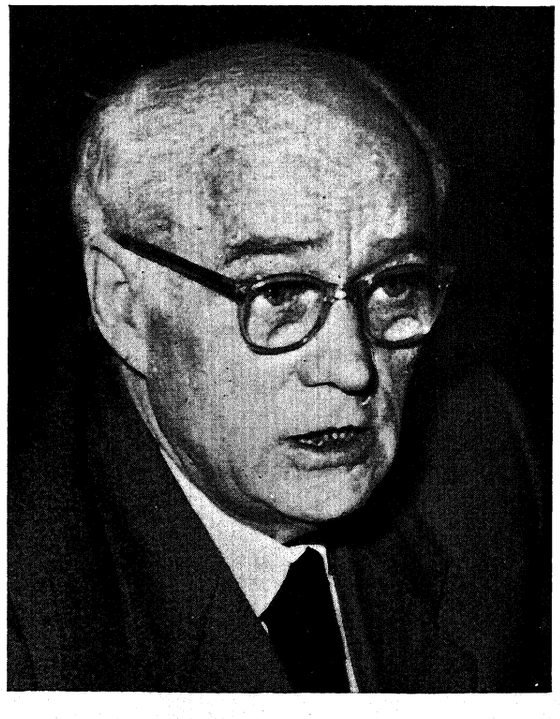
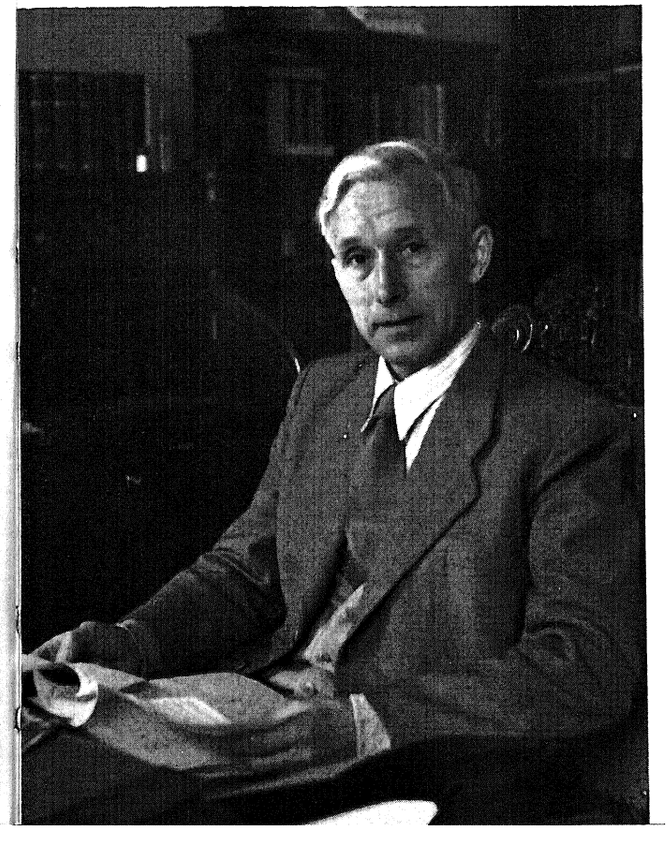


Theodor Plievier



Ernst Jünger

CHARLES BAUDELAIRE

1821 — 1867

A caricature by Charles Giraud

A photograph by Nadar

empathetic critic who tends to assume the point of view of his subject, especially where that subject is also a personal friend. But Baudelaire made similar claims in other essays; that on Barbier (1861), a socialist poet whose artistically undistinguished verse had some influence on Baudelaire, precisely because of the truths which it conveys, contains the aphorism: '*La poésie se suffit à elle-même.*'[1]

Baudelaire, however, was also an extreme opponent of the same view. '*Le temps n'est pas loin*', he had written in 1852, '*où l'on comprendra que toute littérature qui se refuse a marcher fraternellement entre la science et la philosophie est une littérature homicide et suicide.*'[2] And again, in the same year: '*La puérile utopie de l'école de* l'art pour l'art, *en excluant la morale, et souvent même la passion, etait nécessairement stérile.*'[3] Lastly, a passage that reads less like a critical judgment than like an intimate confession, akin to Baudelaire's remarks that 'art is prostitution' and that 'all books are immoral'[4]: '*Le goût immodéré de la forme pousse à des désordres monstrueux et inconnus. . . . La passion frénétique de l'art est un chancre qui dévore le reste; et comme l'absence nette du juste et du vrai dans l'art équivaut à l'absence d'art, l'homme entier s'évanouit; la spécialisation excessive d'une faculté aboutit au néant.*'[5]

A great number of other passages could be adduced from Baudelaire's writings for either side of the argument; to do full justice to Baudelaire, they would have to be related to his practice as a poet and to his development as a man. Nor would Baudelaire be the great poet and critic that he is if he had made no attempt to reconcile these conflicting views of poetry. In practice he did so by the allegorical use of urban imagery to act as a link between the actual and the timeless, the phenomenon and the Idea; by combining a new realism with his search for the archetypes.[6] How far he remained from a consistent symbolism, how deeply rooted in the rhetorical and didactic tradition of French verse, can only be exemplified here by a single poem of his maturity, *Causerie*. In consecutive lines of this sonnet he likens his heart to something which the beasts have eaten:

Ne cherchez plus mon coeur; les bêtes l'ont mangé

[1] 'Poetry is sufficient to itself.'

[2] 'The time is not distant when it will be understood that all literature which refuses to march fraternally between science and philosophy is a homicidal and suicidal literature.'

[3] 'The puerile utopia of *art for art's sake*, by excluding morality and often even passion, was inevitably sterile.'

[4] Note on *Les Liaisons Dangereuses. Oeuvres Posthumes* (1908), p. 176.

[5] 'The immoderate love of form produces monstrous and unprecedented disorders. . . . The frantic passion for art is a canker that devours all the rest; and since the complete absence of the right and the true in art amounts to a lack of art, the entire man perishes; the excessive specialisation of any one faculty ends in complete annihilation.'

[6] A good example is the '*gibet symbolique*' of *Un Voyage à Cithère*, which is also the actual gibbet seen by Gérard de Nerval on the (then British) island of Cerigo as recorded in his *Voyage en Orient. Les Femmes du Caire* (1882), p. 13.

and to a palace befouled by the mob:

Mon coeur est un palais flétrie par la cohue.

The clash between these disparate analogies, which the remaining five lines of the sestet vainly try to resolve, is so disturbing just because Baudelaire was not a Symbolist, but an allegorical poet. If *Causerie* remains a great poem it is because Baudelaire's allegories do their work even within the bounds of a single line; and they do so because of the compressed rhetoric he had learnt from the classical poets, both French and Latin.

On the level of theory, several attempts to reconcile the two views occur in his last essays. '*Le beau*', he wrote in 1863, '*est fait d'un élement éternel, invariable, dont la qualité est excessivement difficile a déterminer, et d'un élement rélatif, circonstantiel, qui sera, si l'on veut, tour à tour où tout ensemble, l'époque, la mode, la morale, la passion.*'[1] In the same year Baudelaire wrote his ill-fated letter to Swinburne to thank him for his laudatory article on *Les Fleurs du Mal*; Baudelaire continues: '*Permettez-moi, cependant, de vous dire que vous avez poussé un peu loin ma défense. Je ne suis pas aussi* moraliste *que vous feignez obligeamment de le croire. Je crois simplement "comme vous sans doute" que tout poème, tout objet d'art* bien fait *suggère naturellement une* morale. *C'est l'affaire du lecteur. J'ai même une haine très décidée contre toute* intention *morale exclusive dans un poème.*'[2]

The morality of a poem, then, should be implicit; and there is a relation between this implicit morality and the artistic merit of a poem. But Baudelaire doesn't claim, as later critics have claimed, that the reader has no business to enquire into these moral implications. And of course there is also the very different tone of a later letter, one of Baudelaire's last, in which he confesses that he put his whole heart, his most tender feelings, all his religion—in a disguised form—and all his hatred into that 'terrible book'.[3] It is also worth noting that, despite his partial allegiance to the 'art for art's sake' school, Baudelaire at no time found it necessary to evolve a kind of literary criticism that would concentrate on the aesthetic and stylistic aspects of a poem. His critical essays are brilliant examples of the synthetic, as distinct from the analytical, approach, and they are the work of a man concerned with the public function of the arts as much as

[1] 'Beauty consists of an eternal, invariable element, whose character is exceedingly difficult to define, and of a relative, circumstantial element which we can attribute to the period, the fashion, morality or passion, each in turn or all at once.'

[2] 'Allow me, however, to tell you that you've gone a little too far in defending me. I am not so much of a *moralist* as you obligingly pretend to believe. I simply believe "like you no doubt" that every poem, every work of art that is *well made* naturally and necessarily suggests a certain morality. That's the reader's business. I even feel a decided loathing for any exclusively moral *intention* in a poem.'

[3] To Ancelle, 18/2/1866.

with their inner laws. As a critic, Baudelaire had more in common with Matthew Arnold than with his acknowledged master, E. A. Poe, or his acknowledged disciple, Mallarmé.

II

But it was Baudelaire the aesthete, the dandy and the Satanist who was acclaimed in the decades that followed his death. Admirers of Villiers de l'Isle-Adam could easily identify themselves with the perpetrator of squibs like this one: 'If a poet demanded of the State the right to keep a couple of bourgeois in his stable, people would be very much astonished; but if a bourgeois asked for some roast poet, people would think it quite natural.' This epigram had all the ingredients required by the *fin de siècle* aesthetes: the anti-humanism, the fine insolence, the tacit equation of the artist with the aristocrat. Even the moralists were taken in by Baudelaire's various masks. Henry James observed that 'sincerity seems to us to belong to a range of qualities with which Baudelaire and his friends were but scantily concerned'. And of Baudelaire's poetry he wrote: 'Our impatience is of the same order as that which we should feel if a poet, pretending to pluck the *Flowers of Good*, should come and present us, as specimens, a rhapsody on plumcake and *eau de Cologne*.'[1]

In 1866, shortly before Baudelaire's death, Mallarmé underwent the crisis known as 'les nuits de Tournon', during which he lost his religious faith. The outcome of this crisis was his essay *Le Livre, Instrument Spirituel* and the sudden discovery that 'everything, in the world, exists in order to culminate in a book'! What Baudelaire had described as a 'puerile utopia' was established in all seriousness; and Baudelaire, together with E. A. Poe, was worshipped as its founder. One would be inclined to ascribe Mallarmé's statement to his youth or to the momentary thrill of having found a substitute for religious faith; but throughout his mature life he expounded an aesthetic doctrine which had its origin in this early crisis. As late as 1894, in his Oxford lecture *La Musique et les Lettres*, he made this astonishing statement (though he himself described it as an exaggeration): 'Yes, indeed, Literature exists, and if you like, Literature alone exists, to the exclusion of everything else.' Though this new cult of literature and art derived from the poets, critics and metaphysicians of German Romanticism, in Mallarmé's case it was combined with Platonic or Neo-Platonic influences. The same lecture makes this clear, or as clear as Mallarmé's truly jewelled, hard

[1] *Charles Baudelaire* in *French Poets and Novelists* (1884), pp. 57–65.

but many-faceted prose style can be said to make anything clear: 'At my risks aesthetically, I set down this conclusion . . . that Music and Letters are the alternate face, here enlarged towards darkness, there sparkling, with certainty, of a phenomenon, the only one, I have called it the Idea.' Art, according to Mallarmé, 'simplifies the world', because by virtue of an inward state the artist reduces external phenomena to their single parent Idea.

What Schiller called the 'aesthetic education of man' most certainly derives from Plato; but it was also Plato who had his doubts as to the fitness of poets to conduct it. The very reason why literature now 'aspired towards the condition of music' was the uncomfortable awareness that the written word, after all, is a medium that resists the purification required of it. The significance of Mallarmé's 'simplification' was that the external world, which already to Delacroix and Baudelaire had been only a 'dictionary', a 'store of images' or a 'forest of symbols' from which the artist selects his material, has now become no more than 'a brutal mirage'. Whereas Baudelaire's allegories served to link the phenomenon to the Idea—or else served the purely artistic purpose of appealing to more than one sense at a time, by the use of synaesthesia—Mallarmé's withdrawal to a wholly subjective symbolism of the inward state severed all connection between the poet and that 'relative, circumstantial' sphere in which extra-artistic values apply. In the most literal sense of the word, art had become a religion, with its own dogma, its artist-saints, and even with its own asceticism, summed up by Villier de l'Isle-Adam's *Axel* in the aphorism much admired by Mallarmé: '*Vivre? Les serviteurs feront cela pour nous!*'[1] It is no wonder, then, that outside the field of aesthetics Mallarmé's thinking was indeed 'puerile' and inept. What could be more so than his prophecy, from the same lecture: 'If in the future, in France, there is a rebirth of religion, it will be the amplification into a thousand joys of the celestial instinct (*instinct de ciel*) in each man'? Baudelaire would have laughed at such a *niaiserie*.

Rimbaud's reaction was even more extreme. Although he criticised Baudelaire for 'living in too artistic a milieu' and for failing to invent new forms, his deification of the master has already been cited. Yet while Mallarmé withdrew into the sanctum of Art, Rimbaud prepared to take the next step, to recreate the world by the power of his imagination. Whereas Mallarmé merely disparaged '*le mirage brutal, la cité, ses gouvernements, le code*', and could therefore devote himself to the refinement of his medium, Rimbaud was in active rebellion against society,

[1]'As for living, our servants can do that for us!'

morality and even against God. It followed that art could be only a means to this end, a weapon of revolt; and when Rimbaud recognised his spiritual defeat in this greater struggle, the mere weapon became a worthless thing. On the rough draft of the work that recorded his struggle and defeat, *Une Saison en Enfer*, he scribbled these words: '*Maintenant je puis dire que l'art est une sottise.*'[1]

Together with Isidore Ducasse, whose *Chants de Maldoror* were almost contemporary with *Une Saison en Enfer*, Rimbaud became the precursor of Surrealism and other experimental movements of this century. It is worth remembering, therefore, that Rimbaud and Ducasse regarded their own experiments as failures; not on artistic grounds, but because the wheel had come full circle: as Baudelaire predicted, the hypertrophy of art must inevitably lead to its atrophy. Rimbaud's recantation took the form of silence; his rebellion had been too wholehearted and too extreme to permit such a conciliatory half-measure as Verlaine's *Sagesse.* Rimbaud's renunciation of literature was as complete as his former faith in the power of the written word—but in the written word as a means of changing the world. As for Ducasse, he recanted in his last work, *Poésies*; the creator of Maldoror, whose search for a kindred spirit had culminated in sexual intercourse with a shark, and who had exclaimed, '*moi seul, contre l'humanité!*', now advocated a return to the 'impersonal poetry' of the classical period and to moral conformism. 'The aim of poetry', he now wrote, 'should be practical truth.'

The wheel had come full circle—by 1873! But the history of literature shows no reluctance to repeat itself; and no wonder, since it's made by individuals whose aspirations and follies are not determined by history alone, nor by those literary and philosophical 'trends' in which historians are forced to deal. The same wheel is turning still; rather more sluggishly, perhaps, but steadily all the same. Mallarmé's lecture of 1894 shows no awareness at all of the implications so clear to the historian's hindsight. Two years later Hofmannsthal wrote to Stefan George, Mallarmé's German disciple, asking him to receive an Austrian friend, Count Joseph Schönborn ('of the Bohemian branch of the house') who was on a visit to Germany. George replied indignantly: 'You write a sentence, my dear friend: "he belongs to life, not to any of the arts" which I would almost regard as a blasphemy. If a man belongs to no art, has he the right to claim that he belongs to life at all? What? at the very most in semi-barbaric ages.'

Later in his life it became evident enough to George that he was indeed living in a semi-barbaric age; and it may even have occurred to him that the gulf

[1] 'I can now say that art is an imbecility.'

fixed by the arrogance of his letter was as acute a symptom as any of this barbarism. Hofmannsthal certainly knew it, and gave up lyrical poetry; and so did Yeats know it, for he included the aristocracy and the poor in his ideal order, as well as the artist (a rather more humane variant of Baudelaire's triad of 'respectable beings', 'the priest, the warrior and the poet. To know, to kill and to create').

It was inevitable that 'Life' should counter-attack. Max Nordau's *Degeneration* appeared in 1893. Tolstoy's tract *What is Art?* appeared in 1897 and 1898. Already in 1887 Tolstoy had written to Romain Rolland: 'Our whole trouble today is due to this: that the so-called civilised people, supported by the learned and the artists, are a privileged caste, like the priesthood; and this caste has the faults of every caste. It debases and dishonours the principle in whose name it was formed. What we call our learning and art is nothing but boundless humbug, a great superstition which usually takes us in as soon as we have emancipated ourselves from the superstitions of the Church.' If Tolstoy's conception of 'culture' as a gigantic hoax reminds present-day readers of Mr Kingsley Amis, his attack on Shakespeare, which followed in 1903, also has a contemporary ring. No recent pronouncement has improved on Tolstoy's description of Shakespeare as 'a fourth-rate artist' whose 'power of characterisation was nil'. In *What is Art*, however, Tolstoy was mainly concerned with the modern aestheticism which he also castigated in *The Kreutzer Sonata.*

Tolstoy's literary judgments were so distorted by the inner crisis which he suffered at this time—a crisis of self-revulsion and self-reproach—and by his position in a society that had only lately ceased to be feudal, that they can be taken seriously only as a symptom of what was to come. The vitalism of Nietzsche was a much more shattering influence in the West. Though on the side of aestheticism, Nietzsche had undertaken the job of relating this doctrine to the philosophical situation in Europe; he showed that the religion of art was 'the last metaphysical activity within European nihilism'. He related it to his religion of the anti-Christ, his immoralism and his own version of Darwinism, 'the will to power'. Another little turn of the wheel, and barbarism revealed a new face. The Nietzschean revolution produced the strange phenomenon of the cultured man with a passionate hatred for culture, the artist ashamed of art. 'To read Rimbaud or the Seventh Canto of *Maldoror*', André Gide confessed, 'makes me ashamed of my works, and disgusted with everything that is a mere product of culture.'

How classical Baudelaire's attitude seems in view of this later *trahison des clercs*, the intellectuals' abject desertion to the enemy's side! '*Tout ce qui est beau et noble*', Baudelaire believed, '*est le résultat de la raison et du calcul.*'[1] True, the new vitalism was a development of aestheticism, with the stress not on beauty, but sensation; it was aestheticism released from its ethical, social and cultural inhibitions. Baudelaire, who had 'foresuffered all', knew its temptations too; hence his warning against the excesses of art-worship, which would not only play into the hands of the barbarians, but turn artists themselves into the worst enemies of art.

III

My little history has confined itself to the attitudes and statements of imaginative writers. To arrive anywhere near completeness—as far as anything so selective, drastic and spasmodic can arrive at completeness—it would have to include those of Valéry, Yeats, Rilke, Lawrence, Mr Ezra Pound and Mr T. S. Eliot; and it would have to trace the dilemma of literary criticism, whose history runs exactly parallel with the one I have attempted to outline. In its effort to keep pace with the imaginative writers, much of the most intelligent criticism of our time has become 'Criticism for Criticism's sake', as Mr D. J. Enright has called it. Although, as long ago as 1924, Mr Edwin Muir wrote that 'all criticism is criticism for criticism's sake' (*Latitudes*, p. 147), his observation does not contradict Mr Enright's; for Mr Muir continued: 'It is a moral habit carried over into art.' Instead of mediating between the work of art and a non-specialist public, it has become as specialised and as difficult as modern poetry is reputed to be; more difficult often, because poetry has its own way of communicating complex perceptions, and because the critics have added their own complexities to those of their texts. There are signs at present that the reaction to the New Criticism may grow as violent and as perverse as Tolstoy's protest against the debilitating effect of art. In fact Tolstoy's exasperation was mild compared to that of Professor Erich Heller's *The Disinherited Mind*, with its insistence that 'the poetry is the ideas, and the ideas are the poetry'. This was anti-aestheticism with a vengeance, since it led the author to condemn Rilke's *Duino Elegies* because its ideas are wrong, and to conclude that Kafka 'had good reason to decree that his writings should be burnt'.

One may sympathise with the impatience behind this literal approach to imaginative literature; but it cuts the knot which it is the business of criticism to

[1] 'Everything beautiful and noble is the result of reason and calculation.'

untie. And to untie the knot will be possible only when we have reintegrated the aesthetic order into a larger one, as Kierkegaard set out to do in Baudelaire's lifetime. This can't be done by merely holding out Dante as a measure for all and sundry, and finding that Shakespeare and Goethe were too modern to pass the test. Nor can it be done by merely returning to Matthew Arnold's position in 1863, before Art—at least in England—had proclaimed her independence from Life, and saying that 'poetry is simply the most beautiful, impressive and widely effective mode of saying things, and hence its importance'. Arnold was a great critic because he tried to maintain a proper balance between the various functions of poetry, as Mr Eliot, with very different premisses and aims, has done in our time; whereas most of the New Criticism has failed to grapple with the dilemma at all. Yet the dilemma was implicit in Professor I. A. Richards's dictum that 'it is never what a poem *says* that matters, but what it *is*'. Professor Heller's literalism simply reverses the dictum; but the dictum itself implied that what a poem says is something different, and separable, from what it is; and that the discerning reader is the one most conscious of this difference. What criticism has failed to do is to account for this difference without losing sight of at least one of the various functions of literature, or giving it up as a bad job. The analytical method is incomplete if it doesn't end by reassembling the parts; and this final process is as liable as any other synthetic process to produce a new machine.

Both as a poet and as a critic, Baudelaire's practice was more classical than is generally granted. Because he was an allegorical poet, rather than a Symbolist, most of his poetry conforms to Samuel Johnson's classical prescription that 'the business of a poet is to examine, not the individual, but the species, to remark general properties and large appearances; he does not number the streaks of the tulip, or describe the different shades in the verdure of the forest. He is to exhibit in his portraits of nature such prominent and striking features, as recall the original to every mind; and must neglect the minuter discriminations . . .'[1] Baudelaire's attitudes, on the other hand, were bound to reflect his situation in his own age, and particularly the isolation which, as Mr Frank Kermode has emphasised in *Romantic Image*, was the common predicament of the Romantics and Symbolists. Baudelaire's self-contradictions, and his dilemma itself, were due to the almost intolerable strain of being a classical, or near-classical, artist in a modern society.

[1] From *Rasselas*. Quoted by T. S. Eliot: *On Poetry and Poets*, p. 179.

Baudelaire, therefore, fell into the confusion which is my chief concern in these notes: to attribute a social, ethical and even religious significance to pre-occupations that were in fact aesthetic. The confusion is very common; few persons of aesthetic sensibility are not sometimes guilty of it. What it amounts to in this particular context is the failure to distinguish between our response to what is ugly and our response to what is evil. The confusion is made all the easier because the aesthetic order touches on the moral, in the sense of *mores* or *moeurs;* and the words 'sordid' and 'squalid' seem to apply equally to both orders. (Mr Auden made the connection in his line, 'New styles of architecture, a change of heart'.) But Baudelaire chose exactly the right word to characterise the utopia of 'art for art's sake': 'puerile', because it is children who are least capable of making the distinction, most apt to base ethical judgments on physical appearances (though very young children are not put off by physical ugliness).

This confusion has led to two other, related confusions. In asserting their belief in 'art for art's sake' many writers have failed to distinguish between their personal motive for writing, and the function of literature. For a modern poet to say that he writes for the poem's sake is neither strange nor shocking; it is simply another way of saying that he is neither a knave nor a fool. The error arises when the poet proceeds to identify his motive with the nature or function of poetry itself, or when he constructs a philosophy of life on the laws of his craft, or on his personal situation as a poet. It was the ideal of the late Gottfried Benn to write 'the absolute poem, the poem without faith, the poem without hope, the poem addressed to no one, the poem made of words which you assemble in a fascinating way'.[1] Absolute poems are 'phenomena, historically ineffective, without practical consequences. That is their greatness'. But Gottfried Benn published his poems; and he didn't even disdain such aids to publication as the radio talk, the public lecture and the press interview. Mere publication would have sufficed to make his poems historically effective, and to give them practical consequences. To point out this inconsistency is not to convict Benn of hypocrisy; I do so to indicate that communication is a function intrinsic to poetry, even where the poet is aware of no wish to communicate anything in particular, where he writes for the dead or for no one. A poem can be a monologue; but it is a monologue spoken aloud.

The second error is to suppose that there must be a fixed ratio between the degree of autonomy attained by a work of literature, and its quality; that this

[1] *Probleme der Lyrik*, 1952.

ratio depends on the poet's beliefs; and that a poet who acknowledges no commitment to anything other than his art is therefore incapable of writing a bad poem, let alone a vulgar poem. Commitment, again, is not only a matter of conscious attitudes; merely to write is to commit oneself, and to reveal a commitment that cannot possibly be confined to the aesthetic order. Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, for instance, owes most of his reputation to his attitude; as a writer of fiction he was inferior to many of the popular novelists of his time. And, as Baudelaire remarked, there is also the vulgarity that consists in insulting a crowd.

The poet as aesthete is the poet turned specialist, the poet who cannot see further than his specialisation and turns it into a creed. In so far as he approved the 'art for art's sake' school, Baudelaire showed that he couldn't resist the general trend towards specialisation. His solitude was against him. His cult of *dandyisme*—as 'the last refulgence of heroism in decadent ages'[1]—was his desperate attempt to make sense of his solitude; it was one of a long succession of auxiliary religions to which artists have resorted merely to keep going at all. Yet it was Baudelaire the classicist who noted in his journal, under the heading of *Dandyisme:* 'Who is the superior man? He is not the specialist. He is the man of leisure and of general education. To be rich and love work.'[2] But Baudelaire, for the greater part of his life, was anything but rich, and he hated work. So he became the first to complain of 'immense nausea of advertisements', a border-line nausea, half aesthetic, half moral, which he interpreted as disgust with the 'sordid' materialism of the age. At the same time he knew that—except in its highest, Platonic reaches—aestheticism is also materialism; and that it was his own aestheticism that divided him from the crowd. 'As for me, who sometimes find it in myself to assume the ludicrous role of prophet, I know that I shall never find there the charity of a physician. Lost in this vile world, buffeted by the crowd, I am like a man tired out; who, looking back, into the deep chasm of years, sees nothing but disillusionment and bitterness, and, looking forward, sees only a cataclysm that contains nothing new, neither knowledge nor grief.'[3]

By the time he had wholly emerged from this vicious circle and acquired the 'charity of a physician', Baudelaire had almost ceased to write; but there are more traces of that charity in his earlier work than he allowed himself to admit. Baudelaire feared nothing so much as that the spiritual passion which he put into his poetry might be mistaken for the false spirituality of the age; that is why

[1] *Le Peintre de la Vie Moderne* (1859).
[2] *Mon Coeur Mis à Nu.*
[3] *Fusées*; last entry.

he wrote that the one important thing was 'to be a great man and a saint *in one's own eyes*' (*pour-soi-même*).

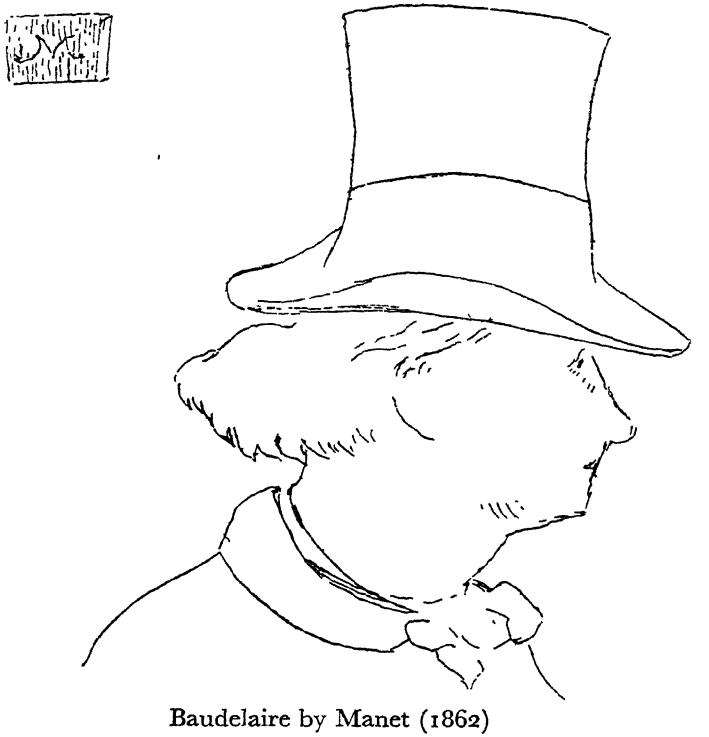
In judging Baudelaire's pronouncements on society, politics, ethics and religion, it is essential to distinguish between two kinds: those made by the specialist concerned only with his own trade, a trade for whose products there was little demand at the time, and those which have the special value of a vantage point which he indicated in his journal: 'I have no convictions, as people of my century understand the word, because I have no ambition.' There is no point in trying to make sense of the former kind—other than biographical and historical sense; to do so is to be confronted with a Baudelaire who was a socialist, a conservative and a fascist, a mystical pantheist and an orthodox Catholic, a Satanist, a puritan and a pagan, etc., etc. It is also essential to distinguish between what Baudelaire thought as a man, and what he thought as an artist. Thus Baudelaire wrote: '*Je ne crois pas qu'il soit scandalisant de considérer toute infraction à la morale, au beau moral, comme une espèce de faute contre le rhythme et la prosodie universels.*'[1] This is an example of the auxiliary religion; it is a statement designed to throw a very flimsy bridge across the gulf between the aesthetic and the ethical orders. The fact is that Baudelaire the man didn't believe in a 'universal rhythm and prosody' which would have co-ordinated the aesthetic and the ethical functions of poetry without any effort on the poet's part; but the artist would have liked to believe in it, and the pseudo-belief was useful to a poet.

There is no need to despair of modern poetry because it calls for distinctions of that kind; or to deny oneself the pleasure of reading it for fear of being corrupted by its 'wrong' ideas. It is up to the critic and the reader to recognise the auxiliary religions where they have become part of the poetry, instead of merely helping to support the poet in a difficult job. I doubt that a reader who is not a poet (or indeed a reader who isn't Rilke) could live for long by the aesthetic religion implicit, and occasionally explicit, in Rilke's *Duino Elegies*; but that reader could still be the wiser for having entered into an experience that wouldn't otherwise have been his; and by entering into it, I mean wholeheartedly, without prejudgment. If the experience leaves a deposit of ideas, rather than sensations, these will have to be put in their place at a later stage. The discrimination demanded then is no different from that which life demands of us; the people and things we come against aren't labelled 'good' or 'bad', true and false ideas appeal

[1] 'I do not think it is shocking to consider every infraction of morality, of the morally beautiful, as a kind of offence against the universal rhythm and prosody.'—*Théophile Gautier.*

to us in every newspaper, not to mention the advertisements that nauseated Baudelaire.

Yet the thing itself tells no lies; this is as true of the poem as an object well and honestly made (and Housman said that poetry is 'more physical than intellectual') as of purely physical products. In both cases we may have to dissociate it from the claims that have been attached to it, even from claims imprinted on the thing itself. If this growing need to discriminate and to dissociate is bewildering, conducive to Tolstoy's exasperation with literature and to Baudelaire's disgust with life, or else to cynicism, indifference and deliberate philistinism, literature also provides a remedy; it has the power to make new associations between the things which, in life, tend more and more to 'fall apart'. The distinction of modern poetry is that it has concentrated on numbering 'the streaks of the tulip'; but again and again it has shown its power to universalise the particular, to give a new centre to experiences which by all the classical criteria should be peripheral, because they are the experiences of specialists. The modern poet may 'number the streaks of the tulip' and not only think, but hope, that he has left it at that; but, whether he likes it or not, he has said something new about flowers, and about men.



Baudelaire by Manet (1862)

WRITERS AT WORK

MARIO PRAZ

It would be very difficult to write books on how writers work, if all the writers should follow the example of Alberto Moravia, who advises (and practises) the following method: 'One must not think about what one is going to write before one sits down to write. One should spend the rest of the time in thinking of something else.' He says moreover (in a brief confession published in the Records of the Marzotto Prizes for 1954, 1955, 1956): 'I had for many years got into the habit of writing every day, only, however, in the morning hours. I think I owe to this almost bureaucratic habit the advantage of having written much without working too much. In this connection I should like to say that to work every day is, in my opinion, preferable to waiting for inspiration and working only on those days in which one believes to have it. Obviously such a way of working smacks more of the humanist than of the creator. But writers are first of all craftsmen.' Anthony Trollope followed a similar method, and to have confessed it did not certainly add to his reputation. True, Trollope went to the limit of bureaucratic automatism: 'It was my practice to be at my table every morning at 5.30 a.m.; and it was also my practice to allow myself no mercy . . . It had at this time become my custom . . . to write with my watch before me, and to require from myself 250 words every quarter of an hour . . . This division of time allowed me to produce over ten pages of an ordinary novel volume a day, and if kept up through ten months, would have given as its results three novels of three volumes each in the year.' The critic would be left very few remarks and investigations when confronted with such a method of work. One would almost say that the page is born with the rhythm of automatic writing. However most writers proceed in a much more complicated manner, and this renders possible the composition of books on their methods like those recently published on Shelley (*Shelley at Work*,

A Critical Inquiry by Neville Rogers, Oxford, At the Clarendon Press, 1956) and on Dickens (*Dickens at Work*, by John Butt and Kathleen Tillotson, London, Methuen, 1957).

The late Arturo Loria, a minor Italian novelist of some distinction, told me once that he was not in the habit of taking notes, because he thought that what is important cannot help recurring to one's memory, and what is not important is better be left to drop away. This seemed to me a mistaken idea, but everyone has his own method, and Loria must have been lucky, in his day, if important things really stuck to his memory. Others indeed (and among these I must probably count myself) may find that the very things which are important have a trick of coming in a flash and disappearing soon afterwards unless one sets them down on paper at once. Then one gets into the habit of taking note of everything, important or not, leaving the reconsideration of such things to a later moment. So did Shelley, who held that 'the source of poetry is native and involuntary but requires severe labour in its development'. And in order to find assistance in this labour, which must have been painful indeed, Shelley filled a number of note-books with whatever suggestion crossed his mind. One wonders whether it is a good thing that thirty-odd such notebooks should have come down to us; through them, says Mr Rogers, we watch the poet in his workshop. I imagine that a perfumer's workshop does not invariably smell good, since what is destined to become a scent is originally a far from good smell (the chemical composition of skatol is very close to that of jasmin), in the same way as sugar in our system is produced by substances which one would not at first identify with sweetness. Well, the material on which Shelley drew for his poems is very heterogeneous, and very often far from harmonious.

He took note of his readings, which frequently had nothing to do with poetry (e.g. statistics of milk and potato production), of inchoate lines, of more or less rough drawings, he would cut a poem short in order to rush on the track of another, he left loose threads hanging, prosaic or clumsy words, and all this in what at first looks like a tangle, which the often unreadable handwriting of the poet certainly does not help to unravel, because he frequently had a way of turning the book upside down and sideways as he worked on it, so that there are four ways in which his handwriting may be found running in any given page of a notebook. Mr Rogers, with a patience second only to that of the scholars who have studied the Dead Sea scrolls, has deciphered, filed, and dated the contents of the notebooks, searching for a clue in this 'wilderness of intricate paths', as

Shelley called it. 'Broken and winding as these are', says Mr Rogers, 'most of them can be mapped out in time: quite often several of them come together to form a single path proceeding in a single direction—a path of Grecian thought', and it is no discovery of Mr Rogers' that Plato is Shelley's starting-point. But just as Blake, starting from neoclassicism and Michelangelo at the same time, created a phantasmal world in which both those sources of inspiration reach a *reductio ad absurdum*, so Shelley, starting from the philosophers of the enlightenment and Plato, and adding a dose of Calderon's *La vida es sueño*, ends by creating a private universe which, from a philosophical point of view, betrays a disarming simplicity. In the end the study of these notebooks, while it lays bare the attic and lumber-room of Shelley's brain, does not succeed in offering us a deeper image of him than the one with which we were acquainted before. Shelley strives to reach truth through images, as it befits his quality of a poet, he wants 'to make the external internal, to make Nature thought and thought Nature', handles the shadows as substantial things and substantial things as shadows. The ship, the island, the dome, the cave, the tail-eating serpent, the painted veil, the dream, do not remain with him mere images, or emblems at the utmost; he combines them in a dialectical pattern, builds a system on them in order to reach a deep truth which 'is imageless'. Once the painted veil which beguiles us mortals is torn, truth will shine before our eyes: Truth is Good, the Veil is Evil . . . No Shelley scholar, so far as I know, seems to have given a thought to these two words: *veil*, *evil*, but the fact stares one in the face that each of these two words is an anagram of the other, that *evil* is *veil* with its first two letters transposed. One has to fight against the temptation of seeing the entire philosophical system of Shelley boiled down to a colossal pun.

While the study of the notebooks does not show us a deeper thinker in Shelley than we knew before, on the other hand it reveals the extreme difficulty the poet found in writing. Poems which strike us as written at a sitting, like *To a Skylark*, or that admirable *Ode to the West Wind* which soars like a dizzy spiral prayer, those poems which appear as free as the flight of a bird or impetuous as the blast of a wind, rise instead from a heap of fragments, broken ends of lines and disconnected phrases. If those poems are flowers, these notebooks are the manure from which the flowers have drawn nourishment. But while we turn that manure upside down, we cannot help sometimes stopping our nose. Hogg relates that once Shelley, when an Oxford undergraduate, stopped a poor woman on Magdalen Bridge to ask whether the baby she was carrying could divulge any

information about pre-existence. The poor woman, who might have expected alms, must have been struck dumb. If John Aubrey had lived after Shelley, he would have summarised his biography in this anecdote, which is very symbolic, because readers of Shelley's poems frequently find themselves in the position of the poor woman on Magdalen Bridge. Shelley's vague abstractions fail to satisfy our hunger for truth.

In Thomas Sprat's *History of the Royal Society* (1667) we find the remark that the sceptical, scrupulous, diligent observer of nature is nearer to the true Christian than is the proud and speculative intellect, and Macaulay, applying the same principle to his own positivist century, imagined that a disciple of Epictetus and a disciple of Bacon, travelling together, come to a village where the small-pox has just begun to rage, and the Stoic assures the population that to a wise man disease and death are not evils, and small-pox is therefore not to be feared, while the Baconian takes out a lancet and begins to vaccinate. This anecdote comes to my mind while from Shelley, a proud and speculative intellect (he said: 'I am formed if for anything not in common with the herd of mankind') I am passing on to Dickens, who did so much with his work to promote social reforms.

Dickens's way of working was very different from Shelley's, even apart from the fact that a novelist's method cannot be the same as a poet's. 'I never commit thoughts to paper', he told a correspondent, about the time of *Copperfield*, 'until I am obliged to write, being better able to keep them in regular order, on different shelves of my brain, ready ticketed and labelled to be brought out when I want them.' It is well known that Dickens began as an essayist with the genre-scenes of *Sketches by Boz*; the proposal of providing a text for Robert Seymour's sporting prints caused him to turn into a novelist, the *Pickwick* project cut across the planned career, and serial publication partly determined his method of work, he found in it a discipline of which he availed himself towards the expression of his genius. Usually when he started publishing a new novel he never wrote more than four or five numbers before the first was published, and by the middle of the novel he was rarely more than one number ahead of his readers. The sheets of his manuscript notes have the appearance of a double-entry book-keeping, for which he seems to have used three sorts of ink, one blue-black, another a vivid blue, and a third which has now faded to a watery yellow: the right-hand side of a sheet contained memoranda of previous chapters, the left-hand side a rough plan of the direction the next chapter was to take. These latter notes in particular, jotted down haphazardly, show us Dickens in the process of composition. They

Characters

— Coker.

a body like a biscuit box a chest like an iron cistern. ~~a~~ A shaved gorilla
Beautiful in her own way. What a skin, muscles like a prizefighter.
Figure like a funnel on a steamboat. legs like stovepipes Feet like cowcatchers

a

Gully 19 or 22. About 1912 or 20. Her name was April or Daisy. Secretive. About meaning of picture says always. Just what you say. Anything you like.

Gully. His secrecy – gives his name wrong. Mr. Jones of Cardiff. Mr. ~~Macdougall~~ ~~from~~ John of Groats – Smith of London. Dexter Fortune of Gloster –
What are you painting now – to tell the truth, I'm trying canvas. I prefer it to plaster – I meant what subject – ~~It~~ a very interesting subject, [illegible] I've got interested in it – I don't so like the [illegible] – people, you know, in a landscape – ~~[illegible]~~ very ~~[illegible]~~ fine[illegible], allegorical – your lines are so fine – When – His face, then – [illegible] from a cigarette – is [illegible] a bit – [illegible] some [illegible], are of the [illegible], [illegible]
– When can you [illegible] all [illegible], [illegible] – around – I [illegible], [illegible] where you stopping – anywhere, old boy, anywhere, are you living on – the very words – ~~[illegible]~~ [illegible] for Old [illegible] – ~~I beg your pardon~~, that [illegible] I [illegible] – well, of course Better for me, [illegible] you [illegible] it –
Re cricket, cricketism. The biographer. The biogruffer. biogroper biogrubber gritter

I was walking by the Thames. Half past morning on a Spring day. Sun in a mist. Like an orange in a fried fish shop window. All bright ~~blow~~ below

~~past morning on a bad nice day. Sun in a~~ mist, like a fried fish ~~shop~~ ~~hot fog~~ ~~all~~ ~~clear below~~ Tide on the turn, dusty water and a crooked bar of straw, chicken boxes, dirt and oil from mud to mud like a viper swimming in skim milk. The old serpent, symbol of ~~the love, of~~ nature and love ~~sweet smiling pestilence~~.

Where is my Cunning bird of Eden Leutha silent love

Leutha, the many coloured bow delights upon thy wings

Soft soul of flowers, Leutha

Sweet smiling pestilence.

~~I thought. I wonder what happiness, happiest~~

~~Well, I thought. For twenty two years of ... have~~ ~~been ... known~~

That's true, I thought. Women you can't do without them and you can't do anything with them. ~~...~~ ~~... I ...~~ My ruin. And my joy. ~~...~~ The wine of life ~~...~~,

The sun shot out a ~~star~~ gold ~~star~~ pin and hit the Eagle and Child, next the water boat factory; right on the new signboard. A sign, ~~I said~~, I thought. ~~I'll go and see~~ ~~see Coker~~ I do anything else, I'll go and ~~see Coker, get the news~~ -- Coker, they say, ~~is in~~ ~~trouble~~ get a drink. See my friend Coker. COKER

Coker, they told me, was in trouble. I was in trouble. ~~...~~

~~The fox provides for himself, but God provides for the lion~~ ~~...~~ ~~I'm in trouble, I~~

in trouble ~~...~~ would rather ~~...~~ ~~...~~ ~~other~~ see each other's ~~...~~, Coo-hoo, thou the ~~smooth & smooth brow smile of the millionaire~~

smile of a millionaire, painted in butter on a barber's shave.

A late, though not final draft for the opening chapter of *The Horse's Mouth*

An extract from *The Captive and the Free*,* the last novel on which Cary was still working at his death. Cary, who was partially paralysed worked with a pen strapped to his hand on a continuous scroll threaded through what he called his 'writing machine'. At this time, he could not turn a page and he had devised a desk with rollers at the back, controlled by an electric switch which he could press.

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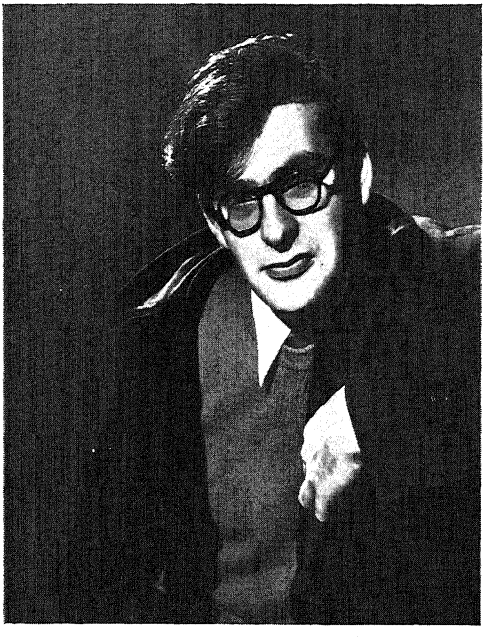
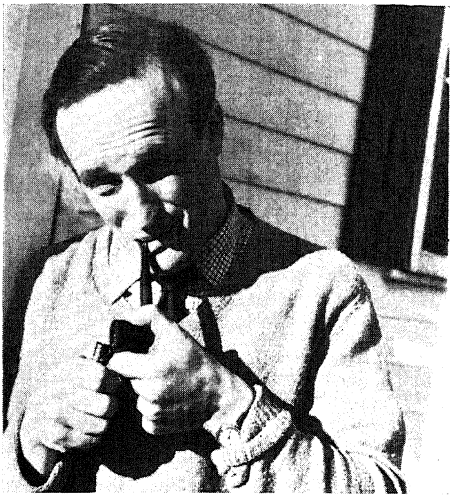
SOME CONTRIBUTORS TO THE ANNUAL



Gabriel Pearson



A. Alvarez

Carolyn Kizer

Robert Conquest

look like cues for the various characters: enters X, Y not yet, his moment has not come. *Yes. No. Not yet. Next number* . . . Dickens's plan conscientiously lists the characters for a final round-up, with ticks added when they have been disposed of. Not one is forgotten, the dog included (he had forgotten him in *Dombey and Son*, but he took care to insert him in proof).

If this is not enough to convince us of the theatrical quality of Dickens's genius, let us consider his ability in the dialogues, his pliability to the demands of serial publication, his immediate sensitiveness to public response, which caused him to alter the destiny of this or that character in order to please his readers, and to soften realistic expressions apt to shock Victorian fastidiousness. His sensibility is that of a man of the theatre; his defects are those of a man of the theatre, of that Victorian theatre in particular which went in for sensation and melodrama. Dickens's characters, Frank O'Connor has remarked in *The Mirror in the Roadway*, belong to the theatre, whereas those of Marcel Proust, e.g. M. de Charlus, belong to narrative. A character in a play has this peculiarity, that his psychology obeys to laws similar to those of theatrical perspective. A perspective in the theatre may give the impression of reality though consisting of different elements from those which are found in real life. Dickens's characters, said Trollope, 'are not human beings. It has been the peculiarity and the marvel of this man's power that he has invested his puppets with a charm that enabled them to dispense with human nature'. Such is the charm of perspective, which creates a preternatural reality.

JOYCE CARY: FRAGMENTS OF AN *OEUVRE*

ANDREW WRIGHT

JOYCE CARY wrote with impatience and exactingness. His calligraphy is that of a man who wrote quickly; the many cancellations and revisions betray his almost constant dissatisfaction with his first thoughts about characters and situations. And yet the manuscripts of his books—even the early drafts—already represent second or later thoughts. For each of Cary's novels has behind it notebooks filled with samples of dialogue, sketches of situations, statements of idea; each of the novels has its dossier, a collection of notes toward the book; each of the novels has its false beginnings, its rejected chapters. 'I do not write', he said in 'My First Novel', 'and never have written, to an arranged plot. The book is composed over the whole surface at once like a picture, and may start anywhere, in the middle or at the end. I may go from the end to the beginning on the same day, and then from the beginning to the middle. As in picture composition, this involves continual trial and error and a lot of waste. Whole chapters get moved from one place to another, or perhaps thrown out altogether; characters appear and disappear. I should think I write about three times the material that finally appears in any book, that is to say, for a novel of about 100,000 words I write at least 300,000. This is of course a fearful waste, and I have tried to avoid it, but it seems to me the only way in which I can get the kind of form I want, a certain balance and unity within a given context.' But technique by itself is unimportant; it is what is realised in and through technique that counts. It is the work of art that counts. And Cary mastered his craft not for virtuosity's sake, but in urgency and in profound concern.

Therefore, besides discarding two-thirds of every novel, Cary wrote a great many things which he could not finish or which he felt did not come off. Indeed, the amount of his unpublished work is vast. There is the fascinating account of his

adventures in Montenegro, *Memoir of the Bobotes*; there are two plays; there are many unpublished short stories and essays; and literally millions of words of novels and fragments of novels. Typical of these is *The Come-Back*, the story of an old actor named Fuljam, who has gone down in the world. Out of style and out of work he has become a drunk. But he is rediscovered by a B.B.C. producer looking for 'originals'—barmaids and so forth—who can make his programme interesting. And Fuljam makes a sensation; he is rediscovered as belonging to the great tradition of Elizabethan acting, that is to the tradition of Irving and Kean. Thus Cary elucidates fictionally here, as often elsewhere, his idea of the movements of styles. (A note on the dossier of *The Come-Back* in Cary's hand reads, 'The Politics of Art'.)

Besides this fragment there are in manuscript such complete works as *Arabella*. Written in the middle 'thirties it represents, Cary told me, an early effort to get away from the African setting. *Arabella* is a political fantasy—taking political, as it must always be taken in Cary's works, in its broadest sense. The novel is satiric, philosophical, prophetic. The target of the satire is governments, or rather any kind of governmental system which would dehumanise man. Nazis and Communists are interchangeable; there is in fact in this novel a kind of foreshadowing of 1984.

But it found no publisher. It is not as even in tone as the novels of Evelyn Waugh which were being published in that decade. There is, in *Arabella*, an incompatible marriage of action and comment about action. The pace is too hectic. There is too much incident. Yet there are some wonderfully fine moments, as when an international banker called Fearstunt Gorgon goes to Russia disguised as a bear, and when Professor Hoopey delivers a speech in Russia, which his interpreter anxious that Hooper should please the audience, translates in reverse. The book as a whole gives valuable evidence of the sort of experiment which Cary undertook before he found a technique adequate to the expression of his political intuition.

Of *The Heiress*, which exists in a number of fragments and under a variety of titles, Cary spoke in his 1956 broadcast on his unfinished work. *The Heiress* is the story of a young girl at a dance who is not danced with until the handsomest young man there asks her. Then she has an enchanting evening. 'But', Cary said, 'the young man's reason is not that he has suddenly seen the charms of a rather plain and very badly dressed girl, but that he has been told she is an heiress. And afterwards she finds this out.' Years later, Cary said, this idea became the basis for *A Fearful Joy*. But the story of the girl at the dance had to be removed. 'I saw

that the book needed a solider, more historical first chapter. . .' In view of the finished achievement of *A Fearful Joy*, it is worth looking at some of the rejected pieces of this novel before it became a novel. One early version is called *Juno*, a girl described in a note on the manuscript as 'an heiress and under trustees . . . who don't bother and leave her to the aunt—the fashionable woman. She is sold and robbed and this suits her'. In the fragmentary manuscript Juno is described as a young Amazon. She is the despair of her family because she seems stupid and queer. At eighteen she is proposed to by a man called Mare. In another version, called *Facts of Life*, there is Toner, a smuggler and half-crook 'in command of his own destiny . . . afraid of nothing and nobody'. He meets Betty Wendt, a young girl who is an heiress, pretty and wilful. Another beginning is as follows: 'When Betty Wendt the ice cream heiress got her fourth divorce, everybody said either "the worthless creature" or "poor little rich girl".' The narrator then begins to describe her meeting with Phil Toner. In still another beginning she is divorced and 'now an amateur ready to sleep with any personable man, and, indeed, preferring the chance stranger'. None of these beginnings worked; none of them is as satisfactory as the opening of *A Fearful Joy*. But all demonstrate the tireless energy, the insistent inventiveness, with which Cary attacked his subjects. For he never allowed himself to forget the difficulty and the importance of his task. Undertaking to illuminate the wellsprings of human motive, he never forgot that his intuition must find a form which would express the complex beauty of man's free and therefore tragic fate.

THE ELECTRONIC REVOLUTION IN NORTH AMERICA

MARSHALL McLUHAN

IT is a fact familiar to most people that in North America the reliance on the printed word as resource and pattern for institutions, educational and political, was more extreme than in Britain or Europe. The latest European technology, that is to say, became in America almost the only technology. From the seventeenth century, education in America relied on print and followed its implications more than elsewhere. So that today North America is severely shaken by the challenge of the electronic age to accept a return to oral culture. Europe and Britain have never quite lost their oral culture but America never had one.

To explain this situation a little it is necessary first to explain why in five hundred years of print the Western world has never observed its effects on habits of perception and judgment. To note the spread of literacy and the ease of access to previously unobtainable information is merely to by-pass the question of print. Print may have been the first mechanisation of a great handicraft. Its use of movable type was probably the earliest form of assembly-line production. The product of the press, woodcut or wood, was an example of mass-production, of exactly repeatable item, which had immediate consequences for the human mind, and ultimate consequences for industry and politics, such as we can now sense all the better because of the recession of print and mechanical production alike in the West today. For we have moved beyond mechanisation into the electronic age; and print is not only mechanical but probably the fount and origin of all the mechanical insights which followed it.

Consider for a moment print under the aspect of cinema. The written word before print was read aloud very slowly. Yet the phonetically written word is an arrested 'shot' of the mind in motion. With print reading became fast and silent.

The arrested 'shots' of the mind in motion could then be projected at a speed comparable to cinematic projection. The reader could easily attain the illusion of direct association with the mental movements of the author and might even imagine himself in dialogue with the author. The fact that print fosters the consumer habit of mind, the readiness to accept completely processed and packaged goods, is a side of print that has been little considered. To my knowledge, Montaigne was the first aesthete of such consumer goods. His essays are the explicit recognition of print as a gimmick for snap-shotting the mind in all its postures—especially the mind of a reader. He called it *la peinture de la pensée*, and acted as his own photographic model, much as Rimbaud did in the midst of a set of innovations even greater than print.

If the static mental photography aspect of print is examined it is easier to understand the preference for the kinds of mathematics and scientific explanation which followed it. The discovery that any kind of motion could be broken up into static moments was a natural derivative of print itself. The preference for explanations which were continuous chains of cause and effect obsessed all minds from Descartes to Darwin. Francis Bacon was quite confident that if all the data of nature were listed in the columns of a dictionary, that a child could 'discover' any scientific law as readily as he might look up the 'meaning' of a word. The effects, in short, of the sheer aesthetics of print on art and science were both extensive and subliminal or unconscious. And today the effects of the electronic revolution are quite as pervasive in every sphere of human perception and association.

If the printed word created new media of instruction out of the vernaculars or mother tongues of Europe, the electronic innovations have created new mother tongues from the non-verbal modes of sight, sound, and movement as such. These 'mother tongues' are new languages to which children respond totally. That is, the young don't acquire these new languages as educated or articulate forms of syntax and discourse. But they respond with their entire unified sensibilities to these forms of codifying and packaging information.

In his *Prints and Visual Communication*, William Ivins explained the stages of development of a visual syntax which codified complex information in a 'net of rationality' as the engraver's lines were called. Exactly repeatable visual statement developed steadily until the photograph. At that stage line disappeared, syntax ended, and statement became not partial but total. The photo substitutes thing for statement about thing, just at the time when painting abandoned representation of things for the presentation of the painting as thing.

To return briefly to the Babel created in North American schools by the new mother tongues or the new media, the case is now that the young know several languages from the cradle which their teachers have acquired, if at all, as 'second languages'. For the most part, the teachers are oblivious of the fact that most of the experience of their charges is handled in forms for which the teachers express hostility and contempt.

The medieval schoolmen naturally felt the same hostility for the new medium of print which at first threatened and then abolished the forms of oral discourse which were of the essence of scholasticism. But it is obvious that the new languages or the new media which are now in the centre of our Western technology were not intended to abolish print nor one another. They are intended for co-existence as surely as the members of the human family. Moreover, there is in the very nature of these electronic media a factor of co-existence which never was in the exclusive lineality and single-levelled awareness of print culture. That factor is the simultaneous or instantaneous one. Electronic media created a many-levelled awareness by means of the instantaneous way in which they present and relate facts which may be widely separated in space and time. Where the sixteenth-century reader could tour through whole authors at a pace which the medieval reader could manage only for a compendium of an author, the twentieth-century student can encompass entire cultures at the same speed. The electronic favours a degree of *inclusive* consciousness inconceivable to the unassisted literary modes.

And to this inclusive factor in electronic media the arts were the first to respond a century ago. But today even the world of management and commerce have accepted the electronic challenge. Schools and universities alone have taken an obscurantist stand in the matter in North America. What they refuse to do is to teach the new languages exactly as they have taught the old languages. Conscious articulation is the necessity of educated procedure. New grammars for the new media.

More than a century ago Edgar Poe, a newspaper man, foresaw the news pattern which was to be confirmed by the telegraph. As the flow of news increased in speed and quantity, editorial or literary processing of the same became impossible. It became necessary to present a vast number of items under a single date line as a do-it-yourself kit. More and more the reader had to process the news himself. And this consequence of the electronic or instantaneous is exactly opposite to the supposed passivity which had long been the tendency of a mechanical and industrial culture in creating a consumer-oriented world. The electronic age has to become a producer-oriented world.

Poe was the first to invent art forms which met the electronic challenge by anticipation. Baudelaire and Valéry were not misguided in regarding him as a sort of Leonardo da Vinci. For he created the symbolist poem and the detective story at the same time. And both of these forms invite the reader to become co-creator. For a century the misunderstanding of art experiment has risen between those who look at art as a completely processed and packaged experience and those who are prepared to become co-creators in developing the experience it presents.

North America far more than Europe or Britain is the land of the Consumer. The reverent appreciation which Americans have always directed towards the art products of 'the Old World' is an exclusively consumer attitude. And not even Poe, James, Eliot, and Pound have been able to reverse the consumer attitude to the producer attitude which is so taken for granted in Europe and Britain. But the electronic movement of information is swiftly bringing about this reverse of attitudes which poets, painters, and composers have anticipated during the past century. Because the instantaneous movement of information around the globe and around the clock has the effect of telescoping not only cultures but functions which had long been separate.

William Whyte's *The Organization Man*, which has recently gotten such wide attention here, describes the decline of individualism and the rise of collective attitudes in American management. In recent years many large corporations have set up Management Training Programmes on the pattern of 'Proust for Executives'. The object of these programmes for high-paid executives has been to enable their decision-making to occur in a new pattern of inclusive awareness. Their business relations are shown to them as part of a total social network of skills and information. And the global consequences of local business decisions are studied on an overall basis even though the global connections of the particular business may not be extensive.

For American executives in their forties and fifties to be taking time out to study Proust, art and archaeology in order to achieve more deftness and responsibility in decision-making is to my mind to be understood only against the new electronic background. And it is from these men that effective educational reforms will come. For they are themselves products of the educational system that has let them down in mid-career and caused them to return to school at company expense.

Perhaps the principal form that the electronic revolution has taken in the executive and university levels in North America has been a re-discovery of the relevance of the spoken word and face-to-face dealing. Again I would suggest what

has been argued at length in *Explorations* magazine, that the oral is accidentally the spoken but essentially the instantaneous. Because auditory spatial structure is a simultaneous field of relations. And any means that creates such simultaneous fields creates the conditions of oral culture. So that even our visual electronic forms, the telegraphic press, teletype, wirephoto and TV are oral in character. And the dynamics of this electronic simultaneity act to pattern perception and judgment in forms not known in the Western world since the invention of the phonetic alphabet. Especially in North America, dependent from the first on print for the shape of its industry, its polity, and its legal system, the electronic revolution provides a kind of subliminal depth charge of a most upsetting kind.

SHIFTING PATTERNS IN AMERICAN LITERATURE

John Unterecker

BEFORE I discuss certain recent trends in American writing and the publication experiments that have made those trends possible, it is imperative, I think, that I pin down as precisely as I can some facts about American reading habits and the education that is in turn responsible for those habits.

The average American has been, as everyone knows, not much of a reader. If statistics are accurate, he spends almost precisely the same amount of money annually on household stationery as he does on books. In 1956, according to the United States Department of Commerce analysis of the distribution of recreational expenditures, the average man spent five times as much on radio, television, musical instruments, and records as he did on books and more than twice as much on 'nondurable toys', whatever they are.

The American, by and large, prefers to books his daily newspaper, which he reads quite carefully, picture newsmagazines such as *Life* and *Look*, which reach respectively an estimated adult audience of 32,100,000 and 27,900,000, and—astonishingly—*Reader's Digest* which, selling itself as a timesaver, is read monthly by 34,950,000 Americans over ten years of age—more than a quarter of the literate population—and by Heaven only knows how many innocent children.

I say innocent advisedly, since American education is designed in many respects to make the child well-informed about factual matters (he's good at geography and arithmetic) and as ignorant as possible about the 'facts of life', not only sexual, but political, social and economic as well. As a result he reads, in his first eight years in school, a conglomeration of handsomely illustrated children's books—which are offered as literature—and a collection of 'graded' history, science, and 'citizenship' texts, all spotlessly moral in tone and almost all dedicated to the thesis

that progress, an inevitable process, culminates necessarily in the land of the free and the home of the brave.

Literature for the young American is almost always a dull, difficult, painful thing—dull because it is made available to him only if it is harmless or has been rendered harmless by unmerciful bowdlerising, difficult and painful because he reads so little that he never really learns to read at all.

When the American child enters high school (at his thirteenth or fourteenth year), he begins a four-year programme which, unless he is in the large minority who go on to college, ends his formal education. In the normal programme, he studies English an hour a day, five days a week (though he has long Christmas and Easter vacations and nearly three months free in the summer). During that four-year stretch of daily English classes he reads about a dozen books: a couple of Shakespeare's plays (usually *As You Like It* and *Hamlet*, sometimes *Macbeth* or *Julius Caesar*), a small anthology of poetry (frequently made up almost exclusively of the more pristine poems of the nineteenth-century American Romantics, a little Wordsworth, and one of the *Idylls of the King*), one or two novels (often adventure stories—Jack London's *Call of the Wild* is a favourite, as is Stephen Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage*), some polite essays, an example of biography, a little Greek literature (almost always *The Odyssey*) and sometimes—if his teacher is adventurous—a novel by Hemingway, Steinbeck or John Galsworthy, and perhaps a few modern plays. Outside of school, he will read an enormous stack of lurid comic books filled with all the sex and violence that have been so carefully strained out of his formal education and—if the word gets around, as it usually does—at least one of Mickey Spillane's dreadful but dirty thrillers. In this way he will learn that literature is boring and that the only 'good' books are the ones his parents disapprove of, read, and forbid him to read.

Should he be one of the thirty per cent who go on to college, he will probably read in a one-year 'English Literature' or 'Great Books' course another dozen books.

This is the literary background of the typical American, a middle-class citizen who regards reading as work and who prefers in his free hours to be distracted by entertainments which range from hell-fire revival meetings through professional sports contests to drive-in motion pictures and, for winter nights, television and radio. The famous American 'pace' takes its toll after working hours, and the normal citizen literally kills his time as passively as possible sleeping, eating, and looking at things.

Yet he is vaguely disturbed. His newspapers press his face against a world suddenly chaotic. He is jolted by fears that atom bombs can fall not only on Hiroshima but as well on Buffalo, New York, and on such little but strategic towns as Norfolk, Virginia. Domestic difficulties, too, disturb him. The painful urbanisation of a nation which had only a short time ago been predominantly agrarian, the growth of juvenile delinquency and the petty crimes associated with it, a soaring divorce rate, an unpleasant increase in the number of drug addicts, a rising threat of racial violence in the South, his uneasy conviction that, in spite of the cheerful words of an optimistic President, the current recession may in reality be a depression—all these disconcerting patterns are slowly bringing the American around to a criticism of his sloppy education and to a feeling that some of the answers may be in the books he has so successfully ignored. He is still no reader, but he is beginning to read. In 1929 Americans bought 214,000,000 books; in 1954 they bought 770,000,000. This year they are buying still more. The increase is significant.

One of the major factors in making that increase possible has been the phenomenal rise in the output of the American paperback presses. Before 1939, though there had been efforts to popularise them, soft-cover books had never caught on. There was no audience for them. But by 1956, thanks in part to America's developing consciousness of its own illiteracy and thanks in part to the ingenious merchandising techniques of the paperback distributors, paperbacks accounted for nearly half of American book production and by now have probably passed that mark. To see just how extensive this new market for books is, one has to consider only two statistics. America has now about 1,200 bookstores selling hard-cover books. But in the last twenty years paperback booksellers have increased in number from several dozen to, early in 1958, just under 100,000!

These 100,000 outlets—news-stands, soda fountains, gasoline stations, grocery stores, department stores, bus and railroad terminals—make it possible for the publishers to print immense editions. Not all of these editions are of good books (Erskine Caldwell's *God's Little Acre*, a violent commercial novel, has sold about 7,500,000 copies and 7,277,000 copies of Grace Metalious's sex-larded *Peyton Place* are now in print), but many of the paperbacks are excellent. And, more important, good, bad, and indifferent, the soft-cover books are gradually swinging the non-reading American into the habit of reading. Because he feels, I think for the first time, that the book is somehow not sacred. Literature, that terrible and dull thing

which he had been forced in high school to read far too slowly and which he had been made to respect as something a little out of his reach, becomes, on a drug store display rack, almost as attractive in its garish, enticing cover as *Life*, *Look*, or *Reader's Digest*. And because it costs very little more than those publications, it becomes—in his mind—something disposable, something that can be used and thrown away, something that can be read on a train, bus, or subway and then discarded. If he doesn't have to respect literature, he often discovers—to his surprise—that he likes it.

Books, consequently, which no one in his right mind would have considered publishing in editions of over 3,000 copies in hard covers suddenly, as paperbacks, find an audience of 15,000 or more readers. Jacques Maritain's *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry* which in its original edition had had a very modest sale in America was bought, in its first two years as a paperback, by more than 35,000 persons and it is still going strong.

It is this new audience for books and its developing reading habits, therefore, which seem to me ultimately responsible for some of the growing trends in American writing and publishing. No writer or publisher can now ignore this audience and everyone is feeling out rather carefully its interests.

One of the ways those interests are being explored is through an altogether new literary medium, the paperback quarterly. The quarterlies, which have blossomed into national prominence during the last three years, pick up a great deal of the slack left by the virtual disappearance of the 'little magazines' which had been, in the 'twenties and early in the 'thirties, a principal outlet for the new and experimental writing of young authors. 'Newness' is as a matter of fact the fundamental sales approach of all of the paperback quarterlies. The cover of the winter edition of Mentor Books' *New World Writing* pointed to the fact that it was (my italics) a 'stimulating *new* volume', 'A *NEW* ADVENTURE IN MODERN READING' and that it contained 'part of a *new* play by W. S. Merwin'; the back cover repeated the title, '*New* World Writing', reminded the reader that he had just experienced 'an exciting cross-section of what's *new* and important in the world of letters', and concluded, neatly enough, with the news that the book was 'published by the *New* American Library'.

New World Writing is, as a matter of fact, much that it claims to be. In its thirteen instalments it has introduced a number of interesting new writers—Samuel Blazer, for instance—and has published a great deal of work-in-progress, excerpts from as-yet-unpublished novels and plays. Probably because it is the most widely

distributed of the paperback reviews, its editorial policy seems to be to present work that is controversial enough to make for discussion yet not so controversial as to be unread.

A far more adventurous publication, *Evergreen Review*, seems dedicated to the joltingly shocking in form and language. *Evergreen*, the principal outlet of America's self-styled 'beat' generation—such writers as Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, and Gregory Corso—has also been largely responsible for making an American audience aware of the work of many of the more revolutionary continental writers, authors like Eugène Ionesco, Alain Robbe-Grillet, and Samuel Beckett.

New Campus Writing, another paperback review, sets out to create a national audience for the most interesting writing being done by students in American colleges. *The Anchor Review* which, like *New Campus Writing*, publishes only when it has 'enough good material', has, in its first two issues, inclined towards scholarly articles, though it did, in its second instalment, publish not only F. W. Dupee's first-rate article on Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* but more of the text of that controversial novel than any other American press has been willing to print. (Now that the censorship has at last been lifted, the uncut book is scheduled for early release.) And before the end of the year, Noonday Press, one of the most enterprising of the paperback houses, will introduce still another paperback review.

If the paperback reviews give the American reader some consciousness not only of new directions in American literature but as well of new directions in literature the world over, the regular paperback publishers make available to him the books which, as an educated person, he ought to have read but which, because they are out of print, he simply can't buy. Norton's new paperback line, for instance, will be headed by such familiar (but in America, at least, unread) books as Robert Browning's *The Ring and the Book*, Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Blithedale Romance*, George Moore's *Esther Waters*, Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*, and Tobias Smollett's *Humphrey Clinker*. Many of the paperback houses are also making a real effort to get into print translations of major foreign titles. Noonday, for example, has just published Robert Musil's *Young Törless*.

The consequence of all of this activity is a sort of grass-roots intellectual boom. I don't mean to suggest that America has suddenly become well-read or, because of that flush of literacy, eloquent. But I do mean to suggest that surprising new audiences for literature are being uncovered and that as those audiences assert themselves we may find the nature of American literature shifting somewhat.

How very conscious young American writers are of those audiences, and at the same time how conscious they are of their craft as writers is vividly demonstrated in Granville Hicks's 'symposium', *The Living Novel*, published earlier this year by Macmillan. Though Saul Bellow, Ralph Ellison, Herbert Gold, Mark Harris, Wright Morris, Harvey Swados and all the other contributors are not always in agreement about what is right or wrong in the state of American fiction, they are all very aware of themselves as serious writers working in an art-form that is anything but dead.

And though the winners of America's two most publicised prizes both wrote very good books (James Agee's *A Death in the Family* won the Pulitzer and John Cheever's *The Wapshot Chronicle* won the National Book Award's fiction prize), it is not in the direction of the prize-winners or in the direction of such best-selling non-prize-winners as James Gould Cozzens' *By Love Possessed* that one must turn to seek a developing pattern in American letters.

One part of that pattern is evolving in the work of the contributors to *The Living Novel*. Another part of the pattern shows up in the work of the young writers who appear in the more off-beat paperback reviews. Yet the idiom, the tone, of both groups is surprisingly similar—an idiom almost grimly American. And behind that idiom in both groups is a recognition of the writer as a figure involved in a kind of international community of isolated men, a figure who is—and this may involve the writer's highest function—a lonely yet integrating personality. Though he is almost of necessity not *of* his society, his function always is to make that society meaningful to itself. As Jack Kerouac, one of America's most talented, most undisciplined novelists puts it, the writer must participate in a kind of 'Holy Lunacy', but he must as well accept a strict mental discipline, 'the discipline of pointing out things directly, concretely, no abstractions or explanations, wham wham the true blue song of man'.

Perhaps, by making not only new writers but great old ones widely available, the paperbacks will create an American audience prepared to read more than road signs, advertisements, comic strips, and the sentimental garbage dished out in the ladies' magazines and the best-sellers. Perhaps, eventually, they will create the audience Mark Harris asks for in *The Living Novel*: 'We want to tell the jokes we want to tell, and we can tell them only to people with ears to listen, people who will bring to the evening talents to challenge our own, who will work as goddam hard to read as we work who write.'

ITALIAN LETTERS IN 1957

UGO VARNAI

In some retrospective surveys of 1957 the suggestion has cropped up that this be chronicled in Italian literary annals as Pasternak's year. The defeatist implication of this is gratuitous: and the Russian novel published in Italian in the late autumn as *Il dottor Zigavo* need only be mentioned here on account of its impact on the Italian public. The cancellation of the original arrangements for publication in Russia, and the attempts to stop the Italian edition, had led many to expect a political scandal. They have been disappointed. But from a literary point of view the book has caused quite a sensation. It is a 'traditional' novel, strikingly different from the usual run of contemporary Italian fiction, and it is just possible that it may play a part in bringing about a reversal of trends that some think is in the offing. An observer as sensitive and authoritative as Guido Piovene has felt it necessary to depart from the lines of a conventional review to say that *Il dottor Zigavo* has moved ('scosso') him more than any other novel by a writer 'either still alive or recent'. He sees in it no less than 'an announcement that great narrative art is still possible', and thinks that Pasternak's book may in fact mark a turning point in European fiction. However, it will soon be available in other languages, and the special circumstances on account of which it can be mentioned here will cease to exist.

But apart from the presence among us, in Italian garb, of this remarkable stranger, 1957 has been quite a profitable year for Italian letters. New novels by Moravia, Elsa Morante, Soldati; Penna's and Luzi's collections of poems; Gadda's long-awaited *Pasticciaccio*; a brilliant new tale by Calvino; Rebora's last poems; Vittorini's *Journal*: these are only the first few names that come to mind. And then there is a real abundance of lively, clever or in other ways interesting works in verse and prose, by dozens of more or less established writers and many newcomers.

One could easily paraphrase the opening remarks of Renato Serra's classic survey of Italian letters 45 years ago: our literature appears to be flourishing. In spite of the *crisi editoriale*, of which one constantly hears, a greater number of books with literary claims are appearing than at any other time. One still hears complaints that Italians do not read as much as they should: and it is true that most kinds of books do not begin to approach the circulation they might have in England; but the gap is less noticeable for purely literary works, and one has heard of successful novels achieving a circulation that would look respectable in any country. And then of course there is the advantage that, unless the author actually goes out of his way to avoid it, his novel or collection of verse will hardly fail to win some literary 'prize' or other. These *premi letterari* are to be counted by the dozen, and a straightforward reportage on them would constitute a sufficient, indeed a prolix account of the literary year. The bookshop windows are full of new titles; the critics complain that they cannot keep up with the new books that have a claim on their attention; the *terze pagine* of the dailies and the *rubriche letterarie* of the weeklies keep the general public informed. In prose and poetry there has never been perhaps so much variety in subject, liveliness and sophistication in approach, as there is now in so many of our authors and literary journalists. In short, all seems to be quite well with contemporary Italian letters, and the chronicler of this last year could well be tempted to start on a note of unreserved optimism.

Why is it then that most of those who have recently tried to take stock of the situation in general or in some particular field tend to take such a pessimistic view?

To begin with, the very picture of material health and prosperity is said to be partly illusory. Much of what gets published appears to be published at a loss; part of it consists of semi-disguised reprints, fairly dispensable new editions, etc., designed not to meet a genuine demand, but to stimulate demand on a basis that is certainly not literary, or else to keep the publisher's flag flying whatever the cost.

Then there is the phenomenon of translations from foreign languages, chiefly English and French. Every literate visitor notices what a large portion of Italian bookshop windows they occupy. Italians are notoriously xenophile; and that foreign books should be available is in itself an excellent thing; indeed, many take a certain pride in this, as a sign of openness, intellectual curiosity, *sprovincializzazione*. But beyond a certain point the implications for the indigenous literature become only too obvious.

As for the spate of *premi letterari*, it can be held to point to a fundamentally unhealthy relation between the authors and their public. Actually the whole ethics of these *premi* are periodically under discussion. Some of them embody a peculiar conception of patronage; many an objectionable conception of publicity. Most of them tend to become a form of outdoor relief.

Much more important are the reservations about the intrinsic literary significance and value of the work that gets done. The abundance of the new production is widely felt to be inflationary. There are too many poets and novelists, and too few who are really outstanding. Basic technical proficiency is not enough to give lasting value to their work: and some are inclined to dispute the proficiency itself, saying that it is often mechanical and derivative, a mere manner.

To put it in a nutshell, this last decade has produced neither a writer of truly European stature, nor a really impressive new trend. There has been much novelty, at all levels, but (to quote Italo Calvino, who is himself one of the few genuinely new writers) 'there has not arisen a new literary civilisation'.

On the other hand hardly any of the established writers can claim the status and the influence of a classic. Serra could make reservations and qualifications in this respect, in 1913: but at least the names he was discussing were those of D'Annunzio, Croce and Gozzano, not to count Pascoli and Carducci. In the intervening half-century or so there is definitely not another name to put in the place of the first two of these. This is indeed a generation without literary masters.

The situation is affected by the break in continuity brought about by the end of both the war and the *ventennio*. In the new political climate, suddenly exposed to the impact of European and other trends previously stifled by the combined influence of fascism and Crocean attitudes, Italian literature could not fail to undergo a renovation. This has certainly happened: but what does it amount to? One had felt that the new freedom was bound to work wonders in opening up the whole field of Italian life 'as it really is', and in allowing writers to experiment freely with ideas, to commit themselves, or to refuse commitment, in ways that were quite unthinkable before the war. One expected new writers, and new—and lasting—literary patterns; along the lines, say, of what did in fact happen in the immediate post-war years, in the field of the cinema.

Yet thirteen years later one finds that most of the outstanding names are still those of writers whose formation, or even reputation, are rooted in the late 'thirties and early 'forties, if not before. If one had to give a general account of Italian letters today, as distinct from the work of this last year, one would have to

base one's remarks on a list of names three-quarters of which would also have been mentioned in a similar survey in 1945. What is 'new' in Italian literature, then, is not new enough, or at any rate vigorous enough, to take the place of the comparatively 'old'.

So far as poetry is concerned one must still begin from the poets of the 'twenties and 'thirties. Umberto Saba died this year, having just published a largely autobiographical collection of *Racconti-ricordi* in prose, some old, some recent. In connection with his death there have been various attempts at an assessment of his *oeuvre*, which stands out as the most distinguished example of a poetry unaffected in substance by what we shall call *ermetismo* for short. At times Saba's poetry seemed to come near to constituting itself as a kind of alternative to the *tradizione ermetica*, though it never quite succeeded. And perhaps it is true that (as Giacomo Debenedetti was recently saying) in a couple of centuries he might be mistaken for a typical writer of the second half of the last century. It is likely, however, that the poetry that is written in Italy in the near future will be affected by Saba, directly or indirectly, not much less than by any of his *ermetici* contemporaries excepting perhaps Montale.

Traditional poetry has not gone out of circulation entirely; not only in the sense that it is still written, but that at times it can be read. The example of Diego Valeri will suffice. Valeri was seventy last year, and the small collection of verse published to mark the event, *Metamorfosi dell'Angelo*, exhibits the familiar characteristics of his little poetic world. It is made of the most trite material: sky, earth, evening, blue, light, wings are key words. It is quite a feat to write acceptable poems with these ingredients: and Valeri at times does. His world is sweetly sensuous, sweetly mannered, sweetly sad. Not great or even impressive poems, assuredly; but they are not worse than many that are quite *à la page*, and less pretentious.

There has been no substantial addition this year to the *oeuvre* of the *chefs d'école* of the pre-war period: though it would be rash to say that they must now have lived out their literary life, and outlived their inspiration. After all, Eugenio Montale's *La Bufera e altro*, probably the most important book of verse of the decade, appeared only in 1956. There is nothing like a new Montale in *La Bufera*; indeed, there is an effect of conscious and unreserved surrender to a now familiar pattern. '*La scatola a sorpresa ha fatto scatto. . . .*' The poetic occasion is again and again related to a *jerk* in experience, a *flash*, a *spark*, an *apparition*. Words like *scatto*, *guizzo*, *scarto* describe it. It suggests images of winged incursions (angels or

birds of prey), of visitations through which the poet is both freed and captured.

Montale's poetic world is now more tightly enclosed in its shell than it ever was; and at times the reader is simply left outside. Occasionally, in a flash, we make contact with a superb passage or a magnificent poem. A valuable feature of Montale's post-war work is that he has not attempted an artificial renovation by importing spurious themes and interests into a poetic world in which they do not belong. He has not assumed the attitude of a *caposcuola*, though he has perhaps more right than anybody else to do so. As a poet he is notoriously diffident and cautious; he does his work as a journalist, chiefly through *Il Corriere*, with characteristic perception and quiet distinction; he is already assured of the form of literary survival that he once defined himself: to be read and understood by a fairly small number of select readers in each generation.

Ungaretti has produced no important new work; but he has had a very active year. His figure, or even his pictures that one sees in newspapers, radiates a sort of laughing exuberance, a healthy contentment. He, too, was seventy this last February. A one-volume collection of his poems is in preparation; his translation from Racine's *Phèdre*, published in 1950, was very successfully performed in Milan; he began translating *Andromaque*; he gave some sample of the *inediti* that he is said to be holding. We read that he complains of his too many *impegni*: 'They ought to leave me in peace'—he is reported as saying—'not to trouble me so much with letters, telephone calls, all sorts of requests, for prefaces, short articles, introductions to catalogues, judging literary contests, journeys, lecture tours. These are requests that I can't always refuse. And by now I really ought to think of my own work: put my things in order.' There is something endearing in this youthful seventy-year-old *maestro*. One is inclined to forget one's reservations about his post-war work.

Quasimodo, a much younger man, has also been engaged in translating from both classical and modern languages, compiling anthologies, etc.; and seems to be thinking of a new collection which 'is organising itself'. Up to the last war Quasimodo had the status of a 'third crown' among the poets loosely called *ermetici*: and this is reflected in the treatment accorded to his work in anthologies, in Italy and abroad, translations, etc. Now the perspective is changed. The moment in which he steps into the anthologies is a delicate one for a poet. It means that an age and a manner are sufficiently defined to be treated as closed and spent; and the poet is faced by the choice of silence, repetition or renovation.

All this hardly applies, however, to a remarkable book of verse by a poet of the

old guard, Clemente Rebora's *Canti dell'infermità*, which the paralysed poet is reported to have been able to see in proof before his death in the autumn. Rebora had made a name for himself before the first world war as a poet whose inspiration was essentially though not conventionally religious. After a religious crisis in the late 'twenties, he took orders in 1931. As don Clemente, he is said to have meant to break with his literary past; but he soon began writing poetry again, on strictly religious lines. There was a collection ten years ago; these *Canti* cover the last decade. His poetry is nothing if not inspired. It turns on religious practice and liturgy (à la *Inni Sacri*) and especially on religious and mystical experience (as the traditional *laude*): This is strikingly linked with the experience of physical suffering of the poet's last years. 'The blood burns for Christ the Enflamer/ *Burn me!* I say: . . ./ But nail in the wall/ I am fastened in bodily misery.' Perhaps to call Rebora the greatest Italian religious poet of our age is not saying very much. Certainly there is a genuine ring about his poetry, all the more effective because it can indifferently use an occasional colloquialism side by side with an example of old-fashioned poetic diction. The utterance is simple, yet solemn and ardent. There are no affectations. One feels that it is all very well to think of contemporary poetry in terms of trends and of a specific literary climate, as I shall try to do myself in a moment. The fact remains that there can always arise a striking voice in isolation.

As for the poets of the middle generation, the natural heirs to the hermetic tradition, they continue to give us poems of varying merits; but I do not think one can say that they do in fact constitute a tradition themselves. 'I have neither peace/nor anxiety', sings Mario Luzi on page 29 of his new collection, *Onore del vero*, which is perhaps the best illustration of what this 'intermediate' poetry can and cannot achieve. 'This is little, and of something else there are no signs' he says elsewhere; and one could quote many more examples of this state of mind. It is the central mood of the book; and it is of course the same that for decades has been the most poetic of all moods in Italian lyrical poetry. This is why the reader is beginning to feel that little more can be done with it, especially after Montale has explored and chronicled it so poignantly. The pity is that Luzi is an extremely accomplished poet, and he gives us here a number of pieces that are as perfect as anything in this *genre*. But one finds it difficult to read them today except as pieces in a *genre*. Of course there are various fully successful passages and moments: it would be surprising if in forty or fifty pages of verse by Luzi this was not the case. But allowing for these, and without counting the direct echoes and borrowings

from the older poets, Luzi's poetry must be called conventional. As a reviewer was pointing out, it seems to be raining all the time in Luzi's country. As one moves from poem to poem one can trace the features of a typically depressed landscape, autumnal, misty, discoloured, chilly, windy, gloomy, muddy, etc. Similarly depressed is the sociological landscape: beggars, poor fishermen, people in rags; who are not there for polemical or documentary reasons. They are mere *décor*, conventional, utterly impersonal projections of 'the Mood' which is basically an intimation of spiritual poverty and emptiness. 'Lack of vitality', as it has been put, seems a fair summing up; nor do I think that the hard centre of this soft world—which is supposed to be the presence of death, a kind of sustained *memento mori*—is defined forcefully enough. The more distinguished the execution, the more noticeable the greyness.

The collected poems of Sandro Penna, including his three previous selections and over 100 unpublished pieces, form a volume of over 250 pages: but these poems are mostly very short, and quite a number are made up of just two, or four, lines. Yet this is not a mere product of la *poetica del frammento*, Penna's little poems being usually not concerned with an *illumination*. Most of them are variations on a surprisingly small number of motifs, grouped around the author's interest in a *fanciullo*, a *ragazzo*, an *operaio*, usually seen in the street, in a bus, in a tram. 'Ah, if I could I would buy him./Only in this way I might find peace.' Or: 'My own god rides away on a bicycle/or wets the wall with nonchalance.' Bicycles, boiler suits, uniforms; the suggested atmosphere of casual encounters and of that moving towards adventure which the author likes to call 'drifting' and which is often supposed to lead to *la periferia*, the outskirts of the city. Penna's emotions are socially unconventional, but not aesthetically so. The quickening of what he calls 'the senses', the pleasurable and unpleasant that are mixed in the little episodes of which his life as recorded here consists, have nothing specially striking about them. Yet out of them Penna occasionally makes some little poems that in their minor way *are* striking. His queer *gioia di vivere* is a genuine if flimsy state of mind, and the peculiar rhythms in which he encloses it in his diminutive poems are often felicitous. I do think one would wrong this poetry if one treated it too seriously, I mean with the wrong kind of seriousness; reading a drama or a *cris de coeur* where there is only a game, comparable to the sort of game that Gozzano liked to play. (Of course even Gozzano's far from wide range looks enormous in comparison with Penna's.) *Giochetti*: that is what these poems mostly are: amusing little games with syllables, partly sad, partly gay.

It is the chronicler's duty to add that the reception of both Luzi's and Penna's books has been much more favourable than might be thought to be implied in this account. Moreover they have both had the recognition implicit in 'winning' a *premio letterario*. But so have, in addition to Saba and Palazzeschi, perhaps a dozen other poets, including Barile, Mondadori, Pasolini, Margherita Guidacci, Maria Luisa Spaziani.

An individual assessment of other collections of poems that have attracted attention in 1957 cannot be attempted here. And then in certain cases that attention was based on reasons that were not purely literary (typical would be Alberto Mondadori's *Quasi una vicenda*, as well as his Poem for Hungary); while in other cases it was chiefly related to the attempt to define current trends and assess the present situation in general terms.

This is one of the fundamental *querelles* of contemporary Italian criticism. Is there a recognisably new poetry? Who are the *poeti di oggi*, what is the value of their work, and where do they stand in relation to the *poeti di ieri*? At the end of the war, roughly between 1943 and 1945, there occurred a dramatic change of perspective in this respect. Up to then when one spoke of the 'poetry of today' one meant the tradition beginning with Ungaretti. Suddenly he and his consorts became the 'poets of yesterday', and most of the new poets and poetry magazines seemed concerned with rejecting them and what they stood for. No more *poesia pura*, no more isolation of the poet from society, no more obscurity.

This often went with a completely negative judgment on the achievement of the recent past: 'It is not even necessary to destroy', said one of the innovators; 'the little men of the generation before our own must be picked up with a spoon or more simply swept away with a broom.'

But did a new poetry worthy of the name in fact emerge? Some openly deny it. As Oreste Macrì put it a few years ago: 'We have been waiting for years that the young poetry of the post-war period should mature and burst out in the name of the new political and social reality: we felt it was in the air: it intimidated us before it had had time to come into existence; it was expected to bring about a clear break, a radical reform in theme and style. Nothing of this has happened.'

There has now appeared the second, much enlarged edition of the already very large anthology published by Enrico Falqui in 1956, under the title of *La giovane poesia*. (It is characteristic and rather amusing that the long introductory essay should start with a reference to the 'fascinating' question whether the young poetry really exists.) Falqui, who is an industrious and painstaking reader and critic, has

always stood for *la documentazione* as an essential preliminary to any serious discussion, and here he provides us with texts by over a hundred poets born from the years of the first world war to the middle 'thirties. This is what Macrì calls the 'fourth' generations, whose 'productive decade' was due to begin about 1944, and whose work he regards as 'missing'. Now that Falqui has found it, we can take a comprehensive view of the situation, which is sufficiently relevant for texts (like Pasolini's *Le ceneri di Gramsci*) published in 1957.

Roughly the scene is dominated by two contrasting trends: the inheritance of *ermetismo*; and what we may conveniently call the neo-realist approach.

Under the first heading it is hardly worth counting the mere imitators, who just repeat or reproduce. But in addition there is a large body of poets who could be called *epigoni* without any derogatory intention. They have genuinely learnt the lesson of the best among the *ermetici*, in point of technical tautness, economy of approach, etc.; and they make use of it in fairly original ways. *Fairly* is the operative word: we cannot but admire some of their poems; but we are constantly reminded that they are, in fact, *epigoni*.

The 'neo-realists' attempt to break with tradition entirely, and try to deal with a new matter in a new manner.

The matter has to do on the one hand with the social realities of Italian life, on the other with the grosser emotions, passions and feelings that were rigorously excluded from the poetics of *ermetismo*. The total effect is definitely one of liberation; but it is also one of chaos. The new matter is by no means controlled by a well-defined new manner. The patterns of metre, diction, images, etc., that were current fifteen years ago have been scrapped; but in their place there is Babel. We get free verse and *canzonette*; the aggressive and the mannered; crudities and over-refinement; and, on the linguistic level, anything from the *lingua aulica* to dialect and slang.

Some neo-realist poems are definitely memorable; but it is impossible to escape the conclusion that this new trend has failed to produce great works, and is not likely to do so any more. There are now signs that neo-realism, at least as a programme, is a spent force; and it seems probable that the poetry that will be written in the 'sixties will not in fact be neo-realist. But it is evident that this turbid attempt at coming to grips with 'reality' represented a necessary stage in the withdrawal from pre-war experiences.

If we now turn to fiction, the position is different in that at the end of the war the shifting of perspectives was much less dramatic and the best work of the

younger innovators took the form of a continuation of trends that were already discernible. There were in 1945 perhaps half a dozen outstanding or very promising novelists who were comparatively young and had already made a start in attempting to create a new tradition. Here if anywhere it appeared legitimate to expect that the young generation might find its masters and perhaps that there should emerge a writer of European stature. The latter expectation has not been fulfilled. Cesare Pavese, who came nearest to fulfilling the former, took his life in 1950; Vitaliano Brancati died in 1953; and the development of both Elio Vittorini and Guido Piovene as novelists ended in an *empasse* many years ago.

Altogether the work of this 'middle generation' in Italian fiction (so differently placed from its counterpart among the poets) failed to crystallise into a sufficiently definite tradition: and while the older men (from Bacchelli, say, to Tecchi, Palazzeschi, Alvaro) have continued to produce plausible and even good books, as distinct from inspiring ones, the young novelists have been and are writing in what many feel is an atmosphere of crisis.

There is striking evidence of this in an interesting survey on *Le sorti del romanzo* in *Ulisse*, Autumn/Winter 1956-7. Though the survey attempts to take stock of the situation in general terms, much of it deals directly with Italian fiction, particularly in relation to the enquiry centring on the question: '*Quali sono le condizioni della nostra narrativa attuale?*'

Most of the answers are despondent. 'To want to write merely in order to tell a story has become a form of epidemic', says Giovanni Comisso, who puts it down to Italian educational patterns. 'The reason why the novel does not exist among us', explains Luigi Bartolini with angry simplicity, 'is that there are no novelists; there are only kiln-men who bake bricks . . .' (We can only smile at the additional remark: 'If the novel does not exist in Italy we must blame the priests.') Italo Calvino thinks that '*la narrativa è il mezzo d'espressione più in crisi di tutti*'; and defines in neat, if familiar terms the difficulties of aiming at a new classicism: 'Thomas Mann who understood everything, was looking out from behind nineteenth-century banisters. We are looking at the world as we fall through the well of the staircase.' The current assumption that through fiction one can say anything is regarded as '*il segno dell'inadeguatezza d'una cultura*'.

But a detailed discussion of trends would be less fruitful than a short empirical account of some individual writers and works.

Moravia has continued to work in his proficient and dependable way. He is the Italian novelist whose name is best known abroad (not counting Silone who is a

special case); and perhaps the only one who embodies the type so familiar in England, the expert practitioner who goes on producing steadily, and has a public, as distinct from just having a name. Some of his books may be more *réussi* than others; but they will always conform to certain professional standards.

After giving us, in his *Racconti romani*, some years ago, perhaps the most striking illustration of the strength and limits of his art, Moravia is not really expected to surprise us any more. His technique is under control; and so are his readers' reactions. Some particular effects may not be completely predictable; the range is.

In 1957 we have had a new full-scale novel, *La ciociara*. It is about the experiences of a Roman widow, born in *Ciociaria*, and her daughter, Rosetta, in the last years of the war. They leave their shop and flat in Rome and go to live as *sfollate* among the peasants. It is a hard and on the whole uneventful life; but it teaches them useful lessons about their fellow human beings and about themselves. When the war has just passed them by, and their ordeal seems to be over, disaster overtakes them. Rosetta is raped by Allied soldiers.

One finds here some of the best qualities of Moravia's work: the simplicity of design, the unemotional approach, the preference for the matter of fact. There are also some of the characteristic defects. Moravia is not really exploring the mind of a *popolana*. His *ciociara*, who tells the story, is not an uneducated woman speaking her own language and giving her own account of the world. She is a kind of premeditated device. You feel that her creator has taken pains to construct a woman of the people: not that a real one has walked into his world. This accounts perhaps for the didactic element, not less evident here than elsewhere: that air of teaching people about a *ciociara*, and also about the effects of the war, the psychology of the lower classes, etc.

Moravia's approach seems realistic and is really abstract. His presumed realism aims on the one hand at reproducing the ordinariness of ordinary feelings and thoughts and situations; on the other it is periodically seeking the vent of violent or crude or shocking scenes and incidents. These dramatic effects leave one cold, when they do not border on a kind of pornography. Another aspect of the same trouble is the too transparent nature of the intention that lies behind some of the central figures and situations. The author wants a 'good' character with whom the two women from Rome will establish a valuable human contact, and from whom they will learn to understand a little more about themselves, and the people around them, and life, and the world. He produces a textbook young 'idealist',

who has all the right notions on the war, the Germans, the English, the working man, the shopkeepers, religion, etc. The predictability of young Michele (even with regard to his death) is almost ludicrous.

Faintly ludicrous, too, is the master scene of the rape, perpetrated by coloured troops, the classic textbook protagonists of such exploits, the legendary *marocchini*. And the very subtlety of the pedagogic intention (in causing the rape to happen when the war is supposed to be over, and the Germans have departed) is so embarrassingly unsubtle. It is also significant that Rosetta should be such an ideal recipient of the outrage, being so strikingly enclosed and almost enshrined in her shapely chastity; so that when this is forced she undergoes a vertiginous process of maturation, and in a matter of days from a kind of 'saint' becomes a kind of 'whore'.

The interesting thing is that all this does not make *La ciociara* a worthless book. Moravia's defects are inseparable from his strength, perhaps an essential part of it. They are themselves vigorous errors, vigorously pursued. Moravia is not really a writer who is out among the people, taking a good look at them; he is at home, in his laboratory where he conducts impressive if slightly preposterous experiments.

Mario Soldati, in addition to bringing out a collection of *Racconti* which reprints most of his work before *A cena col commendatore*, has given us a new novel (really a long short-story) called *Il vero Silvestri*. Soldati's personality is eminently versatile and eclectic. A successful and intelligent film director, a capable journalist and critic, Soldati is, or poses as, an amateur writer. Where Moravia is the sergeant-major of the regular army of Italian fiction, Soldati prefers to act as a sniper. In point of fact his competence is quite professional: indeed, it now tends to overshadow nearly every other quality of his fiction. The outer form of *Il vero Silvestri* shows the usual sophisticated interest in the technique of thrillers; psychological thrillers, of course. Who was the real Silvestri? Was he the amiable, despondent, self-doubting man that his friend remembers, the man who could not fall in love with a woman unless he was sure that he would not succeed; or was he a specialist of courtship through blackmail, as the woman he loved says he was? Or was he perhaps both things at once? What *is* truth in matters of this kind? And does it matter anyhow? Does his friend, the narrator, his loyal friend who goes to the length of refusing a desirable female as he cannot convince her that she did not know 'the true Silvestri', does his friend really care?

This is fairly typical of Soldati's interests. He investigates not human beings, but situations; the ethics, or is it the psychopathology, of love. Love of course is

chiefly the love of love affairs; and its ethics are basically concerned with the interplay of egotism and self-criticism. Soldati's approach is lucid and morbid at the same time. But the glib technique, the sceptical and amusing intelligence cannot hide the fact that his matter is at bottom cold, or at any rate rapidly cooling. Very strangely in a book that is so readable, the final impression is one of dreariness. These men's erotic problems, these women's attitudes (like the anxiety to behave as *la vera signora*) are in themselves boring; and they are not always represented as such. There is the intrusion of a personal element, a curious lack of perspective in relation to the social circles and the psychological types Soldati deals with. At times this is quite explicit: '*Nonostante la nessuna signorilità, ossia, che è lo stesso, la nessuna umanità di Aurora. . . .*' Good table-talk; not perceptive writing.

One could add a word here about Silone's latest novel, *Il segreto di Luca*. It tells of a convict whose innocence is recognised after he has spent forty years in prison for a murder he has not committed. The subject of the story is not the miscarriage of justice as such, but the reasons why Luca had accepted his fate with resignation, indeed had welcomed it; and why he is so silent about it all. This is his 'secret', and it has to do with a personal romance and the feelings of guilt that it had produced. Once out of prison Luca feels that 'it was better inside; there are too many draughts out here'. The book is less openly polemical, in a social sense, than is customary for Silone. It is not uninteresting, but it falls short of felicity: which is by and large the verdict of Italian criticism on the whole *oeuvre* of this writer.

More important is Elsa Morante's second novel, published five years after her first, and called *L'isola di Arturo*. It has been praised much more unreservedly than her first, and rewarded with the *Premio Strega* 1957. Signora Morante has a very high conception of what a novel should be: 'A novel differs from a racconto', she is reported as saying recently, 'in that the latter deals with an individual and limited human experience, whilst in the novel the writer tries to express his own conception of the universe (or of man, which is the same thing) in its entirety.' Her own intentions in this book are defined with the same straightforwardness: 'I can't say that my purpose here is, properly speaking, a *literary* one. In these years of work [the book is said to have taken four years to write] I have aimed . . . at expressing the *reality* of things, not as it appears on the surface but in its deep truth. . . . This has been my only purpose. Because in my opinion this is what art (*la poesia*) consists of.'

The novel supports not indeed the metaphysical claim, which depends on a mere form of words, but some of the 'poetics' implicit in it. Though it is

exquisitely 'literary', Elsa Morante has a point when she says that it is not: as it certainly is independent of direct literary models. Certain affinities are obvious: but they are *natural* affinities. What is clearly no discovery of Elsa Morante's, she *rediscovers*. Arturo tells of his childhood and adolescence in a peculiar set of family relationships and in the isolation of the island of Procida. The story is in fact about his initiation to life and love, and it ultimately bears on their 'meaning': what it means to be in love with one's father; to have a father who is a hero, and yet is called 'Parody' by the young men he pursues; to be a hero oneself; to kiss the little girl, one's own contemporary, who is one's father's wife; to be in love, as distinct from making love. In the charmed island all these things have of course their meanings, but these need not, or must not, be named. Experience is meaningful, but only in terms of itself; as soon as you try to *relate* it to something else, to put it into words, you realise that it is pointless or impossible to do so. Meaning contains an element of mystery. Meaningful and mysterious; such is perhaps the message related to Elsa Morante's 'conception of the universe, or of man'. *L'isola di Arturo* is probably the most important single pointer in recent years to the possibility of a change in the literary climate such as Piovene anticipates.

Elsa Morante's story could qualify as a novel in one of the traditional senses of the word; which is not the case of the two books of fiction that are respectively the most amusing and the most remarkable of the year. Italo Calvino's *Il barone rampante* is a tale; Carlo Emilio Gadda's novel could be called a parody of a detective story.

In the issue of *Ulisse* which I have mentioned, Calvino expresses a 'poetics' which is nearly the opposite of Elsa Morante's. He is interested in novels written chiefly 'to amuse'; and anticipates a state of things in the near future where there may be written 'new books, full of a new kind of intelligence', but he thinks that they are not likely to be conventional novels, but rather 'essays, utopias, dialogues and *operette morali*'.

Be that as it may, Calvino's own tale *Il barone rampante* is a triumph. The humorous matter, the slight tone, makes it possible to see in it no more than a successful *divertissement*. But then perhaps one must resist the implication that this is necessarily an inferior form of art.

One fine day, in the latter half of the eighteenth century, Baron Cosimo di Rondò, aged 12, refuses to eat snails at table. Scolded, he climbs a tree in the garden, and literally does not set foot on the ground any more for the rest of a fairly long life. There are plenty of trees for miles around, so that he can roam

about, over a very wide territory, moving from branch to branch with the aid, when necessary, of ropes and various gadgets. And he leads quite a full and rich life: he hunts, shoots, studies, writes, builds, meets people, including Napoleon, fights and loves. All this is perfectly plausible—in the sense, that is, in which Ariosto's *ippogrifo* is plausible. And Calvino's power of invention never flags. In addition to the subtlety of effects and lightness of touch, he possesses what is so seldom met in conjunction with these: an inexhaustible vitality. We cannot tell whether he will continue to write tales like this one, and his earlier and more slender *Visconte dimezzato* (a nobleman split in two by a cannon ball; each half recovers and goes on living separately; one is wholly 'good' and one wholly 'bad'). If he does, he may conceivably give us one of those great tales that are the ornament of a whole literary age. Or else of course he might give us no more than fanciful stories in the manner of Calvino; though even in that case they are sure to be excellent reading. Some critics hope for the obvious third possibility, a return to 'serious' fiction where Calvino has already distinguished himself. Calvino is in his middle thirties, and I hope he feels that he need not pay attention to the critics yet.

The most highly praised book of fiction of 1957 is by a much older man. Carlo Emilio Gadda is now in his middle sixties, and his *Quer pasticciaccio brutto de via Merulana*, in part already known, constitutes no surprise. It is however his most important piece of work to date, has taken many years to complete and is likely to remain his masterpiece.

The outer form is ironically related to the patterns of detective fiction. The story is ostensibly based on two incidents of *cronaca nera*, a theft in a Rome flat and a murder next door. But the plot is really unimportant: what gives unity to Gadda's world, and to this story, is his own inimitable handling of experience; a fantastic power of breaking up 'reality' into sharply focused fragments, and then threading these together in fresh, astonishing patterns.

On the face of it, the core of Gadda's world is linguistic. Certainly the most conspicuous feature of his work is the indescribable language that he uses. I say indescribable meaning that I cannot think of an adequate description. It certainly is not Italian as anyone else writes it. There is usually some sort of groundwork (here chiefly *romanesco*); there is the current semi-literary *koiné*; there is dialect, in fact an unholy mixture of *dialetti*, often interfering with one another as they may do in reality when, say, a Neapolitan has been living in Rome for a long time; there are archaisms, or rather a contamination of poetic, archaic and purely

literary idiom; there is the free use and often the parody of scientific, bureaucratic, technical and official jargon. All this sounds familiar enough, and could be merely boring. But these ingredients are worked on by plain linguistic genius. A mobile, multitudinous verbal imagination darts about, creating wonders and monsters as it moves; sewing the disjointed elements into some sort of patchy splendour. Gadda's prose is indeed what it has been called: a miracle. Of course its felicity does have limits: one, less important, concerns the excess of a cleverness which at times over-reaches itself; the other, and a more serious one, has to do with the process of mechanisation that threatens this technique. But this counts relatively little, and Gadda's prose remains one of the few genuine literary wonders of the age.

But the linguistic interest, if conspicuous, is not really the ultimate centre of Gadda's writing. Elio Vittorini puts it clearly (in his recent *Diario*), in the course of a comparison of Gadda with the much younger Pier Paolo Pasolini, who in his novel *Ragazzi di vita* (1955) seems to be aiming at similar effects in a 'neo-realist' context: 'Pasolini exhibits under the disguise of realism an interest that is essentially philological. Gadda on the other hand disguises as philology an interest that is essentially realistic. Gadda is concerned to hide the fact that it is things that move him. Pasolini is similarly concerned to hide the fact that what moves him is words.' I am not sure about Pasolini; but Vittorini is right about Gadda. It *is* things, and people, that move him. They move him to anger and scorn, but they also move him to compassion.

The time Gadda deals with is a short period during the fascist *ventennio*. The people are chiefly (but not only) minor officials, *questurini*, prostitutes, peasants; in fact the lower middle classes and the lower classes *tout court*. Of their life in fascist times the book gives us a many-sided picture. There is nothing romantic about the people as seen by Gadda. They are often cheap, sometimes sordid; they prey on one another, perhaps in the name of a social and political system which they do not question, though they may include it, along with the rest of the world, in their maledictions. They are essentially human, in that their peculiar patterns of behaviour are shown to arise from an experience as varied and contradictory as that of any other class of human beings. It is very remarkable that the most effective 'realistic' exploration of the Italian scene should have come in the late 'fifties from this elderly Milanese *ingegnere* who was already writing in the middle 'thirties; and that it should be cast in this hypersophisticated mould.

I have dealt with a few books individually, in order to illustrate concretely the range of the work that is being done. This is not a complete or even a wholly

balanced account. It leaves out important names like Vasco Pratolini, and distinguished books like Natalia Ginzburg's *Valentino* (three stories); or Carlo Bernari's long novel *Domani e poi domani*, which deals in a fairly sedate way with that 'matter of Naples' that Domenico Rea used to handle with such aggressive *verve*, and which has found its most poetic interpreter in Giuseppe Marotta; and at least a dozen not less distinguished novels or collections of stories by established authors. It also leaves out many very promising works by young or junior writers. But even merely to chronicle distinction or promise would be a very long task; and a straight list of writers seems pointless.

The relations between journalism and literature are now perhaps closer than at any other time, and the dividing line is often difficult to trace. It could be said to cut right across the controversial personality of Curzio Malaparte, whose last book, on Tuscany and Tuscans, had appeared in 1956, and who is now dead. The most conspicuous figure among straight journalists is Indro Montanelli, who continues to produce his interviews, profiles, etc., that one reads in *Il Corriere* or looks at again as they are collected in a series of volumes. If you define good journalism as the art of making people read you, Montanelli is a good journalist. He is often called that by people who dislike his *disinvoltura*, almost amounting to unscrupulousness, his self-satisfied scepticism, and his vague notions about the Italian temperament, the catholic mentality, and other large subjects. Good journalism, perhaps: though the clever technique of his interviews begins to show signs of stiffness, and his latest *incontri* are machine made. Their literary value is small.

Quite different is the case of Guido Piovene, who is a born artist, and yet is a really brilliant journalist. Among the novelists of the middle generation he stands very high indeed; but, as has been mentioned, he has been silent for many years, and his early *Lettere di una novizia* is probably still his best work. However, he is now reported to be working on a new novel, whose publication is likely to be an exceptionally important literary event.

In the meantime Piovene has done some excellent journalism, chiefly as correspondent of *La Stampa*, and in the course of an American journey and of a long tour in Italy itself. The former had recently produced the brilliant and thoughtful *De America*, in the tradition of books like Soldati's *America primo amore* and Cecchi's *America amara*; the latter has now resulted in a large and impressive *Viaggio in Italia*, based on a series of broadcasts. Again this book, like any similar account of Italy, takes its place in a tradition of long standing; but it is so competent that it is

likely to discourage other attempts for a long time to come. The reportage on Italian economy, industry, politics, buildings, customs, etc., is first rate: but this *Viaggio* also manages to be a highly personal record. As Montale has remarked, few writers in Italy, and certainly no foreigner, could have given us such a perceptive yet so detached an account of the country. Piovene's writing is characterised by the interplay of a rich and aristocratic sensitiveness with an impeccable intellectual precision. Here he excels especially in portraits of towns and cities; studies in landscape, which for Piovene is a branch of the study of man; accounts of whole *regioni* or *provincie*. But the sketches of individual people, famous or anonymous, of all classes and types, form in themselves a valuable gallery.

Of course the book is not polemical, and to the politically conscious it is bound to look too literary, perhaps even slightly complacent, or at least idyllic. If it is an idyll, it certainly is a long and a well-written one. But it may be worth setting this *Viaggio* against the very different sort of *reportage engagé* (in the manner of, say, Rocco Scotellaro's *Contadini del sud*) which is still practised with both polemical and indirectly literary intents. I think it is safe to say that the peculiar felicity of Carlo Levi's *Christ Stopped at Eboli*, so striking as a document and so convincing as a literary work, has not been attained again. Levi's own new collection of articles on Russia, *Il futuro ha un cuore antico*, is no more than interesting.

Many a good book published in 1957 was born on the *rubrica letteraria* of a weekly. Carlo Laurenzi (an unusual case: a typical columnist of the radical *Il Mondo*, who also writes in the *Corriere della Sera*) has collected some of his weekly chronicles of Roman life for the years 1954-5. Laurenzi is a moralist who watches people (and for preference *clericali*, nationalists, homosexuals and communists) with fascinated and disgusted curiosity. Under the appearance of an ironical attitude, he is in fact deeply committed to his *laicismo*, his radicalism, his anglophilia, his intellectual fastidiousness. Perhaps it is true that he is not the most suitable man to chronicle Roman life. He writes well, but a bit too well to be an effective social critic, and yet possibly not well enough (or too self-consciously 'well') for his prose to become, as a Crocean might put it, *poesia*.

Laurenzi's *Biennio a Roma* is only one of a number of similar publications in the *genre* that we call *letteratura di costume*, an interesting literary development of the *cronache mondane*. Besides Corrado Alvaro's posthumous *Roma vestita di nuovo*, we had recently had Ennio Flaiano *Diario notturno*, which I mention here to show how general is the preference for Rome in this *genre*. Rome both invites sophisticated comment, and baffles it. Flaiano's bitterness is not unlike that of Laurenzi, but

with no suppressed militancy. Flaiano is just a disenchanted man. 'To be a pessimist about the things of this world and of life in general is a pleonasm', we hear him remarking, as he paces the Roman pavements at night.

The eagerly awaited *Diario in pubblico* by Vittorini is not a 'journal' in the sense that Pavese's posthumous *Il mestiere di vivere* was; nor in any of the usual senses of the word. It is a reprint of selections from his writings on literary, 'cultural', and political topics from 1929 to 1956, that is throughout his literary career. Vittorini has not published any new fiction for some time. His *Erica*, which appeared in book form in 1956, was a very old story; and *La garibaldina*, published with it, was far from new. His silence might conceivably be related to the peculiar difficulties into which his development had led him. His is the case of a writer whose gifts do not include the gift of making full use of them. Few writers of comparable ability have done more to make it difficult for themselves to achieve a completely satisfactory novel.

The *Diario* itself is slightly disappointing. There are good pages of course: acute remarks on Italian, American and other writers; interesting minor documents on the author's political experiences, and a few 'leaves' from a real journal. The personal record is valuable; as the author's intellectual history is certainly an interesting one. His reaction to fascism, his involvement with communism and his subsequent withdrawal (which is suitably documented here) are all honourable episodes. His passion for *la cultura*, and his attempts to define it in relation to society, deserve respect; his interest in American 'realism' has played an important part in the development of our *narrativa*. But the material collected here is patchy, and the ambitious headings of the sections (*La ragione letteraria*; *La ragione antifascista*; *La ragione culturale*; *La ragione civile*) cause only embarrassment. The passages collected also bear very peculiar headings: *More on De Foe: Abundance as Freedom*; *More on Martini: The Nude as Universe*; *Plot and Movement* (*in films, but not in films only*); *Movement and Sound* (*in films only*); *Writers and Writers* (*Two ways to be a writer, infinite times two*); and so forth, page after page. Perhaps these are only pardonable *vezzi*. The dozen or so lines of the text that correspond to the last quoted heading, for instance, say something worth saying: namely that writers can be sub-divided into two categories, but that this can be done in countless ways, so that it is not contradictory to call Dostoievski a realist on the basis of one such distinction, and to call him a lyrical writer on the basis of another. This is an acceptable thought, if not so revolutionary as the heading makes it sound. Vittorini is always after some striking formulation, that will grasp the very essence

of art and life. But what he achieves is often only pretentious and elaborate; and at times he just makes ideological mountains out of impressionistic molehills. All this had a different ring at the time of *Il Politecnico*, which Vittorini edited just after the war, and from which he reprints many passages here. But repeated and systematised in 1957, it might be held to point to a serious weakness, possibly to be connected with the experience of Marxist training.

Some reservations of a similar kind I felt inclined to make in reading another book that commands attention, Franco Fortini's *Dieci inverni*, a journal covering the last decade. It deals chiefly with political issues and attitudes, from the point of view of a writer and poet who is deeply committed to a form of Marxist socialism, and is at pains to define his relations to communism. The agony of the long drawn-out process of *chiarificazione*, culminating in the impact of recent international events, is effectively suggested. But how often one feels that what should be the drama of a generation threatens to become a pattern of half-hearted and half-intelligible minor heresies. But this is really a political, not a literary point.

As for literary criticism, so far as it concerns contemporary writing, I think a few general remarks may suffice. The influence of Croce's aesthetics is still widespread, though usually in the form of certain basic assumptions about such concepts as *poesia*, *oratoria*, etc., rather than in strictly orthodox or even narrowly heretical terms. The influence of Marxist aesthetics again is recognisable in certain basic attitudes, and normally linked with some aspects of neo-realist writing. There is no doubt that questions of aesthetics are less prominent and central now than they used to be. Hermetic criticism is either gone, or very much on the defensive: and that unhappy phenomenon, obscure critical prose, has all but departed. It would be cruel to mention names: but how revealing it is to read some solemn critics of fifteen years ago, now that they are trying to write plainly! Of course there has emerged no definite body of literary doctrines or beliefs to play the part of those that have been displaced; and a chaotic state of affairs in creative writing is reflected in a pretty confused set of critical attitudes. Few people, however, seriously regret this; many more begin to think that after all one can live without a central body of ideas on the ultimate nature of art, over which critics will automatically be divided into believers and infidels. The actual practice of criticism, in fact, exhibits an empirical and eclectic approach that some consider refreshing. There are surveys (like the one in *Ulisse* that has been referred to); there is argument about trends; there are discussions on literature in relation to political or social problems. These are chiefly to be found in a fairly small number of *riviste di*

cultura, like *Nuovi Argomenti*, *Il Ponte*, *Paragone*, *Belfagor*. *La Fiera letteraria*, which deals more exclusively with contemporary literature, and appears weekly, is not always as useful as it could be. Much of the reviewing is done by outstanding novelists and poets, often in the literary sections of popular weeklies, and in national dailies like *La Stampa* (Turin) and *Il Corriere della Sera* (Milan), whose literary ('third') page is quite an institution.

Some of the collections of articles and essays that result from this kind of work amount to a comprehensive survey of contemporary production, as in the case of Cecchi's *Di giorno in giorno*, published a few years ago. (In 1957 Cecchi has given us a collection called *Ritratti e profili* ranging from Boccaccio to Croce; his position both on the classics and on contemporaries, even when it is expressed in a short review, is always a factor to be reckoned with.) Other such collections are chiefly interesting on account of their 'eccentric' value: typical was the case of Arrigo Cajumi, whose last book of essays, *Colori e veleni*, appeared posthumously in 1956. I do not think Carlo L. Ragghianti, by profession an art historian, would mind being included among 'eccentrics': his new *Diario Critico*, following on *Il pungolo dell'arte* of 1956, deals with matters of *estetica*, *critica*, *linguistica*, and is mentioned here as one of the few cases where theoretical interests, in artistic and literary matters, increase, rather than taking away, the writer's appetite for reality.

I will not try to deal with the Italian theatre here, except to say that as a literary phenomenon it is of negligible importance, and that such happenings as might be chronicled for one particular year ought to be related not so much to 'Italian letters' as to Italian '*cultura*' in general, especially with regard to the present currency of some classics, the survival of fairly recent masters and petit-maîtres, and the interpretation of foreign authors. Nor could one deal with the cinema, and its important relations with literature, without embarking on far too wide a discussion.

Of the many other books that one would want to mention, a word can be said about Giovanni Papini's posthumous (and not easily classifiable) *Giudizio Universale*, the idea of which goes back perhaps to the author's youth. He began composing it about the beginning of the last war, and left it unfinished, fragmentary and voluminous. Based on a series of hundreds of separate 'judgments', the *Last Judgment* was to be a terrible and stupendous work, a sort of modern *Divina Commedia*, a universal encyclopedia of hope and terror, a *Summa* of things divine and human. What I have read of it is pitiful.

THE LITERARY YEAR IN FRANCE

J. P. RICHARD

Translated by David Moore

THE outstanding event of the literary year in France is represented not by the publication of any book, but by the decision of the Swedish jury to award the Nobel Prize for Literature to Albert Camus. We thought it would be Malraux, and it was Camus. . . . The award immediately provoked violent controversy. (Camus, to be sure, has always attracted controversy.) The Right poked fun at him, ridiculed his tendency to preach, his graceless moralising, his lack of 'elegance' and humour. The Left attacked his passion for personal purity and his desire to remain for the moment aloof from the political battle (particularly on the question of Algeria, where he was born). But Camus has resisted these attacks very effectively, and he retains his devoted following. In spite of all his academic distinctions his writing has not lost its flexibility; indeed, it seems at this moment to be acquiring fresh nuances and a new richness. Camus's early tales were simple narrations of facts—conclusive, logical and rectilinear as allegories. But his latest collection of short stories, entitled *L'Exil et le Royaume* (N.R.F.)—extremely varied in setting, tone and style, very heterogeneous also by reason of the diversity of the moral lessons that emerge from it—is concerned with the portrayal of a whole new world of experience, such as this author's severely simple writing had never previously embraced.

Another important literary event has been the publication of André Malraux's *La Métamorphose des Dieux*, a sequel to his *Psychologie de l'Art*. Here Malraux continues his long impassioned monologue on the familiar themes (death of the gods, birth of the new God, Art), but with new examples. In this exquisite book (in which the illustrations immediately follow the text) the reader will encounter the same lightning transitions, the same flashes of poetry that constituted the

charm of his earlier works—and also the same concern to draw the most unexpected parallels, the same quest for permanence, the same bewildering apprehension of remote identities. Truth to tell, this is less a history of Art—critics have repeatedly drawn attention to its inaccuracies and its arbitrary judgments—than a history of civilisations recaptured through the art that was their expression. Malraux' concern is always to isolate a humanism based on the notion of *style*. The masterly and already time-honoured study by Élie Faure, *La Vie des Formes*, which has been reissued this year, shows us that this attempt does not lack a precedent, and that it conforms to a typically French tradition.

The third 'heavyweight', J. P. Sartre, has not given us any new book this year, but in his review, *Les Temps Modernes*, he has published two essays of paramount importance. The first, entitled *Le Séquestré de Venise*, is a study of Tintoretto. In it Sartre for the first time applies his complex system of analysis to a painter, thereby directing art-criticism into very different paths—at once historical, economic and existential—from those along which Malraux has led us. But Tintoretto, disowned by the Venetians, to whom he was guilty of presenting portraits of themselves that were too lifelike, is also Sartre, rejected by the Frenchmen of 1958. Hence the completely abandoned verve of this essay, and hence also its tone, which is at once angry and regal. The second study, more technical and far more difficult of approach, is entitled *Questions de Méthode*. Here Sartre poses anew the problem of the relationship between Marxism and Existentialism, while restricting his inquiry to the plane of method. He shows how the modern sciences of man (psychoanalysis, existential psychology, history, sociology, etc.) can find their place and their field of activity within the general framework of Marxism. Whereas Marxism offers only universal explanations, these sciences could, he maintains, be successfully applied to the interpretation of the most specific phenomena.

In the field of the novel the year has been quite a good one. True, it has not witnessed the appearance of any very great book, of the kind that compels immediate recognition in virtue of its power or its originality—such a book as Robbe-Grillet's *Le Voyeur* (1955), or Butor's *L'Emploi du Temps* (1957). But several good, and even one or two excellent, novels have been offered for our consideration. This was, if you like, not so much a year of discovery as a year of confirmation, of consolidation.

In the first place, the ambitions of the little group of writers who for two or three years past have been trying to revivify the very *genre* of the novel by seeking new means of expression have been vindicated, indeed crowned, by the award of a

literary prize—the Prix Théophraste Renaudot, presented to Michel Butor for *La Modification* (Éditions de Minuit). I have left it to A. Robbe-Grillet, the most incisive and the most doctrinarian member of this group, to expound elsewhere in this book the theory of the so-called 'experimental' or 'neo-realist' novel. I will content myself with emphasising the variety of temperament and talent displayed by these young novelists. To the doctrinal rigour of Robbe-Grillet (who this year has published an admirable study of psychology in space entitled *La Jalousie*), to his appreciation of intelligence, to his pursuit of pure objectivity, of linearity, of verbal and formal elegance, to his passion for exteriority, are opposed the lyrical precision of Michel Butor, his sense of verbal or symbolic sinuosities, even his 'psychologism', his esoterism. Very different too are the *baroquisme* of Claude Simon (author of *Le Vent*), his Faulknerian gift of verbal proliferation, his sense of the complexity of existence, or, again, the transparent tenderness of Marguerite Duras (author of *Moderato Cantabile*), a novelist specialising in the unusual relationships that spring up amid the banality and silence of our lives. In spite of the diversity of their talent these young novelists—all published by Les Éditions de Minuit, home of the *avant-garde* novel—have in common a mistrust of traditional psychological analysis coupled with a most delicate appreciation of the physical world, of material things—which they describe with infinite care—and a desire to evolve new techniques of presentation (the 'ocular' technique of Robbe-Grillet, the '*vous*' of *La Modification*) or of narration (abandonment of the traditional time-pattern of the novel in favour of one that is fragmentary, discontinuous, elliptical, or even of two non-concurrent time-sequences, as in *L'Emploi du Temps*). In short, they are concerned one and all with the elaboration of concrete structures of experience which they seek to present through the medium of newly-invented art-forms. Whatever else may be said of them these young writers are certainly the most vital and significant exponents of the contemporary novel.

The traditional novel has also had its successes. The most spectacular has been that of Roger Vailland who, in *La Loi* (N.R.F., Prix Goncourt), has written what is beyond peradventure the year's most 'brilliant' book. The dual theme of Vailland—in whose work libertinism and Communism have always been happily wedded—undergoes a felicitous change of setting in this portrait of an Italy haunted, cruel and picturesque—perhaps even a little too picturesque. In a style that stems straight from the Stendhalian novel and an idiom borrowed directly from the neo-realist Italian film, the aristocratic Roger Vailland amuses himself by offering us a succession of 'types', who are at bottom only puppets. It is none

too clear whether the 'law' which the characters invent for their own use and impose on one another, in their games of cards as in their daily lives, has its origin in an eternal human propensity for domination and sadism or in the injustices of a social system that is still permeated with feudalism. The most interesting character in the book is Don Cesare, an erudite old man who has lost all his illusions and who is struck by the existence of this bizarre and paralysing sentiment which Vailland calls 'disinterestedness': a reflection, perhaps, of the current political diminution of Vailland himself. To this almost too successful novel some might prefer one or other of Vailland's earlier works—*Drôle de Jeu*, for example, in which the erotic theme found more convincing expression in the broad movements of history, or even *325,000 Francs*, the first novel in which a really successful attempt has been made to apply the principles of 'Marxist psychology'.

In the same way, Françoise Sagan's third book, *Dans un mois, dans un an*, might justifiably be rated inferior to her first two, a fact which the critics, somewhat cruelly, have been at pains to emphasise. Nevertheless, this slight novel, which has already met with the same success as its two predecessors, resembles them closely. It contains the same faults: conventional nature of the psychological analysis, monotony of the situations, artificiality of the plot, pseudo-profundity of the moral conclusions. But it also has the same qualities: speed and fluency of the narrative, acuteness and sensitivity of the observation, and above all a sort of naïveté, I would even say of innocence, which makes these studies of *ennui* and emotional conflict almost poignant. *Dans uns mois, dans un an* differs, however, from Mlle Sagan's other novels in that it abandons the character of the privileged heroine in favour of an attempt to portray a larger number of characters involved in complex situations. But the attempt is unsuccessful. These characters are hardly distinguishable one from the other; they are all equally gripped and bemused by the Sagan *gris*, by that too-celebrated *tristesse* whose vogue—as Françoise Sagan herself recognises—is attributable far more to sociological than to literary causes.

I now single out for mention, somewhat at random, two excellent long novels, of which one, *L'Or de la République*, by Jean Duvignaud (N.R.F.), is a kind of adventure story, extremely well presented on an ample picaresque and historical canvas, across which a group of semi-burlesque heroes pass at full gallop against the background of some of the outstanding events of our time. The other, Alfred Kern's *Le Clown* (N.R.F.), is a personal history, related, by contrast, with deliberation and sympathy, and posing, through the eyes of a professionally bogus character, a clown, the psychological and moral problems of sincerity,

deception and falsehood. Also worth reading is the latest novel by Jean Cayrol, *La Gaffe* (Éditions du Seuil), the story of a man in search of subjective truth, recounted in that subdued, luminously poetic tone of homely, down-to-earth spirituality which is the whole secret of the charm of this great novelist. Amateurs of psychological novels of the traditional type will be able to read François Nourrissier's *Le Corps de Diane* (Julliard), a brilliant and penetrating, if slightly conventional, study of masculine jealousy, or Christine de Rivoire's *La Mandarine* (Plon), the bitter-sweet story of a young woman of robust appetites. . . . In conclusion, I would mention Henri Bosco's *Sabinus* (N.R.F.), and, most important of all, the latest novel of Jean Giono, *Le Bonheur Fou* (N.R.F.), in which the Stendhalian recital of the adventures of the young hero, Angelo, gradually comes to assume almost Tolstoyan proportions, broadens and expands until it virtually exceeds the terms of the traditional novel. Paradoxically, Giono's sheer narrative genius, his *penchant* for telling a story, to which he now gives free rein, suffices to produce a novel quite as limpid, sparkling, unpredictable and self-contained as those of our youthful apostles of neo-realism. . . .

In the realm of poetry there have been few revelations. Talk continues to revolve around a handful of young poets, already brought together last year between the covers of Jean Paris's *Anthologie de la Poésie Nouvelle* (Éditions du Rocher)—André du Bouchet, Édouard Glissant, Yves Bonnefoy. But the year's most important publications in this field have been the work of poets who are already mature and famous and whose contradictory influences have had the effect of polarising the entire French poetic scene. P. J. Jouve, true to his traditions, has published a slim volume of restrained and internally vibrant poems to which he has given the name *Mélodrame* (Mercure de France). René Char has produced a personal anthology entitled *Poèmes et Proses Choisis* (N.R.F.), and these difficult, fragmentary, solitary poems, all as it were turned in upon themselves and plunged in silence, are here for the first time arranged in accordance with a comprehensive design which has a transparent, luminous quality of its own. Finally, Saint John Perse has published, under the title *Amers* (N.R.F.), his latest poems, which for verbal splendour and richness of imagery defy comparison. Caught between the secretive introspection of Jouve, the laconic brilliance of Char and the intoxicating exuberance of Saint John Perse, half-hypnotised by a surrealism from whose bondage they would none the less wish to escape, our young poets are still engaged in their silent, lonely quest for the right road.

Finally, the essay. As is well known, this is one of the liveliest and most

flourishing of French literary *genres*. Foreigners, to be sure, often accuse us of being mere visionaries, of being given, at all events, to speculation rather than to creation. While the year just ended has not belied this reputation, it has confirmed the fact that in the best contemporary essayists the process of enlightenment remains intimately bound up with the growth of objective experience. Thus, Henri Michaux has described to us, in *L'Infini Turbulent* (Mercure de France), the second phase of his experiment with mescalin. Just as the first phase, described in *Misérable Miracle*, was disappointing, so this one appears to have succeeded. Through mescalin Michaux certainly seems to have discovered and conquered new interior worlds. There have, he declares, been moments when he has passed beyond the frontiers of mere psychic experience and come close to the discovery of an 'absolute' reality. But this absolute, he tells us, has a kind of diabolical obverse or counterpart. . . . However that may be, the mere description of these phantasms, of the new vistas of space and time revealed by the drug, is intoxicating in its power and its poetic *precision*. For his part, Georges Bataille, after a long silence, has published three books: two essays, *La Littérature et le Mal* (N.R.F.) and *L'Erotisme* (Éditions de Minuit), and a novel, *Le Bleu du Ciel* (J. J. Pauvert). All three books revolve around the same theme, namely, the mystery of a transcendent ontological truth, which, says Bataille, can be unravelled only by the deliberate practice of evil, of sin, by daily indulgence in erotic excess (eroticism is here associated with death, with the sacred and the taboo) and in anti-social conduct of a scandalous nature. *Le Bleu du Ciel* (written in 1935 and kept in manuscript until this year) is a story as beautiful as it is improbable, in which the obsessional frenzy aspires periodically to the plane of great poetry. In a more genial vein, Gaston Bachelard, author of five important books devoted to the study of 'the material imagination' in poetic creation, abandons the traditional elements, earth, air, fire and water, to devote himself this time exclusively to *space*. *L'Espace Poétique* (P.U.F.) is a free exploration, at once psycho-analytical and poetic, of all the privileged places that inspire our unconscious reveries (corners, caves, attics, shells, drawers, spirals, nests, circles, etc.). It would be impossible to imagine a more sympathetic, intelligent, or comprehensive introduction to the work of our younger poets.

The most brilliant, as well as the most promising, book of essays which the year has given us remains, however, the collection of brief sociological vignettes which Roland Barthes has assembled under the title of *Mythologies* (Éditions du Seuil). It consists of a series of descriptive pieces through which the France of today is

recaptured at its most familiar level (the Abbé Pierre, the Poujade Movement, the D.S.19, Minou Drouet, steak and chips, the Tour de France, the *Guides Bleus*, etc.). But these analyses are also in a sense psycho-analyses, inasmuch as they aim at unmasking their subject, at unveiling the latent myths on which the life of the French middle classes of today is more or less consciously based and identifying the private interests that are responsible for perpetuating those myths. The aim of *Mythologies* is provocative and critical; its virtue is cathartic, redemptive; its forceful satire has the effect of 'unmystifying' us. Above all, its style, which represents an admirable blend of piquancy, humour and classical severity, firmly establishes Roland Barthes as the most gifted of our younger essayists.

Finally, in what is more specifically the domain of literary criticism, mention must be made of a couple of erudite monographs concerned with two 'Satanic' writers: G. Lély's *La Vie du Marquis de Sade* (Vol. II) (N.R.F.) and Jean Delay's *La Jeunesse d'André Gide* (N.R.F., Prix de la Critique)—and also of a very fine edition of Valéry's *La Jeune Parque* which includes some unedited material never before published and illuminating commentaries by Octave Nadal (*Club du Meilleur Livre*).

I will end by mentioning a little book which will give special pleasure to readers in England: a charming *Anthologie du Nonsense* (J. J. Pauwert), colourfully illustrated and full of all manner of surprises, to which, as is fitting, English writers have contributed—in English—the lion's share.

ENCOUNTER

REBECCA WEST

LONG ago, one autumn night in the 'twenties, I went to a party in New York which was given by a film magnate named Mike. I had been to the opera and arrived late, at the same time as an elderly foreigner who was a stranger to me, whose name I did not hear when we were introduced, and whose features I cannot recall. I gathered nothing about him except that he was a person of consequence, and I gathered this only because my host finished the introduction by waving his clasped hands over his head, as if he were the second of a victorious boxer. The foreigner was obviously puzzled by this gesture and began to enquire what it meant, but either did not know enough English for even that, or was too tired, and perhaps too irritated to trouble. I would have tried to speak French with him, although I thought he was either Italian or Spanish, had I not just then been greeted by a man I had known for some years, who was a famous film star. He had brought with him one of the most beautiful girls I have ever seen, a tall and slender creature with bobbed golden hair and a long neck, who wore a dress of pale gold silk dripping with crystal beads and barely covering her exquisite knees, according to the fashion of those days, which is even now being revived. She looked like a yellow tulip with a very long stalk; and she had the further advantage of a singularly friendly smile, empty of the pride she might reasonably have felt.

It was a crowded party, and the four of us, the foreigner and the film star and his girl-friend and myself, were hemmed in together between a suit of armour and a large group of wooden life-sized figures representing the Marriage at Cana, a work in the tradition of Timann Riemenschneider. These figures the foreigner contemplated with a factitious absorption; he plainly did not want anyone to speak to him. The film star questioned me about London friends, and the

beautiful girl took a caviare sandwich offered by a footman, and told me with an air of shrewd discovery that she thought it a good thing to eat when one was hungry. Presently another footman brought us a salver laden with glasses of champagne. The beautiful girl said that she did not use hard liquor, nor coffee neither, because she had been raised as a Seventh Day Adventist. But the rest of us each took a glass. The film star was the first to taste his drink, and then he leaned towards me and said tensely, 'Your horse is pregnant'.

I was astonished. I had no horse and I could not see how, even if I had had one, the film star would have become aware of its state of health. I repeated quite loudly, wanting to get the thing clear, 'My horse is pregnant?'. I was again astonished. A look of horror passed over the film star's face, and he whispered, 'For crying out loud, Mike is just behind you'. But why, if a horse, mine or anyone else's, was pregnant, should it be kept from Mike? In fact the phrase was one current in those days when Prohibition was still in force, and it was useful to have a few words that could be muttered under one's breath at any party where the drinks seemed dangerous. It is a tag-line from an unpleasing story about an analytical chemist who had been sent some bootlegger Bourbon. There can rarely have been a more appropriate occasion for using it than that party. I can remember the taste of that champagne now. It was like a mixture of golden syrup and vinegar, and it had a curious greasy quality, as if some mayonnaise had been stirred into it; its fizziness seemed the result of its own indigestion. The film star and I went on holding our glasses but drank no more. To our surprise the foreigner emptied his glass and had another one, which seemed an odd action for a man whose home was almost certainly in some wine-drinking country. As he drank he kept his eyes fixed, in the melancholy abstraction which is almost all I can remember of him, on the group representing the Marriage at Cana, perhaps in hope.

Our group broke up and we found other friends, but when I found myself in the hall, ready to go home, I met the film star and his girl-friend again. He offered to drive me to my hotel, and we three went out into a street that was as brilliant as the house we had just left, though New York was ill lit in those days. There was a huge moon rolling across the sky, and the pavement was snow-white, and the shadows of the houses were soot-black. The Japanese chauffeur helped us in and we were just about to start when the host came out of the house with the elderly foreigner and asked the film star if he would mind dropping him at his hotel on Park Avenue. Again Mike's gesture indicated that the foreigner was a

person of consequence; after he had helped him into the car he pointed at him and then clapped his hands and nodded and beamed, as if he were applauding in a theatre or a concert hall. After we drove off he remained on the sidewalk, clapping away. The foreigner sank low in his seat between the beautiful girl and myself, as if fleeing from any further view of his host, and uttered a low moan of exasperation. He yawned several times and moved uneasily, stammered a few words of thanks for our kindness in taking him home, then yawned again.

It was quite apparent that he was suffering from indigestion, and no wonder, since he had had two glasses of that champagne. The beautiful girl, who was much taller than he was, leaned over him in sudden tenderness and said, 'Alka-seltzer'. He looked puzzled and she repeated it sweetly, helpfully, 'Alka-seltzer'. His features twitched irritably, as if more were being asked of him than he could give, and closed his eyes. I suppose that if one did not know the meaning of the word 'Alka-seltzer', and a beautiful girl murmured it to one, bending her beauty towards one, one might get a wrong impression. But we thought no more about him, because just then the car went into Central Park, which was flooded with moonlight, a dazzling silver enclosure in the middle of the black and white town. 'Drive slowly', said the film star, and when we got to the lake the beautiful girl said, 'Oh, can't we stop a mite?' and we did.

'I would like to get out and walk for a minute', I said, and the others sighed ecstatically and agreed. The foreigner was now really asleep and had tilted towards me, for no other reason, I am sure, than that it was not I who had murmured the disturbing word 'Alka-seltzer' to him. We propped him up and got out of the car, and were at once lapped in a pure loveliness not often seen except among snowfields or in the air above the clouds. The lake in Central Park is curiously unspoiled. It looks very much as it must have done when the Indians owned Manhattan Island, with trees and bushes growing from rocks and boulders as if this were a clearing in a forest and not in a city. It is always agreeable, and at this moment it was uplifting, it held the essence of the untarnished night. We could look round us at the tall buildings on the edges of the park, where the darkness was diluted by the flush which hangs above the city lights; but here we enjoyed night in its full intensity. Above, the moon and the stars shone against a sky that was nearly black. Round the lake the Fenimore Cooper pattern of rocks and trees was strongly drawn in moonlight and shadow, and the water itself was the brightest silver I have ever seen, giving back to the moon brighter than it got.

I said, 'How lovely it would be to be on the lake in a boat'. Rarely have I ever wanted to do anything more than I wanted to do that. It seemed as if this little basin of water had a special connection with the moon, was at the end of a miraculous ladder of light.

The film star pointed out that there was a boathouse at the end of the lake and that probably there would be boats inside. I said that there were, I sometimes rowed there in the mornings, but that it would be locked. To this he answered that his Japanese boy could open anything in the world. (On reflection this seems to me one of the oddest parts of this story. Would one like to employ a chauffeur who had acquired the art of opening anything in the world?) I pointed out that even if the Japanese boy got into the boathouse a policeman or park-keeper was bound to appear and to disapprove. The film star explained that there were no policemen or park-keepers in Central Park at night, that was why people got held up and robbed all the time. He would not be standing there with us two girls if the Japanese boy had not two guns with him, one down by the wheel, one up in a holster slung from the roof of the car, in case he was made to put up his hands. At that the beautiful girl sighed, 'You're wunnerful', and the thing was as good as done. Nor did I really try to raise a dissuading voice. I wanted so much to be on that silver core of this black and white world. And indeed I thought it possible that the film star was right and Central Park was left unguarded at night. It is a place where strange things happen. Once some resourceful people, learning that the drug marijuana can be raised from a particular kind of birdseed, planted some in one of the Central Park flower-beds, nursed it to maturity and harvested the crop at great profit, and repeated the feat for several seasons before they were detected.

Very soon a dark shape nosed out of the boathouse and very soon we were all out on the silver water, and it was as good as I had thought it would be. We all stared up at the moon. The film star said that he wished he could get a script that had this in it. He flung out his arm in a gesture of artistic frustration. The beautiful girl said that she wished she could be a hospital nurse; she was, it appeared, in some form of musical show that had succeeded the Ziegfeld Follies. Then we all fell silent. The beautiful girl and I threw off our cloaks, though it was not too warm, as if moon-bathing had the same sort of virtue as sun-bathing. I felt a milder, but still strong, form of the pleasure that is to be got by swimming in a cold sea. But there was more to the moment than a sense of physical well-being. Peace poured down on us; in the pure light life was undefiled. I was intensely

happy for about five minutes, and then there came a roar from the bank. For of course there were policemen in Central Park at night, and we must have been very visible in that boat. Like the beautiful girl, I was wearing a dress dripping with crystal beads, and we must have shone in the moonlight like two chandeliers.

There were two policemen, one Irish and one Jewish; and one of them had a motorcycle. Both would, I think, have taken the matter calmly had it not been for errors that two of my companions were forced by their temperaments to make. The Irish policeman expressed the opinion as, at his urgent behest we got out of the boat, that we must all be well liquored up to be doing a fool thing like this; and that is what all his experience had led him to believe. Only people who were drunk would want to break into a boathouse in order to drift about on a lake, in not very warm weather, at something like two in the morning, and he and his colleague would have pardoned us if we had indeed been drunk, and had therefore fitted into the pattern of the universe as they recognised it. But the beautiful girl was compelled by her amiability and candour, which made her anxious to give correct information to those likely to be interested in it, to state, as she had done when offered champagne at the party, that she did not use hard liquor, nor coffee neither, on account of having been raised a Seventh Day Adventist.

The policemen felt she was laughing at them, and one said sourly that she didn't look no Seventh Day Adventist to him. She was also drawing attention to our absurd, our inconsistent sobriety. Coldly they walked us down to the boathouse, and there the second error was committed. It would have been useless for the Japanese chauffeur to have denied that he had picked the padlock on the door with the steel wire he was holding in his hand, but his desire to please made him bow and smile and claim that he had done no damage to the lock—'Easy job', he said, several times, 'for me, *very* easy job'—and furthermore that he would be able to leave it exactly as he had found it. There it was. We were stone cold sober, and we were accompanied by what appeared to be an experienced burglar. They told us to follow the motorcycle to the nearest police-station.

When we returned to the car I was relieved to find that the foreigner was still asleep, but it seemed to me that it might be a shock to him if he suddenly woke up and found that he was being conveyed to a police-station. When I said this to my companions they did not quite understand what I meant. The beautiful

girl said that if he was travelling in the United States it would be interesting (she left out the middle 't') for him to see how the police worked. The film star said that he would be all right, do him good, and there wasn't going to be any trouble, this wasn't taxes or a morals charge, and he knew the Mayor of New York and the Police Commissioner. We would just go to the station to oblige these two boys and get it over. 'I've been wunnering why you didn't tell them who you are', said the beautiful girl. 'I think they're ignorant', said the film star. 'Better save it up for who's in charge of the station.' They were unapprehensive and were getting sleepy. The beautiful girl yawned and stretched, and curled up in her corner; the film star's chin sank to his shirt-front, the foreigner's head bobbed against my shoulder. I was alone with my fears, which were not acute, I had really so much enjoyed my five minutes in the boat.

The film star had been right about the advisability of saving it up for the man in charge of the station. He was a fat and laughing know-all who looked up as the film star came in, and called him by his name. The film star produced a cigar case and handed it round while he explained that it was all his own fault, he had run into trouble with these two good conscientious boys in Central Park, and he had gladly come along to straighten things out. Beside him the beautiful girl stood in her glittering dress, tall and leggy like a crane, rubbing her eyes under the fierce light of the electric light bulbs under their enamel shades. They were undaunted but I was frightened, as all Europeans are, by the sordid interior decoration favoured by the law when it settles down to the disagreeable side of its work, by those harsh lights, the chocolate paint that went half-way up the walls, the smell of the disinfectant floorwash. The film star went on to recount how these two kids had taken a fancy to go on to the lake, and he had wanted to give them what they wanted; and he pretended to recall that he had broken into that same boathouse when he was a boy on Eleventh Street, and he hoped he would never forget those days, and so he had got his Japanese boy to do what he had done, just for the hell of it. I could not have justly been called a kid at that time, I was about thirty, but I did not avert my face from the light, for I rather suspected that the film star was representing himself as a nice guy who treated a woman as if she were younger than she was, and I was anxious that whatever game he was playing should succeed.

It succeeded. The Irish and the Jewish policemen had realised they were beaten from the moment the sergeant had greeted the film star with such a cordial waggle of all his chins, and they went off with their cigars, glad to get

that much out of the affair. But we had to buy ourselves out of the station with talk. The sergeant was the kind of man who reads the gossip columns. He knew all about the film star's films and the affairs of the studio which employed him; he knew the principals and the management of the beautiful girl's show; he knew the owner and the editor of the newspaper for which I was working. We had to tell him things about all these people, but he could never wait till any of us finished a story, he had to get on to another name; we found ourselves engaged on a task as dreary as saying 'Yes' to names read out of the telephone directory. But he meant no harm, and in time we were showed a courtesy not likely to be enjoyed by any person taken to a London police-station in the middle of the night on the charge of, say, breaking into the bathing pavilion on the Serpentine.

We were all of us, including the Japanese chauffeur, taken away and given a meal of ham and eggs and coffee and doughnuts, shared by the sergeant and two other policemen. I think this meal must have been served not in the police-station but in a small restaurant next door, for I remember a lot of holy pictures on the wall and some flowers in a holder shaped like a gnome in front of a plaster statue of the Madonna. The beautiful girl ate heartily, but as the coffee pot went round she told us again that she was a Seventh Day Adventist, and never used it; and one of the policemen said that it was a very good religion, they looked after their own people, and they had fine hospitals. At this she said that she wanted to be a hospital nurse, and all the policemen smiled indulgently, and the sergeant said kindly that she had better stay in the merry-merry, which is an old slang word for the chorus of a musical show, she would give us all such pleasure there. But the film star had frowned impatiently at the remark and presently said that we must be going.

Out in the car the foreigner was still asleep. As we started off again I said nervously, 'I hope he is just asleep, I hope he's not ill'. The film star said sleepily, 'You're nervous, he's fine'. The beautiful girl, with a curiously smooth and expert gesture, slid her fingers round the foreigner's wrist and took his pulse, and echoed, as sleepily, 'He's fine'. We left her at a little hotel near Grand Central Station and as she went in at the door she turned and gave us a sweet and empty smile. Then we turned down Park Avenue to drop the foreigner, and we wakened him. He came to himself with a start, just as we passed a huge illuminated clock-face. He uttered an exclamation and looked at his wrist-watch, raised his eyebrows, seemed to be calculating and then looked at his watch again. He gave a solemn shake of the head and I felt he was saying to himself, 'It is no use at all

trying to understand what happens on this side of the Atlantic, none at all'.

I thought it probable that he understood French, but I did not feel equal to explaining just why such a long time had elapsed since we left the party. When he got out of the car he thanked us in a little speech, correctly pronounced and phrased, and I wondered again if after all he spoke English, but I think it was something he had learned by rote. He could not get into his hotel at once. Just before him someone had dashed in at such a pace that the revolving door was still spinning; and he stood and waited for it to slow down, his shoulders drooping with fatigue and impatience, the very image of a tired man far from home. He was thinking that where he came from revolving doors behaved more reasonably. The car turned towards my hotel, and the film star said, 'It's been a grand evening. It was fun in the park. That's a sweet kid. But I wish she wouldn't plug that line about wanting to be a hospital nurse. It's corny'.

But the beautiful girl was to surprise us all. I had misread the vacancy of her smile; it was empty only of guile, not of intelligence. She left the merry-merry and went into a Seventh Day Adventist hospital to train as a nurse; but somehow was deflected into laboratory work and became a physiologist. She worked in a research team that achieved some serious results and married a colleague and remained his assistant. But that was a revelation which was made only over the decades. The evening held a more immediate surprise for me. Two days later I met the host who had given the party and he said to me, 'Isn't Pirandello a great guy?'. I answered, 'How should I know? I never met him'. And Mike said, 'Well, you took him home from my party'.

VI: NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

A. ALVAREZ: English poet and critic. Recently gave the Christian Gauss Seminars in Criticism at Princeton University. His study of modern English and American poetry, *The Shaping Spirit*, was published this year by Chatto & Windus, London, and Scribner, New York.

HARVEY BREIT: American poet, critic and playwright; well known for his work in the *New York Times Book Review*. His book, *The Writer Observed*, was published by World Publishing Company, New York (1956), and Alvin Redman, London (1957).

JOSEPHINE BROCKLESBY: Student at Nottingham University. Only recently begun to publish poems.

ROBERT CONQUEST: English poet and critic. Mr Conquest holds a research fellowship at the London School of Economics and Social Sciences. Editor of the anthology *New Lines* (Macmillan, 1956).

K. W. GRANSDEN: Critic and regular contributor to *The Listener*, and other English magazines.

MICHAEL HAMBURGER: Lecturer in German at Reading University. Poet and critic. His most recent volumes, *Reason and Energy* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957) and *The Dual Site* (1958).

W. J. HARVEY: Lecturer in English Literature, University College of North Staffordshire. Co-editor of the Oxford quarterly, *Essays in Criticism*.

FRANK KERMODE: Professor of English Literature, Manchester University. His book, *Romantic Image*, was published by Routledge & Kegan Paul.

CAROLYN KIZER: Poet and critic, widely published in American magazines. Miss Kizer has held graduate fellowships at the Universities of Columbia and Washington.

EDWARD LUCIE-SMITH: Young English poet whose work has been published in magazines and read on the B.B.C.

MARSHALL MCLUHAN: Professor of English at St. Michael's College in the University of Toronto. Chairman of graduate study of Culture and Communication. Co-editor of *Explorations* magazine.

GABRIEL PEARSON: Poet and critic. Lecturer in English Literature, University College of North Staffordshire.

MARIO PRAZ: Probably the most influential continental critic of English Literature, whose books, notably *The Romantic Agony* (Oxford, 1933) and *The Hero in Decline in Victorian Fiction* (1956), are recognised critical landmarks.

JEAN-PIERRE RICHARD: Until recently Professor of French Literature at the Institut Français, London. Is about to take up a University appointment in Madrid.

ALAIN ROBBE-GRILLET: One of the outstanding group of French writers associated with *Les Editions de Minuit*, Paris. Translations of his novels, *Le Voyeur* and *La Jalousie*, are to be published shortly by John Calder in London, and Grove Press, New York.

R. A. SIMPSON: Australian poet whose work has appeared in Australian magazines and anthologies.

JOHN UNTERECKER: American critic. Lecturer in English at Columbia University. His first book, *A Reader's Guide to W. B. Yeats*, will be published shortly by Noonday Press, New York.

UGO VARNAI: A regular contributor to *Comunita*, the Milan monthly.

H. M. WAIDSON: Lecturer in German, Hull University. An authority on contemporary German Literature, his publications include criticism and translations. His most recent volumes are *German Short Stories 1945-1955* (Cambridge, 1957) and a translation of Gotthelf's *The Black Spider* (Calder, 1958).

REBECCA WEST: Her recent book *The Court and the Castle*—literary studies seen in the context of their times and literary, political and cultural events—was published simultaneously in London and New York, by Macmillan and Yale.

ANDREW WRIGHT: American scholar and critic. The author of *Jane Austen's Novels: A Study in Structure* (Chatto & Windus, 1954) and a critical introduction to Joyce Cary's work to be published late in 1958.

VII: SELECTED BOOKS OF THE YEAR

This list aims to do no more than record some of the more interesting books published between July 1957 and July 1958. Even this limited task is attempted, in this first year of the Annual's existence, only for British and American books. In the case of books published in both countries we have tried to indicate precedences. In future years it is hoped that similar lists can be provided for other countries.

FROM GREAT BRITAIN

Fiction

BATES, H. E.: *The Darling Buds of May.* Michael Joseph (Boston: Atlantic Monthly)

BIRLEY, JULIA: *Children on the Shore.* Hamish Hamilton

BLOOMFIELD, ANTHONY: *The Delinquents.* Hogarth

CALLOW, PHILIP: *Common People.* Heinemann

COMPTON-BURNETT, I.: *A Father and his Fate.* Gollancz (New York: Messner)

COOPER, WILLIAM: *Young People.* Macmillan

COPE, JACK: *The Golden Oriole.* Heinemann

DINESEN, ISAK: *Last Tales.* Putman (New York: Viking)

DUDINTSEV, VLADIMIR: *Not By Bread Alone* (trans. Edith Bone). Hutchinson (New York: Dutton)

DUGGAN, ALFRED: *Three's Company.* Faber & Faber

DUNDY, ELAINE: *The Dud Avocado.* Gollancz (New York: Dutton)

DURRELL, LAWRENCE: *Balthazar.* Faber & Faber (New York: Dutton)

GLANVILLE, BRIAN: *The Bankrupts.* Secker & Warburg (New York: Doubleday)

GORDIMER, NADINE: *A World of Strangers.* Gollancz (New York: Simon & Schuster)

GRAHAM, WINSTON: *Greek Fire.* Hodder & Stoughton (New York: Doubleday)

GREEN, PETER: *The Sword of Pleasure.* John Murray (World Publishing)

HASTINGS, MICHAEL: *The Game.* W. H. Allen (New York: McGraw-Hill)

HERBERT, A. P.: *Made for Man.* Methuen (New York: Doubleday)

HYAMS, EDWARD: *Taking it Easy.* Longmans

KAVAN, ANNA: *A Bright Green Field.* Peter Owen

KING, FRANCIS: *The Man on the Rock.* Longmans (New York: Pantheon)

LEGRAND, NADIA: *The Rainbow has Seven Colours.* Macmillan (New York: St. Martin's)

LESSING, DORIS: *The Habit of Loving.* MacGibbon & Kee (New York: Crowell)

MONTAGU, ELIZABETH: *This Side of Truth.* Heinemann (New York: Coward-McCann)

MOORE, BRIAN: *The Feast of Lupercal.* Deutsch (Boston: Atlantic Monthly)

NEWBY, P. H.: *Ten Miles from Anywhere: short stories.* Cape

O'FAOLAIN, SEAN: *Stories.* Rupert Hart-Davis

PHELPS, GILBERT: *The Centenarians.* Heinemann

PIPER, ANNE: *Spinsters Under the Skin.* Heinemann

POWELL, ANTHONY: *At Lady Molly's.* Heinemann (Boston: Little, Brown)

REID, V. S.: *The Leopard.* Heinemann (New York: Viking)

SELVON, SAMUEL: *Ways of Sunlight.* MacGibbon & Kee (New York: St. Martin's)

SHAW, G. B.: *An Unfinished Novel* (ed. S. Weintraub). Constable (New York: Dodd, Mead)

SNOW, C. P.: *The Conscience of the Rich.* Macmillan (New York: Scribner)

SOUTHERN, TERRY: *Flash and Filigree.* Deutsch (Coward-McCann)

SPENDER, STEPHEN: *Engaged in Writing & The Fool and the Princess.* Hamish Hamilton (New York: Praeger)

SYMONDS, JOHN: *A Girl Among Poets.* Chapman & Hall

WAIN, JOHN: *The Contenders.* Macmillan (New York: St. Martin's)

WARNER, REX: *The Young Caesar.* Collins (Boston: Atlantic Monthly)

WHITE, PATRICK: *Voss.* Eyre & Spottiswoode (New York: Viking)

WHITE, T. H.: *The Once and Future King.* Collins (New York: Putnam)

WILSON, ANGUS: *A Bit Off the Map: short stories.* Secker & Warburg (New York: Viking)

Non-Fiction

ALVAREZ, A.: *The Shaping Spirit.* Chatto & Windus (New York: Scribner)

AUDEN, W. H.: *Sydney Smith: A Study.* Faber & Faber (New York: Farrar, Straus)

BAINES, FRANK: *Look Towards the Sea.* Eyre & Spottiswoode (New York: Dutton)

BRAIN, RUSSELL: *Tea with Walter de la Mare.* Faber & Faber

BRAND, C. P.: *Italy and the English Romantics.* Cambridge

BROME, VINCENT: *Six Studies in Quarrelling.* Cresset

CARY, JOYCE: *Art and Reality: Clark Lectures.* Cambridge (New York: Harper)

CECIL, DAVID: *The Fine Art of Reading.* Constable (New York: Bobbs-Merrill)

CHURCHILL, R. C.: *Shakespeare and his Betters.* Reinhardt

CRANSTON, MAURICE: *John Locke.* Longmans (New York: Macmillan)

DAVIDSON, MAURICE: *Memoirs of a Golden Age.* Blackwells

DURRELL, LAWRENCE: *Bitter Lemons.* Faber & Faber (New York: Dutton)

EDEL, LEON, AND G. N. RAY: *Henry James and H. G. Wells.* Rupert Hart-Davis (New York University Press)

ELIOT, T. S.: *On Poetry and Poets.* Faber & Faber

ENRIGHT, D. J.: *The Apothecary's Shop.* Secker & Warburg

FLETCHER, PETER: *The Long Sunday.* Faber & Faber

GABERBOCCHUS' BLACK SERIES NOS. 1-12: *The First Dozen.* Gaberbocchus

GRAVES, ROBERT: *Goodbye to All That* (revised edition). Cassell (New York: Doubleday)

GREEN, V. H. H.: *Oxford Common Room.* Edward Arnold

JOHNSON, PAMELA HANSFORD: *Six Proust Reconstructions.* Macmillan (Chicago University Press)

JONES, ERNEST: *Sigmund Freud: Life and Work* (Vol. III). Hogarth

LEHMANN, JOHN (editor): *Coming to London.* Phoenix House

MANN, ERIKA: *The Last Year.* Secker & Warburg (New York: Farrar, Straus)

MANN, THOMAS: *Last Essays.* Secker & Warburg (New York: Knopf)

MARCHAND, LESLIE A.: *Byron* (3 Vols.). John Murray (New York: Knopf)

MEYERSTEIN, E. H. W.: *Of My Early Life.* Spearman

NICOLSON, HAROLD: *Journey to Java.* Constable

O'CONNOR, PHILIP: *Memoirs of a Public Baby.* Faber & Faber

PLOMER, WILLIAM: *At Home.* Cape (New York: Noonday)

PRIESTLEY, J. B.: *Thoughts in the Wilderness.* Heinemann (New York: Harper)

RAYMOND, JOHN: *England's On the Anvil.* Collins

READ, HERBERT: *The Tenth Muse.* Routledge & Kegan Paul (New York: Horizon)

REES, RICHARD: *Brave Men: A Study of D. H. Lawrence and Simone Weil.* Gollancz

REEVES, JAMES: *The Idiom of the People.* Heinemann (New York: Macmillan)

ROBERTS, S. C.: *Dr. Johnson and Others.* Cambridge

RUSKIN, JOHN: *Diaries. Vol. II 1848-1873* (ed. Joan Evans and John Howard Whitehouse). Clarendon, Oxford

SANSOM, WILLIAM: *The Icicle and the Sun.* Hogarth

SPEERS, JOHN: *Medieval English Poetry.* Faber & Faber (New York: Macmillan)
SPILKA, MARK: *The Love Ethic of D. H. Lawrence.* Dobson (Indiana)
SUTHERLAND, JAMES: *English Satire.* Cambridge
THODY, PHILIP: *Albert Camus.* Hamish Hamilton (New York: Macmillan)
THOMAS, DYLAN: *Letters to Vernon Watkins* (ed. Vernon Watkins). Faber & Faber (New York: New Directions)
TRAVERSY, D. A.: *Shakespeare from Richard II to Henry V.* Hollis & Carter (Stanford University Press)
WAIN, JOHN: *Preliminary Essays.* Macmillan (New York: St. Martin's)
WATSON, GEORGE L.: *A. E. Houseman: A Divided Life.* Rupert Hart-Davis
WEST, REBECCA: *The Court and the Castle.* Macmillan (Yale)
WITTIG, KURT: *The Scottish Tradition in Literature.* Oliver & Boyd
WOOLF, VIRGINIA: *Granite and the Rainbow.* Hogarth (New York: Harcourt Brace)

Poetry and Plays

ABSE, DANNIE: *Tenants of the House.* Hutchinson
BARKER, GEORGE: *Collected Poems 1930-1955.* Faber & Faber (New York: Criterion)
BEECHAM, AUDREY: *The Coast of Barbary.* Hamish Hamilton
BETJEMAN, JOHN, AND GEOFFREY TAYLOR (editors): *English Love Poems.* Faber & Faber
BLAKE, WILLIAM: *Complete Writings* (ed. Geoffrey Keynes) Nonesuch
CAMPBELL, ROY: *Collected Poems, Vol. II.* Bodley Head (Chicago: Henry Regnery)
DAVIE, DONALD: *A Winter Talent.* Routledge & Kegan Paul
DUNBAR, WILLIAM: *Poems* (ed. James Kinsley). Clarendon, Oxford
FULLER, ROY: *Brutus's Orchard.* Deutsch (New York: Macmillan)
GARDNER, HELEN: *The Metaphysical Poets.* Penguin
GILES, BRIAN: *A Dead Sparrow.* Abelard-Schuman
GRANT, JAMES RUSSELL: *Hyphens.* Putnam
GUINNESS: *Book of Poetry, 1956-7* Putnam
HAMBURGER, MICHAEL: *The Dual Site.* Routledge & Kegan Paul
HASSELL, CHRISTOPHER: *The Red Leaf.* Oxford
HEATH-STUBBS, JOHN: *The Triumph of the Muse.* Oxford
HUGHES, TED: *The Hawk in the Rain.* Faber & Faber (New York: Harper)
KINSELLA, THOMAS: *Another September.* Dolmen, Dublin
MORAES, DOM: *A Beginning.* Parton

PINTER AND RODWAY (editors): *The Common Muse.* Chatto & Windus
REEVES, JAMES: *The Talking Skull.* Heinemann (New York: Macmillan)
ROETHKE, THEODORE: *Words for the Wind.* Secker & Warburg
SILKIN, JON: *The Two Freedoms.* Chatto & Windus (New York: Macmillan)
SITWELL, EDITH: *Collected Poems.* Macmillan (New York: Vanguard)
SMITH, JOHN: *Excursus in Autumn.* Hutchinson
SMITH, STEVIE: *Not Waving But Drowning.* Deutsch
TILLER, TERENCE: *Reading a Medal.* Hogarth
VAUGHAN, HENRY: *Works* (editor: L. C. Martin). Clarendon, Oxford

BARNES, DJUNA: *The Antiphon.* Faber & Faber (New York: Farrar, Straus)
BECKETT, SAMUEL: *All That Fall.* Faber & Faber (New York: Grove)
BECKETT, SAMUEL: *Endgame.* Faber & Faber (New York: Grove)
BOLT, ROBERT: *Flowering Cherry.* Heinemann
DENNIS, NIGEL: *Two Plays and a Preface.* Weidenfeld & Nicolson (New York: Vanguard)
GOLDING, WILLIAM: *The Brass Butterfly.* Faber & Faber
GREENE, GRAHAM: *The Potting Shed.* Heinemann
WHITING, JOHN: *Three Plays.* Heinemann

FROM AMERICA

Fiction

AGEE, JAMES: *A Death in the Family.* McDowell, Obolensky (London: Gollancz)
BAKER, CARLOS: *A Friend in Power.* Scribner
BALDWIN, JAMES: *Giovanni's Room.* Dial (London: Michael Joseph)
BARR, STRINGFELLOW: *Purely Academic.* Simon & Schuster
BRODKEY, HAROLD: *First Love and Other Sorrows.* Dial (London: Hamish Hamilton)
BUECHNER, FREDERICK: *The Return of Ansel Gibbs.* Knopf (London: Chatto & Windus)
CHEEVER, JOHN: *The Wapshot Chronicle.* Harper (London: Gollancz)
CREAL, MARGARET: *A Lesson in Love.* Simon & Schuster
DE VRIES, PETER: *The Mackerel Plaza.* Little, Brown (London: Gollancz)
DOHRMAN, RICHARD: *The Cross of Baron Samedi.* Houghton Mifflin
ELLIOTT, GEORGE P.: *Parktilden Village.* Beacon
GRAU, SHIRLEY ANN: *The Hard Blue Sky.* Knopf
HAYES, ALFRED: *My Face for the World to See.* Harper (London: Gollancz)

HUMPHREY, WILLIAM: *Home from the Hill.* Knopf

JACKSON, SHIRLEY: *The Sun Dial.* Farrar, Straus (London: Michael Joseph)

KARP, DAVID: *Leave Me Alone.* Knopf (London: Gollancz)

KEROUAC, JACK: *The Subterraneans.* Grove (London: Deutsch)

LEBHERZ, RICHARD: *Altars of the Heart.* Grove

MALAMUD, BERNARD: *The Magic Barrel: short stories.* Farrar, Straus

MERRILL, JAMES: *The Seraglio.* Knopf (London: Chatto & Windus)

MORRIS, WRIGHT: *Love Among the Cannibals.* Harcourt (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson)

MOTLEY, WILLARD: *Let No Man Write My Epitaph.* Random House

NABOKOV, VLADIMIR: *Nabokov's Dozen: short stories.* Doubleday

NEMEROV, HOWARD: *The Homecoming Game.* Simon & Schuster

PERELMAN, S. J.: *Road to Miltown.* Simon & Schuster (as *Bite on the Bullet.* London: Heinemann)

PURDY, JAMES: *Color of Darkness: stories and a novella.* New Directions (London: Gollancz)

SANDBURG, HELGA: *The Wheel of Earth.* McDowell, Obolensky

SARTON, MAY: *The Birth of a Grandfather.* Rinehart (London: Gollancz)

WAGONER, DAVID: *Rock.* Viking

Non-Fiction

AUDEN, W. H.: *Making, Knowing and Judging.* Oxford

BEACH, JOSEPH WARREN: *The Making of the Auden Canon.* Minnesota

BRADBURY, JOHN M.: *The Fugitives: A Critical Account.* University of North Carolina

COWLEY, MALCOLM (editor): *Writers at Work: The 'Paris Review' Interviews.* Viking (London: Secker & Warburg)

DAHLBERG, EDWARD: *The Sorrows of Priapus.* New Directions

DICKINSON, EMILY: *Letters* (editors: Johnson & Ward), 3 Vols. Harvard (Oxford)

EDWARDS, J., AND OTHERS: *Annotated Index to the Cantos of Ezra Pound.* University of California (Cambridge)

FRYE, NORTHRUP: *Anatomy of Criticism.* Princeton (Oxford)

GLASGOW, ELLEN: *Letters* (editor: Blair Rouse). Harcourt

HICKS, GRANVILLE (editor): *The Living Novel.* Macmillan

HIGHET, GILBERT: *Poets in a Landscape.* Knopf

JOYCE, STANISLAUS: *My Brother's Keeper.* Viking (London: Faber & Faber)

KENNER, HUGH: *Gnomon: Essays on Contemporary Literature.* McDowell, Obolensky

LATTIMORE, RICHMOND: *The Poetry of Greek Tragedy.* Johns Hopkins
LERNER, MAX: *America as a Civilization.* Simon & Schuster
LEVIN, HARRY: *The Power of Blackness: Hawthorne, Poe, Melville.* Knopf
LISCA, PETER: *The Wide World of John Steinbeck.* Rutgers
MACDONALD, DWIGHT: *Memoirs of a Revolutionist.* Farrar, Straus
MCCARTHY, MARY: *Memoirs of a Catholic Girlhood.* Harcourt (London: Heinemann)
MARITAIN, JACQUES: *Reflections on America.* Scribner
MINER, EARL: *The Japanese Tradition in British and American Literature.* Princeton
MORRIS, WRIGHT: *The Territory Ahead.* Harcourt
NEHLS, EDWARD: *D. H. Lawrence: A Composite Biography.* Wisconsin
OLSEN, CHARLES: *Call Me Ishmael: A Study of Melville.* Grove (London: John Calder)
RAHV, PHILIP: *Literature in America.* Meridian
REDDING, SAUNDERS: *The Lonesome Road.* Doubleday
SHANLEY, JAMES LYNDON: *The Making of Walden.* Chicago
TATE, ALLEN: *The Man of Letters in the Modern World: Selected Essays 1928-1955.* Noonday (London: Thames & Hudson)
WARREN, ROBERT PENN: *Selected Essays.* Random House
WEST, ANTHONY: *Principles and Persuasions.* Harcourt (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode)
WILLIAMS, WILLIAM CARLOS: *Selected Letters* (ed. Thirlwall). McDowell, Obolensky
WILLIAMS, WILLIAM CARLOS: *I Wanted to Write a Poem* (ed. Edith Heal). Beacon
WILSON, EDMUND: *The American Earthquake: A Documentary of the 20's and 30's.* Doubleday-Anchor (London: W. H. Allen)

Poetry and Plays

BARNARD, MARY: *Sappho: A New Translation.* California
H.D.: *Selected Poems.* Grove (London: Deutsch)
KUNITZ, STANLEY: *Selected Poems, 1928-1958.* Little, Brown
LATTIMORE, RICHMOND: *Poems.* University of Michigan
MEREDITH, WILLIAM: *The Open Sea.* Knopf
NEMEROV, HOWARD: *Mirrors & Windows.* Chicago
PATCHEN, KENNETH: *Selected Poems.* New Directions
SARTON, MAY: *In Time Like Air.* Rinehart
SCOTT, WINFIELD TOWNLEY: *The Dark Sister.* New York University

SHAPIRO, KARL: *Poems of a Jew.* Random House
STEVENS, WALLACE: *Opus Posthumous* (ed. Samuel French Morse). Knopf
SWENSON, MAY: *Cage of Spines.* Rinehart
WAGONER, DAVID: *A Place to Stand.* Indiana
WARREN, ROBERT PENN: *Promises.* Random House
WILLIAMS, WILLIAM CARLOS: *Paterson. V.* New Directions

FRINGS, KETTI: *Look Homeward, Angel.* Scribner
MACLEISH, ARCHIBALD: *J.B.: A Play in Verse.* Houghton Mifflin
MCCULLERS, CARSON: *The Square Root of Wonderful.* Houghton Mifflin
O'NEILL, EUGENE: *A Touch of the Poet.* Yale
WILLIAMS, TENNESSEE: *Suddenly Last Summer.* New Directions

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