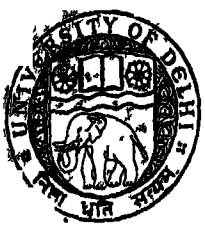

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SCRUTINY

A Quarterly Review

Edited by

D. W. HARDING L. C. KNIGHTS
F. R. LEAVIS DENYS THOMPSON

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THE MODERN UNIVERSITIES

POSTSCRIPT

THE article that appeared under this head in the last number of *Scrutiny* was mainly concerned with the obstacles in the way of any satisfactory programme of education at the modern universities. As an attempt to get the main problems recognized and to secure a basis for discussion it was necessarily critical in the common limited sense. Constructive criticism, it was pointed out, could only be the result of co-operation, and correspondence was invited to that end.

Such correspondence as there has been so far confirms the case that was presented: that at most of the modern universities it is the machinery of education which determines the kind of education given; that the essential questions—what are we educating for? what constitutes the function of a university to-day? —are lost sight of in the carrying out of a routine; that lectures (to come to specific symptoms) are governed by examination requirements, and that the number of lectures and the number of examinations are alike excessive. It may fairly be regarded as established that no satisfactory means have yet been found of overcoming the difficulties inherent in the position of the modern universities—difficulties such as the lack of any real centrality—which distinguish them from the older foundations.

Two of the letters received suggest that some repetition and underlining is called for. Correspondent A remarked that the present shortcomings of schools, universities and teachers' training departments form a single problem. Examination-crammed pupils, he said, enter the university simply to escape from badly paid drudgery in an office; a teachers' training grant temporarily solves their problems. The university merely continues the kind of examination routine they are familiar with at school and, still inert and without any lively conception of education, they pass through the training departments back to the schools where they instruct others to follow in their steps and pass examinations. Universities (particularly the 'modern' ones) are thus 'scholastic factories' and

university education nothing but ' a means of escaping the conflict with a chaotic world.' Correspondent B was more concerned with the effect on the pupil of any attempt to alter the customary routine:

> ' It can escape no effective teacher who makes some personal contact with his students that in so far as he has succeeded in changing the boy or girl who came from the Higher Certificate class at school, he has done something to unfit the resulting man or woman for the life they are most certainly going to lead. If he has ' trained taste ' even a little, the effect will be to disgust the wage-earning graduate with his economically-necessary conditions: the teacher in an elementary school (where many go), for example, will only be irked at the sort of material that he has to teach, will find colleagues philistine or insipid, and will be thrown back on himself as a solitary and unhappy individual . . . Pending the arrival of a reformed world, he might (I fear) have been better off had he kept to the mediocre requirements of a mechanical memorizing and reproducing of opinion, rather than have let himself be beguiled into belief in the value of culture.'

Now this second letter is, if we may say so, very much beside the point. There is no doubt that a good many people who have been awakened at the university to a perception of finer values find the milieu in which they have to earn their living extremely uncongenial. But this is no reason at all why the university teacher should *not* attempt to make his pupils less at home in their world. As Denys Thompson has pointed out in these pages[1] the aim of education to-day must be to turn out ' misfits ' rather than spare parts. It is precisely by unfitting his pupils for the environment—the modern environment being what it is—that the educator can hope to change it, and to change it more radically than if he concentrates on ' political ' issues only. As for the vicious circle commented on by the first correspondent, we can appropriately, if not modestly, quote from the article ' Will Training Colleges Bear Scrutiny?' which we published in December, 1932:

---

[1]See ' Advertising God,' December, 1932, and ' What Shall We Teach?' March, 1934.

> 'Obviously to break it at one point [the same vicious circle was in question] would be an inadequate aim. But we must begin somewhere. And we intend, in subsequent numbers of *Scrutiny*, to attack at other points: an inquiry into the examination system is already in progress . . . Moreover *Scrutiny*, as we hardly need to remind our readers, directs itself in the exercise of its general function upon the cultural conditions that make the educational scandal possible.'

The 'Scrutiny of Examinations,' an article on 'Why Universities?' and various articles on general and particular aspects of education have, since that was written, appeared.

The purpose of referring to these articles is not simply to advertise a good cause. The two correspondents who have been quoted are not the only ones who think it necessary to remind us that the problems raised concerning the modern universities are intimately connected with very much wider problems, and that the discussion of *any* aspect of contemporary education involves the discussion of the whole educational system, and the characteristics of contemporary civilization. *Scrutiny's* achievement so far, including the articles directed to specific issues named above, is sufficient proof that we are fully aware of this; we thought we had ourselves made the point with monotonous insistence, and certainly our educational programme has been conceived from the first in terms of a radical criticism of existing society, including, we may say, its economic and social ordering. What we have also insisted is that the scope and intricacy of the major problems—educational and other—should not prevent us from taking every opportunity that offers itself here and now or from urging specific and limited reforms, such as, in the case of the modern universities, the abolition of terminal examinations and a reduction in the number of mass-production lectures. How far the time and energy thus liberated might be used in the interests of essential education is a subject which will be returned to. Co-operation, we may repeat, will be welcomed, for it is plain that if the part of the modern universities in the modern world is not to be confined to supplying the needs of industry their problems must be threshed out in detail, and (this also was insisted) threshed out in relation to a coherent ideal of education for living.

L. C. KNIGHTS.

'CYMBELINE'

no bolts for the dead'—Posthumus.

IN some respects, one must admit, *Cymbeline* is a very neat bit of work. And the insolence of such a casual remark may possibly find its justification, for some, in the almost comic efficiency with which 'matters are cleared up' in most productions of this play, where the last scene runs off with the clockwork efficiency of a police-court, presided over by an appropriately passive, magisterial Cymbeline. And having seen such a production it is easy to talk glibly of Shakespeare's 'failing vitality' of his successful, or unsuccessful—for that seems to depend on the accidents of the day's business, or the drinks in the intervals—attempt to write a romance, a remarkable play of the month.

But if the play is read carefully—and a great number of people confess to a single, hurried reading—these productions and pseudo-critical 'explanations' fail to satisfy. Even the most obtuse reader would fail to account for a great deal in the play judging by the accepted standards. It might be suggested that Shakespeare found that the lightheartedly chosen material proved to have an essential interest for him when he was already engaged in the writing. But the play offers such strong resemblances to other plays, notably *The Winter's Tale* (which has an almost identical plot), that one is forced to the conclusion that not only was the plot seriously and deliberately chosen, but it was chosen because of its possibilities as the medium for exploring and refining material which had already an essential interest for the poet. It should be considered, not as a fashionable romance, but as a play which continues the achievement of the great tragedies in another form, in one which defies an arbitrary classification much as *Measure for Measure* does.

In examining the implications of these necessarily vague statements, it is obvious that a start must be made in examining the texture of the verse itself. (Just how obvious that is may be judged from the fashionable attitudes to the play, which in order to leave it as a kind of superior best-seller have to forget, conveniently enough, the major part of the verse which forms this play).

With certain obvious exceptions—and it is these which have been persistently admired as characteristic of the play the verse has a hard, corrugated texture differing from that of, say, *Coriolanus* or *The Winter's Tale*, in that this harshness proceeds from the persistent recreation of feelings of a particular kind of physical pain. A large number of the images involve ideas of muscular tension and strain:

> . . . crush him together rather than unfold
> His measure duly . . .
>
> . . . And I shall here abide the hourly shot
> Of angry eyes . . .
>
> I would have broke my eyestrings, cracked them, but
> To look upon him, till the diminution
> Of space had pointed him sharp as my needle.
>
> . . . rivetted, screw'd to my memory.

There is an insistent feeling of brutal strain; the contours of the verse in which these images occur suggest a strong compression—words are strained together to such an extent in this 'fierce abridgment,' that frequently they telescope. 'Underpeep,' 'nothing-gift,' 'after-eye' readily suggest themselves as examples of this tendency. The corollary of this is a tendency of the words to *separate*. Here there is no suggestion of the fluid sap-creation of the great tragedies; the words seem more sharply defined, more separate, the rhythm is, as it were, more fearful, delicately hesitant even. So the life in the verse proceeds from the tension between this tendency and the strong compressive force exerted, as it were, from the outside. Obviously, technique of this kind, in its development away from the characteristic *fusion* of the earlier verse, does not represent an approximation to the verse of the lesser dramatists, the Beaumont and Fletchers writing 'superior' romances. Rather, one suggests, the tendency is towards a kind of verse somewhat like that achieved by Jonson in his best work. In such images as

> that tub
> Both filled and running

the vigorous, destructive vivacity of the homely metaphor completely refutes the charges implied in the academic attitudes towards this play.

The reference to Jonson once made, the suggestion of a subtle exaggeration which pervades this play gains in significance. At once it is seen to be intimately connected with the sense of strain we have noticed. Consider the following passage, selected almost at random:

> Had I this cheek
> To bathe my lips upon ; this hand, whose touch,
> Whose every touch, would force the feeling soul
> To the oath of loyalty ; this object, which
> Takes prisoner the wild motion of my eye,
> Fixing it only here ;—should I—damned then—
> Slaver with lips as common as the stairs
> That mount the Capitol ; join gripes with hands
> Made hard with hourly falsehood—falsehood, as
> With labour ; then, by peeping in an eye
> Base and illustrious as the smoky light
> That's fed with stinking tallow ;—it were fit
> That all the plagues of hell should at one time
> Encounter such revolt.

The exaggeration is obvious. The gusto of the dramatic gestures and inflated emotions—one remembers that Iachimo is playing a part—with the head thrown back and the arm upraised in

> Should I—damned then—

and the raised voice sweeping out into the next lines in an exaggerated theatricality—all this is superbly realized, and naturally it draws attention to itself, demanding a more critical attention. The exaggeration is 'placed' by a continual reference to a solid matter-of-factness. The inflation, built up on 'bathe' and the general theatricality, is subtly controlled by such images as that in the seventh and eighth lines ; the heightened disgust of the kissing, with its suggestions of servility, of old men and children dribbling on chins, and of the dirty hard steps of a public building trodden by unwashed crowds, is modified by the very concreteness of the image, by the *pettiness* of the suggestions. Moreover

'Capitol' still has some dignity, and the lips could only sustain such comparison where the attention is focussed not so much in the propriety of the image as such, as in its reference to the general context, to the unreal theatrical world which yet exists only in concrete, real particulars. This air of unreality, this inflation, reaches bursting-point as it extends into the concentrated disgust of the 'stinking tallow,' and here it becomes obvious that the disgust envelopes the familiar work-a-day world, that both worlds, the unreal melodramatic one and the solid here-and-now, mutually interact in an unresolved tension; or, if you like, while there is a need to escape the disgusting sordidness of the familiar, so that even disgust is exaggerated, yet on the other hand there is a vital need to remain in close contact with the 'local' life.

Put crudely there is a 'conflict' between the tendencies to escape and to remain and the resultant poise is intensely critical. What we have to examine are the bases and implications of these tendencies, so surely expressed in the verse, and the means by which the balance between them is preserved.

II.

The critical interaction of a contrasting dualism which has been noted in the foregoing section is typical of the whole play: throughout there is no 'positive' which is not modified by the intense irony, not even an assured, transcendent vision of Evil or Death, as in the great tragedies; nor is there on the other hand sufficient energy in the negative emotions themselves which might in itself constitute a 'positive.' The acute disgust which finds expression in such phrases as 'partnered with tomboys' 'vaulting variable ramps' and 'crackt of kitchen trulls,' is itself so conditioned, critically, that it too is made to appear petty. This critical element is not, however, merely the ironic detachment of the sophisticated sensibility pricking extravagant bubbles; it is too fierce, too extravagant itself for just that. It seems to emerge at the point of tension between the violent negative emotions which envelop *all* experience and the need to create some positive. In this tension feelings are exaggerated into a condition of nervous susceptibility, and 'exposedness,' which is tauter than that of *The Winter's Tale* where the critical element, in this special sense, being absent, there is a more resolved, if also more convulsive,

reaction. Comparison with this latter play shows how different the disgust-feelings are in these two plays. In the verse of their speeches one immediately notices the greater violence of Leontes' disgust (' no barricado for a belly ') the more convulsive movement, as if the disgust, almost hatred, has a definite direction, whereas Posthumus is not sure, he is swayed between the recognition of the appearance of virtue and of the lust beneath.

> my mother seemed
> The Dian of that time: so doth my wife
> The non-pareil of this.

The emotions behind Leontes are more direct—or, as Coleridge put it, there is ' something like hatred ' ; those behind Posthumus are ironically conceived:

> I'll write against them,
> Detest them, curse them.

It is hopelessly inadequate after the violent theatricality of his disgust-motions. The disgust itself is restrained, held up as it were by the taut critical irony, which when relaxed as in the later play, allows the negative emotions a looser, more violent expression. But when both are compared with Othello's speeches a wide difference is observed. With him it is a purely personal matter—in one speech he even seeks reasons for her unfaithfulness. There is no disgust, no violent hatred against all women, but only the self-conscious reference of everything to his own feelings and then, the self-dramatization. There is hardly any of this self-dramatization in *The Winter's Tale* but in *Cymbeline* it persists throughout, both in the theatricality of the emotions expressed and the trick of making the individual characters play parts, consciously or unconsciously. In this play this ironic detachment is partly *protective*—I mean that what in *Othello* was, shall we say, a tragic theme, becomes in *Cymbeline* a means of distancing the emotions, of protecting the creative sensibility from experience too painful. The artist refuses to give universal valency to these negative emotions though he must recognize their potency. Notice how the third ' O ' is introduced in the following passage:

> O vengeance, vengeance!
> Me of my lawful pleasure she restrained,

> And prayed me oft forbearance, did it with
> A pudency so rosy, the sweet view on't
> Might well have warmed old Saturn; that I thought her
> As chaste as unsunned snow:- O all the devils!
> This yellow Iachimo, in an hour- wast not?
> Or less—at first?—perchance he spoke not, but,
> Like a full acorned boar, a German one,
> Cried 'O' and mounted.

The dominant note in the first lines is a kind of angry sensuality, which is somewhat like that characteristic of Othello—later there is the same 'association of strong sensuality with ugly vindictive jealousy' which Mr. Leavis notes in the earlier play.[1] But the stress has been shifted in the later play—a different element is introduced. Posthumus, in his frenzied excitement, lets his imagination get to work and seems to enjoy the spectacle, elaborating for his own benefit the nationality of the boar, until one is brought to that

> Cried 'O' and mounted

—the climax of a fine declamation; an anti-climax rather, for one's earlier suspicions are confirmed in that comic detail. That is the element of differentiation from *Othello*. It is almost a kind of understatement placed immediately after a blustering speech, again as in

> I'll write against them . . .

But it is not just comic, never falls into bathos. Beneath the words can be felt the strong disgust reaction from the heavy oppressive sluggishness ('German boar') of the gross, common life, from all that does not realize a particular, egotistic (the persistent irony is operative here) and completely *selfish* ideal—but the general impression is that it's overdone: the convulsive movement of the description here is completely out of accord with the intensely static quality of the actual bedroom scene. Not only are the negative emotions inflated, but also there is a recognition of the 'impossibility' of the ideal, upon which they depend, in

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[1] *Scrutiny*, Vol. VI, No. 3.

the description of Imogen's chastity. She is so extraordinarily chaste.

It is absurd to suggest, as many, including Mr. Murry,[1] have done, that Imogen is conceived in the same terms as Marina and Perdita. In the first place, a large proportion of the images of muscular tension occur in her speeches, and in general the verse of these is hard, vigorous and uncompromising. With Perdita's speeches compare the following:

> False to his bed! What is it to be false?
> To lie in watch there, and to think on him?
> To weep twixt clock and clock? if sleep charge nature
> To break it with a fearful dream of him,
> And cry myself awake! That's false to's bed, it is?
> I false! Thy conscience witness, Iachimo,
> Thou didst accuse him of incontinency;
> Thou them lookedst like a villain: now, methinks,
> Thy favour's good enough. Some jay of Italy,
> Whose mother was her painting, hath betrayed him:
> Poor I am stale, a garment out of fashion:
> And for I am richer than to hang by the walls,
> I must be ript—to pieces with me!

The harsh bitterness of this verse, crystallizing into such phrases as ' to weep 'twixt clock and clock ' where the harsh separateness of the words, like strokes on an anvil, creates a feeling of taut suspense, is quite unlike the buoyant wave-movement of Perdita's speech, which should, rather, be related to the verse of the dirges. The taut suspension allows the concentrated disgust (' some jay of Italy ') a closer, more controlled, expression and prepares the way for the dramatic gesture in ' I must be ript.' At that point, the melodramatic savageness reveals itself—the gesture recalls the ' acting ' of Posthumus, and points to the inflated tone, the exaggerated incongruity in the juxtaposition of the ideas of dusty

[1] ' Shakespeare and Love,' *Countries of the Mind*. ' . . . something ethereal is added to the love of the earlier comedies and something earthly taken away. The light is no longer golden but silver. Lovers are no more witty together; they are almost enfolded in a dream of tenderness.'

moth-eaten garments hanging outmoded on walls which can accomodate suicidal hangings, and her great chastity. The same process can be observed in the speech of Posthumus examined above. Imogen is dramatizing herself and, shall we say, 'enjoys' the dramatic gesture. Not that it is pure farce or melodrama the ready comic or pathetic responses (the easiest ways out of the situation) are prohibited by the extreme concreteness of the imagery and by the subtle deflation, the hint at the 'impossibility' of her protestations. One is reminded of Act II, Sc. ii.

Imogen: What hour is it?

Lady: Almost midnight, madam.

Imogen: I have read three hours, then: mine eyes are weak:
Fold down the leaf where I have left: to bed:
Take not away the taper, leave it burning;
And if thou canst awake by four o'the clock,
I prithee, call me. Sleep hath seized me wholly.

You can see here how Hazlitt was tempted into one of his penny press remarks: 'They (the heroines of these later plays) were the prettiest little set of martyrs and confessors on record!' Although such a remark is grossly insensitive and commits the common mistake of grouping together 'heroines' who after all belong to different plays, yet it is evident that Imogen is extraordinarily virtuous—too virtuous, too beautiful, too much 'the paragon of all excellence,' and to this excess the continual inflation in the verse brings the ironic inflection. Against this air of impossibility, however, there is the practical homely familiarity of her speeches. It is as if there is a need to create an ideal, chaste beauty (somewhat like Marina) and yet there is too the insistent necessity of conceiving her in terms of that local world in which she is and does as other women, and which has so much that disgusts, so much that attracts. (It is the central problem for the artist in creating the play, for the artist in 'living' the play). The exaggeration is not entirely farcical, is not primarily so. Primarily it is due to the need to make Imogen remote from the commonplace; but the insistent knowledge of the existence of the commonplace and its reality adds the note of comic unreality. Keats, in a letter to Miss Reynolds, said

'Imprimis: I sincerely believe that Imogen is the finest creature; and that I should have been disappointed at hearing you prefer Juliet; Item, yet I feel such a yearning towards Juliet, that I would rather follow her into Pandemonium than Imogen into Paradise.'

That sort of casual remark points to this quality of remoteness, of extravagant virtue. She is conceived as existing in a world apart and yet living in the local routine of homely images, and I suggest that this seeming impossibility is the cause of the strained tone of the play, of Posthumus' jealousy.

This tension contrasts with the 'fiery vision' of the great tragedies (and it is to these that *Cymbeline* should be related, not the early comedies) where, say, Cleopatra is created *through* the details of common life, the vision transcends them, whereas Imogen is conceived almost *in spite of* them. It is interesting to notice how the symbol of Cleopatra is introduced into the 'report' of Iachimo, where it contrasts with the insolent dirtiness of the pornographic raconteur, which reduces everything to its own level—the insinuating hiss of the alliteration and the familiar tone do not allow any transcendent attitudes towards love, yet the meanness of the account is betrayed in the symbol. The evocation of such a love reveals the coarse self-centredness of Posthumus' agreement:

> She hath been colted by him.

It is as if Posthumus had been thinking pruriently of Imogen when Iachimo was speaking—as if that is the only way of reducing her impossible chastity to everyday experience.

In Posthumus' admission of his guilt all these previous suggestions of melodramatic inflation and self-centred dramatization which we have examined are focussed and intensified, for he rants and struts and visualizes himself, quite conceitedly, as a monster. Here, again, although the air of savage farce is strong in the exaggerated theatricality, there is a suggestion of a firm need beneath it. The 'recognition,' in which the Evil is known and overcome, is conceived as necessary at the same time as a detached, painfully critical attitude is preserved. This 'recognition' is essential before the idea of 'rebirth'—quite as important here as in *The Winter's Tale*—can be accepted. This idea is integral to our conception of the play and now, having examined the kind

of emotions broadly designated here as negative, it remains to examine the more positive tendencies and their final reconciliation, and it is in this examination that the idea of 'rebirth' assumes its importance.

III.

In beginning this fresh inquiry I suggest that we can extend our previous generalization—that there is a conflict between the need to escape and the need to remain in the familiar routine of everyday life—into another, that the contrast throughout is between the still movelessness of the ideal vision and the crude, gross violence of the familiar. The whole play does seem in fact a gradual probing and sifting of experience to create a precise definition of this 'ideal vision' and to reconcile it with actual living experience.

Thus throughout the play there is a complex comparison between Britain and Rome. We have seen how there is a strong revulsion from the pettiness and sordidness of 'local' life, but there is much more than that. Britain is regarded with a mature reasonableness—I do not imply that any 'statements' are made in any particular speeches.

> I' the world's volume
> Our Britain seems as of it, but not in't;
> In a great pool a swan's nest . . .

There, in that final image, you see the balanced recognition of the smallness of Britain. Against any attachment to the native land there is the recognition that Ludstown is incurably provincial, when considered with Rome, which suggests the wide culture of a fine civilization. This contrast is an essential pivot of the play and is characteristic of the 'total situation.' Immediately one notices that Rome is not Italy. Iachimo, 'the Italian villain' is never called Roman, whereas Lucius, the virtuous soldier of a dignified Empire, is always 'the Roman Lucius.' Rome does not seem to be *spatially visualized*, but, rather, is the nebulous symbol of an escape into the Dignity and Grandeur That Was Rome. And then, of course, there is Italy; and the relation resolves itself into a contrast between the fine civilization of a remote Golden Age and the vicious evil of a known present, and in this contrast,

since both are ostensibly conceived as contemporaneous (thus employing a device similar to that of 'double time') both suffer an ironically critical scrutiny.

If the speech of the Queen on the subject of Britain (Act III, Sc. i) be examined it will readily be seen how Cæsar is brought down to the level of a provincial general. He is introduced in colloquial terms as any parish-hero ('a kind of conquest,' 'brag,' etc.) and so naturally becomes 'master Cæsar.' This last phrase is typical (compare 'Neptune's park') and exhibits a kind of activity essentially similar to that found by Mr. Speir's in 'gospel kail' and 'Eden's bonny yard' in Burns.[1] The local does not succeed in annexing, nor is it annexed by, the wider world of Imperial Cæsar; the two remain suspended. If Cæsar is made provincial then that in itself implies an inferiority in the provinciality, so that in that sense Cæsar preserves his dignity over the incipiently comic Britons strutting in their rustic capital. Rome does remain an avenue of escape, essentially that, from the *close confinement* of the rural life, its sluggishness and waste. But although its value is admitted it is never regarded as a 'solution'—as we have seen Rome is never regarded as being attainable in space: its attraction lies in its *remoteness*, and this is recognized.

Escape from, and criticism of, the rural life—which seems to include all life though there is the familiar Court-Country opposition—finds expression too in another mode, in the exquisite, pastoral elegizing of the dirges; but that this 'escape' is not at all like the 'Shakespearean simplicity' of Collins or the 'week-ending' of Arnold is revealed by considering the dirges themselves, undivorced from their context. Mr. Murry has declared:[2] 'In *Cymbeline* Shakespeare himself was not far removed from that condition of relaxed control; but concentration was too deep an instinct with him ever to be quite forgotten,' and if the dirges are considered by themselves such an account as Mr. Murry gives does seem justified. But considered in their context—and since they are part of the play surely they are entitled to such consideration—the final account must take cognisance of the element of critical irony. It is not just that there is never any chance of

[1] *Determinations*, Essay on Burns.

[2] 'The Poetry of William Collins' in *Countries of the Mind*.

the emotional impulse 'trickling away through the porous vessel of poetic commonplace,' as Mr. Murry puts it, but that there is a conscious, unrelaxed *critical* force behind it. The first dirge, 'With fairest flowers . . . ' despite the soft fluency ('azure harebell,' 'furred moss,' etc.) has a suggestion of strength, of rustic vigour, noticeably in the word 'ruddock'; under the delicate alliterative lilting ('those rich-left heirs that let their fathers lie') you can feel the tense concentration, the wiriness of the lines. Immediately afterwards the critical attention is focussed in Guiderius' reaction.

> Prithee have done:
> And do not play in wench-like words with that
> Which is so serious.

Not that that is the 'right' reaction; the dirges cannot be dismissed so easily—and if one returns to the beginning of this passage a speech by Belarius gives the clue:

> O melancholy!
> Who ever yet could sound thy bottom, find
> The ooze, to show what coast thy sluggish crare
> Might easiliest harbour in?

The thick viscosity of these lines, with its fine image of the 'crare' heavily yet gracefully ('easiliest harbour in') moving through the ooze, has certain obvious relations to the claustrophobic tension observed previously. The melancholy is unpleasant yet relaxing, but, as the scene proceeds, the heavy sluggishness is sublimated into the clearer fluency of the dirge and then, completely, in the exquisite song (where the 'chimneysweepers' introduce a fine black contrast to the golden youth), as if melancholy is directly displayed and then 'worked on,' the process occurring partly under the compulsion of a need to escape, partly under the direction of a strong critical irony—

> Thersites' body is as good as Ajax'
> When neither are alive.

The dirges, then, offer a relief similar to that achieved in the evocation of the wide classic culture of Rome, and, similarly, such

relief is critically 'placed'. There is no simple acceptance or rejection but a critical suspension of allegiance. The common denominator is the remoteness, the stillness—there is a kind of photographic stillness in the precision of the dirges—and if this be accepted it will readily be seen that in this way they are intimately connected with the idea of 'rebirth' which in itself includes the idea of coming to rest, perhaps, in the stillness of death. After the personality in its outward 'seeming' has been abandoned—and here the disguise convention is used to good effect—each character accepts death. Imogen is mourned as dead—indeed she suffers a kind of death—and Posthumus makes his acceptance in the gaol. It is this idea which must be examined now.

In his speech in the goal one immediately notices the lack of any of the inflation of the rest of the play, and of any ironic overtones—there is a great deal of irony in the scene, but it is cut off from the magnificent speech: that is left unaffected. This speech is no instance of the weakened Shakespeare momentarily rousing himself from his mechanical task, or any other such academic myth. It has a measured dignity, a calm reasonableness quite unlike the violent convulsiveness and 'theatricality' of the earlier speeches. The movement gradually becomes slower and finally comes to rest in the last lines—

> If you will take this audit, take this life,
> And cancel these cold bonds. O Imogen!
> I'll speak to thee in silence.

The 'silence,' the static remoteness of death, is what appeals to Posthumus, to the poet, as the solution of the impossible tension between the motions from and towards common experience, and through this the scene leads naturally into the ballet-like movements of the dream,[1] which itself provides the transition into the terrible 'humour' of the prose. After the heightened, spiritual acceptance of death a fine modulation is made through the tense jesting to the normal everyday attitudes of the gaoler's prose, and it is thus that a reconciliation of the two opposite tendencies is made. The keen sense of futility expressed in the magnificent prose—

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[1]See Note at end of this essay.

> ' What an infinite mock is this, that a man should have the best use of eyes to see the way of blindness! I'm sure hanging's the way of winking '—

is maintained as the more practical version of what Posthumus saw more spiritually, and the irony in the gaoler's remarks does not destroy the value of the acceptance nor call it in question at all, rather does it substantiate that, since its energy is directed against the defeatist acceptance of death as an escape from a life of futility.

Here is no passion in accepting death as in the earlier work ; here, death is no bridal bed but the cessation of all movement, is ' silence,' is a negative, cancelling force, which, paradoxically enough, has a kind of positive value. The direction of the play is towards this freedom from motion, from the restrictions of life's ' cold bonds '—

> no bolts for the dead!

But although this tendency is strong there is no suggestion of death, as a cessation of action, being the final absolute.

IV.

If these conclusions are not perverse it should be evident that *Cymbeline* cannot be regarded merely as a lighthearted pastoral romance and that there is not the slightest evidence for suggesting ' relaxed control.' The ' neatness ' of the final scene is seen to be, not the hurried finishing-off of a task become wearisome, but the natural consequence of the direction of the play, which is towards a repose achieved in spite of violence, the brutal action which constitutes the substratum of experience.

In the first place it has often been noted that Cymbeline himself does not act but only suffers, a will-less personality, and throughout the play there does seem to be a consciously expressed wish for a will, for the power to break clear of the entanglement of feelings, to have sovereignty over oneself. The whole plot is ostensibily ' the placing of the British Crown,' and the sovereignty of this Britain involves an abnegation of the will— Cloten and Imogen sigh for the wills of lesser people, and the latter

sacrifices a kingdom to gain 'two worlds.' The passivity and restrictions which such sovereignty entails are stressed.

This aspect of the passivity of the king must be related to the whole direction of the play, which finds its consummation in this final scene, where the circular movement is like that of a wheel coming to rest, as more and more of the 'action' is disposed of, circling nearer and nearer to the final immobility of the last tableau. This final immobility is, I suggest, the poise which the play achieves —up to this point the verse rapidly becomes less violent, less immediately evocative, and flatter, more neutral. The tautness of the body of the play is not relaxed, there is no relaxation in that sense, but the verse of the last speeches is flat and polished like a mirror reflecting the final tableau. All the previous suggestions of savage farce disappear leaving only the taut ironic inflection.

This critical element is important, suggesting as it does that the evocation of a static tableau, of the denial of action in this 'final peace,' is not an unqualified resolution of the strain and tension of the play. Cymbeline's speech in its recall of 'Ludstown' and 'our crookt smokes,' although it presents them as in a photograph, yet evokes that world of small, petty things which arouses such revulsion. There is still an ironic inflection to the peace, to the reconciliation of Britain and Rome. And in any case no ideals have been left standing. Imogen is 'a commodity,'

> a shop of all the qualities that man
> Loves woman for,

and the gods are but mischievous little boys who 'throw stones of sulphur.'

There is still the same tension which we have noted throughout, and this tension is only resolved, I think, in *The Winter's Tale*, in the more violent expression of the disgust-emotions through the cathartic 'savage humour' which there becomes more orgiastic and less self-conscious (in a limited sense) and through the simultaneous creation, then made possible, of the beauty of Florizel and Perdita.

F. C. TINKLER.

NOTE.

M. Legouis has pointed out that in this play Shakespeare has discarded all the unities, yet there is, I think, a strong tendency towards a formalism which quite transcends all questions of the unities, and which approaches the kind of formalism we find in the ballet. The strong note of irony throughout gives an air of detachment and in some scenes the movement is so stylized that it should obviously be played as ballet.

The two examples of this which occur to me are the Bedchamber Scene and the Dream. (The similar effect of the last scene I have indicated above). In the first there is a deliberate black-and-white contrast, with Imogen sleeping

> as a monument
> Thus in a chapel lying,

a 'fresh lily, whiter than the sheets,' while Iachimo is a black devil—

> Though this a heavenly angel, hell is here.

The whole scene has a precise, photographic coldness, but with an undercurrent of excitement which suggests the convulsive *action* of the Evil in contrast to the static remoteness of the Good.

As regards the second, I am not at all convinced that the dream is not genuine; the verse is so obviously 'inferior' to that of the rest of the scene that it is difficult to believe that any of the minor dramatists could not have made a better job of the interpolation. Rather, I am inclined to believe, it represents a deliberate attempt to stylize the dream, through its commonplace conventionality, as a masque within the play, a scene of pure ballet where the words are relatively unimportant. Also it introduces an element of ironic farce in the descent of Jupiter, complete with eagle and thunderbolt, having the same effect as the introduction of the Soothsayer into the last scene, where the inclusiveness of the personality, its lack of dependance on arbitrary conceptions, is stressed. Moreover the stylized movement does provide a modulation from the verse to the prose. But none of these reasons are sufficiently strong to make a definite decision possible.

THE APOTHEOSIS OF POST-IMPRESSIONISM[1]

SOMEWHERE in the course of his reflections on the visual arts Diderot mentions the story of a young painter who invariably, before he set to work, flung himself down on his knees in front of his canvas, and exclaimed: 'Mon Dieu! Délivrez-moi du modèle.' He desired, that is to say, to be free from the tyranny of the schools, all the fashionable artificialities of the ruling style. And in the hey day of Lancret, of Boucher and Fragonard, this must have seemed a bold, not to say a heretical, desire. But with the example of Greuze before him Diderot preached a return to the living model, the actual object itself in its natural surroundings. It should be noted parenthetically that the *pathetic* solution of Greuze did nothing at all to solve the real problem. For this

[1]For the purposes of this essay the term Post-Impressionism is used in a general way to denote all those movements that have developed out of the experiments and achievements, not only of the Impressionists proper, Monet, Manet, Pissarro, Jongkind, etc., but also and more particularly those of Cézanne, Seurat, Odilon Redon and their followers, the Pont-Aven group headed by Gauguin, van Gogh in his own strange way, and so on. It is this, the influence of the Cézanne branch, that has proved strongest to-day in what is somewhat loosely described as *The Modern Movement*. Picasso, Braque, Léger on the one hand, Matisse and the *Fauves* on the other, can be said to be the leading exponents of the movement, which, however, includes a long list of interesting names that can only be bracketed together in very elastic fashion. In Sculpture it is best represented by Maillol, Dobson, Brancusi and Moore. Nevertheless Symbolists, Futurists, Vorticists, the Surrealists and the Abstract Artists are all in their different ways derived from or related to that ferment in the arts, that gained such momentum in the closing decades of last and the opening ones of the present century, and of which Paris was and still is

problem, which then had not been clearly formulated, concerned the attitude of the artist to his environment, to that material from which inevitably he must choose the subject for his work of art. And after a century and a half of evolution in art a similar problem is again agitating the artistic fraternity, if for different reasons and in radically altered circumstances.

Diderot's young man, one feels, would effectually hold his own to-day among that band of increasingly vocal artists who animadvert on their practice and affirm their solidarity between the covers of 'Axis,' 'Circle,' 'Minotaure,' 'Verve' and similar fashionable publications. For the members of this group arrogate to themselves the dubious distinction of forming the vanguard of the *Modern Movement*, and hitherto have been at great pains to be delivered of the model, indeed of all models whatsoever. They make a cardinal virtue out of this deliverance, and exult in the splendid freedom, the marvellous opportunities for self expression that are theirs. They can dispense, some of these happy apostles of liberty, with a subject even; for a subject is merely an encumbrance to a truly modern work-of-art.[1] With delightful insouciance they disport

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the storm-centre. There is for the art critic little value in pigeon-holing every single artist who ever lived into some group or school. But a number of artists animated more or less by similar principles may here for the sake of conciseness be referred to by the label which they themselves, particularly in their public utterances, affect, without implying thereby a pre-judgment of individual work. It is hardly necessary to add that there are many distinguished artists not mentioned in these pages, who may well have a claim to recognition when the history of this period comes to be written.

[1]In this connection it is worth quoting a pertinent passage from 'An Essay on Art' by Jaques Maritain. M. Maritain is attacking the theory of the *gratuitousness* of art as elaborated by the Symbolists, Erik Satie and his school, etc., for whom 'the content of a work of art . . . (is) . . . an impurity to be got rid of.' He continues: 'No doubt if there is next to no matter, the work of the artist will more easily succeed. But art, as has been sufficiently dinned into our ears, ought not to be on the look-out for what is easy. It must have opposition and constraint, the constraint of

themselves in the rarefied air of absolute abstraction, and firmly imagine that the results of their activities possess some sort of mystical or occult significance. Plato himself couldn't have quibbled at such practice, which is conducted at so many removes of all reality, that it hardly matters any longer either to art or truth. However, the more militant protagonists of non-representational composition like Kandinsky and Mondrian, Piper, Nicholson, Ozenfant or Hélion should not be dismissed on that account. On the contrary, it is fascinating to watch how like sleepwalkers they balance themselves confidently and with not a little acrobatic skill on the edge of the abyss. And blissfully unaware of their precarious situation they not infrequently contrive some fascinating arabesques, which are important as evidence of the sort of times in which we live, if for no other reason. 'Painting,' writes M. Hélion, 'belongs to the world of concepts, and I expect to find a short cut through everything, to constitute a plan for projection common for ideas, instincts and perceptions. I compose the products of my instincts as they reach my eyes, each accepted as a fact or energy, with structures intellectually conscious, and with experiences of colours patiently and tenderly carried out through numerous charts.'[1] One must suppose that this expresses M. Hélion's meaning exactly! But to discover what Abstract Art is all about and to appreciate its peculiar merits, it is more satisfactory to go to the pictures or statues themselves. These merits in any case are simple and obvious enough. They need no quasi-philosophical circumlocutions, still less a sort of mumbo-jumbo incantation for their justification. The geometrical ingenuities of Ozenfant or Léger, Ben Nicholson's delicately coloured patterns, have occasionally a high decorative value, and fit in neatly with, while to some extent relieving, the monotonous severities, of what passes nowadays under the name of architecture. We can only be grateful, so long, that is, as we are not asked to believe a deep mysterious meaning invests these humble productions, and that they indicate a new and important

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rules and the opposition of matter. The more obstinate and rebellious the matter, the better will art, by its success in mastering it, realize its own end, which is to make matter resplendent with a dominating intelligibility.'

[1] *The Painter's Object*: edited by Myfanwy Evans.

development. Abstract Art, in short, like its cousin Surrealism, is a sectarian derivative of the Post Impressionistic movement; and their ascendency in the past few years is a more than suspicious indication of the way the wind is blowing and the increasing chilliness of the artistic climate in the future. In their more extreme forms they provide a convenient escape from the very pressing problems confronting the artist in the twentieth century.

In order to realize how pressing these problems are we need but turn to the work of Wyndham Lewis, who before the war was the leading representative of abstract art in England. For Wyndham Lewis, though sufficiently aware of the dilemma and without seeking to avoid the difficulties, has somehow managed to turn the situation to his own advantage. Nowadays, however, in discussions of modern art Lewis's name is seldom mentioned. In spite of the fact that he is, so to speak, the doyen of the Abstract cult on this side of the channel, he seems to the younger generation a little *vieux jeu*, 'pre-war'; while the surrealist, uncomfortable possibly that Mr. Lewis has stolen some of his thunder, dismisses him with a superior shrug. And it must be admitted that Wyndham Lewis is not a great painter, that he is not a master of his craft, in the sense that Rembrandt or Velazquez or Poussin were. When he really tries, as in the fifty or so new canvasses shown at the Leicester Galleries six months ago, he at once demonstrates his superiority in complex abstract design over the majority of his tinkling contemporaries. On the other hand Lewis's idea of colour is crude and raw, so much so, that one is inclined to wonder on occasion whether there is not something the matter with his optic nerve. Even where crudity is in keeping with his satiric intent, those harsh passages of reds and browns and greys, have an opaqueness, an obstinate resistance to the eye, and fail to *realize*, as Cézanne would say, the interior organization of the subject represented. But Wyndham Lewis, as is notorious by now, knows only *One way* in art, whether it be painting or literature. He is the artist of the Great Without, of Externals, he likes to think of his work as 'classic and clear.' Unfortunately the resources of craftsmanship he brings to this portrayal are limited. His circular line soon becomes hard and inflexible, his surfaces break up into metal discs, into scaly slabs, triangular, ovoid or fig-shaped, which are arranged on the canvas in vibrating and intricate patterns. The robot-like creatures that

people his mechanical universe have the same ghastly immobility of a motion picture reel suddenly arrested. Yet there is enough passion behind these symbols to compensate for the rather insensitive handling of the brush. A genuinely tragic element informs this satiric art, something profoundly and imaginatively experienced. Had his craftsmanship been equal to his ambition, and his methods not been further limited by an inability to conceive movement as only in Space and never in Time, he would be occupying a place of far greater strategic importance in modern British art. As it is, his great effort, even in such striking compositions as ' Inferno ' and ' The Stations of the Dead,' gives the impression of being abortive, as if he had attempted the impossible. And it may well be that he is the last of his kind, the last performer to attempt anything on an epic scale in a society which, as he himself writes, ' for the first time in civilized history ' will be composed of ' men without art.'[1] If so, with Wyndham Lewis Post-Impressionism goes down with colours flying.

Now it is a remarkable fact that British painting, which the *Times* critic, in reviewing the great exhibition at the Louvre, rightly pronounces a provincial school, ' but with a positive provincialism,' nevertheless at one stage of its history exercised a decisive influence on the course of art in Europe. Suddenly it shed its provincial airs, and found itself occupying, if not a dominating, at least a prominent, position among the leading schools. At one and the same moment it could boast of Turner, Crome, Bonington, Cox, Girtin, Cotman and Constable, as brilliant a constellation of talent as any that could be found on the continent. Nor did the virility and the native character escape the notice of foreign experts. In 1824 ' The Haywain ' was exhibited at the Louvre and awarded a gold medal, while a similar honour was conferred on ' The White Horse ' at an exhibition in Lille. Discerning Frenchmen scented something in this painting out-of-doors, this approach to the object in a natural light, that struck them as fresh and original. They felt that this saturation of the artist in the actual scene brought a new quality into painting, that it discovered a new method for imparting subtle variations of mood and emotional timbre to the subject. During the siege of Paris Monet and Pissarro spent most of their

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[1] *Men Without Art.*

time in London studying Turner's pictures. This study undoubtedly enlarged their conception of the possibilities of oil paint, and from it they derived many of their ideas about the pitch of lighting and the colours of shadows. Moreover Richard Parkes Bonington lived the greater part of his life in Paris, and not a little of it in the studio of Delacroix. That he left his mark on French Romanticism and was in some respects a much finer artist if a less ambitious one than Delacroix, is no longer in dispute. But in relation to the new painting his personality and technique are even more striking in some of his lesser known landscapes, viz. 'Landscape with a Timber waggon' in the Wallace Collection, which in brush work and treatment are reminiscent of Constable.[1] Finally there is his 'Young Man in a Top hat,' in which the subject is so frankly stated and with such a subtle management of proportion and space, that the ground was thoroughly prepared for Manet a decade before Manet was born.

No doubt other influences were at work, such as that of Velazquez and the newly discovered Japanese painting. It would be misleading to suggest that the renaissance in art eventually nicknamed Impressionism originated in the work of these few English painters. Nevertheless their share in it was a vital one and the movement cannot be understood without them. For the time that it lasted, and by the middle of the century already it had waned, this brief moment of glory promised to secure for British art a leading instead of a provincial status in Europe. It has had to wait nearly a hundred years, years of woeful degradation, before it began once more to recover a little of this distinction and exhibit some of its old vitality. With the arrival of Sickert, Wilson Steer, John & Co., English painting at last was rescued from the morass in which the Pre-Raphaelites had left it floundering. But the original impulse, the inspiration for this revival came from across the water; our country cousin relationship to the dominant school was re-established, with the cousin showing his authentic individuality. Yet the work of these men was, and still is, to some extent characterized, in a way that some younger painters, Duncan

[1]Both Constable and Bonington were pupils of Girtin, that youthful but potent spirit, who seems to have stage-managed the movement behind the scenes in the few years of his working life.

Grant for instance, are not, by English tendencies that are less desirable. A strong predilection for the portrait has always had a somewhat constricting effect on our art, which has further been disabled by a *literal* attitude of mind on the part of the artist, a habit of observing facts with a sort of documentary interest. When it is free from this kind of curiosity, as Gainsborough was in certain moods, notably in the blue-paper washes, which in their summarized statement and intense lyrical feeling, seem remarkably *modern*, the effect at once is that of a larger and finer experience. In contrast Turner in so many of his vast water-colours sets down everything in the most circumstantial detail, with a control and penetration into every aspect of the scene, that takes one's breath away. Yet Turner, with all his virtuosity leaves one exactly where one was before. In the same way Sickert, though he paints delightful genre pictures like his master Dégas, rarely transforms the objects he represents into something new. He seems to lack the ideal contemplative detachment. In spite of his insight into character, his sense of the dramatic and a superb management of iridescent light, he never completely transcends the temporary and the local, a furtive description or the ironic anecdote. Sickert's satires and genre pictures, in short, are of the order of Hogarth and George Morland rather than that of Jan Steen or Chardin.

In the Post-Impressionistic period British art has again merely inhabited a suburb of Paris. And it has retained very little even of the national flavour, which formerly at least made our suburbanism a unique and refreshing experience for the worldly metropolitan visitor. At first the Vorticists, it is true, in their Camden Town stronghold ably officered by Gaudier, Wadsworth and Roberts, with Wyndham Lewis leading the band and Ezra Pound doing all the staff work, on their own initiative and without any encouragement from headquarters, delivered an energetic flank attack. It was short-lived, however, and failed to capture any really prominent positions. And after the war our ' positive provincialism ' became less and less positive and more and more absorbed into that slightly hot-house cosmopolitan atmosphere of Paris, London and Berlin, which is so amusing and agreeable for dining-out of an evening, but which is hardly the right milieu to develop the concentration needed for the highly specialized job of an artist. And yet Christopher Wood, whose artistic life covered exactly the interval

between the false boom of 1928 and the great slump of 1929, breathed this air with delighted anticipation and thrived on it. He, so to speak, consumed it at such a rate that so far from reducing him to inanition and impotence as it did many another, it gave him a new kind of strength. In fact he rapidly got clear of it altogether and was just beginning to move in a more stable and robust sort of element, when his activities were cut short. That this untimely death was a first class disaster for British painting, the sequel has abundantly demonstrated. It is idle to speculate what might have happened had Wood lived. It is impossible to guess in what direction he might have developed any further, and if he had, whether he could have inspired a revival of the kind England witnessed a hundred or so years ago. Nor is this the moment to determine his exact status as an artist. It is, however, possible to assess the integrity of his artistic personality. And from such an assessment one is led to suppose that Christopher Wood was perhaps aware he had done all he could ever hope to do in the circumstances, and that his death therefore occurred at the appropriate moment.

For a parallel to this young man's extraordinary productivity during the nine years of his painting career one would have to go back to Bonington, who died in 1828 at the age of twenty six. Bonington, like Wood, received his artistic education in Paris. But, unlike Wood, he matured and found himself very quickly. In his earliest canvases even, *e.g.*, 'Henri III and the English Ambassadors,' he reveals a sureness of purpose and a confidence in execution, which are almost miraculous for a man of his years. Wood was not a prodigy of that calibre. But on the other hand, his very personal touch and originality are apparent in his clumsiest imitations. This trying-out his hand in the manner and the mannerisms of half-a-dozen leaders of the Parisian school was for him an apprenticeship and a necessary process of assimilation. He was fortunate, when on leaving school he decided to become a painter, in making the acquaintance of a number of influential people, Alphonse Kahn and Michael Sevier amongst others, who could put him in the way of useful contacts. In those first few years already he received encouragement and advice from Kisling, Picasso and Cocteau. Furthermore he had opportunities to travel widely in Europe and the Near East. In the autumn of 1923 he

came to London to study at the Westminster school, and was much in the society of Wyndham Lewis. He seems to have lived fully and enjoyed himself. All the time he produced pastiches of other painters with a facility that might well have proved ruinous to a more tenuous spirit. During the next few years he worked industriously in Paris and London, and made friends with the Nicholsons, Dobson and John. But the most important feature of his Paris days was his association, which became increasingly close, with Picasso. The Spaniard taught him how to contrast, harmonize and modulate his colours, and his inexhaustible versatility and experimentation stimulated Wood in his search for an individual style. He spent months in Cumberland and Dorset, and roamed about in Provence, Spain and Egypt. People began to take notice ; his talent was beginning to be talked about. Diaghileff commissioned him to do designs for a ballet (Romeo and Juliet) ; the Beaux Arts Gallery organized the first exhibitions of his work in London. An unfortunate interlude with Raoul Dufy in Monte Carlo yielded a whole series of fake Dufys, which, in view of the fact that Dufy himself is not exactly all above board as a painter are very fake indeed. For these formula sketches of Dufy, it is necessary to insist, are not painting in any true sense of the word. Like the conventions of Abstract Art they can be regarded as agreeable decoration (particularly for the nursery), but on a higher level they are irredeemably trivial and sterile. Dufy's persistent reputation as an artist is an apt comment on the taste and the critical standards of the age. Like many modern painters Wood did not wholly escape this tendency to leave pictures in sketch form. But what for the Impressionists was a disciplined technique, has to-day become a superficial routine. It is a very different affair from Constable's struggles towards a special mode of feeling that produced the elaborate and finished sketches for some of his major works, ' The Leaping Horse,' for instance. Too often the modern sketch masquerading as a completed painting merely disguises a failure to cope with the difficulties inherent in the subject. Though in justice to Wood it should be added that he never descends to trivialities or topical anecdotes.

In April, 1929, a representative collection of his paintings was shown at Tooth's ; and in the following Spring he shared another with Ben Nicholson in Paris. Most of this work was done in

Cornwall and Brittany, which places, villages, beaches, harbour scenes, seem to have inspired him to his best efforts. During June and July, 1930, in Tréboul in Brittany he finished an amazing quantity of pictures. He returned to England in the following month, spent a day or two in the Isle of Wight no one knows why or with whom, and proceeded to Salisbury where his mother lived, to whom he had always been deeply attached. On the same day, the 21st August, 1930, he threw himself underneath a train on Salisbury station, and was killed. Whatever the motives underlying this act, it is fairly safe to assume that certain pathological traits in his personality coupled with an addiction to opium smoking, had not a little to do with it. What concerns us here, however, is that it occurred at a moment when he had emerged from the fashionable cosmopolitanism of the time, and seemed to be imparting a new vitality to his native tradition. The magnificent memorial exhibition promoted last March by the Redfern Gallery has at least proved his right-of-place in that tradition.

One would be hard put to it to think of the name of any other contemporary English artist who could have filled those large rooms with over 600 works all done before his thirtieth year, without ever seeming mechanical or monotonous. No doubt the quality of all this work is extremely variable. Often it has only a superficial effectiveness; comparatively little of it can be deemed completely satisfying and successful. Yet so authentic is his idiom, that everything he does has a look of freshness and spontaneity. He exults in such a naturally exuberant inventiveness that the spectator is at once disarmed and forgets about the models. Of these, indeed, there is a sufficiently heterogeneous assortment. The crowded wall at the New Burlington Galleries bristled with the tricks and formulas patented by such spectacular showmen as Braque, Picasso, Dufy, Modigliani, Vlaminck, Matisse, not to mention van Gogh and Seurat, as well as a few others. But as has already been indicated Wood used another man's tricks imaginatively in order to make a unique and personal discovery. When for example he adopts Braque's flat pattern cubism to paint a still life, it is merely a method to organize spatial values. But his vision remains his own, so that Braque's clichés disappear and acquire a new meaning. In fact the apparent eclecticism of much of Wood's earlier work, though it cannot always be defended on its own ground, should

be regarded as the progress of an interior development towards the mature expression of his final period. Few other English artists moreover have had a feeling for colour so impeccable and delicately attuned. He retains the freshness of Constable in a palette full of vivid and surprising contrasts. Such a frankly sensual delight in colour for its own sake and the deft handling of a rich impasto (*e.g.*, the sea in 'Tréboul 1930' runs in a smooth stretch across the canvas as if entirely unworked by the brush) should entitle him to a very special place in English painting. His draughtsmanship finally, is always adequate, and at times revels in the most captivating rhythms. And everywhere a rich vein of fantasy runs through his work, sometimes gay and simple, as in 'Dancing Sailors Brittany,' then sinister ('Tiger and Arc de Triomphe,' 'The Yellow Man') or merely inconsequential. Of this latter kind 'Zebra and Parachute' is a fine example carried out with such imaginative directness, subtlety in design and tonality, that by comparison nine-tenths of Surrealist painting is mere trifling.

In a valuable monograph published at the time of the exhibition, Mr. Eric Newton describes the peculiar flavour of Wood's painting as of something 'virginal,' a quality of innocence that 'can be achieved either by regarding all things as pure and welcoming them with an open heart, or by regarding most things as impure and avoiding them at all costs. Christopher Wood's was the first militant way to innocence. An odd blend of moods is the result.'[1] And he points to the indefinably tragic atmosphere that broods somewhere in the background of so many of his pictures. This undigested element in the soul of the artist was something more fundamental than the attitude of sophisticated-naïvety which gained him an ephemeral popularity with the smart set of the nineteen-twenties. But it is this also that gave intensity to his moods that make Wood one of the most lyrical of modern artists. In those eighteen months before he died Christopher Wood painted a series of pictures that are a complete and perfect expression of his individual sensibility. In these scenes of Brittany and Cornwall the different phases of Post-Impressionism have been fused, and put at the service, as it were, of the tradition of English landscape. Newlyn, Portscato, St. Ives or Concarneau, Douarnenez,

[1] *Christopher Wood*, by Eric Newton.

Tréboul, are rendered with an exquisite sensitivity and a firm grasp of construction and design.

Though there is an extreme economy of detail in Wood's pictures, they are the product of the same saturation of the artist's mind in the physical features of the scene as can be found in Cotman or in Constable. Not the transient features so prized by the Impressionists, but the sense of something organic and permanent if no less fragrant. Yet his influence has on the whole not been salutary and yielded little of importance since his death. Admiring disciples sedulously copy the odd gestures of his fisher-folk, all the quaint inventory of the toy sea-side. But the tricks that underlie the sophisticated-naïve attitude are not likely to be of much use to another painter, for those are the very things that date most readily. After Christopher Wood Post-Impressionism seems a spent force.

'And now where are we? Where is the object, or the subject or the sub-object, or whatever it is your fancy to call it?' asks Mr. John Piper nervously. And he proceeds to review, alas! with what revealing complacence, the various dodges artists have of late resorted to in order to replace 'the object Cubism has destroyed.' They are highly significant, these artful dodges, of the spiritual decay in our time. 'Henry Moore has landed us back in the stomach of Pre-history, while Paul Nash, again, leaves us with the bare-washed bones of it. Abroad we find Arp also in history's midriffs; Mondrian charting the seas of pre-creation; Hélion constructing complex symbols, new yet age-old, part-game and part-worship; and Mirò rocketing among the stars and comets. It all seems to me an attempt to *return* to the object, and not to escape from it.'[1] One can only envy Mr. Piper his optimism! And how should he not have faith, poor man? No serious artist can really admit the irrelevance of his existence and his activities to society, and still keep going. At any rate it is only charitable to suppose that Mr. Piper and his colleagues will be as completely *en rapport* with the object when they have recovered it, as they now seem to be with whatever fills the void for them in its absence. They should remember, however, that the solution of difficulties does not lie in the formation of cliques, still less in marching under the

[1] *The Painter's Object.*

banner of political slogans. To-day the artist who sincerely strives 'to make matter resplendent with a dominating intelligibility' necessarily stands alone. That is a discouraging position for any one, and to maintain requires a very unusual amount of stamina. And moral stamina is not conspicuously common at the present time, nor for the matter of that has ever been in the world's history. Still, though Post-Impressionism is in decline, it is too early yet to despair that something better will not take its place, and art be given another lease of life.

RICHARD MARCH.

WORDSWORTH : A PRELIMINARY SURVEY

I.

WORDSWORTH'S poetry is not only an extensive, it is a difficult country ; and therefore, before attempting to cross it, I have thought it worth while to summarize what I imagine I know about it. Much of this may be legend, and I put it forward without any confidence that it is anything more ; but a summary of legend is useful if, by internal confusion or apparent improbability, it brings home the amount of labour necessary to attain the truth.

II.

And first of the traps or pitfalls with which Wordsworth's poetry abounds. One of these is I think its mere amount, by which we should not allow ourselves to be unduly impressed. This may seem a slight temptation, but I am not sure that it is easy to avoid. Staying-power is a comparatively rare thing, and even the appearance of it moves at times to admiration. With Wordsworth it is an important question, how much of it is mere appearance ; and an answer can be given only after going through a poem line by line, enquiring into the significance of each. It is not sufficient

to listen for the general effect of a passage, which may be a sonorous cadence with a buzzing of meaning in the background. Wordsworth was skilled in sounding cadences, and with him as with any other poet meaning should be either more or less than a buzz.

From the *Prelude* and the *Preface to the Lyrical Ballads* it is I think at least probable that he looked on poetry as a sort of natural product, like fruit and flowers; brought into being by nature rather than by man, or by man only as nature works in him. Thus from one point of view he might be said to shift responsibility for composition from his own shoulders on to nature; from another, to arrogate to himself the privilege of unrestrained fertility. As nature a hundred daisies for a single oak, so he throws up a hundred insignificant verses for one of substance. But towards them all, as towards the daisies and the oak, he feels the sort of reverence due to the manifestations of a higher power. He receives them into his collected works, and arranges them in a cunning order to ensure that all shall be read; and in that way he at least dissuades, if he does not intimidate his critic from the task of discrimination.

III.

Secondly we must take care not to be dazzled by his rhetorical skill—'rhetorical' is a word with a number of senses, but I use it, I believe, in the best. It would be difficult to exaggerate this skill in Wordsworth, and the danger which results from it.

Nature, he seems to have thought, produces only the bare essence of poetry, to which man must fit an outer garment of words and metre; therefore a poet, if he would not be mute, must set himself to acquire the knack of metre, as he would any other accomplishment. Wordsworth laboured early and long for this end. 'I have bestowed great care upon my style,' he said, 'and yield to none in the love of my art.' From his use of the terms elsewhere, it seems probable that by 'art' and 'style' he meant the power simultaneously to observe the rules for lucid and grammatical English, and for any verse-form in which he happened to be working. He practised and attained proficiency in a great many: in the sonnet, and in the forms of Spenser, Milton, Pope, Hamilton, Burns and Scott.

The sort of merit which he thus brought within his reach, and which it is important to recognize and name lest, remarkable as it is, it be mistaken for something yet more remarkable, is fairly clearly illustrated by his poem *Yew Trees*. This is familiar, if for no other reason, for being often quoted as an example of the grand style outside Milton. It may be so ; but I do not think we can call it anything more than an exercise in Miltonics.

> . . . those fraternal four of Borrowdale,
> Joined in one solemn and capacious grove ;
> Huge trunks!—and each particular trunk a growth
> Of intertwisted fibres serpentine
> Up-coiling, and inveterately convolved,—
> Nor uninformed with Phantasy . . .

A brilliant exercise, but only brilliant. On re-reading I am sometimes halted by the line in which Time the Shadow, Death the Skeleton and the rest are said to ' meet at noontide ' ; there seems promise here of a complication of ideas ; but if there is, it is soon untied. The ghostly company meet only for the unexpected purpose of united worship, or for the incongruous one of listening to the flood on Glaramara. The yew-trees themselves lack depth, and might as well be figures in tapestry. Wordsworth, I should say, is not much interested in his images or his ideas, except as they serve to support certain rhythms ; it is these which claim the greater part of his attention, and which, as with a sterile art, he exploits for their own sake.

Mastery over metre qualifies him to be a conversational poet—the sort of poet, that is, who flourished in a number of countries during the Renaissance, and in England in the early eighteenth century. At these places and periods a firm tradition of poetic performance permitted the treatment of an unusually wide variety of subjects at least as efficiently in verse as in prose, and often with the urgency and vividness of verse. A number of passages in *The Prelude*, like the description of his dame at Hawkshead or of the sights of London, reach a high level of excellence in this way. One of them, on the Terror, suggests that he might have maintained himself fairly consistently at the highest level, if he had been secure of an audience ; for poetry of this kind, to persist, depends on a society whose members continually stimulate and

restrain. But the audience was lacking, and for various reasons he gradually withdrew into a more and more remote exile. In consequence, some of his later verse, which has been praised for its technical perfection, is no more than scholarly ; it is directed, that is, at a distant, almost a disembodied audience. And some of the rest suffers from a lack of focus, as though it were directed at two widely differing audiences at once. This is the fault of the didactic part of *The Prelude*, where Wordsworth seems unable to convince himself that what he has to say is of itself such as to interest the reader. Therefore by means of orotundity and ornament he seeks to provide an elegant diversion, to combine, as it were, the roles of Lucretius and of Dyer in *The Fleece*. The result is a compromise which I find intensely irritating, though it has been praised. But *The Prelude*, because of a multitude of ingredients, deserves more than one paper to itself.

IV.

A third kind of trap can be described in Wordsworth's own words. Readers of 'moral and religious inclinations,' he says, 'attaching so much importance to the truths which interest them . . . are prone to overrate the Authors by whom those truths are expressed and enforced. They come prepared to impart so much passion to the Poet's language that they remain unconscious how little, in fact, they receive from it.' The vocabulary is that of intellectualism ; but what it expresses might serve as the basis for a distinction between more and less valuable responses to poetry.

Wordsworth often wrote, not only about joy in widest commonality spread, but about common joys. His subjects in themselves, and apart from any treatment he may give, are such as to evoke memories or aspirations in which it is pleasant, if not always profitable or proper to indulge. If the opportunity for indulgence were offered alone, it might be immediately rejected ; but its nature is masked—and this is the greatest danger ; perhaps the last two kinds of traps, which I have taken separately, should be considered together—its nature is masked by the accompanying rhetoric. It is easy to be affected by the subject and by the style or metre of one of Wordsworth's poems, as by two separate things: the one appearing to dignify the other, because of their accidental association ; but neither modifying the other—neither the metre

imposing itself upon and ordering the subject, nor the subject filling out the cavities of the metre. And at the same time it is easy to assume that the poem as a whole is effective when the truth may be that as an integrated whole the poem does not exist. The point is a difficult and, I think, an important one, which will justify one or two illustrations.

Arnold's selection contains a number of not very striking poems ; but the one of least merit is possibly that which begins:

> Pansies, lilies, kingcups, daisies,
> Let them live upon their praises ;
> Long as there's a sun that sets,
> Primroses will have their glory ;
> Long as there are violets,
> They will have a place in story:
> There's a flower that shall be mine,
> 'Tis the little Celandine.

The *lilt*, the tone, is that of a music-hall ditty ; it is difficult to imagine how anyone with an ear sensitive to rhythm, with a feeling for more than the surfaces of words can have have written it. As Wordsworth had both, the explanation may be the abdication of responsibility to which I have already referred. But how has the poem come to be approved? For it figures in other anthologies besides Arnold's—for example, in the *Oxford Book of Regency Verse*. In the first place the language is clear, the metre gives no occasion for stumbling ; it has at least the negative virtues. And secondly the subject, or a large part of the subject, is humility, which is a popular quality ; it inculcates the popular opinion that to be humble is to be happy, even to be merry ; and finally, it harmonizes with the absentee or vacation cult of nature which was a force in English society and in English poetry from the middle of last century onwards. There was nothing that, in his better moments, Wordsworth despised more than he did this cult ; there was nothing about which he wrote more lamely—or rather, when he can be taken to be writing about it, he is always at his lamest. Yet his choice of subjects is such, and his unfailing rhetorical skill, that he has imposed himself upon the cult, and figured as its canonized poet. In a similar way he has been the canonized poet of English and of Anglican institutions ; and as

recently as 1915, with the publication of Professor Dicey's *Statesmanship of Wordsworth*, he was hailed with renewed conviction as the poet of patriotism. His sentiments on that topic are of course unexceptionable; and he dresses them out in a language which the percipient can take to be that of inner compulsion, of inspiration. Yet some of these patriotic effusions, as Mr. Leavis has said, are no more than claptrap; the best probably should not rank as high as what I have called his conversational successes. It seems that patriotism, like religion, is not a safe theme for poetry; and that, for the reason quoted from Wordsworth, it is at least as difficult to read as to compose.

The isolated appeal of the subject in passages like the above is no doubt too obvious for it nowadays to form a trap. But it was on account of their obviousness I chose them; it seemed to me they might help in a further discussion, of which the conclusion is not obvious at all. To what extent are we justified in acknowledging Wordsworth as a mystical poet, as is often done? Are we being deceived somewhat in the manner described—that is, are we responding to the subject by itself, and to certain tricks of style by themselves, rather than to a poem in which both are in alliance and unison? By 'mystical poet' I do not mean one who has intense experiences on the occasion of natural phenomena, nor one who is convinced of the importance of spirit in the life of man and in the affairs of this world. This is perhaps not an unusual meaning for the term, but I employ it in a narrower and I hope more helpful sense. I mean by it a poet who has the sort of experience Wordsworth claims in one or two passages of *The Prelude*—that of a communion or a community with something outside and above the world, with a divine soul or with the highest truth.

The possibility that in these passages the subject may make an isolated appeal arises from the flattering nature of the belief that such communion is possible to a fellow-man; and from certain comfortable consequences which seem to follow. Wordsworth may play upon these rather than convey the experience upon which, if the belief is true, it must ultimately be based.

I take as an example the passage in which he seeks to tell what happened to him when, writing an account of his experiences, he realized that once he had crossed the Alps.

And now recovering, to my soul I say
I recognise thy glory ; in such strength
Of usurpation, in such visitings
Of awful promise, when the light of sense
Goes out in flashes that have shown to us
The invisible world, doth Greatness make abode,
There harbours whether we be young or old.
Our destiny, our nature and our home
Is with infinitude, and only there ;
With hope it is, hope that can never die,
Effort and expectation and desire,
And something evermore about to be.

Let me first note about this passage the ample warrant it provides for all that has been said about Wordsworth's skill in rhetoric. Like Milton, he knows how to draw out the sense variously from verse to verse ; or, as he put it to Klopstock, to secure ' an apt arrangement of pauses and cadences, and the sweep of whole paragraphs.' Secondly, the occasion seems not unsuitable for the display of such skill: an attempt, it seems, is to be made to communicate something by its nature difficult, if not incapable of communication, upon which therefore only a number of sallies can be made. If each is doomed to be ineffectual, all of them together, and the variety of their points of departure and return, may be not wholly without effect. ' Strength of usurpation ' and ' visitings of awful promise ' corroborate each other ; and if it is not clear exactly how, inevitable lack of clarity is part of what is to be conveyed. The figure of an invisible world made visible by a flash of light which thereby extinguishes itself, as though by a supreme effort, recommends for acceptance a difficulty for which, even when accepted, there can be no hope of solution. And as the passage goes on, a solution begins to appear less and less necessary: the metre becomes more regular, the difficulty is not at all impossible, it is even exhilarating to live with. The line, ' With hope it is, hope that can never die ' encourages to aspiration; ' Effort and expectation and desire ' suggests an unremitting eagerness in the soul. The last line, ' And something evermore about to be ' is the most regular of all.

The trouble is that it is too regular—too regular to be smooth.

There is no peace about it, but a merciless beat, and with infinitude there surely should be peace. When we have reached this line the suspicion arises, I think, that Wordsworth is not in fact where a mystic should be - with infinitude, outside or above the world; but rather, well within it. And if so some of the preceding lines need to be reconsidered, and our opinion on them to be revised. Aspiration can be unreservedly welcome only where, as with infinitude, there is certainty that it will be fulfilled; elsewhere 'hope that can never die' is but a euphemism for hope that has never lived. And elsewhere than with infinitude effort and expectation and desire are grim companions: that eagerness is unremitting is no guarantee that, in this world, it will not be baffled. If we turn our attention from the sound to the sense of the last line we see it to have the minimum of meaning: there is nothing in the future to which it will not apply. So far as we can talk of a future in eternity it is of a piece with the present and prophecy cannot arouse mistrust; but to a creature in time the mere idea of futurity cannot bring consolation, and confidence based upon it and nothing more is a poor thing. Loudly to proclaim such a confidence is a still poorer thing.

If we read over the passage with these and similar reflections in mind we discover I think that the rhetoric is not only skilful, it is too obviously skilful: it has no natural movement which, if we admire, we admire as concrete in the substance which moves; but rather a mechanical, to admire which we must abstract and even oppose it to the substance. 'How subtle the play of the levers!' we say, and all the time are thinking of the unexpectedness of such subtlety in dead matter. The poem is not alive, but an extremely cleverly constructed simulacrum; a robot put together no doubt for high purposes; but still not a poem.

It is sometimes said that, to judge with any security of a mystical verse, one should be a mystic oneself. That would however reduce the number of judges to such an extent, that it is hardly likely to be true. It may be suggested that the questions whether Wordsworth succeeded in conveying a mystical experience, and whether he had it, are two different questions, the one falling under biography, the other under criticism; and that the answers to them are not necessarily identical. Not that biography is irrelevant to criticism, to which it can give valuable if extra-

technical aid ; and the biographical question it is true might profitably be raised here. But it would require much time and space: to analyse (among other things) the biographical element in *The Prelude,* to compare it with the similar element in *Tintern* (from which it seems to differ in not unimportant ways ; as though Wordsworth altered his views about his own experiences as he grew older), and finally to compare that biography, according to whatever view prove more acceptable, with the history of a mystic or mystics who are fairly widely acknowledged to be such.

In default of such aid, it is perhaps advisable to consider somewhat closely a second passage. I will choose the lines about the Simplon Pass, as the most difficult ones I know to criticize satisfactorily. If, as is only too likely, I cannot make clear my point about them and their kind, perhaps I can at least make the difficulty clear ; and that is a sufficiently important matter.

The lines are as follows:

> . . . the brook and road
> Were fellow-travellers in this gloomy Pass,
> And with them did we journey several hours
> At a slow step. The immeasurable height
> Of woods decaying, never to be decayed,
> The stationary blasts of waterfalls,
> And everywhere along the hollow rent
> Winds thwarting winds, bewildered and forlorn,
> The torrents shooting from the clear blue sky,
> The rocks that muttered close upon our ears,
> Black drizzling crags that spake by the wayside
> As if a voice were in them, the sick sight
> And giddy prospect of the raving stream,
> The unfettered clouds, and region of the heavens,
> Tumult and peace, the darkness and the light
> Were all like workings of one mind, the features
> Of the same race, blossoms upon one tree,
> Characters of the great Apocalypse,
> The types and symbols of Eternity,
> Of first and last, and midst, and without end.

I had better say at once, to prevent misunderstanding as far as I am able, that I think the greater part of this passage is very

impressive indeed. I think it so impressive that I am disappointed perhaps more than I should be with the rest, but this I think distracts and divides the attention, although it is short. It may also influence unfavourably the style of the whole.

In these lines Wordsworth, it seems to me, is trying to do not one thing but two; or rather, having done one thing and done it well, he goes on to another which perhaps by its nature cannot be so well done. Down to the last three lines he is concerned to express a feeling of surprise, almost vexation: like the thwarting winds he is bewildered and forlorn; while the woods, the waterfalls and the rocks about him threaten ruin and decay, they seem fixed for ever. They threaten destruction to one another, and even to the spectator—there are sick sights and giddy prospects—nevertheless there is and there will be no annihilation, only persistence. He finds escape from this bewilderment by, so to speak, living into the phenomena by which it is caused: in all of them he finds the working of a 'single mind,' with which he can identify himself, or of which he can become a part. And then he sees that the stresses which they exert upon one another and upon himself, all of which he experiences in himself, serve only for their mutual support. This notion of immobility resulting where action and change might be expected occurs elsewhere in Wordsworth's best poetry, of some of which it is almost a mark; but in such work he rests in the notion as the only satisfaction which the circumstances can afford. Here however he takes a step further, and seeks a satisfaction which so far from springing from the circumstances seems only to discount them. The bewilderment yields to or is transformed into a revelation, an apocalypse, and the ground for it is removed by degrading the woods, the waterfalls and the rocks from being themselves eternal into types and symbols of eternity. And this eternity, rather than charged with a greater significance than what are said to be its symbols, seems empty of everything: it is dismissed in flat pentameter, the only content of which is the highest common factor of the many associations hanging about a scrap from the liturgy. In other words Wordsworth (I think) finally adopts an answer which has no particular relevance to, and is therefore an escape from, his immediate problem; which, as it might answer any problem, answers none, and is provided for him rather by talk about mysticism than by mysticism itself—

by religiosity rather than religion: at least by a deadening, not a vivifying force.

Perhaps I exaggerate: but I think it is a danger that these last few lines, connected with their predecessors by the sweep of the metre, and offering the reader an alternative against which, in the context, he is least on his guard, may hinder him from entering into the full and difficult meaning of that context ; and they may do so, even when the alternative is rejected. How Wordsworth came to write in this mixed and broken way, if, as I think, he did do so, is obviously a serious problem ; it would almost seem that acute perception was something of which he had learnt to be afraid. Elsewhere there are traces of a similar fear ; of which, of course, it would be a gross impertinence to speak in any tone of censure, not of regret. Perhaps also the phenomenon may be not unconnected with what has already been described as an abdication of responsibility in composition.

V.

From a summary account of what may be the traps—the marshy lowlands, the hidden gulfs—in Wordsworth's poetry, I pass to an account which must be yet more summary of what seem to be its highlands. From a distance it is no less possible to be mistaken about these than about the former ; and as they are of wider significance, I speak with greater diffidence.

It is I think a useful question to ask how Wordsworth first came to believe that he was a poet ; a man, that is, in whom nature works so as to produce poetry. As he thought that nature, instead of repeating herself, provides for a development of the spirit or a gradual revelation of truth, it must have been because he felt he had something new within him.

Part of it was a peculiar sensibility to nature, or a novel intimacy with her and her manifestations. When he was fourteen, he says, he became conscious ' of the infinite variety of natural appearances which had been unnoticed by poets of any age and country,' and resolved ' to supply in some degree the deficiency.' But he was more than an observer: the other childhood experience must be remembered, that he sometimes felt himself slipping into ' an abyss of idealism.' He was part of what he saw, or what he

saw was part of him. And as early as the *Descriptive Sketches* he speaks of 'abandoning the cold rules of painting' to consult both 'nature and his feelings'. From that date onwards he gives no mere lists of natural appearances, but groupings of them as they served to prompt a dominant emotion.

As long as what he calls the idealism persisted, or whenever it reasserted itself, this emotion was some degree of joy; for there was nothing other than himself by which he might be thwarted. It marks various well-known passages in *The Prelude*:

> The sea was laughing at a distance; all
> The solid mountains were as bright as clouds,
> Grain-tinctured, drenched in empyrean light;
> And in the meadows and the lower grounds,
> Was all the sweetness of a common dawn.
> Dews, vapours and the melody of birds,
> And labourers going forth into the fields.

It is at its most exuberant in the spring poems of the *Lyrical Ballads*:

> Love, now a universal birth
> From heart to heart is stealing,
> From earth to man, from man to earth:
> —It is the hour of feeling.
>
> One moment now may give us more
> Than years of toiling reason:
> Our minds shall drink at every pore
> The spirit of the season.

But exaggerations of this kind are themselves a criticism of the mood: as by its nature it is fleeting, it can be maintained for any length of time only by self-deception, to which one means is a loud boasting.

Already in his childhood Wordsworth had made such a criticism: 'idealism' he had recognized as an 'abyss,' and to save himself had put out his hand. In doing so he was not repeating the Johnsonian experiment: his intention was not to refute a metaphysic, but to repeat a type of experience, that of being resisted, which for a time he had forgotten. Resistance,

thwarting, comes from things outside himself, other than himself: and the second new thing about his poetry is I think its preoccupation with *other things as other*. In various ways they threaten his equanimity, disturb his peace.

In his early years there seems to have been a rapid oscillation between the sense of joyous union, and one of divorce from the external world ; the latter giving rise to unhappiness, and at times to fear. A mountain pursued him ' with measured motion, like a living thing ; ' and ' after he had seen that spectacle '—these are his words:

> . . . for many days my brain
> Worked with a dim and undetermined sense
> Of unknown modes of being ; in my thoughts
> There was a darkness, call it solitude
> Or blank desertion, no familiar shapes
> Of hourly objects . . .
> But huge and mighty Forms that do not live
> Like living men moved slowly through the mind
> By day and were a trouble to my dreams.

From time to time he returns to this notion of opposition, of enmity—not only between himself, but between other people and the external world ; and at times, as in the Simplon Pass, between the external occupants of the world. But it does not long remain the centre of his interest. Conceived of as enemies, other things are in a measure like himself, and in that measure reconciliation with them might be possible ; it is in the measure in which they are unlike himself, in which they are other, that the fascination they exert is unescapable.

Are they real? he seems compelled to ask. They are so different, that there is no quality however abstract he might split off from himself—not even the bare quality of being—in which they might partake. Either they exist exactly as he does, and are himself—but that is impossible ; or they do not exist at all—but they obviously do. And as though to convince himself of the latter fact in a subtler manner than by clutching at a wall, he considers repeatedly in his verse the sort of realities which maintain themselves under apparently impossible conditions.

> . the lifeless arch of stones in air
> Suspended, the cerulean firmament
> And what it is, the river that flows on
> Perpetually, whence comes it, whither tends,
> Going and never gone; the fish that moves
> And lives as in an element of death.

A rainbow he saw near Coniston, 'the substance thin as dreams,' nevertheless stood unmoved through the uproar of a storm,

> Sustained itself through many minutes' space,
> As if it were pinned down by adamant.

And reflections in water occupy his attention either because of the instability of the element on which they are traced—like that of Peele Castle, which 'trembled, but it never passed away;' or because of their apparent identity with the object reflected, from which nevertheless they are other. Mr. de Selincourt quotes an early version of some lines in the *Excursion*:

> Once coming to a bridge that overlooked
> A mountain torrent, where it was becalmed
> By a flat meadow, at a glance I saw
> A twofold image; on the grassy bank
> A snow-white ram, and in the peaceful flood
> Another and the same; most beautiful
> The breathing creature; nor less beautiful
> Beneath him, was his shadowy counterpart:
> Each had his glowing mountains, each his sky,
> And each seemed centre of his own fair world.
> A stray temptation seized me to dissolve
> The vision—but I could not.

He had picked up a pebble, but dropped it unthrown. The passage has many defects, but I quote it for one or two phrases—'another and the same,' 'each had his glowing mountains,'—and for the conclusion. This suggests that the habit of contemplating things which exist when and in a way in which existence seems impossible has led to a respect for them which is almost superstitious. When other things are fleeting they are capable of being destroyed; but that they are fleeting is a vindication of their reality as other, and this forbids destruction like a desecration.

Reflections in water retain form and colour ; and carrying analysis as far as it can go, Wordsworth seeks to know what they have which makes them to be other than their objects. What are the principles, which render possible a multiplicity of things? which separate him from the external world, as objects in the external world are separated from one another? The ultimate answer he gives is time and place, duration and extension: it is because the reflection of the ram is elsewhere than the ram itself that, apparently identical in all other respects, it is yet obviously different from the ram. And it is upon duration and extension which, highly abstract as they are, yet seem the soil and sap of other reality, that the superstitious respect just noted finally bears. However confused his account of the experience when he realized that he had crossed the Alps, the experience was of an impressive kind ; and, stripping the account of its reference to eternal destiny, we see the experience to have consisted merely in the realization that, whereas he had been on one side of the Alps, he was now on the other. Or we might say that, as he does not contrast the two sides in respect of any of their qualities—their orientation, their contour or their covering—he realized there is diversity of place. It is this, and this alone, that ' wrapt him in a cloud.' That a mountain barrier rose between two particular places—that they were the *sides* of a mountain—was not his concern, for there rose between them another barrier which, if more ideal, is more impassable. It was erected by the very notion of space, of which the parts are by definition external one to another ; each, for the rest, an *other*. The experience is perhaps more easily discerned behind a second passage from *The Prelude*, which describes an entry into London. At the time Wordsworth was not occupied by any ideas of the capital as a storehouse of tradition or magnificence, and his immediate surroundings did not invite attention—there were ' vulgar men ' about him, and ' mean shapes on every side.' His senses and his memory were unheeded or asleep. But he was awake to the notion of the boundary, the imaginary line which sets up place against place, and by crossing which, from having been without London, he would find himself within.

> The very moment that I seem'd to know
> The threshold now is overpass'd . . .

> A weight of Ages did at once descend
> Upon my heart.

By a sort of intellectual vision he saw himself as having been *there* and now being *here*, and this was sufficient to move him deeply.

Duration is marked and made manifest by events; and there are passages in some of Wordsworth's poems which are perhaps only too well known, in which the sole purpose seems to be to record that something, no matter what, has happened. Throughout a number of stanzas the metre is supported by little more than expletives, repetitions and tautologies; our attention is claimed, it seems, only that it may be cheated of an object—for the stanzas contain neither narration nor description, and very little reflection. The reader is exacerbated or wearied, though Wordsworth, presumably, is full of excitement: so that when something finally happens, if only the prevarication of a child or an old man's tears, it is hailed with relief.

Passages of this kind are little more than biographical or psychological curiosities: in them, Wordsworth is so fully occupied with abstractions that he forgets the concrete business of living. But when he returns he is the better qualified to face its problems, having a keener eye for their elements. The external world, for example, he sees quite clearly is not to be subdued or placated like an enemy; in so far as it is external, it is there while we are here, then while we are now: it is irreducibly *other* than ourselves, so that to stand in any relations to it, to affect it, even to be aware of it, seems to imply a contradiction. If we wish to give any account of it, we can employ only adjectives which are the opposites of those which we apply to ourselves: if we are active then it is immobile, if we are alive then it is dead, as points in space are dead. Yet it is in such a world that he finds himself, and with which he must come to terms, on pain of a sense of desertion blanker than that to which he was first summoned by the pursuing mountain.

His solution seems to be something like the following. He imagines—but imagine is a weak word; he creates and it is part of his own experience—a kind of being in which both the external world and himself can share. It combines the characters of both: internally it is active and striving, as he is, but looked at from

outside it is immobile like the world. While for himself, that is, he renounces the possibility of action upon other things, he need not on that account feel cut off from them. They and he are united by the common possession of a hidden activity, in the knowledge of which he can feel, while among them, at home and at peace. If his spirit is sealed, so is that of the dead Lucy, so are rocks and stones and trees ; and with dead things he has a sort of sympathy. The universe as thus apprehended has no very remote resemblance to the Simplon Pass: if it cannot quite properly be spoken of as a balance of stresses, it yet contains a number of stresses which, though they are active, produce no alteration. At these moments of apprehension Wordsworth describes himself as ' seeing into the life of things,' or elsewhere, as seeing ' the very pulse of the machine.' The word ' machine ' is important, for it gives that sense of change within stability which I am trying to suggest. And the pulse is conveyed in verses, some of which are among the best he wrote, which describe ambiguous creatures like the horse

> . . . that stood
> Alone upon a little breast of ground
> With a clear silver moonlight sky behind.
> With one leg from the ground the creature stood
> Insensible and still—breath, motion gone,
> Hairs, colour, all but shape and substance gone,
> Mane, ears and tail, as lifeless as the trunk
> That had no stir of breath ; we paused awhile
> In pleasure of the sight, and left him there
> With all his functions silently sealed up,
> Like an amphibious work of Nature's hand,
> A Borderer dwelling betwixt life and death.

The horse has one foot off the ground, and that it is clear he might move is one of the reasons for the pleasure which he gives ; the other reason is that he is restrained from moving, or that he restrains himself. Similar to the horse in this way are the solitary beings whom Wordsworth met at night, or in almost permanently lonely places: like the discharged soldier, who remained ' fix'd to his place,' ' at his feet His shadow lay, and moved not.' ' I wish'd to see him move,' exclaims Wordsworth, that he might be assured of the reality of the soldier ; but when at last the soldier did so

> . . . I beheld
> With ill-suppressed astonishment his tall
> And ghastly figure moving at my side

Most carefully drawn of them all is the Leech gatherer, who is compared both to a 'huge stone,' and to a 'sea beast'—that is, he is capable of locomotion, but will not engage upon it. He is

> Motionless as a cloud . .
> That heareth not the loud winds when they call

—he does not hear, not in the sense that he is deaf, but that he will not obey—

> And moveth all together, if it move at all.

I do not know whether Wordsworth was acquainted with the doctrine of the school that all motion is by parts; whether or no, something of the kind has a share in the effect which is intended here. 'The cloud must move all together' that is it cannot be imagined to move, for if it did one part would be seen to take precedence of another; and yet it may move, for otherwise it would not have a share in being, in reality.

VI.

So far as I know Wordsworth was quite new, and has remained unique, in concerning himself in this way with 'being as such': the old phrase is convenient, in spite or because of its habit of bearing now the minimum, now the maximum of meaning. He explored the significance, or examined the experience, of being for other things, and this modified the experience of being for himself. It would be a mistake, I think, to see in this any influence of contemporary German thought: there is a difficulty about the dates. Wordsworth was not sympathetic to German thinkers, and the whole course of his dealing with the problem suggests that it was posed for him by what he lived through, rather than by what he read or what he heard in Coleridgean conversation. And as the achievement in this matter was his own, he used it as the starting-point for a new enterprise.

The problem of suffering, if he awoke to it later than to that of the external world, came in early manhood to occupy him no

less continually. The notion of being at which he arrived seemed to offer promise of a solution. For if suffering arises from thwarted effort, either to affect other things or to avoid being affected by them, it is a consequence of a creature's desire to operate beyond itself. And if this is renounced, as Wordsworth conceived it might and should be, suffering as the occasion of rebellion or complaint will cease. But is it humanly possible to carry renunciation to the point which may be necessary? It is conceivable that other things should close in to such an extent upon a creature that, if he yields to them, any inner activity left is too insignificant to be called human. There are three poems which are perhaps especially important by the answers they return to this question.

They are *The Leech-gatherer*, *The Lesser Celandine*, and *Michael*. It will be possible to notice them only briefly.

When he comes across the leech-gatherer Wordsworth is a man of moods, and he generalizes from himself to the human race:

> As high as we have mounted in delight,
> In our dejection do we sink as low.

But the leech-gatherer, like the stone to which he is compared, knows no moods ; he has few hopes, and such disappointments as come his way do not disturb him. Though the stock of leeches has dwindled, and they are to be found only by wandering alone about the weary moors,

> Yet still I persevere, and find them where I may.

He preserves a courteous and cheerful demeanour, even ' stately in the main.' Wordsworth marvels there should be ' in that decrepit man so firm a mind ; ' and contrasting the firmness with his own levity, which is at the mercy of other things, he accepts the implied rebuke.

The Lesser Celandine usually closes its petals against the foul weather:

> But lately, one rough day, this Flower I passed
> And recognized it, though an altered form,
> Now standing forth an offering to the blast,
> And buffeted at will by rain and storm.
>
> I stopped, and said with inly-muttered voice,
> ' It doth not love the shower, nor seek the cold:

> This neither is its courage nor its choice,
> But its necessity in being old
>
> The sunshine may not cheer it, nor the dew,
> It cannot help itself in its decay

Other things have compelled the Celandine to forfeit the last scrap of independence and dignity; therefore it can administer no rebuke—it cannot be admired, but only deplored.

Nevertheless it has had what might be considered its due of glory: if it falls a victim, it is only to the forces of time and senility about which, as nothing escapes them, there seems something equitable. In *Michael* the shepherd and his family are involved in a similar fate while still in their prime—for the old man is 'strong and hale'—and although they have taken every measure to avoid it. Like the leech-gatherer they make few claims on life:

> Our lot is a hard lot; the sun himself
> Has scarcely been more diligent than I.

they are 'neither gay perhaps, nor cheerful;' and if they have objects and hopes, it for 'a life of eager industry,' for the continued performance of the tasks which their ancestors performed before them. Their only pleasure is 'the pleasure which there is in life itself,' that which is necessary to the pulse and implied in the spark of consciousness. They are submissive to the natural course of things, of which their tasks are almost a part; and, had circumstances permitted, it might have been said of them as of their ancestors, that when

> At length their time was come, they were not loth
> To give their bodies to the family mould.

They seek to preserve a submissiveness even to their abnormal afflictions; and the hopes and fears which these cannot but provoke, if wild, are immediately curbed. Each watches the other for signs of strain:

> . . . the Old Man paused,
> And Isabel sat silent . . .
> . . . her face brightened. The Old Man was glad.

At night Isabel

> Heard him, how he was troubled in his sleep:
> And when they rose at morning she could see
> That all his hopes were gone.

Here it is the ready confidence of the son which redresses the balance:

> She said to Luke, while they two by themselves
> Were sitting at the door, ' Thou must not go . . .
> For if thou leave thy Father he will die.'
> The youth made answer with a jocund voice ;
> And Isabel, when she had told her fears,
> Recovered heart.

But Luke too has his misgivings ; and when setting on his journey he reaches the public way he finds it necessary to ' put on a bold face.' All is in vain ; Luke is driven into exile, and Michael survives hardly as a man but as an animal—by his brute strength.

> His bodily frame had been from youth to age
> Of an unusual strength.

is the first thing we are told about him, and almost the last. He is moreover a sick animal, able to perform some but not all of his instinctive tasks. When he visits the site of the projected sheepfold,

> He never lifted up a single stone.

The verse of the poem is a delicate thing. It has almost ceased to beat, and seems maintained only by the flutter of tenuous hopes and sickening fears.

> . . . the unlooked-for claim
> At the first hearing for a moment took
> More hope out of his life than he supposed
> That any old man ever could have lost.

Wordsworth, who was so often an imitator, here speaks with his own voice ; and the verse is the contribution he makes to prosody. He uses it rarely—elsewhere than in *Michael* only, I think, in *Margaret* and occasionally in *The Brothers* ; but it should be taken as a measure of his work. Against it the verse of the *Simplon Pass*,

though very different in intention reveals itself as forced and harsh. As I believe I suggested, what is noble in the *Simplon Pass* is in a measure debased by the immediate context.

VII.

From *Michael* it appeared that the extinction of suffering is the extinction of humanity. To be sure of this lesson, it had been necessary for Wordsworth to experience suffering in an exquisite form, unadulterated in any way—as for example with the satisfaction of playing either to himself or to an audience. There is no audience in *Michael*, except shepherds too close to the hero to do anything but 'feel pity in their heart.'

I do not know that any other poet has done quite the same thing; I do not think that Wordsworth did it either before or since. It is as though he exposed a nerve which, as it was too sensitive for the impressions it could not but receive, must immediately be deadened.

The conclusions of both *The Leech gatherer* and *The Lesser Celandine* suggest that something like this happened. Though both are less intense than *Michael*, neither maintains such intensity as it possesses to the end: suddenly both run down with a sickening whir—or, to change the metaphor, the music in both poems is broken by a discord. After the discovery of firmness in the leech-gatherer, Wordsworth does not prepare himself for any rigorous self-discipline: he 'laughs himself to scorn':

> 'God,' said I, 'be my help and stay secure;
> I'll think of the Leech-gatherer on the lonely moor!'

In this jauntiness there is no relevance to his circumstances. It is as though he had become oblivious of these; as though they were now presented to the deadened nerve: and the jauntiness had opportunity to supervene from a disconnected part of his consciousness. In *The Lesser Celandine* the break is even more noticeable. It happens in the last line of a stanza:

> The sunshine may not cheer it, nor the dew;
> It cannot help itself in its decay;
> Stiff in its members, withered, changed of hue.
> And in my spleen, I smiled that it was gray.

To be a Prodigal's Favourite—then, worse truth,
A Miser's Pensioner—behold our lot!
O Man, that from thy fair and shining youth
Age might but take the things Youth needed not!

The word ' spleen ' has a multitude of meanings, one of which might be suitable to the poem ; but there is no reason, other than a complete abandonment of seriousness, why Wordsworth should smile. And this would explain the final stanza, which is the sort of platitude with which we dismiss an argument when we have not solved it, and when it has come to weary us ; or the copy-book maxim with which we hand over a vexing problem of conduct to chance for its decision. Wordsworth's maxim is not so much irrelevant to his problem as a denial of the conditions which it presupposes. The Celandine 'cannot help itself in its decay '—' if only it could!' observes the final stanza.

But, as though foreseeing the outcome of the solution attempted in *Michael*, already in *Margaret* Wordsworth had prepared for another way of dealing with suffering. Unlike *Michael*, *Margaret* plays to an audience, who are the author and the Wanderer ; and like all spectators of tragedy, in so far as mere spectators, they are in the role of *tertius gaudens*. Evil to the actor is good to them. Some of the better poems of the middle years—up to *Peele Castle* and beyond—are devoted in part at least to affirming the belief that evil is in addition and in some way good. The belief may be true, or may be necessary ; but as, without revelation or an augmentation of the faculties, it cannot be comprehended without at least partly neglecting evil, the poems, if they can be looked down on from no mean height, can certainly be looked down on from *Michael*. Others of Wordsworth's occupations were, with the help of the optimistic Hartley, refashioning his memories of the past so that they might support the belief (and hence *The Prelude*, in passages like the two we have examined, is of the nature of a palimpsest) ; or indicting scholarly poems and less disinterested ones on behalf of patriotism, Anglicanism and the like. Some of these have already received summary notice.

But an exploratory paper is no occasion to draw the lower contours of Wordsworth's poetry. It is enough to indicate the high peaks ; for even about these—I hope I may be forgiven this last repetition—a distant observer is likely to be mistaken.

JAMES SMITH.

WILLIAM DUNBAR[1]

TO Dunbar Chaucer has become the 'rose of rethoris all'; the phrase is sufficient to awaken doubt as to the substantiality of Dunbar's appreciation of Chaucer. An examination of his poetry reveals that as a poet he is in fact as different from Chaucer as it was possible for another mediæval poet to be. Plainly, to begin an account of Dunbar from a comparison between his work and that of Chaucer would not be to the point, unless to bring home the inaccuracy of styling Dunbar a Scottish Chaucerian. He is at a still further remove from Chaucer than Henryson, and, being nearer the European centre in his time than the latter, he belongs to the very latest mediæval phase.

But to find the explanation of Dunbar's power in the influence, already, of the Renaissance would, again, be a misrepresentation. What gives him (in spite of, and because of, his 'lateness') his extraordinary power, whereby he is perhaps the greatest Scottish poet, in his skilled command of the rich and varied resources of language open to him, and, related to this, his command of varied metres adapted from what were by his time the rich accumulation of mediæval French and mediæval Latin verse, as well as, and often united together with, indigenous alliteration and assonance used as Hopkins rather than as Swinburne uses it. This variety of language and of metres has its counterpart in a variety of modes so bewildering that our first difficulty must be to determine where the centre of Dunbar's work as a whole is. It is my object in this paper to suggest that the core of his living achievement, that part of his achievement which we read as if it were contemporary, consists, not of the ceremonial poems, *The Goldyn Targe*, *The Thrissil and the Rois*, but of the comic and satiric poems, *The Twa Mariit Weman and the Wedo*, *The Dance of the Sevin Deidly Synnis*, the goliardic blasphemies, *The Flyting*, *The Satire on Edinburgh*, and the more acrid and radical satires that

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[1] *Scottish Poetry from Barbour to James VI*, edited by M. M. Gray (Dent & Sons).

The Poems of William Dunbar, edited (with a good introduction) by W. Mackay Mackenzie (Porpoise Press).

merge into the saturnine poems that give his work as a whole its dark cast.

These comic and satiric poems are not less traditional than the ceremonial poems. The difference is in the nature of their several traditions, or, to put it otherwise, in the ways in which they are traditional ; and this again works down to a difference in their language the social and moral implications of which should appear. The language of the comic and satiric poems is essentially the language of what was living speech in Dunbar's ' locality,' which was not without its place in the still homogeneous mediæval European community ; whereas the ' aureate diction ' of the ceremonial poems of Dunbar, the court poet, is at a distinct remove from living speech, and therefore from life, including Dunbar's own, in any locality ; is in fact *purely* ' literary ' or ' poetical,' rootless, without actuality. The difference between the former and the latter is in consequence that between a greater and a much lesser degree of inherent life. Without life informing it, language, however brilliant its surface, and however aristocratic its lineage, is mere idle verbiage.

Yet *The Goldyn Targe* and *The Thrissil and the Rois*, though they may be pressed to one side, for the lively reader, by the vitality of the comic and satiric poems, are what in Dunbar's case had become of the direct line of European allegorical poetry descending from the *Roman de la Rose*, and on this ground they demand some attention in any attempt to give an account of Dunbar's work as a whole ; this attention I prefer to give them at the beginning rather than the end of this paper. To Dunbar himself and to his contemporaries they doubtless seemed the centre of his work, as indeed they might be if the value of a poem is in proportion to the amount of conscious effort that seems to have been expended on it. But even to Dunbar's first readers I doubt if they were the poems which really yielded the most enjoyment.

The terms of Dunbar's celebration of Chaucer and Gower at the end of *The Goldyn Targe* are inappropriate in everything else except that they fit their context. It is Dunbar himself in the *Goldyn Targe*, not Chaucer, whose ' termis ' are ' enamelit ' and ' celicall ' and whose ' lippis,' ' tonguis,' ' mouthis ' are ' sugarit,' ' aureate,' ' mellifluate.' He goes wrong here as a critic at the same time unconsciously revealing why here he goes wrong also as a

poet. The first five stanzas of the poem are a similarly dazzling exercise in the rhetoric, the heavy ornamentation, the overloaded decorativeness, then, in that 'late' century, fashionable. But the poem is inadequate as a poem not because it is rhetoric, but because of the nature of that rhetoric itself. Rhetoric must be something more fundamental, more deeply rooted, than this, to be at the same time fully satisfactory as poetry. Dunbar's highly conscious interest in language carried with it certain obvious dangers. There is here a kind of rootless, mechanical delight generated in the mere verbal exercise but it is not healthy; it is not the same thing as the life, the abundant energy of the living language which Dunbar elsewhere successfully shares. *The Goldyn Targe* remains a monument to the fact that you cannot make a poem out of an interest purely in language, and the manipulation and arrangement of it; and when the interest is in 'poetic' language artificially enriched by over-lavish borrowing from alien sources the resulting kind of richness may easily be fatal to life. Where this kind of rhetoric wears off, as in the beautiful passage about a hundred ladies who land in a meadow from a ship, it is significant that the poetry is revealed as something much more like Spenser than even the Chaucer of the translation of the *Roman de la Rose*. Mediæval allegory is here seen changing into something else; it is the death of allegory, its swan song.

The ceremonial poems were of course written for ceremonial occasions; they correspond to the pageants and processions of these occasions. To this extent they correspond to something in the public life of Dunbar and the Scotland of Dunbar's time in which ritualistic pomp and show, pageants and processions played a part such as to suggest, the times being late, that this heightening of the outward forms, this colouring up of the outward shows is the symptom of some inner spiritual corruption rather than simply what it may at first seem, the spontaneous expression of the natural joy of life in a rather primitive people; there is nothing spontaneous about *The Goldyn Targe*. We cannot afford to ignore this in trying to understand the meaning of Dunbar's work as a whole. Together with the conscious interest in language the ceremonial poems exhibit it may have a bearing on the other poems of Dunbar that are so unlike the ceremonial poems.

At this point we may well have begun to ask whether Dunbar gained anything by being, in his particular place and time, a court poet. What he did gain may be exemplified most purely by the small poem *To a Ladie*. If the ceremonial poems show that he was among other things a professional court poet, the lyric *To a Ladie* shows him capable also of a genuine courtliness. It would seem absurd to claim uniqueness for this trifle, except in the obvious sense that every poem is unique ; but in Dunbar's work it is something of a rarity, something of a surprise in itself ; it is at one end of his range ; in it the main European tradition is alive, not as in the ceremonial poems dead. Nor is it simply a concentration of what Dunbar does diffusely in the ceremonial poems ; it contains something that is not there present ; there is in it a certain unexpectedness, almost wit.

> Sweet rose of virtue and of gentleness
> Delightsome lily of every lustiness.

You would expect ' lily ' where you get ' rose ' and ' rose ' where you get ' lily ' ; they are interchanged ; the lady is virtuous and desirable at the same time. The poem shows Dunbar's skill as a metrist ; but that skill is, here, not merely metrical ; it is part of the unexpectedness ; it contributes, for example, to the surprise of the final line of the first and, again, the second stanza. Allegory and wit are thus brought together, the *Roman de la Rose* and, except that the poem remains in itself completely mediæval, the conceitedness of the sixteenth-century Petrarchian sonnets. This intellectual element in it, balancing the emotional, is exactly what the purely ' local ' love songs of Burns are without.

But, as has been indicated, *To a Ladie* is not representative of Dunbar's characteristic achievement. It is in the comic and satiric poems that his energy, which is Dunbar, finds in various shapes and forms, its free and full expression ; and it is (I think) in *The Twa Marit Weman and the Wedo* that the comic zest, the sheer enjoyment and appetite, reaches its maximum of bursting exuberance ; for this poem, though in the tradition of the *chanson à mal mariée* (This is how these women, when they get together in secret, tear their husbands limb from limb) is primarily comic not satiric ; in it we devour the ripe grapes. The force of vulgar gossip is raised to the degree of art ; ribaldry assumes this proportion. I choose a passage almost at random.

I wald me preen pleasantly in precious weedis,
That luvaris micht upon me look and ying lusty gallandis.
That I hald in more daunt and deare be full merkle
Na him that dressit me so dunk, full dolit was his heid.
When he was heryit out of hand, to hie up my honoris,
And panted me as a parrock, proudest of fedderis,
I him mis kennit, by Christ, and cuckold him made.

What the poem seems essentially to represent in the force of the impudent ('lowd that lewch') natural self rising up from among the people and asserting its right according to the 'law of luf, of nature and of kynd' without respect or regard for moral authority, the dogmas and restraints of the church.

Ladyis, this is the legend of my life, though Latin it be nane.

But the profane figure of the widow in church is an object of purely comic contemplation, a symbol: there is no hint of arbitrary condemnation.

Than lay I forth my bright book on breid on my knee
With mony lusty letter, illumynit with gold;
And drawis my cloak forward owr my face white
That I may spy, unespyit, a space me beside . . .
When friendis of my husbandis beholdis me on far,
I have a water sponge for woe, within my wide cloakis.
Then wring I it full wylily and wetis my cheekis

(The consequence is she is provided with no dearth of lovers in secret).

And all my luvaris leal, my lodging persewis,
And fillis me wyne wantonly with welfare and joy:
Some rounis, and some ralyeis; and sum readis ballatis;
Some ravis forth rudely with riotous speech,
Some plainis, and some prayis; some praisis my beauty
Some kisses me; some clappis me; some kindness me proferis.

In spite of the dramatization we to an appreciable extent share, we are made partakers of the comforts of 'these creatures of the kyn of Adam,' the delight in 'wickedness,' the stolen delight in unrestrained sin; the eavesdropper behind the hawthorn is scarcely an intruder.

Apon the Midsummer evin, mirriest of nichtis,
I muvit furth allane, neir as midnicht wes past
Besyd ane gudlie grein garth, full of gay flouris,
Hegeit, of ane huge hicht, with hawthorn treis
Quhairon ane bird, on ane bransche so birst out his notis . . .
I saw thre gay ladeis sit in ane grene arbeir . . .
Thir gay Wiffis maid game amang the grene leiffis ;
Thai drank and did away dule under derne bewis ;
Thai swapit of the sweit wyne, thai swanquhit of hewis.

There is no essential contrast between the natural scene (described because background, in more conventional language, but still bursting with the opulence of midsummer) and the gossips ; the beauty of nature and the ugliness of vice, as some moralist has suggested. The hawthorn, the birds and the gossips are filled with the same heady wine, the same exuberance of life ; they are equally on the plane simply of nature and instinct.

The Dance of the Sevin Deidly Sinnis comes from the same common source in the popular speech, though in another of these traditions and exhibiting another variety of this humour. The humour here is savage, primitive, uncivilized. Its *expression* is conditioned by the dance frenzy in the rhythm.

And first of all in dance was Pride,
With bare wild back and bonnet on side,
Like to make wastie wanis ;
And round about him, as a wheel,
Hang all in rumpillis to the heel
His kethat for the nanis:
Mony proud trumpour with him trippit
Throw skaldand fyre, ay as they skippit
They girn'd with hideous granis.

The poem is commonly commended for a fantastic blending of the comic with the horrible, the ghastly, the macabre, but that is to misunderstand the essential nature of this savage folk humour. There is no such dichotomy and no such sophistication in the poem. There is nothing fantastic or supernatural in it either. It shares the vigorous, earthy actuality of the popular sermons of the Middle Ages.

Syne Sweirness, at the second bidding,
Come like a sow out of a midding,
Full sleepy was his grunyie
Mony swear bumbard belly huddroun,
Mony slute daw and sleepy duddroun . . .

(Gluttony)

Him followit mony foul drunkart,
With can and collep, cop and quart,
In surfeit and excess;
Full mony a waistless, wallydrag,
With wamis unwieldable, did furth wag . . .

There is no incongruity, intentional or otherwise, in introducing the figure of the Highlandman at the end; Pride ('bonnet on side') and Ire are just as 'local.' But they are at the same time 'local' against the whole mediæval religious (and ecclesiastical) background.

Whill priestis come in with bare shaven neckis,
Than all the fiendis leuch, and made geckis,
Black Belly, and Rawsy Brown.

The Dance of the Sins belongs to the grotesquerie of the late mediæval popular imagination.

We shall by this time have observed that there is a good deal of the goliard even in those poems of Dunbar which are not, as *The Dregy of Dunbar* and *The Testament of Kennedy* are, primarily goliardic. The goliardic parodies should be read with Dunbar's own serious hymn in mind. These latter are scrupulously on the model of the Latin hymns, ritualistic, formal, stiff. The symbolism (I think of the beautiful *Rorate celi desuper*) is the extremely conventionalized symbolism of the Latin hymns. Latinized diction is used; and lines of Latin are inserted. But the ecclesiastical world, the language of which was Latin, was something actual in Dunbar's own world: the lines of Latin fit, without incongruity, into even his profane poems, as they would not into the purely 'local' poems of Fergusson or Burns. The incongruity in the goliardic poems is not essentially between the Latin lines and the others (most goliardic poems were wholly in Latin) but in the clash between sacred associations and the profane sentiments of lustfulness, eating and drinking.

Ego pacior in pectore,
  This night I myght nocht sleip a wink ;
Licet eger in corpore
  Yit wald my mouth be wet with drink.
Nunc condo testamentum meum,
  I leiff my saull for evermare
Per omnipotentem Deum,
  In to my lordis wyne cellar ;
Semper ibi ad remanendum,
  Quhill domisday without dissever,
Bonum vinum ad bibendum,
  With sueit Cuthbert that luffit me never.
A barell bung ay at my bosum
  Of warldis gud I had na mair ;
Corpus meum ebriosum
  I leif on to the toune of Air.

The blasphemy of the goliardic poems is the complement of the dogmatic belief accepted (there is no reason not to suppose sincerely) in the serious hymns.

Dunbar's satire when it is serious is, as we should expect, predominantly ecclesiastical and, at its deepest, religious. *The Satire on Edinburgh* is not satire of this serious kind ; it is again (unless I am much mistaken, for it has been found scathingly bitter) less satiric than comic.

May nane pass through your principal gaittis
For stink of haddockis and of skatis ;
For cryis of carlingis and debaittis,
  For fensum flytingis of defame:
  Think ye nocht shame,
Before strangeris of all estaitis
  That sic dishonour hurt your name?

Your stinkand style that standis dirk,
Haldis the licht fra your parish kirk ;
Your forestairis makis your houses mirk,
  Like na country but here at hame:
  Think ye nocht shame
Sa lytle policy to wirk
  In hurt and slander of your name?

At your hie Feist whair gold and silk
Suld be thair is but crudis and milk
And at your Feist but cockle and wilk,
Pansches, puddingis of Jock and Jame,
Think ye nocht shame,
Sen as the warld sayis that ilk
In hurt and slander of your name?

Plainly Dunbar is here thoroughly enjoying himself, even if the enjoyment is subordinated to a fairly serious and respectable intention. *The Flyting of Dunbar and Kennedy* is a poem of essentially the same nature. It is a comic *tour de force* of sheer language, but because the language is in this case living language, the coarse-textured vigorous language of the actual popular speech, it does not separate the poet from life but carries him towards it, its own life, wild, savage, unravished as its humour again is here:

Thow bringis the Carrick clay to Edinburgh Cors
Upoun thy botingis, lubland, hard as horne:
Stra wispis hingis owt quhair that the wathis are worne:
Cum thow agane to skar us with thy strais,
We sall gar scale our sculis all the to scorne,
And stane the up the calsay quhair thow gais.

Off Edinburch the boyis as beis owt thrawis,
And cryis owt ay, 'Heir cumis our awin queir Clerk!'
Than fleis thow lyk ane howlat chest with crawis,
Quhile all the bichis at thy botingis dois bark
Then carlingis cryis, 'Keep curches in the merk,
Our gallowis gaipis: lo! quhair ane greceles gais.'

Than rynis thow doun the gait with gild of boyis,
And all the toun tykis hingand in thy heilis:
Of laidis and lownis thair rysis sic ane noyes,
Quhill runsyis rynis away with cairt and quheilis,
And cager aviris castis bayth coillis and creilis,
For rerd of the and rattling of thy butis;
Fische wyvis cryis, Fy! and castis down skillis and skeilis,
Sum claschis the, sum cloddis the on the cutis.

Flyting passages, monstrous pilings-up of language,[1] are a feature of both Dunbar's comic and satiric poems, and serve their various ends.

But there are many poems, many of them satiric, and together forming a considerable part of Dunbar's poetry, in which plainly the poet is not enjoying himself. To these we must finally turn to complete the meaning of Dunbar's poetry. At the root of these poems is the overpowering feeling that the times are late and evil everywhere dominant in the world.

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[1]Compare from *Complaint to the King*

Bot fowll, jow-jowrdane-hedit jevellis,
Cowkin-kenscis, and culroun kevellis ;
Stuffettis, strekouris, and stafische strumellis ;
Wyld haschbaldis, haggarbaldis, and hummellis ;
Druncartis, dysouris, dyvowris, drevellis,
Misgydit memberis of the devellis ;
Mismad mandragis off mastis strynd,
Crawdones, couhirttis, and theiffis of kynd ;
Blait-mowit bladyeanes with bledder cheikis,
Club-facet clucanes with clutit breikis,
Chuff-midding churllis, cumin off cart-fillaris,
Gryt glaschew-hedit gorge-millaris . . .
Panting ane prelottis comtenance
Sa far above him set at tabill
That wont was for to muk the stabell ;
Ane pykthank in a prelottis clais,
With his wavill feit and wirrok tais,
With hoppir hippis and henches narrow,
And bausy handis to beir a barrow ;
With gredy mynd and glaschane gane,
Mell-hedit lyk ane mortar-stane.

The monstrous exaggeration develops into caricature, as again for example in *A General Satyre*

Sic fartingaillis on flaggis als fatt as quhailis,
Facit lyk fulis with hattis that little availlis,
And sic fowill tailis, to sweip the calsay clene,
That dust upskaillis ; sic fillokis with fucksailis.

The clerkis takis benefices with brawlis,
Some of Sanct Peter, and some of Sanct Pauhs.
Tak he the teindis, no care has he
Suppose the devil tak all thair saulis

Sic pryd with prelatis, sa few till preiche and pray;
Sic hant of harlettis with thame hayth nicht and day.[3]

'This is the end' is the final feeling conveyed. Distrust infects the air.

Is na man thair that trestis ane uthir . . .[4]

Fra everilk mouth fair wordis proceedis
In every hairt deception breedis . . .

Flattery wearis ane furrit gown . . .[5]
The sugurit mouthis with myndis thairfra
The figurit speiche with facels twa . . .[6]

The disillusion is mature and deep seated; it proceeds from an ultimate dissatisfaction with everything that was connoted by the phrase 'the world.'

. . . the warld, feignid and false.
With gall in hairt, and honied hals.

I have ventured to call the satire in these poems, directed as it is chiefly (though by no means wholly) against ecclesiastics, not merely ecclesiastical but religious (though negatively so) because of the consciousness in them of the *loss* or *absence* of goodness and of any assurance of spiritual reality. The nearest Dunbar comes to such an assurance seems to me perhaps to be here

Lord sen in tyme sa soon to come
De terra surrecturus sum,
Reward me with nane erdly cure

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[3] *Of Discretion in Taking.*
[4] *A General Satyre.*
[4] *Tydingis fra the Sessioun.*
[5] *Into this World may none Assure.*
[6] *Of the Warldis Instabilitie.*

But me resave in regnum tuum ;
Into this warld may none assure.

The question to what extent the morbidity in these poems was temperamental, in Dunbar's case, and to what extent it was imposed on his poetry by his world, need not bother us. It is plainly something both profoundly personal and, since it is common to late mediæval poetry, much more than personal. In the *Meditation in Wyntir* it is given unusually *personal* expression. Winter was no doubt, especially for Dunbar, wretched enough in itself but it is explicitly from something more even than winter that he turns with such anxiety to the new season.

For fear of this all day I droop ;
No gold in kist, nor wine in cup,
No lady's beautie, nor luvis bliss
May lat ne to remember this ;
How glad that ever I dine or sup.

Yit, when the nicht beginnis to short,
It dois my spreit some part comfort,
Off thocht oppressit with the shouris.
Come, lusty simmer! with thy flouris,
That I may live in some disport.

This morbidity in fact explains the Epicurean strain in Dunbar's poetry, the desperate grasping at vivid enjoyments and vivid delights.

Now all this tyme lat us be mirry
And sett nocht by this warld a chirry
Now, quhill thair is gude wyne to sell,
He that dois on dry breid wirry,
I gif him to the Devill of hell.

The frequent images of dancing, music, drinking of red wine,

Sangis, ballatis, playis,

symbolize these delights, and the sprightly *ballade* measures of many of his poems represent them. But just as frequent is the sinister image of the gallows gaping, the violent images of cut-throats and cutpurses, and cartes and dyce associated with evil. It is

here that a comparison with Villon suggests itself. (That it should suggest itself emphasizes again the difference between Dunbar and Burns, who could not properly be compared with any poet outside the Scottish tradition.) The obsession with death[1] was inevitable to some part of Dunbar's poetry coming where it did; Dunbar inherited a world, part of which was mouldering in decay. That the sense of mortality is not more pervasive in his poetry than it is is due to the force of that tremendous principle of life (represented in *The Twa Mariit Wemen and the Wedo* and the other primarily comic poems) he could at times share with the peasant people. But where there is behind a clairvoyant recognition of the vanity of earthly things no supernatural assurance of a spiritual reality, the worm of death and corruption finally devours everything that is,

> Death followis life with gapand mouth
> Devouring fruit and flowering grane.

Thus the procession becomes the procession of Death:

> Unto the deid gois all Estatis,
> Princis, Prelatis and Potestatis,
> Baith rich and puir of all degree!
> Timor Mortis conturbat me.
>
> He takes the knichtis into the field,
> Enarmit under helm and shield;
> Victor he is at all mêlée:
> Timor Mortis conturbat me.
>
> That strang unmerciful tyrand
> Takis on the moderis breist soukand
> The babe, full of benignitie;
> Timor Mortis conturbat me.
>
> He takis the champion in the stour,
> The capitane closit in the tour,
> The lady in bour full of beautie;
> Timor Mortis conturbat me.

JOHN SPEIRS

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[1] *Of Man's Mortalitie* is one of Dunbar's finest impersonal expressions of it.

CORRESPONDENCE

EXACT THOUGHT AND INEXACT LANGUAGE

Sir,

Sir Arthur Eddington takes it ' that the aim of such books [of popular scientific exposition] must be to convey exact thought in exact language. The author has abjured the technical terms and mathematical symbols which are the recognized means of securing exact expression, and he is thrown back on more indirect means of awakening in the mind of the reader the thought which he wishes to convey.' To this Mr. E. W. F. Tomlin in your current issue replies that inexact thought is error.

I believe that Mr. Tomlin's statement reveals a complete lack of understanding of scientific method and scientific practice ; that physicists invariably employ inexact language (even when they express their ideas with mathematical symbols) and that they commonly arouse ideas in each other's minds by talking to each other in inexact terms. To say that the whole of physics is error may have some meaning within a prescribed domain of definitions, but to say it at large is very silly.

Let me give a few illustration. I draw a sketch of a bicycle. It will awaken the thought of a bicycle in the onlooker's mind even if it is an inexact sketch indeed. Next, I draw a blue print of a bicycle. This will awaken the thoughts of the pure detail of bicycle construction so powerfully in the mind of an engineer that he will be able to construct an actual bicycle from the print. Yet the print is an inexact picture of the bicycle—if we go down to the ten thousandth of an inch. Incidentally, a blue print is not a work of art and will arouse the emotion ' bicycle ' in nobody but an engineer. Next, let us think of the lunar theory. There is no doubt that Newton's law of gravitation is approximately obeyed by the Moon, yet when one attempts an analysis of the lunar motion *as precise as the observations allow* one is faced with small but definite discrepancies. We are able to say that the law of gravitation observed in Nature approaches Newton's exact law within certain limits: and all our arguments about the lunar motion are inexact. Newton's original data were much less exact than those obtainable by modern measurements. Exactness in physics is unobtainable.

How about exactness in argument? It is clear that in the final exposition of his reasoning the physicist endeavours to use an exact argument which contains implicit if not explicit reference to the inexactness of the data. Nevertheless the essential feature of an argument may often be contained in an analogy or in a simplified argument, and physicists commonly employ simplifications and analogies in driving home points to their colleagues. The statement 'the surface of Sirius is much hotter than that of the Sun and therefore radiates much more violet light per square centimetre' is inexact but correct, and might be employed in a verbal argument in a laboratory any day. The reply might be 'why more *violet* light?' to which a legitimate but inexact method of provoking the attitude in the objector would be: 'You know that red-hot bodies are cooler than white-hot bodies, and that white-hot bodies radiate more violet light per square centimetre than red-hot bodies, and in general the hotter the body the more violet light.' The inexact argument reproduces the essential features of an exact one with which I will not trouble your readers.

The dividing line between inexactitude and error may be hard to draw in some difficult cases, but happily common sense nearly always comes to the rescue.

Turning back to expositions of popular science, the justification for publishing books of inexact arguments ought to be that every simple argument in the book is a rough parallel of some technical argument published elsewhere which is as exact as the nature of the problem will allow. It is my own opinion that Eddington is remarkably successful in producing admirable parellels, the beauty of which can only be realized by those who are acquainted with the 'exact' arguments which they represent. His *Space, Time and Gravitation* is a popular representation of the very difficult Relativity theory for which no adjective seems too high praise, and it led at least one reader to a comprehension of the subject which was filled out rather than altered by subsequent study of Eddington's own 'exact' treatise.

Yours faithfully,

RICHARD WOOLLEY.

The Observatory,
Cambridge.
March 15th, 1938.

MR. TOMLIN replies:

Mr. Woolley objects to my statement that ' inexact thought is error ' ; but he will recall that, in making it, I was criticizing Eddington's implication that ' exact thought ' could be conveyed in ' inexact language.' What seems to me ambiguous here is the word ' convey.' Reference to a dictionary shows that, when the object to be conveyed is an idea or meaning, ' convey ' is equivalent to ' communicate ' ; and it seems to me evident that you cannot communicate something with exactitude when the medium you employ—in this case, language—is admitted to be inexact. I would push this further. For what, in the case of language, do we mean by ' inexact '? Language can presumably be inadequate in many ways, according to the purpose for which you intend to employ it ; and language admittedly can have more purposes than one. But the primary purpose of language—and this is the purpose in which a thinker such as Eddington is clearly most interested—is to express thought. But if such language is inadequate, it cannot adequately express it.

Again, if it is true, as Eddington suggests, both that the scientist's aim is to express thought, and that, in spite of the handicap of having to employ ' inexact language,' he does actually succeed in getting this across—*i.e.*, in ' awakening in the mind of the reader the thought which he wishes to convey '—then, assuming that the process of ' awakening ' is identical with comprehension, it is clear that he has done exactly what he intended to do. It follows that if such language is still to be termed ' inexact,' the inexactitudes must refer to something distinct from its capacity to express thought. What this something is, I confess to be unable to say.

I think, too, that Mr. Woolley reads into my argument an assumption about the nature of scientific thinking which it does not contain. My object, whether misguided or not, was to show that Eddington's statement was contradictory ; and one of my reasons for supposing it to be so was the implication which it encouraged that all science is error. Mr. Woolley objects to my objection by accusing me of accepting the implication which led me to make it. His next move is to put forward the view that exactness in physics, even where mathematical symbols are concerned, is unattainable ; and he justifies books of ' inexact arguments ' (inexact from the

point of view of the thought or of the language) on the ground that they provide a 'rough (i.e., not exact) parallel' to technical arguments published elsewhere. Thus is to abandon the claim to be 'awakening' exact thought in the mind of the reader. Nevertheless, he continues to speak of Newton's 'exact law,' to which the 'law of gravitation observed in nature' approaches 'within certain limits' (I doubt if this reference to two 'laws' is a very successful 'simplification' with which to 'drive home' the argument); of a statement about the surface of Sirius as 'inexact but correct'; and finally of language as an 'inexact method' of 'provoking' the 'correct attitude.'

Such statements do not seem to me too happy. In what way, we ask, is Newton's law 'exact' (we suspect that 'exact' here is equivalent to 'tidy' or, in the mathematical sense, beautiful); and what is the criterion of correctitude as opposed to exactitude? To say, as Mr. Woolley does at the beginning, that physicists 'commonly arouse ideas in each other's minds by employing inexact terms,' is very likely true (it is certainly true of others) as a description of their workaday behaviour; but are we to suppose that, in the last resort, they are satisfied with such rough approximations, and is 'what is commonly done' the ultimate standard by which they seek to regulate their behaviour? Finally, are we to trust so delicate an operation as the tracing of the 'dividing line' between inexactitude and error to the most nebulous—and I should have thought unscientific—of all criteria, common sense? All this, we are tempted to feel, may be very good pragmatism, but it is not what we mean by the method of exact science.

But pragmatism is only an attempt to state philosophically something which belongs to the essence of all scientific thinking. And I believe that some of the oddities to which we have referred would be removed if it were made clear that scientific thinking is by nature hypothetical. To say this is not to belittle science. On the contrary, it is to render its method intelligible. Otherwise, we have no alternative but to resign ourselves to the ambiguities to which we have drawn attention.

E. W. F. TOMLIN.

COMMENTS AND REVIEWS

GISSING AND THE ENGLISH NOVEL

STORIES AND SKETCHES, by George Gissing (Michael Joseph, 7/6).

These stories, which mistaken piety must have induced Mr. A. C. Gissing to publish, will unfortunately persuade no one to read George Gissing who is not already interested in him. They exhibit chiefly his weaknesses and give no indication of his virtues. This is nothing like as interesting a volume of stories as the better of his other two collections, *The House of Cobwebs*, which ought by now to have been put into one of the pocket libraries together with the interesting long ' Introductory Survey ' Thomas Seccombe wrote for the 1906 edition. But if this new volume had persuaded reviewers to look up Gissing's novels, re-estimate his achievement, and demand for *New Grub Street* recognition as a classic, its publication would have been justified. There have been no such signs of a reviewer's conscience. It is odd that the Gissing vogue—subsequent to the Meredith vogue and much less widespread—has faded even out of literary history.

This is discouraging, but let us disinter Gissing nevertheless. He wrote twenty-two long novels but only one that posterity would want to read, two books of reminiscence (one the extremely popular *Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*), two (now three) volumes of short stories, and the best existing critical introduction to Dickens, in twenty-six years of authorship (he died in 1903, aged only forty-six). He has already received adequate biographical and critical attention in *George Gissing : A Critical Study* by Frank Swinnerton, a capital piece of work which looks like remaining the last profitable word on Gissing as a man and a writer. [Nevertheless academic theses have since been excogitated on the same subject in English, German and American].

Gissing's life and temperament, with the problems that they raise, are the key to both his many failures and his single success as an artist. He made a false start in life, it is true (a blasted academic career, a spell in prison, a spell in America, an impossible marriage), but on the literary side his sending a copy of his first novel (*Workers of the Dawn*, 1880) to Frederick Harrison resulted

much like Crabbe's application to Burke. Harrison recommended Gissing to Lord Morley, then editor of *The Pall Mall Gazette*, and engaged Gissing as classical tutor to his two elder sons, also helping him to get other pupils. He was thus, with the *entrée* to the *P.M.G.* and as many pupils as he could teach, provided for congenially enough—that is, congenially enough for any other man of letters. But his unfortunate idea of what was suitable for the possessor of literary genius interfered with Harrison's benevolent arrangements. He refused to write more than one sketch for the *P.M.G.* on the grounds that journalism was degrading work for an artist, and though Mr. Austin Harrison says that from 1882 onwards Gissing had a living income from teaching which he could increase at will, he continued to live, if not actually in cellars and garrets on one meal a day as before, at least in near poverty, because, says Mr. H. G. Wells, 'he grudged every moment taken by teaching from his literary purpose, and so taught as little as he could.' The interesting point here is not Gissing's romantic conception of what is due to genius, but that he continued to describe himself as the starving and unrecognized martyr of letters, he was for long neither well-to-do nor famous, but Mr. Austin Harrison characterizes his accounts of his 'continued struggles with abject poverty' as 'fiction of fiction.' Gissing apparently needed that fiction to support his self-esteem, his belief in his own genius, for actually he must have been well aware, like his wretched Edwin Reardon, that he had written mostly what was unworthy of his best abilities. He had to explain his failure by blaming material circumstances; and though his output was really enormous we find him in *Ryecroft*, in the year of his death, picturing himself as the writer obliged to earn his living uncongenially so that he could allow himself, ah but how rarely, the luxury of writing a novel at intervals of many years, and thus was his genius blighted. The facts, as we have seen, were otherwise.

It was not lack of time or means that hampered him, nor yet his unhappy temperament. The latter was perhaps his chief asset, since it produced an absolutely personal way of responding to life and his fellow-men, and when a measure of ultimate success came to (as they say) 'mellow' him the results on his work, as seen in *Ryecroft*, were deplorable. It is instructive to compare the benevolent portrait in *Ryecroft* of the writer N., the successful

author and good mixer, with the earlier study of the same type, Jasper Milvain, in *New Grub Street* (when any nineteenth-century novelist names a character Jasper I think we may safely conclude that that character is intended to be the villain). Apart from his temperament all the other qualities he brought to his novels—his scholarship, his bookishness, his enlightened interest in all the leading topics of his day (religious reform, politics, education, emancipation of woman, ethics, science, sociology . . .)—bear witness to his being an exceptionally cultivated man and exceptionally alive in his age, yet apart from *New Grub Street* how those novels date, how unreadable they now are! [It is thus that I seem to hear the literary critic of *Scrutiny*, Vol. L, describing the novels of Mr. Aldous Huxley, whom Gissing in some respects resembles]. But there was no interaction between his subject-matter and his sensibility, so the exhibition of life he gives us seems arbitrarily blighted by a novelist always functioning below par as it were ; Mr. Swinnerton, to account for his unpopularity, says ' he was condemned by novel-readers as a writer who whimpered at life.' But when he took as the subject of a novel his most vital interest—the problem of how to live as a man of letters, the literary world being what it is,[1] without sacrificing your integrity

[1]It seems to have begun to be as we know it in Gissing's time. Jasper Milvain differs from Alroy Kear (*Cakes and Ale*) only in being a simpler psychological study. Reviewing was much the same as now: ' The book met with rather severe treatment in critical columns ; it could scarcely be ignored (the safest mode of attack when one's author has no expectant public) . . . ' ' " The struggle for existence among books is nowadays as severe as among men. If a writer has friends connected with the press, it is the plain duty of those friends to do their utmost to help him. What matter if they exaggerate, or even lie? The simple, sober truth has no chance whatever of being listened to, and it's only by volume of shouting that the ear of the public is held." ' Conditions governing material success were taking modern shape: ' "Literature nowadays is a trade. Putting aside men of genius, who may succeed by mere cosmic force, your successful man of letters is your skilful tradesman . . . To have money is becoming of more and more importance in a literary career ; principally because to have money

of purpose—he produced his one permanent contribution to the English novel. I think it can be shown to be a major contribution. The subject was both inside and outside him. The best way to suggest his achievement is to say that put beside the other best treatments of the same subject Maugham's *Cakes and Ale* and the many fine short stories on aspects of the literary life by Henry James which should be read as a whole. Gissing's *New Grub Street* is quite different, equally serious and equally successful as a piece of art.

The Gissing temperament suitably colours the book, which, like *Cakes and Ale*, is consistently written in one tone, here an irony weighted with disgust. This strikes one as being the right outlook on the literary world ('such things were enough to make all literature appear a morbid excrescence upon human life,' the heroine reflects at one point), if less suited to life in general. However, life in general is here seen from the point of view of the slenderly talented Reardon who wants to support his family by his pen and yet at the same time write only novels and essays worthy of himself. We see him go under, weighed down by a wife who thinks social and maternal success the due of her beauty, by his lack of influential friends, most of all by his choosing to abide by the values of Dr. Johnson in an age where the policy of Alroy Kear had become requisite for success. We see his acquaintance Jasper Milvain deliberately choosing literature as a profitable field for his unliterary talents and ending up more successful than even he had dared expect, his marriage with Reardon's widow (become an heiress) symbolically ending the story. Delicacy and fineness, the strongly noble and the devotedly disinterested elements in human nature, are not ignored or denied, they are presented with complete success—this is a measure of Gissing's total success here—in the persons of Marian Yule, whom Milvain jilts and leaves to wretchedness, and Reardon's friend Biffen who is driven to remove himself from a world that has no use for his devoted labours. Such are shown doomed to misery and failure. The old-style man of letters, part hack and part stiff-necked enthusiast, is

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is to have friends. Year by year, such influence grows of more account . . . Men won't succeed in literature that they may get into society, but will get into society that they may succeed in literature.'' '

skilfully contrasted (Alfred Yule) with the new-style man of straw (Whelpdale) successful because pliant in his complete lack of any literary conscience. There are many masterly studies of the emotions and conduct peculiar to those who live by literature and journalism, and in spite of a certain stiffness of style from which Gissing was never for long free the smallest touches are effective. The subject seems likely to remain of permanent interest and Gissing has raised crucial problems. The central problem, one ultimately of values, is put by Reardon to his wife thus:

> ' " A year after I have published my last book, I shall be practically forgotten . . . And yet, of course it isn't only for the sake of reputation that one tries to do uncommon work. There's the shrinking from conscious insincerity of workmanship which most writers nowadays seem never to feel. " It's good enough for the market " ; that satisfies them. And perhaps they are justified. I can't pretend that I rule my life by absolute ideals ; I admit that everything is relative. There is no such thing as goodness or badness, in the absolute sense, of course. Perhaps I am absurdly inconsistent when—though knowing my work can't be first-rate—I strive to make it as good as possible. I don't say this in irony, Amy ; I really meant it. It may very well be that I am just as foolish as the people I ridicule for moral and religious superstition. This habit of mine is superstitious. How well I can imagine the answer of some popular novelist if he heard me speak scornfully of his books. " My dear fellow," he might say, " do you suppose I am not aware that my books are rubbish? I know it just as well as you do. But my vocation is to live comfortably. I have a luxurious house, a wife and children who are happy and grateful to me for their happiness. If you choose to live in a garret, and, what's worse, make your wife and children share it with you, that's your concern." '

Whether Milvain could have existed at that or any time has, by way of objection, been doubted, but Seccombe, who was in a position to speak with authority, says ' Jasper Milvain is, to my thinking, a perfectly fair portrait of an ambitious publicist or journalist of the day—destined by determination, skill, energy and social ambition to become an editor of a successful journal or review, and to lead the life of central London.'

The original temper that the novel manifests is notable in every detail, *e.g.*,

> 'Alfred Yule had made a recognizable name among the critical writers of the day; seeing him in the title-lists of a periodical, most people knew what to expect, but not a few forebore the cutting open of the pages he occupied.'

> 'They had had three children; all were happily buried.'

> '"... but I was never snobbish. I care very little about titles; what I look to is intellectual distinction."
> "Combined with financial success.'
> "Why, that is what distinction means."'

> 'Amy now looked her years to the full, but her type of beauty, as you know, was independent of youthfulness. You saw that at forty, at fifty, she would be one of the stateliest of dames. When she bent her head towards the person with whom she spoke, it was an act of queenly favour. Her words were uttered with just enough deliberation to give them the value of an opinion; she smiled with a delicious shade of irony; her glance intimated that nothing could be too subtle for her understanding.'

The last example is strikingly in the modern manner, and Gissing's best work, *New Grub Street* almost entirely, seems contemporary with us rather than with Meredith.

As a general thing, the same outlook characterizes Gissing's other novels, but elsewhere it seems merely depressed and therefore depressing. Poor Gissing was sliding down the hill which Dickens and his robust contemporaries had climbed in such high spirits. Seccombe explains it well: 'In the old race, of which Dickens and Thackeray were representative, a successful determination to rise upon the broad back of popularity coincided with a growing conviction that evil in the real world was steadily diminishing ... In Gissing the misery inherent in the sharp contrasts of modern life was a far more deeply ingrained conviction. He cared little for the remedial aspect of the question. His idea was to analyse this misery as an artist and to express it to the world. One of the most impressive elements in the resulting novels is the witness they bear to prolonged and intense suffering, the suffering of a proud, reserved and oversensitive mind brought into constant contact with the coarse and brutal facts of life. The creator of Mr. Biffen suffers

all the torture of the fastidious, the delicately honourable, the scrupulously high-minded in daily contact with persons of blunt feelings, low ideals and base instincts.' Outside *New Grub Street* however you too often feel that the provocation is inadequate to the suffering. Gissing's susceptibilities are not all equally respectable and in some cases he seems only a querulous old maid, too easily provoked on such subjects as bad cooking, slovenly lodgings, ungenteel personal habits and lack of secondary school education. But in *New Grub Street*, just as what is elsewhere merely bookishness becomes transfused into a passionate concern for the state of literature, so his other minor feelings have turned into positive values, and he produced the one important novel in his long list. It occurs less than half-way down, so its unique success is not a matter of maturity or technical development.

The difference between its technical efficiency and the incompetence of the rest is startling too. It might have been written by a Frenchman rather than an Englishman of those days, and Gissing's interest in and admiration for the nineteenth-century Russian and French novelists is significant. He was never able to make use of them as consistently as did Henry James or Conrad, but he was conscious that the English novel tradition he had inherited would not do and he was groping for help where it seemed to offer. [He later met Meredith and must have studied *The Egoist* with a certain degree of profit. Literary historians ought to inspect *Our Friend the Charlatan* (1901) which obviously was conceived and treated in the spirit of *The Egoist* though without ceasing to be Gissing's]. Gissing is an example of how disastrous it may be for a writer whose talent is not of the first order to be born into a bad tradition. A score and more of novels painfully sweated out of his system, the exceptional system of an exceptionally intelligent and well-educated and devoted writer, and only one that amounted to something. The absence of what now enables anyone in Bloomsbury to write a readable novel made Gissing's efforts mostly futile. Mr. Swinnerton justly talks of 'the wreckage of the Victorian tradition by which it [Gissing's best work] is now encumbered.' But in *New Grub Street* Gissing not only solved, if only temporarily, his own problems, he helped all later writers to solve theirs, and the recognition this novel at one time received from literary men is significant. It is probably an ancestor of the novel of our time.

It is an important link in the line of novels from Jane Austen's

have built up. There are inferior novels (*e.g.*, *The Way of All Flesh*) in this tradition as well as good ones, and very minor successes (like Howard Sturgis's *Belchamber*) as well as major contributions, but they are all immediately recognizable as novels, distinct from what we may more usefully call fiction. It is time the history of the English novel was rewritten from the point of view of the twentieth century (it is always seen from the point of view of the mid nineteenth), just as has been done for the history of English poetry. The student would undoubtedly be glad to be allowed to reorganize his approach and revise the list of novels he has to accept as worth attention ; it would be a matter chiefly of leaving out but also of substitution, for the list consists only of conventional values. I don't know who will dare touch off the first charge to blow up those academic values. Mr. Forster once made an attempt on Scott and the response in the academic world was most interesting ; the subsequent Scott centenary was a rally of the good men and true to batten down the hatches on Mr. Forster's wholesome efforts to have that reputation reconsidered. What is commonly accepted as the central tradition is most easily examined in the middling practitioner—such as Trollope or Charles Reade. *The Cloister and the Hearth* is a puerile example of what *Esmond* is a highly accomplished form of, but both are undeserving of serious attention and both are on the educational syllabus, at different ends ; though I never knew anyone but the old-fashioned kind of schoolmaster who could bear the former, and the latter's ventriloquial waxworks in period costume (prick them and do they not bleed red paint) are a direct ancestor of Sir Hugh Walpole's own great trilogy which will in time, who can doubt, get on the list too. It is time also that we sorted out the novels which form or enrich the real tradition of the English novel from those which (like Trollope's and Wells's) are rather contributions to the literary history of their time and to be read as material for the sociologist,

from those which (like Scott's and R.L.S.'s and George Moore's) perpetrate or perpetuate bogus traditions, from those which (like Charlotte Brontë's) are the ill-used vehicles for expressing a point of view or as in other novelists' hands (Aldous Huxley's), ideas ; and from all the other kinds. As one step towards this desirable scheme I suggest that *New Grub Street* be made generally available by reissuing it in ' Everyman ' or ' The World's Classics ' editions. Sir Humphrey Milford has already ventured to make some surprising additions to the world's classic novels on his own responsibility (Constance Holmes for instance) and Messrs. Dent have similarly helped Galsworthy and Priestley to get on everyman's list of great novels, so they might do something for Gissing whose best novel will soon be due for a half-centenary.

Q. D. LEAVIS.

'FEMINA VIE-HEUREUSE' PLEASE NOTE

I'M NOT COMPLAINING, by Ruth Adam (Chapman and Hall, 7/6).

It is pleasant to be able to recommend a novel by a woman novelist in strong terms. Though Mrs. Woolf has declared it to be a popular fallacy, the Jane Austen—Emily Brontë—George Eliot circle still defies addition. These women novelists represent female triumph in the realm of character at least as much as of art—I mean the author's character. It is in terms of deficiency in character that Mrs. Woolf's degeneration and Katharine Mansfield's deficiency as artists are to be explained. The Feminist movement ought to have helped things, you feel, but looking before and after you cannot help noticing that, to take two women of about the same kind of ability, a feminine Mrs. Gaskell has the advantage of a feminist Winifred Holtby and not conversely. What the Feminist movement seems to have done in the literary camp is to set up an ideal, an ideal of the brilliant emancipated woman of wit, intellect and literary genius. No doubt it was inspired by George Meredith's novels. As commonly found, incarnated in a Rebecca West (not Ibsen's) or an Ethel Mannin, it seems it must be an inherently trashy ideal. But there is another kind of feminism, represented by Charlotte Brontë most notably. She was considerably more gifted in character than literary ability, and the abiding interest her novels have is the outlook—the peculiar angle on life and the

personal sense of values—of the author's mouthpiece, Lucy Snow or Jane Eyre.

Miss Adam is evidently such another, though she is as evidently a feminist too in the other way—she conveys powerfully an impression that a man is generally a pitiful object. *I'm Not Complaining* ought to get a literary prize though you can be sure it won't; it has not the qualities that appeal to prize-awarding committees. It is about the Elementary school in a depressed district (no doubt typical enough in these hard times), presented through the personality of a mistress in a Junior and Infant school. The facts are convincing in themselves as they are narrated, though anyone with a friend or two in the profession, or who has been through an Elementary school not too long ago, is likely to be familiar with most of them already. Miss Adam's feat is not merely to convey these facts convincingly and unforgettably, but to have made them into the material of art. The nits in the children's hair, the rude words chalked on the walls, the perpetual petty thieving, the troublesome milk bottles, the eternal registers, are used not as facts to elicit laughter or political action but collectively to build up the atmosphere of a complete culture. Being art it does not demand any such simple response as indignation. Contributors to *New Writing* might profitably study Miss Adam's method, and admirers of the *New Writing* reportage might be stimulated by *I'm Not Complaining* to realize that the *New Writing* stories are almost uniformly uninteresting, not literature, and in their lack of literary ability not even convincing as fact. Miss Adam is steeped in the details of her culture and her novel yields more at every reading.

She has a talent for writing, unlike poor Charlotte. Without any gestures or pretensions she rolls up her sleeves and gets right down to it with the opening sentence. Everyone I have shown the novel to has agreed that you only have to read the first page to realize that here is a unique good thing. Miss Adam has a style characterized not only by condensation, simplicity and objectivity, but by a tone which like Charlotte's is not sympathetic. It is even a bit grim, for underlying it is always an implied criticism. It is the attitude of an uncompromisingly intelligent woman, contemptuous of the unreal—sentimentality, idealism and any kind of emotional silliness. Here is the headmistress: 'She believed that most coughs and all sniffs could be controlled by the child

with a full sense of responsibility towards the school and towards its fellow-scholars.' What she despises most is sentimentality applied to education. For instance, there is the literature professor's wife who greets her (this is really so true to life as to be hardly bearable) with ' You musn't mind us. We're very unconventional ' and presently we get: ' I asked where their child was, and she said he was at school. It was a very enlightened co-educational boarding-school, she hastened to add, where there was no nonsense about segregating the sexes and thus putting impure thoughts into the children's minds. I said that we didn't have any nonsense about segregating the sexes at our school either, but that, so far as we could judge, the impure thoughts were in their minds all ready-made.' In its context, following the picture of children who have not come from sheltered homes, this doesn't read like the *Punch* or E. M. Delafield humour it may here suggest. It conveys a common-sense criticism of impractical theory from someone qualified to hold an opinion because she spends her best energies trying to impose the elements of civilization on children to many of whom, because of their home environment, theft and lies and immorality come as naturally as dirty heads and malnutrition. On fifty-six children at once. Homer Lane worked in an isolated community I believe, and even our expensive advanced boarding-schools are said to complain that their children show a relapse after every vacation. Miss Adam is able in the same style to treat finer and subtler issues, which is a proof that there is nothing superficial about her attitudes. For example:

> ' After dinner she came in very shyly and looking very scared and laid a note on my desk . . . They always have a pathetic belief, that nothing will shake, that an actual letter, written by a parent's hand, has a world-compelling power over any dictum of authority from the laws of the Education Committee downwards. Sometimes they even infect parents with their dazzling faith. Often, between the lines of the ill-written and usually threatening scraps, you can see a mental picture of the unhappy child, creeping into the fancied security of its home, out of the merciless machine of the State, begging for help—so sure that Father or Mother has only to put stubby pencil to dirty paper for God himself to climb down off His perch and let Tommy or Betty go to the lavatory when they want, if you don't mind, teacher . . . '

I have tended to talk about the book as though Miss Adam were voicing it. Actually these are the sentiments of Madge Brigson, who is carefully built up as a character and a personality; and the novel anyway is too well constructed for us to forget that we are reading a piece of art and not a pamphlet. Nevertheless Miss Adam must be credited with sponsoring her views, though it is sometimes hazardous to decide which way the irony is meant to cut. For an irony calling so little attention to itself that it might often be overlooked is a characteristic of Miss Adam's method ('She was one of our very few respectable children. Her father was a warder in the local jail.'). No novelist has wrung more drama out of the richest scenes in history than Miss Adam elicits from Inspectors' visits, abusive parents, undisciplined Night School, demonstrations of unemployed, dishonest caretakers and staff conflicts.

To the creations of art Madge Brigson is an impressive contribution. She makes feminism respectable if not interesting. Her character is of high calibre, like Jane Eyre's. She listens to the training-college professor mouthing conventional enlightenment and reflects devastatingly 'He was a silly man,' to the religion-bitten social reformer and says 'I thought he was a sentimental old fool,' to the Left reporter who babbles 'I think school ought to be such a happy place that they don't need any Attendance Officer to dragoon them into going' and comments 'I had talked that sort of stuff myself at college, but I thought he ought to have got over it at his age . . . we soon disposed of him.' You believe her.

The environment in which traffic-accidents thin out the children already blighted by slums and too large families is artfully set off by a background of the County busy cherishing horses and cats, nursing the weakly puppy of the litter and marvelling how much dogs *know*. Animal non-lovers (not necessarily identical with child-lovers) will find Miss Brigson's sense of proportion cheering. Its importance for a wider category of people who cannot join up with any existing herd is that her enlightenment is apparently unattached to politics of any shade, her social criticism is not from a *parti pris*. She is careful to see that responsibility for the state of things she witnesses is not put in the wrong place: slum parents are merely incompetent not brutal, tenement dwellers who stand callously on nice points of morality will show Christian charity in other respects, and so on. No haphazard indignation,

no cheap irony and no caricature of types or classes invites a stock response. Emotional scenes and situations are deflated and analysed as they occur. We are not allowed any easy outlet for the blend of distress, disgust and exasperation that her themes elicit. Miss Adam, that is, has both an artistic and a moral conscience, whereas what is called a social conscience is nowadays made an excuse for the absence in writers of either. Yet I cannot see that anything but a social conscience could have prompted her to undertake her novel, and it affects me as being likely to awaken a social conscience in people who would remain unmoved by all the recommendations of the Left Book Club. What does Miss Adam want us to blame? There is of course the Government, and Madge Brigson reflects that better management of depressed districts would obviously be desirable (p. 114). But she cannot help looking deeper:

> 'Squalor did not frighten me. When you live so close to it, and are paid to fight it, it is not terrifying—merely a tiresome and tireless adversary. But somewhere beneath it all was a live, burning thread that ran through these human miseries that was not just mismanagement,' nor stupidity, nor a faulty social system, but something living, primitive, terrible—something I dare not look in the face. A hundred nauseating images seemed to rise up in my mind—all somehow connected . . .'

Hence her lack of enthusiasm for her young communist colleague—'extremely earnest. She was given to causes.' Madge Brigson distrusts the effect of causes on people. She knows that only a part of what she is fighting can be altered by legislation or doctrinaire revolution, though you gather she is willing to try anything that offers in those lines. Common sense often seems to sensitive people no more than the most complacent form of stupidity, but Miss Adam's variety of common sense is the means of exposing some of the more plausible and pernicious kinds of stupidity.

Apart from Dickens' admirable satires on the old system in *Hard Times* and *Our Mutual Friend*, the only account of the modern state school in literature comparable with Miss Adam's is a chapter ('The Man's World') in *The Rainbow*. We may be sure that Lawrence would have liked her book. It is to his essay *Education of the People* that we may profitably turn on laying down *I'm Not Complaining*.

Q. D. LEAVIS.

KAFKA'S LIFE

MAX BROD: Franz Kafka. Eine Biographie (Erinnerungen und Dokumente). Prag H. Mercy Sohn. 1937

Franz Kafka's work seems at first sight almost timeless and placeless. It hovers in a rarefied atmosphere of metaphysical horror. In his whole work there is not a single allusion to Bohemia except the scene in St. Vitus Cathedral in the *Trial*, nor anything which would show any interest in the problems which moved the many contemporary German writers who came from Prague. Rilke at least in his early poems and stories is preoccupied with the fascination of his home town and country, Franz Werfel, Max Brod, Gustav Meyrinck and others of less importance seem to think of little else than the Jewish question and the relation of Germans and Czechs. Kafka, though also a German Jew from Prague, seems a complete exception in his almost inhuman passion for the last things of man: his exclusive interest in the mystery and darkness of human life, the guilt of man, his utter helplessness in the face of crushing fate. Max Brod's first full length biography of his dead friend seems to have been written to counteract this first impression and to demonstrate the intimate relation between the work and the personality and fate of its author.

The outward life of Kafka was most uneventful: he was born in Prague in 1893 as the son of a Jewish wholesale dealer: he studied at the German University, took his doctor's degree in Law in 1906, and became a clerk in the Workers' Accidence Insurance Institute. In 1917 he had the first haemorrhage which signalized the beginning of his fatal illness. He retired from his work on a tiny pension, lived first in the Bohemian country and then had to seek help in different homes in the Tatras and near Vienna, where he died at Kierlin in 1924 as a victim of laryngeal tuberculosis. His life as a writer began comparatively late. An early paper which is rescued by Brod from the files of a Prague daily, on an aeroplane display at Brescia which Kafka saw in 1909, shows little more than a future reporter's gift of acute observation. Only in 1912 the story *Das Urteil* was written and the unfinished rather Dickensian novel *America* was drawn up. Most of the great stories followed soon afterwards and his most mature novel *The Trial* was begun in 1914. The last, un-

finished novel *The Castle* was begun in 1922. Kafka leaped into maturity almost at a bound and even Brod who knew him intimately for many years scarcely hints at any actual evolution of his mind. The main outlines of his spiritual make-up hardened very early and were not much changed by any experiences. Brod shows convincingly how Kafka felt the overwhelming strength of family ties. The domineering personality of his robust and successful father was the decisive influence on his life. Brod attempts the obvious psycho-analytical explanation which finds support in many diaries and letters of Kafka himself. Kafka felt the pressure of the father's personality even as a barrier to marriage and interpreted his own life as a series of attempts to escape this influence. He himself says that he lost ' all self-confidence ' and took in exchange only an ' immense sense of guilt.' Brod points to the rôle a mysterious authority plays in his two great novels *The Trial* and *The Castle* and quotes at length a painful letter Kafka wrote to his father accusing him of the failure of his life. Kafka, however, did not feel only the wall between father and son. He suffered acutely from the restrictions his official job imposed on his time and mental freshness. He took the work because he had the idea that his bread should not have anything to do with literature. But his dull job became to him a nightmare of oppression, the occasion of innumerable complaints and delays in his work. But again his work in the office provided one of the standing topics of his novels: the workings or rather non-workings of a cumbrous bureaucratic machine was the mainspring of whatever action there is in his two novels. In all Kafka's books there is no overt mention of the Jewish problem. Kafka for a long time in opposition to the Zionist Brod denied its urgency and even reality. He had even curious Teutonic leanings for some time, though he showed some sympathetic interest in the Czech cause even before the war. But later the Jewish problem seems to have absorbed him almost as completely as Brod. He learned Hebrew and studied Yiddish literature, he took an intense interest in Jewish traditions and beliefs. Brod tries to show that much of Kafka's symbolism is comprehensible only against this background. *The Castle* especially, where the geometer K arrives at a village inhabited by hostile peasants and is received everywhere with distrust and hostility, can be interpreted almost as an allegory

of the pathetic attempt of the Jew to become assimilated to German civilization. But Brod admits that this point must not be pressed too far. Actually the allegory is by no means simple: the references to man's strangeness in this world obviously predominate and even absorb the Jewish question. Brod tries to show that the philosophy of Kafka has been misinterpreted when it is understood merely as a philosophy of utter despair. He shows that Kafka had no affinities and no sympathies with Poe, Baudelaire or any decadents. His literary loves were such normal and comparatively simple authors as Stifter or Hebel, Fontane or Hesse. There are no affinities in Kafka with the surrealists who claim him to-day: he had nothing of their pure passivity. Kafka is to Brod rather a secular saint: kin to Job, at the most, who rebels against the Lord for a time without doubting his might and justice. Kafka believed in truth and justice though he saw clearly the evil comedy of the world. His books are not primarily morbid. He does not reject life. He loves life, he admires everything good and natural, simple and fresh, but he realizes that this good life is not for him. Kafka does not quarrel with God, but only with himself. He believes in the existence of an Absolute, but he knows that it is immensely difficult to reach it. We are too weak, Kafka, the modern man and especially the modern Jew is too weak, for the act of faith and trust required. Hence also came Kafka's extravagant though slightly ironic admiration for the 'ordinary man' who is able to marry and to bring up his children. Here we feel one of the roots of Kafka's painful and awkward love-affairs which only in his last love to a young Polish Jewess found a normal fulfilment. Brod never tires of stressing a core of certainty and self-assurance in Kafka, a fundamental belief in his genius and the permanence of his work which gave to Brod the moral justification to publish the work of his friend even though he asked him to have it destroyed. This striving for a normal life which succeeded at the last but was deprived by illness and death from its fruition in Kafka's work is the one leading motive of Brod's biography. One cannot help suspecting that Brod's sincere admiration for Kafka and his preoccupation with a Jewish philosophy have sometimes exaggerated some sides of Kafka's complex character. But it is difficult to dispute Brod's interpretation, since it is based on a life-long friendship and on access to materials from diaries,

letters and unpublished fragments which are only quoted incompletely in the book. Brod's book is not a formal biography, but rather in accordance with the subtitle a book of reminiscences and documents with connecting reflections. It adds, however, enormously to our information on Kafka and increases the indebtedness every admirer of his work must feel towards Brod for his thirty years' long service to his friend.

R. WELLEK.

LEFT-WING ALLEGORIES

THE WILD GOOSE CHASE, by Rex Warner (Boriswood, 8/6).
JOURNEY TO THE BORDER, by Edward Upward (Hogarth, 7/6).

Both these novels of left wing propaganda are directed, I suppose, at the bourgeois intellectual, but they differ widely in scope and method. Mr. Upward sets out to depict 'the predicament of the more intelligent members of the middle class in England to-day' (*v.* blurb) through the mind of a dissatisfied tutor in a country house. Mr. Warner is much more ambitious: to say that he has attempted a Marxist *Pilgrim's Progress* is to give only the faintest notion of his pretentiousness, and none at all of his all-embracing sensationalism and sentimentality. The setting of the greater part of the book is a fascist state conceived partly on the lines of *The Castle* and *The Trial* (for instance, the laughing policemen), partly in the manner of an Auden-Isherwood play, with the familiar stock imagery of frontiers and marshes, military strategy and rugger. The city, which derives its wealth from the oppressed peasants of the country, is the authentic Wellsian Brave New World as reproduced in schoolboy thrillers, with appropriate mechanical marvels and deadly weapons. Of course, all this is symbolic and satirical, and almost anything can be somehow justified in the name of surrealism, but the fact remains that, as one reviewer innocently remarked, if you disregard the allegory the book can be read as a successful thriller. Perhaps Mr. Warner had his eye on the Junior Left Book Club. It can hardly be supposed that he is deliberately writing down to the masses, for he draws essentially on the values of Public School communism and Bloomsbury enlightenment. George, the hero,

organizes the peasants' revolt and ends as almost the only loyal revolutionary general ; his brothers, Rudolph the hearty and David the æsthete, err greatly, but repent in time to support him on the platform at the final triumphal mass-meeting. The traitors among the leaders are both workers—a moderate and an extremist.

But there are other satisfactions besides sheer melodrama for the not-too-critical reader, secure in the virtuous assurance that he is tackling serious political satire. The fascist town has a sort of university, a haunt of fascinating vice where professors draw up a calculus of sensation and perform unspeakable experiments upon political prisoners, while all the students and teachers are compulsorily bisexual. This, we gather, illustrates the shocking decadence of the bourgeoisie as contrasted with the natural decency of the workers. But it is significant that George is somehow above the morality of the workers: *his* promiscuity is recounted with uncritical admiration as part of the Full Life. And, inevitably, the authority of Lawrence is invoked here, at any rate implicitly, for George's love affairs are described in a style that hovers between a twopenny novelette and a particularly nauseating imitation of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. One can only imagine what would have been Lawrence's own comment on this kind of double morality.

The university stands for bourgeois culture, which is identified with the most trivial and futile pursuits. A literary conversation between David and the headmaster's secretary is presented as a satirical picture of the non-Marxist cultivated world, but it might equally well be a *Punch* lampoon on Bloomsbury. Mr. Warner evidently takes sides with the popular press against the highbrow. But isn't it precisely the group of left-wing writers to which he belongs that cultivates poetry full of esoteric jokes and allusions only to be appreciated by those of the group who call each other by their Christian names? When George breaks in with the assertion that his favourite books are Shakespeare, Karl Marx, *Tom Jones* and Isaiah, the point is presumably that only the Public School revolutionary is left as the guardian of the humane tradition. Similarly his lecture on *Othello*, which is received with hysterical laughter, must be intended to show that bourgeois culture has no use for 'the common sense of readers uncorrupted with literary prejudices': actually the only ideas in the specimen given are those of respectable academic romanticism. This kind of dishonest

muddle is typical of most of Mr. Warner's satire. Liberal reformers are represented by the President of the Free State of Lagonda. He is not a worker by birth (neither is George) and his democratic reformism ends in the betrayal of his cause and the establishment of a home for stray cats. Here as in other places throughout the book one feels that the vindictive spitefulness of the caricature is more like the satisfaction of personal animus than disinterested indignation. The general satire is not merely directed against institutions and the obviously malicious and anti-social; it is implied throughout that honesty and goodwill are the monopoly of Mr. Warner's group, apart from the workers themselves (and even they cannot always be trusted).

The sentimental symbolism of the wild goose is just a means of rounding off this dubious Pilgrim's Progress with the sanctions of a vague poetic mysticism. On the whole, the reader will not be surprised to find Mr. Warner is a professed enemy of literary criticism. George classes it with 'deliberate love-making . . . pictures of sunsets, money, the police,' as 'things we chiefly despise,' and elsewhere he shows that his attitude approximates closely to that of Dr. Goebbels: 'Words are dug from mines and grow in fields. Critics, but not poets, are at tea tables.'

Mr. Upward, in comparison, is pleasantly earnest and simple-minded. His chief character is conscious of having wasted his life in trivialities and dishonesties—'his life which might have been so full of, bright with, ardent for—what? Oh, wonders: love and knowledge and creation, history, science, poetry, interesting daily work, revolutionary politics, discipline, self-sacrifice, holidays, joy.' At the races with his employer he has a nightmare vision of the modern world, and here again the author has made a superficial use of the more easily accessible parts of Kafka's technique. The tutor's mental struggles culminate in a dialogue with himself which recalls a hire-purchase furniture advertisement. The argument is familiar:

> '. . . in capitalist society there is no future for poetry or for anything worth while. There is no future for anything except tyranny.'
>
> 'Yes, I have learnt that.'
>
> 'Only the workers can save the things you value and love. All that is gentle, generous, lovely, innocent, free, they will

fight to save. And in the end they will win. There will be a time of harshness and bitter struggle, but out of it will come flowers; splendour and joy will come back to the world. And life will be better than it has ever been yet in the world's history.'

'How soon can I join the workers' movement?'

The reasons for considering this view inadequate by itself have frequently been discussed in *Scrutiny*. For the present purpose it is sufficient to point to the crude journalistic-didactic style and the naïve sentimentality and over-simplification of the allegory as evidence of the lack of real sensitiveness or genuine imaginative insight into the complexities of the modern situation. Even at the level of simple propaganda the book will not stand comparison with, say, the *Mary French* sections of Dos Passos' *The Big Money*.

Neither of these writers can plead the excuse of extreme youth, and yet their emotional and intellectual immaturity has been allowed to pass without comment: no reviewer to my knowledge has made the slightest protest against the intellectual dishonesty and moral vulgarity of *The Wild Goose Chase* or the naïve muddle-headedness of *Journey to the Border*. On the contrary, both books have been praised for their literary as well as their propagandist merit. The decline of critical standards has brought us, it is clear, to a point where the regular critics cannot be relied on to make the simplest and most obvious judgments of taste and morality. Of course, the groups which these authors represent and by whom they are hailed as important writers appear to control most of the reviewing in literary periodicals: they are also, which is more important, practically the only modern literary movement. This only makes it more depressing to see that if you wear the right colours and know the right people you need observe no higher standards than those of the best-selling thriller and the middle-brow novel with a purpose. Mr. Day Lewis, it will be remembered, is on the selection committee of the Book Society. If a revolution leaves the Public School communists in privileged positions (as they seem sure it will) and follows the lines of their writings, it is impossible that the triumphant new culture of the classless society should be anything more than our present intellectual and moral chaos writ large. At least we know what to expect.

R. G. Cox.

THE POET AND HIS READERS

LETTERS FROM ICELAND, by W. H. Auden and Louis MacNeice (Faber and Faber, 9/-).

I CROSSED THE MINCH, by Louis MacNeice (Longmans, 10/6).

THE EARTH COMPELS, by Louis MacNeice (Faber and Faber, 6/-).

MEMORY, AND OTHER POEMS, by Walter de la Mare (Constable, 6/-).

POEMS, by C. H. Peacock (Chatto and Windus, 3/6).

THE CARNIVAL, by Frederic Prokosch (Chatto and Windus, 5/-).

By taking these books in chronological order one can dispose of the two silliest first. Mr. MacNeice says explicitly that his book about the Hebrides is a pot-boiler, but *Letters from Iceland* has more impressive pretensions and has everywhere been hailed as an important work of literature. It contains a fairly polite and sensible letter by Mr. Auden to a host in Iceland (Chap. XIV) which makes some criticisms of the island and suggestions for its future, and Mr. MacNeice is equally sensible on the decline of the crofters and of Gaelic traditions. But we all of us know about Culture and Environment now. The rest of the *Letters* is composed of a collection of quotations from histories dealing with Iceland, a certain amount of pedestrian tourist information, some description and the poetical contributions which set the tone of the whole. Mr. Auden thinks that

> Art, if it doesn't start there, at least ends,
> Whether æsthetics like the thought or not,
> In an attempt to entertain our friends ;
> And our first problem is to realise what
> Peculiar friends the modern artist's got ;
> It's possible a little dose of history
> May help us in unravelling this mystery. (p. 103)

One can only be grateful to Mr. Auden for stating the situation so completely. And while the chaps get on with the blind (p. 104) the common reader must be confident that at it they devote themselves

to assist in the defence
Of the European Tradition and to carry on
The Human Heritage. (p. 246)

There may be people who trust Baldwin still,
Someone may think that Empire wines are nice,
There may be people who hear Tauber twice (p. 57)

indicates by implication the healthy political, social and cultural outlook. If, as Mr. Auden suggests, the Romantics broke away from society and retired into an ivory studio party, it is equally true that our latter day modernists have found it an extraordinary profitable exhibition-stand. A large audience seems ready to sit quiet and watch any activities that the performers happen to be engaged in. Occasionally an amusing diversion is caused by someone at the back shouting

'It's such a pity Wystan never grows up.' (p. 203)

Anyhow Mr. MacNeice has followed the line up on his own at 10 pages less and 1/6 a time more. He provides the same kind of pointlessly minute descriptions of his trip—he tells the reader when he has a drink, Mr. Auden tells him when he goes to the lavatory—more verse interludes, some dull parodies (including a silly one of Lawrence) and a series of inconsequential dialogues between an imaginary tough and an æsthete. The protective irony is less all-embracing than in Mr. Auden's parts of the *Letters*, though he does the irresponsible snob stuff at some length. Twenty-five of the sixty-four pages of *The Earth Compels* are encores. One of these, *On those Islands*, is quite a pleasant meditative verse-description of the kind that Mr. MacNeice has done before, but *Homage to Clichés* and *Eclogue between the Motherless* are in Mr. Auden's cheapest and nastiest manner. Out of the muddled dullness of

Those who ignore disarm. The domestic ambush
The pleated lampshade the defeatist clock
May never be consummated and we may never
Strike on the rock beneath the calm upholstering.
(*Hidden Ice*)

and the dreariness of

Talking of evenings
I can drop my ash on the carpet since my divorce.
Never you marry, my boy . . .
(*Eclogue between the Motherless*)

one is quite pleased to see emerge a belief in

Your hazard, your act of defiance and hymn of hate,
Hatred of hatred, assertion of human values.
(*Eclogue from Iceland*)

but it isn't very convincing in the mouth of a Norse pre-incarnation of a Bloomsbury tough, and one remembers that Mr. Auden thinks that Lord Byron would have liked him, had he known him. Mr. MacNeice has found a public and he will presumably now go on giving them a little sordidness, a little toughness, a little nonsense verse, a little description and a little reminiscence. It's easy money, but one is sorry because there are not many poets writing at the moment whom one wants to read.

Mr. de la Mare's admirers cannot help being disappointed by *Memory*. He long ago gave us the essence of his poetic vision, and here again he merely repeats the well-known themes, reminiscence and foreboding, wistful aspirations and unaffectedly exotic descriptions.

After reading *The Earth Compels* one is relieved to turn to the honest Romanticism of *The Carnival*, but Mr. Prokosch has not developed much since *The Assassins*.

When all impassioned lovers kiss,
When madmen count the stars anew,
When whales in their gigantic bliss
Lie trembling two by two.

outdoes Mr. Roy Campbell, and at least eight lyrics in the volume are almost pure Housman, for example:

Northwards flames Orion's horn,
Westward the Egyptian light.
None to watch us, none to warn
But the blind eternal night.

Mr. Prokosch is less exotic than he was and is more aware of his immediate surroundings, but he still writes with only a small part

of his personality. A critical intellect, not to say a sense of humour, would also have modified

> And so on this windless morning, forgive,
> Lord, my superfluous words and narcissus
> Athletics. Hunger, control, the Eye and the endless
> Longing to love and discern: let these be my power. (*Ode*)

Though the protest is undoubtedly genuine, it is a mere surge of emotion which leaves no definite and lasting impression on the reader. I liked the title poem, however, and *The Castle*, whose last stanza again shows Mr. Prokosch's weakness and his success when he strikes a vivid image:

> I hear their prayers. O what is the answer? What cool
> Idyll will join their arms in the dance, when Aragon
> Is a book? And the nordic fury
> A phrase, or a bronze fountain?

Mr. Peacock has written very little and it is uneven in quality, but he has at his best a personal tone and feeling which is worth attention. I was extremely surprised to find that he had not reprinted *To Maecenas* from *Scrutiny*, September, 1933, which I think his most individual poem. I will quote the opening and the close:

> You, my friend,
> Who are not apt to notice things like these,
> Remarked how well the buds had rallied
> After the spite of an inconstant spring.
> So you and I,
> Who sleep the time of our short tenancy,
> And spoil no dreams as some men do
> With too much thought and too much noticing—
> We sometimes, forced by circumstance, extend
> The scope of our habitual view . . .
> Searched out by the dynamic impetus of things
> We have no meaning—you and I
> Who wonder, as we stare about us, why
> Our hearts are empty and our spirits cold.

The tone of this quiet ironic satire is Mr. Peacock's distinctive characteristic, which one feels equally in the conversational

Excursion and in the more complex *Creed, Poise* and *Release,* where his use of words is modern in a less personal way, for example in

> I would not have life whittled to an hour
> Of sifted essence, and all memories creep
> Round one small orbit while the visual power
> Becomes not means to gain but keep.
> Better to leave all legacy behind
> Than sign acceptance in the terms of sleep.

Mr. Peacock is a serious artist who takes great pains to communicate those experiences that have interested him. His good poems are truly experiences, carefully clarified and ordered, not the mere elaboration of ideas. What chance a little bread has of finding favour when sack is so popular and plentiful one does not know. Nevertheless one hopes that he will write more and develop the qualities which he here briefly suggests to us.

GEOFFREY WALTON.

THE EDUCATION OF GIRLS

FRANCES MARY BUSS : AN EDUCATIONAL PIONEER, by Sara A. Burstall (S.P.C.K., 2/6).

This life of Miss Buss, written as a tribute to work and character that the author feels are insufficiently appreciated, covers little new ground and is too completely reverent in approach to be revealing. Supplemented, however, from a book of memoirs, *A London Girl of the Eighties,* by Mrs. Vivian Hughes, who entered the North London Collegiate School at the age of sixteen, the book gives a fair account of Miss Buss's difficulties and achievements, and indicates the long-lasting effects of her methods. Her initial problem was to convince the general public that girls could benefit from an organized education ; the immediate means to that end seemed to her to lie in obtaining for girls successes in public examinations previously open to boys. The tendency for this means to become an end in itself still exists. A problem within the school was the maintenance of discipline in large classes without the aid of corporal punishment. Miss Buss created a multitude of rules, and a system of signing for offences, such as talking at the wrong

time or place, or 'marching with the wrong foot.' She believed 'that intellectual training effects greater moral improvement in women than it does in men because women's faults of character, on an average, turn more on irrationality and lack of nerve control,' and consequently she valued discipline of all kinds for its own sake, not only the mental discipline traditionally inherent in Latin and Mathematics, but also a rigid conformity to regulations and a meticulous regard for neatness. The excesses of Miss Buss's method have disappeared, but the fetish of neatness and the temptation to foster a silent surface-efficiency persist. Her attitude to health is relevant here. She combatted the prevailing acquiescence in low health by enforcing precautionary measures and beyond that by treating illness like the Erewhonians. 'You *dare* faint!' was her cure for a girl in church. Marks were another means that tended to become an end: they were intended either as a reward for conduct or as an incentive to work, sometimes the distinction was confused—in Drawing, to quote Mrs. Hughes, you got ten marks for not talking. Even the time wasted in the intricacies of marking has not killed equally fatuous practices and there are still schools where every week every girl is given a mark for every subject and every week an average weekly mark for every girl is read out to the assembled school. In the upper forms of the North London Collegiate the marking system was relaxed and it was assumed that the girls would work because they wanted to. Still more than examinations, prize-givings were instituted by Miss Buss for their publicity value; here again the danger is obvious, and her use of high titles established a precedent that endures after the need for publicity.

Some changes from Miss Buss's original scheme are to be regretted. Miss Burstall mentions the disappearance of men teachers from the senior forms. Afternoon school has gradually been introduced, even into schools belonging to the G.P.D.S.T. which adhere in theory to the old plan; the demands of examination syllabuses and the shortening of school terms leave less time for other activities.

Miss Buss improved the status of girls' education enormously. In doing this she made certain concessions, but she felt that public recognition must first be won by some such measurable achievement as examination successes, and that for her it would have been too great a risk to leave the birds in the bush.

SYLVIA LEGGE.

THE ACADEMIC MIND ON THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

SEVENTEENTH CENTURY STUDIES PRESENTED TO SIR HERBERT GRIERSON (Oxford: Milford, 21/-).

Seventeenth Century Studies contains twenty-three essays collected in honour of Sir Herbert Grierson. All but two or three of the authors are university teachers, known as scholars rather than as critics, and the book raises once more the question of the relations of scholarship and criticism. If one feels that Professor Grierson deserved a better book than this it is not because the essays shown any lack of scholarship but because the spirit which informs so many of them is narrowly academic ; it lacks, that is, that sharp sense of relative values which should guide even the most laborious work with the pick and shovel.

The academic spirit is perhaps most noticeable in those essays which rely mainly on information as a means of enforcing an opinion: Professor Bullough's ' Bacon and the Defence of Learning,' Professor Praz's ' Milton and Poussin,' Dr. Tillyard's ' Milton and the English Epic Tradition,' and Professor Pierre Legouis' ' Corneille and Dryden as Dramatic Critics,' amongst others. Here, plainly, are the Right People discussing the Right Things, professor quotes professor, and none of the essays is unsound or wildly daring, and there isn't one which a student of the century might not, at some time, be glad to consult. But, reading these admirably solid exercises, one feels that anybody, given the time, could have written them ; instead of showing the fruitful impact of a living book on an individual sensibility they are blankly impersonal. The claustrophobic feeling which assails the reader—a sense of horizons drawing in—is, I believe, due to the fact that the authors have attempted to *substitute* scholarship for criticism. Dr. Tillyard controverts the common notion of Milton's isolation by showing how widely Milton had read in the literature of his own and the preceding generation, and he relates the successive stages of the plan for an heroic poem to contemporary literature and contemporary events. But the point in issue is really a critical one ; it is a question of the nature of Milton's mind and feelings as they are displayed in his poetry ; and although Dr. Tillyard has written two books in which he gives his own view of the poetry the present

essay shows a curious incomprehension of the necessary subordination of factual studies. 'The notion of isolation,' he says, 'colours Mr. Belloc's recent book . . . And when Mr. Eliot makes Milton responsible for breaking up the Elizabethan synthesis of thought and feeling and for damaging the English language, he may be arguing on similar premisses.' The 'premisses' of Mr. Eliot's 'Note on the Verse of John Milton'[1] are to be found in the verse of John Milton, and at the critical level at which Mr. Eliot's argument is conducted no amount of information about the books Milton had read makes any difference at all. It is much the same with 'Milton and Poussin.' Professor Praz shows that he is aware of the essential characteristics of Milton's verse, but no one who can read *Paradise Lost* is likely to find his elaborate parallel between the English poet and the French painter very enlightening. Poussin modelled his figures and objects in wax and grouped them in a lighted box before painting his later pictures: 'Milton also modelled his verse in wax before working it in English. The wax *pattern of Milton was the Latin construction; he handled so to* say the classical flesh of the words before dressing it in English attire.' Milton's latinizing habits are best described without the aid of a strained analogy, and what is most noticeable about such a comparison is its irrelevance. It is academic irrelevance too that one finds in Mr. Lawrence Binyon's 'Note on Milton's Imagery and Rhythm.' Mr. Binyon quotes quite seriously Robert Bridge's opinion that the 'addresses to Vane, Fairfax and Cromwell are properly odes and should be called odes, or at least odic sonnets.'

It is peculiarly appropriate (or if you like peculiarly unfortunate) that Mr. C. S. Lewis's essay on 'Donne and Love Poetry in the Seventeenth Century' should appear in a volume so strongly imbued with the academic spirit. This contribution is worth a more detailed examination. Mr. Lewis begins by stating that the style of Donne's poetry 'is primarily a development of one of the two styles which we find in the work of his immediate predecessors. One of these is the mellifluous, luxurious, "builded rhyme," as in Spenser's *Amoretti*: the other is the abrupt, familiar, and consciously "manly" style in which nearly all Wyatt's lyrics are written.' Both styles are good, but twentieth-century prejudice favours the second. Donne of course is in the Wyatt line, and

[1] *Essays and Studies of the English Association*, 1935.

Mr. Lewis first analyses the manner of his love poems in order to show why they make a special appeal to contemporary taste. Donne's wit, he says, displayed in poems which are 'dramatic,' argumentative, and exacting, 'is not so much the play as the irritability of intellect,' and this is peculiarly congenial to our age, for 'we, like Donne, happen to live at the end of a great period of rich and nobly obvious poetry' and 'it is natural to want your savoury after your sweets.' Passing lightly over the fact that most of us are unable to scan and are therefore unable to say whether Donne's poetry is rhythmically good or bad,[1] Mr. Lewis proceeds to the substance of the love poems. He remarks that apart from a few poems of simple appetite and a few which celebrate a self-consciously 'virtuous' love the main theme of the *Songs and Sonets* is 'the love of hatred and the hate of love'; the poems are 'monuments, unparalleled outside Catullus, to the close kinship between certain kinds of love and certain kinds of hate.' This too appeals to us, but the appeal is transitory and limited; for not only is Donne's complexity 'all on the surface—an intellectual and fully conscious complexity that we soon come to an end of,' none of his characteristic poems is *about* love at all: 'Donne's love poems could not exist unless love poems of a more genial character existed first. He shows us amazing shadows cast by love upon the intellect, the passions, and the appetite; to learn of the substance which casts them we must go to other poets, more balanced, more magnanimous, and more humane.'

Mr. Lewis's argument, as may be seen from this summary, is compounded of sense and silliness. The sense comes out in several quotable remarks, but on the whole the silliness predominates. You see it in the remark about 'the substance' of love which I have quoted (for Mr. Lewis Love is simple and constant, and he is convinced he finds it in poems about coral lips and Cupid's golden wings); you see it in the injunction to imagine 'Beatrice or Juliet or Perdita, or again, Amoret or Britomart . . . as the auditress throughout these poems'; and you see something like it in the digression on scansion. (Though I suspect that this is merely intended to throw dust in our eyes: when we are told a little later

[1]Mr. Lewis is, however, 'far from suggesting that the appearance of *vers libre* is simply a result' of 'this widespread metrical ignorance.'

that ' Donne's real limitation is not that he writes *about*, but that he writes *in*, a chaos of violent and transitory passions. He is perpetually excited . . . ' it is useless to reply that his sure and subtle command of rhythm suggests that ' chaos ' is quite the wrong word!) It isn't very profitable to follow Mr. Lewis through various specious arguments (as when, on pages 69-70, he juggles with the word ' serious ') ; what gives his essay its representative importance is the tone. There is no need to be anything but amused by the opening assumption of superiority and detachment: ' Such phenomena as the present popularity of Donne or the growing unpopularity of Milton are not to be deplored ; they are rather to be explained.' But one must protest when Mr. Lewis sneers at modern critics—unnamed—whose work he has obviously failed to understand: on page 66 there is a parody of Dr. Richards's writing which might do credit to a sixth-form boy, and later we are told ' There is a great deal of dandyism (largely of Franco-American importation) in the modern literary world.' This sort of thing is of course simply an appeal to prejudice, and those who are suitably predisposed will be delighted with Mr. Lewis's account of the genesis of modern criticism, including as it does ' the final break-up of aristocracy and the consequent, and still increasing, distaste for arduous disciplines of sentiment.'[1] The paragraph from which this comes is as good an example as one can find of what I should call the lawyer's manner in literary criticism—sophistry, equivocation, and oblique denigration of the opposing party. It is only fair to add that the argument is expressed with elegance and wit: ' The " Petrarchan " sonneteers . . . are not trying to communicate faithfully the raw, the merely natural, impact of actual passion . . . and to accuse them of insincerity is like calling an oyster insincere because it makes its disease into a pearl.' But I seem to have heard that one before.

It is true of course that there is an element of mere fashion in Donne's present popularity ; and it is true also that in recent years his merits have had much more attention than his limitations. But an ' explanation ' of his popularity and an account of the way in which he falls short of the highest standard of excellence would be better undertaken by a critic less partisan and more generous

[1]Such as one obtains from the ' rich and nobly obvious poetry ' of the nineteenth century?

ARISTOCRACY AND THE MIDDLE-CLASSES IN GERMANY: Social Types in German Literature, 1830-1900, by Ernst Kohn-Bramstedt (London, P. S. King, 1937, 15/-).

The book by Dr. Kohn-Bramstedt—though devoted to a study of nineteenth-century Germany—is of interest to every student of literature since it represents one of the most successful and careful applications of the sociological method. Dr. Kohn-Bramstedt has obviously little sympathy for Marxist simplifications though he never even alludes to the Marxist interpretation as such. He is an empiricist who takes the novel between 1830 and 1900 as material for the study of social realities, especially for the study of social types, and groups, their prestige, their attitudes towards each other, etc. The æsthetic question is quite consciously neglected and ignored. The fact that the novel is a work of art is considered rather a 'limitation and shortcoming' for the purposes of social study (p. 3), though it is admitted that it conveys an empirical material of social analysis quite unobtainable in contemporary scholarship. At the same time Dr. Kohn-Bramstedt does not neglect the other side of the question: the illumination of literature itself by a study of society from other non-literary sources. He assembles many criteria which could be used for an evaluation of the writers discussed and he answers questions as to the correctness and relevance of the picture of the society they represent, etc. A special part of the book is devoted to a related question: to the position of the writer in society, his attitude to the different classes either as a propagandist or critic or a neutral observer, to questions of patronage and literary societies, prestige of the writer and his own self-confidence. One of the merits of the book is Dr. Kohn-Bramstedt's reluctance to agree to simple distinctions: he is particularly good in describing the transition from the rigid 'estates' society of the eighteenth century to the more liberal class-society of the nineteenth century and in distinguishing between different groups of the bourgeosie in different times and places. The results of the painstaking study are most illuminating for a comprehension of nineteenth-century Germany, the power and limitations of the aristocracy, the rise of the middle-classes in spite of their political impotence, the peculiar rôle of the well-to-do Jew and many side-lights are thrown on the very different development in England

(see *e.g.*, the remarks on Philistinism and Matthew Arnold on p. 223). Altogether this is a valuable book in the best pre-Hitler German tradition: it should counteract the usual dogmatic and at the same time haphazard way of using the sociological method for the study of literature. Dr. Kohn-Bramstedt establishes a really close relation between literature and society and shows in detail what this relation was like.

The modest and sensible introduction on the sociological approach to literature does not, however, face the question whether the sociological method could not be used for other purposes. I cannot help thinking that the study of literature as an art would profit more by an attention to such questions as the social-conditionedness of æsthetic norms. The validity of a certain system of æsthetic norms is frequently connected with a special social stratum. The most advanced norm is frequently held by the highest layer of society and later this norm sinks socially towards the folklore and popular art, while new norms are arising with social changes. The connection between the most advanced art and the highest society is, of course, by no means necessary in all times of history. We can, therefore, ask such sociological questions as what æsthetic norms were adopted by a specific class or also age-group or sex at a given time. How far, can we ask, does a social class impose its norm or taste on the other classes? How far does one class accept the norm created or transmitted by another? What is the position of æsthetic values in the general scale of values? What are the relations of literary values to other systems of values like morals, religion, etc. I do not suggest that these questions have never been discussed at all, or that the author should have discussed them in the body of his book, but the fact that they can be asked shows that Dr. Kohn-Bramstedt has not exhausted the rich possibilities of a sociological approach to literature, an approach which might take also account of literature as an art. Dr. Kohn-Bramstedt gives us rather an extremely careful and judicious study in the literary approach towards a sociology of the classes and in particular, towards an analysis of the peculiar position of the writer. The study can be recommended as a model piece of research which combines full documentation with a clear realization of the difficult theoretical questions involved.

R. WELLEK.

MR. TURNER'S MOZART

MOZART, by W. J. Turner (Gollancz, 16/-).

The reception accorded to this book has been oddly mixed. Mr. Richard Church and the other critics who go in for soul and sympathy have larded it with eulogy. Critics of academic prestige like Mr. Ernest Walker have treated it with cynically complacent frigidity. Mr. Cecil Gray thought that Mr. Turner ought to have proved himself a real man by explaining to his congenitally squeamish readers how all the best artists are committed (by birthright, as it were) to excesses *in Baccho et Venere*. Taking it all round, I think Mr. Turner has been hard done by.

I wouldn't say that this is a good critical work about Mozart—such a book is yet to be written—but at least it is reasonable, sensible, and modest. I say modest because Mr. Turner has been accused of lack of generosity to other Mozart critics. I have read his book carefully and I can find no evidence for this charge. He happens to have a conception of Mozart's genius which he wishes to bring home to the reader ; he happens also to think that his conception is the right one. If he did not think he was right it would have been better that this book had remained unwritten since it would merely have cluttered the libraries with verbiage pointless because without conviction. Nobody could say that Mr. Turner, even at his wildest and most wrong-headed, lacked convictions. In this book he writes because he has something to say. But of wilful ungenerosity to his predecessors I can find not a trace.

What Mr. Turner has to say about Mozart does not seem to me wild or wrong-headed at all ; I think it is very sensible and just. My only quarrel is that the ' secret ' of Mozart's genius which Mr. Turner so painfully reveals with such awful italics and such hushed expectancy, proves to be not such a very secret secret after all. I cannot really believe that it is necessary, at this date, to protest with such vehemence against the Victorian notion of the ' gentle, child-like ' Mozart ; nor would any of the unusually percipient and superior readers whom Mr. Turner continually tells us he has in mind, want to dismiss as stupidly extravagant his main thesis—that Mozart ' surpasses all the great musicians of genius before or since . . . in his possession not only of a greater

degree of purely musical talent than has been possessed by any man, but also in the combination in him of such a variety of human qualities of head and heart in so high a degree of vitality that we may say of him that he had a truly Shakespearean nature.' But if Mr. Turner doesn't—and I don't think he would claim to—take us very far into the 'mystery' of Mozart's genius, he does present, quietly and with a wealth of accumulated evidence rather surprising from so belligerent a critic, a cogent impression of Mozart as a composer and personality of supreme and terrifying power. His criticisms of the general standpoint of Mr. Eric Blom's incidentally admirable study, seem to me absolutely just.

There is very little in this book that can claim to be called musical criticism; but the biographical portion is good and completely unsentimentalized, and the letters are retranslated with charm and spontaneity. The reviewer who found Mr. Turner 'ungenerous' pounces on a few minor inaccuracies; I am grateful for the letters' spiritual fidelity and liveliness. The most interesting passages of the book are probably those estimating Mozart's position in contemporary musical activity, passages in which the relation of Mozart to the *Sturm und Drang* period is properly but rather excessively stressed. The account of *Cosi fan tutte* is interesting and it is good to see someone protesting against the stupid and long-standing tradition of facetiousness in productions of *Die Zauberflöte*. It's a pity Mr. Turner has nothing to say about the piano concertos, in some ways the most intimate of all Mozart's compositions; and the quasi-philosophical disquisitions at the end seem to me unhelpful. As usual, Mr. Turner is irritating when he presumably forgets the superior percipience of his readers and starts explaining quite commonplace ideas in school-masterly words of two syllables.

But to indicate the extent of my approvals and disapprovals would take more space than it is worth. We all know Mr. Turner's immaturities, his unreliability, his trumpery bellicosities, his occasional really astoundingly inane failures of insight—as in the remarks about Fauré quoted in the last number of *Scrutiny*, and an incredible list of composers 'poor in experience but rich in image-making power,' comprising D. Scarlatti, Debussy and Elgar alongside Grieg (I believe) and Sullivan. His may not be a subtle mind. Yet this reasonable and readable book makes one realize

how decent and how honest a person he is compared with the majority of those who infest the suburbs of the musical republic. He is as ill served by those who crook the knee to his superior wisdom as by those who, having given evidence of not one tenth of his genuine love of and sympathy for Mozart and Mozart's works, affect to despise his writings as self-opinionated or unscholarly or both.

W. H. MELLERS.

A PROPHETIC ROMANTIC

BERLIOZ, by J. H. Elliot (The Master Musicians series, Dent, 4/6).

Mr. Elliot's book is of the type somewhat equivocally described by publishers as 'sensible.' Its sensibleness is a real virtue, for its tone is admirably restrained and unbiassed; on the other hand sensibleness seems a not very positive virtue, so that the book leaves one dissatisfied.

Of course Mr. Elliot might properly protest that his book is an introduction to Berlioz, intended for the 'general' reader, and that an exhaustive treatment and a comprehensive critical appraisement were hardly called for; but I think the implied distinction is a fine one. For the book seems to me to fail as a general introduction precisely because of its critical limitations. Presumably Mr. Elliot is trying to make out his case for Berlioz; yet so 'sensible' is his attitude, so noncommittal his judgments, that one comes away with the feeling that he hasn't any pronounced convictions about his subject at all. There is something like complacency in the glibness with which he praises and blames. It would seem hardly necessary to point out that the first essential of a book intending to stimulate interest in Berlioz would be that it should give some convincing notion of the nature of Berlioz's genius—whether one agreed with this notion or not would be comparatively unimportant—but Mr. Elliot is unaware of this necessity and seems at times perversely unwilling to understand what Berlioz was trying to do. His approach to Berlioz is that of a twentieth-century musicologist. It is a reasonable approach: only it is a little too facile.

If one wants to introduce Berlioz to a wider, more 'popular' audience one has first to dispose of the ignorant conventional misconceptions of his genius which are still current. Mr. Elliot seems aware, in a muffled sort of way, that various factors have resulted in a widespread illiteracy among professional and non-professional musicians where Berlioz's music is concerned, and that several distinguished artists have of late years protested against it. Thus he tepidly discredits the legend of the 'romantic' Berlioz and is dubious about the validity of the programmatic aspect. On the other hand he follows convention in speaking of Berlioz's weariness and declining powers during the latter part of his life—a notion which is not so much wrong as absurdly over-simple. And he admits that he finds Berlioz's music as a whole 'inexplicable,' thus fostering the hoary fallacy of Berlioz the unpredictable, creating eccentric compositions in revolutionary and wildly inconsistent forms. ('There is not one Berlioz, there are half a dozen; and they are as different from one another as they are different from all other composers. The Berlioz of the *Requiem* and the *Te Deum* is poles apart from the Berlioz of *Benvenuto Cellini*. What have either of these in common with . . . *Roméo et Juliette*? Where does the man who wrote the *Symphonie Funèbre* . . . fit into the scheme? . . . Berlioz remains the most baffling phenomenon in musical history. He had tremendous genius, but no power—or no desire—to concentrate it in one channel . . .') Mr. Elliot says he states all this 'with confidence'; it still seems to me nonsense. And I have, at least, Berlioz's own encouragement in not finding his music quite so inexplicable. It has always seemed to me odd that critics who find Berlioz's work baffling never seem to notice the composer's own account of his music in his *Memoirs*. Possibly they wouldn't agree with it; but to refuse to recognize it as a possible point of view is no more than perverse.

Here, anyway, are Berlioz's words. He is speaking of the 'classicality' of his music and refuting those critics who had looked upon his *L'Enfance du Christ* as a complete *volte face*. 'In that work,' he writes,

> 'many people imagined they could detect a radical change in my style and manner. This opinion is entirely without foundation. The subject naturally lent itself to a gentle and simple style of music, and for this reason alone was more in accordance

with their taste and intelligence. Time would probably have developed these qualities, but I should have written *L'Enfance du Christ* in the same style twenty years earlier.

'The principal reason for the long war waged against me lies in the antagonism existing between my musical feeling and that of the great mass of the Parisian public. Many looked upon me as a madman because I considered them as children or simpletons.'

And further on he writes,

'Generally speaking, my style is very bold, but it has not the slightest tendency to subvert any of the constituent elements of art. On the contrary, it is my endeavour to add to their number. I have never dreamt of making music 'without melody,' as so many in France are stupid enough to say. Such a school now exists in Germany, and I hold it in detestation. It is easy to see that, without confining myself to a short air for the theme of a piece, as the great masters often do, I have always taken care that my compositions shall be rich in melody. The value of the melodies, their distinction, novelty and charm, may of course be disputed. It is not for me to estimate them; but to deny their existence is absurd and unfair. But as they are often on a large scale, an immature or unappreciative mind cannot properly distinguish their forms; or they may be joined to other secondary melodies, which are invisible to that class of mind; and lastly, such melodies are so unlike the little absurdities to which the term is applied by the lower stratum of the musical world, that it finds it impossible to give the same name to both.

'The prevailing characteristics of my music are passionate expression, intense ardour, rhythmical animation, and unexpected turns. When I say passionate expression I mean an expression determined on enforcing the inner meaning of its subject, even when that subject is the contrary of passion, and when the feeling to be expressed is gentle and tender, or even profoundly calm. This is the sort of expression that has been discovered in *L'Enfance du Christ*, the *Ceil* scene in *Faust*, and the Sanctus of the *Requiem*.'[1]

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[1]The translation is Ernest Newman's.

If one wants to introduce Berlioz to a wider, more 'popular' audience one has first to dispose of the ignorant conventional misconceptions of his genius which are still current. Mr. Elliot seems aware, in a muffled sort of way, that various factors have resulted in a widespread illiteracy among professional and non-professional musicians where Berlioz's music is concerned, and that several distinguished artists have of late years protested against it. Thus he tepidly discredits the legend of the 'romantic' Berlioz and is dubious about the validity of the programmatic aspect. On the other hand he follows convention in speaking of Berlioz's weariness and declining powers during the latter part of his life—a notion which is not so much wrong as absurdly over-simple. And he admits that he finds Berlioz's music as a whole 'inexplicable,' thus fostering the hoary fallacy of Berlioz the unpredictable, creating eccentric compositions in revolutionary and wildly inconsistent forms. ('There is not one Berlioz, there are half a dozen; and they are as different from one another as they are different from all other composers. The Berlioz of the *Requiem* and the *Te Deum* is poles apart from the Berlioz of *Benvenuto Cellini*. What have either of these in common with . . . *Roméo et Juliette*? Where does the man who wrote the *Symphonie Funèbre* . . . fit into the scheme? . . . Berlioz remains the most baffling phenomenon in musical history. He had tremendous genius, but no power—or no desire—to concentrate it in one channel . . .') Mr. Elliot says he states all this 'with confidence'; it still seems to me nonsense. And I have, at least, Berlioz's own encouragement in not finding his music quite so inexplicable. It has always seemed to me odd that critics who find Berlioz's work baffling never seem to notice the composer's own account of his music in his *Memoirs*. Possibly they wouldn't agree with it; but to refuse to recognize it as a possible point of view is no more than perverse.

Here, anyway, are Berlioz's words. He is speaking of the 'classicality' of his music and refuting those critics who had looked upon his *L'Enfance du Christ* as a complete *volte face*. 'In that work,' he writes,

> 'many people imagined they could detect a radical change in my style and manner. This opinion is entirely without foundation. The subject naturally lent itself to a gentle and simple style of music, and for this reason alone was more in accordance

with their taste and intelligence. Time would probably have developed these qualities, but I should have written *L'Enfance du Christ* in the same style twenty years earlier.

'The principal reason for the long war waged against me lies in the antagonism existing between my musical feeling and that of the great mass of the Parisian public. Many looked upon me as a madman because I considered them as children or simpletons.'

And further on he writes,

'Generally speaking, my style is very bold, but it has not the slightest tendency to subvert any of the constituent elements of art. On the contrary, it is my endeavour to add to their number. I have never dreamt of making music 'without melody,' as so many in France are stupid enough to say. Such a school now exists in Germany, and I hold it in detestation. It is easy to see that, without confining myself to a short air for the theme of a piece, as the great masters often do, I have always taken care that my compositions shall be rich in melody. The value of the melodies, their distinction, novelty and charm, may of course be disputed. It is not for me to estimate them; but to deny their existence is absurd and unfair. But as they are often on a large scale, an immature or unappreciative mind cannot properly distinguish their forms; or they may be joined to other secondary melodies, which are invisible to that class of mind; and lastly, such melodies are so unlike the little absurdities to which the term is applied by the lower stratum of the musical world, that it finds it impossible to give the same name to both.

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[1]The translation is Ernest Newman's.

I think personally that all this is absolutely just, immeasurably the finest criticism of Berlioz that has ever been written. There is some truth in the suggestion that Berlioz was so astonishingly original a genius that we are only beginning to catch up with him. He is anyway, one would have thought, a great enough figure to demand, with the confidence of genius, a little humility from his listeners. To try to understand his intentions, above all to *listen* to his music with our faculties alert and awake, not to irrelevant ideas of what the music *ought* to sound like, according to (say) Dannreuther's prescription—to do this is surely not to submit to hypnosis. What does the 'professional' or academic critic mean when he calls Berlioz's harmony poor, his counterpoint poor, his melody non-existent? These things do not exist apart from the created compositions they occur in. Is it still hopeless to make this class of person understand that the only question worth asking is not Are Berlioz's fugues really fugues? but do they, in actual performance, come off? Even though one may not be able to answer with an unqualified Yes—for to respond sympathetically is not the same as being uncritical—one won't feel like ascribing the notorious 'crudities' to Technical Incompetence, nor will one be satisfied with the only speciously less simple account of Mr. Elliot. I shall be referring to this point again at the end of this review.

If it is a truism, then, that Berlioz is a great romantic genius, it is a truism the precise meaning and justice of which needs examining very carefully. Nearly everyone grants that Berlioz had 'genius,' the implication being, as in the case of Lawrence, that you've got to explain away somehow a sort of troublesome vitality that won't square with ready-made conceptions of the valuable and true. 'Genius' is, anyhow, the measure of Berlioz's romanticism, and such an incident as the celebrated story of Estelle certainly suggests that Berlioz was a person of abnormal sensibilities. But, notwithstanding the immense mane of hair, the transports, pistols and phials of poison, we begin to understand how completely different was Berlioz's romanticism from that of the conventional romantic when we come to consider the nature of that amazing originality of which I've already spoken—when we realize that the composer was, in his century, a completely isolated figure.

What is remarkable about the music of this fantastic romantic

is that it is never introspective—' self-regarding '—music ; in this it differs from the work of almost all his contemporaries. Perhaps we can understand this if we realize that Berlioz was the only superlatively great artist which France of the Napoleonic era produced. There is all the glory and intoxication of the Imperial epoch in Berlioz, and there is also the bitterness of the collapse. If we think of Berlioz conducting, in the open air, with a drawn sword, an enormous orchestra and a military band of two hundred in his *Symphonie Funèbre et Triomphale*, and then collapsing in tears over the kettle-drums, we can realize a little of the fervour and intoxication which the era inspired ; but we can also see how this apotheosizing of martial, imperialistic glory implied an extraversive, rather than an introspective and subjective, attitude on the part of the composer. This symphony, and the *Military Te Deum*, are, in the words of Sacheverell Sitwell, ' the Napoleonic legend seen through an imagination that lifted it to the highest planes ' ; they are ' sudden recreations of vanished glory in his imagination,' visions of Babylonian and Ninevean grandeur through the medium of ' une organisation babylonienne.' To hear the *Symphonie Funèbre et Triomphale* performed, even in a modern concert hall and with less than half the number of performers that Berlioz demanded, is an unforgettable experience and one to which there is, as far as I know, no parallel in any of the arts. The funeral march is a weird, soaring melody such as no-one but Berlioz has ever been able to write, but it is buoyant, taut, proud, quite unlike the conventional romantic Chopinesque funeral march ;[1] the final march of triumph is a dazzling transformation of the 'military' tune into a song of heroism, a heroism so fervent yet so poised and aristocratic as to make all subsequent attempts at heroism look sheepish. In sheer excitement of sound this march is overwhelming ; but there is an extraordinary refinement and aristocratic finesse in the heroic tune, an astonishing poise and avoidance of banality ; this is martial heroism and martial heroism implies the discipline of martial order.

Now I think that if, with this in mind, one turns to Berlioz's greatest and more purely ' autobiographical ' achievements, one can understand more easily the peculiar and significant classicality which critics are at last agreeing to see in them. What is so surprising is the detachment and æsthetic impersonality of these

works, despite their apparently romantic trappings. The economy with which Berlioz uses his colossal resources in the *Grande Messe des Morts* (which I consider to be unquestionably one of the highest peaks to which the art of music has ever attained),[2] is altogether characteristic, despite those people who still wish to represent Berlioz as an unruly extremist. The effect of the four brass bands, when they do appear, is tremendous and masterly, apocalyptic, but no less terrible is the desolating chorus of the *Agnus Dei*. This is music of a piteous and agonizing intensity, slender in its means but unbearable in its poignancy; and always the music remains aristocratic, refined. Moreover this piece is not an isolated example; there is music of a similar piteous tenderness and delicacy in *Roméo et Juliette*, in *L'Enfance du Christ*, in *Les Troyens*. All Berlioz's most typical music, whether in these poignant fragments or in such a thing as the colossal fugue on Hosanna, is a music of Aristocracy; it is music conceived at *white* heat, and the metaphor is singularly apt because it suggests not only the intensity and fervour of Berlioz's emotional processes but also the remarkable clarity, radiancy and refinement of the result of these processes. This aristocratic classicality is present even in the most directly autobiographical of Berlioz's compositions, the *Symphonie Fantastique*, Berlioz's contribution to the nineteenth century self-dramatizing Tragic Hero cult, for the 'horrors' in this music are oddly restrained and impersonal. There is no parallel to the simultaneous intensity and impersonality of this music anywhere in the nineteenth century; one has to look back to Mozart or to Gluck for anything similar. Berlioz's admiration for Gluck is, indeed, revealing, and it is no accident that his most ambitious work, *Les Troyens*, should be an opera conceived in the Gluck tradition, though on a scale of grandeur and imperial magnificence utterly beyond anything that Gluck had dreamed of.

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[1]Berlioz despised Chopin's music. We remember his brilliant *bon mot* which is also, of course, characteristically penetrating criticism: 'Chopin was dying all his life.'

[2]Berlioz himself said: 'If I were threatened with the destruction of the whole of my works save one, I should crave mercy for the *Messe des Morts*.' (Letter to Ferrand, 1867. The *Requiem* was written in 1837).

In all Berlioz's most characteristic music, particularly in *Les Troyens* and the *Requiem*, there is this vision of heroic and majestic dignity combined with that singular inimitable piquancy in the Berliozian melody—a peculiarly acrid sense of bitterness and loss, and a sepulchral, almost necromantic, evocation of things beneath the surface. It is easy to overestimate the 'sepulchral' qualities of, say, the *Requiem*—I think Mr. Elliot does so— or at any rate to interpret them in misleading terms. There remains, however, this quality that one cannot explain; it is as far from the conventional notion of the 'romantic' horrors as it is—in Mr. Sorabji's words—from the 'normal healthy mind' of the 'average' citizen. It is music, Mr. Sorabji has said, viewed 'in a glass darkly.' It is uncanny, eerie, in touch with the horrible and grotesque. Yet so perfect and controlled is the detachment of the artist that, when we listen to this music, it is not the horror that we are conscious of, but the pity of it. It is significant that we would not think of describing Berlioz's most typical creations as 'beautiful'; Mr. Elliot rightly remarks that they 'are no more beautiful than an earthquake.' Even in his most radiantly lovely music—the tranquil lyrical flights of *Roméo*, the vivacity of *Béatrice et Benedict*—one senses, as it were, this undertone of the uncanny which never quite becomes explicit. Mozart and Busoni are the only other composers who possess this quality to anything like a comparable degree. It's another of the things that 'immature and unappreciative minds' prefer to ignore.

The characteristics that make Berlioz so significant a figure to-day are really summarized for us in his own account of his music which I have quoted earlier. We may mention here, briefly, the pure musicality of his work, his avoidance of oversubjectivity, and the consequent tendency of his art towards the operatic form—a tendency which foreshadows the twentieth-century cult of ballet as a relief from excessive introspection. Most central of all is the importance with which he invested the melodic element of his music, his perfection of an original melodic idiom of incomparable sensitiveness and beauty, freed from the outmoded conventions of the eighteenth-century symphonic form—and the corresponding restraint of his harmony and the complex large-scale organization of his rhythm. (It's interesting to note that some of these melodies tend away from diatonicism towards a unique sort of modality, a

characteristic which Mr. Elliot dubiously calls Berlioz's 'archaism'). Cecil Gray, in pointing out the importance for the contemporary composer of Berlioz's immense individual melodies, adds that the composers' music is nevertheless primarily homophonic and in this respect is not likely to influence the music of the future. I don't think the point is an important one. Melody, with Berlioz, came first—that is the crux of the matter. And Mr. Gray would seem to agree that it is only a half-truth to deny to Berlioz mastery of the great polyphonic forms.

But quite apart from these technical considerations the figure of Berlioz has a curiously, almost symbolically, prophetic quality. That the *Grande Messe des Morts* is the greatest non-religious (in the limited sense) requiem is a minor point, perhaps, though interesting. But the isolation and perpetual bafflement of this remarkable but unhappy creature, his continual disillusionment, give warning, in no uncertain terms, of what was to come. For it cannot be denied that, completely successful as Berlioz's finest and most wonderful works were, he *did not* accomplish half that he aspired towards. Possibly this is what the critics really mean when they speak of his ' crudities,' though it's hard to forgive their impudence. There is a strange feeling of nonfulfilment about Berlioz's music considered as a whole. The comparison with Wagner is instructive in this connection, for no man could have hoped for a more complete fulfilment of his ideals and ambitions than Wagner obtained both in his life and in his art. Wagner's music has a wholeness, a sense of fulfilment, which Berlioz's lacks ; but we cannot therefore conclude that Wagner is the more profound and valuable composer. And it is perhaps the last ironic twist of the knife that Wagner should have been able to persuade his audience to deify him whereas Berlioz, who wrote in *Les Troyens* ' music of the gods ' if ever such music has been written, should have died a broken and fatally misunderstood man. True, Berlioz leaves one feeling that he was potentially an even greater composer than he is in achievement. But can we glibly say, with Mr. Elliot, that he ' failed ' in the gigantic task he had set himself? He suffered so much mostly because of his superb distinction of mind—musicians of brilliant and powerful versatility of intellect, such as Busoni and van Dieren, are in this respect his successors. If he ' failed ' where Wagner succeeded, there is obviously room for

some discrimination about the nature of failure and success.

There is irony, too, in the fact that, until our own day, the only way in which Berlioz has exerted any influence on practising musicians should have been in the direction of that old bogey, the development of Orchestral Technique. That Berlioz, whose instrumentation—the flesh, as it were, in which his imaginings take shape—is of such exquisite delicacy and clean brilliance, should be the progenitor of the monstrous orchestras of the early twentieth century, which in their turn are indirectly responsible for more bad music than one cares to mention—this is a paradox which would have appealed to Berlioz's own sense of the sardonic. Of course Berlioz is a ' virtuoso of the orchestra ' ; he has the great artist's mastery of his medium. He is a virtuoso of the orchestra as Liszt and Busoni—or for that matter Mozart— are virtuosos of the keyboard, or as Handel and Bellini are virtuosos of the voice. The superstition that the virtuoso must necessarily be creatively inferior is one that has died hard, yet it is manifestly, glaringly, irreconcilable with the facts. The stigma of virtuoso is another of the reasons why ' immature and unappreciative minds ' have turned from Berlioz's music with a shrug of ignorant indifference or equally ignorant conceit.

It might be objected that if this is a review of Mr. Elliot's book, I am merely telling him what he ought to have said—substituting my idea of Berlioz for his. Well, my complaint is really not that I disagree with Mr. Elliot's idea but that I find it so difficult to discover what precisely it is. In other words Mr. Elliot seems to me to do nothing to protect Berlioz against the attacks of those ' immature and unappreciative minds.' Perhaps the most useful book on Berlioz is still Mr. W. J. Turner's, since this author, for all his faults of overemphasis, does seem to have a genuine, if indeterminate insight into the singular nature of Berlioz's genius. It's a pity he (characteristically) bludgeons the reader with such childish persistency, since a man who dislikes Berlioz's music, or dislikes some preconceived notion of it, is not likely to be converted through being told that for that reason he is a dolt and a blockhead. In a general way, indeed, his book would be the better for a little of Mr. Elliot's restraint ; he is properly severe on people who offer to ' explain ' Berlioz's crudities (if they exist), but on the other hand he has nothing to say about the subtle problem of the com-

poser's ' failure,' a problem which, for being subtle, is no less real.

But then, no-one would want to pretend that Mr. Turner himself could be called ' unappreciative.'

W. H. MELLERS.

GRAMOPHONE RECORDS OF FAURÉ

I have been asked for information about recordings of Fauré's music. Most of the big Fauré recordings have been withdrawn in this country owing to lack of support ; but the Bach Society's very good performance of the *Requiem*, opus 48, and the Krettly Quartet's version of the *Quartet*, opus 121, can still be obtained from France, through E.M.G.

By far the best easily accessible recordings of Fauré's work are Panzera's superb versions of the song cycles *L'Horizon Chimérique*, and *La Bonne Chanson*—performances of perfect artistry, excellently reproduced. Another late song, *Jardin Nocturne* from *Mirages*, is recorded by Bernac and Poulenc, and there is a prize piano record of the *Sixth Nocturne* by Jean Doyen. The numbers of these records are listed below. Several earlier songs, including *Le Parfum Impérissable*, have also been recorded by Panzera, and figure in most comprehensive catalogues.

	Rimington van Wyck's Foreign List	E.M.G.'s Foreign List	
L'Horizon Chimérique	G 1063	B 100	8/3
La Bonne Chanson	G 1062-3	B 360-362 @	8/3
Jardin Nocturne, Prison	G x 205	B 312	5/9
Au Cimetière, En Sourdine	G 886		8/3
Nocturne, op. 63		B 382	8/3
Le Parfum Impérissable		B 171	4/-

W.H.M.

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A Quarterly Review

Edited by

D. W. HARDING L. C. KNIGHTS
F. R. LEAVIS DENYS THOMPSON

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THE PHILOSOPHY OF MARXISM

MARXISM is presented by its adherents as a coherent system of theory and practice from which no deviation may be tolerated. Such an attitude inspires Communists with the energy and the self-sacrifice of religious fanaticism, but it also causes them to misjudge concrete situations and to alienate many who might be sympathetic to their immediate aims. In reality Marxism is both a sociological method and a body of concrete doctrine. As a method it is of the greatest importance ; but as a doctrine it is a mixture of partial truths with the most irrational mysticism.

The characteristic of Marxism as a sociological method is that it takes as its point of departure the concrete needs of concrete human beings. The most fundamental human needs are economic. In the process of satisfying their need for food, clothing and shelter, human beings create different systems of production and different social structures, and become divided into classes. Since different classes share unequally in the distribution of economic goods, conflicts develop between them ; and these class conflicts have been the chief dynamic force in human history. According to Marx man's outlook on the world is a reflection of his class interests ; social existence determines consciousness, and religious philosophical and political ideologies tend to be disguised expressions of economic drives, having the effect of justifying either a ruling class which wishes to retain its privileges or a revolutionary class which is fighting to destroy those privileges.

Marx did not invent the economic interpretation of history, but his followers have been the first to apply it systematically to all social phenomena: and their claim to be scientific sociologists is not unreasonable. Marxism offers a most fruitful method of interpreting the past, and can be used to predict the future. Individuals may violate the interests or the ideologies of their class, but the eccentricities of individuals can be ignored by sociology ; like physics, it can base itself on statistical probabilities. Ruling classes always view the world largely in terms of their class

interests ; and if oppressed classes fail to do so, it is because they are dominated by the ideologies of their rulers. The reduction of idealistic pretensions to terms of class greed is apt to seem brutally cynical ; but the effectiveness of this key to political problems abundantly justifies itself in experience.

Marxists, however, like scientists of other kinds, have often been guilty of erecting a method into a dogma. Because sociological phenomena can be largely explained in terms of economics, it has been assumed that they are wholly economic. This assumption is unjustified.

That the economic interpretation has its limitations becomes plain when it is applied to the motivations of individuals. In any organized society the basic economic needs play a relatively small part in directly determining individual behaviour. Men are governed also by a desire for power and by drives which are sexual in origin ; and their egoistic impulses are normally modified by a need for social approval and for self-justification in terms of an objective ideal. The validity of the Marxist method is due to the fact that individuals are members of a society. Economic factors govern social systems and the main outlines of accepted codes of beliefs, and the non-economic activities of individuals occur within an economically determined framework. A millionaire engaged in doubling his fortune is not governed by a desire for food, clothing and shelter, or even for money for its own sake ; his mode of activity, nevertheless, is a product of the economic system. Under feudalism equivalent motivations produced a crusader or an archbishop. A volunteer dying in an imperialist war may be sacrificing himself in a spirit of the purest idealism, yet it was economic greed which created the situation in which he found himself. Though, however, non-economic drives usually take their directives from the economic system, it does not follow that they do not have an independent reality or that sociology can safely ignore them. The economic needs are the most fundamental, in that they must be satisfied first ; but human happiness depends on much more than on economic security. Nor would the abolition of economic conflicts necessarily prevent conflicts of other kinds ; love of power and sexual jealousy are, under capitalism, associated with property rights, but this does not mean that they would disappear if property rights were abolished.

Similarly the fact that an ideology can be largely reduced to terms of class interest does not prove that it is wholly determined by it. Marx himself (though not his Russian disciples who distinguish proletarian from bourgeois mathematics) believed in the objectivity of science ; and if there are scientific truths which are independent of class relationships, a similar claim may be made for truths of æsthetics, morality and religion. The content of works of art is often an expression of attitudes which have their origin in economic conflicts, but the æsthetic impulse itself, the laws which govern the formal organization of art, and the recording of types of experience which recur under any social system are independent of economics.[1]

Concrete ethical imperatives, regulating property or sexual relationships, vary in different social systems, but the ultimate bases of morality—self-awareness and self-control and recognition of other individuals as ends and not as means— are not economic. Even in religious or metaphysical ideologies there is usually a residue of objective truth which defies economic interpretation. Marxism itself, indeed, becomes unintelligible unless it is regarded as an attempt to transcend class ideologies and arrive at human truths.

What has been asserted is merely that, as a matter of scientific fact, economic factors determine social organization, and that the beliefs and activities of individuals will tend to become harmonious with the social organization. Recognition of these truths does not result in any system of values. Marxists believe that societies can be judged by the criterion of economic efficiency, and that economic progress causes cultural development ; but these beliefs cannot be deduced from the economic interpretation of history. Economic needs require satisfaction ; but above the primitive requirements

[1]Marxist critics treat Shakespeare as a spokesman of the rising bourgeoisie. If he were merely this, then he would be of interest only to the historian. But the value of *Hamlet* lies not in its portrayal of a specific social situation—a situation which, so far from being bourgeois, belonged to that more primitive stage in human development when vengeance was still the duty of the individual—but in its study of a type of human experience which may recur in any social situation.

of food, clothing and shelter, these needs are highly elastic. Conceivably a relatively low level of economic technique may promote a high degree of cultural creativity. Individual freedom is a necessary condition for cultural development; and it may be argued that there is more freedom in a society based on private property widely distributed than in a society, whether capitalist or collectivist, based on large-scale industry. The city-state corresponds to a relatively primitive phase in economic technique; yet the city-state has always proved to be more stimulating to creative activity than the nation or the empire. We may believe, perhaps, that the dynamism of economic interest makes the growth of large-scale organizations inevitable; but we may still deduce a Spenglerian rather than a Marxian conclusion.

An instructive parallel can be drawn between the method of Marx and that of Freud. The achievement of each man was to take one of the primal impulses of human nature, to show how it assumed disguised expressions in idealistic sublimations and ideological superstructures, and thereby to make men conscious of their real needs and desires. Each man can be criticized for denying all independent reality to æsthetic and intellectual constructions, and for interpreting all human activity in terms of a single basic physical urge. In Freud the sexual impulse, and in Marx economic need, are given such broad meanings that they almost lose their specifically sexual and economic characters and become identical with the undifferentiated flow of human vitality.[1]

A thorough-going economic interpretation of history implies that there can be no universal, moral or political ideals. An ideal is merely an expression of a class-interest, and different classes will evolve different ideals between which there can be no reconciliation. For the proletariat, for example, capitalist profits consist of the surplus value created by the workers and stolen by the bourgeoisie; for the bourgeoisie, on the other hand, they are the legitimate rewards of enterprise and organizing ability. Where then, after denying the possibility of general standards of desirability, does Marxism contrive to find political values? How can it show that certain social changes are good and that those who oppose them

[1]After writing this paragraph I discovered that a similar comparison had been made in the pages of *Scrutiny* by Mr. E. W. F. Tomlin.

are to be condemned?

Marxism endeavours to evade this problem by proving that Communism is inevitable. Partly by means of metaphysical doctrine, and partly by an analysis of the economics of capitalism, it purports to show that the victory of the proletariat, and the consequent creation of a Communist society, are objective necessities which can be scientifically predicted. Marxism assumes, moreover, that the real is the rational, and that all human values are derived from objective social conditions; there can therefore be no distinction between what must happen and what ought to happen. This monistic point of view appears to do some violence to human nature; but it is buttressed, somewhat inconsistently, by the belief that there is an absolute law of development and that development in human society can be measured by the satisfaction of economic needs. Communism is thus desirable because it is inevitable and inevitable because it is desirable. Social processes are sometimes explained in terms of metaphysical and economic forces of which human beings are merely the instruments; at other times it is implied that the economic needs of human beings are the original dynamic force in history, and that Communism is inevitable because it means the satisfaction of those economic needs. This combination of contradictory viewpoints is an essential part of Marxism and one of the chief sources of its strength. Emphasis on desirability alone would provoke arguments as to whether Communism was actually better than other systems; emphasis on inevitability alone would lead to a fatalistic passivism. By fusing both conceptions, at a sacrifice of logical coherence, Marxism provides itself with an answer to any kind of criticism.

The metaphysical arguments for the inevitability of Communism are derived from the Hegelian dialectic. It has sometimes been doubted that Marx himself used the dialectic in this fashion, but it was undoubtedly so used by Engels, and afterwards by Lenin; and it has become a part of orthodox Marxist apologetics.[1]

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[1]The chief exponent of the opinion that Marx did not preach dialectical materialism is Professor Sidney Hook. Professor Hook appreciates the absurdities of dialectical materialism and, perhaps, over-estimates Marx's intelligence in assuming that he must have

The Marxist philosophy of dialectical materialism originated as an attempt to reconcile materialism and idealism. The materialism of the eighteenth century, with its belief in mechanistic determinism and its conception of the human mind as the passive recipient of sense impressions, had been unable to explain the capacity of the human mind to distinguish between truth and error, to organize sense impressions into systems, and to change the world through creative activity. Such difficulties had resulted in the growth of German idealism, which had taken as its starting-point the activity of mind and which—in contrast with the determinists who had interpreted mind mechanistically—had explained the capacity of the mind to discover truth by interpreting matter idealistically. Dialectical materialism abandoned idealistic interpretations of the universe, regarding mind as a product of matter, but at the same time it retained the idealistic belief in the activity of mind. Human beings were not merely the mechanically-determined products of natural processes ; they were also capable of creative action upon the world. Such a conception involved epistemological difficulties as to the relation of mind to matter, but these difficulties were brushed aside by Marx as of no practical importance. Man proved the truth of his ideas by testing them in practice.

The Marxists, however, have not been content with this pragmatic attitude. They have also retained from the idealism of Hegel a number of metaphysical doctrines which are incompatible with materialism. Hegel emphasized the weaknesses of mechanistic determinism—in particular, its inability to account for novelty and growth—and used them as arguments for idealism. The universe was supposed to be the expression of a divine mind, and the laws

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been aware of them. Passages from Marx's writings can be quoted in support of this interpretation ; but Marx was not a very consistent thinker. According to Professor Hook Marx was almost a pragmatist, and his system of thought was determined by the class interests of the proletariat. Professor Hook abandons, therefore, the doctrine of inevitability. This attitude, like all varieties of pragmatism, is open to the objection that the ultimate interest or value by which intellectual operations are guided remains somewhat arbitrary. Why is the viewpoint of the proletariat preferable to that of the bourgeoisie?

of thought were also the laws of things; by examining mental processes one could thus arrive at a genuine understanding of material realities. According to Hegel the universe was a unity whose parts were in constant movement and were constantly interacting upon each other. In studying movement and change the human mind discovered contradictions, and these contradictions were objective realities; the universe was built out of pairs of opposites. Change was real; and since the universe was the expression of a divine mind, change could be viewed eulogistically, as development. Such changes were of two kinds: a change in quantity might become a change in quality; and two opposites might be synthesized into a higher unity. The human mind arrived at truth by synthesizing opposite conceptions, each of which was partially true; and this 'dialectical' process was characteristic also of the divine mind by which matter was animated. Thus the chief dialectical laws were those of interaction, of the unity of opposites, of novelty, and of development.

When Marx, according to his own statement, turned the dialectic right side up and interpreted it materialistically, there was no longer any justification for assuming that the laws of thought could be used to interpret nature. Obviously the doctrine that mind is material cannot mean that mental and physical processes are identical; there is still a difference between psychology and physics, just as there is between organic and inorganic matter. The Hegelian dialectic continued to have a negative value; the weaknesses of mechanistic materialism which had been emphasized by the idealists still existed. But the positive doctrines of Hegelianism no longer had any justification. Thus the real significance of the dialectical laws, when they are combined with a materialistic philosophy, is that they formulate those situations where chains of cause and effect cannot be discovered. In so far as they still have meaning, they are the limitations to scientific method. They do not enable us to predict the future, they show under what conditions the future cannot be predicted. They apply not to objective realities but to the methods by which the human mind apprehends those realities. Beyond this they degenerate into mystical verbiage. It is, however, precisely in this mystical verbiage that Marxism discovers its metaphysical arguments for predicting the inevitability of Communism.

The method of science is to isolate phenomena and thereby to discover invariable sequences of events. This, however, is impossible to the extent that the universe is characterized by interaction. When a number of different forces are all interacting upon each other, it is impossible to isolate any chains of cause and effect. In the natural sciences the interaction is often small, and a sufficient degree of isolation can usually be artificially created for experimental purposes. In sociology, however, no such isolation is possible. Different individuals, classes and nations, factors of economics, politics and philosophy, are all constantly interacting upon each other. Sociology, therefore, can never become an exact science. Every phenomenon must be studied in relation to the total situation, and our reading of events must be based not so much on scientific method as on a capacity to grasp the meaning of a situation, of a kind which is more intuitive than logical. The dialectical law of interaction is thus a warning against any excessive use of scientific method in human affairs. In practice—and this was a meaning frequently given to it by Lenin—it means reliance on common sense rather than on theory.

The law of the unity of opposites means partly that in attempting to describe movement and change the human mind discovers contradictions and partly that material phenomena can be analysed into opposing forces. The former of these meanings has reference merely to certain verbal paradoxes which have no practical importance. Thus, when an object is moving, it both is, and is not, in a particular place at a particular moment ; or when a man is becoming bald, there is a moment when he can be described as both bald and not bald. Such contradictions, which have fascinated metaphysicians since the time of Zeno, are merely tricks of verbal legerdemain. That opposite forces can often be distinguished at work in nature is an objective fact and not a verbal paradox. It cannot, however, be assumed that all phenomena are unities of opposites ; whether they are or are not is a matter for investigation. In practice, most phenomena can be analysed not merely into a single pair of opposites but into a much larger number of different forces. It is merely a metaphor to apply the word ' opposite ' to many of the contradictions which Marxists discover with such profusion in nature—to the ' opposition ' between life and matter, for example, or between animals and their environment. Marxists

frequently become intoxicated with a mystical passion for discovering opposites everywhere and show themselves incapable of distinguishing between mental operations and objective natural processes. Engels, for example, believed that the fact that two minuses made a plus was an example of a dialectical process actually at work in nature. But the fact that a — b(c — b) is another way of saying a — bc + b^2 tells us nothing about the external world.

The dialectical emphasis on the appearance of novelties has a negative value, in that it involves a denial of materialistic determinism. The universe cannot be wholly explained in terms of mechanistic causation; genuine change is possible. Thus quantitative changes may become qualitative; when water reaches a certain degree of heat it changes into steam.[1] Of greater significance is the fact that a whole, such as a living organism, may be more than the sum of its parts. Matter, organized in a certain way, becomes a living creature; a living creature operates in accordance with laws which differ from those which apply to the matter of which it is composed. Dialectical materialism does not, however, enable us to understand such changes, nor can they be predicted when we have no previous experience of them; the manner in which matter becomes organized into new compounds, with new properties, remains mysterious. Marxism endeavours to explain novelty and growth by means of its doctrine of opposites. A thesis is negated by its antithesis, which is followed by a negation of the negation, in other words by a synthesis. A seed dies, and from its death springs new life. Such statements are merely metaphors, which explain nothing. The original core of truth in this verbiage was the fact that the human mind often discovers truth by synthesizing contradictory ideas. This process can also be traced in the pedulum swing of action and reaction between

[1]The chief fallacy in Marx's prophecy of a Kingdom of Freedom, to be achieved through state socialism, lies in his failure to take account of a change of this kind. When half-a-dozen men work together, there may be both co-operation and freedom; extend the principle to an entire nation, and there is a qualitative change; bureaucracy and dictatorship become necessary. Genuine freedom is possible only in a society of small units, with a minimum of centralized control.

opposing tendencies in society. But it cannot be applied to nature unless one believes, with Hegel, in the immanence of a divine mind.

Similarly dependent upon belief in a divine mind is the dialectical law of development—a law which, according to Lenin, is 'absolute.' This Hegelian conception was an inheritance from the Christian tradition, and in particular from the mystico-heretical faith in a coming Age of the Holy Ghost when men would obey the impulses of God in their hearts, and laws and institutions would become unnecessary—when, in other words, the state would wither away and mankind would enter the Kingdom of Freedom. But for a materialist there can be no absolute law of development. A materialist has no objective standards by which he can measure growth and decay ; he can assess events only in human terms which have no cosmic validity. Development, moreover, can be absolute only if time is limited ; an endless development is impossible ; if time is infinite, then cosmic processes must be cyclic. Actually Marxists judge development by the standard of economic power. This, however, is a human value, which can claim no metaphysical support ; and since the only justification for such a standard is the assumption that human behaviour is primarily governed by economic need, there is no reason for supposing that development of this kind is inevitable. Economic growth may be prevented by objective natural conditions—an exhaustion of the world's raw material, for example, or thwarted by destructive conflicts and by a failure of human intelligence to solve them. The course of human history has not hitherto been characterized by any unilinear development. On the contrary a dozen different civilizations have progressed up to a point and then degenerated.

In so far, therefore, as the dialectical philosophy is true, it offers no support for Communism ; and in so far as it serves to justify Communism, it is not true. It is true that the universe is characterized by interaction, and that natural and historical processes exhibit certain discontinuities which cannot be described in terms of mechanistic causation. It is not true that the universe is composed of pairs of opposites, that these opposites tend always to become synthesized into higher unities, and that development is absolute. It is true that society can be analysed into a number of different interacting forces, that the clash of these forces must produce constant changes, and that such changes may be qualitative

and dialectical and not merely quantitative and mechanistic. But there is no metaphysical justification for dividing society into a single pair of opposites—bourgeoisie and proletariat—or for assuming that their conflict must produce the higher synthesis of Communism.[1]

The economic arguments for the inevitability of Communism were, according to Marx, the result of an open-minded study of capitalism. By purely economic investigations Marx purported to show that society was divided into two classes, that the gulf between them would grow steadily broader, and that the proletariat must eventually seize power and expropriate the bourgeoisie; if this analysis proved to corroborate the Hegelian philosophy, that was not because Marx had studied capitalism in Hegelian terms; it was because that philosophy was unescapably true.

This assertion may be doubted. There are errors in the Marxist analysis of capitalism—errors which have been of enormous practical importance—and these errors appear to have originated in an attempt to prove that society conformed to the Hegelian formulæ.

In the first place society is not, and never has been, divided into a single pair of opposites. This is plain enough in the case of pre-capitalist systems. The French Revolution, for example, was certainly no conflict between opposites. The emergent bourgeoisie were not in any intelligible sense the 'opposite' of the feudal aristocracy. The purpose of the Revolution was to expel from the body politic a privileged class which had become parasitical, and the groups who achieved this can be roughly classified as wealthy bourgeoisie, petty bourgeoisie, proletariat and peasants. In capitalist society the proletariat may perhaps be regarded as the 'opposite' of the bourgeoisie, but to view capitalism in terms

[1]Lenin discovered a class struggle—*i.e.*, a 'conflict' between positive and negative electricity—in every particle of matter, and used it as an argument for Communism. If, however, we are to deduce our politics from our physics, it would seem that we should be Fascists rather than Communists. Negative electricity does not destroy positive electricity; matter is composed of the two together, in perpetual 'conflict.' This resembles the Fascist theory of the state.

of a single class-conflict is dangerously misleading. A realistic sociology must take account also of the persistence of farmer peasant and petty bourgeois elements, of the growth of a salaried middle class, and of the various conflicts of interest between skilled and unskilled workers which are concealed by the abstraction 'proletariat.' By analogy with the French Revolution, the true object of twentieth-century revolutionary movements should be, perhaps, not to give power to a single class, but to overthrow a privileged class which has become parasitical—the bankers, monopolists, and wealthy rentiers. It was the refusal of Marxists prior to 1935 to take account of such facts which was the primary cause for the victory of Fascism. By forcing all non-proletarian elements to classify themselves as either for the dictatorship of the proletariat or against it they drove the majority of them into an alliance with finance-capitalism.

In the second place the gulf between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat is not becoming broader. The Marxist prophecy of increasing misery among the working class is based on certain economic fallacies which few, even among the Marxists, to-day take seriously. Capital, according to Marx, was divided into the variable capital used to pay wages and the constant capital used to buy new means of production ; according to the theory of surplus value all profits were made on the variable capital ; as the capitalist system progressed, however, the proportion of constant capital would increase, the result being that the rate of profit on the total capital would diminish, and in order to prevent it from disappearing, the capitalists would be compelled to lower the wages and intensify the exploitation of the workers. The chief weakness of this argument is the assumption that profits are extracted from the workers, so that the lower the wage, the higher the profit ; actually profits are extracted from the consumer, and the rate of profit depends on the market.[1] It should be added, moreover, that if capitalism is viewed as a unit the distinction between constant and variable capital is meaningless—ultimately all capital is variable—and that the Marxist theory makes the fact that capitalists do increase the

[1]The theory—now adopted by most left-wing economists—that capitalist crises are caused by low consuming power comes not from Marx but from Mr. J. A. Hobson.

proportion of constant capital, and do so in the expectation of larger profits, quite inexplicable. As a matter of historical fact the working class have become more insecure but not more miserable, and even their insecurity has been considerably modified by state intervention. The Marxist vision of two opposites, a bourgeoisie growing richer and fewer and a proletariat growing more miserable and more numerous, culminating in a catastrophic dialectical transference of power, is further from realization than when Marx wrote.

In the third place the proletariat is not in its nature a revolutionary class; it may, more easily than other classes, be converted to revolutionary ideals, but it is not, as Marx asserted, revolutionary by virtue of its economic status. It is dangerous to draw analogies between the working class movement to-day and the rise of the bourgeoisie before the French Revolution. The bourgeoisie were engaged in constructing a new social order, the growth of which was impeded by Feudal survivals but which was wholly independent of feudalism. The working class, on the other hand, are a part of capitalism; their natural tendency is to fight not for a new kind of system but for a different distribution of profits under the existing system. According to Marx socialism was not an intellectual invention but a real force objectively active in society. Actually, however, the combination of socialism with the working class movement has always been an alliance rather than an identity. The primary-purpose of the working class movement has always been to win higher wages and better living conditions under capitalism; and to the extent that it accomplishes this, it becomes—as in the United States and, to a lesser degree, in Great Britain and in the Germany of the Weimar Republic—a conservative rather than a revolutionary force. Insecurity may make the working classes converts to socialism, but this is almost equally true of the middle classes. *Bona fide* revolutionary socialism, as distinct from social-democratic reformism, probably has as many supporters among the middle classes as inside the trade unions.

That a revolutionary transformation of society is not inevitable does not mean either that it is impossible or that it is undesirable; it means, however, that the argument for it must be stated in terms of value rather than of metaphysical and economic fatalism. And though such an approach is condemned by all disciples of the

master as utopian, it is, in reality, true to the spirit of Marxism. The question of motive is consistently ignored in Marxist literature. Marx became a socialist before he set out to discover cosmic support for his faith ; his own conversion was an expression of moral idealism, and his writings are shot through with a moral indignation against the injustices of capitalism. It is its Hebraic passion for social justice, and not its dreary and often fallacious chains of reasoning, which has made *Das Kapital* the bible of twentieth-century revolution.

The future is partly determined and partly contingent. The economic interpretation of history defines the limits within which choice is effectively possible ; we cannot expect, for example, that a privileged class should abandon its privileges without a struggle, or that the tendency of capitalism towards monopoly should be reversed and the *laisser-faire* competition of Cobdenism re-established. Economic determinism is not, however, absolute, nor is it inevitable that private capitalism be followed by centralized state capitalism on the Russian model. Classes are not governed directly by their economic interests but by those interests as interpreted by the intelligence and modified by ideals ; and to the extent that actions are influenced by ideologies, there lies the possibility of altering the course of history. The battle between Communism and Fascism, for example, is inexplicable in purely economic terms. It is a struggle not merely between classes but also between rival ideologies, between the idea of racial imperialism and that of the classless society, in which the original core of economic conflict becomes almost invisible.

It remains true, as the Marxists have insisted, that an idea is futile unless it is embodied in an interest ; but it does not follow that the idea is a mere reflection of the interest or that the interest alone has reality. The idea is always broader ; it must, in fact, claim universality, for without such a claim to universality no interest can act with full self-confidence. Human beings, in other words, are not governed solely by the economic interests of their class ; they also have a sense of the unity of the race and of the role of humanity in the cosmos. All movements which have played any important part in history have done so because they have fused an economic interest with a universal ideal, and have been of lasting significance to the extent that they have set the ideal

above the interest. Eighteenth-century liberalism would have been futile if it had not corresponded to the interest of the bourgeoisie, but it was no mere reflection of that interest. Its ideal of a universal personal freedom was broader than the bourgeois demand for a free market. It was an expression of an ultimate ethical ideal—the sense that human beings should be ends and not means—and it was occasionally capable of enforcing that value even when it conflicted with bourgeois economic interest. It was his loyalty to the same value which made Marx a socialist. By proclaiming as its goal the emancipation of humanity Marxism sanctifies the economic struggle of exploited classes and endeavours to transform the working class movement, which in itself is merely a movement for better conditions under capitalism, into a crusade for a world in which human beings shall not be treated merely as instruments of the economic machine. But if this moral basis constitutes the real appeal of Marxism, its refusal to make that basis explicit is, correspondingly, its cardinal weakness. For a movement which rests merely on the economic interest of a class and which finds its justification not in ethical values but in historic fatalism cannot win loyalty and self-sacrifice, even among the class to which it appeals; and when it proceeds to the building of a new social order, it will be likely to violate that sense of the freedom and dignity of individual men and women which constitutes the only valid reason for demanding the overthrow of capitalism and the creation of a classless society.

H. B. PARKES.

BAUDELAIRE

I.

BAUDELAIRE is in many ways so remote from us—we do not like his age, nor his more obvious reactions against the age—that we need, I think, to be specially careful when we study him. It is easy to mistake his word and gesture.

For example, it is sometimes assumed that, because he frequently mentions the devil, he was not only a Christian, but a sort of Christian ascetic ; or, to use the humbler and more appropriate term, a Puritan. A number of well-known poems can be taken to imply this ; and there are notorious phrases from the *Journals*, such as: *Faire l'amour, c'est faire le mal.* But it will be suggested in this paper that the poems, if they are not to be largely emptied of their meaning, cannot be read in this way ; and as for the *Journals*, it may be doubted whether they can be appropriately discussed by a critic at all. They are rather matter for the psychologist or the biographer. Baudelaire had not that habit of systematic reflection, at least on moral subjects, which alone makes *obiter dicta* immediately instructive: in his case they tend to be accompanied by sound and smell, rather than by light. They are explosions, provoked by a momentary joy or pain. It is they which need to be interpreted with the aid of considered utterances such as the poems, rather than the other way round.

If we read the poems closely, we see that Baudelaire does not always talk about the same kind of devil. One he describes as above all cunning—*rusé, savant*—and his sole business is to deceive ; another can spare himself this labour, for he has the power of a despot over slaves ; while yet a third is a sort of honest merchant, the excellent quality of whose wares secures him clients. The importance of these distinctions is that whereas the first devil is a part of Christian tradition, which has satisfied centuries of thinking men ; the second and third are drawn—ultimately perhaps from the Manichees, but immediately—from the Satanist or diabolist poets, who have satisfied few men but themselves.

Accordingly, the quality of Baudelaire's poetry making mention of the devil varies considerably. At times he does not much differ from Swinburne, at least in the paradoxical mood.

O Satan, prends pitié de ma longue misère!
Toi dont la large main cache les précipices
Au somnambule errant au bord des édifices . . .
Toi qui, magiquement, assouplis les vieux os
De l'ivrogne attardé foulé par les chevaux . . .
Toi qui, pour consoler l'homme frêle qui souffre
Nous appris a mêler le salpêtre et le soufre . . .

and so on. There is no clear reason why such benefits as the above should be attributed to Satan ; nor why—if they exist: if the sleep-walker has a special immunity from precipitation, or the senile drunkard from pounding under horses' feet—they should be singled out for praise. It is true that gunpowder may console, but that is not its obvious purpose. In such verses as these Baudelaire is not only intending to astonish, he is content with doing so ; he is irresponsible in his writing ; he cannot therefore be taken seriously.

There are however other verses about the devil which are highly serious ; and yet others which, while not ostentatiously trivial like the above, do not carry conviction. Perhaps it is best to call them, simply, poor: and if they are poor, Baudelaire's skill being what it is, it must be that he is dishonest—either with himself or with the reader. These two kinds of verses can, I think, be illustrated from the introductory poem to the *Fleurs du Mal*, where they are somewhat curiously juxtaposed.

The opening stanzas I would call highly serious. The adjectives trim their nouns to the exact shape required, and at times to a pin point ; the images not only arrest, but retain and satisfy the attention. The subject, human levity, is one with which we are well acquainted.

La sottise, l'erreur, le péché, la lésine,
Occupent nos esprits et travaillent nos corps,
Et nous alimentons nos aimables remords
Comme les mendiants nourrissent leur vermine.

Nos péchés sont têtus, nos repentirs sont lâches,
Nous nous faisons payer grassement nos aveux,
Et nous rentrons gaiement dans le chemin bourbeux,
Croyant par de vils pleurs laver toutes nos taches.

Man's folly and ignorance are mentioned first, because they alone explain the facility of his remorse, and the vanity of his pursuits. Rather than solid and durable goods, he chooses those which are unsubstantial and fleeting ; his energies are therefore dissipated, and his will enfeebled. And in this he is encouraged by the devil, who maintains the supply of unsubstantial goods.

> Sur l'oreiller du mal c'est Satan Trismégiste
> Qui berce longuement notre esprit enchanté,
> Et le riche métal de notre volonté
> Est tout vaporisé par ce savant chimiste.

In these lines, the devil is the devil of Christianity. But it is not necessary to be a Christian to see in human experience a succession of problems, subtle enough to be worthy of a malign intelligence ; and serious enough for a wrong answer to ruin the nature of man.

In the first line of the next stanza, however, the devil is transformed into the despot of the diabolists:

> C'est le Diable qui tient les fils qui nous remuent!

Moral problems would thus seem to vanish from experience, and responsibility for action be lifted from human shoulders. But, lest man should appear blameless, Baudelaire hastens to accuse him of another failing. He is no longer frivolous, but perverse. He is not only forced on evil, but, says Baudelaire, he also chooses it and longs for it as such. Precise attention to the meaning of 'choose' and of ' evil ' would show this to be impossible, were not precision the last thing with which Baudelaire is now concerned.

> Ainsi qu'un débauché pauvre qui baise et mange
> Le sein martyrisé d'une antique catin,
> Nous volons au passage un plaisir clandestin
> Que nous pressons bien fort comme une vieille orange.

The adjectives no longer sharpen but, if anything, blunt their nouns. That a debauchee should be poor serves to lighten, rather than deepen any horror inspired by his partner ; that an orange is old is an obvious reason why—if no other fruit can be obtained—it should be well squeezed. A few lines earlier the reader was informed that men take the path to hell *sans horreur*: it is not therefore clear why the pleasures which they snatch should be

clandestine. An increasing disorder in the poet's ideas becomes apparent through lines like

> Et, quand nous respirons, la Mort dans nos poumons
> Descend, fleuve invisible, avec de sourdes plaintes

—which are not only obscure in themselves, but irrelevant to the context—and the Swinburnian exuberance of the following:

> Mais parmi les chacals, les panthères, les lices,
> Les singes, les scorpions, les vautours, les serpents,
> Les monstres glapissants, hurlants, grognants, rampants
> Dans la ménagerie infâme de nos vices,
> Il en est un plus laid, plus méchant, plus immonde!

Obviously the intention is to arouse disgust. But, it seems necessary to ask, why cannot Baudelaire fulfil this intention, except by heaping together nouns and adjectives? This defeats its own end; and if he really felt disgust, it may be assumed from the rest of his work that he would communicate it forcibly and concisely. Perhaps then, in spite of his protestations, he is not unduly disturbed at the prospect of vice; perhaps, as was suggested above, he is not altogether sincere. And if so he has adopted not only a devil from the diabolists, but their manner of thinking and writing too. Under cover of reproaching Satan, these poets not infrequently express a private satisfaction with their lot; they acquiesce in a way of life, which conscience or convention allows them to acknowledge only if they brand it as evil. But the branding is no painful operation, their iron is cold.

Some such diagnosis as this would seem to be confirmed when the vice, to which Baudelaire reserved preeminence in the lines last quoted, is finally introduced. It is ennui: not accidie, the most terrible of the soul's maladies, which renders all action impossible; but boredom, such as afflicts the soul when an infinite variety of actions seems possible. To none is it compelled or attracted in a distinguishable degree; it craves therefore (like Nero) an unheard-of excitement:

> Il ferait volontiers de la terre un débris
> Et dans un bâillement il avalerait le monde.

Compared with this vice there is none other, the text implies, which may not be condoned; it is a sufficient excuse for *le viol, le poison,*

le poignard, l'incendie that they were undertaken to stifle a yawn.

This is levity very similar to that with which the poem started: but the poem is no longer about levity, it is light and frivolous itself. The last line

Hypocrite lecteur,—mon semblable,—mon frère!

reads in its original context somewhat differently from the passage in which it is quoted in *The Waste Land*. It is not yet a cry for sympathy in pains, but a hint of partnership in pleasures. These are not such as to be creditable, and one knowing fellow gives another knowing fellow a dig in the ribs.

II.

Before basing any general conclusion about Baudelaire's poetry on his statements about the devil, it would thus be necessary to classify these statements into groups; for they are by no means of a kind, either in what they say, or how they say it. And when this labour is over it might appear that none of these groups is large enough to support a general statement. That at any rate is what I fear.

I do so largely because I feel that the striking character of Baudelaire's verse is the way it deals, not with supernatural but with natural existences. Baudelaire is I think remarkable, not so much for the converse he may have had with spirits, fallen or erect; but for the closeness with which he observed, and the care with which he analysed, his converse with men and things of this earth. And if he was a Christian, I would say it was because this observation and analysis convinced him that Christianity was true. At any rate, in reading Baudelaire I have found it useful to have in my mind, not doctors of the supernatural to whom he is frequently compared—Dante or Tertullian, for example—but rather the Anglican Bishop Butler who in his Sermons studies the natural world, and especially human nature, in the endeavour to propagate his faith.

In particular, in preparing this paper, two doctrines of Butler's have frequently occurred to me. They are, first, that human nature is not 'one simple, uniform thing;' and secondly, that for its happiness and misery, indeed for its very existence, it is dependent on an external world. It is not simple because, says Butler, it

consists of ' appetites, particular passions and affections ; ' and it is dependent, because each of these passions and affections is directed, not upon the self, but upon external objects. A hungry man, in so far as he is hungry, cannot be satisfied with anything within himself, but only with food ; a thirsty man craves a potable liquid ; ambition will rest only in the esteem or respect of others, benevolence only in their well-being—and these, if not material, are none the less external to the ambitious or benevolent person. Human nature, in other words, is necessarily engaged in commerce with an outside world ; and, by the first doctrine, this commerce is multifarious, conducted not by a single agent but by many. Each agent pursues a different kind of object—some physical, some immaterial and spiritual ; but in human life each plays a necessary, and may play a proper part. To see that each plays this part and no other, Butler would say, is virtue and happiness ; while vice and misery result from disorder. But this is not immediately relevant to my purpose.

If we take the second of the above doctrines, it might I think be illustrated from Baudelaire, or used to illustrate him, in some such ways as the following.

The external world is of the greatest importance in his poetry. Not only do sense-impressions so crowd his lines as at times almost to embarrass the reader—

La nuit s'épaississait ainsi comme une cloison—

they do so because they are of significance for his moral life. He recognizes that it is by their occasion his life will be either maimed or perfected. They announce the presence of objects, for which the desire may be untimely or tempestuous ; in that case temptation will need to be resisted:

Et son bras et sa jambe, et sa cuisse et ses reins,
Polis comme de l'huile, onduleux comme un cygne,
Passaient devant mes yeux clairvoyants et sereins ;
Et son ventre et ses seins, ces grappes de ma vigne,

S'avançaient plus calins que les anges du mal,
Pour troubler le repos où mon âme était mise,
Et pour la déranger du rocher de cristal,
Où calme et solitaire elle s'était assise.

Or they may foretell the thwarting of a desire by the decay of an object; therefore, by meditation on this event, the desire is to be moderated:

> Les mouches bourdonnaient sur ce ventre putride,
> D'où sortaient de noirs bataillons
> De larves, qui coulaient comme un épais liquide
> Le long de ces vivants haillons.
> Tout cela descendait, montait comme une vague . . .
> Et pourtant vous serez semblable à cette ordure,
> A cette horrible infection,
> Etoile de mes yeux, soleil de ma nature,
> Vous, mon ange at ma passion!

Passages of this kind, covering all the senses and a wide gamut in every sense, are so frequent as to make his work appear a sort of inventory or catalogue: drawn up, it might be said, to guard against surprise from the external world. He wishes to be prepared for any action which, as he is inevitably in commerce with that world, it may be proper for him to take. He may not always, and indeed often does not take it, but at least he is aware that he should do so.

The main virtue of a catalogue is its exactness; and Baudelaire's can I think be allowed to be exact in a very high degree. In his poetry the external world is as in real life; it is neutral and public, and not in any way coloured or deformed by his desires. Our desires might have business in it too. If he enumerates more detail than we have observed, that is because his senses are more acute and more alert, not because they are less reliable than ours. Were we not immediately convinced of this as we read, we could not perhaps resist the temptation which is strong, to dismiss at least some of his adventures as nightmares. They are such consequences of the failure to take proper action as it requires fortitude to contemplate. But we see they have occurred under the conditions with which we are acquainted when awake; we must therefore gather fortitude whence we may.

If we read carefully, we shall do so from the poetry, which is too great merely to disturb. Baudelaire, when he is fully himself, is of an heroic fortitude. And the source of this, once again, would seem to be the external world. The commerce which is natural

to us is our opportunity of happiness; and it must remain so, however much through our mismanagement it has yielded misery in the past. The proper action may have become difficult to take, and still more difficult to find, because of previous errors; yet the external world by its mere existence is a guarantee that the proper action may be taken. In this existence therefore—in the external world as external, before he has attempted profitable commerce with it or after he has attempted and failed—Baudelaire finds a consolation: a promise of happiness which, however conditional, is sufficient to ward off despair.

If the consolation appears small, that is the measure of what I called Baudelaire's heroism. He can be compared to those peasants whom Wordsworth describes as reduced by poverty to

> The pleasure which there is in life itself;

reduced, that is, to finding a pleasure in mere existence, to that flicker of interest and of hope without which any life is inconceivable. Yet whether because of conscience or mere healthy instinct—whatever the name, the thing is wholly admirable—they do not 'wish not to be.' Nor does Baudelaire, reduced by spiritual rather than physical deprivation to a similar state; he clings firmly to what little life is left.

Hence what has been described as his catalogue of the external world is not merely a catalogue; or rather it is not such a catalogue as is drawn up by a dealer, interested merely in the use of objects, or in what they will produce. The author is someone for whom the things in themselves, and even before they have benefited him, possess importance and a value; if they were pictures we should call him an amateur, if books a scholar. Baudelaire eagerly scans the horizon, like his own sentinel

> Qui guette nuit et jour brick, tartane ou frégate
> Dont les formes au loin frissonnent dans l'azur:

but with this difference: the *frissonnement* itself, as an appearance in and part of the external world, has a value for him, apart from what it may signify for his immediate future. It arrests his attention, and he transfers it to his verse. In the following lines, the rain is a symbol of all that excludes him from happiness:

Quand la pluie étalant ses immenses traînées
D'une vaste prison imite les barreaux . . .

but it too is part of the external world, and as such can detain him a moment from his melancholy. Before he returns to this there is a felt pause, and the melancholy becomes deeper for the contrast.

If this latter distinction is thought over-subtle, it should be compared with that drawn by Baudelaire himself in the stanzas already quoted from *Les Bijoux*. The contemplation of his mistress threatens to plunge him into lust which he recognizes as wasteful ; nevertheless he does not on that account desist from the contemplation, or shut his eyes to his mistress. To do so would be to endeavour to exclude from the external what is and must remain a part of it ; and what as such, however near it is bringing misery, may yet be a source of happiness.

But here, it is true, a new factor has come into play. The external world contains objects for the sense which are in themselves either pleasant or repulsive. When he encounters one of the former, such as his mistress, Baudelaire lingers over it as long as possible ; for as both pleasant in itself and as external, it is doubly important: *J'aime avec fureur*, he says,

Les choses où le son se mêle à la lumière.

But even intrinsically unpleasant things, by their character as external, can induce him to linger long enough to comprehend them fully:

Les yeux étaient deux trous, et du ventre effondré
Les intestins pesants lui coulaient sur les cuisses,
Et ses bourreaux, gorgés de hideux délices,
L'avaient à coups de bec absolument châtré.

Because these lines and others of their kind are obviously dictated by something more than disgust, they have sometimes been made the ground for a charge of morbidity, or *morosa delectatio*. To disprove this, it is sufficient to refer to the lines about the vices quoted from the introductory poem ; where, if anything, moroseness dominates. But the present lines give no hint of a secret pleasure, or of a pleasure which masks itself behind vituperation: all that they contain is frank and open.

The last few paragraphs, I am afraid, have not been at all clear ; the transcription of an experience in reading poetry is very difficult. Perhaps I may be allowed a further attempt to illustrate my meaning, from the *Rêve Parisien*. Baudelaire recounts a dream in which he has inhabited a world containing only

> L'enivrante monotonie
> Du métal, du marbre et de l'eau.
>
> Babel d'escaliers et d'arcades,
> C'était un palais infini,
> Plein de bassins et de cascades
> Tombant dans l'or mat ou bruni ;
>
> Et des cataractes pesantes,
> Comme des rideaux de cristal,
> Se suspendaient, éblouissantes,
> A des murailles de métal.

This is often taken as a sort of *Kubla Khan* landscape, and indulgence of the fancy for its own sake. But Baudelaire the mere fantast would be as negligible as Baudelaire the devil-worshipper ; and the truth would seem rather to be that he is recreating himself in the original, not in the modern sense of the term. He is imagining a world in which that minimum life to which, as has been said, he is at times reduced, is of itself a fully satisfying life. It is so in the first place because no other life is possible : time, and the stars that measure time, have ceased, and with them action :

> Nul astre d'ailleurs, nuls vestiges
> De soleil, même au bas du ciel ;

so too has the pursuit of truth, for there is no reasoning, no speech :

> Et sur ces mouvantes merveilles
> Planait (terrible nouveauté !
> Tout pour les yeux, rien pour les oreilles !)
> Un silence d'éternité !

And in the second place all that is offered to the senses is intrinsically pleasant : there is no motion, and therefore no disorder, no animals nor plants, and therefore no decay. Finally, the external objects in the vision are

. . . des prodiges
Qui brillent d'un feu personnel ;

which I take to imply that they are not, as are objects in the real world, mere dead material by means of which a satisfying life is yet to be achieved ; they themselves lead such a life, in which it is possible to share by mere contemplation. The vision however is no more than a vision:

En rouvrant mes yeux pleins de flamme
J'ai vu l'horreur de mon taudis,
Et senti, rentrant dans mon âme,
La pointe des soucis maudits ;

La pendule aux accents funèbres
Sonnait brutalement midi,
Et le ciel versait des ténèbres
Sur ce triste monde engourdi.

To quote Butler: ' We cannot remove from this earth, or change our general business in it ; . . . neither can we alter our real nature.' Baudelaire is the last person to pretend otherwise, and immediately on waking he brushes aside the vision as a

. . . terrible paysage
Que jamais oeil mortel ne vit.

It has served, not as refuge to slacken his efforts in this world, but rather as an ideal by which to intensify them: it is here, if anywhere, that he must achieve the fully satisfying life, in spite of and because of repulsive sights, and the difficulties of right reasoning and right action.

The second of Butler's doctrines has occupied us somewhat too long. The first, it will be remembered, was that human nature is a bundle of, among other things, ' appetites, particular passions and affections.' Butler had already been anticipated in holding this by a number of expressions of common speech ; and these Baudelaire takes over with marked approval. ' L'esprit humain regorge de passions,' he says in *Les Paradis Artificiels* ; ' il en a à revendre, pour me servir d'une autre locution ordinaire.' Further, his poems contain lines such as

. . . vers toi mes désirs partent en caravane.

That is, he recognizes not only the multiplicity of human passions but what Butler calls their disinterested quality: though they are part of the self they are by no means directed upon it, and therefore for the self's sake may need to be controlled and to be denied. When nevertheless they insist upon satisfaction Baudelaire has other terms for them: they are 'un peuple de démons,' or 'un choeur de vermisseaux.' But a discussion of these terms would be one of the pains of the soul; and this needs to be preceded by a discussion of its pleasures.

III.

The Infinite Being who created us has, says Butler, provided objects for the satisfaction of all our desires. None of these therefore is in itself evil, and its satisfaction is not only compatible with but a condition of perfect happiness. Paradise is a place where we find 'a supply to all the capacities of our natures.' A desire becomes evil only by insisting on more than its due satisfaction; and then, thwarting other desires, it needs itself to be thwarted. But this thwarting is a character of the disordered, and not of the healthy life. Similarly Baudelaire is—it is not too much to say—haunted by the notion of an existence that shall be as rich and as harmonious as possible; of 'cet état charmant et singulier, où toutes les forces s'équilibrent.'

He finds a symbol of it in the 'admirable et lumineuse promptitude des enfants;' and in youth—

> . . . la sainte jeunesse, à l'air simple, au doux front,
> A l'oeil limpide et clair ainsi qu'une eau courante,
> Et qui va répandant sur tout, insouciante
> Comme l'azur du ciel, les oiseaux et les fleurs,
> Ses parfums, ses chansons, et ses douces chaleurs!

The youthful races of the world, he thinks, enjoyed the same privilege. And once or twice, if only for a moment, it has been his own.

'Il est des jours,' he writes, 'où l'homme s'éveille avec un génie jeune et vigoureux. Ses paupières à peine déchargées du sommeil qui les scellait, le monde extérieur s'offre a lui avec un relief puissant, une netteté de contours, une richesse de couleurs admirables.' That is, part at least of the *Rêve Parisien* is a reality.

But there is more, which did not enter into the dream: ' Le monde moral ouvre ses vastes perspectives, pleines de clartés nouvelles. L'homme, gratifié de cette béatitude, malheureusement rare et passagère, se sent à la fois plus artiste et plus juste, plus noble, pour dire tout en un mot.' This account in prose may be supplemented by the following in verse, in which Baudelaire addresses his soul as Hopkins did the windhover:

> Au-dessus des étangs, au-dessus des vallées,
> Des montagnes, des bois, des nuages, des mers,
> Par delà le soleil, par delà les éthers,
> Par delà les confins des sphères étoilées,
>
> Mon esprit, tu te meus avec agilité,
> Et, comme un bon nageur qui se pâme dans l'onde,
> Tu sillonnes gaiement l'immensité profonde
> Avec une indicible et mâle volupté.

This striving is not to an end, for a full and properly ordered activity is an end in itself. In the final stanza therefore the soul is compared to things which rest in themselves, things immobile and mute ; and, to play their part in the figure, they in turn are endowed with the striving of consciousness:

> Heureux celui qui peut d'une aile vigoureuse
> S'élancer vers les champs lumineux et sereins!
>
> Celui dont les pensers, comme des alouettes,
> Vers les cieux le matin prennent un libre essor,
> —Qui plane sur la vie, et comprend sans effort
> Le langage des fleurs et des choses muettes!

Baudelaire, says Mr. Eliot, is a *poète des départs*. But he is also, and it is perhaps more important, a *poète des arrivées*. He is not one of those whom he ironically describes as ' les vrais voyageurs,'

> . . . coeurs légers, semblables aux ballons,
> (Qui) sans savoir pourquoi, disent toujours Allons!

Except in the address to Death at the conclusion of this poem (where the ironical intention still continues) he is always fully aware where he wishes to go. It is to the paradise in which a life like the above is lived: ' un vrai pays de Cocagne, où tout

est beau, riche, tranquille, honnête ; où le luxe a plaisir à se mirer dans l'ordre.' There ' la cuisine même est poétique . . comme une belle conscience.' All human needs being satisfied in their proper order, the most diverse can be ranked together, as here. If this is felt to be incongruous, it is no more than a device common in mystical poets widely acknowledged to be serious. They transfer to paradise, as to its natural place, the earthly pleasure which at the moment occupies them ; and they claim from paradise the satisfaction of an immediate earthly want. Between such poets and Baudelaire there are some fairly close parallels to be drawn. Herbert, returning from Salisbury, heard cathedral choirs about heaven's gate ; Baudelaire, who delighted in the plastic arts as Herbert in music, saw within that gate

> Des meubles luisants
> Polis par les ans.

Again, Herbert in a moment of exhaustion looked forward to death as ' a chair ' ; to Baudelaire it is

> . . . l'auberge fameuse inscrite sur le livre,
> Où l'on pourra manger, et dormir, et s'asseoir.

IV.

Baudelaire is thus not of the Puritans, if these, as I assume they do, set apart and prohibit as necessarily evil an object or objects of enjoyment. And in the same way (in addition to all other ways) he is to be distinguished from the Satanists, who are inverted Puritans. They claim to prohibit as evil what they nevertheless enjoy. By definition their enjoyments are disorderly ; Baudelaire's always depend upon the possibility of order.

Nevertheless it might be thought that Swinburne for example is not without a notion of a *pays de Cocagne*. He writes of a garden of Proserpine, where the weary may slumber ; and of a noble, nude and antique world, where the eyes may be refreshed. These are, however, merely refuges, where life may be avoided rather than organized to the full ; places of diversion or relaxation between which Swinburne may choose, and which he may or not visit as he fancies. The *pays de Cocagne* on the other hand is Baudelaire's good, which he cannot but try to reach ; and if he

fails, there is nowhere else for him to turn—he is condemned to evil and misery. Hence there is a note of urgency in his writing about paradise, unlike anything in Swinburne ; who is never in the least reminiscent of Herbert.

This note deepens to tragedy, as the barriers between Baudelaire and paradise seem to increase. It is heard most clearly perhaps in *Le Voyage a Cythère* ; which also provides the sharpest contrast to Swinburne.

The poem opens with an image with which we are now familiar:

> Mon coeur, comme un oiseau, voltigeait tout joyeux
> Et planait librement autour des cordages ;
> Le navire roulait sous un ciel sans nuages,
> Comme un ange enivré du soleil radieux.

It seems that the paradisal state has already been achieved, in the delights of which the physical universe, and even the ship itself, have a share. But the delights are interrupted by a brief question:

> Quelle est cette île triste et noire?

The answer comes in an off-hand tone, as though to deprecate alarm:

> . . . C'est Cythère,
> Nous dit-on, un pays fameux dans les chansons,
> Eldorado banal de tous les vieux garçons.

The suggestion is that no one on board can be concerned with the doings on the island.

Here it may perhaps be noted that, in this poem, changes of tone are of the utmost importance. It consists entirely of speeches, and is now dialogue, now monologue ; there are no stage-directions, and even the number of speakers is not clear. It is only by a careful observation of tone, therefore, that the speeches can be fitted into their proper relations. Written in this way, the poem gains remarkably in economy and strength ; but also, the degree of that strength is not immediately apparent.

At least one passenger is not wholly reassured, and needs to confirm with his eyes the report which he has heard:

> Regardez, après tout, c'est une pauvre terre.

The phrase *après tout* suggests that the report was not wholly disingenuous; and as if to confirm this, someone on board breaks into what, by contrast with the lines which precede and follow, can only be called a hymn:

> Belle île aux myrtes verts, pleine de fleurs écloses,
> Vénérée à jamais par toute nation,
> Où les soupirs des coeurs en adoration
> Roulent comme l'encens sur un jardin de roses
> Ou le roucoulement éternal d'un ramier!

To what island is this addressed? If to that in prospect, it would seem, in spite of all reports, well deserving of attention. But this idea is no sooner conceived, than it is extinguished by the curt lines:

> —Cythère n'était plus qu'un terrain des plus maigres,
> Un désert rocailleux troublé par des cris aigres.

The two islands, that in prospect and that of the hymn, have nothing whatever in common: the ship's company may continue in its aloofness.

The off-hand tone is resumed:

> J'entrevoyais pourtant un objet singulier.

A traveller is about to describe what entertained his idle curiosity for a moment. He begins with a mocking reference to the hymn he has just heard:

> Ce n'était pas un temple aux ombres bocagères . . .

then gives a few casual details:

> . . . voilà qu'en rasant la côte d'assez près
> Pour troubler les oiseaux avec nos voiles blanches . . .

and finally the object itself is described. It is a gibbeted corpse, surrounded by birds and beasts of prey. The lines have already been quoted as an example of Baudelaire's writing at its least casual, and when he is alert to every stimulus of the sense. Accordingly from this point on the poem becomes more and more deeply charged with emotion. The spectacle is first assimilated to one of human justice:

Une plus grande bête au milieu s'agitait
Comme un exécuteur entouré de ses aides,

then to one of divine. The corpse is seen to be alive, and suffers the pains of purgatory or hell:

Habitant de Cythère, enfant d'un ciel si beau,
Silencieusement tu souffrais ces insultes
En expiation de tes infâmes cultes.

The speaker's sympathies are already warm; soon he identifies himself with the victim:

Ridicule pendu, tes douleurs sont les miennes!

All trace of aloofness has now disappeared.

The physical universe remains as at the beginning of the poem:

Le ciel était charmant, la mer était unie;
Pour moi tout était noir et sanglant désormais—

but the ship's company find it impossible to return to the bliss which they thought they enjoyed. This was not the paradisal, which endures; but only make-believe. As such it crumbled, either before self-examination or before the mere course of events. The company sought to keep all rumours of Cythère from their ship, and to persuade themselves they were made of different stuff from the men of Cythère. But their stuff is the same, and so their lot will be: either they will achieve paradise in the island, and in that case it will blossom as in the hymn; or they must endure the island in its present state, and finally hang in chains. It is not possible to sail away to a Swinburnian refuge.

In the last two lines:

Ah! Seigneur! donnez-moi la force et le courage
De contempler mon coeur and mon corps sans dégout!

the accent falls on *contempler* rather than on *dégout*. They are not a repudiation of the flesh so much as a recognition that the flesh and the desires with which it fills the heart cannot be repudiated. Baudelaire fears that his is too much ravaged to be healed, but he faces the situation as best he may.

V.

By their frequent satisfaction desires are strengthened, and it is only too easy for them to become strong enough to destroy the equilibrium of our nature, and therefore the possibility of happiness. A desire, says Butler, should not be pursued beyond a certain degree ; for otherwise it 'is always attended with more inconvenience than advantage . . . and often with extreme misery.'

In some cases this degree is imposed by the nature of the object upon which the desire is directed. If it belongs to this world, where '*rien . . . n'est certain . . . tout craque*,' a too insistent desire is exposed to the danger of a shock so grievous as to maim it. Then it will be impossible to look at a human body without seeing behind it a corpse, or to read in the eyes of others friendship or affection, but only a ' secrète horreur du dévouement.'

Again, desires in themselves, and apart from their objects, differ in the esteem in which we hold them. Conscience cannot, for it is a form of the reason, say that any should be wholly neglected ; but some it says are to be cherished more than others. ' There are some, the having of which implies the love of them, when they are reflected upon. This cannot be said of all . . . It were ridiculous to assert that a man upon reflection hath the same kind of approbation of the appetite of hunger, or the passion of fear, as he hath of goodwill to his fellow-creatures.'

Substitute for the appetite of hunger that of the flesh ; and for the goodwill of men the comfort that is to be found in God ; and this quotation becomes immediately applicable to Baudelaire. That men have a need of God, as much and more than of anything else external to themselves, is clear to both Baudelaire and Butler from self-observation, and from the observation of others. ' It is plain that there is a capacity in the nature of man, which neither riches nor honours nor sensual gratifications, nor anything in this world, can perfectly fill up, or satisfy : there is a deeper and more essential want . . . ' And this only the Infinite Being himself can supply. Baudelaire speaks of an infinite within us, needing the infinite which is outside ; and whose demands we can never escape. ' Fuyez l'infini que vous portez en vous,' he calls in scorn to the women of Lesbos ; knowing that they cannot, and that this is their punishment.

This desire for God is the desire of which conscience and the

reason most strongly approve ; therefore for complete happiness, says Butler, its satisfaction must be preferred to that of all others. But in the Baudelaire of the poems other desires are already far too strong to admit of being postponed, for whatever reason. They demand satisfaction here and now, or will secure it by guile.

They can do so because every satisfaction has a moment in which it appears infinite ; and accordingly the inexperienced return for it a *gratitude infinie et sublime*. But, unless it corresponds to the desire of an ordered soul, it brings, not boundless riches, but only a pittance ; it provides, instead of a true infinity to bear up the soul on every side, only a vacuity through which the soul plunges headlong. Baudelaire learns to be on his guard against these gulfs ; but they threaten him at every moment, so that the mere thought of them fills with horror.

> Hélas ! tout est abîme,—action, désir, rêve,
> Parole ! et sur mon poil qui tout droit se relève
> Mainte fois de la Peur je sens passer le vent.

This is the beginning of the pains of the disordered soul, which take on a thousand forms. His one-time care for the desires now standing between him and God turns to hate: they are not caravans setting out for merchandise, but a chorus of worms launching itself upon a corpse. Hysterically, as in calmer moments he admits, he vituperates the objects of these desires as not only the cause of evil to him in his present circumstances, but as necessarily such a cause at all times to everybody. It is as such a vituperation that '*faire l'amour, c'est faire le mal*' is to be interpreted, and all similar passages in the poems. Then he finds that the desires themselves, not being properly subordinated to the supremely valuable desire, are maimed: he 'eats without hunger, and drinks without thirst' ; finally the desires weaken to such an extent that he falls into accidie. He can do nothing but contemplate, helplessly, his own forlorn state ; he would prefer insensibility—

> Je jalouse le sort des plus vils animaux
> Qui peuvent se plonger dans un sommeil stupide,
> Tant l'écheveau du temps lentement se dévide !

Rescuing himself with an effort he seeks an escape in pride, in the scorn of his fate. But for him to do this, he soon sees, is ludicrous:

Qui fait le dégouté montre qu'il se croit beau.

The only possible escape is to face the evil of his situation, secure what little good remains, and endeavour slowly to increase it. He has sufficient fortitude for this ; and he was preparing for it, for example, at the end of *Le Voyage a Cythère*.

VI.

In a brief paper it is impossible to discuss Baudelaire's poems in technical detail ; an Englishman would in any case find it difficult to do so. But technical excellence, as an aspect of precise statement, depends at least partly upon width of experience and clarity of view ; and an effort has been made to indicate these.

They will be found to lie behind any of Baudelaire's poems which make more than a temporary impression on the reader. To refer to a section of his work which has so far received only passing mention, they give force to his satire: to *Le Voyage* for instance, directed against those who, finding comfort in travel, see spiritual significance in the achievement of a Columbus:

Ce matelot ivrogne, inventeur d'Amérique.

Or to *Femmes Damnées*, which is a double satire, at once against those who would limit human happiness to the flesh, and those who, unconscious of limiting themselves thereby, seek to equate the two. They are *des rêveurs inutiles*, who wish

Aux choses de l'amour mêler l'honnêteté.

Whereas, if earthly love may be part of the good life, the good life is not part of earthly love. With some satisfaction, Baudelaire reflects that these dreamers are ignorant (the mind flies to many English poets who were contemporary), not only of what might be the rest of life, but of the flesh itself.

Celui qui veut unir dans un accord mystique
L'ombre avec la chaleur, la nuit avec le jour,
Ne chauffera jamais son corps paralytique
A ce rouge soleil qu'on nomme l'amour!

He himself is acquainted with both ; but as he is unable properly to order his life, what might have been a constituent pleasure in paradise is only a torment in hell:

Et, comme le soleil dans son enfer polaire,
Mon coeur ne sera plus qu'un bloc rouge et glacé.

The word *fortitude*, which has been used so often, again suggests itself to describe the clarity of this view of his own experience.

Another comparison with an English poet may serve to define this fortitude a little more closely. As has already been stated, Hopkins and Baudelaire have much of their spiritual experience in common ; it is deep and wide in both. But there is a point at which it diverges. After a day of struggle, Hopkins finds it possible to rest:

. . . Here! creep,
Wretch, under a comfort serves in a whirlwind: all
Life death does end and each day dies with sleep.

It is as though a supernatural power restored to him, at least for the moment, the innocence and confidence of childhood: no harm will come from any source, and he may sleep. But to Baudelaire, who waits as anxiously for it, nightfall brings not the opportunity for sleep but only the duty of watching. He receives no supernatural aid, and must himself prepare for the struggle of the morrow. He does so by shrinking into the life of the senses ; and conceived as parts of the external world, even his spiritual failures can bring comfort:

. . . Vois se pencher les défuntes Années
Sur les balcons du ciel, en robes surannées ;
Surgir du fond des eaux le Regret souriante ;
Le Soleil, moribund s'endormir sous une arche,
Et, comme un long linceul se traînant à l'Orient,
Entends, ma chère, entends la douce Nuit qui marche.

According to Christianity, there is a sense in which the child is spiritually richer than the man, who needs to abase himself before he can rise to his full dignity. This must be taken account of, in estimating the amount of Christianity in Baudelaire (no doubt he has now separated from Butler) ; but to many readers the opening lines of the sonnet just quoted will seem wholly satisfying, both in what they admit and what they deny of human weakness:

Sois sage, o ma Douleur, et tiens-toi plus tranquille.
To réclamais le Soir ; il descend ; le voici.

To judge with confidence between Hopkins and Baudelaire would however require a depth of spiritual experience approximating to that of either ; and perhaps this is an occasion when, if ever, one should be content to talk of technical perfection.

JAMES SMITH.

THE COMPOSER AND CIVILIZATION (II)

ALBERT ROUSSEL AND LA MUSIQUE FRANÇAISE

' Le génie musicale de la France, c'est quelque chose comme la fantaisie dans la sensibilité.'—*Claude Debussy.*

' . . . le culte des valeurs spirituelles est à la base de toute société qui se prétend civilisée et la musique, parmi les arts, en est l'expression la plus sensible et la plus élevée.'—

Albert Roussel.

I.

ONE wouldn't say that Roussel is ever likely to be a popular composer, but his career is, among contemporary musicians, almost unique in that he has been treated, even when misunderstood, with the respect that ought, in any civilized society, to accrue to the serious artist. He came to music late ; he proved himself consummate master of the materials of his craft ; almost alone among contemporary composers he was unmistakably recognized as a personality whom it was impossible not to respect. Young musicians have looked to him as a contemporary, but a contemporary whose experience and wisdom their inexperience might envy and admire ; older musicians admitted that they could not understand him but knew they had no right to smile. They didn't smile ; and even the most recalcitrant were in the long run converted. His reputation was, and is, international, unlike Fauré's, for the

latter was accepted only in his own country. He dedicated himself to his art as religiously as did Fauré, but he makes contact with the life of to-day at more points and in more ways, for Fauré's conception of civilization belongs, as I have shown, in a sense to the past. It may be that this explains why discerning musicians of all countries have respected Roussel as the French respected Fauré—even the pugnacious Mr. Sorabji, who can hardly be suspected of a temperamental partiality for French music, saluted the later symphonies as music with heart and guts—at last a juicy steak amid the perpetual bubble and squeak of present day music-making. We respect Roussel's integrity, his eager love of his art ; and we feel that he *too* has had to grapple with the problems that confront us. We are on more comfortable ground with Roussel than in tackling Fauré who remained so majestically aloof from many of the values we are forced to live by. Though perhaps Roussel might be called a more difficult composer in the sense that he is more sophisticated.

Here, anyway, is something to start from. I suggested in the postscript to my Fauré essay that Roussel's music was the sort of music that a man with a sensibility similar to that of Fauré might write if he were confronted with the problems of the modern world. One could make the point more neatly by suggesting that whereas Fauré is civilized, Roussel is urbane. I don't use the word pejoratively for his urbanity represents always a serious and sometimes even a solemn attitude to life ; but I do want it to suggest Roussel's greater self-consciousness, his peculiar modernity. We recognize Fauré as being aristocratic, ' polished ' ; but his polish is inseparable from, indeed is, his civilization. We recognize Roussel as polished also, but by calling him urbane we imply that the relation between his civilization, his sophistication and his way of ordering his experience is complex and precarious as Fauré's conception of civilization had no need to be. He is the more self-conscious, the more allusive in his cultivation. I don't want to suggest that either attitude is superior to the other. But I do think that to insist on this distinction between Roussel's *urbanity* and Fauré's *civilization* is a key to any intelligent approach to Roussel's music. If the distinction seems at the moment rather hazy, my apology must be that to illustrate and elucidate it is what I am trying to do in this essay.

II.

As far as concerns the earliest works the distinction is pretty obviously and simply pertinent. The point is often made that they are written in an idiom which is a compromise between d'Indy and Debussy—on the one hand 'formal,' on the other impressionistic—though the somewhat unpleasant Parsifalish ascetic aspects of d'Indy's music can hardly have been congenial to Roussel. They are anyway, though intensely French, rather naïvely sophisticate in their subtle inflexion of line, almost a superior sort of dilettante music, the same *type* of music as Ravel was writing at the time, though probably tougher if less accomplished, and certainly of greater potentiality. The first piano pieces, the *Rustiques* (1904)—I pass over the initial amateurish exercise, *Des Heures Passent* (1898)—the first symphony, *Poème de la Forêt* (1905), the first *Trio* (1902) and the first Violin *Sonata* (1907), all these are overlong and meandering but none is without distinction. The reconciliation of impressionism with 'classical' formulism is the achievement of a personality of real force and originality, not merely a facile if intelligent tampering with other composers' mannerisms. To describe the technique of d'Indy and of impressionism is unnecessary; it is familiar enough, can be easily investigated at first hand, and anyway has little bearing on the work of Roussel's maturity. What I want to do here is to indicate briefly characteristics in these earliest compositions which are Roussel's own, which make his use of the d'Indy-Debussy technique inimitable. They are all traits which will be developed in the Rousselian technique of maturity, a technique which cannot be properly understood unless it is realized that the germ of it is present in the very earliest compositions.

Firstly, both the melodic and rhythmic structure of these works bears some relation to the traditional French *chanson*; the tunes have a racy vigour that reminds us that Roussel knew and admired the *beau musicien de la campagne* Déodat de Séverac, but at the same time he is never, like de Séverac, simply a regional composer. It is not merely that he uses, basically, the impressionistic, arty, technique; so did de Séverac. But his attitude to his rusticity is not simple but extremely sophisticated; if his melodies have qualities resembling those of the *chanson*, they wear them with an air of deliberate decorativeness and whimsicality. Roussel some-

times assumes an air of wide-eyed bumpkin innocence ; but he does not let us forget that he is at heart the sophisticated man of cultivation—I almost said ' man of the world '—who writes those impressionistic harmonies, and the peculiar charm of his early music comes largely from this juxtaposition, in melodic and harmonic structure, of two apparently opposed points of view.

Roussel's rusticity is, then, in these early works, partly artificial. One might bring out the nature of this artificiality by suggesting that if his tunes are reminiscent of those of the *chanson*, it is the *chanson* in an eighteenth century setting that he is most interested in. Even at this date, though he takes over in some measure the prevailing technique of Debussy, the seeds of the revolt against impressionism are sown. Like de Séverac's, his early music is, of course, in a sense music of the open air and of the sun—the *Poème de la Forêt* is even directly evocative and illustrative. But he is much more equivocal than de Séverac in trying to create a musical corollary for the ecstasies of sea and sunlight ; nor is he ever, like Debussy, interested in sensation for its own sake. The *Poème de la Forêt* may be a very successful piece of nature music ; but what we are most conscious of is not its evocative brilliance but its geniality of melody, the precision and ingenuity of its rhythmic structure, its exquisite placing of sonorities and timbres. The *Divertissement* for piano and wind instruments (1906) reveals explicitly what we had always, indeed, suspected ; that it is not so much the natural aspects of Nature that appeal to Roussel as the eighteenth century elements of *champêtre* and *fête galante*. The *Divertissement* is a musical evocation of the eighteenth century *parc* of rivers, woods and lawns, a world of the *fantasque à la Watteau*, such as Debussy was more bitterly to turn to in his last years. The tunes are slender, but have an unimpeded dulcet lyricism, a delicious pastoral suavity, an autumnal gentleness and melancholy gentility ; the rhythms are elaborate, yet tactfully controlled. With its rhythmic ingenuity, the neat solidity of its lines, the unexpected juxtaposition of its harmonies, the *Divertissement* was in its way as important an event in musical history as Stravinsky's *Sacre*. Roussel had, in 1906, done with real melodic distinction what Poulenc was to do fifteen or twenty years later without much distinction of any kind except such as he borrowed second-hand from the tunes of the nursery

and from Rossini. We shall see later how this elegant artificiality becomes not altogether distinct from the tradition of the *Commedia dell' Arte*.

In describing these early works we have concentrated mainly on their relation to French music of the past as revealed in their melodic and rhythmic structure. But there is one harmonic peculiarity which immediately distinguishes his work from that of any other composer of the time using the same more or less Debussyan idiom, and that is his use of the tritone. The central position given by Roussel to the tritone in his harmonic scheme is so characteristic that it might almost be called a mannerism. It is noticeable in his very earliest compositions and helps to give that oddly acrid quality to their bucolic sophistication. The device may be part of his legacy from d'Indy who got it, of course, from Wagner ; but there is no resemblance whatever between d'Indy's use of the tritone and Roussel's ; in d'Indy it has a rather emasculating effect while it is one of the conditions of Roussel's caustic vigour.

All these qualities are developed and synthesized in the first compositions of Roussel's maturity, the piano *Suite* opus 14 (1911), the piano *Sonatina* opus 16 (1912), the ballet *Le Festin de l'Araignée* opus 17 (1912), and a few songs. These works may be called mature in the sense that in them the rather jejune *ambivalence* between the bucolic and the sophisticated is first resolved into what for want of a better word we must call an ' attitude '—a way of experiencing which is *at once* toughly earthy and hyper-fastidious and cultivated. In technical terms one can make the same point by saying that the idiom no longer depends on artfully *juxtaposing* the idiosyncracies of impressionism with those of, say, the *chanson* and the eighteenth century, but evolves ' from within,' is a dialect peculiar to Roussel and to no one else. The *Suite* is composed of traditional French dance forms treated with the sardonic brilliance characteristic of Roussel. Except in the tender, elegant, and Watteau-like *Sicilienne* the music is brusque and racy, of a bucolic toughness but with a superb alacrity and distinction in the contour of the lines. The *Sonatina* manifests a trenchancy almost Haydnesque, with a brittle Scherzo such as we shall become familiar with in the later works, an adagio with a robust if dolorous melody in a swaying irregular measure, and a finale (telescoped

with the adagio) in complex rhythmic formation—a movement as sunlit as de Séverac, but much more sinewy and ironic. *Le Festin*, the best known, I suppose, of all Roussel's works, is pastoral music in essence, music of the most witty and genial lyricism of spirit ; and it gains its peculiar flavour from what might almost be called a harmonic system developed from syncopated fourths and tritones. The rhythms of these works, supple and undulating, for the most part based on traditional French dance forms yet so briskly unexpected, testify to a sense of *physical movement* that no modern composer can rival. Some of the songs employ modern dance forms with the same éclat ; *Amoureux Séparés* written, surprisingly, in 1906, is a tango of delicate but full-blooded suavity.

III.

' Roussel, marin favorisé,
Entrelaçant l'ancre à la lyre,
Les moussons et les alisés
Servent le gré de ton navire . . . '

Before he decided on a musical career at the age of twenty-five Roussel, it is well known, had been destined for the sea. His love of the sea and of travel never left him, and in 1909 he went a long voyage to India and the Orient. This expedition proved a turning point in his musical life. On his travels he heard oriental music and watched oriental dances. When he returned to France he spent a year or so maturing his impressions, then he produced his first two major compositions, the *Evocations* opus 15 (1910-1911) and *Padmavati* (1914).[1]

Evocations is an odd work, a *tour de force*. It is quite deliberately an evocation of the Orient in a western technique, and hindoo and pentatonic scales are woven into a gorgeous orchestral fabric. There is, of course, no attempt to create ' atmosphere ' ; it is Roussel's sympathetic comment, in his own language, on the peoples and countries of the East—and we must remember that even in his very earliest work Roussel had given evidence of a

[1]Chronologically the piano *Sonatina* and the *Festin* were written *after* the *Evocations*. I regard them, however, as the consummation of the early manner not as the beginning of something new.

certain exoticism of imagination. Here is music of a strange voluptuous fascination, a rich and sumptuous power. Mr. Sorabji, who should know, places it among the few really convincing evocations of the Orient in western music.

In *Padmavati* the process is carried a step further. Here there is no attempt to ' evoke ' the Orient. Eastern scales and rhythms have been assimilated into the Roussel idiom, becoming as much French as oriental. Before *Padmavati* he had, of course, created his own idiom by means of the tritonal elaboration of his harmony; but it was an idiom too restricted to express anything more than the limited states of feeling I have tried to describe. After *Padmavati* he never looked back, he was done with impressionism and with all contemporary experimentism. He had added a language to the history of music, a language of tragic austerity and ardent lyricism. *Padmavati* was frowned upon by critics because of its wilful gaucherie and harmonic incompetence. Actually its technique marks a newly won vitality, and Roussel himself realized this when he wrote, in April, 1916: ' Je réfléchissais à cela hier et je me demandais justement si je n'avais pas à craindre ce nouvel état d'esprit, qui résultera de la crise actuelle, pour *Padmavati* qui a été conçue et composée entièrement avant la guerre. Toute réflexion faite, je ne crois pas. Je ne vois dans mon œuvre aucune trace d'influences morbides ou déliquescentes. Il me semble au contraire que le ton general en est plutôt viril et fort . . . ' This seems to be the place to give some general account of this fresh technical mastery—of the typical late Roussel language in which all the works after *Padmavati* were with various modifications to be written. For a more comprehensive treatment of some of the points I am going to make very briefly the reader is referred to the chapters on technique in M. Hoérée's admirable little book on Roussel (*Les Editions Rieder*, 1938).

IV.

The key to the technique of Roussel's late work is by way of what M. Hoérée calls its *polymodality*. Most types of defective scales are to be found in hindoo music, the most modally fecund, and the scales of hindoo music are almost all exploited in *Padmavati*. Greek modes are used in *La Naissance de la Lyre*,

the pentatonic scales of Chinese music in *A un jeune gentilhomme* and *passim*. But to catalogue the various modes employed by Roussel is futile, and, moreover, impossible, since like Fauré, Roussel evolved his idiom quite spontaneously and it is not true to say that modalism influenced the shape of his melodies but rather that the shape of his melodies—and behind that the mould of his sensibility—precisely determined their modality. He seldom writes melodies in one specific mode, but his melodic thinking tends towards modality in the way in which his tunes oscillate round a fixed point, generating other related figurations (the basses of *Padmavati* by this process vitalize the whole score despite their apparent immobility ; and *cf.*, the *Danse des Nymphes* from *La Naissance*, and the *Sarabande* from the *Suite in F*) ; in the undulating contour of the melodies, their abrupt leaps (particularly of sixths and sevenths), their irregular accentuation, their sinewy chromaticism, and above all in their perpetual modulations and tonal instability.

Roussel's conception of his art is essentially melodic, rather than thematic. He works on a principle of melodic evolution by modal alteration, independent of the customary procedures of repetition, transposition and development. This trick of incessant transition from one mode to another by means of *modes alterés* is a distinctive feature of his principle of modulation and hence of his harmony. (The major scale with the flattened sixth is used in, for instance, the *Second Violin Sonata*, and the minor scale with the augmented fourth *passim* ; that is, the tritone, in the later work, has become as much a melodic as a harmonic idiosyncrasy). All this means, of course, that Roussel's phrases tend to be of exceptional length and sustained power. In this respect his technique resembles Fauré's in a more ' advanced ' form. Though his melodies are tonally much freer than Fauré's they too are never atonal since even his most complex departures from diatonicism can be referred back to some scale system or chordal structure. M. Hoérée quotes an interesting case (a passage from the *Sarabande* of the *Suite in F*) proving that the composer himself is not always—or indeed usually —' intellectually ' aware of any such system. It seems natural and inevitable that a composer so concerned with the civilized virtues should not defy the physical laws of the art of sound.

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But not only does each melodic line, while being firmly based

on a sense of tonality, glide rapidly through a multiplicity of modal and defective scales, but the various melodic strands that make up the complete score may pass *simultaneously* through different modes. ' Rien ne s'oppose au contrepoint polytonal, à la superposition des lignes melodiques se développant dans deux ou trois tons différents.' Here Roussel is not referring to polytonality of the somewhat artificial kind practised by Milhaud but to this *polymodie simultanée* I have been describing ; and it becomes quite obvious that his polymodal melodic thinking must condition his scheme of harmony. (M. Hoérée mentions the corollary in the case of Honneger, whose counterpoint is the result of the adoption of ' modern harmony ' ; but he doesn't point out what a give-away this is, how much it explains about Honnegar's inflated reputation).

It is possible to find instances in Roussel's work in which the harmony is conditioned by one particular mode ; the harmony of the *Ode Chinois*, for instance, is completely controlled by the pentatonic scale. And sometimes the equivocal Rousselian harmonic flavour is to be attributed to his use of interior pedals—a device which, again, is found in oriental music and double appogiaturas. Most often, however, the harmonic tang is the outcome of his polymodal contrapuntal writing ; defective scales produce modifications in the tetrachord, and a singular shift to the most obvious harmony. The predominance of certain intervals—the tritone, the major seventh and minor ninth—the frequent use of the chord of the eleventh with the major seventh between the ninth and the fundamental, and of the thirteenth with the minor ninth between the third and the eleventh—these are harmonic traits which owe their existence to modes of melodic expression which had been implicit in Roussel's music ever since, and in a subterranean sort of way even before, the creation of *Padmavati*. His melodic sense does not call for exact symmetry ; and there is no place in his music for ' academically ' developing harmonies. He was accused of writing false—harmonically unsound—basses precisely because his basses were so integral to his unique melodic idiom. The convention of the Bass was a convention deduced from the music of the eighteenth century, to which it was perfectly adequate. In a more subtle and fluid way it is applicable to such a comparatively homophonic music as that of Fauré. But there was absolutely no musical reason why, in the nineteenth century,

it should have been academically elevated into a universal unalterable Law. There are, as several distinguished musicians of to-day have pointed out, many types of polyphonic music to which such a harmonic conception in chordal ' blocks ' simply isn't pertinent. It isn't relevant to Roussel's mature music ; his basses have an importance equal with, but by no means greater than, his ' middle ' parts, whether it be in such diverse manifestations of his genius as the austere chromaticism of the *Marche Funèbre* from *Padmavati*, the comparative diatonicism of the chorales and fugues of the *Psaume*, or the supple canonic writing of the piano *Concerto*.

Rhythmically the Roussel language is rich and complex, inevitably so since his melody and polyphony are rich and complex. But he preserves, as we shall see, his respect for the traditional dance forms of France and of eighteenth-century Europe. His rhythmic vitality and sanity perhaps comes from this delicate compromise between freedom and discipline. Roussel's æsthetic, in so far as he can be said to have had one, was very simple:

> ' Ce que je voudrais réaliser, c'est une musique se satisfaisant à elle-même, une musique qui cherche a s'affranchir de tout élément pittoresque et descriptif et à jamais éloignée de toute localisation dans l'espace . . . Loin de vouloir décrire je m'efforce toujours d'écarter de mon esprit le souvenir des objets et des formes susceptibles de se traduire en effets musicaux. Je ne veux faire que la musique.'

There are to be no more ' evocations.'

V.

Padmavati is one of the major achievements of the twentieth century ; but it is in Roussel's development a transitional work. Without knowledge of it it is difficult to understand the works in the late manner and perhaps the reason why *Pour un Fête de Printemps* and the *Second Symphony* appeared at first so baffling was that they were actually performed before *Padmavati*, presentation of which was delayed, owing to the war and consequent enonomic difficulties, until 1925. After *Padmavati* Roussel never again touched, except indirectly, on exotic subjects ; but he had learned from oriental music the direction which his melodic thinking

was to take, he had escaped the tyranny of conventional idioms. The language he evolved for *Pour un Fête* and for the *Second Symphony*—the language I have tried to describe in the preceding section—remained his musical speech for the rest of his career. He modified and simplified it ; but it remained substantially the same.

One might make the point more concretely by suggesting that hearing the modal melodies, the subtle inflexions and complex rhythmic organization of oriental music awoke Roussel to a realization of the true nature of his own heritage. The relation of his earliest music to the *chanson* tends to be, as I have shown, decorative and whimsical ; the first mature pieces incarnate a serious attitude, but are still somewhat topically sophisticate in their urbanity and locally regional in their rurality. In the late works he has realized, whether consciously or no, that he, born at Tourcoing, in French Flanders, belongs to the tradition that produced the great religious and troubadour composers of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the tradition of Pérotin, Machault, Binchois, Dufay and Jannequin.[1] Of course his music only superficially ' resembles ' theirs ; he has not their European culture. But this is what his new-found rhythmic and melodic independence—his sanity, his suppleness, the mature humour or melancholy of his linear inflexions—really means ; he has divested the idiosyncracies of his earlier work of their merely topical and local elements, he has taken his place in the evolving tradition of *la musique française*. Certainly I know of no other contemporary music which has precisely this poise and ripeness of attitude. The late works of Vaughan Williams have something of the same toughness and perhaps Vaughan Williams's relation to the tradition of English

[1]Convinced of its importance, I was yet doubtful as to how far this point could be pressed until I found that M. Hoérée bears me out. He makes the point only in passing and doesn't bring out its full implications, but he does, as one of Roussel's most intimate friends, suggest that the composer himself was aware of, and recognized some such relationship. M. Hoérée interestingly compares Machault's ' balancement mélodique ' with the insistently oscillating line of such a thing of Roussel as *Ciel, aer et vens* for soprano and flute.

music is similar to that of Roussel to Machault and Jannequin ; but the tradition of Vaughan Williams is hardly one that can be called urbane ; he, in his late works, for all his toughness of emotional fibre, is more hysterical in his modernity.[1]

There is one more aspect of this relation, in the last works, to the traditional *chanson* to be noticed. On the one hand the relation to the *chanson* provides a link between Roussel and fifteenth-century French music and the work of the Flemish polyphonists ; on the other hand it connects him, by way of the nursery song, with the tunes of the café-concert and hence with certain aspects of the art of Erik Satie. The subtle poise of his best work is to be attributed to the equilibrium he achieves between these various ways of feeling ; the latin culture he inherits from France (partly a mature Machault-like tenderness of lyricism, partly sympathy with the French eighteenth century classical forms) ; the robust gravity and impudent drolerie he inherits from Flanders (*cf.* the enormous soaring melodies of his adagios, and some of the tunes of the scherzos) ; and the equivocal naiveté and sophisticated brutality he shares with the French nursery song and the tune of the café-concert respectively (*cf.* the relation of the scherzos to Chabrier, Bizet and Satie). The rhythmic poise which I have noticed earlier as being produced by a combination of melodic freedom with the traditional discipline of the movements of the dance is, of course, a more particular example of the same maturity of attitude. We can understand what Roussel meant when he said that he hated ' tout sentiment résultant d'une hypertrophie du *moi*.' We shall be examining further these various traits in considering with some particularity the works in the final, the ' classical ' manner.

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[1]If we admit that there is some similarity between the positions occupied in English and French musical life by Vaughan Williams and Roussel respectively, we can also see that Roussel enjoyed the advantage in being French. I don't think it is an accident that Vaughan Williams, before he arrived at his late manner, should have written such a depressing amount of music that is utterly bad. Roussel in his early days wrote some music that is crude and amateurish and therefore dull, but nothing that is bad in the sense of being emotionally muzzy or cheap or vulgar.

VI.

Roussel was aware, himself, that *Pour un Fête* and the second *Symphony* (opus 22 and 23 respectively, composed 1919-1921), marked a fresh stage in his musical career. 'Je travaillerai (he writes), avec plus d'ardeur et de frénésie que jamais. Jamais je ne suis senti aussi dispos et aussi frais d'esprit et aussi dégagé de toute influence, et cela provient evidemment du grand répos de mon cerveau . . . ' The new polymodal technique, the harmonic system of appogiaturas is in these works consummated ; the task of simplification—of concentration—remains. In 1925 Roussel retired to Vasterival, small fishing village so congenial to his temperament, and in one year produced *La Naissance de la Lyre* opus 24, the *Sérénade* for flute, violin, viola, cello and harp, opus 30, the second *Violin Sonata* opus 28, the *Suite in F* opus 33 and a number of songs. These works inaugurate the ' new classicism ' of the final manner.

The manner is called ' classical ' because, I suppose, it represents a return to *le style continu* (compared with the fragmentary methods of the impressionists). In *La Naissance de la Lyre* and the *Sérénade* the lyricism is more supple, the harmony more acid, the orchestration delicate and fluid. The *Suite* is written in three eighteenth-century dance forms ; a Prelude with a fierce, jaunty rhythmic pulse and an immense bounding second subject characterized by abrupt leaps and racy twists ; a Sarabande with a long flowing line of a sweet yet powerful elegance and sumptuousness of stature ;[1] and a Gigue in which a comic truculent nursery tune is introduced on the trumpet, the entry being timed with the most consummate skill so that the balance between the ludicrously vulgar (the café-chantant element) and the vigorously earthy (the

[1] I use the word stature in an attempt to indicate the curiously static quality of the Sarabande and some other of Roussel's late slow movements—a sense of motion within immobility. The rhythmic feeling is very subtle and strong but it seems, as it were, disembodied. It is rather like an aural form of the visual phenomenon of watching a cinematograph representation of a slow and courtly dance (which the Sarabande is) ; one applauds and appraises the elegance of the pose, the charm of the movement, while remaining personally aloof.

folk-tune element) is perfectly poised. It is movements like this that remind one of Satie, not only in their chanson-like lilt and persistent repetition of rhythmic formulæ, but also in that curious urbane distinction and precariousness in the melodic contour[1]—a subtle, almost cynical detachment (note the slightly caustic insouciance given to the nursery tune by flattening the leading note)—and that singular piquancy of orchestration. Roussel must, indeed, be counted among the few really significant orchestrators of the twentieth century. His instrumentation is unatmospheric, taut, but with a tortuous spiced quality, a knack of juxtaposing sharply defined sonorities for the sake of polyphonic clarity, which helps to give his music its stringent, almost wry flavour.

' J'ai toujours poursuivi le dessin de la construction et du rhythme ; le récherche de la forme et du développement ont été ma constante préoccupation.' This sentence of Roussel emphasizes his concern for discipline in these compositions of his final years. The setting of Psalm LXXX uses only the simplest technical means, so simple as to appear on paper almost gauche ; yet it attains in its detached way—for Roussel's urbanity hardly presupposes any accepted religious creed—to a farouche majesty and grandeur. The *Concert* for small orchestra, opus 34 (1927) and the *Petite Suite*—Aubade, Pastorale, and Mascarade—opus 39 (1929) have an elegant lucidity and sprightly concision that make them the music par excellence of the commedia dell' Arte ; and the piano *Concerto* opus 36 (1927), with its percussive rhythms and bouncing themes in the first movement, its comic frustrated café-chantant tune in the finale—we may compare some of the tunes of Wiéner, though Roussel's tunes are much less ' juicy,' more aristocratically poised—attains in the adagio to a truly noble chastity of line and distinction of pianistic ornament.

The peak point of the Rousselian idiom is perhaps reached in the third and fourth Symphonies (1930 and 1934). All the

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[1]I know Satie's melodies are short and symmetrical whereas Roussel's are longish and complex ; that's the inevitable reflection of the simple singlemindedness of Satie's sensibility and the comparative tortuosity of Roussel's. But the fact that Satie is so miraculously singleminded also means that he is a much smaller and more limited composer than Roussel.

elements we have noticed combine here with deeper substance and richness. The first movement of the *Third Symphony* has the familiar prancing modally inflected themes, the ferocious pulsing rhythmic organization—the sense of physical movement. The grave and ripe adagio reaches a climax in a clattering fugue and then subsides serenely in a sustained soaring aria for violin. The Scherzo is a racy waltz, more acrid version of Chabrier ; the finale combines a chanson-like lyricism with passages of tranquil melodic solemnity. The *Fourth Symphony* explores similar reaches of experience with almost equal power.

It is not necessary to describe the long list of compositions written (mostly at Vasterival) during the nineteen-thirties. They manifest—through the *Sinfonietta*, the *String Trio*, the *Quartet* and the ballets, down to the last unfinished Trio for wind instruments—no falling off from mastery and an ever increasingly stringent economy. Perhaps the best introduction to Roussel's late work is by way of the songs of these final years. *Cœur en Péril*, elliptical but comparatively diatonic in line, offers a characteristically wry transformation of the clichés of Spanish music, just as the odd *Jazz dans la Nuit* opus 38 had metamorphosed the rhythms of jazz into something as unlike jazz as it is like Roussel. *L'Heure du Retour* is a mournful and bitterly *fauve* perversion of the nostalgic song of the café-concert ; and the two songs that comprise opus 55, *Vieilles Cartes* and *Si quelquefois tu pleures* are perfect examples of the Rousselian whimsical yet melancholy urbanity in their ' modally ' evolving yet symmetrically poised polyphonic contour, and their consequent piquancy of harmony. In the *Deux Poèmes Chinois* opus 47, the apparent inconsequentiality of the various linear strands—their apparent disjointedness and independence of one another—produces an effect at once amused and nonchalant, yet hardly cynical. The inconsequentiality is the result of a peculiarly French aloofness of attitude ; it creates no feeling of vapidity but rather of calculated understatement.

The masterpiece of all these late songs is undoubtedly, however, *Le Kérioklepte* from opus 44, in which the droll tune is so delicately moulded that the most apparently simple triad or the most undemonstrative rhythm takes on, beneath it, an inexhaustibly surprising irony. It would never have been written, obviously, but for such things of Satie as the *Ludions*—it is a case here of

the pupil teaching the master ; but Satie achieved nothing as profoundly human in its urbanity.

The *Rapsodie Flamande* opus 56 (1936) might be mentioned in conclusion because it is the only occasion on which Roussel directly employs Flemish folk tunes. It is light music of delicious buoyancy, orchestrated with that crisp pungency I have already referred to. There is a berceuse transparently harmonized for strings ; the other tunes are treated with unashamedly rowdy jocularity. Again the orchestration, particularly in its use of the brass, is reminiscent of Satie. This brilliantly urbane little work should be a lesson to all sentimentally rustic folkmongering musicians.

VII.

Something remains to be said about Roussel's conception of the place of music in opera and ballet. An account of the history of opera might be given in terms of its tendency to aspire now to the dramatic and realistic, now to the balletistic ideal, and Roussel follows Satie and most twentieth century musicians in coming out, roughly speaking, on the side of the ballet. His principles were indicated in a programme note to *Padmavati*, with which work he said he was trying to revive the form of *opéra-ballet* in the manner of Rameau :

> ' L'opéra-ballet se distingue de l'opéra ordinaire en ce que la danse y tient autant de place que le chant et qu'au lieu de n'intervenir que comme un divertissement elle doit se rattacher constamment à l'action.'

Since ' tout est conventionel au theâtre ' realism is a false ideal ; the essential relation is that between music and physical movement.

It will readily be perceived that Roussel, with his superb musical sense of physical movement, especially as reflected in the traditional French dance forms, combined at the same time with his sustained melodic power and linear freedom, was peculiarly endowed for the creation of works in this form, and the ballets he wrote at Vasterival, *Bacchus et Ariane* (1930) and *Aenéas* (1934)—*ballet avec choeurs*—are certainly among his most

impressive accomplishments. He possibly learned something from Satie, learned how to combine the maximum of personality with the ' objective ' organization of rhythmic sequences ; but the idiom is his own, substantially that of the *Concertino for Cello* opus 57 (1936), the late songs and the other works of the period ; and it is a logical extension of principles implicit in all his mature music. Readers wishing to examine his method cannot do better than to read over the extremely beautiful *Danse de Didon* and the majestic and rhythmically exciting *Hymne Final* from *Aenéas*.

The year before he died Roussel unexpectedly produced an opéra bouffe, *Le Testament de la Tante Caroline* (1936). I have been unable to obtain a score of this work, which seems to be unpublished. It must surely be a creation of remarkable interest— the *Rapsodie Flamande*, composed about the same time, is suggestive of the kind of fluent ironic gaiety we might expect from it, though it would probably be too allusive to be really popular. It was, I believe, a financial success in France ; there is no reason to hope that it will ever be produced in this country.

VIII.

> ' Un artiste dérive toujours de quelqu'un, d'un maître antérieur dont il s'est inspiré, consciemment ou inconsciemment . . . On se juge très mal soi-même et je n'arrive pas à retrouver mon père musical . . . à qui me rattachez-vous?'
>
> Albert Roussel.

Roussel's distinction, I hope I have made it clear, lies in his creation of a personal language ; and he has created that language because he has been aware of his place in the traditional evolution of French music ; so that an attempt to estimate his position has amounted, really, to an attempt to answer the question he asks in the quotation at the head of this section. But when I say that he is ' aware ' of his position I do not mean that he has thought about it as I have tried to do in these pages ; only that he has, through a long process of evolution, assimilated what he wanted from French music of the past and taken his place in the succession of great figures that make up that tradition. He does not recreate in music, like Machault, a European civilization ; nor, like

Couperin, a great but comparatively local French civilization ; he does not express an ideally formulated civilization like Fauré. But his response to the world is that of a man who has understood and sympathized with all that Machault and Couperin and Fauré have stood for. True, though his music is powerful, it has not the effortless power of Fauré's finest work ; and his achievement is less important and less remarkable than that of the completely cosmopolitan van Dieren. Yet his urbanity must, I think, for its traditional originality, be recognized as a sort of wisdom ; and I suppose, anyway, that France is about the only country that still offers the material—the cultural heritage—necessary for such an undertaking.

I think it is significant that though his language was universally recognized as an accomplishment utterly independent of and comparable in importance with, the various revolutions of the most influential of modern composers—Stravinsky, Schönberg and Hindemith—this language has had absolutely no influence on practising musicians—and this despite the fact that young composers looked to him, as a commanding personality, for guidance. (Satie took a course of strict counterpoint under Roussel but if there is any question of influence involved here it is, as I have suggested, the pupil who influenced the master. And it is not as surprising as it superficially appears that the Parisian-American, completely anti-traditional revolutionary Edgar Varèse, should have been among Roussel's pupils). In his way, Roussel was as lonely a figure in his generation as Sibelius. He didn't seem to mind being lonely:

> ' Il n'est pas nécessaire qu'une symphonie ou un drame deviennent aussi populaires qu'une chanson de Mayol. La Musique est l'art le plus fermé et le plus inaccessible. C'est du musicien bien plus encore que du poète qu'on peut dire qu'il est complètement isolé dans le monde, seul avec son langage plus ou moins incompréhensible . . . A part deux ou trois belles œuvres qu'on pourrait écrire pour le peuple, pour des fêtes analogues aux fêtes suisses et qui seraient comme de grandes fresques largement brossées, tout le reste, dans l'état réciproque actuel de la musique et de la foule, sera toujours destiné à de très rares auditeurs.'

I suppose this is sensible enough ; only it's a bit hard on the composer who has not his genius, and his self-sufficiency. There must be few who can have the right to feel so confident.

W. H. MELLERS.

NOTE.

The following are the extant recordings of music by Roussel:

Third Symphony opus 42, orchestra Lamoureux, con. Albert Wolff, Polydor CA 8199-8201.

Suite in F opus 33, con. Coppola, Gramophone W 1132-3.

Danse des Nymphes, con. Coppola, Gramophone W 1133. From *La Naissance de la Lyre*.

Le Festin de l'Araignée, orchestra Straram, Columbia LFX 47-8.

Sicilienne from piano Suite opus 14, Lazare Levy, Gramophone L 909.

The following songs recorded by Claire Croiza for Columbia:

Invocation, Light, Amoureux Séparés, Le Bachelier de Salamanque, A Un Jeune Gentilhomme, Sarabande, Jazz dans la Nuit.

The following have been withdrawn from circulation but may sometimes be obtained second-hand:

Sinfonietta opus 52, orchestra Jane Evrard, Gramophone.

Ciel, aer et vens (soprano and flute), A. Noordewier Reddingius, Col. hollandais DHX 36.

More detailed Rousseliana can be found in M. Hoérée's book.

The most important of these is, of course, the recording of the *Symphony*. The performance is fine and authoritative, the recording is good, though a little shrill. The recording of the *Suite* is not as lucid as it might be in the more polyphonic passages, but quite adequate on the whole. The songs are sung with insight and delicacy by Claire Croiza, but unfortunately each one is backed by a ' manufactured ' song of unbelievable insipidity by Milhaud or Honneger.

E. M. FORSTER[1]

THE problem with which E. M. Forster immediately confronts criticism is that of the oddly limited and uncertain quality of his distinction—his real and very fine distinction. It is a problem that Miss Macaulay doesn't raise. In fact, she doesn't offer a critique ; her book is rather a guide, simply and chattily descriptive, to the not very large corpus of Mr. Forster's work. Nor does she provide the biographical information that, however impertinently in one sense of the adverb, we should like to have and that we might have been led by the publisher's imprint to hope for, however faintly. We should like to have it because it would, there is good reason for supposing, be very pertinent to the problem facing the critic. Still we do, after all, without extra-critical pryings or impartings, know quite a lot about the particular milieu and the phase of English culture with which Mr. Forster's work is associated ; enough, perhaps, to discuss with some profit the extent to which, highly individual as it is, it is also, in its virtues and its limitations, representative.

The inequality in the early novels—the contrast between maturity and immaturity, the fine and the crude—is extreme ; so extreme that a simple formula proposes itself. In his comedy, one might carelessly say, he shows himself the born novelist ; but he aims also at making a poetic communication about life, and here he is, by contrast, almost unbelievably crude and weak. Yet, though his strength in these novels, it is true, comes out in an art that suggests comparisons with Jane Austen, while it is in the element, the intention, relating them most obviously to *The Celestial*

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[1] *The Writings of E. M. Forster*, by Rose Macaulay (Hogarth Press, 7/6).

[I have to call attention to the essay on E. M. Forster by Mr. D. A. Traversi that appeared in *Arena* for April, 1937. If I had re-read it before writing my own note instead of after, I might perhaps have decided that Mr. Traversi, with his admirable economy, had made my observations superfluous. As it is, I offer my particular limited approach, with its attendant stresses, with the less misgiving because there is his essay to refer the reader to].

Omnibus that he incurs disaster, the formula is too simple. For one thing, to lump the four pre-war novels together is clumsy; a distinction has to be made. There is no disastrous weakness in the first of them, *Where Angels fear to tread*, or in *A Room with a View* (which, in order of publication, comes third). And the distinction here isn't one of 'comedy' as against 'poetry' or 'comedy-cum-poetry.' For though the art of the 'born novelist' has, in these two novels, a characteristic spinsterly touch, that novelist is at the same time very perceptibly the author of *The Celestial Omnibus*, the tales in which suggest, in their poetic ambition—they may fairly be said to specialize in 'poetry'—no one less than they do Jane Austen. Italy, in those novels, represents the bent of interest that Pan and the other symbols represent in the tales, and it is a bent that plays an essential part in the novelist's peculiar distinction. Pre-eminently a novelist of civilized personal relations, he has at the same time a radical dissatisfaction with civilization—with the finest civilization of personal intercourse that he knows; a radical dissatisfaction that prompts references to D. H. Lawrence rather than to Jane Austen.

In his treatment of personal relations the bent manifests itself in the manner and accent of his preoccupation with sincerity—a term that takes on, indeed, a different value from that which it would have if Jane Austen were our subject. His preoccupation with emotional vitality, with the problem of living truly and freshly from a centre, leads him, at any rate in intention, outside the limits of consciousness that his comedy, in so far as we can separate it off, might seem to involve—the limits, roughly, that it is Jane Austen's distinction to have kept. The intention is most obvious in his way of bringing in, in association, love and sudden death; as, for instance, in chapter IV of *A Room with a View* (see pp. 54-58). It is still more strikingly manifested in *Where Angels fear to tread*. There Italy figures much more substantially and disturbingly as the critical challenge to the 'civilization' of Mr. Forster's cultivated English people, and what may be called for the moment the Lawrencian bent is more pronounced. There is the scene (c. VII) in which passionate paternal love, a kind of elemental hunger for continuance, is enacted in the devotion of the caddish and mercenary Italian husband to the baby; and the baby it is that, in this book, suffers the violent

death. There follows the episode in which the Italian tortures Philip Herriton by wrenching his broken arm. Yet none of Mr. Forster's books is more notable for his characteristic comedy, with its cool, sedate and rather spinsterly poise. And there is, nevertheless, no discrepancy or clash of modes or tones: *Where Angels fear to tread* is decidedly a success. It seems to me the most successful of the pre-war novels.

A Room with a View is far from being a failure, but, though the themes here might seem to be much less dangerous, there are certain weaknesses to be noted. There is, as Miss Macaulay points out, a curious spinsterish inadequacy in the immediate presentation of love (in *Where Angels fear to tread*, significantly, serious love between the sexes doesn't come in, at any rate immediately). And old Mr. Emerson, though not a disaster, does lead one to question the substantiality of the wisdom that he seems intended to represent. Nevertheless *A Room with a View* is a charming and very original book—extremely original and personal, yet decidedly, and more unreservedly than *Where Angels fear to tread*, provoking comparisons with Jane Austen.

The reference above to D. H. Lawrence was, of course, an over-emphasis, but as a way of calling attention to Mr. Forster's peculiar distinction among Edwardian novelists it can perhaps be justified. If we have to agree that he shows the influence of Meredith (see for instance the story called *Other Kingdom* in *The Celestial Omnibus*), that is not to make the originality and the distinction less remarkable. The critic who deals so damagingly with Meredith in *Aspects of the Novel* is potentially there in the genuineness of the element in Mr. Forster's early novels that sets them apart by themselves in the period of Arnold Bennett, Wells, Galsworthy and (one might add) Conrad. For Mr. Forster's 'poetic' intention is genuine and radical, even if in expression it may manifest itself as a surprising immaturity; and actually, in *Where Angels fear to tread* and *A Room with a View* it for the most part commands a touch that is hardly to be distinguished from that of the comedy.

Or perhaps it would have been better to say 'is commanded by'; for when, coming to the other two pre-war novels, *The Longest Journey* and *Howards End*, we ask how it is that they should be so much less successful, we notice at once how the

contrast brings out the sure easy poise, in *Where Angels fear to tread* and *A Room with a View*, of the artist's—the 'born novelist's' —control. The art of the comedy is a distancing art—

' " Foreigners are a filthy nation " said Harriet '

—and it is a tribute to the novelist's skill that we should have no disturbing sense of a change in mode and convention when we pass to effects quite other than those of comedy. That is, the whole action is framed and distanced. Lilia, Gino's silly tragic victim in *Where Angels fear to tread*, Philip Herriton, commissioned to retrieve the baby, Miss Abbott and the rest, are all simplified figures, seen from the outside ; it is only in a very qualified way that they engage us (though they engage us enough for a measure of poignancy). The complexity of the situation we see as such : though we are interested and sympathetic, we are hardly worried. The critical scenes and episodes towards the end are, of course, not undisturbing ; yet we are not immersed in them—the detachment, though modified, still holds. In this effect the Italian setting, exotic and quaint—its people seen as another kind from us, has its part ; it lends itself beautifully to the reconciliation of the ' comedy ' with the ' poetry ' and of tragic intensity with detachment.

The other two novels are much less the artist's : in them the imposing or seeking of any such conditions of a detached and happily poised art has been precluded by the author's essential interest. *The Longest Journey*, perhaps one may without impertinence observe, has plainly a good deal of the autobiographical about it, and it offers, in the presentment of its themes, a fulness and intimacy of realization. True, we find there too the characteristic comedy (notably in all that concerns Mr. Herbert Pembroke), but we can no longer say the success of this carries with it a general success. In fact, there are discrepancies, disharmonies and disturbing shifts that go a long way towards justifying the formula thrown out and withdrawn in the second paragraph of this note. The poised success of the comedy in its own mode serves to emphasize the immaturity, the unsureness and sometimes the crudity of the other elements, with which it wouldn't have been easily congruent even if they had in themselves justified the intention they represent.

Passionate love and, close upon it, sudden death, come early in this book:

> 'He had forgotten his sandwiches, and went back to get them. Gerald and Agnes were locked in each other's arms. He only looked for a moment, but the sight burnt into his brain. The man's grip was the stronger. He had drawn the woman on to his knee, was pressing her, with all his strength, against him. Already her hands slipped off him, and she whispered, "Don't—you—hurt—." Her face had no expression. It stared at the intruder and never saw him. Then her lover kissed it, and immediately it shone with mysterious beauty, like some star.' (p. 51).

Gerald is a brutal and caddish minor-Public-School Apollo and Agnes a suburban snob, but this glimpse is for Rickie, the hero, a revelation:

> 'He thought, "Do such things actually happen?" and he seemed to be looking down coloured valleys. Brighter they glowed, till gods of pure flame were born in them, and then he was looking at pinnacles of virgin snow. While Mr. Pembroke talked, the riot of fair images increased. They invaded his being and lit lamps at unsuspected shrines. Their orchestra commenced in that suburban house, where he had to stand aside for the maid to carry in the luncheon. Music flowed past him like a river. He stood at the springs of creation and heard the primæval monotony. Then an obscure instrument gave out a little phrase. The river continued unheeding. The phrase was repeated, and a listener might know it was a fragment of the Tune of tunes . . . In full unison was love born, flame of the flame, flushing the dark river beneath him and the virgin snows above. His wings were infinite, his youth eternal . . . '

Then, a dozen pages later (p. 62):

> 'Gerald died that afternoon. He was broken up in the football match. Rickie and Mr. Pembroke were on the ground when the accident took place.'

It is a key-experience for Rickie. Its significance is made explicit—perhaps rather too explicit. This memory of pure uncalculating

passion as a kind of ultimate, invested by death with an awful finality and something like a religious sanction, becomes for Rickie a criterion or touch for the real, a kind of test for radical sincerity, in his questing among the automatisms, acquiescences, blurs and blunted indifferences of everyday living:

> 'He has no knowledge of the world . . . He believes in women because he has loved his mother. And his friends are as young and ignorant as himself. They are full of the wine of life. But they have not tasted the cup—let us call it the teacup—of experience, which has made men of Mr. Pembroke's type what they are. Oh, that teacup!' (p. 74).

The theme of *The Longest Journey* is Rickie's struggle to live by the truth of the wine while being immersed in knowledge of the world.

Rickie writes stories like Mr. Forster's in *The Celestial Omnibus*. There is a note of ironic indulgence in the references to them: Rickie is very young. The direct and serious expression that the novelist offers us of the bent represented by such stories is in terms of a character, Stephen Wonham,

> 'a man dowered with coarse kindliness and rustic strength, a kind of cynical ploughboy.' (p. 217).

He is the illegitimate child (comes the shattering revelation) of Rickie's mother and a young farmer, of whom we are told

> 'people sometimes took him for a gentleman until they saw his hands.'

It is a Lady-Chatterley-and-the-keeper situation that is outlined, though Robert is too much idealized to be called a Lawrencian character. Stephen, product of a perfect passionate love (cut short by death), grows up among the villagers and shepherds a kind of heroic boor, devoid of the civilized graces and refinements, representative of physical and spiritual health:

> '. . . looked at the face, which was frank, proud and beautiful, if truth is beauty. Of mercy or tact such a face knew little. It might be coarse, but . . . ' (p. 243).

He loves horseplay and can be a drunken blackguard, but he is incapable of anything other than direct sincerity: he would, as

Ansell says, ' rather die than take money from people he did not love.' He moves roughshod through the latter part of the action, violating suburban flowerbeds, outraging gentilities, and breaking through the pretences, self-deceptions and timid meannesses of respectability.

> ' He only held the creed of " here am I and there are you," and therefore class-distinctions were trivial things to him ' (p. 292).

When Rickie, having suspected him of intent to blackmail, offers apology and atonement, this is how Stephen replies:

> ' " Last Sunday week," interrupted Stephen, his voice suddenly rising, " I came to call on you. Not as this or that's son. Not to fall on your neck. Nor to live here. Nor—damn your dirty little mind! I meant to say I didn't come for money. Sorry, Sorry. I simply came as I was, and I haven't altered since . . . " " *I* haven't altered since last Sunday week. I'm—" He stuttered again. He could not quite explain what he was . . . His voice broke. " I mind it—I'm—*I* don't alter—blackguard one week—live here the next—I keep to one or the other—you've hurt something most badly in me I didn't know was there." ' (pp. 281-2).

In short, it isn't easy to feel that the novelist in this essential part of his undertaking has attained a much more advanced maturity than the Rickie of the stories. Of course, what he has undertaken is something incomparably more difficult, and the weakness of the ' poetic ' element is made to look its worst by contrast with the distinction of what is strongest in the novel. Still, the contrast is there, and it is disastrous. What Mr. Forster offers as the centre of his purpose and intends with the greatest intensity of seriousness plainly cannot face the test of reality it challenges. Uninhibited by the passage about ' knowledge of the world ' and the ' cup of experience ' quoted above, the reader has to remark that Mr. Forster shows himself, for a writer whose touch can be so sure, disconcertingly inexperienced. An offence, even a gross one, against the probabilities, according to 'knowledge of the world,' of how people act and talk isn't necessarily very serious. But such a scene as that (c. xxvii) in which Ansell, the Cambridge

philosopher, defying headmaster, headmaster's wife, and prefects, addresses the assembled boys at Sawston School—

> ' "This man"—he turned to the avenue of faces—"this man who teaches you has a brother," ' etc.

—reflects significantly on the ruling preoccupation that, in the born novelist, could have led to anything so crudely unreal. And of all that in *The Longest Journey* centres in Stephen one has to say that, if not always as absurd, it is, with reference to the appropriate standard, equivalently unreal. The intention remains an intention, nothing adequate in substance or quality is grasped. And the author appears accordingly as the victim, where his own experience is concerned, of disabling immaturities in valuation: his attributions of importance don't justify themselves.

A ready way of satisfying oneself (if there were any doubt) that 'immaturity' is the right word is to take note of the attitude towards Cambridge (after which one of the three parts of the novel is named). Rickie, a very innocent and serious young man, found happiness at Cambridge and left it behind him there, and that this phase of his life should continue to be represented, for him, by an innocent idealization is natural enough. But Rickie in this respect is indistinguishable from the author. And if one doesn't comment that the philosophic Ansell, representative of disinterestedness and intelligence and Cambridge, is seen through the hero-worshipping Rickie's eyes, that is because he is so plainly offered us directly and simply by the novelist himself in perfect good faith.

Howards End (1910), the latest of the pre-war novels and the most ambitious, is, while offering again a fulness and immediacy of experience, more mature in the sense that it is free of the autobiographical (a matter, not of where the material comes from, but of its relation to the author as it stands in the novel) and is at any rate fairly obviously the work of an older man. Yet it exhibits crudity of a kind to shock and distress the reader as Mr. Forster hasn't shocked or distressed him before.

The main theme of the novel concerns the contrasted Schlegels and Wilcoxes. The Schlegels represent the humane liberal culture, the fine civilization of cultivated personal intercourse, that Mr. Forster himself represents; they are the people for whom and in whom English literature (shall we say?—though the Schlegels are

especially musical) exists. The Wilcoxes have built the Empire ; they represent the ' short-haired executive type '—obtuse, egotistic, unscrupulous, cowards spiritually, self-deceiving, successful. They are shown—shown up, one might say—as having hardly a redeeming characteristic, except that they are successful. Yet Margaret, the elder of the Schlegel sisters and the more mature intelligence, marries Mr. Wilcox, the head of the clan ; does it coolly, with open eyes, and we are meant to sympathize and approve. The novelist's attitude is quite unambiguous: as a result of the marriage, which is Margaret's active choice, Helen, who in obeying flightily her generous impulses has come to disaster, is saved and the book closes serenely on the promise of a happy future. Nothing in the exhibition of Margaret's or Henry Wilcox's character makes the marriage credible or acceptable ; even if we were to seize for motivation on the hint of a panicky flight from spinsterhood in the already old-maidish Margaret, it might go a little way to explain her marrying such a man, but it wouldn't in the least account for the view of the affair the novelist expects us to take. We are driven to protest, not so much against the unreality in itself, as against the perversity of intention it expresses: the effect is of a kind of *trahison des clercs*.

The perversity, of course, has its explanation and is not so bad as it looks. In Margaret the author expresses his sense of the inadequacy of the culture she stands for—its lack of relation to the forces shaping the world and its practical impotence. Its weaknesses, dependent as it is on an economic security it cannot provide, are embodied in the quixotic Helen, who, acting uncompromisingly on her standards, brings nothing but disaster on herself and the objects of her concern. The novelist's intention in making Margaret marry Mr. Wilcox is not, after all, obscure. One can only comment that, in letting his intention satisfy itself so, he unintentionally makes his cause look even more desperate than it need: intelligence and sensitiveness such as *Howards End* at its finest represents need not be so frustrated by innocence and inexperience as the unrealities of the book suggest. For ' unreality ' is the word: the business of Margaret and Henry Wilcox is essentially as unrealized as the business of Helen and the insurance clerk, Leonard Bast—who, with his Jacky, is clearly a mere external grasping at something that lies outside the author's first-hand

experience (though his speech, like that of Miss Avery's genteel niece, is consummately caught: the born novelist's gift so apparent in *A Passage to India* is remarkable from the outset).

And the Wilcoxes themselves, though they are in their way very much more convincingly done, are not adequate to the representative part the author assigns them—for he must be taken as endorsing Margaret's assertion to Helen, that they 'made us possible': with merely Mr. Forster's Wilcoxes to represent action and practice as against the culture and the inner life of the Schlegels there could hardly have been civilization. Of course, that an intellectual in the twentieth century should pick on the Wilcox type for the part is natural enough; writing half-a-century earlier Mr. Forster would have picked on something different. But the fact remains that the Wilcoxes are not what he takes them to be, and he has not seen his problem rightly: his view of it is far too external and unsubtle.

At the same time it is subtler than has yet been suggested. There is the symbolism that centres in Howards End, the house from which the book gets its title. Along with the concern about the practical insignificance of the Schlegels' culture goes a turning of the mind towards the question of ultimate sanctions. Where lie—or should lie—the real sources of strength, the springs of vitality, of this humane and liberal culture, which, the more it aspires to come to terms with 'civilization' in order to escape its sense of impotence, needs the more obviously to find its life, strength and authority elsewhere?

The general drift of the symbolism appears well enough here:

> 'The sense of flux which had haunted her all the year disappeared for a time. She forgot the luggage and the motor-cars, and the hurrying men who know so much and connect so little. She recaptured the sense of space which is the basis of all earthly beauty, and, starting from Howards End, she attempted to realize England. She failed—visions do not come when we try, though they may come through trying. But an unexpected love of the island awoke in her, connecting on this side with the joys of the flesh, on that with the inconceivable . . . It had certainly come through the house and old Miss Avery. Through them: the notion of "through" persisted; her mind

trembled towards a conclusion which only the unwise have attempted to put into words.' (p. 202).

—Yes, but the author's success in the novel is staked on his effectively presenting this 'conclusion' by means of symbols, images and actions created in words. And our criticism must be that, without a more substantial grasp of it than he shows himself to have, he was, as it turns out, hardly wise in so committing himself. The intention represented by Howards End and its associates, the wych-elm, the pig's teeth, Old Miss Avery and the first Mrs. Wilcox, remains a vague gesturing in a general—too general—direction, and the close of the book can hardly escape being found, in its innocent way, sentimental.

The inherent weakness becomes peculiarly apparent in such prose as this:

> 'There was a long silence during which the tide returned into Poole Harbour. "One would lose something," murmured Helen, apparently to herself. The water crept over the mud-flats towards the gorse and the blackened heather. Branksea Island lost its immense foreshores, and became a sombre episode of trees. Frome was forced inward towards Dorchester, Stour against Wimborne, Avon towards Salisbury, and over the immense displacement the sun presided, leading it to triumph ere he sank to rest. England was alive, throbbing through all her estuaries, crying for joy through the mouths of all her gulls, and the north wind, with contrary motion, blew stronger against her rising seas. What did it mean? For what end are her fair complexities, her changes of soil, her sinuous coast? Does she belong to those who have moulded her and made her feared by other lands, or to those who have added nothing to her power, but have somehow seen her, seen the whole island at once, lying as a jewel in a silver sea, sailing as a ship of souls, with all the brave world's fleet accompanying her towards eternity?' (p. 172).

Mr. Forster's 'poetic' communication isn't all at this level of poeticality (which, had there been real grasp behind his intention, Mr. Forster would have seen to be Wilcox rather than Schlegel), but it nevertheless lapses into such exaltations quite easily. And the 'somehow' in that last sentence may fairly be seized on: there

the intention that can thus innocently take vagueness of vision in these matters for a virtue proclaims its inadequacy and immaturity.

In closing on this severe note my commentary on the pre-war novels I had perhaps better add explicitly (in case the implication may seem to have got lost) that they are all, as I see them, clearly the work of a significantly original talent, and they would have deserved to be still read and remembered, even if they had not been the early work of the author of *A Passage to India*.

In *A Passage to India* (1924), which comes fourteen years later (a remarkable abstention in an author who had enjoyed so decided a *succès d'estime*), there are none of these staggering discrepancies. The prevailing mood testifies to the power of time and history. For the earlier lyrical indulgences we have (it may fairly be taken as representative) the evocation of Mrs. Moore's reactions to the caves ('Pathos, poetry, courage—they exist, but are identical, and so is filth,' etc.—see pp. 149-151). The tone characterizing the treatment of personal relations is fairly represented by this:

> 'A friendliness, as of dwarfs shaking hands, was in the air. Both man and woman were at the height of their powers—sensible, honest, even subtle. They spoke the same language, and held the same opinions, and the variety of age and sex did not divide them. Yet they were dissatisfied. When they agreed, "I want to go on living a bit," or, "I don't believe in God," the words were followed by a curious backwash as if the universe had displaced itself to fill up a tiny void, or as though they had seen their own gestures from an immense light—dwarfs talking, shaking hands and assuring each other that they stood on the same footing of insight.' (p. 265).

Of course, tone and mood are specifically related to the given theme and setting of the novel. But the Indian sky and the Anglo-Indian circumstances must be taken as giving a particular focus and frame to the author's familiar preoccupations (exhibiting as these naturally do a more advanced maturity).

Fielding, the central figure in the book, who is clearly very close to the author, represents in a maturer way what the Schlegels represented: what may still be called liberal culture—humanity, disinterestedness, tolerance and free intelligence, unassociated with dogma or religion or any very determinate set of traditional forms.

He might indeed (if we leave out all that Howards End stood for) be said to represent what was intended by Margaret's marrying Henry Wilcox, for he is level-headed and practical and qualified in the ways of the world. His agnosticism is explicit. Asked

> ' Is it correct that most people are atheists in England now?'

he replies:

> ' The educated thoughtful people? I should say so, though they don't like the name. The truth is that the West doesn't bother much over belief and disbelief in these days. Fifty years ago, or even when you and I were young, much more fuss was made.' (p. 109).

Nevertheless, though Fielding doesn't share it, the kind of preoccupation he so easily passes by has its place in *A Passage to India* as in Mr. Forster's other novels, and again (though there is no longer the early crudity) its appearances are accompanied by something unsatisfactory in the novelist's art, a curious lack of grasp. The first Mrs. Wilcox, that very symbolic person, and Miss Avery may be said to have their equivalents in Mrs. Moore and Ralph, the son of her second marriage. Mrs. Moore, as a matter of fact, is in the first part of the book an ordinary character, but she becomes after her death, a vague pervasive suggestion of mystery. It is true that it is she who has the experience in the cave—the experience that concentrates the depressed ethos of the book—and the echo ' undermines her hold on life,' but the effect should be to associate her with the reverse of the kind of mysteriousness that after her death is made to invest her name. For she and the odd boy Ralph (' born of too old a mother ') are used as means of recognizing possibilities that lie outside Fielding's philosophy—though he is open-minded. There is, too, Ralph's sister Stella, whom Fielding marries:

> ' She has ideas I don't share—indeed, when I'm away from her I think them ridiculous. When I'm with her, I suppose because I'm fond of her, I feel different, I feel half dead and half blind. My wife's after something. You and I and Miss Quested are, roughly speaking, not after anything. We jog on as decently as we can . . . ' (p. 320).

Our objection is that it's all too easy. It amounts to little more than saying, 'There may be something in it,' but it has the effect of taking itself for a good deal more. The very poise of Mr. Forster's art has something equivocal about it—it seems to be conditioned by its not knowing what kind of poise it is. The account of the Krishna ceremony, for instance, which is a characteristic piece by the sensitive, sympathetic, and whimsically ironic Mr. Forster, slides nevertheless into place in a general effect—there are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio—that claims a due impersonality. How radical is this uncertainty that takes on the guise of a sureness and personal distinction of touch may be seen in Mr. Forster's prose when a real and characteristic distinction is unmistakably there. Here is an instance:

> 'The other smiled, and looked at his watch. They both regretted the death, but they were middle-aged men who had invested their emotions elsewhere, and outbursts of grief could not be expected from them over a slight acquaintance. It's only one's own dead who matter. If for a moment the sense of communion in sorrow came to them, it passed. How indeed is it possible for one human being to be sorry for all the sadness that meets him on the face of the earth, for the pain that is endured not only by men, but by animals and plants, and perhaps by the stones? The soul is tired in a moment, and in fear of losing the little she does understand, she retreats to the permanent lines which habit or chance have dictated, and suffers there.'

The touch seems sure in the first three sentences—in fact, but for one phrase, in the whole passage. Consider, for instance, how different an effect the second sentence would have out of its context: one would suppose it to be satiric in tone. Here, however, it is a means to the precise definition of a very different tone, one fatigued and depressed but sympathetic. The lapse, it seems to me, comes in that close of the penultimate sentence: '. . . plants, and perhaps by the stones.' Once one's critical notice has fastened on it (for, significantly too, these things tend to slip by), can one do anything but reflect how extraordinary it is that so fine a writer should be able, in such a place, to be so little certain just how serious he is? For surely that run-out of the sentence cannot be

justified in terms of the dramatic mood that Mr. Forster is offering to render? I suppose the show of a case might be made out for it as an appropriate irony, or appropriate dramatically in some way, but it wouldn't be a convincing case to anyone who had observed Mr. Forster's habit. Such a reader sees merely the easy, natural lapse of the very personal writer whose hand is 'in.' It may seem a not very important instance, but it is representative, and to say that is to pass a radical criticism.

Moreover, a general doubt arises regarding that personal distinction of style—that distinction which might seem to give Mr. Forster an advantage over, say, Mr. L. H. Myers (to take another novelist who offers some obvious points of comparison). The doubt expresses itself in an emphasis on the 'personal.'

> 'Ronny approved of religion as long as it endorsed the National Anthem, but he objected when it attempted to influence his life.'
>
> 'Sir Gilbert, though not an enlightened man, held enlightened opinions.'
>
> 'Ronny's religion was of the sterilized Public School brand, which never goes bad, even in the tropics.'

> 'Incurably inaccurate, he already thought that this was what had occurred. He was inaccurate because he was sensitive. He did not like to remember Miss Quested's remark about polygamy, because it was unworthy of a guest, so he put it away from his mind, and with it the knowledge that he had bolted into a cave to get away from her. He was inaccurate because he desired to honour her, and—facts being entangled—he had to arrange them in her vicinity, as one tidies the ground after extracting a weed.'

> 'What had spoken to her in that scoured-out cavity of the granite? What dwelt in the first of the caves? Something very old and very small. Before time, it was before space also. Something snub-nosed, incapable of generosity—the undying worm itself.'

—A larger assemblage of quotations (there would be no difficulty but that of space in going on indefinitely) would make the point

fairly conclusively: Mr. Forster's style is personal in the sense that it keeps us very much aware of the personality of the writer, so that even where actions, events and the experiences of characters are supposed to be speaking for themselves the turn of phrase and tone of voice bring the presenter and commentator into the foreground. Mr. Forster's felicities and his charm, then, involve limitations. Even where he is not betrayed into lapses of the kind illustrated above, his habit doesn't favour the impersonality, the presentment of themes and experiences as things standing there in themselves, that would be necessary for convincing success at the level of his highest intention.

The comparative reference to Mr. L. H. Myers thrown out above suggests a return to the question of Mr. Forster's representative significance. When one has recognized the interest and value his work has as representing liberal culture in the early years of the twentieth century, there is perhaps a temptation to see the weaknesses too simply as representative. That that culture has of its very nature grave weaknesses Mr. Forster's work itself constitutes an explicit recognition. But it seems worth while insisting at this point on the measure in which Mr. Forster's weaknesses are personal ones, qualifying the gifts that have earned him (I believe) a lasting place in English literature. He seems then, for one so perceptive and sensitive, extraordinarily lacking in (if the phrase will pass) force of intelligence ; it is perhaps, a general lack of vitality. The deficiencies of his novels must be correlated with the weakness so apparent in his critical and journalistic writings—*Aspects of the Novel*, *Abinger Harvest*[1]—the weakness that makes them representative in so disconcerting a way. They are disconcerting because they exhibit a lively critical mind accepting, it seems, uncritically the very inferior social-intellectual milieu in which it has developed. Mr. Forster, we know, has been associated with Bloomsbury—the Bloomsbury which (to confine ourselves to one name) produced Lytton Strachey and took him for a great writer. And these writings of Mr. Forster's are, in their amiable way, Bloomsbury. They are Bloomsbury in the valuations they accept (in spite of the showings of real critical perception), in the assumptions they innocently express, and in pervasive accent.

[1]See *Scrutiny*, Vol. V, No. 1, p. 100.

It might, of course, be said that it is just the weakness of liberal culture—'bourgeois,' the Marxist would say—that is manifested by Bloomsbury (which certainly had claims to some kind of representative status). But there seems no need to deal directly with such a proposition here, or to discuss at any length what significance shall be given to the terms 'liberal' and 'culture.' The necessary point is made by insisting that the weaknesses of Mr. Forster's work and of Bloomsbury are placed as such by standards implicit in what is best in that work. That those standards are not complete in themselves or securely based or sufficiently guaranteed by contemporary civilization there is no need to dispute: the recognition has been an essential part of the creative impulse in Mr. Forster. But that, in the exploration of the radical problems, more power than he commands may be shown by a creative writer who may equally be said to represent liberal culture appears well enough in *The Root and the Flower*—at least, I throw out this judgment as pretty obviously acceptable. In any case, I cannot see how what they both stand for can be dispensed with. They represent, these spokesmen of the finer consciousness of our time, the humane tradition as it emerges from a period of 'bourgeois' security, divorced from dogma and left by social change, the breakdown of traditional forms and the loss of sanctions embarrassingly 'in the air'; no longer serenely confident or self-sufficient, but conscious of being not less than before the custodian of something essential. It is, in these representatives, far from the complacency of 'freedom of thought,' but they stand, nevertheless, for the free play of critical intelligence as a *sine qua non* of any hope for a human future. And it seems to me plain that this tradition really is, for all its weakness, the indispensable transmitter of something that humanity cannot afford to lose.

These rather commonplace observations seemed worth making because of the current fashion of using 'liberal' largely and loosely as a term of derogation: too much is too lightly dismissed with it. To enforce this remark it seems to me enough to point to *A Passage to India*—and it is an occasion for ensuring that I shall not, in effect, have done Mr. Forster a major critical injustice. For I have been assuming, tacitly, a general agreement that *A Passage to India*, all criticisms made, is a classic: not only a most significant document of our age, but a truly memorable work

of literature. And that there is point in calling it a classic of the liberal spirit will, I suppose, be granted fairly readily, for the appropriateness of the adjective is obvious. In its touch upon racial and cultural problems, its treatment of personal relations, and in prevailing ethos the book is an expression, undeniably, of the liberal tradition ; it has, as such, its fineness, its strength and its impressiveness ; and it makes the achievement, the humane, decent and rational—the ' civilized '—habit, of that tradition appear the invaluable thing it is.

On this note I should like to make my parting salute. Mr. Forster's is a name that, in these days, we should peculiarly honour.

F. R. LEAVIS.

COMMENTS AND REVIEWS

MUSIC: VAN DIEREN AND RUBBRA

Two publications of importance to those interested in contemporary music must be noticed this quarter.

The first is van Dieren's *String Quartet No. 5*, a miniature score of which has been published by the Cecilian Press, London, at the very reasonable price of 5/-.

The second is Edmund Rubbra's *Symphony*, a full score of which appears from the Universal Edition of Vienna. It's a pity the Oxford University Press shouldn't have undertaken this work, but one is only the more grateful to Universal for their enterprise. I hope all self-respecting libraries and all musical people who can afford the 63/-, will do what they can to support the venture and thus to encourage a composer of whom we ought to be proud.

W.H.M.

CATERPILLARS OF THE COMMONWEALTH UNITE !

THREE GUINEAS, by Virginia Woolf (The Hogarth Press, 7/6).

This book is not really reviewable in these pages because Mrs. Woolf implies throughout that it is a conversation between her and her friends, addressed as she constantly says to ' women of our class,' though bits of it are directly and indirectly aimed at those women's menkind. What ' our class ' is turns out to be the people whose fathers function at Westminster, who ' spend vast sums annually upon party funds ; upon sport ; upon grouse moors . . . lavish[es] money upon clubs—Brook's, White's, the Travellers', the Reform, to mention the most prominent.' Mrs. Woolf would apparently be surprised to hear that there is no member of that class on the contributing list of this review. On the other hand, readers of this review will be surprised to hear that Mrs. Woolf thinks this class—the relatively very few wealthy propertied people in our country—is to be identified with ' the educated class ' and contains at this date the average educated man and the average student of the women's colleges of the older universities. This is the first of many staggering intimations for the reader that Mrs. Woolf is not living in the contemporary world: almost the first thing we notice is that the author of *Three Guineas* is quite insulated by class. What respectable ideas inform this book belong to the ethos of John Stuart Mill. What experience there is of domineering and hostile man (for that purports to justify the undertaking) is second-hand and comes from hearsay.[1]

It is no use attempting to discuss the book for what it claims to be, which is a sort of chatty restatement of the rights and wrongs

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[1]Often unreliable. Mrs. Woolf instances as one burning injustice: ' Not a single educated man's daughter is thought capable of teaching the literature of her own language at either university.' There are at present six women regularly on the lecture-list for the English Tripos and I believe at no time in the last ten years has there been less than four—a generous representation for two colleges. Again: ' The great majority of your sex (Englishmen) are to-day in favour of war.'

of women of Mrs. Woolf's class, with occasional reflexions where convenient on the wrongs of other kinds of English-women. Mrs. Woolf, by her own account, has personally received considerably more in the way of economic ease than she is humanly entitled to, and as this book reveals, has enjoyed the equally relaxing ease of an uncritical (not to say flattering) social circle: she cannot be supposed to have suffered any worse injury from mankind than a rare unfavourable review. Writing this book was evidently a form of self-indulgence—altruism exhibits a different tone, it is not bad-tempered, peevishly sarcastic and incoherent as this book is throughout. As a reviewer I must say it impresses me as unpleasant self-indulgence, and as a member of a class of educated women Mrs. Woolf has apparently never heard of, I feel entitled to add that it is also highly undesirable. The reviewers have indeed all blessed the book, but any man who objected would lay himself open to the obvious charges of (a) being no gentleman and (b) expressing a resentment easily explicable in psychological terms, while any woman who refused to vote solid would of course be a traitress to the cause. Nevertheless I venture to voice what I know to be the opinion of many educated women, that Mrs. Woolf's latest effort is a let-down for our sex. *A Room of One's Own* was annoying enough, causing outpourings of disgust in the very quarters in which Mrs. Woolf, one gathered, expected to earn gratitude; but this book is not merely silly and ill-informed, though it is that too, it contains some dangerous assumptions, some preposterous claims and some nasty attitudes.

The method is a deliberate avoidance of any argument—its unity is emotional. She tries in fact to make a weapon of feminine inconsequence, and I felt sympathetic with another reader of *Three Guineas*, of course of the wrong sex, who remarked to me that Mrs. Woolf's mental processes reminded him of Mrs. Nickleby's. The result affects me like Nazi dialectic without Nazi conviction. Take pages 39 to 40. They run like this (I preserve Mrs. Woolf's wording where possible): men dress up in their professional capacities as warriors, lawyers, courtiers, dons; they forbid us women to wear such uniform, but don't let them suppose that they are anything but a ridiculous spectacle to us; preserving archaic costume for public ritual in the universities emphasizes the superiority of educated men over other people; this arouses com-

petition and jealousy, emotions making for war ; women therefore can help to prevent war by refusing to wear academic dress (though they have at present a legitimate grievance in not being allowed to wear it at Cambridge) or to accept public honours, and by openly despising the men who do. I cannot understand all this as anything but phrases which have no meaningful connection with each other, but it is a fair specimen of the rhetoric in which the ' argument ' of *Three Guineas* is conducted. This passage moreover is illustrated with photographs, but as they are evidently selected with malice and as the thought perforce leaps to mind how a corresponding selection, probably as stupid-looking or ridiculous, could be compiled of eminent women's faces and persons in gala dress, the method defeats itself. As does another artifice. This is to write as though the defects of human nature existed only in the male branch (if deliberate it's bad tactics because it outrages common sense and if unconscious, as there seems reason to suppose, it discounts the whole undertaking). For example, Mrs. Woolf gives much space to the Victorian father who almost without exception, she thinks, kept his daughters in intellectual and economic subservience. I do not myself believe that the bourgeois fathers at any period were worse than the mothers, or that both varieties of parent are not at all times equally inclined to proprietary behaviour wherever unchecked by self-knowledge, whatever the state of the law and public opinion. Mrs. Woolf writes as though the Victorian fathers whom she adduces as jealous of their daughters marrying or achieving economic independence were not to be paralleled in many ages, including our own, by the common case of mothers who try to run their sons' lives (D. H. Lawrence's mother is a well-known type) and it is even arguable that the moral and emotional pressure exerted by mothers upon their children, particularly sons, is worse than the economic dependence of daughters and wives.

In fact the release of sex hostility this kind of writing represents is self-indulgent because it provides Mrs. Woolf with a self-righteous glow at the cost of furnishing an easy target for unsympathetic males, and at the still greater cost of embarrassing those women who are aware that the only chance of their getting accepted as intellectual equals by intelligent men (and so ultimately by the men who run the institutions and professions) is by living down

their sex's reputation for having in general minds as ill-regulated as Mrs. Woolf's is here seen to be.[1] It is a reputation that will die the harder for *Three Guineas*.

For just think of the proposals made here for improving the position of educated women. There is her proposal for reforming the evils of the professions by women refusing to acquiesce in them. Instances given are: refuse to approve of academic dress and decorations because these somehow cause wars; accept University lectureships in literature and then refuse to lecture because all such lectures and all teaching of literature (except by creative writers to those itching to become such themselves) is 'vain and vicious';[2] refuse to pander to 'adultery of the brain' by writing

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[1]Mrs. Woolf heaps contumely upon Mr. Joad for alleging that conversation—by which he presumably means, as many of us do, serious discussion—is ruined by the presence of women. Though he might have put it less irritatingly, a conscientious woman would often feel obliged to admit from her own experience that this attitude is understandable. I have frequently heard accounts from educated women of their discomfort at discussions which have been nullified or spoilt by shameless exposures of the limitations of female intellects. Such accounts have often ended with the formula 'I blushed for my sex.' The remedy is of course a more rigorous intellectual discipline and that acquaintance with standards which produces humility. Mrs. Woolf's idea however is to abolish that kind of education altogether—see below.

[2]There are notoriously perfectly worthless lectures on literature—the kind students call 'potted textbook,' and those which are summaries of texts, answering to Mrs. Woolf's account of 'sipping English literature through a straw.' But Mrs. Woolf does not apparently mean these. It seems curious that she does not make the obvious suggestion that women should show their mettle by offering the right kind of teaching (for there is a right kind, unless the opinion of the better students is negligible, and she might have satisfied herself that this is so by undertaking some field-research—a necessary preliminary, one would have thought, to voicing an opinion on a subject of which Mrs. Woolf can have no first-hand knowledge having, according to *Who's Who*, been educated at home). She alleges in general terms the danger of infection

for journals or publishers (alternative source of income for professional women writers not inheriting five hundred a year and rooms of their own not indicated). Then there is the plan for abolishing the man-made university with its examinations, degrees, and distinctions based on native ability, and substituting the ideal college as conceived by and for woman. At a time when all responsible educationists are expressing radical dissatisfaction both with the existing college system and with the accepted idea of university education this attracts our attention as a hopeful sign. But as a nice practical start Mrs. Woolf won't hear of university students being prepared in any way to earn a living, even by studying specialities. She thinks that adults from eighteen to twenty-one can justify their existence as burdens on the state by

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from ' a mature mind lecturing immature minds ' on literature. This looks like a joke if you happen to know that the invariable complaint made by serious students of literature at *any* English university is that they suffer from working under lecturers who haven't the wherewithal for impressing a student with anything but boredom. The very marked objection of the run of such lecturers to a method of discussing literature that stimulates students to ask questions (I have heard of the objection being made in these words) is then understandable. And the objection of inferior or spoilt writers to the potential creation of a public capable of distinguishing between good and bad art is also understandable. By seeking information at the right instead of the wrong end of the process Mrs. Woolf could have learnt that the effective method of teaching literature does not tell young men and women what to approve or disapprove of (to do so would of course merely antagonize) but develops in them individual sensibility—a capacity for discovering what is of value in art, and how those values can be usefully organized. Examinations then become not what Mrs. Woolf censures as ' the reduction of English literature to an examination subject ' but a test whether a student has profited by his studies to become a person capable of discriminating, evaluating, and organizing his judgments, as well as whether he has studied widely enough to have acquired a sound basis for judging. ' Vain and vicious ' seem to be the right terms for those who would prevent such genuinely educational work.

studying what she calls the art of living. Most people might feel that the art of living is best acquired incidentally to some discipline, either that given by brute circumstances when one is forced to stand on one's own feet (ideal: Robinson Crusoe) or that acquired in the pursuit of specialist studies—and many educationists now think it would be an improvement to combine the two. Without some such discipline the art of living becomes a pitiful affair. Mrs. Woolf's conception of it turns out to be the variety implied in the prospectus of an Arts Theatre I once received which announced something like this, that it would be a place where people who appreciated the arts of dress, epicurism and conversation would be able, in appropriate surroundings, to feed a corresponding taste for the art of drama. It seems to me the art of living as conceived by a social parasite. Mrs. Woolf wants studies in her college to be pursued by 'the clever and the stupid' side by side, without any troublesome distinctions or standards to spoil things. But if an institution for the higher education of adults is to defend humane values, as Mrs. Woolf in theory at any rate desiderates, it can only do so by jealously maintaining the highest possible standards where the arts are concerned and conducting the most rigorous scrutiny of intellectual processes generally. Hence its very first duty would be to inculcate the critical attitude and its second to develop in its students the ability to discriminate, judge and reject, along with the practice of responsible thinking and conduct. Mrs. Woolf however feels even more strongly than about the wrongs of women of her class the wrongs of writers like Sir Edmund Gosse and Tennyson (specified along with Keats as objecting to criticism—a few instances of better-known objectors to criticism, such as Miss Edith Sitwell and Marie Corelli, would have made the point clearer) and her most cherished project of all is to uproot criticism root and branch in the Nazi manner. With access to some practical control Mrs. Woolf would evidently develop into a high-powered persecutor; this throws a pretty light on her conception of truth, freedom and intellectual liberty which she calls upon educated women to maintain. She wants to penalize specialists in the interests of amateurs, and so her university, in spite of a promise that learning should be studied there for its own sake, could only be a breeding-ground for boudoir scholarship (a term I once heard applied to the learning of one of Mrs. Woolf's group) and belletrism. I cannot believe that any

one else would think this an improvement on the existing kind of university studies, or that such a higher 'education' would be more successful than the present kind in discouraging meanness of spirit, hostility to freedom of thought and hatred of disinterestedness. Mrs. Woolf's is no doubt a feminine conception of congenial study, as opposed to the existing masculine one of disciplined studies towards an end, but is it the kind of education women have struggled for admission to in the past? *Three Guineas* draws freely on the impressive biographies of the leaders of female emancipation, but from the quotations she gives I conclude the desires of these women were the same as mine and those of most men on entering college, the desire to continue a general education by disciplined specialist studies under the best available instructors (who, shameful admission, still happen to be men in most fields) and as far as possible in the company of those students able to set the highest standards and work with the greatest degree of maturity (who also happen to be men, which explains why sensible women would never dream of imitating Mrs. Woolf's feminist heroics). The least damning thing you might say about Mrs. Woolf's proposals is that they are irresponsible.

Out of these babblings the noble and dignified utterances of Josephine Butler, the vigorous good sense with which Sophia Jex-Blake pursued her reasonable demands, the humility of Anne Clough, appeal to Heaven against the context in which they find themselves. I think such women would rather not have had the claims of their sex advocated by Mrs. Woolf's methods. I myself stipulate that any piece of female writing advocating equality of opportunity for the sexes should prove its author to have a highly developed character and a respectable intellect, to be free from mere sex-hostility, to have an at least masculine sense of responsibility and that capacity for self-criticism which impresses us as a mark of the best kind of masculine mind, and over and above that to come from a woman capable of justifying her existence in any walk of life. There really are quite a number of women like that about. I would rather the kind of men who need converting from gross prejudice against women's abilities should read not *Three Guineas* but, among other recent women's books, *Highland Homespun* (Margaret M. Leigh), *Can I Help You, Madam?* (Ethyle Campbell), *I'm Not Complaining* (Ruth Adam), *Sex and*

Temperament in Savage Society (Margaret Mead)—books which in varied ways exhibit women capable of doing a job (farming, business, education, social sciences) which demands sterling qualities of mind and character. These books are impressive documentation of women's right to share interests and occupations that have sometimes been considered suitable only for men.

But I have passed over Mrs. Woolf's plan for the complete emancipation of women of her class from the prison-house she considers every part of the home other than the drawing-room to be. To judge from *Three Guineas* Mrs. Woolf wants the women of her class to have the privileges of womanhood without the duties and responsibilities traditionally assumed by them, and to have the advantages of a man's education without being subsequently obliged, as nearly all men are, to justify it. Thus she urges the re-endowment of the almost extinct class of 'idle, charming, cultivated women' whose function would be to provide those dinner-tables and drawing-rooms where the art of living, as previously defined, is to be practised, and she is indignant that the early students of Girton and Newnham had to make their own beds and suffer plain living—though some responsible educationists now advocate university reform in the direction of obliging even men to conduct their education in the more realistic surroundings provided by the absence of servants.

On the other hand, 'Daughters of educated men have always done their thinking from hand to mouth . . . They have thought while they stirred the pot, while they rocked the cradle. It was thus that they won us the right,' etc. I agree with someone who complained that to judge from the acquaintance with the realities of life displayed in this book there is no reason to suppose Mrs. Woolf would know which end of the cradle to stir. Mrs. Woolf in fact can hardly claim that she has thus helped to win us the right, etc. [redacted]myself, however, have generally had to produce contributions [redacted] this review with one hand while actually stirring the pot, or [redacted]mething of that kind, with the other, and if I have not done [redacted] thinking while rocking the cradle it was only because the [redacted]ghters even of uneducated men ceased to rock infants at least [redacted] generations ago. Well, I feel bound to disagree with Mrs. [redacted]olf's assumption that running a household and family unaided [redacted]cessarily hinders or weakens thinking. One's own kitchen and

nursery, and not the drawing-room and dinner-table where tired professional men relax among the ladies (thus Mrs. Woolf), is the realm where living takes place, and I see no profit in letting our servants live for us. The activities Mrs. Woolf wishes to free educated women from as wasteful not only provide a valuable discipline, they serve as a sieve for determining which values are important and genuine and which are conventional and contemptible. It is this order of experience that often makes the conversation of an uncultivated charmless woman who has merely worked hard and reared a family interesting and stimulating, while its absence renders a hypertrophied conversation piece like *Three Guineas* tiresome and worthless. Mrs. Woolf's plan for a new society intrigues me nevertheless. We are to have one kind of educated women, the idle charming cultivated women, who are to be subsidized as hostesses for the art of social intercourse (it is presumably to spare the sensibilities of these exquisite creatures that criticism of literature is to be prohibited—perhaps because they tend to dabble in letters themselves). Then we are to have a sterner kind of educated woman, the professional woman, for whose benefit the men's colleges are to be thrown open and all the available scholarship money divided equally between the sexes—the women who are to be just like men only more high-minded. Both these kinds are the five-hundred-a-year-by-right-of-birth-as-daughters-of-the-ruling-classes women. Then there are to be the base-born women who come in on the edge of the picture as drudges, to relieve both the other kinds of women of their natural duties (I mean of course nursing and rearing their own infants) as well as the routine of home-making. To impress hired labour for such work is enlightened ('remember we are in the twentieth century now,' writes Mrs. Woolf, and quotes a feminist writer to the effect that a mother is only incapacitated from pursuing her profession for two months per child), but Mrs. Woolf's ancestors who thought it advisable to send their daughters about London accompanied by a personal maid are the objects of much laboured irony (see p. 294). Then there are the unfortunate men who are to marry these daughters of educated men. If their wives choose to have babies—for women are to avert war by refusing to bear children, but apparently not indefinitely—they must from the start share the work of tending their offspring. A thorough-going revolution

in their wage-earning pursuits, and so a regular social reorganization, unenvisaged by Mrs. Woolf, must take place to allow this. I like to think of the professional man hurrying home at four-hour intervals to spend upwards of half an hour giving the baby its bottle (for breast-feeding will only be able to survive among the uneducated)—among other duties ; and presently he will have little time to give to his profession if he has any unenlightened doubts about trusting the growing mentality and sensibilities of his child to hirelings. But perhaps Mrs. Woolf does not mean to be taken as seriously as this. Or perhaps she is advocating the Soviet system of handing the child over to the State to rear at the earliest possible age. If so she should say as much and clear up her projects ; they are at present all too nebulous.

I should like to end by making one part of them a little less so. It will be necessary to draw upon the disagreeable facts of experience instead of confining ourselves with Mrs. Woolf to asertions and wishful prophecy ; but to import even a little reality into such a discussion should be a service. The position then with regard to further female emancipation seems to be that the onus is on women to prove that they are going to be able to justify it, and that it will not vitally dislocate (what it has already seriously disturbed—and no responsible person can regard that without uneasiness) the framework of our culture. It is no use starting all over again with the theory with which the Victorian emancipators began, we have to look at the results of fifty years of experience and consider facts which worry thoughtful women. One is that it is the exceptional and not the average woman student who is the intellectual equal of the average serious undergraduate in the same subject. ' Every year I have from one to two dozen men reading my subject [one of the humanities, taken by a comparable number of each sex, in which women generally get better preparation at school than men] with whom I can discuss it as equals. I have learned from long experience that among the women students there will be only one such in three years, if that.' Observations of this kind from perfectly open-minded witnesses are not unusual, and substantiate the regular complaint of outstanding women students that there is a dearth of congenial intellectual company to be found in college—whereas the men can always find such company. Either, that is, the women's colleges do not cream the

country as the men's do, or else there is precious little intellectual cream available for them to skim off. In relation to this, we may examine Mrs. Woolf's implication that women are victimized because they are restricted to about ten per cent of the students at both Oxford and Cambridge. It is an open secret that even at present the entrance lists can hardly be filled without lowering the standard of admission undesirably—this may well be because it is harder for intelligent girls at the lower end of the economic scale to get to college than for their brothers, but Mrs. Woolf is concerned only with daughters of the well-to-do and she may rest assured that none of these if up to honours standard is ever prevented from entering Oxford or Cambridge because the quota is filled.[1] Again, Mrs. Woolf thinks it monstrous that the men's scholarship list at Cambridge is more than six times the length of the women's, but the general informed opinion seems to be that to throw all scholarships open to both sexes would mean that women would probably get fewer scholarships than at present, and rarely any in some subjects (scholarships being awarded on evidence of promise as well as of acquirements). To say that this is because women have not had the educational advantages of men, that is, of being taught by men at school, only puts the difficulty further back. The obvious course is to advocate co-education at an earlier stage than college, as a preliminary to women's storming the older universities.[2] Mrs. Woolf's guns should have been trained not on

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[1]Though of course, on general principles the restriction of their numbers should be left to the wisdom of the women's colleges themselves, which could be trusted to do that in their own interests. But Mrs. Woolf does not take this line.

[2]If Mrs. Woolf were to reply that those who cannot take high honours may nevertheless profit from going to college and should have the chance of doing so, we should have to remind her of the existence of the modern universities, to which women, like men, have unrestricted access. I say 'remind,' but the regular use of 'either university' in *Three Guineas* suggests that Mrs. Woolf has never heard of any but Oxford and Cambridge. To say that there is a case for keeping the older universities for those students capable of the highest standards in many specialisms is not to deny that it would be desirable for the modern universities to have

the protectionists of the men's colleges but on the women of her own class who don't give their daughters the chance to start fair with their brothers, but send them to conventual establishments where they never come up against masculine standards. Mrs. Woolf should logically be campaigning for two things—co-education from the primary to the boarding schools, and a change in the social structure which will allow the daughters of *any* men to enter upon the highest course of studies they are fitted for. As for the daughters of Mrs. Woolf's class, evidence suggests that they value the opportunities offered by the universities less than in the early days when these had to be struggled for. 'I am in the minority of those who go there to work and they think it funny,' the daughter of an educated man, in her first year at one of the Oxford colleges, remarked to me recently. Perhaps related to this is the complaint often heard from intelligent Oxford undergraduates that the women students there make themselves a nuisance. It suggests another reason for deploring the tone of *Three Guineas*. One hears there is still plenty of sex-hostility about in the common-rooms and combination-rooms; Mrs. Woolf only cites the indefensible manifestations of such an attitude, but women cannot afford to give such prejudice any grounding.

If from evidence of what limited progress we have made in equalizing the sexes we wish to move to a more profitable attack on theory than *Three Guineas* makes there is *Sex and Temperament in Savage Society*. Miss Mead's investigation of different kinds of societies where (a) the women are 'masculine' in temperament and activities and the men 'feminine,' (b) both sexes are 'masculine,' (c) both are 'feminine,' provides real evidence (assuming the other anthropologists have checked the sources) that many qualities and habits of feeling which we think sex-linked are the arbitrary results of social forms. If a competent social psychologist were to apply the findings of this book to the problems connected with emancipating women within our culture we might get somewhere at last. Certainly there is no longer any use in this field of speculation for the non-specialist like Mrs. Woolf.

Q. D. LEAVIS.

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much more of the atmosphere and educational method of the former. Here is another reform Mrs. Woolf might more reasonably have demanded in the name of women.

THE T. E. HULME MYTH

T. E. HULME, by Michael Roberts (Faber and Faber, 10/6).

T. E. Hulme was even in his life time the object of a cult which the publication of *Speculations* (which contains most of his writings) did apparently nothing to dispel. Perhaps the fragmentary nature of these writings, his untimely death in the war, his support of then fashionable ideas are enough to excuse the special way he was thought of and written about. One must distinguish here between the praises of those personal friends whose opinions in various degrees command respect and the snobs who surrounded his reputation with an atmosphere so close that it was difficult to approach his work without bias.

As a thinker he was essentially an amateur. This quality secured him a hearing similar to that obtained by Dr. Richards's *Principles of Literary Criticism*. In *Speculations* we find the same dogmatic ' incisive ' style, the refreshingly unacademic contempt for authority, the zest in exposing what Hulme thought charlatanry (two quotations come to mind: ' I consider it a duty, a very pleasant duty and one very much neglected in this country, to expose charlatans when one sees them ' and ' There is a tremendous amount of hocus-pocus about most discussions of poetry ') and together with all this an air of many-sidedness, of embracing several disciplines and of escaping from the academic specializations. Not that he was ever smug. In his trenchant distinctions and his welding together of distinctions made in different fields into apparently brilliant positions of startling clarity (the hard dry ' classical vision ') he undoubtedly indulged a natural bent. Yet in so doing he actually blurred his meaning and whatever of value can be found in his writings can only be reached by patiently untangling his syntheses and toning down his overstatements.

This work has been admirably undertaken by Mr. Roberts. In a careful, but often verbose, exposition of the ideas to be found in *Speculations* he says ' most of his assertions are true in their proper field ; the problem is to restate them in a way that will make their limitations clear.' Yet he makes two important admissions: that the unity of Hulme's work is temperamental and

' there is scarcely a single statement in Hulme that is not borrowed.' One may then pardonably wonder why he undertook the writing of this book. For the philosophies of Bergson, Husserl and Scheler, etc., if still insufficiently known in this country are better dealt with technically and by experts ; Hulme's æsthetic excursions are on Mr. Roberts' own showing unsatisfactory. One may legitimately doubt whether the great work on æsthetics Hulme planned would have been anything but good middleman work for Bergson and Lipps.

In short I doubt whether Mr. Roberts can substantiate his claim that Hulme's great merit is that the ideas he borrowed were important. It seems much more likely from the extensive *ad-libbing* (to borrow a word from the Americans) Mr. Roberts allows himself that Hulme's positions were useful to him in working out problems that are preoccupying him. A convenient summary occurs on pp. 252-3. ' Democracy and democratic progress are bound to fail if they do not rest on the religious or tragic outlook ; but within the framework of a Christian polity, whose economy reflected the moral principles it professed, a form of democracy would be not only possible but also necessary, for democracy is the form of government that recognizes most openly the responsibility of the individual and the fact that all government rests on the consent of the governed. Progress towards such an end is not impossible . . . ' In reaching this conclusion Mr. Roberts is just and frank in pointing out Hulme's limitations. But he himself does not appear to realize how damaging he is to the Hulme myth. It is clear from this book if it was not so before that Hulme was of importance almost exclusively as a stimulating influence, and was possibly more valuable in conversations than in his writings. Many of his dicta can be found in different settings in, for example, the work of T. S. Eliot. But these ideas are only valuable when worked out and properly defined. It is by the success of those who are known to have come under his influence that Hulme will be esteemed.

H. A. MASON.

HOPKINS AND PATMORE

FURTHER LETTERS OF GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS, Edited by Claud Colleer Abbott (Oxford University Press, 16/-).

The latest volume of Hopkins' letters adds little that is new to our knowledge either of the man or the poet. Various aspects of his character and genius which were shown in the earlier volumes are further illustrated, but it is chiefly a matter of additional confirmatory detail, and there is a good deal which is simply dull.

The correspondence relating to his conversion (there are several letters to and from Newman) brings home once more not only the depth and sincerity of his religious convictions but also his independence and strength of character. Having announced his conversion to his parents, he writes to Newman: 'Their answers are terrible: I cannot read them twice.' The following remark gives perhaps a hint of the conflicts behind some of the poems and the ascetic spirit in which he dealt with them:

> 'The melancholy I have all my life been subject to has become of late years not indeed more intense in its fits, but rather more distributed, constant and crippling. One, the lightest but a very inconvenient form of it, is daily anxiety about work to be done, which makes me break off or never finish all that lies outside that work . . . When I am at the worst, though my judgment is never affected, my state is much like madness.'
>
> (p. 109).

There is further evidence of the variety and intensity of Hopkins' interests outside literature; besides the frequent references to music and the visual arts, we find him conducting long arguments with A. W. M. Baillie about Greek etymologies, advancing new theories with superb confidence in defiance of all recognized authority.

The correspondence with Patmore, which occupies a hundred pages of this volume, does not increase our esteem for Patmore. A good deal of it follows this pattern: Hopkins having made numerous minute criticisms of Patmore's latest poems, the latter replies:

> 'If I can I will set it right, but, at this distance of time from the composition of the poem it is very dangerous to make more

than verbal alterations . . . were I to remodel a passage, however short, I fear the alteration would look like a patch of a different colour.' (p. 163).

It is very difficult to see why Hopkins should have been so tolerant of Patmore's work (' Your poems are a good deed done for the Catholic Church, for England, for the British Empire.'). Other critics were much less encouraging, as the poet ruefully notes:

> ' Mr. F. Harrison . . . speaks of my work as "goody-goody muddle," and in last Saturday's *Athenæum* . . . " Honoria " and " Amelia " are described as " girls smelling of bread-and-butter." ' (p. 220).

But Patmore's letters leave no doubt that he retained ample confidence in his own profundity. It is not surprising to find that he could make little of Hopkins' own poetry.

There are several interesting fragments of literary criticism scattered throughout these letters. Hopkins describes Arnold's poems as having all the ingredients of poetry without quite being it (p.43), praises the essay on *The Literary Influence of Academies* (p.74), and defends Arnold's opinion of Keats against Patmore's assertion that Keats was merely effeminate and sensual (pp. 233-9). In a letter to A. W. M. Baillie as early as 1864 he has begun tentatively ' to *doubt* Tennyson ': this leads to a long discussion of the degrees of poetic language and inspiration, and then, after extravagant praise of a section of *In Memoriam* to the characteristic remark: ' Inconsequent conclusion: Shakespeare is and must be utterly the greatest of poets.' (p. 68 seq.). Later, discussing the poems of Patmore's dead son, he says, ' They are strong where this age is weak—I mean Swinburne and the popular poets, and, I may say, Tennyson himself—in thought and insight.' (p. 188). Similarly he is critical of the archaisms of Bridges and Dixon, and of the strained allegory and lack of common sense in a dramatic poem by ' a young Mr. Yeats ' called *Mosda*—which nevertheless contains ' fine lines and vivid imagery.'

This scholarly and expensive volume presumably completes the collection of letters, and looking at them as a whole one feels that they are of very unequal interest. What is needed now is an intelligent selection in one volume at a reasonable price.

R. G. Cox.

MR. SPENDER'S PLAY

TRIAL OF A JUDGE, by Stephen Spender (Faber and Faber, 5/-).

Mr. Spender has always met with indulgence from publishers and reviewers. Respectable names can be quoted in support of the view that each of his works is a masterpiece, or at least points towards a more glorious future. Whereas, in fact, as is known to readers of this journal, almost the opposite is the case. Yet his most recent work is announced by the publishers as 'a tragic statement,' and by himself (presumably) on the title-page as a 'tragedy.' (Mr. Auden, we remember, was content with calling *Paid on Both Sides* a charade).

In examining the pretensions of this poetical drama it will be convenient to start from the notion of 'tragic *statement.*' For the most notable portion of the play—and the only one in which the author writes with any clarity and force—occurs in the fifth act. Here various barely disguised versions of the author discuss their points of view. There is a Communist, a Liberal judge and later a 'Fascist' leader. But the kind of clarity and force which their statements have adequately place the pretensions. For they are no more than could be attributed to his own prose work on the same theme—the position of Liberalism between the two more rigid 'ideologies.' He puts the well-known arguments in such a way that no one could mistake them. Nor does he seek to favour (or so it seems) the Communist more than the Liberal, and the Fascists once the stylization is admitted are creditably drawn. It is clear from various remarks uttered by Mr. Spender that he has been working towards this style for a long time and attributes to it remarkable virtues. Yet it does not force conviction on us by any poetical means. Nor do the arguments penetrate far enough into the problems involved to convince us intellectually. The blurb asserts: 'The material is political, but the readers and the audience will, according to their abilities, find deeper levels of meaning.' Apart from a passing tribute to the beauty of this piece of advertisement, the attentive reader will quickly recognize it as bluff. The meaning in this portion is on the surface and when read leaves you exactly where you were.

It is difficult to discover wherein the tragedy lies. The personages have the puppet-like abstraction we have become familiar with from the plays of Mr. Auden. The Judge's Wife is a crude sketch of a pathological case, there is a Shavian Home Secretary, and the various political figures. Clearly tragedy cannot be concerned with these. It is evidently round the Liberal Judge that it must centre. Prolonged investigation suggests the irreverent thought that it is a tragedy according to the formula of Bradley. The judge, himself on trial, appeals to public opinion.

> Let them note well my tragic error
> Fatal to repeat
> When I renounced my public anger
> Before imagined expediency.

In the eyes of his friend his only weakness

> Was his faith in an absolute justice
> Beyond the State and beyond the law.

But Mr. Spender is at pains to show that the ' tragic error ' is not of any political importance and that in general the judge and his problems are quite removed from the ' reality ' of political life as expressed in the clashes of Communist and Fascist forces. Further the Judge as such maintains the justice of the state's laws and has no concern with absolute justice. Mr. Spender does not succeed in properly disentangling his theme. But where, if this interpretation is on the right lines, the central failing lies is in the emptiness of the verse in those passages where he attempts to bring out the inward stress of the Judge's position. In short the play is tragic in formula but not in content.

The play throughout bears all the marks of a carefully thought out method. In any given speech of sufficient length we find a blend of styles from the vaguely Elizabethan, the too liberal translations of Greek tragedies, the starkly modern, and the banal. Two examples must suffice (the mother of a murdered Communist speaking):

> We went to bed early, for my son was a good son
> Causing me no anxiety with late hours but staying at home;
> Going to rest at dark and rising to read by the dawn
> He was what you might call a studious one.
> Now I pray God to pour Hell fire upon his murderers

Who, with a dark lantern—five there were—
Broke in with sticks and revolvers on our slumber
—Found nothing to steal except my solitary treasure
My son, my son. Sir, well I remember
That night, the hottest night of this summer, how
He coughed, so that if at all of evil I dreamt,
It was to pray he might die peacefully.

And this dialogue between the Judge and his Wife:

Dear, the night is turning cold,
I think we should go in.

I won't do as I'm told!
These brave, brave boys, are going to win.
I feel myself a girl again.

To whatever place I turn my eyes,
I stare at my own weakness
Which brings down a Polar night
Groaning with more than winter-long distress . . .

It is time to go in.
I have worked for many hours.
Dear, come back into the house.
Lead on.

[Exeunt].

Mr. Spender has had time in the three years he has spent on this work to study further and imitate the devices of Messrs. Eliot and Auden. But where he himself seems to speak in his own voice we find the same qualities and weaknesses as appeared in his first published collection *Poems*. I refer to those striking images which on inspection turn out either to be vague or to lead the attention away from the subject in hand. Examples taken at random are:

You know the law
Makes hourly statements like electric advertisements
In city squares—those man-tall golden letters

Regard to-day
Whose paper finger on the calendar
Has shaken the traditional libraries

And still will wing like seed into the ground
To produce from the instant a generation of chaos
His living was one word
Influencing surrounding speech
Of a crowd's life, printless until
The words of all this time are frozen
By all our deaths into the winter library
Where life continually flows into books.

But now all crumbles away
In coals of darkness, and the existence
Of what was black, white, evil, right
Becomes invisible, founders against us
Like lumber in a lightless garret.

Mr. Spender's incapacity at this date to deal adequately with anything but such images provokes the most serious judgment. Since his first book he has tried various forms of writings in prose and verse, none of which have advanced him beyond the dilemmas raised by *Poems*. His career subsequent to that book has in short been one of literary frustration and dissipation. This latest work aims far too high ; nor does his failure show any promise for the future. The very fact of the labour plainly involved in this play makes more apparent the deep-seated lack of conviction and direction in his poetry. Evidently something more than industry is required if he is to find his feet.

The play has been acted by the Group Theatre players. Without having seen it I can well believe that it provided several striking *tableaux* and that in general it is well adapted for the stage. But as poetic drama the plain fact is that the play is still-born. And if it is a worthy member of the small group of poetic dramas of recent years it is high time that a distinction be drawn between stage successes and a fruitful dramatic movement. There is clearly a public that will attend these performances, but it would be interesting to know more of the quality of the audiences and what contact is created between them and the plays. To judge from the text of *Trial of a Judge* at any rate one would consider this play to be closet drama of the most barren kind. Mr. Spender has not had any greater success in coming to grips with life than he had in *Vienna*.

H. A. MASON.

THE POET OF REVOLUTION

ARTHUR RIMBAUD, by Enid Starkie (Faber and Faber, 15/-).
RIMBAUD IN ABYSSINIA, by Enid Starkie (Oxford University Press, 7/6).

' The aim of poetry,' said Ducasse, ' must be practical truth.' During the nineteenth century the poet's conception of his function underwent a change and poetry was made to serve an extra-literary purpose. Its aim was no longer to glorify the existing order, as great poets of the past had glorified it, but to ' change ' it ; it was not ' a superior amusement,' but a means of solving metaphysical problems. This meant that the horizon of literature was immensely extended and the relations between literature and life were revolutionized. It follows that the poet's life assumes a new importance for the literary critic, and a writer like Mr. Edmund Wilson seems disposed to treat Rimbaud's later life as a continuation of his poetry.

Mr. Wilson's view is perhaps a debatable one, but his instinct is surely right. There is nothing in Rimbaud's life that the critic can safely disregard. But we must remember that though his life may help us to understand his poetry, the study of his life must not become a *substitute* for the study of his poetry as it does in many of the books written about him. 'There are times,' said Rivière, ' when I almost believe that he is the greatest poet who has ever lived.' That of course is an exaggeration, but the emphasis falls in the right place. There have been greater poets than Rimbaud, but it seems to me that whatever the limitations of his achievement, his natural endowment was superior to that of any other French poet. An accident of birth made him not simply a great poet, but a great leader ; and for this reason he seems to speak to our generation with a greater urgency than any other modern poet. He was not (to borrow words that Mr. Eliot once used of Baudelaire), important primarily as a ' human proto-type of new experience' and 'only secondly because he was a poet.' There can be no distinction between a great writer's poetry and what we are pleased to call his ' message.' It is simply because they were first and foremost great poets that the work of Baudelaire and Rimbaud possesses what for want of a better word can only be called an extra-literary importance.

Miss Starkie's *Arthur Rimbaud* is a useful and informative life of the poet. It provides the critic, approaching his work for the first time, with all the facts that he is likely to need, and it is pleasantly free from the fashionable doctrinaire bias which has been a serious obstacle to the study of his poetry. The smaller book, in particular, contains a lively account of the political background during Rimbaud's stay in Abyssinia and throws a good deal of light on his activities as a trader. It brings out Rimbaud's natural generosity of character, but it proves conclusively that he was far from being the shrewd man of business that he is sometimes thought to have been.

Miss Starkie's book, however, is much more a popular life than a work of serious scholarship. It is difficult to avoid the impression that her air of scholarly detachment conceals a fundamental uncertainty about some of the main problems of the poet's life. There is no evidence (except a bad poem of Verlaine's) to support her 'central theory' that 'Rimbaud, at the time of his greatest creative power, believed that he had become God.' Rimbaud's own words at the close of *Une saison en enfer*—'*[Je] me suis dit mage ou ange, dispensé de toute morale . . .* '—will hardly bear this interpretation.

The relations between Rimbaud and Verlaine have aroused a good deal of unhealthy curiosity among the biographers of both poets; but though Miss Starkie displays considerable interest in the problem, one cannot help feeling that its significance has escaped her. Rimbaud's homosexuality (unlike Verlaine's) cannot be treated as a mere aberration or as an interesting psychological problem according to the taste of the writer: it must be related to his poetry and that is what Miss Starkie fails to do. Rimbaud was the poet of revolution. The driving impulse behind his work was a desire to demolish the existing order and to create a fresh one. The *Premiers vers* are a destructive survey of contemporary society, its institutions and beliefs, and they are only fully intelligible as a prelude to the metaphysical revolt of the *Illuminations*. The words from *Une saison en enfer*, '*l'amour est à réinventer*,' suggest that Rimbaud's homosexuality was, to some extent at any rate, an attempt in the *practical* sphere to divest himself as completely as possible of traditional morality and traditional ways of feeling; and it has its parallel in the attempt

to discover a new mode of consciousness in the *Illuminations*.

Miss Starkie's summary of the æsthetic theories in Rimbaud's letters[1] is clear and useful, but her chapter on the influence of 'occult' literature on his poetry is less satisfactory. It is perfectly possible to summarize a poet's theories without being a literary critic at all, but a discussion of influences can only be fruitful when the findings are constantly checked by the critic's responses to his text. I doubt myself whether the 'occult' literature had any *direct* influence on the *Illuminations*, though it may indirectly have stimulated Rimbaud's taste for speculative thought. But it is a pity that Miss Starkie suggests, as she appears to suggest, that this influence (supposing it existed) is of the same kind that we find in Balzac's novels, *Louis Lambert* and *Séraphita*. No one doubts the influence on Balzac, but in those novels he was simply dramatizing—with unfortunate results—the cloudy theories of some very second-rate 'thinkers.' Now the *Illuminations* are the work of a genuinely speculative mind making an independent approach to reality through the medium of poetry. Unless this is clearly grasped, we run the risk of missing the significance of Rimbaud's poetry altogether.

It is particularly unfortunate that a book which is likely to be many readers' first introduction to Rimbaud should be entirely inadequate in its treatment of his poetry. It is a curious fact that as soon as she comes to Rimbaud's poetry, Miss Starkie's writing loses all its vitality and becomes flat and lifeless as though she were not really interested in poetry at all. Her description of *Aube* —that incomparable poem—as 'one of the finest nature poems in the French language' might have come from one of the weaker manuals of French literature; and the comparisons between the *Illuminations* and a very undistinguished passage from Ballanche (p. 113), and the wretched fragments from Judith Gautier's *Livre de jade* (pp. 193-4) show something resembling an incapacity to read Rimbaud at all.

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[1]These letters are published in J. M. Carré's valuable *Lettres de la vie littéraire d'Arthur Rimbaud* (Gallimard, 1931). This book also contains what purports to be the first authentic account of the destruction of *Une saison en enfer*—an incident which Miss Starkie only discusses in a very summary manner.

The chapter on the *Illuminations* is altogether too ambitious and contains theories which are really misleading.

'It is not surprising,' writes Miss Starkie, 'to find that many of *Les Illuminations* are the expression of Rimbaud's transcendental experience of God. There can be no doubt of the certainty of his vision of God, though no one would be so bold as to claim that it was Catholic or in any way fundamentally Christian. Many conflicting claims have been put forward for Rimbaud, but out of all these claims the conviction emerges that when a man has reached the ultimate heights of mystical, transcendental experience and union with God, creeds and dogmas are of no more account, and the experience will be precisely the same for the members of the different religions, whether of the East or of the West.'

'Mysticism' is a scientific term borrowed from speculative theology. When used by a trained theologian, it may have a precise meaning; but its appearance in literary criticism is nearly always a sign of critical indolence—an attempt to give the illusion of precision without the effort of rigorous thought. The study of a work like the Jesuit theologian Maréchal's *Études sur la psychologie des mystiques*, which is an object lesson in the extreme caution required in making any pronouncement about mystical phenomena at all, would, I think, make critics of Rimbaud less eager to jump to conclusions about the content of the *Illuminations*. I must state clearly that I am not here concerned with the authenticity of the mystics' claims, which lies outside the field of literary criticism, but with their *psychology*. There seems to me to be no possible parallel between Rimbaud's psychology and that of the mystics. There is none of the mystic's sense of possession. It is a striking fact that all through Rimbaud's poetry the revelation which he was seeking eludes him. '*J'ai vu quelquefois ce que l'homme a cru voir*,' he says in the *Bateau ivre*; but when he tries to tell us what he has seen, his poem goes to pieces. It ought to be plain, too, that if he had enjoyed the transcendental 'union with God,' he could never have written *Une saison en enfer*. For that poem is a confession that his quest (whatever it was) had failed. Nor is there any parallel between the 'spiritual dryness' of the mystics, caused, as they believed, by God's withdrawal from them for a time to test their faith, and the extreme disillusion of parts of Rimbaud's poem.

Most of the mystical writers, whatever school they belonged to, appear to have started with belief in a personal God and a desire for union with him. Now I can find no evidence in Rimbaud's letters or his poetry that he shared this belief. Indeed, his statement that the poet should 'define the *amount* of Unknown arising in his time in the universal soul' makes any attempt to equate God with Rimbaud's 'Unknown' arbitrary. In the *Illuminations* Rimbaud tries to pierce the sensible appearances of things in order to reach the 'Unknown' which he thought was concealed behind them. This theory explains the curious tricks he plays with material reality:

> 'Un souffle ouvre des brèches opéradiques dans les cloisons, —brouille le pivotement des toits rangés,—disperse les limites des foyers,—éclipse les croisées.'

The clue to these pieces must be sought, I think, in their very individual imagery which Miss Starkie scarcely mentions. The whole collection is a comment on that strange phrase which occurs in the letters and in *Une saison en enfer*:

> 'Car JE est un autre.'

Rimbaud believed that there were in him two beings—the simple bourgeois whose existence was bound up with convention, and the poetical self or 'Voyant.' In order to express the 'Unknown' he tries to free himself from the old life and the conventional categories of thought. He therefore constructs a stylized, a fabulous world, which is as remote as possible from the world we know. Its proportions and the materials out of which it is constructed are monstrous:

> 'Ce dôme est une armature d'acier artistique de quinze mille pieds de diamètre environ.'

It is worked by strange engines:

> 'Des chalets de cristal et de bois se meuvent sur des rails et des poulies invisibles. Les vieux cratères ceints de colosses et de palmiers de cuivre rugissent mélodieusement dans les feux.'

It is inhabited by metaphysical monsters who remind one of M. Valéry's Teste. In *Génie* he describes one of them:

> 'O ses souffles, ses têtes, ses courses ; la terrible célérité de la perfection des formes et de l'action!'

Miss Starkie thinks that this is a description of God. It seems to me, on the contrary, that all these monsters are emanations of the poet's own personality, are attempts to realize the new mode of consciousness attributed to the 'Voyant' in the letters. They are examples of minds which are governed by different laws from our own are are therefore free from our particular limitations.

Although Rimbaud regarded the poet as a 'Visionary,' the value of his work does not seem to me to lie in any mystic revelation. It lies in his power of modifying, and not merely of modifying but of reorganizing, our sensibility. To submit oneself to the new mode of seeing, to walk the crystal streets and ride in the diamond carriages described in the *Illuminations* is to undergo an extraordinary process of liberation from the stereotyped ways of seeing and feeling. Our usual conception of the real is based on the assumption that there is only one interpretation of reality, only certain prescribed combinations of feelings. Rimbaud's work is not a denial of that reality; it is an assertion that there are other possible interpretations and other possible combinations of feelings besides the ones to which we are accustomed. The order of the classic writers of the seventeenth century was a true order, but it was not the final order. The failure of their successors to realize that in literature no order can ever be final and their attempt to continue the work of the *grand siècle* meant that classicism hardened into dogmatism. It is Rimbaud's lasting achievement to have demonstrated that the classic view is only one of many possible views; and his protest against a narrow dogmatism which was impervious to the impact of living experience made him a revolutionary in the true sense. For great poetry is always in some sense the discovery of new truth and there are times when traditional poetic forms have to be discarded, not merely tinkered with, and new forms created in order to express the new vision. To have done this gives Rimbaud his gigantic stature among modern poets, but because he was without a living tradition to help him he was unable to consolidate his findings and his vision remains fragmentary and incomplete.[1]

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[1]The piece called *Conte* is worth careful attention. It is not one of the best poems in the collection—it is more a *statement* than an *experience*—but, as often happens with a great poet's lesser works, it helps considerably to explain his method.

Une saison en enfer is less difficult than the *Illuminations* and its general meaning has been appreciated by most of Rimbaud's critics. Miss Starkie's discussion of the poem is more satisfactory than her chapter on the *Illuminations*, but she appears to think that once she has told us what the poem is ' about ' her work as a critic is done. She makes no attempt to deal with its remarkable technical originality, and her statement that it contains ' some of the finest examples of French prose in the grand manner ' is the reverse of helpful.

This poem has been described by one critic as ' the bible of the modern consciousness,' and the description is a good one. In it Rimbaud explores some of the central problems of our time ; and the problems he explores are as pressing to-day as they were at the time when the poem was written. The three main problems are his unsuccessful quest for the ' Unknown,' his relations with Verlaine, and the problem of belief. Of the three it is the last which is the most important. In one of the finest sections of the poem he writes:

> ' Je dus voyager, distraire les enchantements assemblés dans mon cerveau. Sur la mer, que j'aimais comme si elle eût dû me laver d'une souillure, je voyais se lever la croix consolatrice.'

What makes Rimbaud peculiarly representative of the modern world is his profound awareness of the need of a religious solution with an inability to accept traditional beliefs. The crucial word in these splendid lines is the word *consolatrice*. He had failed to reach the ' Unknown ' by his own route, but to become a Christian seemed to involve a compromise with the life he had discarded. He felt, as others have felt, that belief was a *temptation*. In another place he writes:

> ' Les blancs débarquent. Le canon! Il faut se soumettre au baptême, s'habiller, travailler.'

It is clear from this that for Rimbaud religion was associated with colonization and exploitation. He could not believe that truth was clothed in such a corrupt form. ' *M. Prudhomme,*' he said. ' *est né avec le Christ.*'

Rimbaud's treatment of his subject lifts him out of the rank of men like Corbière and Laforgue, fine poets though they were, and puts him with the masters. Laforgue was not an intellectual

poet in the same sense as Rimbaud. His poetry is a skilful distillation of emotion from ' the contemporary situation,' or what he took to be the contemporary situation. It is simply a succession of feelings and its precarious unity a personal one—the mood of the poet—which could only be achieved as long as the writer did not probe too deeply into his problem. Now the unity of Rimbaud's work is not merely a personal one. He gives us the emotion *and* the situation from which it springs, that is to say, there is an organic, an objective relation between the poem and the events which produced it. The emotion is generated by the contemplation of the problem and it therefore possesses that impersonality which only belongs to the greatest poetry.

This leads to a consideration of its technical qualities. In spite of the immense influence of Laforgue on the development of modern poetry, Rimbaud's technical mastery is of a different order. Laforgue was essentially a virtuoso. The *Derniers vers* sometimes make one feel like the spectator at the exhibition match, applauding the brilliant images as one might applaud ' the lightning return '; and when it's over the appropriate comment seems to be not ' a great poem,' but ' a splendid performance.' The difficulty of the writer who lives in an age of instability is that he is unable to give cohesion to his work. The emphasis, instead of falling on the work as a whole, tends to fall on a succession of intense but unrelated ' moments,' on the individual image or the individual word. With Laforgue the image sometimes remains suspended without any precise relation to the poem as a whole, and it is this difficulty which Rimbaud manages to overcome. One of the principal themes of *Une saison en enfer* is fear—fear that the poet's experiments were leading him not to the 'Unknown' but to insanity, or possibly to something worse.

> ' Ma santé fut menacée. La terreur venait. Je tombais dans des sommeils de plusieurs jours, et, léve, je continuais les rêves les plus tristes. J'étais mûr pour le trépas, et par une route de dangers ma faiblesse me menait aux confins du monde et de la Cimmérie, patrie de l'ombre et des tourbillons.'

The short breathless sentences suggest the terror that seizes him. Instead of journeying towards his goal, his footsteps are directed towards the void. In the superb manipulation of the o's, m's and

n's we hear the hollow reverberations of someone wandering helplessly lost in the darkness of the void. The final image is clearly related to the staccato rhythm which is characteristic of the whole poem. In a passage like this—there are plenty of them—the movement of the poem rises to a crescendo and the image proceeds naturally, inevitably, from what has gone before. It is not a decoration, but the fullest expansion of the poet's emotion and seems to gather up the whole intention of a particular sequence.

Une saison en enfer is a dramatic poem—a conflict whose issue is in doubt until the last line is written. It is not all pitched in the same key like the *Derniers vers* ; there are violent changes of mood and the problem before the poet was to find a medium that would reflect these extraordinary interior vicissitudes. The solution was the dramatic form in which the experience was presented. What Rimbaud did was to invent a new mythology. The ' I ' of his poem is not at all the timid, shrinking young man of the *Derniers vers* or Mr. Eliot's early work. Rimbaud adopts a curious extension of personality and traces his own history, which is also the history of ' the modern man,' from his primitive origins down to the present time, compares what he has been at different periods of this continued existence with what he is now. In *Mauvais sang* he writes :

> ' J'ai des mes ancêtres gaulois l'oeil bleu blanc, la cervelle étroite, et la maladresse dans la lutte. Je trouve mon habillement aussi barbare que le leur. Mais je ne beurre pas ma chevelure . . .
>
> ' Pas une famille d'Europe que je ne connaisse.—J'entends des familles comme la mienne, qui tiennent tout de la déclaration des Droits de l'Homme . . .
>
> ' Il m'est bien évident que j'ai toujours été *race inférieure* . . .[1]
>
> ' Je suis assis, lépreux, sur les pots cassés et les orties, au pied d'un mur rongé par le soleil.—Plus tard, reître, j'aurais bivaqué sous les nuits d'Allemagne . . .
>
> ' Je n'en finirais pas de me revoir dans ce passé. Mais toujours seul ; sans famille ; même, quelle langue parlais-je? Je ne me vois jamais dans les conseils du Christ ; ni dans les conseils des Seigneurs,—représentants du Christ.'

[1]Italics mine.

This is contrasted with what he has become and enables him to make the necessary comment on the popular slogans and palliatives of the day:

> 'Qu'étais-je au siècle dernier: je ne me retrouve qu'aujourd'hui. Plus de vagabonds, plus de guerres vagues. *La race inférieure*[1] a tout couvert—le peuple, comme on dit, la raison, la nation et la science.'

The picture is filled in by a series of *personæ* which are sometimes representations of the poet like the 'Epoux Infernal,' or of another as Verlaine becomes the 'Vierge Folle.' In this way the various themes and problems are dramatized and their relation to one another forms the pattern of the whole poem.[2]

There is no room to illustrate the remarkable variety of Rimbaud's great poem, but the last section deserves particular attention:

> 'L'automne. Notre barque élevée dans les brumes immobiles tourne vers le port de la misère, la cité énorme au ciel taché de feu et de boue. Ah! les haillons pourris, le pain trempé de pluie, l'ivresse, les mille amours qui m'ont crucifié! Elle ne finira donc point cette goule reine de millions d'âmes et de corps morts *et qui seront jugés*! Je me revois, la peau rongée par la boue et la peste, des vers plein les cheveux et les aisselles et encore de plus gros vers dans le coeur, étendu parmi les inconnus sans âge, sans sentiment. . . J'aurais pu y mourir . . . L'affreuse évocation! J'exècre la misère . . . '
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> 'Un grand vaisseau d'or, au-dessus de moi agite ses pavillons multicolores sous les brises du matin. J'ai créé toutes les fêtes, tous les triomphes, tous les drames. J'ai essayé d'inventer de

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[2]Compare particularly the confession with which the poem opens with the ironical confession of the 'Vierge Folle' in *Délires I*; and the passage in which Rimbaud sees himself as a condemned criminal ('*Prêtres, professeurs, maîtres, vous vous trompez en me livrant à la justice* . . . ') in *Mauvais sang* with the passage in which he becomes the mountebank in front of his stall (*J'ai tous les talents!—Il n'y a personne ici et il y a quelqu'un* . . .) in *Nuit de L'Enfer*.

nouvelles fleurs, de nouveaux astres, de nouvelles chairs, de nouvelles langues. J'ai cru acquérir des pouvoirs surnaturels. Eh bien! je dois enterrer mon imagination et mes souvenirs! Une belle gloire d'artiste et de conteur emportée!

'Moi! moi qui me suis dit mage ou ange, dispensé de toute morale, je suis rendu au sol, avec un devoir à chercher, et la réalité rugueuse à étreindre! Paysan!'

Instead of carrying him away into the 'Unknown,' as it did in the *Bateau ivre*, the vessel is bringing him back to 'rugged reality.' The image of the stately vessel, half lost in the mists, is a symbol of the poet's own serenity. *Immobiles* is the focal point of this passage as the word *insoucieux* is of the *Bateau ivre*, and the calm movement of this section forms a strong contrast with the helter-skelter movement of the earlier poem. The ironical *Paysan!* is a reference back to an earlier passage in *Mauvais sang* and is a good instance of the skill with which the different themes are linked together. The witty renunciation of the poet's superhuman powers, which sometimes reminds me of Prospero's dismissal of his magic spirits at the end of *The Tempest*, strikes a note which is unique in French literature of the last century. It stands out against a background of uncertainty as the unrivalled expression of complete spiritual health.

The close of *Une saison en enfer*, however, is remarkable not as an example of 'French prose in the grand manner,' but as an example of the way in which the grand manner can be adapted to the needs of the modern *poet*. It has all the dignity, all the spaciousness of the grand manner without any of its corresponding defects.

Miss Starkie tells us 'that there is no modern poetry, in whatever country it may be, that does not claim to owe its source to Rimbaud.' It is true that his influence has been immense, but it has also been an immense disaster. For the *Illuminations* have been imitated and the discoveries of *Une saison en enfer* neglected. What happens when the method of the *Illuminations* is imitated by writers who do not possess Rimbaud's vision can be seen from the experiments of the Surréalistes and the dramas of Claudel. A medium which is capable of such matchless variety of expression as Rimbaud's prose-poetry clearly deserves to be studied by living poets. There is a further reason why the poem has particular

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importance for modern poetry. The development of free verse seems to have been carried as far as it can go and the next step is likely to be either a return to traditional measures or a poetry written in the medium which Rimbaud used with such consummate skill. For, properly used, prose-poetry is capable of a greater range of feeling than free verse, or at any rate than the free verse that has so far been written.

It remains to point out that Miss Starkie's bibliography will hardly add to her reputation as a scholar. A critical bibliography in a book of this sort would have been useful, but Miss Starkie's bibliography appears to be purely ornamental. There is little in the text and nothing in the bibliography to tell us which of the fifty ' authorities ' mentioned are worth reading, or from what point of view they are written—always an important factor in the case of Rimbaud. No publishers' names are given, and the titles of the books and the authors' names are not always correct. Among the critical studies mentioned here two strike me as indispensable: Edgell Rickword's *Rimbaud : the Boy and the Poet* (Heinemann, 1924)[1] which is probably the best general study of the poet that has been written, and Rivière's *Rimbaud* (Kra, 1930). Ruchon's *Jean-Arthur Rimbaud* (Champion, 1929), though rather academic, is useful. In order to get an idea of the various approaches it is worth looking at Coulon's *Problème de Rimbaud* (Rationalist), Daniel-Rops' *Rimbaud : le drame spirituel* (Catholic) and Etiemble and Gauclère's *Rimbaud* (Marxist). I cannot imagine what principle of selection led Miss Starkie to include Lalou's *Histoire de la littérature française contemporaine* and leave out Edmund Wilson's *Axël's Castle*. And Mr. Samuel Hoare's article on Rimbaud, which appeared in *The Calendar of Modern Letters* for June, 1925, might have been mentioned in the list of articles in reviews.

The proofs of the book do not seem to have been read with the care they deserve. The quotations themselves are often inaccurate, genders are uncertain and the manipulation of the past participle appears to have been left in places to the printer's discretion.

MARTIN TURNELL.

[1]This book is unfortunately out of print, but I believe that remainders can still be picked up cheaply.

RAINER MARIA RILKE

RAINER MARIA RILKE: Aspects of his Mind and Poetry, edited by William Rose and G. Craig Houston, with an Introduction by Stefan Zweig (Sidgwick and Jackson, 6/-).

LATER POEMS, by Rainer Maria Rilke, translated with an Introduction and Commentary by J. B. Leishman (The Hogarth Press, 10/6).

RILKE'S APOTHEOSIS: A Survey of Representative Recent Publications on the Work and Life of R. M. Rilke, by Eudo C. Mason (Basil Blackwell, 2/-).

Rilke died on the 29th December, 1926, and in the years that have elapsed since his death an immense quantity of material, critical and biographical, has been published in Germany, in France, in Switzerland and Italy, to mention only the principal countries where interest in this poet has been intense and shows no sign of abating. Indeed, everywhere in Europe this interest has deepened as his works become better understood and information about the history of his life is gradually assembled and placed on record. Everywhere, that is to say, except in England. In spite of the fact that translations of his major writings have been appearing at intervals here since 1930, Rilke is still hardly more than a name to the majority. It must, however, be admitted, if in no carping spirit, that Rilke has not been especially fortunate in his English translators. I mean, he has not enjoyed the privilege of literally being recreated in another tongue like Proust, or like Paul Valéry, who had the advantage of Rilke's own incomparable skill in this branch of literature. Still, we now have passable versions of the early *Stories from God*, we have the celebrated *Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge* (too often misleadingly described as an autobiographical novel), while Mr. Leishman has attempted the exacting and rather thankless task of turning selections from the *Neue Gedichte*, the *Letzte Gedichte*, the *Requiem* and all of the *Sonnets to Orpheus* into English rhymed verse. Last but not least there is the blank verse rendering of the *Duinese Elegies* by Edward and Vera Sackville-West, which, in spite of imperfections, is a feat that deserves high praise considering the prodigious difficulty of the undertaking. It is characteristic of the sort of reception accorded

to Rilke in this country that this work, originally published in a superbly produced but limited and exceedingly expensive edition (1931), still remains to all intents and purposes inaccessible to the general reader.

The appearance, then, of the four studies in book form by Dr. Rose and his colleagues, which stands at the head of our list, is something of an event. In justice to Mr. Leishman, however, it should be remarked, that the discerning and scholarly introductions he has written to his volumes of translations must have played an important part in paving the way for the recognition of Rilke by the English public. Now much of the critical writing on the subject of Rilke tends to lose itself in endless discussions of his so-called mysticism, of his religiosity, his search for God, his attitude to love, his conception of death, etc., etc., so that a bewildering confusion of 'interpretations' has been produced behind which the living work grows disconcertingly remote. Dr. Rose, for instance, in his essay on the latter theme, writes apropos of *Malte*, that it 'is the study of a mind in the thrall of an "anxiety neurosis," and to understand its relation to Rilke's personal experience, for it contains much of an autobiographical nature, we must go back to his first visit to Paris in 1902.' And the reason for this visit turns out to be, according to Dr. Rose, his disappointment in the failure of a play of his produced in Berlin and a feeling that he was not understood by the public! Apart from my suspicion that the attribution of 'anxiety neuroses' to characters of fiction is simply a mechanical trick *à la mode* that leaves the real question unanswered, I fail to see how this statement of the case establishes any connection between Rilke's sudden desertion of his wife and home, for that in the light of after events is really what it amounted to, and the unbearably poignant revelations of *Malte*. Yet by this time we know a good deal of the details of Rilke's life. For apart from the seven volumes of his published correspondence, there are the innumerable reminiscences of his friends as well as the careful biographical researches of his son-in-law. Notwithstanding, here is Dr. Zweig (who knew him well) speaking in his introduction of 'the genuinely poetic existence' that Rilke led, his 'perfect way of life,' 'the matchless harmony of life and creative activity,' when it is perfectly obvious that Rilke unscrupulously sacrificed everything to the

pursuit of his art, even to the extent of evading those responsibilities and obligations of ordinary life that he thought might interfere with his purpose. What, moreover, is the point of trying to create the impression that Rilke was a sort of internationalized personage who was at home everywhere, quite content to live without any ties, with no regular habits, no address and no fatherland? Whereas on Rilke's own confession the rootlessness of his existence was a source of great grief to him, to which he refers again and again in his letters, though he has a tendency to camouflage the trouble. When he speaks of 'die Heimatlosigkeit des Oesterreichers,' for instance, it means in effect, the homelessness of an Austrian born in Prague in 1875 and suffering from the peculiar disabilities of a family background and early upbringing such as were those of young Rilke. ' No successful and prosperous poet or artist of our times has ever been so free as Rilke ' writes Dr. Zweig. Alas! for Rilke, for surely he paid a heavy price for his freedom, if such it can be called. No doubt Dr. Zweig has some show of reason on his side, and it is apparently difficult to acknowledge Rilke's qualities at all without trying, as many do, in particular his numerous women admirers,[1] to make a sort of saint out of him. But to paint such a portrait of the poet is not going to be a very helpful preparation for an understanding of his poetry. This portrayal misses the cardinal point, namely, that Rilke's whole life and personality revolved continually round a fundamental conflict in his nature, a deep-seated spiritual and physical maladjustment as incurable as the horrible and painful disease from which he died. And it may be remarked in passing that the manner of his death acquires an illuminating, not to say, sinister significance, when it is remembered that a dominating theme running through his work is precisely the conception of a *personal*

[1]In this respect Rilke has, however, been luckier than Lawrence. For these admirers in their public utterances show often real glimpses of insight. Edmond Jaloux reproduces a letter from a lady which contains the following admirable characterization of Rilke and his work: ' Les femmes mettent longtemps à admettre les histoires infinies et indéfinies comme celles de Rilke, des histoires toujours reprises, qui ne se terminent jamais qu'avec un point de suspension devant du mystère.'

death, the idea, which is expressed in such startling fashion in *Malte*, that everyone must die his *own particular* death and no one else's. His restlessness, therefore, and the frequent physical distress about which he complained, were an externalization of an internal malaise. Yet it was just this malaise that formed the source and inspiration of his work, that modified the materials of his art, and remained the necessary condition for all his creative activity. For us living in this present world of ours the malady presents a clinical picture that is all too familiar, even if it is not susceptible of a ready diagnosis.

But in order to get our subject in perspective it is as well to emphasize the fact that Rilke was an artist first, last and all the time. His triumphs and his failures should be considered as those of an artist, one, moreover, who practised his craft with a tireless and single-minded devotion. And because Rilke was a great artist, who could objectify his dilemma, state it in terms of universal validity, his bitter struggle has come to represent something that touches us, his contemporaries, very closely indeed. In the atmosphere of his own country he found little satisfaction, and he therefore lived for many years in France and latterly in Switzerland, at least when he was not travelling extensively all over Europe. In this as well as in other respects his case has many features in common with that of Lawrence, though it is as well to add that the differences between the two are as important as the resemblances. No man has ever been more fortunate than Rilke in having a whole host of generous and influential friends, who could put at his disposal castles, houses, rooms, to make use of whenever and as long as he wished. And Rilke did make use of them, particularly the castles. They became almost a necessity to him which he could not do without. They symbolized some immensely valuable quality that was lost and that he needed to bolster up his life, like his researches into the history of his family and the belief, to which he often alluded, since proved to be entirely groundless, that he was descended from a noble Carinthian family of great antiquity. These aspects of his character, however, are apt to be misleading when estimating his achievement. They are responsible for the stinging indictment by the German critic Gundolf, a protagonist of the rival Stefan George faction, in which Rilke is shown to be a namby-pamby æsthete and something of a prig

into the bargain, who deliberately withdrew himself from the world and escaped into art. In his excellent critical survey Mr. E. C. Mason sums up this charge by calling Rilke a feeble character, devoid of real will-power and real spiritual dignity. So far as Gundolf is concerned, Rilke is damned on account of his refusal to accept the hierarchical framework, the certainty of dogma and the mystic sacrament, that is to say, his evasion of all restrictions and limitations. But Gundolf falls into the common and fatal critical error of abstracting more or less arbitrarily from the body of the work certain notions assumed to be decisive ones, and then demolishing these as false and untenable. This type of critic takes the shadow for the substance, for when all is said and done, it is the actual, one might say, the physical work of art in its integrity that should always remain the ultimate criterion. And to Rilke's masterpiece, the *Elegies*, not to mention the *Sonnets to Orpheus*, Gundolf makes scant reference. It is doubtful whether he can have seriously examined them or else he would hardly have been betrayed into such extravagance.

The *Elegies from the Castle of Duino*, which were begun in 1910 and completed at the Chateau de Muzot in 1922 (appearing, it is instructive to note, about the same period that saw the publication of *The Waste Land*, *Mauberley* and *Ulysses*), must be read as a single poem in ten sections. It is the mature expression of a poet who has striven with an absolutely ruthless persistence for the perfection of his art. It is the final statement of a man who has courageously sought to come to terms with the discordant experience of his life. In a sense it is a justification for life itself. To his Polish translator who asked for an interpretation, Rilke wrote: 'Am I the one to give their correct interpretation to the Elegies. They reach out infinitely beyond me. I regard them as a further shaping out of those essential presuppositions that were already given in the *Stundenbuch*, that in the two parts of the *Neue Gedichte* make a playful and experimental use of the image of the world, and then, in *Malte*, conflictively concentred, strike back into life, and there lead almost to the demonstration that this so bottomlessly suspended life is impossible. In the *Elegies*, from the same premisses, life becomes possible again; indeed, it here experiences that ultimate affirmation to which young Malte, although on the right, hard road 'des longues

études,' was not yet able to conduct it.'[1] The poem, then, begins as a lament and ends in praise. It celebrates the acceptance of suffering and the essential unity of the world visible and invisible, of health and disease, of life and death. Mr. E. L. Stahl, in a very able study of the work, poses the underlying question thus: 'How can we exist in the face of our inadequacies in life, death and love?' But this seems a little pointless, for, after all, we do exist somehow, whether we like it or not. Rather does Rilke contemplate the possibilities of understanding and accepting existence so that, in the face of our inadequacies, we do not perish in despair. In short, 'the ultimate and metaphysical reasons for human existence' is the true subject of the poem. The argument it pursues, while making use of the most common materials of our intimate and everyday experience, is poised with the skill of a magician between the abstract and the concrete, and demands great concentration and a finely attuned response from the reader. This, for example, the opening lines of the 5th elegy known as 'Les Saltimbanques,' is a fair illustration. I am quoting from the Sackville-West translation:

> But tell me, who are these itinerants,
> these fugitives more hasty than ourselves,
> urgently driven from the start,—by whom?
> To gratify what discontented will?
> Not only does he drive them, bend them, twist them,
> winnow them, throw them up and catch them back,
> but they float down, as out of slippery
> and greasy air, on to their little carpet,
> worn thin and threadbare by their ceaseless leap
> upwards ;—

So far so good. We have the image of an action before us. But this image of the performing acrobats very soon begins to deepen, to extend in many directions at once, the acrobats become the principle of purposeless activity. And in the next passage, in spite of the vividness of the metaphor we are no longer in contact with the familiar world but far beyond it:

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[1]Translated by Leishman in his introduction to *Requiem*.

Alas, around this centre blooms the rose
of the performance ; and its petals drop.
Around this ramrod, round this pistil, met
by its own pollen, fruiting with the fruit
illusory of a disinclination
not realised by them, and glittering
with a most thin veneer
of glib reluctance smiling with false smiles.[1]

The language, so to speak, is double-edged and continually transcends the ordinary connotation of the words. It is language at once simple and highly charged with suggestion and allusion, in consequence bristling with paradoxes, verbal subtleties and ambiguities. Mr. Stahl's analysis brings out this point well when he describes it as both neological and profoundly etymological. ' He (Rilke) infuses into the most usual words, such as "Anschein," " Bezug," " leisten," " überstehen," richly individual notions while revealing their original, hidden and almost forgotten meaning.' The verse, therefore, carries not one meaning, but many ; and the temptation, which Mr. Stahl not altogether escapes, of giving a reasoned account of the poem's content, is liable to obscure its most astounding qualities. No doubt the implicit philosophy in its broad outlines can be fairly precisely formulated. And in any case the principal ' dramatis personæ,' the lovers, the young dead, the angels and animals, the mother, the acrobats, the hero, etc.,

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[1]The original reads:

Ach und um diese
Mitte, die Rose des Zuschauns:
blüht und entblättert. Um diesen
Stampfer, den Stempel, den von dem eignen
blühenden Staub getroffnen, zur Scheinfrucht
wieder der Unlust befruchteten, ihrer
niemals bewussten,—glänzend mit dünnster
Oberfläche leicht scheinlächelnden Unlust.

For the verbal dexterities here no English equivalent is possible unless a complete paraphrase were attempted that would stray too far from the direct, concrete imagery of the German.

are there for all to see. They stand out as large as life. But the army of interpreters all eager to tell the uninitiated exactly what it is all 'about,' often seem to forget that this is a poem and not a philosophical treatise. A logical exposition of the 'argument' which will clear up matters now and for all time, distracts the reader from the true purpose and intention of the work. This purpose, Mr. Stahl rightly insists, as does Mr. C. M. Bowra in his examination of the *Neue Gedichte*, is never merely ethical or didactic. It points no moral and communicates no message for the betterment of mankind. The poem has no other object than to describe in utterance of strangely moving and austere beauty a view of life as revealed to an intensely individual sensibility. This austerity proceeds in the first place from the terse and compact structure of the verse which is yet susceptible to extraordinary technical variety and modulations of tone. There are few things in the field of literature more astonishing than this progress of Rilke towards the sublime expression of the *Elegies*, which approximate nearer to sublimity as conceived by Longinus than any other writing of our own day. For a poet who began his career in the German Romantic tradition, and whose earlier productions abound in second-hand 'feeling,' facile musical effects, conventional melancholy and emotionalized nostalgia,[1] it was a veritable triumph of the spirit and the culmination of a long, arduous and sustained effort. Rilke's development, in which the great landmarks are the *Stundenbuch*, the *Neue Gedichte* and finally the *Elegies* and the *Sonnets to Orpheus*, and in which the prose work *Malte Laurids Brigge* occupies a central position, has already been the subject of much critical study. Yet with regard to this latter work, for instance, little of any value has been said about its relationship to novel-writing of the time and its influence on later developments. The very curious fact seems to have escaped notice that it was published in 1910, that is to say, four years before the first volume of *A La Recherche du Temps Perdu!* Altogether the part which the enormous effort of Rilke's development as

[1]His son-in-law and biographer Carl Sieber in his valuable book on Rilke's youth makes no bones about it, as when he describes him as a hopelessly sentimental young man, who gave no evidence of being in any way a prodigy or especially precocious.

an artist plays in his private history, constitutes a problem worth much fuller treatment than it has yet received. However, the books under review, if they do not broach questions of this nature, at any rate should perform a useful service in focussing attention here on one of the most accomplished modern masters of the literary art.

RICHARD MARCH

AIDS TO ENGLISH TEACHING

POETRY IN PRACTICE, by Norman Callan (Lindsay Drummond, 3/6).

ENGLISH POETRY: A STUDENTS' ANTHOLOGY, selected by Kenneth Muir (Oxford University Press, 5/-).

The first of these books is a scheme for the teaching of poetry in schools; the second an anthology for the use of, I presume, Sixth-form students. Both of them seem to me very good indeed, which is not to say that either of them is perfect.

Mr. Muir's anthology is a little curiously arranged. I do not like the section heading of 'Sacred and Profane Love', to lump one group of poems as 'Criticism of Life' seems rather rash, and I can't see why one of the seven sections should be devoted to 'The Seasons.' There is far too much Shelley, especially in the 'Satire' section, where he has no right except for the Wordsworth passage from 'Peter Bell the Third': his presence there in such quantities distorts the meaning of the word 'satire.' But these are comparatively small faults, outweighed by merits. There is excellent material for comparative work—Mr. Muir is not afraid to introduce prose passages or French extracts for this purpose—and the chief English poets and genres are well represented by passages which lend themselves admirably to critical analysis and appreciation. Many English teachers will welcome this anthology—it will supply a good background of reference for Higher School work and dispenses with the necessity for the *Oxford Book of English Verse*.

It would be very easy to pick holes in Mr. Callan's book: the teaching of English is much easier in theory than in practice—

a remark which cuts both ways. But it is, certainly, the most intelligent and most helpful book of its kind that I have read yet. It is constructive and, above all, practical: any English teacher who does not adopt the mystic adoration attitude to poetry should benefit by reading it. Mr. Callan insists that the word is the unit in poetry and that, therefore, the study of the words of a poem must be the first step to understanding it. He stresses the necessity of getting at the correct syntax of a piece of verse. (That this is not an unnecessary warning will be realized if we ask ourselves how many people really grasp the construction of

> Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow
> Creeps in this petty pace from day to day . . .)

He points out the desirability of comparative study of the use of words by different poets in more advanced school work, and how much more fruitful this is than desultory reading or preparation for the usual examination inanities on ' Browning's love of art ' or ' The supernatural in *Poems of To-Day*.' (Of course, everyone realizes that this latter type of preparation is inevitable).

His suggestions for the writing of verse are interesting. This may be a helpful and enjoyable exercise, but I cannot attach quite as much importance to it as Mr. Callan does. This is because I differ from his assumption that a good English teacher must be a writer of poetry. I dare say most English teachers have written verses at some time, but very few either are, or would claim to be, poets. I feel that more extensive damage might be done by a teacher who fancied himself to be a poet than by one with an averagely good critical intelligence who had no illusions about his own poetic performance. But, if Mr. Callan means that in order to teach children to write metrically, we should be able to write metrically ourselves, I have no quarrel with his attitude ; in any case, I do not think the teaching of verse composition can go much beyond this point.

One other criticism there is which can be directed against most books of this nature ; that there is some reluctance to consider the age-factor, and a temptation to let one idea lead to another, with the result that we are left with a vague impression as to how much the author thinks should be done concurrently and, if consecutively, in what order. Mr. Callan may well reply that we may use our

own common sense about this, but the impression remains that there is a corresponding uncertainty in the author's own mind and that the scheme had its main outlines obscured by over-abundant suggestions, many of which are obviously impracticable at the age at which the scheme commences.

It is rarely that two books connected with the teaching of English appear together and can be praised with such minor reservations. They are both to be strongly recommended.

FRANK CHAPMAN.

A HISTORY OF ECONOMIC THOUGHT, by Erich Roll (Faber and Faber, 12/6).

Recent emphasis on the relation between ideas and the social environment in which they were produced is not new. Many responsible for important intellectual advances, when attempting to explain the persistence as well as reveal the invalidity of ideas they were exposing, have resorted to a materialist explanation of their origin. One generation, that is, has found the ideas of an earlier one inconsistent and irrational, not because its predecessors were fools but because the problems with which they were concerned and the presuppositions on which their answers were based were relevant alone to the conditions of their day. Adam Smith argued that mercantilists emphasized the supreme importance of a favourable balance of precious metals because merchants were, on those grounds, able to identify their interests with those of the prince or of the state. (*Wealth of Nations*, Bk. 4, c. i.): and Mr. J. M. Keynes has recently pointed out that the apparently obvious problem of effective demand was ignored by economists influenced by Ricardo's claim that it could never be deficient, because of the ' complex of suitabilities ' in that latter doctrine ' to the environment into which it was projected.' (*The General Theory of Employment, Interest, and Money*, p. 33). It is surprising, then, that the history of economic and social doctrine has so largely been written as if the theories concerned bore little relation to the practical needs of the societies in which they emerged ; it has too often become an arid and meaningless catalogue of ideas that appeared out-of-date and irrelevant. It is to Mr. Roll's credit that he has attempted to show that ' the appearance of certain ideas is not fortuitous but

dependent upon causes which can be discovered,' (p. 16) by examining economic thought as a practical discipline seeking to solve practical problems. ' Economic theories are always, though often tortuously, related to economic practice. Only a study of the interplay between objective conditions and the theorizing of man can provide a guide through the conflicts of ideas. The ideas of the past had their roots in institutional arrangements, in the relations between social classes and groups in their conflicting interests . . . ' (p. 14).

If he has not entirely succeeded it is not that his method is at fault ; he has not consistently exploited it. A certain methodological confusion and an insufficiently detailed acquaintance with economic history seem responsible for an occasional lapse into the older method of treating the history of ideas. He fails, for instance, to explain the important part usury played in the economic life, and therefore ideas, of the middle ages and the sixteenth century (pp. 50-1) ; his analysis of mercantilism does not take sufficiently into account the economic controversies and the conflicts of group interest with which most of its exponents were directly connected (c. 2) ; thus, while he has many sound points to make on both those phenomena, his account at times resembles one of those old histories of an abstract intellectual evolution, away from past error to modern-classical or marginal-utility ' truth,' which we know only too well. A passage on Adam Smith is worth quoting, not because it is typical of Mr. Roll's approach, but because it illustrates precisely how this kind of history should not be written. It concerns his ' faith in the natural order.' ' The naturalist school of philosophy to which he belonged had had an unbroken tradition from the later Greek Stoics and Epicureans onwards. It reappeared in the works of Roman Stoics like Cicero, Seneca and Epictetus, received an enormous stimulus in the Renaissance and Reformation, showed itself again in a modified form in Bacon, Hobbes and Locke, and came to full flower in the writings of Smith, the physiocrats, and the later radicals.' (p. 145). Now Mr. Roll is perfectly aware that statements like this tell one very little about the history of ideas, and that the real problem is to explain—as, in several cases, he convincingly does—why what seems natural and obvious to one generation, becomes artificial or unnatural for its successors. But his account seems at places hesitant and insufficiently explicit ; he

does not describe in sufficient detail the economic problems that faced particular thinkers, and thus explain the kind of thought they produced. A major question of interpretation is involved here. For Mr. Roll rightly remarks that ' it is difficult to present convincingly this casual relation between economic practice and economic theory in more detailed discussions of their history ' (p. 16) ; and the solution surely lies in a sphere which he has deliberately omitted—perhaps unavoidably, if the scale of the book was to be at all manageable ; in what he calls 'the theories developed by bankers, business men and politicians.' (p. 18). A study of the everyday, ' practical,' opinion of any particular period is essential, if we are to understand why academic theorists were concerned with their own particular problems, and why their answers ran along certain specific lines.

But these should be understood as minor criticisms. Mr. Roll has done a valuable piece of work, and, on the whole, sustains his thesis with remarkable clarity. His account of Marx—to whose as yet untranslated *Theoriem über den Mehrwert* this book owes a great deal—is one of the most lucid that has appeared ; and his method is particularly effective in a discussion of the classical and post-classical schools. He brings out the close relation between the theories of Ricardo and Adam Smith, and the necessities of Britain's expanding economy—the establishment of freedom of trade in all commodities against the privileges of a landlord class and commercial groups ; he shows how the new conception of the ultimate source of wealth—in labour rather than foreign trade—was involved in the triumph of industrial over commercial capitalism ; and he explains how the inconsistencies in their theories of value were due to a reluctance to admit the existence of what Socialists were shortly to call the element of exploitation in the relation between capital and labour. Indeed, the main reason, he argues, why economic thought was shortly to abandon the labour theory of value—useful enough when ' sinister interests ' had to be overthrown—was precisely that ' by a slow and subtle process the classical analysis was purged of those parts which offered an opportunity for attack on the political implications of liberal economic theory.' (p. 316 ; *cf.* pp. 296, 348). There is little doubt that theories of Marginal Utility have been used to prove that an economy working in response to uncontrolled market prices, what-

ever the distribution of wealth, represents the fullest utilization of available resources. Economists to-day may prefer to give their analyses a purely neutral significance, and equilibrium theory may serve simply to express market price as a function of certain given variables of supply and demand ; and the technique thus evolved may have its value for detailed analytical problems. But Mr. Roll's main contention remains valid : there has been a significant change in the type of problems economists have been considering since the Classical School. His plea that Political Economy should concern itself with the major problems of social change as they present themselves in practice—' the economical structure,' as Richard Jones, an early nineteenth-century economist put it—is particularly urgent at times like the present. It is all the more effective because the effort would, he shows, be in the best traditions of economic thought.

P. HARRIS.

BUSONI'S LETTERS TO HIS WIFE, translated by Rosamund Ley (Arnold, 16/-).

I have already, in an essay published in *Music and Letters* for July, 1937, tried to say something about the peculiar problems with which Busoni's music presents the listener, and this book would provide a starting-point for investigations along the lines I indicated. Short of that, the only way one could ' review ' this book would be to string together lists of quotations—passages of fine musical criticism (particularly one about Beethoven), remarks about audiences, about contemporary composers, about Busoni's ideals, and some curious anticipations of D. H. Lawrence. So perhaps it is best merely to say that this is one of the few books of predominantly musical interest that the ' educated ' man will wish to buy and to preserve in his library. If these letters are perhaps less immediately impressive than the reported conversation of van Dieren's *Down Among the Dead Men*, they are equally the testament of a mind of rare integrity and distinction. The translation is ' readable.'

W.H.M.

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D. W. HARDING L. C. KNIGHTS

F. R. LEAVIS DENYS THOMPSON

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'THE NEW REPUBLIC' AND THE IDEAL WEEKLY

IT will be generally agreed that *The New Republic* holds a high place among weeklies of its kind. It is not for nothing that it is to be found on the shelves of those who take an intelligent interest in the contemporary world. For its position there is by no means entirely explained by the understanding it makes possible of what is going on in America to-day. It has enjoyed a number of passing tributes in these pages and elsewhere which challenge investigation. Yet the present article does not pretend to deal at all adequately with *The New Republic*, and the conclusions I have attempted to draw have a limited and special bearing. Though as will appear in due course it is a measure of the success of *The New Republic* that one can select from its total output what represents the main achievement without serious risk of distortion. All that follows here is based immediately on an examination of one year's numbers (the actual year 1931 was chosen as being sufficiently recent and at the same time far enough removed to ensure a proper critical balance) controlled by the impressions gleaned from fairly constant reading over the last few years.

There is a certain vanity in laying down *a priori* what a good critical weekly should be. This vanity is in direct proportion to the ineffectiveness of suggestions so made. For if one does not lose all touch with what is possible under present conditions there is the further risk that the most brilliant abstract statement may through lack of illustration fail to convince. The object of this essay is, while avoiding these defects by the suggestion of a concrete 'control' provided by even so scanty an examination of the pages of *The New Republic* as is attempted here, to suggest an approach towards the formulation of a standard for a weekly journal of opinion. I propose to review the contents of the copies I have selected, to pass on to certain immediate inferences which can be fairly made on the strength of this evidence, and in suggesting where *The New Republic* attains or falls short of its standard to come near to an ideal that is both realizable and will serve as a criterion by which our English weeklies can be measured.

In format *The New Republic* resembles the English model. Its regular features are a review of the week's affairs, a number of general articles, columns on party politics, finance, the theatre, with a final section devoted to book reviews. Its tone is 'serious,' of the kind which in certain circles might earn it a polite sneer. That is to say, it takes its responsibilities seriously and claims (by implication at least) that progress can be made, and that it fulfils a genuine function. On the other hand it is far from being solemn: but (a marked contrast here with English journals) its humour serves the general purpose. There is nothing which resembles the occasional 'light' leaders of the *Times* or the *Manchester Guardian* or the playful essays of Y.Y. It has no literary competition or cross-word corner.

The articles (again in contrast with English periodicals) are the most praiseworthy feature of *The New Republic*. They may roughly be classified under five heads, but as will be seen later the treatment is such as makes rigid classification impossible. At any rate there is one broad class of articles which treats of matters which are engaging or should engage the immediate attention of the government. As far as I can judge they are extremely competent and present a wealth of technical detail and such acquaintance with the problems of government as comes rightly from experts who expect to be read by an intelligent public and by fellow experts. Though it lies well outside my competence I risk the observation that they are more impressive on questions of internal administration than on long term policy. The occasional supplements that I remember struck me as models; at least I can imagine that in the schools to which *The New Republic* is offered at a cheap rate the handbook issued before the last presidential election or the supplement on the depression came as a godsend.

The articles on general economic questions maintain an equally high standard. When descending to the details of business *The New Republic* shows a particularity that I suppose our libel laws would prevent. In 1931 there were two excellent series of articles by J. T. Flynn on chain stores and on graft in business. Closely associated with this kind of writing are the articles on general social questions. The selected year is rich in examples. For there were running at the same time articles by Edmund Wilson on the slump

conditions and Stuart Chase's comparison of Middletown and Mexico, both of which were later published in book form and still have an educational value. Whereas in this field *The New Republic* appears more lively than any English journal and manages to throw light on so many aspects of American life which do not come up for comment in England, the articles on foreign politics are often more naïve and presuppose a public less well-informed on such questions than ours. Some of the best reports are reprints from *The New Statesman*, and some others read more like digests of other European papers. Over the British Empire they appear to take a too simplified attitude which the following quotation fairly represents:

> 'We do not know whether India is fit to govern itself: we know that Great Britain at least, is not fit to govern it, and that her attempt to do so is a source of danger and corruption to herself and other peoples.'

The articles on the sciences, arts and philosophy do not call for separate consideration under this head. They are in fact merely an opportunity to treat at greater length topics which arise from the general reviewing. Though it may be remarked in passing that *The New Republic* gives more extended treatment to philosophical questions than is found in non-technical journals in England. In 1931 there were excellent articles on Critical Realism, Emile Meyerson and on Humanism. Whatever be one's opinion of Dewey as a philosopher, there is no doubt that England has no philosophical journalist of his calibre.

In many respects (though with reservations, as will appear) the reviewing pages are a model of what weekly criticism should be. At any rate a strict comparison of a review of the same book from *The New Republic* and *The New Statesman* provides an exercise in comparative criticism which supplies its own comment. Quite an anthology of opinions that would hold to-day could be taken from this one year. How little good reviewing even *The Spectator* yields per annum is well known. A notable feature of the reviewing section is the space given to general literary questions. For example in 1931 Lewis Mumford wrote an excellent article on Regionalism in Literature which was followed up by Allen Tate. Dos Passos made a survey of the New York theatre which should

in my opinion have had a greater effect on the present dramatic critic than appears. The best part of what was eventually published as *Exile's Return* was also running in this year.

The *New Republic* reviewers are not handicapped by the belief general in England that no useful service can be served by trying to assess the importance of contemporary literary figures. They are constantly engaged in sorting out of their recent history those writers who have something important to say. The following written in 1931 will serve as an indication of their pretensions. Lewis Mumford is writing about Veblen.

> 'Perhaps the chief reason for his neglect among economists was the fact that he was so much more than an economist. He was one of the half-dozen important figures in scholarship that America had produced since the Civil War, certainly in the social sciences: when one has added Lewis Morgan, Henry Adams, William James and Charles Pierce one has about completed the roster of decisive and original minds. Veblen's thought should not be confined to economic circles: it should be filtering through and penetrating every pore of our intellectual fibre.'

One of the happiest features of *New Republic* reviews for English readers is their immunity from respect for established English values. Like most Americans (one suspects) they are always on the look out for the signs of decay in English tradition. Perhaps there is nothing very creditable in refusing to be impressed by the published lectures of H. W. Garrod of whom they write: 'he belongs completely to the genteel tradition of Oxford and Boston and he says nothing to those who dislike its graceful sterility.' But it is quite refreshing to see the sort of book which in England receives the place of honour neatly 'placed' in a shorter notice. There have been excellent reviews of this kind in the past years. In 1931 I noticed several, the neatest of which is the following analysis of George Moore's style: 'its syntax is Pater, its rhythms and archaic diction out of the Authorised Version or the Butcher-Lang translation of Homer.' On the other hand (though more clearly in 1931 than later) there is observable a distressing tendency to take over Bloomsbury values without question. A possible recent example was the adoption of Messrs. Auden, Lewis and Spender, though their supposed political interest may have been

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an added inducement. Yet here we are in the happy position to record the recovery made not long afterwards. Edmund Wilson is writing. 'I confess to being rather disappointed by these last two books of W. H. Auden's. It looks as if the group to which he belongs—the school of young Oxford poets which includes C. Day Lewis, Stephen Spender and Louis Macneice had lapsed, after their first lift of enthusiasm for the clean sweep of society promised by Communism, of repudiation of the world to which they belong, into a period of relaxation and vagueness, of cooling down and marking time. And it has come to be a depressing feature of the literary scene at the present time (noticeable also in this country) that writers who had hitherto seemed able to stand on their own feet have begun flopping over one another and imitating one another's idiom—without there necessarily being any question of the normal attraction of the weaker towards the stronger.'

A reader who is chiefly interested in the criticism of American writers is presented over a period of years with a gradual crystallization of opinion about the important contemporary writers. For instance, during 1931 one could find the following which are taken at random. What I suppose is the sanctioned verdict on Dreiser appears in a review in which are mentioned 'the deep ingenuousness of his mind,' his naiveté, want of discrimination and incapacity for evaluation. 'His novel is a document rather than an imaginative performance.' Allen Tate writing of Edna St. Vincent Millay, after comparing one of her sonnets with Yeats' poem *Leda*, shows that 'properly speaking she has no style but has subtly transformed to her use the indefinable average of poetic English.' *The New Republic* enables its readers to participate in the best opinion of the day and not to be twenty or fifty years behind the times as in England.

After this rather haphazard cataloguing of contents there remains the task of assessing the merits of *The New Republic* in the light of its own pretensions. A major handicap to any liberal review in America which hopes to influence the political life of the country is the existing party system. To the credit of *The New Republic* it must be allowed that it is well aware of this handicap. In 1931 the editors wrote: 'no consequences of any

moment follow from its advice to voters in a presidential election.' They are not only aware of the difficulty but have sought the only means to overcome it. In this same year there appeared a series of articles on the need for a third party, then, of course, to be a liberal opposition. Since then, while recognizing this need, and showing willingness to offer its pages to further discussion, a timely sense of other political realities has kept them from premature action.

One of the great difficulties in the conduct of a critical weekly is to maintain the proper connection between the political and what may be called roughly for convenience the literary side. It is notorious that this difficulty has proved too great for *The New Statesman*. A happy union depends on a community of outlook among the editors and the public and a genuine and serious interest in both sides. The unity of tone in *The New Republic* is remarkable, though certain attendant difficulties have not been overcome. For the most common danger is that one side may improperly dominate the other. Various controversies in *The New Republic* show that the delicacy of this balance and the nature of the underlying unity have been subjects of acute conflict. I discovered only one example in 1931 of what in recent years is an obvious tendency. In a review of a novel by Dos Passos G. Hicks wrote: 'his communistic theories give him a definite and advantageous attitude towards the material he works with—since the communist, unlike the liberal, wholeheartedly accepts industry and all its natural consequences, rejecting only those features of our order that derive from the private ownership of property.' On the other hand he ends his review with this: 'whatever happens to our social order the necessity for humanising the machine will remain.'

An editorial introduction to a series of articles runs: 'they are the outcome of conversations among the Editors of *The New Republic* that have been occurring for several months and the gist of which may be of interest to our readers as raw material for thought and discussion.' That there is a continuous interchange of criticism among those responsible for *The New Republic* we are made sufficiently aware without this explicit reminder. Such criticism apart from its value in securing unity has the equally useful result of clarifying differences. A sickly feature of English periodicals—the over-indulgent treatment by fellow reviewers of any

book written by the fraternity—is almost wholly absent from *The New Republic*. I say almost, for I cannot discover what else entitles Kenneth Burke to the advertisement he receives. A typical example of their method is given by the article on the work of Stuart Chase who was at about that time writing frequently in *The New Republic* in which his naïveté and the unthought-out nature of his political views was exposed. A review must finally be judged by the quality of its chief writers. Often they are too few and (as happened with that excellent organ *The New Frontier*) they write themselves out. While *The New Republic* has not met this fate and can claim as one of its chief merits its ability to call on the appropriate expert (owing chiefly to its connection with the universities and perhaps the greater accessibility as compared with things in London of the talent of New York) it cannot rise above the standard of its best writers, such as Edmund Wilson, Lewis Mumford, and Malcolm Cowley. Now whatever the reasons in each case it seems clear that E. Wilson in his recent articles on the *Finland Station* theme is inferior to the Wilson of *The American Jitters* and *Axel's Castle*. Lewis Mumford in his recent books seems to have lost the outlook which made *The Golden Age* so valuable a survey. And Malcolm Cowley at times seems more of a liability than an asset.

One may tentatively suggest (with a due and sufficiently grim awareness of the situation here) as a possible reason for this decline the poverty of the critical milieu. No weekly journalist can hope to produce good work regularly without the support of more leisured writers. Some of the *New Republic* contributors were themselves concerned in the maintenance of those lively post-war magazines which did so much for American talent, and for a time there was *The Hound and Horn*. Yet the lament that ' the reviewer who dealt regularly from a distinct point of view with subjects of serious interest seemed to have become extinct ' is evidence that they are aware of having to subsist too much on their own resources.

In 1931 the Editors wrote of *The New Republic* that ' its function is rather to deal in ideas, to aid discrimination, to provide as candid and as discerning as possible a medium of critical opinion for those who are interested in discussion of this sort.' Their statement will serve as a focus for grouping one's general criticisms of *The New Republic*. One way of answering the question whether it lives up to this claim is to point out that at least unlike *The*

New Statesman (and incidentally, *The Times Literary Supplement*) which seems to be seeking solidarity with its readers by lowering its level *The New Republic* maintains a standard which I suspect is well above that of the average reader. After all we have only to consider the situation here to give weight to Allen Tate's remark: 'our people has no single mind for reading, no preference that is capable of maturing or is allowed to mature longer than a very few years. We have no public taste.'

This consideration—the nature of the environment and its inevitable effects on even the best intentions—must qualify the praise due to *The New Republic* for the prominent part it has played in the work of self-understanding that America seems (unlike England) to undertake with a certain verve. 'Ever since the close of the World War,' writes Matthew Josephson, 'we have seen a remarkable growth of self-consciousness and self-examination on the part of American writers.' To assess the quality of such a growth is to pronounce on the state of American culture to-day—an ambitious undertaking. But keeping close to impressions derived from *The New Republic* one may risk a few rough generalizations. First that there exists in its pages a healthy bias towards referring all questions to present needs. This attitude is seen at its most striking when a historical biography comes up for review. Put shortly it is the reverse of the constant practice here. In any English weekly there will be a long *résumé* (biography gets a disproportionate amount of reviewing space) of the more striking episodes served up with the emphasis on 'period' in a quaint and delicate dilettante antiquarianism. That there is a less creditable side to American impatience with the past must be of course admitted.

Second among the outstanding virtues is what may reasonably be called the 'Middletown' approach to society which enables *The New Republic* to blend skilfully the economic, social and cultural in their presentation of America. Here undoubtedly lies their strength and hope for a healthy development. Not surprisingly their weakest point lies in the unevenness of the literary criticism. Poetry in particular comes in for the most uncertain treatment. (It is worth noting that the actual poems printed are usually of the same insignificance as those which appear in English papers). A *New Republic* reviewer is capable of swerving from good sense

to elementary fallacy in the course of a single article. One may of course retort that good criticism of poetry is rare enough anywhere. Yet it remains true that the central nerve which should give sharpness and delicacy to the whole body of criticism functions fitfully and as it were coarsely. A companion study to American critics such as Blackmur, Tate and others would be needed to supplement a point I am conscious here of leaving unduly vague.

Before passing on to the consideration of an ideal standard it may be well to recall a suggestion made in the opening paragraph of this essay. *The New Republic* with all its faults does at least succeed in providing a certain standard firmly enough maintained for deviations from it to be easily detected. Moreover it does supply with all its deficiencies the essential material for the irrigation of public opinion. The best available thought is sooner or later reflected in its pages. And—a note which has not been sufficiently heard in this survey—it presents its material in a lively, flexible way. It has carried on for twenty-four years in an environment probably in many ways bleaker than ours, with a circulation smaller in proportion to the size of the reading public than that, say, of *The Spectator*. And it has carried on with such relative success in spite of having at times to do the work of a quarterly as well as that of a weekly.

I hope that now the main contentions made at the beginning of this essay will appear to have been established. At least *The New Republic* shows that a weekly setting a hign standard is not an impossible dream. And some at any rate of the desiderata can be defined more satisfactorily by adding, ' as, for example, is attempted in *The New Republic*.' Without wishing to forestall conclusions to reach which much critical labour and a combination of talents would be required, I append some of the considerations which arise naturally from the study of *The New Republic*.

The New Republic suffers a concrete limitation from the poverty of what may roughly be called the critical milieu. No weekly can flourish independently, that is, can be at the same time the source and the medium of critical opinion. M. Duhamel, to whom we shall return later, traces the hierarchy from the book through the quarterly to the weekly and finally to the newspaper. This, put abstractly, sounds too beautiful to be true. Yet even in

the last century provincial papers used the quarterlies in the process of continuous irrigation through the different levels of society. A weekly fulfils its general function in completing a certain stage in the dissemination of opinion. Some kind of consensus of opinion, and a coherent view of society as a whole (however sketchy be the coherence) is, of course, a necessary preliminary to this process. It was noted that *The New Republic* presented an outlook with such a rough coherence. The achievement of *Middletown* is here a handy reference. Such an approach with all its limitations makes possible a kind of synthesis mutually illuminating and transforming all its elements.

Now, whereas this synthesis can be concretely illustrated in *The New Republic*, it must be at once admitted that what is ordinarily understood by politics is (apart from religion) the element with the highest resistance to such inclusion in a general view. That is, political questions in the weeklies are treated as if independent, as if there were no such necessary hierarchy as was claimed for the criticism of literature. Or, if such a hierarchy is admitted, the basis for political writing seems to bear no relation to that postulated for adequate literary criticism. It was for this reason that in reviewing the political articles the only comment risked was in terms of ' competence.' But political writing involves more than the collecting and recording of relevant facts. And the immediate comment on them must frequently involve wider assumptions and previously assumed attitudes. These in the end receive their ultimate sanction from the unspecialized intelligence it would be the aim of an ideal university to foster, for whose needs the ideal weekly would cater. And if, following the suggestions of *Why Universities ?* we suppose that ' it must be in literature above all that the sense of human values gets its training ' the centre with which political experts must keep in touch will have to be generated from that centre which exists on the foundation of, in the last resort, literature. So that, as things are, the literary side of a journal will have to show the way to the political side.

Unfortunately the discussion of the relation of politics to literature has been left too exclusively to Marxists. It seems a fair criticism of *Scrutiny* that it has been too content to maintain a negative attitude, and that exposure of the weakness of the Marxist position does not constitute the whole duty of a quarterly. True,

certain large gestures have been made which lightly sketch in the position *Scrutiny* should occupy. Yet were a weekly to be founded tomorrow relying on the critical agreements reached in *Scrutiny* I do not think it could find here the basis for establishing a unity between its 'literary' and its 'political' sides. Those 'underlying issues'[1] on which the critical mind should freely play make a too infrequent appearance. Nor if we turn to the political commentary of the *Criterion* do we receive any practical help. It is true that the work with which *Scrutiny* is associated eventually breeds a general critical attitude. But it will not do, as has been pointed out, to infer directly and naïvely from the prose style of a politician his capabilities as a statesman. On the other hand, I cannot suppose that *Scrutiny* accepts as the intelligent man's view of politics or economics those of Mr. Bernard Shaw or Mr. Cole, or endorses complacently the tone of the political side of the *New Statesman*. Surely the work undertaken by *Scrutiny* does have political implications? This is no call for a general line-up on one side or other of the barricades. It is merely that *Scrutiny* should give its general attitude some more tangible shape. It seems to me that this is a task not being attempted elsewhere.

The existence of *The New Republic* is a standing challenge to the intelligent public of this country. Why have we no such paper here? It cannot be maintained that a body of experts as qualified as those which write in the American paper could not be assembled here. Nor has the disintegration of culture in England proceeded further than in America. And the need for a similar weekly here is urgent. The points I have inadequately raised call for competent and expert investigation. Before concluding that all effort is vain it would be seemly to examine the possibilities. I append a citation from the *Défense des Lettres* which might serve as a rallying point for those who still entertain some hope for the continued employment of intelligence in the direction of affairs.

> 'Certains observateurs du monde moderne ne manqueront pas de conclure que le monde se transforme en effet et que les revues n'ont qu'à disparaître. Je persiste à croire que ce serait un grand malheur. Les revues correspondent à une forme

[1]See *Scrutiny*, Vol. I, No. 1, p. 3 (*A Manifesto*).

d'activité intellectuelle qui me semble plus que jamais nécessaire dans le désordre contemporain. Le livre est volumineux et lent. Le journal et trop bref et trop furtif. Certaine façon d'examiner, de critiquer les événements, les hommes, les ouvrages exige la revue, véhicule naturel d'une pensée vigilante, d'une pensée qui ne résigne pas sa mission.'

H. A. MASON.

HENRY JAMES'S HEIRESS:

THE IMPORTANCE OF EDITH WHARTON

THE unfinished posthumous novel of Edith Wharton just published[1] should at least serve to bring up this author's name for evaluation. It is incidentally quite worth reading if you are an amateur of the period now in fashion again (the 'seventies). It would have been far more worth publishing if Mrs. Wharton's literary executor had supplemented his appendix by a memoir and critical essay designed to introduce the present generation to her best work, scarcely ever read in England—for to the educated English public Mrs. Wharton's novels are those of her last ten years and known vaguely as the kind of fiction which was published serially in *Good Housekeeping*. But her characteristic work was all done long before, early enough for one of her good novels to have been published in World's Classics in 1936, more than thirty years after it was first printed. It was as the historian of New York society of the 'nineties that she first achieved character and eminence as a novelist, on the dual grounds, as she said, that it was ' a field as yet unexploited by any novelist who had grown up in that little hot-house of traditions and conventions ' and had been ' tacitly regarded as unassailable.' In her rapid growth as combined social critic and historian she continued to strike roots outwards and downwards until she had included in her reach the

[1] *The Buccaneers* (Appleton Century, 7/6).

lowest levels of rustic, urban and manufacturing life. And her work was no mere historical fictionizing, she was a serious novelist. She was also an extraordinarily acute and far-sighted social critic; in this she was original and appears still more so when we think with what an effort this detachment must have been achieved by the child brought up to believe it her ambition to become, like her mother, the best-dressed woman in New York, and who was married young to an anti-intellectual society man.

By a combination of circumstances she was peculiarly qualified to undertake such work. Her interesting autobiography[1] documents her cultural origins for us. There we are told that the best people in New York, among whom she was born, had the traditions of a mercantile middle class whose 'value lay in upholding two standards of importance in any community, that of education and good manners, and of scrupulous probity in business affairs.' This society was leisured, and satisfied with a moderate wealth—she never in her young days encountered the gold-fever in any form. It concentrated on the arts of living that radiate from home-making. It was resolutely English in culture (speaking 'pure English,' importing tutors and governesses, reading the English classics and deploring contemporary American men of letters) and habitually travelled abroad (unlike Boston) though keeping aloof from the English Court and society. She grew up to see this society disintegrate from within, its values succumbing to spiritual anæmia—'the blind dread of innovation and the instinctive shrinking from responsibility' that she noted as its chief weaknesses and which left politics to be the prey of Business—even before its standards were overthrown by the invasion from without of the predatory new rich. Her quick intelligence made her aware of the import of changes that even an insider at the time could only have sensed, her literary ambition encouraged her to try to fix them in the novel, and her early environment and family traditions gave her a position from which to survey changes in the social scene, a code by which to judge the accompanying shifts in *mœurs*, and values by which to estimate the profit and loss. Her admiration of Henry James's work, later her great intimacy with him, provided her with a spring-board from which to take off as an artist.

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[1] *A Backward Glance* (Appleton Century, 1934).

For her literary career began, as she said, ' in the days when Thomas Hardy, in order to bring out *Jude the Obscure* in a leading New York periodical, was compelled to turn the children of Jude and Sue into adopted orphans ; when the most popular magazine in America excluded all stories containing any reference to "religion, love, politics, alcohol or fairies " (this is textual) ; the days when a well-known New York editor, offering me a large sum for the serial rights of a projected novel, stipulated only that no reference to " an unlawful attachment " should figure in it . . . and when the translator of Dante, Professor Eliot Norton, hearing (after the appearance of *The House of Mirth*) that I was preparing another " society " novel, wrote in alarm imploring me to remember that " no great work of the imagination has ever been based on illicit passion "! ' It was equivalent to the literary England of Trollope's beginnings, yet Edith Wharton without any bravado assumed that because she did not depend on literature for her income she should ignore its ' incurable moral timidity ' and the displeasure of her social group. ' The novelist's best safeguard is to write only for that dispassionate and ironic critic who dwells within the breast ' she wrote. The likeness to Jane Austen is revealed in that, and borne out by her decision, after writing several dull psychological novels, to make a novel out of what she knew best, the fashionable New York of her early married life ' in all its flatness and futility.' In doing so she was taking up Henry James's work where he left it off with *The Bostonians* and *The Portrait of a Lady*. And in this novel she turned, as she noted, from an amateur into a professional novelist. The American novel grew up with Henry James and achieved a tradition with Mrs. Wharton. He, she points out in a passage of great interest,[1] was never at home in twentieth century America—' he belonged irrevocably to the old America out of which I also came ' and whose last traces, as she said, remained in Europe whither he fortunately went to seek them. ' Henry James was essentially a novelist of manners, and the manners he was qualified by nature and situation to observe were those of the little vanishing group of people among whom he had grown up, or their more picturesque prototypes in older societies—he often bewailed to me his total inability to use the " material,"

[1] *A Backward Glance*, pp. 175-6.

financial and industrial, of modern American life.' And she instances James's failure to make plausible Mr. Verver in *The Golden Bowl* or 'to relate either him or his native "American City" to any sort of concrete reality.' She might have instanced her own Mr. Spragg and his Apex City in contrast, those fully realized symbols which make the later creations Babbitt and Main Street seem unnecessary as well as crude work. Unlike James, she rightly felt herself qualified to deal with the society that succeeded 'the old America' and she stayed to write its natural history, to write it in a form as shapely and with a surface as finished as if she had had a number of predecessors in her chosen task. These works had the advantage of being 'readable' as Jane Austen's and even George Eliot's were and as *The Ambassadors* was not. It is profitable to observe how, in *The Custom of the Country*, she makes use of James's technique and yet reaches a public unwilling or unable to wrestle with his formidable novels.

She was early convinced that the virtue had gone out of 'the old America' of her ancestors—'When I was young it used to seem to me that the group in which I grew up was like an empty vessel into which no new wine would ever again be poured.' So when she decided to make a novel out of the circle in which she lived she chose to depict it in terms of 'the slow disintegration' of Lily Bart, one of the 'wasted human possibilities' who form, she declared, 'the underpinning [on which] such social groups (the shallow and the idle) always rest.' No doubt it was her own experience that enabled her to isolate the destructive element in such societies—'the quality of making other standards non-existent by ignoring them . . . Lily's set had a force of negation which eliminated everything beyond their own range of perception.' These explanations are from the subsequent introduction. In the novel (*The House of Mirth*, 1905) this analysis is present in solution—in terms of dialogue, dramatic situation and the process by which the exquisite Lily Bart slips down into annihilation. For in these novels Mrs. Wharton never ceases to be first of all a novelist. Her social criticism is effected in the terms that produced Middlemarch society and the Dodsons in *The Mill on the Floss*, and often challenges comparison with analogous effects in Jane Austen:

'Mrs. Gryce had a kind of impersonal benevolence: cases of individual need she regarded with suspicion, but she subscribed to Institutions when their annual reports showed an impressive surplus.'

'In her youth, girls had not been supposed to require close supervision. They were generally assumed to be taken up with the legitimate business of courtship and marriage, and interference in such affairs on the part of their natural guardians was considered as unwarrantable as a spectator's suddenly joining in a game. There had of course been "fast" girls even in Mrs. Peniston's early experience; but their fastness, at worst, was understood to be a mere excess of animal spirits, against which there could be no graver charge than that of being 'unladylike.' The modern fastness appeared synonymous with immorality, and the mere idea of immorality was as offensive to Mrs. Peniston as a smell of cooking in the drawing-room: it was one of the conceptions her mind refused to admit.'

[Of the much-divorced but 'ineradicably innocent' beauty from the West] 'The lady's offences were always against taste rather than conduct; her divorce record seemed due to geographical rather than ethical conditions; and her worst laxities were likely to proceed from a wandering and extravagant good nature.'

The feature of most permanent interest in the book is the systematic portrayal of the various groups in New York society. These are created with zest and an abundant life, surprisingly lacking animus; even distaste is lost in ironic appreciation. And no group or character is wantonly dragged in, each has an indispensable function in advancing the plot. They range from the timid millionaire of the old school, Percy Bryce:

'After attaining his majority, and coming into the fortune which the late Mr. Gryce had made out of a patent device for excluding fresh air from hotels, the young man continued to live with his mother in Albany; but on Jefferson Gryce's death, when another large property passed into her son's hands, Mrs. Gryce thought that what she called his "interests" demanded his presence in New York. She accordingly installed herself in the Madison Avenue house, and Percy, whose sense of duty was

not inferior to his mother's, spent all his week-days in the handsome Broad Street office, where a batch of pale men on small salaries had grown grey in the management of the Gryce estate, and where he was initiated with becoming reverence into every detail of the art of accumulation '—

through the established ' good ' society—smart Trenors, dowdy Van Osburghs, and their parasites like the divorcée Mrs. Fisher—to the various social aspirants, such as the new-rich Gormans:

' Mrs. Fisher's unconventionality was, after all, a merely superficial divergence from an inherited social creed, while the manners of the Gorman circle represented their first attempt to formulate such a creed for themselves,'

the comic Wellington Brys and the financier Rosedale (not stock size) down to the outermost darkness of Mrs. Norma Hatch from the West, ' rich, helpless, unplaced,' living in the Emporium Hotel whence she endeavours to launch herself into the bosom of society. [There is an invaluable pre-Sinclair Lewis account of fashionable hotel life of the time].

' The environment in which Lily found herself was as strange to her as its inhabitants. She was unacquainted with the world of the fashionable New York hotel—a world over-heated, over-upholstered, and over-fitted with mechanical appliances for the gratification of fantastic requirements, while the comforts of a civilized life were as unattainable as in a desert. Through this atmosphere of torrid splendour moved wan beings as richly upholstered as the furniture, beings without definite pursuits or permanent relations . . . Somewhere behind them, in the background of their lives, there was doubtless a real past, peopled by real human activities: they themselves were probably the product of strong ambitions, persistent energies, diversified contacts with the wholesome roughness of life ; yet they had no more real existence than the poet's shades in limbo.

' Lily had not been long in this pallid world without discovering that Mrs. Hatch was its most substantial figure. That lady, though still floating in the void, showed faint symptoms of developing an outline . . . It was, in short, as the regulator of a germinating social life that Miss Bart's guidance was

required ; her ostensible duties as secretary being restricted by the fact that Mrs. Hatch, as yet, knew hardly any one to write to . . . Compared with the vast gilded void of Mrs. Hatch's existence, the life of Lily's former friends seemed packed with ordered activities. Even the most irresponsible pretty woman of her acquaintance had her inherited obligations, her conventional benevolences, her share in the working of the great civic machine ; and all hung together in the solidarity of these traditional functions . . .

' Mrs. Hatch swam in a haze of indeterminate, enthusiasms, aspirations culled from the stage, the newspapers, the fashion-journals, and a gaudy world of sport still more completely beyond her companion's ken . . . The difficulty was to find any point of contact between her ideals and Lily's.'

Such a combination of sustained anthropological interest with literary ability was hitherto unknown to fiction except in *The Bostonians*. Mrs. Wharton had all the qualifications that Galsworthy so disastrously lacked ; to place *The Forsyte Saga* beside one of her characteristic novels is to expose it.

The Custom of the Country (1913) is undoubtedly her masterpiece. [It should have been obtainable in a cheap edition or ' Everyman ' long ago]. Here the theme is explicitly ' social disintegration.' But now the ' good ' New York society has shrunk to a sideshow, the centre is consciously occupied by the moneyed barbarians ; they lack both a moral and a social code but are fast acquiring the latter by imitation. Whereas old New York (like Henry James's Boston) by keeping itself to itself had evolved an independent culture, new New York is shown trying to construct an imitation of European culture by copying its social surface, by acquiring it by marriage, by buying up its antiques and by reproducing its architectural masterpieces at home:

' Bowen, from his corner, surveyed a seemingly endless perspective of plumed and jewelled heads, of shoulders bare or black-coated encircling the close-packed tables. During some forty years' perpetual exercise of his perceptions he had never come across anything that gave them the special titillation produced by the sight of the dinner-hour at the Nouveau Luxe: the same sense of putting his hand on human nature's passion

for the factitious, its incorrigible habit of imitating the imitation. As he sat watching the familiar faces swept towards him on the rising tide of arrival—for it was one of the joys of the scene that the type was always the same even when the individual was not—he hailed with renewed appreciation this costly expression of a social ideal. The dining-room at the Nouveau Luxe represented, on such a spring evening, what unbounded material power had devised for the delusion of its leisure: a phantom " society," with all the rules, smirks, gestures of its model, but evoked out of promiscuity and incoherence while the other had been the product of continuity and choice. And the instinct which had driven a new class of world-compellers to bind themselves to slavish imitation of the superseded, and their prompt and reverent faith in the reality of the sham they had created, seemed to Bowen the most satisfying proof of human permanence.'

'Small, cautious, middle-class, had been the ideals of aboriginal New York ; but they were singularly coherent and respectable as contrasted with the chaos of indiscriminate appetites which made up its modern tendencies . . . What Popple called society was really just like the houses it lived in: a muddle of misapplied ornament over a thin steel shell of utility. The steel shell was built up in Wall Street, the social trimmings were hastily added in Fifth Avenue ; and the union between them was as monstrous and factitious, as unlike the gradual homogeneous growth which flowers into what other countries know as society, as that between the Blois gargoyles on Peter Van Degen's roof and the skeleton walls supporting them.'

The writing is unbrokenly taut and incisive, with sustained local vitality. The hero reflects on his ' aboriginal family '—' Harriet Ray, sealed up tight in the vacuum of inherited opinion, where not a breath of fresh sensation could get at her,' ' hardly anything that mattered to him existed for them, and their prejudices reminded him of sign-posts warning off trespassers who have long since ceased to intrude.' Instead of the downward drift characteristic of *The House of Mirth* we are initiated into the triumphant social and material progress of Undine Spragg, type of the new as Lily Bart was of the superseded. Thanks to an inborn lack

of either moral sense or introspective qualms Undine hauls herself to the top of the ladder, trampling husbands, family decencies and social codes underfoot, perpetually violating in all unconsciousness even her own moral professions. Yet Undine is not a monster. She is felt to be less of one than Rosamund Vincy, George Eliot's masterpiece on the same pattern, and there is a stimulus to be derived from the display of her tactics. The pattern of this novel lends itself to a kind of irony congenial to Mrs. Wharton—the latent irony that is to be discovered in certain kinds of situation: the clash between civilized and primitive *mœurs*, between pretence and actuality, intention and achievement. Her novels are rich in social comedy, displayed with something like Jane Austen's enjoyment, though the victory does not, as in the latter's works, go to the finer spirits.

The next novel in this line is *Twilight Sleep* (1927), which displays the chaos that followed on the establishment of a society based on money without any kind of traditions. It is inferior to the earlier work in its tendency to come down on the side of the farcical in the study of Pauline Manford, whose optimistic progress through life is symbolized in the title. ' " Of course there ought to be no Pain . . . nothing but Beauty . . . It ought to be one of the loveliest, most poetic things in the world to have a baby," Mrs. Manford declared, in that bright efficient voice which made loveliness and poetry sound like the attributes of an advanced industrialism, and babies something to be turned out in series like Fords.' Nevertheless it compares favourably with Huxley's and other novels treating of the same kind of life. Pauline, whose millions were made in the Middle West from the manufacture of motors, appears intended to embody the crude virtues of the invaders of pioneer stock, for with all her innocence of culture and her belief in activity for its own sake and her muddled passion for universal spiritual progress—in spite of this she is seen to have a respectable aspect too. For opposed to her is the next generation, represented by her daughter-in-law and her social group, whose insolent irresponsibility and empty vice set off whatever it was worth admiring—some moral positive or intuitive decency? that at least kept the family from going to pieces—that Edith Wharton felt evan a Pauline Manford retained but was then (in the 'twenties) melting away under her eyes: the last stage of the social disinte-

gration she had analysed and chronicled and turned into art. She had lived, she felt, to see disappear ' the formative value of nearly three hundred years of social observance: the concreted living up to long-established standards of honour and conduct, of education and manners.'

This sequence leads up to the fiction of Scott Fitzgerald, Faulkner and Kay Boyle, among others, and without it their writings cannot be understood by the English reader. This school depicts (Faulkner and Kay Boyle with approval) a kind of life, without roots or responsibilities, where value is attributed only to drunkenness and allied states of excess. This phase of American culture is conveniently illustrated by the career of the late Harry Crosby. Mrs. Wharton's autobiography contains a first-hand account of the earlier half of this cultural disintegration. Read in sequence, after *The Education of Henry Adams* and Henry James's *A Small Boy and Others*, and before Malcolm Cowley's *Exile's Return*, it provides the English student with part of this indispensable background to American literature—the cultural history of literary America which, if Van Wyck Brooks's *The Flowering of New England* had been executed by an able critic, would now be complete to date in five volumes.

Later on she attempted to supplement her sequence by historical studies—*The Age of Innocence* (1920) and *Old New York* (1924)—of the static society of her grandparents' days. But the historical novel necessarily bears about the same relation to art as the waxwork, and in any case her talents found congenial only the contemporary and the changing. Here she has to reproduce ' the old New York way of taking life "without effusion of blood." '

Nevertheless there are good things in both books. One remembers the analysis of

> ' That terrifying product of the social system he belonged to and believed in, the young girl who knew nothing and expected everything. His own exclamation: " Women should be free—as free as we are," struck to the root of a problem that it was agreed in his world to regard as non-existent. " Nice " women, however wronged, would never claim the kind of freedom he meant, and generous-minded men like himself were therefore—in the heat of argument—the more chivalrously ready to concede

it them. Such verbal generosities were in fact only a humbugging disguise of the inexorable convention that tied things together and bound people down to the old pattern. In reality they all lived in a kind of hieroglyphic world, where the real thing was never said or done or even thought, but only represented by a set of arbitrary signs, as when . . . The result, of course, was that the young girl who was the centre of this elaborate system of mystification remained the more inscrutable for her very frankness and assurance. She was frank, poor darling, because she had nothing to conceal, assured because she knew of nothing to be on her guard against . . . But when he had gone the brief round of her he returned discouraged by the thought that all this frankness and innocence were only an artificial product. Untrained human nature was not frank and innocent; it was full of the twists and deferences of an instinctive guile.'

After this sequence she ceased to write novels worthy of herself. Partly she was growing old, partly, as she wrote in her memoirs, she should have ceased to write because 'the world she had grown up in and been formed by had been destroyed in 1914.'

But her work is by no means so limited as this may have suggested, even though suggestions have been made that she turned Henry James's early work from a sport to the beginning of a tradition, that she was the nearest thing to an American Jane Austen, and the archetype of a Galsworthy. As far back as 1907 she had shown, in *The Fruit of the Tree*, her recognition of the general social problem and her refusal to limit her subject-matter to the moneyed or educated strata of Americans. Heaven knows where she got her knowledge of mill-towns, but here, though the novel is uncertain in intention and now only readable in patches, she revealed the split between the capitalist ruling class and the oppressed mill-hands, the worthlessness of the lives of the one and the misery of the lives of the other. Nor do we know how she acquired the material for that moving study of the sufferings of the respectable poor, the short story *Bunner Sisters*. Mrs. Wharton's presentation of the poor [of New York in the horse-car period in this story, of the hill-farm folk in *Ethan Frome* (1911) and of the New England rustics in *Summer* (1917)] is like George Eliot's in its sympathy and its freedom from sentimental evasions, but

without the latter's large nobility that throws a softening light on all wretchedness. She is prone to end on a note of suspension in fierce irony that was not included in George Eliot's make-up. Mrs. Wharton, with her unmannered style and impersonal presentation, solved the problem of tone by ignoring the reader altogether. These three *nouvelles* might well be issued in England in one volume, everyone interested in literature ought to read them at least once—they are works of art, and historically they have some importance. She was the first to outrage the accepted pretence of seeing the New England countryside idyllically. Hers was informed realism. 'For years I had wanted to draw life as it really was in the derelict mountain villages of New England, a life even in my time, and a thousandfold more a generation earlier, utterly unlike that seen through the rose-coloured spectacles of my predecessors, Mary Wilkins and Sarah Orne Jewett. In those days the snow-bound villages of Western Massachusetts were still grim places, morally and physically: insanity, incest and slow mental and moral starvation were hidden away behind the paintless wooden house-fronts. *Ethan Frome* was written after I had spent ten years in the hill-region where the scene is laid, during which years I had come to know well the aspect, dialect and mental and moral attitude of the hill-people.' In consequence *Summer*, and the inferior but better-known *Ethan Frome*, stand, along with the Scottish specimen, *The House with the Green Shutters*, in the *Wuthering Heights* category.

Mrs. Wharton's interest in the contemporary social scene then was deep and wide as well as acute and witty. *Silas Marner* is rightly considered a classic of our language, but except for the accidental advantage of having a more attractive social picture to reproduce—a mellower setting, less ungracious *mœurs*, a more comely dialect—it seems to me inferior to *Summer*. The village of North Dormer, 'abandoned of men, left apart by all the forces that link life to life in modern communities,' where only those remain who can't get away or who have drifted back wrecked, completes Mrs. Wharton's social survey. Outside North Dormer is the Mountain, the home of a colony of squatters, bad characters and outlaws, who represent the limits of degradation to which society can sink—they have neither material civilization nor moral tradition. Mrs. Wharton declared that they were drawn in every

detail from life. She was bold enough to seize on the Mountain for an unforgettable symbol that few novelists would have cared or dared to touch (it was received, she recorded, ' with indignant denial by reviewers and readers '). And the understanding shown in these three stories of the workings of uneducated, rustic and similar inarticulate kinds of minds is more convincing than George Eliot's, even as hers is more plausible than Hardy's, both these last having a suspicious tendency to humorous effects and George Eliot besides being never quite free from a shade of superiority in her attitude to intellectual inferiors.

Edith Wharton's value seems to me therefore not merely, as Mr. Edmund Wilson said in a recent article (' Justice to Edith Wharton,' *The New Republic*, June 29th, 1938) that she wrote ' in a period (1905-1917) when there were few American writers worth reading.' I am convinced that anyone interested in the cultural basis of society, and anyone sensitive to quality in the novel, will find this selection of her writings I have made of permanent worth and unique in character. The final question then is, what order of novelist is she?—*i.e.*, not how permanent but how good? She was, until her decay, a tough-minded, robust artist, not the shrinking minor writer or the ladylike talent. It is characteristic that she should refer to ' that dispassionate and ironic critic who dwells within the breast ' of authors, and equally so that she should have considered the unencouraging atmosphere (indifference to her literary success and disapproval of her choosing to write) of her family and social circle, and the adverse reviews she received from outside, stimulating to talent, just as she accepted the severest professional criticism as valuable. This, she said, was better for fostering literary ability than ' premature flattery and local celebrity ' and having one's path smoothed ; one contrasts this with Mrs. Woolf's claims for the creative temperament. She was a born artist ; of the work of her prime she could justly say ' My last page is latent in my first.' Of how many novels in the English language before hers can that be said? She had the advantage of being a solidly-educated lady frequenting the most cultivated society of England and France. As an artist she had Henry James behind her work, whereas Sinclair Lewis, when he later attempted similarly to epitomize his environment in fiction, had only H. G. Wells behind his. She was remarkably intelligent ;

it is easy as well as more popular to be wise after the event (like Sinclair Lewis) but it takes a kind of genius to see your culture from the outside, to diagnose what is happening and plot its curves contemporaneously as she did. Jane Austen never got outside (of course she could never have imagined doing so): her social criticism is all from the inside and remains indoors without so much as a glance out of the window. It is not only that in Jane Austen social forces never come up for comment or that she accepts the theory of the rich man in his castle and the poor man at his gate, but that she can mention the enclosure of the commons as the natural subject of conversation for the gentlemen at dinner—just that and no more. Yet there can be no question that Jane Austen was a great novelist while Edith Wharton's greatest admirer would not claim that title for her. What makes a great novelist? Apparently not intelligence or scope or a highly-developed technique, though, other things being equal, they often give an advantage. But what then are the other things?

Again, compare Edith Wharton with George Eliot. George Eliot was a simple-minded woman except where great sensitiveness of feeling gave her a subtle insight—even her learning was deployed with solemn simplicity. Undeniably Mrs. Wharton had a more flexible mind, she was both socially and morally more experienced than George Eliot and therefore better able to enter into uncongenial states of feeling and to depict as an artist instead of a preacher distasteful kinds of behaviour. Her Undine Spragg is better sustained and handled than the other's Rosamund Vincy. Undine's sphere of action is dazzling and she always has a fresh surprise for us up her sleeve in the way of moral obtuseness; it was cleverer to make Undine end up at the top of the tree with her only disappointment that her last husband couldn't get made Ambassador (on account of having a divorced wife) than to involve herself in disasters like Rosamund: the manifold irony of worldly success is more profitable than any simple moral lesson and artistically how much richer! Mrs. Wharton writes better than George Eliot, who besides lacking grace rarely achieves the economy of language that Mrs. Wharton commands habitually. Her technique is absolutely right and from the works I have instanced it would be difficult to alter or omit without harm, for like Henry James she was the type of conscious artist writing to satisfy only

her own inflexible literary conscience. Now George Eliot in general moves like a cart-horse and too often takes the longest way round. But again it is George Eliot who is the great novelist.

I think it eventually becomes a question of what the novelist has to offer us, either directly or by implication, in the way of positives. In *Bunner Sisters*, *Summer*, and some other places Mrs. Wharton rests upon the simple goodness of the decent poor, as indeed George Eliot and Wordsworth both do in part, that is, the most wide-spread common factor of moral worth. But beyond that Mrs. Wharton has only negatives, her values emerging I suppose as something other than what she exposes as worthless. This is not very nourishing, and it is on similar grounds that Flaubert, so long admired as the ideal artist of the novel, has begun to lose esteem. It seems to be the fault of the disintegrating and spiritually impoverished society she analyses. Her value is that she does analyse and is not content to reflect. We may contrast Jane Austen, who does not even analyse, but, having the good fortune to have been born into a flourishing culture, can take for granted its foundations and accept its standards, working within them on a basis of internal relations entirely. The common code of her society is a valuable one and she benefits from it as an artist. Mr. Knightley's speech to Emma, reproving her for snubbing Miss Bates, is a useful instance: mannners there are seen to be based on moral values. Mrs. Wharton's worthy people are all primitives or archaic survivals. This inability to find any significance in the society that she spent her prime in, or to find 'significance only through what its frivolity destroys,' explains the absence of poetry in her disposition and of many kinds of valuable experience in her books. She has none of that natural piety, that richness of feeling and sense of a moral order, of experience as a process of growth, in which George Eliot's local criticisms are embedded and which give the latter her large stature. Between her conviction that the new society she grew up into was vicious and insecurely based on an ill-used working class and her conviction that her inherited mode of living represented a dead-end, she could find no foundation to build on. We may see where her real strength lay in the critical phrases she uses—'Her moral muscles had become atrophied' ['by buying off suffering with money, or denying its existence with words'] ; 'the super-

ficial contradictions and accommodations of a conscience grown elastic from too much use'—and in the short story 'Autres Temps . . .' a study of the change in moral codes she had witnessed since her youth. Here the divorced mother, who had for many years hidden her disgrace in Florence, returns to America to succour, as she thinks, her divorced and newly remarried daughter. At first, finding the absence of any prejudice against divorce in the new America, she is exalted, then she feels in her bewilderment '"I didn't take up much room before, but now where is there a corner for me?"' 'Where indeed in this crowded, topsy-turvey world, with its headlong changes and helter-skelter readjustments, its new tolerances and indifferences and accommodations, was there room for a character fashioned by slower sterner processes and a life broken under their inexorable pressure?' And finally, depressed by what she feels to be the lack of any kind of moral taste, she loses her illusions about the real benefits of such a change, she finds it to be merely a change in social fashions and not a revolution bringing genuine enlightenment based on good feeling. She explains to an old friend: '"Traditions that have lost their meaning are the hardest of all to destroy . . . We're shut up in a little tight round of habit and association, just as we're shut up in this room . . . We're all imprisoned, of course—all of us middling people, who don't carry freedom in our brains. But we've accommodated ourselves to our different cells, and if we're moved suddenly into new ones we're likely to find a stone wall where we thought there was air, and to knock ourselves senseless against it."' She chooses to return to Florence, 'moving again among the grim edges of reality.'

Mrs. Wharton, if unfortunate in her environment, had a strength of character that made her superior to it. She was a remarkable novelist if not a large-sized one, and while there are few great novelists there are not even so many remarkable ones that we can afford to let her be overlooked.

Q. D. LEAVIS.

'THE GREAT AND GOOD CORNEILLE'

I.

IT is Corneille's misfortune that no English writer has done for him what Lytton Strachey did for Racine. Whatever the shortcomings of Strachey's criticism, it did much to dispose of academic prejudice and to present Racine as a *poet*. It is true that Corneille has never aroused the same antipathy among English readers that Racine once did and that he has his place among the immortals on the Albert Memorial ; but it is also true that he has never enjoyed the relative popularity which came to Racine with the publication of Strachey's essay. The insistence of living critics that Racine is not merely a great poet, but a great *contemporary* poet, has brought him closer to us, while the figure of Corneille has receded farther and farther into the past. For many of us he has become a sort of historical monument, the lonely representative of a vanished civilization. His poetry suggests Versailles with its vast porticoes and the rigid stone figures hiding coyly among the *bosquets* in its trim gardens, or—more formidable still—a scratch troupe from the Comédie Française dressed in those strange, those impossible accoutrements, which seem to be inseparable from the performance of high tragedy, declaiming the *Cid* to an audience of school-girls armed with the Hachette plain text. It is ironical to think that the veteran Rodrigue, a little hoarse of voice, a little 'gone in the knees,' who rants and stamps through five acts for the edification of the School Certificate class, should have become the symbol of the great writer who was all his life the champion of youth in revolt against the corruption and pretence of an older generation.

It is perhaps reassuring to find that this impression is not due entirely to insular prejudice and that Corneille's own countrymen have experienced similar difficulties. The most striking thing about the distinguished French critics of the last century is their profound dislike of the great masters of their own literature. Of Racine they could scarcely bring themselves to speak with patience. '*Bérénice*,' wrote Sainte-Beuve in a characteristic sally, '*peut*

être dite une charmante et mélodieuse faiblesse dans l'œuvre de Racine, comme la Champmeslé le fut dans la vie.' In spite of Stendhal's timely championship of 'the great and good Corneille,' Corneille himself fared no better. 'I admire his characters,' said Taine, 'but from a distance: I should not care to live with any of them.' '*C'est beau, admirable, sublime, ce n'est ni humain, ni vivant, ni réel,*' said Brunetière.

That was the verdict of the nineteenth century. Corneille was widely recognized as 'The Father of French Tragedy,' but he had become the professor's poet—a 'classic' whose proper place was not the playbill, but the examination syllabus. Racine has long since come into his own, but it has been left to the younger French critics of our own day to discover in this staid classic, whose *Horace* delights, or is supposed to delight, the populace at the free matinée on Armistice Day, a much more exciting figure. According to the latest of his critics, Corneille's world is not a world of flourishes and lofty feelings. It is a world of corruption and intrigue inhabited by doddering, time-serving fathers and criminal stepmothers plotting the ruin of their children who are drawn with a ferocity that is worthy of Racine.[1]

There is, perhaps, a danger of exaggerating the sensational element in Corneille and the reason is not hard to discover. Contemporary admirers are a little too anxious to profit by the immense popularity of Racine and to point out similarities between the two writers, though it is clearly the differences which ought to detain us. One of the most important of these differences is brought out in the first chapter of M. Jean Schlumberger's valuable study[2] when he speaks of the contrast between

> 'Un art héroique et un art de jouissance ou de connaissance pure, un art qui construit une image exemplaire de l'homme, et un art qui la défait par l'analyse et le raffinement.'

It is a curious fact that few French critics manage to be fair to both poets and that their 'rivalry,' which is merely of historical

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[1] *Pierre Corneille*, by Robert Brasillach (Fayard, 1938, Fr. 20). This is a stimulating though unequal book; and the author takes nearly 500 pages to say what might easily have been said in 300.
[2] *Plaisir à Corneille: Promenade anthologique* (Gallimard, 1936).

interest, still influences critical opinion. Stendhal spoilt his defence of Corneille by declaring roundly that he was 'immensely above Racine'; and it is one of the drawbacks of M. Schlumberger's study that he is inclined to diminish Racine's greatness in order to make his defence of Corneille more convincing. This is surely a mistake. No one seriously believes that he is as great a poet as Racine, but they are not 'rivals' and they are not interchangeable. Without Corneille there would be a gap in French literature which Racine could never have filled.

Racine belongs to a period of transition from the old order to the new, from the old social solidarity to the new individualism. His impact on French poetry produced what was virtually a change of direction—a movement away from all that Corneille stood for—and for this reason he seems to me to be much more the predecessor of Baudelaire than the successor of Corneille. Corneille is not in himself a difficult poet, but an appreciation of his poetry has been made difficult by changing circumstances. He is more than most other great poets the test of a catholic taste in poetry because to enjoy him it is necessary to realize that poetry may be 'sublime' *and* 'human, living and real.' He wrote heroic plays and it is as an heroic poet that he stands or falls. A criticism of his work is primarily an elucidation of this uncomfortable term. M. Schlumberger's suggestion that an appreciation of Corneille involves an appreciation of Hugo and Claudel seems to me a strategic error, and Croce's invitation to us to discard Corneille's four principal plays and to discover the true Corneille—Corneille the Poet—in the final plays simply shirks all the difficulties.

II.

Corneille's achievement becomes more comprehensible when we consider it in relation to contemporary society. The reign of Louis XIII opened appropriately with an assassination. France was governed by a despotism, but an uneasy despotism. The first part of the century, indeed, is dominated by the figure of Richelieu. The spectacle of Richelieu entering La Rochelle at the head of the King's troops to celebrate the Mass of thanksgiving for the fall of the town is a symbol of the contradictions of the age and of its strange mixture of piety and opportunism. It was an age of rival factions and incredible intrigues, an age that delighted in great

exploits and violent actions. France had been shaken to the core by the religious wars of the previous century; and though the worst of them were over, the country was still split in two by the conflict between Catholic and Protestant. It was also a period of intense religious revival in which the chief figures were St. Francis of Sales and St. Vincent de Paul. Although it has seemed to later generations that theology and philosophy parted company in the seventeenth century, to Corneille's contemporaries there seemed to be no conflict between the old religion and the 'new philosophy.' Descartes and the theologians were at one in their interest in human psychology and their preoccupation with moral problems; and Bossuet and Pascal were both admirers of the Cartesian philosophy.

In Corneille's poetry all these different and sometimes contradictory elements found a place. The interest that he shows in family feuds in the *Cid*, in political intrigue in *Cinna* and religious dissensions in *Polyeucte* is clearly a reflection of events that were going on around him. The relation of a great poet to his time, however, is primarily a matter of temper, and it was left to Sainte-Beuve to put his finger on it in a sympathetic moment in his description of the famous *journée du guichet* in *Port-Royal*:

> 'C'est le même combat, c'est le même triomphe; si Polyeucte émeut et transporte, c'est que quelquechose de tel était et demeure possible encore à la nature humaine secourue. Je dis plus: si *Polyeucte* a été possible en son temps au génie de Corneille, c'est que quelquechose existait encore à l'entour (que Corneille le sût ou non) qui égalait et reproduisait les mêmes miracles.'[1]

The fact that internally France was in a state of turmoil undoubtedly produced a considerable effort towards consolidation.[2]

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[1] *Port-Royal*, T.II, p. 115. The *journée du guichet* was the day when Arnauld was refused admission to the Abbey by his daughter, the abbess, to prevent an unwarrantable interference with his children's vocation. Sainte-Beuve's words are still more significant when one remembers what a large part of Corneille's work was occupied with conflicts between parents and children.

[2] The propaganda for absolute monarchy, which is prominent in all Corneille's plays, seems to be a sign of the political uneasiness of the times and of the 'effort towards consolidation.'

In spite of its contradictions, Corneille's age was in many ways an age of reconstruction. Corneille was clearly disposed by his early training at at Jesuit college, which left a lasting impress on his poetry, to sympathise with this spirit. A sense of effort, a striving towards a moral end seems to me to be the deepest thing in his poetry. It is well expressed in a characteristic couplet from one of Auguste's last speeches in *Cinna*:

> Je suis maître de moi comme de l'univers ;
> Je le suis, je veux l'être.

In the first line we notice that the personal problem is related to the social one, and in the second that the statement is significantly followed by the aspiration.

A direct preoccupation with morality and the constant recurrence of words denoting moral qualities like *honneur*, *gloire*, *grand cœur* and *mâle assurance* are usually a sign of literary decadence—a sign that society is becoming self-conscious about qualities that it is in the process of losing. In Corneille this is not so. In his poetry, as surely as in Pope's, the words represent 'robust moral certitudes' which were the product of centuries of civilization and the common heritage of the people. France was engaged in setting her house in order, in trying to work out a fresh code after the upheavals of the previous century, and this produces a literature of great vitality. Corneille's heroes are not, as they are sometimes said to be, mere abstractions or metaphysical entities, but the embodiment of all that was best in the middle class from which the poet came. They are human beings realizing these aspirations in *action*. It is the integrity of this middle class—*la solide vertu*, as Horace calls it—which gives his poetry its personal idiom and its peculiar strength. For this reason Corneille's poetry, in spite of a certain narrowness, possesses a maturity of outlook which makes the lesser Elizabethans in England seem crude and immature by comparison.

The political triumphs of the latter part of Louis XIII's reign made possible the splendour and *external* stability of the reign of Louis XIV. They also account for some of the main differences in the poetry of the two periods. M. Schlumberger suggests that Corneille's work is the product of an age in which civilization was

threatened and Racine's the product of an age of security, an age which encouraged disinterested speculation without the slightest necessity of translating thought into action. Racine's elegance belongs to a civilization which has reached its zenith, but a civilization which has within it the seeds of its own dissolution. Corneille's verse sometimes seems clumsy in comparison ; but it is a clumsiness which comes from living in a difficult age and not the clumsiness of a man who is not the master of his medium. It seems possible that Racine's age did not possess the same internal stability as Corneille's and that its moral fibre was perhaps less fine. I think that one might defend the view that Racine made greater poetry out of a poorer philosophy.

When we compare

> Il est doux de revoir les murs de la patrie
> (*Sertorius*)

with

> Dans le fond des forêts votre image me suit
> (*Phèdre*)

or

> Tous les monstres d'Egypte ont leurs temples dans Rome
> (*Polyeucte*)

with

> Dans L'Orient désert quel devint mon ennui
> (*Bérénice*)

or

> . . . sur mes passions ma raison souveraine
> Eût blâmé mes soupirs et dissipé ma haine
> (*Polyeucte*)

with

> Il n'est plus temps. Il sait mes ardeurs insensées.
> De l'austère pudeur les bornes sont passées.
> (*Phèdre*)

we may think that though Racine's lines are finer, they are not obviously more ' poetical.' It is clear, however, that the lines are the product of two very different sensibilities. Corneille limits and defines and finally sets a particular feeling against its background. Racine's method is a process of infinite suggestion ; the lines seem

to expand in the mind, to set up waves of feeling that become more and more subtle and elusive. In the first line *patrie* has a precise geographical connotation and limits the emotion to a definite area. In the second there is no barrier; *fond* suggests an infinite extension which has no limit and no term. In the third line—a description of the perverse Eastern cults which are tolerated in Rome while Christianity is persecuted—Corneille deliberately strips the East of the sort of glamour with which Racine's *Orient désert* invests it. The squalor and degeneracy of the East are set against the moral integrity which Rome often suggests in Corneille's poetry. In the last example, the 'barrier' is purely a moral one; but the *raison souveraine* (which is deliberately placed after *passions*) is so vividly apprehended by the poet that it gives us a sense of physical repression. In Racine's couplet, on the contrary, the limit is only mentioned in order to tell us that it has long since been exceeded.

The differences become still more striking when we compare longer passages:

> Quoique pour ce vainqueur mon amour s'intéresse,
> Quoiqu'un peuple l'adore et qu'un roi le caresse,
> Qu'il soit environné des plus vaillants guerriers,
> J'irai sous mes cyprès accabler ses lauriers.
>
> (*Le Cid*).

> Je le vis, je rougis, je pâlis à sa vue:
> Un trouble s'éleva dans mon âme éperdue;
> Mes yeux ne voyaient plus, je ne pouvais parler,
> Je sentis tout mon corps et transir et brûler.
>
> (*Phèdre*).

The speakers in both passages are the victims of a conflict between what might provisionally be called 'duty' and 'inclination.' In Racine Phèdre's personality crumbles and disintegrates at once; the emotion of the passage is split up into its component parts, but though there is analysis there is no synthesis. 'There is nothing in her mind,' said Rivière of a character in *Andromaque*, 'which properly speaking acts as a dam against the wave of love except a contrary wave, which one may call anger, spite, hate or what you will, but which at bottom . . . is of the same nature and

the same stuff as the passion against which it is pitted.'[1] Chimène's character is different. She is not passive, but active. The two conflicting impulses are balanced against one another and the conflict resolved by the will acting in obedience to a principle. There is nothing specious about it: the solution springs necessarily from the *données*.

The great passage from which Racine's lines are taken has been discussed in another article.[2] I must now record that the four lines from the *Cid* seem to me to be one of the glories of Corneille's poetry. The first three lines have an extraordinary lyrical *élan* which is intensified by the obvious sexual connotation of *intéresse*, *adore*, *caresse*, and the suggestion of 'action' and 'vitality' contained in *vainqueur* and *guerriers*. This feeling of expansion, this sense of personal liberation that comes from the momentary identification of Chimène with Rodrigue and his exploits, is suddenly checked by something altogether impersonal in the last line. The spreading foliage of the cypresses, with their sinister hint of darkness and death, comes down like a pall and stifles the 'life' which is now concentrated in *lauriers*. The final effect of the passage, however, is not negative. The emotion of the first three lines is skilfully transformed so that the last line has behind it the force of the whole passage. It should be noticed that there is no casuistry and no argument here: Corneille's method is purely a poetic one and depends on the opposition of *cyprès* and *lauriers* and the triumphant use of the word *accabler*. The image in the last line is fully adequate to the emotion; it stands out against the sober background of Corneille's verse and glows with a sombre splendour.

I hope that these comparisons have given some indication of the structure of Corneille's world. It is a finite world whose geographical boundaries are marked with such clarity that we sometimes have a feeling of almost physical oppression in reading him. His conception of the nature of man is defined with the mathematical precision of Descartes' *Traité des passions de l'âme* which gives his poetry its certainty and forthrightness. He is only interested in a few aspects of human nature and therefore only

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[1] *Moralisme et littérature*, p. 28.

[2] See *Scrutiny* for March, 1938, pp. 455-7.

master of a limited range of emotion.[1] Within these limits he is a great writer, but when he ventures outside them the results are disastrous. He is, it need hardly be said, a more pedestrian writer than Racine, and the hard, metallic clang of his verse is a strong contrast to Racine's sensuous, flexible rhythm. There are no surprises in his poetry, none of those sudden glimpses into a sub conscious world of primitive instinct that we get in Racine. For Corneille's aim, as we shall see, was to bring that world of primitive instinct under the dominion of reason before reason was overthrown by it and society reduced to a state of chaos. Corneille's vocabulary was no smaller than Racine's, but it is probable that he had less power of suggestion than any other great French poet. Words are scientific terms which mean exactly what they say. He did not possess Racine's astonishing gift of revealing mysterious depths with the most commonplace words as, for example, when Hippolyte says:

Je me suis engagé trop avant.
Je vois que la raison cède à la violence.

Corneille's four most famous plays are really variations on the same theme. They show the Cornelian hero in relation to the code of chivalry, to patriotism, to politics and finally to religion. In the later plays there is no doubt that Corneille was sometimes inclined to play the showman and to write without any inner compulsion and it is this, perhaps, that has led critics to say that his characters are artful mechanical contrivances without contact with living experience. The simplicity of his psychology and the ease with which he could define his position have undoubtedly lent currency to this view. In a remarkable passage in the Epistle Dedicatory to *La Place Royale* he wrote:

> 'C'est de vous que j'ai appris que l'amour d'un honnête homme doit être toujours volontaire ; que l'on ne doit jamais aimer en un tel point qu'on ne puisse n'aimer pas ; que si on en vient jusque-là, c'est une tyrannie dont il faut secouer le joug . . . '

[1]It is probably this tendency to select, to isolate emotion, which is responsible for the sense of remoteness from common experience that we sometimes have in reading Corneille, and it may have inspired the criticisms of Taine and Brunetière given above.

This is a statement of principle which underlies the whole of Corneille's work, and our opinion of him as a poet depends ultimately on whether it is a living principle that produces vital poetry or an assumed position which led to a frigid formalism. It is plain that we have here a conception of love which is completely opposed to the one that dominates the poetry of Racine and of almost every great French poet who has since written. For Racine and his successors love was essentially what Corneille describes in the same dedication as *une inclination aveugle*. Hostile critics have always maintained that Corneille's was an artificial system deliberately imposed on living experience. Its authenticity can only be fully tested by an examination of Corneille's verse, but there are two reservations, both more or less theoretical, which should be made. The first is that the view of passion contained in Racine's poetry has become so much a part of our consciousness that we are no longer capable of approaching Corneille with an open mind. And the second is that although the code of honour on which the *Cid* is based may no longer seem valid, the poetry it once inspired is not affected by changing standards.

III.

Corneille's poetry has been variously described as a conflict between 'love and honour,' as a 'drama of the will' or as mere stoicism. All these views have been challenged at one time or another; but though it is true that a great poet's work can never be summed up in a single formula, these views may serve as pointers in examining his work as long as they are not too rigidly interpreted. 'Love and honour' was a favourite theme in literature of chivalry and it is interesting to see how Corneille extends its significance. The central fact in the *Cid* is a duel—the single combat between two 'men of honour.' It has not been sufficiently remarked that far from being a picturesque incident, the duel is a symbol of the whole play and indeed of all Corneille's poetry.

Don Rodrigue :
A moi, comte, deux mots.

Le Comte :
Parle.

Don Rodrigue :

Ote-moi d'un doute.
Connais-tu bien don Diègue?

Le Comte :

Oui.

Don Rodrigue :

Parlons bas ; écoute.
Sais-tu que ce vieillard fut la même vertu,
La vaillance et l'honneur de son temps? le sais-tu?

Le Comte :

Peut-être.

Don Rodrigue :

Cette ardeur que dans les yeux je porte,
Sais-tu que c'est son sang? le sais-tu?

Le Comte :

Que m'importe?

Don Rodrigue :

A quatre pas d'ici je te le fais savoir.

Le Comte :

Jeune présomptueux!

Don Rodrigue :

Parle sans t'émouvoir.
Je suis jeune, il est vrai ; mais aux âmes bien nées
La valeur n'attend point le nombre des années . . .

Le Comte :

Retire-toi d'ici.

Don Rodrigue :

Marchons sans discourir.

Le Comte :

Es-tu si las de vivre?

Don Rodrigue :

As-tu peur de mourir?

In this admirable scene we hear the thrust and parry of the rapiers—the hiss of steel in the

Sais-tu que c'est son sang? le sais-tu?

and we hear it all through the play. It is the duel that is evoked at the height of the drama in Chimène's

Dedans mon ennemi je trouve mon amant ;
Et je sens qu'en dépit de toute ma colère,
Rodrigue dans mon cœur combat encor mon père:
Il l'attaque, il le presse, il cede, il se défend,
Tantôt fort, tantôt faible, et tantôt triomphant:
Mais, en ce dur combat de colère et de flamme,
Il déchire mon cœur sans partager mon âme . . .

The thrust and parry of the duel merges into the movement of consciousness, into the conflict between *amour* and *devoir* and this gives the play its unity. These passages reflect the movement of all Corneille's verse—a simple movement befitting a simple psychology. We feel it again, for example, in those lines from *Polyeucte* where the ' duel ' is purely an interior one.

Polyeucte :
C'est peu d'aller au ciel, je vous y veux conduire.

Pauline :
Imaginations!

Polyeucte :
Célestes vérités!

Pauline :
Étrange aveuglement!

Polyeucte :
Éternelles clartés!

It is possible to see now how Corneille extends the significance of love and honour. The movement of his verse is not a destructive movement and the conflict does not end, as it usually does in tragedy, in the destruction of the characters. Nor is it true to say, as Lemaître and other French critics have said, that Corneille's poetry is simply a glorification of will and power for their own sake. There is always a definite aim in view, a process in which

new values are forged, the human material re-shaped and given a fresh direction. Honour is not merely a symbol of reason, it stands for the principle of order which has to be imposed on the chaos of unruly desires, on the whole of the instinctive life which Corneille constantly refers to as *les sens*. The real theme of his poetry therefore is not a simple clash between duty and inclination, but the subordination of one set of values to another which leads to the creation of a fresh order.

The background of Corneille's drama is aristocratic, the life of the court. In each of his major works the even flow of this life is disturbed by a shock—by the duel in the *Cid*, a conspiracy in *Cinna*, a conversion in *Polyeucte*. The effect of the shock and the conflict which is set up is to reveal the Cornelian hero to himself in a new way. The court life is seen to be conventional and unreal; and it is only when the convention is disturbed that the characters come into contact with the vital experience which is hidden beneath the outer husk and the mechanical code of honour is transformed into something living.

Corneille's drama, particularly the *Cid*, is always a drama of initiation. Fresh claims are made on human nature and it undergoes a change. In the opening scene of the *Cid* Chimène says to her *confidente*:

> Dis-moi donc, je te prie, une seconde fois
> Ce qui te fait juger qu'il approuve mon choix.

It is the voice of a child asking to be told over again that her father approves of her young man. In the second act she says to the Infanta

> Maudite ambition, détestable manie,
> Dont les plus généreux souffrent la tyrannie!

This time it is the voice of a mature woman criticizing the values she is called upon to accept; and the alexandrine registers the change of tone with remarkable delicacy.

The sudden contact with life produces in the Cornelian heroes a peculiar self-knowledge

> Je *sais* ce que je suis, et que mon père est mort

cries Chimène.

Mon père, je suis femme, et je *sais* ma faiblesse

says Pauline. This clairvoyance—this insight into their own feelings—gives Corneille's characters a poise, a centrality which are perhaps unique in European drama. The hero is always in imminent danger of being betrayed by the uprush of *les sens* which threaten to overturn reason and plunge him into chaos and disaster.

La surprise des sens n'abat point mon courage

says one of them, and it is precisely these *surprises* which are the condition of heroic virtue, of the *grand cœur*.

The theme of the *Cid* is the clash between two generations, the dilemma of youth thrown into a world made by its parents and called upon to accept its standards. It is one of the signs of Corneille's maturity that these standards are never accepted passively; his attitude towards them is always critical. Honour is in constant danger of becoming inhuman and mechanical unless it is accompanied by a profound humanity which is always referred to by the word *généreux*. When Don Diègue says:

Nous n'avons qu'un honneur, il est tant de maîtresses!
L'amour n'est qu'un plaisir, l'honneur est un devoir.

the cynical slickness of the lines and the facile epigram are certainly ironic. *Honneur* and *devoir* are turned into counters which no longer correspond to any moral experience. For Don Diègue expresses something which is incompatible with the Cornelian view of life. The combat does not destroy *les sens*, it dominates them in order to incorporate them into a definite hierarchy—a hierarchy which would be ruined if they were predominant, but which would be hollow and incomplete without them, as the world of Don Diègue and the Horaces is hollow and incomplete.

The criticism in *Horace* is of a far more drastic nature. The play becomes in the person of Camille—one of Corneille's most extraordinary creations—a harsh and angry indictment of the whole system:

Rome, l'unique objet de mon ressentiment!
Rome, à qui vient ton bras d'immoler mon amant!
Rome qui t'a vu naître, et que ton cœur adore!
Rome enfin que je hais parce qu'elle t'honore!

Puissent tous ses voisins ensemble conjurés
Saper ses fondements encor mal assurés! . . .

The heavy, monotonous verse suggests the terrible machine remorselessly sacrificing humanity to an empty phantom. It is not easy to decide how far Corneille ever accepted his own sanctions, but it seems clear that they were valued as a means to a richer and a fuller life, not as an end in themselves. The struggle towards a new synthesis produces some of Corneille's finest and subtlest verse:

Ma raison, il est vrai, dompte mes sentiments ;
Mais quelque autorité que sur eux elle ait prise,
Elle n'y règne pas, elle les tyrannise ;
Et quoique le dehors soit sans émotion,
Le dedans n'est que trouble est que sédition.
Un je ne sais quel charme encor vers vous m'emporte ;
Votre mérite est grand, si ma raison est forte:
Je le vois encor tel qu'il alluma mes feux,
D'autant plus puissamment solliciter mes vœux,
Qu'il est environné de puissance et de gloire . . .
Mais ce même devoir qui le vainquit dans Rome,
Et qui me range ici dessous les lois d'un homme,
Repousse encor si bien l'effort de tant d'appas,
Qu'il déchire mon âme et ne l'ébranle pas.[1]

This passage with its inversions, its verbs deliberately piled at the end of the lines, is a remarkable example of the pitiless self-inquisition to which the Cornelian heroes are subjected. There is a deliberate and calculated clumsiness about the verse which admirably expresses the immense effort that the speaker is making to dominate her feelings. The passage gets its life from the constant alteration of tone—the change from a note of defiance and determination to the half-whispered reflections of lines 6-8. The merits

[1]The context is important. The speech comes from the meeting between Pauline and Sévère, the admirer whom she had been obliged to give up in obedience to her father's wish for her to marry Polyeucte, and who now returns from the wars (where he has been consoling himself) covered in glory and the Emperor's favourite.

of Sévère are carefully catalogued and balanced against the claims of reason until one has the feeling that Pauline is being gradually engulfed in a vast stream which threatens to dislodge her at any moment. In the line

D'autant plus puissament solliciter mes feux

the hiss of the s's suggests the voluptuous element, the tug of *les sens*. Then, at the moment when she seems lost, there is a sudden shifting of the tension in the victorious

Repousse encor si bien l'effet de tant d'appas,
Qu'il déchire mon âme et ne l'ébranle pas.

This dramatic assertion of the will is, as I have already suggested, one of the most striking characteristics of Corneille's poetry; and it seems to me that it is here rather than in the famous *Qu'il mourût!* that we detect the authentic heroic note. It is a note that we hear not once, but many times in every play. It does not lower the tension or resolve the conflict, but produces a marked increase of life and vitality that enables the Cornelian hero to 'carry on.'

From this we may turn to Pauline's speech at the beginning of Act III.

Que de soucis flottants, que de confus nuages
Présentent à mes yeux d'inconstantes images!
Douce tranquillité, que je n'ose espérer,
Que ton divin rayon tarde à les éclairer!
Mille agitations, que mes troubles produisent,
Dans mon cœur ébranlé tour à tour se détruisent:
Aucun espoir n'y coule où j'ose persister;
Aucun effroi n'y règne où j'ose m'arrêter.
Mon esprit, embrassant tout ce qu'il s'imagine,
Voit tantôt mon bonheur, et tantôt ma ruine,
Et suit leur vaine idée avec si peu d'effet,
Qu'il ne peut espérer ni craindre tout à fait.
Sévère incessamment brouille ma fantaisie:
J'espère en sa vertu, je crains sa jalousie;
Et je n'ose penser que d'un œil bien égal
Polyeucte en ces lieux puisse voir son rival.

This is half-way to poetry,' remarks a university lecturer patronisingly.[1] It seems to me to be a good deal more than that. It seems to me to be not only dramatically effective, but to be something to which we can hardly refuse the title of great poetry. The same writer complains that ' the metaphors and images are confused,' but the confusion does not seem to me to lie in Corneille's imagery. For the success of the passage depends very largely on the skill with which the poet presents ' a whole of tangled feelings.' The focal point of the passage is the image of the conflicting feelings dissolving into and destroying one another. The words *soucis flottants, confus nuages, inconstantes images* suggest a state of complete instability which is accompanied by a desperate longing for the elusive stability promised by *douce tranquillité, persister, arrêter* ; but there is no security anywhere. Whatever Pauline tries to cling on to dissolves into mere *fantaisie*. For here the words ' seem to do what they say ' as surely as in the finest English poetry of the same period. Pauline's mind is battered into a state of immobility. She is acutely aware of what she feels, but in the midst of the tumult of warring impulses she is passive and unable to act. Only a dumb determination to ' hang on ' persists and gives the poetry its vitality. The tension of the passage does not depend, as it does in Racine, on the sickening sense of complete collapse, but on the rigid immobility—the numbness between the metal walls of the alexandrine—which prevents action amid the swirl of the rapidly changing feelings going on around it.

Although the passages I have discussed come from different plays, they illustrate the stages in the evolution of Corneille's characters which scarcely varies from one play to another. It is evident that this evolution is as different from Racine as it could well be. In Racine there is a violent conflict, but it does not end in the creation of fresh moral values or the renewal of life ; it is a conflict in which ' honour ' (which for Racine is not a *principle*, but a *feeling*) is beaten every time. Corneille is inferior to Racine as a psychologist, but he seems to me to reveal a greater range of what is commonly called ' character.' Racine concentrates all his attention on the moral crisis and there is nothing in his work

[1] *Poetry in France and England*, by Jean Stewart (Hogarth Lectures, 1931), p. 52.

which is comparable to the moral growth that takes place in Corneille's. The final change, when it does come, appears as a flash of illumination which transcends all the separate acts and the different phases of the drama which lead up to it. One example is Auguste's sudden realization of his place in the existing order:

> Je suis maître de moi comme de l'univers ;
> Je le suis, je veux l'être.

Another is the remarkable description of one of the conversions in *Polyeucte*:

> Je m'y trouve forcé par un secret appas ;
> Je cède à des transports que je ne connais pas . . .

I should be shirking a difficulty if I failed to mention the celebrated encounter between Rodrigue and Chimène in Act III Scene (iv). This scene—too long to set out here—seemed to Corneille's age a masterpiece of pathos. M. Schlumberger cannot resist the temptation to quote it, and M. Brasillach subjects it to an enthusiastic analysis. My own opinion, for what it is worth, is that Corneille was not a master of pathos and that though the scene contains good passages, the most admired parts are tiresome and embarrassing. They are an example of what happens when Corneille ventures outside his prescribed limits. It must of course be remembered that his verse was written to be declaimed and that lines which are embarrassing in the study may sound very well on the stage. It is one of the shortcomings of the grand manner that it does allow the poet to 'fake' emotion, to rely on the sweep of the alexandrine when there is no correspondence between his personal sensibility and the emotion he is staging.

IV.

The *Cid* has always been Corneille's most popular play and it possesses the peculiar beauty which belongs to the first work of a great writer's maturity ; but the plays which followed it also possess a vision, a complexity, that we do not find in the *Cid*. It has been pointed out that the discovery of Rome was an event of the first importance in Corneille's development, but its importance is not always understood. Corneille dealt with Rome at several

different periods of her history and his attitude towards her varied, but the most impressive of the Roman plays is perhaps *Cinna*. The *Cid* is the most individualistic, the most 'romantic' of his works. It does not possess, that is to say, any coherent view of society. There is simply the life of the court with its etiquette and conventions. *Cinna* is far from being a faultless play, but there does emerge from it a definite conception of society—something which can, I think, not unreasonably be called a social order. We must not expect to find in French drama the sort of picture of contemporary life that we get in English. French tragedy was essentially the product of an intellectual aristocracy. There was no place for *le peuple* whom Corneille regarded as creatures of instinct in whose life reason played little part. The social order which emerges from *Cinna* is therefore concerned with the problems of the ruling class, for it is assumed—not unnaturally—that reconstruction starts from above. The advance in Corneille's art is apparent from the great speech of Auguste who in the second act significantly displaces Cinna as the hero.

Cet empire absolu sur la terre et sur l'onde,
Ce pouvoir souverain que j'ai sur tout le monde,
Cette grandeur sans borne et cet illustre rang,
Qui m'a jadis coûté tant de peine et de sang,
Enfin tout ce qu'adore en ma haute fortune
D'un courtisan flatteur la présence importune,
N'est que de ces beautés dont l'éclat éblouit,
Et qu'on cesse d'aimer sitôt qu'on en jouit.
L'ambition déplaît quand elle est assouvie,
D'une contraire ardeur son ardeur est suivie ;
Et comme notre esprit, jusqu'au dernier soupir,
Toujours vers quelque objet pousse quelque désir,
Il se ramène en soi, n'ayant plus où se prendre,
Et monté sur le faîte, il aspire à descendre.
J'ai souhaité l'empire, et j'y suis parvenu ;
Mais en le souhaitant, je ne l'ai pas connu :
Dans sa possession j'ai trouvé pour tous charmes
D'effroyables soucis, d'éternelles alarmes,
Mille ennemis secrets, la mort à tout propos,
Point de plaisir sans trouble, et jamais de repos.

It is one of the finest examples of Corneille's handling of the grand style. Without any rhetoric, the *ampleur* of the style and the regular thud of the end-rhymes contrive to suggest a stable order. For there are two voices speaking in this passage—the voice of the lonely, harassed individual debating whether to give up his throne, and what one may call the public voice. It is no longer simply a matter of coming to terms with oneself or of satisfying accepted standards of honour, but of playing a part in society. *Cinna* is a drama of adjustment. The individual experience has to fit in with the experience of the community and the drama is only complete when this is accomplished. In *Cinna* therefore there is a blending of the political and the moral problems. It is not simply that all political problems are seen to involve a moral problem, but that in transforming moral problems into political problems Corneille gives them a wider context and immensely increases the import of his poetry ; and this makes his approach extremely actual to-day. In the great political discussion at the beginning of Act II one is aware of a straightening out of the emotions and order, which is so often discussed and so seldom defined, becomes something almost tangible.

Although Corneille's contemporaries thought of him as the author of *Cinna*, many modern French critics consider that *Nicomède* is the finest of the political plays. The passion of the Latin mind for the ' well made play ' may have something to do with this preference, but *Nicomède* is an extraordinary ironic *tour de force* which deserves to be better known than it is in England. ' Tenderness and passion have no part in it,' said Corneille in his Dedication. ' My chief aim has been to paint Roman politics in their external relations.' He sets his ' cool and efficient hero '—the language of the best-seller is somehow appropriate—against the background of political intrigue and proceeds, very skilfully, to ' debunk ' the large pretensions of Rome and her predatory designs on smaller countries. Nicomède's ruthless sardonic humour gives the play its peculiar flavour. Ostensibly he is trying to bolster up his father and make him resist the demands of Rome ; but there is an undercurrent of resentment which spares neither Prusias's inefficiency nor his senile passion for his second wife.

Prusias :

Quelle bassesse d'âme,
Quelle fureur t'aveugle en faveur d'une femme?
Tu la préfères, lâche! à ces prix glorieux
Que ta valeur unit au bien de tes aieux! . . .

Nicomède:

Je crois que votre example est glorieux à suivre . . .
. . . . . .
Pardonnez-moi ce mot, il est fâcheux à dire,
Mais un monarque enfin comme un autre homme expire . .

He carefully points the contrast between the office of king and its present occupant. The *expire*, with its suggestions of the funeral cortège, the vast mausoleum with the appropriate inscriptions, reveals the fatuity of the person who will be buried there. Prusias is a richly comic figure and has a definite place in Corneille's survey of seventeenth-century society. In the *Cid* and *Horace* he exposed an 'honour' which had become mechanical and inhuman. Through Félix (in *Polyeucte*) and Prusias he makes the essential criticisms of middle-class complacency—of the moral corruption which prevents the realization of Cornelian 'honour.'

A word must be said about a more debatable side of Corneille's poetry—the religious side. Some critics have denied that he is properly speaking a religious poet at all, while others have described *Polyeucte*, which is certainly his greatest play, as a masterpiece of religious poetry. It must be recorded with gratitude that it is refreshingly free from the incorrigibly romantic attitude towards sin that we find in a living Catholic writer like M. Mauriac ; but in spite of its subject it is probably neither more nor less religious than any of Corneille's other works. What is religious in all Corneille's best work is not the subject or the setting, but his sense of society as an ordered whole and man as a member of this hierarchy. If he tried to round the picture off in *Polyeucte* by presenting the natural order in the light of the supernatural, it seems to me that he failed. It is significant that in this play the fable was modified to fit the usual Cornelian formula and we are left with the feeling that the religion was not inevitable, but that any other motif might have produced an equally great play.

Corneille's world remains a circumscribed world and his religion does not extend the field of his experience as it clearly ought to have done.

It should be clear by now in what sense Corneille is an heroic poet. It has nothing to do with declamation and bombast (though there is plenty of both in his work), or with the misleading theory that his characters are supermen. It simply means that by a combination of insight and will power the moral values which Corneille derived from close contact with his class are raised in his poetry to a high level of intensity. He was a great poet because he expressed something that is permanent in human nature and because he had the whole weight of what was best in contemporary society behind him. One only has to compare him with Dryden to see the difference. For Dryden's age was not an heroic age and in trying to write heroic plays he was simply going against the spirit of his time. His drama is an example of the false sublime, of the stucco façade which ill conceals the viciousness and corruption beneath.

In his laborious commentary on Aristotle Corneille argued that tragedy should compel our 'admiration.' The need to admire is a primitive instinct in man, and when we compare what the seventeenth century admired with the contemporary prostration before film stars and record-breakers, we get some idea of the disastrous changes that have overtaken civilization.

V.

Corneille's later plays have been the subject of considerable controversy. Contemporary apologists like M. Schlumberger take up their stand against the traditional view which regards the later plays, in Lytton Strachey's words, as 'miserable failures.' M. Pierre Lièvre's Introduction to his admirable edition of the complete plays[1] is an eloquent plea that Corneille's work should be treated as a whole, as a steady development from the early comedies to the final tragedies. I confess that I find it difficult

[1] *Théâtre Complet* (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade), Gallimard, 1934, 2 vols. Fr. 160. This is much the most satisfactory edition of Corneille for ordinary purposes.

to accept this view. Plays like *Rodogune* and *Pompée*, which belong to the third period that lasts from 1644 to 1669, contain fine things, but compared with Corneille's best work they show a falling off. There is, perhaps, a greater breadth of characterization, but the poetry is less impressive. The fact that Corneille never stood still and never repeated himself may account for the difficulty. With *Polyeucte* the Cornelian hero is complete and there is no room for further development along those lines. The poet loses interest in the hero who degenerates into a mechanical warrior—*Attila* is the worst example—and concentrates on the persons who surround him. The main interest of the plays of this period lies in the amazons like Rodogune, Cornélie and the two Cléopâtres. This produces an alteration in the quality of the verse. Corneille develops the vein of rhetoric which is already visible in the *Cid*:

> Paraissez, Navarrois, Mores et Castillans,
> Et tout ce que l'Espagne a nourri de vaillants ;
> Unissez-vous ensemble, et faites une armée,
> Pour combattre une main de la sorte animée . . .

In *Rodogune* this becomes the staple of the whole play:

> Serments fallacieux, salutaire contrainte,
> Que m'imposa la force et qu'accepta ma crainte,
> Heureux déguisements d'un immortel courroux,
> Vains fantômes d'Etat, évanouissez-vous!

There is a natural tendency to rhetoric in French poetry—to use words as mere labels and rely for the 'poetry' on the drive of the alexandrine. Certainly there is no lack of drive in *Rodogune*, but there is a loss of subtlety and a marked coarseness of texture in the verse.

Although M. Schlumberger has apparently abandoned the view that the last plays of all are the crown of Corneille's work, he still gives *Pulchérie* and *Suréna* a high place. In these plays there is a return to the old Cornelian formula which was to some extent abandoned in the plays of the middle period. He sees in them a tenderness and serenity which he does not find in any of Corneille's other work. This may be so, but one cannot help wondering

whether they deserve all the praise they get. Consider, for example, the opening speech of *Pulchérie*:

> Je vous aime, Léon, et n'en fais point mystère:
> Des feux tels que les miens n'ont rien qu'il faille taire.
> Je vous aime, et non point de cette folle ardeur
> Que les yeux éblouis font maîtresse du cœur,
> Non d'un amour conçu par les sens en tumulte,
> A qui l'âme applaudit sans qu'elle se consulte,
> Et qui ne concevant que d'aveugles désirs,
> Languit dans les faveurs, et meurt dans les plaisirs:
> Ma passion pour vous, généreuse et solide,
> A la vertu pour âme, et la raison pour guide,
> La gloire pour objet, et veut sous votre loi
> Mettre en ce jour illustre et l'univers et moi.

According to Croce this passage marks the summit of Corneille's poetry and, with lofty assumption of philosophical detachment, he proceeds to commend Pulchérie's attitude to physical love. It is not difficult to see why this passage appeals to one whose criterion is evidently 'simple, sensuous and passionate.' It is by no means a negligible piece of verse, but it owes its charm to a subtle flavour of dissolution. The difficulty that one feels might be put by saying that honour wins too easily. It is clear from the looseness of texture, the slackness of the versification, that we are a long way from the poet of *Polyeucte*. It is the work of an old man, of a great poet in decline. Nor can one share Croce's enthusiasm for the content. For who but a survival of nineteenth-century romanticism can feel any sympathy for the bloodless spinster high-mindedly giving up her lover to contract a 'chaste' alliance with her father's aged counsellor?

What is to be the final estimate? 'Corneille,' answers M. Schlumberger, 'does not ask the supreme questions, neither does he attempt to answer them. If I give him a high place in my æsthetic there remains a vast region of myself in which I feel the need of other poets besides him.' It is clear that he lacks many of the qualities that we have come to expect of poetry. Certain fundamental truths were grasped with the clarity and tenacity of genius; he was a penetrating critic of the evils of the existing order; but his own vision was partial and incomplete and

The ' infinity ' sought by the will is the idealistic love of Troilus, which neglects the wearing action of time and the related inability of passion to live up to purely abstract ideals of love and honour ; and the very ' boundlessness ' of the desire, when it encounters the limits imposed by time and the body to which it feels enslaved, turns to the clogged inertia of Achilles and the endless self-scrutiny of the Greek camp.

D. A. TRAVERSI.

REVALUATIONS (XI):

ARNOLD AS CRITIC

'AND I do not like your calling Matthew Arnold Mr. Kidglove Cocksure. I have more reason than you for disagreeing with him and thinking him very wrong, but nevertheless I am sure he is a rare genius and a great critic.'[1]

The note of animus that Hopkins here rebukes in Bridges is a familiar one where Arnold is concerned: it characterizes a large part of recorded comment on him. Raleigh's essay in *Some Authors* is (if we can grant this very representative *littérateur* so much distinction) a convenient *locus classicus* for it and for the kind of critical injustice it goes with. But one may be quite free from such animus or from any temptation to it—may welcome rather than resent that in Arnold by which the Raleighs are most antagonized—and yet find critical justice towards him oddly difficult to arrive at. He seems to present to the appraising reader a peculiarly elusive quantity. At least, that is my experience as an admirer, and I am encouraged in generalizing by the fact that the experience of the most important literary critic of our time appears to have been much the same.

In *The Sacred Wood*, speaking of Arnold with great respect, Mr. Eliot calls him 'rather a propagandist for criticism than a critic,' and I must confess that for years the formula seemed to me unquestionably just. Is Arnold's critical achievement after all

[1] *The Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins to Robert Bridges, XCVII.*

a very impressive one? His weaknesses and his irritating tricks one remembers very well. Is it, in fact, possible to protest with any conviction when we are told (in the later essay, *Arnold and Pater*)?—

> 'Arnold had little gift for consistency or for definition. Nor had he the power of connected reasoning at any length; his flights are either short flights or circular flights. Nothing in his prose works, therefore, will stand very close analysis, and we may very well feel that the positive content of many words is very small.'

And yet, if the truth is so, how is it that we open our Arnold so often, relatively? For it is just the oddity of Arnold's case that, while we are apt to feel undeniable force in such judgments as the above, we nevertheless think of him as one of the most lively and profitable of the accepted critics. Let us at any rate seize on the agreement that as a propagandist for criticism he is distinguished. On the view that has been quoted the first two essays in *Essays in Criticism: First Series* would be the texts to stress as exhibiting Arnold at his strongest, and they have, indeed, seemed to me such. And re-reading confirms the claim of *The Function of Criticism at the Present Time* and *The Literary Influence of Academies* to be remembered as classical presentments of their themes. The plea for critical intelligence and critical standards and the statement of the idea of centrality (the antithesis of 'provinciality') are made in memorable formulations of classical rightness:

> whoever sets himself to see things as they are will find himself one of a very small circle; but it is only by this small circle, resolutely doing its own work that adequate ideas will ever get current at all.'
>
> 'All the world has, or proposes to have, this conscience in moral matters . . . And a like deference to a standard higher than one's own habitual standard in intellectual matters, a like respectful recognition of a superior ideal, is caused, in the intellectual sphere, by sensitiveness of intelligence.'
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> . . . not being checked in England by any centre of intelligent and urbane spirit . '

'M Planche's advantage is . . . that there is a force of cultivated opinion for him to appeal to.'

'. . . a serious, settled, fierce, narrow, provincial misconception of the whole relative value of one's own things and the things of others.'

Arnold's distinction as a propagandist for criticism cannot be questioned. At the same time, perhaps, it must be admitted that these essays do not involve any very taut or subtle development of an argument or any rigour of definition. They are pamphleteering—higher pamphleteering that has lost little of its force and relevance with the passage of time.

Yet it must surely be apparent that the propaganda could hardly have had its virtue if the pamphleteer had not had notable qualifications in criticism. The literary critic, in fact, makes a direct appearance, a very impressive one, in the judgment on the Romantics, which, in its time, remarks Mr. Eliot[1] (who elsewhere justly pronounces it incontrovertible) 'must have appeared startlingly independent.' It seems plain that the peculiar distinction, the strength, represented by the extracts given above, is inseparable from the critical qualifications manifested in that judgment: the sensitiveness and sure tact are essentially those of a fine literary critic.

But does any actual performance of Arnold's in set literary criticism bear out the suggestion at all convincingly? Again it is characteristic of his case that one should be able to entertain the doubt. How many of his admirers retain very strongly favourable impressions of the other series of *Essays in Criticism*?—for it is to this, and to the opening essay in particular, *The Study of Poetry*, that the challenge sends one back. For myself, I must confess to having been surprised, on a recent re-reading of that essay, at the injustice of my recollection of it. The references to Dryden and Pope tend (in my experience) to bulk unfairly, and, for that reason and others, there is a temptation to talk too easily of the essay as being chiefly memorable for having standardized Victorian taste and established authoritatively what, in the academic world, has hardly ceased to be the accepted perspective of poetic history.

[1] *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism*, p. 104.

And it is, actually, as a review of the past from the given period angle that the essay claims its classical status. But it is classical—for it truly is—because it performs its undertaking so consummately. Its representative quality is of the highest kind, that which can be achieved only by the vigorously independent intelligence. If it is fair to say that Arnold, in his dismissal of Dryden and Pope by the criterion of 'soul' and his curious exaltation of Gray, is the voice of the Romantic tradition in his time, we must note too that he is the same Arnold who passed the 'startlingly independent' judgment on the Romantics. And with whatever reservations, protests and irritations we read *The Study of Poetry*, it is impossible in reading it (I find) not to recognize that we have to do with an extraordinarily distinguished mind in complete possession of its purpose and pursuing it with easy mastery—that, in fact, we are reading a great critic. Moreover, I find that in this inconsequence I am paralleled by Mr. Eliot. He writes in *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (p. 118), in the mainly depreciatory chapter on Arnold:

> 'But you cannot read his essay on *The Study of Poetry* without being convinced by the felicity of his quotations: to be able to quote as Arnold could is the best evidence of taste. The essay is a classic in English criticism: so much is said in so little space, with such economy and with such authority.'

How is this curious inconsistency of impression—this discrepancy of report which, I am convinced, many readers of Arnold could parallel from their own experience of him—to be explained? Partly it is, I think, that, taking critical stock at a remove from the actual reading, one tends to apply inappropriate criteria of logical rigour and 'definition.' And it is partly (a not altogether separable consideration) that the essay 'dates' in various ways; allowances have certainly to be made with reference to the age to which it was addressed, certain things 'date' in the most damaging sense, and it is easy to let these things infect one's general impression of the 'period' quality of the essay.

The element that 'dates' in the worst sense is that represented by the famous opening in which Arnold suggests that religion is going to be replaced by poetry. Few now would care to endorse the unqualified intention of that passage, and Arnold as a theological

or philosophical thinker had better be abandoned explicitly at once. Yet the value of the essay does not depend on our accepting without reservation the particular terms in which Arnold stresses the importance of poetry in those introductory sentences, and he is not disposed of as a literary critic by pointing out that he was no theologian or philosopher ; nor is it proved that he was incapable of consistency and vigour of thought. Many who deplore Arnold's way with religion will agree that, as the other traditions relax and social forms disintegrate, it becomes correspondingly more important to preserve the literary tradition. When things are as already they were in Arnold's time, they make necessary, whatever else may be necessary too, the kind of work that Arnold undertook for 'Culture'—work that couldn't have been done by a theologian as such. No doubt Arnold might have been able to do it even better if he had had the qualifications that actually he hadn't ; he would at any rate have known his limits better, and wouldn't have produced those writings of his which have proved most ephemeral and which constitute the grounds on which Mr. Eliot charges him with responsibility for Pater.[1] But his actual qualifications were sufficiently remarkable and had their appropriate use. His best work is that of a literary critic, even when it is not literary criticism: it comes from an intelligence that, even if not trained to some kinds of rigour, had its own discipline ; an intelligence that is informed by a mature and delicate sense of the humane values and can manifest itself directly as a fine sensibility. That the specific qualifications of the literary critic have an important function some who most disapprove of Arnold's religious position readily grant.[2] Failure to recognize—or to recognize unequivocally—an admirable performance of the function in *The Study of Poetry* may be partly explained by that opening of the essay: Arnold, after all, issues the distracting challenge, however unnecessarily.

The seriousness with which he conceived the function and

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[1]See the essay 'Arnold and Pater' in *Selected Essays*.

[2]See, *e.g.*, *Poetry and Crisis* by Martin Turnell (Sands: The Paladin Press, 2/6). With what reservations Mr. Turnell, writing as a Catholic, grants it a perusal of his extremely interesting book will show. But the book, which thus comes out opportunely for my purpose, bears on my argument, I think, in the way I suggest.

the importance he ascribed to poetry are more legitimately expressed in the phrase, the best-known tag from the essay, 'criticism of life.' That it is not altogether satisfactory the animadversion it has been the object of must perhaps be taken to prove; at best we must admit that the intention it expresses hasn't, to a great many readers, made itself satisfactorily clear. Nevertheless Arnold leaves us with little excuse for supposing—as some of his most eminent critics have appeared to suppose—that he is demanding doctrine or moral commentary on life or explicit criticism. Nor should it be necessary to point out that all censure passed on him for having, in calling poetry 'criticism of life,' produced a bad definition is beside the mark.[1] For it should be obvious to anyone who reads the phrase in its context that Arnold intends, not to define poetry, but, while insisting (a main concern of the essay) that there are different degrees of importance in poetry, to remind us of the nature of the criteria by which comparative judgments are made.

Why Arnold should have thought the insistence and the reminder worth while and should have hit on the given phrase as appropriate for his purpose is not difficult to understand if we think of that Pater with whom, as noted above, he has been associated:

> '"Art for Art's sake" is the offspring of Arnold's culture; and we can hardly venture to say that it is even a perversion of Arnold's doctrine, considering how very vague and ambiguous that doctrine is.'

At any rate, we can certainly not say that 'Art for Art's sake' is the offspring of Arnold's 'criticism of life.' In fact, Arnold's phrase is sufficiently explained—and, I think, vindicated—as expressing an intention directly counter to the tendency that finds its consummation in 'Art for Art's sake.' Aestheticism was not a sudden development: the nature of the trend from Keats through Tennyson and Dante Gabriel Rossetti was, even in Arnold's mid-career, not unapparent to the critic who passed the judgment on the great Romantics. The insistence that poetry must be judged

[1] See, *e.g.*, J. M. Robertson's curious performance in *Modern Humanist's Reconsidered* referred to by Mr. Eliot.

as 'criticism of life' is the same critic's reaction to the later Romantic tradition; it puts the stress where it seemed to him that it most needed to be put.

In so far as Arnold ever attempts to explain the phrase it is in such terms as those in which, in the essay on Wordsworth, he explains why it is that Wordsworth must be held to be a greater poet than the 'perfect' Gautier. But with no more explanation than is given in *The Study of Poetry* the intention seems to me plain enough for Arnold's purposes. To define the criteria he was concerned with, those by which we make the more serious kind of comparative judgment, was not necessary, and I cannot see that anything would have been gained by his attempting to define them. His business was to evoke them effectively (can we really hope for anything better?) and that, I think, he must be allowed to have done. We may, when, for example, he tells us why Chaucer is not among the very greatest poets, find him questionable and provoking, but the questions are profitable and the provocations stimulate us to get clear in our own minds. We understand well enough the nature of his approach; the grounds of his criticism are sufficiently present. Pressed for an account of the intention behind the famous phrase, we have to say something like this: we make (Arnold insists) our major judgments about poetry by bringing to bear the completest and profoundest sense of relative value that, aided by the work judged, we can focus from our total experience of life (which includes literature), and our judgment has intimate bearings on the most serious choices we have to make thereafter in our living. We don't ordinarily ask of the critic that he shall tell us anything like this, or shall attempt to define the criteria by which he makes his major judgments of value. But Arnold appears to challenge the demand and so earns reprobation for not satisfying it. By considering the age to which he was addressing himself we are able to do him justice; but if in this way he may be said to 'date,' it is not in any discreditable sense.

There is still to be met the pretty general suspicion to which Mr. Eliot gives voice when he says[1] that Arnold 'was apt to think of the greatness of poetry rather than of its genuineness.' It is a

[1] *The Use of Poetry, etc.*, p. 110.

suspicion that is the harder to lay because, with a slight shift of accent, it turns into an unexceptionable observation:

> 'The best of Arnold's criticism is an illustration of his ethical views, and contributes to his discrimination of the values and relations of the components of the good life.'[1]

This very fairly accords due praise while suggesting limitations. We have, nevertheless, to insist that, but for Arnold's gifts as a literary critic, that criticism would not have had its excellence. And when the suspicion takes such form as the following,[2] some answer must clearly be attempted:

> 'Yet he was so conscious of what, for him, poetry was *for*, that he could not altogether see it for what it is. And I am not sure that he was highly sensitive to the musical qualities of verse. His own occasional bad lapses arouse the suspicion; and so far as I can recollect he never emphasizes this virtue of poetic style, this fundamental, in his criticism.'

Whatever degree of justice there may be in these suggestions, one point can be made at once: some pages of *The Study of Poetry* are explicitly devoted to considering 'genuineness'—the problem of how the critic makes those prior kinds of judgment, those initial recognitions of life and quality, which must precede, inform and control all profitable discussion of poetry and any evaluation of it as 'criticism of life.' Towards the close of the essay we read:

> To make a happy fireside clime
> To weans and wife,
> That's the true pathos and sublime
> Of human life."
>
> There is criticism of life for you, the admirers of Burns will say to us; there is the application of ideas to life! There is undoubtedly.'

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[1] *Criterion*, Vol. III, p. 162.
[2] *The Use of Poetry, etc.*, p. 118.

And Arnold goes on to insist (in terms that would invite the charge of circularity if we were being offered a definition, as we are not) that the evaluation of poetry as 'criticism of life' is inseparable from its evaluation as poetry; that the moral judgment that concerns us as critics must be at the same time a delicately relevant response of sensibility; that, in short, we cannot separate the consideration of 'greatness' from the consideration of 'genuineness.' The test for 'genuineness' Arnold indicates in this way:

> 'Those laws [of poetic truth and poetic beauty] fix as an essential condition, in the poet's treatment of such matters as are here in question, high seriousness;—the high seriousness which comes from absolute sincerity. The accent of high seriousness, born of absolute sincerity, is what gives to such verse as
>
> "In la sua volontade è nostra pace . . ."
>
> to such criticism of life as Dante's, its power. Is this accent felt in the passages which I have been quoting from Burns? Surely not; surely, if our sense is quick, we must perceive that we have not in those passages a voice from the very inmost soul of the genuine Burns; he is not speaking to us from these depths, he is more or less preaching.'

This passage is old-fashioned in its idiom[1], and perhaps 'high

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[1]Comparison with a passage in a more modern idiom may prove interesting:

> 'But unless the ordering of the words sprang, not from knowledge of the technique of poetry added to a desire to write some, but from an actual supreme ordering of *experience*, a closer approach to his work will betray it. Characteristically its rhythm will give it away. For rhythm is no matter of tricks with syllables, but directly reflects personality. It is not separable from the words to which it belongs. Moving rhythm in poetry arises only from genuinely stirred impulses, and is a more subtle index than any other to the order of the interests.'
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> I. A. Richards, *Science and Poetry*, p. 40.

Arnold's 'accent,' it will be shown, is intended to do much the same work as 'rhythm' in this passage.

seriousness' should be dismissed as a mere nuisance.[1] But 'absolute sincerity,' a quality belonging to the 'inmost soul' and manifested in an 'accent,' an 'accent that we feel if our sense is quick'—this phrasing, in the context, seems to me suggestive in a wholly creditable and profitable way. And actually it has a force behind it that doesn't appear in the quotation: it is strengthened decisively by what has come earlier in the essay.

The place in question is that in which Arnold brings out his critical tip, the 'touchstone.' Whatever that tip may be worth, its intention should be plain.[2] It is a tip for mobilizing our sensibility; for focussing our relevant experience in a sensitive point; for reminding us vividly of what the best is like.

> 'Of course we are not to require this other poetry to resemble them; it may be very dissimilar.'
>
> 'The specimens I have quoted differ widely from one another, but they have in common this: the possession of the very highest poetical quality.'

It is only by bringing our experience to bear on it that we can judge the new thing, yet the expectations that we bring, more or less unconsciously, may get in the way; and some readers may feel that Arnold doesn't allow enough for the danger. But that he means to allow for it and envisages the problem with the delicate assurance of a fine critic is plain.

What, however, we have particularly to mark—the main point of turning back to this place in the essay—is what follows. Arnold, while protesting that 'It is much better simply to have recourse to concrete examples,' ventures, nevertheless, to give some critical account, 'not indeed how and why' the characters of a high quality of poetry arise, 'but where and in what they arise.'

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[1] It is an insistent nuisance in the whole essay. But the suspicion that Arnold is demanding with it a Victorian nobility of *tenue* should have been disposed of by his remarks on Burns.

[2] For a striking example of the kind of misinterpretation from which Arnold has suffered, the reader should turn up Raleigh's comments on the 'touchstone.'

The account is characteristic in its method and, I think, notably justifies it.

> 'They are in the matter and substance of the poetry and they are in its manner and style. Both of these, the substance and matter on the one hand, the style and manner on the other, have a mark, an accent of high beauty, worth and power.'

And the succeeding couple of pages might seem to be mainly a matter of irritating repetition that implicitly admits an inability to get any further. Nevertheless, there is development, and the varied reiteration of associated terms, which is certainly what we have, has a critical purpose:

> 'We may add yet further, what is in itself evident, that to the style and manner of the best poetry their special character, their accent, is given by their diction, and, even yet more, by their movement. And though we distinguish between the two characters, the two accents, of superiority, yet they are nevertheless vitally connected one with the other. The superior character of truth and seriousness, in the matter and substance of the best poetry, is inseparable from the superiority of diction and manner marking its style and movement.'

It is plain that, in this insistent association of 'accent,' 'diction' and 'movement' in the equally insistent context, Arnold is offering his equivalent of Mr. Eliot's 'musical qualities of verse' and of the 'rhythm' of the footnote to page 327. His procedure is a way of intimating that he doesn't suppose himself to have said anything very precise. But he seems to me, all the same, to have done the appropriate directing of attention upon poetry—and that was the problem—not less effectively than the other two critics.[1]

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[1]As a way of bringing home the difficulty of achieving anything more precise in the treatment of this problem, the reader may profitably compare with one another Arnold's passages, the footnote above from *Science and Poetry*, Mr. Eliot's account of the 'auditory imagination' (*The Use of Poetry, etc.*, pp. 118-119), and Coleridge's remarks on 'the sense of musical delight' in chapter XV (head 1) of *Biographia Literaria*.

Arnold's comparative adequacy will be apparent.

Inquiry, then, into the main criticisms that have been brought against *The Study of Poetry* yields reports decidedly in Arnold's favour. If he speaks in that essay with economy and authority, it is because his critical position is firmly based, because he knows what he is setting out to do, and because he is master of the appropriate method. The lack of the 'gift for consistency or for definition' turns out to be compensated, at his best, by certain positive virtues: tact and delicacy, a habit of keeping in sensitive touch with the concrete, and an accompanying gift for implicit definition—virtues that prove adequate to the sure and easy management of a sustained argument and are, as we see them in Arnold, essentially those of a literary critic.

However, it must be confessed that none of the other essays in that volume can be called a classic in English criticism. The *Milton* is a mere ceremonial address. (But it may be noted at this point that the reader who supposes Arnold to have been an orthodox idolator of Milton will be surprised if he turns up in *Mixed Essays* the essay called *A French Critic on Milton*). The *Gray* dates most of all the essays in the series—dates in the most damaging sense; though it may be said to have gained in that way a classical status as a document in the history of taste. Neither the *Keats* nor the *Shelley* makes any show of being a model critique of poetry; but nevertheless the rarely gifted literary critic is apparent in them. It is apparent in his relative placing of the two poets. 'Shelley,' he says, 'is not a classic, whose various readings are to be noted with earnest attention.' And the reasons he gives for his low valuation, though they are not backed with particular criticism, seem to me unanswerable. On Keats he is extraordinarily just, in appreciation both of the achievement and of the potentiality—extraordinarily just, if we think of the bias that 'criticism of life' is supposed to imply. The critic's quality comes out in some notable phrases:

> 'But indeed nothing is more remarkable in Keats than his clear-sightedness, his lucidity; and lucidity is in itself akin to character and to high and severe work.'

> 'Even in his pursuit of "the pleasures of song," however, there is that stamp of high work which is akin to character, which is character passing into intellectual production.'

The *Wordsworth*, with all its limitations, is at any rate a distinguished personal estimate, and though by a Wordsworthian, and by the critic who spoke of poetry as the 'application of ideas to life,' exhibits its salutary firmness about the 'philosophy.'

But what has to be stressed is his relative valuation of the great Romantics: Wordsworth he put first, then Byron (and for the right reasons), then Keats, and last Shelley. It is, in its independence and its soundness, a more remarkable critical achievement than we easily recognize to-day. (The passage on the Romantics in the *Heine* essay should not be overlooked).

If any other particular work of his is to be mentioned, it must be the long essay *On Translating Homer*. It was, as Saintsbury points out,[1] an extraordinary original undertaking at the time, and it was carried out with such spirit and intelligence that it is still profitable reading.

The actual achievement in producible criticism may not seem a very impressive one. But we had better inquire where a more impressive is to be found. As soon as we start to apply any serious standard of what good criticism should be, we are led towards the conclusion that there is very little. If Arnold is not one of the great critics, who are they? Which do we approach with a greater expectation of profit? Mr. Eliot himself—yes; and not only because his preoccupations are of our time; his best critical writing has a higher critical intensity than any of Arnold's. Coleridge's pre-eminence we all recognize. Johnson?—that Johnson is a living writer no one will dispute, and his greatness is certainly apparent in his criticism. Yet that he imposes himself there as a more considerable power than Arnold isn't plain to me, and strictly as a critic—a critic offering critical value—he seems to me to matter a good deal less to us. As for Dryden, important as he is historically, I have always thought the intrinsic interest of his criticism much overrated: he showed strength and distinction in independent judgment, but I cannot believe that his discussion of any topic has much to offer us. We read him (if we do) because

[1] 'Almost for the first time, too, we have ancient literature treated more or less like modern—neither from the merely philological point of view, nor with reference to the stock platitudes and traditions about it.' *Matthew Arnold*, G. Saintsbury, p. 68.

of his place in literary history, whereas we read Arnold's critical writing because for anyone who is interested in literature it is compellingly alive. I can think of no other English critic who asks to be considered here, so I will say finally that, whatever his limitations, Arnold seems to me decidedly more of a critic than the Sainte-Beuve to whom he so deferred.

F. R. LEAVIS.

COMMENTS AND REVIEWS

It is opportune to call attention to the work of *For Intellectual Liberty*, which provides an opening for 'intellectuals' and professional workers to unite in pursuit of a few fundamental aims that readers of this journal are likely to find acceptable, by means that are not open, I think, to the usual objections. The latest leaflet of the Association contains an admirable, and admirably concise, statement of the relations of public policy and intellectual liberty and explores the possibilities of action.

The minimum subscription to F.I.L. is 5s. a year (3s. 6d. for teachers in elementary and secondary schools), but those who can are asked to give more. Particulars of the Association may be had from the Hon. Secretary, 23 Haymarket, London, S.W.1.

L.C.K.

IVOR GURNEY AND THE ENGLISH ART-SONG

The series of commemorative recitals of the songs of Ivor Gurney, given by the B.B.C. last July, was on the whole disappointing; but if one had perhaps been led to expect too much by the understandable zeal of his friends and colleagues—for

Gurney was, by all accounts, an endearing personality about whose tragic destiny one's feelings must inevitably be tender—there was nonetheless enough evidence in these recitals to establish Gurney as a serious composer, if a very little one, with a melodic idiom that constitutes a unique contribution to English song. He was influenced by no fashionable or unfashionable movement, he was not even in on the renaissance of English folk-music. Yet his melodic lines, of considerable length and flexibility, and habitually asymmetrical, indicate an assured measure of independence. It is not a demonstrative idiom ; it expresses what is essentially a single mode of feeling, quiet, meditative and retrospective. The tone is gentle, almost conversational—his position in English music is somewhat similar to that of Edward Thomas in English poetry, though I doubt if he has any quality corresponding to Thomas's irony and delicacy of fibre. Gurney's is a timid genius, but in his best work he has done something that can never be equalled because it can never be imitated, being created music, *sui generis*.

The question that seems to me to be worth asking is, Would Gurney have been a better or a worse composer if he had not been a pupil of Stanford? He was, of course, a nostalgic, a retrospective artist, yet he was, in his very nostalgia, an artist of the twentieth century, whereas the convention he adopted belonged in its essence to an earlier age. I felt occasionally in listening to these songs that there was some slight tension between Gurney's ways of melodic expression and the harmonic idiom he was, by force of circumstance, compelled to adopt. Considering the complex and asymmetrical nature of his most characteristic melodies I think it is possible that he might have written his piano parts in a rather more linear manner if he had been as familiar with the English musical heritage as was, for instance, Philip Heseltine ; and it is just possible that in this case he might have been less rigorously committed to a single—in the long run rather monotonous—manner. On the other hand he might never, but for Stanford's influence, have learned to express himself at all.

But it was no such technical conundrum that Gurney himself ever intended to solve ; the problem that concerned him was that of reconciling the claims of the human singing voice with those of the human speaking voice, and this is a problem that every song-writer is obliged to face. Gurney was well equipped to tackle

this matter because he was a poet himself—a reasonably respectable Georgian with some knowledge of his craft, though only a rather touching matey generosity of spirit can account for the opinion, prevalent among musicians, that he was a poet of any significance. When only a comparatively simple lyrical poem is in question it is not in itself enormously difficult to attain to a measure of fidelity to the sense of the words, the difficulty lies in making this faithful mirror musically interesting and self-subsistent. And the same problem is accentuated when poems embodying more profound and complex experiences are to be given a musical accompaniment. Music can do nothing to 'enhance' the 'meaning' of a poem like Thomas's *Lights Out* or Yeats's *The Folly of being Comforted*; it may add something of its own, but from the poem itself it can only take away. In the rhythms of these two poems, for instance, there is implicit an extremely subtle balance between the conversational rhythms of the speaking voice and the rhythms of lyrical (that is, quasi musical) declamation; to attempt to translate these rhythms into a vocal line means that some of the subtlety of balance must be sacrificed, that one possible rhythmic interpretation must be clumsily insisted on at the expense of others. It is significant that in setting these, and similar poems, Gurney's music tends increasingly to the condition of heightened declamation—encourages the poetical at the expense of the musical virtues. As songs they are, though very interesting, literally a partial success.

That very remarkable Moravian composer Leos Janácek held, it is apposite to recall, that all the mysteries of musical language can be explained by reference to the rhythms and inflexions of the human voice when it speaks in anger or love or fear or any other emotion to which human beings are susceptible, and he evolved his own unique melodic speech only after a long and most scrupulous research into the varying tonal traits of the language spoken by his countrymen. In this individual musical language he composed some of the most interesting music of our time. Yet I think it is significant that he should always have been regarded as a by-product of musical history and that, despite his carefully formulated attitude, he should have no imitators or disciples. He deliberately exploited, I believe, only a part of the melodic resources of which music is capable. I do not want to suggest

that the natural rhythms of the human singing voice are any less subtle than those of the human speaking voice, but they are, I am sure, of a different order—different, it may be, in being less topical and local. Lyrical utterance and the spoken word, if they aren't actually antipathetic, will never be easy bedfellows, and the troubadours (for instance), who created some of the finest vocal music, qua lyricism, the world has ever known, recognized this when they unashamedly treated the words as material for decorative arabesque ; nor did the notorious ' realism ' of the Elizabethans in their illustration of verbal ' effects ' amount, in the long run, to much more than a traditionally sanctioned musical convention.

Some sort of compromise seems, then, to be unavoidable, and if one is tempted to think that compromise is inevitably limiting one has in refutation only to examine—I am thinking of examples in which the ' spoken ' word has considerable intrinsic poetic value and metrical subtlety—Peter Warlock's magnificent settings of Yeats in *The Curlew*. To compare these songs with Gurney's *The Folly of being Comforted* brings home the difference between the thing accomplished and the admirable intention. But the intention is not to be sniffed at, and Gurney's is a beautiful song that repays the closest study.

It is a corollary of all I have been saying that the poem which will allow of the most profound, as well as the most successful, musical treatment will not *usually* be very profound in itself—or anyway it will not be very difficult or corrugated rhythmically. The emotional associations of the tritest poetic convention were sufficient to inspire the Elizabethan lutenist or madrigalist to the bravest flight of melodic fancy ; and the finest of all the Gurney songs broadcast in the series of recitals seemed to me to be a setting of a completely commonplace, not to say factitious, poem by John Freeman called *Last Hours*. Elsewhere there is something less than mastery ; Gurney's personality, for all his melodic originality and, sometimes, the boldness of his harmony, does not always assert itself strongly enough to dispel every suspicion of the stock in trade of the Edwardian ballad, while the more pretentious de la Mare songs, such as *The Scribe*, tend to be flat and tedious because so uncertain in intention. But the unpretentious settings of Fletcher—good but minor poetry—are almost invariably

beautiful, and *Sleep*, though inferior to, is worthy to be put beside, the setting of this poem by Peter Warlock.

Twenty representative songs by Gurney have recently been published in two elegantly produced volumes (with frontispiece and preface) by the Oxford University Press, at the reasonable price of 5/- a volume.

W.H.M.

DEFENDING LETTERS

DEFENSE DES LETTRES, par G. Duhamel (Mercure de France, 1937).

IN DEFENCE OF LETTERS, tr. by E. F. Boxman (Dent, 1938, 3/6).

Most of M. Duhamel's theses are acceptable. As the title indicates he is concerned about the present state of literature and civilization. 'La crise qui secoue le monde n'est pas une crise économique ou politique ou sociale. C'est une crise de civilisation . . . je ne me lasse pas de dire que, dans les conditions actuelles du monde humain, la destinée de notre civilisation est liée à la destinée du livre. Et j' ajoute aussitôt que la cause du livre dépend, pour une très grande part, de la ferme volonté du corps universitaire.' His manner is solemn ; he writes as a sympathetic elder to his younger contemporaries. 'J'ai composé le présent ouvrage non seulement pour attirer l'attention de mes contemporains sur certaines questions poignantes, mais pour laisser un témoignage.' The simplicity and dignity of the book make it an admirable choice for a school prize.

But nowadays in a more sophisticated world everyone is willing to admit the existence of a *Kulturkrise*, not only those who try to defend letters, but also those who are content to drift with the times and those whose deliberate intention is to exploit the 'crisis.' Consequently an effective defence must make it possible to distinguish friend from foe. I do not know how the book was received in France ; but one English reaction deserves to be quoted because it is so representative of the stock attitude to any general

condemnation of the state of letters. And those whose aim is to do more than salve their conscience by dignified protests might well consider the implications of the following situation.

In the *Times Literary Supplement* for August 6th, 1938, M. Duhamel's book was taken as one of the texts in an article on 'Present Discontents.' The direct comment of an editorial in the same issue ran: 'These are the anxieties which trouble our correspondent. It may be that some of his readers will profess a robuster faith in the powers of the spirit to maintain itself inviolate against all that money-getting can do, whether in the book market, the cinema, or the wireless.' And in this editorial the writer, unabashed, asserts: 'There has always been as much trash as the public could absorb; and the vastly increased appetite of a vastly increased public that can read is fed every day by masterpieces in scores, every one of them too masterly to be announced in anything narrower than a couple of columns and anything smaller than very large capitals. That is sad, and silly; but the real danger is that all this trumpeting and shouting, all this parade of wind, earthquake and fire, should drown the still small voice of true literature.' One cannot, alas, suppose that this is a piece of stringent self-criticism. For in this same issue detective novels receive their usual honoured place. The novel of the week which is given two columns of prominence was *Rebecca* by Daphne du Maurier. A few excerpts from the review will be sufficient to clinch the point. 'If one chooses to read the book in a critical fashion—but only a tiresome reviewer is likely to do that—it becomes an obligation to take off one's hat to Miss du Maurier for the skill and assurance with which she sustains a highly improbable fiction . . . The conventions of a story of this kind are not the conventions of the so-called realistic novel, and it would be absurd to reproach Miss du Maurier for her fine, careless rapture. In its kind *Rebecca* is extraordinarily bold and confident, eloquent and accomplished to a degree that merits genuine respect. Hundreds of novelists to-day try to write on a similar theme ("low brow story with a middlebrow finish"); the few who produce novels as readable as this are household names. It is fair, no doubt, to call this type of fiction "dope." But it is no good pretending that everybody would read Tolstoy or Proust if there were no dope literature.' In the light of this the close of the

editorial appears for what it is, a perfect parody of the editorial manner. 'The whole world is in need of spiritual truth and freedom, and discouragement that should lead to indifference might well be fatal to civilization.'

That, however dignified, a simple general approach is ineffective is shown more clearly in the second part of the book which treats of the duties and responsibilities of authors. Here again much of what he says is sound, though nothing is new. And though his French public will feel sure here and there of the particular case of abuse M. Duhamel has in mind, the average English reader will not derive much profit from a catalogue of specimen cases without, as it were, any case-histories. The one concrete example—the portrait of Brandes—stands out vividly in contrast with the rest. But it is not mere want of particularity which diminishes the value of the book. There is in marked contrast to the expressed intention a distressing instability of tone. M. Duhamel does not seem to have made clear to himself what audience he imagined he was addressing. Some remarks seem to be aimed at the dawning intelligence, others to contemporary authors; whole sections would suit a French colonial public, others would do better for 'ces petites gens d'entre lesquels je suis sorti.' Consequently his observations vary enormously in value and in scope. But whereas a short chapter is adequate to deal with some technical point such as the difficulties of the export book trade to South America, it is alarming to find him raising problems of the following order: 'La littérature française est-elle, comme on l'a dit parfois, une littérature de moralistes? Voilà sans doute un problème qui demande examen': and treating it at such a level that it can be polished off in half a dozen pages.

Défense des lettres at least serves as a reminder that a general presentation of the position of letters in this country is urgently needed. There is much scattered material already available. But all the aspects of the problem must be brought together into one volume. And above all it must be particular and topical. If the law of libel should prove an insuperable obstacle, there is still another solution. For one learns more say, of the position of the artist from one short story of Henry James on this theme than one can glean from the whole three hundred pages of this book.

H. A. MASON.

THE PRESS

REPORT ON THE BRITISH PRESS (PEP, 16 Queen Anne's Gate, S.W.1, 10/6).

That the part played by the Press in the modern world is an important and increasingly dominant one is generally admitted. For good or ill the course of our civilization is largely determined by the way the Press is directed. It is in fact one of the forces which must be controlled if what is left of our cultural tradition is not to be allowed to disintegrate completely. Consequently any light that can be thrown on the present state of the Press and its observable tendencies is to be welcomed. Unfortunately most of the published criticism comes from biassed sources or is based on insufficient information. The present report, therefore, on the face of it deserves attention. For, to quote from one of their own pamphlets, 'PEP is an independent, voluntary, non-party group and is not run for profit. It consists of more than a hundred working members, and through its broadsheet PLANNING, is in touch with many more hundreds of people actively interested in promoting national reconstruction through an objective fact-finding approach to current social and economic problems.' The report is the result of three years' work by the Press Group of PEP. 'The experience represented on the group has included newspaper and periodical editing, news editing, feature editing, leader writing, national and provincial newspaper reporting, staff and free-lance writing for a wide variety of publications, circulation management, advertising, public relations work in government, public concern and company interests, issue of publications for review and of Press releases, broadcasting, and literary and radio criticism.' The main object of the report is 'to present a clear and balanced account of the present state of development of the Press and its problems and achievements as an industry and as a social organ.'

Both the urgency of the question and the illumination (however partial) it has received demand that the present report be judged by the severest possible standards. And since the Press is so closely linked with the cultural prospects of society, it is by its treatment of the Press as a cultural force that the report must be finally judged. And here, as I hope to show, it is most

faulty. The book is strongest, not so much in fact-finding, as in fact-collecting. A useful assemblage from current reference books makes sufficiently plain the situation of the Press considered as an industry. The original researches of the group deal with topics of doubtful or slight interest, though they represent great labour and industrious collecting of 'facts.' Naturally the straight-forward accounts of the processes involved in running a newspaper, from wood-pulp to final delivery, as coming from those who are actually engaged in this work, carry conviction. But where the mere collecting of data is useless, where in fact another discipline and technique are required—and it is in this field that most of the more important problems lie—the writers show themselves to be ill-equipped and out of their depth.

The most admirable feature of the report lies in the weight of evidence it brings to support conclusions that are generally drawn but only tentatively held for the want of the very information that is assembled here. On the basis of this report one can assert and demonstrate that the history of the newspaper industry has followed in broad outline the normal development of industry in Great Britain. There is an excellent and detailed account of the financial relation between the Press and its advertising interests. One of the consequences that is plainly drawn, is the resulting impossibility of introducing a new national paper with a large circulation without a capital running into millions. Figures are quoted to show that the national Press is expanding while the circulation of the provincial Press is at a standstill. They point out that it is virtually impossible to conduct an influential paper without carrying advertising. Thus: 'each paper has a business side whose sole interest is profit. Advertising managers are not primarily concerned with the accuracy, veracity or social desirability of an advertisement.' Nor do they hesitate to conclude that the commercial function of the Press conflicts with its social function as an agency of enlightenment.

The inadequacy of the report in so far as it treats of the Press as a social influence is not easily shown in a review. For it is a pervasive inadequacy which takes the form at one point of omissions, and at another of evasions: the problems are not seen or are confused. But one initial assumption can clearly be shown to point to a deficiency. The writers of the report are aware of

a difference between the two main parts of their report. 'As an industry the Press can to some extent be studied by objective methods, but many of its problems and the major part of its output defy measurement and confront any investigator with great dangers of subjective bias.' Again, 'no two people are likely to agree in detail about the social influences of the Press. There is no way of measuring these influences objectively . . . the material for such an assessment as follows is inevitably subjective.' Now without wishing to be philosophical about these terms 'objective' and 'subjective' or to push the argument too far (though the attitude here criticized is to be found generally among amateur sociologists) it can at least be maintained that the strict use of these terms presupposes an approach which renders the whole effort of evaluation vain. For if any opinion about the quality of the Press is 'subjective,' the mere fact of adding and comparing a hundred or so opinions does not greatly redeem their damning personal nature. No effort of national reconstruction can proceed on such a basis. If there are no recognized standards to which judgments can be related, no coherent plan can be formed. Of course, the writers do have standards: but they are not sufficiently high or sufficiently related to serve them in the crucial cases.

A useful comparison to clarify the point may be made between this report and the chapter on the Press in *England* by Wilhelm Dibelius. A careful reading of both reveals the difference between the clear judgment of a cultivated mind and the hesitancy of the imperfectly educated. Two examples must suffice. In both works there are discussions of the effect of the Press on public taste. Dibelius wrote: 'This (agitation) is one method to influence the masses: the other is continuous reiteration of all the slogans of the market-place to darken counsel and stifle independent thought in the bud. The Press always boasts that it educates the masses intellectually: it certainly does so in many small questions of the day: in all the big issues, however, it does exactly the opposite: it repeats—with the most skilful variation in detail—the same argument so often that it becomes an axiom and makes the reader's mind absolutely inaccessible to any arguments from the opposite camp.' The attitude of the report is fairly represented by this: 'No newspaper can do more than keep one step in front of its public, but no newspaper can afford to be one step behind it. So

far from the public taste having fallen from a once high level, there is good reason to suppose that it was even lower in the past, although the rise of mass-circulation newspapers has made its shortcomings much more generally conspicuous.'

The second example concerns the improper influences which are brought to bear on the Press. Here the report, no doubt in its desire to avoid subjectivism, unfortunately gives the impression that it is trying to evade the issue and while making minor admissions on the way finally whittles down these distorting influences to the relatively minor 'unconscious journalistic bias.' The report concludes on this subject with the following: 'Indeed, after reviewing all these potentially distorting influences, it appears creditable that the Press maintains so high a degree of impartiality as it does.' Speaking, it is true, of Northcliffe, Dibelius wrote: 'in a great newspaper of this type everything is politics, not only the leading articles. There is political significance in the amount of space a sub-editor will give to a news-item: whether it is merely inserted once or hammered into the reader's mind with a constant stream of fresh detail: the kind of type it has been set in: whether it is being followed up in a succession of leaders and so used to create opinion, or merely lost amid the mass of other news-items. When political agitation, on the grand scale, is being carried on, this propaganda purpose must inspire not leaders only but every line that appears in the paper.'

These examples are quoted not merely to show a difference of temper and outlook, but to draw attention to the paralysis of the 'subjective-objective' method. For the report does not attempt seriously to bring evidence to support its views and refute those of critics such as Dibelius. Yet these questions are capable of rational discussion. If public taste has really improved since the war, the signs of improvement can be indicated. The laws of libel may make it difficult to cite particular cases of undue influence. At least to assert that they are the exception without showing the method of calculation is hardly scientific. The whole question of the relation of the Press to public taste needs more extensive treatment than it is given here. The formula, 'give the public what it wants,' in particular, needs to be more rigorously analysed. Such an analysis would have involved considerable improvements throughout the book.

The standards appealed to in the reports are not despicable: it is just that they are not high enough. They are probably those of most self-respecting journalists. But it is not enough to take *The Times* and the *Manchester Guardian* as models of what a paper should be. Further, there is something equivocal about the appraisal of the 'new popular journalistic technique.' 'American popular papers,' we learn, 'are even more brightly and crisply written than the British popular Press.' 'Long and prosy articles have been replaced throughout the popular Press by short paragraphs with stimulating headlines.' The increase in circulation of the *Telegraph* 'is one of the wonders of post-war Fleet Street.' 'The class papers have profited by the experience of the popular Press to brighten their pages.' Typical of the general attitude is the complaint that the one 'cultural subject' mishandled by reporters is Science. Whereas, 'in some of the popular newspapers the quality of book criticism is remarkably high. In the "class" newspaper, the critics, or at any rate those who cover art, music, literature and drama, are men and women in the front rank of their respective subjects.'

In concluding the writers point out that their report, 'is intended as a first step towards building up the necessary awareness of the problem, the necessary body of information, and the necessary sense of responsibility.' Moreover they consider, 'that many necessary improvements in the British Press can only be secured by providing for the continuous scientific study of the Press and full discussion of its problems,' and suggest that a Press Institute be set up in England. This support would rather suggest, first, that something more than a narrow 'scientific' attitude is required: that the essential facts do not exist for observation until a certain degree of cultural awareness is reached: and that the interpretation of these facts involves a deeper understanding than is shown here of the relation of the Press to civilized standards and of its social responsibilities and shortcomings.

H. A. MASON.

EDUCATION, WRITING AND ACTION

WRITING AND ACTION : a documentary anthology. Compiled and edited by Mary Palmer (George Allen and Unwin, 8/6).

This anthology consists of extracts from the works of men who ' wrote to persuade to action '—action for intellectual, social and political liberty, and against intolerance, ignorance and oppression. The greater number of the extracts are as noteworthy for their clear and vigorous prose as for their content. The value that the editor attaches to good writing and, consequently, good reading, is stressed in a very clear and sensible note ' On Reading and Writing.'

As history, too, the book is of great interest. It is possible to trace from Sir Thomas More (the first writer quoted) to the present day the same evils produced by the same ring of vested interests—' a certain conspiracy of rich men,' More calls them. The true nature of the Puritan rebellion is well brought out—any illusions about its ' revolutionary ' nature can be disposed of from first-hand evidence in the extracts from Lilburne and Winstanley (some of the best prose in the book), the representatives of the truly revolutionary sections of the Commonwealth party.

The editor thinks ' that teachers may find in the book a useful link between English, History and Science in VIth forms ' (it contains a good section on ' Science and Toleration '). Certainly, it could be used with advantage in English lessons with any of these branches, of the Sixth, or in History lessons, with a form not specializing in History, as an excellent introduction or groundwork. But something must be done about the price: very few schools or pupils can afford eight-and-sixpence for a text book. It is to be hoped that the publishers will feel encouraged to issue a cheap reprint as soon as possible.

F.C.

POETRY AND ANARCHISM, by Herbert Read (Faber and Faber, 6/-).

Miss Ethel Mannin, according to the publishers, says that it is a very long time since she has been so excited about a book ; she thinks that its lucidity is admirable, its sanity superb, and that its wisdom blows like a great clean breath of fresh air through all the hot air and general deoxygenation of so-called ' left ' thought to-day. With the best will in the world one can hardly say that Mr. Read didn't deserve this. Any good cause is liable to be discredited by its supporters but this book does nothing to mitigate the danger. And yet, painful as it is to think of the people who will be waving their red and black banners, there is a great deal of good in this book, and in its timeliness it may fulfil an important function.

It comes at a moment when people are fed-up with international affairs that consist of the manœuvring and power-balancing of states, whether quasi-democratic or dictatorial. And it reminds them enthusiastically and with much good feeling that an alternative political principle is ready to hand. The strength and weakness of anarchism both lie in its being a genuinely different political principle and not possessed of either the futility or the immediate workability of a mere variation in state policy, such as dictatorial communism.

Mr. Read believes that anarcho-syndicalism *is* readily workable and could keep production running at its present speed. Others may doubt whether it could maintain the existing standard of material prosperity—though what it did give us would be more secure and better shared out. About anarchism in Spain too Mr. Read is unpractically hopeful. In the light of George Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia* he seems fatally to underestimate the repressive strength there of Russian (state) communism. In fact it is probably just at the times when state politics have produced crisis without collapse, and the states are braced up for survival, that anarchism can least hope to function successfully ; in an air-raid you support the best defensive organism, and that at present is generally a central government.

In the main *Poetry and Anarchism* leaves on one side both working policy and closely-reasoned theory, concentrating with a rather too consciously ' poetic ' directness upon central principle.

The lack of discipline and ordered thinking that pressure of conviction might excuse are here made worse by Mr. Read's effusive intellectuality. Psycho-analysis, surrealism, J. D. Unwin, and Kierkegaard are all brought in with that thrilled responsiveness to ideas that must have given animal magnetism and phrenology their day of fashion.

For all that, the book should be read, read rapidly for its main idea and excellence of intention and sentiment, and not taken too seriously as a fully reasoned statement of its case. The best passages are the denunciations of bureaucracy, of huge-scale centralized politics, of professional diplomacy, of politics as a career, of general governmental delegates instead of *ad hoc* delegates; these denunciations spring direct from the central doctrine and point its significance. Most of them are to be found in the chapter called 'The Necessity of Anarchism.' They suggest implicitly how the principles of this mode of co-operative social life can be expressed in the detail of individual lives: in eschewing personal dominance; in combating centralization, with its gerontocracy and self-perpetuating committees; and in working to disintegrate precedent-ridden institutions and to dissolve the fixed social categories, of whatever kind, by which personal relationships are depersonalized.

D.W.H.

MR. CHASE ON WORDS

THE TYRANNY OF WORDS, by Stuart Chase (Methuen, 10/6).

The continuance of certain disputes, thinks Mr. Stuart Chase, shows that civilization is in danger. Some of them can be brought nearer their conclusion by a more scrupulous use of words, which is strongly to be recommended. Others cannot properly speaking be concluded, for properly speaking they have never begun. They are mere word-spinning and, as they are about nothing at all, can only be abandoned.

There are subjects, he says, about which it is strictly impossible to know anything, and therefore impossible to think or to speak. They do not include mathematics, perhaps not physics, but certainly ethics, politics and metaphysics. This scepticism although wide is not in itself surprising, for something very like it is familiar

in a number of quarters. What is surprising is that it should be Mr. Chase's, that he should hold it firmly, and that he should have no fear of its implications. They include a pessimism at least not favourable and possibly fatal to civilization ; which is just what Mr. Chase says he wishes to preserve.

If any dangers threaten they do so, not from the region of mathematics, but precisely from that of ethics and politics. It seems unlikely that their sole cause should be word-spinning, which is a trivial pastime ; but if not they have other causes which, according to the sceptics, are hidden from us and are beyond our control. If and when the dangers come, we can only submit ; if they are real, they are also ineluctable like the scourges once known as divine—plagues in the Middle Ages, and earthquakes, cyclones and floods to-day.

Not that Mr. Chase himself appears unaware of the helplessness to which he is reduced, and to which he would reduce other people. There are no general principles, he says, in the light of which to decide even so important a question as that between peace and war. ' Non-resistance '—I am quoting from his book—' is meaningless as a timeless principle.' It is meaningless, not false. While itself not true, that is, it can neither be qualified nor negatived to yield truth ; it cannot serve even as a starting-point for discussion: it can only be ignored, together with the books which have hitherto been held to command, to defend or to controvert it. For it can be neither controverted, defended nor commanded, and the books are as void of significance as the scribble of an uneducated child. If and when war comes it must find us unprepared: we shall neither take up arms nor refuse to take them up because we have thought about doing the one thing or the other ; we shall hardly perhaps know which of them we are doing, for we shall be taking ourselves by surprise.

I do not think I am misrepresenting Mr. Chase. His arguments against the ' timeless principle ' for example are all of the following kind: ' To proclaim in advance what one will or will not do in some future situation is a branch of astrology. You do not know what you will do until you are in it. In the event of an unprovoked attack by air on your city, a military invasion of the country where you live, a sudden revolutionary uprising on the streets as you go home to lunch, your boy's being choked to

death by poison gas—how can you tell what you will do *then*?' And over the page: 'My feeling is against war; what my body will do when the time comes, I cannot say.' At first sight the arguments are inept, being directed against the possibility, not of statements about what ought to be done (such as the principle of non-resistance), but of statements about what will be done. The two are different. But Mr. Chase puts forward the arguments in good faith, and so glaring an ineptitude would not escape him. It must be therefore that he does not recognize the difference, and that in his eyes statements of the first kind are in import absolutely identical with the second. Given this identity, and given that we do not know what we shall do, obviously what we ought to do is unknown. Our knowledge is confined to what we are doing now; and in view of the rapidity with which the present crumbles before the future, it cannot be large.

Those who reject the guidance of general principles to follow particular promptings of their mind or soul have often been the butt of satire. They make it more difficult to carry on civilization, which demands a limited certainty of co-operation between its members. The inner light, though supposed to reveal the same things to all people, in practice does not always do so, and by exclusive reliance on it the margin of certainty is reduced. Mr. Chase abolishes the margin altogether, for he rejects both general principles and the inner light in favour of what might be called an inner heat—a prompting of the muscles and of the blood. He will 'wait to see what his body does when the time comes.' It is difficult to believe there can be any certainty about the action of a body, the owner of which has carefully refrained from considering the future. But if not, civilization vanishes; or if a fragment remains it has lost all claim to its former title—for it is wholly dependent on the body, and has ceased to be self-conscious and reflective. This seems to be the moral of a book written, as its author repeats, to assist in the defence of civilization.

There is no need, nor in view of his previous books would it be possible, to doubt his word; they gave abundant evidence of goodwill, which the present book does not impugn. And perhaps its importance lies here: its sole importance is symptomatic, in that it shows how the best of wills to-day may be in danger, not only of defeat but of reversal. There is a disability or a disease

abroad—the stronger word is not too strong—by which the mind, prevented from fulfilling the intention with which it sets out, is compelled to fulfil another and at times very different one. This mental ataxy is curious ; and as it is by no means confined to Mr. Chase, may be grave. An account of one or two more of its symptoms may decide upon this, and may help towards a diagnosis.

Mr. Chase's first chapter is to some extent autobiographical. ' I found it impossible,' he says, ' to read philosophy. The great words went round and round in my head until I became dizzy. Sometimes they made pleasant music, but I could rarely effect passage between them and the world of experience. William James I could usually translate, but the great classics had almost literally no meaning to me . . . As these works had been acclaimed for centuries as part of the priceless heritage of mankind, it seemed obvious that something in my intellectual equipment was seriously deficient.' The conclusion recommends itself to common sense. Nevertheless Mr. Chase did not seek to improve his equipment, or did so in an unfortunate way. He turned to mathematicians and to writers on ' semantics,' by whom he was ' encouraged to believe ' that his equipment had never been other than complete. If a ' priceless heritage ' yielded no benefit to him, that was not because he was unable to gather it, but because there was none to be gathered. He had therefore the privilege and even the duty of neglecting the heritage.

Dr. Johnson proposed a rule, erring perhaps on the side of caution, that no reputation should be neglected when it had stood for a hundred years. Trusting to the word of a few men who have recently become known to a narrow circle, Mr. Chase is ready to neglect reputations which have stood for a millennium. And the word ' neglect ' is to be interpreted in its widest sense: if the ' great classics ' appeared at first to have a little meaning—' almost none,' but still a little—after the study of semantics it became quite clear that they had none at all. Like the supposed writers on questions of peace and war, they had not really written ; but produced merely verbiage, none and no part of which could be either true or false. This second conclusion of Mr. Chase's, flatly contradicting his first, might I think be said to outrage common sense. Yet he adopts it without hesitation, and this I would call

a second symptom of disease.

Common sense, however, is not an infallible guide, and if not probable it is conceivable that Mr. Chase is right in disregarding it on this matter. Even so, he has taken over from the popular biologists an article of faith which might hold him back from the second conclusion. The prompting of the blood and of the muscles, he believes, is always to an act which is beneficial in the long run. Now the 'great classics,' their disciples and successors, may for the moment be allowed to have meant nothing when they wrote down words; nevertheless they did something, and followed impulses of the muscles and the blood. In the long run therefore their activity should have produced some benefit; but according to Mr. Chase the least that can be said of it is that it has not—though it began some two thousand years ago and has been carried on fairly continuously since. Two thousand years is a very long run indeed. Here is a difficulty which he himself recognizes, and seeks to explain.

There was an accident to the machinery, he suggests; the functioning of the muscles and the blood was deranged. Or in his own language, which is more scientific and more vague: 'Something . . . perverted human survival-behaviour.' It is unfortunate that on the same page he criticizes the Christian doctrine of the Fall, rejecting it as 'an assumption without meaning.' For the perversion which he postulates proves, when it is examined, to be not very dissimilar from the Fall: it was the work of an agent external to its victims, as was the Devil; who operated near the beginning of history, as did the Devil; and who, very like the Devil, was a person. Plato is the earliest author whom he mentions; and towards Plato he feels the emotions of horror, fear and indignation which are felt by Christians towards the Evil One.

This may not seem possible, and indeed I despair of making it appear so; but should not, perhaps, omit quotation. To Mr. R. M. Hutchins, a 'brilliant young educator' who proposed that metaphysics should continue to be studied in Universities, Mr. Chase replies: 'Back, young men and women of the twentieth century, to the broad bosom of Plato! Within these academic shades let it be known that Galileo flung his cannon-balls in vain; Bruno died at the stake to no purpose; Einstein discovered nothing

of educational importance. Dr. Hutchins is young to be so tired.' A note of exaltation is I think obvious, and also the blindness of a crusader: Mr. Chase allows himself to forget that Plato is not the whole of metaphysics, that cannon-balls do not crash through every argument, that physical theory supposes as well as provides arguments, and that Bruno was burnt for (among other things) a leaning to Plato.

Indifference to self-contradiction, I would suggest, is a third symptom of Mr. Chase's disease. Not only does he both adopt and reject a doctrine of the Fall, the whole of his book depends upon similar double-dealing. The article of faith he takes over from biologists, for example, is an optimism, and of so universal a kind that by even contemplating disaster he becomes a heretic; yet his main purpose in writing is that imminent disaster may be averted. This contradiction explains the pessimism which we noticed first about him: by itself he would not find it tolerable, nor does he tolerate it; for no sooner has it emerged than for him it is neutralized by an optimism in which he persistently, if inconsistently, believes.

It is not necessary to carry further the hunt for symptoms. Ignorance, or lack of equipment, is obviously one of their causes; but no less obviously it is only a contributory cause. It is not necessarily more harmful than the lack of meaning Mr. Chase attributes to philosophers, and a merely ignorant person would neither have undertaken his book nor, if he had, would have completed it. Alongside and serving to conceal any ignorance there is a remarkable competence based on knowledge of some kind: he writes persuasively, and orders his material well; and if he professes to be unable to read Plato and Spinoza he does not recoil from mathematicians or from *The Meaning of Meaning*. It is on this competence, I think, that the diagnost should fix. It will be found to have two characters: Mr. Chase is able to write not persuasively but soundly only about the material conditions of civilization, about the means to it which do not form part of its essence—food, clothing, shelter and so on—and he is able to read only the books which are written in the idiom of his own day. The rest are 'meaningless' to him.

Recent centuries and especially the last have demanded rapidly increasing amounts of food, clothing and shelter; these amounts

have passed the bounds of reason and necessity (I do not mean for every individual ; but in this context the problem of distribution is, I think, secondary), so that means have been confounded with ends ; but this is not the only, nor perhaps the most important result. A class has developed, concerned solely to supply material demands ; and it has been educated solely to converse with contemporary merchants and producers, about problems of contemporary marketing and production. It is like the third class in Plato's *Republic*, with the difference that it has never received systematic guidance from above. Now it receives hardly any, and must itself face the problem of guiding. Inevitably it finds difficulty even in becoming aware of the problem, as would a being of two dimensions summoned to control a machine of three. Like Mr. Chase's, its knowledge is confined to the present ; but the civilization of which it is put in charge has roots in the past, and is continually branching out into the future. The consequences are the disease we have been considering: isolation of the present from past and future leads to self-contradiction ; acceptance of contradictions is the flouting of common sense; proposals supposedly for the future but merely for the perpetuation of the present are the future's denial, and will be its destruction. Let us lie back and fold our hands, says Mr. Chase, we need only to wait and see ; unaware that it is our nature to act, and the perfection of that nature to act reasonably.

The remedies to a disease of this kind cannot be other than slow in operation ; they can however only be tried, in the hope that their operation will not be too slow. Ceaseless criticism must be directed against those books which have so much impressed Mr. Chase, or against his interpretation of them. It might be suggested, for example, that his wide use of the term ' meaningless ' is not justified even by Mr. Richards, from whom presumably he derives it: Mr. Richards distinguished scientific from emotive language, the first alone having meaning in the usual sense, not with the intention of handing civilization to the sole direction of the sciences, but of securing a share in that direction to art and poetry. Almost certainly that is not the way to secure art and poetry their proper share: but if Mr. Chase and his like can be brought to attach any value to poetry at all it will be a gain ; and they will not be wholly out of contact with the past. And secondly,

of course, Mr. Chase can only be persuaded to allow the 'great classics' another chance. He must be habituated to them. How to begin is a problem; but a passage like the following might perhaps be sufficient to rouse his attention. The speaker is Socrates in prison:

> 'I found the writer made no use of Mind at all, and that he assigned no causes for the order of things. His causes were air, and ether, and water, and many other strange things . . . in the same way he would go on to explain why I am talking to you: he would assign voice, and air, and hearing, and a thousand other things as causes; but he would quite forget to mention the real cause, which is that since the Athenians thought it right to condemn me, I have thought it right and just to sit here and submit to whatever sentence they may think fit to impose. For, by the dog of Egypt, I think that these muscles and bones would long ago have been in Megara or Boeotia, prompted by their opinion of what is best, if I had not thought it better and more honourable to submit to whatever penalty the state inflicts, rather than escape by flight.'

Is this really so incomprehensible? Can Mr. Chase maintain in sincerity that it is meaningless? Can he even maintain that it is a less plausible account of human behaviour than his own 'I wait and see what my body does when the time comes'? Or if this last is in fact how Mr. Chase behaves, can he approve of himself exactly as he does of Socrates? That he should think more highly of himself need not, perhaps, be supposed.

The result of such habituation, if Mr. Chase can submit to it, might be a recognition that the scepticism with which his book begins, and which he thinks something new in the history of thought, is as old as thought itself; that philosophy is built on its refutation rather than awaits destruction at its hands: and that to neglect the 'great classics' in order to write books of the kind he has now produced is to do what the barbarians did—erect huts among the palaces of Rome, burn libraries because they could not read.

JAMES SMITH.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF KAFKA

AMERICA by Franz Kafka (Routledge, 8/6).

The unfamiliarity of Kafka's method as a novelist offers the literary critic an opportunity for discussing quite a wide range of subject-matter with some show of relevance. The sound critic of impeccable orthodoxy can run through his mental card-index, where, somewhere among Tragedy, the Lyric and the Epic, he will find a neglected but still serviceable dossier on the Allegory (*cf.* Bunyan). Those more fully equipped with modern conveniences can pass many a pleasant hour tracking to earth Kafka's Castration Complex or Super-Ego fixation. Or if everything else fails, it is always possible to analyse one of Shakespeare's plays in detail just to show what a good literary critic you are even though you can't understand Kafka.

The most obvious of the temptations that offer themselves is a discussion of Kafka's philosophy. The Kierkegaardian system of belief that was responsible for much of the form and content of Kafka's novels is sufficiently remote from contemporary English habits of thought for an account of it to give an appearance of throwing light on the novelist's apparent obscurities. And it does seem as though the Danish philosopher's conception of a religious way of life transcending human codes and sanctions was peculiarly profitable in stimulating Kafka's approach to his material. For whether or not we care to admit from a doctrinal point of view the possibility of a teleological suspension of the ethical, there can be no doubt that something of this kind is assumed whenever one asserts the universality of a work of art. The explicit moral concern of any given artist (and most have something of the sort) may be his source of strength, but what will make his work of lasting significance will be his insight into the sensible and mental reactions of the human being to everyday experience and into the problems that arise therefrom. Whether or not, therefore, Kafka was proselytizing on Kierkegaard's behalf isn't relevant to literary-critical evaluation. Our concern is with his success in recreating from a sympathetic and consistent standpoint the complexity of the individual problem in its wider and profounder implications. I think it can be shown that he does this with an insight as penetrating as that of any other novelist of our time.

The Castle was Kafka's last and greatest achievement in the novel form, and any estimate of his significance as a novelist is bound to start from a consideration of this apotheosis of his method. Here the trends of interest that appear rather diversely in the earlier novels are fused to give an account of the whole range of human experience in what seemed to Kafka its most significant implications. The ultimate concern is religious. In Kafka's view there is a way of life for any individual that is the right one, and which is divinely sanctioned. So much is perhaps admitted by most of our moral novelists; but to Kafka this fact itself constitutes a problem of tremendous difficulty, because he believes the dichotomy between the divine and the human, the religious and the ethical, to be absolute. Thus, though it is imperative for us to attempt to follow the true way, it is impossible for us to succeed in doing so. This is the fundamental dilemma that Kafka believes to lie at the basis of all human effort. He gives some insight into its nature in *Investigations of a Dog*, where the dog-world corresponds roughly to human society and we as humans bear something of the same relationship to the hero as the Castle officials bear to Kafka in *The Castle*. The solution of the Dog's problems is perfectly plain to us, yet we can see that the Dog is constitutionally incapable of ever realizing the solution.

This fundamental problem, however, doesn't present itself to the human mind in naked simplicity. It isn't the Puritan problem of justifying one's behaviour in the eyes of God alone. The dilemma is conceived of as becoming known to us only at the ethical level; that is, it emerges as the general problem of the individual's relation to society, and any attempt at a solution must involve an attempt to come to terms with, and find a place in, the social organism. We are told, and it is probably true, that Kafka felt this problem with peculiar acuteness in virtue of his racial isolation as a Jew and his general isolation as a consumptive; but it is important to realize that this only made more keenly felt a difficulty that is implicit in any attempt at social organization, and one that has manifested itself particularly in recent years as a result of the centrifugal tendencies of modern civilization. In '*He*,' *Notes from the Year 1920*, Kafka writes:

> 'He was once part of a monumental group. Round some elevated figure or other in the centre were ranged in carefully

thought-out order symbolical images of the military caste, the arts, the sciences, the handicrafts. He was one of those many figures. Now the group is long since dispersed, or at least he has left it and makes his way through life alone. He no longer has even his old vocation, indeed he has forgotten what he once represented. Probably it is this very forgetting that gives rise to a certain melancholy, uncertainty, unrest, a certain longing for vanished ages, darkening the present. And yet this longing is an essential element in human effort, perhaps indeed human effort itself.'

One has only to run one's mind over the more significant literature of Kafka's generation, from *St. Mawr* and *The Waste Land* to *Ulysses* and *Manhatten Transfer* to realize how prominent a part this view of modern European civilization has played in determining the artist's attitude to his material. Pre-occupation with this problem—the problem presented by the corruption, not of the individual as such, but of the inter-human relationships that give him significance as a member of civilized society—recurs throughout Kafka's work, and is realized most effectively in his short story, *The Hunger-Artist*. Its more positive aspects are persistent throughout *The Castle*, where the hero's whole efforts are directed immediately towards an attempt to establish himself in a home and a job, and to become a member of the village community—to come to terms, in fact, with society.

Kafka's particularization of the teleological problem doesn't stop at the social level, however. Just as the attempt to follow the religious way of life is seen as a social problem, so the social problem is in its turn seen as one that appears in terms of individual human relationships. The complexity of relationship that exists between the individual and the undiscoverable way of life emerges as the complexity of the relationships between the hero and the other characters in Kafka's novels. In this his method isn't essentially different from that of most other novelists ; the difference lies in that, in his treatment of inter-human relationships, Kafka's concern is always for their more general implications, their significance for the social, and ultimately for the religious, problem, and the framework and properties of the novels are constructed with this consideration in mind. But just for this reason he is scrupulously careful in presenting even the minutest detail relating to any given

situation, so that the complexity never becomes confusion, and the nature and extent of the subtlety and delicacy of the network of relationships are always exactly determined at any given point. His language maintains an almost scientific lucidity, and there is an almost complete absence of explicit figures of speech in his prose. His eye is always on the object, noting carefully details like change of tone in a person's voice, whether a person is sitting or standing, and even what he is wearing—all such points are noted with a view to objectifying the exact relationship between two people. Explicit comment is rarely offered by the author ; the implications of every detail are allowed to speak for themselves in creating the atmospheric tension that arises as soon as two people enter one another's sphere of consciousness, and the detailed precision with which the shifts and changes in that tension are traced invests them with a constant sense of apocalyptic significance ; so that sudden shifts into the physical are quite in keeping with the whole effect:

> ' For a moment K. thought that all of them, Schwarzer, the peasants, the landlord and the landlady, were going to fall on him in a body, and to escape at least the first shock of their assault he crawled right underneath the blanket. (*The Castle*, p. 6).

The effect of this passage is to crystallize the whole emotional atmosphere when it is discovered that K. has no right in the village and has lied about it into the bargain, and the explicit physical action of crawling underneath the blanket, though obviously useless as a protective measure, serves to epitomize K.'s emotional reaction to this atmosphere.

The basis of Kafka's method thus lies in the creation of a complex and continually changing dramatic situation subsisting mainly in the relation between the hero and the other characters. Where the prose is not concerned with defining some element in an interhuman relationship, either external or introspective, but with describing the hero's situation purely objectively, it frequently becomes itself dramatic in movement:

> ' So ging er wieder vorwärts, aber es war ein langer Weg. Die Strasse nämlich, diese Hauptstrasse des Dorfes, führte nicht zum Schlossberg, sie führte nur nahe heran, dann aber, wie

absichtlich, bog sie ab, und wenn sie sich auch vom Schloss nich entfernte, so kamm sie ihm doch auch nicht näher.' (*Das Schloss*, p. 21).

The effect of the prose here is to produce the sense of physical effort appropriate to the situation. The short phrases and the jerky movement of the sentence suggest the feeling of frustrated effort that K. experienced, striving to get nearer the Castle, but repeatedly being prevented. The end of the sentence gives us a closer view of the process; the movement forward—' sie führte nur nahe heran,' the pause—' dann aber,' the moment of suspense, hanging on the tortuous syllables of ' wie absichtlich,' then the sudden recoil, like a spring snapping back into place—' bog sie ab,' then the ensuing sense of disappointment and disillusion, embodied in the flat phrasing of ' so kam sie ihm doch auch nicht näher.' One is reminded of the similar passage in Donne's third Satyre in more ways than one.

It is necessary to insist on this fusion of the mental with the physical in Kafka's work for two reasons. In the first place, it is the basis of his allegorical method. The whole of his hero's experience, whether spiritual, mental, emotional or physical, is regarded as absolutely continuous, and the distinctions that for the sake of exposition I have drawn between the religious, the social and the individual levels simply do not exist in the actual writing. The objectification of emotional experience into physical that I have noted emerges in the large as the concrete visualization of the individual's sense of the wider issues of existence in terms of the institutions and officials that characterize his novels and stories. Secondly, it is this preoccupation with the concrete and the physical that forces itself first on the reader's attention, and the remoter implications of the hopeless struggle are realized only over a wide area; the stress, that is, is on the struggle and not on the hopelessness, and the preoccupation with this struggle in the most immediate sense engages the reader's emotional energies, directs and disciplines them, and offers him a positive interest amid what would in abstraction be described as a philosophy of pessimism.

Cogent criticism of Kafka's work is bound to direct the reader's attention to *The Castle*, and it is more important that he should have before him in approaching *America* such general considerations

as I have outlined above than a ' placing ' of the novel under review that left him with no conception of Kafka's importance as a novelist. Nor is this approach of no immediate relevance, because those standards by which *The Castle* is appraised must also be referred to in finding the two earlier novels of less importance. In *The Trial*, which in point of time comes between *America* and *The Castle*, the religious considerations which are the implicit ultimate in the later novel predominate, and it is the dichotomy between the actual true way and our conception of the true way that is insisted on, with the result that the unity and continuity of method isn't here present. In *America* this preoccupation with teleological considerations doesn't intrude at the expense of more immediate interests, not because, as in *The Castle*, it has been completely assimilated to those interests, but simply because religious considerations haven't yet become so pressing to the author. Although the novel has the same purposive air of endless pilgrimage about it, the purposiveness is not insisted upon, and the light-hearted symbolization of spiritual salvation in the incomplete last chapter is entirely in keeping with the implicit general assumption that ' it will all come right in the end '—an assumption that allows the whole question to be a less constant concern. The disruptive effect of *The Trial* is thus avoided, as the general organization at the more immediate levels—what I have for convenience called the social and personal levels—is complete. With this source of emotional pressure much diminished, the whole texture of the novel is much looser and the effects less concentrated, though the method is the same.

The hero, Karl, is expelled from his habitual environment for a venial sexual offence, and makes his acquaintance with a new order of things, first on the liner in which he leaves Europe, and then in America itself. In the liner we find that same highly-organized, incomprehensible hierarchy of officials that appears in the later novels, and they serve much the same function of objectifying the individual's sense of human society, both locally and generally, as a complex organization the nature of whose bonds he can scarcely comprehend. Kafka gives his account in terms of an encounter between Karl and the captain and officers of the ship, and he uses to the full his powers of expressing the interaction of human personality in order to achieve his effect. American

civilization later plays a similar function in the hero's life, and Kafka makes clear that full participation in community life is something to which there is no golden road. As in *The Castle*, his attempts to achieve this meet with the more *real* success the less ambitious they become. Hobnobbing with social organization at its most sophisticated proves a complete failure; as soon as its assistance is required in quite a trivial matter in the process of living, it lets him down completely. Then Karl becomes one of the time-serving bell-hops of the social organism with which we are all familiar (Kafka, of course, makes him a real bell-hop in a big hotel), and seems to have achieved some real success in establishing himself in a satisfactory way of life; but when the crucial moment comes, his second position proves of little more value than the first. So he sinks lower and lower in society, coming closer and closer to grips with the realities of the problem that arises from being a member of a complex civilization, until finally ('finally' in a purely relative sense; since the novel is not only incomplete but endless, there can be no finality) he is submitted to all sorts of indignities at the hands of the mistress of a ruffianly tramp, and at last approaches some degree of the awareness of his problem which is the asymptote to success of solution. The technique is less accomplished than that of *The Castle* because of the sense of unrealized possibilities that indicates the author's incomplete grasp of his material; yet the achievement is comparable, and in a final estimate it would probably have to be ranked as Kafka's second greatest work; because a final estimate of Kafka's work would have to take account of limitations which didn't seem relevant to a short review.

Such an estimate would, of course, rest upon the German texts. But English readers have been most unusually lucky in having translators who have been at such pains to render their original not only accurately, but with sympathetic attention to details of style and expression. It seems to me that in the future Mr. and Mrs. Muir's translation will stand as a model for any others who undertake the thankless job of rendering a German novelist into English.

R. O. C. WINKLER.

AUDEN AND ISHERWOOD

ON THE FRONTIER, by W. H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood (Faber and Faber, 6/-).

Messrs. Auden and Isherwood continue to follow their principle of putting Marxist pap into bourgeois bottles. They call this repast a melodrama in three acts, but unfortunately it doesn't deserve that title. *On The Frontier* is a tract, similar in formula to their other productions, but duller.

The theme is topical. We are shown two countries, Westland and Ostnia, the first a dictatorship and the second a monarchy; both hate each other and both indulge in mutually destructive propaganda. There is an 'incident'—a 'bus carrying Westlanders and Ostnians is blown up at a frontier bridge; each country blames the other, each reports only the deaths of its own nationals. War is declared, plague breaks out, there is a revolution in Westland, and we are left with the prospect of a world war.

We watch the countries and the crisis through the eyes of the Westland Leader, of Valerian, a Westland armaments racketeer, and of an average Westland and an average Ostnian family. In presenting the two families, the authors make use of the divided stage, one of those ingenious tricks (they used to be called 'expressionistic') which often seem to me to be merely an evasion of the problems of dramatic construction. 'The concentration of lighting,' they tell us, 'should heighten the impression of an invisible frontier between the two halves of the stage.' Both the Westland and the Ostnian rooms are dominated by a wireless set, and the portraits of the Leader and the Monarch. Four characters can cross the frontier; the armaments racketeer and his secretary, an Ostnian spy; Eric, a Westland student, and Anna, the daughter of the Ostnian household. The first pair symbolize the international of high finance, the others stand for what one must I suppose call the international of love, or of the spirit. Valerian tries to prevent the war, because it's bad for business, but he fails, and is shot by a revengeful storm-trooper formerly sacked from the Valerian works. Eric, at first a pacifist, dies on the barricades of the Westland revolution, and Anna of the plague contracted in an Ostnian hospital. They fail, too, but

'They die to make men just
And worthy of the earth.'

Or, as the hymn more crisply puts it, 'they die to make us good.'

Perhaps I can best explain my dissatisfaction with the play by saying that though I know what the authors are getting at, though I can follow the parallelism of the two internationals, the symbolism of the intangible yet insuperable barrier, I do not for one moment feel these things. I understand the message, and I sympathize with it; as messages go it's very sensible, but that doesn't alter the fact that I experience nothing, and for this there are three reasons.

As an imitation of an action, the play's a failure. There is, properly speaking, no action at all. True, things happen, and there are economic and political and psychological connections between them; but there are no dramatic connections at all. If you're not going to have a plot, you shouldn't call your play a melodrama.

There is respectable authority for believing that character and dialogue are easier to manage than action. Are Messrs. Auden and Isherwood any better here? I don't think they are. Examine, for example, the way they have presented Valerian, the bad financier. He is suave and cultured; he collects Poussins, and also etchings; he is very intelligent and very superior, and soothes the Leader's nerve-storms by playing him Rameau on the gramophone; he rather reminded me of Philo Vance, and he is just about as credible. All the main characters are composed of mannerisms from the stock wardrobe, plus motives from psycho-analytical casebooks—there is no true creation about them at all. We might at least have been spared the etchings.

The prose dialogue doesn't help us to believe in the characters, and I can't think that it will help the actors either. Before I had read many pages of the scene between Valerian and his secretary, I was reminded of Andrew Undershaft—the resemblance is pretty striking. Now I dislike the flippant superficiality of *Major Barbara* as much as I admire the serious intent of *On The Frontier*; but if one considers the two roles, speech for speech, and asks oneself which one would prefer to play, there is no doubt about the answer. Every phrase of Shaw's comes trippingly off the tongue, but to read Valerian's lines aloud is hard and ill-rewarded labour.

It seems to me that Mr. Isherwood should be able to put these defects right. A coat or two of the slick varnish that encases Mr. Norris and Sally Bowles, and an echo of their cheerful chatter, would brighten this play no end.

But the root of the trouble is simply lack of fusion. The various elements are not combined, and until the authors can construct a coherent play, until, in other words their message, their world view, becomes a play, they had better continue to use the revue rather than the drama as their vehicle. The world-view seems a bit synthetic too. We have now long been accustomed to having the bearded Nobodaddy, Marx, as President of the Immortals ; we have been led to regard Professor Freud as the ghostly partner. Now, I believe, the Trinity is completed, the diet balanced, the pap shaken up and dissolved in the milk of human kindness. Is it possible that one discerns, however dimly, in the vague features of the third person, the lineaments of Dr. Buchman?

T. R. BARNES.

'HUMAN NATURE' IN SOCIETY

SEX AND TEMPERAMENT IN THREE PRIMITIVE SOCIETIES, by Margaret Mead (Routledge, 10/6).

Mme. de Staël, on being informed that Napoleon was unable to receive visitors since he was in his bath, is reported to have exclaimed '*Le génie ne connait point deux sexes*,' and, I suppose, at that time it was necessary to be a genius to achieve such ignorance. Readers of Dr. Margaret Mead's book are more fortunate in that they will scarcely have needed genius to realize that now there can be no arbitrary sex-classification in terms of temperaments. Dr. Mead writes so convincingly and intelligently on the social determination of behaviour that one is tempted to throw up one's hands in admiration and endorse the publisher's opinion that this is an extremely valuable book, if not exactly so original as they seem to think. The documentation is very convincing, almost, one is inclined to believe, too convincing. The remarkable aptness of the illustrations leads one to give more credence than is their due, perhaps, to the reports of other anthropologists who obtained

very different results from the same tribes. But it is unreasonable to allow, as many distinguished anthropologists have allowed, the existence of this contrary evidence to discount altogether Dr. Mead's approach. Indeed, it would seem more profitable to use this additional evidence to correct the focus on the problem. The main trouble is probably that a great deal of loose thinking, largely prompted by party-politics, has been allowed to obscure the real issue, and at this time it does seem imperative to treat this question of the relation of the individual to his culture with that same cool detachment and precision with which Dr. Mead herself tackles the problem.

It is now becoming familiar knowledge that the attitudes and emotional responses of two individuals confronting the same situation may be remarkably different if they come from different social groups. Administrators in Assam declare that one may order flogging as punishment for an Angami Naga with some hope of benefit to the victim, while to order it for his neighbour the Lhota is to risk the suicide of the punished native; the Dyak answers insults with revenge in terms of theft or murder, the Trobriand Islander in terms of suicide. Dr. Mead would immediately suggest that this is because the social patterns are different and different attitudes in the individual are induced by the different patterns

In other cases the outer, 'peripheral' behaviour of people may differ greatly from one society to another and yet leave their more intimate feelings much the same. One Naga tribe, believing dead souls to contaminate all that they have owned or come into contact with, burn everything belonging to the deceased except the livestock, which they turn loose into the jungle, so reducing the family to utter poverty. A neighbouring tribe, which holds contrary ideas and has a feast to induce the soul of the deceased to keep near them, is said to make not a little profit out of their neighbour's fears. But, observers report, the more intimate responses of the individuals in both tribes appear to be similar, *i.e.*, the reaction to a bereavement familiar to us in our own society.[1] This kind of evidence, of which there is a considerable

[1]It is important to remember here that the familiar problem of the observer's own predispositions may have completely distorted the evidence.

amount, would seem to establish the existence of at least two modes of response, one public and one private, as it were.

This private conduct, it seems, Dr. Mead would impute only to the deviant. But ordinary observation of one's own society suggests that it is characteristic of the majority: some few people appear to have a public code only, some a private code only, but most people have both. The interrelations of the two levels of behaviour are complex and, as yet, little understood, nor can it be said that these modes of response are essentially different in kind. The outlines of the social pattern are forms which prescribe a fixed mode of response that is generally cruder, more limited, and, sometimes, altogether different in appearance from the actual living experience.

But at this point caution is necessary. We must beware of regarding this ' actual living experience ' as revealing the ' innate disposition ' which Dr. Mead takes as the chief contrast with socially moulded behaviour. Instead of any simple contrast we seem to find successive layers of socialization as we pass from the outer forms of behaviour to more and more intimate responses. In fact it proves exceedingly difficult to indicate any point at which we can safely say the culturally moulded responses end and those which are physiologically determined begin. The Trobriand son is bound by social custom to conceal disgust and shew reverent joy while sucking the bones of his deceased father ; in actual fact he generally vomits.[1] One has heard it suggested that here there is a distinct opposition between the cultural form and the physiologically determined reaction, but if it is remembered that these people at this ceremony also *expect* the son to be sick it will be seen that it is quite impossible that the disgust reaction is socially conditioned. Nagas of Assam have been known to eat elephant which had been buried for a fortnight and was already in an advanced stage of decomposition. We have in fact no evidence, beyond a certain amount of rough observation, that could be used to prove that private behaviour is any closer related to ' innate disposition ' (whatever that may be) than public behaviour.

Although Dr. Mead has done very valuable work in shewing the various ways in which the social forms may mould or distort

[1]Malinowski *Sexual Life of Savages*, p. 133.

the personality it will be seen that her use of the term 'innate disposition' and her treatment of the problem of deviants are naïve. A more complete handling of the problem would examine the ways in which the different levels of response, which we have arbitrarily, and crudely, separated into 'public' and 'private,' *interact* as complementary parts of the same temperament. In such an inquiry 'temperament' would not be regarded as something detailed and arbitrary from which details are selected and moulded by the social forms but as a product of the interaction between the individual and his environment, differing not in kind but only in subtlety and intimacy from the solidified social forms. Considering the magnitude of such a task one is tempted to believe Dr. Mead's more limited approach to have more immediately valuable results. In any case it is increasingly obvious that the help of the psychologist must be invoked, since the difficulties of communication make the task more and more impossible in examination of members of primitive societies, particularly where the native is learning the 'right' answers. It is certain that anthropologists with a smattering of popular psychology will achieve only harm.

In any case, apart from the value we have ascribed to Dr. Mead's work, there is the tactical benefit of her book. Anthropological scholarship seems to have entrenched itself from such 'intellectual bombshells' (*vide* blurb) in the shelters of Frazerian collections, shelters which appear to the detached observer as fatuous as those advocated by the sponsors of A.R.P.

F. C. TINKLER.

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SCRUTINY

A Quarterly Review

Edited by
D. W. HARDING L. C. KNIGHTS
F. R. LEAVIS DENYS THOMPSON

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THE AMERICAN CULTURAL SCENE

(I) POLITICAL THOUGHT

THIS is pre-eminently an age of politics, in which political criteria are extended to every human activity, and no branch of culture can successfully claim independence. It is therefore appropriate that in this communication, which is intended to be the first of a series discussing different aspects of the American cultural scene, I should make some comments on American political thinking. In literature the past half dozen years in the United States have, by contrast with the twenties, been disappointing. The discussion of fundamental political problems, on the other hand, appears to be achieving a scope and a clarity comparable to the great debates which preceded the adoption of the American constitution in the eighteenth century and the abolition of slavery in the nineteenth.

The basic problem of modern politics is that of reconciling the ideals of liberalism—individual freedom, political equality, representative government, and the rule of law—with an industrialized society. Attempts to preserve capitalism appear to lead inexorably to Fascism, while the only visible alternative to private capitalism is the totalitarian dictatorship of the Soviets. An unplanned society ends in chaos, while planning, whether by the Right or by the Left, apparently involves the rule of a bureaucracy and the suppression of individual freedom. In the United States this problem is presented in its purest form. The task of reconciling liberalism and industrialism is not complicated by any relics of feudalism, any traditions of aristocratic rule and imperialist supremacy, or by any pressing need for military self-defence. Liberal doctrine, written into the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights, is the basis of American national self-consciousness, and has at least the nominal allegiance of every political party.

The United States, moreover, is more favourably situated than any other great power. Here, if anywhere, it should be possible to create a more stable economic order without war, revolution and dictatorship. If the American people are handicapped by a long tradition of violence and contempt for law in civil disputes, and by a form of government which, in spite of the extraordinary reverence which it inspires, is one of the clumsiest political mechanisms ever contrived—characterized as it is by a division of authority which prevents efficient action, promotes conflicts, and encourages irresponsibility—they have the advantages of controlling a continental area large enough for self-sufficiency, of not being dependent on a colonial empire or on any large foreign trade, and by being separated by four thousand miles of water from the nearest enemy bombing planes. These facts make the political debate now in progress in the United States of more than local importance.

Right and Left, moreover, are to some degree in agreement *about principles—an agreement sufficiently large to make discussion* possible. The rationale of capitalism in America has always been provided by an interpretation of eighteenth-century liberal doctrine which emphasizes the rule of law and the freedom of the individual to do what he likes with his property and which, as developed by the Supreme Court in the latter part of the nineteenth century, virtually prohibited any interference with business activities by the government. Business leaders have never, as in Europe, functioned directly as part of a ruling class ; they have instead remained aloof from the state, seeking immunity from it by a series of legal devices rather than domination over it. Even vigilante action against trade unions, which is apt to resemble Fascism in embryo, claims justification on the pretext that unionism interferes with the worker's freedom of contract. The parties of the Left, on the other hand, base themselves equally on the liberalism of the American Revolution, but insist that the realization of its ideals has become incompatible with private capitalism. Even the Communist Party now describes its programme as the Americanism of the twentieth century, and treasures the memory of Thomas Jefferson and Abraham Lincoln. For an understanding of modern society the Left may turn to Marx or—more profitably, perhaps—to the greatest of the American critics of capitalism, Thorstein

Veblen; but its ideals are those of the Declaration of Independence.

The identification in the United States—of capitalism with the ideal of individual freedom means that some of the most vigorous enemies of Fascism are also among the most ardent champions of capitalism. Such is notably the case with the two most influential political commentators in the country, Mr. Walter Lippmann and Miss Dorothy Thompson, who may be considered as the representatives of the Right.[1] Mr. Lippmann, who was once a socialist and is now on the staff of the conservative *Herald-Tribune*, is the author of *The Good Society*, which is probably the ablest defence of private capitalism which has appeared in our time. Arguing that any form of planned economy is incompatible with freedom, and that the state can never plan for prosperity but only for war, he presents the case for what may be called a positive programme of *laissez-faire*, a programme not of state inactivity, the adoption of which in the nineteenth century caused, in Mr. Lippmann's opinion, the *laissez-faire* attitude to be discredited, but of positive state action to maintain freedom and equality of competition. The difficulty with such a programme is that it requires a state which is both stronger than that of any modern democracy and, at the same time, more impartial. Such a combination appears to be a political impossibility; and Mr. Lippmann's lack of realism betrays itself in an excessively rhetorical and exhortatory style. As an attack on economic planning, however, the book presents a case which, if not unanswerable, emphatically deserves an answer. A study of it should be regarded as an indispensable method of intellectual self-discipline by all Left-wing theorists.

A variant on the capitalist-socialist antithesis is presented by the American distributivists (who prefer to call themselves 'agrarians'). In contrast with their English equivalents, Messrs. Chesterton and Belloc, they are intellectually respectable, present an attitude which is, perhaps, not wholly impracticable, and can plausibly claim to represent the true American tradition. Small

[1] I exclude Mr. Lawrence Dennis, who writes in defence of Fascism, but who is too intellectual to have any influence over the sort of people who are apt to become Fascists. Fascistic movements exist in the United States, but they do not put forward any doctrines which it is possible to discuss.

proprietors, especially in agriculture, remain an important independent force in American politics; and the argument that freedom is possible only in a society based on private property widely distributed can claim to be supported by all historical experience. Distributivism originated in the 'twenties as a movement of intellectuals in the Southern states, who proposed to defend the Southern farmer and the Southern way of life from being exploited and destroyed by capitalistic forces centred in the North. With this movement for regional autonomy were associated a number of the more interesting younger writers (among others—John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, Caroline Gordon, Donald Davidson, Robert Penn Warren). The recent symposium, *Who Owns America?*, edited by Herbert Agar and Allen Tate, presents distributivism as a principle not only for the South but for America as a whole. The political influence of the group is, at present, negligible, though its literary importance has been considerable; but its ideals probably correspond with those of a large proportion of the American people, and should be regarded as a theoretical formulation of attitudes which, on a lower intellectual plane, play an important role in American politics.

Reading from right to left, we arrive next at those who advocate a reformed capitalism, believing that state action can ensure economic stability without any revolutionary change in the present ownership. This is roughly the viewpoint of the Roosevelt administration (though it is impossible to discover in its various experiments any consistent programme) and is likely to be the dominant attitude in American politics for some time to come. Probably the ablest exponent of such an attitude is Mr. Jerome Frank, a New Deal administrator and the author of *Save America First*. A planned capitalism, as Mr. Frank realizes, involves autarchy; unrestricted foreign trade puts an economic system at the mercy of world forces beyond national control. The United States, moreover, cannot sell to Europe on any large scale unless she first lends Europe the money with which to buy. Autarchy is impossible in European countries because none of them (except Russia) has sufficient territory and natural resources; the primary need of Europe is continental unity—a consummation which, according to Mr. Frank, has always been prevented by Great Britain, who cannot dominate Europe herself and has traditionally

fought any other power which threatened to do so.[1] The United States, however, is capable of self-sufficiency. Mr. Frank's programme is to accept monopolistic control of industry, to equalize consumption with production by lowering prices, and to persuade the present owners of the industrial system that, in their own interest, they should prevent revolutionary upheavals by ensuring sufficient mass purchasing power. The role of individual freedom in such a programme remains obscure, but there appears to be no theoretical reason for regarding it as impracticable; economists are substantially in agreement that what is wrong with the American economic system is the high price policy of monopolies. The chief reason for scepticism is that, judging from past experience, it is doubtful whether the rulers of American big business are capable of displaying a sufficient degree of intelligent farsightedness.

It is a striking illustration of the bewilderment of the non-Communist Left—in a world increasingly dominated by competing totalitarianisms—that their immediate proposals approximate to those of Mr. Frank. The two recent Left-wing pronunciamentos which have attracted most attention are *The Prospects of American Democracy* by Professor George S. Counts, and *It Is Later Than*

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[1]At this point it may appropriately be remarked that the problem of American foreign policy is being debated as vigorously as that of social reconstruction. Roughly speaking, the Right (bankers and industrialists) and the extreme Left (the Communist Party), both of whom have private axes to grind, are anti-isolationist; moderate opinion, remembering 1919 a little too bitterly, remains doubtful. It seems likely, however, that this question may settle itself. For reasons which the present writer has never been able to fathom, the American State Department is incapable of acting in European affairs except as a subsidiary of the British Foreign Office (an example of this is the American participation in the Spanish 'non-intervention' policy, in spite of the fact that a majority of the American people, including—according to a reliable investigation—forty-two per cent. of the Catholics, are pro-Loyalist). Popular support for active intervention in Europe can, however, be gained only if it is presented as a crusade to save democracy; and it is obvious that there are few things in which the British Foreign Office is less interested than saving democracy.

You Think by Professor Max Lerner. Both, taking warning by Russia, offer vigorous defences of civil liberties ; and both, taking warning by Germany, recognize that no programme of proletarian revolution is likely to succeed. Neither of them, however, grapples with the problem of how to reconcile freedom with a planned society ; and Mr. Lerner, after presenting the case for a popular front, offers as its immediate policy a plan not for changing capitalism into socialism but for making capitalism work by co-operating with it in a policy of increased production and lower prices.

The long-term aims of a popular front, both in the United States and in Europe, require clarification ; in practice it is apt to be purely defensive—a fatal attitude for any Left-wing movement to adopt. A theoretical basis for such a clarification appears to the present writer to be provided by *Communism, Fascism, or Democracy*, by Eduard Heimann. This is the ablest critique of Marxism with which I am acquainted ; its argument is strikingly simple and lucid, and it deserves much wider attention than it has received. Adopting as his criterion of democracy the principle that each man should be independent in his work, he argues that this was the basis of the eighteenth-century liberalism of Adam Smith, whose economic theses were predicated on small-scale production by individual producers, and that the same principle modified by the acceptance of co-operation in large-scale production, was the original basis of Marxism. Marx, however, assumed that large-scale production was in process of becoming universal, whereas actually important areas of the modern economic system are still in the possession of small producers. The forcible imposition of collectivism upon small producers in Russia has led to Communist totalitarianism, whereas in Germany and elsewhere the stubborn opposition of the small producers to collectivism has made inevitable the triumph of Fascism. A consistent application of the true principles of economic democracy, common both to liberalism and to socialism, leads to a pluralistic economic system, combining co-operative workers' ownership of large-scale industry, with private ownership of farms and small-scale industry. Such an attitude, with its emphasis on humanistic value rather than on economic efficiency, offers an escape from the impasse into which Communist dictatorship has led the Left-wing movement ; and, being based on a single consistent principle, may—if translated into terms of a long-

term political programme - redeem the alliance of the workers and the middle class in a popular front from opportunism.

The viewpoints which I have discussed appear to be representative specimens of American politico-economic theory, in so far as it achieves serious intellectual formulation. In the United States, as elsewhere, it is difficult not to wonder for how much longer it will still be possible to debate political questions and to disagree about them, and how soon discussion may disappear in a rising flood of irrationality and fanaticism. Yet considering the vast area of the United States (which makes it difficult for any one movement to seize control of it), its continental variety of races and cultures, and its long tradition of tolerance and optimism, one can plausibly hope that it will not succumb to the totalitarian blight now spreading over Europe. Such hopes derive encouragement from a reading of *My America*, by Louis Adamic, an immigrant from Jugo-Slavia, who has been a resident of the United States for twenty years. *My America* is an autobiography recording investigations of different aspects of the American scene, more especially in the fields of trade unionism and of liberal and Left-wing politics, during the past decade. Mr. Adamic is sometimes naïve, is often verbose, and is over-fond of the first person singular. I know, however, of no book which conveys a more adequate impression of the more significant currents of thought and feeling in present-day America, or of how the peoples of America differ in mentality and viewpoint from those of Europe, and why they may escape from the maladies with which Europe is infected. And in the post-Munich world any writer who can present plausible reasons for optimism deserves our gratitude.

H. B. PARKES.

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My America, by Louis Adamic (Harpers).

'WUTHERING HEIGHTS'

'I don't care about physiology of matter—but somehow—that which is physic—non-human in humanity, is more interesting to me than the old-fashioned human element—which causes one to conceive a character in a certain moral scheme and make him consistent.'—D. H. Lawrence.

BY common consent there is something wrong with *Wuthering Heights*, and greater nonsense has been written in an effort to bring this blemish to light than has been occasioned by perhaps any other novel. In fact, *Wuthering Heights* has now become the *enfant terrible* of the English Novel, and critics hurry past with little more than a furtive glance at this regrettable deviation from the norm of sanity and health. A. A. Jack, for example, writes in the Cambridge History:

'It is not desirable to read; to take *Wuthering Heights* from the shelf is to prepare for oneself no pleasure.'

If this is being rather more frank than most commentators, that is the only point of difference. The prevailing opinion is that the novel is most oppressive—'It is undoubtedly too morbid and humorless to reach the highest excellence,'[1] and that the bleakness of the Yorkshire moors would be sufficiently cathartic without introducing Heathcliff as well. Charlotte Brontë, who cannot be accused of lacking sympathy, found herself forced to say:

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[1]Pelham Edgar: *The Art of the Novel*, Macmillan.

> ' Whether it is right or advisable to create beings like Heathcliffe, I do not know: I scarcely think it is.'

But one cannot help feeling that, if the matter were made one of ' right or advisable,' it would not be Emily who would be condemned, but Charlotte herself, who created the mad Mrs. Rochester:

> ' " It was a discoloured face—it was a savage face. I wish I could forget the roll of the red eyes and the fearful blackened inflation of the lineaments! . . . [she] was purple: the lips were swelled and dark ; the brow furrowed ; the black eyebrows widely raised over the bloodshot eyes." '

The point is, of course, that few people object to Mrs. Rochester because she only exists in the assertion, she is not realized artistically and consequently never impinges on the imagination ; whereas *Heathcliff arouses various kinds of disapproval, from disgust to* fear, precisely because he is so vividly present to the emotions of the reader.

That anyone could create such a character as Heathcliff, a man who ' stands unredeemed ; never once swerving in his arrow-straight course to perdition,'[1] naturally leads to observations about Emily Brontë herself. The most respectable of these appear in *The Common Reader* ; Virginia Woolf at any rate appreciates *Wuthering Heights*, even if she seems not to understand it fully. She writes:

> ' Emily was inspired by some more general conception. The impulse which urged her to create was not her own suffering or her own injuries. She looked out upon a world cleft into gigantic disorder and felt within herself the power to unite it in a book. The gigantic ambition is to be felt throughout the novel—a struggle, half thwarted but of superb conviction, to say something through the mouths of her characters which is not merely " I love " or " I hate " but " we, the whole human race " and " you, the eternal powers . . . " the sentence remains unfinished.'

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[1]Charlotte Brontë, in her Preface to the 1850 edition of the novel.

When one considers how unsympathetic Virginia Woolf might be expected to find *Wuthering Heights*, the somewhat mystical tone of her remarks will not appear unnatural; but, unnatural or not, it seems highly improbable that Emily Brontë did any looking out 'upon a world cleft into gigantic disorder,' and though it is no doubt very hard to understand how she could have written such a novel, little can be gained by attempting to explain the phenomenon. Explanations tend to become vulgar, and Miss Romer Wilson, whose biography of Emily Brontë is entitled *All Alone*, expends considerable energy in distorting the facts when she writes:

> 'There is Emily at Haworth, exiled from love, with a man's soul in her female body, hell tormenting her, poetry adding to the torment.'

Actually, in the thirty years she lived, Emily Brontë pursued an entirely normal existence, which was not in the least romantic or in the smallest degree interesting, one would have supposed, to creative biographers. Contrary to the impression that one might get from the novel, she does not appear to have been in any way gloomy or pessimistic. In 1845, while writing her novel, she wrote in the second of her two scraps of diary:

> 'I am quite content for myself: not as idle as formerly, altogether as hearty, and having learnt to make the most of the present and long for the future with the fidgetiness that I cannot do all I wish; seldom if ever troubled with nothing to do, and merely desiring that everybody could be as comfortable as myself and as undesponding, and then we should have a very tolerable world of it.'

Her tranquillity was conditional, however, upon her remaining at Haworth, and of the few years when she was sent away to school, Charlotte writes:

> 'The change from her own home to a school, and from her own very noiseless, very secluded, but unrestricted and unartificial life to one of disciplined routines was what she failed in enduring. Her nature was too strong for her fortitude. Every morning, when she woke, the visions of home

and the moors rushed on her, and darkened and saddened the day that lay before her. Nobody knew what ailed her but me. I knew only too well. In this struggle her health was quickly broken: her white face, attenuated form, and failing strength threatened rapid decline. I felt in my heart she would die if she did not go home.'

This nostalgia, which contributes to the main theme of the novel, informs much of Emily Brontë's poetry:

> There is a spot, 'mid barren hills,
> Where winter howls, and driving rain;
> But, if the weary tempest chills,
> There is a light that warms again.

But on the whole the poems do not offer much biographical interest, but rather are remarkable for a fine normality and an emotional strength not common in Victorian verse. This can be seen very clearly if one compares *Remembrance* with the relevant parts of *In Memoriam*. Emily Brontë is obviously writing with her finger on a keen experience,[1] and she reveals an unwillingness to sentimentalize and indulge her emotion that makes her a much more masculine poet than most of her male contemporaries.

But the distinction of her best poems, however indisputable it may be, can hardly compare with that of the novel. From the first page to the last one is aware of a rigid control and a clarity of execution that are truly remarkable. There is no trace at any point of emotional indulgence, and this in a work which operates throughout at very considerable pressure. A short quotation may serve to enforce this point. The scene is the death of Frances, Hindley's wife:[2]

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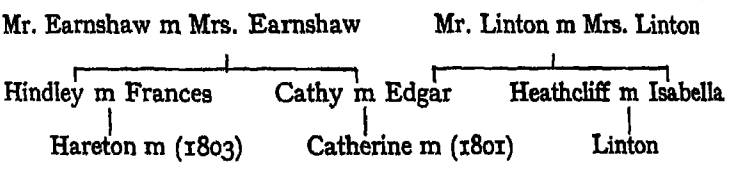
[1]That the poem appears to have no foundation in fact in no way invalidates this statement, as one does not demand that the experience at the root of the work of art should have taken place in actuality. Marvell's *Coy Mistress* is an equally factitious poem from this point of view.

[2]In order to help in following the analysis of *Wuthering Heights*, I append the family-tree of the Earnshaws, Lintons, and Heathcliffs, worked out by C.P.S. in *The Structure of Wuthering Heights*:

'. . . but one night, while leaning on his shoulder in the act of saying she thought she should be able to get up tomorrow, a fit of coughing took her—a very slight one—he raised her in his arms ; she put her two hands about his neck, her face changed, and she was dead.'

The delicate assurance of this passage does not depend upon the use of an emotive vocabulary ; the words, in contrast to the situation described, are colourless, and force attention above all on the precision of the movement. Up to ' a fit of coughing took her ' the prose runs smoothly, with Frances convincing herself that she is now better ; but with the dash, the prose takes on a quivering and panting motion, and then as it were loses its balance, and falls. And it is because the staple of the prose of *Wuthering Heights* is of this quality that one has confidence in asserting with D. H. Lawrence that ' it is a great book.'

Wuthering Heights, it should be quite evident, is not an unpleasant novel, and one of the main purposes of this analysis will be to demonstrate that it is in fact a very precisely balanced structure of 'pleasant' and 'unpleasant,' 'normal' and 'abnormal.' Far from giving way to melodrama and self-indulgence, Emily Brontë relegates all the potentially unhealthy elements to their place in the artistic whole, and the novel moves continually towards a resolution of perfect tranquillity. At the centre of *Wuthering Heights* lies, of course, the relationship between Cathy and Heathcliff ;[1] for the second half of the book there is a closely allied theme, the relationship between Catherine and Hareton, the latter theme acting, in its similarity to the former, as a commentary, though upon a very different emotional plane. There are in addition several subsidiary themes which serve to determine and qualify the



[1]For the sake of clarity I refer throughout to Catherine Earnshaw, with whom Heathcliff is in love, as ' Cathy,' and to her daughter, Catherine Linton, as ' Catherine.'

attitude to be adopted by the reader. The novel is almost entirely recounted by two observers, Mrs. Dean and Lockwood, for much the greater part by the former. Lockwood, in fact, has no more than the first and the last words, and for the rest he merely listens to Mrs. Dean's story as a representative of a world foreign to the events that take place. As such he tends to be both uncomprehending and insensitive ; he explains, for instance, that his search for solitude is to help him forget an unsuccessful love-affair:

> ' While enjoying a month of fine weather at the sea-coast, I was thrown into the company of a most fascinating creature: a real goddess in my eyes, as long as she took no notice of me, I " never told my love " vocally ; still, if looks have language, the merest idiot might have guessed I was head over ears . . . '

The vulgarity of this is enforced by the flat and lifeless prose ; and the absurdity of Lockwood's passion helps to bring out by contrast the significance of the Cathy-Heathcliff relationship. Lockwood's response, at subsequent points in the novel, is more or less what the response of the ordinary reader might be expected to be. At first unsympathetic, he is by the end entirely reconciled to all that has taken place. He has not long made the acquaintance of Heathcliff and Wuthering Heights before he feels that

> ' The dismal spiritual atmosphere of the place overcame, and more than neutralised the glowing physical comforts around me ; and I resolved to be cautious how I ventured under the rafters a third time.'

Having thus recorded the natural reaction of an observer as yet unacquainted with the deeper cross-currents of emotion, Lockwood tends to suspend judgment until the end of the novel.

Mrs. Dean's function in the novel cannot be so simply stated ; she may be said to act as Chorus with the difference that she offers a point of view which is not altogether disinterested. As raconteuse she naturally has to move upon a plane of normal and sometimes trivial consciousness that excludes her to some extent from the emotional atmosphere of the Cathy-Heathcliff relationship ; but this apart, she represents the maximum objectivity possible to any active participant in the events described. Her essential qualifications appear when Lockwood says to her:

' "Excepting a few provincialisms of slight consequence, you have no marks of the manners which I am habituated to consider peculiar to your class. I am sure you have thought a great deal more than the generality of servants think. You have been compelled to cultivate your reflective faculties for want of occasions for frittering away your life in silly trifles."

Mrs. Dean laughed.

"I certainly esteem myself a steady, reasonable kind of body," she said; "not exactly from living among the hills and seeing one set of faces, and one series of actions, from year's end to year's end; but I have undergone sharp discipline, which has taught me wisdom: and then, I have read more than you would fancy, Mr. Lockwood. You could not open a book in this library that I have not looked into, and got something out of also . . . " '

The key-words—' think,' ' reflective faculties,' ' steady,' ' reasonable,' ' sharp discipline,' ' wisdom '—emphasize the essential normality, the spiritual poise which informs the whole novel. And it is important that Mrs. Dean's ' wisdom ' is not an exclusively rural heritage, and comes ' not exactly from living among the hills ' ; it is also derived from a wide reading, and it is this which endows her with a width and generosity of opinion that contrast very strongly with the narrow calvinism of old Joseph, who says to Heathcliff:

' " Aw hed aimed tuh dee, where Aw'd sarved fur sixty year . . . " '

If Lockwood is not to be trusted as a commentator, he being almost a foreigner, nor is Joseph, who is too exclusively part of the environment to offer any semblance of impartiality.

The central theme, as has been suggested, is the relationship between Cathy and Heathcliff. Emily Brontë, however, has no particular concern with the surface appearance of this relationship, but insists throughout on its inner tension. To Mrs. Dean, Cathy is explicit:

' " This is for the sake of one [Heathcliff] who comprehends in his person my feelings to Edgar [Cathy's future husband] and myself. I cannot express it; but surely you and everybody have

a notion that there is or should be an existence beyond you. What were the use of my creation if I were entirely contained here? My great miseries in this world have been Heathcliff's miseries ; and I have watched and felt each from the beginning: my great thought in living is himself. If all else perished, and he remained, I should still continue to be; and if all else remained, and he were annihilated, the universe would turn to a mighty stranger: I should not seem a part of it. My love for Linton is like the foliage in the woods: time will change it, I'm well aware, as winter changes the trees. My love for Heathcliff resembles the eternal rocks beneath: a source of little visible delight, but necessary. Nelly, I *am* Heathcliff. He's always, always in my mind: not as a pleasure, any more than I am always a pleasure to myself, but as my own being. So don't talk of our separation again: it is impracticable . . . " '

Elsewhere she says:

' " Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same." '

And Heathcliff, speaking of the dead Cathy, says:

' " I *cannot* live without my life! I *cannot* live without my soul!" '

Though the point should not be much laboured, there exists a distinct similarity between these passages and the one by Charlotte describing Emily's enforced absence from Haworth ; and the comparison serves to emphasize the non-personal nature of the Cathy-Heathcliff relationship.

The key-sentence in the first passage quoted is ' My love for Heathcliff resembles the eternal rocks beneath.' This imagery drawn from nature, and particularly from its sterner elements, is recurrent in the descriptions of Heathcliff. Mrs. Dean describes him as being ' hard as whinstone,' and when he and the refined Edgar appear together, she says that ' The contrast resembled what you see in exchanging a bleak, hilly, coal country for a beautiful fertile valley.' Cathy is even more outspoken, and describes him as an arid wilderness of furze and whinstone.' But, in contrast with the ' red eyes and the fearful blackened inflation of the lineaments ' of Mrs. Rochester, Heathcliff is presented as being physically quite attractive. Lockwood finds that ' he has an erect and handsome

figure,' and Mrs. Dean says that 'his manner was even dignified: quite divested of roughness, though too stern for grace.' In so far as Heathcliff is abnormal, if that is the right word, it is an abnormality that tends to lie below the level of social deportment. Cathy says:

> '"Pray don't imagine that he conceals depths of benevolence and affection beneath a stern exterior! He's not a rough diamond —a pearl-containing oyster of a rustic: he's a fierce, pitiless, wolfish man."'

Heathcliff himself relates how he has 'taught him [his son] to scorn everything extra-animal as silly and weak'; and later he says: 'It's odd what a savage feeling I have to anything that seems afraid of me.' And finally Isabella, his wife, contributes to the impression of the non-human element in Heathcliff, when she asks: 'Is Mr. Heathcliff a man? If so, is he mad? And if not, is he a devil?'

With the death of Cathy, however, what was once latent now emerges, and Heathcliff ceases to be dignified. Mrs. Dean relates how, just before her death, he 'foamed like a mad dog'; and he himself says: 'You know, I was wild after she died.' The balanced relationship is now broken up, and a great contrast is evident between Cathy and Heathcliff. Mrs. Dean says of the former:

> '. . . hers [was the hush] of perfect peace. Her brow smooth, her lids closed, her lips wearing the expression of a smile; no angel in heaven could be more beautiful than she appeared. And I partook of the infinite calm in which she lay; my mind was never in a holier frame than while I gazed on that untroubled image of Divine rest . . . To be sure, one might have doubted, after the wayward and impatient existence she had led, whether she merited a haven of peace at last. One might doubt in seasons of cold reflection; but not then, in the presence of her corpse. It asserted its own tranquillity.'

As for Heathcliff, Mrs. Dean finds him 'leant against an old ash tree.' After talking to him, she relates:

> 'He dashed his head against the knotted trunk; and, lifting up his eyes, howled, not like a man, but like a savage beast getting goaded to death with knives and spears.'

The contrast is not only one of verbal description, but also of movement ; the Cathy passage runs very smoothly and evenly, and reflects the ' tranquillity ' ; whereas the Heathcliff passage is lumpy and awkward to read, generally uneasy in motion. The contrast persists, by implication, till the end of the novel. Heathcliff's behaviour remains weird and unnatural. He now bends all his energies towards bringing under one control the two properties of Wuthering Heights, where he has lived, and Thrushcroft Grange, where Cathy lived with her husband, Edgar Linton. This undertaking, symbolizing his desire to be re-united with Cathy, obsesses him, and he lets nothing stand in his way. He shows, for instance, considerable subtlety and brutality in arranging the marriage between Linton, his son, and Catherine, to whom Thrushcroft Grange will belong on the death of Edgar. The essential clue to his behaviour is supplied by Catherine, who says to him:

> ' " Mr. Heathcliff, *you* have *nobody* to love you ; and, however miserable you make us, we still have the revenge of thinking that your cruelty arises from your greater misery ! " '

But, once the mundane union has been effected, Heathcliff subsides. He goes and looks at Cathy in her coffin—' " I saw her face again—it is hers yet " '—and says to Mrs. Dean:

> ' " She [Cathy] has disturbed me, night and day through eighteen years—incessantly—remorsely—till yesternight ; and yesternight I was tranquil. I dreamt I was sleeping the last sleep by that sleeper, with my heart stopped and my cheek frozen against hers. " '

He now has ' a single wish,' and his ' whole being and faculties are yearning to attain it.' The ordinary physical demands of life have no more interest for him : ' " I have to remind myself to breathe—almost to remind my heart to beat ! " ' He moves nearer and nearer towards the unspecified goal ; ' " I'm too happy, and yet I'm not happy enough. My soul's bliss kills my body, but does not satisfy itself. " ' And finally Mrs. Dean relates:

> ' Mr. Heathcliff was there—laid on his back. His eyes met mine so keen and fierce, I started ; and then he seemed to smile . . . he was dead and stark ! '

He is buried, as he had demanded, with Cathy; and the final cadence comes with the small boy's story:

> '"They's Heathcliff, and a woman, yonder under t' Nab," he blubbered, "un' Aw darnut pass 'em."'

The level on which the Cathy-Heathcliff relationship has moved, and its depersonalized character, make it seem entirely fitting that it should attain equilibrium and tranquillity only with the death of the two persons concerned.

The structure of *Wuthering Heights*, as has been shown by C.P.S. in a Hogarth pamphlet, is truly remarkable for the degree to which it seems to have been artificially constructed, with minute attention paid to details of apparent irrelevance.[1] Analysis reveals, however, that this is not a symptom of misapplied energy and interest in Emily Brontë, but is precisely what gives the novel its coherence. The stresses and contradictions inherent in the Cathy-Heathcliff theme just analysed are reflected in varying ways in all the relationships of the novel; heredity, above all, plays a structural and unifying rôle that merits some attention at this point. The fundamental conflict emerges in the contrast between the two estates, between Thrushcroft Grange—'a splendid place carpeted with crimson, and crimson-covered chairs and tables,' and Wuthering Heights—'the floor was of smooth white stones; the

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> 'The faults of *Wuthering Heights* proceed, not from defective knowledge of human nature, but from inferior technique, from an insufficient acquaintance with the craft of fiction.'

Other critics have favoured the theory that the novel is by two people, Bramwell writing the first part. This absurdity has been convincingly refuted by Miss Irene Cooper Willis, whose pamphlet, *The Authorship of Wuthering Heights*, published by the Hogarth Press, contains some excellent close analysis of the texture of the prose.

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chairs high-backed, primitive structures, painted green.' Thrushcroft Grange is the home of the Lintons, and Edgar and Isabella Linton, together with Frances, stand for refinement and delicacy. In contrast there are Hindley and Cathy Earnshaw and Heathcliff, all of whom were brought up in Wuthering Heights, and develop very roughly and without the civilized graces. In comparison with the 'beautiful fertile valley' of Edgar, Heathcliff is a 'bleak, hilly coal country.' As a girl Cathy was a 'wild, wicked slip,' but, after staying for some time with the Lintons, she returns 'a very dignified person'; the Linton environment tends to eradicate from her the wilder elements that remain in Heathcliff. There are two inter-marriages: Heathcliff marries Isabella, and Cathy marries Edgar. The former marriage is a complete failure; Heathcliff shatters Isabella, and their son, Linton, is utterly spineless and wastes away rapidly. The second marriage is more successful; Mrs. Dean believes that Cathy and Edgar 'were really in possession of deep and growing happiness.' Their daughter is Catherine, of whom Mrs. Dean says:

> 'Her spirit was high, though not rough, and qualified by a heart sensitive and lively to excess in its affections. That capacity for intense attachments reminded me of her mother: still she did not resemble her; for she could be as soft and mild as a doe, and she had gentle voice and pensive expression: her anger was never furious: her love never fierce; it was deep and tender.'

The implications of these marriages and their offspring are fairly general. The first emphasizes the incompatibility of the Heathcliff and Isabella elements. And the second reveals that there exists a potential sympathy between the two conflicting houses; Cathy, her nature modified by a stay at Thrushcroft Grange, marries Edgar with comparative success, and their daughter meets with as great approval as Heathcliff's son with contempt from Mrs. Dean. And finally there is Hareton, the son of Frances and Hindley, Cathy's brother. Up till the age of about seventeen, Hareton is almost a replica of Heathcliff, though the Frances influence renders him more subdued, she being an insignificant and frail person. Mrs. Dean says that Heathcliff 'appeared to have bent his malevolence

on making him [Hareton] a brute' ; and not long before Heathcliffe dies, he says:

> '"Hareton seemed a personification of my youth, not a human being . . . his startling likeness to Catherine [Cathy] connected him fearfully with her . . . Hareton's aspect was the ghost of my immortal love, of my wild endeavours to hold my right, my degradation, my pride, my happiness, and my anguish . . ."'

The differences between the two main themes, Cathy-Heathcliff and Catherine-Hareton, lie, very generally, in the fact that the former is wilder and more Lawrencian. For instance, Cathy and Heathcliff do not marry ; Cathy tells Mrs. Dean that their relationship has no need for sanctions of that kind, and that it is not likely to be affected by her marriage to Edgar. And the same applies to Heathcliff's marriage to Isabella, Edgar's sister. In fact the Cathy-Heathcliff relationship is handled in neither sexual nor even particularly human terms. On the other hand, the Catherine-Hareton theme moves on a plane of normal procedure ; at the end of the novel they are about to be married. And this distinction between the two themes is of fundamental importance: the Catherine-Hareton relationship is the projection into the sphere of ordinary behaviour of the Cathy-Heathcliff relationship ; it is the expression in conventional social terms of the main spiritual conflict. As in the description of Catherine quoted above, on the one hand the anger is 'furious' and the love 'fierce,' on the other everything is 'soft and mild,' 'gentle,' and 'pensive.'

Between Catherine and Hareton, however, there is no such immediate sympathy as there was between Cathy and Heathcliff. The former relationship being, as has been suggested, a counterpart of the latter, it develops from outside itself. Cathy dies in giving birth to Catherine, and so, just as from this moment she and Heathcliff are separated and only very slowly re-united, similiarly there exists from the first a lack of sympathy between Catherine and Hareton which is only gradually overcome. At their first meeting she mistakes him for a servant, and he retorts:

> '"I'll see thee damned before I be *thy* servant."'

Heathcliff's struggle to unite the two estates involves marrying

his son, Linton, to Catherine, and this naturally throws her further apart from Hareton. But, once the marriage has taken place (Linton dies almost immediately) and Heathcliff feels himself moving ever closer to Cathy, intimacy between Catherine and Hareton springs up rapidly. And, significantly linking up with Mrs. Dean's remarks about her literary education, it is in teaching Hareton to read and appreciate her books that Catherine gives impetus to this relationship. Mrs. Dean says:

> 'His honest, warm, and intelligent nature shook off rapidly the clouds of ignorance and degradation in which it had been bred; and Catherine's sincere commendations acted as a spur to his industry.'

It is this relationship which meets with Mrs. Dean's approval. Her comments on Heathcliff and Cathy are fundamentally sympathetic, but none the less qualified. After Cathy has told her of her feelings for Heathcliff—' "Nelly, I *am* Heathcliff!" '—she says that she 'was out of patience with her folly!'; and after Cathy's death she says:

> 'Retracing the course of Catherine Linton, I fear we have no right to think she is [happy in the other world]; but we'll leave her with her Maker.'

And when she finds Heathcliff in the grounds, and sees him dash 'his head against the knotted trunk,' she observes that 'It hardly moved my compassion.' But of Hareton and Catherine she says:

> 'The crown of all my wishes will be the union between these two. I shall envy no one on their wedding-day: there won't be a happier woman than myself in England!'

But the 'union between these two' symbolises also the final union of Cathy and Heathcliff. The close sympathy between the two themes now emerges clearly. When Heathcliff dies, Hareton 'sat by the corpse all night, weeping in bitter earnest.' The resolution into tranquillity with which the Cathy-Heathcliff theme ends is paralleled in the Hareton-Catherine theme. As Mrs. Dean tells Lockwood that the latter are going to live at Thrushcroft Grange, they return from a walk.

' "They are afraid of nothing,' I [Lockwood] grumbled, watching their approach through the window. "Together, they would brave satan and all his legions."

As they stepped onto the door-stones, and halted to take a last look at the moon—or, more correctly, at each other, by her light—I felt irresistibly impelled to escape them . . . '

Lockwood, whose sympathies are now fully engaged, goes to find the graves of Edgar, Cathy and Heathcliff.

' I lingered round them, under that benign sky: watched the moths fluttering among the heather and hare-bells; listened to the soft wind breathing through the grass; and wondered how anyone could ever imagine unquiet slumbers for the sleepers in that quiet earth.'

The even and balanced movement of the prose, and the particularity of the description, bring the novel to a close on a note of great calm and completeness. Suggestions of the novel being 'terrible,' or not 'enjoyable,' are now seen to be possible only as a result of stubborn misreading; unfortunately this appears to be the sanctioned way of reading *Wuthering Heights*.

BORIS FORD.

MUSIC IN THE MELTING POT

CHARLES IVES AND THE MUSIC OF THE AMERICAS

I.

THE most important point about American music is that America has no musical past. This may sound suspiciously simple ; but we must remember that all the great musics of history have been evolved in a civilization small enough to have a traditional folk-music of its own (though the art-music will not necessarily be ' influenced ' by the folk music but may be complementary, a parallel growth) ; and that huge amorphous industrial America is the antithesis of such a civilization and has never possessed a representative folk-art. It is true that certain regions have a folk-music of somewhat poor vitality, but an art of the people that can be recognized as peculiarly American there never has been or (I imagine) will be. The suggestion has often been made—by the late George Gershwin for instance—that jazz is the universal folk-idiom of America which, if it were true, would be so much the worse for the folk. The palpable absurdity of the suggestion is, however, revealed when we remember that jazz is for the most part written by cosmopolitan Jews, that its conventions are mainly European, and that it is repudiated as a mode of artistic expression by all serious American musicians both in theory and in practice. Jazz has ultimately not much more connection with America than with the rest of the modern world ; America, as Wyndham Lewis remarks, was merely unfortunate enough, because of its comparative youth, to be the first country to become Americanized.

I am not at all sure that in order to be a genuine native American composer it is necessary completely to repudiate the traditions of the music of Europe. But at least one can understand the spirit of the young American composer's almost hysterical insistence on the ' new,' one can appreciate the validity of his

desire to begin *ab ovo*, to shake off the trammels of the academic nineteenth-century European frock-coat in which, at the turn of the century, he seemed doomed indefinitely to languish ; a technical, an idiomatic garb which bore no conceivable relation to the peculiar problems of his personality and his environment. One can even, I think, understand the kind of impatience that provoked Mr. Wallingford Riegger's blunt statement: 'While I do not claim that the possibilities of the major, minor and modal tonalities have been exhausted, I believe that the greatest music in this idiom has probably been written. On the other hand, *specially invented tonalities* (my italics) . . . open up vast fields as yet but little explored.' One can understand it, but can hardly agree, one cannot but regard it as an over-simple attitude. There are more complex questions which it seems to me the American composer must consider, and some of these questions are (a) whether it is *possible* to ' invent ' a new technique (the techniques of European, Asiatic or Indian music being the product of centuries of growth) ; (b) whether such a new technique would be of any use when and if it was invented (how far would it be indicative of new modes of consciousness and how far would these new modes of consciousness, if they existed, be desirable or worth the carrying ; and (c) whether newness has any meaning at all in connection with art except in the sense that all *good* works of art, however traditional, are new, that is, truly creative.

II.

If we wish to examine the practical application of these problems to American music we cannot do better than to consider the work of Charles Ives. English, or rather European, critics have dismissed him with amused contempt ; American critics dub him a major composer, both of which valuations seem to me ridiculous. What is certain is that he is not critically negligible and that he is, if not a great composer, very nearly a great—a singularly rich and ripe—personality. He is a genuine American type, a man of immense physical energy and competence in practical affairs, of a certain native commonsense, and of a vigorous originality and independence. Between 1890 and 1910 he had effected the revolutions of atonality and polytonality and the

exploration of polyrhythms and polyharmonies which afterwards came to be associated with the most advanced composers of central Europe, and his discoveries ranged, indeed, much further than any European composer had ever dared to go. His adventurousness itself is no proof of merit, nor even of lasting interest; but it is, as we shall see, suggestive and significant.

By birth Ives was almost a regional composer. His musical education—and it was a valuable one—he gained by listening to the improvisatory out-of-tune village fiddler, and to the curious noises made by the chanting school children and by the village harmonium and choir. Ives himself tells us that the improvisatory treatment of the hymn provided opportunities for displays of artistic skill of a crude, but curiously intense, kind, and it was through listening to the unnotated and perhaps unnotatable art of the villagers that Ives realized that there is not one right way of composing music but many, that music is, after all, only the art of sound, that the one test of rightness is whether the music is sincerely created, the one and only way of doing that particular thing. He tried to build up an original sound-system, a gigantic all-inclusive art-form which embraced within itself much of European, Oriental and most other musics, the improvisatory art of the local villagers, and many other methods of exploiting sound which had never before appeared in any music whatsoever. The mere fact that Ives's music includes so much makes him interesting for the young American composer who is in search of himself; let us now, therefore, make a few notes on some of Ives's most characteristic technical discoveries, using the term 'technical' in the limited sense. We will afterwards go on to consider the implications of these technical characteristics—the inner nature and probable value of Ives's *œuvre*.

(1) MELODY.

Ives's attitude to his art is above all anti-pedagogic. He has never made any bones about the fact that he aims at Expression and that he seeks the most immediate and the most 'natural' way of saying what he has to say. For this reason he seeks an 'inevitable' continuity between the successive notes of his melody and welcomes anything which provides relief from the cut-and-dried keyboard scales of pre-War European music. He does not wish

to discard entirely ' all principle of tone-unity ' but he believes that there are many possible such principles and that every artist must seek his own. Ives's melodic lines exploit on occasion every known stabilized tone-principle in such simultaneous diversity that they seem to have no tone-principle at all ; but he never ' invents ' any artificial theoretical tone-principle like the duodecuple scale. Similarly Ives has never advocated a quarter-tonal or any other fractional tonal system, but he insists that intervals smaller than a semitone may and should be employed where the immediate exigencies of expression call for them. In the use of intervals smaller than a semitone Ives was guided by the village fiddlers whom he heard in his youth ; he uses these intervals as it were instinctively, in accordance with no system but in order to create some peculiar effect which could be created in no other way. The shape of Ives's melodies is characterized by a huge Whitmanesque sweep, by enormous and exhilarating leaps, and by abrupt pauses ; but since naturalness is the essence of his art, his melodies have almost no recognizable mannerisms and may, when their inner life calls for it, manifest a diatonic simplicity as sweet and smiling as their more customary complexity is fierce and unflinching.

(2) HARMONY AND POLYPHONY.

It has often been pointed out that the notorious opposition between the two poles of homophony and polyphony is largely illusory, for you cannot combine melodies together without implying some sort of harmonic discipline, nor can you produce interesting harmony by treating chords as static blocks, or without a measure of flexibility and potency in the basses. Perhaps Ives, above all the ' natural ' musician, realized the artificiality of this opposition ; he writes down what he feels to be necessary, without stopping to consider whether it is homophonic or polyphonic or both simultaneously. Thus multitudes of interwoven melodic strands will be punctuated by enormously complicated (and ' ungrammatical ') masses of chords which can only be considered homophonically. Sometimes Ives will even write for two orchestras playing simultaneously music which is completely different in melodic, harmonic and rhythmic structure, hence the terrifying complexity of much of his work—on paper. Yet always he writes with the most scrupulous regard for the *sound* of his compositions,

and because his means are unfamiliar it does not follow that they are wrong. Ives is really a phenomenal technician in the sense that he invents original and unprecedented methods for saying certain unfamiliar things he has to say (he was using polyharmony—the juxtaposition of contrasting tone-systems—early in the eighteen-eighties). Criticism of the value of his achievement must ultimately go deeper than the justness, the integrity, of means.

(3) SONORITY.

Consideration of the simultaneous polyphonic-homophonic nature of Ives's work involves too the question of Sonority. It is the composer's opinion that sound, considered as such (*i.e.*, as noise), is just as much a legitimate musical element as those comparatively few specialized combinations of tones which time and convention have agreed to call 'concordant.' His trick of writing for two orchestras at once, each independent of the other (sometimes the two bands don't even end together) was inspired by his hearing two military bands pass each other on the march. Various strange accidents of aural phenomena such as this seem to be peculiarly fascinating to Ives; he repeatedly insists that sound coming from a distance, or over water, or through a wood, produces effects of peculiar musical value, and he attempts to find some orchestral, pianistic or vocal equivalent for these effects. Ives writes that he remembers hearing 'when a boy, the music of a band in which the players were arranged in two or three groups around the town square. The main group in the bandstand at the centre usually played the main themes, while the others, from the neighbouring roofs and verandas, played the variations, refrains, and so forth . . . The bandmaster told of a man who, living nearer the variations, insisted that they were the real music and that it was more beautiful to hear the tune come sifting through them than the other way round. Others, walking round the square, were surprised at the different and interesting effects they got as they changed positions . . . ' These and suchlike are the devices explored by Ives in his music. His work is the antithesis of 'abstract' music—music as an arrangement of 'notes.' Always he is minutely concerned with the *sound* of these notes, the precise timbres they take on when allotted to certain instruments in certain circumstances. In the course of these explorations he exploited masses

of sound, ' noise,' clusters of adjacent semitones, many years before the note-clusters of Henry Cowell.

(4) RHYTHM.

All these characteristics we have been discussing depend on, and cannot really be separated from, rhythm, but we have temporarily made this artificial segregation in order to point out that it is in its rhythmic fluidity that Ives's music—and indigenous American music generally—chiefly differs from European music. 'Our rhythmic sense,' writes Roy Harris, ' is less symmetrical than the European rhythmic sense. European musicians are trained to think of rhythm in its largest common denominator, while we are born with a feeling for its smallest units . . . We do not employ unconventional rhythms as a sophistical gesture ; we cannot avoid them . . . Our problem is to put down into translatable rhythms and symbols and consequent melodies and form those that assert themselves within us.' I do not think it is true to suggest that the American rhythmic sense is more *subtle* than the European, certainly I doubt if music of greater rhythmic subtlety than a motet of Vittoria or a madrigal of Wilbye has ever been created in any civilization. Possibly the rhythms natural to the American musical temperament are of greater metrical intricacy, but this is a different matter. Where American music does diverge widely from European music (particularly that of the last two centuries) is in its exploitation of ' harmony of rhythm,' an interwoven texture of different rhythms which proceeding simultaneously make up a whole in the same way as different tones combine together to make a harmony. This sort of harmony of rhythm can be found in Oriental, African and most ' primitive ' musics, but the work of Ives represents probably the first attempt to write such rhythms down. The freedom of Ives's polyphony derives from the fact that each melodic strand proceeds in its own unique and complicated rhythm, independently of its neighbour. Henry Cowell gives an example, by no means an isolated case, of a rhythm-harmony in Ives's music in which different parts move simultaneously in ' 20, 17 and 5 notes to the measure, with other parts taken from rhythms of 12, 10, 6 and 4 to the measure.' And these rhythms are all varied and complicated by tied notes, misplaced accents, overlappings and ellipses within the realm of

each rhythm-system. It is indisputable that rhythm-harmonies are a legitimate means of expression for American composers; they are in no sense a freakish invention but an ancient and honourable element of the technique of composition which has fallen into disrepute only in comparatively recent times. (Not that European music suffered because rhythm-harmonies were alien to it; only European music isn't the only sort of music). It is interesting to note also that Ives was using rhythms similar to Stravinsky's abrupt pounding syncopations and almost exactly like the characteristic rhythms of 'hot' jazz during the years 1900 to 1905.

(5) INTERPRETATION.

Ives himself has always stressed the experimental nature of his art. He insists that his music is personal and emotional and that it must be recreated at each performance; the artist must 'live through' the music as he plays it. Thus Ives allows the utmost latitude to the executant. He is directed to play passages loud or soft according to his immediate feelings, he may add or omit notes at will, often several alternative versions of one passage are given. All this suggests that Ives doesn't regard his music as a consummate art-form, either because he recognizes it as experimental and incomplete or because completeness seems to him an illusory virtue. There is some confusion in Ives's mind in connection with the incompleteness of his art, and discussion of this confusion provides the most convenient approach to an attempted valuation.

III.

To have discussed the technical traits of Ives's music in this segregated manner has been necessary because he is so revolutionary a composer; some such preliminary clearing of the ground is unavoidable if critical comment is to be made with any intelligibility. But it should be obvious by now that technique in this limited sense is meaningless as applied to Ives's work. His extraordinary eclectic and voluble style is the outcome of his desire to include everything, all facets of personality and all aspects of reality. To attain this universality has been the aim, avowed or unavowed, of many great composers, Busoni for instance remarking that he wished, in his *Concerto* and other large-scale works, to

include ' everything that presented itself to my imagination.' But he introduced vulgarity and triviality (*cf.* the Tarantella of the *Concerto*) only that they might be seen in reference to other more durable qualities, giving an added richness and sanity, and the notorious eclectic style of which newspaper critics still petulantly complain (What a pity Busoni wrote in so many other composers' manners) is a use of the emotional associations of the style of other composers as legitimate as Eliot's use of quotation.

Now in Ives the whole range of experience is not grasped, consummated, in this way. Musical corollaries of Emersonian uplift (the song *Duty*), of the barbaric yawp of Whitman, of antimacassar evangelicanism and Sunday-school sanctimoniousness (*Immortality*), regional robustness, sentimentality and racy vulgarity (*At the River*), broad music-hall humour (*The Great Man*), and the bustle and dust of ragtime (*Theater Set No. 2*), are poured helter-skelter into the melting pot, and the rag-bag idiom is entirely emotional and undisciplined. The music is wonderfully immediate and vigorous, there is remarkable diversity of life in it, everything which makes up the tragi-comic kaleidoscope that is the life of America. But it is also, I think, rather a superficial kind of life, *so* immediate, so *merely* real, as to be chaotic.

And this kaleidoscopic immediacy and reality is evidence of an extreme moral naïveté, a naïveté which is demonstrably present in the technique. Whenever he is setting words to music Ives's interpretation is comically literal. Thus references to fear or terror will be accompanied by sudden bumpings, clashes and note-clusters (*cf.* the adagio of *Theater Set*), and the movement of the swimmers in the song of that name is indicated by a soaring chromatic vocal line and by a whirling arpeggio accompaniment, not in grammatical harmony, but treated percussively, as ' noise.' The song *West London* (to Arnold's poem) is a particularly curious example, beginning in a contorted dreary jog-trot, with clumsy baffled lines tending to atonality, in the passages describing the distress of the poverty-stricken, and then bursting into ridiculously banal diatonic hymn-book harmonies at the crudely optimistic coda. (The question as to how far such effects may be intended ironically will be discussed shortly). *Like a Sick Eagle*, with its gauchely cluttered harmonies and viscid juxtaposition of sonorities provides a brilliant literal translation into music of a state of physical and mental

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fatigue, but the essential naïveté of the trick is revealed in the simple descending chromaticism of the vocal line. The 'sonorous' imitations of autumnal winds and whirling leaves in *September*, and the vocal descriptions (by means of leaps of major sevenths, quarter tones, shouts, croaks and glissandi) of hail and lightning in *Soliloquy* are open to the same criticism and so, in a rather different way, is the Sunday-school account of Mother's Death in *The Great Man*. The rapid flickerings of Ives's style between the angularities of the atonalists and the unctiousness of the ubiquitous Dykes can always be traced to his concern for the immediately obvious, the surface effect. So that although there is a great bustle of coarse and racy life in his music, it is a vitality that seems almost vicarious, all the flourish, the sentimentality, the fine melodramatic gesture of life but only a little of its real substance. Its reality is deceptive ; it is alive and many-sided as the life of a Fair is alive and many-sided ; but it has something of the Fair's phantasmagoric quality.

Of course, there is an individual note that gives a sort of unity to the apparent chaos, and this individual note is the composer's vigorous robust personality, as a man, not as an artist. You can observe this individuality most clearly in the queer shape of Ives's melodic lines—the unexpected descending leaps in the opening phrases of the song *At Sea*, the coarse and crude humour of the jumping angularities of line in *Walt Whitman*, the more jaunty gaucherie of that charming piece of Broadwayism *Ann Street*—and also in the oddly unresolved harmonic treatment of blatant revivalist or Spiritual tunes like *At the River* (from the 4th Violin Sonata) and in the brusque tough and complicated rhythms of all his characteristic work. Ives's music is the diversified life of the middleman of America seen through the glass of his own personality, it seems all of a piece because it is in one sense Self-Expression, the realization of a powerful easily recognizable temperament. It has a certain unity ; but it has no *order* in the sense that the composer arrives at any organization in, or synthesis of, his experiences. It is essentially undigested experience, the result of over-eating, with the vividly real unreality of a nightmare.

In the foregoing paragraphs I have chosen the examples mainly from *Thirty-Four Songs*, because they are easily accessible, being published by *New Music*, but the preoccupation, which we

have noticed earlier in discussing technical traits of Ives's music, with the aural effects of natural phenomena (brass bands passing each other, sound over water, through a wood, etc.) patently represents the same sort of naïveté on a wider scale—adapted to the orchestra and chorus rather than to the voice, the piano, or a few instruments. And we see that Ives's practice, in his desire to embrace all kinds of experience and all possible means of expression, really cuts to the core of musical æsthetics and opens up speculations as to the nature of the distinction, if there is one, between a noise and a musical tone. (We speak of the music of birds, of the wind, of the stream, etc. Is this merely a metaphorical use of language or do we mean that in these instances the sound is somehow ordered, and if so ordered by what?). Ives's attitude to sound seems to me a healthy one because, at a time when clear thinking was desperately needed, it recognized that distinctions between a noise and a musical sound can only be arbitrary, that the boundaries between the tolerable and the intolerable are elastic, shifting with successive ages in the life of man, that probably the only physical laws which are unanswerable and unalterable are those few primary ones on which melodic construction, in the music of all ages and civilizations, is based, and these laws are, roughly speaking, those implicit in the human voice. But at the same time Ives's attitude is, in its literalness, essentially naïve because it doesn't recognize that although such distinctions may be arbitrary they are none the less necessary, for music is bound to be conventional to a degree and if a composer uses 'noises' he must be clear in his own mind as to how far he uses them for naturalistic and how far for conventional ends. He may learn from nature how to widen the scope of his musical speech, as the sculptor may learn from nature many of the basic principles of modelling stone; but his musical speech must remain a speech and not a gibberish.

In the music of Leos Janácek we can examine a traditional stable classical technique invigorated and intensified by emotionally sanctioned explorations into the 'natural' resources of musical speech; in the music of Edgar Varèse we can examine an attempt to formulate a language out of the natural phenomena of sound without reference to any traditional idiom—a music which is thus as close to gibberish as a formulated language could well be. Now it is the essence of Ives's documentary importance that he will

have none of such distinctions between the natural and the conventional, and in his denial of the synthesizing activities of the intelligence (it is more than intellect, amounting, really, to emotional maturity), Ives is a typical American product, related to the cult of the cruder aspects of life which emerged in the days of Sherwood Anderson, though he is as a personality much more remarkable and culturally significant. He seems to think that as experience is essentially incomplete and never to be completed the artist has no choice but to present it in fragmentary form. He discards conventions, or uses them all, which is the same thing, and concentrates upon the flux of life which is for him life's only meaning. But the flux of life is, in itself, meaningless; and the diversity of his art, its complexity, the trivial and nincompoopish beside the solemn and the sad, is its weakness as well as its strength. We cannot be sure how far there is an ironic implication, how far sentimentality and vulgarity are accepted and how far debunked, and this is a more radical defect than if we were certain that there was no ironic implication at all, because it points to a similar uncertainty in the composer's mind. Ives is a *remarkable* melodist but he has created no melody that is in itself remarkably beautiful; and this is another way of saying that his music is something rather less than music, something that is not quite composition. For this reason it seems to me that his most *musically* successful pieces are those concerned with sensation purely and simply, with practically no indication of an emotional or moral background. Such songs as *The White Gulls*, *Afterglow*, or *Thoreau* convey, through an exquisite original method of fluttering chromaticism and delicate opposed sonorities and timbres (using the piano as a 'sonorous' instrument by exploiting its harmonic overtones), quiverings of nervous sensation with a success as complete as that of Debussy in his equally adequate but very different technique. These are lovely and successful pieces; but they are nervous sensation merely, with almost no reference to the emotions human beings feel as they come into contact with each other and with the activities of everyday life. They are not so much art as the material out of which art might be made; considering them we shall understand how it is that the music Ives wrote during the nineteen-thirties is not noticeably distinct from the music he wrote during the eighteen eighties, except perhaps that it is more expert.

Ives's usefulness for American composers has been, I think, largely negative. He has shown them that each must work out his own salvation, he has suggested means whereby they might do so, but, since his art is so personal, he has not given them a convention which they could as a group accept ; he has provided them with no solidarity. The most cursory survey of American music reveals the complete lack of any centrality, a chaos of conflicting experimentalisms, all of which are as it were summarized in the eclectic diversity of the art of Ives.

IV.

To attempt to indicate the extent and variety of American creative musical activity in a few paragraphs is indeed a Herculean labour, and I hardly think its usefulness would justify the effort, for as far as I know America has not yet produced any music that is likely to survive the next fifty years. But the diversity is documentarily interesting and there is place for a few notes on its more representative manifestations.

Aaron Copland and Carlos Chavez have the distinction of creating a genuinely indigenous American music. Copland's work is often praised as being a music of Steel Girders. If one looks at the piano *Variations*, which is reputed to be one of his finest compositions, it does seem that a music of Modern Life is rather easy to write. A gawky sequence of notes calling itself a theme is harmonized consistently in major sevenths and minor ninths, galvanized into a nervous hysterical life by complex syncopated rhythmic formations. The music is undoubtedly 'steely' and in a primitive way even exciting, but the convention is pathetically limited. Only in the *Ode*, perhaps, does Copland manifest a slight, sultry and bitter lyrical gift ; harmonically his music is not so much austere as uninteresting (*cf.* his numbing insistence on the 'accompanying' tenth of the average jazz hack).

The most powerful music of Chavez is that which, like the sombre and acrid piano *Sonatina*, is mostly closely related to the ritualistic music of Mexico. This little work contains some genuinely original linear construction, depending on the gradual dynamic development of a persistent linear formula, but in his more consciously American compositions, such as the ridiculous *Blues* and

Fox in dissonant linear counterpoint, the studied angularity of the writing, the perpetual leaps of minor ninths and major sevenths, the mechanical perversity of the rhythms, become acutely irritating and I can find nothing in this music but a fetish of aridity. The least silly of the pieces in this style are machine-musics like *Unidad* and '*36*,' depending on the development of incisive figures in mosaic over a throbbing rhythmic pulse. It is an odd and suggestive fact that Chavez should be associated with the idiotic Pure Music campaign, and yet nothing could be less musical than these compositions of his which deliberately deny the root of all true musical expression—the melody of the human voice.

There are many American composers who 'invent' specialized idioms. Henry Brant, having decided that nothing more can be done by composing vertically or horizontally, writes harmonically 'oblique' music, though he grants that *at the present stage of aural development* the unprecendented subtlety of his music is not perceptible to the ear. Ruth Crawford writes heterophonic music in which the various linear strands bear no relation to one another except that of proximity in time-space. An American critic charmingly remarks that a high degree of skill is necessary (a) to avoid any implication of the recognized harmonic and melodic relationships; (b) to ensure absolute metrical coincidence; and (c) to make the undertaking worth while. Wallingford Riegger and many others exploit various cerebrally ingenious versions of the Schönbergian tone-row.

The most interesting of the experimental individualists is probably Carl Ruggles whose music looks, in score, as though it might be impressive in a very limited and naïve way. It is volcanically unexpected music in the heroic American 'epic' pioneer succession. Independently of Schönberg, Ruggles arrived at a species of atonality of which the principle is that no one tone shall be repeated until the tenth progression, but the 'Babylonian' grandeur of his lines is remote from the perverse tortuosity of Schönberg's, nor does he accept the duodecuple scale but writes rather in a kind of twenty-one tone scale with seven 'white' notes and a sharp and flat for each. The line is continuous and declamatory, with sweeping curves, accentuated in accordance with the rhythms of the speaking voice.

Many composers like Emerson Whithorne still cling to the old

nineteenth-century European conventions ; others, like Roy Harris and Roger Sessions, strive to modify European conventions in an individualistic way. I do not know enough of Harris's music to speak with confidence but I believe that he lacks sufficient technique to carry through his attempt to give fresh vitality to the Beethovian ' thematic development ' conception of music ; and when I say that he lacks technique I mean that he lacks conviction, is muddle-headed and ' moved ' too violently in no particular direction. Sessions on the other hand is technically very accomplished, a man of impeccable taste and considerable intelligence who knows precisely what he wants to do but has, ultimately, little creative zest of a positive order. Finally, one might mention the inevitable fact that the American musical scene teems with toughly sentimental Cummingsian counterparts of the noodles of the twentieth-century Parisian salon ; it can but induce a kind of inert desperation to realize that the only possible compromise between the poker-faced solemnity of the New Music school and the trite lachrymosity of the Hollywooden hack of Tin-Pan Alley seems to be represented by the private facetiousness of eupeptically gay composers like Virgil Thomson, Marc Blitzenstein, and Nicholas Slominsky.

If the present of American music is so little encouraging, what is to be said of the future? Can one regard it hopefully when a man such as Ives, of immense force of character and of undeniable talent, fails to produce a single authentic composition? Well, there is one consideration that may give us pause, though it offers no definite contribution to the problem either way, and this is that Ives has at least given the American composer a clean slate to start with. The European composer is beset with the foetid vegetation of so many dead ideals and rotten beliefs that the rank breath of it must needs cloud his eyes and tingle his nostrils. On the other hand the European composer, if he is extremely honest and clairvoyantly sensitive, may yet find a whiff of life in the midst of putrefaction, whereas the American composer is unanswerably reduced to ' constructing ' something positive out of ' air which is thoroughly small and dry.' The glitter of Mr. Copland's Steel Girders will not magnificently dazzle any but the already desperate-hearted ; but I suppose one must admit that there's nothing one can do if one doesn't continue briskly to hammer in the rivets.

W. H. MELLERS.

LESLIE STEPHEN: CAMBRIDGE CRITIC

THE reputation of Leslie Stephen as literary critic seems to have been at its lowest ebb when Mr. Desmond MacCarthy in his lecture on *Leslie Stephen* (being the Leslie Stephen lecture for 1937) nailed down the coffin. No contrary demonstration was provoked among the audience or the Press. However, some of us may feel that the last word has not yet been said, on our side, and on the other—the corpse's—that these bones can still live. Those of us who can remember the barren state of English literary criticism before *The Sacred Wood* reached the common reader and before *The Problem of Style* and *Principles of Literary Criticism* appeared remember also their debt to Leslie Stephen: for after Johnson, Coleridge and Arnold who was there who was any help? [Certainly not Pater or Symons or Saintsbury or . . .] We were grateful to Leslie Stephen not so much for what he wrote—though that was considerable—as for what he stood for, implied and pointed to. He seemed to us to be in the direct line of the best tradition of our literary criticism, to exemplify the principle virtues of a literary critic, and to exhibit a tone, a discipline and an attitude that were desirable models to form oneself on. This, to us, would have seemed the obvious starting-point for any contemporary littérateur speaking on that subject. Mr. MacCarthy, however, was entirely apologetic and deprecatory. This—he said, as it were—is what Leslie Stephen was, these were his scraps of abilities (and a poor showing they make, I grant you), of course he had none of the essential qualifications for a literary critic (we know what they are) and he had all these disabilities, but still there it is and I've done my duty by him.

I think it owing to Leslie Stephen to scrutinize Mr. MacCarthy's critical values and to state, in greater detail than I have done above, what Leslie Stephen stands for and what his criticism consisted of. For apart from Mr. MacCarthy's unfortunate testimonial and the chatty informal *Life and Letters* by Maitland,

there is nothing; except Stephen's own *Some Early Impressions*, which even in Cambridge no one seems to read. On the other hand, everyone has read *To the Lighthouse*, and the portrait-piece of Mr. Ramsay by Leslie Stephen's gifted daughter elicited immediate recognition from the oldest generation. Yes, that's Leslie Stephen, the word went round; and that brilliant study in the Lytton Strachey manner of a slightly ludicrous, slightly bogus, Victorian philosopher somehow served to discredit Leslie Stephen's literary work. But it is obvious to any student of it that that work could not have been produced by Mr. Ramsay. However, Stephen seems fated to be known only as the original editor of the D.N.B.

Mr. MacCarthy starts by informing us that Leslie Stephen is 'the least æsthetic of noteworthy critics'—meaning, it appears, that Stephen was thereby at a disadvantage. His unfavourable criticism of Sterne, for instance, is due to his inability to enjoy what Mr. MacCarthy called Sterne's 'elegant ambiguity' and he does not appreciate that 'Sterne's attitude towards all emotions was playful.' Actually Stephen's last word on Sterne was this: 'Sterne has been called the English Rabelais . . . We know that, on clearing away the vast masses of buffoonery and ribaldry under which Rabelais was forced, or chose, to hide himself we come to the profound thinker and powerful satirist. Sterne represents a comparatively shallow vein of thought . . . He is too systematic a trifler to be reckoned with any plausibility amongst the spiritual leaders of any intellectual movement.' Mr. MacCarthy does not like this kind of criticism, and he consistently but not I think deliberately misrepresents it; you suspect that he finds it uncongenial because it represents a threat to his own existence as a critic. He notes with discomfort Stephen's seriousness, his refusal to compromise or to scale down his standards, and he complains that Stephen's strong sense of character affected his discussion of an author's work. That is, Mr. MacCarthy deplores a moral sense in the critic. What he demands instead is easily discovered: 'Stephen was deficient in the power of transmitting the emotions he had derived himself from literature; he seldom, if ever, attempted to record a thrill.' 'As a practising critic he limited hemself as far as he could to that aspect of his subject about which it was possible to argue.' Criticism, we are further told, is the adventures of the soul

among masterpieces, and the soul of Cambridge, he suggests, had no qualifications for embarking on such adventures 'in a region where reason is at a disadvantage compared with intuition.'

Mr. MacCarthy is placing not Leslie Stephen but himself (he might be a vulgarized echo of Arthur Symons). Delivered at Cambridge in 1937 his can only be described as an insolent performance. For if the humanistic side of Cambridge studies has any justification for existing it is in standing in the eyes of the great world—as it does—for a critical position descended from Leslie Stephen's and antagonistic to Mr. MacCarthy. Some part at least of Mr. MacCarthy's audience must not have been affected as he expected by his recital of Stephen's limitations or failings—that Stephen seemed to think that on the whole books ought not to be written unless they are first-rate of their kind, that mediocrity in poetry is unforgivable, that his studies 'might seem grudging, owing to the number of reservations they contain, until the reader has grasped that praise from Leslie Stephen, which he always strove to make precise, meant a very great deal.' And so on. Actually, I suppose the more intelligent section of Mr. MacCarthy's audience held these qualities, this outlook, that mode of expression, to be indispensable to the practice of literary criticism. 'I often think that the value of second-rate literature is not small, but simply zero' Stephen wrote. He was not a Sunday reviewer, we perceive. And unless you are one, or a minor poet, you can hardly be devoted to literature without having reached the same conclusions as Leslie Stephen independently. Again Mr. MacCarthy cannot see the point of Stephen's painstaking examination of Defoe's minor novels (though his essay has the merit of destroying in anticipation the Woolf-Forster claim that Defoe is a literary *artist*) and his similar pieces of critical analysis; he opines that criticisms of this kind (with which 'Leslie Stephen's critical essays are crammed'), while they may 'increase our interest when we think over an author's works,' yet 'Of course, they do not help us to decide whether the fiction in question is good or bad.' When it comes to judgment, he says, 'the test which Leslie Stephen applied was the relation of a work to life, the extent to which it ministered, in one way or another, to all human good.' This is not the best way of explaining Stephen's critical values, but we can gather the force of Mr. MacCarthy's objections. Those of us who do not choose

to linger in the æsthetic vacuum of the 'nineties can afford the courage of asserting that we agree with Leslie Stephen and not Mr. MacCarthy. Mr. MacCarthy's critical position is revealed as the last heritage of the 'nineties (not the Cambridge 'nineties). It is a position which we might well have supposed not merely outmoded but abolished for ever, though I suppose its last recognizable sign of life was as recent as Mr. Clive Bell's theory of Significant Form.

Let us recapitulate the grounds of dispute between Mr. MacCarthy and Leslie Stephen. Stephen, misguided man, thought the critic should confine himself to what is discussible about a work of art instead of recording his thrill at experiencing it: the youngest hand will have the answer ready that it is the critic's business to advance the profitable discussion of literature, substitute-creation ('transmitting the emotions derived from literature') being indefensible egotism. His detailed analyses of writings, focussing on the writer's idiom and technical devices, do not help us to decide whether the work is good or bad, says Mr. MacCarthy; we on the contrary who believe that literary criticism can be demonstrated and so argued about find Stephen's procedure—starting from the surface and working inwards to radical criticism—obviously right and convincing. We believe with Stephen that literary criticism is not a mystic rapture but a process of the intelligence. No doubt the environment of Clerk Maxwell and Henry Sidgwick was peculiarly favourable to the development of such an attitude to literature, but we recollect that Arnold and Coleridge also practised this method when they were most effectual. His feeling that the character of an author was a factor in his art to be reckoned with was, we are assured, a demerit in a critic, it interfered with his judgment of a piece of literature. We reply that Stephen had evidently a finer critical sense than Bloomsbury; if we mean by art something more profound than an 'æsthetic' theory can explain we have to agree with Henry James, that in the last event the value of a work of art depends on the quality of the writer's make-up. Art is not amoral and everything is not as valuable as everything else. Stephen did not apply a moral touch-stone naïvely. In practice the question at issue is, can we or can we not diagnose Sterne's limitations and George Eliot's only partial success as artists in terms of these writers' make-up? Stephen

thought he could and we think he did. The position we share with Leslie Stephen has been admirably stated by Mr. L. H. Myers in the Preface to *The Root and the Flower*, where he says that 'Proust, for instance, by treating all sorts of sensibility as equal in importance, and all manifestations of character as standing on the same plane of significance, adds nothing to his achievement, but only draws attention to himself as aiming at the exaltation of a rather petty form of æstheticism. For my part, I believe that a man serves himself better by showing a respect for such moral taste as he may possess.' Unless we adopt this position, says Mr. Myers, we 'are likely to be satisfied with art that is petty.' Stephen had no use for art that is petty; Mr. MacCarthy wants to be allowed to rebuke him for describing Sterne as 'a systematic trifler' representing 'a shallow vein.' Of course the academic attitude to literature is much the same as Mr. MacCarthy's. 'It appears that you prefer some authors to others, Mr. Graves' is the classic rebuke of authority to criticism. Stephen was not academic—it is only one of his virtues but it is the fundamental one for a critic—he was not conventional, timid or respectable in his findings. 'It is tempting to try to clear away some of the stupendous rubbish-heaps of eulogy which accumulate over the great men when admiration has become obligatory on pain of literary renunciation' he wrote. And again on Johnson's criticism of Milton:

> 'His independent judgments are interesting even when erroneous. His unlucky assault upon *Lycidas* is generally dismissed with a pitying shrug of the shoulders . . . Of course every tyro in criticism has his answer ready . . . The same writer who will tell us all this, and doubtless with perfect truth, would probably have adopted Pope or Johnson's theory with equal confidence if he had lived in the last century. *Lycidas* repelled Johnson by incongruities which, from his point of view, were certainly offensive. Most modern readers, I will venture to suggest, feel the same annoyances, though they have not the courage to avow them freely . . . Every critic is in effect criticizing himself as well as his author; and I confess that to my mind an obviously sincere record of impressions, however onesided they may be, is infinitely refreshing, as revealing at least the honesty of the writer. The ordinary run of criticism

generally implies nothing but the extreme desire of the author to show that he is open to the very last new literary fashion . . . If Johnson's blunder in this case implied sheer stupidity, one can only say that honest stupidity is a much better thing than clever insincerity or fluent repetition of second-hand dogmas . . . He had the rare courage—for, even then, Milton was one of the tabooed poets—to say what he thought as forcibly as he could say it; and he has suffered the natural punishment of plain speaking.'

Mr. MacCarthy evidently thinks that the Cambridge ethos, which everyone including Stephen agrees was the decisive influence in shaping his character, was very inferior intellectually to old Bloomsbury. What sort of environment was it in fact? The best account of it is in *Some Early Impressions* (Hogarth Press), where Stephen himself records his debt. Stephen was born in 1832. His family was what he called 'the second generation from the Clapham Sect' (it is interesting to note that Macaulay's was the first generation from it and Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell's the third). Stephen did not react against the Clapham inheritance. His admiration for 'the essential Puritan' was derived from his early impressions. He naturally found the Evangelical leaning of Cambridge in 1850 congenial. 'Cambridge has for the last three centuries inclined to the less romantic side of things . . . We could boast of no Newman, nor of men who, like Froude and Pattison, submitted for a time to the fascination of his genius and only broke from it with a wrench which permanently affected his mental equilibrium. "I have never known a Cambridge man," as a reverent disciple of the prophet said to me, "who could appreciate Newman." Our version of the remark was slightly different. We held that our common sense enabled us to appreciate him only too thoroughly by the dry light of reason and to resist the illusions of romantic sentiment.' It was one of the advantages of Cambridge, he felt, that there was no such spiritual leader as Carlyle or Newman in the place. His mind was formed first by his mathematical tutor Isaac Todhunter, whose character impressed him as much as his attainments, by the great Whewell (who had no personal charm, and whose character, intellect and influence were markedly opposite to those of Jowett, for whom Stephen felt great

distaste) and finally by the pervading influence of John Stuart Mill. 'Pure, passionless reason' was embodied in his works—which was all his disciples knew of him at the time. Stephen speaks of 'that shrewd, hard-headed, North-country type which was so conspicuous at Cambridge' and notes 'our favourite antipathy was the "imposter"—that is, the man given to allowing his feelings to override his common sense.' At Cambridge he found a conspicuous absence of interest in the struggle of Church parties then proceeding ('We left such matters to Oxford'), 'the religion of all sensible men' being generally the wear. This Stephen after some years as a don and tutor found dropping away from him painlessly, and he became and remained an agnostic. What Cambridge had to offer him is most clearly seen if we consider the contrasting experience of Mark Pattison, a natural Cantab as it were, who, as Stephen noted, 'fretting under the oppressive spirit of the old Oxford atmosphere' and feeling that Newman represented mere obscurantism, wore himself out in his efforts at educational reform in the university, thwarted by the insufferable Jowett. He left Cambridge without loss of esteem on either side and entered journalism, the higher journalism that was then available to offer a career to talent without degradation. 'I joined the great army of literature because I was forced into the ranks,' he wrote in after life, 'but also with no little pride in my being accepted as a recruit.' The *Saturday Review* succeeded Cambridge and stamped him afresh. He notes that turning over the files many years afterwards to look for his own contributions, he was startled to discover that he could rarely distinguish them by internal evidence. It seems to have been a congenial extension of the Cambridge ethos; he speaks of the 'strong realistic common sense of the Johnson variety' that was practised. The last factor in shaping him as a critic seems to have been the D.N.B., whose editorship he accepted in 1882. There he 'learnt to think that the whole art of writing consists in making one word suffice where other ordinary men use two.' It also assisted him to perfect his dry, unobtrusive irony thanks to which the Dictionary is, as Maitland said, 'strewn with man-traps.' That impersonal but caustic wit, expressing an outlook characteristically devoid of easy enthusiasm, is most evident in the George Eliot volume he contributed to the English Men of Letters series (of the others—Hobbes, Pope, Johnson and Swift—the two last

are admirable). It is a decidedly unsympathetic study though admirers of George Eliot find to their annoyance that he has said practically all in her favour that there is to say; his critical appraisal of her weaknesses remains an uncomfortable obstacle which they cannot afford to neglect and which is not easily dealt with.

His belief in reason (as opposed to 'intuition') deplored by Mr. MacCarthy did not lead to crass blindness. He was not ignorant of the fact that a work of art has its own internal logic; but he did not consider that this exempted the author or poet from intellectual scrutiny. He expected a poet who deployed philosophic views to have sound ones, and he realized, in spite of his great 'intuitive' admiration for Wordsworth, that Wordsworth's were not always sound. For Shelley's intellectual lights he had the greatest disrespect, and was able to make a corresponding case against Shelley's poetry—he protests to J. A. Symonds that he cannot agree with his praise of Shelley in the Men of Letters volume, there is 'a certain hollowness' about the Prometheus, an 'insubstantial mist' in much of Shelley's most admired poems. His use of 'reason' is in the Johnson tradition. Since it led him to explode Lamb's sophistical defence of Restoration Comedy and Hazlitt's of Wycherley, it was evidently a useful critical technique. His cautious examination of what a writer has to offer will seem to many of us, in spite of Mr. MacCarthy, worth more than a cartload of records of thrills. Do we or do we not find the following kind of criticism more helpful than transmission of the emotions derived *from* literature?:

> 'There are parasitical writers who, in the old phrase, have "formed their style" by the imitation of accepted models, and who have, therefore, possessed it only by right of appropriation. Boswell has a discussion as to the writers who may have served Johnson in this capacity. But in fact, Johnson, like all other men of strong idiosyncrasy, formed his style as he formed his legs . . . Johnsonese was, as far as we can judge, a genuine product. Macaulay says that it is more offensive than the mannerisms of Milton or Burke, because it is a mannerism adopted on principle and sustained by constant effort. Facts do not confirm this theory. Milton's prose style seems to be the result of a

conscious effort to run English into classical moulds. Burke's mannerism does not appear in his early writings, and we can trace its development from the imitation of Bolingbroke to the last declamation against the Revolution. But Johnson seems to have written Johnsonese from his cradle.'

'What Swift has really done [in *Gulliver*] is to provide for the man who despises his species a number of exceedingly effective symbols for the utterance of his contempt.'

His style was no doubt precipitated by the conditions of working as journalist, editor and biographer, but it is a genuine expression of personality and an effective weapon. Aspects of it were registered in the contemporary mots: 'No flowers by request' and 'Stephen's ink was never watery' (or purple, it might have been added). He had the right to come down on Arnold for his rhetoric about the dreaming spires and to object to his mannerisms. Stephen was the type of the critic who makes no parade of personality, has no studied attitudes, whose manner consists of an absence of manner but is felt as the presence of a mature personality. He himself described his style modestly as 'short-winded and provokingly argumentative,' and says that whereas X 'can keep up a flow of eloquence' he himself cannot keep on the rhetorical level because he 'must always have some tangible remark to make.' Unlike his contemporaries we cannot consider this in any way unfortunate. His habitual tone and style are represented by this from the essay on Jowett: 'To a distinct view of the importance of some solution he seems to have joined the profound conviction that no conceivable solution would hold water. "He stood," says one of his pupils, in a rather different sense, "at the parting of many ways," and he wrote, one must add, "No thoroughfare" upon them all.' As a critic he stood for outspoken criticism all round; 'I like his [Huxley's] pugnacity—a quality I always admire. The more hard-hitting goes on in the world, the better I am pleased—meaning always hard-hitting in the spiritual sense.' His critical credo is constantly implied in the essays *Hours in a Library* (three volumes), *Studies of a Biographer* (four volumes) and the fragmentary *English Literature and Society in the Eighteenth Century*. It corresponds generally to the position that we hold to-day.

'After all, though criticism cannot boast of being a science, it ought to aim at something like a scientific basis, or at least to proceed in a scientific spirit. The critic, therefore, before abandoning himself to the oratorical impulse, should endeavour to classify the phenomena with which he is dealing as calmly as if he were ticketing a fossil in a museum. The most glowing eulogy, the most bitter denunciation, have their proper place; but they belong to the art of persuasion, and form no part of scientific method . . . Our faith in an author must, in the first instance, be the product of instinctive sympathy, instead of deliberate reason. But when we are seeking to justify our emotions, we must endeavour to get for the time into the position of an independent spectator, applying with rigid impartiality such methods as are best calculated to free us from the influence of personal bias.'

'Coleridge's specific merit was not, I think, that he laid down any scientific theory. He was something almost unique in this as in his poetry, first because his criticism was the criticism of a man who combined the first simple impulse of admiration with the power of explaining why he admired; and secondly, and as a result, because he placed himself at the right point of view; because, to put it briefly, he was the first great writer who criticized poetry as poetry, and not as science.'

'Nothing is easier than to put the proper label on a poet—to call him "romantic" or "classical," and so forth; and then if he has a predecessor of like principles, to explain him by the likeness, and if he represents a change of principles, to make the change explain itself by calling it a reaction. The method is delightfully simple, and I can use the words as easily as my neighbours. The only thing I find difficult is to look wise when I use them, or to fancy that I give an explanation because I have adopted a classification.'

'The phrase "criticism of life" gave great offence, and was much ridiculed by some writers, who were apparently unable to distinguish between an epigram and a philosophical dogma. To them indeed, Arnold's whole position was naturally abhorrent. For it is not uncommon now to hear denunciations of all attempts to connect art with morality and philosophy. It is wicked, we are told, for a poet, or a novelist, or a painter, to take any

moral consideration into account ; and therefore to talk of poetry as destined to do for us much that philosophy and religion used to do is, of course, manifestly absurd. I will not argue the point at length . . . Meanwhile it is my belief that nobody is the better in any department of life or literature for being a fool or a brute: and least of all in poetry. I cannot think that a man is disqualified for poetry either by thinking more deeply than others or by having a keener perception of (I hope I may join the two words) moral beauty . . . When Arnold called poetry a criticism of life, he only meant to express what seems to me an undeniable truth.'

'Critics in an earlier day conceived their function to be judicial. They were administering a fixed code of laws applicable in all times and places . . . There are undoubtedly some principles of universal application ; and the old critics often expounded them with admirable common-sense and force. But like general tenets of morality, they are apt to be commonplaces, whose specific application requires knowledge of concrete facts . . . Criticism must become thoroughly inductive . . . Briefly, in talking of literary changes, I shall have, first, to take note of the main intellectual characteristics of the period ; and secondly, what changes took place in the audience to which men of letters addressed themselves, and how the gradual extension of the reading class affected the development of the literature addressed to them.'

I hope I have made it plain not only what Leslie Stephen's strength as a literary critic was, but why I have chosen to describe him as a Cambridge critic. His is not (unfortunately) the invariable kind of criticism practised at Cambridge or by Cambridge products, but it is what the world of journalism and *belles-lettres* means when it refers with respect or malice to 'Cambridge Criticism.' His style, his tone, his mental attributes, his outlook are what are considered the most admirable, or objectionable, or at any rate, whatever your opinion of it, the most characteristic features of the Cambridge school. Cambridge has not by any means produced only Leslie Stephens ; it is sufficient to name Rupert Brooke and Housman as evidence that dug-outs exist as refuges from the prevailing wind, that east wind which Elton, I think, says might

have done Pater so much good if he had been placed in the other university. In contemporary Cambridge where one section still holds literary criticism to be a charming parasite and sends its soul, with Mr. MacCarthy's approval, adventuring among masterpieces, while another holds semasiology to have superseded literary criticism along with philosophy and the rest—it is high time for those who look back with respect to Leslie Stephen as the exemplar of a sound position and a profitable practice to put it on record why they honour his memory.

Q. D. LEAVIS.

GIOVANNI PAPINI AND ITALIAN LITERATURE[1]

THE main characteristic of all Signor Papini's work is a conviction of his own originality. His career has been distinguished by numerous vicissitudes and spectacular conversions, recorded in a series of self-revelations ranging from *Un Uomo Finito* (1912) to *La Storia di Cristo* (1920). The titles seem to imply a contrast between scepticism and belief, but the most significant thing about them is the identity of character, vivid, egoistic, and incurably polemic, which they reveal. The English reader, to whom much in Papini's character must seem incomprehensible, needs to remember a variety of circumstances. When he picks up a history of literature dedicated to 'Benito Mussolini amico della poesia e dei poeti,' he should reflect that literature in Italy has been for six hundred years at once the repository and the vanguard of a national consciousness which has remained until recently without practical political fulfilment. And when he is disturbed by Papini's self-assertiveness he needs to remember that the retarded achievement of national unity in Italy coincided with a period of abject spiritual poverty and coarse materialism from which all Italian

[1] *Storia Della Letteratura, Italiana*, Vol. I, by Giovanni Papini (Vallecchi, 1937).

literature, from Pascoli and D'Annunzio downwards, has been trying with varying success to escape. So when Papini insists in his preface that the value of his book lies in its being written, not by a critic but by a 'creative writer,' his 'originality,' with all its excesses, is a genuine effort to escape from the void created by debased spiritual values; and his insistence upon the moral and civil function of literature implies awareness of an historic gap between political realities and a genuine national consciousness which has suddenly found itself called upon, in an age of decaying traditions and spiritual uncertainty, to proceed beyond intellectual formulation and literary expression to practical action. It is Papini's aim to bring the great tradition of Italian literature into contact with the life of the nation; it is a pity, therefore, that marked critical deficiencies should cause this tradition to be seriously impoverished at his hands.

Papini's ideas are a strange mixture of sense and perversity. He is fully justified in believing that a great literature should provide 'vital nutrimento'; but he is impatient of the discipline which the critical intelligence should bring to personal intuition. Francesco de Sanctis, the author of the most notable history of Italian literature, is dismissed in these terms: 'Lo stesso De Sanctis . . . era un critico più ardito e caldo dei soliti ma pur sempre un critico, cioè discorritore filosofante assai più che artista.' The implied criticism, supported by apt quotations from Carducci and D'Annunzio, contains a germ of truth; but Papini never seems to realize that the shortcomings of De Sanctis are not due to his being too 'critical,' but rather to his being in certain cases not critical enough. In short, a critic is *not*, as Papini assumes, a 'discorritore filosofante.' De Sanctis had remarkable critical gifts in an age notably deficient in them; had he possessed even more fully the capacity to eliminate certain prejudices dictated by his outlook and environment, these gifts would have been greater still.

Papini's intuitions are much more obviously insecure. He has a good deal of the flamboyant facility and shallow posturing of the self-conscious convert. His robustly personal and Florentine idiom can be stimulating, but is often a rather graceless display of personal exhibitionism; and it is often coupled with an extraordinary degree of incomprehension. He tells us that the *Vita Nuova* is like the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius Loyola, simply

because both are 'a kind of guide to the progressive perfection of the soul,' and because both 'meditate a passion.' He slips easily into rhetorical profundities about 'the divinity of poetry,' and reaches something like the height of vulgarity in describing the early life of Catherine of Siena: 'Ci sarebbe materia per far di Caterina una "donna fatale," che innamora di sè gli uomini fino al punto di spingerli a volontaria morte.'

These incidental failings suggest the insufficiency of Papini's approach. His book is inadequate, partly because it shows no sense of literature as a continuous process, and partly because the moral judgments which are his main concern are not safeguarded from irrelevance by disinterested critical analysis. These defects are apparent in his treatment of Boccaccio where a series of interesting intuitions fails to produce a balanced judgment. The case of Boccaccio is worth considering in detail as an illustration of Signor Papini's methods. He revolts at once, and rightly, against the unhistorical conception of Boccaccio as a precursor of full-blown humanism, as an asserter of 'the values of life' against mediæval asceticism. For Papini, the *Decameron* expresses a complete collapse of moral standards, and the plague round which the whole book is built up becomes a heaven-sent opportunity for the assertion of anarchy proceeding from the collapse of law: 'La peste . . . è anche un avvenimento (quasi, si direbbe, provvidenziale) destinato ad allentare i vincoli delle leggi, dei costumi, delle convenienze, cioè ad istaurare un regime di libertà, propizio allo sfogo degli istinti.'

This picture of Boccaccio is supported by an arbitrary selection of the elements in his work which happen to coincide with Papini's own interests; one might call it, in fact, a projection into the fourteenth century of the 'uomo finito.' An unprejudiced reading of the *Decameron* does not support this simple view. Not only is Boccaccio's treatment of avarice and religious abuses related to a long mediæval tradition, which is familiar throughout European literature and so cannot be safely ignored, but (what is even more important) Papini's account cannot explain why the *Decameron* is a great work. He shows himself dimly aware of this when he practically renounces any attempt to give a coherent account of his subject and concludes that 'Il Boccaccio fu un grande scrittore ma non un grande spirito.' The phrase 'un grande spirito' is

perhaps a little less loose in Italian than its translation into English would suggest; but it is astonishing that a critic who insists upon the seriousness and moral content of literature should be ready to accept this facile division between 'literary' and 'moral' qualities. Had Signor Papini been prepared to examine Boccaccio's qualities as 'un grande scrittore' he would have produced a figure less anarchical and less 'modern' than the creature of his intuition, but with a more reasonable foundation for his greatness, and more closely connected with the development of Italian literature.

Papini himself notes that Boccaccio's prose is a compound, in varying proportions, of two elements—a vivid, idiomatic Florentine, and a 'literary' prose elaborately modelled on Latin syntax; this fact, once its importance is fully appreciated, enables one not only to place Boccaccio in the line of Italian literary development, but also to define the qualities and deficiencies of his sensibility. Boccaccio's prose is the expression, vigorous and assertive, of the prosperous middle class life of the Italian cities, an expression whose confident vivacity is the reflection of acute intelligence and personal initiative. Boccaccio was himself the son of a merchant connected by marriage with a noble French family. One has only to compare his prose with Dante's, on the one hand, and with that of the mediæval chronicles and *novelle* on the other, to see that his work represents something new in Italian literature. Dante, in the prose of the *Vita Nuova* and the *Convivio*, is engaged in creating, among other things, an instrument for the expression of his thought; one can feel the writer, intensely aware of the originality of this attempt, exploring the resources of Latin vocabulary and syntax to make the undeveloped vernacular suitable for conveying the complexities of exact thought. The writer is engaged in a struggle, not only with his own thought, but with the available means of expression. This may be shown by quoting almost anywhere from the *Convivio*:

> 'E io adunque, che non seggio a la beata mensa, ma, fuggito de la pastura del vulgo, a' piedi di coloro che seggiono ricolgo di quello che da loro cade, e conosco la misera vita di quelli che dietro m'ho lasciati, per la dolcezza ch'io sento in quello che a poco a poco ricolgo, misericordievolmente mosso, non me dimenticando, per li miseri alcuna cosa ho riservata, la quale a

li occhi loro, già è più tempo, ho dimostrata ; e in ciò li ho fatti maggiormente vogliosi.' (*Convivio*, I, i, 10).

No detailed analysis is needed to show how Dante is struggling here to bring Latin syntactical forms to the service of vernacular prose. It takes some effort to pick out the central phrase: ' E io adunque . . . per li miseri alcuna cosa ho riservata,' and to disentangle the series of interwoven clauses which have been forced, sometimes with a distinct strain, into the compressed structure of the sentence. Only in the unique poetry of the *Paradiso* will a fusion of Latin and vernacular elements be successfully accomplished by the sheer compelling power of Dante's strongest emotions ; and then the achievement, like the poem itself, will be unique and inimitable. Dante's prose is only a necessary by-product of his genius ; modern Italian prose really derives from another outlook, which produced Boccaccio.

In Boccaccio's best writing, the vernacular has acquired self-confidence and fluidity, no longer in the expression of abstract thought, but in the representation of concrete reality. The best prose of the *Decameron* retains the immediate and vigorous phrasing of the *novelle* and the Florentine chronicles, but adds to them the supple continuity of a closely-knit syntax ; in other words, it has attained maturity and a consciousness of its own gifts. The mediæval *leggende* have a dramatic sense of their own, but their expression is always direct and unelaborated. Describing Cæsar in a storm at sea, one such *leggenda* simply sets a number of the circumstances of his voyage side by side and leaves them to make their own effect: ' . . . la notte era scura, la tempesta era forte, la vela era rotta, lo nocchiero era smarrito.'[1] The references in these stories are almost always direct and popular ; Antony is ' duca e maniscalco dell'oste di Cesare,' and Cæsar describes him as ' un malvagio uomo.' The world for which Boccaccio wrote retained this sense of vividness and directness of reference ; but, having come into economic prosperity and a consciousness of its own dignity, it demanded also the refinements of culture. It required a prose based on the vernacular but not without distinction, direct but not lacking

[1]From a collection of *leggende* entitled: *Fatti di Cesare*, dating probably from about 1300.

in a sophistication of its own ; and this is the prose, sometimes wonderfully vivid and precise, sometimes pretentious and overloaded when the literary inspiration outdistanced the feeling for directness, which Boccaccio provided.

One might give many instances of the precision and actuality with which Boccaccio visualizes his characters ; here are two noted by Papini :

> ' Isabetta . . . giovane ancora di ventotto in trenta anni, fresca e bella e ritondetta, che pareva una mela casolana.'
>
> (*Decameron*, III, 4).
>
> ' Biondello, piccoletto della persona, leggiadro molto e più pulito che una mosca, con sua cuffia in capo con una zazzerina bionda . . . ' (IX, 8).

Such prose is completely secure ; the popular reference, apparent in the choice of the comparisons (' più pulito che una mosca,' ' che parova una mela casolana ') and in the fresh use of the diminutives (' ritond*etta*,' ' piccol*etto* '), is at the service of a lucid intelligence and a fully conscious purpose. Signor Papini's uncritical approach blinds him to the full significance of this achievement. Commenting on Isabetta, he says that she ' was made for the desire,' and this is perfectly true ; but the comment implies, given Papini's leanings, a moral sensationalism which is quite out of place here, nor is there anything immoral about a picture at once so lucid and so vivacious. Boccaccio's prose has a profound significance in the development of Italian literature. The new society, reflected in a writer of the first order, has become aware of the direction of its talents. Dante's speculative interests, which presuppose the mediæval sense of the continuity between metaphysics and practical action, lie outside its scope ; the intellectual universality of the middle ages has been replaced by the intelligence and vivacity of individual enterprise.

These qualities can be seen almost anywhere in the *Decameron*. One might instance the story of Calindrino (VIII, 3) who was deceived by his more acute neighbours into searching for a certain dark stone which, as he was told, would bring him prosperity. The choice of subject is typical: Boccaccio invariably delights in the exposure of simplicity (especially when associated with greed) by men of quick wit and sharp intelligence. Bruno and Buffalmacco,

the two conspirators, are presented as ' uomini sollazzevoli molto, ma per altro *avveduti* e sagaci,' and Maso del Saggio is ' un giovane di maravigliosa piacevolezza, in ciascuna cosa che far voleva, *astuto* e avvenevole.' They take pleasure in telling the simple Calandrino about ' Berlinzone, terra de' Baschi,' and in playing up to his ignorance of geography by assuring him that this country is ' further than Abruzzi.' This delight in the resourcefulness of the intelligence is the product of the shrewd and self-reliant merchant classes exercising their newly-acquired literary consciousness ; it is also the first mature expression of Italian prose.

There is, however, another aspect to Boccaccio's work. When we turn to the ornate Latinized periods with which he elaborated his unbelievable tales of moral edification (Papini rightly observes that Boccaccio's representations of virtue are either ' incredible or border on stupidity ') we are aware not so much of an anarchic writer as of one whose magnificent sensual and linguistic talent was not crowned with an adequate moral consciousness. Boccaccio's inspiration, at such moments, becomes merely ' literary ' ; his very virtuosity, in the absence of his greater qualities, testifies to lack of interest. If we wish to see how far Boccaccio, when he attempted to give his work a moral content, could go in following a dead convention, we have only to turn to the pastoral *Ameto*. Heavy, artificial prose, with long and unvaried set-pieces of description (the very epithets used to describe the various nymphs—' *candide* guancie,' ' bocca *vermiglia*,' ' *candida* gola,' ' *diritto* collo '—recur again and again) prepare us for an unpleasing mixture of conventionalized immorality and feeble echoes of Dante's *terza rima*. Prose and poetry both tell the same story. His ' moral ' allegorical prose is related to the living parts of the *Decameron* as his spurious *terza rima* is related to the fresh and vigorous verse of the *Ninfale Fiesolano*. On the one hand we have the banalities expressed by the Trinity at the end of the *Ameto*, when Boccaccio clearly has the *Paradiso* in mind :

> ' Io son luce del cielo unica e trina,
> Principio e fine di ciascuna cosa,
> Del qual men fu, nè fia nulla vicina.
> E sì son vera luce e graziosa,
> Che chi mi segue non andrà giammai
> Errando in parte trista, o tenebrosa.'

in a sophistication of its own ; and this is the prose, sometimes wonderfully vivid and precise, sometimes pretentious and overloaded when the literary inspiration outdistanced the feeling for directness, which Boccaccio provided.

One might give many instances of the precision and actuality with which Boccaccio visualizes his characters ; here are two noted by Papini:

> ' Isabetta . . . giovane ancora di ventotto in trenta anni, fresca e bella e ritondetta, che pareva una mela casolana.'
>
> (*Decameron*, III, 4).
>
> ' Biondello, piccoletto della persona, leggiadro molto e più pulito che una mosca, con sua cuffia in capo con una zazzerina bionda . . . ' (IX, 8).

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the two conspirators, are presented as ' uomini sollazzevoli molto, ma per altro *avveduti* e sagaci,' and Maso del Saggio is ' un giovane di maravigliosa piacevolezza, in ciascuna cosa che far voleva, *astuto* e avvenevole.' They take pleasure in telling the simple Calandrino about ' Berlinzone, terra de' Baschi,' and in playing up to his ignorance of geography by assuring him that this country is ' further than Abruzzi.' This delight in the resourcefulness of the intelligence is the product of the shrewd and self-reliant merchant classes exercising their newly-acquired literary consciousness ; it is also the first mature expression of Italian prose.

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Against this, we must set the *Ninfale*, whose easy and supple rhythms correspond so perfectly to a graceful poetic idiom:

> ' E tu sola fanciulla bionda e bella,
> Morbida, bianca, angelica, e vezzosa,
> Con leggiadro atto e benigna favella,
> Fresca e giuliva più che bianca rosa,
> E splendente più di ogni altra stella
> Sei che mi piace più che altra cosa . . . '
>
> (Pt. III, v. 69).

This verse is itself founded on a poetic convention, which is felt in ' leggiadro atto,' ' benigna favella,' in ' giuliva ' and ' bianca rosa,' and in the comparison to the star. But, in the first place, the convention, which derives from the poetry of the ' stil nuovo,' reflects a refinement of poetic language and mirrors a genuine sensibility ; and, secondly, Boccaccio shows by the effective ' conversational ' touch in the last line (' Sei che mi piace più che altra cosa ') that it is a convention still in touch with living speech and so with his real interests. And this can never be said for Boccaccio's ' moralizing ' writings.

Once more, this judgment has historical and social implications. Boccaccio's age, for all the confidence with which it expressed itself in its prose, was peculiarly an age of uncertainty. The final decay of the ideal of the mediæval Empire and the removal of the Papacy to Avignon: the strange mixture of incipient national feeling, of antiquarian nostalgia, and of visionary religion, apparent in the career of Cola di Rienzo: the development of capitalist enterprise side by side with the traditional attitude to usury—all these things point to fundamental changes, as yet scarcely understood, in the outlook of society. This uncertainty had moral implications ; it may be said that the inferiority as prose of Boccaccio's ' virtuous ' stories reflects a world which was not concerned with the traditional moral outlook, which it did not abandon but, on the whole, simply ignored. The moral indifference of so much of his work scarcely needs Papini's romantic sensationalism to account for it ; it was simply a general characteristic of Boccaccio's world.

One event, however, exposed the moral crisis latent in fourteenth-century society. The Great Plague was a decisive event

in the life of other men besides Boccaccio ; its effect may be felt in the difference between the suave and sentimental limpidity of the *canzoni* addressed by Petrarch to Laura still living and the mortified tone of the laboured, allegorical *Trionfi* written after her death. The earlier *canzoni* are concerned with the expression or analysis of isolated sentimental states ; the new insistence on death in the *Trionfi* is never successfully related, as in Dante, to any coherent religious outlook. Allegory no longer represents, as it had done for Dante, a living way of thinking and feeling ; the various representations of Love, Death, Time, and Eternity are not significantly related to one another, and the intellectual content of the allegory is thin and imperfectly developed. Love triumphs over the poet, Chastity over Love, Death over Chastity: Fame conquers Death, Time, Fame, and Eternity triumphs over Time ; it is clear that allegory of this type has no relation to the realities of experience. The most living thing in the *Trionfi* is a preoccupation with the death of the body, which completely dominates and conditions the ' spirituality ' nominally set against it:

> ' Quella leggiadra e gloriosa donna
> ch'è oggi *ignudo spirto* e *poca terra*.'[1]
>
> (*Trionfo della Morte*, I).

The emphasis is not on ' spirto,' but on the accompanying adjective; the spirit after death is ' ignudo ' because the body, without which Petrarch cannot imagine its survival, is reduced to ' poca terra.' Writing scarcely a generation after Dante's death, Petrarch has completely lost that intellectual conviction of the reality of the spiritual life, and of its continuity with the present life, which made the *Divina Commedia* possible ; that is why his allegorical scheme corresponds to nothing real in his experience. Allegory is only a valid condition of thinking and feeling so long as the physical and spiritual aspects of existence are seen as related parts, in mutual inter-dependence, of a single and intelligible whole ; otherwise the intellectual scheme will remain an abstraction, unrelated to the human material of poetry. For Petrarch, the ' spiritual ' only

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[1]Compare, from the canzone ' Quando il soave mio fido conforto ' :

> ' Spirito *ignudo* sono, e'n ciel mi godo:
> Quel che tu cerchi, è *terra* già molt'anni.'

exists as a refuge from the decay of the body ; his only philosophy is a kind of mortified Stoic resignation to Fortune which implies the lack of any positive conviction :

> ' Questi è colui che'l mondo chiama Amore ;
> *amaro*, come vedi, e vedrai meglio
> quando fia tuo, com'è nostro signore . . .
> Ei nacque d'ozio e di lascivia umana,
> nudrito di *penser dolci soavi*,
> fatto signore e dio da gente *vana*.' (*Trionfo d'Amore*, I).

> ' Miser chi speme in cosa mortal pone!'
> (*Trionfo della Morte*, I).

In Boccaccio, the Plague replaced indifference by fear and a simple sense of inadequacy. The account of it with which he prefaces the *Decameron* is full of phrases like : ' la crudeltà del cielo,' ' Et in quella non valendo alcuno senno nè umano provvedimento.' It is well known that Boccaccio was moved by a visit from the preacher Gioacchino Ciani in 1362 to repent the tone of his literary work in view of the immanence of death ; but this moral crisis of his late life can be related to feelings already present in the *Decameron*. The assumed light-heartedness of many parts of the work is a reaction against the fear of death. The characters in the famous prologue cut themselves off from the events of the outside world ; but even that gaiety often implies fear. Pampinea commands that no servant, if sent out of the secluded retreat to make some necessary contact with that world, should bring back ' dove che egli vada, onde che egli torni, che che egli oda o vegga, niuna novella *altro che lieta*.' The emphasis and what it implies are both unmistakable. The prose of the famous account of the plague is, like that of the ' moral ' stories, heavily latinized ; but the complexity represents, no longer mere lack of interest, but emptiness, the absence of anything positive to set against the fear it conveys : an emptiness which can be detected also in the various stories in which Boccaccio dwells upon death and corruption. But we must not go too far. It is true that we find in the *Decameron* that sense of the dissolution of authority and the breakdown of law which is so stressed by Papini : ' E in tanta afflizione e miseria della nostra città era la reverenda autorità delle leggi così divine

come umane, quasi caduta e dissoluta tutta, per li ministri e esecutori di quelle, li quali sì come gli altri uomini, erano tutti o morti o infermi o sì di famigle rimasi stremi, che ufficio alcuno non potean fare: per la qual cosa era a ciascuno licito quanto a grado gli era d'adoperare.' But it is not possible to deduce from this, as Papini suggests, that Boccaccio regarded this state of license with pleasure, or as anything other than a disaster. To describe his work as 'anarchic' is misleading, not only because it implies that he accepted and willed, in a manner characteristic of certain tendencies in modern romanticism, what he actually feared, but also because it does not account for the humanity and limpidity of his best work. One must always remember Boccaccio's vivacity and immediacy, and the fact that his best stories may not only have a long 'popular' history behind them, but also represent the virtues of his society; and these qualities are not merely accidental gifts in an essentially 'immoral' writer, but a vital element in the tradition Papini is endeavouring to trace.

I have considered Papini's treatment of Boccaccio at some length because it illustrates most of his interests and deficiencies. When dealing with a poet whose sensibility operates on principles totally removed from his own, as in the case of Dante, the results are disastrous. The gap between Papini's romantic sensationalism and Dante's conception of poetry can be gauged from his argument against treating Virgil as an allegorical representation of Reason: 'Come avrebbe dunque potuto Dante sceglier come simbolo della Ragione un poeta . . . quando la poesia è, per sua essenza, estro, intuizione, entusiasmo, estasi, cioè, in tutto diversa dall'attività ragionativa e scientifica.' On such a view, the harmony between personal and universal interests, the correspondence between the Christian synthesis and a profoundly personal development—at once linguistic, personal, political, philosophical, and mystical—is completely obscured. The result is, apart from one or two striking observations, a wordy travesty which scarcely repays detailed consideration. There is no clearer proof that Papini's Catholicism seems to have done almost nothing to protect him from the more unfortunate influences of modern Italian culture.

D. A. TRAVERSI.

CORRESPONDENCE

THE *PEP* REPORT ON THE PRESS

Sir,

Much could be said on the general issues raised by your review of the *PEP* Report on the British Press in the December issue of *Scrutiny* but I will resist the temptation, even at the risk that such self-restraint will be classed by your engaging contributor as fresh evidence of what he so delightfully terms 'the hesitancy of the imperfectly educated.' As one of the most imperfectly educated members of the group concerned I had, however, hoped that your review would give some enlightenment upon the subject of criticism by the popular Press of current books, plays, music, art and films. The PEP Report points out the 'perfunctory or irresponsible treatment' which such subjects often receive and emphasizes that journalistic treatment of such subjects 'may contribute either to raising the standards of public understanding and appreciation, or to a very serious lowering of standards and misrepresentation of values.' We called attention to the need not only for selecting competent critics but for protecting them against 'advertising considerations, political considerations, or deference to powerful outside interests, such as film corporations, theatre managers' associations and others.' We recognized the difficulties of book reviewers, but criticized multiple reviewing and tendencies to log-rolling, and the many types of questionable influence exerted through parties, free seats, and presents for critics. We found 'a tendency to flatter democracy by ridiculing or dismissing whatever was abstruse, difficult or novel,' and a parallel tendency to review on the basis of current fashions and reputations, suggesting that the 'overwhelming stress on the political, the topical, the economic in books may itself appear to do literature a serious disservice.' We also referred to the relative absence of criticisms of broadcasting and the tendency in theatrical treatment for 'full notices by competent critics to be replaced by photographs of first nights, gossip paragraphs, and news stories.'

I had hoped that *Scrutiny*, as one of the few journals devoted to criticism, would give an illuminating opinion on these specific

and far-reaching charges, and I was surprised to find that your reviewer's only reference to them read as follows:

> 'Typical of the general attitude is the complaint that the one "cultural subject" mishandled by reporters is Science. Whereas, "in some of the popular newspapers the quality of book criticism is remarkably high." In the "class" newspaper, the critics, or at any rate those who cover art, music, literature and drama, are men and women in the front rank of their respective subjects.'

Not only is this, I submit, an unpardonably distorted version of what the Report says, but your reviewer has even gone so far as to drop out, without giving any clue to the omission, a sentence which comes between the words 'remarkably high' and the next sentence he quotes. The omitted sentence reads 'The task of reviewing books is sometimes, however, regarded as a matter within the competence of the office boy, or as a pleasant change for the sports reporter.' If this sentence had been reproduced within its context your critic's opening assertion would of course have collapsed at once, and its omission is natural if the object of criticism as he sees it is to prove a case by the suppression of the other side. What I would like to know is whether you consider this an honest and reputable form of criticism. I shall be obliged if you will give this letter as much prominence in your next issue as the misleading statements to which you have given currency.

MAX NICHOLSON.

16 Queen Anne's Gate, S.W.1.

We are grateful to Mr. Nicholson for calling attention to the omission of a sentence from the passage quoted by Mr. Mason in his review, and we apologize unreservedly, both to PEP and our readers, for any false impression that this omission, together with the sentence explained below by Mr. Mason, may have produced. Any suggestion that the Report, in dealing with the unsatisfactory state of the Press on the cultural side, so failed in one of its obvious functions as not to offer adverse criticism of the state of reviewing is, as Mr. Nicholson points out, and as the reader may readily verify by turning up the Report (PEP, 10/6), contrary

to the facts, and we much regret having printed anything interpretable as conveying such a suggestion.

Where the broader issue is concerned, we are glad of an opportunity of publishing Mr. Nicholson's own account of the Report's findings on reviewing and criticism in the Press.

MR. MASON writes:

I must offer an unreserved apology for the unfortunate dropping of a sentence in the quotation beginning 'in some of the popular newspapers . . . ' And I can see now—being abroad, I had no opportunity of going over my proofs—that the exigencies of compression produced a sentence which, taken by itself, has an effect of misstatement that was certainly not intended (my point gained nothing by my clumsiness):

> 'Typical of the general attitude is the complaint that the one "cultural subject" mishandled by reporters is Science.'

The suggestion that nothing but Science received attention under the head of 'mishandling' was entirely unintended: I deplore the sentence, and again offer my unreserved apology for any misunderstanding it may have caused. I meant that the one adequately made complaint (as I judged), in the Report's consideration of 'cultural subjects,' regarded Science—that only in the consideration of Science were the important issues involved in 'mishandling' realized. I was impressed by the adequacy of the Report on the side of Science and intended to make a contrast. I wish I had had room to dwell more on that adequacy, which was significant from my point of view: the bias of the Report seems to me that of minds of preponderantly scientific training or interests.

But I protest against the charge of wilful distortion. It seems to me partly to rest on a misunderstanding of my point. It is the last sentence of the abbreviated quotation which illustrates the attitude I wished to criticize. I am prepared to agree that often the reviews in popular newspapers are on a higher level than that of the rest of the reading matter. But for my argument whether this is so or not is immaterial. What I wanted to stress was the Group's failure to see that it is the best critical writing in the best papers which is so pitifully inadequate to the standards expected

of serious reviewing. To notice the obvious defects in popular reviewing was, of course, proper and I nowhere charge the Report with failure on this head (to have emphasized that these defects had received attention would have suited my purpose). The Report seemed to me good enough to deserve ' to be judged by the severest standards,' and in this light I found after repeated readings and as careful a weighing of all that could be said in favour as I could manage that the essential problems were not seen or were confused. It may have been asking too much to expect PEP to agree that good criticism is not to be found in the newspapers, or to realize that ' imperfectly educated ' was not a cheap sneer, and, in general, the attitude of the review may be found intolerably ' high-falutin'.' But, at least, such expectations are a compliment to serious work ; they raise issues which should be met by argument and which will not, I hope, be dismissed by accusing the reviewer of disreputable intentions.

Let me end by making the nature of those issues quite plain in brief (since in my review I apparently did not make them plain) :

For the Group the serious aspect of the problem lies in the more obvious defects and abuses of reviewing, which they call attention to. For me it presents itself when the Report states, with the implication that the reviewing here is of high quality: ' In the " class " newspaper, the critics, or at any rate those who cover art, music, literature and drama, are men and women in the front rank of their respective subjects.' My contention is that if, in the field of these subjects, the Group had applied standards equivalent to those they applied in dealing with Science, they could not have made any such statement. It is a radical difference in judgment, in valuation, between the Group and myself: to bring it out seemed to me a main duty in my review.

H. A. MASON.

COMMENTS AND REVIEWS

A 'CORRESPONDING BUREAU'?

It has been suggested that we should invite answers to the following inquiry:

On the assumption that there are a fair number of people who are living in varying degrees of isolation in an environment more or less intractable ; who miss the stimulus of personal contact and informal exchange of opinion ; who being so isolated and thrown back upon themselves are unable properly to receive or reflect the radiating influence of the supposed nucleus (*Scrutiny*)—would it be a good idea to establish a 'Corresponding Bureau,' the aims being: to put these people in touch with each other ; to give an opportunity for the development of divergent views arising directly or indirectly from criticism of the consensus of opinion apparent in the pages of *Scrutiny* ; to 'compare notes' in all fields, the sociological (a conspicuous gap in *Scrutiny*), and educational ; to ventilate opinion on such questions as the political implications of *Scrutiny* ; to note generally neglected features in the literary world ; to form a body to conduct investigations such as the *Scrutiny of Examinations* ; to establish foreign contacts ; to arrange for actual meetings ; to foster individual talent by criticism before publication, and to stimulate such talent by the prospect of a select and varied audience capable of welcoming it?

Opinions should be addressed to the Editors.

SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

THE CLUE TO HISTORY, by John Macmurray (Student Christian Movement Press, 7/6 net).

It seems to me deplorable that in trying to express sound intuitions about the psychological facts of social relationships Professor Macmurray should produce such a thoroughly bad book. Is it the result of being a philosopher that for him discipline and dessication are evidently the same, and that before trying to say anything that has life in it and really matters to him he should have to take a swig at some emotional inebriant? It isn't just Jesus and the Jewish consciousness and private interpretations of Christianity, though the craving to sanction his outlook by this idiom of expression is lamentable enough. Worse than this is his technique of pseudo-statement. The method is, in the course of several paragraphs, gradually to colour some word with emotional significance derived from an intuition; the intuition being unstated, untested, and therefore unusable outside the confines of the holy haze.

The most important instance is the word 'personal.' 'The discovery which Jesus made was the discovery that human life is personal.' After about a dozen pages of elaboration one is able to see, given sufficient determination, the relatively simple, and vitally important, fact of social psychology that Professor Macmurray has in mind. He never states it, only gives it dim adumbration. But to the reader for whom the book is apparently intended, the habitué of summer schools and week-end conferences, that wouldn't matter. He would soon be able to ask (having outgrown Brother are you saved?), Don't you agree that the 'essential character of human life, the thing that constitutes its humanness' (page 56) is that it's *personal*?—and that to know this 'lifts human life on to a new plane of consciou..ness' (page 58)? And if you dared ask him to say what he meant you would stand revealed as a victim of 'the dualistic consciousness,' that comprehensive blanket of darkness which Professor Macmurray sees as responsible for all shutting out of light.

But though the idiom makes me sick it would be absurd to neglect the book. The insight Professor Macmurray has achieved

into the nature of our social needs is none too common, and the more it is discussed, in whatever idiom, the better the chance of getting it and its implications realized.

He begins with the commonplace of social psychology that 'it is not the fact of common birth that makes the unity of the natural family. It is the natural love which tends to develop between members of the family because of their common experience and common interests.' But, he goes on, 'What Jesus does is to introduce the element of intention into this natural fact, and so to base the development of a really human community upon the *intention* to enter into community with one's fellows, because they are one's fellows.' That is what lies behind the precept 'love your enemies.' This is not an 'ideal,' which in Professor Macmurray's arbitrary usage is something set apart from practice, but 'a precept defining at once the character of a personal community and the direction of activity which intends to bring it into existence.'

> 'To the question, "Why should I love people who don't love me?" Jesus answers, "Because that is the only way to establish a human relation between you and them." To the further question, "But why should I try to establish a human relation between myself and them?" Jesus' answer might be, "Because that is what you are made for, and that is what your human nature really wants."'

This, I think, is the nearest he comes to saying what he means. I take it to be an assertion that if we are fully sensitive to our social needs we cannot be indifferent to the knowledge that *anyone* dislikes us or disagrees with us, however little material power he may have to interfere with us. If we fully develop our social interest we cannot regard anyone as irrelevant to us. (There are devices, which Professor Macmurray does not mention, for denying a human being social relevance: the main one is to label him 'abnormal.').

That this is what Professor Macmurray means seems evident from his view that the alternative to loving your enemies is 'hating' them—in the sense of wishing them out of existence. If you hate people in this way it means that you regard them merely as animate obstacles, the significance of whose opposition vanishes as soon as they are out of the way. For the person who

is alive to his social nature this is not possible. You may bump your enemy off, but that doesn't eradicate the essential injury that the enmity has done—the deprivation of potential amity and reciprocal sanctioning of each other's values. This is the nearest I can get to what Professor Macmurray seems to mean, though in so far as it is intelligible it must not be supposed anything like what he says.

'The *intention* to enter into community with one's fellows' seems to mean explicitly recognizing one's fundamental social needs, and as the basis of Professor Macmurray's social and political programme it probably implies putting these social needs before anything else. This is where he is sentimentally one-sided. It is a prevailing sentimentality (come about as a swing of the pendulum) to put community before everything else. We have other sides to our nature, besides the social. And though everything we do is more satisfactory to us if the very fact of doing it confirms our sense of oneness with others, yet there are times when we have to stick to a line of action or judgment even at the cost of disrupting social relationships. We do not then abandon the intention of community: we only reject inadequate community in order not to deny other sides of our personality. Nor is it, really, just on certain occasions that this problem arises. It is continuously present as a tension between ourselves and others: we are continuously putting our own beliefs and choices to the test of being offered to our friends for assimilation into their personalities. Reciprocal challenging is as much a part of genuine social life as is reciprocal sanctioning.

It seems unlikely that Professor Macmurray would want to deny this, but he certainly neglects it. In stressing the need to love your enemies he says nothing of the equal need to resist your friends. And in fact the conception of community he offers is the inadequate one of getting together and being together, without much caring whether we *do* anything together. It suggests the earlier, intoxicated phases of a love affair with one's fellow beings.

In a review it is impossible to discuss so unhappily-formulated a central conception and still have space to do justice to the admirable secondary analyses to which Professor Macmurray proceeds. In discussing the ideas of equality, freedom, money, and 'individual self-realization,' he excels at exposing the inherent

contradictions and the self defeating nature of some of the institutions and ideals of a class divided society.

Whenever he detects an incompatibility between an institution and the basic human craving to have friendly relationships with all one's fellows, he is confident of the ultimate defeat of that institution. His confidence is based on the conviction that the basic human needs are unchanging, and that no social institution can permanently deny or distort them. Against this position, needless to say, some sociologists and anthropologists would train very heavy guns. I should like to think he was right. But clearly this is too vast a question to broach now. One can only hope that he will write some more books, with more faith in the possibilities of definition and statement. It will be highly regrettable if Professor Macmurray cannot be shaken in the conviction that all the hopeless misapprehension that his book meets (of which this review is very likely an example) is entirely due to the novelty of the truth he has seen.

D. W. HARDING.

THE HISTORIAN'S TASK

ASPECTS OF HISTORY, by E. E. Kellett (Jonathan Cape, 5/-).
THE MODERN HISTORIAN, by C. H. Williams (Thomas Nelson, 7/6).

Both these books testify, in Mr. Kellett's words, to 'the inextricable confusion in the minds of historians as to the nature of their task' and to the fact that during the past fifty years historians have written primarily for specialists rather than for the general public. Mr. Kellett's book, which contains chapters on history as theology, literature, propaganda, science, politics, ethics and economics, is intended as a kind of Cook's tour for the guidance of the common reader. Persons who are more seriously interested in history will derive little illumination from it, and will find its self-consciously literary style somewhat irritating. Mr. Williams's book is an anthology designed to illustrate the theories and methods

of twentieth-century English historians. The extracts appear to be fairly chosen, though it is unfortunate that Mr. Toynbee's *Study of History*, perhaps the most interesting of recent historical writings, is not more adequately represented.

The importance of the study of history has never been greater than to-day. For in addition to its real cultural value, which is simply that it broadens our knowledge of human nature and human society, it has acquired fresh significance as a result of its perversion in the interest of false ideas ; every current variety of fanaticism seeks support by misinterpreting the past. The scarcity of good historical writing is therefore to be regretted. The ideal of scientific objectivity (Germany's retaliation for England's gift to Prussia of Carlyle) and the consequent retreat of historians into the laboratory left a vacuum which has been filled by journalists, propagandists and charlatans. This indictment is perhaps overstated, since history which is also literature has never wholly disappeared ; but it is undeniable that the greatest historians of the past half-century—F. W. Maitland, for example—have remained unknown to the general public, while those academic historians who have won popular acclaim—such as Mr. Trevelyan and Mr. Fisher—have been distinguished by their adherence to patriotic prejudices which are both historically unjustifiable and politically harmful (it is, for example, recorded in Mr. Fisher's History of Europe that British rule in India is a realization of the ideals of Plato's Republic).

The notion that history is a science—as stated with such emphasis by J. B. Bury—is difficult to explain and still more difficult to defend ; and the adoption of it can only induce among historians a paralysing lack of self-confidence. It is indisputable that historical events ought to be ascertained and verified with a scientific objectivity—that they should not be invented or wilfully misrepresented ; but events are merely the raw material of history, as laboratory observations are of science. The characteristic of science is its power to summarize observations in a general hypothesis, to test a hypothesis by experiment, and to use it for purposes of prediction and control. History, however, cannot frame any universally applicable hypothesis ; for it can never isolate chains of events or test hypothesis by experiment ; the number of independent variables and the possibilities of interference

by unpredictable biological (*e.g.*, births of men of genius) and geological (*e.g.*, earthquakes) factors are always too great. Yet historians cannot limit themselves to the statement of events. For in the first place the selection of events implies standards of importance; and in the second place the method in which events are linked with each other usually involves some conception as to what factors are of most importance in determining human behaviour. It is thus impossible for historians not to have what may be called—perhaps too grandiloquently—a philosophy; and if they are not conscious of it, they will be dominated by it all the more forcefully.

To say this is to say that history is an art and that one derives from it the same kind of illumination as from literature. The question of the relationship between history and literature has usually been argued on the narrow basis of style; but efforts to achieve an elegant prose do not make good history any more than they make great literature, and the self-conscious stylists are as irritating in one field as in the other. History is an art because it must inevitably express the individual point of view of the writer. This does not imply that breadth and accuracy of factual knowledge are unimportant. Opinions are based on experience; and the wider the range of experience, and the more objectively it is apprehended, the sounder will be the opinions. Narrow sympathies and unconscious prejudices vitiate a work of literature as much as a work of history. Good history resembles good fiction in that it gives us the same sense of the independent and living reality of other human beings, that it presents their behaviour not as explicable in terms of scientific law but as predestined in terms of character and situation—an intuition which is at the root of all drama—and that the generalizations which it suggests belong—to use a trite distinction—to wisdom rather than to knowledge. Most students of history, for example, would subscribe to such principles as that social groups act in accordance with their interests and are not normally capable of altruism, that an idea has little influence unless it expresses or justifies an interest, that fundamental social changes are always slow, that power corrupts and long-continued privilege enervates, that successful revolutions are the work not of oppressed groups but of rising groups, and that wars, reforms and revolutions never completely fulfil either the hopes of their friends or the fears of their enemies. None of these, however,

can claim the status of a scientific law. They are, on the contrary, the same kind of guiding principles that the man of intelligence and sensitivity formulates on the basis of his personal experience.

H. B. PARKES.

THE PROGRESS OF POETRY

MODERN POETRY, by Louis MacNeice (Oxford, 7/6).
THE YEAR'S POETRY, 1938, edited by D. Kilham Roberts and Geoffrey Grigson (Lane, 5/-).

Modern Poetry is a ' plea for *impure* poetry, that is for poetry conditioned by the poet's life and the world around him (since this description applies to all poetry of any considerable merit, why should it need a special defence?) and—by quotations—it invites comparisons with the poetic manifestos of Wordsworth and Coleridge, of Arnold and of Eliot. Mr. McNeice does three things ; he sketches his own literary self-portrait, he attempts to establish himself and his friends as the poetic successors of Eliot and Yeats and he adds chapters on such topics as imagery and rhythm. The treatment given to these subjects is of a kind that one would ordinarily expect from someone who had read nothing more advanced than a school history of literature, though, as the following pronouncements show, the tone is one of deliberation and of authority:

> ' . . . the poet should select material which vitally interests him personally rather than material which is fashionable. If, however, he is a fairly normal person (and it is desirable that poets should be neither half-wits nor out-and-out mystics nor any kind of extraordinary pervert) the result should not be esoteric.' (p. 5).
>
> ' It is a mistake to think of a poet's image as merely an embellishment . . . often the image, as in Dante, is there to clarify or ram home the meaning.' (p. 90).
>
> ' The case for rhyme is that it is in itself attractive—musical —and makes for memorability (besides setting the poet a healthy

technical problem). The case against rhyme is that, being obviously artificial, it suggests insincerity and that it lulls the reader into a pleasant coma. There are many ways of compromising between these two schools of thought.' (p. 130).

and so 'on and on, and up and up.'

However, since the *Times Literary Supplement* gave the book a lengthy review praising Mr. MacNeice's critical 'detachment,' in which he is compared to Coleridge writing on Wordsworth, and since it also made it the text for a first leader, I do not think that it is shouting 'Wolf! Wolf!' to suggest that *Modern Poetry* is a sign of a concerted movement in the literary world. I don't suggest that Mr. MacNeice's nullity is a deliberate attempt to discredit serious discussion of literature. He may not consciously intend to enlarge the reputation of his friends at the expense of Yeats and Mr. Eliot, whose greatness is anyway not in need of demonstration in this review, but his book inevitably gives rise to general conclusions about the way in which taste is being guided.

These quotations will illustrate his argument and mine:

> 'With Eliot we meet a poet who has a world-view and is interested in the study of mankind. His world-view is defeatist and he sees mankind through the glasses of a pedant, but he is at least civilized, and synoptic(!) and—with allowance made for his pedantry—a realist. And for all his talk in his critical writings of impersonality, Eliot is a very personal poet.' (p. 12).
>
> 'The squalor of Eliot was a romanticised squalor because treated, on the whole, rather bookishly as décor.' (p. 74).

yet *Triumphal March* 'is fatally broken up by a prose catalogue of armaments.' (p. 165).

> 'But Yeats' world-view is so esoteric that he can only escape from literature at odd moments.' (p. 24).
>
> 'Yeats's sound is so good that many readers do not bother about precise meaning; they get a general impression of other-worldliness, of a mystical faith, of an attitude to the passage of time.' (p. 169).

Lawrence

> '. . . had not inherited the stale thought of a class. But, on the other hand, for the reason that he moved out of his class,

his thought and vision faded. Compare one of his later novels, *The Plumed Serpent* with the early *Sons and Lovers.*' (p. 76)

After all this defeatism and defeat Mr. MacNeice's friends are 'tragic' even when gloomy.

> 'The poets of *New Signatures* are interested in Man Functioning. They select their details . . . in order to illustrate the workings of vital principles.' (p. 29).
>
> 'The poet is once again to make his response as a whole.' (*ibid*)
>
> 'The younger poets are less conditioned by culture and more concerned with life *as they live it.*[1] (None of them, incidentally, has followed a purely literary profession. Spender has never had a job, but has given much time to political work). Where Eliot insists that the poet should be an observer, impersonal, looking at the stream from the bank, these younger poets do not cut off their poetic activity from their activity in general.' (p. 169).
>
> 'Their poetry may be expected to become clearer side by side with their philosophy, provided the public itself becomes at home with such a philosophy.' (p. 177).
>
> 'When the crisis comes, poetry may for the time be degraded or even silenced, but it will re-appear as one of the chief embodiments of human dignity, when people once more have time for play and criticism.' (Finale).

For all his newly-acquired Marxist sympathies Mr. MacNeice is here playing the well-known bourgeois game of passing off the mediocre and the watered-down as the excellent, and he does it with all the pompousness, irresponsibility and tendentiousness which characterize the older generation of middlebrow propagandists, whom *Scrutiny* used to refer to as literary racketeers. With his Marxism *and* his citations of Housman as an authority, his donnish doubts about satire being poetry, his ignorance and obtuseness about the Metaphysicals, Dryden and Pope and his classical references, Mr. MacNeice keeps well in with both wings of the movement. One wouldn't trouble about the book if it stood alone, but along with the notices in the *Times Literary Supplement* and

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[1]Mr. MacNeice's italics.

with current Left-wing criticism generally (not to mention Messrs. Auden and Isherwood's début in *The Bystander*) it looks alarmingly like part of another attempt on a far bigger scale than before to discourage an artistic revival and to stabilize a taste for the second-rate.

The Year's Poetry, 1938, of which the predecessor four years ago was commended by Sir Hugh Walpole, gives no support whatever to Mr. MacNeice's contentions. There is nothing in it which does not derive from—or was made possible by—the earlier generation of poets or the earlier work of this generation, except a uniform dullness and inability to make a clearly definable impression. A stanza by Mr. George Woodcock will serve as illustration:

> I shall do the thing the neatest and cleanest way.
> Cord rots soon. I shall drop to the floor.
> I shall be found behind the kitchen door
> Sprawling untidily on the trodden clay.

There are worse and better in the book, but that is typical of a prevailing cleverness, combined with uncertainty as to the degree of seriousness intended. There is no point in drawing detailed attention to the various resemblances, from Mr. Day Lewis[1] to Shakespeare in *King Lear* to Miss Tucker's to Mr. Herbert Read in his war poems. Mr. Empson's *Just a Smack at Auden* is too much like a slap on the back. The first stanza of Mr. Auden's *Dover* reminds us that he once wrote, for example, 'Who stands the crux left of the watershed . . . ':

> Steep roads, a tunnel through the downs, are the approaches;
> A ruined pharos overlooks a constructed bay;
> The sea-front is almost elegant; all this show
> Has, somewhere inland, a vague and dirty root:
> Nothing is made in this town.

GEOFFREY WALTON.

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[1]The poem by Mr. Day Lewis, *Sex-Crime*, comes from his latest volume, *Overtures to Death* (Cape, 5/-), the depressing Left-wing jingoism of which is very effectively analysed in the final number of *The Criterion*.

THE FATE OF EDWARD THOMAS

THE CHILDHOOD OF EDWARD THOMAS: a fragment of autobiography (Faber, 6/-).

AS IT WAS . . . WORLD WITHOUT END, by Helen Thomas (Heinemann, 5/-).

It is difficult to decide with oneself whether Edward Thomas's autobiographical ' fragment ' is disappointing or not (it is certainly something that every admirer of his poetry will want to have). What more could one have expected? It is a sensitive record of memories of childhood, and if one asks oneself whether it doesn't seem a little external, one is paying a tribute to its scrupulousness. Would a greater analytic particularity really have sorted with the kind of recapture of experience that Thomas is intent on? And, poignant as the flavours of ' significance ' may be for ourselves, isn't it largely illusion that we can, in our own recollecting of childhood, grasp a richer inwardness? Our own ' externalities ' are not such for us ; they are unique, real (even if elusive) and ours.

The Childhood of Edward Thomas contains a note or two that would seem to be of special interest to psychologists. But what, in an account of life in varied lower-middle-class environments (for the most part) is perhaps most significant for admirers of the poetry is the intimation of a certain lack of complete at-homeness in Edward's Thomas's life at home. In particular, his temperament was painfully out of resonance with his father's.

The autobiographical fragment carries the story of his life to the point at which Mrs. Thomas takes it up. Her two memoirs, to which their simple integrity combined with delicate rightness of touch should give a permanent place in literature, are, it is worth noting, now obtainable in one volume. The Edward Thomas they portray is of the essentially unhappy temperament intimated in the poetry. D. W. Harding, in his *Note on Nostalgia* (see *Determinations*) suggests that the unhappiness is that of a man who, without admitting it, craves for the adequate social group he has not found. He had certainly failed in obvious ways to find himself, and to find a purpose in life satisfactorily related to his powers. Already well on the way to being established as a pro-

fessional writer, yet essentially callow and defenceless, he had, as Mrs. Thomas shows him to us, the extraordinarily bad luck to go up to Oxford in 1897, when the 'Nineties were still the 'Nineties, and Oxford, apparently, an irresistible enchantment. He whose natural taste was for the prose of Richard Jefferies, and whose endowments were much like those of Jefferies, subscribed to the taste of the *Yellow Book*—admired Pater, Oscar Wilde, John Addington Symonds and the rest. For years he cultivated a Paterian manner in his own writing.

He married while an undergraduate, and committed himself to letters as a profession. For a man of his fineness and this inner confusion the sense of futility and frustration that dogged him through life was fore-ordained. The hardships and uncertainties of a literary career, uncongenial tasks and overwork, would, of course, account for a great deal of depression. But it seems pretty plain that even if Thomas had had economic liberty to write what he liked he wouldn't have known how to satisfy himself. The critical admirations he professes—and he was incapable of insincerity in any ordinary sense—indicate this: it is not possible that anyone, least of all a man of his quality, should really have admired some of the contemporary versifiers he thought he admired. That he should have felt so much

> How dreary-swift, with naught to travel to,
> Is Time

seems understandable. He was perhaps unlucky in falling on a period when there was no influence, critical or other, to give him the jog that might have enabled him to find himself.

As a poet, of course, he got his jog from Robert Frost, and wrote his poetry at the very end of his life when in the army (the relief with which he surrendered himself to the purpose provided by the war is significant). This poetry is devoted almost wholly to expressing the characteristic unhappiness of his life, and has corresponding limitations of the kind that D. W. Harding indicates. Yet there it is, a fine and unique, if decidedly limited, poetry; the particular thing it is—and it expresses a representative kind of modern experience—conditioned by that particular history of the poet. A happy Edward Thomas might have written no poetry at all. And yet it is hard to believe that the man who wrote a

poetry so original and fine could not, with better luck, have produced something less negative in its essential attitudes—for there is an obvious sense in which 'negative' applies to his actual work. It is perhaps a tribute to the positive virtue of this 'negativeness' that the Group—the post-Eliot Group—have not co-opted him into their bosom along with 'Wilfrid' and 'Kathy.' And it is worth noting that Georgian taste, though he has perhaps suffered from having made his *début* in Georgian pastoral company, didn't take to him. Harold Monro, for instance, could see nothing in his work.

Edward Thomas, in fact, got no recognition while he was alive and hasn't had his due yet.

F. R. LEAVIS.

HART CRANE FROM THIS SIDE

THE COLLECTED POEMS OF HART CRANE (Boriswood, 7/6).

At last it is possible for the reader on this side of the Atlantic to come to a conclusion about the legend of Hart Crane. It was a most impressive legend. So far as one could see, all American critics, with whatever reservations about the actual achievement, were agreed that the poet who walked off the steamer into the sea in 1932, ending at much the same age as Shelley, was a genius of peculiar contemporary significance. The odds and ends of him one came on in American periodicals, together with the kind of claim made for him by the critics, left one wondering. And now that the texts are fully to hand the conclusion seems unavoidable that if the legend, at any rate, remains significant, it is not because of any genius in Hart Crane.

The genius had manifested itself above all, one gathered, in a heroic effort at the creation of an American myth. Of *The Bridge*, the work embodying the effort, it seems fair to say that Mr. Waldo Frank, who constitutes himself its interpreter, is a not unsuitable one. 'Crane,' he says, 'was a mystic.' 'Mysticism' would appear to be an ability to take a vague, confused and grandiose gesturing towards symbolism for an achieved order and a realized significance.

> 'The revelation of *The Bridge*, as myth and principle, comes to a person in the course of his day's business; and that person is the poet. In this sense the Poem is allied to the *Commedia* of Dante, who also, in response to desperate need, takes a journey in the course of which his need finds consummation. Lest the analogy be misleading I immediately amend it.'

The reader will not find that Mr. Frank's amendments do much to recommend the analogy. And in the following account of the Bridge symbol the stress should fall on the 'shall':

> 'It shall synthesize the world of chaos. It joins city, river, and sea; man made it with his new hand. Parabolawise, it shall now vault the continent and, transmuted, reach that inward heaven which is the fulfilment of man's need of order.'

Crane's symbolism amounts to nothing more than a turgidly rhetorical 'shall,' and in spite of Mr. Frank's insistence that 'the structural pattern of *The Bridge* is superb,' the poem is a wordy chaos, both locally and in sum.

The quality of Crane's rhetoric and of his use of symbols is fairly suggested by this:

> And now, as launched in abysmal cupolas of space
> Towards endless terminals, Easters of speeding light—
> Vast engines outward veering with seraphic grace
> On clarion cylinders pass out of sight
> To course that span of consciousness thou'st named
> The Open Road—thy vision is reclaimed!
> What heritage thou'st signalled to our hands!

'Thou' is Walt Whitman, and the relation so easily established between his 'vision,' the aeroplanes and a 'span of consciousness' is representative of Crane's symbolizing. His main 'symbol,' Brooklyn Bridge, pregnant as the obscurities of its elaboration are meant to be, has just as much significance, no more. Crane's ambition, it is clear, was possible because of his lack of all qualification for it: having no glimpse or notion of any principles of order, he was able to take a rhapsodically vatic Whitmanesque warmth as sufficient for the undertaking, which justified itself by its very magnitude.

That the America of the 1920s should have produced a Hart Crane is not surprising. What is surprising is the critical respect the legend commands. For the question is not, as one would gather from American criticism, At what point does Crane fall short? but, Why should he enjoy any reputation at all—as a poet, that is? At any rate, I cannot see that, apart from his conviction of genius and his confidence, he had any relevant gift. Mr. Waldo Frank speaks of his ' poetic texture ':

> ' Here is music plainly related to the Elizabethans. And here is also a sturdy lilt, like the march of those equal children of the Elizabethans—the pioneers . . . always there is this homely metronomic linking him to his fathers. Hence the organic soundness of the verse. Indeed, the entire intellectual and spiritual content of Crane's verse, and of Crane the child of modern man, could be derived from a study of his typical texture.'

Here is a piece of Crane's typical texture (the dots are his):

> The nasal whine of power whips a new universe . . .
> Where spouting pillars spoor the evening sky,
> Under the looming stacks of the gigantic power house
> Stars prick the eyes with sharp ammoniac proverbs,
> New verities, new inklings in the velvet hummed
> Of dynamos, where hearing's leash is strummed . . .
> Power's script,—wound, bobbin-bound, refined—
> Is stropped to the slap of belts on booming spools, spurred
> Into the bulging bouillon, harnessed jelly of the stars.
> Towards what? The forked crash of split thunder parts
> Our hearing momentwise ; but fast in whirling armatures,
> As bright as frogs' eyes, giggling in the girth
> Of steely gizzards—axle-bound, confined
> In coiled precision, bunched in mutual glee
> The bearings glint,—O murmurless and shined
> In oilrinsed circles of blind ecstasy!

It is true that this doesn't illustrate the ' homely metronomic ' beating at its sturdiest lilt. It illustrates rather what happens to Crane's rhythm when he overloads the naïvely conventional romantic rhetoric (going with ' thou,' etc.) that is his basis:

The captured fume of space foams in our ears . . .

The gleaming cantos of unvanquished space . . .

Time like a serpent down her shoulder, dark
And space, an eaglet's wing, laid on her hair . . .

When he attempts modern effects—verse embodying contemporary speech—his rhythmic nullity is brutally exposed.

As for the turgid verbosities and incoherences to which even Mr. Frank admits him to be prone, it looks as if the alcoholic part of the legend would go a long way to explain them. Crane was plainly in the habit of associating alcoholic excitement with poetic inspiration, and there are signs of the habit's persisting even in the absence of the excitement. Frankly alcoholic documents are such poems as those on pages 104 and 106, and there is, significantly, an elegy addressed to Harry Crosby.

Crane's career belongs to the period chronicled in Mr. Malcolm Cowley's *Exile's Return*. If the legend persists even among the most intelligent American critics, a sufficient explanation is, perhaps, that implicitly conveyed when John Peale Bishop, writing on Thomas Wolfe in the first number of the new *Kenyon Review*, thus brackets Wolfe and Crane together:

> 'His position as an artist is very like that of Hart Crane. Crane was born in 1899, Wolfe in 1900, so that they were almost of an age. Both had what we must call genius; both conceived that genius had been given them that they might celebrate, the one in poetry, the other in prose, the greatness of their country.'

Mr. Bishop offers severe and radical criticism of both, but—'genius'! The need to feel that America had at least come near to producing such genius as both conceived themselves to have is readily understood. But from this side of the Atlantic it is impossible to see genius in either.

F. R. LEAVIS.

HŒLDERLIN

HŒLDERLIN, by Reginald Peacock (Methuen, 10/6).

There are many reasons why Hölderlin, apart from the attraction of novelty, should have become since the war something of a cult both in England and Germany. His romantic idealizing temperament as well as his unhappy career have naturally attracted those whose interest is in poetic personalities, rather than in poetry. In his unvarying enthusiasm (Begeisterung) he reminds us at times of Shelley ; in his innocence, his finer moments of vision, he is sometimes like Wordsworth. But comparisons with English poets are dangerously misleading. That which makes Hölderlin important to-day, which demands something more than a merely literary-historical approach, is his unquestionable poetic talent, the superiority of his technique, which is evident even to the foreigner,

Mit gelben Birnen hänget
Und voll mit wilden Rosen
Das Land in den See,
Ihr holden Schwäne,
Und trunken von Küssen
Tunkt ihr Haupt
Ins heilignüchterne Wasser.

Weh mir, wo nehm ich, wenn
Es Winter ist, die Blumen, und wo
Den Sonnenschein
Und Schatten der Erde?
Die Mauern stehn
Sprachlos und kalt, im Winde
Klirren die Fahnen.

It is impossible for the foreigner to define exactly the superiority of these characteristic lines ; one can only point to the simple felicity of the phrasing—a simplicity which implies a particular concentration—and the impact with which a phrase like ' heilignüchterne ' strikes even the reader who is unaware of its especial meaning in Hölderlin's verse.

Much of Hölderlin's thought (and it is with this that Mr. Peacock is chiefly preoccupied) can be related to that of his

contemporaries, and in particular to Rousseau, Winkelmann and Novalis. His conceptions of Nature, of Mankind in relation to Nature, and of the role of the Poet and the Hero in society are characteristically romantic.

> Heilige Gefässe sind die Dichter
> Worin des Lebens Wein, der Geist
> Der Helden sich aufbewahrt. (Buonaparte).

His Diotima is not unlike Shelley's idealized Emilia Viviani

> Schönes Leben, du lebst wie die zarten Blüten im Winter
> In der gealterten Welt lebst du verschlossen allein.
> Liebend strebst du hinaus, dich zu warmen am Licht des Frühlings
> Zu erwarmen an ihm sucht die Jugend der Welt . . .

Hölderlin, like Novalis, is distinguished by the consistency and disinterestedness of his thought and by his natural piety; these intellectual qualities are paralleled by his emotional exaltation and his simple directness of expression. Goethe and Schiller hellenized. But Goethe's Hellenism often seems academic and not a little affected, and Schiller's Hellenism was merely a medium, giving rhetorical expression to his own ethos, his Humanität. Few poets have hellenized so consistently as Hölderlin. What often seems unnatural stylization according to a model in Goethe, seems in Hölderlin a natural personal idiom. Hölderlin, like the Weimar poets, saw in Hellas the realization of his ideals; but with a more naïve and perhaps more honest mind than Goethe, his evocations of Hellas are more convincing. Similarly, his pious belief in the day when

> Die Berge des deutschen
> Landes Berge der Musen sind,
> Wie die herrlichen einst, Pindos und Helikon
> Und Parnassos, und rings unter des Vaterlands
> Goldnem Himmel, die freie
> Klare geistige Freude glänzt.

cannot be confused with the more militant patriotism of Arndt or Kleist.

Perhaps one can best appreciate Hölderlin's importance, if one considers his work negatively. In an age of 'sensibility,' Hölderlin

refused to wear his heart on his sleeve ; his verse is generally exalted in tone (the poet was, for Hölderlin, the Seer), but controlled by a verbal discipline which prevents his raptures from becoming—except in his very latest work—incoherent or fantastic. In an age of affected classicizing, Hölderlin was nearer to the Greek spirit than perhaps any other European. In a materialistic world, he remained true to his ideals ; he could not, like Goethe, compromise with the world. Yet one must not be blind to his limitations. Although his letters show that he was not devoid of social sense, his poetry is remote; it does not deal with actualities; its rhapsodies deny it any acute psychological perceptiveness, comparable with, say, Blake's ; and it has little dramatic potentialities. But these limitations themselves enhance Hölderlin's positive achievement, his technical ability, his power of infusing an apparently descriptive passage with a wealth of significance. Consider, for instance, the force of such phrases as ' freudiges dichtend,' ' scherzende ' and ' freudigschauernde ' in the following:

> Drin in den Alpen ists noch helle Nacht und die Wolke,
> Freudigesdichtend, sie deckt drinnen das gähnende Tal.
> Dahin, dorthin toset und stürzt die scherzende Bergluft,
> Schroff durch Tannen herab glänzet und schwindet ein Strahl
> Langsem eilt und kämpft das freudigschauernde Chaos
> Jung an Gestalt, doch stark feiert es liebenden Streit . . .
>
> (Heimkunft).

Mr. Peacock's book is frankly disappointing. One can think of many similar books on English poets. It is one of those pretentious pseudo-critical works, which concerns itself for the most part with the elucidation of Hölderlin's 'philosophical background'; it abounds in clichés about the ' cosmic ' or the ' mythical ' aspects of Hölderlin's verse; it has every prospect of becoming popular with candidates for the Modern Languages Tripos. The chapter divisions are arbitrary, and, worse still, the language is vaguely generalizing and intolerably repetitive: ' The poems are saturated with the philosophical interpretation of human life, history and culture ' or ' He was not simply an extraordinary poetic phenomenon ; he had a philosophy of gravity and depth.'

But it is in his effort to describe the characteristics of Hölderlin's verse itself—which he relegates to the last chapter—

that Mr. Peacock fully displays his incompetence. He can say little which the reader cannot discover for himself; his phrasing is sometimes positively uncouth. These are representative passages, which speak for themselves. 'He does it by his mythical manner, and by tone and rhythm.' 'Sometimes, indeed, because of the very swell and overfulness . . . there is a certain monumental quality; something comparable is found in Michel Angelo and Beethoven.' And his final summary: 'He scaled heights which very few have touched . . . He has quite a remarkable spiritual centre of gravity, which is felt throughout his work.'

Hölderlin is an important poet, who deserves to be better known in England. This time he has been unfortunate in his advocate.

H. L. BRADBROOK.

NINETEENTH-CENTURY SCOTLAND IN ALLEGORY

THE HOUSE WITH THE GREEN SHUTTERS, by George Douglas ('World's Classics,' 2/-).

The appearance of George Douglas Brown's single novel *The House with the Green Shutters* as a 'World's Classic,' suggests that the book has claims both to be regarded as a 'classic' and nearly forty years after its first appearance (1901) to be read. Whether or not it has claims to be read is the test; for a classic that will be content to ornament a bookshelf is a classic of a very equivocal kind. It was doubtless the vogue half a century ago of idyllic 'kailyard' fiction that provoked George Douglas to the prosaic 'realism' of his book. But what appears rather to sustain it is an almost terrifying dissatisfaction with the Scotland itself he had known. The book not merely implies a criticism of certain other books that in any case are no longer read—that it killed the 'kailyard' type of fiction in its historical importance—it implies a radical *social criticism* amounting to an indictment, and it is as such that it may have its present importance; for while I would not admit it to the highest rank as a work of the novelist's art—to the rank that is to say of *Wuthering Heights*,

the novel with which one immediately compares it in one's mind—its value *as a work of art* seems to me to depend on the values of the social criticism it successfully implies. As a 'tragedy' detached from these implications it seems to me at once 'conventional' as if its author were striving to conform to some exterior idea of 'tragedy' which he supposes himself perhaps to have got from the Greeks. Expectation is preferred to surprise according to the best models; the 'bodies' are thought of as filling the role of the 'chorus,' and so on. The scenes of pity (not weakly indulged) and terror—horror rather—towards the end would appear to justify it as a 'tragedy' in this conventional sense. But the source of all that power the book undoubtedly has, can, it seems to me, be shown to exist in reality in the terrible nature of its social criticism.

The novel presents a number of different individuals—centering in the members of the Gourlay family—in the setting of a small local community—that of Barbie—which is in a late phase of disintegration. Whether or not Barbie was characteristic of the Scotland of the nineteenth century must be left to someone other than the literary critic to confirm; in any case 'Barbie' has, I think, a general application. 'Barbie has been a decaying burgh for thirty years,' we are told explicitly in the beginning of the second chapter. To call Barbie a community is indeed to extend the meaning of the word unduly; it has ceased to be an 'organic community'; there is no longer a fruitful co-operation between its members. The 'bodies' who represent the last of the local public opinion and should have been, without necessarily knowing it, the guiding and controlling centre of the community are—destructive worms bred out of the decaying organism—idly malicious gossipers and backbiters. Yet the 'bodies' are in a sense what has become of the past, and as traditional figures are significant, as well as richly comic. The Deacon, and for example (at the beginning of Chapter XXII) David Aird, the City bounder about to return to the City after finding Barbie 'too quiet for his tastes' ('Thank God, we'll soon be in civilization') form a significant comic contrast; but it is the Deacon alone who is satirically aware of the others.

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that Mr. Peacock fully displays his incompetence. He can say little which the reader cannot discover for himself; his phrasing is sometimes positively uncouth. These are representative passages, which speak for themselves. 'He does it by his mythical manner, and by tone and rhythm.' 'Sometimes, indeed, because of the very swell and overfulness . . . there is a certain monumental quality; something comparable is found in Michel Angelo and Beethoven.' And his final summary: 'He scaled heights which very few have touched . . . He has quite a remarkable spiritual centre of gravity, which is felt throughout his work.'

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eighteenth century, are little more here than dots on the periphery. The laird has sunk into identity with the surrounding commonalty. He is proud to have an evening's 'sederunt' with old Gourlay—at least until he marries a miller's daughter (of a different sort from Tennyson's—'Her voice went with the skirl of an east wind through the rat-riddled mansion of the Hallidays'). The minister, the Rev. Mr. Struthers, is an exceptionally stupid peasant—he has taken ten years to enter the Church and has had a reverence for the university ever since, though what he reverences about it is mainly the wonder of its administrative machinery. The scene (Chapter XX) in which he congratulates the young prize-winner ('Ability to write is a splendid thing for the Church') is one of the richest in comedy.

As for the schoolmaster he 'rarely leaves' his studying of the theory of Political Economy—

> '"Ay," he said dryly, "there's a wheen gay cuddies in Barbie!" and he went to his stuffy little room to study *The Wealth of Nations*.'

—a study which being disconnected from what is happening around him in Barbie is socially barren. Here there is a society without aristocratic or ecclesiastical or even pedagogic leadership or guidance. Presbyterianism itself is no longer substantial; it persists vestigially as some of its effects. It has left behind a certain hardness and bitterness in character and conversation, an absence of sap and sweetness:

> '"It's a fine morning, Mr. Gourlay."'
> '"There's naething wrong with the morning," grunted Gourlay, as if there was something wrong with the Deacon.'

The Provost's 'Huts, man, dinna sweer sae muckle!' is a kind of unconscious reminiscence of the grave reproofs of elders. The ironic technique of the traditional speech goes on functioning out of relation to its proper object.

> '"What's that your're burying your nose in now?" and if she faltered "It's the Bible," "Hi" he would laugh, "you're turning godly in your auld age. Weel, I'm no saying but it's time!"'

The skeleton of Presbyterianism can seem terribly forbidding:

> ' Heavy Biblical pictures, in frames of gleaming black like the splinters of a hearse, were hung against a dark ground.'

There being no longer a community holding together and controlling its members, the sheer individual, Gourlay, of peasant stock, stupid, but of tremendous dourness and brute force of ' character ' thrusts upward. He builds the House with the Green Shutters on the top of the hill. It represents his attempt at self-sufficiency—the house apart. ' It is his character in stone and lime,' and it dominates the town. Since the public opinion—as represented by the ' bodies '—is important to control him the malevolence of the ' bodies ' grows monstrous against him. With shakes of the head they judge Gourlay's house as Vanity and ' Pride that *will* have a downcome.' But the traditional judgment loses most of its force from being made the vehicle of their petty personal spite.

Gourlay maintains his position till the advent of another individual—Wilson—who although a native of Barbie has been —significantly—*away* for an interval of years.

> ' In his appearance there was an air of dirty and pretentious well-to-do-ness. It was not shabby gentility. It was like the gross attempt to dress of your well-to-do publican.'

He introduces the familiar modern business methods. (They are described in some detail in Chapters X, XI and XIII).

> ' Now the shops of Barbie (the drunken man's shop and the dirty man's shop always excepted, of course) had usually been low-browed little places with faded black scrolls above the door, on which you might read in dim gilt letters (or it might be white)
>
> " Licens'd To Sell Tea & Tobacco."
>
> ' When you mounted two steps and open the door, a bell of some kind went in the interior, and an old woman in a mutch, with big specs slipping down her nose, would come up a step from a dim little room behind, and wiping her sunken mouth with her apron—she had just left her tea—would say, " What's your wull the day, Sir?" and if you said your " wull "

was tobacco, she would answer, "Ou, sir, I dinna sell ocht now but the tape and the sweeties," And then you went away, sadly.

'With the exception of the dirty man's shop, and the drunken man's shop, that kind of shop was the Barbie kind of shop. But Wilson changed all that.'

Gourlay, although a type of the individualism which both followed from and contributed to the break-up of the Scottish community, is himself thoroughly Scottish. Wilson is no longer Scottish but nondescript modern commercialism and 'progress.'

The downfall of the Gourlay family gains in significance from being a particular instance of a more general downfall. The house of Gourlay looks well enough from the outside and in its yard—

'A cock pigeon strutted round, puffing his gleaming breast and *rooketty-cooing* in the sun. Large, clear drops fell slowly from the spout of a wooden pump, and splashed upon a flat stone'—

but inside it is in filthy disorder for Gourlay has a sluttish wife and his son and daughter are ailing in mind and in body; the fruit of Gourlay's pride is internally rotten. Gourlay's attempt to found a self-contained house and family dominating Barbie has to come to nothing sooner or later in any case, for young Gourlay, his son and heir, is a 'weakling.' Yet we are shown clearly enough that brought up in more favourable conditions there is sufficient in young Gourlay to have brought forth some fruit. He is gifted with a wealth of sensuous perceptiveness represented in passages of a prose that in this respect reminds one oddly of Katherine Mansfield's.

But as young Gourlay's schoolmaster and, later, his professor perceive, he is without the mind and character to use this wealth so as to make it something other than an incubus. The difficulties of the sensitive adolescent Scot are dealt with in a way that seems to anticipate what *The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* does for the Irish adolescent. In the case of the adolescent Scot there is almost no tradition, no sympathetic understanding community to guide him; prematurely born, he is subjected only to the brutal will of his father and the weak indulgence of his mother. Not

that the novelist attempts to invoke our sympathy for him. He is dealt with as unsympathetically as almost everyone else in the book. It is part of the bracing effect of the book that it is almost wholly unsympathetic. Douglas is a stringent moralist, scrupulous searching our moral failure. As a moralist he is perhaps too *explicit* for a novelist. But as that is not a fault of much modern work it is almost to be welcomed here as a sign of health than otherwise. A moral preoccupation in the finest sense of ' moral ' may be held to be an essential for a novelist, perhaps for any artist.

Young Gourlay is sent to Edinburgh University to be made into a minister. ' " Eh, but it's a grand thing a gude education! You may rise to be a minister," his mother had said when he was sent to the secondary school. " It's a' he's fit for " his father had growled.' Old Gourlay has no illusions as to the sacred profession. He wants to put his son into it as an expedient for saving the falling fortunes of his house. At this point then the focus is shifted from a small rural burgh to the very capital of Scotland itself and to what might be expected to be the centre of its cultural life, Edinburgh University. Young Gourlay at Edinburgh is partly a test of what Edinburgh and its university have to offer. It might not have been too much to expect that here if anywhere the youth might have found the conditions lacking in Barbie favourable for the multiplication of his single talent. Douglas's picture of Edinburgh and its university is no flattering one. Edinburgh offers the ' weakling ' only too much encouragement in his suicidal tendency to whiskey-addiction. The lecture rooms, where as one of a mob of rowdy students he has his sole opportunity of confronting his professor, are twice presented in the condition of a bear-garden. ' Auld Tam,' the Scots professor, is indeed a figure to be reckoned with. He is representative of the Scots professor of the days before Scots professors were mostly Englishmen from Oxford and Cambridge, and he possesses powers of mind and character (he quells the unruly students with the humorous acerbity of his tongue) which we are bound to respect. Being also a representative of the tradition of philosophy and abstract speculation which we associate more especially with the Edinburgh of the eighteenth century, he is in general amusing inadequate when attempting to deal with something

and particular as literature. What effective culture there might seem still to be in Edinburgh is represented by the Allan circle. There seems to me a serious weakness betrayed by Douglas in his portrayal of this circle (Chapter XVII). The novelist seems to accept it almost at its own valuation. If, as appears, Douglas intends it to be regarded as really 'brilliant,' he does not succeed in convincingly representing it as such. Could it have been that Douglas, in general so without illusions, was himself impressed by the sort of thing represented by Tarmillan, the most 'brilliant' apparently of the Allan circle? The superficial, even vulgar, cleverness of the wit of Tarmillan's conversation is something sadly inferior to the corresponding thing there is reason to believe there was in the Edinburgh of the eighteenth century. 'The Howff'—the pub which night after night lures young Gourlay to it out of his dismal room and away from his uncongenial books—represents what had become of the tradition to which at an earlier phase Burns's poetry belongs. It is a survival from the older Scotland; as is the groset-fair and such an episode (and such a vocabulary) as the following:

> 'They roared and sang till it was a perfect affront to God's day, and frae sidie to sidie they swung till the splash-brods were skreighing on the wheels. At a quick turn o' the road they wintled owre; and there they were, sitting on their doups in the atoms o' the gig, and glowering frae them!'

But for young Gourlay 'the Howff' is no longer an expression of the robust enjoyment of bucolic life; it is merely a refuge to shrink into from the terrors that assail his sensitivity. The novel ends, inevitably, on the notes of Insanity, Disease, Murder, Suicide. The tendency is not only in young Gourlay; it is in the whole of the society of which the novel is a grim representation. This seems to me the nature of the tragedy of the novel, by virtue of which it may prove permanently applicable.

What is to be one's final word on the book as a contribution to literature? The quality of a novel is of course that of its prose both locally and as a cumulative organic whole. The passages extracted above give a fair idea of Douglas's prose at its working best. The purple patch about the thunderstorm at young Gourlay's birth (Chapter VI) might be extracted, together with its echo

later (Chapter XIV) that so terrified the truant boy, if the comparison with *Wuthering Heights* is to be insisted on. But Douglas's prose is not always so good. At times it appears insufficiently controlled—emotions ' seethe ' and ' boil '—and on the other hand, while frequently exhibiting a rich particularity, it occasionally drops into something like the journalist being ' literary.' That the book was Douglas's first (and only) novel may explain its immaturities, as its astonishing power may seem to have offered great promise of future achievement ; but it's not easy to believe that the life of a journalist in London would have qualified him to write a greater Scottish novel ; and in any case considerations of what he might have done ought not to deflect the critical judgment on what he did do. That Douglas's prose should so consistently preclude sympathy is of course its unusual strength. If that unsympathy could have been converted into a purely artistic detachment and sustained as such the novel would have been a great work of art. Unfortunately, as an examination of its prose at once confirms, the unsympathy is not always that of detached and seriously poised art, but seems at times to proceed from an unresolved personal animus. There is not space to extract the opening passage of the book for examination, but I may perhaps refer to it. It is Douglas's prose at its best, but even here the ' silly ' of ' The silly *tee-hee* echoed up the street ' is perhaps a sign of this insecurity. There may be some justice also in the common dismissal of the book as ' merely depressing.' Douglas does indeed refer to certain positives in at least one place—

> ' To bring a beaten and degraded look into a man's face . . . is an outrage on the decency of life, an offence to natural religion, a violation of the human sanctities '

—but these positives, though referred to, are nowhere strongly and positively realized in the book. If they had been it would perhaps have been a wiser, because more complete, book. Nevertheless if not a great novel it is because of the clarity of the social criticism it implies, a very remarkable one, perhaps the only very remarkable Scottish novel, not excepting the earlier Scottish novels of Walter Scott and John Galt.

JOHN SPEIRS.

RUTH ADAM AGAIN

THERE NEEDS NO GHOST, by Ruth Adam (Chapman and Hall, 7/6).

This is inferior to the previous novel of this author reviewed in *Scrutiny*. No wonder, seeing it is about the effects of the Munich crisis on Bloomsbury Bohemians and English villagers and came out before Christmas. Apart from being less well written and of a piece than *I'm Not Complaining*, Mrs. (not Miss as previously stated in these pages) Adam is less successful in her choice of her chief mouthpiece—the Vicar's sister, though the last drop of juice is wrung out of her, is a bit too limited to have so much rope and her style of thought a bit Loosish to enjoy for long. The other chronicler, the Bloomsbury young woman, is first-rate in the line of the recounter of *I'm Not Complaining*. With all these reservations, the book is good entertainment literature and something over. There is some good back-chat between the Bohemians, an acute account of the emotions set up in complicated people by the Czech affair, and a more than acute display of the process by which the artificial, *i.e.*, mental, values of Bloomsbury give way, in a village environment and in face of the realities of life, to the real values which tradition has found for a class of people who could never have afforded the luxury of artificial ones. Exposure of false values is always Mrs. Adam's strong suit. She is also masterly here in demonstrating the ineffectiveness of simple goodness in grappling with the political scene as well as the unexpected strength of the *anima naturaliter christiana* in personal relations. I for one consider a novel by Mrs. Adam, who has a point of view, a lively feeling for Character as well as for characters, and a personal sense of values, far more worth having than a sackful of art-novels (for instance, those of Miss Elizabeth Bowen and Miss Kay Boyle). Mrs. Adam remains a novelist not only to read but to watch.

Q.D.L.

SHAKESPEARE CRITICISM

APPROACH TO SHAKESPEARE, by D. A. Traversi (Sands: the Paladin Press, 6/-).

This is not quite the book one was expecting from Mr. Traversi. It is extremely ambitious, and at the same time, as the author admits, painfully compressed. It sets out to give a general account of Shakespeare's development: 'Proceeding from the written word and the verse to the greater complexities of which they form a part, we may hope to contribute something to a general picture of the Shakespearean experience.' Such an undertaking could only be adequately carried out in a series of detailed studies of all the major plays on the scale at least of Mr. Traversi's previously published essays on *Troilus and Cressida*, *Coriolanus*, and *The Winter's Tale*. Those who have read and admired these careful and sensitive analyses will be disappointed to find that the *Troilus* essay has been truncated to fit a small book, while that on *Coriolanus*, perhaps the best of the three, does not appear at all. The space gained is given up to short accounts of other plays. All these are suggestive and valuable, but in the nature of the case none can pretend to anything like completeness. For criticism which sets out to work from analysis of the poet's language to a comprehensive account of the total experience communicated to the qualified reader needs above all space to show by copious illustration how themes are developed, actions judged, and attitudes to the characters made clear in the tone and texture of the verse. If this kind of analysis is not sufficiently full to be completely convincing, it is apt to leave, at worst, an impression of futile niggling, at best, a sense that it is fragmentary and one-sided.

All the same, this book makes a genuine contribution to Shakespeare criticism: it has the elementary but rare merit of concentrating throughout on what Shakespeare wrote. Mr. Traversi sees Shakespeare's development as a progress from plays whose unity is mainly imposed by the plot to plays in which every part of the material is worked into the expression of a unified and complete imaginative experience. To do the book full justice it would be necessary to consider each piece of analysis

separately and in detail: in a short review I can only attempt a rough discrimination. The best sections are those on *Troilus* and *The Winter's Tale*. Following Mr. Wilson Knight's description of the symbolism of the Trojan and Greek camps in *Troilus*, Mr. Traversi nevertheless corrects his sentimental view of the sordid conclusion and of the character of Pandarus. He regards the play as an expression of intense experiences not ordered into a coherent whole, and shows how this may be deduced from the instability of the verse. The effect of imagery of taste in conveying the insubstantiality of Troilus' love is well brought out. The essay on *The Winter's Tale*, reprinted almost in its entirety, is the most valuable and original in the book. It shows a sensitive appreciation of the symbolic technique of the last plays, and elucidates the main theme here—' the divisions created in love and friendship by the passage of Time and the action of ' blood,' and the healing of these divisions '—by a delicate and convincing analysis of key passages. It is a pity that the account of the pastoral scene omits the earlier comments on Florizel's speech (IV, iii, 135). On *Othello* and *Macbeth* Mr. Traversi follows, in the main, the conclusions of Mr. Leavis and Mr. Knights: he describes these plays as separating out from the confusion and uncertainty of the ' problem plays ' ' the decisive orientation of Shakespearean good and evil.'

On *Lear* and *Antony* he is less satisfactory. The analysis of the reconciliation and restoration scenes in *Lear* as balancing the purgatorial suffering entailed by the original division and disruption carries conviction, but it seems to me rather shirking the problem to say that because the ending appears to nullify the previous poetic harmony the play is not an artistic whole. Mr. Traversi suggests the comparison with *Timon*, where the mood of disgust is opposed to all order or control, but at least the problem needs more extended consideration than this brief dismissal. In *Antony and Cleopatra* I think he is right in stressing the powerful associations of generosity, fertility and even immortality in the later scenes, but a much fuller analysis would be needed to establish satisfactorily his main contention that Antony's love is justified in terms of its intensity and vitality in spite of his obvious weaknesses. The section on *Hamlet* relates it to *Troilus* as a play of frustration not entirely coherent as a work of art, but several aspects of the play

are left out of account. It seems to me misleading to imply that there is no solution to the moral problems of *Measure for Measure*, and I think the function of the Duke is less uncertain than Mr. Traversi suggests. The seven pages on the sonnets are hardly sufficient for an adequate discussion of the growth of Shakespeare's interest in the action of Time. And surely *Henry IV, Part II* is not such an organic unity that one can say with assurance that the rejection of Falstaff implies a relation of all the divisions of the play to ' a developing split in Shakespeare's feeling '?

This last remark raises a point that may cause some confusion. Without involving himself in a discussion of the theory of artistic creation, Mr. Traversi might in some places have made it clearer whether he is referring to Shakespeare's own personal experience or to the experience which the qualified reader receives from the work of art. (See, for instance, the sentence quoted at the beginning of this review). It is a question of clarifying the argument and avoiding possible misunderstandings.

The last chapter draws some tentative conclusions as to Shakespeare's preoccupations in his mature work with the action of Time and the two elements of experience which may be called roughly ' sense ' and ' reason.' I feel that these only explain certain aspects of the plays, and are not quite the master-keys for which Mr. Traversi presents them. But the critic who could do justice to Shakespeare's work as a whole has not yet appeared, and in case I have over-stressed the points on which this book seems to me open to objections, I hasten to say that it remains one of the few valuable aids to an understanding of Shakespeare that have appeared in recent years.

R. G. Cox.

EDUCATIONAL

EDUCATION AND SOCIETY, by E. G. Biaggini (Hutchison, 4/6).

All who are interested genuinely in the teaching of English, as distinct from cramming for School Certificate, must, by now, be familiar with Mr. Biaggini's work. His previous book, *The Reading and Writing of English*, combined sound critical intelligence with a knowledge of the practical difficulties of teaching, which is too frequently missing from books of this type. His exercises and methods are applicable below Sixth Form standard, and by using them I have obtained some interesting results from a Fourth Form (average age, fourteen to fifteen) on the supposedly more backward side of a Lancashire secondary school, where intelligence is by no means above the average.

The present work is concerned mainly with adult education, but the exercises contained in it could be used profitably in secondary schools. They are intended to test the student's reaction to the general environment, by asking his response to such words as 'citizenship,' 'personality,' and 'right-thinking,' by testing his ability to distinguish between sense and nonsense (many students were incapable even of this), sincerity and claptrap, and even by examining his sense of humour. Even in such a risky proceeding as this last, Mr. Biaggini never becomes pedantic or dogmatic.

In the last half of the book Mr. Biaggini puts forward his own ideas on the relation of education to society, and on the methods of counteracting the appallingly complacent Philistinism of the contemporary world. If we do not find these chapters as interesting as the author's practical work, it is not because there is much exceptionable in his arguments, but rather because they are already familiar to us and when we have read them we feel no nearer to the solution of our difficulties.

F. CHAPMAN.

RIMBAUD

LE LYRISME DE RIMBAUD, by C. A. Hackett (Librairie Nizet et Bastard, 35f.).

'He is a poet of whom there can only be interpretations,' Charles Du Bos once said of Rimbaud. Rimbaud is one of the most difficult of modern poets and the difficulty has been greatly increased by the tendency of his critics to take sides, to use his poetry to support a particular creed or a particular party. It is one of the virtues of Dr. Hackett's study, which is a Paris doctorate thesis, that it is solidly based on the text of Rimbaud's poetry; and though it is difficult to accept some of his conclusions, his book is an interesting piece of exegesis which is particularly welcome in the present state of Rimbaud criticism.'

The scope of the book is a good deal wider than the title suggests. It is not confined to one aspect of Rimbaud's poetry, but covers the whole field of his work. Dr. Hackett says excellently of his *lyrisme*

> 'Ses visions sont saisies au moment où elles apparaissent dans sa conscience: les mots sont comme forgés sur place en réponse à un besoin pressant, immédiat . . . '

Again:

> 'Sa vision est si intense, si personnelle, que tous les intermédiaires sont supprimés et que les images subissent une sorte de télescopage.'

He goes on to discuss the connection between Rimbaud's style and the sources of his inspiration. A large part of the book is devoted to an examination of his imagery and the elucidation of the symbols of the mother, birth, death, water and the *auberge verte*; and there is an interesting examination of *Voyelles* and *Les Effarés*.

Dr. Hackett is perhaps inclined to push the Freudian interpretation too far. Commenting on Rimbaud's desire to be an *être intact*, he writes:

> 'Pour sa part, il se dit sans mère ou il s'imagine né miraculeusement d'une mère-vierge.'

The identification surely arbitrary of the rainbow with the umbilical cord leads him to discover a curious and sinister meaning in the line

' J'avais été damné par l'arc-en-ciel '

which is probably merely an instance of the poet's strange fantasy. The danger of this method is that it sometimes allows ' the problem of Rimbaud ' to obscure the poet. When, for example, Dr. Hackett observes

> ' Le poète devient " malade à mourir " et se tue pour expier le crime d'être né, d'avoir ainsi violé la pureté de cette mère qu'il aurait voulue vierge, et qui a inspiré tout son lyrisme '

he puts the emphasis in the wrong place. For ultimately it must fall not on what Rimbaud failed to do or his attitude towards his mother, but on the splendour of the poetry which was in fact written.

The discussion of Rimbaud's ' vision ' and ' hallucination ' strikes me as inconclusive. In a very interesting comment on the significance of clocks in his poetry, Dr. Hackett says:

> ' L'horloge qui se fait entendre à travers son œuvre est comme la césure du drame spirituel ; elle signale le moment où, l'esprit en suspens, on passe de l'hallucination à l'illumination.'

Unfortunately, however, he does not provide any satisfactory definition of the two states, and the nature of Rimbaud's central experience remains obscure.

Once a critic begins to interpret symbols, he passes lightly and probably unconsciously to the assumption that *all* symbols are capable of explanation.

> ' Il est frappant de remarquer (writes Dr. Hackett) que toutes les visions hallucinatoires nous ramènent à cette idée de repos et de fuite dans un endroit fermé, dangereux et protecteur à la fois pour le petit enfant.'

This is one aspect of Rimbaud's poetry, but it is only one. His poetry cannot be reduced to complete uniformity or even to complete coherence. It is full of disparate elements ; ' vision ' and ' hallucination ' alternate until no one—least of all the poet himself

—can decide with any certainty which is vision and which is hallucination. Some of the symbols can be explained, but others remain hopelessly obscure and others still, perhaps, have no meaning. It is after all part of Rimbaud's greatness that his work contains a refractory element which makes complete symmetry impossible.

The conclusion seems to be that Rimbaud's poetry and his life alike were a tragedy of non-adaptation. Dr. Hackett speaks of his ' constant flight from a true illumination ' and quotes with approval M. Carré's summing-up of the relations between mother and son:

> ' La mère de Rimbaud lut le volume [*Une saison en enfer*] et n'y comprit rien. C'était pourtant la preuve éclatante de son triomphe: elle avait vaincu son fils, Rimbaud avait tué les chimères.'

If Dr. Hackett and M. Carré are right, Rimbaud's ' flight ' to Africa represents a complete compromise with the bourgeois respectability of his mother. But does not this interpretation overlook the *tone* of the superb closing sections of the *Saison en enfer*? Rimbaud had clearly made up his mind that his visions were hallucinations and had decided to return to ' rugged reality ' ; but this does not mean that he had been ' vanquished ' by his mother. The poetry seems to me to lead logically to a new start and he certainly expected to find some sort of fulfilment in Africa. The fact that it was a life of complete disillusionment merely brings us back to Rivière's theory that he was separated from us *d'une manière constitutionnelle*. Rimbaud's poetry is proof of the supreme difficulty of preserving one's human integrity in a world like our own. The fault was not with Rimbaud, but with his world ; and the courage and integrity with which he faced a tragic situation makes his work a landmark in the spiritual history of our time.

MARTIN TURNELL.

MALLARMÉ: LIFE AND ART

MALLARMÉ, by Kurt Wais (C. H. Beck, Munich).

I.

In his commentary to Roger Fry's translations from Mallarmé, published in 1936, M. Mauron regretted that 'a good biography, human as well as literary, is still to come.' Herr Wais's is at least comprehensive: it covers the little-known early years as well as the later, and comments not only on the poetry but the prose. This is often impressive, and at times as difficult as the poetry.

Mallarmé has been celebrated as a *poète absolu*, a biography of whom would be superfluous if not impertinent. M. Thibaudet, for example, wrote a *Critical Study* which confines itself to remarks upon style and metre, and to a sort of philosophical exegesis; as though the poet were interested only in general ideas and their relations. On the other hand M. Mauron seems to have expected that biography, at least in its post-Freudian sense, should oust criticism altogether: 'All that is not art should become science'—I quote from memory but preserve, I think, his meaning—'and the only way to avoid gossip is for æsthetic to become a branch of psychology.'

The attempts at psychological criticism which have been published during the last few years are perhaps sufficient of themselves, if not to refute M. Mauron, at least to cast a doubt on his opinion. The more psychological they have been, the less their immediate importance for æsthetic; while their remote importance has been either problematical or fairly obviously nil. I do not know whether it is not clear on reflection that this was likely to happen. For the psychologist who turns to æsthetic, a poem can be neither more nor less than a datum: the more he advances in his work, the more he leaves the poem behind; while if he hopes either to discover or to complete it, he is ignorant of what a poem should be. Many psychological critics—and anthropological and sociological critics, the same judgment applies to all—have been of the second kind. They have been in search of an experience which they felt they lacked; whilst the lack of it meant that the search was misconceived.

The exhaustive division of intellectual activities into art and science is too neat to commend itself either to common sense, or to the tradition of humanity. Even science, according to Aristotle, needs to be discussed by the non-expert and in the light of non-scientific opinions; otherwise it remains unprofitably independent of the rest of human concerns. As this discussion cannot be wholly methodical, in the last resort it must be controlled by native or acquired tact, and M. Mauron is free to call it gossip if he likes; but if so, he is prevented from condemning the whole of gossip as useless. It seems yet more probable that a work of art stands in need of the same sort of discussion. To extract an adequate and helpful sense from a poem, we need to be aware of at least some of the subtleties of its language; and we can do so, only if we are not totally ignorant of the poet's surroundings, material as well as intellectual. This view is familiar; and it seems possible to cite in its support not only Herr Wais, by whom it is proclaimed, but also M. Thibaudet, by whom it is denied.

In spite of his protestations, M. Thibaudet found it impossible wholly to neglect biography. The poet whose sole interest lies in general ideas cannot be conceived; they come to him on particular occasions, and these are his only reason or excuse for handling the ideas. Determined not to lift his eyes from the text, M. Thibaudet of necessity found occasions within it; concluding that Mallarmé had to face, or chose to deal, only with the problems of a writer. The poems, he said, are about the writing of poetry; that is, their subject is themselves. This account has usually been held to be somewhat tenuous, even by favourable judges; Herr Wais, who considers Mallarmé as a man who not only wrote but had more pressing if not more important tasks, comes perhaps very near to showing that it is mistaken. At any rate it is interesting to place his account of a poem side by side with M. Thibaudet's: and if no one but a Frenchman may finally decide between them, Englishmen are entitled (and indeed, for their own purposes compelled) to come to a sort of provisional decision.

II.

But as Herr Wais himself is not French, this problem of foreign poetry should perhaps first be considered. If criticism is a discussion which, as has been suggested, is guided ultimately

by tact, the foreigner is necessarily at a disadvantage. His 'feelings' for the subtleties of language cannot be so fine or so reliable as the native's. This has usually been recognized; but not so usually perhaps, that the disadvantage is greater now than ever before. For the first time in the history of civilized Europe, the nations not only express themselves, but receive their intellectual and a great part of their emotional training, each in a different tongue. They no longer have a large and common share in the classics, nor do they acknowledge a single modern tongue as culturally supreme, as at one time the Italian and later the French. Communication has become extremely difficult, and perfect communication perhaps impossible; it may take place from time to time, but is interrupted by an uncertain number of blunders.

To preserve what is left it seems necessary to run the risk of blunders; which may themselves, when put on record, have a value—for they give information, if not that which was intended; and invite their own correction. My desire is not wholly, though it is partly, to provide myself with defence for writing in English: but to make clear if I can that while Herr Wais, it seems to me, has written a valuable book about a French poet, it is also a German book. The proportion in which it is the one or the other is difficult to judge, at least on a single reading; it is the first in a high proportion, and cannot as such be neglected: but it is not wholly the first, and the English reader will be struck with this.

Herr Wais's Mallarmé appears to live in Weimar of the first Grand-duke as well as in Paris of the Third Republic. He is described in phrases which have about them something it might be unfair to call unction, but for which it is difficult to find another appropriate term. It might perhaps be said that Herr Wais writes, if not to edify as well as to instruct, at least as though edification were the necessary consequence of instruction. This formidible optimism is, I think, a note of Weimar rather than of Paris.

As words are important, it may perhaps illustrate what I mean that, where Mallarmé talks of *la femme*, Herr Wais (but what could he else?) talks of *die Frau*. And the sonnet *Tristesse d'Eté* (*O lutteuse endormie* . . .) he glosses: 'Mallarmé has been reading too much Baudelaire, and cannot believe that the woman's —*des Maedchens*—sorrow is genuine or that her tears are more

than a mere pretence.' But the text, so far as I can see, gives not the slightest ground for this assumption, nor has the assumption the slightest relevance to the text. The man and the woman do not satisfy each other, nor is there any means short of the most fantastic by which they may be satisfied. Herr Wais has perhaps been reading too much Goethe and misinterprets in the interests of what, on Weimarian principles, cannot fail to satisfy—das Ewig-weibliche.

A second disadvantage of Herr Wais, at least in so far as he writes for the general reader, should perhaps be mentioned. He is an academic, with the academic's hospitality to almost anything in verse or prose. He quotes much French and Spanish that seems hardly likely to be of use ; and references to, say, James Branch Cabell are almost certainly a hindrance rather than a help. So too are references to Poe or to the more banal Keats, unless a clear distinction is drawn between any influence they may have had on the writer and that to which the reader is expected to submit. Since M. Valéry took the Anglo-Saxon world to task for its neglect, the continental reputation of Poe has grown almost to a menace. The truth would seem to be that Poe, if a gifted being, failed to find or to profit by an intellectual discipline ; of which his gifts stood peculiarly in need, so that without it they were wasted.

III.

In the *Après-Midi* the faun wakes up from a dream of nymphs, whom he proposes to perpetuate in song. But after only six verses, and abruptly in the seventh, he turns to meditation:

> . . . Inerte, tout brûle dans l'heure fauve
> Sans marquer par quel art ensemble détala
> Trop d'hymen souhaité de qui cherche le *la*:
> Alors m'éveillerai-je à la ferveur première,
> Droit et seul, sous un flot antique de lumière,
> Lys! et l'un de vous tous pour l'ingénuité.

Although this break is emphasized by a change of type and by the closing of quotation marks, M. Thibaudet appears to overlook it. The above lines he glosses as though they continued the song, and expressed the faun's approval of it: ' Rien, autour, que l'heure

fauve de midi, rien qui rappelle la belle vision. Mais il suffit, pour tout récréer, que s'érige le lys musical de la Syrinx.' But if music suffices for this purpose, it is not clear why it should have been abandoned.

There follow almost immediately the well-known lines:

> Mon sein, vierge de preuve, atteste une morsure
> Mystérieuse, due a quelque auguste dent ;
> Mais, bast! arcane tel élut pour confident
> Le jonc vaste et jumeau dont sous l'azur on joue:
> Qui, détournant à soi le trouble de la joue
> Rêve, dans un solo long, que nous amusions
> La beauté d'alentour par des confusions
> Fausses entre elle-même et notre chant crédule ;
> Et de faire aussi haut que l'amour se module
> Evanouir du songe ordinaire de dos
> Ou de flanc pur suivis avec mes regards clos,
> Une vaine, sonore et monotone ligne.

According to M. Thibaudet, these give Mallarmé's views on the nature of music and poetry ; and the faun's views too, for he is Mallarmé's mouthpiece. Poetry, containing within itself the essence of all objects of desire, is a world where its devotees rest in a state of complete satisfaction. ' Ligne de musique qui résume la chair ainsi que la ligne des horizons résume les paysages,—ligne exhalée du lys et du jonc, et qui, s'étalant droite, le répète comme dans la dimension inverse.' The flute, says M. Thibaudet, taking up a figure which will be quoted later, is an ' instrument des fuites, fuites vers la beauté intérieure qui fait mieux que consoler, qui couronne et qui achève . . . '

The faun however, who has this instrument of consolation and consummation within his grasp, not only chooses to lay it down but announces that he does so. Compelled to seek an explanation for this, M. Thibaudet suggests that the faun is ' plus impatient de vivre.' But the flute, he has told us, is the sole means to the fullest possible life: and the faun therefore is either ignorant or inconsequent or abstemious in his actions. M. Thibaudet would deny he is the first or the last ; the second we do not expect from Mallarmé.

These and similar difficulties can be avoided if, with Herr Wais, we adhere more closely to the text. Taking it up at the point to which M. Thibaudet has brought us, we see that the faun does not merely lay down the flute but mocks it ; and that he regards Syrinx, the goddess of the flute, as the opposite of beneficent:

> Tâche donc, instrument des fuites, ô maligne
> Syrinx, de refleurir aux lacs où tu m'attends!

Tâche de refleurir . . . but the flute cannot, for it has been cut from a reed ; and is now being reminded that, though it claims to confer benefits upon the player, there is an important benefit which it cannot confer upon itself. Similarly, looking back over the longer quotation, we see that while the faun acknowledges the dignity of poetry (the tooth with which she has branded him is *auguste*), he is rebelling against rather than rejoicing in her power. From the flute she produces no more than a *chant crédule* ; and to identify this song with the surrounding beauty, or to find the essence of that beauty in the song, is only a *confusion fausse*. Or so it seems to the faun who contrasts with the coolness and calm of poetry, the heat of which he is aware in the landscape outside, and the heat of his passion within.

And this contrast is why, in the first quotation, he breaks off his song when it is scarcely begun. He does so with marked impatience, at the third syllable of a line. The satisfaction craved by excited senses is very different from that of a musician who finds the A among his stops (Herr Wais is no doubt right that here there is a note of contempt). Therefore he will yield himself to the *ferveur première*, and parade in the pagan sunlight ingenuous as the lily. This is the last of M. Thibaudet's misconceptions: the lily and the reed are not, as he thinks, two symbols for the same thing or two names for the same symbol ; rather they are opposed, the one representing primitive passion as it appears to the faun, the other the art to which he prefers it.

I have quoted this passage at length not only as an example of Herr Wais's eye and care for detail, of which there are perhaps more striking examples ; but to illustrate the importance of this care for judgment on the complete poem. M. Thibaudet's faun continues to behave as inconsequently as he has begun, for there

is nothing else that he can do. Having laid down the flute for no apparent reason, he fails for no apparent reason to find satisfaction in the reveries to which he turns. But that does not distress him greatly, or indeed at all: his afternoon has been one of both 'mensonge et beauté,' and he asks for nothing more than to repeat it. Wine and sleep will prepare him to dally with visions once more: 'ainsi,' says M. Thibaudet, 'le dernier vers reprend le motif du premier . . . et, comme en des volutes indéfinies, reprend le même cycle de songes.' If poetry, the highest elaboration of life, can be exchanged without regret for life in its crudity, then the major distinction which the poem establishes is seen to be no distinction at all; and when it has collapsed, no others can be maintained. During the faun's afternoon one thing succeeds another thing in any order and without any significance in the succession; for all things are the same. While therefore the poem never progresses, there is no reason why it ever should end. The music of its words, which alone sustains interest, returns upon and produces itself like an arabesque:

Une vaine, sonore et monotone ligne.

There is, perhaps, a beauty of this kind, but it is not usually rated very high.

According to Herr Wais on the other hand the poem consists not of one element but of two; and not in an indefinite number of repetitions but in a conflict, receiving thence a determinate form and length. Though dedicated to poetry the faun renounces it; he suffers in consequence of the renunciation, for poetry is a necessity to him. His reveries after laying down the flute are of the morose kind which, by keeping lust alive when its satisfaction is physically or morally impossible, end by reducing all life to lust. In imagination he re-enacts amorous adventures:

O nymphes, *regonflons* ces souvenirs divers.

He abducted a brace of nymphs, one of whom at least gave promise of serving as accomplice; but he had neither the strength nor the skill of a god, and both escaped.

Tant pis! vers le bonheur d'autres m'entraîneront!

He will establish his equality with the gods by an attempt on Venus herself:

A l'heure où ce bois d'or et de cendres se teinte
Une fête s'exalte en la feuillée éteinte:
Etna! c'est parmi toi visité de Vénus
Sur ta lave posant ses talons ingénus,
Quand tonne un somme triste ou s'épuise la flamme.
Je tiens la reine!

But lust has stirred his imagination so deeply as to ensure its own defeat, and the light shed by divine beauty shows at last the depths to which he has descended. There is nothing now in common between himself and Venus:

. . . O sûr châtiment!

Unlike the lily which is not dedicated to poetry, he has nothing to commend him merely as a creature of the *ferveur première*.

In spite of remorse he must continue with ordinary living:

Sans plus il faut dormir en l'oubli du blasphème.

But this he finds impossible, and has recourse to wine. The sun which maddened him to a frenzy must now, through the grapes it has ripened, sink him in oblivion. This is all he can hope for: so far from having perpetuated the nymphs he has both lost them, and is driven to lose himself.

IV.

Herr Wais's commentary, I think it might be said, gives to the *Après-Midi* not only a shape but one which, in the terms of painting, is not abstract but representative: it recalls a part of experience, and the weight of experience is directly associated with it:

Sans plus il faut dormir en l'oubli du blasphème.

Writing in this manner Mallarmé was no mere producer of *l'art pour l'art*; and Herr Wais goes so far as to claim that, first of his generation, he overcame the 'fruitless opposition' between *l'art pour l'art* and the *pièce à thèse*. He did not do so without a struggle, persistence in which both required and perfected a remarkable dignity of character. This deeply impressed his contemporaries, having an immediate influence perhaps greater than that of the poems. For Herr Wais also Mallarmé is eminent not only

as a poet, but as a sort of poet hero.

The detail of this portrait needs no doubt to be examined, and it cannot be accepted without reserve; in its main lines, however, it is I think more acceptable than the one which is customary. They seem to be sanctioned by the history of literature in general, on which the 'mere artist' has had little influence, and in particular of literature during the last fifty years. As I said, Herr Wais's book cannot be neglected, and he has done a great service in writing it.

Nevertheless my feeling when I put it down is not so much that a problem has been solved; as that merely apparent problems have been swept away, and for the first time the real one revealed. If Mallarmé rejected *l'art pour l'art*, how did he come to incur so deep a suspicion of being devoted to it? A suspicion not without its grounds; which Herr Wais, if he makes them seem less extensive, cannot cause to disappear entirely. The interpretation he gives of some of the later poems, though possible, is no more than plausible; and a more obvious interpretation remains, on which they are very nearly webs of words without, or with a deliberately confused, reference to things. If Herr Wais's interpretations are accepted it is only in deference to his general argument; to which they continue a source of weakness, rather than of strength. Then there is the heroic quality which he vaunts in Mallarmé: the term is not wholly misleading, but fairly obviously it is being used in a not very usual sense. Mallarmé, it seems true, was neither unaware of nor indifferent to the dangers which threatened contemporary society; but this only makes it more rather than less difficult to approve the limited attention which he paid them. The time which was thus left free he devoted to pursuits normally held to be the reverse of heroic: the editorship of *La Dernière Mode*, for example, in which he answered fashion-ridden correspondents as obsequiously if not as crassly as Arnold Bennett. This last Herr Wais takes as a mark of respect for woman, as part of a *Lob der Frau*; but presumably one needs to be deeply dyed in Weimarism to do so.

Some of the better-known poems may give hints towards a solution of the problem. The struggle between the ideal and the real, between the human passions which are the material and the harmony which is the form of a work of art, is not so much

composed as, once having been acknowledged, avoided; or a composition, if arrived at, is only at the sacrifice of a great part of the material. The *Après-Midi*, for example, not only ends with the self-abdication of the faun, but the heat of his desire is so persistently connected with that of noon as no longer to appear a human phenomenon. That is, it no longer appears a moral phenomenon, of which there is any significance in saying that it 'ought not' to be. Reader, poet and faun are reduced to hoping for the heat to pass without its causing too much distress. Venus visits Etna

Quand tonne un somme triste ou s'épuise la flamme;

But has no power to extinguish or control the flame, which when it bursts forth must be borne with. When therefore the *Après-Midi* is considered as anything more than a specimen of *l'art pour l'art*, an unpleasantness is felt to hang about it similar to that about the *Faerie Queene*: in which the blatant beasts, though one may now and then be destroyed to mark an occasion, are on the whole accepted, if not preserved, as natural. Somewhat similarly, in *Le vierge, le vivace . . .* the swan takes up as the only possible attitude to its *exil inutile* that of a *froid mépris*; and is content to await deliverance from a *coup d'aile ivre* of the Spring, when the course of nature brings the Spring round again. Against defeatism of this kind the *puéril triomphe* of *Victorieusement fui* does not stand out in very strong contrast:

Victorieusement fui le suicide beau
Tison de gloire, sang par écume, or, tempête!
O rire si là-bas une pourpre s'apprête
A ne tendre royal que mon absent tombeau.

Mallarmé refuses to decorate himself with the merely natural splendours of the sunset, of which suicide, or the reduction of oneself to flesh and bones, is the moral equivalent: but the only moral or human achievement of which he can boast is the possession of a woman whose hair is splendid enough to have blazed alongside the sun. He thinks it worth while to mention further about her head, that as it rests on the pillows it resembles

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This is surely a frigid comparison: and the definition of frigidity is the neglect, where they would be in place, of human or moral considerations. Explicitly in *Quelle soie aux baumes du temps* Mallarmé states that, to be supremely content with his mistress, he must strangle (*étouffer*) *le cri des Gloires*, or the desire for and admiration of most varieties of human effort.

I am of course choosing my quotations, and there are other poems which are notable for their humanity. But they do not seem to touch on the struggle to which Herr Wais draws attention, and are perhaps irrelevant to a discussion of the quality which distinguishes Mallarmé.

I find the suggestion very strong that, with a sharp eye for the problem of the ideal and the real, and a scrupulousness which forbad him to overlook any of its bearings, he was yet without equipment—not to solve the problem, with which it would be invidious to reproach him—but to handle it while yet unsolved. He could not refrain from merely partial solutions which, though they satisfied him immediately, could satisfy few others but himself. Yet the problem is by no means new, and is not impossible to live with: the history of civilization is perhaps the history of very little else. It may be, however, that to do so, a firm reliance is necessary on the complex habits which have been elaborated by civilization; they alone providing strength continually to envisage both the ideal and the inadequacy of the means which for the most part are the only means to approach it. If this is true, it may to some extent serve as an explanation of Mallarmé: for he was very much the child of his century, in so far as this prided itself on the rejection of habits. To the end of his life he indulged in a schoolboy infidelity; and upon realizing that his problem could not be solved without intellectual help, he neglected to go outside his century in search of it. Antiquity and the Middle Ages had thought and written in vain: he chose to rely exclusively on the brand-new German speculations (at least they were so in France) to which his friend Villiers introduced him. *O cerveau fou d' Hegel!* said Laforgue, seeking help from the same source but rejecting it almost immediately. The seriousness and scrupulousness of Mallarmé, which raised him above Laforgue, on this occasion betrayed him: he could not trifle, and had to make the best of the help which came his way. Unfortunately he was too much

of his century to adopt the habits even of German idealists, and thought to modify these also for his own purposes. As his brain was by no means so well nourished in philosophy, he produced a *folie* which is correspondingly more striking.

This is a first impression on looking into *Igitur* and *Un Coup de Dés*, which the sympathetic account of Herr Wais has failed to modify. Intended as major works, they are ineffective almost in proportion, it seems, to their earnestness: much as would be a scheme of salvation hatched in a country chapel, by one who had hardly heard of Paul. Daily and yearly familiarity with solutions of this kind tended perhaps to blunt Mallarmé, to make him less capable of realizing the inadequacy of the *Après-Midi* and the triviality of *Victorieusement fui*; or to put it another way, the insecurity and inexperience which forced him on the one may have forced him on the other. Maybe also the obscurity of some of the later poems results, not from an endeavour after *l'art pour l'art*, or to cut loose from the duties of a full life—this is Herr Wais's point, and it may now be allowed him—but to discharge the duties in an original way. They may be an example of speaking with tongues.

V.

Mallarmé is distinguished by the vigour with which from time to time he asserts the existence and the claims of the ideal, of *ce qui là-haut éclate*; and by his refusal at such times to identify the ideal with the material product not worked over by the spirit—*l'absente de tous bouquets* with the flowers of which they are composed, the human paradise with *le mirage brutal, la cité, ses gouvernements, le code*. The latter are no more than *des nécropoles*. But his own spirit was unable to work with the wisdom of experience which brings patience; and therefore he degraded the ideal, or sought to use as a bridge to it what is a mere pebble rolling down into vacuity. It is no accident that some of nis work splits up into fragments even before examination: lines, couplets are remembered while the rest vanish without a trace.

This is surely a frigid comparison: and the definition of frigidity is the neglect, where they would be in place, of human or moral considerations. Explicitly in (*Quelle soie aux baumes du temps* Mallarmé states that, to be supremely content with his mistress, he must strangle (*étouffer*) *le cri des Gloires*, or the desire for and admiration of most varieties of human effort.

I am of course choosing my quotations, and there are other poems which are notable for their humanity. But they do not seem to touch on the struggle to which Herr Wais draws attention, and are perhaps irrelevant to a discussion of the quality which distinguishes Mallarmé.

I find the suggestion very strong that, with a sharp eye for the problem of the ideal and the real, and a scrupulousness which forbad him to overlook any of its bearings, he was yet without equipment—not to solve the problem, with which it would be invidious to reproach him, but to handle it while yet unsolved. He could not refrain from merely partial solutions which, though they satisfied him immediately, could satisfy few others but himself. Yet the problem is by no means new, and is not impossible to live with: the history of civilization is perhaps the history of very little else. It may be, however, that to do so, a firm reliance is necessary on the complex habits which have been elaborated by civilization; they alone providing strength continually to envisage both the ideal and the inadequacy of the means which for the most part are the only means to approach it. If this is true, it may to some extent serve as an explanation of Mallarmé: for he was very much the child of his century, in so far as this prided itself on the rejection of habits. To the end of his life he indulged in a schoolboy infidelity; and upon realizing that his problem could not be solved without intellectual help, he neglected to go outside his century in search of it. Antiquity and the Middle Ages had thought and written in vain: he chose to rely exclusively on the brand-new German speculations (at least they were so in France) to which his friend Villiers introduced him. *O cerveau fou d' Hegel!* said Laforgue, seeking help from the same source but rejecting it almost immediately. The seriousness and scrupulousness of Mallarmé, which raised him above Laforgue, on this occasion betrayed him: he could not trifle, and had to make the best of the help which came his way. Unfortunately he was too much

of his century to adopt the habits even of German idealists, and thought to modify these also for his own purposes. As his brain was by no means so well nourished in philosophy, he produced a *folie* which is correspondingly more striking.

This is a first impression on looking into *Igitur* and *Un Coup de Dés*, which the sympathetic account of Herr Wais has failed to modify. Intended as major works, they are ineffective almost in proportion, it seems, to their earnestness: much as would be a scheme of salvation hatched in a country chapel, by one who had hardly heard of Paul. Daily and yearly familiarity with solutions of this kind tended perhaps to blunt Mallarmé, to make him less capable of realizing the inadequacy of the *Après-Midi* and the triviality of *Victorieusement fui*; or to put it another way, the insecurity and inexperience which forced him on the one may have forced him on the other. Maybe also the obscurity of some of the later poems results, not from an endeavour after *l'art pour l'art*, or to cut loose from the duties of a full life—this is Herr Wais's point, and it may now be allowed him—but to discharge the duties in an original way. They may be an example of speaking with tongues.

V.

Mallarmé is distinguished by the vigour with which from time to time he asserts the existence and the claims of the ideal, of *ce qui là-haut éclate*; and by his refusal at such times to identify the ideal with the material product not worked over by the spirit—*l'absente de tous bouquets* with the flowers of which they are composed, the human paradise with *le mirage brutal, la cité, ses gouvernements, le code*. The latter are no more than *des nécropoles*. But his own spirit was unable to work with the wisdom of experience which brings patience; and therefore he degraded the ideal, or sought to use as a bridge to it what is a mere pebble rolling down into vacuity. It is no accident that some of his work splits up into fragments even before examination: lines, couplets are remembered while the rest vanish without a trace.

effort, to seize only the greatness, and the solidarity escaped him: the solidarity has not become any easier to seize, and the greatness may altogether disappear. If his success stands as an example of what may be achieved under difficulties, his failure and the reason for it is a yet more instructive warning.

JAMES SMITH.

BEGGARS ON HORSEBACK

SAILOR ON HORSEBACK: The Biography of Jack London, by Irving Stone (Collins, 12/6).

EDGAR WALLACE, by Margaret Lane (Heineman, 10/6).

These biographies would provide useful *Scrutiny* documentation, though probably no *Scrutiny* reader has read anything by Jack London since he was a schoolboy nor anything by Edgar Wallace unless when convalescing. Both men were born in 1875, outside wedlock and in great poverty, both made fortunes out of the writing profession and died heavily in debt in early middle-age. Both worked with incredible energy, persistence and fecundity, made fantastic sums by their writing, didn't know how to manage their lives so as to get anything out of them, and consequently got tied up in lunatic forms of expenditure whose increasing claims they wore themselves out to satisfy. The careers of both, in the waste of ability and means and potential usefulness they represent, constitute an indictment of the societies that produced them and supplied them with wealth they could only dissipate along with their talents.

Jack London was the tough little American boy who brought himself up on the San Francisco water-front and in the Alaska gold-rush; he never did grow up. He remained the victim of whiskey, feminine charm, his trust in everyone he met, the latest ideas in science, political theory and so forth, and a senselessly-manifested desire to be loved and to regenerate mankind. His biographer is an admirer and by way of being a Jack London himself; he has no standards to place him by. He thinks Jack was a great American writer and a powerful intellect. His writings however have already found their level, and his intellect was a

matter of bolting ideas without even realizing when they produced indigestion—for instance, he was an ardent life-long socialist but he also believed in the supremacy of the Nordic race and his literary idol and model was Kipling.

The success of Edgar Wallace's domestic life seems to be a tribute to the virtues of the respectable English poor by whom he was brought up. His biographer has collected interesting and valuable details about an almost extinct culture in vanished quarters. This picture contrasts with the incoherent emotional and domestic background that was all the corresponding stratum of American life had to offer little Jack London in the last century. On the other hand Edgar Wallace had none of Jack London's proletarian sympathies (once he had risen) and was not, except superficially, more sophisticated. Wallace the writer was the product of Fleet Street between the Boer War and the Great War, and he was almost nothing else but that. Jingoism and the Northcliffe outlook seem to have been instinctive in him, and a blind sense for what would catch the market enabled him sooner or later to make a fortune out of every kind of journalism right up to the West End stage thriller. He could not have done this without some real appreciation of certain aspects of his time, and his gangster play *On the Spot* is nearer to art and survival than anything that is likely to be in Jack London's fifty volumes, perhaps because his lack of ideals, his shrewd newspaperman's knowledge of character and his friendships in the criminal underworld qualified him to be the dramatist of this society. He has received more than his deserts in a biography by Miss Margaret Lane, his daughter-in-law, which is a pleasure to read. Its discrimination, its delicate comment and detachment, and its assured placing of every aspect of its subject form a pointed contrast to Mr. Stone's red-blooded hero-worship. How much better a biography turns out when written unpretentiously by an intelligent woman than when a journalist, though with infinite labour, throws together an enthusiastic mess of words about Messianic complexes and such.

Q.D.L.

THE TEXTUAL CRITICISM OF MUSIC

THE FORTY-EIGHT PRELUDES AND FUGUES OF J. S. BACH, by Cecil Gray (Oxford University Press, 8/6).

BEETHOVEN'S PIANO SONATAS DISCUSSED, by Eric Blom, (Dent, 10/6).

There never was a more imbecile notion than the twentieth-century cult of Pure Music for the simple reason that, although in one sense all music must be programme music since it is concerned with human emotions, in another sense music, in so far as it *is* music, can never be anything but pure.[1] No one could ever prove, though it is always being said, that Beethoven is a 'more philosophical' composer than Mozart: there is a very real distinction implied but it is one that can be made only in terms of quality and kind of emotional response. One has just got to admit that as soon as one starts to use words to describe the effects of music one is to some extent interpreting in non musical terms something which is not the music but which is more or less closely related to it. The decision as to where exactly the borderline is to be drawn between what is strictly relevant to the musical experience and what isn't, rests ultimately on personal judgment, but something parallel to this seems to me to be true to varying degrees of any sort of criticism whatever.

A word, of course, is something that can be held up for inspection, it has definable meanings, even though these meanings may be very complex and not reducible to prose analysis. Yet even though we may know, ultimately, a little more about the relation of the experience of, say, *King Lear* to the emotions of 'real' life than we know about the relation to real life of the attitudes involved in a musical composition, I doubt if the matter is, in the literary case, so very much simpler; and when we consider the pictorial arts we realize only too clearly how troublesome, rather than helpful, the element of representation may be. The

[1] *cf.* 'Music is of all arts the nearest to the abstract sense . . . the most nearly related to Nature; not to its forms but to its being.' Ferrucio Busoni.

whole question comes back, I think, to the problem of Language. One is bound to use words to communicate about *anything*; the question is, how far is it possible to describe 'feelings' in words at all, and what degree of precision can one hope to attain to when one is dealing with such a comparatively unfamiliar language as music. Neither the literary nor the music critic can find any *equivalent* for the created experience which the music (or the poem) is, he can only offer clues and pointers. The music critic's task is the more difficult simply because the language of music is more remote, and because no acceptable technique of analysis has as yet been so much as suggested.

Willy-nilly, then, the music critic is forced to a compromise. On the one hand he may 'account for' the music in terms of established technical jargon—account for it as a matter of second-subjects, developments and inversions, which method is useless as a means towards value judgments (and they are the ultimate end of criticism) and which is only in a very limited sense a help towards understanding and appreciation; or on the other hand—at the further extreme—he may substitute for the composer's music a poem (or rather a prose-fiction) of his own creation which he imagines to be a literary version of whatever it was the composer 'meant.' The first of these alternatives is unhelpful; the second is both unhelpful and impudent. I suppose the ideal the critic should hold out for himself is to keep as close to the simple description in technical terms as is consistent with saying anything at all about the sort of experience the music precisely is, and the sort of value that may be attributed to it.

In a few cases I think it is possible to deduce the salient features of the mesh of feelings and attitudes which a musical composition is from a detailed examination of its technical characteristics with some reasonable chance of demonstrating that one's conclusions are tenable if not unanswerably right. For instance, it is possible to relate a certain factitiousness in César Franck's technique—the sugary harmonic clichés, the notorious tendency of his melodies to droop back with monotonous persistency to the acoustically weak mediant, their inability to 'grow,' the spurious because externally applied logic of his 'cyclical' formal processes—to a certain religiose factitiousness in the composer's ways of experiencing. An equally convincing case can be made out with

reference to Puccini, and Dr. Mosco Carner has deduced the characteristic Puccinian neurasthenic emotionalism from an analysis of his melodic structure conceived entirely in terms of 'technique.'[1] Dr. Carner points out (a) how the characteristic Puccini melody (like the French *sentimental* operatic aria) begins to develop but soon slows down and comes to a stand still—' psychologically it is the expression of a feeling that lacks the power to stretch out in a long melodic sweep, but soon loses energy and rests before a fresh start'; (b) how the melody, often in a minor key, is usually built on simple falling diatonic scale progressions which (c) tend to be broken up into brief phrases by the frequent appearance of the 'final' interval of the falling fifth; and (d) how Puccini unconsciously tries to counteract this falling tendency by grouping these brief (usually two-bar) phrases in sequences which *rise*. 'These sequences have the effect of a forcible screwing up of melody which would much rather fall.' All these traits give Puccini's melody its feeling of weariness and limpness, of something spineless and neurasthenic. The 'tired' melody, says Dr. Carner, is Puccini's 'most personal creation and embodies perhaps his finest ideas.'

Now this is a piece of textual criticism giving rise to an account of Puccini's representative significance that is, or so it seems to me, unanswerable. It is an epitome of what musical criticism ideally ought to be. Unfortunately however, this sort of treatment seems to be applicable mainly to composers whose work is of somewhat narrow and idiosyncratic interest; the more profound, complex and 'central' are the experiences involved, the less possibility there seems to be of backing up one's personal opinions with an 'unanswerable' display of critical method. Thus there are few who would deny that Elgar's use of the brass and his sequences and descending sevenths are intrinsically important aspects of his technique, but whereas some think his brass vulgar and his sevenths and sequences glutinous others think his brass stirringly heroic and his sevenths and sequences ardently expressive. I think one can demonstrate fairly clearly that Elgar's technique isn't factitious as Franck's sometimes tends to be; but it is a

[1] *vide Puccini's Early Operas*, published in *Music and Letters*, July, 1938.

much more delicate undertaking to *justify* the judgment of sensibility that still remains to be made—to explain *why* Elgar is (as he seems to me indubitably to be) a great composer.

When one turns to such a difficult and impersonal composer as Mozart one can hardly say anything precise about the reasons why a melodic phrase is ' so and not otherwise ' ; one can suggest why at this point or that it departs from convention but one cannot indicate precisely the ' local manifestations ' of an ' interesting complexity of feeling.' Yet I don't know that this is a difficulty as peculiar to music criticism as it superficially appears. If it is true that what is communicated in a musical composition can only be the music itself, this is equally if less obviously true of a poem also ; because we cannot at present say anything validly critical about Mozart I do not think we should assume that we shall always be unable to. It is at least a start if one can accomplish the comparatively simple task of criticizing such a mannered composer as Jean Wiéner.

Connected with all this is the problem of quotation ; the music critic cannot even put the text before his readers as can the literary critic. The legitimate function of musical quotation is, as I have indicated, for location purposes ; one refers the reader to this or that passage of the score as an example of the sort of thing on which one bases this or that value judgment. But to quote long passages from orchestral scores is patently impracticable, and even if it were possible, the impression the reader would get from looking over the quotation wouldn't be the *same* as that which he would get from hearing the work performed. Music, unlike painting, is an art that unfolds itself in time ; nor, when you are listening to music, can you go back to pick up any thread you inadvertently let slip, as you can when you are reading poetry. Moreover, no two performances of a given work will ever be exactly alike (except on the gramophone). The presence of the performer, yet another element whose psychology has to be taken account of, introduces innumerable complications that the student of poetry doesn't have to contend with. It is true that the dramatic critic has to face similar difficulties, but dramatic criticism is in almost as rudimentary a condition as musical.

We have now to ask how far the two books which we have to consider—books which are ostensibly concerned with the textual

analysis of music bear on the solution of the problems we have been discussing in the preceding paragraphs. Mr. Blom explicitly states that his book makes no pretension to being musical criticism; it was compiled from notes which he wrote for the recordings of the Beethoven Sonata Society, and is a sort of guide-book to the piano sonatas containing a thorough survey of the structural contour of the country with a mass of usually interesting and occasionally unfamiliar historical information thrown in by the way. The book is agreeably written and, as a guide-book, is extremely useful, the notes on repeats and on the Playing of Beethoven being particularly salutary. I have only one minor grouse, and that is to deplore Mr. Blom's habit of speaking of Clementi merely as a 'historically interesting' predecessor to the unparalleled genius of Beethoven. This, I know, is the conventional account; and it only proves that it's time someone rehabilitated Clementi who is an essentially Italian genius, quite distinct from Beethoven, closer to Mozart and Scarlatti; a composer whose powerful individuality of invention is expressed in melodies of a warm and luminous fertility and in harmonies of an inexhaustibly surprising chromatic audacity.

Mr. Gray's book is a less simple because more pretentious case, and try as I will I cannot discover precisely why Mr. Gray wrote it. The only excuse at this date for another technical analysis of the Preludes and Fugues would be that it should seek to provide some link between such academic analysis and the emotional interpretation of the compositions in terms of something other than music—that it should, in short, attempt some genuine musical criticism, of the kind we have been trying to define, of some of the greatest and most highly organized music which the history of civilization has to show. We have seen why this would have been a task of the utmost difficulty; yet if the book was worth writing at all, the attempt should have been worth making, for it is surely patent that the technical analysis as such has already been more exhaustively done in many much fatter compilations by men who have devoted a lifetime to this kind of research. Yet Mr. Gray seems to offer nothing except incomplete technical analyses on the one hand and on the other comparisons of the emotional effect of the various preludes and fugues to different seasons of the year and other natural phenomena—comparisons

which can hardly be illuminating to people who do not share Mr. Gray's emotional habits. I do not see that Mr. Gray makes any effort to justify the poeticisms by the analysis or *vice versa*, I do not see any musical criticism. The most valuable part of the book is to be found in general incidental observations and in the introductory chapters.

Here Mr. Gray is as usual stimulating even when he seems most wrong-headed. His account of the comprehensiveness of Bach's genius, stretching backwards to Gregorian chant, the Netherlanders and Palestrina, forwards to Wagner and Schönberg, was worth developing more fully ; on the other hand he devotes great pains to proving to his own satisfaction that the first book of the forty-eight was conceived as an ' organic ' whole whereas the second book was a compilation of miscellaneous pieces without establishing much beyond the sincerity of his enthusiasm ; equally satisfying evidence could probably be educed to support the opposite contention. The book has a touching memorial dedication to the late Bernard van Dieren (' *Tu duca, tu signore, e tu maestro* '), but I do not see why this or more than two hundred illustrations in musical type should have led the publishers to price Mr. Gray's modest 140 pages at 8/6.

W. H. MELLERS.

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And contributions by W. H. Mellers on music have appeared almost every quarter over the past three years.

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