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RENASCENCE

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of Letters



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RENASCENCE

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ACTING EDITOR: SPIRE PITOU
Editorial Assistant: Bert Thelen

Editorial Advisers:
Victor M. Hamm, Marquette University
Sister M. Camille, O.S.F., College of Saint Teresa

Forecast:

Paul Claudel

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RENAISSANCE

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The Poetry of Roy Campbell

BY NICHOLAS JOOST

ROY CAMPBELL is a poet little known in America as yet, and Mr. Regnery has performed a signal service in publishing *Selected Poems*. I should like to discuss them in relation to other works by Campbell also published in this country: the translations into English of *The Poems of St. John of the Cross* and Baudelaire's *Les fleurs du mal* and the autobiographical *Light on a Dark Horse*. These volumes have not sold widely, nor has Roy Campbell been widely published in American literary periodicals; to the best of my knowledge, only *Shenandoah* and the Canadian *Northern Review* have recently printed his poems, and only *Poetry* has printed his memoirs. Formerly, in the 1930's, Campbell was well represented in Louis Untermeyer's standard anthologies, and as late as 1942 Untermeyer printed "Autumn" and "The Serf" in his *Treasury of Great Poems, English and American*. But Campbell is not included in most postwar collections of contemporary verse assembled in America. He appears in three recent anthologies: Oscar William's *Pocket Book of Modern Verse*, with "The Zebras" and "Choosing a Mast"; Selden Rodman's *One Hundred Modern Poems*, with "Tristan de Cunha," and Paul Engle and Warren Carrier's *Reading Modern Poetry*, with "The Serf" and "The Zebras." Campbell does not appear in that most influential of contemporary anthologies, Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren's *Understanding Poetry*, nor does he appear in the new *Modern American and Modern British Poetry* compiled by Louis Untermeyer, Karl Shapiro, and Richard Wilbur. Prior to this essay, there has been only the appreciation by Roberta Teal Schwartz in the *Kenyon Review*. Not altogether arbitrarily, one may take such omissions as significant and may take as equally significant Randall Jarrell's attempt in his *New York Times* review of Campbell's *Selected Poems* to dismiss Campbell's lyric poems as mere imitations, and not very good ones at that, of Byron and Campbell's satirical poems as mere virulence.

I see two reasons for the dismissal of Roy Campbell's poems by some of our most respected poets, anthologists, and critics. One of them has to do with politics, the other with art. Politically Roy Campbell seems to be, as Henry Adams described himself in old age, one of the "Conservative Christian Anarchists." Those who have read *Light on a Dark Horse* and who have known, however briefly, this whirlwind of a man realize he is no fascist. His point of view is not so much political as theological and artistic and, above all, self-made. In writing and in conversation he has repeatedly stated his closeness to the Spanish anarchists, who were of course his enemies when he chose to fight for

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the forces led by General Franco in the Spanish Revolution of 1936-39. He is deeply conservative in his way of living and in his ideals; his love of adventure and physical risk is in the great tradition of Anglo-Saxon adventurers such as Burton and Cunninghame Graham. The exploits of Ernest Hemingway pale beside those of Roy Campbell; and indeed, of contemporary American adventurers, only that remarkable scholar-adventurer William Montgomery McGovern compares with Campbell.

ROY CAMPBELL is a Christian, too. For him the conversion to Catholicism meant birth to a new life both of the senses and of the spirit. He fought in Spain as, he believed, a Christian; he lives his personal life as a Christian. For those who object to my presentation of Campbell, I can only repeat the words of Paul Claudel, in one of his letters to André Gide: ". . . It's one thing to sin, and to be sorry about it, and to know that it's wrong and to wish to do better, and to ask God to give one the strength to do better; it's quite another thing to believe that one is right to do wrong, and to talk of it, and be proud of it. For in such a case there is not only perversion of the senses, but perversion of judgment and conscience as well." In general, American literary society has not judged Campbell by this Claudelian standard but has tended to be unforgiving as well as unsympathetic toward his political activities and his religious beliefs. The fusion of his personalism, his conservatism, and his faith has proven too strong for what Geoffrey Wagner calls "the dead level of liberal orthodoxy that greets one in the pages of *PMLA* or the *Saturday Review of Literature*" and to be found "at most faculty meetings throughout America."

I cannot overcome a suspicion that Campbell's part in the Spanish Civil War alienated, in America, a potentially large audience that ordinarily would have liked his poetry, which on the whole and at its best is surprisingly unpolitical. Surely Campbell's *Selected Poems* are not as eccentric in their politics of the Right as, say, the poems of MacLeish or Spender are in their politics of the Left. Perhaps with our changed climate of opinion, a new generation of readers will approach Campbell's poetry in a more receptive frame of mind.

Assuredly he has a great deal to offer. First, he is a poet who has conserved and transmitted the Christian tradition of the West, in his translations of Charles Baudelaire and Saint John of the Cross. John F. Nims has objected to some details of the latter work (cf. *Poetry*, May 1952) and has undertaken both in *Poetry* and in the *Commonweal* to show, by his own translations from the Spanish mystic and poet, how Campbell erred. I must honestly say, however, that after comparing both Nims' and Campbell's English translations of "En una noche oscura" and the "Canciones entre el alma y el Esposo" with the Spanish originals, I find Campbell's to be the more fully realized as poems and as translations, with a less spasmodic, eccentric utterance and a closer approximation to Saint John's limpidity. About translations of supremely great poets

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such as Saint John of the Cross, one always has misgivings and reservations; there is no satisfying substitute for the original. Still, Campbell's renditions, with their errors, rank as good poems and are indeed among the outstanding poetic translations of our age. As for the translations of *Les fleurs du mal*, they are on the whole the best we have. Jackson and Marthiel Mathews have used Campbell's versions for about forty percent of the text in their edition of Baudelaire's poems Englished by various hands. This achievement would be an important one for any poet.

ROY CAMPBELL is several kinds of poet—the Churchillian satirist (I refer to Charles Churchill, the eighteenth-century poet who wrote *The Prophecy of Famine* and *The Rosciad*), the neo-symbolist disciple of Baudelaire and Rimbaud, the political poet, the religious poet, the activist of the great open spaces of Africa and the Mediterranean. These categories are not mutually exclusive, of course, but they may serve as a crude outline of Campbell's creative accomplishment.

Of all the categories just named, Campbell as satirist seems to me the least attractive and, more objectively, the least successful. I found *The Georgiad* (1933) energetic in its heroic couplets, and occasionally I got the point of the savage caricatures:

He was not even member of some Church-
Society for sexual research,
Like Bertrand Russell or the wise MacCarthy—
For frowsiness his disrespect was hearty.

I think I recognized which of the numerous Lewises is constantly referred to and who Humbert and Nicolson and MacCarthy and Squire are, although to an American many of the references are too obscure to make sense without footnotes. There are a few notes in the back of *Selected Poems*, but obviously the British laws of libel preclude outright identification in most cases. Many of the passages, nevertheless, are less special and correspondingly funnier:

Now Spring, sweet laxative of Georgian strains,
Quickens the ink in literary veins,

and:

For with deep broodings and colossal pains
They hatch Utopias from their dusty brains
Which are but Hells, where endless boredom reigns—
Middle-class Hells, built on a cheap, clean plan,
Edens of abnegation, dread to scan,
Founded upon a universal ban:
For banned from thence is all that fires or thrills,
Pain, vengeance, danger, or the clash of wills—
So vastly greater is their fear of strife
And hate of danger than their love of life.

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This second passage I select as representative of Campbell's virtues and faults as a satirical poet. It has energetic movement; its scorn is in the grand manner, its points are cogently and neatly expressed in excellent pastiche of Dryden or Churchill. But the couplet beginning "For banned" weakens Campbell's statement of his case. Particularly I object to "thrills" as merely sentimental and to "vengeance" as immoral. If the poet intends to show himself as superior to those Georgian writers whom he castigates, he should by all means remain rational and magnanimous, in contrast to Shaw and Russell, the proponents of middle-class Hells. All in all, the shorter satires are the more effective: "To a Pommie Critic," "Creeping Jesus," "On Professor Drennan's Verse," "On Some South African Novelists," and "The Land Grabber: On a Poet Who Offered His Heart for a Handful of South African Soil":

The bargain is fair and the bard is no robber,
A handful of dirt for a heartfelt of slobber.

This satire carries us back to Herrick and Donne and even further back to Campbell's poetic progenitors, those wandering Gaelic satirists who were hired by feuding clans to disable the opposing party by chanting satires against them—their genealogy, their hospitality—up and down the land.

CAMPBELL'S lyric and narrative poems fall into two main groups. One group consists of poems such as "Tristan da Cunha" filled with a fantastic energy and bombast and inimitable masculine strength. Mr. Jarrell has compared the Campbell of this period to Byron and has disliked the poetry because it is, apparently, no more than a retrogressive imitation of Byron's "Roll on, thou deep and dark blue Ocean—roll!" manner. Of course this criticism is esthetic nonsense—in art each artifact must be examined on its own merits, and in art there can be no such thing as progress. I. Rice Pereira may use plastics as material for her finished work, but the esthetic canons by which she works and by which we judge her work are also, at least implicitly, those of the Paleolithic artists and audience of the Dordogne. Then, too, Mr. Jarrell seems to have fallen prey to the cult of originality. If Roy Campbell creates excellent poems in the Byronic manner—and "Tristan da Cunha" does have something of one Byronic manner—what is the difference, so long as the poem possesses its own individual integrity of thought and emotion and technique? On the same grounds Mr. Jarrell's own poems might be dismissed as having failed to progress beyond the manner of *The Ring and the Book* or "The Love-Song of J. Alfred Prufrock." We should be grateful for the youthful accomplishment of "The Zebras," "The Serf" (how prophetic of contemporary Africa!), "Tristan da Cunha," and *The Flaming Terrapin*.

Roy Campbell's second manner obviously has been schooled by the examples of Baudelaire and Rimbaud; in fact, his versions of Rimbaud's "The Louse

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Catchers" and Baudelaire's "The Albatross" are printed in *Selected Poems*. Of the shorter poems I am particularly struck by "The Sisters," "Autumn," and "The Sleepers." Of the poems of middling length I like especially "Choosing a Mast," "Toril" (which uses the poet's favorite Mithraic symbolism of the bull-fight), and "The Skull in the Desert." Many of the shorter poems are flawless within the strict limitations of their tradition, as in the first lines of "The Sleeper":

She lies so still, her only motion
The waves of hair that round her sweep
Revolving to their hushed explosion
Of fragrance on the shores of sleep.

How different are these brief exercises, chiseled and hard, from the untrammelled fierceness of longer poems, such as "The Skull in the Desert":

To look on him, my tongue could taste
The bony mandibles of death
Between my cheeks: across the waste
The drought was glaring like a gorgon
But in that quaint outlandish organ
With spectral whinny, whirled the breath.

THE ending of this poem illustrates an abiding weakness in Campbell's work: "To say the Rosary together/And sleep in one another's arms." To him the two phrases clearly and precisely conjure up images of the good life; to most readers they offer no very clear, precise image and therefore seem not only vague but sentimental. They say at once too much and not enough. Occasionally, as in "The Skull in the Desert," Campbell has an unhappy faculty of evoking a vivid image which is ridiculous by its incongruity. "The tap-dance of the morning stars" for most readers in this country relates to Fred Astaire rather than to flamenco dancers. And in "Junction of Rails: Voice of the Steel" to write of the Jewish prophets as "the living radios of God" is to create an effect not so much vivid as it is outrageous, like bad baroque—or like surrealism, which in its Spanish phase embodies the churrigueresque tradition of decadent baroque. Campbell has a weakness for *kitsch*; yet so did Federico García Lorca, and just as García Lorca survives in spite of his own bad taste, so no doubt will Roy Campbell.

In *Light on a Dark Horse* Campbell, writing of his younger days of the Twenties and Thirties, confides that "poetry was then, for me, the perspiration of other activities, though now it happens spontaneously." These other activities furnish the background of the *Selected Poems*, with their scenes of the South African bush, London and the English countryside, Provence, Spain, military life, and the sea and its islands. His occupations as cowboy, soldier, bullfighter,

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fisherman, and writer give added scope and authority to his poetic imagery and largely make up for his lapses in taste. Indeed, the lapses in taste themselves stem from his wide experience and his contempt for the banal. Technically he has been as conservative as in his imagery he has been wide-ranging:

I will go stark: and let my meanings show
Clear as a milk-white feather in a crow
Or a black stallion on a field of snow.

But I offer this as an observation, not as adverse criticism. The older poetic forms, the more charging and emphatic prosody he has used carefully and to his advantage. Campbell's main lapses are in matters of taste, not technique. He is forthright, with little tact. I can think of no more masculine poet now living.

Sir Desmond MacCarthy called Campbell "one of the three best living poets," and Dylan Thomas called him "a poet of genius." Of the two estimates, I prefer the latter, but just what a genius is I am not certain; moreover, I prefer to judge the poems and not the poet. Ten or twelve of these poems continue to give me pleasure as intense as that I receive from any other poetic work of this age.

A Bedroom Scene in Faulkner

BY BLAISE HETTICH

BY the time "The Bear" appeared in *Go Down, Moses*, it had been considerably expanded and developed from Faulkner's earlier magazine stories. The complexity of the enlarged tale and the difficulty in reading part IV were recognized by Malcolm Cowley in his note introducing "The Bear" in the Viking Portable edition, but on the same page Cowley calls it "in many ways the best" of Faulkner's stories. This may seem a bold claim for a combination of two worked-over hunting tales, a partially punctuated hodge-podge of family lore and philosophy, and an epilogue containing three comical incidents and some wilderness ritual. The obvious questions are: *Do the additions to the bear-hunt plot function as integral parts of the story, and what do they contribute to its meaning?*

In the following study these questions are asked about one passage in particular, an addition which does not seem to be necessary for or even related to the main plots of the bear hunt and of the McCaslin inheritance. This passage has hardly been mentioned in critical comments on "The Bear." The powerful language and tense rhythms of the passage give it a tone of brilliancy and seriousness. Faulkner's unpunctuated rushing rhetoric with its interminable parentheses seems an attempt to get the reader to contemplate each facet of the story while keeping in sight every other detail. Does this passage belong to the story as a whole? Or is it a piece of cheap sensationalism thrown in for spice?

BEFORE he was sixteen Ike McCaslin had learned from the half-Indian, half-Negro Sam Fathers not only a marvelous skill in hunting but also a deep reverence for nature, had learned "pride and humility," his place among created beings. In the wilderness, "in the yearly pageant-rite of the old bear's furious immortality," the boy had recognized Old Ben as a symbol of unspoiled nature receding before the ruthless devastation of man. That is why Sam Fathers, high priest of the wilderness, stopped living when the bear was finally killed. Isaac McCaslin had seen the mechanical ferocity of the dog, Lion, disciplined to hold the bear at bay for Boon Hogganbeck's knife. At eighteen he had seen the logging machinery moved in to cut down the forest. He had met the serpent in the wilderness and was not bitten because he stood still.

When he was twenty-one, Isaac McCaslin had relinquished his share in the great plantation inherited from his grandfather, Carothers McCaslin. He had seen the whole tragedy of the South as a punishment for the rape of the land, for injustice to the Negroes, for the desecration of God's creation. Telling this to the curled upper lip of his cousin-brother-father, McCaslin Edmonds,

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he had relinquished his patrimony. He had paid back the thirty dollars which he had borrowed to buy his first set of carpenter tools. Then he got married.

He married the only child of a farmer, "a small girl yet curiously bigger than she seemed at first, solider perhaps, with dark eyes and a passionate heart-shaped face." Faulkner identifies her with the land, the earth: "They were married and it was the new country, his heritage too as it was the heritage of all, out of the earth, beyond the earth yet of the earth because his too was of the earth's long chronicle, his too because each must share with another in order to come into it." Ike McCaslin's marriage is a revelation of God's design for sharing and enjoying the earth. His rented room becomes "wall-less and topless and floorless in glory." He comes home from work, "Entering no rented cubicle since it would still partake of glory even after they would have grown old and lost it."

He sits on the edge of the bed next to his wife, "her voice a passionate and expiring whisper of immeasurable promise: 'I love you. You know I love you. When are we going to move?'" Ike thinks she is talking about the bungalow which he has been building to be their new home. As he begins to speak, she claps her hand over his mouth, hard, saying, "The farm. Our farm. Your farm." Even before they were married she had inquired about the land and ascertained that it belonged to Ike. Now she slackens the pressure on his mouth only for an instant, will allow only one answer, and when Ike begins to explain his position, she holds his mouth shut, whispers again "of love and of incredible promise," then asks "When?" Since this method does not avail, she tries another. Ike does not hear the cold calculation in his wife's voice; he only hears a strange calmness. In the tense passage that follows, it is only through Ike's consciousness that Faulkner records the wife's motives for undressing: "lying still on the bed outside the covers, her face turned away on the pillow, listening to nothing, thinking of nothing, not of him anyway he thought." Her surrender is not an act of love but a trick to get the land.

The narration concentrates upon the contest of wills, the wife's tantalizing resistance and cajolery trying to overcome Ike's great resolve. Faulkner brings to the attention of the reader only her hand and arm:

Her hand moving as though with volition and vision of its own, catching his wrist . . . and he neither saw nor felt it shift, palm flat against his chest now and holding him away . . . the hand shifting from his chest once more to his wrist, grasping it, the arm still lax and only the light increasing pressure of the fingers as though arm and hand were a piece of wire cable with one looped end, only the hand lightening as he pulled against it.

This metallic, mechanical simile places the wife in the same frame of reference as the dog, Lion, which held Old Ben at bay, and of the logging machinery

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which destroyed the forest. She does not argue verbally. She whispers "Promise:" and "The farm."

Ike keeps saying, "No . . . No, I tell you. I won't. I can't. Never . . . Not ever. Remember:" while he marvels at her knowledge of how to convince him. Faulkner sums up the amazement of Isaac McCaslin at his wife's ruthless employment of sexual powers for a purpose apart from the expression of their mutual love: "*She already knows more than I with all the man-listening in camps where there was nothing to read ever heard of. They are born already bored with what a boy approaches only at fourteen and fifteen with blundering and aghast trembling.*" While he says Yes he thinks: "*She is lost. She was born lost. We were all born lost* then he stopped thinking and even saying Yes." In this one moment Faulkner allows Isaac McCaslin to compromise with the high ideals, the integrity, the firm resolve that made him in this story so admirable a hero. Nowhere else does Faulkner record that Ike swerved from his purpose. Even the reverent man, the man most in tune with nature and the plan of creation, succumbs at some time to the allurements of this earth, earth represented by the woman who turns away from Ike with a mocking laugh. So the scene ends, so also the story.

AS a dramatic action the bedroom scene parallels the tragedy of Old Ben. Ike did not want to kill the bear, but he had to take part in the hunt because the hunt had become a ritual, a formal representation of man's relation to nature, a cult regulated by traditions which glorified the bear and brought out the best qualities in the human participants. But the ceremony had an inevitable conclusion, the slaying of Old Ben. Ike did not want to abuse the land nor any creature. Relinquishing his inheritance did not entirely free him from the universal human predicament. His wife's trick has a seemingly inevitable conclusion, and Ike cannot escape his own weakness. Even the reverent man is bound to violate nature at some time, and the earth laughs at him.

The meaning of the bedroom incident is clarified in relation to the rest of the story not only when it is considered as an action but also when it is viewed as a *tableau* with two persons on the scene, Ike standing in opposition to his wife, as in the plantation store Ike stood opposed to his cousin. All of part IV: the long discussions about ownership, about God's creation, about truth, about the Civil War, about the Negroes, about Ike's vocation, with the excerpts from the plantation records, the stories of how Buck and Buddy McCaslin freed their slaves, how Ike went to Arkansas to take the legacy to Sophonsiba, and how Ike inherited a tin coffeepot from Hubert Beauchamp, all are contained in a scene in which Ike stands in opposition to McCaslin Edmonds. The first time the little room in the Jefferson boarding house is mentioned, the night after Ike's twenty-first birthday, "McCaslin tossed the

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folded banknotes onto the bed," the bed on which Ike's wife would lie. Ike was refusing to accept the money to keep as part of his inheritance, he would take it only as a loan. The scene between Ike and his wife parallels earlier scenes in which he takes his stand "against the tamed land . . . not against the wilderness but against the land, not in pursuit and lust but in relinquishment."

PART V of "The Bear" is especially rich in images and associations that bind together the bear hunt, the McCaslin inheritance, and the bedroom scene—not merely in reviewing the names of the hunters nor in another magnificent description of the forest nor in Ike's visit to the grave of Sam Fathers—but through symbolic action. Major de Spain will not go back to the hunting camp, does not want to see the lumber company move in. Ike glances at the logging machinery but leaves the sawmill as quickly as possible, staring at the wall of trees while he rides the little logging train with its peanut-parcher whistle that had seemed harmless once but now shrieks as a portent of destruction. The story of the frightened bear cub trapped in a tree by the train repeats in a comic vein the tragedy of Old Ben.

As Ike McCaslin and Major de Spain stand for reverence toward nature, Boon Hogganbeck represents the violation of nature and a disregard for its ritual. The impious plan to lease the camp and hunting privileges is recorded as "an invention doubtless of the somewhat childish old General [Compson] but actually worthy of Boon Hogganbeck himself." A year after he has killed Old Ben, Hogganbeck becomes town-marshal for the lumber company, allying himself with the forces of destruction. This adds significance to the final scene in which Boon sits under the Gum Tree, unable to shoot the squirrels he has trapped there, but refusing to allow anyone else a share of them. The frustration of attempting ownership, an important theme in the story and represented by this final piece of grim humor, is also one of the ideas conveyed by the bedroom scene.

In the consciousness of Ike McCaslin, the cajolery of his wife to get "the farm" is not simply one human being betraying her stewardship of God's gifts. It is the earth proving itself accursed, shattering Ike's ideal. Faulkner could not have chosen a more effective frame of reference in which to crystallize the difficulty of Ike's position than that sacred act of procreation which is the reverent man's glory but the act wherein man's weakness has been traditionally represented. Of all the phases of human experience from which Faulkner might have dramatized Isaac McCaslin's predicament, what could have provided a vehicle fraught with more poetic power, more seriousness, more tension than the marriage act? A man's attitude toward sex may be considered a touchstone for all his attitudes toward creation and morality. From an artistic standpoint,

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therefore, the bedroom incident appears to be well suited to convey Faulkner's meaning, even though the full complexity of that meaning is barely suggested in this study.

A FURTHER proof of Faulkner's success may be demonstrated in a consideration of the moral problems involved in the passage. Faulkner writes of greed, lust, and injustice as wrongs perpetrated in violation of *real* natural laws. Although the right and wrong use of the land is the problem which provides the central theme, sex morality is also bound up with the story. The most memorable example is the relation between Carothers McCaslin and his Negro daughter. This incest is discovered by Ike in his sixteenth year, the year he sees Old Ben killed. Through the consciousness of Ike McCaslin Faulkner treats Carothers McCaslin's incest as a sin, a deliberate violation of nature which demands vindication. Ike's journey to deliver the legacy to the descendents of this incestuous union constitutes a kind of expiation for the sin. Just as Ike resolves not to take possession of the accursed inheritance but to work as a craftsman, he also resolves to make his marriage a glorious sign of the ideal relation which should exist between a reverent man and God's creation.

To preserve the integrity of his art, Faulkner must observe in all parts of his story those fundamental moral truths upon which he bases the development of the plot and the theme of the whole composition. Admitting that there is a right and a wrong in regard to the use of sex, an author must not treat sexual matters as morally indifferent, or he would contradict himself. Now Faulkner narrates the sexual union of Ike McCaslin and his wife with a clear indication as to what is right and what is wrong in the situation. Ike's sexual experiences with his wife since their marriage and until the scene described in "The Bear" have been glorious expressions of love. Ike has respected his wife's refusal to let him see her naked. In the incident told by Faulkner, there is no doubt about the couple's right to the marriage act and to any action (e.g., undressing) which is properly conducive toward it. What Faulkner brands as wrong is the wife's irreverent use of her sexual powers in order to trick her husband into promising that he will accept the farm. She even violates her marriage contract for a moment; by that contract they had given one another the right to sexual union whenever the other would reasonably ask for it; now she refuses him that right while she makes demands that are extrinsic to that right.

Faulkner makes his readers aware of the evil in this situation. First the wife tries to get Ike to tell when they will move to the farm and prevents him from arguing by holding her hand over his mouth. Faulkner describes this in ugly terms: "the hot fierce palm clapped over his mouth, crushing his lips into his teeth, the fierce curve of fingers digging into his cheek." Her face is "strained and terrible." Her first words to Ike are almost ridiculous as the

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whisperings of love are nullified by the self-willed demands. Faulkner adds to the meanness of her scheme by inserting the detail that she would not sacrifice her instincts of modesty for her husband's love and admiration, but when she thinks it will help her get a farm she lies on the bed naked before him. The selfishness of her invitation now penetrates Ike's mind. He knows she is not thinking of him with true and generous love. By concentrating on her hand, calling it "a piece of wire cable," and making her disgustingly efficient in her resistance and cajolery Faulkner highlights the moral defect in the act rather than its physical attractions. Ike's condemnation of his wife's trick is printed in italics. He associates her method with the vile talk of men in hunting camps, and, in the declaration "*She is lost,*" expresses an unmistakable moral judgment. Faulkner is faithful to the standards to which he committed himself in other parts of the story, and his artistic achievement rests on that faithfulness.

A FURTHER consideration of the demands such a scene makes upon its author may be pointed out in terms of the author's responsibility to his readers. If Faulkner is going to be convincing and consistent in asserting that there is a right and a wrong way of using created goods, particularly sexual pleasure, he must avoid leading his reader into an abuse of sex. Faulkner emphasizes man's obligation to use his sexual powers as a glorious expression of married love, not for unlicensed pleasure, nor as a means to get a farm—therefore not as a means of selling a book nor for the thrill stimulated by vivid narrations of sexual experience.

Examining the passage objectively, one will find comparatively little stress on the sex act and its accompanying emotions. Ike's mental processes are vividly recorded, but his physical actions and reactions are revealed in highly figurative and abstract language. The dinner bell and the landlady's knock provide a welcome distraction. The difficulty of comprehending Faulkner's rhetoric may also be counted as a means of occupying the reader's mind to prevent him from being too much involved in the description of the sex act. Taken at face value, the passage does not seem to deviate from its function as a part of the story and a symbol of the story's central theme. Although it is difficult to state what effects the bedroom scene will have upon the sensibilities of various readers, a mature healthy mind should find the intellectual and artistic experience far more attractive than any suggestion that the passage be used for an immoral purpose.

The bedroom scene, therefore, is not only a key to the meaning of "The Bear" but also illustrates Faulkner's ability to construct from the most delicate area of human experience a dramatic action that functions as an integral part of the story.

Newman the Poet

BY JOHN PICK

T S. ELIOT'S "Gerontion" echoes Newman's "Dream of Gerontius." Yet the two poems epitomize the contrast between Newman's Gerontius, with his hard-won triumph of faith, and modern man with his "Thoughts of a dry brain in a dry season." "Lead, Kindly Light" continues to formulate for contemporary man "amid the encircling gloom" his unrest.

These two poems by Newman serve as a constant reminder of his many-sided genius. His *Apologia* remains possibly the greatest autobiography in English; his *Idea of a University* for a century has been recognized as the almost "perfect handling of a theory"; his *Development of Christian Doctrine* and *Grammar of Assent* are still relevant documents. In the forty volumes of his works we see him as preacher, orator, controversialist, novelist, theologian, and as poet, historian, philosopher, and critic.

But perhaps it is too much to expect that Newman be equally great in all these fields, and the question is often asked: Is he a poet?

It might be well to recall, with Eliot—the greatest religious poet of our own time—that "The capacity for writing poetry is rare; the capacity for religious emotion of the first intensity is rare; and it is to be expected that the existence of both capacities in the same individual should be rarer still."

It might be well also to recall that different people expect of poetry very different things. One remembers Dr. Johnson's emphatic "If Pope be not a poet, where is poetry to be found?"—a different concept of poetry from that of Emily Dickinson who declared, "If I read a book and it makes my whole body so cold no fire can ever warm me, I know that is poetry. If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, I know that is poetry." She added: "These are the only ways I know it. Is there any other way?"

Readers have called Newman a poet, but they have meant various things. Opinions of his critics have varied all the way from one who contended that poetry was his ultimate gift to another who pronounced: "It is not poetry at all—not even the protoplasm of poetry." But even this latter critic—J. Lewis May—has queried and then answered:

Was, then, Newman a poet? To this question there is but one answer. A poet he certainly was. But he was a poet who did not write poetry. His real poetry is to be found, not in his metrical compositions, which affect one with a sense of chill disappointment, but in his prose.

All students of Newman, even the most critical, have found poetry—and great poetry—in his sermons, and of all the Victorian preachers (and it was

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an age of great pulpit orators such as Canon Liddon, Dean R. W. Church, Frederick D. Maurice, Dean Stanley, Charles Kingsley, and Thomas Arnold) probably only Newman's sermons are still read.

Even without the physical presence of Newman before one, Matthew Arnold's passage on his sermons conveys their poetry:

Forty years ago, when I was an undergraduate at Oxford, voices were in the air there which haunt my memory still . . . Who could resist the charm of that spiritual apparition, gliding in the dim afternoon light through the aisles of St. Mary's, rising into the pulpit, and then, in the most entrancing of voices, breaking the silence with words and thoughts which were a religious music,—subtle, sweet and mournful? I seem to hear him still, saying: "After the fever of life, after weariness and sickness, fightings and despondings, langour and fretfulness, struggling and succeeding; after all the changes and chances of this troubled, unhealthy state,—at length comes death, at length the beatific vision." . . . Again I seem to hear him: "The season is chill and dark, and the breath of the morning is damp, and worshippers few, but all this befits those who are by their profession penitents and mourners, watchers and pilgrims. More dear to them that loneliness, more cheerful that severity, and more bright that gloom, than all those aids and appliances of luxury by which men nowadays attempt to make prayer less disagreeable to them. True faith does not covet comforts; they who realize that awful day, when they shall see Him face to face whose eyes are as a flame of fire, will as little bargain to pray pleasantly now as they will think of doing so then."

In these quotations the reader catches the magic of Newman's voice, the passion of his words—the poetry of Newman. The sermons with their impassioned cadences and rhythms, their imaginative power, their sudden illumination of the abstract by the use of the concrete, their analogies and metaphors—one who reads them cannot help saying: here is a poet in the pulpit.

But even such austere intellectual works as *The Development of Christian Doctrine*, the *Idea of a University* or *The Grammar of Assent* are not without their poetry which resides not only in their panoply of cadence, alliteration and climax, but even in such individual words as one of his commentators has pointed out: "A University is the place where the catechist *makes good his ground* as he goes, *treading in* the truth day by day into his ready memory, and *wedging* and *tightening* it into the expanding reason."

BUT if all readers have detected the poetry of his prose, not all of them have felt the poetry of his verse. However, two of Newman's poems have become classics, and strangely enough one was written at almost the opening of his poetic career and the other at the close.

"Lead, Kindly Light" is so famous—it is said that more than forty musical

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settings have been written for it—that analysis need not detain us here, though the intensity and architectonic structure of this *de profundis* ought to be noted.

It is a short poem, only three stanzas long, while "The Dream of Gerontius," the other poem that is popularly linked with Newman's name, is the longest he ever attempted—almost a thousand lines. Acclaimed during Newman's life, it has retained much of its popularity. In his own day even Swinburne praised it; General Gordon kept it with him at Khartoum as he awaited his death. It has been translated into French and German. During the first two decades after Newman's death over eighty thousand copies were sold.

In 1865 Newman composed it under the presentiment—he was then sixty-five but was to live to be ninety—that he was to die and in three short weeks, with scarcely a correction, he completed the poem. The story is told that some weeks later the editor of *The Month* asked him for a theological contribution and that Newman, after hunting through his desk to see whether he had anything suitable on hand, came across "The Dream of Gerontius" and forwarded it to the editor saying that he was sorry he had nothing else completed.

The theme of "The Dream of Gerontius," that of the Christian facing death and of the disappearance of the veil between this and the next life, had been foreshadowed and anticipated in many of his minor poems and sermons, and one writer has aptly remarked that all of his previous works are "an overture to the grand Requiem." In spite of shortcomings, the poem has been highly regarded, even by those not in sympathy with Newman, for "its psychological penetration, its presentation of the mind of a dying man."

Just as impressive is the skilful versification. The poem depends not upon the eye (there is little of the visual power of a Dante) but upon the ear. It is not surprising that such a man as Elgar has elaborated its music and that hymns have been made of separate stanzas. In 1951 it was performed in London as a dramatic poem with new music by Fernand Laloux.

The prosody bends and flexes to the meaning with supple and subtle ease, and the poem is filled with astonishing contrasts and variety. The rhythm is at times stately, or pleasing, or despairing, or hopeful, or awesome and solemn or anguished or calm. The contrast, for instance, between the graceful harmonies of the angelic choirs and the cacophonous dissonances of the demons is masterful. Especially notable is the lyrical close "Farewell, but not for ever!"

Part of the impressiveness of the poem is due to the degree to which Newman has deftly woven into the poem his own translation of liturgical chants, and litanies, and psalms from the Bible.

"The Dream of Gerontius" is an answer to his own earlier "Lead, Kindly

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Light." It is also an expansion of his own epitaph, *Ex umbris et imaginibus in veritatem*—out of shadows and insubstantialities into realities.

BUT both "Lead, Kindly Light" and "The Dream of Gerontius" have been widely anthologized and are well known. What of Newman's other poetry? It is uneven in quality—this is notoriously true, of course, even of such men as Wordsworth—and Newman, who took a very modest view of his own poetry, anticipated the need for selection. In the preface to his collected poems, entitled simply and unpretentiously *Verses on Various Occasions*, he remarked humbly that only the urging of others had brought him to the project and that "biassed by the associations of memory and by general feelings," and faced with the choice of either printing all or none, he chose the former course.

The virtues of the best poems are found in the sureness with which he handles verse forms, in their lucidity, and above all in the highly personal quality of the sincerity, candor, and humility of the spiritual struggle of a burdened and troubled soul. Dignity and restraint sometimes raise them to a severe beauty.

The reader easily discovers the strength of Newman's best poems, but he also discovers—even in "The Dream of Gerontius"—numerous weaknesses. In his lesser poems he will often be deeply disappointed. What are the defects and limitations? Playing *advocatus diaboli*, one of his recent critics, Charles Frederick Harrold, indicted Newman along with the group to which he belonged:

It is one of the ironies of the Oxford Movement that its poetry should have been so feeble. Unfortunately, Tractarian poets seem to have felt that graceful versifying of approved sentiments, ornamented with metaphor and some eighteenth-century "poetic diction," was a satisfactory method of writing religious poetry.

Much of Newman's inferior verse is not "simple, sensuous and passionate." The restraint is too great and there is a lack of lyric ardor, of creative imaginative power and intensity. Only rarely is there pictorial power, or sharply focused imagery. What Newman himself referred to as "vivid exactness" is absent.

Conventional poetic diction and clichés (festive-hall, dewy morn and balmy eve, pensive brow, azure heaven, golden flowers, dazzling beams, stary height, fair domain, sweet music, earth's green robes, vaulted sky) and poetic archaisms are not unusual and are sometimes found even in his better poems. Corresponding to the absence of "vivid exactness" there is also a tendency toward generalization and the personification of abstractions (Death, Pleasure, Affection, Zeal, Fear, Charity, Time, Anger, Joy, Sin, Truth). Metaphors are

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rarely bold or striking, the language seldom compressed, and there is an absence of "word magic," of hidden music, of subtle rhythms. Obvious rhymes abound.

At its worst it becomes pedestrian and prosily wooden:

Plants in the garden
See best the Sun's glory;
They miss the green sward in
A conservatory.

And very characteristic is the tendency to preach, to be didactic and philosophically moralistic; not unusual is the final stanza of "St. Paul at Melita":

But, when he felt the viper's smart,
Then instant aid was given;
Christian! hence learn to do thy part,
And leave the rest to Heaven.

Much of his verse, then, may be said to belong to "the literature of knowledge" rather than to "the literature of power."

IF these are frequent defects of Newman's poetry then one can ask whether there are any particular ways of accounting for them, and I think that it is quite possible to come close to a series of interrelated answers.

Newman's critical sense was keen in reference to his own prose but it was weak when he came to his own poetry. Indeed his criticism of poetry, particularly during his early career, is notoriously mixed. He thought of Pope as "a rival of Shakespeare, in copiousness and variety if not in genius." Of his immediate predecessors he knew little of Wordsworth and Byron, almost nothing of Coleridge, Shelley or Keats. His greatest favorite was Scott and after him came Crabbe and Southey. In a letter Gerard Manley Hopkins remarked that Newman's preference for the opening of Southey's *Thalaba* over the first chorus of Milton's *Samson Agonistes* "is as if you were to compare the Panathenaic frieze and a teaboard and decide in the teaboard's favor." Newman's critical sense was indeed sometimes strange.

This may partially be accounted for by the fact that Newman's only really productive period of writing poetry came at a peculiar time, the 1830's. It was a season when the Romantics had passed their zenith—by 1830 most of them had died—and at a time when the luminaries of the Victorian era, Browning and Tennyson, had not as yet established themselves, a period which one of the literary historians has aptly called "the interregnum," when those poets who had long been in the ascendancy had been swept away and their places remained unfilled. It was therefore an era of poetic mediocrity and uncertainty. During this period Newman's poetic taste was formed.

It is crucial to a right understanding of the limitations of Newman's poetry

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to be aware of the stage of development in his life during which he wrote most of it. Newman's life stretches across most of the nineteenth century, from 1801 to 1890, but his most poetic period started in 1828; then during his Mediterranean tour of 1832-1833, immediately preceding the initiation of the Oxford Movement in 1833, he wrote half of the poetry he was ever to write.

In 1836 he published (with other poets of the Oxford Movement) *Lyra Apostolica* which included most of his poems up to that date. In 1845 he became a Roman Catholic and between that date and 1865 when he wrote his greatest poem, "The Dream of Gerontius," he produced little poetry, and much of that was mere translation. The final volume of his poetry, what might be called his collected works, appeared in 1868 and was entitled *Verses on Various Occasions*. More than half has already appeared in *Lyra Apostolica*.

Since his most productive period was from 1828 to 1833 and since it was during this period that his practice of writing was set, a valuable way of trying to account for the limitations of his poetry is to discover what his critical and aesthetic position was during that period.

IN 1828 Newman wrote a critical essay of over ten thousand words (published in 1829) entitled *Poetry with Reference to Aristotle's Poetics*, an essay which is by no means strictly Aristotelian—nor even consistent within itself—and which dominated him during the years of his greatest productivity and for many years after.

Moving away from the rationalism of the Oriel Noetics and from the influence of Whately (on whose *Logic* he had worked), now fearful of the "usurpations of reason," he holds a rather romantic theory of inspiration according to which poetry is "a free and unfettered effusion of genius." That such a view was no passing fancy is reflected in a letter to a friend in 1833 in which he says, "Ten thousand obvious ideas become impressive when put into metrical shape; and many of them one should not dare to utter except metrically," and he adds very significantly, "for thus the responsibility (as it were) is shoved off of oneself."

The theory of poetry as "a free and unfettered effusion of genius" meant that he looked at his poetry in a very different way from his prose. Poetry became a mere "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" while prose was disciplined to perfection. That this was his view is further substantiated by the fact that it is notorious that he found poetry easy and seldom worked over it while he spent endless hours on his prose. It was of his prose that he wrote: "Every book I have written has been a sort of operation, the distress is so great." Of one of his theological volumes he said to his sister:

I write, I write again; I write a third time in the course of six

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months. I literally fill the paper with corrections, so that another person could not read it. I then write it out fair for the printer. I put it by; I take it up; I begin to correct again; it will not do. Alterations multiply; pages are rewritten, little lines sneak in and crawl about. The whole page is disfigured; I write again; I cannot count how many times this process is repeated.

On the other hand, during his Mediterranean tour he sometimes "was inspired" to dash off two or three poems in a single day and we never hear of him correcting or revising them. His poetry, according to his accounts (and unfavorable critics will say it is easy to detect this), seems to have written itself.

In his *Poetry with Reference to Aristotle's Poetics* he also holds a moralistically didactic view which is very evident in the poetry he wrote during this period. It was part of his reaction at this time against liberalism; one recalls the passage in the *Apologia* in which he says: "The truth is, I was beginning to prefer intellectual excellence to moral, I was drifting in the direction of the Liberalism of the day." He bent over backwards to over-emphasize the moral element in poetry. In his essay on poetry he goes so far as to say, "Without affecting the accuracy of a definition, one might call [poetic talent] the originality of right moral feeling" and "poetry is ultimately founded on correct moral perception," "a right moral state of heart is the formal and scientific condition of a poetical mind." Poetry must "satisfy the moral nature." It is significant that it was because he felt that they inculcate moral virtue that he especially approved of Crabbe and Southey. Poetry becomes a moral teacher and "right moral feeling" becomes the criterion of poetry. Such quotations can be multiplied from the Newman of this period (for Newman's views changed later), but the following is particularly conclusive:

With Christians, a poetical view of things is a duty,—we are bid to colour all things with hues of faith, to see a Divine meaning in every event, and a superhuman tendency . . . It may be added, that the virtues peculiarly Christian are especially poetical—meekness, gentleness, compassion, contentment, modesty, not to mention the devotional virtues; whereas the ruder and more ordinary feelings are the instruments of rhetoric more justly than of poetry—anger, indignation, emulation, martial spirit and love of independence.

Such views were reinforced by the Evangelistic upbringing which overemphasized a view which was, in the words of one critic, "morally severe and non-aesthetic."

Accompanying such opinions in his essay on poetry was another view which would make impossible a poetry that would be "simple, sensuous and passionate." Holding that poetry "becomes, moreover, the utterance of right

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moral feeling, seeking a purity and truth which the world will not give," he Platonically rejected the world of the senses, saying that "the poetical mind is full of eternal forms of beauty and perfection," in contrast to "the commonplace and matter-of-fact conceptions of ordinary minds, which are fettered down to the particular and individual." His suspicion of the concrete and particular at this time appears not in his prose for his letters are often delightfully vivid descriptions, and his friend Thomas Mozley wrote:

His eye quickly caught any sudden glory or radiance above; every prismatic hue or silver lining; every rift, every patch of blue . . . His admiration of the beauties of earth and sky, his quickness to observe changes overhead, and the meaning he put into them, sometimes taxed the patience of a dull observer. Flowers, especially certain flowers, he was fond of as a child could be.

But this hardly evidences itself in his poetry; instead he wrote such lines as these from "The Pilgrim" (1831):

There stray'd awhile, amid the woods of Dart,
One who could love them, but who durst not love.
A vow had bound him, ne'er to give his heart
To streamlet bright, or soft secluded grove.
'Twas a hard humbling task, onwards to move
His easy-captured eyes from each fair spot,
With unattach'd and lonely step to rove
O'er happy meads, which soon its print forgot:—
Yet kept he safe his pledge, prizing his pilgrim-lot.

Or such verses as these from "The Isles of the Sirens" (1832):

Cease, Stranger, cease those piercing notes,
The craft of Siren choirs;
Hush the seductive voice, that floats
Upon the languid wires.

Music's ethereal fire was given
Not to dissolve our clay,
But draws Promethean beams from Heaven,
And purge the dross away.

Weak self! with thee the mischief lies,
Those throbs a tale disclose;
Nor age nor trial has made wise
The Man of many woes.

In contrast are such lines as the following from "To Edward Caswall":

Once, o'er a clear calm pool,
The fulness of an over-brimming spring,
I saw the hawthorn and the chestnut fling
Their willing arms, of vernal blossoms full

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And light green leaves: the lilac too was there,
The prodigal laburnum, dropping gold.

But these lines belong to 1858, a different period of Newman's development.

HIS mature views of poetry belong to the time when he had almost ceased to write poetry and they may be found especially in *The Idea of a University* and in addresses at that period such as "Christianity and Letters" and "Catholic Literature in the English Tongue."

A narrowly didactic and moralistic view disappears. Not only does he hold that the greater writer subjects his work to severe correction, but he says in *Idea of a University*:

Literature does not argue, but declaims and insinuates; it is multi-form and versatile: it persuades instead of convincing, it seduces, it carries captive; it appeals to the sense of honour, or to the imagination, or to the stimulus of curiosity; it makes its way by means of gaiety, satire, romance, the beautiful, the pleasurable.

And every reader of *The Grammar of Assent* knows that by 1870 so far has he reacted against Platonism that it is now not the "notional" but "the real" which seems to him so fair.

Newman's mature views could have resulted in a very different kind of poetry than that which we now associate with his name, but his poetically productive period was over and his views mellowed slowly. His aesthetic was now more solid, but his creative spirit went into his great prose.

What, then, is the value of much of Newman's poetry? Largely, I think, in the contribution of his productive period of poetry to the formation of one of England's greatest prose styles. Often the things which are defects in poetry became virtues in prose; if, for instance, poems should not preach, then certainly sermons should, and Newman brought to his prose as the years went on many poetic qualities so subtly controlled and so deftly woven into the fabric of his work that the final outcome was a style which without being "poetic prose" yet has the modulations, the cadences, the metaphorical overtones that give to his prose an important part of its continuing appeal.

Review-Articles

Péguy Recently

Péguy Socialiste. By Félicien Challaye. Paris: Amiot-Dumont.

Un Poète l'a dit. By Charles Péguy. Paris: Gallimard.

Deuxième élégie XXX. By Charles Péguy. Paris: Gallimard.

Charles Péguy: Lettres et entretiens. By Marcel Péguy. Paris: Editions de Paris.

Charles Péguy: The Pursuit of Salvation. By Yvonne Servais. Dublin: Cork University Press.

OF THE making of books on Péguy there seems no end. One by one writers plunge into the complex works of this disturbing personality and emerge triumphantly clutching texts which confirm their own prejudices. This generation is still too close to Péguy for more than a few to see him whole. While contemporary society seems to fulfill his prophecies and vindicate his denunciation of the modern materialistic world, most of us are too absorbed in the same kind of minutiae which he took as starting-points, to appreciate, save fitfully, the profundity of that vision, which, while accepting the misery of the human condition and its costly greatness, yet asserted the continual renewal of the temporal by grace.

It is partly because he offers so many pertinent texts for ephemeral situations that it is difficult for non-Frenchmen to feel him as the enduring moral force he unquestionably is. This is not to say that Péguy does not throw revealing light on modern dilemmas, or that he does not enable us to separate the transient from the eternal. But a recognition of those defects he shares with Hugo and Claudel—pride, a taste for rhetorical exaggeration, a realization that he believed passionately in action rather than in academic theorizing, and a resolution not to use his writings as a Bible sanctioning diverse political sects—must precede wider acknowledgement of his stature as a world figure concerned for the salvation of mankind as passionately as for that of France.

If the Péguyian synthesis is still too formidable a task for most writers, hardly one of the exegetes, from Rolland and the Tharauds to Roussel, however partisan he may be, does not contribute something to an understanding of his personality. M. Challaye is a striking exception. Here is an author who has accomplished the astonishing feat of writing about one of the liveliest and most stimulating of minds one of the dullest and least illuminating books conceivable. In a blend of pamphleteering rhetoric and flat journalese, M. Challaye, who knew Péguy at the École Normale and collaborated on the *Cahiers*, offers his thesis that there are two Péguy's, the warmly human, independent-minded, anti-clerical socialist of twenty, opening to men of all parties "les portes de sa Cité harmonieuse"; and the Péguy of forty, corrupted by Bergsonism and Catholicism, greedy for fame, heedless of the poor, "nationaliste étroit, germanophobe et revanchard."

For M. Challaye (who finds *Eve* unreadable!), what little is good in the later Péguy is the lingering trace of his youthful Socialism, before the break with Jaurès. He grants the mature man a certain genius but denies him integrity and creative power. In short, remaking the younger Péguy in his own image of old-

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style anti-clerical, secular socialist, M. Challaye replaces the later great Péguy by a truculent bigot, writing unreadable, incoherent works charged with megalomania, self-pity and corrosive arrogance.

Yet it was not Péguy who changed, but French Socialism. He never sacrificed his old ideals; he merely purified them as he saw more clearly their supernatural basis. Péguy's Socialism was always, as he said, "profondément mystique." Even M. Challaye admits that in the young Péguy "le sentiment religieux subsiste dans le subconscient." But as he saw the self-seeking, cynicism and compromises of Socialist leaders, he pitilessly denounced, not his youthful ideals, but the betrayal of them. The Péguy of 1911 is as Socialist as he is Christian.

In one of the many texts which refute M. Challaye, *Un poète l'a dit*, we find: "Ce que nous avons connu, hélas, dans et par ces immutables quinze années, c'est que le socialisme n'est plus rien dans le monde et que nos maîtres, hélas, n'ont jamais été dans le socialisme. . . . Dans ce monde lamentable ce qu'est devenu notre lamentable socialisme nous l'avons vu sous nos yeux par une infinité d'exemples. Nous avons vu ce malheureux socialisme descendre de chute en chute par une infinité d'exemples de chute." The 283 pages of the title-piece of this volume of unpublished pieces form, in fact, one long denunciation of the modern secular world, including a lament for the ruin of Socialist hopes through the materialism of its leaders. Unrevised, and in places almost stammering with indignation, it is nevertheless one of the most vigorous of Péguy's polemics, rich in his mature eloquence, shot through with irony, sarcasm and imprecations, and thunderous with proliferating incantations.

Dated at the end of 1907, *Un poète l'a dit* itself belongs with the *Situations*, published in the *Cahiers* for 1906-7, with which it should be grouped in a definitive edition. The volume also contains *Nous sommes des vaincus*, a gloomy product of the crisis of 1909, when he was ill and in the grip of a temporary disillusionment. It is burdened with loneliness; it complains of the triumph of demagogues, of his own sickness, of the strain on his physical and spiritual resources and of the problems of running the *Cahiers* in the face of indifference. Invaluable as revealing the intensity of the spiritual conflict through which he passed into serenity, it is typical in the intrusion of self which gives vitality to even the most abstract disquisition in the *Cahiers*. Following it is an early draft of the first conversation between Jeanne and Hauviette in the *Mystère de la Charité de Jeanne d'Arc*, which is every bit as interesting as the final version; two superb speeches by Hauviette on the nature of war rank with Péguy's finest poetry.

Equally characteristic are the pieces collected for the first time in *Deuxième élégie XXX*. Though Péguy's themes are ever the same, the variations he plays on them never cease to fascinate. The title-piece is a colossal blazing sermon on the text announced in the first sentence: "Vanité infinie, infinie frivolité du monde moderne." Perhaps more than any other of his posthumous works, this piece cries out for pruning. Even the most devoted Péguyian must at times find himself overwhelmed by the torrent of words and the insistently circling phrases and deafened by the "monotonous chant of heath and moor," in Gide's phrase. But amidst much that smells of the polemical pamphlet are flashes of humor, searing irony and startling moments of self-criticism. The tender passages describing his childhood show Péguy's deep involvement in all he wrote. And those who may have felt that he was too caught up in the purely political will be enchanted by the vigorous pages on classical art and architecture.

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This volume also contains what seems to be a first draft of *Clio*. Nothing Péguy wrote is more central to his philosophy than this strange monologue of the complex and mysterious *Clio*, who represents by turns the academic mind, dogmatic and self-conceited, the Bergsonian view, the Greek spirit of speculation, Péguy's opposite, his guide and interpreter, and his most intimate inner self. It marks his emergence from the depths, the shattering of his old illusions and his passing from the gloom of 1909 to acceptance—acceptance of the concepts that human happiness is a myth, that, while the temporal may be shattered, Grace can renew it, and that lost innocence and purity are not irrecoverable. Fragmentary though this first draft is, it shows even more clearly than the published *Clio*, the strenuousness of Péguy's struggle to fathom his own heart and rid himself of chimeras. At the centre of it all is "Jésus que vous blessiez. Jésus que vous lésez. Jésus que vous crucifiez," and at the end is the blinding realization of "cette incroyable, la seule réelle liaison, du Créateur et de la créature."

Since almost all the pieces in these two volumes date from 1908-9, a reader knowing little of the rest of Péguy might carry away the impression of a tormented, incredibly fluent writer whose entire outlook on the modern world was one of despairing distaste, touched only lightly with the Christian hope. Marcel Péguy's edition of Péguy's *Lettres et entretiens*, the first of two in the *Correspondance* series, corrects that idea. This is a lucid, compact and, on the whole, balanced introduction to Péguy through his letters. A short sketch of his life and ideas leads into a discussion of his gradual movement from Plato to Christ, and letters to Lotte, Baillet and others between 1902 and 1908 show this evolution clearly. Further letters show his struggle to reconcile the religious with the political, and the final section relates to the composition of his magnificent *Eve*. The documents are chosen with care, the notes, which have only occasionally an obtrusive bias (in the matter of Bergson being placed on the Index, for instance) are excellent; and the photographs and reproductions of pages of Péguy's shapely handwriting make this collection an attractive gateway into the Péguyian forest.

But what of the reader who has not yet acquired a taste for Péguy, who, faced with the immense collected works, the conflicting assessments and staked claims, needs a Vergil to conduct him through the spiralling circles of Péguy's thought? There exists in English little more than Halévy's largely factual account, Pfeleger's provocative but brief essay in *Wrestlers with Christ*, and Julian Green's introductions to his selections. To fill the gap, we now have Yvonne Servais's fine *Charles Péguy: The Pursuit of Salvation*. It may seem mere Catholic prejudice to say that this book succeeds in capturing the essential Péguy, where many other writers have failed. Yet, unless a commentator has some understanding of the imperatives of that Faith towards which Péguy laboriously struggled, that Catholic centre where contradictions are resolved, where acceptance need not imply resignation, where reverence for tradition may blend with revolutionary fervour, it is hardly possible to comprehend how Péguy could be at once, with the same heart and the same spirit, Catholic and Socialist, man anguished and at peace, polemist, critic, philosopher and poet. Miss Servais' meticulous documentation, her close argument, and patient analysis of Péguy's thought, her consistent fairness (to Renan, for example) and her acknowledgement of Péguy's faults and contradictions, remove her book from the partisan arena and put it in a different category from M. Challaye's special pleading.

She ends her study of Péguy's political and religious development at 1909. In

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some ways this is a pity, for the remaining five years are poetically his richest. However, many of the later developments are implied in her pages. Her extensive quotations (in English) from Péguy's works are just what was needed. Nobody has written so movingly of Péguy as the man himself, and the passages quoted illuminate every step of his way. The reader is brought face to face with this incredibly honest man, peasant and intellectual, simple and profound, and begins to understand why he has so magnificently survived. So, too, Miss Servais' comments on his style, free from the rhetorical generalizations favored by some French critics, admirably pinpoint the sources of its strength and seductiveness.

But the heart of the matter for Mrs. Servais, as for most Catholic readers, is the complex and difficult one of Péguy's final attitude toward the Church, a matter fogged over by the breath of controversy. Why did he, after a passionate conversion, believing so deeply in the Catholic faith, adhering to and understanding Catholicism with his whole soul, deprive himself of the sanctifying grace of the Sacraments, and remain "a Catholic outside the Church?" Here at long last is an exhaustive, intelligent exploration of the matter in all its painful aspects. The reasons given by others are carefully scrutinized: his family situation—he was married to a freethinker and deeply involved with her relatives—the excessive, injudicious zeal of his Catholic friends, the possible danger to the *Cahiers*, a difficulty in accepting the doctrine of Hell, his distrust of priests. And the reasoned conclusion to which Miss Servais comes is: "It was mainly because he refused to be separated from those he loved and who had not his faith that he remained so strangely and distressingly on the threshold of the Church."

To be a Catholic was for Péguy a Calvary, a Calvary which bore its fruit in the conversion, after his death, of his wife and family, and in the impulse towards the Church he has inspired in so many more. Yet his later poetry, as Miss Servais writes, "became the uninterrupted prayer of a man who was conscious of his vulnerability and limitations but who had achieved an attitude of complete trust and ineffable love, since salvation had become an invincible certitude."

It is difficult to over-praise such a book as Miss Servais has given us, blasting down the high walls which had cut Péguy off from so many English readers. Carried out with scholarly assurance, clearly and persuasively presenting his great themes of suffering, truth, hope, patriotism, birth, death, the community of mankind and the message of history, the book is fully in harmony with its daunting subject. With such a gloss as this, the most timid reader can confront Péguy's colossal tracts and vast word-symphonies with courage and excited anticipation.

Auckland University

J. C. REID

Discipline of the Supernatural

The Poetry of Meditation: A Study in English Religious Literature of the Seventeenth Century. By Louis L. Martz. Yale University Press. \$5.00.

Poetry and Dogma: The Transfiguration of Eucharistic Symbols in Seventeenth Century English Poetry. By Malcolm Mackenzie Ross. Rutgers University Press. \$5.00.

THERE can surely be no disputing the appropriateness of Christopher Dawson's concept of religion as the dynamic element in culture to the bulk of the poetry of the middle ages, and there is, I take it, increasing under-

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standing of the continuity of that dynamic of religion through the phases of the Renaissance, though not of course anything like general agreement on particular descriptions, or unanimity of critical verdict on particular poets and within the dynamic organism of an individual poem (on Milton, say, and the *Faerie Queene*). There is one aspect of the Renaissance situation which parallels the dominant intellectual and spiritual activities of our own times, especially in America. There are some extraordinary likenesses between the concerns of a Donne and an Eliot; some of these may at first seem less significant than some of the differences, but many of the differences are only accidents and are not manifestations of the essentially similar situation confronting both Donne and Eliot—that of a poet exiled in a world that to his view is rapidly losing (or has already lost the core of) the old beliefs; and for such a mind it is the poet who “must know and deal with, what as a Christian he perhaps has only to know and transcend, all that knowledge and experience which is not Christian and which is so much greater in quantity than the Christian” (R. P. Blackmur, *Language as Gesture*). Such a mind—both that kind of seventeenth-century mind which was Donne’s and that kind of twentieth-century mind which is Eliot’s—is (to use Blackmur’s superb phrase) “a great onion of analogy.”

Analogy—and with it the ancillary forms of allegory, and the transcendent forms of symbolism (which must, in my use of the term, always be part of the historical continuum of Christian belief)—analogy was very much the onion for the seventeenth-century poet (and must be so seen in our modern reading of their poems), and increasingly, I suspect, very much the heart of the onion, though not quite the same onion, for religious poets of our time. Therefore the double importance to us of the two books under consideration: as readers and teachers perhaps of seventeenth-century religious poetry, and simultaneously as poets and participants in our contemporary poetic experience, and (shades of Dante) as future explainers and appreciators of this contemporary poetic expression.

Professor Martz has given a deeply thought-out book which is presented with the great carefulness of statement and the respect for fact of scholarship; it is perceptive and knowing, heuristic and persuasive. It must be declared at once—not as a *great* book, for these are in the humanities the rarest of things (Ker’s *Epic and Romance*, *The Allegory of Love* by C. S. Lewis, Gilson’s *Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy*, and not many others)—but certainly as an important book that stands with equal justice in literary history and in criticism (or perhaps demonstrates that the soundest, the most valuable of contributions to the understanding of literature, must be amphibious and live in both worlds). No one, it is now plain, can talk again about metaphysical poetry in the flat and long-unsatisfying terms of Johnson, Gosse and Grierson; nor can there be critical writing in the future on Southwell or Donne, Herbert or Crashaw, that fails to take into account Martz’s impressive argument.

The scope and method of this book can be summed up briefly. Part I consists of chapters on the method of meditation and on meditations on the life of Christ and Mary, then “Self-Knowledge: the Spiritual Combat,” and “Problems in Puritan Meditation: Richard Baxter”—all with references to the poetry of Southwell, Donne, Herbert, Vaughan and Crashaw. Part II interprets “Three Meditative Poets” in carefully argued individual essays—Southwell,

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Donne (the Anniversaries in particular), and Herbert. There is a final chapter on "Unity of Being" and the Meditative Style," two Appendices on special problems, and a very good selective bibliography; there is a satisfying index (though for such a book, a topical index would have greatly increased its usefulness).

Throughout the essays, links or parallels are established between the metaphysicals and moderns, for part of the Martz thesis is that the meditative style may also be found in Wordsworth, Hopkins, the later Yeats and the later Eliot:

It is a style that may in places permeate the drama, the epic, the narrative poem, and of course the forms of prose as well I am trying only to discern a genre

In any case, it seems clear that meditative style, so described, forms a tight link between the seventeenth and twentieth centuries; for the art of meditation appears fundamental to the achievement of Yeats and Eliot, and is certainly fundamental to the achievement of Hopkins

Few will dispute that Martz has conclusively demonstrated that some of the meditative methods of the Counter Reformation became firmly imbedded in the intellectual life, and certain major phases of the poetic expression of that life, in seventeenth-century England. But it is in the limiting of the sources of that poetry, which we may now call meditative poetry rather than metaphysical, to the Jesuit manuals of meditation that he has seen his causal forces too narrowly:

1. Meditation was not new with the Counter Reformation. To be sure, this is stated in the preface, but the rest of the book proceeds as though it were. And this leads us to points two and three.

2. The influence of St. Augustine, as has been suggested in other contexts, was simply enormous: Augustinian influence is a light that penetrates and is reflected everywhere. It is to be traced (though it is as yet a job that remains to be done) in the forests of sixteenth-century theological controversy, as with Jewel and Rastell; on both public and private devotions, for as Helen C. White has shown in her recent *Tudor Books of Private Devotion* (p. 17), "the intellectual and spiritual progeny of Saint Augustine proved in the centuries to come literally beyond number . . ." Yet of this great source of light there are only four mentions, not one of which suggests that in the author's view there is any understanding of the impact of Augustinian ideas and traditions upon the sixteenth century.

3. Finally, there is no attempt to consider the sixteenth and seventeenth-century interest in the medieval theologians, especially in the English mystical achievement of the fourteenth-century: there is one slight reference, I believe, to the *Cloud of Unknowing*, but no treatment of Walter Hilton—and both of these, along with such diverse theologians as Nicholas of Cusa and Nicholas of Lyra, were intensively studied.

(There is another point, relevant but not crucial: Martz has asserted that meditative style is a tight link between the two centuries, and has maintained that for the seventeenth century the Counter Reformation gave form and method to that style—but he does not offer a source for the meditative style of the twentieth. And it cannot be shown that the Counter Reformation manuals of meditation were a direct influence on the style of either Yeats or

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Eliot, both of whom got their craft elsewhere. Obviously there is more to the story, for the seventeenth as for the twentieth.)

While nothing in the above three points of omission will seriously challenge the main line of Martz's thesis, that the meditative methods of the Counter Reformation had great influence upon certain English religious poets, yet what must be adjusted is the too-easy notion certain to seduce many readers of *The Poetry of Meditation* that the style or method of meditation would have been available to these seventeenth-century English religious poets *only* through the Counter Reformation manuals, and that some of their individual poems are to be glossed only as meditative works in terms of Luis, Sales and Ignatius.

I DO NOT know when I have read so stimulating a book as "this great argument" by Professor Ross. One does not have to accept the tremendous challenge of his core thesis to use and be grateful for the plenitude of his insights on seventeenth-century poetry, on the Renaissance mind, on the nature and operation of Christian symbolism—which is to say that the book cuts very deeply into all that lies between and binds together poetry and life, belief and convention. But there must be several necessary qualifications, and some of what has just been offered in comment on Martz might with equal justice be repeated about Ross; while Ross's sense of tradition is much firmer and richer than Martz's, it is still unnecessarily channelled (there is, for example, not one reference to Augustine).

The first three of ten chapters cover Ross's notion of the "Firmament of Symbol," and "The Liturgy and Poetic Symbol," leading to the "Anglican Dilemma." In this discussion he argues for the centrality of Eucharistic dogma in the traditional firmament. He then attempts to "assess the significance for poetic symbol of the various Protestant revisions of the Eucharist": by a study of the imagery of representative "high" and "low" Anglicans—from Henry Lok to Giles Fletcher and Joseph Beaumont—he shows the "effect of revised Eucharistic dogma on the analogical capacity of central Christian symbol in poetry." The chapters richest in insight are those on "George Herbert and the Humanist Tradition," "The 'Spiritual Anglicans,'" and "Milton and the Protestant Aesthetic." The conclusion tries to "suggest that the central dogmatic symbols of Christianity, abandoned for so long by poets, not only retain their vitality but now once again tempt the symbol-maker and begin to reshape the firmament within which the poetic symbol is made."

To praise the wit of this book is not to say that the style is at all times without grave defects, for occasionally that flash of wit is achieved at the expense of what the wit is intended to light up; and at times Ross generalizes too easily (he moves, at one point, from an acceptable paradox of Calvin aiding and abetting the anti-religious impulse of the hated Renaissance to the generalization: "In this way the Reformation connives with the Renaissance in the secularization of the arts"). But at its best the wit operates to focus the insights—as, speaking of the restrictive habits of thought and feeling in the humanism of Babbitt and More, "Unlike the humanists of a younger time, these men praise the fugitive and cloistered virtue, and draft an ethic out of inhibition."

It is instructive to compare the Herbert poems glossed or analyzed by Martz and Ross (for Herbert's poetry is central to the thesis of both as the other religious poetry is not): there is, as one might by now anticipate, sur-

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prisingly little overlapping. Ross is far more selective, in that he discusses a much smaller number of poems: he takes "Content" (and also "Church-Militant," "The Bag," "Pierce" and "The Quidditie" and works over the crown symbol in a way that is perhaps not relevant to Martz's main line of investigation, but which certainly illuminates the poetry, as Miss Tuve's elucidation and demonstration of the Jordan image-cluster illuminates. Martz touches many more poems, but largely deals only with those which fall within the purview of his meditative genre: "Denial," "Elixir" (and here it might be noted that there is nothing of Ross's rewarding recognition of Herbert's "ironic flirtation with gold" and little of Miss Tuve's perceptions on wit). Unsatisfactory as these notes might at first seem, they lead us to a deeper comparison.

Rosemond Tuve's splendid little book on the poetry of George Herbert is very helpful in enabling us to understand the contribution of Martz and Ross. Martz, it is quickly apparent, has put Herbert and certain other "metaphysical" poets into a context of method or operation as Tuve, very largely, did not; but it is equally obvious that Tuve helps us to focus on the poetry as poetry—on the symbolic coloration and texture—as Martz does not and, I think, because of his emphasis can not. To be sure, Martz does clarify our understanding of the genre: he has given us for the first time an accurate description and definition of that genre in seventeenth-century poetry (though not, I think, in twentieth-century)—but he does not really explain what is in the poet's mind, and tells us only the guides that it follows in this attitude of meditation, and does not come to what the poem is and precisely what it does and means, *as a poem*. Mootable though much of Ross's argument may be, there is frequently the excitement of standing a few feet away from some extraordinary alchemical work—and there, he cries as the fire flashes, is the gold!

There is another important difference between their two views of Catholic spiritual life in the Counter Reformation. For Martz, the central aim of Catholic spirituality during this period was to teach the devout individual how to maintain a proper balance and proportion between the intellectual and the affective: "in this effort—to absorb and amalgamate, in perfect union, the intellectual and affective heritage of the Middle Ages—resides, I believe, the central tension of English religious poetry of the seventeenth-century." (But Martz, as I have already suggested, procedurally limits the central tension to the meditative genre.) Ross sees the analogical firmament of traditional Catholic poetry as displaced, though not yet destroyed, in the seventeenth century, with the central dogmatic symbols though conserved unable to function poetically: "for the purification of ritual and the clarification of crucial dogma by the Council of Trent . . . did not really penetrate the poetic situation in England, did not restore to function and life the full Catholic firmament of symbol." The strategy is seen as defensive: "the shape and texture of the ancient firmament remain intact. But the living motion of the firmament has been arrested . . ."

In these last quotations I have been trying not so much to sum up the two critical essays as to point to an important difference: whether because of his great stress on the meditative manuals of the Counter Reformation or because of more deeply seated convictions, Martz's view is more Protestant, seeing the mind of the seventeenth century existing as the mind of an individual Christian and poet in whom the tension resides and by virtue of whose individual effort forces are fused in his poetry. Ross seems to have a pre-Tridentine view of the

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place of the individual artist in the tradition: for him there is a firmament which is greater than any individual stars; for him the dangers of the new poetic achievement of *Lycidas* are at least as great as the gains, "for the movement of a specifically Christian symbol from the centre to the periphery of the work of art implies a decisive shift of value and anticipates the emergence of a dominantly secular culture. The exteriorization of Christian symbolism opens a vacuum at the centre which must be filled . . ."

Both Martz and Ross are concerned with the religious poetry of the early seventeenth-century, and both with the forces that poets like Southwell, Herbert and Vaughan, in different ways, worked with in their poetry. But past this, they differ.

"It is the very purpose of a supernaturally derived discipline, as used in poetry," writes R. P. Blackmur in discussing the poetry of Yeats, "to set the substance of natural life apart, to give it a form, a meaning, and a value which cannot be evaded . . . for the poet the discipline, from seeming secondary, had an extraordinary structural, seminal, and substantial importance to the degree that without it he could hardly have written at all." The view that dominates Martz's approach is the formal, the discipline with its importance, always structural, sometimes seminal and substantial. What dominates Ross's approach is that this discipline is supernaturally derived, and from this derives its meaning and therefore its value. Where Martz has not given sufficient weight to the supernatural source and to the tradition of Christian symbol, and must be compensated by Ross and Tuve, Ross has not been sufficiently concerned with or has not sufficiently stressed the method, the procedure, the forms—which Martz has shown to have been of such importance to the meditative poets that without that method they could hardly have written at all. And we may turn again to Blackmur (in another observation cited by Martz) to see how necessary each is to the other:

The life we all live is not alone enough of a subject for the serious artist; it must be life with a leaning, life with a tendency to shape itself only in certain forms, to afford its most lucid revelations only in certain lights. If our final interest, either as poets or as readers, is in the reality declared when the forms have been removed and the lights taken away, yet we can never come to the reality at all without the first advantage of the form and lights.

Though Blackmur was speaking of the later poetry of Yeats, his consideration is surely valid also for seventeenth-century religious poetry, and when we read and use Martz (and one may be sure that especially in non-Catholic places, where the need for his elucidation is so much greater, he will be used extensively) we must bear in mind that the discipline of which he writes existed only to give form to the spiritual life, but without that shaping form of the meditative mode much of that life would not have been given form or actualization. And so, when we read Ross, we must remember that religious poetry whether in the seventeenth or the twentieth century cannot be simply declared or stated out of the cloth of symbolism: that the method of meditation did much to give form, as the traditional symbol of Christian revelation did much to give light, to the Eucharistic dogma of which Ross has so penetratingly written.

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I echo and applaud what Ross has to say about the arrested firmament of dogma in our times; as the blood of martyrs waters the ground of history (thus Ross), so the ground of the historical present must be watered ever freshly with the mysterious dew of supernatural grace. Where Eliot's poetry, especially in the *Four Quartets*, is great achievement by virtue of its "sacramental repossession of nature and time, things and history," we must also see that Eliot's poetic vision is lacking in the corporate sense, the sense of living community. The recovery of the sacramental symbol by contemporary Christian writers is as yet by no means complete, of course, but how immeasurably richer is the situation today than it was fifty years ago—before Eliot, and before at a lower level, Auden and Lowell and Merton, Mauriac and Claudel and Greene.

Great artists have always known instinctively that the time is now, and that the redeeming of time past must always be done in time present, never time future. I must now give my own position as on the side of Ross: the *magna restauratio* of Catholic art, I believe, lies in the recovery of the sacramental symbol—the meditative genre, unless it have a symbolic tradition (as the early seventeenth century still had, though fragmentarily and momentarily), cannot do the job of recovery; and the full recovery must achieve a sacramental knowledge of reality which analogically possesses all things. "For whether he defines it or no" (to close with this statement by Ross), "the Christian is compelled, under the fixed star of the Incarnation, to believe in existence, in the act of existence . . . for the Christian artist, all things have their own separately structured, intrinsic actuality and value, while at the same time they participate proportionately in larger relationships and values which are moral and spiritual without ceasing to be actual, specific, concrete. The Word is made Flesh without ceasing to be the Word . . ." There is, as Father Lynch has so penetratingly written in "Adventure in Order," *Thought*, XXVI (1951), 33-49, an analogical imperative in Christian art. This is the discipline of the supernatural.

University of Notre Dame

R. J. SCHOECK

Book Reviews

No Reporters, No Greetings

A Swedish Play on Hofmannsthal's Belief.

BERTIL MALMBERG'S play *Die Excellenz* is not a key to Hofmannsthal's life. The drama deals with an imaginary Hofmannsthal, but with one who, thanks to the inner truth intrinsic in literature, seems to be very much alive.

Herbert von Blankenau, Austrian poet and former Cabinet Minister—thus he is described in the *dramatis personae*—can be identified with Hofmannsthal in his essential qualities, but the latter's actual life ran a different course. Hofmannsthal was not a minister, nor was he in Austria at the time of the *Anschluss*, so that the main connection between the two lies in their both being Austrian poets and in the fact that, *mutatis mutandis*, they both develop their outlook on life in the same way.

It was not merely the hypothetical problem of how Hofmannsthal would have reacted to the events of 1938 which led the author to write this drama. The inspiration of the work was a problem which the march of contemporary events has rendered acute in our day; the problem of how a literary mind will react to force. What would be the reactions of a man who turns to Christianity and Catholicism, not out of an inner conviction, but because he sees the things of the spirit threatened by an outside force? Would such a man, in the face of evil, be able to renounce words for deeds?

Bertil Malmberg is one of the most important Swedish lyric poets of today. He has made some excellent translations of Hofmannsthal, Rilke, and George and has spent several years in Germany. He is not only conversant with the problems of German literature, but also considers, in the light of his own experience, that Hofmannsthal may be endowed with the attributes of a Christian martyr. Malmberg himself has run the gamut of change from pure aestheticism to the point where he seeks a supraesthetic philosophy. Fate did not call for the same decision from the founder of the *Salzburger Grosses Welttheater* as it does from Herbert von Blankenau. The latter has to decide whether a creed of words carries more weight than one finding its expression in deeds, and whether the sacrifice of the spirit is nobler than the sacrifice of the body.

For its effect, Malmberg's play depends upon its ability to convince us that Hugo von Hofmannsthal would, in the same circumstances, have acted in the same way as Herbert von Blankenau. The relationship of the original to the imaginary character is too close to allow of a dialectical differential between the two, and it is of no consequence whether this was the author's intention or not.

This unavoidable synthesis forces the reader to a conclusion which does not concern the drama alone, but concerns even more closely Hofmannsthal's own later works. The boldness with which the problem is presented is characteristic of Malmberg's radicalism and the spiritual development of his works, and it gives the work a special place within the framework of that

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type of literature which is concerned with the investigation of contemporary problems.

On the day that the Germans enter Austria, Herbert von Blankenau, whose hatred of the Third Reich is equally reciprocated, decides to leave his homeland. His departure is made possible, despite the fact that the frontier is closed, by Max Karbe, his daughter's fiancé and a high-ranking member of the SS, who is able to produce the necessary papers. Karbe is at heart an honest and benevolent person, but he is consumed by belief in the Führer, and his outlook is narrowed by the uniform he wears and by his own fanatical will to obey. He helps Blankenau, so that he himself may avoid the conflict arising out of his love for the poet's daughter and the ideology that demands his enmity of her father. Karbe is aided in his plans by the fact that the Nazi hierarchy regards Blankenau's escape as a lesser evil than his continued presence in Austria. Before leaving, Blankenau signs, at the insistence of his confessor Ignatius, a heated protest against the occupation of Austria. This protest is to appear in the final number of *The Cross and Reality*, a periodical published by Ignatius, and will serve to make a martyr of its publisher.

Quiet reigns at Blankenau's house on the occasion of his birthday, some weeks after March 13. There are no telephone calls, no greetings and no reporters. Joseph, Blankenau's old servant, former lackey to a Grand-Duke, observes all this and, in his capacity as the unbending protector of tradition, arranges for a display of flowers. One bouquet is delivered from the Emperor Otto, pretender to the throne of Austria, and the person who has remembered and dared to honor Austria's greatest living poet. Blankenau's whereabouts are unknown to his daughter and to Joseph; in fact nothing has been heard of him since his departure. Karbe alone knows that, after leaving Austria, Blankenau crossed over into Czechoslovakia just in time, for the protest published by Ignatius would have brought immediate imprisonment in the concentration camp where Ignatius is now interned, guarded by Karge. Inside the camp Karbe once more gives evidence of his fanatical will to obey, but he refuses to commit any atrocities unless they are expressly ordered by a higher authority. On the other hand he has announced his intention of carrying out any punishment meted out to Blankenau should the latter ever be arrested and imprisoned. This attitude estranges Karbe from Elizabeth, who, although she respects Karbe's belief in his cause, is still devoted to her father. In the midst of this confusion of emotions, much to Karbe's anger and to Elizabeth's horror, Blankenau appears. While still in the train he had suddenly decided to give his papers and luggage to a fellow passenger and then to return himself to Vienna, where he went into hiding. There are two reasons for this change of purpose, the first is Elizabeth's mockery of him, which has shown through her protestations that she understands the motives of an aesthete. The second is the irony which Ignatius poured upon him, as well as the fact the latter stayed behind and took his fate into his own hands. Karbe has no alternative but to arrest him.

The first scene of Act Three shows how Blankenau, who has been subjected to physical torture, shatters the thoughtless crudity and spiritual emptiness of a hospital orderly, by his spiritual powers and by the intensity of his Christianity, made manifest by his complete readiness for self-sacrifice.

The second scene is in the office of the camp commandant, Karbe, who

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is now seen reprimanding SS officers who have exceeded their orders in the mishandling of the prisoners, among them Ignatius. This scene begins with a fresh meeting between Elizabeth and Karbe. Elizabeth brings a sealed letter from the Gestapo, which will permit Blankenau to be released if certain conditions are fulfilled. Blankenau is ready to submit to all the conditions, even down to emigrating and signing a statement that he has been treated humanely in the concentration camp, but he will not withdraw the protest against the occupation of Austria. The letter contains disguised orders for Blankenau's execution should he refuse to fulfill the conditions. Karbe refuses to carry out the sentence, and Elizabeth at the same time refuses to marry him, although Blankenau is prepared to use his death as the instrument of reconciliation between the two. This is the ultimate manifestation of his Christianity, the readiness to lay down his life for another. In order to hasten the inevitable, Blankenau tries to escape, and is shot by a guard. Karbe, now a spiritual wreck, orders the gates to be opened and allows all the prisoners to escape. The wheel has turned full circle: Karbe, the one-time fanatical believer in the Führer, has become a disbeliever, careless of his own life, while Blankenau, the cultural exponent of Christianity, in which he had but a weak belief, has sealed his Christian outlook by death.

The play was first performed privately in Stockholm in 1941 and 1942, and subsequently in public, where it received acclaim. It is significant, however, that though a German translation has existed since 1945 (Bermann-Fischer Verlag, Stockholm), there has been no performance in Germany. Malmberg's play is the only one on the contemporary stage, with the exception of Zuckmayer's *Des Teufels General*, which raises the problems of our time so successfully into the realm of a work of art, whilst, at the same time, making the maximum use of real-life material.

University of Fribourg

ERNST ALKER

Fugitives In France

Les Hommes Traqués. By R. M. Albérès. Paris: La Nouvelle Edition.

THE great literary generation of Claudel, Gide, Proust, and Valéry was fortunate enough to be read and explained by such critics as Charles Du Bos, Jacques Rivière, Ramon Fernandez, and Albert Thibaudet, whose essays and meditations in the early years of our century still stand as works of art—powerful and beautiful expressions of original personalities. It now seems more evident than ever before that the 'teens and twenties, bound together under the leadership of the *Nouvelle Revue Française*, represent one of the perfect flowerings and collaborations of writers and critics in the history of French literature.

The critic, like the artist, must finally stake his life on style and strong individuality. It is undoubtedly on this account that a Du Bos and a Rivière seem destined to grow in stature while others, for all their erudition and exactness, die. The style may be difficult, strange, or irritating, as in the case of Du Bos (Gide naturally found it so); but in the transcription of a

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new, fascinating, and delicately detailed vision of life and literature that irritation is but a small price to pay for admission to the truly passionate mind.

As we scan a very incomplete list of more recent French critics—Albérès, Boisdeffre, A. Rousseaux, Claude Mauriac, Blanchot, Claude-Edmonde Magny, P. H. Simon, Mounier, Kanters—we are struck by the size of their production (many of them are still relatively young), by their erudition (all of them appear to have “covered” most contemporary literature), and by the endless lucidity of their very acceptable styles. We are given “portraits” of Sartre, conversations with Montherlant, “views” of Camus, or the “secret” of Malraux’s *désespoir*. That is, we are given almost everything we may reasonably hope to find in the work of the competent critic. Yet somehow, in the majority of such cases, we miss the critical genius—the power of the personality spread almost religiously throughout the book or essay, the matured vision, the “virginal gaze” that Mallarmé had fondly hoped to draw from the ideal reader’s eyes, and even the stylistic gropings and imperfections which are occasionally the mark of an exceptional mind engaged in exceptionally difficult work. In short, we sense the distance between the competent and the great in the art of criticism as we distinguish more and more sharply between an Anatole France and a Marcel Proust in the art of the novel. The outstanding French critics—Baudelaire, Valéry, Gide, Claudel, Rivière, Du Bos—have usually been outstanding artists or thinkers (one is reminded of Baudelaire’s assertion that the true poet is necessarily a critic of high order), and their common bond has been a fervent devotion to art as such (Gide, Valéry, Baudelaire), to their own striking version of a religion (Rivière, Du Bos) or a philosophy (Sartre). Perhaps the most original, imaginative, and (in the strongest sense of the word) exciting French novelist of the last decade is the same Julien Gracq who wrote what seems to this reviewer to be the only recent masterpiece of French criticism, *André Breton* (1948)—an irritating work for those in search of stylistic simplicity and biographical data, but none the less a work whose lasting qualities lie at the center of Gracq’s spiritual preoccupations, and which we re-read and remember as we do his novels.

The criticism of R.-M. Albérès would seem to us to lie somewhere between the extremes just indicated. *Les Hommes Traqués* is a work of sincerity and considerable power which reach us through a clear but not particularly distinguished style. In his *Révolte des Ecrivains d’Aujourd’hui* (1949), M. Albérès had already revealed a remarkable acquaintance with the modern literary scene; and as we read the particularly fine chapters on Malraux and Bernanos in that work, we were impressed by the sense of perspective and unity which constitutes his chief critical interest and contribution, and doubtless determines the success of *Les Hommes Traqués*. Here he has continued to examine such novelists as Julien Green and Albert Camus; yet, at the same time, he has strengthened his central observation by reaching beyond French literature to the achievements of Pirandello, Aldous Huxley, and Graham Greene.

That observation is this: inherent in the thought of modern writers of several countries—Existentialists, Catholics, *hommes révoltés*—is at once the myth and reality of the *homme traqué* or hunted man: fugitive from justice, God, Grace, or from himself; disintegrated personality seeking his own remains and some desperate new coherence for them in the midst of a tragic fall or

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indefinable Fate. Man flees in terror into the arms of Camus' *absurde* or Sartre's *néanti*; crouches in terror and at bay with the priest in Graham Greene's *The Power and the Glory*; gropes around the vicious daily cycle of Duhamel's Salavin. It is clear—but M. Albérès re-emphasizes the connection with necessary vigor—that the problems of sincerity, of the multiplicity of the human personality and pain are not the literary monopoly of the twentieth century. In France they were specifically and definitely posed by such seventeenth century thinkers as La Rochefoucauld, La Bruyère, Racine, and above all by Pascal who stands today as the most fertile single source or reference point of the modern literary and religious temperament. "Je ne puis approuver que ceux qui cherchent en gémissant" or "l'inutile recherche du vrai bien" are thoughts, among countless others, conceived of physical and spiritual agony and they have assumed frightening proportions in human consciousness today. We must be grateful to M. Albérès for reminding us that they are expressions of a reality which "our society lives on"; that "this attitude is concrete because we can observe it in those who were adolescents during the war." It is this conviction—this fact—which gives his study its fire and truth. He admits with perfect candor that the attitude was *not* prevalent in the nineteenth century and may well disappear with the disappearance of the present generation. In this way, his book achieves balance. He makes no claim for eternal values, expresses no preference as such for our time, even though his genuine interest in, and love for, his century are implicit.

In addition, he is a reliable guide to each author discussed. He has read Pirandello, read Greene, and thought his conclusions through to their depth and interrelationships, rather than rushing to paint the all too frequent "portrait" or to sketch misty memoirs of literary acquaintances. (We would only suggest, in this connection, that he has been perhaps *too* thorough: large numbers of Pirandello or Huxley plots are recounted—albeit succinctly—in order to illustrate sometimes a single phenomenon which is already firmly in the reader's mind.)

M. Albérès has the healthy prejudices of the good critic. He is at considerable pains to show the greatness of the admittedly neglected Pirandello who was the first, he adds, to propose a "psychological vision of man which corresponds to the *absurd* in the metaphysical representation of the world." Yet even as, by his careful analysis, we are generally bound to acquiesce, we wonder why he has omitted (save in a small, deprecatory footnote) all discussion of the writer who, more profoundly and more consistently than any other, has explored the questions of the dissolution of the "authentic" personality, its multiplicity, and its solitude: Marcel Proust. Such works as Gide's *Faux-Monnayeurs* and even his *Journal* (both particularly cited by M. Albérès) remain, to say the least, unsubstantial by comparison.

Following an overly-illustrated chapter on Huxley, whose "withdrawal from reality" he quietly but clearly disapproves, M. Albérès writes with discernment on the imprisonment theme in the work of Julien Green, its links with the constricting hells of the Sartrean or Camusian universe, his heroic but perhaps pitiful attempts to give birth to an ultimately "abortive supernatural," his revolt against his own sense of *fatalité*. His treatment of Graham Greene leads M. Albérès to conclusions which can be properly summed up by the quotations from Pascal given above. And whereas his analysis of the early

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works of Camus seem unexceptional, he does well to show the recent development of his author's mind, Camus' refusal to rest on the laurels of the pure *révolté*, to seek solutions even should they lead the atheist to the approaches of a Christian ethic. *La pensée de Camus* is well described as *crispée*, and doubtless a study of Camus' stylistic evolution (so much more careful and effective than the pyrotechnics and stylistic slice-of-life methods of a Sartre) would help to reveal the newest directions of his philosophy.

The omission of Proust from his book, and the unfavorable reaction to Huxley's "withdrawal," are in themselves less important than in their suggestion of a particular problem which has long confused critics of modern literature. M. Albérès, proud of his writers' or century's courage, is kindly disposed toward those whom he considers to be in "contact with life." This phrase has been on the lips of practically every twentieth century writer; it has never been defined, even by a Rivière, whose entire critical effort was avowedly based upon it. Surely we have overcome the facile conviction that a Proust must somehow lose stature because, in the public or even in the responsible critical mind, he was a "decadent" dweller in a cork-lined, hot-house room, surrounded by his own scribbles and 3:00 a.m. visitors. For it is surely unnecessary to observe that inner tortures are at least the equal of the outer, or that a jealous Swann knew the reality of pain as deeply as any character of Sartre or Malraux. Actually, such comparisons are not merely odious but impossible. Yet M. Albérès is not far from making them when he implies that Huxley's Brahmanism is somehow less vital than the continued struggles of a Malraux or a Julien Green. The danger here lies in the critic's temptation to prescribe a common solution to a common problem. In fact, and quite naturally, the solutions have been various: faced with the horrors of reality, personality dissolution, and the absurd, a Sartre has fallen back upon himself or Communism; a Camus has evolved increasingly intricate plans for revolt; a Huxley has embraced Brahmanism; a Julien Green and a Graham Greene have chosen Catholicism, as had Pascal before them; to say nothing of the mystic Simone Weil, who threw herself into politics, labor, starvation, factories, and (almost) into Catholicism. Who is to say which of these courses is the more honorable or logical? The Existentialist can argue that the Catholic has scattered his life to the winds of a myth; the Catholic replies that the atheistic Existentialist is unintelligent in his denial of, or inability to face, what Bossuet called the "simple truth" of God's existence, and that he takes his anguish so seriously, so unharmoniously, that the Source of anguish finally escapes his thought—a situation which the future may well define as the true tragedy of the Existentialists. For each of these apparent opponents, the other's solution of the absurd may appear to be a *reductio ad absurdum*.

The wisest, in conclusion, are perhaps those who look less madly for remedies and attempt to see these matters with some sense of balance. And if we return to the literary point of view, it will be well to remember Gide's warning that form and excruciatingly careful writing do not entail a sacrifice of content, power, or reality. To each his own particular form of pain and symbolization of pain. If M. Albérès finds torture palpably projected from the house of Green's Adrienne Mesurat, so must he find it from that unforgettable stair that the young Proustian hero climbed slowly to an empty room. Such wisdom seems undeniable, for we associate it with the names of

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the greatest writers of our time—with a Proust, a Gide, or a Faulkner—who had, in some way known only to themselves, to withdraw above the battle in order to describe it and render its truest meaning.

University of California

BRADFORD COOK

Music and Silence

Silent Years: An Autobiography with Memoirs of James Joyce and Our Ireland. By J. F. Byrne. Farrar, Strauss and Young. \$4.00.

Chamber Music. By James Joyce. Edited by William York Tindall. Columbia University Press. \$3.75.

BYRNE, the Cranly of *The Portrait of the Artist*, also lived at No. 7 Eccles Street before coming to America in 1910. No. 7 is the address assigned to Leopold and Mollie Bloom in *Ulysses*. Reared on the very banks of the Liffey, Byrne at eight was known as "the boy who wouldn't tell a lie." Grim, unimaginative frankness persisted as the mark of his temperament, and attracted Joyce to him. But Byrne was also musical, and a chess champion. From the age of ten, he proclaims, he was a complete and utter sceptic, but faithful in all outer conformity. He does not mention how soon he became involved in AE's hermeticism and theosophy, but he indicates that Joyce and he were frequently with AE. As Joyce put it: AEIOU.

Typical of the many episodes which bear on the work of Joyce is Byrne's account of Father Darlington's fire-lighting (p.34). And typical of the surly resentment frequently expressed towards Joyce is his comment:

It was not until seven years afterwards, in 1902, that I committed the blunder of telling Joyce about this incident of Father Darlington and the fire, and years later I regretted my indiscretion when I read how he used, or rather abused, the story in his *Portrait of the Artist*. When I visited Joyce in Paris in 1927 I criticized him for this . . . Joyce agreed with me, saying he was sorry he had written it as he had, and that he was sorry for certain other things he had written. So I said no more.

Byrne was, and is, an intense Irish Nationalist, which Joyce never was. The coolness between Byrne and Joyce may well have been political. But we can be grateful for these memoirs, which give so much of the tone and flavor of Dublin life fifty years ago and which make clear and credible so many facets of the work of Joyce. Mr. Byrne concludes his volume with a section on his invention "chaocipher." On this code he has spent most of his life. *Finnegans Wake* is a simple comic book beside it.

Professor Tindall has done a fine piece of work with *Chamber Music*. Textual variants are given on the page facing the poem in a most readable form. The introduction and commentary are full of information and insights obtained from the rest of Joyce's work, as well as from unpublished letters of Joyce. It is useful to know that the poems were arranged as an autobiographical suite but that the present arrangement is that, not of James, but of his brother, Stanislaus.

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Professor Tindall, who frequently exerts his prowess in critical exegesis, occasionally emits a little crow of scholarly triumph, as follows:

The critics who, detecting an arrangement, devoted intelligence to the relationship of part and part were working in the dark. Unaware that an act of scholarship (such as visiting a library or writing a letter) might help, those critics, thinking they had to do with the beauties of Joyce, seem to have been commending the structural triumphs of his brother . . .

What appears from this study is that *Chamber Music* is not a thin bit of youthful lyricism from the pen of the cynical naturalist but an elaborate and wittily symbolic structure shadowing the progress of the soul. In the pyramidal shape of the suite, lyric xiv is the climax "not only because it celebrates the nearest approach to fulfillment but because it is the most successful embodiment of the girl in all her capacities, those of church, mother, Muse, nation, and soul. To present his approximate possession of these Joyce chose the Song of Solomon again."

Chamber Music is both hieratic and scatological: "In *Ulysses* making water is always a symbol of creation—example, Stephen . . . while listening to his 'wavespeech' or poetry, he thinks of Genesis and Shakespeare, other symbols of creation." Joyce seems to have been equipped with the full range of theosophical esthetic lore at an early age.

Now that Mrs. Joyce is dead Professor Tindall feels free to reveal that as Nora Barnacle she was a chamber maid at Finn's Hotel in Nassau Street. This, he is sure, is a link with *Chamber Music* and *Finnegans Wake*. This may not be a scholarly but may well be a critical suggestion.

St. Michael's College, University of Toronto

H. MARSHALL McLUHAN

The Heart of Things

✓ *No Man is an Island*. By Thomas Merton. Harcourt Brace. \$3.95.

THOMAS MERTON'S new book falls easily within the genre of personal reflections and meditations, as did his former *Seeds of Contemplation*, to which it is a sequel. Yet it differs from the latter in that instead of being an extension of its subject matter, it goes back to cover some of the ground that was taken for granted in the earlier volume, and treats the basic verities on which the spiritual life depends, in a simpler, more fundamental, and more detailed manner. Though chronologically a new book, it is also old, for when a writer of stature produces another book, it is old in the sense that its basic ideas, however traditional, are leavened by the richness of its author's mind, and take its unique texture, however varied his angles of approach and certain the maturity of his grasp. Though in form and content the present volume is not autobiographical, it nevertheless lays bare the characteristic verve and élan of Merton's inner life with its gift of articulating the highest spiritual truths in modern idiom. "The meditations in this book are intended to be at the same time traditional, and modern, and my own."

Although subjects are considered under sixteen chapter-headings, the book,

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as its title suggests, is a unity. "No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main," admirably echoes (though the words be John Donne's), the "We are all members one of another," of St. Paul.

Merton states in his prologue that he would have his reader discover the *meaning of life*, his salvation, and "by salvation I mean first of all the full discovery of who he himself really is . . . then something of the fulfillment of his own God-given powers, in the love of others and of God." This is what every man is looking for in life. Though this is what Merton is about in this book, he is not so smug as to suppose his answers to be final ones to final questions, or even to face them in the most fundamental terms possible. "But at least I can hope they are thoughts that I have honestly thought out for myself and that, for better or for worse, mean something in my own life and in the lives of those I live with." We are grateful for his candor and his answers. In showing us the problem of salvation as it is posed in various areas of spiritual living, he makes clear that it has its validity and makes sense only "in relation to the central reality which is God's love living and acting in those whom He has incorporated in His Christ." In fact, nothing at all makes sense, says Merton, unless we admit with John Donne that "No man is an island."

As one might expect, Merton in his first chapter sets himself at the very heart of things, *love*, which "can be kept only by being given away." As he elucidates its essence, its sharing, its selflessness, its perfect charity, which to attain "I must be true to them, to myself, and to God," he is strong in his censure of selfish love disguised as unselfish, which fails to respect the rights of the beloved to be an autonomous person. He is likewise eloquent on the love of friendship, "a holy thing," yet cautions against treating too many men as intimate friends, for it is not possible to be intimate with more than very few, since with only a few in this world we have practically everything in common. And though the lives of all we meet are woven into our destiny, together with the lives of many we shall never know, "certain ones, very few, are our close friends," with whom we have more in common and more to share; hence we can love them with a special selfless perfection. These "are inseparable from our own destiny, and therefore, our love for them is especially holy: it is a manifestation of God in our lives."

But one cannot speak of this book without pointing up significant topics which Merton discusses with special insight and emphasis. In his chapter on "Conscience, Freedom, and Prayer," in drawing the distinction between the moral and psychological consciences, he speaks of the latter's role in the aesthetic experience, in which, though secondary in the life of the spirit, it is nevertheless able to attain some of its highest and most perfect fulfillments for

Art enables us to find ourselves and lose ourselves at the same time. The mind that responds to the intellectual and spiritual values that lie hidden in a poem, a painting, or a piece of music, discovers a spiritual vitality that lifts it above itself, takes it out of itself, and makes it present to itself on a level of being that it did not know it could ever achieve.

Nor need one rule this out of his prayer; in fact, it will have its repercussions, and it is important to be able to respond to such flashes of aesthetic intuition, since

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Art and prayer have never been conceived by the Church as enemies, and where the Church has been austere it has only been because she meant to insist on the essential difference between art and entertainment. The austerity, gravity, sobriety, and strength of Gregorian chant, of twelfth-century Cistercian architecture, of Carolingian miniscule script, have much to say about the life of prayer, and they had much to do, in the past, with forming the prayer and the religious consciousness of saints.

For art frees souls from concentration upon themselves as well as from mere speculation about technical values in the arts and in asceticism. "One can be at the same time a technical expert in chant and a man of prayer, but the moments of prayer and of technical criticism do not usually coincide."

True to the Christian humanist tradition in which Merton has always solidly stood, throughout these spiritual studies he is adamant in maintaining the inherent goodness of all created things. Perhaps the initial step in our spiritual climbing is to learn to appreciate and respond to reality rightly, for if it revolts us, if we merely turn away from it in disgust, how shall we consecrate it, how make of it a gift to God and to men?

Sharp and lucid is his focus on suffering: "The Word of the Cross" with which man's life is so richly inlaid, which the Christian must not only accept but make holy, and of which he must have much more than a philosophy. Suffering has no power or value of its own, except as a test of faith. And here is one of the most luminous and searching passages in the entire book:

When a man suffers he is most alone . . . what shall we answer when we come to be examined by pain? Without God we are no longer persons.

We lose our manhood and our dignity . . .

When suffering comes to put the question "Who are you?" we must be able to answer distinctly, and give our own name . . . we must express the very depths of what we are, what we have desired to be, what we have become. All these things are sifted out of us by pain.

Its effect upon us will depend on what we love: if ourselves, selfishly, suffering is merely hateful; if others, and we suffer for them, even without a supernatural love for other men in God, it can give us a certain nobility and goodness, bringing out something fine in our nature and giving glory to God who made man greater than suffering. When suffering turns us in upon ourselves, it is useless. And Merton is wise in acknowledging that "sometimes no explanation is sufficient to account for it. The only decent thing is silence—and the sacraments." And with the finality of a closing cadence: "The Church is very humble and very reserved in her treatment of suffering. She is never sanctimonious or patronizing. She is never sentimental. She knows what suffering is."

Nor, says Merton, is the spiritual life a negation of matter; it must be spiritual in all its wholeness, our whole being, body and soul, elevated by grace. "The saint, therefore, is sanctified not only by fasting when he should fast but also by eating when he should eat." He denounces the sterility and absurdity of self-denial practiced for the wrong reasons, or, worse still, without any valid reason at all. "If my soul silences my flesh by an act of violence, my flesh will take revenge on the soul . . ." One of the chief tasks of Christian asceticism is to make our life and our body valuable enough to be offered to God in sacrifice. "An asceticism that makes all pleasure seem gross and disgusting . . . is a per-

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version of the nature which God made good . . . there is no necessary connection between sin and pleasure . . . Pleasure which is good, has more to do with virtue than it has with sin." Nor need we walk into heaven over the ruins of our bodies, though some saints apparently did. But if they did, and were really saints, it was not because their flesh was destroyed by their spirit but because God's love, possessing them, led them into a situation in which the renunciation of health or of life itself was necessary for the sake of some greater good. "Asceticism is utterly useless if it turns us into freaks."

After absorbing the spiritual wisdom of these chapters one is still tempted to state that perhaps Merton's sharpest insights occur in that magnificent study of "Vocation," which to him is "not a sphinx's riddle, which he must solve in one guess or else perish," for some find that after many wrong guesses "their paradoxical vocation is to go through life guessing wrong." He points up the vocation of the priest who "makes no sense at all in the world except to perpetuate in it the sacrifice of the Cross, and to die with Christ on the Cross for the love of those whom God would have him save." Too, the one thing that truly makes a monk what he is "is this irrevocable break with the world . . . in order to seek God in solitude." But perhaps his most piercing insights are those on the beauty of marriage. Whereas the religious life is a special way of sanctity, reserved for comparatively few, the ordinary way to the fullness of Christian life and holiness is marriage, wherein most men and women will become saints. And one feels a certain well-justified sharpness in his retort to such Christians as not called to religion or to the priesthood say of themselves, "I have no vocation!" "What a mistake!" says Merton:

They have a wonderful vocation, all the more wonderful because of its relative freedom and lack of formality. For the "society" which is the family lives beautifully by its own spontaneous inner laws. It has no need of codified rule and custom. Love is its rule, and all its customs are the living expression of deep and sincere affection.

And he adds that this "vocation" in a certain sense is more desirable than any other, because of this very spontaneity and spirit of freedom and union in charity so easily accessible for the ordinary man. Married people should thank God that their vocation, with all its responsibilities and hardships, "is a safe and sure way to become holy without being warped or shriveled up by pious conventionalism," since "the formalism and artificiality which creep into religious communities are with difficulty admitted into the circle of a family where powerful human values triumphantly resist the incursions of falsity."

For these observations alone the volume would be of high value, for Merton sets truth directly at variance with the distorted ideas that are only too often entertained by even the best meaning and "holiest" persons. For "all vocations are intended by God to manifest His love in the world," and their difference lies only in the different ways in which each enables men to "discover God's love, appreciate it, respond to it, and share it with other men."

Chapter by chapter new vistas open to basic truths under such headings as "Sentences on Hope," "Mercy," "The Measure of Charity," "Being and Doing," and "The Inward Solitude." There is something for everyone. In fact, one might go through the book and make a rich gathering of spiritual aphorisms and counsels. And, as in his other writing, Merton is an expert in the probing of

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our insincerities and selfishness: how we distort by fear, anxiety, greed, ambition, and our hopeless need for pleasure, the image of reality that is reflected in our minds. Here perhaps the probing knife is keenest, and each can answer in his own soul:

Half the civilized world makes a living by telling lies. Advertising, propaganda, and all the other forms of publicity that have taken the place of truth have taught men to take it for granted that they can tell other people whatever they like provided that it sounds plausible and evokes some kind of shallow emotional response.

Contrary to what Americans have thought, he says, we are not at all protected against the advertising business by our sophistication:

If we only knew how naive our sophistication really is! It protects us against nothing. We love the things we pretend to laugh at. We would rather buy a bad toothpaste that is well advertised than a good one that is not advertised at all. Most Americans wouldn't be seen dead in a car their neighbors had never heard of.

The problem of sincerity is, in the end, a problem of love; its secret is to be sought not in a philosophical love for abstract truth but in a love for real people and real things—a love for God apprehended in the reality around us. In fact, he insists that the whole problem of our time is not a lack of knowledge but lack of love. "If men only loved one another they would have no difficulty in trusting one another and in sharing the truth with one another."

The psychological impotence of our enraged generation must be traced to the overwhelming accusation of insincerity which every man and woman has to confront, in the depths of his own soul, when he seeks to love merely for his own pleasure.

This is a book of meditation for *everyman*. It is to be read not only once, but to be opened at random, as it were, in trying situations, as one might open the Scriptures or *The Imitation of Christ*, for light and spiritual counsel. Its writing is tight and precise, as is necessary to a work dealing with the basic spiritual truths; yet, being Merton's it is delightfully readable. It is a major work.

SISTER M. THERESA, S.D.S.

Out of Their Treasure

Legende vom Herrn. By Walter von Molo. Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag.

Der Reporter Gottes. Eine Hörfolge in zehn Kapiteln. By Stefan Andres. Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Josef Knecht.

A FEW YEARS AGO the *Herder Korrespondenz* published an article entitled *Die Gestalt Jesu Christi im modernen Roman*. Anyone interested in nonscriptural and fictional lives of Jesus will probably find himself accounted for in that article, since it deals with numerous examples of, and a wide variety of critical judgments upon, this recently quite popular product.

For fifty years, says *Herder*, we have been getting novels about the Nazarene.

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Before that we had the scholarly biographies coming from the liberal academic world of the nineteenth century; and, before that, we had the books of largely affective devotion. Whatever may be said about biographies and devotional manuals—and both have persisted into the present—the novels have suffered from an intrinsic flaw: the contrived word of man falls short of the inspired word of God. A legitimate artistic procedure becomes, when confronted with the Gospel, a means to a certain falsity, the falsity which would make of the Incarnation a complicated literary discovery rather than a simple historical fact. These books are at their worst when they strive to improve upon the realism of Scripture.

Neither von Molo's nor Andres' book has created, nor seems likely to create, much stir in the United States. Two years ago, however, the *Legende vom Herrn* had reached 26,000 copies in Germany, and *Der Reporter Gottes*—at that time just out—7,000. Both afford an instructive contrast in ways of communicating the Gospel.

"Every scribe instructed in the kingdom of heaven is like to a man that is a householder, who bringeth forth out of his treasure new things and old" (Matt. 13:52). In some measure every writer or preacher who would communicate the Gospel must combine new things and old in order to reword a timeless instruction. This is no doubt the aim of the man who risks an historical novel about Jesus, as it also is of the man who risks depicting Jesus in modern surroundings—the aim, therefore, of Walter von Molo, as well as of Stefan Andres.

Von Molo prefaces his book with a disarming note:

Dieses Buch ist kein Christus-Buch in dem Sinne, dass es Christus umfassen möchte, es ist eine Legende, die den Saum seines Gewandes berührt.

A welcome disclaimer, but quite a claim even so; for the modest restriction to "the hem of His garment" apparently means, in the result, taking *the* narrative of all time and interlarding its divinely selected episodes with all-too-humanly invented situations. The best that can be said is that Christ's own words are art tampered with the least.

Tampered with they are, nevertheless, and added to. The apostles are shoved about like so many mechanical aids to the painful labor of spelling things out, and thus we learn, for example, of St. Matthew's slow wit:

Es war kein Laut in der Finsternis zu hören, dann aber widersprach Matthäus: "Wenn du so denkst, Herr, dann kommt das Reich deines Vaters niemals!"

"Nur so kommt es, Matthäus."

"Willst du am Ende auch den Römern und den Herodianern, welche unseren Zug zersprengten, vergeben?" fragte Matthäus.

"Ich bin nicht gekommen, um äusserlicher Dinge willen, das könntest du füglich gemerkt haben; ich habe Gestalt angenommen, um euch selig zu machen!"

"Das fasse ich nicht," sprach Matthäus und hämmerte sich mit den Fäusten die Stirn, "das werde ich nie, niemals verstehen! Wie willst du siegen, wenn du allen deinen Feinden vergibst?"

"Der Vater hat alle Macht, mit dem Seinen zu tun, was er will."

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Die Sterne kreisten und legten sich ehrerbietig am Rande des Himmels nieder. Erst nach langer Zeit liess sich Matthäus wieder vernehmen:

"Wenn du das den Leuten sagst, dann wird gar bald niemand mehr arbeiten."

"Wer um des Lohnes willen arbeitet, Matthäus, der hat ohne jeden Lohn gearbeitet; wie oft soll ich dir das sagen?"

"Das ist alles sehr schwer, Herr! Deine Lehre heisst soviel, als dass sich der Mensch von allem abkehren soll, was er bis heute als richtig ansah und gemacht hat?"

"So dein Herz das erkannt hat, Matthäus, bist du auf dem richtigen Weg."

This is a plausible terminus, but the conversation goes on. The book abounds in such passages—is, in fact, one great big such passage. However infelicitous the reconstruction may seem to us, we must admit one thing. To dare to find and fill out gaps in the Gospel takes courage and reverence. Von Molo has both.

So also has Stefan Andres—but with a difference. In his vigorous book—a dramatic radio phantasy—a reporter tells, and gets other people to tell, how the impact of Christ's coming strikes humanity at any time. The ten chapters, each with a central idea, present ten encounters between the power of the Gospel and the power of some idol. The imagination may be clumsy at times, but the thought is always related to the scriptural source. Rather than an attempt at realistic expansion of Christ's words in their Biblical setting, there is an imaginative expansion of setting and words alike, and the result is a fresh and lively homily in radio script, a paraphrase deftly combining unabashed originality with recognizable authenticity.

Thus Christ appears as a candidate in an oral examination:

PROFESSOR: . . . Aber allmählich muss die Menschheit erwachsen genug sein, um den ganzen lyrischen und mythologischen Plunder aus der Wissenschaft hinauszuerwerfen—und damit aus dem Denken, und damit aus der Welt überhaupt.

KANDIDAT: Wenn ihr nicht werdet wie die Kinder, könnt ihr nicht in das Gottesreich eingehen.

PROFESSOR: Apropos Gottesreich! Definieren Sie uns einmal exakt, was das ist!

KANDIDAT: Exakt? Herr Professor, das Gottesreich ist gleich einem Senfkörnlein, einem Sauerteig, einer kostbaren Perle, einem Hochzeitsmahl—aber es ist nicht gleich einer mathematischen Formel. Infolgedessen wird es nicht durch die Schärfe des Verstandes begriffen, sondern—

PROFESSOR: Durch das Gemüt?

KANDIDAT: Durch den ganzen Menschen.

And the Candidate continues for a page in exposition of the nature of man. But as a rule this book employs what we might call the reflection technique. *Der Mensch*, said Schiller, echoing St. Paul, *is geboren, Beleuchtetes zu sehen, nicht das Licht*. This we learn about Our Lady by studying His effect on others—upon St. Matthew, for instance:

REPORTER: Darf ich Ihnen eine Frage stellen, Herr Levi? Haben Sie, als Sie sich hinter Ihrem Zolttisch erhoben, gewusst, wer dieser Mensch ist, oder haben Sie zumindest darüber nachgedacht?

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LEVI: Aber wie wäre das denn möglich gewesen? Ich war doch voll von ihm, so voll, dass es in mir gar keinen Platz für eine Frage gab. Fragt denn ein Verdurstender, der endlich einen Quell findet: was ist das für ein Wasser? Er trinkt es und erbebt bei jedem Schluck.

REPORTER: Und wie lange sind Sie nun in seiner Gesellschaft?

LEVI: Fast zwei Jahre.

REPORTER: Und noch immer haben Sie nicht über ihn nachgedacht?

LEVI: Es ist unmöglich, über ihn nachzudenken. Man geht ihm nach, das ist alles. Nur manchmal, wenn die andern es bezweifeln, dass er aus der Höhe stammt, wenn er selbst uns fragt, was wir von ihm denken, dann antworten wir—aber nicht aus dem Verstand. Wir antworten, wie wir es wissen, wie wir es erfahren haben—im Herzen. So hat es Simon gesagt: Du bist der Gesalbte Gottes und sein Sohn!

Man geht ihm nach, das ist alles. Doesn't this sentence say more about St. Matthew and about Our Lord than the entire passage quoted from von Molo? And it is simply derived, not elaborately contrived, from Scripture.

The book ends with a long speech of the Voice from the Cross: *Es ist nicht wahr, dass mich die Juden töteten, es waren die Menschen* (p. 219). The world has not changed in twenty centuries. It is still man who makes a wreck of human life. And it is still only the Cross which can save it. Stefan Andres has held the reader's attention to the end, and the end is authentic.

In conclusion, a few remarks about language. Others have noticed before this that World War II and the ensuing occupation have wrought changes in German style. Both these books sometimes sound American! "*Das könntest du füglich gemerkt haben,*" Jesus is made to say in a passage quoted above. Surely "*Das hättest du füglich merken können*" would (before 1939) have better befitted the dignity of the speaker. Whence comes the astonishing verb, *konfrontieren*? This occurs in the publishers' blurb on the Andres jacket and several times in the book—*Konfrontierung*, even, on page 64. Yet actual English does not quite make the grade: when Andres wants to have a chorus of Englishmen quote from St. John (p. 117), he has them say, "In the beginning has been the word!" Such things add to the general discomfort. The books are earnest, but not polished.

CHRISTOPHER HUNTINGTON

Answering Back

Catholic Approaches to Modern Dilemmas and Eternal Truths. Edited by Elizabeth Pakenham. Farrar, Straus, and Cudahy. \$3.50.

IN THIS collection of essays a courageous attempt is made to answer the challenge of our day to Christian doctrine and discipline. Lady Pakenham tells us in the Introduction that "those subjects which have been selected have been chosen for their prickly nature." Revelation is limited. "Our Lord has only revealed what was necessary for us to know in order to get to Heaven. He did not reveal everything." Consequently there are enough problems still remaining to challenge our intelligence. Some of these are indicated in the titles of the various essays that make up the volume: "The Mystery of Evil" (Father D'Arcy),

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"The Uncommitted Mind" (Douglas Woodruff), "The Catholic in Politics" (Frank Pakenham), "Divisiveness in the United States" (Wm. F. Lynch, S.J.), "Physics and Philosophy" (G. Temple), "The Church and Sex" (E. B. Straus), "Marriage and the Family" (Lady Pakenham), "Problems of Education and Upbringing" (Nicolette Gray), "Art and Sacrament" (David Jones), "An Approach to Africa" (David Mathew).

A journal like *Renaissance* cannot pretend to scientific, ethical, and theological expertness. Besides, a book of miscellaneous essays by different writers is almost impossible to review. The reviewer therefore takes the liberty of determining his own choices. It happens, however, that three of the best and longest essays in the volume are also the most interesting.

Douglas Woodruff argues with the fashionable view, perhaps best represented in literature by the late André Gide, that man must resist the temptation to engage himself but must instead play the perennial skeptic. We are really back to Socrates' argument with the sophists in a modern form. As Woodruff says, the question of intellectual commitment is a permanent question for all men everywhere, and involves the very nature of human action:

The man who considers himself too highly educated, enlightened, and intellectual ever to dream of committing himself to accepting anything as certainly and unchangeably true, who builds his morality on personal relationships and subjective judgments of values, leaves himself singularly defenceless against the onslaughts of much cruder violent men who proclaim their own subjective sense of values, and say it is as good as his and better because stronger.

The uncommitted mind thus becomes easy prey for political and economic tyrants.

But there is an equal danger in the over-committed, or prejudiced mind, as Father Lynch points out in an essay that deserves wide dissemination and study. "Divisiveness in the United States" is one of the best things that has come to this reviewer's attention on this thorny subject, and he cannot resist quoting from it at length.

Father Lynch premises his study by stating that we do have a potentially serious problem of divisiveness on our hands, and that if this problem is not solved and well solved in the United States, it is not likely to be solved anywhere in the world. He then analyzes the two principal and related forms of divisive mentality: (1) that of the clear idea, which makes a fetish of remaining isolated and unpenetrated by anything save its own self and its clarity; (2) the univocal mind in American civilization. (Father Lynch does not say so, but it occurs to me that our eighteenth century origins as a nation have a lot to do with this rationalistic tendency.)

The addiction to the clear idea, says Father Lynch, "is a generator of easy passions and partisanship, and wishes to spare itself the effort of thought that is involved in relating itself to other ideas." An example is the opposition of the nationalist and the internationalist. The nationalist assaults all ideas of international organization *tout court*; the internationalist is "completely univocal and simplistic in his thinking and plans for world unity."

My own point is that all such pairs of ideas should invade each other's boundaries, constantly, perpetually, in some way from morning to night,

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being mutually interpenetrating, the one nourishing the other, as if it were creating the other. And my further point is that this fusion requires constant thought of the most difficult kind, constant effort, constant discipline, if they are to be kept together and in the right balance.

He analyzes other such pairs of opposing polarities of the clear idea: freedom and security, the individual and the common good, the intellectual and the masses. At this point I must insert another quotation:

The people have no right to band together in a formless mass, as a kind of self-protection for all and a common, consoling defense against the light of the intelligence and a true culture, branding all who would criticize them, or help them, as egg heads and do-gooders and bleeding hearts. They have no right, before God or man, to become anti-intellectual.

This needed saying, in the face of the stupid attitude of many against that intelligence which the Church has always defended and to the primacy of which in the natural order Christian culture testifies. At the same time, the intellectuals must be discriminated among themselves, and the true distinguished from the fake.

The second type of divisive mentality, the univocal mind, is concerned with reducing all men and things to the unity of the minimal level:

I would say that the ordinary human way of working out the problem of unity is to seek the highest values and try to unify a nation around them. But with this univocal mentality, quite the opposite happens. A least common denominator of unity becomes the blazing ideal on every level of life, and if there is something better in the order of values and truths outside of it, so much the worse for it. It is presently not a unifying force. Therefore out with it.

This is really un-American, though a man like Blanshard proposes it in the name of Americanism, and it is a widespread reductive tendency sometimes mistaken for democracy. The American principle of unity, as Lynch points out, is not ethnic or cultural, but one that penetrates to the natural law of the human person "in his bed-rock nature." The univocal mind, on the other hand, makes for a totalitarianism of the least common denominator.

An essay to be chewed and digested.

Father Lynch does not mention it in his paper, but the polar opposition between art and prudence is another example of the tyranny of clear ideas and of the univocal mind. David Jones devotes his essay "Art and Sacrament" to this inquiry. He finds the root of the matter in man's sapience, which commits him in action to *prudentia*, in thinking and making to *ars*:

There is a common cause preventing the animals from being either prudential beings or artists. This common cause reversed secures for man his unique title, *poeta*, and his inescapable commitment to Prudentia.

Art is gratuitous; so too was the Creation. There is a sense in which "the gratuitousness in the operations of the Creator is reflected in the art of the creature." Art is a species of sign-making; so too is sacrament. "We are committed to body and by the same token we are committed to *Ars*, as to sign and sacrament."

Since man is a rational being, but at the same time a corporeal one (unlike the angels), his unique artistic faculty must work in a twofold way. All art is

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abstract, since it is intellectual; and all art represents, since it is material making. Another clear polarity ruined.

At the end of his essay Mr. Jones is troubled about the status of art today and its future tomorrow. "How are we to reconcile man-the-artist, man the sign-maker or sacrament-maker, with the world in which we live today?" His faith in the stability of man's nature commits him to the view that man remains man-the-artist, in spite of technology and technocracy.

This essay is written in a peculiar style. Its discourse is intelligible and its premises are sound, but it is not ready reading.

Of the other papers in the volume, Professor Temple's on "Physics and Philosophy," which will interest the informed layman as well as the scientist, and Professor Straus' dialogue, "The Church and Sex," are to this reviewer the most noteworthy.

Altogether this book is an unusual achievement, which shows that Catholic thinkers are not necessarily muscle-bound.

VICTOR M. HAMM

The Timeless Rivers

The Four Rivers of Paradise. By Helen C. White. Macmillan. \$3.50.

CONSIDERED seriously as an art form the historical novel demands technical maturity such as few ordinary novelists possess. It requires, on the part of the artist, both an emotive and a referential approach. Referentially, the historical novelist must respect facts. He may not distort history for propagandistic or artistic ends. This postulates research, and research is never easy for the creative artist. After the research, and still within the referential problem, there is the task of pruning and ordering data—a task which depends upon both creative insight and academic distance and which cannot be hurried. Good historical novels are not written: they are rewritten. Great historical novels like *Kristin Lavransdatter* are not only tributes to art. They are massive monuments to courageous, patient synthesis.

But an historical novel is semantically emotive: it is on the side of myth as opposed to mathematics. Whatever it may "mean" in the final analysis, it must mean it through artistic, emotive manipulation of character and conflict. For this reason the historical novelist reveals data gradually through the senses of his characters (there is no surer way of killing off readers of historical fiction than by inundating them with unabsorbed data). This is why he wrestles with the problem of language, reaching a compromise which will suggest how people spoke in other days rather than actually reproduce their speech. For the same reason the historical novelist tries to get deep inside his historical protagonist or he creates a sympathetic character whom history does not record but whom it might very well have observed. A synthetic character serves to tie historical events together. He can be conveniently located at climactic scenes. He is often the inexplicable unifying factor in an historical novel. Through him the reader lives history and experiences purgation.

Helen White knows all this. Hers has been a distinguished academic career and a very respectable creative one. She may not be so completely and thoroughly at home with fifth-century Rome as she was with the medieval worlds

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of *A Watch in the Night* and *Not Built with Hands*, but her research and organization are more than ample to support her story. Rome, from its narrow streets to its majestic forum, comes slowly to life. The Campania countryside is brilliantly evoked. The gladiatorial games, senatorial intrigue, the religious cauldron that was the Eternal City in the year 404, these are presented skillfully. We have little trouble believing that the important historical characters—St. Augustine, St. Jerome, Pope Innocent, the Emperor Honorius, the famous general Stilicho—were more or less as Miss White says they were.

The protagonist, young Hilary of Bordeaux, has been given two years in Rome by his rich grandfather preparatory to his taking over the family estates (Hilary's father has run away to join the monks in far-off Dacia). Hilary is alternately fascinated and repelled by the Eternal City. He meets pagans and fellow Christians, is attracted to Gaia, a beautiful divorcee, and becomes a friend of Stilicho, the brilliant general who stands between Rome and the barbarians. He watches the decay of the once-great city but is absent when Rome finally falls to Alaric. At Jerusalem, where he meets St. Jerome, he learns of the suicide of Gaia. Then, after a talk with St. Augustine at Hippo, his footsteps turn home to the burned-out chapel of his barbarian-encircled estates: he will follow the same great river of Paradise his father followed and be an apostle to the hordes who must be converted if Christianity—and civilization—is to survive.

Miss White tells the story with great restraint and with little overt drama and conflict. There are few direct scenes. The frontiers crumble, the army revolts, a queen is dismissed, a general dies gallantly, the Goths wipe out Hilary's family—and there is often a piece of parchment or a veil of conversation between the reader and the drama. We look with anticipation to the scene of the fall of Rome (the cultural and emotional climax of the book), recalling all the memorable pictures of a stricken city we have read. Will Miss White be influenced by Josephus? Will she compete with Manzoni? Will she show the influence of the novelists of the second world war? But instead of direct presentation of the scene, Hilary, who has been carefully shunted to Jerusalem, pieces together a tantalizing mosaic of the city's fall from the accounts of survivors. One wonders if Miss White is trying to give her novel some of the qualities of a classical play, where much of the dramatic action is over before the curtain rises and all the violence occurs offstage.

A drama, however, makes particular demands upon characterization. But in *The Four Rivers of Paradise* Hilary seems to be emotionally anemic and it is difficult to understand what important personages see in him and why they feel impelled to keep feeding him classified information. It is a remarkable commentary on Miss White's insight into her major character and her tenacity as an artist that she very nearly succeeds in overcoming what seems to be a defect. Before the book ends, Hilary somehow undergoes a metamorphosis into a more credible human being.

It is obvious that Helen White is not trying to write the usual kind of historic novel. What then is she attempting? Perhaps something akin to what Willa Cather attempted in *Death Comes for the Archbishop*: the abstraction of a mood, the stylistic interpretation of a moment in history or of an ideal that is closer to sculpture or music than to narrative fiction. Certainly there is some suggestion of this in the title of the novel; and obviously the meaning

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of the book, what Hilary comes at length to know, is that empires come and go but Christ endures. Nothing that happens in history (not even the climactic fall of Rome) is as important as the Truth which rides quietly through it. It may well be that Miss White has preferred to follow that truth through a moment in history and to capture its mood even as the unknown artist captured something beautiful and timeless when he painted in the apse of the monastery at Nola the four rivers of Paradise.

St. John's University

THOMAS J. BEARY

Tomb and Birch

La Corne du Grand Pardon. By Claude Vigée. Paris: Seghers.

TO MOST of those who have read the previous volume of Claude Vigée this collection of his latest poems must come as a surprise: it hardly seems possible that two books so different could be written by the same person. In the *Aurore Souterraine*, the reader was overwhelmed by an atmosphere of Greek serenity, a sure and confident possession of all human values. The poet sang in the rich orchestration of a triumphant, timeless wisdom; he appeared to hold the keys of existence; his grip on the obedient globe was firm and magical, as that of Orpheus on the kingdom of sounds and animals. He was happy, loving and loved.

In this collection, on the other hand, we face a changed poetical profile. Something must have happened in the last three years to our optimistic author. He suddenly opens the dams of an entirely new outlook, his voice becomes tragic and mythical. We have the impression that the fastidious palaces of his primary visions had crumbled to pieces under the shocking impact of a universal inner earthquake. Claude Vigée, in his ascending career, now confronts for the first time the problems of a suffering mankind, of a broken finite existence; he recognizes the reality of tears as well as of smiles. What is more: behind the skin of the modern man he discovers with elementary force the past and heredity, his Jewish, Old Testament ancestry, like an adult in pain whose lips unconsciously cry back for consoling strength.

Who could have imagined in 1952, date of the *Aurore Souterraine*, that in a couple of months the creative synthesis of our masculine poet and his apparently final message about the radical goodness of our planet and its destinies would undergo such a metamorphosis, such an abrupt widening in the viewpoint that admits depths and crises hitherto ignored or misjudged?

Yet this is what happened, and the impartial critic must be glad for it. This submarine journey of a yearning soul has a rare significance in the world of American letters: Claude Vigée has grown into full literary maturity. Perhaps more than any contemporary poet, he has dared to follow his genius wherever it led him, and he dared to go to the end of the paths according to the laws of his seemingly capricious and yet so utterly logical inner voices. Here is an artist who, leaving behind the unified but necessarily less comprehensive ideals of his youth, proceeds to face the whole horizon even when it means anguish, awakening or re-evaluation of lifelong orientations.

Let us review shortly the phases of Claude Vigée's latest synthesis. First,

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the poet beomes aware of something wrong with the universe in which he was until now so contented. Something, an undefinable "presence" is missing from it, as if the roots of reality were eluding us exactly at the moment when we seem to touch them intimately. Nature, poetry, mankind, our greatest inspirations on earth contain something blind, petrified, dead in the very core of their essence. "Chaque homme est en exil (surrounded by the) pesante odeur amère de la terre," cries out the poet for whom even his art thinned out into an "enfer de poésie." We are living, he adds, like fossilized bones in the Valley of Josaphat, in a cosmic cemetery, amidst the lifeless stars waiting for a miraculous resurrection, a second creation. The end of the human search for the meaning of the Divine Comedy is a dead end in a "false universe."

Or is there, perhaps, a chance for an alternative? Fortunately, yes. For in the midst of this total despair the poet, like prophets of old, unexpectedly notices a sign, a symbol of hope: a blossoming birch. If the inanimate branch in the dessert can come back to life at the touch of spring, why not the petrified universe of mortals? Dark wombs again can produce a child, poetic words can again regain their primeval magic, and love too, can re-interpret the secrets of belonging in the freshly born generations.

"La terre est une jeune femme qui se sait lourde d'un fils: sa grossesse a muri au milieu des tombeaux, elle enfante la vie aux portes de la mort. Le coq rouge est debout sur la montagne claire cette année à Jerusalem qui s'étend par toute la terre Israel surgit de ses cendres comme le phénix du troisième jour.

This restoration of all created things into their original innocence does not come about, however, without effort. The earth cannot be again the "mirror of eternity" without a purification similar to that used in the Old Testament liturgy on the day of the Great Forgiveness. At the "corne du Grand Pardon" Israel, America, Europe must throw away the idols of Tare, return to the sources of creation, to the transparency of the first Garden of Eden, to the naked veracity of suffering and death. Then and only then will be revealed the lost "presence" in the world.

Le tremblement de la corne divulgue la présence faite visible il descelle les catacombes ou se transmet par-dessous l'histoire la vie morte de l'exil."

The high-priest of that day will be no one else than the poet. For it is in his palimpsests that the supreme alchemy of the cosmic palingenesis will take place:

"dans le poëms les décombes fluants retrouvent l'ordre originel
ils edifient la maison claire du réel-
lieu élu et habitable pour l'homme nouveau qui connaît l'eau et la terre."

Adding a last personal note, this critic sincerely hopes that Claude Vigée will continue his unwavering search for reality and truth. Who knows if, in view of his unparalleled poetical honesty in asking the remaining questions, one day he will be able to enter from the Old into the Final Testament where waiting for him are all the answers and where he will meet the "Absent Prince" to whom his catechumen poems are so fittingly dedicated.

Our Lady of Victory College

REV. GEORGE FERENCY, S.O. CIST.

BOOK REVIEWS

Unfurnished

The Empty Room. By Vincent McCrossen. Philosophical Library. \$2.75.

VINCENT McCROSSEN'S *The Empty Room* can be best understood in relationship to *The New Renaissance* in which he focused his literary and historical attention upon growing signs of spiritual re-integration. In *The Empty Room*, however, Professor McCrossen turns his attention to the very dislocations which have made the spiritual renaissance a necessity.

The book is challenging but lacks many of the insights of *The New Renaissance*. Reminiscent of Péguy and even of Bloy, the pages resound with an ardent cry of faith hurled challengingly out at spiritual vacuity. The author deals with generalizations, which, for a cultural historian, are indeed a proper commodity. But the generalizations, especially those on religion, are shot through with predilections in areas where debate is desirable and finality dubious.

Not all irreligion is due to hardness of heart. In this sense, the author seems to embody the attitude described by Reinhold Niebuhr when he wrote in *A Protestant Looks at Catholics*: "I frankly cannot find, in some modern Catholic theory, an adequate consideration of Aquinas' warning that matters of application become increasingly hazardous the further they are removed from principle and involved in adjustment to historical contingency."

It is to be presumed that the author is referring to matters of his own style when he tells us that his work is rooted in poetry. Indeed, deep familiarity with the poetic tradition of world literature is everywhere exhibited. Even the text itself, especially when the sacred mysteries of religion are approached, achieves a prose-poetic quality. On the other hand, an overuse of alternate repetition and ellipsis of grammatical elements tends at times to monotony. This minor stylistic defect should not deter the reader, however; the book should be read—and discussed.

St. Michaels College

JOHN J. DEVLIN JR.

The Grass Is Greener

W. B. Yeats Letters to Katherine Tynan. Edited by Roger McHugh. McMullen. \$4.50.

TURNING the pages of a family album can be a torturous experience—faces of the days of childhood and adolescence have a way of contrasting unpleasantly with countenances known only in maturity or old age. Between the self-portraits of Yeats and Tynan in these letters and the likenesses that emerge from later work, there is a smaller contrast. Here is Tynan of the days of poetic promise that was never fulfilled, and Yeats before he lost himself in a mist of obscurity mistaken for mysticism—a poet's only refuge when he has rejected the authentic veil of mystery in which Truth is clothed.

The title of this volume places the emphasis—deliberately, no doubt—on Yeats rather than on Katherine Tynan. So I shall here give more attention to him than to her. Had Tynan followed the advice of young Yeats in these letters—that Ireland is the proper source of inspiration for an Irish poet—

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she might have been a greater poet, as Yeats might have been, if he had followed his own advice. But both poets were fatally *Anglo-Irish*: Yeats by inheritance, and Tynan by unhappy choice or, perhaps, by deliberate affectation. As a consequence, in the work of neither poet is the religious faith of Ireland the force that it must be in a poet whose work is authentically Irish. In this matter Tynan's gaze was deliberately diverted; Yeats's sight was congenitally defective. Otherwise Tynan could never have written "Maturity," nor could Yeats have written "Countess Kathleen."

When the editor of this volume, who has done a masterful job, speaks of Yeats as a major poet and of Tynan as a minor one, he raises a question which *adhuc sub iudice lis est*: What is a major poet and what is a minor one? More difficult still: who are the major poets and who are the minor ones? Tynan was undoubtedly a minor poet—no ignoble title. But was Yeats a major one—to be named with Chaucer, Shakespeare and Milton?

There is mention in the introduction of Tynan's "more than a hundred novels, several volumes of reminiscences and of verse, besides anthologies"—an obvious instance of over-production. But there is no similar listing of Yeats's works—too numerous, it would seem, to have sprung from genuine inspiration.

When Yeats wrote to Tynan, December, 1888: "Your best work—and no woman poet of the time has done better—is always where you express your own affectionate nature or religious feeling," we wonder that Tynan voiced no protest, conscious as she must have been of the incomparably greater achievement of her friend, Alice Meynell. Her *Preludes* published in 1875 was praised without qualification by Ruskin, and her celebrated sonnet, "Renouncement," which Rossetti learned by heart, was published six years before Yeats's flattering letter was written.

Commenting on Yeats's regret that his early poetry "is almost all a flight into fairyland from the real world," inconsistent with "the poetry of insight and knowledge," the editor is not altogether convincing when he states: "this reaching out of the young imagination into far-off fields is not the neurosis called 'escapism' but the dream in which one gathers strength." Yeats wrote of his own experience and he was not of the opinion that the strength he lacked was to be derived from dreams, but from "the real world." And an essential of his real world was the Catholic faith from which he sought to escape by seeking inspiration in the paganism of ancient Ireland. In his essay, "The Paganism of Mr. Yeats," a critique of Yeats that has never been surpassed, the late James J. Daly, S.J., wrote: "The Gaelic revival became for Mr. Yeats nothing else than an endeavour to resuscitate a dead past and to furnish forth out of its outworn emotions and primitive religious experiences food and raiment for modern needs." Of this and other tendencies in Yeats and Tynan there are interesting foreshadowings in this sheaf of letters, so ably edited that they must prove a gratifying aid to students of either poet and a delight to the general reader.

Boston College

TERENCE L. CONNOLLY, S.J.

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